

The John Locke Society

EDWIN C. OLSEN IV
Chairman

SAMUEL E. LISMAN
Secretary

ROBERT G. EPSTEIN
Chief Whip

CHARLES R. NEUBECKER
Chancellor

April 30, 2002

It's easy, in today's culture, to take shots at what the television industry passes off as quality entertainment. It's so easy, in fact, that the Chairman rarely, if ever, misses the opportunity to do just that. Sneering down his nose at those whose schedules are planned based on the airtime of their favorite shows (of course, with TiVo, soon that will no longer be an issue – but that's neither here nor there), the Chairman prefers an evening playing Squash, Cribbage, or reading from his enormous (yet often untouched) collection of books to such a low-brow, passive, activity.

And what is he really missing? The television news is always biased and sensationalized (except for our good friends at Fox News, that is), the sports are driven more by advertising than excellence, the educational programming almost never is, and the entertainment caters to the lowest of our common, as it were, denominators.

There are four staples, it has been suggested to the Chairman, of the modern primetime television program: violence, sex, profanity, and that always uplifting humor that comes from watching a character be placed in humiliating situations (the *raison d'être*, if you will, of the contemporary sitcom). Furthermore, the *ethos* presented in so many shows today does little to help, and much to harm, society's views on issues, trends, and lifestyles.

But perhaps too much is being made of such trivial factors. Sure, we all agree, that television news is uniformly disappointing, but so too are most newspapers. And yes, sports, like the holidays, are too commercialized, but the game is still what draws the viewers. As for the state of the entertainment industry, is it really fair to paint with such large strokes? First, the Chairman admits, he has never seen a television show that came close to approaching the graphic violence of, for example, *The Iliad*. Second, dime-store romances are just as explicit, if not more so, than TV (are there still dime-stores? If so, where?). Third, the battle against profanity was lost long ago – witness our former first family. And as for the sitcom, we're laughing at the same gags and situations that were staged by Aristophanes, long before the invention of the cathode tube.

Moreover, there *is* quality programming out there, if one knows where to look. Despite the charges of some of our more vocal friends, *The Simpsons* does offer laudatory moral examples; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fights evil, without the moral equivalency and relativism so prevalent in our society; *South Park* consistently puts forth a Conservative viewpoint on everything from the primacy of the market to the inherent stupidity of the Florida election farce, from the importance of family and tradition to what to do when your younger brother is kidnapped by aliens (albeit always couched in the most foul-mouthed of phrases).

So with the pen poised over the check to the cable company, and with the Secretary rushing home to watch his beloved Buffy, the Chairman, wisely, calls upon the Members and Friends of the Antient and Honourable John Locke Society to debate at the 23rd Ronald Wilson Reagan Debate Caucus

Resolved: America Should Turn Off Television For Good.

The Society will assemble at **7 PM** on a rare **Wednesday**, the 15th of May 2002, at the home of the Chairman, **6205 Rincon Way**, Dallas. To get there, place yourself upon U.S. 75 *North Central Expressway*, exit Lovers Lane (going EAST). Pass one light, then at the next light go left on *Skillman Road* (going NORTH). At the second residential street, turn RIGHT (going EAST) onto *Rincon Way*. 6205 is a third of the way down the street on the left or north side. All gentlemen who desire to speak should adorn proper neckwear and ladies should be similarly sartorially resplendent. Literary presentations are, as always, welcomed. This being a private residence, Members and Friends should feel free to bring libations, as it were. The Chairman can be reached at 214-289-5409.