

Student Forum

by Melissa Conway

The recent suggestion by a female faction of the freshman class for a slave auction in order to raise money initially seemed to me as incongruous as if the freshman class had been contemplating the organization of the Scranton Chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

Amidst the clamor for "equal rights," I was amazed that any person, female or male, would submit to, let alone suggest, being sold like a piece of furniture, even if it would be in jest, for only one day, or if the duties of the "slave" would be "within reason."

"How degrading!" was my first thought. However, after subduing my visceral reaction and objectively analyzing the situation, I believe the entire idea to be symptomatic of the "cultural conditioning" to which everyone is exposed.

The sonorous, straight-forward demands of the Women's Lib movement are counteracted by years of a more subtle and effective "sex-typing" which, from birth, dizzily catapults a female toward society's version of what she **should** be — "soft, beautiful and above all feminine."

Although the rudiments of femininity are established in early childhood via baby dolls and parental encouragement to "be a little lady," the pressures begin in adolescence. An already insecure and confused girl is convinced that, despite any other attributes, she is inadequate if she is not beautiful. In magazines, page after page of gleaming, marvelously beautiful girls "confront" her, tempting her with the prospects of resembling them exactly if only she'd use Love's A Little Color or Pot O' Gloss or Ultra Brite. A girl in a scanty bikini taunts, "This is what the competition will be wearing this summer." Articles in between these advertisements give advice on how to "Catch A Boy" ("find out what interests **him**") or "Ten Steps To A More Beautiful You."

Etiquette, too, assigns a rather confined role to women. "If he doesn't open the car door for you," advises Ann Landers, "stay in the car until he gets the picture." Why a perfectly healthy girl would need aid in opening a car door never occurred to her. One letter, written to Amy Vanderbilt, implored aid in addressing a note to a married couple

of which the wife was a doctor and the husband was not. "Simply write Mr. and Mrs. So and So," Amy answered. "Mr. and Dr. So and So sounds terrible." Amy failed to mention what "sounds" so much better about the former and what does euphony have to do with etiquette anyhow?

Even in learning institutions where a female should ideally be escaping the "feminine stereotype," she is bombarded by more propaganda — this time disguised as fact. "Women are psychologically selfless and uncreative and have smaller brains than men," one anatomy book declares. Misogyny invades literature, too, and whether St. Paul or Strindberg, Milton or Mailer, the female is continually "reminded" of her "relative worthlessness."

With all this conditioning from earliest "sex-typing" in the home to anthropology classes at universities, it is little wonder that a group of college females might desire a slave auction. Though I can rationalize the motives behind it from a sociological, cultural, psycho-sexual point of view, I must still repeat, "How degrading!"

O'TOOLE'S & ANDRES

"Your

Campus

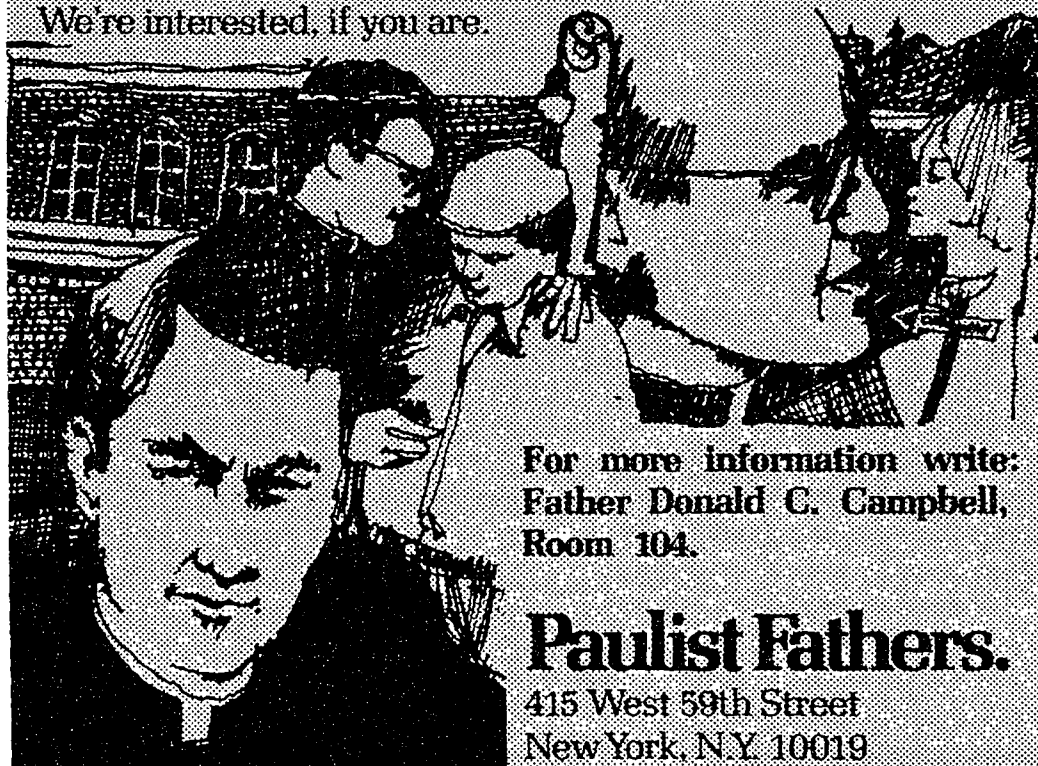
Tavern"

An invitation to join...

The Paulist Fathers... A contemporary religious community serving the people of America communicating the Christian message: in the city, on the campus, in the parish, on radio and T.V. Dispelling uncertainty and imparting peace, celebrating the hope of the people of God and speaking on issues that concern the Church.

As an individual, you can develop and share your talents with others. As a member of the Community, you will experience the encouragement and support of fellow Paulists.

We're interested, if you are.



For more information write:
Father Donald C. Campbell,
Room 104.

Paulist Fathers.

415 West 59th Street
New York, N.Y. 10019