

Two workers look over the damage to a stained-glass window at the Russell Street Church of Christ in east Nashville April 18. Hundreds of people were injured and many buildings damaged when a tornado passed through the city April 16.

CNS/Reuters

Jury finds pro-life leader guilty of violating RICO

By Bill Britt
Catholic News Service

CHICAGO — After a guilty verdict was reached April 20 in his federal racketeering trial in Chicago, Joe Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League, said he will appeal and expects victory.

In a statement, Scheidler said he had expected the defeat and charged that the case "was full of lies and misstatements."

Chicago's Cardinal Francis E. George also lamented the decision and said the archdiocese may get involved in the case.

The lawsuit, filed under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization law, known as RICO, was brought by the National Organization for Women and two abortion providers. Defendants were Scheidler's Chicago-based organization; Scheidler and two other league leaders, Timothy Murphy and Andrew Scholberg; and Operation Rescue National.

The civil suit charged that the defendants used violence to prevent women from using abortion clinics.

The jury of four women and two men, which began deliberating April 16, found the defendants liable under the anti-racketeering law and awarded the two clinics more than \$86,000. The money represents damages in compensation for security costs each clinic incurred. Under the federal statute, the judge could decide to triple the damage award.

"We expected a defeat during this round," Scheidler said in his statement. "The plaintiffs' case was full of lies and misstatements. It was nearly impossible to sift through it all to discern the truth."

But he was optimistic about his appeal. "We're expecting a solid victory at the appellate level, if not sooner after post-trial motions are filed," Scheidler said.

Cardinal George also issued a statement on the day of the decision.

"The Archdiocese of Chicago will consider joining in the appeal of the decision by filing an amicus curiae (friend-of-the-court) brief," he said.

Cardinal George called the decision unjust. "The decision in this case effectively equates freedom of speech with racketeering," said the cardinal. "The decision very likely will have a chilling effect on freedom of speech and religion for those who oppose the violence of abortion."

Comparing the pro-life fight with that of Blacks in the 1960s, the cardinal said: "If the courts had been used to stop the organized sit-ins at lunch counters throughout the South in the '60s there would have been no civil rights movement."

The chief architect of RICO, University of Notre Dame law professor G. Robert Blakey, has said that the case is "a nightmare for anybody who wants to picket." He said the law was passed to be used against organized crime and drug cartels.

Initially, the lawsuit was filed under federal antitrust laws. NOW and the clinics alleged that Scheidler and the Pro-Life Action League conspired with other activists to restrain interstate commerce by their efforts to close abortion clinics.

The case produced a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1994, when the justices ruled unanimously that abortion protesters need not have an economic motive to be prosecuted under RICO.

Archbishop Weakland cites hope in Catholic 'middle'

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland said the report he prepared for his "ad limina" visit to Rome gave him a chance to reflect on just "who are these Catholics we are trying to pastor" and "what are they really thinking?"

Writing in the April 18 issue of *America* magazine, he examined the social diversity of the church, groups that have left the church, and the range of attitudes among those Catholics who remain in the church

and still go to Mass.

In *America*, Archbishop Weakland identified groups that have left the church. The smallest is made up of followers of the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

Some others left the church because they were "soured on institutional religion" and turned to a "privatized" form with little relation to society, Archbishop Weakland said.

But a group growing "larger and larger," he said, consists of people in second marriages the church considers invalid, homosexuals who feel the church rejects

them and "angry women who also feel alienated."

Among practicing Catholics are those who emphasize papal loyalty to the point of forming a "papal maximalist" group. These Catholics turn out to be selective in their papal loyalties and "selectively anticlerical" in their attitudes toward priests and bishops, and Catholic teachings, he said.

Along with the "papal maximalist" group, Archbishop Weakland said those still in the church included "restless innovators" who were "poised for Vatican Council III." But he said their "sloganeering" and "imprecision" about their ultimate goals left them ineffective.

In an interview with CNS, Archbishop Weakland said both the "papal maximalist" group and the "restless innovators" were declining, and his own sympathies lay

more with a third group he described in the *America* article as "a kind of middle ground."

The basic desire of this group is for a church that is "more flexible," the archbishop wrote. "They want a church that is not stagnant and inert, but one that has inner-growth possibilities and that is open to such growth. They do not want a church that is frozen in time, whether it be pre- or post-Vatican II."

Archbishop Weakland said this group knew little of the national Catholic media and organizations, or their disputes, but wanted a vital parish life.

They fear a shortage of priests will limit the availability of the sacraments, and "fail totally to understand why the church is not seriously discussing on a worldwide scale the ordination of married men," he said.

He also said this group wanted a "more humane and helpful solution" than annulments for problems with second marriages. Despite all the explanations, they think the theology and reasoning behind the annulment procedure "border on dishonesty and casuistry of the worst kind."

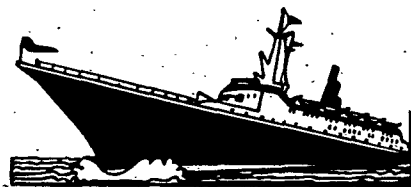
Archbishop Weakland concluded by reporting that "the middle ground is holding."

"I know that my prayer and my pastoral efforts as a bishop must be directed toward keeping that vitality alive while at the same time challenging it," he said.

Travel & Summer Recreation May 14

This special section will highlight domestic and foreign vacation sites, shrines, and other places of interest, with a special emphasis on opportunities for Catholics seeking relaxation and spiritual enrichment; tips on trip preparation; and staying safe and healthy away from home.

Advertising Deadline April 28



For more information on advertising in this special section please call the

Catholic Courier at 716-328-4340

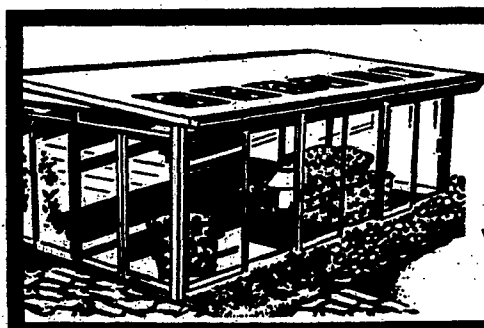
(1-800-600-3628 outside the Rochester calling area).

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 109 No. 31 April 23, 1998

Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.



patio
ENCLOSURES, INC.

Affordably Priced
Three Season or
Year-Round Enclosure or Solarium
1-716-385-9999
Long distance call collect