

How Hollywood Should Be Rated

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

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The recent proposals for self-policing by the so-called “entertainment industry” should be rejected as a transparent political fraud, by the authors and leading sponsors of such proposals, on both government and the public at large. In brief, the authors of this supposed “self-policing” proposal, evade, in the most transparently shameless way, the issue posed by the Federal Trade Commission report on the connection between juvenile forms of murderous “new violence” and the promotion of such violence by audio-visual broadcasting and Nintendo-style games. Some preliminary observations by me, are needed at this moment.

If we put to one side the modern electronics-based technology on which new-violence productions such as Nintendo games are based, the most notable precedent for these causes

of a rising epidemic of new qualities of homicidal violence by juveniles and adolescents, is the games played out in the grandstands of the arenas of the ancient pagan city of Rome. On the basis of that comparison, we must define the issues and required remedies of natural law posed by our contemporary epidemic of new violence in the following terms.

The remarks put forward recently with endorsement by figures such as Vice-President Gore and Senator Lieberman amount to proposals to assign the foxes to guard the hen-houses. I do not accuse Governor Bush of being capable of understanding the issues under discussion.

1. All the relevant clinical and related studies of this and related phenomena of new violence show that the threat to the general welfare posed by the new violence, comes chiefly from permitting persons of the relevant suggestible ages and conditions, chiefly children and adolescents, to be exposed repeatedly to such forms of games and broadcast entertainments. All entertainments which are congruent with such forms of Nintendo games, should be disallowed for distribution to young children and adolescents, disallowed on the same premises applied to distribution of controlled categories of substances.

2. The common features which the relevant modern entertainments and games share with the public blood-sport games of ancient pagan Rome, show that the conditioning of a large

Farcical Senate Hearings on the ‘New Violence’

On Sept. 27, the Senate Commerce Committee, headed by John McCain (R-Ariz.), held a “show hearing” on the subject of Hollywood’s marketing of violence to children, taking testimony from the CEOs of Hollywood’s eight major studios. The announced intention was to put Hollywood’s moguls “on the spot” and have them explain why, according to a recent Federal Trade Commission report, they are “aggressively” marketing violent, adult-rated movies and video games to children as young as six years old. The FTC report documented how Hollywood advertising targets young children with these ads during TV shows and movie “trailers” watched by young audiences.

The studio chiefs began by self-righteously praising their own films, then defended their right of “free expression” and said it was not their own, but the parents’ responsibility, to enforce the ratings. Rob Friedman, the CEO of Paramount Pictures, which produces many “slasher” films, trivialized the FTC report and compared his studio’s films to Classical art: “From the beginning, storytelling has utilized these themes of war, violent acts, and betrayals. . . .

Using art and entertainment to explore vicariously the varied challenges that these themes present to us as individuals and as members of society is useful and long established. One need think only of traditional Grimms’ fairy tales, the works of Shakespeare.”

Lyndon LaRouche has described Hollywood’s offensive as part of a “New Violence,” which trains young children in “point and shoot” video games to accurately, and without emotion, shoot to kill. Such training was found to be have been a key factor in the massacre in Littleton, Colorado and other locations.

In an “Appeal,” circulated shortly after the Littleton shootings in 1999, Congress made it clear that they would only slap Hollywood’s “hand”—the hand that feeds them. It said: “We are not advocating censorship or wholesale strictures of artistic creativity. . . . We are not asking government to police the media. Rather, we are asking the entertainment industry . . . to take some modest steps at self-restraint.”

On Sept. 18, the same day that the Gore-Lieberman campaign raked in \$4.2 million at a Hollywood fundraiser, Joe Lieberman said, “Al and I have tremendous regard for this industry. . . . I promise you: We will never, never put the government in the position of telling you, by law, through law, what to make.”—*Donald Phau*

part of the public, especially the young, to entertainments of these common features, constitutes a major and direct threat, in and of itself, to the continued existence of civilized forms of society. Such practices by the state and people of ancient Rome define the quality of axiomatically predatory popular culture by means of which a society is most likely to bring about its own destruction. Indeed, the Latin term for “popular opinion,” *vox populi*, is derived from notions associated with the Latin term “*popular*,” a term which signifies “the predators.” There is no essential difference between “*vox populi*” and Walter Lippmann’s infamous, modern definition of the term “popular opinion.”

3. The difference between ancient Rome’s practices and similar modes of cultural conditioning today, is, predominantly, that the modern methods are quicker, and lead to the same result within decades, or less, which brought ancient Rome to its self-imposed doom over successive generations.

Therefore, considerations of natural law require that we treat such forms of recreation, under the terms of the Preamble of the U.S. Federal Constitution, as a form of moral degeneracy, against which the nation, and especially those highly suggestible persons known as young children and adolescents, must be protected, that in the names of both the national defense and the general welfare. The very least which must be done, is to conduct a widespread and thorough public dis-

cussion of these threats to our national security, a discussion aimed to discover how much might be accomplished by the impact of that discussion itself, and what more might require measures of enforcement.

Otherwise, the Hollywood and related sophistries heard lately, under the rubric of “freedom of artistic expression,” is not only an insult to the intelligence and morals of our citizenry in general; it is also, not only a fraudulent misuse of the term “art,” but has become a pretext for the effectively injurious suppression of the continued existence of those same forms of Classical artistic composition upon which the coming into being of modern free forms of society has depended.

It should be clear to rational persons, that the loudest Hollywood and other mass media voices in defending trash in the name of “freedom of artistic expression,” are thus doing substantial injury to the rights of the population as a whole.

The first step is to protect not only those qualitatively more suggestible strata, young children and adolescents, but also to protect the very lives of the persons whose lives are threatened by the effects, such as those at Littleton, of repeated such entertainments such as Nintendo games on the minds of those young persons. At the same time, we should mobilize popular revulsion against the transparent hypocrisy of the useless and evasive kinds of reforms lately endorsed implicitly by Gore and Lieberman.

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Speech to Schiller Institute conference, Feb. 20, 2000.

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