

Television group president apologizes after reporters hire male prostitute to lure priest

League uncovers prior contact and blackmail attempt

In what must surely rank as a new low-point in television-journalism ethics, news personnel from KMOV-TV, a Viacom owned CBS affiliate station in St. Louis, hired a male prostitute and set him up in a St. Louis hotel and proceeded to tape an encounter with a priest from the neighboring diocese of Belleville, Illinois.

Although the story never aired, the tawdry details surrounding it came to light and made national news after a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporter first broke the story on June 9.

According to reporter Eric Mink, the station transported the young male prostitute to St. Louis from Kansas City and set him up in a bugged room at a luxury downtown hotel in an effort to elicit names of other priests who might be interested in the prostitute's "services."

Bishop Edward J. O'Donnell, St. Louis archdiocesan administrator, and Belleville bishop James P. Keleher have written letters to the Federal Communications Commission accusing the station of creating, rather than reporting the news.

Viacom president apologizes on air

Mr. Francis P. Brady, president of Viacom, the communications giant which owns KMOV-TV flew to St. Louis and apologized on the air to Bishops O'Donnell and Keleher and to the people of

St. Louis for the actions of station personnel. His statement was repeated several times in subsequent news broadcasts.

A letter of apology written by Brady was also published in the *St. Louis Review*, the archdiocesan weekly.

League discovers contact with second reporter

As part of his investigation in support of the action by the two bishops, Catholic League Chicago chapter executive director Tom O'Connell learned from a confidential source that the male prostitute had first approached another St. Louis area reporter and offered him the story for \$500. The offer was refused.

That same source told League officials that KMOV backed off on the story when they overheard the prostitute inform the priest that their meeting had been audio and video taped and he allegedly asked for a large sum of money to have the story killed. It was further revealed that at least two staff members at KMOV may lose their jobs before the affair is over.

Grand jury to investigate

St. Louis Circuit Attorney Dee Joyce-Hayes has begun an investigation and plans to convene a grand jury in order to determine if KMOV-TV violated a Missouri law which prohibits the promotion of prostitution.

St. Louis metropolitan area Ford dealers have since announced that they are pulling all of their advertising from KMOV.

The League will continue to monitor the story as it unfolds.