

LYM Presses Virginia Tech Panel On Role of Violent Video Games

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In the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings carried out on April 16 by Seung-Hui Cho, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine commissioned an independent Incident Review Panel to complete an analysis of the circumstances leading up to, during, and immediately after the shootings that claimed the lives of 33 people. The panel is led by retired Virginia State Police Superintendent Col. Gerald Massengill, and includes Hon. Diane Strickland, former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge, Dr. Gordon Davies, Dr. Marcus L. Martin, Dr. Aradhana A. Bela Sood, Dr. Roger L. Depue, and Carroll Ann Ellis.

At the second of a series of official hearings in Blacksburg, Virginia, near the Virginia Tech campus, on May 21, members of the LaRouche Youth Movement, representing the LaRouche Political Action Committee, attended and spoke. Thus far, at both panel hearings, LPAC has been the only organization to bring to light the macabre role that violent first-shooter video games, such as the Valve Corporation's "Counter-Strike," have played in training not only the Virginia Tech shooter, but also other similar student shooters, including at Paducah, Ky., Littleton, Colo., and Erfurt, Germany.

The statements of LaRouche Youth leader Paul Mourino, who testified on May 21 (see below), and of LPAC representative Donald Phau, who testified before the panel in Richmond on May 10, have been the only public testimony before the panel that addressed the addictive nature of these video-games, their role in creating student killers, and the fact that this brainwashing has been done deliberately.

The premise of the panel's investigation was threefold: what the university knew about Cho prior to the event; what transpired in the Emergency Policy Group in the two-hour lull between the first and the second shootings; and, finally, what has been done to help students, family, and victims in the healing process.

The speakers before the panel included Vice Provost for Academic Affairs David Ford, University Legal Counsel Kay Heidgreder, Vice President for Student Affairs Zenobia Lawrence Hikes, the Montgomery Regional Hospital, Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger, the Virginia Department of State Police, and the Virginia Tech Emergency Response team. The panel meticulously reconstructed what happened at the scene of the crime, giving an account of the scope of the

tragic events, the way that the university handled the case, and the efficiency and rapid response of the medical emergency rescue team.

Each speaker gave detailed testimony, consisting of an hour-by-hour timeline of the way this tragedy was handled. Among the topics discussed were the legal premise of disclosing confidential medical records of patients, the 174 rounds fired in 9 minutes by the shooter, the psychological and other counseling provided to victims and their families, and what measures are now being taken by universities nationwide in preparedness.

'The Purloined Letter'

As "The Purloined Letter" of Edgar Allan Poe attests to the principle of investigation (the case of Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police, and C. Auguste Dupin in search of a stolen letter), at times the very simplicity of the thing being searched is that which puts one at fault. Despite the perseverance, resourcefulness, cunning, and thorough diversity in technical expertise commanded by these nationally recognized experts in higher education and mental health, their *faux pas* lay in the fact that they did not pose the most fundamental questions.

There exists no doubt that the panel's measures being adopted may be advantageous and even indispensable. However, the incessant probing, and scrutinizing with microscopic detail of events would inevitably lead to a fruitless investigation and, furthermore, a morally erroneous one, were the premise of search to remain in the realm of the perceptual, by focussing solely on effects, without asking the right questions that would get the underlying root cause.

Lyndon LaRouche stated in an article on the 1999 Littleton massacre: "Unless the U.S. government, and many relevant other influentials, change their view of this problem, abandoning the useless approach they have publicized thus far, the horror will continue, gun laws or no gun laws. Unless relevant institutions get down to the serious business of addressing the actual causes for this pattern of violent incidents, this murderous rampage will persist—whether or not guns were legally sold to adolescents, or whether or not the producers and distributors of cult-films and Nintendo-style video

games intend that specific effect” (“Star Wars to Littleton,” *EIR*, July 2, 1999).

Without taking that principle into account, it would be impossible to understand the nature of the problem or its cure.

LYM Testimony to Virginia Tech Panel

These are excerpts from the testimony of Paul Mourino of the LaRouche Youth Movement, to the second official hearing of Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine’s Virginia Tech Review Panel, May 21. The hearing took place in Blacksburg, Va., where Virginia Tech is located.

In the aftermath of the Columbine High School massacres several years ago, Lyndon LaRouche joined such law enforcement experts as Col. David Grossman in demanding action against the manufacturers and distributors of violent point-and-shoot video games that, in Colonel Grossman’s words, “give kids the will and the skill to kill.” Studies by law enforcement agencies . . . have found a very high correlation between the 20 major school shooters of the past decade, and addiction to violent point-and-shoot video games.

Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter, is no exception, despite the near total media blackout of his involvement with violent video games, including “Counter-Strike.” News organizations like the *Washington Post* interviewed friends of Cho from high school and college, and confirmed his strong attraction to these games. Yet that story never appeared in print, and only accidentally showed up on a blog site associated with that newspaper.

There is good reason to believe that the video-game industry, which was rocked by the Columbine revelations that school killers Harris and Klebold were addicted to violent video games, and honed their shooting skills through these computerized killing simulators, have poured millions of dollars into a public relations and damage-control campaign, aimed at preventing a repeat of that bad media coverage. The video-game industry is now a \$20 billion a year industry, surpassing the motion picture industry in revenue.

We of the LaRouche Youth Movement call on this Commission to include in its deliberations and investigations a thorough look at the role that violent video games may have played in the Virginia Tech tragedy. Such a serious probe by such a prestigious body can do much to assure that the root causes of the recent tragic killings here are understood and addressed.

The nation faces a potential epidemic eruption of a “new violence,” driven, in part, by the mass distribution of killing

simulators to youth. These point-and-shoot video games were originally developed by the U.S. military for the U.S. military and law enforcement professionals. When the same technologies that were developed specifically to break down human beings’ resistance to killing are packaged as video games, and are targeted at an audience of children in their teens and younger, there is something profoundly wrong.

There are clearly a number of pressing issues that this Commission will be taking up. It is essential that one of these issues is the role of the violent video games in the horrible events that have recently taken place here in Blacksburg. We look forward to working with the Commission in any way we can, to provide you with the material that we have gathered on the “new violence” and on the nature of the video game industry.

After he read his written testimony, Mourino added the following remarks:

There is a fight waging in the current U.S. Congress, between the legacy of FDR’s tradition, whose promise is being shown in the potential to construct great projects—for example the Russian offer to construct the Bering Strait tunnel project. On the other hand, we have the current Administration’s policy of fighting the war on terrorism. Currently, the Administration’s war policy is changing the character and philosophy of our military’s orientation. . . .

I would like to reference the work of Col. David Grossman. A shift occurred in the U.S. military after World War II. With the death of FDR, some of the military leaders in combination with some from the private sector discovered that only 15% of America’s riflemen could shoot to kill at the moment of truth, on the combat field. . . . [A] decision was made to correct this problem and . . . increase the ability of the riflemen . . . to shoot to kill, without thinking.

Colonel Grossman, now a retired Army ranger, used these technologies during the Vietnam War and afterwards trained American riflemen. Later he noticed that the same techniques and technologies he used on the proving ground were embedded in his kids’ video games. He raised the alarm, and has written various books, and tried his best to bring this horror to the public’s attention. . . .

I ran into this phenomenon when I was in middle school. The game “Wolfenstein 3D” was free and was the first killing simulation game on the market. . . .

These video games are creating menticide among the young generation. LaRouche PAC recommends that this panel create the legislation, which will . . . return to the idea of the citizen soldier. . . . We also recommend that you shame, fine, or regulate all those private corporations who have participated in these projects. Proper legislation, designed to protect my generation from these games, is needed. Time—the younger generation needs time to think about what kind of future we want for our Republic, and . . . to develop the capacity to take leadership in the future.”