

LEAGUE OBJECTS TO DNC-NATION OF ISLAM LINK

Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam, has asked the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to participate in a joint voter registration drive. In response, the Catholic League has joined with Rep. Peter T. King of New York in urging the Democratic Party not to endorse Farrakhan's effort. King stated that Farrakhan is "attempting to infect the American political process with his hateful form of racism," adding that "it is highly likely that his drive to involve the Nation of Islam in electoral politics will be funded through the financial backing of Middle Eastern terrorist states."

William Donohue wrote to Congressman King explaining that "I am always wary of attempts to confer legitimacy on unrepentant bigots, and that is why I object to this relationship: it is morally wrong for the DNC to cooperate with the Nation of Islam in any endeavor, much less one that gives a standing of citizenship to Louis Farrakhan's efforts."

The league has previously criticized Farrakhan for his bigoted remarks, some of which are vintage anti-Catholic, and his courting of Libyan terrorist Muammar Khadafy.

HISTORY CHANNEL DROPS OFFENSIVE "FONT"

This past spring, The History Channel, an A&E outlet, aired a splendid series on Hitler. There was, however, something that the Catholic League found disturbing about the show.

Dr. Donohue explained his objection in a letter to the Executive VP and General Manager by saying that each time a new segment of the show was introduced, “the T in Hitler appears as a cross, the clear implication of which is to associate Hitler with Christianity.” Donohue then commented that “Hitler was no more a practicing Catholic than Karl Marx was an observant Jew. Indeed, Hitler persecuted the Catholic Church throughout his reign of terror. Which begs the question: why the nefarious inference?”

On July 11, Donohue received a letter from the Coordinator for Viewer Relations, Krutin S. Patel, explaining the situation: “The in-house producers for the program had chosen a gothic font since it best suited the program. It was quite by coincidence that in this particular font, the lower case “T” appeared unusually large and resembled a cross. I can assure you there was no deliberate attempt on our part to associate Hitler with Christianity by utilizing this character font in the title.”

Patel then said that “Even before we were in receipt of your letter, a decision had been made to change the title font in order to avoid any such inference in the future. When the program airs again on The History Channel, it will have a completely different title design.”

The Catholic League is satisfied with this response.

ANTI - CONDOM AD MAKES SMITHSONIAN

The Catholic League’s first anti-condom ad has been accepted by the National Design Museum, a facility of the Smithsonian

Institution, for display this fall. "Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture" is an exhibition that will explore the social and aesthetic value of graphic design. It will run from September 17 to February 17, 1997 at the New York museum.

In 1994, the league gained national attention with this ad by having 10,000 copies placed in New York City subway cars. "Mixing Messages" is being made possible by a grant from the Mead Corporation. Though the league has no reason to believe that the artistic community likes the ad, it is delighted to have its work shown. It also hopes to get its message across one more time.

SMITHSONIAN ADOPTS LEAGUE AD

In 1994, the Catholic League ran the following ad in New York subways:

WANT TO KNOW A DIRTY LITTLE SECRET?

CONDOMS DON'T SAVE LIVES

But restraint does

Only fools think condoms are foolproof

Remember, better safe than sorry

Now the National Design Museum of the Smithsonian Institute has decided to include the league's ad in a book and exhibition entitled, "Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture." The exhibition will explore the social and aesthetic value of graphic design and opens September 17 at Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 2 E. 91 Street, New York City. The league's

poster will be on display through February 17, 1997.

READER'S DIGEST WITHDRAWS RED FLAG

The June *Reader's Digest* included an article by William Ecenbarger on the subject of shoplifting entitled, "They're Stealing You Blind." As stated in a letter to the president, the Catholic League said the piece was "vintage *Reader's Digest* fare: it is accurate, timely and informative." But it also chastised the publication for including "two references to a shoplifter's religion, namely, Catholicism," descriptions the league labeled "gratuitous and deliberately baiting in its message."

The league drew attention to pages 97 and 100 where readers learned that "Fran" is "a devout Catholic." We wanted to know "why is this germane to the story? What was the point of mentioning that this woman 'goes to Mass every Sunday'? Why was there no mention of the religious affiliation of any of the other shoplifters?"

We are happy to report that *Reader's Digest* responded professionally and said that while the author "did not mean to single out or slight Catholics in any way," they understand the league's objections. "In hindsight, we fully understand why this reference could have been offensive. For this we are sorry." Importantly, the publication said that "In any future uses of this story by our editors around the world, we have decided to drop the references to 'Catholic' and 'Mass.'"

“IRON-FISTED” ROMAN CATHOLIC?

On May 22, the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, a Florida newspaper, did a story on a man running for a seat on the Sarasota County Commission. It mentioned that the candidate, Walter Sheil, was once associated with former Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague, whom the paper described as “an iron-fisted Roman Catholic.”

Catholic League member Father Vincent J. Sheehy, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Venice, Florida, noted that the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* is owned by the *New York Times* and no doubt entertains similar views. As Father Sheehy said, if Mayor Hague had been a Jew or a Methodist, the descriptive would never have seen the light of day. The league wrote a letter to the paper expressing its concerns. An apology was quickly forthcoming from the Executive Editor and Director of Broadcasting, Diane H. McFarlin.

BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB MAKES CURIOUS CHOICES

The June “Mixed Media” catalog of the Book of the Month Club had a full page of video selections entitled, “Crisis of Faith.” Most of the offerings were vintage anti-Catholic fare, raising questions about the selection process of the Book of the Month. Included were *Priest*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Agnes of God*, *The Boys of St. Vincent* and *Priests of Passion: Celibacy and the Catholic Church*.

Dr. Donohue wrote to George Artandi, president of the club, stating his objections. An excerpt appears below.

Why are anti-Catholic titles branded “Crisis of Faith” when it would be more honest to simply dub them “Catholic Bashing”? Moreover, why does the Book of the Month Club cluster these films? It would also be useful to know who the intended audience is.

I raise these questions because I doubt for one moment that you would offer *Birth of a Nation* or the *Best of Amos and Andy*, never mind lump them with other anti-black videos. And would you then title these selections, “Crisis of Race”?

I think you would agree that Catholic sensibilities deserve the same respect accorded to African Americans. Please let me know your thoughts on this matter.

Responding to Dr. Donohue’s letter, Richard F. Schnabel, the executive vice president of the Book of the Month Club, said “We regret the disturbance caused by our selection of video titles categorized as ‘Crisis of Faith,’” but then proceeded to argue that “These selections are profound and, in many cases, critically acclaimed expressions of modern as well as traditional filmmaking.”

Schnabel sent along copies from their catalog of religious offerings which were not offensive, trying to make the point that the Book of the Month Club does market positive portrayals of religion. The league acknowledges this to be true but is certain that the company would not offend blacks by hawking a “Crisis of Race” selection of racist videos. Why Catholics aren’t accorded equal treatment is something the league will be monitoring in future catalogs.

RADIO SHOW REVISES NEWS STORY

On July 3, a New Jersey radio station, WKXW-FM, reported a story about the arrest of a Protestant minister for possessing pornographic pictures of young boys. The newscaster, Mary Jo Powell, opened her remarks with the following quip: "This time not a Catholic priest." After a protest from the Catholic League, news director Nick Alexander rewrote the story by deleting the cheap shot and aired the revised version later in the day.

SISTER MARY BACK IN NEW YORK

The notoriously anti-Catholic play, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, made a New York comeback in June and July by playing at the Duplex, a Greenwich Village playhouse. It was widely ignored by both the press and New Yorkers, suggesting that the play has run its course, save among those who just can't get enough of Catholic bashing.

LEAGUE DEFENDS LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

On June 10, Connecticut's *Hartford Courant* ran a front page story on the Legionaries of Christ called, "Novices Accuse Catholic Order of Intimidation, Pressure." Unfortunately, it revealed more about the newspaper than the Legionaries, and

what it revealed was unsavory.

The article characterized the order as a “militaristically styled,” “boot camp-like,” “secretive organization” engaged in “brainwashing.” Dr. Donohue sent a letter of protest which was published by the paper. Here is the heart of what he said.

“Over the past several years, I have gotten to know some Legionaries and the ones I’ve met hardly resemble the negative stereotype you offer. They are not robots goose-stepping their way off to Mass, rather they are determined and quite loyal priests working in service to the Catholic Church. And they don’t need to lasso anyone to keep their ranks from dwindling: their burgeoning rolls are testimony to the extent that they continue to voluntarily attract new recruits.

“When a secular newspaper casts an order of priests in such a fashion—never mind making it a cover story—it suggests an agenda that transcends mere journalistic voyeurism, rather it suggests a desire to malign.”

This letter was published on June 29 in the *Hartford Courant*.