

UAW Local 1981/AFL-CIO

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October 12, 1994

373 Broadway, Suite 203
New York, New York 10003-1209
tel (212)254-0279
fax (212)254-0673

Mr. John Gehron
Station Manager, WRKO
116 Huntington Avenue
Boston MA 02116

Dear Mr. Gehron:

I'm president of the National Writers Union—a labor union representing nearly 4,000 freelance writers nationwide. We are proud to be UAW Local 1981 AFL-CIO.

Our national Political Issues Chair, Robert Chatelle, resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bob also currently serves the union as a member of our National Executive Board. On Friday, October 7, Bob and his colleague—Jim D'Entremont, spokesperson for the Boston Coalition for Freedom of Expression—attended a lunch-hour lecture by Massachusetts artist Hans Evers at Cambridge City Hall Annex. An installation by Mr. Evers has caused controversy and has been the focus of recent media attention.

On leaving the Annex, Bob and Jim were confronted by two young men with recording equipment and a microphone from WRKO. Bob and Jim answered a few questions and moved on about their business. They were poorly impressed by your employees, who seemed more interested in making smutty remarks than in asking informed questions.

Bob and Jim later discovered that these people were taping excerpts for use by Mr. Howie Carr, who hosts a popular afternoon talk show for your station. Some of Bob and Jim's taped comments were aired. Before airing them, the interviewer said something to the effect, "...and then two uh—guys—came out, if you know what I mean." After the comments were aired, Mr. Carr asked, "Did you see any lesions on them?" The interviewer replied, "Well, I wiped off the microphone after they had touched it."

I can't believe that any person still retaining the slightest shred of human decency could fail to be deeply offended by remarks such as these. While Bob is a personal friend who has worked hard and unselfishly for our union, I would be as offended were he a complete stranger. The National Writers Union has always been proud of its sexual-minority members. Our constitution from the beginning has stressed our inclusiveness for all sexual orientations. When we affiliated with the United Auto Workers, our Delegates insisted unanimously that we work within the UAW to amend its constitution to be equally inclusive. This was done at the UAW Constitutional con-

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NATIONAL WRITERS UNION

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of the National Writers Union regarding the sale of shares
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vention in June 1992, and I was proud to not only work for this change but to speak in favor of it as a Delegate to that convention.

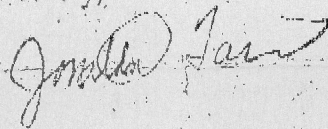
Many of our hardest working activists are also valiantly living with AIDS. I cannot begin to find words to express my contempt for someone who makes crude remarks about lesions. Evidently, Mr. Carr's fans find such statements humorous. I wonder, Mr. Gehron, do you find them humorous?

If Mr. Carr had said, "Did they have thick lips and woolly hair?" or "Did they have hooked noses?" you and I both know that his days at WRKO would be over. We, however, ask that you take no disciplinary action whatsoever against Mr. Carr. In fact, we're not even going to ask Mr. Carr to apologize.

According to our constitution, "the National Writers Union is committed to freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression in all media, including print, film, and electronic media of any sort." We acknowledge that the First Amendment protects Mr. Carr's right to say crude and horrible things. We don't ask you to censor him or to impose guidelines upon him. We call for no boycott of either WRKO or of any of Mr. Carr's sponsors. The last thing we ever would want to do is to give Howie Carr the opportunity to assume a martyr's mantle.

We, however, also have First Amendment rights. We shall not be silent. We shall loudly proclaim our outrage at Howie Carr's bigotry. And we shall proclaim our even greater outrage at those who happily and knowingly profit from the sale of hatred. We will do everything in our collective power to inform all we can of this most disgraceful incident.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Tasini, President

cc: Maurcen Dezell, *Boston Globe*; Renee Graham, *Boston Globe*; Mary Jo Palumbo, *Boston Herald*; Liz Galst, *Boston Phoenix*; Harvey Silverglate, *Boston Phoenix*; *The American Writer*; *Rough Draft*; *Solidarity*; Trixi Burke, *In*; Rudy Kikel, *Bay Windows*; Christopher Muther, *Bay Windows*; *Boston Magazine*; *The Advocate*; *The Cambridge Chronicle*; *PeaceWork*; UAW President Owen Bieber; AIDS Action Committee; Boston Mayor Thomas Menino; Cambridge Mayor Kenneth Reeves, and others.

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Conent Comm. #8

Comm. was received from Jonathan Tasini, President of the Writers Union regarding the art exhibit at Gallery 57.

In City Council October 24, 1994

Placed on file