

Television censorship

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Television Censorship WHAT IS CENSORSHIP? " Censorship is the supervision and control of the information and ideas that are circulated among the people within a society. In modern times, censorship refers to the examination of books, periodicals, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other communication media for the purpose of altering or suppressing parts thought to be objectionable or offensive. The objectionable material may be considered immoral or obscene, heretical or blasphemous, seditious or treasonable, or injurious to the national security. Thus, the rationale for censorship is that it is necessary for the protection of three basic social institutions: the family, the church, and the state.

Censorship and the ideology supporting it go back to ancient times. Every society has had customs, taboos, or laws by which speech, play, dress, religious observance, and sexual expression were regulated(Microsoft Encarta 95)." CENSORSHIP OF OBSCENITY " The beginning of a new legal approach may be traced to the action of the federal courts in the 1930s, when they held that Irish author James Joyce's Ulysses was not obscene and could be freely passed through customs. The courts ruled that the use of " dirty words" in " a sincere and honest book" did not make the book " dirty." Since the 1950s many obscenity cases involving books, magazines, and film have been brought before the Supreme Court. In the cases during the 1970s the court ruled that laws against obscenity must be limited " to works which, taken as a whole, appeal to the prurient interest in sex; which portray sexual conduct in a patently offensive way; and which, taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value." The Court has further held that obscenity should be determined by applying "

contemporary community standards" rather than national standards (Microsoft Encarta 95)."

WHO DOES TELEVISION CENSORSHIP EFFECT?

CENSORSHIP AFFECTS MINORS AND ADULTS

Does censorship affect both minors and adults? One incident in Ohio led a mother of a 5 year old boy to believe so. The boy's mother attributed his actions to the influence of the popular MTV cartoon show Beavis and Butthead. In response to watching this cartoon the boy set his house on fire which killed his younger sister. In response to criticism about the show's violence and appeal to younger viewers, MTV moved the cartoon to a later time slot, to prevent young children from viewing it (Microsoft Internet Explorer). In another incident a teen-aged boy was killed and two others seriously injured while lying down along the centerline of a highway. The boys were imitating a scene from the movie The Program. The accident and the publicity that followed prompted Touchstone films to remove the scene from the movie, but leaving many other violent scenes, including one in which a student purposely smashes his head through a car window (Microsoft Internet Explorer). I also believe that not only children but perhaps an "impressionable adult" for whatever reason could feel moved to commit these same acts of violence that are portrayed on uncensored movies and television. Many of these movies contain countless instances of torture and unnatural suffering, mass killings and ethnic persecution. Some of these same crimes are being committed as we speak by minors and adults all over the world. Who is to say that people are not influenced by viewing a movie that lacked proper censorship?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GUIDELINES THAT GOVERN TELEVISION CENSORSHIP?

FILM INDUSTRY GUIDELINES

"One US industry, the film industry has for many

years practiced a form of self-censorship. In the 1920's, responding to public demands for strong controls, the Motion Picture Association of America imposed on its constituents a Production Act; compliance with its standards gave a movie a seal of approval. A system of film classification was begun in 1968 and has been revised several times since then. Films are given ratings, as follows: G (general audiences), PG (Parental Guidance advised), PG-13 (may not be suitable for pre-teens), R (persons under age 17 not admitted unless accompanied by parent or adult guardian), and NC-17 (persons under age 17 not admitted, replaced the X rating in 1990) (Microsoft Encarta 95)"

TELEVISION AND RADIO GUIDELINES " For the television and radio industries the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has generally established vague rules about program content containing an implied threat that a license can be revoked for repeated poor judgment involving program content. In 1987 the FCC responded to public complaints by adopting measures to restrict the use of explicit language about sex and bodily functions from the broadcasting media. Another code, designed by the National Association of Broadcasters, is voluntarily adhered to by station operators. The major networks also have their own self-regulating system. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), for example, has a staff of people who review scripts and watch everything that is aired on CBS-TV, including commercials; every contract with a producer provides that the project is subject to approval under this system (Microsoft Encarta 95)." PRIVATE ACTION GROUP GUIDELINES " In the US, many different private groups attempt to influence radio and television and broadcasters and other communication media to suppress material that they consider objectionable.

Religious, ethnic, and racial groups have tried to prevent plays, movies and television programs from being presented because of elements they deem offensive." " One private group, the American Civil Liberties Union, promotes the open flow of all types of information in the belief that individuals should have free access and opportunities for the exercise of their personal discretion and that no group should limit the availability of the resources from which such choices are made (Microsoft Encarta 95)."

TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPETITION AND DEREGULATION ACT OF 1995

THE GOALS " This Act is intended to establish a national policy framework

designed to accelerate rapidly the private sector deployment of advanced telecommunications and information technologies and services to all

Americans by opening all telecommunications markets to competition, and

to meet the following goals: 1) To promote and encourage advanced

telecommunications networks, capable of enabling users to originate and

receive affordable, high-quality voice, data, image, graphic, and video

telecommunications services. 2) To improve international competitiveness

markedly. 3) To spur economic growth, create jobs, and increase

productivity. 4) To deliver a better quality of life through the preservation

and advancement of universal service to allow the more efficient delivery of

educational, health care, and other social services (Telecommunications Bill

1995, Internet)." THE FINDINGS The Congress makes the following findings: ·

" Competition, not regulation, is the best way to spur innovation and the

development of new services. A competitive market place is the most

efficient way to lower prices and increase value for consumers. In furthering

the principle of open and full competition in all telecommunications markets,

however, it must be recognized that some markets are more open than others." · " More competitive American telecommunications markets will promote United States technological advances, domestic job and investment opportunities, national competitiveness (Telecommunication Bill of 1995, Internet)" VIEWERS HAVE OPTION TO WATCH VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION One Associate Night Editor, Daniel C. Stevenson, wrote a column called, " Viewers Have Option To Watch Violence On Television". In this column, he states, " It should not be the responsibility of the government to decide what is good and bad for viewers, it should be the responsibility of the viewers themselves. A film or book that is vulgar or horrifying to one person might be seen as beautiful art or entertainment to another. Such value judgments should be left up to each person, not formulated by the government. Any kind of government control that seeks to expose children only to 'good' events and actions is a violation of an important freedom—the freedom to see both sides of an event, to observe both good and bad (Microsoft Internet Explorer)." Another viewpoint is that of Pat Paulsen, TV personality, on January 7, 1968. He states, " Many people feel that censorship is a violation of Freedom of Speech...Bull Feathers...Censorship is NOT unconstitutional. Censors have the right to censor what you hear. Without censorship of television, how else can you, the American public, have the protection you want from vulgar scenes, over- exposed bodies and all the other sights you like to see...Without the censors we would all be at the mercy of the warped minds of the television industry and Deity only knows what you would see, probably some of the most foul, nasty, disgusting, vulgar, funniest, greatest stuff in the world (Microsoft Internet Explorer)." CENSORSHIP OF TELEVISION -

VIEWPOINTS SHOULD TELEVISION SHOWS BE CENSORED? One private individual, Mitchell Gene Zaninelli states, " I will start with the censorship of television. The government of the United States of America has been getting very involved in what they think is appropriate to be on television. I want to know why they get to decide what I want to watch. I feel that it should be a person's choice. They say they are concerned with what children are viewing, or that some things such as nudity and swear words offend people. Parents should monitor what their children watch. If a parent does not want their child to see something in particular, then it is the parent's responsibility to see that they do not, not the government's (Microsoft Internet Explorer)."

What do you think? Should our government continue to enforce television and film censorship as it has been? Or should all forms of censorship be abolished completely? THE PURPOSE " It is the purpose of this Act to increase competition in all telecommunications markets and provide for an orderly transition from regulated markets to competitive and deregulated telecommunications markets consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity (Telecommunications Bill of 1995, Internet)."