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# THE CANCER OF CABLE PORN

A Chicago newspaper columnist recently related the story of a 9-year-old girl who went to a slumber party with her friends. The children stayed awake past bedtime, as girlfriends are wont to do, and then they turned on the television.

This gave the 9-year-olds their first experience with pictorially explicit sex, and it had a traumatic effect. You can imagine the reaction of the mothers the next day who were asked by their daughters why men and women with no clothes on were crawling all over each other.

What the little girls saw was a pay-TV channel which shows pornographic movies. The way it works is that everybody in the area receives a scrambled signal on this channel and, if you pay the prescribed fee, your channel is unscrambled and the picture comes in clear.

But the slumber party took place in a household which did not subscribe to pay-TV or have any pay-TV accessories. The station manager explained, "We don't know why [it happened]. Something must have broken down electronically."

Millions of people subscribe to cable television because they want to get CNN, CBN, C-SPAN, the super-stations, or sports. Complaints are widespread that pornographic programs bleed onto their sets without their consent or payment. I know this is true because it has happened on my own television set.

This doesn't happen everywhere, of course, but it's happened often enough to refute the specious argument that you can avoid pornography by not inviting it into your home. It can come as an uninvited guest and psychologically damage your children.

It is also false to argue that pornography is a "victimless" crime. The principal victims are women and children. If you think that pornography is just a voluptuous girl in a bikini on a calendar, you are in for a rude awakening if you look at what is coming out on cable channels today.

My verbal powers of description cannot possibly convey the impact of the moving

pictures. But let me try to tell you about some of the scenes aired over cable channels which I personally saw.

One sequence showed a man slapping and violently raping a woman; then she changed from resisting to enjoying it, saying, "Turn me over and love me like an animal." Such pain-pleasure pictorialization is what creates and reinforces the "rape myth," the false notion that women secretly yearn to be raped.

Another cable segment showed graphic oral sex. That was bad enough, but the scene included a young girl of about age 13 watching and smiling. It was a blatant come-on to pedophiles.

I saw commercials advertising "a selection of men and boys" at $65 who are available for sadomachism. And I saw much, much more that is too obscene to describe in this column, but is beamed daily in living color on cable.

The President's Task Force on Family Violence reported last year that the $4 to $6 billion pornography industry "victimizes countless children who are exploited in pornographic photographs and films. Task Force testimony indicates that an alarming number of rape and sexual assault offenders report that they were acting out behavior they had viewed in pornographic materials."

Plenty of evidence exists that pedophiles use pornography to train children to accept and then respond to the abuser's sexual demands. Task Force experts also testified that "the only uses for child pornography are to lower the inhibitions of the child, gratify the sexual desires of the pedophile, and control and blackmail the child."

It is a terrible cancer in our society that permits profiteers of such depravity to wrap themselves in the sacred mantle of the First Amendment, while they victimize women and children, both the ones hired to perform in front of a camera, and those who become the future victims of the film. There is no First Amendment right to say or show obscenity any more than there is a First Amendment right to commit libel or slander.

The moral standards of prime-time network TV are low enough. It isn't too much to ask that the Federal Communications Commission act now to hold cable to those minimal standards of decency.