

Thursday, September 4, 1986

Family television turned off to protest

Minister questions media content

TUPELO, Miss. (AP) — Rev. Donald Wildmon clicked off the family television a decade ago as a personal protest against what he saw as unbridled sex and violence invading his Mississippi home.

The next week, the Methodist minister asked his congregation to do the same. "I was angry because these things were intruding in my private world," says Wildmon, who heads national organizations that daily challenge television networks and magazine giants in a search-and-destroy crusade aimed at what he calls "the moral cancer that is invading our land."

The approach is simple — identify programs, movies and magazines that promote sex, profanity and violence, then go for the economic throat of those financing them.

His National Federation for Decency, based in this quiet little city in the heart of the Bible Belt, has waged successful economic campaigns in recent years that have led to several major convenience and drugstore chains — including 7-Eleven, Stop-n-Go, Rev-Co and Eckerd — pulling Playboy, Penthouse and other adult magazines from their shelves.

Wildmon also heads the 16,000-member Christian Leaders for Responsible Television coalition which, he says, has forced big-time

advertisers to re-examine the programming they sponsor.

The impact on content was limited. Wildmon concedes, adding, "To this point Clear-TV has not flexed its muscles. We are made up of a diverse group of leaders and they are trying every avenue to appeal to the good conscience of the networks and advertisers."

"However, we are equally determined, if all else fails, to go the other route — we will begin boycotting."

Wildmon's efforts have received a predictably mixed reaction, praised by those who share his views on the dangers of pornography and deplored by those who consider his crusade an attack on the right of free speech.

Barry Lynn, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, says, "I have never called him a censor but I have said that his organization is engaged in an unwise tactic, which has as the ultimate effect, if successful, of narrowing the availability of material about sex in a free society."

Lynn said that while Wildmon's use of boycotts and other economic tactics appear to be constitutionally permissible, they are unwise.

Wildmon says he can't understand how the ACLU can defend the rights of some groups

to speak out while criticizing his organization for doing the same thing.

The 48-year-old minister says the recent rejection by Maine voters of a measure to outlaw pornography was an example of only one side of the issue being presented to the public.

"I believe that if the voters in Maine were exposed to some hard-core pornography they would understand what we are attempting to do," he says.

Wildmon applauds the controversial report of the National Commission on Pornography, which, among other things, linked pornography to sex crimes, a conclusion that some experts dispute.

"Most of the national secular media are ripping the report apart, which we expected," he says. "But I think grass-roots people will really benefit from and support this."

Wildmon's TV-watchers keep charts on programs, rating them on the amount of profanity, sexual content, violence, and anti-Christian stereotyping. But, Wildmon says, the ratings take into account cases where such a negative factor is essential in a program that's generally positive.

Wildmon himself rarely watches TV, he says. While there are some programs he enjoys, he says that most of the time he finds TV morally offensive and mentally insulting.

Eating disorders aren't confined to Anglo women

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) — One-third of patients being treated at a New Mexico hospital for eating disorders are Hispanic, contradicting the belief that anorexia nervosa and bulimia are limited to young, Anglo women.

"This stereotyping should be put aside," said Dr. Vincent Tuason, director of behavioral medicine at Kaseman Presbyterian Hospital.

Anorectics can lose a quarter or more of their body weight by self-starvation and relentless exercise, while bulimics follow eating binges with severe dieting, self-induced vomiting and purging with laxatives.

"It's a problem that I feel is getting more and more widespread," said Norma Jean Wilkes of the New Mexico Center for the Treatment of Eating Disorders.

She said people usually try to conceal the eating disorders and many professionals might not notice the subtle symptoms in minority patients as often as they do in Anglo patients.

Tuason said that since Kaseman began its anorexia-bulimia treatment program, a third of its 63 patients to date have been Hispanic.

"We were surprised," Tuason said.

He said advisers from other eating disorder programs and the bulk of scientific literature have suggested that Hispanics rarely have the disorders.

Tuason said the Hispanic patients treated at Kaseman tend to have had the disorder longer than Anglos before seeking help.

He said that unlike their Anglo counterparts, Hispanic patients usually are seeking treatment for the first time.

He said two-thirds of the Hispanics treated at Kaseman are members of the upper-middle class, much like the anorexia-bulimia stereotype.

Wilkes said eating disorders are more prevalent among the affluent, but that the incidence among lower economic groups might be underestimated because those victims often cannot afford expensive treatment.

A survey a year ago by the University of New Mexico School of Medicine supported the view that eating disorders span all social, cultural and economic groups.

Dr. Jill Miller, a clinical faculty member at UNM and medical director for the New Mexico Center for Treatment of Eating Disorders, said 406 high school students were questioned on a variety of subjects, including weight control. The group was about equally divided among boys and girls. Sixty-three percent were Hispanic, 20 percent were Anglo, 7 percent were black and the rest were from other minority groups.

A third of the students, and three times as many girls as boys, said they considered themselves overweight. About 14 percent of the freshman girls said they dieted. This percentage jumped to 24 percent for sophomore and junior girls and to 36 percent for senior girls.

Two percent of the students admitted to purging, but 31 percent said they binged and 26 percent said they felt bad after eating too much.

Dr. Miller said minority status appeared to have no effect on the answers.

"We deduced it is not a cultural phenomenon," she said. "It affects all young women."

Pittsburgh priest devoted to labor movement

CASTLE SHANNON, Pa. (AP) — After 50 years as a champion of organized labor, civil rights, the Irish Republican Army and other causes, a 75-year-old Monsignor Charles O. Rice, at home on the pulpit or the

labor movement and devotion to the blue-collar workers of his parishes in industrial western Pennsylvania.

"I had the feeling that the labor movement was more than just that," he says, "that it had a reform element to it, that trade unionism would lead to a reform of society and general justice, and that it would free freedom to the working class."

On other fronts, Rice has led sit-in opposition to U.S. involvement

in Central America. He decried the bombing of Libya and voiced support for the Irish Republican Army.

"The IRA has not indulged in the indiscriminate killing of civilians," he says. "They are in a frightfully unjust situation."

Although he retired June 15 as pastor of St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church in this Pittsburgh suburb, Rice says he's only giving up the administrative tasks of running the 7,000-member parish. He still remains active in plenty of causes.

"Franklin D. Roosevelt led a revolution for compassion," he says. "Now it's gone the other way, led by President Reagan and his advisers. He's undoing the New Deal."

Rice doesn't confine himself to picket-line preaching. He hosted a

local radio show for 40 years and still writes a column for a weekly Roman Catholic newspaper in the Pittsburgh area.

He took on the powerful, even in the church. When Cardinal Francis Spellman ordered seminarians to cross a Teamsters picket line during a New York grave-diggers strike in 1948, Rice wrote: "A scab is a scab, whether in denim blue or cardinal red."

In the Steelworkers' 1965 presidential election, Rice supported dissident Edward Sadlowski, a Chicago district director, who was defeated by I.W. Abel, a well-known Steelworkers union pioneer.

Abel remembers Rice well. "He wanted to congratulate me after the election in the dining room

of the Pittsburgh Hilton," Abel recalls. "What I said wasn't printable."

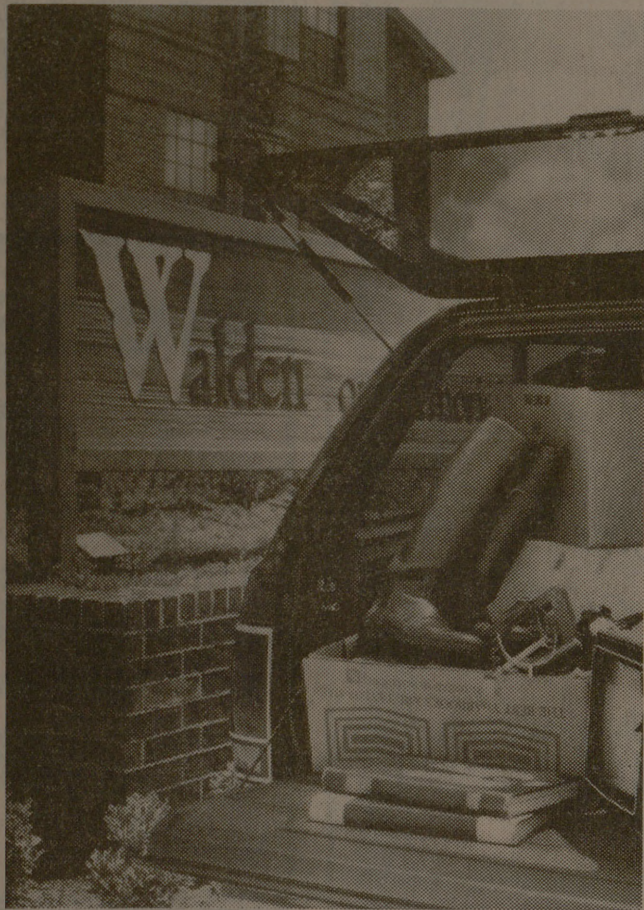
"When I think of him, I'm reminded of the man who said, 'I admire your courage, but I question like hell your judgement.'"

The labor movement was not Rice's only passion.

In 1937, he opened the St. Joseph House of Hospitality in Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood, which provided food and shelter for homeless men. It still operates today.

When civil rights and the Vietnam War became issues in the 1960s and 1970s, Rice planned protests and marched in Washington, D.C., and New York City alongside the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Norman Mailer and Dr. Benjamin Spock.

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