

# We need fail-safe ways to protect decency

One sure sign of an argument that cannot be answered is that responses to it go off on tangents in all directions. Senator Bob Dole's recent criticism of violent movies and Time Warner rap music that celebrates rape and murder has provoked a lot of this kind of response.

Margaret Carlin of Time magazine said that it didn't take much courage for Dole to attack Hollywood. Columnist Molly Ivins chimed in that Dole had criticized makers of violent movies who were Democrats but not other violent moviemakers who were Republicans. Besides, she said, "a lot of art is about sex and violence" and you "can't just tell genius to stay away from certain topics."

Dole's courage or partisanship are not the issue. You might think that his record in World War II would have laid the courage issue to rest. But even if he were the biggest coward in the whole world, what does that have to do with the truth or validity of what he said? If there were no Bob Dole at all, the issue of glorifying rape and murder to young people would be just what it is today — and no doubt it would be evaded on some other ground.

As for art and genius, nothing could be further from the cheap barbarism of rap lyrics. Whenever there are standards, someone is

going to challenge them. Civilization — let us face it — is often boring and sometimes a real pain. The only reason for putting up with it is that barbarism is far worse. But nothing is more common than to want to thumb your nose at it.

A society that is not prepared to defend its standards will not long have any standards to defend. If shrill voices crying censorship are enough to make you cave in to the barbarians, then you may as well declare unconditional surrender once and for all, instead of waiting to see standards fall one by one.

In the sloppy thinking that is as much a symptom of social degeneracy as the rottenness of rap, censorship by government and social disapproval are lumped together and both denounced. No society can be saved by government if the social standards are gone. There will never be enough policemen or enough jails.

Policemen and jails are effective when 5 or 10 percent of the population refuse to follow the rules but they are useless when 90 or 95 percent desert civilization. Long before that point is reached, all sorts of social sanctions must be invoked.

Whether that takes the form of appealing to common decency on the part of Time Warner, as Senator Dole did, or cancelling subscriptions to Time magazine or boycotting theaters that poison the minds of the young — whatever it takes, something has to be done.

Freedom has never meant that the precious anointed can do whatever they please and that no one else has the freedom to react to it. That is not freedom but bigotry. Bigotry means claiming rights for yourself that you want to

deny to others. What too many in the media call freedom is the bigotry of the anointed.

One of the many dishonest arguments against censorship — that is, standards — is that parents should police the movies, music and TV that their children see and hear. Are parents to stop working and stand by the TV set 24 hours a day? And if so, how are they to be monitoring the movies and music at the same time?

Nobody asks these questions because the suggestion was not serious in the first place. It was one more tangent to go off on, instead of confronting social degeneracy.

In the law there is such a thing as the burden of proof and in the military there is such a thing as fail-safe. With nuclear weapons especially, procedures have to be set up so that a failure in the system will cause a nuclear bomb not to be exploded.

We have long since passed the point where we need fail-safe ways of protecting civilized standards in general and the young in particular. Let the burden be put on those who wish to broadcast filth into other people's home to make sure it does not reach children.

Programs could be rated and computers automatically programmed to reject anything offensive to children unless parents specifically authorize the TV set to be programmed differently. Similar systems could be set up for music and movies.

Those who want to sell or see filth could continue to do so. They would just have to pay the price of seeing that it doesn't reach those who don't want it.

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