

POINTS OF VIEW

Censorship not way to change moral standards

We're all guilty, not just the TV networks, when it comes to sex and violence in the media. We love to watch them, therefore it becomes easy to sell that kind of fare to advertisers. For example, witness:

- The NFL in the newspapers and radio shows the latest in the physically abusive game is how to use a player's head to smash into and incapacitate an opponent. It's something we love to hate.
- Gory photos in newspapers and magazines do more than tell a story: They get attention and that, too, sells.
- The popular movies "Home Alone" one and two, considered family fare, are shockingly violent. Yet the proposition that an innocent youngster could be so cruel in defending himself brings laughter.

■ The TV show "Law & Order" bills itself as talking stories "from today's headlines." The show, once compelling, has deteriorated into sensationalism that serves only to titillate.

■ And another TV show, "Reasonable Doubts," recently featured previews of one of its stars getting shot in a "sensitive spot." That should read groin, but its more sexy to be indirect.

Censorship of the media is not the answer, no matter whether it comes from the FCC or from the recent announcement that networks would do their own policing. Yes, censorship is a violation of the first amendment, but the real issue here is the futility of trying to censor what people want. Remember that Prohibition, which lasted barely more than a decade, brought with it corruption and clandestine ef-



SANDRA ARMBRUSTER

forts to consume the forbidden elixirs. The truth is that the public seems so dulled by decades of sex and violence, or so debased by them, that they don't react anymore. So whether it was Bloomfield Hills' Terry Rakolta's initiative to protest over sexual themes in "Married with Children," or the networks decision to limit violence, prohibi-

tion of the two won't work.

And we're paying the price, folks. Recently our newspapers reported a sexual assault without penetration at Farmington Harrison High School; a sexual assault of a Plymouth Canton high school junior on the way to school; confiscation of an unloaded gun at Orchard Lake Middle School in West Bloomfield; and a murder behind Adams Junior High in Westland in which several teens are accused.

And these are our so-called safe, secluded, suburban enclaves? Hal! We need to open our eyes and ears to what's really going on out there. That's not what a Michigan judge did last week when he reduced the charges against some teens accused in the rape of a 13-year-old girl. She shouldn't have gotten in the car in the first place,

said the judge, as though many of us, much less the 13-year-old, are considering the consequences of what we're doing.

That judge's ruling teaches those boys that they don't have to take responsibility for their actions, and therein lies the mortal sin of which we all are guilty.

Movies like "Home Alone," violence in sports and on TV won't diminish until we all start taking responsibility for what we watch and how we conduct our lives.

This isn't an either/or situation of being a saint versus sinner. It's a matter of establishing some semblance of peace on earth, goodwill toward all.

Sandra Armbruster is editorial page coordinator for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Citizens group works in strange ways

My colleagues on the Board of Education received an invitation on Monday, Dec. 7, to apply for possible participation in a debate scheduled by Citizens for Quality Schools on Dec. 16. As of this date, Dec. 10, I have not received a written invitation to apply. After being contacted by the Observer and asked why I and several others were not invited, Mr. DeVries chose to call and invite me to apply for participation.

Perhaps Mr. Ranney, who wrote the letter, could explain why, out of all the parents in our community, only David York was asked to apply? Why was Lincoln Avery, one of two chairmen of Citizens for Excellence in Education, the only one asked to apply?

Who are the members of Citizens for Quality Schools, besides Richard DeVries and Robert Ranney? Last year, they stated that they had 108 members, yet did not have the integrity to release their names to the Observer. Why not? How have their members and other potential interested citizens been encouraged to join?

Do their members pay dues? If not, how has CQS's political activity been funded? During the 1991 millage election, thousands of fliers were placed in newspaper boxes throughout the commu-

nity opposing the millage with the statement, "Paid for by Citizens for Quality Schools."

Besides endorsing their original, former president and now treasurer, Richard DeVries as a school board candidate in three elections, what else have they done to justify their name, "Citizens for Quality Schools?"

Concerns were expressed by the Observer and others during the last millage election about creating legitimate forums for citizens' questions during a millage campaign. The Board of Education was very deliberate in scheduling a public forum to be broadcast live on TV-10 for citizens' questions and comments, from the day we began discussion about holding the February 2 election. At our last board meeting on Dec. 1, we announced this forum will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 7:30 at the Board offices. By contrast, all interested citizens will have an opportunity to have their questions answered and concerns heard by all members of the Board at the Jan. 19 forum, as opposed to CQS's proposed format of allowing only three questions asked by a "selected" single individual and only three questions from the community. Who in CQS's organization will determine which of three citizens in attendance will be fortunate enough to have their question "se-

GUEST COLUMN

lected" for use in their program?

The format of CQS's debate is totally unacceptable. It is self-serving by this group and appears to be an attempt to gain publicity for themselves. When the League of Women Voters conducts informational meetings, they do not allow a moderator any time, let alone 10 minutes, to speak from a potentially biased point of view as CQS has scheduled for itself. They also do not limit participation to a selected few, ultimately "selecting" one representative and three questioners.

The issue is integrity. I do not believe that democracy implies that any group, whether regarded as self-serving or serving the community has the right to demand that others participate in an event designed for destruction of another point of view. I believe that legitimate forums and participation by a wide range of interested citizens is democracy in action and we all must work to maintain this precious freedom by not giving community support to those who would subvert our community interests, standards and responsibilities.

Representatives of CQS have never attended nor commented in person or writ-

ing during the discussion held by the board about the renewal election. These discussions, as always, were open to the public and took place at two separate meetings in a span of two weeks.

Citizens for Quality Schools is calling this a millage "increase" renewal. If CQS exercised its responsibility to attend the board meetings and participated in the dialogue and debate generated at those meetings, they would realize that this is not a request for a millage increase. This is a renewal of the current millage rates, which have been responsibly rolled back by the effect of the Headlee Amendment.

The Chamber of Commerce, State Rep. Jan Dolan, and numerous civic leaders have endorsed passage of this millage renewal. They have acknowledged that a quality school system is a necessity for a quality community and support the millage renewal.

The board has two meetings scheduled for Jan. 12 and 26, in addition to the public forum scheduled for Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m. Please use these meetings as opportunities to ask questions and make comments. As always, we welcome and encourage everyone's participation.

Cathleen M. Webb,
Farmington Board of Education

LETTERS

Children's rights

The children of today have problems in some ways different than those of children years ago. It is true that some of today's children did not grow up during the depression. But at the same time yesterday's children did not grow up with the threat of AIDS or drugs.

On Monday night, Dec. 7, there was an item on the agenda requested by me at the Farmington Hills City Council meeting about a Bill of Rights for Children. I did not realize that there was a meeting that night. But these are my thoughts about that.

It may indeed offend some adults but perhaps those adults should question themselves. Remember this. The body of a child belongs solely to that of the child. They were not placed here as our entertainment. We as adults can in fact be friends with those that are younger without touching them, without violating them to do so. Trust works both ways.

Vernon C. Kielpinski,
Farmington Hills



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CCWB House Raffle
C/O: West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation
3325 Midalebelt Road
(just North of Long Lake Road)
West Bloomfield, MI 48323

The drawing will be February 21.

For more information call the Raffle Hotline anytime: (313) 33-DREAM (333-7326)

The Michigan Dream Sweepstakes House Raffle is sponsored by Concerned Citizens for West Bloomfield as a benefit for the West Bloomfield Recreation Activities Center.

Raffle License #R26398. The drawing will be at 3 p.m., Sunday, February 21, 1993, at Fats Restaurant, 3636 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield, Michigan.

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