I!S. to the NEWS

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TV FAMILY HOUR DECISION

A Federal judge in Los Angeles has just provided new grist for the mills of those who think that the Federal courts are the principal cause for the flood of pornography that has inundated newsstands, movies and television during the last several years. This judge ruled that the television "family hour" is an unconstitutional violation
of the First Amendment guarantee of free speech.

The "family hour" is a voluntary agreement by the three television networks to abstain from showing objectionable programs of violence and illicit sex from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. because so many children watch during those hours. The effect of this decision is to accord a higher constitutional value to the rights of the pornography profiteers who want to make killing, robbing, maiming, and sleazy sex a spectator sport, than to the rights of children to enjoy decent family enter tainment, or to the rights of parents to train their children in obedience to the laws of God and country.

This is an indefensible decision. Television scriptwriters have no more "right" to have their scripts aired on television between 7:00 and 9:00 P.M., or at any other time, than any author has a "right" to have his books bought in the bookstores. The customer determines what is worthy of being bought, not the author or performer.

Neither the networks, nor the advertisers, nor the viewing public wants violence and illicit sex aired in family viewing times; yet this Federal judge has enshrined the right of the scriptwriters to inflict their pornographic programming and violence-inciting subject

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mat,ter on the entire country.

The negative effeot'of violence on children can no longer be disputed. Dr. Michael n. Rothenberg, a child psychologist writing in the American Medical Association Journal, is one of the many experts who have concluded that a concentrated viewing of violence prod.uces increased aggressive behavior in the young and a desensi tization to violence.

Dr. Rothenberg pointed out that the average America:ti child, by the time he finishes school, "will have witnessed 18,000 murders and countless highly detailed incidents of robbery, arson, bombing, forgery. smuggling, beating and torture averaging approximately one per minute in the standard television cartoon for children under the age of ten." He said that "there is an average of six times more violence during one hour of children's television than there is in one hour of adult television.V

Dr. Rothenberg said that the time is long past due for an or ganized cry of protest from parents and also from the medical profession to what he called "a national scandal," because "to be silent is to acquiesce, and it is clear that if we truly oare about our children, we cannot be silent."

Professor Anne R. Somers, writing in the New England Journal of Medicine, was correct when she said that fBlevision is a molder not a mirror of social values, and that 11:f'or a considerable proportion of American children and youth, violence bas become a major health problem." She identified a major cause as "television's massive daily diet of symbolic crime and violence in 'entertainment' programs.11.

The television networks should be applauded for instituting the "family bour" and for appealing the reoent Fe<leral court decision against it. If the networks do not engage in responsible self-regula tion, the American public may come to the same conclusion reached· by Malcolm Muggeridge: 1'Tlle corruption of our children is absolutely appalling. ,., on television they see the family 1•idiculed, marital fi delity riclicule<l, and a crass materialism constantly being preaohE.Hi. ... Parents would do well to never let their children. watch television."

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