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In One Morning, Conservative Expert Robert Knight Gets Dissed by CBS, Cancelled by ABCNews.com

## Did Gumbel Call Guest a “F---ing Idiot”?

**D**id Bryant Gumbel call a socially conservative expert a “f---ing idiot” when he thought he was off camera on yesterday’s edition of *The Early Show*?

Robert H. Knight of the Family Research Council appeared to address the Supreme Court’s decision to allow the Boy Scouts of America to exclude homosexual activists from its leadership ranks.

Gumbel fought and talked over Knight, and when the interview was over, Gumbel subtly made a face. Then he turned the show over to weatherman Mark McEwen. When McEwen gestured back at Gumbel, the camera revealed Gumbel shaking his head, saying what clearly looks like “What a f\*\*\*ing idiot.” (The last two words are inaudible.) FRC spokeswoman Sharon Sampson told CNSNews.com the group was drafting a letter to CBS seeking an explanation for Gumbel’s behavior.

But CBS isn’t the only network that had a problem with Knight. ABCNews.com producers asked for Knight to appear on yesterday’s edition of the daily Sam Donaldson Internet program. FRC publicist Kristin Hansen was told Knight would appear with a representative of the gay left group Lambda Legal Defense Fund.

Hansen said she told ABC producers, “I just want to warn you that when Lambda finds out they’re going to debate the Family Research Council, they’ll demand that you drop us.” The next morning, with the show slated for an 11:20 taping, and the ABC-ordered limousine idling on the street, ABC called to cancel. “It was like a half-hour before the show, and I get the call that ‘Lambda won’t go on with you. And in fact, we found James Dale [the gay man who sued the Boy Scouts with Lambda]’. I said I can’t believe you’re allowing your show to be dictated by your guests. You’re completely stacking the deck.”

When we called ABC for comment, Sam Donaldson called back, and he confirmed that they granted Lambda’s

last-minute demand. “This was about James Dale and his case. And we booked James Dale and the Lambda attorney. I can’t do the show on James Dale without James Dale.”

**At the last minute, the Lambda Legal Defense Fund made a demand on ABC: they would not appear if the Family Research Council appeared. ABC granted their wish. “I cannot control the way Lambda feels,” said Sam Donaldson.**

When asked if the FRC would be invited on next week to take the other side of the case, Donaldson said “No. Our show had three clips from an executive of the Boy Scouts we had interviewed.” He added, “I don’t know much about the Family Council [sic], I have my staff helping me here. I cannot control the way Lambda feels.”

When Donaldson was asked if it would serve viewers to inform them of Lambda’s dump-FRC demands, since he told viewers the Boy Scouts declined to appear, Donaldson said that might be warranted if Lambda had refused to appear with any opponent. “They did not say that. They said they wouldn’t appear with this particular group. They said a Boy Scout attorney would be fine.”

Since his case drew national attention in 1998, Dale has made six network morning show appearances, and only one of them featured an adversary (Rep. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas on January 3, 1999). This is part of a pattern. Of the morning show segments on gay rights in 1993, the largest year for TV news stories on homosexuality (756 network morning, evening, and magazine show stories), the networks invited 69 gay-rights advocates to only 23 opponents. In 1995, the ratio was 13 to 3.

FRC’s Hansen explained that Knight appeared on CBS because of a booking pinch: James Dale had been booked by *The Early Show*, but he backed out for higher ratings at ABC’s *Good Morning America*. — *Tim Graham*

**L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Tim Graham, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Ted King, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmouth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. See the June 29 edition of Sam Donaldson’s Web show at [www.abcnews.com](http://www.abcnews.com)**