



BOOK REVIEWS

Title: *Inquiry into Strategies to Deal with the Issue of Community Violence, with Particular Reference to Mass Media and Entertainment Industries (3rd and Final Report)*

Authors: Social Development Committee, Parliament of Victoria, May 1989

In the wake of the Hoddle Street and Queen Street massacres in 1987, the Victorian Social Development Committee embarked on a major project to examine the issues of Community violence and develop strategies to stem its occurrence.

The Government announced its intention to establish a Community Council Against Violence (C.C.A.V.) and the Committee's First Report, tabled in May 1988, dealt with the composition, function and objectives of the C.C.A.V. It was recommended that the goals of the C.C.A.V should be:

- to improve detection, sanctions and preventative measures;
- to improve support services
- to eliminate gratuitous and inappropriate portrayals of actual or fictionalised violence in the mass media and entertainment industry
- to promote fundamental changes in people's attitudes and values relating to violence; and
- to improve controls over offensive weapons.

The Second Report, tabled in December 1988, dealt with general strategies to prevent violence in the community. Under the headings of public awareness, school programs, parent and professional education, general support programs, mediation programs, child abuse, spouse abuse, counselling for violent men, schools and family violence, crisis intervention; and youth and violence, the Report suggests a broad range of preventative measures and specific programs to curb violence.

The Third Report demonstrates an explicit and targeted concern with the mass media and entertainment as a major catalyst for violence in the community. It is a very thorough Report that canvasses local, Australian and overseas data on the relationship between violence and the mass media. It gives a lot of detail about classification codes and the ethical codes of practice in the TV and print media industries. This sort of 'inside information' reveals the self perception of these major organisations that dominate our leisure time. Additionally, the submissions made by individuals and community groups concerned with desensitisation to violence

in the media, stereotyping and the efficacy of practical measures highlights the complexity and controversy surrounding the topic.

An extensive 30 page literature review of the research about the role of the media in community violence by Dr. Patricia Edgar, Director, Australian Children's Television Foundation, is worth reading.

She concludes that while "the tools of social science show that it seems unlikely that television plays more than a minor role in producing violence and violent crime directly when compared to many other social forces ... the film and television industry have a responsibility to the audience on the issue of violence and its treatment in news and entertainment programs. This responsibility is undiminished by the lack of clarity in social science research on the subject."

Readers of this journal are likely to be particularly interested in the Second Report.

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