

# COMMENTARY

JOHN LOFTON

It's a caricature, really, of the old cliché about one person being able to make a difference. But make a difference Mrs. Terry Rakolta has, a big difference. She's not through yet. And her plan for the future has Ted Koppel sputtering, which means it can't be all bad.

Upset by some of the garbage she has seen on prime-time network television — specifically Fox TV's "Married... With Children" — Mrs. Rakolta, a concerned pro-family mother from a suburb of Detroit, Mich. — wrote letters to 45 sponsors of that program denouncing it for "helping to feed our kids a steady diet of gratuitous sex and violence."

And Mrs. Rakolta's letters have gotten results.

Procter & Gamble, McDonald's, Tambrands and Kimberly Clark all instructed their ad agencies not to purchase any more time on "Married... With Children." And the president of Coca-Cola USA, Ira C. Herbert, wrote her and apologized, saying he was "corporately, professionally and personally embarrassed" that an ad for Coke had appeared on this program.

And then Mrs. Rakolta appeared on ABC's "Nightline" program.

Does she have a goal, a grand strategy?, asks Ted Koppel, the host

John Lofton is a columnist for The Washington Times.

## Making a big difference



Ed O'Neill and Katey Sagal star in "Married... With Children."

of this program. Well, yes, says Mrs. Rakolta, she does. She says she's not going to let things drop now. She says she wants to come to Washington, D.C., to meet with groups already interested in responsible advertising in the media. And she says such groups are talking about a nationwide boycott of one specific advertiser, for one year, to make an example and to make a statement on behalf of the American family.

To which Mr. Koppel replies:

Who's talking about that, that is about such a boycott?

Well, Mrs. Rakolta names the American Family Association. And she says she'd also like to meet with the Concerned Women of America, a group she says has 600,000 members.

Mr. Koppel (incredulously): "And the idea is to put one sponsor and, in effect, blackball them for a year?"

Mrs. Rakolta: "Yeah."

Mr. Koppel (beginning slowly but

surely to get the picture): "You might put 'em out of business."

Mrs. Rakolta: "Well, I think that's the intent. I mean, they are polluting the minds of our children. Why can't we do the same thing to them?"

Mr. Koppel (seemingly flustered and beginning to sputter): "You're talking about sponsors, not the producers, the networks. In other words, you might take a company and say 'Folks, we're going to boycott you for a year and if you go outta business, tough?'"

Mrs. Rakolta (standing her ground, God bless her!): "Exactly. They don't care too much about the family!"

Wow, this Terry Rakolta is some profile in courage, isn't she?

But what's Mr. Koppel's story? Why is he so shocked by what Mrs. Rakolta says she wants to do?

Why doesn't Ted Koppel understand that all Mrs. Rakolta is proposing is a simple act of self-defense and the defense of her family and other people's families?

Aren't parents, particularly with young children, allowed to defend them against the slop that pours out of their TV sets from the networks

see LOFTON, page F4

## LOFTON

From page F1

during prime time?

And "slop" is one of the nicer words that may fairly be used to characterize Fox TV's "Married ... With Children." Indeed, this program is so bad that it has been panned by the TV critic of The New York Times, John O'Connor, who called it "blatantly crude," depicting "marriage with the wife as bimbo and the husband as determined chauvinist." Among the scenes Mr. O'Connor specifically objected to in this program was a scene which showed the family dog having a bowel movement.

Ha-ha. Real funny, right?

And Mrs. Rakolta is absolutely correct to be "appalled" by "Married ... With Children's" sexual innuendo and treatment of women, its references to homosexuality, and a sequence which showed a woman publicly removing her bra. Says Mrs.

*What you're seeing is a woman who's had it with the trash we're offered on TV every night.*

Rakolta: "I care that there are advertisers out there paying the freight for this. They're taking my dollars and putting them into soft-core pornography."

Amen, Mrs. Rakolta! Amen, friend!

I, too, care that such filth is being pumped into our nation's respective living rooms. I suspect that tens of millions of other Americans also care. And I'm delighted that you are effectively combating this creeping crud.

But I remain puzzled by the reaction of Ted Koppel.

Mr. Koppel is, after all, a man who,

not that long ago, was preaching to a college audience about the virtues of the Ten Commandments — about how God's laws are not suggestions, but *commandments*. And a good sermon it was, too.

But now, now, Mr. Koppel is almost swooning, live, on his own TV show, when this Michigan mother has the temerity to call for something as passive as an advertiser boycott in defense of traditional morality — a morality which I thought Mr. Koppel believed in. Or so he said at Duke University.

But, relax, please, Mr. Koppel. Take 10 deep breaths and at least one cold shower.

Calm down.

What you're seeing, sir, is a woman who's speaking for tens of millions of us, a woman who's had it with the trash we're offered on TV every night.

What you're seeing is a woman who, ironically, has the courage of your convictions on this morality business. And I say: God bless her!