

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

TV and Children

Youth Development/After School/
Violence

**The Second World Summit
on Television for Children Limited**
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**The Second
World Summit
on Television
for Children**

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children
TV*

Mrs. Hillary Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.,
Washington DC 20500,
USA

01 776 1 1000 11418
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

16th June 1997

Dear Mrs. Clinton,

The Second World Summit on Television For Children, which will be held in London from 9th - 13th March 1998. The Summit intends to advance a global commitment that the television provided for children shall meet the highest standards, both in quality of production and respect for its audience.

I am writing to invite you to participate in the Summit as a Keynote Speaker.

The success of the First World Summit, held in Melbourne in 1995, has been reflected in the series of regional initiatives in Latin America, Asia and Africa. These are encouraging the development of more locally-based programming for children. The First Summit also provided a unique opportunity for the developed world to understand the challenges in children's broadcasting which face the developing nations today.

Over one thousand international delegates, including broadcasters, producers, writers, politicians, regulators, academics and NGO representatives are expected to attend next year's Summit, which will take place at London's Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. We are also planning for about 75 children from around the world to participate in the Summit.

The aims of the Summit are to promote the ideal that children watching television should be entertained, informed and educated by the medium; and to devise initiatives to encourage the making of such programmes in every corner of the world, so that children everywhere are able to see their own cultures represented on the screen.

Knowing of your concern for children and your interest in the media, we wondered whether you would be able to participate in this event as a keynote speaker. If you are not able to attend in person, you might consider sending us a video message. I can of course provide you with detailed information about both the First and the Second Summit.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Thompson
**CHAIR SECOND WORLD SUMMIT
ON TELEVISION FOR CHILDREN**

cc: Jenny Thompson
David Kleeman



21 JUN 1997

AMERICAN CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S TELEVISION THE OLLIE AWARDS

Board of Governors

David Britt
Children's Television Workshop

Robert Conrad
Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Betty Cohen
Cartoon Network Worldwide

James Dowdle
Tribune Broadcasting

Ervin Duggan
Public Broadcasting Service

James A. Fellows
Central Educational Network

John Ford
Discovery Networks

Jane Henson
The Jim Henson Company

Geraldine Laybourne
Disney/ABC Cable Networks

Margaret Loesch
Fox Children's Network

William J. McCarter
WTTW/Chicago

Sterling C. Quinlan
Mediatech

Herb Scannell
Nickelodeon

Amc Simon
Microsoft Corporation

June 18, 1997

Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton
First Lady of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Clinton:

Key leaders of the global village -- people with enormous responsibility for raising the world's children -- are about to gather. We would be honored if you will join us.

On behalf of the North American Advisory Committee to the Second World Summit on Television for Children, I am writing to endorse the enclosed invitation for you to address the Summit's opening ceremony.

At last July's White House Summit on Children's Television, I spoke about the worldwide hallmarks of excellence in children's programming. I drew my inspiration from the very people who will gather for the World Summit -- the producers and executives, in developed and developing nations, who struggle daily to sustain the quality and quantity of their work, to create programs and services that entertain and educate, to instill appreciation for the world's diversity and pride in children's own culture.

Two years ago, in a Miami Herald column, you wrote, *in a culture such as ours, which is so dominated by television, children's programming is not a luxury enjoyed by a privileged few; it is a necessity for tens of millions of American families.*

Your statement holds true for young people worldwide, yet children's television is under constant threat. Your voice at the Summit -- reminding us of our responsibilities and our privilege in serving children -- will be inspiring, invigorating, and irreplaceable.

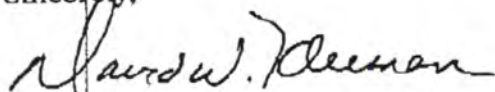
Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton
June 18, 1997
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The London Summit is the second world gathering. The first -- in Australia, in 1995 -- resulted in the Children's Television Charter. I attach that document, so you will know the universal standards for which the Summits stand.

My colleagues and I will assist in any way to facilitate your participation. If I can provide further information or endorsement, please feel free to contact me (847-390-6499 phone / 847-390-9435 fax / dkleeman@mcs.com e-mail).

We look forward to your acceptance of this invitation.

Sincerely,



David W. Kleeman
Coordinator, North American Advisory Committee

cc: **Office of the First Lady:**
Melanne Verveer, Chief of Staff
Patty Solis Doyle, Head of Scheduling

World Summit:
Anna Home, Chair

**The North American Advisory Committee for
The Second World Summit on Television for Children**

David V.B. Britt, President, *Children's Television Workshop*
Alice Cahn, Director of Children's Programming, *Public Broadcasting Service*
Deborah Forte, Executive Vice President, *Scholastic Productions*
David Kleeman, Executive Director, *American Center for Children's Television*
Adrian Mills, Head of Children's Programs, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*
Alyce Myatt, Independent Producer
Herb Scannell, President, *Nickelodeon/Nick at Nite*
Carla Seal-Wanner, Chair, *MindWorks Media* and *@ccess 4 @ll*
Dale Taylor, Vice President of Programming and Production, *YTV/Canada*

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 1, 1996

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND VICE PRESIDENT
IN DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN AND PARENTS
ABOUT TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

The Vice President's Ceremonial Office
Old Executive Office Building

9:55 A.M. EST

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, ladies and gentlemen, the President and the First Lady and my wife, Tipper, and I would like to welcome you here to this office. And, traditionally, this has been the Office of the Vice President since way back, since this became the Executive Office Building. And these families, with their children, have been invited here this morning for a discussion with the President and us here about the historic turning point yesterday in the relationship between families and the mass media.

As you know, President Clinton fought for, got passed in the Congress and then signed into law a real breakthrough measure called the V-chip, which makes it possible for parents to exercise more control over what their young children see on the television set.

Then yesterday, in response to President Clinton's invitation, the leaders of the entire entertainment industry came to the White House and after a two-hour discussion with the President announced their unanimous agreement who put in place a voluntary rating system for every program that appears on television, whether it's broadcast or cable; and to electronically encode that program with a signal that will interact with this electronic device called the V-chip, which will enable parents to say this particular kind of programming is not appropriate for

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my children in my judgment, and so when I'm not there, they're not going to be able to watch that.

Some of the parents who are gathered here today, and some of the children, too, have been thinking about this issue and this particular solution in some cases for quite some time. Some of them participated in the family conference that Tipper and I host each year and that the President spoke at last summer. Some of them have been featured in the First Lady's book about what families can do, "It Takes A Village." And this discussion this morning we hope will shed some more light on the importance of the turning point yesterday. And, of course, to lead the discussion and to explain why this is so important for our country, the President of our country, President Clinton.

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Vice President, I might say, aren't we all glad to be in his big, beautiful office here. I love to come over here. I want to thank all of you for coming and to say to you and to the members of the media who are here, yesterday we heard for two hours from a remarkable assemblage of people who are involved in the television industry -- people who broadcast the programs; we heard from cable people; we heard from the people who write the programs; people who represent the actors; producers. It was an amazing assemblage of people who got together and came to Washington to announce that they had decided to develop a rating system for television programs like the movie rating system, and that as the Vice President said, that that would be able to be used then when the V-chip becomes available in televisions.

Now, the V-chip, of course, will start coming into televisions in a couple of years. And we replace about 25 million televisions a year, I think, in America, so it will quickly be a fixture in a significant percentage of America's televisions. But the rating system presumably will still be helpful for parents even before they have the V-chip.

We wanted to have you in here today because we want to get a feel and we want the country to get a feel for what kinds of things parents feel about this rating system and the V-chip, what the young people feel about it, what you expect out of it, what do you think it will do, what won't it do, what would you like to see, how would you like to see it work and, of course, we have some advocates and professionals here who can talk about the impact of this on child-rearing in America and on childhood.

I must tell you, this is going to be a very

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complicated and difficult thing for these people in television to do in the sense that they have -- there are many, many thousands of -- tens of thousands of programs on all of these television stations, and as we get more cable channels, they will multiply exponentially. So the job of rating them is very different from the job of rating a couple of thousand movies a year.

So as they undertake this task, I think it's important for the people in the entertainment industry and the public at large to get just a feel for how parents feel about it, how young people feel about it and kind of how it should proceed, because they committed to have this done by the first of next year -- no later than the first of next year, and perhaps sooner.

So we really just felt we ought to have this conversation today and we thank you for joining us. And maybe we ought to start with you, Mrs. Somson. If you could tell the press -- everybody, if you could tell the press your name when you speak and how you happen to be here.

Q My name is Barbara Somson. I've got two kids, Michael Eisenbrey, 11, and Rebecca Eisenbrey, 8. And I'm here because I've been active with the PTA and I was asked to come here today. I think it is fabulous that the industry has agreed to put in this rating system.

I was growing up on Long Island -- there were, I think, seven TV channels. And now, as the President said, it's impossible to probably count how many there are. It's impossible for a parent to hope to screen what's on television today. And it would be so helpful to be able to have the rating system that I now use for the movies because, especially with younger children -- and I know it changes as your children get to be teenagers -- but I can say to my children, you don't watch movies that are PG-13. We don't have to talk about it. You know those are off of the screen, off of the table not to talk about those. Okay, so maybe we'll talk about what we do see, but we don't have to talk about this.

I think it's fabulous that they're going to start rating even before the V-chip is available, because parents can use that rating as a tool and the V-chip as a tool as the children especially get older. Just at Michael's age now, I'll leave him alone for a couple of hours and it's wonderful to be able to have that technology to enforce what I would be enforcing if I were home. And I, by the way, am home more than most

parents because I don't work full-time. But I can't be with my children, by their side, at every moment guarding what they watch on TV, nor would I want to. I think it's terrific and I really applaud the industry for doing a big turnaround.

Q I'm LaTanya Jones and I am the mother of a three-year-old and a soon-to-be. And I work with a group in Maryland called Advocates for Children and Youth. We have something called the Maryland Campaign for Kids TV, so I know firsthand that there are a lot of parents who are very concerned about the issue of television. And I applaud not only the industry, but this administration for the support that you've given for the Children's Television Act, for Public Broadcasting and also for the V-chip.

I see the V-chip, though, as really just the first step because I think the parents not only need negative control over blocking the things that are coming into their homes that they think aren't good, but we need to continue to encourage the industry to produce good programming and to produce the kind of programming that we can become involved in helping our kids make good choices.

One of the things that we always talk about is that television is such a wonderful educational tool. And, unfortunately, the V-chip and the recent developments are really because a lot of what's being produced is not really using the potential that television has to educate and enlighten. So I'd like to see the V-chip and this industry coming together as the first step to taking it to where they can talk about pooling resources to produce better children's programming. And we're hopeful that the V-chip will be the beginning of that.

THE PRESIDENT: I want to talk about the better programming in a minute because I think that's a big part of it, especially when I ask the young people about it. But I want to give the parents who are here a chance to say anything they'd like to say about the V-chip and the ratings issue, and then I want to come back and talk about the V-chip with you. I want you to tell your story.

Q I'm Jim Murphy. I'm here with my family today. I've been involved for a number of years through the Virginia PTA and the National PTA advocating for children and children's issues, and I've long seen the impact that television has on our families and how we raise our children and the environment that our children are living in today. The V-chip in our home is going to be an aid, a tool.

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Particularly when you look at the diversity of ages of my children, ranging from 10 to 17, their viewing habits and what they should be viewing is vastly different.

I applaud the industry for the fact that -- and I applaud you for the fact that you have brought the industry to the rating scheme. I believe that the technology of what we're going to be doing with the V-chip is actually going to assist and aid the industry in refining and defining that rating system. I don't want to -- I want to make the judgment, along with my wife, as to what is good quality programming for my children, but I do not want to take that same standard and say that that has to be the industry standard. Those are the professionals. Let them worry about that. I'm worrying about what's in my home.

I do think that the V-chip is going to define for us now what has previously been defined by the industry, and that's the family hour or the family time, because I think people will actually vote -- since most of our airways are commercial, they'll vote with that V-chip. And advertisers will understand that and programmers will understand that. And maybe we will see more family programming of the type that we would like to see as a result.

So I see it as the critic's choice, and I tend to view it that way.

THE PRESIDENT: I'm so glad to hear you say that because there were -- you made two comments; I just want to say that to kind of resonate with the discussion we had with the people from the industry yesterday. Ted Turner said, and he went out and said in public, so I'm not saying anything in private he didn't say in public -- that he strongly supported the rating system and what we were doing, what they were doing, but he did think it would be very costly. And I think it will obviously cost a lot of money to figure out how to do this and then review all these programs, to set up the system. But I think he meant he thought it would be costly over the long run because programs would not have the same viewership and their advertisers would drop.

I think I see it more like you do; it's a voting system. It would be another -- it's like the Nielsen ratings, except you won't have -- this won't be a sample, you'll be able to actually know. You'll be able to at least sample all the V-chip homes, you take a representative sample. And it might actually change the content of programming so that the market, the market forces actually produce more positive programs.

The other thing you said I think is important, a couple of the folks who were skeptical yesterday talked about how this wouldn't be a panacea, it wouldn't solve all the problems. And one of the men in the broadcasting meeting said -- I mean the industry meeting -- he said, I'm going to take off my industry hat now and tell you that I'm a parent of three small children. I'm not looking for panaceas, I'm looking for a little help. (Laughter.) And I think that's the way all of us who are parents look at this. There is no such thing as a panacea, we're looking for a little help.

So you made that point, and I thought it as very good.

Q Along that same line, I think that with the V-chip it will be possible to address the issue of whether a particular program is acceptable, or not once, and not have to keep revisiting it every time you come down to the family room and you find that the children have conveniently forgotten that this was one of the programs that's been deemed not acceptable and you have to go back through the explanation over and over again -- remember, I told you we can't watch this because this is where it does not meet our standards.

And I think it will probably reduce some of the tension that goes back and forth as you keep reiterating the same issue over and over again over the same program. It could be discussed once, explained once, and then with the V-chip it's locked out and it's done. So I think that's going to be another benefit of it. And again, the push toward setting a standard and letting the standards reflect, hopefully, shaping the programming.

My name is Jacqueline Caldwell, and this is my husband, Excetral Caldwell. And we are the parents of toddlers. They are two and four. And we are delighted with the strides of the administration and the industry have made with respect to the V-chip and the voluntary rating system. We have a system right now where if we are watching television, I will notice that there may be something that we don't want the children to see, and my husband, who is the keeper of the remote -- (laughter) -- will change the channel. So we have to be sort of actively involved with what they see and don't see.

And anything, as you say, that will assist
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THE PRESIDENT: Hillary almost fell off the

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chair when you said that -- the keeper of the remote.
(Laughter.)

Q So we're really delighted with both the V-chip and the rating system.

Q It is important. I mean, one of the first things I noticed as parents of toddlers is that one of the first things our children learned was how to turn on the TV. When they were two they could figure out how to hit the remote, what channel had to be on to actually get the screen on. So something like this is a vital first step for working parents like us who can't be there every single minute that they may be looking at TV.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, you will remember that Dr. Robert Phillips with the American Psychiatric Association was one of the experts who met with us in Nashville last summer and the experts have pointed out that there have been about a thousand studies about the relationship between televised violence and actual violence and about six of them have said there's no connection. About 994 have said there is a very strong connection. And you were telling us in Nashville about why the expert community has felt strongly about this. Why don't you share some of that.

Q Well, I am a psychiatrist by training, although I remind my colleague that I did sub-internship in obstetrics so I am ready to respond if necessary. (Laughter.) I spend most of my time evaluating persons who have committed crimes and then testifying in court. It's becoming shocking to me that the persons that I was called to evaluate were becoming younger and younger, and the crimes that they were committing were becoming more and more heinous. And it began to focus my attention on what some of the root causes were and what are the things that are beginning to influence children to behave in ways that most of us, when were children, perhaps would not even think of doing.

The research information is overwhelming and it's clear. Mrs. Gore has called our attention to the way in which violent, demeaning musical lyrics can potentially affect the way in which children behave. Mrs. Clinton in her book talks about the way in which young brains form and the way the hard wiring of that brain is so easily influenced because by design children are great imitators. That's how they learn.

And in my own clinical experience and the research work that I've been doing, there's no question that both those things are true. We are a society that

has become infatuated with violence and we feed our addiction to violence in every way conceivable, including at the news trailers at 5:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 11:00 p.m., and every show that you can think of.

The National Television Violence Study which the American Psychiatric Association and other professional groups have participated in has shown that violence is free and gratuitous on television and its effect on children is powerful. Children are like little VCRs. They see something once, and then they repeat it. And they repeat it over and over and over again.

I share the enthusiasm that my colleagues share today in thanking you, Mr. President, and you, Mr. Vice President, for taking the leadership in an area where parents -- and while I am trained clinically, my primary job is to be a father of 16 and 14-year-old daughters and seven and five-year-old sons. In that broad spectrum I have seen some remarkable differences in attitudes and behaviors with what they see on television and what they listen to, only within that generational gap in my own family.

These are powerful influences. Television is an extraordinary medium, one that we should be very, very pleased that we have access to that technology because children have learned enormous things and have benefitted greatly. But with the good side of technology there is the potential risk, and it is that risk that I and the scientific community have become particularly concerned about, because we know without balancing that risk, without paying attention to the ways in which children learn, the kinds of violent images that sometimes are seen on television in which violent acts go unpunished, in which violence may be masked in humor, in which there is no pain. I evaluated someone in a hospital down south not too long ago who looked at me from his bedside, having been involved in a homicide in which he was shot, and he said to me, "Doc, I never realized it was going to hurt to be shot."

These are powerful statements coming from our children. And these are the kinds of images that we as parents, at the very least, need some help in making determinations as to what children are exposed to, at what age and what frequency. What my 16 and 14-year-old watch may be quite different from what I think my seven and five-year-old ought to watch. And I think what the two of you have done has really helped facilitate the industry and parents to work together on creating a stronger and more healthy environment in

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which children can use television in a productive and useful way.

THE PRESIDENT: Hillary, do you want to comment on that, based on what you said in --

MRS. CLINTON: That was incredible. I mean, I think that if we could have every parent hear that and understand it, then the rating system and the V-chip would be even more effective because, of course, one of our challenges is to convince parents to use the rating system and to take the time and energy that will be required to implement it in their own homes, and then when the V-chip comes along, to be ready to use that as well. And the more information they can get, such as the doctor is explaining about what we know is the linkage between what they see on television and how they behave, I think the more willing parents will be to act.

THE PRESIDENT: I want to get to the young people here. And let me tell you, it's okay if you disagree with us about this. (Laughter.) We want to hear what you really think. But I want to ask the doctor one more question. Before I had this job, as I used to say, back when I had a life -- (laughter) -- I was governor of my state when I ran a big prison system and a big criminal justice system, obviously. And then I was attorney general and before that I taught criminal law. So I've been following issues of crime and violence closely from that perspective for more than 20 years now.

For most of my time, it was an article of faith that 75 percent of all the violent crimes in America were created by people between the ages of 17 and 26. And that there was almost a hormonal problem. If you could literally just get violent people and put them somewhere until they were 27, you could let them out and then they would not do that again. That there really almost seemed to be sea changes.

Now we see an astonishing thing. With the crime rate going down among people 18 and over, and I might add, drug use going down among people over 18, and violence going up among people under 18, as well as casual drug use. And I think there are plainly other reasons for increasing violent behavior among young people, including the lives that many of them have to live virtually raising themselves on some of the meanest streets in America.

But I gather from what you said that you really believe that the sort of cumulative, almost deadening impact of all this media-generated violence

is at least partly the explanation for rising rates of violence among juveniles.

Q I don't think there's any question, Mr. President. And you're right, if you look at the recent data that was released by the Justice Department, you see this rather unusual trend, a very positive trend that crime rates overall in this country are going down, except there has been an extraordinary explosion of crime among juvenile offenders -- those individuals who under the age of 18. The use of handguns by juveniles in this country has increased in the last six years by 144 percent, so that in the last year there were close to 2,000 murders committed by children under the age of 18 and whom the victims were other children under the age of 18.

Now, it would be foolish to suggest that the television set and the broadcast industry is responsible for that; it is a multifactorial problem. But what is true is that something has radically changed from when you and I grew up on Long Island to the way in which people are growing up on Long Island and other places in this country now.

And one of the things that I think scientifically helps explain the phenomenon is what we talked about in Nashville, and I think that is one of the powerful negative effects of repeated exposure to gratuitous violence, whether it is through the ear or whether it is through the eyes and the ears combined. And that is the concept of desensitization. And I gave an example in Nashville, and if I can have a moment I'll give it again.

Most of us probably remember the rather horrific image that was captured quite accidentally by video cameras of Rodney King being beaten in the streets of Los Angeles. And the first time you saw that image you probably were repelled by it. But quite honestly, by the fifth, 10th, 12th or 20th time, you did what most of my male colleagues in this room do, since we do have the remote controls, and that is to reach over -- there's a little joke that we've had in the room for the last few minutes that it was a male thing -- you reach for that remote control and you change the channel.

Except the point that you change that channel that I think you demonstrated your desensitization to the cumulative effect of violent exposure. In fact, if you think about the ways in which we have used desensitization scientifically, the more you show someone an image, the less impacted they are by that image, and they are then able to move on to

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the next step.

This is part of what's happening in our society with our young because of the way young brains are hard-wired, because if you use misogynistic and violent language in musical lyrics and you listen to that, it becomes easier then to use that language and convey those attitudes when you interact with others.

I think these are the kinds of things that substantively contribute to some of the data that you reference, Mr. President, but we've got to be very careful not to presume that the answer is in the television or that the blame lays with the broadcast industry, because that's summarily incorrect, and we have to remember that it is this very same industry that is responsible for substantively increasing the literacy rate in this country and by reaching out and capturing the minds of children who are visual learners and learn by visual and auditory images than print images, and so we have to accept both the good with the bad but recognize that we have a responsibility when we identify something that could be problematic to try and deal with or create a safety net for those children for which this may be problematic.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let me point out that next week, toward the end of next week, I believe it's on March the 7th the President's going to be hosting a White House Conference on Youth Violence, looking at a lot of the other factors involved.

But the fact that children, on average, before graduating from high school, witness 20,000 simulated murders on a little box in their home has to have some effect, as all of the studies indicate. And while there are many other causes of the problem also, this is one, and it's one that, thanks to the President, is finally going to be susceptible to a solution. And, thanks to the industry for taking the steps that they agreed to yesterday.

So we have to take each of the causes, one by one. As the President was saying, these children here may have a different perspective, certainly is something to add to this.

THE PRESIDENT: I thought maybe we ought to start with Catherine next to me, because Catherine Murphy actually passed the first V-chip bill -- (laughter) -- in the United States of America. I think you all need to know that. It wasn't us, it was her. And so I think you ought to hear her story and I'd like to know how you came to propose this legislation and what you think of it.

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Q Well, I first discovered the project actually with the aid of my father who was working on the project for the Virginia PTA, and it interested me, so I contacted Jim Moran's office and asked for a copy of the legislation that was in committee at the time, and he sent me the House Bill 1807, I think it was. And I took a look at that and, going to the seminar across the nation -- 96 girls from around the country and came and set up a mock Senate, and we were all responsible for proposing our own piece of legislation, be it a resolution or a bill on something that we thought was important.

And since I discovered this project and it caught my eye and I decided that I would write my own version of the V-chip bill and submit it at the Girls Nation Senate. And so the first day we were there, we went into committee and I had to defend it there. And it got through committee and got on the floor, had to defend it there. It got through the entire senate, and I had a lot of support behind it. And the senator president who didn't believe in government regulation of private industry whatsoever, and she vetoed it. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: They'll do that to you. (Laughter.) Let me ask you this. Do you believe -- I want to ask and then I want to go around to the students here -- how do you think the V-chip should be used? And how much difference do you think there is in the age of the children in terms of the regulation of the programming?

Q Well, strictly in my home, concerning the -- I'm 17 and a senior in high school, and my brother is 10 and a fifth-grader in elementary school. There's a vast difference between the four of us, between our TV watching habits. I am so involved in so many different school activities that television is just not a high priority for me and I don't find myself watching a lot of television. I watch the news because I like to stay informed -- I'm probably a little odd like that in my age group.

But it's not a very high priority for me, whereas elementary schoolers spend a lot of time, I've noticed -- I mean, a lot of time. And when I used to baby sit, I'd go over and baby sit and the parents would say, don't worry about them, they'll get ready for bed and turn on the TV. And then at 9:00, send them to bed. And, I'd go over there at 5:00 p.m. in the evening; they eat dinner, they turn on the television at 6:00 p.m. and just sit there for three hours.

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I think, baby sitting job, okay, but, you know, when it finally got to me, if you're thinking about it, these kids could be reading a book or doing their homework, possibly. (Laughter.) Something has got to be -- there's got to be a line between where television is useful and informative and where it's just mindless activity.

THE PRESIDENT: You watch television a lot?

Q I don't watch it as much as most of my peers, because I am somewhat busy considering my age because I play two sports. I do street hockey with my friends and I fence, and I spend a lot of time in a creek near our house. But I do watch some news. I watch the news, one or two cartoons, and sometimes I watch E.R. But I know a lot of friends basically base their lives on TV. That's all it is. They go home, turn on the tube, and at 10:00 p.m. they go to bed. That's it. And then during school, that's all they talk about. And they base their lives on it, and they think everything they've seen on TV is perfectly fine and is how they should act. And a lot of it isn't. A lot of it is the exact opposite of how they should be acting, yet they base it --

THE PRESIDENT: If you've actually seen that in your friends who believe it --

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: -- that they're acting, they model what they do based on what they see on television.

Q Yes. They model themselves after Will Smith or Bart Simpson and they act just like them. And they end up getting in a lot of trouble, too. And they never realize it because they figure, oh, well, it's okay because I see it on TV every night. And I like the V-chip because it doesn't automatically do anything, but it gives you the power -- it gives the parents the power to control it so that kids won't do that. And what I'm hoping is that they can block out the bad programming, and if nobody's watching it, then they're liable to put good programming in there because they have to get their income somehow.

THE PRESIDENT: What about you? You're eleven, right?

Q Yes. My sister watches TV sort of like -- she'll sneak away when she's done with her homework and watch TV. But I hardly ever watch TV. I like the computer much more than the TV. I play on the computer

for hours and hours.

Q Is there going to be a V-chip for the computer? (Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No.

THE PRESIDENT: -- about that because that's going to be a big issue.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Let me interject and make a brief point on that. The industry group in the computer industry that has put together this system for rating computer games just made an announcement yesterday that they're coming up with their own industry-based approach to give parents the ability to screen the Internet to prevent material that's inappropriate for young children come into home computers on the Internet. Now, some of the on-line providers like America Online already do that, but there needs to be this industry-wide system to do it for the Internet generally in case that legal provision doesn't work out. It's real controversial, but that's good news. But I didn't want to interrupt you. Go ahead with what you were saying about TV.

Q Well, I have a couple of friends who watch TV. a lot. Their brothers -- one of them is in fourth grade, the other is in sixth grade. And they are sort of -- they spend most of their time playing with Leggo, playing on the computer or watching TV. But they're really not affected -- they don't watch many violent programs. They watch The Simpsons, they watch cartoons. But they don't watch violent programs. And TV doesn't really affect them much.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Have you ever had a friend, either of you, who watches the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers?

Q No.

Q Yes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You haven't?

Q I have a friend who watches them, but I hate that show. (Laughter.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, does he act out the moves?

Q Sometimes him and his friends, like, during recess will go away from playing kick ball and they'll just pretend they are the Mighty Morphin Power

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Rangers or the X Men or whichever they saw what they think looks the most interesting episode the day before. And they'll just act them out. And then they'll just go around pretending they have such power and just pretend they're killing each other or such things and think nothing of it.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And they do the kicks and the --

Q Yes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Teachers say there are lots of little Mighty Morphin Power Rangers and many of them have gotten hurt.

Q Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: What do you think? Do you think your mother should have some influence over what you watch on television or should you decide?

Q It would be good if my mom did because there's still a lot of shows that I watch, there are some things like -- (inaudible) -- and I just don't think that kids should be able to watch those because some kids in the second grade, some kids in my class, there are two kids near my desk and they're always pretending to be the X Men. And they're like scrapping me with their pencils and stuff and they take three pencils and go like that and pretend that they're all these different people. And this gets really annoying -- (laughter) -- and they go to the principal's office and they just don't really think much of it because they're just --

THE PRESIDENT: Playing out what they saw on TV.

Q Right.

THE PRESIDENT: What about you all?

Q I'm 13. I baby-sit, and I see these kids playing games and they're just acting out what they've seen on television, but they hurt each other and they don't -- and when you tell them you can't do that, and you can't roughhouse like those, they don't realize what's wrong with it. I also see myself -- I watch less and less television as I get more active in clubs and sports and groups at my school and going out with my friends, and there are better things to do than watch television.

Kids could be playing -- like, my little

brother prefers to go out and play in the woods or build forts with his friends than watch television. Kids need to expand their imaginations. And they could be doing so many other things that would benefit them instead of watching cartoons and violence, et cetera, et cetera.

Q Recent studies have shown that kids in the inner city watch up to 11 hours of television a day, and it's important for us to acknowledge that for some parents, they'd much rather have their kids in the house watching TV than out in the neighborhood that might not be safe or in activity or with friends that they don't particularly approve of what the friends are doing.

So I'd much rather have my son watching X-Men and Mighty Morphin Power Rangers than out there with someone who has actually got a real gun playing pretend. When I talk to parents' groups about the fact that the average American household watches seven hours a day, people usually shop. They hear, "seven hours, how could you do it?" But when you really think if it, many of us use the television as an alarm clock in the morning, so it's very, very common for households to have the TV on for two hours in the morning while you find out what's the weather, what are the school lunches. And then kids who come home from school may watch a couple of hours in the afternoon.

And as we know, many parents watch the news with their kids while they're cooking dinner and then at dinner. By the time you've added two or three hours of prime time, you're not even talking David Letterman or the Tonight Show. It really is not hard to add those hours up a day, and the kids who are watching 11 hours a day are going to school, but they're also watching cartoons in the morning, they're watching cartoons in the afternoon, they're watching in the evenings.

This young man mentioned to me that he got the sense that a lot of the kids here don't watch a lot of TV, and I said I think it's because your parents are really aware, and even though there are parents that are also concerned, they don't quite know what to do and how to offer alternatives, or the alternative of watching the show and having this fantasy may seem safer.

So I think that the V-chip will be helpful to a lot of the parents, but I also think that encouraging parents to help kids be critical viewers and choose what they're watching carefully is also really important, too.

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THE PRESIDENT: What do you think?

Q Well, I think it's kind of like sad what's being put on TV now, and it's really good because the V-chip is going to be able to get rid of those things, because they have things like "Tales From The Crypt," and "X-Files," and those things freak me out -- so -- and it's really sad because these little kids are watching them and they get the wrong sense of reality, and they shouldn't be watching these things because that leaves them in their rooms hugging their teddy bears, saying I'm not afraid of the dark, I'm not afraid of the dark, practicing for when they're supposed to go to bed, instead of playing outside and playing with their friends, riding their bikes.

They should be having fun and not being scared, and it's really awful that they get addicted to it and everything. They should spend more time outside and have fun with their friends, because you only get to be a child once.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Have you or any of your friends ever had nightmares and trouble sleeping because of images you've seen on television?

Q Yes. We were spending the night at one of my friend's house once, it was her birthday, and we were talking about the last time she had rented a movie, one of the Chucky movies --they stayed up all night because they were terrified that Chucky was in the other room and they couldn't go to sleep. It's sad what -- things that go on TV.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, one of the reasons I asked that question is that many children that watch the television eight, ten hours a day will at a young age now often be exposed to decapitation or some very gruesome, violent scene, that they're not in any way prepared to deal with. And many parents tell us that they have to spend a lot of time comforting children when they have these nightmares and have trouble going to sleep. And the V-chip gives those parents a tool with which they can instruct their television set, don't put those images on in front of my child anymore. It's a major advance.

Q I think that's something that's really important. A lot of people are talking about, "But the V-chip won't do this, the V-chip will do that." It's not the V-chip that's going to do it, it's the parents. And that's got to be the biggest point people have to understand with this new technology, is it's not just this microchip, it's not just the broadcasting industry

-- it's got to start with the parents and it's got to start at home with the parents educating their children about what's right and wrong in television and then being able to back that up with the technology, to be able to enforce the values that they're teaching at home with that technology that they have accessible to themselves now.

Q I'd just like to say a word for children. I think you're exactly right, it is power to parent, the V-chip is power to the parent. But I think what you're saying is also something we've seen in our house. And as you get older what we as parents want for our children is to make good, critical decisions about what they view, to know what freaks you out. And you, yourself, can use the V-chip to block out programs that you decide that you don't want to see. And as kids get older they can use it as a way to protect themselves from those kinds of images.

And I think that's another value of it that we don't want to overlook. We want to focus on parents and parents having the power, but older children also are going to be able to use the V-chip to help themselves have critical viewing skills and know themselves and what they want to see. And so kids, too, are to be given credit for having sense about this.

Q I was thinking about -- we've heard the younger person's perspective on how violence in TV has affected them and their peers. And we've heard Catherine talk about how her -- the activities she's involved with in school that really doesn't -- it makes television go down on her list of priorities. And I think that when you look at the age groups, I think that there's kind of a transitional age between the children that are young enough to have adult supervision for the majority of the time that they're going to be spending watching TV or doing other activities.

And there's a difference between that and the older kids who have soccer practice after school or who are independent enough to spend the afternoon at the library by themselves. And I think it's the age -- you know, 12, 13, 14 -- where kids are becoming more independent. They don't require constant attention from their parents or a baby sitter. And I think that's the age where a lot of education and a lot of instruction and guidance as to what kind of shows are appropriate and what kind of shows are indicative of acceptable behavior. I think that's the age where that needs to be stressed.

Q I think that's a really key point. More and more studies have shown in that middle school period of time, where we go into the prepubescent period and early adolescence, that is probably the most critical time in a child's life and it is also -- I think all of us as parents know it's probably the most difficult time that we have raising our children. We're not only dumber than dirt -- (laughter) -- but they seem to have gone into a melt-down and just kind of tuned us out for a while. And that's where the influence of the television -- and it really does seem to be that's where the mind set is that they sort of vegetate there for a couple of years. And it's at that critical point where we're shaping those values that they're going to carry with them. And this goes back into what we were talking about earlier in the crime statistics.

Q You know, it's really interesting because -- well, I think it's true, as parents we always think about the most critical time as being what we're trying to deal with at the moment. And if you've got adolescents in the house, that's pretty preoccupying. But I vacillate back and forth with my sons and daughters because of the gap. And, really, if you look critically at the research you begin to recognize that it's all important. While the value constructs that you talk about I think are extraordinarily critical, because that's a time when normally, in fact, long before there was television, we were struggling at that age to try and figure out what's right and what's wrong and how we should behave. But, you know, between the ages of one and six there is a lot that's going on that we tend to forget about.

If you put children in a room with a monitor and you feed violent and aggressive images into that room through the monitor and leave some toys on the floor and then shut the monitor off, guess what happens? Within minutes, those behaviors will be reenacted so that we've got to recognize that it's all important.

And I think the most positive thing, as had been said by many of the young folks in this room and their parents is that the technology is marvelous. When I was a kid growing up in New York, there were three television stations. And programming was so sophisticated that the Million-Dollar Movie ran the same movie four times a day, seven days a week. (Laughter.) Things have changed. And they've changed in such a way that you simply don't know what's on and you don't have a handle on what the information is that's available -- good and bad.

This small piece of technology really helps us create a reasonable environment for the broad range of children that may be in your home and in your community and in our nation. I predict, and I hope I'm right in this prediction, that this is the first in a series of technologies that will be helpful. This one happens to be viewed negatively because it's been cast as an instrument that will block out signals. But I suspect that there's going to be technology that's going to help us facilitate identifying things that are of value. I think we're going to see frame shifts in the industry.

But most importantly, we have to make sure that this technology does not force parents to reach over to that television set and turn it off. Because if we turn off the television set, we are really denying our children probably one of the greatest inventions of this century that has really, I think, served an enormously useful purpose in providing strong and important influences.

THE PRESIDENT: I'm so glad to hear you say that as well. But that -- I don't know how much time we have left, but I think we ought to hear from the young people especially on the flip side of this because we believe it's important, we applaud the industry for developing the rating system and making it compatible with the V-chip.

But the Children's Television Act, which was passed a couple of years ago, also calls upon producers of television programs to develop more and better programs that will be appealing to children in a positive way.

And I just want to make two points and then ask anybody who wants to comment to comment. There were two interesting ideas which came out yesterday. One is, the people who were there -- not us, the Vice President and I just watched -- but in the room there, in the industry, there was a genuine argument about whether, particularly younger people, would be as likely to watch any kind of educational program as they would a sort of a violent cartoon or something. And there was a woman there from the Discovery Channel who was a very powerful advocate and said, that is not true. If you make education entertaining, it will be watched. And she gave some examples. That's the first thing -- would you like to have more positive programming on television?

The second thing I think's important to point out -- one of you sort of inched up to it when you were talking about the Internet, young people on

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the computer. All these technologies, the Vice President knows 100 times more about this than I do, but it looks to me like they're all merging. I mean, it won't be very long before you can call up any movie you want on your computer and before a lot of the things you see on your television screen are interactive.

So that I think that basically we're watching -- we're seeing a process -- and that, by the way, will engage more young people because as they become more computer literate, if they have interactive programs on television, it will bring them up. Or if they can call movies up on the computer, it will -- so we really need to also focus on the positive things that we ought to be doing for our children.

And so, what do you think? Do you think young people would be just as likely to watch more constructive programs if they were genuinely entertaining, or do you believe there's just an inherent predisposition to watch the violence?

Q I think that most definitely fun, educational television is -- has been and will continue to be widely accepted by young children because young children are so fascinated by basically everything. And if you fascinate them with something that's going to benefit them and something that's going to make them more aware of what's going on, it opens so many more new doors and windows of opportunity for them.

Watching an educational show about animals, for instance, can spark a child's interest in biology or some kind of science relating to animals, and that's such a fascinating field, and it can give a child like sort of a boost into a lifetime of educational filming in terms of TV and their studies and just basically their lives.

MRS. CLINTON: One of the things that was said yesterday that I did find interesting, and the teenagers I'd like to respond to this is, you know, the movie industry, with few exceptions -- mostly the Disney animated features, finds that a G rating is the kiss of death for most movies because teenagers won't go to see a G-rated movie. And, in fact, most teenagers won't go to see a PG-rated movie and they go to PG-13, and that's one of the reasons that the category was split, apparently.

But one of the people at the meeting yesterday said that they are concerned that when they get to older kids who are a big market for consumer goods, that the older kids will have more control over

the V-chip because their parents will think they have more authority and right do that on their own, and that they just won't choose programming once they get to be 12, 13 and above that is educational. Younger kids, yes, you can encode it and you can say I think you'll love watching this animal show, but when you get to be your ages, how do we send a message to the industry that older kids also will be interested in programs that aren't filled with a lot of violence and cheap thrills all the time.

Q Well, I date -- I'm 14 and I'm starting to date. And when I go to a movie with some friends, we went and saw Toy Story, we went out to the mall, saw Toy Story, ate dinner there. So it's not necessarily that all teenagers are picking the violent movies or the PG-13 or the R movies. And I find more of my friends go see the new Disney movie or the movie that is marketed towards the children, because it's cute, it's funny. So it's not -- I mean, I can't speak for everyone, but we prefer to go see the new Disney thing instead of the rated R movie with who knows who --

MRS. CLINTON: You are an exception --
(laughter) -- based on the numbers that are out there.

Q I think also it has to do with where I live and the family upbringing that I had.

MRS. CLINTON: That's exactly right.

Q Also, that I don't -- I watch a television show and, you know, someone dies in it and I cry, and I'm just like, oh, my gosh, because I'm not numb to it. But I notice that some of my peers are numb to it, they can watch, you know, really violent television and go, oh, okay, great." I can't do that. And I sit there going, oh, my gosh, you know.

Q I know I've seen Aladdin and I can see -- (inaudible) -- but when I watched Aladdin with my peers there are enough jokes that are on the higher level and they're almost bordering political satire that it catches the attention of the older crowd. And I think that's something that's very smart. What they've got to do is understand the same thing that, apparently, the advertising industry is a master at understanding -- you have to have your target audience.

If you're trying to target teenagers, there's going to be certain ways you're going to have to do it and you don't have to give up the violent programming. But educational programming for younger children is drastically different than what educational

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programming for high schoolers, what would catch their eye. And I think probably one of the keys for the industry to create educational programming for kids ages like 14, 17, high school, freshmen to senior in high school, is to use freshmen and seniors in high school.

I mean, teenagers want to relate to other teenagers. I mean, that's what I can say. And to use other teenagers -- you know, the news kind of -- the kids news stories. I think, you were pointing out, when they have other teenagers that come on and share, like, experiences or neat adventures, or a teenager who got to go do this or got to go do that, I think that kind of stuff, sharing each other's experiences, that's the kind of thing that educational programming for high schoolers needs to be.

Q That's the third quality -- children and young adult programming. The industry by default has left it to the cable industry, that's done a really remarkable job of providing quality children's television. But the open airwaves -- and I think this is the important issue of the Telecommunications Act -- there really has to be an aggressive looking at the kinds of programming, which even as late as the early '70s was available.

I can remember the Information Rock series, and how a bill becomes a law, and those little five-minute vignettes that used to be on the broadcast networks which have summarily disappeared. Kids are information sponges, in answer to your original question, and they will draw up anything that you put in front of them. The problem is that we have tended not to put in front of them the kinds of things that will be beneficial to them as persons but, more importantly, the kinds of things that are going to be beneficial to them as young citizens in this nation.

Q And that's why the Children's Television Act remains so important and why -- I'd be remiss representing the advocacy community to not talk about the opportunities with the FCC, with the fact that there are two openings. And now that the Telecommunications Act has been passed it changes the license renewal period for stations and when communities actually will have a chance. So the commissioners who are the FCC and the strengthening of the Children's Television Act is really crucial because that is really impacting on the kids and the quality of the programming.

I did just want to talk a little bit about an effort in Maryland, only because I think what we're

all talking about is sort of the theoretical. But how do parents who at home get involved in activities and in groups that are actually trying to do something. And in Maryland we have something called a Maryland Campaign for Kids TV, which is the only statewide group that we have teams that are assigned to each of the stations that talk to station management and work in partnership with them to talk about what's on television. And we did put out a book.

You talked about how important it is not to see turning the TV off as the only alternative. You hear people in the industry always say there is already a V-chip, it's the on and off button. But we think pulling the plug isn't the only option. And what we've done is we've organized this parent's guide by age group, because it's very true that toddlers are dealing with something very different. And then for three years we have evaluated the programming that's on Maryland stations, to take a look at the educational program to see is it getting better, is it getting worse. And we have kids involved in that, too.

I think that you're very right to say that the children are so savvy these days, from a very early age. My daughter at three, the fact that VCR was part of her vocabulary when she could start to talk. And I think that we're really remiss if we don't get the kids involved and realize, as you just said, that teenagers want to see other teens. They don't want to see old people telling them what to do. So get the teens involved. And the industry has the ability to use all those creative resources to do good, positive shows. It doesn't all just have to be the violent stuff.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I wanted to say before we close, Mr. President -- and I've been getting the signal that we've gone way overtime because this conversation has been interesting. And I know the President has expressed the hope that conversations like this will take place in communities all across the country. And just as Tipper's campaign with music provoked conversation about that issue, this new law and the industry move yesterday will have the extra added benefit of provoking conversation about the wide range of issues that television raises for families that often go undiscussed.

You were talking about children vegging out on television. That's a problem. You were saying they're little VCRs. Sometimes they just blink 12:12:12. (Laughter.) And that's a problem. The nightmares -- but the studies, while pointing out some of the problems, also demonstrate, as we learned in Nashville, that children who see a few hours of

programming chosen thoughtfully, with their parents involved in making the choice, actually do better in school and learn faster.

And so it really does not make sense for most families to just pull the plug and throw the television out of the house, although we've probably all been tempted to do that at times. It's not practical. Nor is it practical, as you said, for a parent to be told you have to stand there every minute of every hour and monitor every single program your child is watching. That is impossible. What the V-chip provides is a third option -- for parents to make categorical choices and say, this is the kind of programming that I think is good for my child and I want it available in my living room, as you said. But this other kind of programming which has images or language or scenes that my child is not prepared to deal with yet, keep that out of my house. And the choice is made by the parent.

But this conversation today, as I said, is one that's taken place all across America and this new program, the V-chip and the rating system is going to make it possible for parents to act on those choices.

Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I would like to thank all of you for being here, especially the young people. Thank you, doctor, it's good to see you again.

Q Good to see you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: I want to thank Tipper Gore when she first proposed a rating system for records it was considered heresy. And now she's lived and worked hard at this long enough to make it a matter of American conventional wisdom in television.

And let me say that for Hillary and for me, based on our experience over the last 15 or 20 years, maybe the most important reason to have this conversation today was the point that Catherine made when she first talked about her work for the V-chip, and that is that technology is intrinsically action oriented, but neither intrinsically good nor bad. It depends on the values and the action of the people in control of the technology. And while this gives more -- the V-chip and the ratings

information will give more power to parents, it's utterly useless unless they use it.

And so what I'm hoping that this did today is to convince other people in other community settings and every community in our country to begin to discuss these matters and to begin to now -- if their community does not have an advocacy group, like the one you are involved in, perhaps to form one or at least figure out how friends and neighbors can get together and figure out how they're going to use this ratings information and figure out how they're going to use the V-chip as the V-chip comes in.

But I was glad to hear Mrs. Somson say what she did about this. You don't have to wait for the V-chip to make use of the ratings information. You know, most parents are still influenced -- most children still have some influence about what their parents say, and parents are influenced by their children. So I just want to encourage that every place in America.

But this law that was passed, and this remarkable effort by the industry will not amount to a hill of beans if the parents do not take action in their homes and if in each community the community activists who know how to make the most of this don't work with the parents to do it.

Thanks a lot. It's great to see you.

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10:58 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 29, 1996

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The East Room

1:10 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I have just concluded a very significant meeting with the leaders of America's media and entertainment industries. I am pleased to report on a breakthrough voluntary agreement to help parents protect their children from violence and adult content on television.

Our purpose in this meeting has been to find out how we can help parents raise their children in the right way and to protect them as they raise them. In this high-technology age, our goal should be more opportunity, more responsibility and more community, to make changes in the way we do business that will help people to raise their children and bring us together as a people even as we grow the economy and enjoy the opportunity that this new technological era brings.

Just a little over a month ago in my State of the Union address I challenged Congress to pass legislation that requires new television sets to include a V-chip, to give parents the power to screen out violence and objectionable content in television programs. Earlier this month, with the Telecommunications Act, I signed the V-chip into law. Since that time, our administration, spearheaded by the Vice President, has worked with broadcasters, cable firms, production studios and others to encourage them to find ways to take more responsibility toward meeting our shared goals.

I am gratified that the far-sighted leaders gathered here in this unprecedented meeting have risen to the challenge. And I thank them all.

As a result of our discussions, the media and the entertainment industry has agreed to a voluntary system of ratings for television programs. These ratings will be put in place by the end of this year or the beginning of next year to help parents decide what programs they want their children to watch. And the V-chip will give parents the power to block those programs they do not want them to watch from their televisions.

We're handing the TV remote control back to America's parents so that they can pass on their values and protect their children. In the next few moments, Jack Valenti will describe the next steps the industry will take. But they've already shown that they recognize that their creativity and their freedom carries with it significant responsibility. I applaud them for it, and all Americans are in their debt.

The work we began here is just that -- a beginning. In our meeting I invited the industry leaders to come back to the White House to report once they have developed their rating systems and I look forward to the work that they will do.

Let me say on their behalf -- I know Jack Valenti will say this, but this is a complicated and difficult undertaking. They talked a lot about some of the challenges that they will face. I think that that should cause all the rest of us to be all the more supportive of the fact that they are doing it, doing it together, and doing it with real deliberation and discipline on a specific timetable.

We also had a very good discussion this morning of the urgent need to improve children's programming. It is not enough for parents to be able to tune out what they don't want their children to watch, they want to be able to tune in good programs that their children will watch. We take the Children's Television Act seriously. We want to continue to work with the industry to do the very best we can for our children in both quantity and quality of children's programming. And I believe the executives here today will bring to this challenge the same sense of responsibility they have brought to the issue of TV ratings.

Ultimately, we're trying to raise our children successfully in an age of information overload in which the typical child will watch 25,000 hours of television before his or her 18th birthday. Television is a powerful force to bring people together, to entertain, to educate, to open our minds and hearts. But we also know that young people are exposed regularly to numbing and pervasive violence and other destructive behavior when they park in front of the family television.

I believe what we are doing here today shows how America can meet this challenge and many of our challenges by businesses and parents and government all working together, each doing our part. It shows what can happen when visionary business leaders do make a commitment to values and the common good as well as the bottom line, and when they live up to their responsibilities as corporate citizens of our great country.

I want to say, too, that I hope the kind of responsibility these leaders have shown here today will be matched by other executives in other industries, on other problems the American people face in common. That is how we can move forward into this new age of possibility.

Finally, let me give credit where credit is due. This breakthrough we see today is the result of literally years of concerns by America's parents. Ultimately it is only parents who can prevent our children from seeing programs that teach violence, that has no consequences or that inappropriate behavior is glamorous. So to all the parents of America, I say: You will be handed a powerful tool that you must now exercise it with the responsibilities that go with it. And to all the parents who have worked for this day, I say a very special thank you, especially to Tipper Gore, who has worked on this issue for 20 years, and to the First Lady, who has given it so much of her concern.

America's media and entertainment industry is the world's most vital creative force. It would be much more difficult for me to be President were it not for the economic advantages in international trade brought to us by the creative energies of America's entertainment industry.

I hope that this agreement today will ensure that that creativity will forever be a source of learning and values and responsibilities in the lives of our children, even as it continues to be a great source of your own success, our entertainment, and America's strength.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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1:16 P.M. EST

MORE

The following are excerpts from statements made by the President, the Vice President, the First Lady and Mrs. Gore on ways to help parents control the effects of televised violence and adult situations on their children.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS
JANUARY 23, 1996:**

"To the media, I say you should create movies and CDs and television shows you'd want your own children and grandchildren to enjoy.

"I call on Congress to pass the requirement for a V-chip in TV sets so that parents can screen out programs they believe are inappropriate for their children. When parents control what their young children see, that is not censorship; that is enabling parents to assume more personal responsibility for their children's upbringing. And I urge them to do it. The V-chip requirement is part of the important telecommunications bill now pending in this Congress. It has bipartisan support, and I urge you to pass it now.

To make the V-chip work, I challenge the broadcast industry to do what movies have done -- to identify your programming in ways that help parents to protect their children. And I invite the leaders of major media corporations in the entertainment industry to come to the White House next month to work with us in a positive way on concrete ways to improve what our children see on television. I am ready to work with you."

**PRESIDENT CLINTON TO THE FAMILY AND MEDIA CONFERENCE
JULY 10, 1995:**

"I see no alternative to solving this problem than to reduce the aggregate amount of violence to which these children are subject. And we're going to have to have some help from the media to get that done. I just don't see any alternative to that.

"The V-Chip is something we ought to do . . . We must find a systematic way to do it. And in our country with the First Amendment and other things being the way they are, we're going to have some voluntary initiatives and some disciplined support from the media in America to get it done."

**PRESIDENT CLINTON DURING THE SIGNING OF THE
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1996, FEBRUARY 8, 1996:**

"Children sometimes are exposed to images parents just don't want them to see because they shouldn't. A comprehensive study released just yesterday confirms what every parent knows -- televised violence is pervasive and numbing, and if exposed constantly to it, young people can develop a numbing, lasting corrosive reaction to it. . ."

"I thank the Congress and the members of both parties for giving parents who want to take more responsibility for their children's upbringing an important tool to do so. I thank the Congress for reducing the chances that the hours spent in church or synagogue or in discussion around the dinner table about right and wrong and what can and cannot happen in the world will not be undone by unthinking hours in front of a television set."

"Of course, parents now have to do their end of the job and decide what they do or don't want their young children to see. But if every parent uses this chip wisely, it can become a powerful voice against teen violence, teen pregnancy, teen drug use, and for both learning and entertainment. The responsibility of parents to do this is something they deserve and something they plainly need. Now that they have it, they must use it."

**THE VICE-PRESIDENT TO THE FAMILY AND MEDIA CONFERENCE
JULY 10, 1995:**

"If we all agree that art educates us about the wrongs of society . . . and change how we view the world . . . then isn't it a little naive to claim that only the good stuff has that influence? Isn't it wishful thinking to think that only positive images would have an impact?"

". . . Here's the truth. For every study which demonstrates the pro-social effects of positive programming, there are many more which demonstrate the incredibly negative effects on behavior of violent programming. When findings are aggregated across all types of studies the apparent impact of media violence is highly significant. Media violence makes people more aggressive. It desensitizes them to its tragic results. Exposure to violence through the media makes our children less likely to respond to violence with concern and compassion."

THE FIRST LADY, from *IT TAKES A VILLAGE*:

"Television, movies, video games and music are here to stay and will continue to be influential in shaping opinions and behaviors in the years to come. As parents, we must be willing to reassert our authority over what enters our households. As creators and consumers of the media, and as citizens of the village, we must be willing to join with one another to press for improvements in what our children see and hear."

MRS. GORE, from *RAISING PG KIDS IN A X-RATED SOCIETY*:

"I have been concerned about violence on television and its effects on children for several years. In 1977 I helped form a group of Congressional wives who joined a coalition with the National PTA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and approximately thirty other groups. This coalition went to the networks to express concern about televised violence."

CHRONOLOGY

1987

Tipper Gore publishes Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society

1993

June

President sends letters to leaders of broadcast networks applauding their announcement of parental advisories for violence.

1994

March 25

TV Guide interview with President. About the V-chip: "Philosophically, I don't have a problem with it, because that's a matter of a parent controlling access to programming in the home and I think that's OK." About legislation to reduce TV violence: "I would prefer that we do it voluntarily, as a national cause, without legislation. Just work to channel the brilliance and the power of the entertainment industry to try to deal with these things."

1995

January

President in State of the Union calls on media industry to be more responsible in programming.

April 4-May 25

Vice President and Mrs. Gore host a series of dinners in preparation for Family Conference with academics; technology community; media industry leaders; entertainment industry leaders; television executives; and advertisers

June 15

President's statement on S.652 supports Senate's inclusion of V-chip in telecommunications reform legislation.

June 26

The First Lady hosts a White House event on children's television and public broadcasting.

July 9-10

President attends Family Conference hosted by Vice President and Tipper Gore in Nashville, Tennessee on "Family and the Media." He repeats support for V-chip legislation.

August 1

President's statement on H.R. 1555 threatens veto and criticizes House Commerce Committee for not including V-chip provision in telecommunications reform bill.

August 3

Vice President's statement on H.R. 1555 criticizes House Commerce Committee bill for not including V-chip.

September 18

President sends letter to FCC Commissioners supporting at least three hours per week per station of educational children's television.

October 26 President's letter to Sen. Hollings supports inclusion of V-chip in Conference report on telecommunications legislation.

December 20 Vice President issues statement congratulating Conference for including V-chip in telecommunications legislation conference report.

1996

The First Lady publishes It Takes a Village.

January 23 In State of the Union address, President calls upon Congress to pass the telecommunications bill with the V-chip provision, asks the industry to improve programming for children and invites industry to meet with him in the White House by end of February.

February 1 President's statement on passage of telecommunications reform legislation lauds inclusion of V-chip in final bill.

February 2 Vice President's statement on passage of telecommunications legislation applauds inclusion of V-chip.

February 8 President signs Telecommunications Act of 1996 and invites industry to meet at White House on February 29th to discuss TV ratings and children's programming.

February 8 Vice President meets with industry leaders to discuss next steps after telecommunications reform and White House meeting on TV ratings and children's television.

February 13 Ad hoc industry group informs White House that they were prepared to abandon litigation in favor of developing a V-chip-compatible ratings system.

February 15 White House representative meets with television writers to discuss children's television and television ratings, meets with Screen Actor's Guild to discuss same.

February 16 White House representative meets with Writer's Guild representatives to discuss President's call for TV ratings system.

Attached is an excerpt from the First Lady's book, It Takes A Village, where she discusses the influence of television on children and younger people. Also, attached are excerpts from related speeches by the First Lady.



Seeing Is Believing

As television has ravenously consumed our attention, it has weakened the formative institutions of church, family and schools, thoroughly eroding the sense of individual obedience to the unenforceable on which manners and morals and ultimately the law depend. Obviously, we need to rebuild our families, our schools and our churches. But we cannot complete these reforms until something is done about television, for in both its advertising and its programming it has created demands that appeal, not to the best in our natures, but to the worst.

JOHN SILBER

A FRIEND OF mine told me about a visit she made to a family with five children. Down in the basement, she could hear the two teenage boys and their buddies singing along to the latest "gangsta"-rap CD. On the first floor, the six-year-old and the eight-year-old were slouched at either end of the couch, motionless in front of the screen, "surfing" the channels. *Click.* A futuristic battle scene. *Click.* Graphic images of a recent murder in the city. *Click.* Two men fighting. *Click.* What appeared to be a "docudrama" about rape. In an upstairs bedroom, their twelve-year-old sister was watching an "R"-rated video with a friend. It was a clear case of media assault.

When my friend gently raised the issue of the poison that was pouring into those children's minds, her harried hostess could only say, "Look, I'm doing my best." Clearly, this mother, like nearly every parent I talk with, could use some assistance from the village.

Some of that assistance has come from Tipper Gore,

whose 1987 book, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*, sums up the challenge parents face. Long before I met her, I admired Tipper for having the courage to stand up and say what millions of other fathers and mothers were thinking: that some of the media our kids are exposed to is doing them harm.

Tipper and her watchdog group, the Parents' Music Resource Center, were leading forces behind the effort to get record companies to put warning labels on music recordings with violent, degrading, and sexually explicit messages that are inappropriate for children. Yet Tipper was attacked and ridiculed for her outspokenness, and accused of supporting censorship for advocating voluntary warning labels.

Finally, other public figures have taken up her call for action. C. DeLores Tucker, head of the National Political Congress of Black Women, teamed up with William Bennett against "gangsta" rap. They confronted media giant Time Warner, which has since decided to sell its stake in Interscope Records, the company that produced some of the music with the most offensive lyrics. Although it has taken a long time, public opinion seems to be mobilizing to force the entertainment and news industries as well as the government to address concerns about the effects of the media on our children and our society.

The recent attention that has been brought to bear on the content of movies is also overdue, given their powerful influence on the culture. At least we have a movie ratings system, although there is much we can do to refine it and to improve the content of films in the first place. For example, we can look to countries such as Great Britain and Australia, which have stricter codes for violent content. But in this chapter the focus is primarily on

what happens all day on our television screens, both because that is where most people see the movies Hollywood makes and because its presence and influence so pervade our society.

Former Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton N. Minow sounded the alarm long ago. In 1961, Minow decried television as a "vast wasteland" and urged that the networks be held to a high standard of public interest. Since then, Minow has devoted himself to this vitally important issue in a variety of communications and public service positions. Most recently, in *Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children, Television, and the First Amendment*, he and Craig L. LaMay catalogued the overwhelming evidence of television's negative effects that has accumulated over the past three decades and took broadcasters to task for evading the consequences of their decisions by hiding behind the First Amendment.

Minow's portrayal of how deeply televised violence has embedded itself in our national psyche is as shocking as the violence itself:

So routinely do Americans accept television's version of their lives, that on January 18, 1993, when seventeen-year-old Gary Scott Pennington walked into his high-school English class in Grayson, Kentucky, and fired a .38 caliber bullet into his teacher's forehead, killing her, one of the students who witnessed the murder remembered thinking, "This isn't supposed to happen. This must be MTV." Must be. The average student in Gary's senior class had already seen 18,000 murders on television. The average student in the class had spent between

15,000 and 20,000 hours watching television, compared with 11,000 in school; every year the average American child watches more than a thousand stylized and explicit rapes, murders, armed robberies, and assaults on television.

Since the 1950s, a steady stream of articles, books, and studies have documented the harm television does to children. The American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth points to three major reports, each a decade apart—by a surgeon general's commission in 1972, by the National Institute of Mental Health in 1982, and by the American Psychological Association's Committee on Media in Society in 1992—which reviewed hundreds of studies to arrive at the same unshakable conclusion: that "viewing violence increases violence" and "prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence."

Ninety-eight percent of American homes have at least one television set, which is watched each week for an average of twenty-eight hours by children between the ages of two and eleven, and twenty-three hours by teenagers. Children who grow up in lower-income families, with fewer organized activities or places to play, watch even more TV than their more affluent peers.

Children themselves report that certain television shows encourage them to engage in sexual activity before they are ready, to behave aggressively, and to be disrespectful to their parents. Eighty percent of Americans responding to a 1993 Times-Mirror poll said that they believe TV is harmful to society and especially to children. And we know that saturating young minds with increasingly graphic and sensational depictions of vio-

lence prevents them from developing the emotional and psychological tools they need to deal with the threat and the reality of violence. Shootings, beatings, even killings, begin to seem normal and, in an odd way, painless. Children become numbed—"desensitized"—to violence.

Whether, and under what circumstances, the violence people see on television and at the movies actually incites violent acts is a question researchers have debated for years, ever since the surgeon general's 1972 report. As with smoking and lung cancer, however, we know that there *is* a connection. Yet just as somebody—most often somebody well paid by the tobacco companies—is sure to stand up each time a new finding confirms the linkage between smoking and lung cancer and shout, "That's not definitive," every time a new report draws a connection between the violence on our television screens and the violence on our streets, some in the entertainment industry try to refute, or at least to dilute, the claim.

You don't have to conduct research worthy of a Nobel Prize to grasp that what most children are seeing on television can't be good for them. Just turn on your television, any time of the day, any day of the week, and see what is competing for their attention. I'll bet that if a stranger came into your home and began telling your kids stories about the same kinds of characters and events, using the same kinds of words and pictures, you'd throw him out. You wouldn't wait for a surgeon general's report to validate what your instincts as a parent told you was a hazard to your children's mental and emotional health.

Defenders of television argue that children are subjected to images of violence in all sorts of media—including fairy tales and other literary classics—and complain that

it is not fair to hold television to a higher standard. But as Minow points out:

The tradition of oral and written storytelling embodied in both fairy tales and modern children's literature developed in the service of children's moral education, and its lessons helped to define the boundaries between childhood and adulthood. In traditional settings, violence was but *one* possible outcome of conflict, not the only one or even the primary one. Moreover, stories that included violence surrounded it with meanings created by adults for instructing children, not by adults for entertaining adults.

Television executives are also quick to say that they are a major provider of information as well as entertainment. They stress that it is the duty of journalists to report what goes on in the world. It's true that children now get most of their information about events at home and around the world directly from the media instead of filtered through their parents, teachers, or other adults. And it's also true that we need to be made aware of crime and violence so that we can take actions to protect ourselves, such as supporting measures to impose sensible gun control. But why, when we turn on the evening news these days, do we find ourselves awash in depictions of sensationalized violence that are increasingly difficult to distinguish from the gore that permeates the latest "action" series?

In 1992, the Center for Media and Public Affairs counted the acts of violence on ten television channels in the course of a single eighteen-hour broadcast day. When

the study was repeated just two years later, the center found that the incidence of television violence had increased by 41 percent, with the greatest rise occurring in news shows. Another recent study found that local news coverage of murders tripled last year, even though there was no corresponding rise in the recorded murder rate. The explanation is obvious. News executives are acting more single-mindedly from the same motive that drives their colleagues in the entertainment business: violence sells. Ellen Hume, a senior fellow at the Annenberg Washington Program in Communication Studies, points out in her recent report, "Tabloids, Talk Radio, and the Future of News," "News about crime and violence is cheap and easy to cover."

The exhaustive coverage of violence and bad news in general contributes to young people's increasing sense of alienation and to the dysfunctional, antisocial behavior that accompanies it. Many kids become depressed or have nightmares because of the barrage of bloodshed they see on TV. It numbs them to the pain and destructiveness of actual violence, encouraging a stance of ironic detachment. At worst, it contributes to what social scientist George Gerbner has identified as "the mean world syndrome," where children internalize the negative attributes of the world as they see it portrayed in the media.

Children also learn from television that we prize celebrity above all else, regardless of how it is achieved. At the same time, television may leave them with the impression that people hardly ever do anything good or right and that few, if any, adults are worthy of respect. We are saturated with stories about priests who molest children, gangs of young thugs who vandalize and victimize indiscriminately, and families that are nightmares of abuse

and neglect. The lurid accounts tend to eclipse positive stories about priests and other clergy who help people come to terms with loss and find meaning in their lives, teenagers who feed the homeless, clean up our parks, and help the elderly, and families who pull together in times of stress.

Small wonder, then, that many children grow up skeptical that organized religion can offer guidance and sustenance, that they or their peers can be a force for good, that families can be a lasting source of strength and stability. The merciless, minute scrutiny of crimes and victims emphasizes and exaggerates the powerlessness of individuals, especially in the minds of children, whose own lack of power in the world is all too plain to them. More insidiously, it undermines their faith in institutions, their belief that individuals can band together for good as well as for evil.

Leonard Eron, a psychology professor at the University of Michigan and a leading expert on the effects of television, warns: "In the same way television teaches violence, it now teaches youngsters that . . . dysfunctional families are par for the course." Professor Froma Walsh of the University of Chicago echoes him. Consistently seeing the sensational way families are portrayed on most talk shows and many prime-time programs encourages people to "view their own families through a glass darkly and look for pathologies," even when families are "just trying to cope as well as they can." Such research suggests that whatever is provided as a steady diet on television becomes reality in the minds of frequent viewers. That's not good news for any family, given what's currently on the menu.

And the menu is expanding. Video games have trans-

formed millions of television sets into scenes of blood and violence that children not only watch but participate in. Agile fingers race across the controls of best-sellers like *Mortal Kombat* and *Killer Instinct*, directing characters on the screen to execute the most desired outcome—a brutal murder. There are also moves like the Neck Breaker, the Skeleton Grab, the Skull Rip, and the Death Scream. In *Mortal Kombat*, a computer-generated voice urges “Finish him!” as blood continues to spray.

Recently, a fourteen-year-old boy from a Maryland suburb where actual violence rarely intrudes described his fascination with electronic violence to *Washington Post Magazine* staff writer David Finkel. “I like violence,” he said. “I like seeing violence. I just really like watching violence.” This boy’s parents are involved in their son’s life—they go to the movies with him and try to interest him in reading—but they also believe he is old enough to watch what he wants to see, listen to what he wants to hear, and play the games that amuse him. This boy assures Finkel that his life would be very different without this connection to violence. “I’d be scared to be with anyone else,” he explains. “I wouldn’t be able to relate to anybody else because *they’ve* all seen it.”

It is too early to evaluate the effects of video games fully. But already some psychologists have pointed out that children’s direct control of the violence in video games could be more harmful than what they only observe passively. Dr. Carole Lieberman, a UCLA psychiatrist and former chair of the National Coalition on Television Violence, refers to video games as a “new drug.” “I think it’s worse than television violence because children are pushing the buttons themselves,” Dr. Lieber-

man says. “They are getting rewarded for destroying people in a game.”

We already know that television doesn’t just affect what we think; it also affects *how* we think. The medium, as Marshall McLuhan pointed out, is itself the message. The episodic, reactive, almost frantic pace of what is broadcast makes children feel and act frantic and shortens their attention spans and their patience for activities that take time and problems that don’t yield immediate solutions.

Children—and teenagers—need stimulation, but there is a limit to how much they need, and what kind. Consider for a moment what it means to put the remote control in the hands of a preschooler. She does not have to work hard to be entertained, to use her imagination as she would if she were listening to a story or playing make-believe. She does not have the ability to screen out what she sees and hears, let alone to evaluate it. And least of all, faced with the dancing images and bright colors and exciting sound effects, is she equipped to walk away.

The pull of television is irresistible to children, riveting their attention the way traffic accidents draw rubberneckers. The homes in America where television sets blare night and day are like highways clogged with accidents. Only, in this case, the children gawking mindlessly, overstimulated and underchallenged, are the victims.

MY PARENTS did not worry so much about the content of the television shows my brothers and I watched as they did about the amount of time we would spend at it, if they let us. They wanted us reading, doing chores, or

playing outside, so they regulated our viewing hours strictly. Bill and I restricted both the amount and the kind of television Chelsea watched as a child, and even now we check up from time to time on her TV and movie watching. Parents are beginning to come up with other ways of defending themselves and their children from the excessive influence of television. They may eventually get some help from technology, such as the V-chip included in proposed telecommunications legislation. The V-chip is a computer chip with which parents could block television programs designated as containing material unsuitable for children. Making the technology available is only half the battle; putting it to good use will require a strong, clear rating system like the one we now have for movies.

In the meantime, parents are on their own in making sure children are not watching inappropriate shows or too much television, period. They can continue to trade their own "ratings" informally. They can encourage the newspapers and magazines that are beginning to gear reviews of movies and music toward parents to cover television in this way as well. They can also teach their children *how* to watch television, the same way they teach them to cross the street: carefully.

A publication entitled "Taking Charge of Your TV: A Guide to Critical Viewing for Parents and Children" is available from the Family and Community Critical Viewing Project, an initiative sponsored by the National PTA and the cable industry to teach television viewing skills to parents, teachers, and children. It suggests ways parents can talk to kids about what they are watching, which not only makes television a less passive pastime

but transforms it into a learning tool. We can ask children why characters act as they do and help them to distinguish between responsible and irresponsible acts. We can get them to talk about how the families on television are different from theirs and from other families they know. We can relate television to real-life situations. When Roseanne and Dan fret over bills because Dan's business is going under, for example, we can explain to our children that sometimes parents need to figure out ways to make sure they can meet all their responsibilities.

Used wisely, television can help children to distinguish between fantasy and reality—precisely because the fantasy it projects feels so real to them. Identify aspects peculiar to "TV land" that may seem obvious to an adult but aren't necessarily clear to a child. For instance, when watching a thirty-minute drama or sitcom, point out that it's not realistic to solve a problem in the span of a half hour. Explain that this is how writers and directors adapt to scheduling needs and discuss how the situation might have played out in real life.

There is another option parents might consider: Just turn the televisions, video games, and VCRs off—for an evening, a week, a regular day each week. When I made this suggestion in an interview with *Woman's Day*, readers responded enthusiastically. Some parents, fed up with not only depictions of violence but the excessive influence of television in general, wrote to say they had already tried out the idea.

Imagine what might happen if we all turned off our televisions for an entire week. The quiet—and the other activities we could take up—might be habit-forming.

Here and there, parents are banding together and dis-

covering their collective strength. The South Florida Preschool PTA monitors children's programming on the Miami television stations, with members volunteering to watch programming for one- or two-week blocks to determine whether the stations are complying with the law.

The Children's Television Act of 1990 limits the amount of time the networks can devote to commercials during children's programming. It also directs the FCC more broadly to review, as part of the licensing procedures, whether stations air shows that "serve the educational and informational needs of children." In three years, the Florida group found, the networks failed to meet the law's requirements. In their 1995 report, they noted that Miami commercial television stations were devoting only 1 percent of total programming time to educational programs for children.

The Miami group is among the many parent and consumer groups urging the FCC to enforce its regulations and to strengthen them, by requiring the networks to air more educational programming. In 1951, twenty-seven hours of quality children's programming aired each week. The President and FCC Chairman Reed Hundt would like to see the FCC require each network to broadcast at least three hours a week. As of this writing, the FCC has not yet taken action on this proposal. In response to public petitions, however, Westinghouse, which has recently purchased CBS, has voluntarily made such a commitment. The FCC's decision will not affect cable stations, since they are considered exempt from government regulations because they do not use the public airwaves.

The advent of cable television has dramatically expanded offerings available to children, for better and worse. Channels like Disney, Discovery, Nickelodeon,

and A&E are staples of Clinton family viewing. But only 65 percent of American households now have access to cable, and the demographics of the remaining 35 percent includes a disproportionate share of the nation's children. As with many other social changes of the past fifty years, the children hardest hit by the negative impact of the media, television in particular, are those in low-income families.

That's why public television, which has consistently provided educational programming for children, deserves our tax dollars and charitable contributions. Shows like *Sesame Street* entertain while they teach math and reading. *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* makes learning geography fun and exciting. With the help of music videos and special effects, *Bill Nye, the Science Guy* transports science out of the classroom and into the world. Many "hit" educational shows are creations of the Children's Television Workshop, which was founded in 1968 to explore television's potential as an educational medium.

In May 1995, John Wright and Aletha Huston, professors of human development at the University of Kansas, released the results of a four-year study on how television influences the academic skills, school readiness, and school adjustment of low-income children. They found that preschoolers who watched as little as twenty-five minutes per day of educational children's programs like *Sesame Street* did significantly better on standardized verbal and math tests when they started school and consistently spent more time on reading and other educational activities than did children who watched primarily noneducational cartoons and adult programming.

Educators, community leaders, church groups, and others can join in the effort to demand support for pub-

lic television and better commercial programming. They can also organize boycotts of gratuitously violent, sexually explicit, or otherwise offensive programming. One household won't have much of an impact, but a village or two can make or break a Nielsen rating percentage point, and ratings are TV's most critical barometer for making programming decisions.

Teachers can play a part, both directly and indirectly. First and most important, they can do their best to make reading fun. They can also assist parents in helping to educate children about how television manipulates them and undermines values like compassion and kindness that they are learning at home, in their place of worship, and at school.

Journalists and news executives have responsibilities too. When violence is newsworthy they should report it, but they should balance it with stories that provide children and adults with positive images of themselves and those around them, taking care not to exacerbate negative stereotypes. To report the truth in a thoughtful manner, mindful of the potency of the written word and the televised image, is to be not only a good journalist but a responsible citizen.

Acknowledging that commercial television is driven by the need to make a profit does not let executives and programmers off the hook. As Newton Minow said in a 1995 keynote address to a conference of Children Now, a leading nonpartisan, nonprofit organization for children: "In an ideal world, the people who work in television would have to take an oath like the Hippocratic oath: 'Do no harm.'" How could they uphold it? They could begin by asking themselves if they would allow their own children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and neighbors

to watch the shows for which they are responsible. They could form their own advisory panels—preferably of parents—who could be counted on to put children's interests ahead of financial ones.

Journalists and broadcasters tell me they have been talking among themselves about these issues and looking for ways to fulfill both their professional and public responsibilities. At their annual Family Conference, held this year in Nashville, Al and Tipper Gore brought together broadcasters, children's advocates, advertisers, researchers, and parents to discuss the media's impact on children and families. Oprah Winfrey has decided to steer her show in a more positive direction. One television station decided not to carry the more lurid talk shows, and another is considering dropping them. A few local TV stations have decided to abandon the tabloid approach and get back into the news business.

There may be monetary as well as moral rewards for such choices. When he was a news director at WCCO-TV in Minneapolis, John Lansing realized that the more his station's local news coverage resembled an entertainment program, the weaker its connections to its community were becoming. He decided to convene town meetings to allow the station to reacquaint itself with the expectations of its viewers. As a result, the news operation dropped its tabloid-style coverage, and WCCO became a pioneer in "family-sensitive viewing," reducing or eliminating descriptions and images of violence during designated early evening hours. Even so, WCCO has managed to maintain its first-place market share.

Numerous journalism associations and programs encourage balanced and open-minded reportage. One such organization is the Casey Journalism Center at the Uni-

versity of Maryland, which awards fellowships to reporters, editors, producers, and news directors. The recipients get the chance to participate in conferences and meet with experts on these issues. The intent is to encourage thoughtful, in-depth, well-documented reporting.

Television could take a cue from the several newspapers that have developed children's beats and long-term reporting projects focusing on family issues. The Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, for instance, has added a new "family section" that runs every Saturday. So far, it has run stories on children's television viewing habits (along with tips on how to make TV watching a more constructive activity), on ways grandparents and grandchildren can spend time together, and on building stronger families (accompanied by personal stories about people in the region). The section also includes a regular family finance column, with information on everything from the cost of buying a family pet to how to take a family vacation without breaking the bank.

Television, movies, video games, and music are here to stay and will continue to be influential in shaping opinions and behaviors in the years to come. As parents, we must be willing to reassert our authority over what enters our households. As creators and consumers of the media, and as citizens of the village, we must be willing to join with one another to press for improvements in what our children see and hear. A single act has little impact, but millions of decisions—to turn off television sets or to reject certain movies or CDs or video games—give us the voltage to send a message to advertisers and programmers that will reach them loud and clear.



Every Business Is a Family Business

The Golden Rule does not mean that gold shall rule.

BARBARA REYNOLDS

MY FATHER distrusted both big business and big government. When I was growing up, he never tired of quoting President Eisenhower's warning against the military-industrial complex and the dangers of concentrated, unaccountable power in anyone's hands. I thought of him during a trip I made to South America in October 1995, when I happened to hear a reference to the words of an earlier President, Theodore Roosevelt. I was to give a speech to students and faculty at the University of Chile in Santiago. When the rector of the university introduced me, he referred to remarks that Roosevelt had made in the same hall eighty-two years before. The former President, he said, had warned against the excesses of unchecked corporate power.

Intrigued, I tracked down a copy of Roosevelt's speech and was struck by how relevant his message remains today:

By allowing, with no control, this concentration of enormous enterprises in the hands of a few . . . many evils have arisen. . . . We must

COLLECTED QUOTES BY FIRST LADY
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY TO THE AMERICAN
NEWSWOMEN'S CLUB
(June 26, 1995)

"...Children who watch about 25 minutes of public broadcasting...every day have, after two to five years of exposure, more success and better readiness for school than children who watch 25 minutes of commercial television.

"We add that information to the more general knowledge we have about the impact of television on our children, and it underscores how important it is that we as adults recognize the differences between children and adults. And those differences are particularly marked in the way children respond to and from television.

"There is no getting around the fact that television is a pervasive influence. And it can either be an influence for the good or for the ill. That is up to us to determine. It is not out of our control...

"...Educational television plays (a positive role) in the lives of children, but particularly in the lives of those children in 40 percent of our families that do not receive cable, who are solely dependent upon the three major networks and public broadcasting, and who, in larger numbers than the rest of the population, often do not have the resources with books and videocassettes and renting movies every week so that their children can have the same kind of opportunities that we try to provide to our own."

EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS AT THE CASEY JOURNALISM CENTER FOR CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES
(June 13, 1995)

"...Issues affecting children are not marginal issues, they are the issues that really are at the core of what kind of country we have, what kind of investments we should make, what our priorities ought to be...Children's issues are not soft issues, but rather the very essence of who we are as a people; how we treat our children and what kinds of support we give them will, I hope, continue to make the case for including concerns about children in everything else that we do...

"...Looking at the business world is as important as looking at government policy. Looking at individual and family responsibility is as important as looking at the cultural norms

as played out in movies or television. They are all part of the culture in which children are being raised...

"...Children are the result of the values of both their families and the broader society in which they are raised, and to pretend that the family is some kind of little fortress immune from the effects of what goes on beyond its walls is as equally irresponsible as pretending that government policy or business policy can substitute for a family's love, concern and attention to children."

EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY TO THE NATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON YOUTH VIOLENCE
(August 15, 1994)

"...Think of what it is like today for the young people in this room and the millions of others like them who are immersed in a culture of violence. A culture that in so many ways glorifies violence. We see it every day on television, we see it in our movies, but worst of all we see it every single day on the streets and neighborhoods where children are trying to grow up. Where many, too many, are in effect raising themselves. In too many neighborhoods, gunfire is a daily ritual of life, and an uzi is a badge of honor, instead of a mark of cowardice, which it truly is. A bullet wound is an emblem of adulthood."

EXCERPTS FROM THE FIRST LADY'S APPEARANCE ON THE OPRAH WINFREY
SHOW
(May 16, 1995)

"...Adults need to be careful about what they say around children and what they portray to children...The kind of dysfunctional behavior that we are subjecting our children to gives them no role models, gives them the feeling that anything goes, that they can do anything with no consequences and get on television...I think that talk shows, combined with the violence, is, in effect, changing the way children feel about themselves in very damaging ways to themselves and our country."

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW WITH THE FIRST LADY BY NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE
(January 4, 1996)

"...I was looking at some research that a political scientist has done showing that young people are by far, in her words, more misanthropic than people our age and older. They don't trust anybody. They have more emotional stress in their lives.

"And the explanation for that has to do with everything from the breakdown of the family and divorce, to the steady diet of what they see on television, to the way they're treated by the

adults in their lives. And I just think we've got to take a step back here and say, "What are we creating? What are we doing to our children?" There aren't any simple answers. You can't say, it's just the government's fault. Or you can't say, it's just those irresponsible parents living in the inner city. The responsibility is spread all the way across society."

EXCERPTS FROM MIAMI HERALD COLUMN, "PUBLIC TELEVISION: AN OASIS FOR CHILDREN"

(August 13, 1995)

"...just at that wonderful stage when young children seem to absorb every new word and concept that they come across, educational television provides a unique learning tool. Even watching as little as 25 minutes a day can help. Researchers have found that low-income children between the ages of 2 and 5 who watch a small amount of educational programming do significantly better on tests of reading potential, vocabulary, mathematical reasoning, and overall readiness for school.

"By contrast, kids who spend the same amount of time watching noneducational cartoons and adult programs are not as well prepared for learning in school."

"...I do not mean to suggest that public television is a panacea. Clearly we parents must take responsibility for turning off the television more often and monitoring the shows that our children watch. And we can do more as a society to help our families meet that challenge. A rating system and the proposed V-chip to block our violent programs from individual homes could make a difference.

"But let's not kid ourselves. In a culture such as ours, which is so dominated by television, children's programming is not a luxury enjoyed by a privileged few; it is a necessity for tens of millions of American families."

EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS TO CHILDREN NOW CONFERENCE VIA SATELLITE

(March 4, 1994)

"Over the past few years, a lot of attention has been paid to violence in movies and in television programming, and in the records that young people listen to. And on that score, things are beginning to improve. As the President said earlier this week, the entertainment industry has -- as a result of public concerns -- become much more involved in efforts to reduce violence in network programming. Their willingness to set up a voluntary monitoring system is a step in the right direction."

"...One of the biggest dangers of excessive coverage of violence is that, in a child's eye, the stories validate, sometimes even glamorize, dysfunctional behavior. Violence becomes normal -- and, in an odd way, even painless. It becomes harder for a child to distinguish between fact and fiction...

"The second danger of excessive coverage is that children become numbed -- or, as social scientists say, "desensitized" -- to violence. Children become so habituated to seeing and hearing about violence that shootings, beatings -- even death -- come to seem normal to them.

"They develop an ironic detachment from life, a fatalism that prevents them from trusting anyone or anything. Recently I read a story about young children planning their own funerals. These children were so sure they were going to die violently that they had told their families what clothes they wanted to wear at their funerals, what music they wanted played, all with a casual detachment about what living and dying really means."

QUOTES FROM RAISING PG KIDS IN AN X-RATED SOCIETY, TIPPER GORE, 1987

P. xii: "...in virtually every medium, the communications industry offers increasingly explicit images of sex and violence to younger and younger children."

P. 40: "I have been concerned about violence on television and its effects on children for several years. In 1977 I helped form a group of congressional wives who joined a coalition with the National PTA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and approximately thirty other groups. This coalition went to the networks to express concern about televised violence."

P. 43: "More and more researchers are succeeding in measuring the link between television violence and individual behavior."

P. 45: "Television is shaping the hearts and minds and attitudes of an entire generation of children who—like their parents—are turned on to this plug-in drug."

P. 49: "Media images mirror and shape society, reflecting trends and realities, but also validating and reinforcing them. Many tend to remain unconcerned about media violence, accepting it simply because it imitates and dramatizes the violence in society and the world." ["....Some go so far as to suggest...that exaggerated, fictionalized violence in movies, television, and music videos even has a cathartic value, allowing viewers to purge themselves of their own base instincts. While this may be true for some, the evidence with respect to most people suggests otherwise."]

P. 129: "Sexually explicit, violent, destructive entertainment is being aggressively marketed to an audience that includes preteens, young teens, and older adolescents, by commercial interests who have demonstrated an astounding lack of accountability for their actions."

P. 129: "Excessive and explicit violence is promoted in many entertainment offerings, even though our country is already one of the most crime-ridden in the developed world."