

Commentary

Censorship must be treated with care and responsibility

by Fr. Joe Hattie, O.M.I.
Roman Catholic Chaplain

The development of communication, and thus of community, requires the effort on the part of each of us to acquire the ability to make distinctions. It is a necessary virtue which helps us to keep the balance between unfair distinctions and pretending there are no distinctions to be made.

This virtue is most important when speaking against censorship. In our day being against censorship presents the temptation to pretend there are no distinctions to be made. Thus it is often used as a club, or, more often, as a magic wand which is supposed to make any opposition to my ideas or desires disappear.

Pornography is one of the issues which causes some to reach for the club or magic wand.

What would be more beneficial is to reach for the dictionary. A lit-

tle research will show that the function of the censor is to work to protect the common good. Such work will most certainly involve making decisions about various types of human activities, etc., in the light of their contribution to the common good of society. It can provide a most important service, especially to help us to see those things which, at first glance, appear to be good, but in effect are harmful to the common good and thus the good of individuals in our society.

The Trojan Horse is an example in fact. It looked good, and the people freely took it into their city. The effect: their downfall.

We do therefore need to make valid distinctions which go beyond appearances. Many of us need help and encouragement to make the effort required.

We do have a tendency to give

that responsibility to one or two people in our society, e.g. films. This, however, does not relieve us of our own responsibility to protect the common good. We must thus be prepared to offer our observations whenever we become aware of a Trojan Horse. Hopefully, also, we would all have the willingness to listen carefully to the observations offered and evaluate them seriously. To simply wave opposition to censorship as a magic wand, expecting the person to disappear, does an injustice to that person as well as to the waver of the magic wand.

We must also be cautious that the magic wand does not make disappear our individual desire to protect the common good. Or that it make disappear our right to protect those we love. We all acknowledge the responsibility of parents to cen-

sor actions of their children to protect them, e.g. Don't skate on the lake, the ice is too thin; Don't eat those pills, they only look like candy.

The magic wand of opposition to censorship could also make disappear the citizen's right to try and show promoters of the arms race why that activity is a Trojan Horse. That magic wand could make disappear our right to censure our own governments, especially through voting, when they may try to bring a Trojan Horse into our society.

The use of opposition to censorship as a magic wand would eventually lead to depriving us of our right and duty to love our neighbour. If that should happen who would protect us against the oppression of mind and soul which would result? Who would protect

us against the coercion of conscience this would bring about? Who would speak on behalf of the dignity of the human being - whether male or female?

Censorship has great potential for good. It likewise can be greatly abused. We will contribute to its potential for good if we don't become intellectually lazy. If we are willing to develop the virtue of making real and necessary distinctions.

Such a virtue will be particularly helpful in the present discussions as to whether pornography is a Trojan Horse or not. One man who has made such efforts is Dr. John Court, a psychologist at Flinders University of South Australia, in a paper he presented last year titled "The Impact of Pornography on Society". I would recommend it to all.

Letters

Cable TV says wait and see

To the Editor:

Controversy over the "adult viewing" on Pay TV has been a hot issue in Nova Scotia during the past month and unfortunately, the cablevision companies appear to be caught in the middle of it. All cable systems are licensed under the Broadcasting Act by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to carry certain television signals and pay television services on their cable plants, and distribute same to householders who choose to subscribe to their service. The licenses from the CRTC do not permit cable companies to change or delete these signals, they have absolutely no say or control in the content of the programs carried by the television or Pay TV networks.

Cable television and Pay TV are not mandatory or essential services, as three television signals can be received in the Halifax area off-air with roof top antennas. However, over 36,000 households (in excess of 80% of homes passed by cable) choose to subscribe to cable television in the Halifax area. Although Pay TV has only been available since February 1 in Canada, the initial response exceeded expectations, and the feed-back from Pay TV subscribers has been positive.

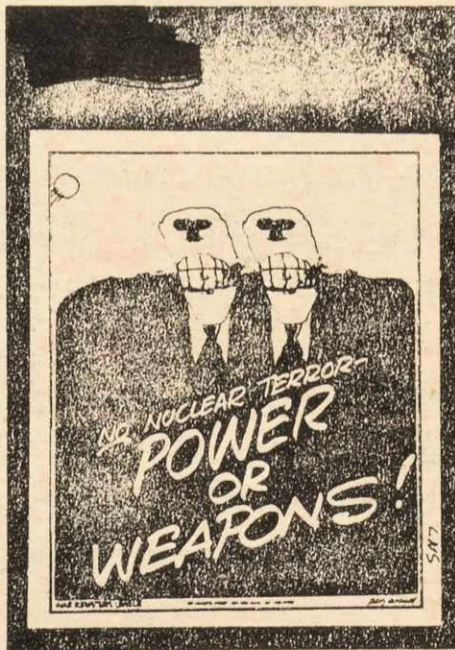
While I have stated that cable companies have no control over Pay TV programming, I am certain that Pay Distributors (including First Choice) will be responsive to feed-back from the cable systems and their subscribers. The Star Channel (the Atlantic Region Pay TV Distributor) has already responded by changing their March program schedule to include "General movies Saturday and Sunday". The Pay Distributors are also developing an industry-wide "code of ethics", which will set standards for Pay TV programming. All movies on Pay TV will be classified in the First Choice, Star Channel, and C Channel guides, and on the air before the films begin. This classification of programs will assist subscribers, particularly parents, in selecting which programs will be viewed in their home. A blocking device which is used by the viewer to prevent access to certain programs on Pay TV in his/her home is also available.

The Playboy programming on First Choice is not the "main bill of fare" as it constitutes only 3% of their total 24 hour-a-day entertainment package. Airing under the banner of Playboy Late Night Weekend, it will be broadcast on alternate Friday and Saturday evenings at 1:00 a.m. All Playboy material is screened by the programming directors of First Choice before it is aired.

Adult viewing is also programmed on the Star Channel and C Channel in response to consumer demand for the service.

No one, including the undersigned and members of the groups that are opposed to Pay TV, has seen the "Playboy" programming. I for one am willing to give First Choice an opportunity to prove that their programming will conform to acceptable community moral standards prior to registering objections to the programming.

Sincerely, Kim Marchant,
Marketing Director, Eastern Cablevision Ltd.



USSR not the only cruise-target

To the Editor:

U.S. propagandists indicate that the weapons' systems to be tested in Alberta are aimed at the U.S.S.R. "It ain't necessarily so."

For U.S. and its sycophants have been fighting nations like Vietnam, Nicaragua and Palestine over land and raw materials. U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. contradictions exist but the main contradiction is between the U.S. and oppressed peoples.

Resistance to demands for cheap raw materials in Asia, Africa and South America has helped create economic prob-

lems in the big states. Contradictions between the U.S. and its NATO "Allies" have intensified.

With missile systems in Alberta, the U.S. won't be spending as much for northern support. U.S. control over Ottawa and the Provinces will be tightened.

There will be more U.S. demands for the land and oil belonging to Native peoples. Harsher treatment will be the answer to those favouring the Right of Self-Determination for Quebec.

U.S. farmers will sell more wheat to the U.S.S.R. Canadian farmers will sell less. U.S. drug and pornographic sales in Canada will increase.

U.S.A.-philes can't explain how long the missile systems' testing will continue; nor how to get rid of them if the owners refuse to leave.

Sincerely,
Homer B. Chase,
Canning, Nova Scotia

Early registration post-poned

To the Editor:

For the information of all students returning to Dal next year, the early registration period (traditionally) held during the second week of March will be held March 28-31 this year.

The postponement is due to collective action by the faculties of Arts and Science, Administrative Studies, and Health Professions, stemming from the Faculty of Arts and Science's concern that registration should be held off until the 1983/84 departmental budgets had been confirmed by the university administration.

The faculty stated that departments could not submit accurate 1983/84 class offering lists to the registrar without knowing their financial situation.

The decision is conscious of student concern that a registration period any later than March 31 would conflict with April exams, but, unfortunately, the action appears to be a result of an administrative delay in completing the envelope budgeting process, and, to a student's disbenefit, the registration period is only four days (the Friday is Good Friday) instead of the usual five.

Sincerely,
Heather Roseveare
DSU Arts Rep