

“60 MINUTES” SKEWS STORY ON IRISH CATHOLICS

The Catholic League did not call it bigotry, but it did say that it was tendentious. This was our take on a segment of “60 Minutes” that ran on January 3.

Entitled “Magdalen Laundries,” this piece focused on the plight of dysfunctional young women who sought care in Catholic convents in Ireland. Most of the women had lived on the fast track, winding up either pregnant out-of-wedlock or in trouble with the law. The gist of the story was that many were ill-treated in these convents.

The events described in the piece have their origin in the nineteenth century and extend to a few decades ago. Our complaint was not that “60 Minutes” cooked this whole thing up, but that it failed miserably to place these events in historical perspective. And that showed more than poor judgment.

As we conveyed to the executive producer, Don Hewitt, women who found themselves in dire circumstances were treated much more harshly by society, and often by their own families, than they were by nuns. Indeed, the convents were, for a very long time, the only institutions willing to give such women shelter. But none of this was presented to viewers, thus leaving the impression that these women were oppressed by the Church.

There is not a single institution that could be exposed to this kind of ahistorical analysis and pass muster with the standards of today. Why “60 Minutes” selected to do this story in the first place is something that is of interest all by itself. And why this program has a penchant for zeroing in on Catholicism is still another issue that fascinates us. We can

only guess why.

THE NATION SHOWS ITS CLASS

The *Nation*, the weekly radical magazine, recently showed its class with a story on Catholic hospitals; the class-conscious publication proved that however middle-class its writers may be, its workmanship is decidedly low-class.

On the cover of the January 25 edition was a popular illustration of Madonna and Child. The title of the piece was vintage *Nation* fare: "Immaculate Contraception: As Catholic Ownership of Health Services Grows, Women's Choices Decline." Written by feminist Jennifer Baumgardner, the piece is an anti-Catholic diatribe masked as serious analysis.

Catholic hospitals are charged with "discrimination" because they bar abortions. Baumgardner wants to know "Whether poor women should be subject to the morals of the Vatican," sarcastically observing that "At Catholic hospitals, a woman's having a baby is treated like the Virgin herself." She warns, of course, of "a dangerous blurring of the line between church and state," and openly laments the reality that "Catholic hospitals are the largest nonprofit healthcare provider."

Baumgardner's interest in violations of church and state is not sufficient, however, to stop her from suggesting that anti-discrimination laws should be used to coerce Catholic hospitals to provide "services" which violate their moral teachings and ethical standards. We also pointed out to the *Nation* that there is nothing stopping pro-abortion groups from buying community hospitals; therefore, complaints with

Catholic hospitals are more of a whine than serious commentary.

It all comes down to this: unlike most other hospitals, Catholic ones don't kill kids. And for that they're condemned by the bigots.

This is an issue that will only grow bigger. The pro-aborts are mad about this cause.

BUFFALO (JUNK) NEWS

When we're upset with some newspaper column or editorial, we usually just write a letter to the editor. But in the case of a recent remark by a columnist for the *Buffalo News*, we also took our complaint to the editor and senior vice president, Murray Light.

On February 4, Mary Kunz wrote a short comment on the significance of the feast of St. Blase. She managed to get the day wrong (she said it was January 31, not February 3), but that was the least of her problems. She said that this feast "cracks up non-Catholics, and we can see why." Then she enumerated her reasons.

"First," she offered, "there's the idea of a saint specializing in ailments of the throat. Then there's the way everyone lines up for the annual Blessing of the Throat, administered by a priest holding two candles in a V around your neck. Finally, there are the memories of the old days, when they actually lighted the candles, and when everyone knew some kid whose hair got singed." It ended with a quip about a "St. Blazay," who comments, "Yeah, through the intercession of...What? (yawn). Oh yeah, OK. What the heck, I'll, like, try

to protect you from all ailments of the throat, and, uh, whatever.”

To the letters editor, we said, “Perhaps Kunz gets a kick out of Yom Kippur as well, or maybe it’s Kwanzaa that gets her off, and surely Ramadan must be an occasion for a good belly laugh.” We also asked to know about her religious affiliation and ethnicity so that “we might be able to honor her in just the same fashion.”

To Mr. Light, we expressed astonishment that he would allow such a piece, and then asked whether he could send any “similar snide commentaries that have been printed against Jews.”

It should be obvious that our intent, here, is not to take satisfaction with anti-Semitism—we denounce it as virulently as we do any other form of bigotry. But to get our point across, sometimes we need to make the offenders wince, and since they clearly don’t wince at Catholic bashing, maybe this will open their eyes.

Just before we went to press, we heard from Ms. Kunz. While she is not happy with our response, she certainly got the point.

BIASED AD DRAWS FIRE

Over the past few years, the Catholic League has complained to several newspapers regarding their willingness to publish full-page ads, paid for by the Eternal Gospel Independent Church Seventh-Day Adventists, that attack Catholicism.

Fortunately, our complaints have typically resulted in a pledge by the editor not to run the ads again. Unfortunately, the *St. Louis-Post Dispatch* recently ran one of these ads. Worse, they ran it on the eve of the pope's visit to St. Louis.

We have registered our objections to the newspaper and hope to hear from them soon. But members should know that we have heard from the Seventh Day Adventists: they sincerely apologized for the antics of the Eternal Gospel SDA—they are an offshoot, a splinter group that no way represents the real Seventh Day Adventists. We are happy to learn of this and ask that all members duly note it as well.

More good news: on February 12, Tom Rees of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* called to apologize and said he wouldn't run the ad again.