

Getting the frog out of the water before it boils

The Academy Award nominees were announced this week. Woody Harrelson was nominated for his portrayal of the title character in the movie "The People Versus Larry Flynt." I have not seen the movie and I do not intend to. I am in agreement, for once in my life, with the National Organization for Women. How can anyone make a hero out of a man who made a living degrading women and promoting pornography?



BOB HYDRICK

About 20 years ago my good friend and predecessor in the Mayor's office declared war on the budding pornography industry in Columbus. At his urging the Columbus police raided several adult book stores and movie houses. To some of my more worldly friends, it was all a joke. One remarked over morning coffee, "Well, your friend the mayor had the police out again last night. I see they raided a triple-X movie and an Exxon

branding as a "bluenose." There are legitimate First Amendment issues here. But there is also the issue of what is morally right and wrong.

You can oppose pornography and not be a advocate of censorship or be a bluenose. Many years ago, Pabst planned to build a brewery over near Perry. Many of the state's clergymen decided to oppose the construction and organized a petition drive aimed at then-Governor Lester Maddox. When told of their intentions, Maddox responded, "The preachers need to worry more about the people who take the beer out of the bottles than the people who put it in the bottles." Good advice then, good advice now. If you dry up (no pun intended) the demand for a product, the supply will take care of itself.

There are groups who are following Governor Maddox's advice on this issue. In Washington's words, they are "raising the standard to which the wise and honest can repair" in a number of ways.

They are exposing the lie that pornography is harmless by educating the public that it can become an addiction that can have devastating effects on family relationships and society.

They are trying to clear up the misconception that pornography is a "victimless crime." The victims of pornography are not only the users, but often the families, particularly the spouses. And

station. I guess the two X's in the sign confused them."

How things have changed. Today, the kind of magazines we saw in the Grand Jury room are on sale on virtually every street corner in this community. The movies that made us squirm uncomfortably when they were shown in the privacy of the court chambers can be seen in your home and mine any night with just a phone call. And an Oscar nomination goes to an actor who portrays one of America's best-known sleaze purveyors.

In a real sense, it is symptomatic of our society. We have turned from an ethic of self-discipline to one that encourages self-gratification. A friend sums up his opinion of another person, only half-jokingly, "The only pronouns she knows are I, me and mine." Unfortunately, the same thing could be said about our culture. Yours, ours, self-sacrifice, service to others are words and concepts we don't hear much about anymore.

Last week I mentioned Robert Bork's new book, *Slouching Toward Gomorrah*. In it, Bork chronicles the slow, steady moral decline of our society. The prevailing apathy toward pornography certainly helps make his case. It has become so commonplace and widely accepted that for anyone to speak up against it is to risk immediate

innocent people, particularly children, become victims of deviant sexual behavior and violent crime to cover it up.

They are raising the standard by calling attention to movie, music, TV shows and even the Internet that contain pornography and which are widely available even to children.

It is public involvement in the best sense of the word. They have joined the battle for the hearts and minds of the American people. You may say it is too little, too late. Let's hope not.

There is an old recipe for boiling a frog: Don't drop him in a pot of hot water, he'll only hop out. Put him in a pot of cold water and gradually raise the temperature to the desired level. He will be boiled before he realizes what is happening to him.

Thankfully, there are some people who realize how hot the water is and are trying to get us all out before we too are boiled.

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