

A "good guy" whale, a super hero who uses a magic club, and a flying brontosaurus are featured in a typical new Saturday morning cartoon series titled "Moby Dick and the Mighty Mightor."

Irrigate TV Mini-Wasteland

New York—The "mini-wasteland"—that stretch of TV's "vast wasteland" fenced off for children—is beginning to attract the kind of attention that could make other criticisms of television appear to be kids' stuff by comparison.

The "mini-wasteland" is Saturday-morning television (with a steadily increasing spill-over into Sunday morning), featuring cartoons, cartoons and, in between those, more cartoons.

While many of them feature violence, horror and tasteless slapstick, the major concern appears to be over the sheer waste of time rather than over the cartoons' real or imagined ill effects.

"Cartoons are more harmful because of their banality than anything else," according to Dr. A. D. Buchmueller, executive director of the Child Study Association of America. "Their constant repetition and terrible sameness do nothing to challenge the child."

There are, to be sure, continued protests about cartoon violence ("People are dying all over the place and no one mourns," said one TV producer. "No one dignifies death with grief. What does this do to the child's idea of the value of human life?"), but the main criticism seems to be that on Saturday mornings—when as many as 16 million viewers under the age of 12 are watching—they have, with very little exception, nothing to watch but cartoons.

The new Saturday morning and Sunday morning line-ups announced by the three major networks for the coming season offer no change in format.

There will be the science-fiction or comic-book character cartoons, such as "Birdman," "Atom Ant," "Super President," "Space Ghost," and the "Superman-Aquaman Hour of Adventure"; spy spoofs such as "Cool McCool" and "Secret Squirrel"; slapstick cartoons like "Tom and Jerry" and "Beanie and Cecil"; and others with titles like "Moby Dick and the Mighty Mightor," "The Hercules," "Frankenstein Jr. and the Impossibles" and "The Human Torch."

With the exception of the educational "Discovery" and "Captain Kangaroo," the "mini-wasteland" lacks balance, critics charge, pointing out that for all the mediocrity of "adult TV," adults have some choice of superior, instructive programming during their viewing hours.

Television, remarked Federal Communications Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, referring to the mini-wasteland, is training children "to sit there and accept nothing passively." A major cause for concern over the mini-wasteland involves the future of TV programming; namely, if the children are not trained now to tune in superior programming—and there is hardly any such programming available to them—future adult audiences will still be settling for TV trivia.

Home Masses OK in Boston

Boston — (RNS) — Richard Cardinal Cushing has given approval, under certain strict regulations, for the celebration of public Masses in private homes in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston.

According to a statement issued by the archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, the purpose in allowing Mass to be celebrated in private homes is "to foster knowledge of, participation in, and enthusiasm for the Mass. It is not designed for personal convenience."

The new regulations will normally apply to Masses offered in nursing or rest homes for several persons, or in private homes "for more than one or

"Priority in this matter of Mass outside the church," the statement noted, "should be given to the shut-ins and invalids who reside in such private homes and who otherwise would seldom or never have the consolation of participating in the Eucharistic celebration."

Priest Vocations Far From Grim

San Antonio — (RNS) — The overall picture of priestly formation is healthy and alive and far from grim as painted in "the popular press," according to Redemptorist Father William Coyle, executive secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation.

And this prevails, Father Coyle said here, despite the alarming reports about substantial decreases in the number of priestly vocations, the expressed disappointment of some Catholic writers over Pope Paul VI's encyclical on celibacy, and recent moves of seminary facilities to secular university campuses.

Father Coyle, who directs the office which began to function last January, said the committee was established to formulate a plan of priestly formation as it applies specifically in the United States.

"Our plan must encompass adaptation to the needs of the locality and religious orders with their specific apostolates and still leave room for experimentation," he stressed.

The efforts to merge, consolidate, and move some seminaries to secular campuses are attempts to solve some of the problems which have developed over the years and do not constitute a capitulation of any kind, claimed Father Coyle.

However, he emphasized that moving to a secular campus is not "the" answer for all problems confronting American seminaries.

France Expects First Deacons

Paris — (RNS) — Roman Catholics here believe that France will be the first nation in Europe to restore the permanent diaconate in the Catholic Church.

A special seminary has been established at Lyons by the French bishops and the first 50 candidates for the permanent diaconate are now studying there. Plans for the expansion of the program will be discussed by the bishops at a meeting in November.

Robert Keeshan, better known as "Captain Kangaroo," has long favored the networks' setting up of a special department for children's programming, which—like the Public Affairs department—would operate without a view to turning a fat profit.

Of course, the success of the Sunday afternoon "Children's Film Festival" last Spring, featuring outstanding films from throughout the world, could be the start of a major breakthrough in children's programming, with a new series of similar films scheduled to start in January.

But the mini-wasteland will not be adequately irrigated, suggests "TV Guide," until parents really become concerned about it. "But the concern obviously isn't anywhere near the boiling point," the magazine noted. (Catholic Press Features)

"I personally have a distrust of a single solution to anything simply because of the fact that simple solutions are usually wrong. We must keep ourselves somewhat free with regard to the solutions that should be used," he said.

Father Coyle expressed the view that the Pope's encyclical on celibacy would not greatly decrease the number of sincere vocations or bring about great changes in formation programs.

"I think that the encyclical gave us a kind of clearing of the air, so there can be a more sincere evaluation of the entire picture of priestly celibacy," he said.

One trend in priestly formation which has developed over the past year, according to Father Coyle, is a "greater emphasis in seminaries with regard to apostolic formation."

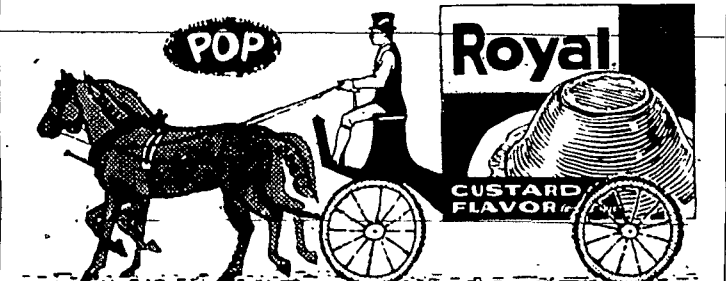
"In many seminaries this takes on some type of contact with the poor and needy classes, common laborers, people in hospitals or jails or who are in other ways deprived," he said, adding that such apostolate work, however, could not be identified as the only duties of a priest.

"Whether such special apostolic training should supplement the parochial orientation of all seminarians is something that is going to vary from diocese to diocese and from religious order to religious order," he said.

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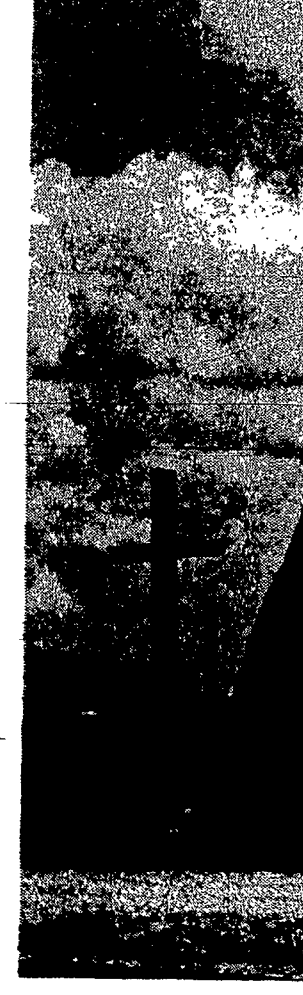
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