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IMAGES OF OURSELVES

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A Dialogue Between Washington and Hollywood

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Paramount Studios

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Saturday, February 24, 1996

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REPORTED BY:

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ANITA NOBLE, CSR NO. 1565

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1 Sam Nunn attended Georgia Tech
2 and Emory University and Emory Law School, from
3 which he graduated with honors. He served in
4 the United States Coast Guard. And throughout
5 his public life Senator Nunn has focused his
6 efforts on strengthening America's defenses,
7 reducing the threat of nuclear war, restoring
8 fiscal responsibility and accountability in the
9 Federal Government and streamlining the federal
10 bureaucracy, among other things.

11 Sadly, as Edgar noted, this fine
12 leader and legislator is leaving government
13 service, but we are delighted that he is here
14 and brings his service to us.

15 SENATOR NUNN: Thank you very
16 much, Bruce, and David Horowitz, all the people
17 who sponsored this program today and those who
18 are on the panel. I am honored to be with you.

19 I have a lot to learn today, and
20 I have already learned a lot; and I'm going to
21 be primarily in a listening mode. There are
22 certainly differences in Hollywood and
23 Washington.

24 I recall the expression, though,
25 that there are some similarities between

1 Washington and politics and show business, we in
2 politics and show business, both have to be
3 smart enough to understand the rules of the
4 game, and we both have to be dumb enough to
5 think what we're doing is important.

6 I think what we're doing is
7 important. I think what we're doing in
8 Washington is important. I think what you're
9 doing here in Hollywood and the entire creative
10 community is important.

11 And I also begin by recognizing
12 that creativity is one of the most difficult
13 tasks in life. Not many people are capable of
14 creativity. In Washington, I note that on a
15 daily basis. But creativity takes a great deal
16 of talent.

17 I know that it is required not
18 only in acting and writing but in directing and
19 producing and also in marketing and sales and
20 promotion in basically bringing information and
21 entertainment to the American people and indeed
22 to the world. There is no place in the world or
23 in the history of the world that has the
24 creativity that you do right here. So I
25 congratulate you on that.

1 Before I go forward and give you
2 some views of the way things are in Washington,
3 at least from my perspective, but really it's
4 not a question of what does Washington think;
5 it's what's happening out there in the country
6 that reflects itself in Washington, because
7 Washington takes its signals from the
8 constituents all over this country, as Jack
9 knows and as others know.

10 Pat Monahan said a couple of
11 years ago -- asked a very profound question,
12 which, I think, is really what we're all of
13 here about today and, really, indeed is the
14 common denominator which I hope we can build on,
15 and I do hope we can build on some constructive
16 agreements as we continue this dialogue.

17 Pat Monahan asked the question,
18 "Will we be the first species that forgets how
19 to raise its young?"

20 "Will we be the first species
21 that forgets how to raise its young?"

22 This is about children, and I
23 begin with the premise that television and
24 movies -- but television, of course, is, in many
25 cases, with parents not at home, something that

1 people do not control; movies are a little bit
2 different -- but television and movies have a
3 very powerful effect on the American people and
4 on our children in particular.

5 A few years ago, Dr. Brandon
6 Centerwall of the University of Washington, a
7 psychiatrist -- he wasn't coming from the
8 religious right or from the left -- he was
9 doing, whether you agree with anything he said
10 or not -- he was coming from an analytical
11 psychiatric viewpoint; he wrote a long article
12 in the Journal of the American Medical
13 Association.

14 To give you a little bit of
15 background about why we get into these debates
16 about legislation regarding the Internet, why we
17 now have legislation that's on the books and the
18 Telecommunication Bill that Jack Fields and
19 others did a great job with on the V-Chip,
20 there's a background to this. It didn't come
21 out in the last couple of years. It goes way
22 back.

23 In 1992, this article was written
24 by about 30 senators who started the effort, but
25 about 30 senators of both parties, really about

1 equal in both parties -- not Liberals
2 or Conservatives -- but across a broad spectrum,
3 we wrote to each of the networks as well as the
4 major leaders in the cable industry, and we sent
5 them a copy of the Centerwall article, and we
6 posed certain questions about the article.

7 Lo and behold, after about six
8 months, I counted up, and we had a response from
9 about two out of about eight people we had
10 written. The others did not even respond. No
11 response at all: no thank you; no nothing.

12 So there's a background here.
13 Well, Dr. Centerwall basically studied the
14 effect of television in South Africa as well as
15 in Canada as well as in the United States, and
16 he came to a number of conclusions, and there
17 have been a number of critics. So I do not
18 endorse all of the findings here.

19 But he came to the conclusion,
20 even an analytical conclusion, that if
21 television had never been invented there would
22 every year in America be 10,000 less homicides,
23 70,000 fewer rapes, 700,000 fewer injuries by
24 assault.

25 Now, we're not here to turn the

1 clock back, and I would have to say on the other
2 side of the ledger, that I think television and
3 communications played a major role in promoting
4 freedom in the world.

5 I don't think it was a
6 coincidence that we had a person out of the
7 shipyard, a laborer out of the shipyard in
8 Poland, that started a revolution there, and it
9 spread all over just like lightning, all over
10 Eastern Europe, and ended up dismantling the
11 Soviet Empire and bringing freedom to people all
12 over the world. That's a product of the
13 information age.

14 I don't think it's a coincidence
15 that dictatorships all over the world are having
16 a much more difficult time stifling their
17 people, because they have an awesome decision to
18 make in their own approach to their own people.
19 They really have a choice between participating
20 in the world of information, on the one hand,
21 and having a robust economy or stifling
22 information and keeping their people uninformed.
23 They really can't have it both ways.

24 But back to the Centerwall
25 article, even if you put a 90 percent discount

1 factor on his study and his quantified results,
2 he points out an irrefutable fact, in my view,
3 when he said that "Young babies," quote, "are
4 born with an instinctive capacity and desire to
5 imitate adult human behavior." The problem is
6 that children do not possess an instinct for
7 gauging which behavior ought to be imitated.
8 Now, that is the dilemma.

9 What we want to do in terms of
10 absolute freedom for adults has a profound
11 effect on children, and it's that balance that
12 we're going to have to have a dialogue about:
13 how do we achieve that; how do we protect
14 children from the effect of absolute freedom for
15 adults?

16 This is not simply a question for
17 television and movies. It gets into the whole
18 social arena: divorces, no-fault divorces, and
19 a lot of other things that are going to be on
20 the agenda in the future. How do we handle
21 that? I don't really have answers today, but I
22 can tell you where a lot of people are coming
23 from.

24 If you look at the article in the
25 Washington Post yesterday, the headlines, a boy

1 11 -- he wasn't but 10 when it happened. He is
2 is 11 when he testified -- who raped a
3 five-year-old girl, says he copied cable
4 television.

5 The first paragraph: "An
6 11-year-old and a Rundall [phon.] County boy
7 raped a girl half his age last summer, told
8 Montgomery County Police that he learned about
9 having sex from the Porno Cable Channel at his
10 parents' home." It goes on and on.

11 But this is what people are
12 reacting to. And this is real. It's out there.
13 It's not Washington. It's the reaction from
14 American people all over this country that are
15 truly frightened. They are frightened about
16 their children, and they're wondering if they're
17 going to pay a lot of money to get their
18 children through a school and get them a job and
19 then end up having to help pay for security bars
20 for their windows and security agents all around
21 their neighborhood to keep them from having
22 grievous harm. This is what is out there now.

23 Let me be clear. The causes of
24 violent crime are many and complex: economic
25 and social. I think the number one cause, in my

1 view, is the breakup of the American family.
2 But it's the television and movie effect on that
3 society that is already in grave difficulty that
4 we're talking about.

5 There's an old saying in tort
6 law, and I know Bruce -- I have been away from
7 the law for a long time, but there is an old
8 saying: "You take your victim as you find him,"
9 meaning if you have someone out there who is
10 already injured, and you injure him further, you
11 really take them as you find them, and that's
12 what we're dealing with today.

13 Now, I know that context is
14 important in programming. No one would dream of
15 taking violence out of Shakespeare. That would
16 be an absolute absurdity. But those who work in
17 the powerful medium of television and movies
18 must ask, I think, yourselves some very tough
19 questions which have been delayed too long.

20 As Arianna Huffington said a few
21 minutes ago, "There is a sense of urgency in our
22 society."

23 Question number one: How does
24 dramatic violence in huge doses affect children
25 in a society which is fighting a tide of family

1 breakup, teenage pregnancies, school drop-outs,
2 drug abuse, child abuse, murder, rape, and
3 assault?

4 That's the playing field. Those
5 are the victims that we are dealing with out
6 there. Now, what is the obligation of those in
7 your medium, not just the parents who are
8 attentive enough to really implement and use a
9 V-Chip, but, more importantly, from my
10 perspective, to the millions of children who are
11 neglected, abandoned, have no uplifting role
12 models and who are being influenced heavily by
13 what they see on television. These are the
14 children that the V-Chip is not likely to affect
15 at all.

16 Will these -- will those in the
17 creative world and those who sponsor and pay for
18 the productions begin listening to constructive
19 critics -- since it's such as the national
20 television violence study conducted by four
21 universities, which was paid for by the cable
22 industry, incidentally. That study concluded
23 that TV violence raises serious risks for
24 viewers in three ways: learning to behave
25 violently, becoming desensitized to harmful

1 consequences of violence, and becoming more
2 fearful of being attacked.

3 Another question: will those in
4 the creative world who reject this cable
5 TV-sponsored study and who cite the recent UCLA
6 report in defense of that recognize that this
7 UCLA study also has some very interesting
8 conclusions, one of which is that when it comes
9 to children, there's been no real progress in
10 curbing "violence," end quote.

11 And while defending network
12 executives and producers as individuals who care
13 about society, the report notes, quote, "There
14 is certainly something to be said for holding
15 their feet to the fire with an eye toward making
16 necessary improvements in programming. There's
17 a tendency in the industry to make the proper
18 noises and wait for the dangers to blow over."

19 My bottom line is that the
20 dangers are not going to blow over for our
21 society, and that all of us have an opportunity
22 and responsibility to work together and to find
23 answers to these dilemmas that will really
24 determine the future of our children, the future
25 of our culture, and the future of America.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. RAMER: Thank you. Thank
3 you, Sam, for your remarks in proposing those
4 very important questions to us.

5 Our next panelist, Mr. Rob Long.
6 Rob is on the staff of "Cheers," first as a
7 staff writer, then executive story editor; and
8 he finished the eleventh and final season of
9 that highly successful and entertaining show as
10 co-executive producer in 1993.

11 Since then he has created and
12 executive-produced the television series
13 "Pigsty," which appeared on UPN television
14 network, which should not be confused with the
15 feature "Babe" that I mentioned earlier.

16 He is currently -- excuse me --
17 working on a series for CBS: "The Cube."

18 And with that -- Rob Long.

19 MR. LONG: How TV decisions are
20 made. It's now called "The Good Company." It
21 premieres Monday right after "Murphy Brown" on
22 CBS, March 4. So get those television cameras.
23 They changed the title on us, which they had the
24 right to do -- the network.

25 I'm really outclassed on this