

FCC ruling incites language war

Parents council enraged at FCC for allowing profanity on the news

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By Rick Snee

Language is a potent tool in today's cultural landscape like the gun was in past eras. As we've all had driven into our pointy skulls, this is the Information Age. We spread information through language: words or sometimes pictures, which are worth thousands of words. As information has become a weapon, so has language. We fear language because it can be abusive (you jerk). It can unsettle us (grandma's nipples). It can call our values into question (communism). But the worst part about language is that we all use it, yet we all think differently; therefore, one person's rationalization is another's obscenity (fuck).

The biggest battleground over language is on television. The Federal Communications Commission's Web site states that they have regulated "interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable" since 1934. For the past 72 years, the FCC has monitored our airwaves and prevented subversive content from entering our living rooms. After all, we must protect our children from Hollywood's immoral agenda to subvert decent Americans.

But something has happened: the FCC has backed off of certain words over the years. Most the current generation can't remember when "damn," "hell" and "ass" were all taboo words on television. The *South Park* song, "Kyle's Mom is a Big, Fat Bitch (in D Minor)," would not have made the air 20 years ago. Now "shit" is becoming okay on news shows after 10 p.m.

*The Los Angeles Times* reported on Nov. 9 that the FCC did not punish CBS' *The Early Show* for airing my new favorite noun, "bullshitter." The FCC justified its ruling because it was said on a news program. I justify the ruling because morning news programs need swearing to spice up their tedious pageantry of perfect smiles, colorful sweaters and banal human interest stories. Matt Laure, I'm looking in your direction, you hack.

However, not everyone agrees with me and the FCC (and Tenacious D). Concerned parents—probably Regis fans—are outraged and have formed a group: the Parents Television Council. One of their chapters is actually on Facebook. This is proof positive that Facebook has every protest group imaginable, even one that "addresses the issues of the dangers on the Internet and students [sic] involvement in social networks."

The PTC watches all of television's most unsavory programs, hour after hour, poop joke after poop joke ... you get the idea. They voluntarily watch a lot of filth to report it to the FCC. And when the FCC lets them down (like with *The Early Show*), they annoy the rest of us with complaints and wishes for the good old days.

Ah, the good old days. The battle over language always falls back on some period in history when language wasn't dangerous. Invariably, it seems like the 1950s when Father Knew Best and parents slept in separate beds after conceiving their 2.3 children.

Back in the salad days, we only used language to buy a pack of smokes and wish the neighbors a hearty good morning. But language could be rough some times, even back then. You had to keep the missus in line when she got hysterical or keep the colored boys away from your children's school. Let's not forget the Commie horde—they were all over television and movies, using subversive language to brainwash us.

Even if we try to go further back to the Victorian Era, we would be hard-pressed to ignore their raunchy pornography and imperial conquests of the brown world.

That's the problem with the good old days: there's no evidence they ever actually existed. Yet we fight tooth and nail to return to this Utopian dream world. We complain standards have gone down and nobody speaks the language the right way anymore. Everyone speaks so coarsely now—or doesn't speak the right language at all. Sex is everywhere, as is Spanish, and ideas that frighten us are all over

the Internet. But while you're looking up the good old days, try to find a year in history where there weren't concerns over language.

The PTC isn't a collection of new visionary thinkers in a world gone to pot. The PTC members are their parents and their parents before them. They are the same people who have always wished the bad people would just shut up and go away, rather than be bothered to ignore them.

Ever since the invention of language, we have used it to justify repressing and hurting others because we don't agree. There has always been a battle over language because we still try to divide our world into good and evil—both labels are the product of language. Make no mistake: the PTC isn't up in arms over the “S” word or any dirty word. They are continuing a war to control our language. This is a war for hearts and minds that has been waged throughout human history and will, unfortunately, continue for the rest of our existence.

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