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Thoughts on Bill O'Reilly and Squeaky the Chicago Mouse

By Roger Ebert /

To: Bill O'Reilly
From: Roger Ebert

Dear Bill: Thanks for including the Chicago Sun-Times on your exclusive list of newspapers on your "Hall of Shame." To be in an O'Reilly Hall of Fame would be a cruel blow to any newspaper. It would place us in the favor of a man who turns red and starts screaming when anyone disagrees with him. My grade-school teacher, wise Sister Nathan, would have called in your parents and recommended counseling with Father Hogben.

Yes, the Sun-Times is liberal, having recently endorsed our first Democrat for President since LBJ. We were founded by Marshall Field one week before Pearl Harbor to provide a liberal voice in Chicago to counter the Tribune, which opposed an American war against Hitler. I'm sure you would have sided with the Trib at the time.

I understand you believe one of the Sun-Times misdemeanors was dropping your syndicated column. My editor informs me that "very few" readers complained about the disappearance of your column, adding, "many more complained about *Nancy*." I know I did. That was the famous Ernie Bushmiller comic strip in which Sluggo explained that "wow" was "mom" spelled upside-down.

Your column ran in our paper while it was owned by the right-wing polemicists Conrad Black (Baron Black of Coldharbour) and David Radler. We dropped it to save a little money after they looted the paper of millions. Now you call for an advertising boycott. It is unusual to observe a journalist cheering for a newspaper to fail. At present the Sun-Times has no bank debt, but labors under the weight of millions of dollars in tax penalties incurred by Lord Black, who is serving an eight-year stretch for mail fraud and obstruction of justice. We also had to pay for his legal expenses.

There is a major difference between Conrad Black and you: Lord Black is a much better writer and thinker, and authored a respected biography about Roosevelt, who we were founded to defend. That newspapers continue to run your column is a mystery to me, since it is composed of knee-jerk frothings and ravings. If I were an editor searching for a conservative, I wouldn't choose a mad dog. My recommendation: The admirable Charles Krauthammer.

Bill, I am concerned that you have been losing touch with reality recently. Did you really say you are more powerful than any politician?

That reminds me of the famous story about Squeaky the Chicago Mouse. It seems that Squeaky was floating on his back along the Chicago River one day. Approaching the Michigan Avenue lift bridge, he called out: *Raise the bridge! I have an erection!*

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