

CHILD'S PLAY

BY THOMAS W. HAZLETT

Direct mail hucksters boast that a helpless child's picture is worth a thousand bucks. Nothing jump-starts an adult's protective rush like "the children." For "the children," adults will sacrifice more than money—even sacred liberties protected by the U.S. Constitution.

Congress has just enacted a measure directing the Federal Communications Commission to assess the effect of a television station's programming upon *the children* before renewing its broadcast license. The law also caps the amount of advertising on kids' shows at 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays.

President Bush allowed the bill to become law without his signature. Of course, Bush has no principles—on principle. His own press statement on the legislation solemnly warned, "The First Amendment...does not contemplate that Government will dictate the quality or quantity of what Americans should hear. Rather, it leaves this to be decided by free media responding to the free choices of individual consumers." Voilà! Having castigated the law as detrimental to the very freedoms we Americans hold dear, the president vacated his oath of office and allowed this assault on the Constitution to become the law of the land.

The Washington-swell for the law was bodysurfed by teachers' unions, religious orders, and health-care professionals—along with the National Association of Broadcasters. The designated spokesperson was Peggy Charren, of a lobbying group called Action for Children's Television, who so adroitly summed up the *realpolitik*: "There was no constituency for a veto." Mr. Madison a nobody, Ms. Charren?

Just moments before the vote, cocktail-hour freedom fighters were beefing about David Souter's ostensible softness regarding individual protections im-

plicit in the Bill of Rights. But these limousine libertarians drew a huge collective blank while the Congress voted explicitly to regulate the content of electronic publishers.

"I'm just appalled at the way Judge Souter refuses to reassure Americans about his firm commitment to an American's right to privacy, found right there if you read between the lines in that Fourth Amendment. Oh, yes, wouldn't it be swell to give federal regulators more discretion over what television producers tell our impressionable young people." Congress shall make no law...abridging freedom of speech, or of the press? (Between those lines: Except, of course, where creep "the children"!)

The Lucifer lurking in this censorship coalition is the NAB. Even Beltway bubbleheads with the gollygee-whiz gullibility of a Jimmy Carter could ID this mischief. The legislation limits the amount of commercial time that stations can sell. If the broadcast competitors ran this pooling arrangement on their own, they'd bump into quite another body of law: Sherman Antitrust, Section 1. Indeed, just a decade ago the Justice Department's Antitrust Division knocked out a previous NAB collusion: the networks' Family Hour agreement not to start the T and/or A until 8 P.M. (when adults, presumably, stood a better chance of enjoying it in peace). But get the feds to police the conspiracy themselves, as the Good Government activists have done for the NAB, and your cartel is (a) legal; and (b) a hero to America's youth!

While broadcasters regulated according to "public convenience, interest, or necessity" quiver when making this rudimentary point, the reason for having a Bill of Rights that cuts government off at the pass is that lots of well-meaning PTAers, not to mention political ruffians

on the order of a Lyndon Johnson or a Richard Nixon, will want to shave the prerogatives of those possessing "no constituency for a veto." The slick skids this censorship legislation coasted upon reveal the delicate nature of fundamental freedoms that fail to make the interest group Top 40.

There is no trade-off of repression of choice for quality of output. Federal supervision of television has proceeded since the very first yawn to a test pattern, yet all the equal-time, fairness-doctrine, and public-interest licensing rigmarole has secured are artificially imposed scarcity of media, mediocrity in product of Gerald-esque proportions, timidity in news gathering, hack favoritism in awards, and political whack-a-rounds at license-renewal time. Even the classic fairness-doctrine legal precedent, *Red Lion v. FCC* (1969), turns out (unbeknownst to the High Court that decided it erroneously) to have sanctioned Kennedy-Johnson harassment of right-wing radio broadcasters—via expensive fairness-doctrine license challenges—in a calculated campaign to shut up political dissenters.

Tots plugged into Saturday TV will be no more protected from flaky 'toons by FCC monitoring than adults have been shielded from Sam Donaldson in prime time. But don't expect to see exclusive footage of regulatory failures and abuses on "Live at Five," so long as federal marshals keep their fingers on the "off" switch. Which is precisely why all speech—printed, beamed, wired, or uttered—merits protection by the First Amendment's remote control.

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The Institute for Humane Studies will award

First Prize: \$5,000

Second Prize: \$3,500

Third Prize: \$1,500

10 Runner-Ups: \$500

for the best essays by undergraduate students on an individualist theme in a selected work of fiction.

“Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.”

—Lord Byron

ESSAY

Choose ONE of the following novels and write an essay discussing how the novel explores the theme captured in the quote above.

- J. M. Coetzee, *The Return of the Barbarians*
- Robert Heinlein, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*
- Ken Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion*
- Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
- Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*

Essays should deal with the *ideas* in the novel, although form, characterization, trope, metaphor, etc., may be discussed relative to the author's development of ideas.

SELECTION OF WINNERS

Essays will be judged on the following criteria:

- quality of writing (clarity, organization, style, etc.)
- persuasiveness
- grasp of theme
- demonstrated understanding of selected work

RULES

1. Entrant must be an undergraduate student at an accredited university during the 1990-91 school year.
2. Essay must be no less than 2,000 words and no more than 3,000 words.
3. Essay must be the work of a single individual.
4. Essay must be submitted in English, typewritten, double-spaced.
5. Entry must include a cover sheet providing the student's **name, mailing address, date of birth, school, major, year of graduation, and career interests.**
6. Decisions of the judges are final. The Review Committee reserves the right not to award a prize.

DEADLINE

Entry must be postmarked by **March 1, 1991**, or sent by overnight carrier for delivery by March 7.

Submit completed entry, with cover sheet, to Fiction Essay Contest, Institute for Humane Studies, George Mason University, 4400 University Dr., Fairfax, VA 22030-4444. To verify receipt of your entry, include a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope.

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at George Mason University

FICTION ESSAY CONTEST

Traffic radar doesn't say which car is being clocked, it merely flashes a number.
The radar operator must then try to determine which vehicle produced the reading.



Why radar makes mistakes. How to protect yourself.

Although nine different errors have been documented for traffic radar, the most common source of wrongful tickets is mistaken identity.

It's hard to believe, but traffic radar does not identify which vehicle is responsible for the speed being displayed. It shows a number and nothing else. The radar operator must decide who is to blame.

Traffic Radar Is Blind

Traffic radar works differently from military, air-traffic-control, and weather radars. The others use rotating dish antennas in order to track many objects simultaneously.

Traffic radar uses a far smaller, far cheaper, antenna. This requires traffic radar to ignore all reflections but the strongest. The number displayed is the speed calculated from the strongest reflection.

The Best Guess

Remember, these reflections are invisible. Truck reflections can be ten times stronger than car reflections. How can the operator know for sure which vehicle is responsible for the number?

The truth is, he can't be sure in many cases. The result is mistaken identity. You can be ticketed for somebody else's reflection.

Self Defense

The only way to defend yourself against these wrongful tickets is to know when radar is operating near you. In his verdict upholding a citizen's right to use a radar detector, one judge wrote:

"If government seeks to use clandestine and furtive methods to monitor citizen actions, it can ill afford to complain should the citizen insist on a method to effect his right to know he is under such surveillance."

We Can Help

We specialize in radar warning. And PASSPORT, ESCORT, and SOLO do far more than simply find radar. Upon radar contact, the alert lamp responds and the meter shows radar signal strength. At the same time, you will hear an audio warning — pulsing slowly when the radar is weak, quicker as it strengthens, then constant as you approach close range. When you know exactly how strong the radar waves are, you'll know when the radar unit is near enough to actually have you under surveillance.

Expert's Choice

PASSPORT, ESCORT, and SOLO are the most advanced radar-warning instruments available. And the automotive experts agree.

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