from Phyllis Schlafly June 24, 1993

VIOLENCE AND SEX ON TV HAVE GONE TOO FAR

Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, told a Senate Judiciary subcommittee this month, "I refuse to believe that the cruelties visited on this Republic can be blamed on television." He was defending Hollywood against charges that television violence and its negative effect on children should be viewed as a national public health crisis.

Valenti's statements are no surprise, considering that he is paid $800,000 a year to defend the movies. Everybody knows that Hollywood is cramming gory violence, explicit sex, and an assault on traditional values down the throats of moviegoers and television viewers, and that crime, especially among young people, has risen dramatically.

The movie industry piously argues that it shouldn't be blamed for the vast increase in crime in America since violence existed before movies and television were invented. But indeed they can be blamed. It is clear that violent, hostile and aggressive behavior has tremendously increased in the last couple of decades right along with repeated and long-term airings of those kinds of televised messages.

One of the expert witnesses before the Senate subcommittee testified that this causal relationship is not open to scientific question any more. Leonard Eron, a research professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said: "The scientific debate is over..•• Reports implicate television violence as one of the causes of aggression and violence in the United States."

This doesn't mean that every kid runs out and kills his grandmother after seeing one violent movie (although there are plenty

of examples of people who did kill in imitation of a movie they just saw). But it does mean that the accumulation of violent images ultimately impacts on behavior, and that impact is profound because those images redefine what is accepted and expected as normal behavior.

The Senate subcommittee heard from a number of expert witness·es who testified that children, even more than adults, emulate what they see on television. According to Dr. William Dietz, spokesman for the American Academy of Pediatrics, "The absence of consequences of the violence that they see, and the rapidity with which difficulties are resolved by the use of violence, increases the likelihood that violence will be among the first strategies that a child selects."

A new book called *Don't Touch that Dial* by Barbara Hattemer and Robert Showers (Huntington House, 1993) provides the best up-to-date documentation of violence and sex in the media and its devastating effect on young people. In 1982 the National Institute of Mental Health Report on Television and Behavior summarized the findings of 2,500 studies and concluded that there is overwhelming scientific evidence that a "causal relationship (exists) between viewing televised violence and later aggressive behavior."

Just compare today's run-of-the- ill movies with the Motion Picture Code in effect from 1930 to 1966. It stated: "The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.... Methods of crime should not be explicitly presented • • • . There must be no suggestion, at any time, of excessive brutality."

We can hear Jack Valenti and his friends chanting their mantra: "First Amendment, First Amendment." But prior to 1966, few would have

dared to argue that the First Amendment provides a figleaf to cover the moviemakers' making millions out of dramatizing the rape, torture, and brutal killing of women.

The whole argument by the movie and TV people that television doesn't influence behavior is so ridiculous that it should be laughed to scorn. The entire multi-billion dollar television industry is financed by the sale of 30- and 60-second spots specifically designed to influence viewers' behavior by causing them to buy certain products.

If 30 seconds of TV images can cause you to part with your hard earned money to acquire Product X, then 30 minutes can surely cause you to believe it is normal to beat up women. If the networks don't believe that television affects behavior, the networks should refund the money paid by the advertisers.

If Hollywood wants to show its good faith, it can make available to the general American public the cleaned-up versions of current movies that are provided to the airlines. As anyone who flies trans oceanic or transcontinental routes knows, the explicit sex scenes and vulgar language have been snipped out of the movies on airp anes.

Why can't Americans who can't afford those long trips have the opportunity to see clean and decent versions of popular movies? Because Hollywood won't release those versions to the general public, that's why. Hollywood really wants us to endure at least one "F" word per minute, plus all those violent and sexual portrayals.

The murder and mayhem aired during the May ratings sweeps show that Hollywood is incapable of policing itself. The American people are fed up with the corruption of our culture by the entertainment media in pursuit of its own agenda, and they are ready for strong

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