



OBSERVATION POINT

Has TV Brainwashed The Kids?

By Philip H. Power

I dropped over to Ann Arbor the other day to take in part of the teach-in on environment and pollution they had at the University of Michigan. It was an impressive performance, complete with informed experts, dedicated kids and an awesomely important subject.

By now, you've probably read about much of what happened. Speaker after speaker made the point that we are befouling our environment, that we have neither noticed nor cared much, and that there is only a certain amount of pollution our tired and poisoned earth can endure.

And that this must stop. Now. Listening to the speeches, something else struck me. The audience, mostly college-age, judged the speakers very, very quickly. And they judged them as either good guys or bad guys. There was very little ground left in between.

Arthur Godfrey, for example, spoke. He made a couple of rather tired remarks which didn't go down too well, and they started to heckle and boo. Other speakers, more in tune with the audience, were cheered for almost totally rapid remarks.

It seemed as though the audience's reactions were knee-jerk instinct: The good guys were cheered; the bad guys were booed; judgment was quick, often before the speaker had a chance to finish his full argument.

THAT SET ME to thinking. This process was helped over the weekend, when I listened to a very wise speech made at a newspaper convention by Paul S. Hirt, the promotion manager at the Chicago Daily News.

He talked about television and what kind of impact it has had on the generation of people - now ranging from 25 years old on down - who have grown up under its influence.

Disregarding the content of TV programs, Hirt discussed the enormous effects of the TV program format itself in conditioning the minds of young viewers.

The typical TV show tells its story in a 30 or 60 minute format (minus commercials). This means that the show has to tell its story, complete its action, and make its point in a very short time span.

Because of the time pressure, the characters are brought on stage and labeled very quickly. The good guys wear white hats; the bad guys, black.

There just isn't time to portray the idea that the good guys might not be all good, nor the bad guys all bad.

Then the conflict or action is reduced to the simplest possible terms, again because of the time pressure. Bad guy wants to do something bad, and good guy stops (ie. kills, catches, jails, convicts, slugs, etc.) him.

Typically, the conflict is resolved in definitive terms, just before the closing commercial. (ie. the bad guy is dead, or in handcuffs, or in jail, or out cold, etc.) Any ambiguity of conclusion can't be presented in the time allowed.

NOW REAL LIFE just isn't like the TV shows.

People aren't all bad or all good, or all right or all wrong. Conflicts aren't solved in either 30 or 60 minutes only; it may take years. And conflicts aren't always solved in such final ways as dying or being knocked out cold.

But consider how the people who were brought up on TV feel. They may agree that real life isn't like the TV shows, but they HAVE been conditioned during the thousands of youthful hours they spent watching the tube.

Starting with infancy, they have been brainwashed by the format of the TV shows. Brainwashed with the idea that every problem has a sharply polarized definition, that the participants are either all-good or all-bad and not in between, and that there is a sharp, quick and definite solution to any problem.

They have been brainwashed with the idea that the hero (with whom they identify) always wins.

SO WHAT happens?

Some of the kids who grew up on TV find that real life contradicts their conditioning. They find there is no instant solution to their problems - and they become frustrated.

They make snap judgments between good guys and bad guys - and are baffled to find that there may be a middle ground. They find that others may not always instantly acquiesce to their demands for their kind of right - and they become enraged.

OBVIOUSLY, I can't argue

that everyone who grew up on a TV diet works in this way.

But I do suggest that TV has had an influence on the way people think, particularly those who were exposed to a great deal of it when very young.

Nor do I suggest that the things the kids are concerned about - pollution, for example - are not desperately serious problems, in need of prompt solutions. But it seems to me that if we ignore the effects of TV on a whole generation of people, we're making a serious mistake.

DISSENT

View points expressed in DISSENT do not necessarily reflect those of Observer Newspapers Inc., but are presented in the belief that publication of all segments of thought on a public issue is a prerequisite to understanding and progress.

By MATTHEW SCHOECH
Garden City

In regards to your amusing editorial on regionalism - it fell not short on rationalizing.

Point number one: because we live in the same region as other communities, we share common problems; therefore, we should drop all of our local boundaries and unite under SEMCOG.

Point number two: Kent Mathewson argues that because we share regional problems like water and air pollution, no individual city or township can (because it doesn't have the power) cure our regional ills; therefore, SEMCOG will more effectively control our regional problems.

Shame on you Mr. Mathewson, and you also, Mr. Power, for your faulty reasoning - even though you might have the right intention in your heart.

THE ABOVE PREMISES smack of intellectual dishonesty whether you care to look at it that way or not. Your "key conclusion", that we are all linked together is completely non sequitur. Each city, as it now stands, has its own local ordinances on problems within their particular city.

If the situation arises that requires a city to curtail the operations of a polluter it has the power through enforcement of its ordinances to do so. Each city acting on its own can do it if you let it and press for responsible local government.

I say let us not abandon our local sovereignty for the all-promising SEMCOG, which is what it will amount to, as "We the people" will have to be changed to we the governed and/or governing.

There would be no local control over our police and fire department. SEMCOG would abrogate and usurp our right of self-government, which was what our Revolutionary War was all about, in a narrow-minded way, of course.

The real problem, Mr. Publisher, lies in the fact that not enough citizens have discovered that the power to cure most of our ills lies solely within their hands. Many are tricked into believing that it is up to the politicians to decide.

Such foolish lassitude has led to the downfall of many great nations. There hasn't been a nation that fell into the hands of tyrants which didn't deserve what they got.

Cleverly disguised intentions of avaricious politicians aren't what lead countries into dictatorships, it is the gullibility of the sleeping masses - for they only get what they deserve - slavery.

Fortunately, enough people were wise enough at the last election to see through the chicanery of County Proposal No. 1. This was the County Home Rule proposition. Home Rule, SEMCOG, same-name as Mr. Ravitz knows only too well. The term, home rule, has a very pleasant ring for concealing something so treacherous. Nice try, Mel.

NOW COME SOME very interesting observations. If home rule was turned down by the people in the last election why do its proponents incessantly shove it down the peoples' throats? Are we going to be led to believe that because its name is being mentioned so much, that it will automatically be a popular movement.

Pavlov's dog has nothing over the gullible American's mind. Lastly and yet far from the least important, just what is Uncle Sugar's role in the Smelly plot? The Federal Government, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, has just granted SEMCOG \$400,000 - that is \$400,000 of our money.

R.T. Thompson writes

Tip Of Topper To West High

With most of the state in a dither over the annual state basketball tournament, we take this opportunity to doff our newest hat to the unbeaten Garden City West High team. Coach Chris Babler and his brilliant star Rick Drewitz.

It marks the second time in three years that Garden City sent a team into the class 'A' quarter-finals and for a second time the entire city is buzzing with excitement.

This year's West quintet is one of the most unusual in Michigan. Starting the season with a starting lineup that included only one regular from a team that lost only twice last year, Coach Babler developed another club that has to rank with the best ever in Garden City or the section we prefer to call Observerland.

IN THE FIRST place most observers knew from the start of the season that Drewitz had to be rated as one of the greatest performers in state prep ranks. He was tabbed as a sure-fire all-star, the first in this section of Michigan.

None can recall when a player from Observerland received such recognition. There have been three or four all-state selections in football but none in basketball.

There isn't any question as to his right to the honor for Rick pulled the Tigers out of numerous tight situations during the season and his play in the district and regional tournaments was just fantastic.

Time after time he came up with the big shot, the big defensive play and points when points were needed to keep West going.

Then there was the smart coaching of Babler who seemed to sense when changes were needed, especially on offense when the opponents double teamed Drewitz

and left other members of the team wide open.

ALTHOUGH DREWITZ was the key to the Tigers' success it can't be said that he was the sole reason for the unbeaten record.

It was a team effort all the way and a great job by a coach who had a good start with a top star performer but had to weld four others around him for a winning combination.

Dennis Leszczynski, Gary Nustad, John Rutter, Jerry Guzowski and Kirk Lewis - they are the ones who filled the other starting berths. They deserve just as much credit for the all-winning season as Rick.

So once again, we tip our lid to a great team, built around a great player and coached by a great little guy who knows when to make the proper moves.

A FORM OF POLLUTION?



Tim Richard writes

A New Crime: Too Many Kids

It wasn't that many years ago that I went to school. At that time, the list of sins was mainly what was in the Bible: Don't cuss, stay away from the other guy's property, go easy on the guru, stick to your own wife.

Then the sociologists came up with a new approach to crime and a whole new class of criminals. They re-defined crime as any "anti-social behavior," and they went on a law-and-order kick against what they called "white-collar criminals."

The white-collar criminal did more than pad his expense account and cheat a little on his income tax. He owned slum property and didn't repair it. He deliberately produced shoddy cars, junky toys, advertisements that induced people to smoke cigarettes; he produced apartments with paper-thin walls and quoted inflated real estate prices to black families. He produced electric power plants, oil wells and cars that polluted the environment.

THE THEORY of white-collar crime, to this suburbanite, has been a little difficult to swallow, because it treats as criminals precisely those persons we have always considered the pillars of society.

And now, if I heard correctly at the environmental teach-in at the University of Michigan, we are going to have a new class of criminals: People who have more than two natural children.

It used to be that couples who had a lot of kids were considered dumb or oversexed. As long as they could "afford" to feed and clothe them, however, there was nothing socially or morally wrong.

But last week it happened. Ralph MacMullan, director of the State Natural Resources Department, called it "morally wrong" to increase our population any

more. That's what the man said: "Morally wrong." What's more, he was applauded, and a lot of other people said the same thing.

Arthur Godfrey, American commerce's greatest salesman, said something like this: With a population of 200 million, we use two acres of arable land per person to produce food; if our population continues to grow at this rate, we will soon have 300 million and only 1.5 arable acres per person. It can't be done.

THERE ARE MANY sources of danger to our environment - pollution, most notably - but a major source of damage is our population growth rate per se. More people mean more subdivisions, which means less farmland and oxygen-producing trees.

With three billion people in the world, we have half of them undernourished, and we have so fearfully mismanaged our resources that we're even polluting the Atlantic Ocean. It's madness to think we can let the population swell to six billions . . . So the speakers said, one after the other.

As a young reporter, I recall being amused at the no-smoke, no-drink pledge the Seventh-day Adventists administered to the freshmen at their denominational college. Well, after the teach-in last week, people were signing pledges that they wouldn't have more than two children. Honest.

And so, fellow suburbanites, we are at the point where if you have more than two kids, you are a sinner and a polluter.

YOU DON'T LIKE being called that? Well, please don't harass me with your anonymous phone calls and personal questions. I'm only telling you what they were saying in Ann Arbor last week, and what you'll be hearing in the years ahead. If

you still think it's wise, laudable and proper to have more than two kids, get up in front of those 13,000 people in Crisler Arena and tell 'em off.

But don't bother quoting Genesis 1:28 at them because they have two answers ready: There were only two persons, not three billions, when God said to be fruitful and multiply; and we have seriously violated the rest of the instructions in that passage by damaging and even destroying large sections of the earth that God gave us dominion over.

Teaching Involvement

A UNIQUE FINAL EXAMINATION in a communications course at Michigan State University recently presented an example of how a university can encourage students to seek change through peaceful, organized efforts.

During the semester, each of the 48 sections of the 1,200-student course elected speakers and these spokesmen met several times to devise resolutions for presentation to the entire class on final exam day.

The one adopted was: To implement student values within the university, there must be student representation in all decision-making processes relating to instruction within each college department and on an all-university level.

The demand has been heard before, and even unique voicing doesn't insure success-but there is more. The proposal will be passed on to students of a persuasion course.

They will analyze it and devise strategy to gain acceptance for the proposal by university officials.

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