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NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING BOYCOTT CALLED BY CONSERVATIVES (450)

NEWARK, N.J. (NC) — A conservative Catholic organization calling itself Upon This Rock has called for "an all-out boycott of The Advocate," Newark archdiocesan newspaper, until the paper begins printing the views of "no less than three conservative, orthodox Catholic columnists" approved by the group.

The demands were contained in a letter from Gerard Kelly of South Orange, founder and executive director of Upon This Rock, to James B. Dulan, The Advocate's executive director. Kelly has urged advertisers to withdraw their ads from the paper.

Advocate advertisers also received a letter from Father Paul A. Wickens of St. Venantius Parish, Orange, N.J., asking them to "please withhold any future advertisements in The Advocate until a new and fairer policy is embraced by its editors." The priest identified himself as "police and fire chaplain."

Membership of Upon This Rock is unclear. Kelly claims "it represents 100,000 Catholics" and said he would have to "consult my 21 chapter heads" before revealing any information about the group's founding and makeup. The group lists four advisors in New Jersey counties on its letterhead, but none would talk about the organization.

Kelly said the group had its genesis "in several other organizations organized two or three years ago," which he did not name. He called his demand for the introduction of three columnists approved by the group "a compromise" because "we could, in justice, demand that the whole newspaper take on a conservative flavor." The overwhelming majority of Catholics are conservative, he said.

Father Wickens has been demanding space in The Advocate for himself and other "orthodox" columnists since 1975. In an April 24, 1976, letter to Joseph R. Thomas, managing editor, he said that if he were not contacted by May 15 of that year, he and others would "embark upon a boycott" that would include efforts to induce pastors to halt the sale of The Advocate, seek the support of archdiocesan organizations and "encourage people to stop patronizing" advertisers who would not withdraw their ads.

In a May 30, 1978, letter to Advocate advertisers, Kelly said the group had contacted Thomas, Dulan and Archbishop Peter L. Gerety of Newark and had been frustrated "by broken promises, token cooperation and even by refusal to print some of our important letters."

Dulan and Thomas said, however, that they had never heard of Upon This Rock before May 30 and had never been contacted by Kelly, given him any promises or rejected his letters.

So far, Kelly's campaign has been ineffective, Dulan said. One advertiser has asked for information on the "controversy," another has cancelled for reasons having nothing to do with Kelly, and two others have withdraw temporarily. Only one of the two was a regular advertiser, he said.

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