

Editorials

Times Complaint

As fine, complete and almost irreplaceable newspaper as it is, the New York Times nonetheless has been leaving itself open to some increasingly frequent and valid complaints of prejudice. And we are not referring to thoughts expressed by the Times in its editorials but in its news columns.

We hope to make Times readers aware of what may be a very serious situation if certain complaints are correct and there is reason to believe they are.

Not many readers know there is an agency called the National News Council which consists of members from the fields of journalism, education, law, labor and so on. When someone feels there has been unfair or prejudicial treatment rendered in the news media, a complaint may be made to the council which then may take it to the alleged offender for that side of the story. After both sides are heard, the council then votes and issues its own official but unbinding stand on the complaint.

The New York Times does not participate in the work of the council. That is, the newspaper will not give its side or take part in the hearing. We are not arguing with its right to take such a stance; presumably it considers the work of the council an intrusion.

Recently, a William F. Gavin of Arlington, Va., complained that a New York Times story of June 20, 1978, dealing with the effects of anti-abortion activity in political campaigns, had unnecessarily and unfairly identified one anti-abortionist by religion.

According to the council report in the Columbia Journalism Review, eight persons were mentioned in the story but only Carolyn Thompson, head of the Pro-Life Action Council in Iowa, was so identified. She

is a Roman Catholic. The council inquired of the Times but received no response.

Why the council does not always agree with the content is in fact, it is very objective and possibly more often than not upholds the medium, even in the case of the Times which does not participate.

Let us point that out to give proper perspective to the council's finding concerning Gavin's complaint. We quote:

"The council believes that the identification of Ms. Thompson as Roman Catholic was unfair in the context of the entire story since no other individual was identified by religion. In light of the repeated complaints on this specific issue, the council can only conclude that the Times is either insensitive to justifiable criticism or is condoning careless editing. The complaint is found warranted."

The "repeated complaints" refers to other such past criticism of the Times in like circumstances by the late William Gavin. The council had made the commendation that "the practice of identifying religious affiliation in news accounts follows that generally applying to race and national origin - that all such designations be avoided unless the information is relevant and material."

Lest anyone think that this is to be taken lightly, we point out that just a little reflection will show that there is both overt and subtle prejudice involved. It should not go unheeded.

We ask Times readers particularly to become aware of such unhealthy attitudes which could undermine the very credibility of their favorite newspaper. We are not asking Catholics to become so thin-skinned that they shiver in a sun shower but we should at least know when someone is trying to insult us.

And take our word for it, we are only singling out

the New York Times because of the case cited in the Columbia Review. We are sure our readers can spot similar disdain for certain views in other media outlets - radio, television and print.

Odd Separation

We echo the position espoused by Gordon C. Zahn, a University of Massachusetts professor, in the Courier-Journal of March 14.

Zahn said there is a package of causes which needs the concerted efforts of both "conservative" right-to-life forces and "liberal" anti-war groups.

We use the word "echo" in deference to the professor but actually this newspaper has been editorializing on the necessity of just such a coalition ever since the days of the Vietnam War.

We voiced the hope then that all those anti-war protesters who had been so effective in condemning the taking of life in war would turn their attention to the taking of life by abortion. This hope has never really come to fruition.

For some ungodly reason there has been no real meeting of the minds or of the spirits or of the muscle of those who oppose the taking of life by capital punishment or war and those who oppose death via abortion.

Both sides claim to be pro-life but only fulfill that phrase when promoting their own less-than-broad interest.

We thank Professor Zahn for reminding all that abortion, capital punishment, suicide, euthanasia and war are all simply versions of the same societal illness: the choosing of death to remedy our problems.

and Opinions

Attica Should Copy Auburn

Editor:

The past three years I have visited Attica Prison on several occasions. Weekend mornings, even in winter, you wait outdoors for an hour before you get inside. You are mechanically processed at the desk and then wait another hour or two to pass through to metal detectors. Sometimes you see reception guards standing idle while you wait.

Or you hear the name of a favored visitor, who arrived after you, being called ahead of turn. A guard may stare sullenly at you and make you feel like an intruder. Occasionally you are told that you are not on an inmate's visiting list - even though you have visited before.

Whether all this is inefficiency or a cruel joke, it is an exasperating experience. In the crowded waiting room you can sometimes hear whispers about a protest petition. Then someone wonders about possible retaliation against visited inmates. Silence.

At Auburn prison, another maximum security institution, you are greeted cheerfully by reception guards. Even on busy weekends you are through the detector and in the visiting room in minutes. Across the street is a hospitality center offering counseling, refreshments and babysitting services for visitors.

On Jan. 3, the Courier-Journal published a letter of mine about institutional loneliness. As a first step in alleviating this tragic situation, facilities such as Attica must take measures to encourage - not discourage - visits from relatives and friends of inmates.

Joel Freedman
Social Worker
329 N. Main St.
Canandaigua, N.Y. 14424

Sophomore On Laws

Editor:

Lately I have seen much disrespect for Church laws - such as eating meat on Fridays during Lent, not fasting an hour before receiving Communion, not going to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, not using the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and others.

We must remember that the Church Laws are God's Laws because God speaks through his Church. We must have faith to believe these laws as God's because God would not steer us wrong. Breaking these laws are signs of disrespect to the Lord and we must obey them despite our personal opinions.

I am a Sophomore at Aquinas and a graduate of St. Pius Tenth School. People should realize that breaking a Church law is intentionally a sin despite what they may think.

John B. Huber
(A pupil who wants
Nuns in habits)
55 Saddleback Trail
Rochester, N.Y. 14624

Supports Sex Curriculum

Editor:

I am writing in response to the Feb. 28 article concerning plan of the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency. A furor arose over a section on teenage pregnancy which recommended that the curriculum guide developed by Planned Parenthood for a secondary school program in a human sexuality be examined as a possible model for other programs in the state.

The reason for using such curriculum is that teenage pregnancy has reached epidemic proportions. Statistics indicate that 11 million U.S. teens have had or are having sex from time to time. Approximately 1 million become pregnant each year; two thirds of these pregnancies are unplanned. This is indeed a health problem. Seven out of ten mothers under the age of 15 do not get any prenatal care. Infants born to teens are more likely to be premature and of low birth weight, and they more often die during their first year than infants born to women over 20. The maternal death risk to teens is 13-60 per cent higher, depending upon the age of the individual.

In response to the expressed fear that human sexuality education will increase, not decrease, teen pregnancy, research shows that just the opposite is true. The less informed the individual, the more likely the risk of unplanned pregnancy. For Prof. Baer to suggest that a human sexuality curriculum which includes values clarification promotes hedonism is irresponsible. It is far more

realistic and accurate to note that the messages which imply that the chief duty in life is to seek pleasure are those being disseminated by TV, rock lyrics, movies and magazines which popularize sex.

The media have glorified sexual activity. I support the Planned Parenthood curriculum which explores the realities and consequences of such activity and encourages personal responsibility for behavior. There are varied reasons for teenage sex and pregnancy - it is up to adults to be certain that ignorance is not one of them.

Sally A. Ward
2705 Pinnacle Road
Rush, N.Y. 14543

Suicide Pact?

Editor:

It was with dismay that I approached the appalling display on a makeshift booth in Midtown Mall advertising "Death with Dignity" and "The Living Will."

Is there no end to these "living atrocities" made upon the unsuspecting public? And is there no one to openly refute these deceptors portraying euthanasia as a self-act of mercy?

What audacity to inveigle one into a written proclamation of a future and convenient suicide pact.

Mrs. Edna C. Faulkner
1124 Garson Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14609



"HEY LOOK, MARVIN, IF IT'S GONNA DRIVE YOU NUTS ALL DURING LENT, DON'T GIVE IT UP!"

COURIER-JOURNAL

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan
President

Anthony J. Costello
Publisher &
General Manager

Carmen J. Vignucci
Editor

Rev. Louis J. Hohman
Episcopal Advisor

Vol. 95 No. 46 March 14, 1979

Courier-Journal (USPS 135-580)
Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 20¢; 1 year subscription in U.S. \$7.50; Canada and Foreign \$12.00. Offices: Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604, (716) 454-7050. Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

Courier-Journal

Guidelines

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

Expressions of opinions should be brief, no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed, double-spaced, with names and addresses.

We reserve the right to edit as to length, offensive words, libelous statements, or to reject altogether. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and letters will reflect the writer's own style.

We encourage readers to submit opinions, but since we try to print letters from as many different contributors as possible we will publish no more than one letter a month from the same individual.