National Conference of Christians and Jews honors man responsible for 'Last Temptation of Christ'

By Joseph Farah, Editor
Between the Lines

Awards are given out every day in Hollywood. But one recent honor was so obviously granted to the wrong person that even he expressed misgivings about it.

The National Conference of Christians and Jews acknowledged Tom Pollock, chairman of the Motion Picture Group of MCA-Universal, with its Entertainment Industries Humanitarian Award. Think about it. Pollock is the studio head responsible for giving us **The Last Temptation of Christ**, Spike Lee's incendiary **Do the Right Thing** and, most recently, **Henry and June**, the first NC-17 rated movie.

When MCA President Sidney Sheinberg informed him he was NCCJ's choice for the annual award, Pollock said he believed the group "had chosen a most unlikely recipient."

"Now we all know how persuasive Sid can be, in his modest, unassuming way," Pollock explained to about 800 who attended the recent benefit affair in Beverly Hills. "And there was no way I could refuse his request. But I thought I should at least warn him. 'Sid,' I told him, 'I don't think I'm the guy you want. After all, I'm the one who released **The Last Temptation of Christ, Do the Right Thing** and **Henry and June**. These movies offend people.' 'Well, Tom,' he said, 'that's true. But God knows, you've offended everyone equally.'"

What Pollock and the National Council of Christians and Jews don't seem to understand is that Hollywood is not part of the solution, it's part of the problem.

And he has a point there. Why, with **Last Temptation** alone, Pollock managed to offend both Christians and Jews. Christians were shocked to see their Lord portrayed as an indecisive, lustful maniac, and Jews were dismayed to see a grotesque depiction of ancient Israel—a hideously corrupt place where blood literally runs through the streets.

But the Pharisees from the NCCJ were willing to overlook all that— especially given the fact that they were able to raise their usual $350,000 at the affair.

There were the usual testimonials at the event. CBS Entertainment President Jeff Sagansky called Pollock a "true humanitarian." Sagansky is something of an authority on humanitarianism. He and his last-place network are most noted for their recent accomplishment in kicking off a new fall TV show with a six-year-old girl telling her brother, "You suck!"

The award was presented to Pollock by producer-director Ivan Reitman who praised the Hollywood executive for "his leadership in the film industry, for providing the public with a consistent flow of quality filmed entertainment, for his integrity in bringing to the screen motion pictures that explore important social and political issues, giving filmmakers the freedom of expression guaranteed by the First Amendment and for his support of many organizations serving the arts and the community."

Reitman alluded to some of Pollock's more questionable judgments at MCA-Universal. "At a time when many of our government and business leaders either are incapable of or unwilling to stand up for their beliefs, Tom has shown great courage in bringing to the screen motion pictures that extend our understanding of human freedom." Reitman said. "He has been a tireless supporter of filmmakers' rights to create a work of art, but also of the public's freedom to view a work of art."

Pollock took the opportunity not to apologize humbly for the extremely bigoted and divisive movies he has sponsored while at the helm of MCA-Universal, but rather to point the finger at others for stirring bigotry and divisiveness.

"Our country is in the grip of a new wave of racism and anti-Semitism," he charged. "Censorship is back in fashion. More and more, people seem determined to silence voices different from their own. I see us retreating from the unfamiliar, seeking out people of 'our own kind' and becoming increasingly intolerant of those who are different."

Pollock blamed not his own industry for creating this mess, but rather the news media and the global information explosion, which, he said, have created a mass appetite for simple solutions to complex problems. He did not mention the fact that some of his own most notable movie releases (**Do the Right Thing** and **Cry Freedom**, among other) were singled out for criticism for doing exactly that.

"Simple answers are often shortsighted and bigoted," he said. "Voices have become strident. Blame the blacks! Blame the whites! Blame the Christians! Blame the Jews! Blame men, or women, or the rich!" That's true, too. And no voices have been more strident and simple-minded than those emanating from Hollywood, including many of those coddled and pampered by Pollock himself.

"When you're in the business of producing and marketing motion pictures, you try to be aware of the trends—to keep a finger on the social pulse," Pollock said. "And the readings I've been getting are disturbing. We're living in a time when America seems to be tearing itself apart. Our country is fragmenting, splitting along every imaginable line: religious, racial, ethnic, economic, sexual, you name it."

Once again, it's all very true. But what Tom Pollock and the National Conference on Christians and Jews don't seem to understand is that Hollywood is not part of the solution, it's part of the problem.

Founded in 1928, the National Conference of Christians and Jews identifies itself as a non-profit human relations organization engaged in a nationwide program of intergroup education to eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

Media pushes National Endowment for the Arts

The Center for Media and Public Affairs has confirmed by meticulous study what many have known all along: Television and newspaper reports have been biased toward giving a free hand to the NEA to continue funding pornographic and blasphemous "artworks" with tax dollars.

The group's researchers analyzed 234 of last year's news and opinion pieces and concluded that 62% of journalists favored continued tax support.

The group also discovered that highly negative language was used more than twice as often to describe those who opposed tax dollars to fund porn "artworks" than to describe those who support unrestricted use of tax dollars for that purpose.

One example came from the pen of liberal columnist Anthony Lewis: "A small band of religious zealots and right-wing opportunists is trying to show the world that America is an intolerant puritan country, contemptuous of artists."

Human Events, 1/19/91

AFA Law Center adds to staff, involved in several cases

The AFA Law Center, begun last August to defend the rights of Christians and to aid local prosecutors in obscenity prosecution, has added a fourth attorney to its staff and is currently involved in several cases.

Dennis Staffelbach, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame School of Law, joined the staff as Legal Counsel in January. Staffelbach brings to four the number of fulltime, in-house attorneys of the Law Center. Staffelbach joins General Counsel Benjamin Bull, Peggy Coleman and Nick Nikas on the Law Center staff.

In addition to the in-house staff, more than 300 local attorneys across the nation have volunteered to work with the Law Center on cases in their respective local areas.

"The Law Center is beginning to come together as a strong force to protect the rights of Christians in the courtroom," said AFA president Don Wildmon. "The Law Center is already working on several significant cases and we feel it will become a force for good in the months ahead."

One of the more significant cases the Law Center is involved in is a suit against the Woodland Joint Unified School District in California. AFA's suit contends that the use of the Impressions reading curriculum violates the First Amendment. The Impressions series, according to the suit, promotes Wicca or Witchcraft.

The Law Center is working with broadcaster Vic Eliason of Milwaukee who was sued by a lesbian. (See February AFA Journal for details.)

Other cases the Law Center is involved in include a suit against Planned Parenthood in Minnesota, suit against National Endowment for the Arts General Counsel Julianne Ross Davis, and representing a pastor who has been sued because he applied church discipline.

AFA has also prepared a comment on regulation of children's television and will file an amicus to the Kentucky Supreme Court requesting the court to reverse an appellate court opinion that struck down as unconstitutional Kentucky's sodomy statute.

In February, General Counsel Bull held a training workshop on enforcement of obscenity laws for police chiefs in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's new obscenity law was recently upheld in a court case.

In addition, the Law Center staff continually offer advice and suggestions to numerous phone calls and letters helping individuals secure their rights without going to court.

The Law Center is here to help Christians whose religious freedom rights have been violated, and to help local prosecutors in obscenity cases.

AFA assists Bible club in public school

The Revelation Bible Study Club of Central High School, Springfield, Missouri, has expressed its gratitude to the American Family Association Law Center for the Law Center's legal assistance in obtaining for the student members of the Club the rights guaranteed to them by the Equal Access Act and the recent decision of the United States Supreme Court, **Westside Community Schools v. Mergens**. The Equal Access Act passed by Congress forbids federally funded public schools from discriminating against a student-initiated club on the basis of the religious content of the club's speech if the school allows other non-curriculum related clubs to meet during non-instructional hours. On June 4, 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court in **Westside Community Schools v. Mergens** upheld the constitutionality of the Equal Access Act. Simply put, the law requires that high schools treat religious clubs as they treat any other non-curriculum related clubs.

Unfortunately, the student members of the Revelation Bible Study Club were told by a school administrator in October of 1990 that they could not use the school public address system, could not appear in the school yearbook, and could only place one poster in a limited area of the school, even though other non-curriculum related clubs were allowed to place posters advertising their clubs all over the school and were able to use the public address system, appear in the student yearbook, hold fund-raising meetings and invite outside speakers to address their clubs. In short, the school administration was treating the Revelation Bible Study Club as a second class citizen and discriminating against the Club on the basis of its religious content.

The AFA Law Center wrote a letter to the principal of the school setting forth the requirements of the Equal Access Act and the **Mergens** decision and requesting that the administration cease its discriminatory conduct toward the Revelation Bible Study Club and allow the Club all privileges accorded other non-curriculum related clubs. After receiving the letter, the principal of the school granted official recognition to the Revelation Bible Study Club and allowed the Club to place posters where other non-curriculum related clubs placed posters, allowed the Club to appear in the student yearbook, and to have all of the other rights accorded any other non-curriculum related club. In a letter thanking the AFA Law Center for its help, the president of the Club stated that the Club is well on its way to becoming the "largest club on campus." Additionally, the president of the Revelation Bible Study Club stressed that the Law Center's representation of the Club has helped all of the students in the entire school district who wished to form religious clubs.

Resources from AFA

Public School Sex Education: A Report. A documented study on sex education programs and school-based health clinics.

A Guide to What One Person Can Do About Pornography. A step-by-step guide to how you can fight porn in your community—magazines, videos, cable TV, etc.

Christianity and Humanism: A Study in Contrasts. A six-session study written by AFA. Biblically based, good for Sunday school, bible study, evening worship.

Pornography: A Report. An in-depth look at the effects of pornography. Some of the finest material available on the subject.

Anti-Christian Bias in America. Articles reveal bias in government, media and education.

For Each of the above titles send:
One copy $2; 2-9 copies $1.50 each;
10-49 copies $1 each; 50 or more copies 50¢ each

Bumper Stickers. "The American Family: Our National Treasure" in attractive red, white and blue. Order in quantity only: 100/$19; 500/$79; 1000/$141.

Anti-Porn Billboard. Ready to apply to standard-size billboard. Red and black; "Pornography victimizes women and children" slogan with photo of child. Has AFA name. $25 each, includes shipping.

Don Wildmon Books. *The Home Invaders* on TV's influence in society. *The Case Against Pornography* explores all facets of the problem. Reg. $6.95, $3 each or $5 for both. *The Man the Networks Love to Hate*, latest book gives history of AFA, $8.95.

Send check with order to: AFA, P. 0. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803