News media attack Vice President, reveal affinity with 'show biz'

By Richard Grenier
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The country has never seen anything like it: the Vice President of the United States locked in mortal combat with the entertainment industry over America's moral values. With television news on the side of . . . ? Entertainment, of course.

And Dan Quayle is not on the defensive. The entertainment industry is on the defensive. Caught with its hand in the cookie jar. The Quayle versus Media fire storm over Murphy Brown giving birth to an illegitimate child brings into the open a venomous hostility that has lain unrecognized for a good two decades. The entertainment industry, for psychoromantic reasons is utterly dominated by left-liberal orthodoxy.

In precipitous decline in the country as a whole, a modish left-liberalism —in its most unappetizing, limousine-liberal form—still rules almost unchallenged in Hollywood. In the words of Lord Beaverbrook, it's our generation's most turgid example of "power without responsibility."

When Daniel Patrick Moynihan, now a senator from New York, wrote the "Moynihan Report" in 1965, asserting that a

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breakdown of the black family was at the heart of the social pathology of the black "underclass," there was a fierce flurry of debate. But with a stunning 66 percent of black children now being born out of wedlock (and with all four of the young black males who beat Reginald Denny to a pulp on the streets of south-central Los Angeles having known fatherless-homes), the debate is long over. In today's American population at large, furthermore, one child in four is born out of wedlock.

There is now near-universal agreement that single motherhood—subsidized by our welfare system and growing at a terrifying rate—is an American scourge. To raise a fatherless child in America today, white or black, male or female, increases something like tenfold the chance of that child ending up a permanent member of the impoverished underclass. Even with economic conditions factored out, a whopping disproportion of boys who grow up in fatherless homes commit rape, homicide, suicide, assault; succumb to drug addiction, mental illness; get low grades or drop out of school; and engage in all kinds of crime and delinquency.

In responsible quarters, there is simply no argument about this anymore. The impeccably liberal mayor of Minneapolis, Don Fraser, has joined the campaign against single motherhood as have, with shadings of emphasis, almost all other liberal social thinkers and politicians. But liberals can be divided into two groups: responsible liberals and crazed, nut-case liberals. Unfortunately, it's the nut-case variety that we meet all too frequently around the swimming pools and private tennis courts of Bel Air and Beverly Hills.

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revealing its affinity with show business) is unprecedented for an affair of this sort. The sincerity of the attack—and the question of who is on the defensive— can be judged by the bogus quality of the criticism that erupted in no fewer than six TV news programs that led with an account of Quayle versus Brown. Every fraudulent argument in the book has been dragged out to attack the Vice President. I summarize:

1. I disagree with what Dan Quayle says and will fight to the death to prevent him from saying it.
2. I actually agree with what Dan Quayle says but will still fight to the death to prevent him from saying it.
3. MURPHY BROWN is "only television" and has no bearing on real life. (Note that this argument is never used regarding criticism of TV sex or violence.)
4. Black people don't watch Murphy Brown, thus sparing the endangered portion of the population.
5. Murphy Brown is a high-salaried television personality and will be well able to afford to raise a fatherless child. Women with more modest incomes realize that this lifestyle is not for them. (Note that all talk of "role models," as if by magic, is instantly

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forgotten.)
6. People don't learn their values from television anyway, the media being less important in this respect than school, church and family.

Every single one of these arguments can be shot full of holes. Perhaps the most common misapprehension regarding the shameless ideological agitprop appearing in entertainment is that the author expects his audience to be persuaded in a blinding white flash—and the fact that this doesn't happen proves he had no didactic intent. This approach wildly underrates the cumulative effect of highly polemical ideological positions expressed in a medium assumed merely to "entertain."

Now, I personally find Murphy Brown slightly less witty than mud wrestling and think that in fact Candice Bergen's "light" comic touch is a rather well-paid, verbal form of mud wrestling. The show, I admit, has millions of devoted fans. But, whereas it would be an elementary mistake to assume that these fans swallow the show's feminist ideology lock, stock and barrel, it would be an equally elementary mistake to assume they're totally uninfluenced by it. Nor is the country's African-American community sealed off in a watertight compartment from attitudes prevailing in the country at large.

The collapse of socialism has left Hollywood "idealists" with a craving for substitute utopian belief systems. Along with environmentalism, Indian arcadianism and a kind of swamp-gas pacifism, one of these substitute systems is a particularly rabid form of jingoistic feminism. One doctrine of these feminist jingoes is simple enough: Women can do anything. They need men for nothing—including bringing up a child.

A spectacular study of 11,000 crimes committed in three widely separate American urban areas established recently that there is no correlation between crime and either poverty or race. The catastrophic correlation is with "father-absent households."

So it would be interesting to see what happens to Murphy Brown's affluent, white male child when he reaches 15 or so.

By then, of course, Murphy Brown will have gone to her reward in TV heaven. But her kid, tragically, will be with us for years to come.

Vice President right to raise the issue

By Samuel Francis
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In the past few weeks, the moral evolution of America has wheezed from the elevation of Rodney King as an icon of race relations to the canonization of a nonexistent unwed mother as the norm of wholesome family life. When Vice President Dan Quayle delivered himself of his platitudinous rap at illegitimacy last week, the nation's idiot boxes glowed green. Not since Spiro Agnew gave a boot in the lip to the nation's news media has a vice president caused so much spit to gather in their jaws.

What Quayle actually said was that the erosion of the family in America is not braked by a prime-time network show that depicts the merry adventures of a fictitious woman with an illegitimate child. As usual with Quayle, his remarks were unremarkable, but nonetheless they incited riots among the chinflappers.

Hence, in the week that followed, the media experts instructed us on whether television does or does not affect sexual behavior. The urban experts lectured us on whether Murphy Brown did or did not instigate anarchy in Los Angeles. The professional

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womanologists preached on whether unwed motherdom is or is not a good thing. And finally we heard from the First Father himself on the true answer to the crisis.

Cornered at a news conference, President Bush was unable to avoid the sneering inquisition pitched by reporters. At last he too unbosomed himself on the subject—and, despite his avowed intentions, succeeded in resolving none of it.

"I believe," began the president's credo, "that children should have the benefit of being born into families with a mother and a father who will give them love and care and attention all their lives.... I've talked to Barbara about it a lot, and we both feel strongly that that is the best environment in which to raise kids—not always possible, but that's the best environment, and I think it results in giving a kid the best shot at the American dream, incidentally."

Nothing wrong with that at all, except it was obviously the artfully crafted Wonder Bread that speechwriters and spin artists are paid to bake for the men who present themselves as the nation's leaders.

Bush's statement was carefully designed to offend no one. He didn't denounce illegitimacy as wrong or antisocial, nor did he defend the "right" of a woman to breed and bear offspring whenever the mood fetches her. He didn't deplore the TV show in question, nor did he affirm its value. He merely served some weak lemonade about mothers and fathers that in some quarters stimulates the same salivation as suggesting that Jeffrey Dahmer would make a pretty good presidential running mate.

Moreover, he talked with Barbara about it, just to show he's not the type of guy to come up with moral values all by himself without consulting the woman of the house, and indeed, he probably discussed it with Millie too, and after they discussed it, they all decided, yes, together, to "feel" that moms and dads are indeed the best "environment" for raising rug rats, at least on Tuesdays and Thursdays and often during the summer. Had George Washington shown Bush's moral leadership, the troops would have bolted Valley Forge for a spring break in Fort Lauderdale.

By contrast, the man who plays Robin to Bush's Batman mounted the siege engines. "This is typical Hollywood," Quayle proclaimed, "glamorizing something that is wrong with society."

Well, hurrah for Quayle! With one stroke he managed to cut through the gabble and pierce the heart of the issue. The issue is not whether television corrupts our youth, sets off race riots or is fair to unwed women and their urchins. The issue is the predominance of a morally and socially rootless elite in writing the scripts and designing the programs for American popular culture.

By pointing his pistols at Hollywood, Quayle evaded the artful moral evasions of his boss and drew a line in the sand. The line divides the country. On one side stand the men and women who believe in marriage, the family and raising children under the shield of authority. On the other stands the enemy: not women whose husbands desert them and their duties, but the man-eaters and malcontents who hate the family, play marriage like most people play Monopoly and want to make sure the personal lives of everyone else in the country are just as miserable as theirs.

Quayle was right to draw the line and engage the enemy. Mothers and fathers are rare birds on television these days, and they don't have much say in government, either. If Quayle can fill the vacuum left by his vacuous boss and speak strongly in favor of the forces of normality and against their foes, he may last longer on the screen than the insipid Murphy Brown and the bungled life she celebrates.