Gingrich, Jones support homosexual rights

House Minority Whip Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) surprised his luncheon guests when he revealed that he opposes the Department of Defense ban on homosexuals in the military. His remark came in response to a question from Andrew Sullivan, the openly homosexual editor of *New Republic* magazine. The magazine's editorial staff was hosting a luncheon for Gingrich to explore his positions on a variety of issues.

Congressman Ben Jones (D-Ga.) became the 94th co-sponsor of HR 1430, a proposed law giving homosexuals special civil rights, which is now in Congress. Jones told the *Southern Voice*, a paper catering to the homosexual community in Atlanta, that "...there has to be some sort of legal protection for people who are discriminated against for personal private behavior." If passed, HR 1430 would deny rights to individuals and businesses in housing, employment and public accommodations, whereas it would provide homosexuals with special rights because of their sexual orientation.

The Washington Blade 1/31/92

Pornography involved in sex molestation cases

Cumberland County Sheriff's investigators seized pornographic films and sexually explicit slides from the former apartment of a businessman who has admitted molesting numerous boys, court documents show.

An affidavit filed in District Court in Portland reveals that the investigators searched the apartment where Warren Cole used to live, above his family's Cole Farms restaurant in Gray.

Cole, according to an affidavit, turned over to the police more than 120 pornographic movies, about half of which involved children. He also had slides depicting nude children performing sex acts, books and an 8 millimeter movie projector.

Portland, Maine, Weekend, 2/8-9/92

Government funds help support Smithsonian prostitute display

The Smithsonian Institution recently opened an exhibit on homelessness that lets visitors lie in a morgue, fend off an attacker and listen to a prostitute having sex.

The "Etiquette of the Undercaste" forces visitors to become "performers" and uses the voices of real homeless people to narrate the adventure.

In one section of the tour, the visitor is asked to recline in a bed and listen to tape recording of a prostitute having sex with a john and being pressured to accept $200.

"Who is smarter, the girl who gets paid for it or the one who gives it away for free?" a woman's voice asks.

The particular project was funded with $15,000 in private donations, but the Smithsonian is funded with tax dollars. Addresses: U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 and U.S. Senate,Washington, DC 20510.

Associated Press, 2/26/92

Report: TV narrowly focused, unrealistic

The nation's psychologists say that commercial TV doesn't portray children, the elderly, minorities and women as they really are. And television doesn't even try to appeal to many groups in society, they said.

Instead, TV is fixed on luring young Americans with enough money to buy sponsors' products, a task force appointed by the 108,000-member American Psychological Association said.

The findings included:

• TV's model female isn't realistic. On TV, she is "helpless, passive" and "valued for her appearance more than for her capabilities."

• Constant portrayal of sexual violence "leads to increased acceptance of rape."

• Violence occurs 20 to 25 times an hour on Saturday morning children's fare.

• While portrayal of blacks has improved, ethnic minorities are "virtually absent" from TV and those who appear are stereotyped.

Electronic Media, 3/2/92

Levi Strauss OKs employee benefits for homosexuals, unmarried partners

Levi Strauss & Co., the world's largest clothing manufacturer, announced that it will offer health benefits to unmarried partners of its U. S. employees.

The policy, which takes effect June 1, applies to any worker who lives with and shares finances with an unmarried lover.

"We want a nondiscriminatory workplace," said Reese Smith, Levi's director of employee benefits. "And when we looked at our policies prohibiting discrimination for race, sex, religion, or marital status, we realized our own practices were not in compliance with our policy."

The decision makes Levi's the largest company in the United States to extend benefits to partners of unmarried employees. It applies to all of its 23,000 U. S. workers.

Under the Levi's policy, unmarried couples will be eligible for the same benefits as married ones. However, benefits for an unmarried lover are considered taxable income to the employee, so the value of the dependent health care will be taxed, Reese said.

Levi's will use the "honor system" to ensure that people who join the health plan are really live-in, unmarried lovers, Reese said. "If we find out later they're lying, we'll take disciplinary action," he added.

The address to write is Levi Strauss & Co., Robert D. Haas, P.O. Box 7215, San Francisco, CA 94120, Phone 415-544-6000, fax 415-544-3939.

Associated Press, 2/24/92

Minnesota will not sponsor violence

Minnesota will stop financing advertisements shown during television programs that exploit and glorify violence, Gov. Arne Carlson has announced. He didn't specify which programs or ads will be targeted.

USA Today, 2/12/92

Sex-video couple want their child back

A Monterey, Tennessee, couple who made and sold sex videos to pay their bills are now fighting to regain custody of their nine-year-old daughter.

Jack Lee Ashcraft, Jr. and his wife, Jean, appeared on the Sally Jessy Raphael program last November to discuss their enterprise. Since then, state Department of Human Services officials have put the Aschrafts' daughter in a foster home and deputies arrested the Ashcrafts on obscenity charges.

"I'm sorry we ever made them," Jean Ashcraft said. "It was a mistake going on that television show. A big one. Everything was going along all right until we did that." Mrs. Ashcraft, 43, said her daughter was never around to see anything.

The couple have been indicted by a grand jury on two counts each of producing and possessing obscene material for distribution.

A report by Putnam County Sheriff's Deputy David Andrews said he accompanied a DHS worker to the child's school last November and then to the Ashcraft home. Andrews said magazines, letters and videotapes were confiscated and DHS took the child from the home.

Associated Press, 3/1/92

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TV: The Cyclops that eats books

By Larry Woiwode
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Monthly Journal of Hillsdale (MI) College

What is destroying America today is not the liberal breed of one-world politicians, or the IMF bankers, or the misguided educational elite, or the World Council of Churches; these are largely symptoms of a greater disorder. If there is any single institution to blame, it is, to use the cozy diminutive, "TV."

TV is more than a medium; it has become a full-fledged institution, backed by billions of dollars each season. Its producers want us to sit in front of its glazed-over electronic screen, press our clutch of discernment through the floorboards, and sit in a spangled, zoned-out state ("couch potatoes," in current parlance) while we are instructed in the proper liberal tone and attitude by our present-day Plato and Aristotle–Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw. These television celebrities have more temporal power than the teachings of Aristotle and Plato have built up over the centuries.

Television, in fact, has greater power over the lives of most Americans than any educational system or government or church. Children are particularly susceptible. They are mesmerized, hypnotized and tranquilized by TV. It is often the center of their world; even when the set is turned off, they continue to tell stories about what they've seen on it. No wonder, then, that as adults they are not prepared for the front line of life; they simply have no mental defenses to confront the reality of the world.

The truth about TV

One of the most disturbing truths about TV is that it eats books.

Once out of school, nearly 60 percent of all adult Americans have **never read a single book**, and most of the rest read only one book a year. Alvin Kernan, author of *The Death of Literature*, says that reading books "is ceasing to be the primary way of knowing something in our society." He also points out that bachelor's degrees in English literature have declined by 33 percent in the last 20 years and that in many universities the courses are largely reduced to remedial reading. American libraries, he adds, are in crisis, with few patrons to support them.

Thousands of teachers at the elementary, secondary and college levels can testify that their students' writing exhibits a tendency toward a superficiality that wasn't seen, say, ten or fifteen years ago. It shows up not only in the students' lack of analytical skills but in their poor command of grammar and rhetoric. I've been asked by a graduate student what a semicolon is. The mechanics of the English language have been tortured to pieces by TV. Visual, moving images–which are the venue of television–can't be held in the net of careful language. They want to break out. They really have nothing to do with language. So language, grammar and rhetoric have become fractured.

Recent surveys by dozens of organizations also suggest that up to 40 percent of the American public is functionally illiterate; that is, our citizens' reading and writing abilities, if they have any, are so seriously impaired as to render them, in that handy jargon of our times, "dysfunctional." The problem isn't just in our schools or in the way reading is taught: TV teaches people not to read. It renders them incapable of engaging in an art that is now perceived as strenuous, because it is an active art, not a passive hypnotized state.

Passive as it is, television has invaded our culture so completely that you see its effects in every quarter, even in the literary world. It shows up in supermarket paperbacks, from Stephen King (who has a certain clever skill) to pulp fiction. These are really forms of verbal TV–literature that is so superficial that those who read it can revel in the same sensations they experience when they are watching TV.

Even more importantly, the growing influence of television has, Kernan says, changed people's habits and values and affected their assumptions about the world. The sort of reflective, critical and value-laden thinking encouraged by books has been rendered obsolete. In this context we would do well to recall the Cyclops—the race of giants that, according to Greek myth, predated man.

Here is a passage from the well known classicist Edith Hamilton's summary of the encounter between the mythic adventurer Odysseus and the Cyclops named Polyphemus, as Odysseus is on his way home from the Trojan Wars. Odysseus and his crew have found Polyphemus's cave:

> "At last he came, hideous and huge, tall as a great mountain crag. Driving his flock before him he entered and closed the cave's mouth with a ponderous slab of stone. Then looking around he caught sight of the strangers, and cried out in a dreadful booming voice, 'Who are you who enter unbidden the house of Polyphemus? Traders or thieving pirates?' They were terror-stricken at the sight and sound of him, but Odysseus made shift to answer, and firmly too: 'Shipwrecked warriors from Troy are we, and your supplicants, under the protection of Zeus, the supplicants' god.' But Polyphemus roared out that he cared not for Zeus. He was bigger than any god and feared none of them. With that, he stretched out his mighty arms and in each great hand seized one of the men and dashed his brains out on the ground. Slowly he feasted off them to the last shred, and then, satisfied, stretched himself out across the cavern and slept. He was safe from attack. None but he could roll back the huge stone before the door and if the horrified men had been able to summon courage and strength enough to kill him they would have been imprisoned there forever."

To discover their fate, read the book, preferably Robert Fitzgerald's masterful translation, if you don't know Greek. What I find particularly appropriate about this myth as it applies today is that, first, the Cyclops imprisons these men in darkness, and that, second he beats their brains out before he devours them. It doesn't take much imagination to apply this to the effects of TV on us and our children.

TV's effect on learning

Quite literally, **TV affects the way people think**. In *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1978), Jerry Mander quotes from the Emery Report, prepared by the Center for Continuing Education at the Australian National University, Canberra, that when we watch television, "our usual processes of thinking and discernment are semi-functional at best." The study also argues "...that while television appears to have the potential to provide useful information to viewers—and is celebrated for its educational function—the technology of television and the inherent nature of the viewing experience actually inhibit learning as we usually think of it." And its final judgment is: "The evidence is that television not only destroys the capacity of the