



merry christmas

happy kwanza

Finally! Tasting victory at Cracker Barrel

by David Stout

After ten years of intense lobbying and precedent-setting court battles, GLBT and progressive activists won a monumental victory December 4 when the board of directors of Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores voted to add sexual orientation to the company's non-discrimination policy and effectively rescind a previous directive prohibiting the employment of individuals who fail to "demonstrate normal heterosexual values"

"This small step has enormous significance for every gay or lesbian employee who has ever experienced job discrimination," said Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Education Director Kim I. Mills, who oversees the organization's workplace advocacy project HRC WorkNet. "Cracker Barrel has undergone important cultural changes in the last 10 years, but until now has resisted rewriting its non-discrimination policy. This long-awaited change is a watershed and we welcome it."

The flap began in 1991 when the popular family style restaurant chain fired 11 workers in North Carolina, Tennessee (where the company



is headquartered), Georgia and Florida for being gay. The company-wide policy was reportedly prompted by a customer's complaint at one of the chain's then 94 locations.

The firings generated a flood of publicity and sparked ongoing protests at Cracker Barrel units across the Southeast, including the Charlotte

franchise at the I-85 Service Road from which Jefferey Sherrill was terminated.

In an April 1991 interview, Sherrill described the scene to Q-Notes, "It was right before 2 pm in the afternoon, halfway through my shift, when I was called to the manager's office for something. We were doing inventory so I didn't think anything about it."

Awaiting Sherrill was General Manager Dave Pittman along with the gift shop manager, the district gift shop manager and the district restaurant manager. When asked what was going on, Pittman said it had been brought to his attention Sherrill was a homosexual in violation of company policy and would have to be let go.

"I really didn't understand; I was a good employee. I always did everything, more than what was expected of me. On my last review I was given a 95 percent rating and over the course of my two and a half years of working for Cracker Barrel, had even traveled for the store.

"Then to be fired for violation of a company policy on homosexuality, which I didn't even know

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Above and beyond Law lies the awful truth

Disclosed documents show cardinal coverup and church complicity; and it's not just in the USA

BOSTON, MA — Despite denials, church officials in Rome and the US have tried to channel public anger away from the hierarchy's handling of priests known to be serial sex-offenders and refocus it on gay priests in general, the vast majority most of whom are not guilty of any crime.

These intense efforts by Roman Catholic officials to scapegoat gay priests suffered a crippling blow in Boston with the release of church documents detailing a long history of crimes and coverups.

As recently as October, the Vatican was circulating draft proposals to bar gay men from becoming priests. The policy has long had the backing of Pope John Paul II but became a safe and convenient method of responding to the abuse crisis without sacrificing church control.

The documents detail years of attempts by the Archdiocese of Boston to shield abusive priests from the law with full knowledge of their crimes.

According to the Boston Globe, "one priest regularly terrorized and beat his housekeeper, another traded cocaine for sex, and a third had enticed young girls by claiming to be 'the second coming of Christ.'"

The reports of out-of-control clerical con-

duct - locked for years in secret church personnel files - became public after lawyers for alleged victims of Rev. Paul R. Shanley made 2200 pages of internal documents on eight priests part of their courtroom file.

"It is very clear from the documents that Cardinal Law and top diocesan officials knew far more, far earlier, about far more priests and their abusive behavior than officials have ever let on, but did so very little to protect not just innocent children, but adults, boys and girls, church employees, and regular lay people," said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

While the number of abusive archdiocesan priests has been known for months, the church fought efforts to divulge details of the abuse. The records released were made public only after victims' lawyers won a ruling from a judge, who bluntly criticized the church for trying to sidestep her order to produce the personnel files.

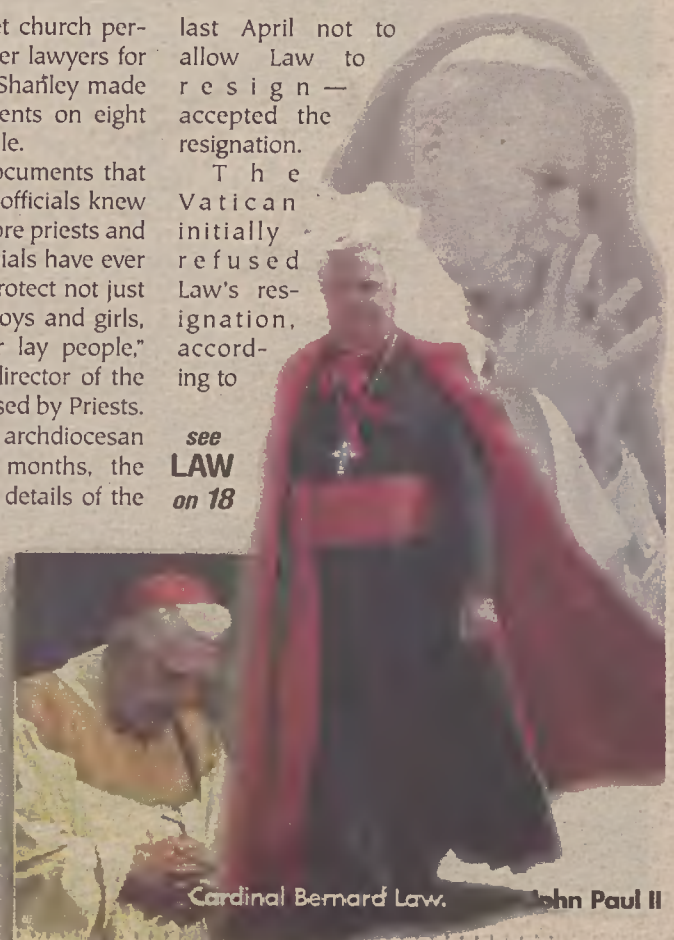
Pope allows Law to leave

The church has always been chained to hierarchy - ruling from the top down. Cardinal Law went to Rome where Pope John Paul - reversing his earlier decision

last April not to allow Law to resign - accepted the resignation.

The Vatican initially refused Law's resignation, according to

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Cardinal Bernard Law.

John Paul II