

Vermont printers win three-year fight

Three years ago, the Catholic League stepped in to help Chuck and Susan Baker, owners of Regal Art Press in Vermont, when the ACLU brought suit against them on behalf of "Catholics for Free Choice." The Bakers' "crime" was their refusal to print pro-abortion materials for the abortion industry front organization.



Chuck and Susan Baker in September, 1991 with thousands of postcards and letters of support from Catholic League members.

The Bakers won a victory for themselves and for religious freedom when, on February 18, 1994, the Franklin County Superior Court in Vermont dismissed the case brought by Catholics for Free Choice.

In her decision, Judge Linda Levitt stated that "it cannot be said as a matter of law that the state of Vermont's interest in eliminating discrimination overrides a person's rights to free speech and the free exercise of religion."

The judge further explained that Regal Art Press was exempt from Vermont's Fair Housing and Accommodation Act in regard to the plaintiff's claim.

Catholics for Free Choice, an anti-Catholic front group that has admitted receiving funding from Hugh Hefner's Playboy Foundation, was represented by the American Civil Liberties

Union. Catholics for Free Choice had prevailed before the Vermont Human Rights Commission in 1990, when their spokesman, Linda Paquette, argued that support for abortion was part of her "religious creed."

Catholic League Operations Director C.J. Doyle was quoted by Catholic News Service describing the lawsuit as "a shameful attempt to coerce Catholics into acting against their religious beliefs." He went on to note that "In a genuinely free society, Christians cannot be forced to violate their conscience as a condition of doing business."

The Catholic League brought the Bakers' plight to the attention of a national audience and a League mailing generated thousands of cards and letters of support for the beleaguered Bakers from Catholics all across the country.

The case, *Paquette vs. Regal Art Press*, is expected to be appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court.