

Date: Wed, 20 May 1998 17:03:18 -0400 (EDT)
Mime-Version: 1.0
To: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
From: Brian Linson <cemad@libertynet.org>
Subject: Senator Brownback
Status:

Dr. Gerbner,

Senator Brownback 's position is that he has spoken out publicly in opposition to entertainment corporations, and has a detectable disdain for their monopoly, and has spoken out against media violence.

But he has also spoken out and voted against the V-Chip and ratings labels.

He calls himself a libertarian cutltural agitator. For him, holding open forums is a means to shape the "cultural conditions". Here is his view of the First Amendment, six paragraphs selected from.

As many of you know, I recently held a Senate hearing on the impact of violent music lyrics on young people. During this hearing, we heard a variety of witnesses testify on the effects of music lyrics that glorified rape, sexual torture, violence and murder. Some of these lyrics are almost unbelievably awful -- but they are backed by huge, powerful, prestigious corporations. I have grown more and more concerned about the content and the impact of these lyrics. And I have publicly criticized the entertainment executives who produce, promote, and profit from such music.

I am also the only Senator on the Commerce Committee to vote against a very popular bill that would coerce TV stations into labeling their programs. I publicly opposed V-chip legislation. I have consistently voted against any sort of government involvement in regulating or rating music or television.

Some people don't think the two go together. They think that if you talk about some music lyrics being degrading and violent, then you must be in favor of censorship. Others think that if you vote against various government restrictions on television programs, or music content, you must approve of those programs and songs. Both views are mistaken.

When it comes to First Amendment issues, I vote as a libertarian. I have voted against labels, against restrictions, against government meddling. But it is not enough to merely legislate in a manner to protect freedom. It is also necessary to agitate for the cultural conditions that safeguard freedom. Let me explain what I mean:

For free societies to endure, there must be a distinction between what is allowed and what is honored. I believe that the First Amendment assures the widest possible latitude in allowing various forms of speech -- including offensive, obnoxious speech. But the fact that certain forms of speech should be allowed does not mean that they should be honored, or given respectability. There are many forms of speech that should be thoroughly criticized, even as they are protected. Freedom of expression is not immunity from criticism.

The proper response to offensive speech is criticism -- not censorship, and not apathy. Vigorous criticism of the perverse, hateful, and violent reflects a willingness on the part of citizens to take ideas seriously,

evaluate them accordingly, and engage them directly. A cultural predisposition to care about ideas -- and to judge between them -- protecting the liberty of others, is the best bulwark of a free society. A citizenry that evaluates ideas, that discerns the true from the false, that values reason over reaction, that affirms that which is edifying, and that refutes that which is wrong -- is exactly the society most likely to value, to have, and to keep free speech.

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Date: Wed, 20 May 1998 17:55:52 -0400 (EDT)
Mime-Version: 1.0
To: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
From: Brian Linson <cemad@libertynet.org>
Subject: Senate testimony. Outline of ideas...
Status:

Dear Dr. Gerbner

We have a lot to say. Please reply, commenting to me which of these things you'd like to include in your testimony. I stuck them in five groups. I stuck them in five groups. Each one of these could be fleshed out with facts and figures.

1. NUMBERS ON MUSIC VIDEOS

We could get numbers counting:

~~Violence as a theme in videos~~
Sex as a theme in videos
For comparison "Social change" or "family" as a theme
Percentage of characters involved in sex interation in videos.
Percentage of characters involved (committer, victim) in violence
Same thing with alcohol tobacco and drugs.

2. EXPLICIT LYRICS LABELS on RECORDS

They shift the burden onto parents while freeing record companies from responsibility.

They make records more attractive to youth.

Merchants report better sales on music with warnings.

They aren't legally enforced. A child need only assure the merchant of their parent's consent, and only if he feels there's a need to ask.

Labels allow certain issues to be ignored. If it is illegal to market tobacco to kids, why would there be no labels on songs that speak favorably about smoking and drinking? (I have a list of song lyrics mentioning tobacco.)

3. GLOBAL MEDIA MONOPOLIES

They reduce accountability.

Marketing concerns are pushing out higher ideals.

Music videos are a marketing tool for record sales. Global monopolies force music video makers to make music videos for global market. The violence in music videos is necessary to reach a global marketplace which needs easily translatable images.

Media monopolies lack diversity in ownership. These are male-owned copanies Where are the women's stories in all this violence?

4. ALCOHOL & TOBACCO.

Time Warner owns magazines, which promote movies they make, which promote soundtrack albums they make which are all promoted in the tv shows they make. Seagram's also owns movie, tv, and record companies. We have seen that Seagrams, Bertelsmann, and Time Warner appear to be making music videos which promote alcohol and tobacco as a lifestyle, and not the free expression of artists.

5. MUSIC LYRICS AREN'T AS BIG A PROBLEM AS MUSIC VIDEOS.

Music is a personalized selective process with consumer choice determining content.

Television is much more crucial. It is an environment whose content is determined by a small group of corporations. The viewer has no choice, and with televised music videos, the only option is to watch a

conglomerate-controlled station which plays the same few videos
repetitively.

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To: Brian Linson <cemad@libertynet.org>
From: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.temple.edu>
Subject: Re[2]: Commerce Hearing
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachments:

Brian:

Here is the response. So it's another thing in our plate! I don't want to dump more on your already full schedule. So please send me another comprehensive and realistic timetable - one that you can definitely do, and we'll go on from there. If we can make to DC hearings. I want to take you and Vicky as well. g,

Mime-Version: 1.0
>Date: Fri, 22 May 1998 18:44:13 -0400
>From: Cherie Harder@brownback.senate.gov (Cherie Harder)
>Subject: Re[2]: Commerce Hearing
>To: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu>
>Status:

>
>

Dear Dr. Gerbner:

>

> The points below would all be of interest to the committee; your
> thoughts on "explicit lyrics and labels" would be most relevant for the
> purposes of the hearing on the 16th. I also believe the point you
> make about alcohol and tobacco; namely, that Seagrams, et. al. use
> music to market products to young people, is particularly interesting.

>

> Your oral remarks to the Commerce Committee should be around five
> minutes in length, but additional comments and statements for the
> record will be included upon your request. As such, you may want to
> focus your remarks on music lyrics and labels, and submit additional
> information for the record on the other topics you listed.

>

> I will be out of town next week, but if you would like to discuss this
> further, I can be reached at home this weekend (until Sunday
> afternoon) at (703) 812-9304.

>

Sincerely,

>

Cherie Harder

>

>

>

Reply Separator

>Subject: Re: Commerce Hearing
>Author: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu> at internet
>Date: 5/20/98 11:11 PM

>

>

>Dear Ms. Harder:

>

>Here are some thoughts:

>

>1. MUSIC VIDEOS

>We could get numbers counting:

- > Violence as a theme in videos
- > Sex as a theme in videos

Call: page 1 p. 759 8888 1192002
Michael Rubin

- > For comparison "family" as a theme
- > Percentage of characters involved in sex interaction in videos.
- > Percentage of characters involved in violence
- > Same with alcohol tobacco and drugs.
- >

>2. EXPLICIT LYRICS LABELS on RECORDS

- >They shift the burden onto parents while freeing record companies from
- >responsibility.
- >They make records more attractive to youth.
- >Merchants report better sales on music with warnings.
- >They aren't legally enforced. A child need only assure the merchant of
- >their parent's consent, and only if he feels there's a need to ask.
- >Labels allow certain issues to be ignored. If it is illegal to market
- >tobacco to kids, why would there be no labels on songs that speak favorably
- >about smoking and drinking? (I have a list of song lyrics mentioning
- >tobacco.)
- >

>3. GLOBAL MEDIA MONOPOLIES

- >They reduce accountability.
- >Marketing concerns are pushing out higher ideals.
- >Music videos are a marketing tool for record sales. Global monopolies
- >force music video makers to make music videos for global market. The
- >violence in music videos is necessary to reach a global marketplace which
- >needs easily translatable images.
- >Media monopolies lack diversity in ownership. These are male-owned
- >companies. Where are the women's stories in all this violence?
- >

>4. ALCOHOL & TOBACCO.

- >Time Warner owns magazines, which promote movies they make, which promote
- >soundtrack albums they make which are all promoted in the tv shows they
- >make. Seagram's also owns movie, tv, and record companies. We have seen
- >that Seagrams, Bertelsmann, and Time Warner appear to be making music videos
- >which promote alcohol and tobacco as happy, risk-free lifestyle features.
- >

>5. MUSIC LYRICS AREN'T AS BIG A PROBLEM AS MUSIC VIDEOS.

- >Music is a personalized selective process with consumer choice determining
- >content. Television is much more crucial. It is an environment whose
- >content is
- >determined by a small group of corporations. The viewer has no choice, and
- >with televised music videos, the only option is to watch a
- >conglomerate-controlled station which plays the same few videos over and over
- >again.
- >

>Please let me know if any of the above may be of interest. .

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>For a tangentially relevant piece now in press, read the following. (The

>Figures will not survive e-mail. Can fax if interested.

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>DEADLY CHOICE: VIOLENCE OR ALCOHOL

>

>Uses and Abuses of TV Ratings

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