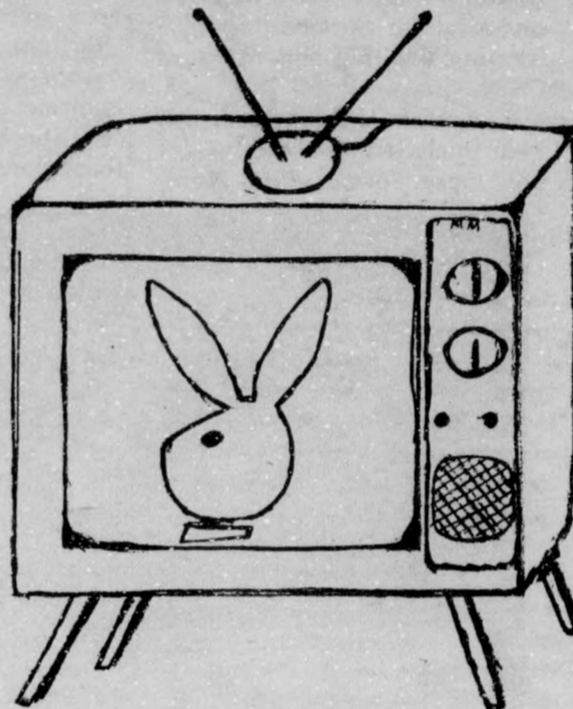


Put the choice back in First Choice



Over the past several weeks a great deal of controversy has been swirling around the heads of special interest groups across this great land of ours. Having little else to do with their time, feminists, preachers and the press have been stirring up a lot of dirt on a characteristically smutty subject: pornography. And no, this time it's not the onslaught of kiddie porn, sadistic double 'x' rated movies and 'sex shops' these do gooders are after, it's the new First Choice pay television company which has entered into an agreement with Playboy to show their programming.

The name Playboy makes the jaws of many conservative people drop to their knees and turn a whiter shade of pale. The mere thought of the magazine and its contents is enough to send many people into a tail spin, and now, heaven forbid, it's coming to television. In Fredericton, the Women's Center has joined with many other women's groups across Canada to protest the proposed soft-porn which will be aired on the pay TV channel.

The important facts to note in this whole controversy are these. First of all none of the movies are rated 'x'. They will be shown after midnight on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only and in total will occupy only 15% of air time. Basically, you won't be seeing anything that you can't pay four-fifty to see at the

theatre. But more importantly, and this seems to be the thing that everyone forgets, if you don't like it, you can always turn it off. Why do people always seem to forget the simple solutions?

One of the biggest arguments used in this fight against the Playboy channel is that portraying females as sex objects, when they are struggling for equality is totally unacceptable. Well, that's a fair enough argument except for one thing: women have been portrayed as sex objects, air heads and house wives on prime time television for years and no one seemed to mind. Take for example shows like "Three's Company" where the character of Chrissy is played for the classic, dumb blonde style. How did a show so degrading to women stay in the Top Ten for so long? Why weren't there hordes of letters written banning that? Because the word pornography wasn't mentioned, that's why. How about "Benny Hill"? If you ever want to see a show portraying women as nothing more than a set of knockers, don't miss this one. "Too Close For Comfort", "All In The Family", and "Charlie's Angels" are just a few more examples of the kinds of shows which have been degrading women for years.

These women's groups feel that the only choice we have is to say no to First Choice TV. But is that really our only option? Of course not. This is just another case of a group of people trying to decide for the

masses what they should watch. You may remember a similar case occurring in Saint John a few years ago when a certain minister got on his high horse and decided that certain books weren't suitable for teaching in the classroom. How can one person decide for everybody what is right and what is wrong? In Aristotle's republic, more than 2000 years ago, much the same thing was happening. A few of the "older and wiser" people would get together and determine what was suitable for the masses to hear, to read and to see. Surely we've come further than that in 1983?

We are by no means condoning pornography, degradation or any other form of discrimination. What we mean to say is that no one has the right to take away our democratic right to free choice. The minute that happens, we're in serious trouble.

Do these groups realize that the more fuss caused by all this unintended hype, the more pay TV channels are sold? It's like telling your five year old to keep his hand out of the cookie jar, and when next you look all that's left are the crumbs. Don't tell adults what they can and can't do. You'll have a war on your hands.

It seems that the next step is that concerned groups of people will be telling us what we can and can't wear. Will it ever stop? The choice is yours.