

When KMOV-TV Crosses The Line

The recent attempt by KMOV-TV (Channel 4) to create the news rather than report it is reprehensible. Unfortunately, it is becoming all too common.

In February, NBC apologized for rigging tests of General Motors pickup trucks to sway public opinion and boost its "Dateline" program's ratings. This dangerous trend toward abuse of the public trust and manipulation of public opinion is to be abhorred by all thinking people.

In addition, we must consider the very serious abuse of power when a television station can arbitrarily entrap citizens in a sting operation.

The problems of sexual abuse in the Belleville Diocese are painful enough for the victims, their families, the Catholic community and all caring citizens, without this irresponsible attempt to capitalize on it in the pursuit of ratings. The church acknowledges the problems and is addressing them.

In a time of unprecedented violence, decaying morals and family values, we do not need our media to pander to purient interest to increase ratings.

Channel 4's General Manager Allan Cohen stated that "our system of checks and balances worked because the story never aired." This does not change the fact that the news director, Cohen and the stations attorneys all approved its staging in the first place.

As a city, we deserved more from KMOV-TV than this embarrassing, unprofessional and unethical display. The KMOV-TV news department has sunk to the lowest level of tabloid television.

Virginia Doody Klein
Frontenac

The American Jewish Committee, this country's oldest human relations organization, is shocked by the actions taken by KMOV-TV in its payment of a prostitute to solicit a priest for immoral purposes.

We find this action both professionally irresponsible and morally

reprehensible. We wonder what kinds of internal procedures the station has in place to allow this situation to go as far as it did.

KMOV-TV has gone beyond the limits of acceptable broadcasting, regardless of the fact that the story was never aired.

Mont S. Levy
Chapter President
Rabbi Eric J. Bram
Vice President
Interreligious Affairs
The American Jewish Committee
Clayton

6/15/93
Now we know for sure that KMOV-TV and the *Post-Dispatch* will do anything to trash the Catholic Church. Placing on the front page the entrapment of a Catholic priest into a cash-for-sodomy situation staged by KMOV-TV is revolting. A sensational story, true, but does it belong on page one of a supposed family newspaper?

If I were this errant priest, I would sue KMOV-TV for millions based on privacy rights and entrapment. If I were the head of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, I would sue the *Post-Dispatch* for inflammatory and incessant bigotry against the Catholic Church.

Should Hillary Clinton want to really find out where "this spiritual vacuum at the heart of American society, this tumor of the soul" lies — it's in the media.

Anne Stewart Connell
University City

No other word but sleaze could characterize KMOV-TV's (Channel 4) recent entrapment of a priest.

Channel 4 excuses itself by stating that the program was not aired, that the cameras and microphones were removed midway. But the intent was despicable and prurient.

Big Brother of 1984, in this case, is not the government but newsmen determined to manufacture and create news rather than to report it.

I applaud Dee Joyce-Hayes' action to check for criminal activity on the station's part in this voyeur-

istic set-up, and I am bypassing the Channel 4 button on my TV set.

Gloria Griffero
St. Louis

Thank you for the recent front-page coverage of KMOV-TV's sensationalistic approach to the news.

The purpose of journalism is to report what is happening. KMOV-TV tries to *create* the news, rather than report it. We feel that the way KMOV-TV goes about presenting the news is not in good taste.

The Franciscan Sisters of Mary, a religious congregation of 250 members, is dedicated to justice. We, its leadership team, will no longer be getting our news from KMOV-TV.

Srs. Jacinta Elmendorf, Constance Fahey, Jeanne Meurer, Mary Joan Meyer and Irma Kennebeck
Richmond Heights

Demonstrating and practicing high moral standards and ethical behavior for young people are the best ways to keep them from becoming involved with gangs, drugs, shootings, sexual promiscuity and violence. This must include the media and politicians.

While scandalous politicians can be voted out, TV stations like KMOV-TV and magazines like the *Enquirer* roll on in their sexually oriented, money-making trash.

KMOV-TV has completely obliterated any signs of dignified journalistic ethics and style over the last few years with its sleazy, sexually suggestive promos and reporting. The recent attempted expose involving a male prostitute and a Catholic priest was the epitome of journalistic filth.

The "error in judgment" offered by General Manager Allan Cohen simply reflects his ignorance of high moral standards and stately journalism.

May God guide our children because the role models they so desperately need are failing.

Art Bauer
Florissant

Views On News

Regarding the June 11 front-page article, "KMOV Owner Apologizes During Evening Newscast," KMOV was clearly in the wrong by instigating this incident, but this admission is not the core of the story, and may have been premature by the station owner.

The root of this problem is the inability of the Catholic Church to admit that it harbors a large number of repeat sex offenders, and the lack of outside investigators with authority to see these offenders are removed from positions of public prominence.

The Catholic Church is unable to police itself, thus a large number of priests are free to continue molesting minors and young adults. Apparently the separation of church and state is failing us in this area; I have seen no evidence that state investigators are pursuing these offenders. Must the task of exposure of these offenders be left to the private sector?

I believe that KMOV-TV had good intentions by investigating this priest. They wanted the public to be aware that the menace was still at large, despite recent church claims that the issue has been dealt with.

I am saddened that the station manager saw fit to admit his mistake, while the Catholic Church strives to protect the guilty. Where is the apology from the church for having failed to remove this sex offender from among its numbers?

Richard T. Quick II
Glendale

6-17-93

The June 11 editorial concerning the unethical and unprofessional activity of KMOV-TV last week apparently decided that an apology and warning to media professionals to avoid unethical, immoral and possibly illegal behavior was sufficient.

Is that really enough? Where is the resolution? Had a priest been guilty of unethical, immoral or illegal behavior, would the editorial say an apology and warning were enough? No. It would seek resolution: removal from office, loss of position, prosecution, confinement for rehabilitation or imprisonment. Nothing like this was suggested in the editorial.

I join Bishop Edward J. O'Donnell in not watching Channel 4 until some resolution is evident. I encourage my parishioners to do so also.

Rev. Bruce H. Forman
Pastor
SS. Peter and Paul Church
St. Louis

6/17/93