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ACTION ITEMS

JUSTICE COMMITTEE Hearings on Marriage, Tentative Cross-Canada Travel Plans. Find out when they will be in your area.

Bill C-13, named 'An Act Respecting Human Reproduction and Related' is up for its third & final reading in the House of Commons. Bill C-13 contains long-awaited and important prohibitions on activities such as human cloning. Sadly, the bill does allow human embryos to be destroyed for research purposes. For more information see [Current Issues](#).

Svend Robinson's **Bill C-250**, which seeks to add "sexual orientation" to the current list of identifiable groups (i.e. colour, race, religion and ethnic origin) in the "hate propaganda" sections of the Criminal Code of Canada, is before committee. See [Current Issues](#) for more information.

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Current *Issues*

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CCRL PRESS RELEASE

Release date: February 18, 2003

CBSC denies Catholics protection from abusive broadcasts

A disappointing yet not surprising ruling was handed down by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) today in the matter of the defamation of Catholic priests on CTV's Mike Bullard show last April.

Exploiting the abusively discriminatory stereotype of the pedophile Catholic priests, Mike Bullard has made an art of ridiculing Catholic priests. The CBSC ruled that it is acceptable to engage in 'satire' of this nature because this stereotype is readily drawn from the headlines of the day. Well, we have no disagreement there; the news media have failed on a massive scale to provide accurate accounts of the American scandal.

To offer some background with respect to this complaint, having recognized serious flaws in previous CBSC decisions, our complaint was purposefully directed to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Specific instructions stipulating that the CRTC was not to delegate the adjudication to the CBSC were ignored. Further correspondence seeking the CRTC to correct the error was dismissed because the CRTC, recognizing that the CBSC duplicates its mandate, feared that a parallel processes might result in different decisions. The problems caused by the CRTC's downloading of its responsibilities to the non-governmental, non accountable CBSC are of great concern to those attempting to hold broadcasters to account.

An initial analysis of the decision shows that the CBSC framed it in terms of freedom of speech vs. the nonexistent 'freedom not to be offended.' The CCRL did not ask to be protected from comments which 'merely' offend, though. The complaint specifically referred to the need to protect Catholics and Catholic Priests from abusively discriminatory comments erroneously implying that Catholic Priests are particularly prone to pedophilia. In framing the complaint a reference was made to a previous CBSC ruling in the case of the Dr. Laura radio program, specifically this statement:

"Without getting into the relative numbers issue, the effective assertion by the host that paedophilia has to do with being gay is, in the view of the Councils, an abusively discriminatory comment based on sexual orientation in violation of the CAB Code of Ethics."

Likewise we argued that given the evidence -- which indicates that despite the recent scandal, the statistical significance of such Catholic (and other denominational) priestly pedophilia does not merit such a behavioral 'trait' association -- asserting that pedophilia has to do with the Catholic priesthood is abusively discriminatory

Marc Ouellet on the occasion of the beginning of his pastoral ministry as Archbishop of Québec.

Basilica-Cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-Québec, January 26 2003

Ian Hunter's March 3, 2003 column in The Report.

"On our list of rights, religion comes last" Robert Fulford. *National Post*, Nov. 30, 2002.

"Don't banish the faithful" October 8, 2002. *National Post*. This is the first of a four-part series featuring speakers at this week's McGill University conference on Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy.

"Carving out a safe secular space," October 09, 2002. *National Post*. Second of the four-part series from speakers McGill's conference on Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy.

"The secularism of the West," Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, Oct. 11, 2002. *National Post*. The last in the series featuring speakers McGill University conference on Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy.

"Wars of the Ring," Daniel Cere, Catholic Educator's Resource Centre.

"Ottawa Finds Flaw in Gay Marriages," Sept 16, 2002. *National Post*

comment based on protections guaranteed by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Code of Ethics.

"Say No to Gay Marriage."
Winnipeg Free Press, Aug. 4,
2002

There were really only two ways to properly address and resolve the complaint: offer Catholics the same protection that has been granted the homosexual community, or declare that the reasoning in the Dr. Laura decision does enshrine a right not to be offended and that this right trumps freedom of expression considerations.

Curiously, the CBSC decisions clearly ignored this critical element, and choose instead to list previous instances of anti-Christian bigotry which they deemed acceptable. Was it their intention to demonstrate that Christians receive this type of treatment on a relatively regular basis?

Alarming, there is no appeals process with CBSC. So, efforts at addressing this concern with the CRTC, which was the clear intention at the outset nearly 10 months ago, will resume. It is our hope that the flawed ruling of the CBSC will not be used by the CRTC as a tactic to deny Catholics access to the protections afforded by the Broadcast Act.

Thomas Langan, President of the Catholic Civil Rights League, spoke about the issue today:

"Pedophilia is an extremely grave matter, the destruction of young lives is no more a matter for levity than would be jokes about extermination camps.

"The continent wide press offensive against the Catholic clergy, based on no fact that could justify stereotyping Catholic priests in this way, is itself such a vile and offensive undertaking that the CBSC must be singularly lacking in human feelings to fail to realize the enormity of the affront."

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Catholic Civil Rights League assists in creating conditions within which Catholic teachings can be better understood, cooperates with other organizations in defending civil rights in Canada, and opposes defamation and discrimination against Catholics on the basis of their beliefs. The Catholic Civil Rights League is a Canadian non-profit organization entirely supported by the generosity of its members.

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FREE OFFER

As Dr. John Shea points out in his booklet, **The Safer Sex Illusion**, "Postponing sexual activity until marriage with an uninfected mate is the only realistic way for anyone to be certain of avoiding sexually transmitted diseases." Thus, abstinence until marriage has proven to be good for our physical as well as our spiritual and psychological health.

Parents, educators and youth-workers are encouraged to find out more by requesting free copies of "The Safer-Sex Illusion" from the Catholic Civil Rights League at 416-466-8244 or ccrl@idirect.com



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