CS97-55

April 24

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MAY - 7 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Mr. Hundt,

I am so opposed to the TV rating system being age-based - It hasn't worked. I am concerned.

We need a system of Family Values on particularly judging (family) hrs. - programs, etc. to give the parents real good choices for their children as to TV watching.

Seems we bend so often to the convincing ways that seem right & yet aren't. We need good changes. Please, Mr. Hundt I pray that your decisions will make a difference for good to the families of America.

God bless you -

Respectfully,

Mrs. Chester T. Horton (a grandmother)
8800 Green Valley Rd. #54
Sebastopol, CA. 95472

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MAY 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

CS 97-53
4/24/97

The Honorable Reed Hundt Chm.
FCC, 1919 M Street
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Sir:

I am opposed to the age-based system and would like a contour based system along with return of the Family Hours.

Thanks

Sincerely,
Arnold J. Ahrens

6907 Daisy Lane
Citrus Heights, Cal 95621

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CS 97-55

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MAY 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Chairman Hundt,

I do not support the rating Symbol System. I believe parents should be able to make an informed decision concerning what their children watch. I do not want the television industry making that decision. Talk about vested interest.

Sincerely,

Marianne Keefer
827 Vallevista Ave
Pgh. Pa 15234

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CS 97-55

April 22, 1979
Reed E. Hundt
FCC Chairman
1919M St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554
subject - TV programming and ratings.

RECEIVED
MAY - 7 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Mr. Hundt,

You are probably aware of the incident several days ago in your city, wherein a fourth grade boy and girl were discovered having sex in one of the classrooms. Upon learning of the incident, the Principle ruled that no disciplinary action was to be taken since it was apparently consensual...a decision for which he is being put on a temporary leave of absence.

This is but one of the hundreds of incidents that are occurring daily across the nation, which directly reflect the disastrous state of morality and decency throughout our society. The trash and filth that we are exposed to daily in the guise of "information and entertainment" is overwhelming. As a result, drugs, crime, rapes and violence have become daily occurances in most cities and towns across the country. And far too many of those involved in these antisocial and criminal activities are becoming increasingly younger. In short, we are rapidly becoming an out of control, third-rate society.

All of this has been and is being tolerated in the name of preserving our freedom of speech and expression. We have bought the fallacious reasoning of a few self-serving degenerates, that there should be no limits to the vile and infectious trash they should be allowed to dump on our society. We have fallen prey to the absurd proposition that nothing can or should be done to inhibit the relentless assault on our inherent sense of decency and self-control.

We no longer seem to care about the content of the material pouring into our homes and public institutions via our publicly

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licensed and controlled airways. In short, those charged with the responsibility of protecting and acting in the best interest of the public seem to have abdicated their responsibility. They are choosing instead to grant carte blanche approval to radio, television and the entire telecommunications industry, to poison the minds of not just our children and young people, but all of us who are exposed to these medias. Not only is much of the material of no social or redeeming value, it is of obvious danger of doing great harm.

How then, in a nation in which the vast majority of men and women of all ages are still good, decent and responsible citizens, can such a situation be allowed to continue? Well, mainly we have this problem with the interpretation of the "First Amendment" to the Constitution. We all know that the farthest thing our forefathers had in mind, was to establish the rights of some self-serving individuals to diminish the morality and values of our kids and young people right in our own homes and public institutions. Our forefathers would surely be crying in their graves if they knew that is how the wonderful instrument of their creation was now being used. Amendment 1 simply includes the statement that no law shall be made "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press". "Abridging" meaning "to shorten, condense or diminish", and "speech" meaning "the faculty or power of expressing thoughts and emotions by articulated sounds and words...oral communication". Doesn't sound to me like our nation's founders had any idea of protecting the rights of transmission of violent and filthy pictures or material into our homes and public places. One would have to assume an extremely liberal translation of the First Amendment to be the protectorate of the violent and sexually explicit material being beamed into our homes today! Material which has been time and again determined to be very harmful to the mental and emotional health of not only our children, but all of us!

I believe our founding fathers were well aware of the need for a Constitutional clause to protect us from liberal and dangerous misinterpertations, when they passed the Ninth Amendment... which we seem to hear very little about. This amendment reads "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people". Indeed, like the right of being protected from harmful programs and materials being beamed into our own homes and schools via the public airways or other telecommunications media. Further evidence of our forefathers concern for the importance of guarding our moral and religious heritage can be found in Article III of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787..."Religion, morality and Knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged". In other words, the role of the government should be to protect and promote religion and morality, not sit idly by and assume a role of being helpless in these matters. Anyone who doesn't really understand that "Religion, <u>morality</u> and knowledge" are indeed essential to "good government and the happiness of mankind", need only take a look at the pitiful state of our society today. We are rapidly becoming a third-rate nation, in which broken homes and broken families are commonplace. Half of our children are being raised in one parent homes, and society is being expected to take the responsibility for raising more and more kids from unwed mothers and failed marriages. And of course, drug pushers, rapists and violent criminals are running rampant on our streets. This America is a far cry from the one that I once knew as a young man.

Much of what is being seen on TV network programming is coming out of that vast wasteland and garbage dump championed by Jack Valenti called "Hollywood". Why anyone even bothers to listen to Mr. Valenti is a mystery to me. Here's a man who has managed to earn a handsome living trying to convince us that most of the material being produced by the motion picture and television companies today, really isn't as rotten

and harmful as it really is. It's like a deja vu of the tobacco industry executives and representatives. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that the poisoning of young minds is far more devastating in terms of broken lives, broken homes, and the horrendous welfare and law enforcement cost to taxpayers than smoking ever was or will be. And of course, the tobacco industry didn't beam their product right into your home...you had to go out and buy it.

Our home is indeed our castle and our fortress. It is the only bastion in which we should have complete control over the quality and content of anything and everything entering it's walls. It is the one single place that we can be assured of peace and tranquility in a safe and healthy environment...a refuge from the tumultuous world outside. It is the place were we instill the values and morality of our children so that they can grow into responsible citizens and become an asset to our society. It is the primary place were we attend to our mental and physical health and fitness to properly function in the society around us. It is as a tiny cell, tens of millions of which constitute our American society as a whole. And it is the health of each of these home cells upon which the fitness and health of our nation depends. If there are elements of intrusion which are beyond the control of the residents inside, such as power, water, and radio and TV programming, it is the duty of the appropriate branches of government to assume responsibility for their quality and content, and to protect the people from any form of mental and physical harm they might inflict. No individual or organization has a right to usurp these powers of government, nor does any government have a right to relinquish theseresponsibilities on it's own. Unfortunately, the later seems to be what has been happening in America today!

I can remember back a few years, in a discussion with several friends, pointing out the fact that movies which were edited for television back then, were every bit as good as those

shown in theatres. The difference of course was the editing out (some would call it censoring) of the filthy language, graphic sex and excessive and/or gore and violence. We all agreed that it was nice to be confident that any movies beamed into our homes by the major networks, were for the most part, fit for viewing by the entire family. Back then, the same could be said for most of the major networks programing. Why then, we wondered, do the movie producers in Hollywood feel compelled to introduce such filthy language, explicit sexual encounters, and excessive gore and violence in what might otherwise be a pretty decent movie? We about came to the conclusion that too many people in the entertainment industry (and Hollywood in particular), wallow in such a state of decadence that they are doing their damndest to pull the whole country down in the gutter with them. That they are determined to influence us, and our children in particular, that their sordid and irresponsible life style is the only way to live.

A few evenings ago I turned on my TV to one of the regular network channels (we don't have cable... regular programming is bad enough). It was midevening and I had no idea which channel I was tuned to. Even though I am accustomed to the caliber of trash and filth that is now being allowed on regular network programming, I was somewhat schocked to see that I was viewing an almost completely nude couple vigorously engaged in sexual intercourse! He was on top and she with her legs spread apart, and both were obviously enjoying the hell out of it! What if there had been kids or young people in the room at the time, or for that matter any one else who finds that kind of program extremely offensive? Frankly, I find myself somewhat embarrassed and feeling guilty just describing it in this letter, as I'm sure you do in simply reading about it. Yet it's the sort of thing we allow to be programmed into our homes, to be available to anyone who happens to turn on a TV set. Much of it is pure unadulterated pornography, of no redeeming social value whatsoever. And no one is taking

the responsibility for doing anything about it.

When we first began regular television broadcasting in the early 40's, it seemed to hold the promise of being an instrument for enriching the lives of all Americans. It excited our sense of both sight and sound, and we eagerly welcomed the many entertaining and educational programs which were sure to come. And so they did...for awhile. Responsible networks were granted broadcast bands and licensed to use the public airways. And, for the most part, the public received and enjoyed the benefits of the great new communications media which now served them. Then things began to change as more and more new programming material was being introduced, and more and more stations were being licensed to broadcast. Suddenly TV seemed to be on it's way to becoming a vast wasteland. The FCC seemed to be falling prey to self-serving factions which would use the media to exploit every vile form of debauchery, violence and corruption, with complete disregard for the devastating effect it would surely have on the quality of life of all Americans. And this was always done in the guise of avoiding even the slightest hint of being under any form of "censorship". No matter that Americans have always lived under some form of censorship, monitoring, or control in one manner or another. Thank God there are government agencies that assume their rightful role in controlling the content and quality of our water, our power companies, telephone companies, pharmaceutical manufacturers, educational institutions, etc...all of which play a vital role in our daily lives and well-being. Even in the most disciplined form of Democratic government, there will always be some function directly effecting the public welfare which must properly be brought under control of the common government... especially those directly effecting the public's mental and physical health and well being. This obviously includes all forms of telecommunication, and especially those using the public airways.

The FCC is to be commended for the fine job it has been doing in serving the public interest in the radio broadcasting industry. The public has every right to expect that the same high standards would apply to the television industry and all forms of telecommunications being given free access into America's homes. Unfortunately, their monitoring of the content of TV programming being beamed into America's homes today seems virtually nonexistent. It seems the FCC has buckled under the powerful television industry...as have or Representatives and Congressmen in Washington. We now have a readily available and unlimited supply of programs featuring, foul language, explicit sex, and excessive gore and violence being beamed right into our living rooms. And we are indeed paying a terrible price for it because of the disastrous effect it is having on the youth of America today!

It is not a question of whether or not we need a far better and more definitive rating system for TV programs. Of course we do! We need a rating system that informs the viewer of the contents which may be of concern in the program before choosing to watch it. For this purpose the present rating system is a joke. And to let the sleazebags who are currently running the motion picture and entertainment industry set their own standards is preposterous! The rating system should be developed by a board of highly respected and morally fit men and women from all walks of life, of which there are many who would gladly volunteer their time and services. Any rating system which simply tries to designate a "suitability" for age groups, or any other category and does not specifically identify the elements of concern in the contents, is worthless. We the viewing public should decide how we rate the program's contents for ourselves and our families...not some "industry group" who's opinions of suitability for viewing are a far cry from those of main stream Americans.

We should ignore the notion put forth by the entertainment industry, that any rating system which would identify the

elements of objectional content, would conflict with similar elements of content in legitimate situations which might be acceptable. These might include Medical documentaries, fine art, news events, etc.. Anyone who can't see the difference in viewing a fine statue or painting of a human form, and a pair of lovers copulating in the nude on a bed sheet in a movie or magazine, is unfit to voice any kind of opinion on the suitability of material going into America's homes! Even in the world of fine art, there has always been the erotic, sexually explicit work of a perverted few which was always shielded (or Censored if you prefer) from the general public...and certainly not considered suitable for the home. The vast majority of decent, responsible and morally fit men and women across America would have no problem whatsoever in using their common sense in telling the difference between filth and trash, and something with at least some redeeming social value.

While a good effective rating system is critically needed, We have every right to expect and insist that the FCC and our elected representatives in Washington will move beyond that with reasonable dispatch. We must regain control of the quality and content of the programming itself which we are permitting to be beamed into our homes. Broadcasters, or whoever the responsibility rightly belongs to, should get back to doing an acceptable job of editing out all the filth and garbage that may be contained in the origional material. If not, it should be barred from the airways. Stations which refuse to comply with reasonable standards of decency and the elimination of excessive gore and violence, should be fined, suspended, or simply loose their license, depending on the severity and frequency of the offenses. This in no way presents an unreasonable condition or situation. It simply will get us back to the way it was before we lost control. No one can argue with whether or not it can or should be done...hell it's the same thing they had been doing for years, back when the whole family could sit down and enjoy a program together. Back in the days

when the minds of our young people weren't being poisoned by what they were watching and listening to right in their own homes! Back in the days before the rate of crime and sex offenses being committed by children and young people began to soar out of sight. And it is a clinically accepted fact that much of the problem can be attributed to what the kids are being exposed to in movies and television! Something must be done... and now, before the situation is totally out of control!

And so Mr. Hundt, in the name of my grandkids and all the wonderful children and young people of our great nation, I implore you to act, and act now. Stop listening to the special interests of the entertainment industry and broadcasting networks, and start representing the people you are being paid to represent. And I implore all of our elected represntatives in Washington to join you, if not push you along in your effort. Our families, and especially our children will be forever in your debt!

David Allgeyer
18 Woodruff
Conway, Ark. 72032

David Allgeyer

P.S. I am enclosing an article on the subject from the April 22 edition of the Arkansas Democrat/Gazette...and would like you to pay special attention to some of the comments sent in by readers... especially the ones from Little Rock, North Little Rock and West Hellena. They pretty well state the case for the need to go back to editing in addition to having meaningful ratings.

cc President Bill Clinton
Senator Trent Lott
Congressman Newt Gingrich
Senator Dale Bumpers

Grown-ups give television's new system of classifying shows an F.

BY MICHAEL STOREY
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Alphabet soup. That's what most *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* readers who responded to a recent poll say they want with their TV ratings. And the more letters in the soup, the better.

A majority in our unscientific survey say they'd prefer a ratings system that added the letters V, S or L to the current age-based formula to indicate the levels of violence, sexual content and adult language in a program.

Last month, we asked parents to give us their opinions on the controversial television ratings that have been in place since January. The current six ratings tiers are:

TV-Y — Material suitable for children of all ages, even very young children.

TV-Y7 — Material suitable for children 7 and older. Comedic violence may frighten children under 7.

TV-G — General audiences. Most parents would find suitable for all ages.

TV-PG — Parental guidance suggested. Some parents would find unsuitable for younger children.

TV-14 — Parents strongly cautioned. Material may be inappropriate

See RATINGS, Page 8E

Ratings

• Continued from Page 1E

for children under 14.

TV-M — Mature audiences only. May be inappropriate for children under 17.

The television industry, which devised the system voluntarily under protest, does its own rating.

Parents were asked to indicate whether they:

1. Don't like the idea of rating TV shows;
2. Think the current system is adequate;
3. Prefer a system that would indicate content and not just age levels.

Several dozen Arkansas parents from all corners of the state responded. Here's the breakdown:

■ 35 percent say they don't like rating TV shows and will not use *any* system.

■ 10 percent think the current age-based system is adequate and find it useful.

■ 55 percent say the current system is inadequate and a content-based ratings system would be more useful.

WATCHDOGS BARKING

This last and largest group is in agreement with a number of watchdog outfits making noise on Capitol Hill. Organizations ranging from the National PTA to the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America have asked the Federal Communications Commission to not accept the current rating system. The groups have been joined by about two dozen members of the House and Senate.

The FCC must decide if the current rating system is acceptable. If not, it'll establish its own committee to recommend something different. The FCC will hold public hearings on the matter in the near future.

April 8 was the deadline to file comments with the FCC about the ratings that are intended to work with the coming television V-chip. The chip will allow parents to block out objectionable programs.

The current TV system is similar to the one used to rate movies for the past three decades. It suggests an age level for which a program may be appropriate, but does not include any indication of *specific* program content. That's what's at the core of the controversy.

AGE VS. CONTENT

Proponents for an alternate system want to know why a TV-14 show deserves such a strong rating. They say if it's because of violence and sexual situations, the TV-14 could just as easily be changed to VS-14 so parents would have a better idea

Valenti told the National Association of Broadcasters meeting recently in Las Vegas. "A witty adult sitcom would carry an L, but so would *Pulp Fiction*."

Critics counter that it would be a simple matter to indicate the different levels. *National Geographic Explorer*, with graphic footage of lions eating zebras, could be PG-V, suggesting parental guidance and indicating the possibility of some scenes disturbing to younger viewers.

Basic Instinct, with its *very* adult themes of kinky sex, seduction and murder, might — with heavy editing — get a TV-14 with V, S and L tacked on as well. This could be easily represented as VSL-14.

HIDDEN AGENDA?

The TV industry was dragged kicking and screaming into the ratings game in the first place. The most cynical critics contend that the current system is essentially an industry smokescreen intended to hide content so as not to scare away advertisers that don't want to be associated with violent or adult-oriented programs.

The networks are squirming and seem to be seeking middle ground in the controversy. Leslie Moonves, CBS Entertainment president, is typical of major network executives.

"We're the guys who are between a rock and a hard place," Moonves says. "When ratings systems were first discussed, the creative community felt it was a form of censorship. On the other side, you have all the parental groups who feel if we do anything less than explaining what each sentence of a show is about, we are not doing our job.

"So we had to come up with something in the middle. If the system is not working a year from now, and more program information is

Tell the FCC how you fee

Under the 1996 telecommunications law, the FCC must decide if the current TV ratings system devised by the TV industry is acceptable. If it is not, a committee will be appointed to propose a new system. The law calls for the creation of a "V-chip" system for television sets that will allow parents to block out objectionable programs.

The official deadline has passed for public comment on the TV industry's proposal, but a rebuttal period continues until May 23. FCC chairman Reed Hundt has said the commission will hold public hearings on the issue.

A number of children's advocacy groups and two dozen members of Congress have urged t FCC to reject the current syst in favor of one that contains scriptions of a program's conte

Here are the addresses those wishing to voice th opinions to the FCC.

Reed E. Hundt,
FCC chairman
1919 M St., N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 2055

If you prefer to send e-m Reed Hundt's address is **rhundt@fcc.gov**

And if you want to call, FCC may be reached at (202) **1000.**

— *Michael S*

ter. Here are some examples of how Arkansans feel about the ratings controversy and television in general.

Some expressed concern over the inconsistency of the ratings and levels, especially programs rated TV-PG (parental guidance suggested). TV-PG is by far the most common rating in use. Others wondered about the wisdom of allowing the TV industry to rate their own programs.

■ **Camden:** "Parents would like a responsible person [other parents] to preview the programs and rate accordingly. Also a panel to vote out programs with vulgarity, sex and obscenity. If people want that kind of junk, they should go to adult movies, clubs, etc.

"We need to curb some of the filth being shown on TV. I am writing the president and the TV stations, also the sponsors."

■ **Little Rock:** "I am appreciative of *any* attempt to monitor television because the majority of the programs are trash! The ratings should be assigned by people who have small children as it gives you a different point of view when you have innocent eyes exposed to trash TV!

"Not only is the majority of television idiotic and detrimental to children, I cannot see any redeeming social value in *adults* watching constant violence, rapes, rampant sex, smart aleck children and inane adults!"

■ **Gurdon:** "The movie *The Cowboy Way* [rated TV-PG] shown on Channel 4 is sick and disgusting. It needs a TV-14 at least. I wouldn't want my children to see it at all."

■ **Fayetteville:** "We do not want to view nudity, hear profanity and view horrible violent scenes. We cannot know what will be in a TV program by the current system. We are Christians and believe in God ... and we try our best to obey his desire for us to have a pure mind

Stupid comment but source.

If violence becomes an identifying characteristic of the TV ratings system, *The Three Stooges* and *National Geographic* specials would be in the same category as films like *Basic Instinct*, says Jack Valenti, chairman of the group who devised the system.

ducive to that."

Some parents fear the ratings will give the networks an excuse to air even more explicit fare.

■ **North Little Rock:** "We used to be able to watch a movie on TV which had been 'edited for television,' therefore not leaving the viewer to wade through profanity, nudity and gross violence. On a recent Sunday night we were shown all of the above with *no* editing. I was insulted to think such viewing would be available with just the flick of a switch.

"No wonder our children cannot tell right from wrong — they only have to watch TV to see *all* is OK!"

■ **West Helena:** "Our children deserve better than TV offers. Too much violence, murder, sex and dope dealers are making criminals of children."

One reader suggested a simple rating system he feels would be more appropriate.

■ **Benton:** "Allowing the [TV industry] to rate its own programs is exactly like following Satan's directions for going to heaven. Prior to 1970, programs could be rated as 'watchable' or 'unwatchable.' From 1971-90, recognizing that 'sophisticated themes' and 'adult material' translates into 'filth' makes it simple to rate the programs. From 1991 to date, we need much stronger ratings: F1 = Extremely filthy; F2 = Extremely filthier; F3 = Extremely filthiest."

One viewer was concerned about the message TV is sending children compared to when she was young.

■ **Greers Ferry:** "Television today furnishes role models for young people. When I was growing up movies did this. Books furnished ethical standards.

"In both movies and radio, virtue always triumphed. We know this is not always so, but would we not all be better off if we believed that? And television where *all* characters are as good as Della Reese's [*Touched by an Angel*] could be boring. But the conclusion that we need drama where people are morally and ethically better seems valid."

Finally, a couple of readers against any rating system shifted the blame from TV to parents who have abrogated their responsibilities.

■ **Flippin:** "In today's world, everybody blames everything on something or someone else. There has always been sex, crime and violence on TV and ... parents today spoil and baby kids too much. Instead of realizing that morals and values come from the family, they put the blame on television and not themselves."

■ **Mountain Home:** "If people knew that morality is a virtue, none of this would be necessary! Teach kids to be moral again."

Valenti, who once said the industry would be in court "in a nanosecond" if the government tried to alter the ratings, has since backed off such litigious language. He now says parents will be polled to see if changes should be made. Those interviews will begin shortly.

If the pollsters stumble into Arkansas, it seems they'll find lots of parents waiting with a few choice words.

LAKEWOOD 8 ♿
Lakewood Village 758-5354
*MURDER AT 1600 (R)
2:10-4:35-7:05-9:25

PARK PLAZA 7 ♿
Markham at University 661-9300
*McHALE'S NAVY (PG)
1:40-4:15-7:00-9:25

CINEMA CITY
Breckenridge Village 24-3990
*EIGHT HEADS IN A DUFFEL BAG (R)
2:00-5:00-7:40-10:00

RECEIVED

MAY 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

CS97-55

4-7-97

Dear Mr. Chessen,

I appreciate this opportunity to discuss my views with the FCC. I oppose all age rating systems. I would much prefer a content based preview guide for all media entertainment so that we, as families, can make our own decisions about what we feel is appropriate for our children to watch.

Again I appreciate what is being done + hope that comments such as mine are well known among your staff. Thank you.

Mrs. Sherri Ann Jensen
250 E. 1300 N.
Springville UT 84663

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AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION
BENJAMIN RUSH, M.D.
1844

1400 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: 202.682.6000
Fax: 202.682.6114

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April 18, 1997

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APR 23 12 39 PM '97
CABLE SERVICES BUREAU

Reed E. Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20544

Re: CS Docket No. 97-55

Dear Chairman Hundt:

The American Psychiatric Association, America's oldest medical specialty society, with a membership of over 40,000 psychiatric physicians nationwide, would like to comment on the current National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) and the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) proposal for a voluntary ratings system (the industry proposal) for video programming.

We have considered that system, and find it inadequate.

Along with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Academy of Pediatrics, and many others, we would like a TV rating system that is clear, brief, easily available to parents, and specific as to **content** of programs.

We think content specificity will be of more use to more parents than is the vaguer age rating system that the industry is now trying out. Content specificity should probably include a rating **for sex, for violence**, and **for strong language.**

We think a brief, clear content-based system, easily available to parents, is feasible. We suggest as one possible model for consideration, the RSAC system for software, which is already in use.

We would be glad to comment on these issues in more detail if you would like.

Sincerely,

Melvin Sabshin, M.D.
Medical Director

CS97-55

April 25, 1997

RECEIVED
MAY 7 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Mr. Reed Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M St.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I am writing to **object** to the Hollywood-endorsed age-based rating system we now have for television. This is a sellout to Hollywood, their profits and their horrible values.

We need to drop this worthless system and develop a content-based rating system.

I am the father of two small children. I want to know WHAT the shows contain, not what some Hollywood producer thinks his show should be rated.

We need specifics on sex, violence and obscene language. An ideal system would specify when these were present and to what level and how much. I want to know, for example, if the show contains sexual content, strong sexual content, etc., similar to the system that Pay TV now has.

Please *take action* to drop this present system and develop one that has meaning and is truly helpful.

Sincerely,

J. B. Mixon, Jr.
P. O. Box 21314
Roanoke, VA 24018

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MAY 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

April 24, 1997

Mr. Reed Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Hundt,

As a parent and grandparent, I am writing to express my concerns about the TV ratings system which was unveiled late last year by the television industry. The six broad ratings categories based on their estimation of age-appropriateness and their definition of content differ, in actuality, very little from the M.P.A.A. ratings used for movies. It is a known fact that a majority of people favored a system that labels programming for its sex, violence, and foul language. It is too bad the task force ignored the input.

The benefits of the content-based system requested by the public would be to provide specific information to parents who want to monitor their children's viewing habits. With the "Hollywood system", parents are not going to obtain the necessary information to make informed choices because of the vagueness of the system.

New ratings systems for entertainment merely enable the muckmakers to give their sleazy products attention-drawing labels. In a perverse way, the new TV ratings actually give the purveyors of smut a license to carry on.

America is in a civil war of values and the prize in that war is our children. If we want high standards of values and ideals to survive, even prevail, then please help to oppose those who seek to steal the innocence of our youth.

Yours truly,

Joyce J. Read

Joyce J. Read (Mrs. Lyle L. Read)
1200 N.E. Territorial Rd., #83
Canby, OR 97013-2400

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CS97-55

April 20, 1997

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MAY - 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Chairman Reed Hundt
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington DC. 20554

Dear Chairman Hundt,

Often, parents wonder about the appropriateness of the television programs their children watch. In response to this common complaint, television networks introduced the age-based ratings system several months ago. While these ratings are a step towards the right direction, there are several major flaws within it that renders it uninformative at best. For example, the TV ratings use age as an indication to what material is appropriate, such TV-Y for all children, to TV-MA for mature audiences only. Unfortunately, these ratings do not convey enough information to be effective because all children mature at different rates. In addition, these ratings are only shown in the upper left-hand corner of the program screen for fifteen seconds at the beginning of the program. Finally, the producers and networks rate their own shows, which creates a problem of non-uniformity among the levels for each rating. Therefore the new ratings system is inadequately informative, not supported, and should be replaced.

The content-based ratings system is more appropriate than the age-based one and should be implemented immediately. When the National PTA and the Media Studies Center did a nationwide survey, the result was that 80% of parents would prefer a content-based ratings system to an age-based one. Lois Salisbury, CEO of Children Now emphasized, "This (age-based) rating system won't tell parents what they need to know most: whether there is sex and violence in a show their kids are watching." Accordingly, the content-based system would present a symbol for violence, language, and sexual situations. Moreover, each symbol would be given a number for the level of the aforementioned program circumstances, such as L-3 for language at a level three intensity. Many notable organizations such as: the National PTA, the American Medical Association, the National Education Association, the American Psychological Association, the Children's Defense Fund, and the Coalition for America's Children support the content-based ratings systems. Besides the fact that the content-based system has garnered much more support, there is further dissent that the age-based system offers a universal judgement for all children. As aforementioned, all children mature at differential rates and thus need to be addressed individually. Salisbury also commented, "Unfortunately, the TV industry today announced a system that presumes producers and TV executives are a better judge of what children should watch than parents. Rather than offering information to parents, their system offers a one size fits all judgement about what's right for a child to watch." Her point was reinforced by Center for Media Education President Kathryn Montgomery, who stated, "Parents don't know why a show gets one of those ratings. Is it just because a little saucy language was used or because there was a lot of disturbing, graphic violence?"

Furthermore, the broadcast duration of any ratings symbols should be prolonged. Parents who check the program at infrequent intervals may simply miss the symbols because of the short, fifteen-second duration. Therefore the symbols should be broadcast after each commercial break

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for a longer time period, giving them prolonged and multiple broadcasts to reach audiences through. Another way of reaching the viewers with the symbols is to publish them in the TV guides after the mention of each show.

In addition, the networks should submit to an outside association to rate their shows. For example while Friends is rated TV-PG for its explicit sexual innuendo, Cybill, of another network, is rated TV-14. However, when watched, the two shows exhibit virtually the same level of innuendo. In order for a ratings system to be reliable, it should be created and imposed by a separate, more objective organization than the networks, which broadcast the shows. There is also a feeling that without independent rating, the television industry is implementing the ratings simply to appease the FCC. Linfield Professor of Communications Dave Gilbert emphasized, "The ratings must be done by independent organizations. It's a bone thrown by the industry to get the watch dog organizations off their backs and to avoid potential for increased FCC regulation."

Therefore, the current, inadequate television ratings system should be changed. The age-based [illegible] and 80% of parents. These ratings would also take into account the differing maturity of children, allowing parents to decide what is appropriate for them to watch. The broadcast duration of the symbols should be prolonged, and the symbols should reappear after each commercial break. Furthermore, the ratings should be imposed by independent organizations, rather than by the networks themselves. This would create a uniform standard of ratings that would solve the problem of disparities within the current system.

Sincerely,

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CABLE SERVICES BUREAU

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MAY 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

April 18, 1997

The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chairman
FCC
1919 M Street
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Television Rating System

Dear Mr. Hundt,

I would like to add my name to those who support a "content-based" rating system rather than one that is age-based. I cannot rely on the ratings developed by the television industry. Perhaps that is why our television is turned off most of the time. That is a choice that we can make in our own home, but what happens at the neighbor's house or elsewhere? I know we have become a callous society and some may think it odd that some children have not routinely witnessed seductions and murders. If we want to protect our children, we must have the tools. A useful rating system based on the material content of each program could be that tool. Please understand that I am not suggesting that networks be prevented from producing whatever they perceive to be marketable. I am asking only that we be given the means by which to evaluate a particular program so that its undesirable elements cannot take us by shock. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cecily Hintzen

Cecily Hintzen
541 Mills Way
Goleta, CA 93117

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CABLE SERVICES BUREAU

Dr. John Van Schepen
*17603 S. Ardmore * Bellflower * CA * 90706*
(562) 866 - 5577 FAX (562) 925 - 8962

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April 17, 1997

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MAY 7 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chrm.
FCC, 1919 M Street
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Sir,

Thank you for having the FCC open a "public comment period" on the "age-based rating system." I am writing this letter to indicate to you that in my opinion this age-based rating system is doing little if any good. As a matter of fact it may be doing more harm than good. With a system in place we as parents -I have five children- may somehow think that we can now simply check the rating and certainly anything with a PG rating would be fine for our children. IN fact, nothing could be further from the truth! The current TV-PG ratings allows shows with sexually provocative themes, profanity, and sex out side of marriage. Even the show Ellen falls into this category. Nor is it merely sex and profanity that concern me. In an ever increasing violent society the violence even on the TV-PG shows is ever increasing and most of the time either the perpetrator goes unpunished and/or the show would indicate that there are no long tern consequences whatsoever.

Sir, we need a rating system that is content based, one which truly rates the shows for what they are. When a net work calls out, "welcome home," and displays a TV-PG sign before a show, I, as a parent should not have to be embarrassed to watch it with my children.

Thank you for giving this matter your attention. I look forward to hearing from you and look forward more, to a rating system which has a measure of veracity.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Van Schepen

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CS97-55

Dr. John R. Hartwick
Diplomate, American Board of
Veterinary Practitioners
Canine and Feline Practice

April 15, 1997

The Honorable
Reed Hundt, Chairman
FCC, 1919 M Street
Washington, DC 20554

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

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MAIL SERVICES BUREAU

Dear Sir,

Regarding the "Age-based" rating system organized by the television industry, I want to register my response during this public comment period.

I am opposed to the "Age-based" rating system. It is a failure.

I think we should have a "Content-based" system, along with a return of the family hour.

Thank you,

John Hartwick, DVM

Chatsworth Animal Hospital
9763 Mason Avenue
Chatsworth, California 91311
Tel: (818) 341-2606
Fax: (818) 341-1567

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April 15, 1997

The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chrm.
FCC, 1919 M Street
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Sir,

I am opposed to the age-based rating system and want a content-based system along with the return of the Family Hour.

Yours Sincerely,

Patricia J. Snay

Patricia J. Snay
387 Valley View Dr.
Santa Maria, CA 93455

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