

SENATE—Monday, April 26, 1999

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Father, we have not forgotten the three American infantry soldiers who were captured on March 31 while on patrol at the Macedonian border: Staff Sergeants Andrew A. Ramirez and Christopher J. Stone; Specialist Steven M. Gonzalez. Be with them, Lord. Bless them with courage and strength. During this anxious time, give their families Your comfort and assurance. May these men and their families know that they are not forgotten and that the Senate is praying today for their safety and their release.

Here in the Senate we begin this new week with renewed trust in You and a commitment to work together for Your glory and for Your will in our Nation and in the world. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3:30 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 96, the Y2K bill. A cloture motion on that legislation was filed on Thursday, and by unanimous consent that vote will take place today at 5:30 p.m. Members are encouraged to come to the floor to debate this important legislation.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. President, I wish to address the body today on another matter during morning business. It is about the situation that has taken place in Colorado.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). The Chair will announce that under the previous order leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a

period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 3:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. I thank the Chair.

TEEN VIOLENCE

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I wish to address the Senate today on the subject of the violence in Littleton, CO. I note that over the weekend a number of funerals took place, and as I speak another funeral is occurring as a result of the shootings in Littleton, CO. I think it would be appropriate for us to observe a moment of silence for the victims of the shootings that took place.

(Period of silence.)

Mr. BROWNBACK. I thank the Chair.

Certainly, all of our thoughts and prayers are with the people in Colorado, across this country and across the world, who have been touched by the terrible tragedies in the shootings.

We cannot ignore the shootings that took place in Littleton, CO. I think we really must say that this time we will address these problems that are in our culture. They are here. We have a culture that glorifies violence and killing, where perverse things are put on television as normal. Ours is a culture that has far too much darkness in it.

Just listen to some of the words of the writers in various newspapers across this country when they have discussed today's culture. This was in last Thursday's Washington Post in the Style Section, mind you. Its headline: "When Death Imitates Art." It says:

Before Teenagers Commit Violence, They Witness It in American Culture.

Here is how the writer starts:

In what used to be the dark corners of our culture, there is now a prime time cartoon with a neo-Nazi character, comics that traffic in bestiality, movies that leave teenagers gutted like game, fashion designers who peddle black leather masks and doomsday visions. It's all in the open now, mass produced, widely available. Even celebrated. On countless PCs, killing is a sport. And there's Marilyn Manson, a popular singer who named himself after a mass murderer and proclaims he is the Antichrist.

Film, television, music, dress, technology, games: They've become one giant playground filled with accessible evil, darker than ever before.

Listen to this:

Consider: Of the last 11 major movies released on video since April 6, seven of them have violent themes. Among them, "Art Pupil," about a high school kid obsessed

with Nazism; "American History X" about the rise and fall of a skinhead; and "I Still Know What You Did Last Summer," a teen slasher sequel.

"There is no question in my mind that film and society interrelate," said Douglas Brode, a professor of film at Syracuse University and author of 18 books on the movies. "And not just films but music, video games, all of it. There is a connection. It may be tangential, it may be tight. Nobody knows for sure."

And so caution and perspective are urged.

It is surely one of the great debates of this decade: Does the culture simply reflect the dark, decadent times in which we live or is society this way because the cultural proprietors have run amok.

Listen to this from the Wall Street Journal, written by Peggy Noonan, a columnist. This was in last Thursday's Wall Street Journal. She writes this:

What walked into Columbine High School Tuesday was the culture of death. This time it wore black trench coats. Last time it was children's hunting gear. Next time it will be some other costume, but it will still be the culture of death. That is the Pope's phrase; it is how he describes the world we live in.

The boys who did the killing, the famous Trench Coat Mafia, inhaled too deep the ocean in which they swam. Think of it this way. Your child is an intelligent little fish. He swims in deep water. Waves of sound and sight, of thought and fact, come invisibly through that water, like radar; they go through him again and again, from this direction and that. The sound from the television is a wave, and the sound from the radio; the headlines on the newsstand, on the magazines, on the ad on the bus as it whizzes by—all are waves. The fish—your child—is bombarded and barely knows it. But the waves contain words like this, which I will limit to only one source, the news.

Then she goes through and lists:

... was found strangled and is believed to have been sexually molested. . . .

There are a number of headlines, and they finish this portion by saying:

This is the ocean in which our children swim. This is the sound of our culture. It comes from all parts of our culture and reaches all parts of our culture, and all the people in it, which is everybody.

Listen to this from the New York Times today:

By producing increasingly violent media, the entertainment industry has for decades engaged in a lucrative dance with the devil.

That was in the New York Times today. It goes on to describe a process that our young people are going through, that a former Army officer talked about being desensitization, conditioning of people, being able to do heinous violent acts that they are taking culture conditioning through a movie, music, the Internet that just constantly bombard them and it desensitizes them to the humanness surrounding them.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.