
**CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL
NATIONAL SPECIALTY SERVICES PANEL**

W Network re *My Feminism*

(CBSC Decision 01/02-1120)

Decided February 28, 2003

R. Cohen (Chair), S. Crawford (Vice-Chair), R. Deverell,
E. Duffy-MacLean, M. Hogarth and C. Murray

THE FACTS

The specialty service called W Network broadcast a documentary entitled *My Feminism* on July 25, 2002 at 7:00 pm Pacific Time. The documentary consists primarily of individual interviews with a number of prominent feminists of diverse national, cultural and religious backgrounds who discuss a range of issues related to the feminist movement, such as pornography, violence against women, division of household tasks, divorce, reproductive rights, women's health, religion, cultural differences and politics.

The segment of the documentary dealing with religion, which began about 43 minutes into the program, troubled a viewer who filed a complaint with the CBSC. That part began with an interview with Urvashi Vaid, who stated:

Many of the most sexist notions held by societies are embedded in religious tradition. There is Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam or Judaism, there are sexist traditions. In many parts of the world where fundamentalism is growing you're seeing these religious movements transform those societies in ways that are bad for women, in ways that are setting back the gains that have been made by the feminist movement.

Information then appeared on-screen stating that a woman named Taslima Nasreen was "condemned to death by Islamic fundamentalists for her feminist writings." The segment continued with remarks from Irish feminist Ailbhe Smith who described her view of religion in the following terms:

I come obviously from a culture in which religion plays a very important part. The Holy Roman Catholic Church has been responsible, ably aided and abetted and reinforced by the Holy Irish Catholic State to keep women in a state of submission, subordination, fear, to restrict and constrict and constrain us in every way that it can possibly think. That means, of course, that men should have the power to actually make sure that women don't have any power and that we as women should stay in our places as mothers and man-servers. No, of course I don't believe in a religion which can, which can actually mind-fuck people to that kind of extent. No, and I won't subscribe to it, I won't support it in any way.

Mary Becker then provided her view of Catholicism and feminism:

I was raised Catholic, but I'm not religious now. I think it's very hard, although not necessarily impossible, for women to stay within traditional mainstream religions and be feminist. To stay Catholic and a feminist, which I know many women do and I really respect them and I think it's so important that women continue to do it, but it's beyond what I can do.

The final interview in the segment was with Urvashi Butalia who explained that she comes from a family with both Sikh and Hindu backgrounds, but that the only time religion played a large role in her childhood was when her grandmother would come to visit. She mentioned that she enjoyed the music when she went to the Sikh temple, but that, as an adult, she was not particularly religious. She suggested that

Still the ritual of religious practice enables women at least to get out of the house, have a space where they can sing and be together and talk in the temple. It's not great, but it's something, it's more than they have. So I think I wouldn't knock religion even though I don't subscribe to it myself.

The program did not contain any viewer advisories.

A viewer sent letters to both the CRTC and the CBSC on July 29 describing the segment that was of concern (the full text of all correspondence can be found in the Appendix):

[O]n a show called *My Feminism* a woman attacked the Christian faith and Roman Catholic Church – referring to them as “mind fuckers”. This view was supported by another woman who also stated the church and feminism were incompatible. I find the attack and the language used as offensive, hateful and totally inappropriate for this media [*sic*] and time of broadcast. It was religiously intolerant and held one faith and church, in particular, up for ridicule. Other faiths were not mentioned. [...] Broadcasting these views on public television gives them undeserved credibility, and should not be allowed without counterpoint.

The viewer also commented that the use of the f-word is not appropriate for broadcast at that time in the evening.

The Director of Programming for the W Network responded to the complainant's letter on September 3. She explained that the documentary was broadcast as part of the service's “W Docs” series, which “offers the opportunity for viewers to

examine several important issues and events through a variety of gutsy, poignant and thought provoking documentaries.” With respect to the complainant’s concerns about the segment on religion, the W Network pointed out that

While most of the women agreed to the difficulty of believing in a faith they felt went against their personal beliefs, there were several comments and opinions made in support of religion and several of the women expressed great respect for those women who were able to balance their feminist beliefs with their faith. The comments were not intended as a direct attack on religion [...]. The comments made were expressed as the personal opinions of the women speaking in the Documentary.

The letter from the Director of Programming went on to cite past CBSC decisions dealing with abusively or unduly discriminatory material against identifiable groups and suggested that the broadcast did not fall afoul of the Code in this respect.

The complainant wrote back to both the W Network and the CBSC on September 9. In the e-mail to the W Network, the complainant expressed the view that the Director of Programming had not dealt with the use of the coarse language and he reiterated his concerns about the hateful comments made by the Irish feminist:

The anger and hate in her voice and on her face were unmistakable. Clearly she did not want to debate religious issues, improve the Catholic institution, or deal in facts. She wanted simply to destroy what she viewed as in her way, get rid of the symbol of opposition. [...] As far as other women following up on her comments, yes, one of them said she “admired other women who could stay in the church” (read: “the poor misguided dears”) but she, the speaker, could not (read: “being so much more wise and sophisticated”). The clear, unmistakable message was “do not believe in nor support the Catholic Church.” [...] Name calling, crudity and *ad hominem* attacks have no place in an informative program.

In the e-mail sent to the CBSC, the complainant simply stated that the response from the Director of Programming was “unsatisfactory, as she merely minimized my ‘narrow’ interests with no indication of remorse, error, apology, or indication not to repeat such insult in future.”

The complainant later sent a newspaper article about a French author who had been reprimanded by the French courts for calling Islam a “stupid” religion. The complainant pointed out that, although that case occurred in a different country, calling a religion “mind-fuckers” was considerably worse.

THE DECISION

The National Specialty Services Panel considered the complaint under the following provisions of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' (CAB) *Code of Ethics* and *Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming*:

CAB Code of Ethics, Clause 2 (Human Rights)

Recognizing that every person has a right to full and equal recognition and to enjoy certain fundamental rights and freedoms, broadcasters shall endeavour to ensure, to the best of their ability, that their programming contains no abusive or discriminatory material or comment which is based on matters of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, [sexual orientation], marital status or physical or mental handicap.

CAB Violence Code, Article 3.1.1 (Program Scheduling):

Programming which contains scenes of violence intended for adult audiences shall not be telecast before the late evening viewing period, defined as 9 pm to 6 am.

CAB Violence Code, Article 5.0 (Viewer Advisories):

- 5.1 To assist consumers in making their viewing choices, broadcasters shall provide a viewer advisory, at the beginning of, and during the first hour of programming telecast in late evening hours which contains scenes of violence intended for adult audiences.
- 5.2 Broadcasters shall provide a viewer advisory at the beginning of, and during programming telecast outside of late evening hours, which contains scenes of violence not suitable for children.

The National Specialty Services Panel read all of the correspondence and viewed a tape of the documentary. It concludes that there is no breach of any of the foregoing provisions.

The Use of the F-Word

After dealing with the issue of the use of the f-word in *CJOH-TV re "White Men Can't Jump"* (CBSC Decision 94/95-0060, March 12, 1996) a number of years ago (under the provisions of Clause 6, paragraph 3 of the *CAB Code of Ethics*), the CBSC was not again called upon to consider its use in television programming until relatively recently, a year or two ago. In the CJOH decision, the Ontario Panel was dealing with the post-Watershed broadcast of a feature film, of which it said that "the language used is that of the streets of California portrayed in the motion picture [and that] it cannot interfere with the broadcaster's choice to air the film." More recently, in *Showcase Television re the movie*

Destiny to Order (CBSC Decision 00/01-0715, January 16, 2002), this Panel was called upon to deal with a considerable quantity of coarse language in general and the f-word and derivatives in particular in a feature film aired at 2:00 pm. Applying, as it now does, the above-quoted provisions of the *CAB Violence Code* to all broadcasts including any type of material intended for adult audiences (for the background, see, among others, *TQS re the movie L'Inconnu (Never Talk to Strangers)* (CBSC Decision 98/99-0176, June 23, 1999)), It found

it useful to observe that, were it called upon to characterize the severity and frequency of the coarse words and expressions in *White Men Can't Jump* and *The Sopranos*, it would find that, in both cases, the language would be "intended for adult audiences" and entirely inappropriate for broadcast in a pre-Watershed context. Similarly, in *Destiny to Order* the Panel finds that the coarse language was "intended for adult audiences" and equally inappropriate for broadcast in a pre-Watershed context.

Similarly, in *WTN re the movie Wildcats* (CBSC Decision 00/01-0964, January 16, 2002), this Panel decided that the "use of 'fuck' and 'motherfucker' in a dramatic film renders it programming 'intended for adult audiences'." Then, in *Comedy Network re an episode of Gutterball Alley* (CBSC Decision 01/02-0450 & 01/02-0481, September 13, 2002), the context for the use of the f-word considered by this Panel was, for the first time, different. The show was a kind of hybrid, ostensibly a game show in a comedic genre. In that case the f-word was used twice and this Panel referred to the fact that it had previously

decided that the "use of 'fuck' and 'motherfucker' in a dramatic film renders it programming 'intended for adult audiences'." The logical result of those rulings in the present file is that this episode of *Gutterball Alley* is intended for adult audiences, which would necessitate the application of the 18+ rating in circumstances in which a rating would be required. In other words, the use of "fuck" and derivatives qualifies as "graphic language" in the Content Guidelines of the AGVOT classification system.

The question for the Panel in the matter at hand is whether the use of derivatives of the f-word ought to be dealt with as in the previously cited matters or not. Its answer is that documentary films are, as a general rule, of a different genre. *My Feminism*, which is a current-affairs essay documentary, is a serious, strong and credible point-of-view film. Such an interview-based documentary is not, by its nature, scripted. Without diminishing in any way the contributory role of behind-the-camera directing, editing and other creative components, for present purposes it is fair to say that the documentary's success depends on the power, articulation and credibility of its on-camera contributors. In the case of this documentary in particular, it must be appreciated that its subject matter is not merely feminism, it is *my* feminism. The film is not merely dependent on the interviewees, it *is* the interviewees. And their choice of words is *theirs*, not that of a screenwriter looking for a dramatic jolt or an effect. The words spoken represent the reaction of each individual to the questions put to her. The intensity and emotion of each response is reflected in the words used and the tone of their delivery. The seriousness of the broadcast vehicle, the non-

gratuitous use of coarse language, its infrequent presence, the contextual relevance and importance of such words, and the likely lack of appeal to a younger audience will all be factors taken into consideration by a CBSC Panel assessing offensive words in a documentary film.

In the context of the program at hand, the challenged term was used by Irish feminist Ailbhe Smith in a very visceral context, namely, to describe her perception of what the combination of the Church and the State had done to place women “in a state of submission, subordination, fear, to restrict and constrict and constrain us in every way that it can possibly think.” *That* was the issue for Smith. Establishment gender oppression. She was angry. She was bitter. She used the word as a strong, particular and meaningful verb rather than as a casual, flippant and unnecessary term. It was solitary and emphatic. It underscored her massive discontent at what she had lived in her native land. It arose 43 minutes into the program, after her views on many of the other feminist subjects had been digested and understood by the viewer. Given its context and the likely lack of appeal of *My Feminism* to a younger audience, the Panel does not find that the use of the term in the context of this broadcast exceeds the bounds of acceptability.

Scheduling

Given the Panel’s view of the contextual justification of the isolated use of coarse language, it does not consider that there is any reason to force *My Feminism* into a post-Watershed broadcast time.

Viewer Advisories

Similarly, while the Panel understands that some of the important themes may be mature, in the sense that younger family members might benefit from the elucidation of parents, this alone is not a reason to mandate viewer advisories. Nor, for the reasons given above, does the Panel consider that the isolated but contextually justifiable use of the f-word require such treatment. That being said, CBSC Panels have been aware of circumstances in which broadcasters, out of consideration for sensitive members of their audiences, have provided such warnings to help them make informed viewing choices.

Unduly Discriminatory Effect of Coarse Language?

The complainant’s concerns were twofold: first, the “offensive” nature of the language; and second, the “hateful” usage of the word, which “was religiously

intolerant and held one faith and church, in particular, up for ridicule.” Having dealt above with the usage issue, the Panel now turns its attention to the documentary’s treatment of the Roman Catholic Church.

First, the effect of the Panel’s conclusion regarding the term itself is inescapable. If the usage of the admittedly colloquial verb “mind-fuck” has been found by the Panel to be serious, non-gratuitous, emotionally comprehensible, and thus acceptable, the question is what might render it unacceptable under this rubric? For a start, the broadcaster could not even have been accused of a lack of balance on this issue. It should first be noted that Ailbhe Smith referred only to her own culture. She spoke of her own experience. Despite the fact that she dealt angrily and critically with the male-domination in the Church, her comments were juxtaposed with those of Mary Becker, who said:

I was raised Catholic, but I’m not religious now. I think it’s very hard, although not necessarily impossible, for women to stay within traditional mainstream religions and be feminist. To stay Catholic and a feminist, which I know many women do and I really respect them and I think it’s so important that women continue to do it, but it’s beyond what I can do.

Becker’s comments were clearly far gentler vis-à-vis the Church although the purport of her comments was still that “it’s very hard [...] for women to stay with traditional mainstream religions and be feminist. To stay Catholic and a feminist [...] is] beyond what I can do.” In any event, the complainant’s perspective was uni-directional. He stated unequivocally, “Other faiths were not mentioned.” This was simply not correct. Consider the interview with Urvashi Vaid:

Many of the most *sexist notions* held by societies are *embedded in religious tradition*. There is Catholicism, *Hinduism, Islam or Judaism, there are sexist traditions*. In many parts of the world where fundamentalism is growing you’re seeing these religious movements transform those societies in ways that are bad for women, in ways that are setting back the gains that have been made by the feminist movement. [Emphasis added.]

Following the interview, there was an on-screen super, which read:

Taslina Nasreen

Condemned to death by Islamic fundamentalists for her feminist writings

This could hardly be understood as a pro-Islamic observation. Thereafter, in reference to Sikh and Hindu religions, there was the interview with Urvashi Butalia, in which she concluded that, although religion did not work for her, she saw positive aspects of it, including that

the ritual of religious practice enables women at least to get out of the house, have a space where they can sing and be together and talk in the temple. It’s not great, but it’s something, it’s more than they have. So I think I wouldn’t knock religion even though I don’t subscribe to it myself.

The point is that there were at least five other religions than Catholicism discussed, commented on or criticized in *My Feminism* and the alleged uniqueness of the focus targeted by the complainant is simply not justified by the review of the documentary program. Moreover, the Panel is duty-bound to point out that there is no obligation for a filmmaker or his or her broadcaster to be uncritical of the subject treated. Criticism is not alone the equivalent of unduly discriminatory comment. It is unjustified, unsupportable criticism that fails the test. It is casual, gratuitous, foundation-less criticism that cannot stand the bright light of the private broadcasters' codified standards. There is none of that here. It is not the critical but thoughtful view of the single Irish Catholic speaker, which can fairly be considered in isolation, but the presentation of the entire documentary which must be assessed collectively. As to the religious issue, it is reasonably balanced, fair and credible. There is no breach of the Human Rights Clause of the *CAB Code of Ethics*.

Broadcaster Responsiveness

In addition to assessing the relevance of the Codes to the complaint, the CBSC always assesses the *responsiveness* of the broadcaster to the substance of the complaint. While the complainant was responsible for the bulk of the correspondence in this matter, the Director of Programming of W Network sent a long and thoughtful reply to the complainant. It did not satisfy him. This is, of course, the case with all matters that arrive at an adjudication stage. The responsibility of the broadcaster is to be responsive and thoughtful, so that the complainant is left with a sense of dialogue. Complainants cannot always be satisfied by the broadcaster's dialogue, although it does frequently appear to be successful. That might have been the case here. Although it failed, the broadcaster has fulfilled its responsibilities in this instance.

This decision is a public document upon its release by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. It may be reported, announced or read by the station against which the complaint had originally been made; however, in the case of a favourable decision, the station is under no obligation to announce the result.

APPENDIX

CBSC File 01/02-1120 W Network re *My Feminism*

The Complaint

The following complaint dated July 29, 2002 was sent to the CRTC and forwarded to the CBSC in due course:

To reiterate my earlier complaint, on Friday July 26, 2002 on Shaw cable, Channel 21, W (or WTN as it used to be labeled) network, at 8:00 p.m. on a show called "My Feminism" a woman attacked the Christian faith and Roman Catholic church – referring to them as "mind fuckers". This view was supported by another woman who also stated the church and feminism were incompatible. I find the attack and the language used as offensive, hateful, and totally inappropriate for this media [*sic*] and time of broadcast. It was religiously intolerant and held one faith and church, in particular, up for ridicule. Other faiths were not mentioned. So, are Jews "mind fuckers"? Considering 9-11, is Islam overflowing with love and concern for womens' rights? Does it also "fuck people's minds"? I accept that people may hold these views, but they should be private. Broadcasting these views on public television gives them undeserved credibility, and should not be allowed without counterpoint.

Thank you for passing my complaint on to the CBSC. I will contact them personally to ensure my complaint is understood and dealt with fully. My complaint to Shaw Cable made at the same time as my complaint to you still has not been answered, although it has been acknowledged. I will advise you when they do.

The complainant then wrote directly to the CBSC on the same day:

Dear Sirs;

I have been informed by [the Senior Regional Officer] of the CRTC-Western Territories Region, that a complaint I made of a recent television broadcast was passed on to your organization for review. On Friday, July 26, 2002 at 8:00 p.m. on Shaw Cable, Edmonton, channel 21, W (WTN) network broadcast a program entitled "My Feminism". In addition to the usual hate and distortion directed against fathers and men in general, an Irish-accented woman attacked Christianity and the Catholic Church – calling them "mind fuckers" that she could not tolerate or believe – no arguments, just emotion. I am not a Catholic, but was appalled at the grotesque language and the hate and scorn in her voice. Another woman following, agreed with her that the church was incompatible with feminism and not believable. While I understand people can hold these views, by broadcasting them on public television they are given undeserved credence, and the lack of counterpoint gives them the seal of righteousness. The program did not elaborate on other faiths, so we are left to speculate on whether Jews or Arabs are also of "mind fucking" faiths. Only Christianity and Catholics have been singled out for derision, but this is as offensive and wrong as if it were any other faith or church. Public television is simply not acceptable as a means to emotionally attack anyone's faith.

I have been moved to tears at the spectacle of 9-11. It was fathers and men that ran into the burning collapsing building to rescue whoever, whatever they could, and who died in horrible

numbers. Father Mychal Judge was killed giving comfort and unction to hurt and dying souls. All over New York in following weeks, hundreds of Catholic funerals attempted to give honour and meaning to senseless tragedy, comfort to families of the dead. However, the feminists call this "mind fucking".

I also protest the filthy language used in the attack. The "F" word is not appropriate so early in the evening and again, on a public network. Provided balance and opportunity for rebuttal is made, a reasoned and factual assault on any institution is fair game. An emotional, unsubstantiated, and foul-mouthed attack is not, and public television should not be used to bring it into my home. I ask for your agreement with me, and that you act to censure Shaw Cable and "W" network for an inappropriate and hate-filled broadcast, and that steps be taken by both parties to ensure this not happen again.

Thank you.

Broadcaster Response

The Director of Programming at W Network responded to the complainant's letter on September 3 with the following:

The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council ("CBSC") has asked us to respond to your e-mail of July 29, 2002 to the CBSC. In your e-mail, you raised concerns regarding the documentary 'My Feminism' (the "Documentary") aired on W Network on July 25, 2002.

As you know, the Documentary was aired as part of our W Docs series. W Docs airs Monday-Friday at 7:00pm EST/PST and offers the opportunity for viewers to examine several important issues and events through a variety of gutsy, poignant and thought provoking documentaries. This Documentary featured several women from different cultural and racial backgrounds discussing the issue of feminism in their own words, drawing on their own personal experiences and addressed key issues such as religion and family life. In that context, some of the women expressed their negative view towards men who refuse to pay child support. Please be assured that this view was not directed at all men and fathers and was not the only topic of discussion. The key message of that discussion was that fathers should play a more equal role in family life.

Your e-mail also expresses concerns over some comments made on the topic of Christianity and more specifically, the Catholic Church. While most of the women agreed to the difficulty of believing in a faith they felt went against their personal beliefs, there were several comments and opinions made in support of religion and several of the women expressed great respect for those women who were able to balance their feminist beliefs with their faith. The comments were not intended as a direct attack on religion, nor on the efforts of the Catholic Church during the September 11 terrorist attacks. The comments made were expressed as the personal opinions of the women speaking in the Documentary.

We recognize that not all of our viewers will appreciate this type of documentary and that some viewers may find the topics of discussion controversial. However, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Codes (administered by the CBSC) provide that such "healthy controversy is essential to the maintenance of democratic institutions". In previous decisions, the CBSC has noted that a program "will not be everyone's 'cup of tea' and it assumes that some members of society would be offended That is not, however, the criterion by which the program must be judged." Moreover, the CBSC has noted that "it is not any reference to 'race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, marital status or physical or mental

handicap' but rather those which contain 'abusive or discriminatory material or comment' based on the foregoing which will be sanctioned."¹ In that decision, which addressed a comedy about "Sister Mary Immaculate", jokes about religion and homosexuality, the CBSC explained that even where "the humour in question may at times be in poor taste (a matter not addressed in any of the Codes under CBSC administration), it is not necessarily on that account abusive or discriminatory to any particular group." In a subsequent decision, the CBSC noted that the measure of abusive or discriminatory "must be made in the overall societal context, not in the narrow context of the sensibilities of individuals."²

We regret that you found some of the content of the Documentary disturbing or in poor taste. However, we believe that the Program did not fall afoul of Canadian Association of Broadcast codes ("Codes") administered by the CBSC and was not trying to assault any institution. While the opinions in this documentary may not necessarily reflect those of the Network, we believe it is important to offer a forum for different perspectives and points of views to be presented to our viewing audience on a variety of topics.

Please be assured that we take our responsibilities as a broadcaster very seriously. At W Network, we work to ensure all our programming complies with the Broadcasting Act and Regulations and the Codes and standards expected of us as a member of the CBSC. We regularly have discussions with our staff about appropriate content and continue to exercise diligence in our programming.

We trust that the foregoing responds to the concerns raised in your letter regarding our programming. At W Network, we recognize the importance of viewer feedback and appreciate and value all comments. We thank you for taking the time to share your concerns with us.

¹ *CKVR-TV re Just for Laughs* (CBSC Decision 94/95-0005, August 23, 1995)

² *CHAN-TV re Last Temptation of Christ* (CBSC Decision 95/96-0011, December 18, 1996)

Additional Correspondence

The complainant was unsatisfied with the broadcaster's response and sent the following e-mail to W Network dated September 9:

Your response to my e-mail complaint July 29, 2002 concerning the documentary titled "My Feminism" aired on W Network July 25, 2002 does not satisfy my concerns. You have not admitted any impropriety using the term "mind fuckers" in regards to the Catholic Church, expressed any direct apology to me or the church, nor agreed to forgo repeating such terminology in future.

I reiterate my concerns. "My Feminism" purports to be a documentary about women's issues and calls on noteworthy and credible persons for interview and comment, the purpose being to elucidate and educate the viewing public. Disregarding several other controversial topics, on the subject of religion, one of the interviewees – an Irish person, apparently – launched into an outright attack on the Irish Catholic church, referring to them as "mind fuckers" whom she absolutely refused to respect or believe. The anger and hate in her voice and on her face was unmistakable. Clearly she did not want to debate religious issues, improve the Catholic institution, or deal in facts. She wanted simply to destroy what she viewed as in her way, get rid of the symbol of opposition. In this regard she was motivated not too differently than the 9/11 attackers on the World Trade Center. Symbolism is everything. As far as other women following up on her comments, yes, one of them said she "admired other women who

could stay in the church” (read: “the poor misguided dears”) but she, the speaker, could not (read: “being so much more wise and sophisticated”). The clear, unmistakable message was “do not believe in nor support the Catholic Church.”

Let’s make comparisons. In your letter, you linked the language in “My Feminism” with a comedy “Sister Mary Immaculate” and a play (?) “The Last Temptation of Christ”. I have seen neither – you have me at disadvantage. Judging by the titles, however, I judge one to be a risqué comedy, the other a controversial drama about the life of Christ. These are not the proper context. “My Feminism” by your own description is a documentary, and should be in a class with “W5”, “60 Minutes” or “The National” newscast. For Peter Mansbridge or Morley Safer to use the term “mind fucking” Islamists in one of their broadcasts would provoke outrage, and probably the bombing or burning of their newsrooms.

Name calling, crudity, and *ad hominem* attacks have no place in an informative program. You talk about “not all of our viewers” will appreciate the language, that “some viewers” may be offended. Bull! You are patronizing me and minimizing the insult. Most viewers would be offended. How many people do you know in your life who would accept “mind fucking” to describing [*sic*] their own, their families [*sic*], or their friends’ religion? Where? At a party? In an office discussion? At the dinner table? This is not “any reference” to religion. If it is not “abusive” to Catholics, then what is?

Finally, you talk about “overall societal context” vs. the “narrow context” of individuals. Well [Director of Programming], let’s talk about the REALLY BIG picture. I am not Catholic. I know the Catholic Church has major problems with its priests and some of its policies. The issues need to be discussed, facts examined, and points of view intelligently debated – all with the object [*sic*] to improve the institution. To simply destroy and disregard it as your feminists crudely suggest, would cost Western civilization one of its fundamental, shaping and guiding influences of the past two millenia. To replace it with what? Marriages by Gloria (fish needs a bicycle) Steinem? Funerals by Sunera (rivers of blood) Thobani? Birth affirmations brought to you by Hedi (crosses burning as we speak) Fry? The point of all of this, [Director of Programming], was brought home by a recent editorial in the National Post by columnist Mark Steyn. He pointed out that with the war in Afghanistan, the coming invasion of Iraq, and the possible wider conflict with the Muslim world soon to come, two things were apparent. First, that while the Islamic nations are militarily weak, they are culturally strong. The West, on the other hand, is militarily strong but culturally weak (see above). He concluded that “there is more than one way to lose a war.” U.S. President George Bush also stated that “if you aren’t with us, you are against us.” I conclude by asking you and your feminist friends “whose side are you on?”

You still owe me and the Catholic Church an apology, an admission you erred, and a commitment to not repeat this sorry spectacle ever again.

The complainant also wrote directly to the CBSC on September 9:

I have received a response from [the Director of Programming] of the W Network on my complaint about the “My Feminism” broadcast July 25, 2002. Her response was unsatisfactory, as she merely minimized my “narrow” interests with no indication of remorse, error, apology, or indication not to repeat such insult in future. I have sent you my response to her, and I still believe W Network has violated community acceptable standards by referring to an established religion as “mind fucking.”

In the absence of the restitution I have requested above, I am asking W Network be officially reprimanded and punished and that I be informed as to the outcome.

The complainant sent further correspondence to the CRTC on October 8, which it then forwarded to the CBSC:

Dear Sir;

In response to your email below, I am attaching an excerpt from a recent edition of the Edmonton Journal, regarding the prosecution of a French author by French courts for calling Islam a "stupid" religion. There appears much upset on the part of the local Muslim community, and the possibility of the author actually being fined or imprisoned for his so-called "abuse" of free speech. While this is another country, and we don't yet know the trial outcome, it has similarities to the complaint I have brought against the W network. If you recall, they referred to the Irish Roman Catholic church (and by inference all Catholic churches) as "mind fuckers." My point is, this is much worse and more insulting to a religious group than simply calling it "stupid". If the French courts can charge and potentially convict an author for the "stupid" comment, then there should be much more serious censure for calling a major Western faith "mind fuckers".

Also, I am concerned that in the ruling request heard by the CBSC Secretariat, there will be contact made or representation heard from the W Network. If that is the case, I would like a similar opportunity to represent my concerns at that time as well, to respond to excuses or explanations made by the W network.

[explanation on how to open attachment]