

## The FTC's Case Against Hollywood

On Sept. 11, Robert Pitofsky, chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, at a press conference at the Commission's Washington, D.C. headquarters, released the results of a year-long study, "Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children: A Review of Self-Regulation and Industry Practices in the Motion Picture, Music Recording & Electronic Game Industries."

Pitofsky opened the press conference by summarizing the FTC's findings: "As you all know, on June 1 of last year, President Clinton asked the Federal Trade Commission, in cooperation with the Department of Justice, to answer two important questions. . . . The questions that the President asked were as follows:

"Do the movie, music recording, and computer game industries market to young people products that contain violent content in a way that undermines the ratings they themselves apply to their products? And if so, is it intentional?"

"For all three industry segments, and for both questions, the answer is yes."

He explained, "While rating systems vary, each of these industry segments do have a rating system that designates certain material as warranting parental control or as inappropriate for young people. Nevertheless, the companies in each entertainment segment routinely end-run and thereby undermine these parental warnings by target marketing their products to young audiences."

Pitofsky gave a case study of the movie industry: "Our review," he explained, "is a telling snapshot of what's going on in these industries. Of 44 movies rated R, 35, or 80%, were marketed to youngsters under 17. One document says, 'Our goal was to find the elusive teen target audience and make sure everyone between the ages of 12 and 18 was exposed to the film.'"

The video-game industry was even worse: "Of the 118 electronic games with a 'mature' rating for violence—and incidentally, in the course of this project I looked at these games, even played a few, and I must say, the level of violence of some of these games is really astonishing. Eighty-three of those games, or 70%, were targeted to children under 17. . . . A couple of marketing plans even referred to a target audience as young as six and eight. Finally, a document recommends television ads to a primarily male audience of 12 to 17 because, as the document says, 'the younger the audience, the more likely they are to be influ-

enced by TV advertising.'"

Pitofsky reported, "The Commission did not independently survey the issue of whether there was a causal connection between exposure to violent materials and violent behavior. We did a literary search, however. . . . Exposure does seem to correlate with aggressive attitudes, insensitivity to violence, and an exaggerated view of how much violence there is in the world."

During the question and answer period, Pitofsky was pressed whether there was a pervasive pattern of abuse, or if these were isolated cases. He answered, "As you know, when you conclude that 80% of the R-rated movies were marketed to an underage audience, and all of the music that we checked up on, which was the best-selling music, was marketed to an underage audience, it's hard to say that there's a few bad actors in the industry who are giving the industry a bad name. We concluded it was pervasive and aggressive, and I think the report supports that."

### From the FTC Report

*The FTC report, a 56-page document with 48 pages of endnotes and 11 appendices, can be obtained from the FTC's website: [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). Brief excerpts follow:*

**Marketing Movies to Children: Promotional and "Street Marketing":** The studios use a wide array of promotional activities to generate interest in a film. . . . Some are directed to children.

**R-rated films:** One of the most popular methods the studios used to attract teens to R-rated films was to distribute free passes to movie screenings and free merchandise related to the film (such as t-shirts, tatoos, and mini-posters) at places where teens congregate. As one marketing plan for an R-rated film stated: "[O]ur goal was to find the elusive teen target audience and make sure everyone between the ages of 12-18 was exposed to the film. To do so, we went beyond the media partners by enlisting young, hip 'Teen Street Teams' to distribute items at strategic teen 'hangouts' such as malls, teen clothing stores, sporting events, Drivers Ed classes, arcades, and numerous other locations."

**Marketing M-Rated Games to Children:** The Commission's review of industry documents indicates that nearly all the game companies contacted have marketed violent M-rated games to children in violation of the IDSA's anti-targetting provisions. These violations are evidenced foremost by marketing documents for M-rated games that expressly target children (typically boys) under age 17. This under-17 targetting occurred as late as February 2000, the cut-off date for Commission-requested materials. . . . Overall, 10 of the 11 companies contacted by the Commission (91%) produced at least one marketing document expressly identifying males (denoted by the letter "M") under 17 as the core, primary, or secondary target of their advertising campaigns for a violent M-rated game. . . . Most of the plans

targetting an under-17 audience set age 12 as the younger end of the target spectrum, e.g., “M 12-17” or “M 12-24,” but two targetted children as young as six and eight.

**Conclusion:** Members of the motion picture, music recording, and electronic game industries routinely target children under 17 as the audiences for movies, music, and games that they themselves acknowledge are inappropriate for children or warrant parental caution due to their level of violent content.

## LaRouche Speaks Out on Hollywood: Stop Turning Kids into Killers

**June 11, 1999:** Lyndon LaRouche wrote a groundbreaking study entitled “Star Wars and Littleton” (*EIR*, July 2, 1999), which addressed the underlying causes that produced the child killers of Littleton, Colorado. The following are excerpts:

“If what is known popularly as ‘Hollywood’ continues with the genre of so-called popular entertainment typified by the *Star Wars* series, there will be an increasing frequency of similar incidents of lunatic outbreaks, as bad as, or worse than Littleton.”

“How does one corrupt innocent children into becoming psychotic-like killers? The quick answer to that question, is: *dehumanize* the image of man. The details of the way this leads to the production of youthful ‘Nintendo’ terrorists, is a more complicated matter. Nonetheless, it is no oversimplification to say, that once that first step, dehumanizing the image of man, is accomplished, the axiomatic basis has been established, to make war, and killing, merely a childish game played according to a childish mind’s perception of the importance of obeying the rules: even according to that pervert’s fancy called by Britain’s Tony Blair and Illinois’ Henry Hyde, ‘the rule of law.’ ”

“We must take into account the heritage of the cumulative work of Hollywood and other producers and script-writers, to locate the background which the authors of programmed scenarios such as the Littleton massacre had available, as models, for crafting today’s Nintendo-style and kindred satanic games. One recalls, thus, *Clockwork Orange*, or, another Hollywood horror-film, *The Bad Seed* . . . or, the many trash Hollywood horror-films of the 1930s through 1950s. . . .

“Professional clinical psychologists remind us, that the behavior of a so-called ‘normal’ teen-ager, continued into

adulthood, is regarded as symptomatic of mental illness. Severe mental disorders among adults, are often styled as infantile behavior. The difference in legal status, and legal responsibility between that of adults, and of children and adolescents, is premised on the heretofore customary immaturity of judgment of at least most persons of their age, relative to the standard justly demanded of adults. The constitutional prescription of a legal voting age, for example, is based upon such well-founded considerations.

“. . . The gap between progress in development of adolescent intellectual powers, and adult maturity, is usually expressed in society today as a pathetic trait of ‘suggestibility.’ . . . This factor of childish and adolescent suggestibility represents a point of exceptional vulnerability of society as a whole, to certain methods for corruption of children and adolescents. . . .

“The use of wicked fantasies and matching forms of games, to exploit the recent several decades of thus increased vulnerability of persons of student ages, is typified by the ancient cult of Dionysus and the modern use of the kinds of pathological fantasy-life associated with a Nietzschean mode in parodies upon ‘Nintendo’ games. . . .

“Although some of the incidents of this adolescent form of international terrorism may appear to be coincidences of the ‘copy-cat’ variety, the presently emerging pattern of such crimes is no matter of mere coincidence. . . . *It must be emphasized: It is those who induce the spread of such practices, who are the masterminds behind such resulting patterns of terrorist criminality.*”

### Call for a National Commission

**Feb. 28, 2000:** LaRouche issued a call for the creation of a national commission to study the causes of the “New Violence.” The events at the time around the issuance of that call, were the outcry over the acquittal of the four “Nintendo-style killer” policemen who, on Feb. 4, 1999, had gunned down an unarmed African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, firing 41 rounds as he was entering his home; and the shock over the latest school shooting, in which a six-year-old boy, in Flint, Michigan, killed his classmate with a gun he stole from his uncle.

The following excerpts are from memos and speeches addressed to meetings concerning the New Violence.

**April 8, 2000:** “During the past three days, the leading German tabloid, one of the largest circulation newsprint publications in the world, *Bildzeitung*, has been featuring a story about a boy of about 15 years of age, who asked his parents, in Spain, to assist him in purchasing a Samurai sword. The parents refused, suspecting that there was something awry with this request. And, shortly thereafter, the boy beheaded both his parents.

“This is exemplary of what’s going on.

“. . . People have set into motion something which has