

HOUSE OF BLUES PULLS LOGO AFTER CATHOLIC PROTEST

The famous nightclub chain, House of Blues, bowed to Catholic pressure by announcing that it will remove its logo and replace it with a new one. The logo had been the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a symbol that is deeply meaningful to Roman Catholics. But now, after a protest lodged by the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Chicago chapter of the Catholic League, the crown of thorns and drops of blood from the heart have all been removed. The new symbol is a heart with a rose.

House of Blues first opened in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1992. In 1994, the nightclub opened in New Orleans and West Hollywood. In 1996, the chain expanded to Atlanta during the Olympics and recently opened another club in Chicago. The chain is owned by Isaac Tigrett, co-founder of the Hard Rock Cafe. It should be known that the Hard Rock in Las Vegas withdrew a Catholic altar from its lounge after the Catholic League mobilized public pressure against the club.

When House of Blues sought a patent for its symbol from the U.S. Patent Office, it was refused registration. It was determined that the use of the Sacred Heart of Jesus "may disparage or bring into contempt or disrepute persons of the Roman Catholic faith."

The Atlanta chapter of the Catholic League, led by chapter president Richard Perry, worked with the Archdiocese of Atlanta in challenging the logo and supplied the Archdiocese of Chicago with the results of its work. The credit in Chicago goes to league chapter president Patrick Cremin: Cremin met with officials from the Archdiocese and was the subject of a front-page story in the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

The Catholic League was prepared to go to the press

immediately with a statement regarding this victory, but decided to postpone its news release upon learning of the death of Cardinal Bernardin, a strong supporter of the Catholic League's. Here is what the league's statement said once it was released:

"Cardinal Bernardin deserves tremendous credit for pursuing this issue. It was his leadership that brought Isaac Tigrett to his senses. The Catholic League was delighted to assist the Archdiocese of Chicago in this matter and is especially grateful to the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Chicago Board of Rabbis for registering their outrage over this misuse of a Catholic symbol. Thanks must also be given to Archbishop Donoghue of Atlanta for the invaluable work that his attorneys did on this subject.

"The misuse of religious symbols for crass commercial purposes is an abuse of power. While the motive behind such decisions is not always ascertainable, the effect of the harm done certainly is. Let the House of Blues become a profitable enterprise, but let it do so without disparaging the icons of the Catholic Church, or those of any other religion.

"It is a further tribute to His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin that during his final days he took on this battle and won."

MISUSE OF SACRED HEART DRAWS RESPONSE

Routledge, the distinguished publishing company, recently released a book on the late rock star, Elvis Presley, that

drew fire from the Catholic League. The league objected to the cover illustration: it featured Elvis as the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The book, *Elvis After Elvis: The Posthumous Career of a Living Legend*, has nothing to do with the cover design. What particularly upset the league was the decision to flag this illustration on the cover of the "Literary and Cultural Studies" flyer that was mailed to prospective readers.

In a letter of protest to Routledge president Colin Jones, league president William Donohue labeled the ad "offensive" and accused Routledge of taking "liberties with a symbol held sacred by Roman Catholics." Donohue closed his letter by saying "Editorial scrutiny surely involves judgments regarding portrayals that might offend various segments of the population. It is hoped that Catholics are added to that list of considerations."

Jones maintained that "Routledge publishes progressive works in many disciplines and is well known for giving voice to authors who champion the tolerance of difference." He then admitted, "It is an unfortunate truth that this tolerance sometimes 'forgets' certain groups in our midst."

In a statement of candor, Jones added that "The Elvis book jacket can indeed be seen as too liberal a use of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We apologize for any offense this may have caused you, your colleagues, or indeed any of your Catholic fellows."

The league was pleased with the honesty of Jones' response.

HOLLYWOOD'S MORAL CODE

At the end of February, I will be going to Hollywood to score a few points for our side. Jeffrey Katzenberg, who is a partner with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen in DreamWorks, has invited me to preview a new movie, *Prince of Egypt*. Scheduled for release in November 1998, it is an animated film whose story is supposedly inspired by the Biblical story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt.

The day after the movie preview, I will attend a conference sponsored by the American Cinema Foundation and the UCLA Center For Communication Policy. At the conference will be leading representatives from virtually every field in the entertainment industry. The topic: Advocacy Groups and the Entertainment Industry.

So what do these guys want, anyway? Ostensibly, they want my input. Trust me—they'll get it.

Some Catholic League members may argue that Hollywood doesn't have a moral code. I disagree. They have one alright, but it doesn't include us.

Hollywood is awfully busy these days making movies and airing TV programs that don't offend large segments of the population. That would include African-Americans, Native Americans, Jews, gays, Asians, Hispanics and others. It doesn't include us.

When I was recently asked by a skeptical reporter what kinds of things the Catholic League complains about, I rattled off four TV shows in the past week that were downright offensive to Catholics. I then asked her to name any shows that disparaged blacks, Jews or gays lately. She couldn't cite one and conceded the point.

We're not included in Hollywood's moral code because a lot of

writers, producers and directors believe we have it coming to us. The Catholic Church, in their minds, is the greatest obstacle to the emancipation of women and homosexuals, hence the need to bash it. Never mind that no other religion venerates a woman the way Catholicism does or has an order of religious comprised totally of women. And never mind that the Church no more condemns homosexuals than it does heterosexuals: it is sodomy, as well as fornication and adultery, that the Church opposes.

But none of this matters because the ideologues have made up their minds. So why go to Hollywood? Because not everyone in Hollywood is a hopeless mental robot following the lead of the trend-setters in their midst. Some actually think, and they're the ones I want to get to.

Hollywood is now wrestling with a ratings system that would track a program's content as it bears on violence and sex. But why isn't there a V-chip for bigotry as well? The answer is that Hollywood doesn't think it needs one.

Not for a minute do I believe that the real reason why Hollywood doesn't have programs that offend the groups I've mentioned is because the creative-types are afraid of catching flack from them. That's secondary. The real reason is that such shows would offend their own moral code. And that is why Hollywood would think it bizarre to have a ratings system that clocked bigotry: they have done such a masterful job at self-censorship that they wouldn't think of bashing most groups, and they do not see as bigoted the bigoted material they serve up to us.

Hollywood is all about sending messages, some of which are direct and others which are subtle. Unlike the Hollywood of old, they don't make shows that feature smokers or treat Catholics reverentially. The new moral code has no tolerance for either smokers or Catholics. So there are taboos, after all.

In a recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now, it was found that three out of four shows the major networks air during the so-called family hour (between 8 and 9 p.m.) contain some sexual content, and a typical hour contains eight sexual messages. What these groups did not measure was the number of times these sexual messages were juxtaposed with cracks about Catholicism.

The effect of these messages can be debated endlessly but what cannot be doubted is that they have *some* effect, otherwise advertisers wouldn't advertise. How the penchant for denigrating Catholics impacts on the Church is not certain, but the constant chipping away at its moral authority cannot be salutary, either for the institution or the society at large. That's why we need to fight back.

So these are some of the things I want to address. I just hope they spare me the goat cheese and white wine. I much prefer pizza and beer.

BIASED ADS HURTS STORY

The CBS affiliate in Cleveland, WOIO, recently aired a two-part series titled, *Pedophile Priests*. Immediately after the show was aired on November 17-18, William Donohue wrote to station manager Thomas Griesdorn expressing his views. He was principally concerned with the way the show singled out priests and the way the show was advertised.

The response that Donohue received was satisfactory in one regard, unsatisfactory in another. That there was a legitimate basis for a story seems plain: a former priest who was convicted of raping a young girl and sentenced to 5-25 years, was scheduled for a parole review after serving 3 years. Not

unexpectedly, the family of the victim and the police involved contacted WOIO about their concerns.

After investigating the story, reporters found that when church officials learned of the priest's misconduct, they did not proceed fairly. Assuming this was the case, then it certainly was not unfair for WOIO to report on it. It is also true that the show stated that "there is no scientific evidence that there are more pedophiles in the priesthood than in any other part of the society." But the way the ads were handled is another matter altogether.

Local newspapers carried the following ad: "Dozens of priests in our area have been accused of molesting children. One or two may go to jail, but what about the others? How are they protected from the law? And who'll protect the children from repeat offenders? Find out what the church hasn't confessed in this **CBS 19 NEWS two-part special report Sunday and Monday at 11PM.**" The ad showed a picture of a priest from the bottom of his eyes down to his neck with the inscription "Pedophile Priest" written in a gag-like style across his mouth.

In fact, the two-part series discussed three cases of sexual misconduct, none of which occurred recently (one of the three priests died in 1980). Why then, the red flags? The week that the ads appeared in newspapers was also "Sweeps Week," meaning that it was important for stations to secure high ratings. By sensationalizing the story, WOIO did a disservice to Catholics and marred the outcome of series.

A series that takes a hard look at hard issues demands serious advertising. That is one lesson WOIO still needs to learn.

WHY NOT SPONSOR A PRIEST OR NUN?

For the past several months, the Catholic League has been fortunate to have an anonymous person secure members for us from the mid-west. Whoever it is, he or she has requested that we advise our members to sponsor a priest or nun interested in the league's work so that they might receive *Catalyst*. If you know of a worthy candidate, perhaps you might consider paying for a membership subscription.

Many thanks to whoever it is that is helping us out.

CRÈCHES MAKE COMEBACK

Every December the Catholic League presses its case that crèches should adorn the public square. From public parks to public schools, league activists have succeeded in getting the authorities to recognize that it is unfair to deny the placement of a crèche when space has been provided for menorahs. This past December was no different.

Reports of crèches being placed in public places reached our office from all over the nation. Regrettably, there is still stiff resistance in virtually every part of the country, but progress continues to be made. Perhaps the most prominent victory occurred in New York when the president of the Long Island Rail Road reversed his decision of last year not to allow a crèche in Penn Station. It was due to the work of Long Island chapter president Chuck Mansfield that a crèche was placed in Penn Station in 1996.

In 1995, Long Island Rail Road president Thomas Prendergast wrote to Mansfield explaining that the placement of Christmas tree and a menorah "are typical of public displays representing the two major holidays of the season, Christmas and Hanukkah." He added that "our legal department has advised that our decorations conform to court rulings concerning the First Amendment."

In 1996, Mansfield pressured Prendergast again, only this time the message was different: "We at the Long Island Rail Road," wrote Prendergast, "are very pleased to advise you that a Nativity scene will be on display at Penn Station during the Holiday season."

Mansfield also worked with the Knights of Columbus on this issue in many parts of Long Island, scoring the biggest victory in Westhampton Beach. Mansfield cooperated with John Sullivan, Grand Knight of the local K of C, in getting permission to put a crèche on the village green.

Yet another victory that Mansfield won was getting the Glen Cove library to put up a nativity scene. He was also instrumental in getting the Jericho Fire District on Long Island to add a crèche to its holiday display and in getting the schools in Garden City to display a nativity scene. Finally, Mansfield persuaded the town of Hempstead to display a crèche on municipal property.

The national office of the league was successful in persuading officials in Rockland County to display a crèche at the Holiday Festival in Clarkstown. League employees also gave needed advice to many callers on how to proceed with this matter, offering to buy crèches if requested.

The national office dealt most extensively with this issue by giving advice to persons who called the office; calls came in from throughout the nation. We also made our case on numerous TV and radio shows.

Gov. Christie Whitman's office of New Jersey was perhaps the most obstinate on this issue. After the governor participated in the menorah lighting ceremonies at the State Capitol, league staffers made many phone calls inquiring about the source of funds used to purchase the menorah. In every case, the governor's office proved to be uncooperative. A letter was sent to her explaining the league's frustration.

The public schools and U.S. Post Office proved to be tough battlegrounds. While some schools did display a crèche, most settled for a Christmas tree instead of a nativity scene. While there is no specific legal case that addresses crèches and menorahs in the schools, there is no legal prohibition that stops principals and superintendents from establishing parity between the two religious symbols.

The abysmal ignorance that public officials show regarding court decisions on this matter is troubling. In some cases, it's not ignorance, but prejudice against Christians that explains the inertia. Either way, the league will have to fight this war every year until fair treatment is finally secured.

HOWARD STERN DISCOVERS BIGOTRY

Radio talk show guru Howard Stern is infamous for many reasons, not the least for his Catholic bashing. For example, on many occasions, Stern has libeled priests by making sweeping generalizations on the basis of a few wayward members of the clergy. He has a particular fondness for branding all priests as pedophiles.

It was with some interest, then, that we noted the umbrage that Stern took when he was made the victim of an anti-Semitic remark. It was reported to Stern that a media executive said that the reason Stern wears dark sunglasses is because “he wants to hide his beady Jew eyes cause they’re a window into his insecurity.”

Stern complained publicly that no one investigated this incident further, other than the TV show, *Hard Copy*.

It’s too bad Stern isn’t as sensitive to priests as he is about himself. A little more reflection on what he says about others might convince him “to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM REVISES TEXT AFTER PROTEST

When the Catholic League was first asked by the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, for permission to display one of the league’s anti-condom posters, it gladly said yes; the museum is a Smithsonian Institution gallery in New York City. The poster, 10,000 of which were displayed in New York City subways in 1994, is reprinted below:



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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Want to know a Dirty Little Secret? CONDOMS DON'T SAVE LIVES.</p> | | |
|  | <p>But restraint does. Only fools think condoms are foolproof. Remember, better safe than sorry.</p> | |
| | <p>Some common sense and a public service message from the Catholic League <i>for Religious and Civil Rights</i> 1011 First Avenue New York, NY 10022 (212) 371-3191</p> | |



The league poster was selected to be part of the exhibition entitled, *Design on the Street: Mixing Messages in Public Space*; the graphic design exhibition opened September 17 and runs through February 17. What stunned the league was the liberties that museum officials took with the league's poster. The text that described the poster, as well as the text that explained two other condom posters that were featured, suggested that the league was being set up for derision.

The good news is that when our objections were raised, the National Design Museum behaved responsibly by revising the contested text for all three posters.

What follows is a selection of the correspondence that details this incident.

November 19, 1996

Ms. Ellen Lupton
Curator of Contemporary Design
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum
2 East 91 Street
New York, New York 10128-0669

Dear Ms. Lupton:

Last spring, I was invited to submit the Catholic League subway poster, "Want to Know a Dirty Little Secret?" I was told that it would be part of the upcoming exhibition entitled, *Design on the Street: Mixing Messages in Public Space*. Having recently seen the exhibition, I was angered to see the liberties that were taken with our work.

The Catholic League anti-condom poster is shown alongside of two other entries. Referring to our ad, the inscription at the bottom of the display says, "The Catholic Church, which maintains an uncompromising stance against birth control, promotes abstinence as the only guarantee against AIDS." That part is fine, but the next sentence is outrageous: "The Church associates sexuality with dirtiness and secrecy."

As a matter of fact, this is not what the Church teaches. From the *Catholic Catechism* itself, it says, "Sexuality [within marriage] is a source of joy and pleasure." It then quotes from Pope Pius XII who, in 1951, said "The Creator himself...established that in the [generative] function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore, the spouses do nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment."

But there is more to object to than simply this. There is another poster called "Decision." It is described, in part, as follows: "Aimed at Hispanic subway riders, many of whom are Catholic, this bilingual campaign uses a familiar and engaging narrative form to suggest that condom use, abstinence and monogamy are all forms of AIDS prevention."

Now what was the purpose of flagging the Catholicity of most Hispanics? Isn't it your message that many Hispanics don't accept the Church's teachings on sexuality? And isn't this the kind of tendentious editorializing that is inappropriate for a Smithsonian institution to be making?

There is more. The final inclusion is an ACT UP poster that features a picture of Cardinal O'Connor. The final sentence makes plain the message that you intended, namely that it is wrong for Cardinal O'Connor to speak to issues that affect New York: "This angry, abrasive poster attacks New

York's Cardinal O'Connor, who has taken a prominent political as well as religious role in the city's life." How cute. I await a statement from the Smithsonian on the propriety of a rabbi sticking his nose into the affairs of New York City.

Just as bad is the way ACT UP is characterized. We learn that ACT UP "is an organization that has aggressively advocated improved health care, housing, and protection from discrimination for people with AIDS." What is most amazing about this is that the poster in question was an invitation to gays and lesbians to STOP THE CHURCH by attending a December 10, 1989 protest at St. Patrick's Cathedral. However, what really happened on that day was hardly a protest, rather it was urban terrorism: militants interrupted Mass and spat the Host on the floor, an act worthy of Nazis. And yet this exhibition depicts ACT UP as Good Samaritans.

I also find it striking that in the book that accompanies this exhibition, *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture*, only the first two posters are published. What happened to the ACT UP poster? Why wasn't it printed as well?

There are a number of avenues that I can pursue about this matter, but before doing so I would like to give you the opportunity to respond. Justice demands that the commentary explaining the posters either be removed altogether or substantively revised. The ACT UP poster should certainly be withdrawn.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

CONGRESSIONAL

STAFFER

DISCIPLINED AFTER LEAGUE PROTEST

In mid-December, B.J. Rudell, a staffer for Congressman Bob Clement of Nashville, Tennessee, posted via e-mail and the Internet an offensive statement about the pope. In *The Hotline: Daily Briefing on American Politics*, Rudell submitted a list of the "Top Ten Surprising Confessions Made by the Pope." Included in this "humorous" list were such comments as "Stopped sending alimony checks" and "Scratches himself during prayers." The most offensive remark was listed by Rudell himself as #1: "His imaginary friend is Jewish."

When a staffer from the Catholic League contacted Rudell about this matter, he argued that this was a free speech issue. He also maintained that his statements were not offensive because they "passed his criteria."

The Catholic League sent the following statement to the press about this incident:

"B.J. Rudell believes that he has emptied the discussion of his statement on the pope by citing his First Amendment right to free speech. However, the Catholic League has free speech rights, too, and we choose to exercise that right by calling for his dismissal: we are demanding that Congressman Clement fire Mr. Rudell.

"To suggest that Pope John Paul II, who has done more to foster better relations between Catholics and Jews than virtually anyone alive, is somehow in need of imagining that he has a Jewish friend, is scurrilous. That this comment was made the week before Christmas shows a level of insensitivity to Catholics that makes Mr. Rudell unfit for public service. Even worse is his obstinacy when challenged.

"The Catholic League hopes that Congressman Clement has

stronger criteria for judging offensiveness than his staffer, B.J. Rudell. If so, we expect it won't be long before Mr. Rudell is given his walking papers."

The good news is that upon learning of this incident, Congressman Bob Clement acted swiftly and fairly. He wrote a letter on December 23, the same day of the Catholic League news release and the same day that Rep. Clement was sent a letter from William Donohue.

In his letter, Rep. Clement said that "The employees actions were unauthorized, offensive and inappropriate. He has been formally reprimanded in writing and suspended without pay pending further review and possible further disciplinary action."

On Christmas eve, Dr. Donohue spoke to Congressman Clement in his home in Nashville, Tennessee; Rep. Clement was very apologetic.

The Catholic League is very pleased with the timely and ethical response of Congressman Bob Clement.

SEED SOWERS SOWS ROTTEN SEEDS

Seed Sowers, an anti-Catholic Protestant-based group from Vermont, has been sending anti-Catholic literature to Catholic priests. When asked by the league to "cease and desist," director Stephen Colbeth wrote that "The Roman Catholic System is deceiving many people." He added "You will be wise to depart from the false doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church."

We were kind enough to send Mr. Colbeth a copy of our tribute to the pope that recently appeared in the *New York Times*.