

Editorial

Cold turkey

The New Year is a time to take stock, to resolve to do better. With this in mind, we suggest “cold turkey” on television viewing. If we had to encapsulate what is wrong with the American population in just one word, that one word would be “television.” The situation is not much better elsewhere in the world.

Television is a mind-bender—a brainwashing medium. From the supposed news shows to the soap operas, it is designed to dull the mind of the unwary viewer. It is the equivalent of the bread and circuses offered to Romans, in the decadent Roman empire.

Particularly with U.S. television, sports competitions and game shows, and the continuing saga of soap opera characters, merge with “the real life dramas” shown on “news” shows. Rather than a citizenry prepared to debate the proper course of public policy and then act with resolve, Americans have become a nation of passive observers—television viewers. This is also increasingly true in Europe, where there is yet no mass outcry over policies which are igniting a series of “small” wars that threaten to become another unstoppable world conflagration.

The U.S. population’s moral and intellectual level this year is markedly below that of last year. In January 1992, the presidential election campaign, at least in its first stages, offered an arena where protest could be voiced, and alternative policies debated. That was the real significance of the first campaign of Ross Perot.

The hope which that phase represented was quickly dissipated, and Americans went back to their stupefied addiction to a packaged emotional life dominated by soap opera, game shows, MTV rock music extravaganzas, and hour after hour of spectator sports. This is not only a moral illness, but it is mental illness as well, on the scale of the whole culture, for which real life is dominated by fantasy.

In early 1992, and especially following Bush’s vomiting incident in Japan, there was a very significant turn in manifest public opinion trends. By about April, a “Dump Bush” mood could definitely be observed

among the American electorate.

Clinton was not seen as an acceptable alternative. He had no positive attraction for any large proportion of the population. There was just nothing there. Indeed, it was because of Clinton’s poor quality that he ended up with a smaller percentage of the vote than Michael Dukakis, the loser, got in 1988. Because of the poor quality of Clinton as an alternative, Bush was very close to getting a plurality of the vote, up until the last days before the election.

Yet, especially following the Democratic and Republican conventions during the summer, the American people adopted the mentality of sports fans, and this was the environment in which the debates among Bush, Clinton, and Perot were held. The majority shifted away from seeking genuine alternatives, into the mood of fans going into a sports competition—a league competition, a league runoff.

Of course, things can and will change again. For one thing, the world economy is sinking rapidly, despite the fanciful propaganda being spread to the effect that we are in the midst of a recovery. This reality cannot be ignored forever. Unemployment is spreading, benefits are being cut back, and the numbers of homeless grow—whether they be hapless refugees, or those who have been dispossessed from decent housing because of their poverty.

Under these circumstances, we must still arm ourselves with hope. Men and women of good will must step forward to offer leadership, as the masses of the world’s population wake up to reality and seek a solution to the crisis.

That means we must go against conventional wisdom, as peddled by the Anglo-American establishment and packaged by the television moguls; such “wisdom” is the enemy of truth. Demanding of one’s fellows that they turn off that blasted TV may not make one popular, but it is the essential first step which must be taken if we are going to reverse the present downward slide to a disaster which may destroy our very civilization.