

TV violence debate rages on in form of a V-chip



MARY LINDA CALDERONE

Coming soon to a television near you... the V-chip. The V-chip is a new technological device parents can use to screen violent or indecent programming on their television sets.

This little silicon wafer will probably be installed in every newly manufactured TV set sold in the near future. The V-chip provision sponsored by Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., is part of the

Telecommunication Bill that recently went through the House and Senate and is now in joint committee. Since President Clinton specifically endorsed such devices at a conference on Family Values in July, the V-chip is likely to be part of the final bill.

The V-chip legislation not only includes circuitry in TV sets to provide screening, but it also stipulates that a rating process of programs must be enacted. Herein is where the controversy lies. It's not over the hardware or technology of the V-chip. It's over the rating process.

Who decides on the ratings? Will the bill say the TV and video programming industry will

have to come up with a "voluntary" way to assign ratings. It gives the industry one year from the date of enactment of the legislation to do this.

If the industry doesn't accomplish this, then the law requires the FCC to create an advisory committee of parents, programmers, broadcasters and cable operators to do the ratings.

There is an underlying fear here of violation of the First Amendment. "The V-chip is a Censor-Ship," says Tony Podesta of the First Amendment Rights Working Group. It restricts the ability of the parents to choose what they want to block from their children. It can only block whatever the

government ratings board deems objectionable. If parents want to regulate what their kids are watching, they ought to be able to buy products in their local electronics store which they can control — not be mandated to buy something which the government controls," he asserts.

If the government labels programs objectionable, advertisers will shy away from supporting these shows. Broadcasters are totally dependent upon advertising revenues while pay cable companies are not, popular programming aimed at adult viewers may be driven from broadcast to pay cable.

Dick Rolfe, president of the

Dove Foundation, a non-profit organization in Grand Rapids, whose mission is to encourage and promote the creation of wholesome family entertainment feels, "even if programming does migrate to cable, parents choose to subscribe to a cable service, unlike broadcast signals that come into homes and are accessible to children whether they like it or not. Consequently, Network TV should be held to a higher standard than cable."

Which side of the fence are you on? Has anybody ever heard of an on/off switch? If you can't always be there to monitor your children's viewing habits, are you aware that there are television devices on the market to help you censor the shows your family

watches. Besides for V-chip technology to be effective, your family would have to go out and buy all new TV sets.

Stay tuned for next week's column. I'm going to fill you in on the parental lock code, a device Time Warner has made available to lock out certain channels and a special remote control TCI Cable Company has for kids.

The next CAC meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 7 p.m., 24021 Research Drive.

The next SWOCC meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 4:30 p.m. in Farmington City Hall.

Mary Linda Calderone is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

Jewish speakers stir thoughts of afterlife

The possibility of reincarnation and the impact on an individual's life will be discussed by Rabbi William Gershon and Dr. Allea Tisdale at the 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 24, Women's Division

Food for Thought program at Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills.

Gershon, of Congregation Shaarey Zedek, Southfield, will

discuss "The Afterlife: A Jewish Perspective." Ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1987, he was a co-recipient of the Cyron Prize for outstanding graduate of his class.

He serves on the boards of Hillside Day School, the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit Young Adult Division and the United Jewish Appeal National Young Leadership Cabinet.

Tisdale will talk about "Past Life Regression" as it relates to living a past life. She has a private practice in West Bloomfield and serves as Hillside Day School's

psychologist. She has appeared on various television shows in Detroit and received her PhD in education from the University of Michigan.

There is a \$12 per person fee for the breakfast program. Reservations are needed by Jan. 19.

The Food for Thought breakfast program is sponsored by the Jewish Federation Women's Division, which conducts volunteer and educational activities that focus on the needs and concerns of women.

For details, call the Women's Division at 642-4260.

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