

Editorial

The chicken and the egg

Even before it was officially released July 9, the report of the U.S. attorney general's Commission on Pornography had come under harsh criticism from civil libertarians and social scientists.

The first group attacked the report for its potential to generate a "censorship mentality" that could undermine First Amendment rights to free speech. The scientists faulted the commission for jumping to potentially erroneous conclusions that pornography leads to violent sexual behavior.

Though the jury is still out on these questions, no one can criticize the report's emphasis on child pornography. Nor can the commission be faulted for citing a clear link between "kiddie porn" and the psychological trauma experienced by children it exploits.

The report claims that government has been lax in enforcing existing laws that restrict various forms of pornography. But with regard to child pornography, the commission found existing legislation to be well-enforced.

Yet kiddie porn persists. It finds its niche not in the visible — and, therefore, policed — aisles of adult bookstores, but in the underground realm of pedophile swap sheets and computer networks.

How can this — one of the most insidious forms of pornography — be stamped out? The commission made the following recommendations:

- The sexual abuse of children through the

production of sexually explicit visual depiction should be a felony in all cases.

- The use of computer networks to exchange information concerning child pornography or children to be used for pornography should be outlawed.

- Both Congress and state legislatures should make child selling for the purpose of producing sexually explicit material a felony.

One fears that this important aspect of the report will be dismissed because of attacks on the commission's overall conclusions and its controversial nature. Rather than focusing on the inconclusive aspects of the commission findings — and debating the chicken-and-egg conundrum of the link between pornography and aberrant behavior — we should concentrate instead on the commission's clear and concrete findings on child pornography.

Certainly, no criminal legislation nor any amount of police enforcement will completely eliminate kiddie porn. Its devotees will do whatever is required to obtain it — regardless of the risk of arrest and imprisonment.

But bringing increased attention to the problem is a start, and for that the commission must be commended. As society becomes more conscious of the threat of pedophilia, it will be more able to identify pedophiles and to bring them to treatment. This is the only effective means of eliminating this danger to innocent children.

And opinions

Outside views unwanted in S. Africa

To the Editor:

In your "The ongoing attempt to control past, present and future" (Editorial: June 19), you say South Africa can no longer keep its affairs to itself, for human rights are the affair of everyone. Have you forgotten the old saying that everybody's business is nobody's business?

Are you aware that:

- South Africa is self-sufficient;
- South Africa does not receive economic or military aid from anyone;
- South Africa doesn't care about world opinion;
- South Africa is the military superpower of the region;
- many South Africans are not disciples of non-violence;
- the U.S. economy would be lost without the strategic materials it can only get from South Africa or the Soviet Union;
- companies invest in South Africa because they can make a profit, not as some sort of foreign or state aid;
- Afrikaaners are not British colonialists who will head for merry old England when the natives kick them out;
- "apartheid" is a principle taken from the

Bible;

—the Afrikaaners took the land with the gun, have held it with the gun and — if what they are doing now is any indication — they intend to continue to do so?

As for Victor Bartolotta Jr.'s "Uncle Tom's Cabin, Part II" (June 26), such ignorant distortions do not help to calm the waters or to facilitate compromise. He would be more helpful if he went to Capetown or Durban and hurled rocks at the police, along with the other untutored, unarmed and misled freedom fighters.

What I have written are facts that cannot be changed by ideological wishing.

As for your concern with George Orwell's "1984," 1984 arrived with the advent of the democratic process of changing the law, ethics or morality to suit the situation. You might read Orwell's other dissertation, "Animal Farm." It will explain how the ANC would run South Africa if they ever came to power. Look at the way the Sandinistas run Nicaragua. That too started out as a coalition of freedom fighters against an oppressive government.

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Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look

The pain of life

A friend asked me to write an article on the pain of life. Actually, the friend suggested not that I write a single article on the topic but that I use my personal experience with pain as an overall posture in my writing.

Understandably, it is impossible to try to write a single article on the topic of life's pain, but I was tempted to give it a try.

The reason my friend suggested that I deal with the topic of the pain of life is that, as many readers know, I lost a 33-year-old wife. When she died, she left behind a three-year-old daughter, nine brothers and sisters, and me.

My friend thinks that losing a young wife might qualify me to say something about life to adults and parents. My friend wondered how I managed to cope with life and how I managed to balance things like single parenthood, vocation and, I think, sanity.

Who can explain the death of a young, beautiful mother in the prime of her life? Who knew, when she was a little girl frolicking at the playground, that my wife, Maxie, would walk (in Maxie's case, run) on this earth for only as long as her Savior?

Or, if we look at other tragedies in life, who can explain, for example the loss of a young child? Or, who can explain the death of whole families?

Humanly, all these tragedies can be explained. The answers are simple: cancer, auto accidents and house fires. Spiritually, the job of explaining life's tragedies and pain is much harder. The question, "Why did it have to happen?" is always there and can never be completely answered.

My friend's questions to me about how I cope with life are really part of a larger question — that is, does anyone cope with life's pain, sorrow, unfairness or injustice?

I think that many people cope with life's pain by taking drugs, by turning to the bottle, or by embracing shallow pleasures.

The only way I know to cope with life is to say yes to faith. It is faith that gets me through. My faith tells me that there is a God, an Almighty Creator who knows each of us personally. My faith speaks to me about the quiet stillness of death, telling me that the God who exists waits for us with open arms just around the bend in the road of life. This is the God that gently spoke my wife's name at the point she left us and met Him. It is the same God who will one day call my name and the name of everyone



During their exhaustive study of pornography, the attorney general's Commission on Pornography examined such publications as these examples of "kiddie porn."

Writer says Statue of Liberty message is a lie

To the Editor:

During the weeks of saturation "bombing" by the commercial promotion of the Statue of Liberty, members of the Christian community may have been so preoccupied with the orthodoxy of Bishop Clark and Father Curran that we have been lulled into uncritical support of the immoral message which the nationally hailed Lady Liberty, "Mother of Exiles" continues to announce to the world. The inspired lines of Emma Lazarus put on the Lady's silent lips 100 years ago are still repeated by her in our name, even though they are no longer true.

"Give me your tired, poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me..."

We American Christians, through her lips,

'Journalese' misunderstood

To the Editor:

In the Courier-Journal of July 3 a "World and Nation" column regarding the New York State Catholic Conference carried the headline: "No Medicaid for abortions" which referred to the conference's desire in this matter.

Unfortunately, some persons read this heading and thought it meant that Medicaid funding of abortions in New York state had ended. This sadly is not the case, and we all have to continue our efforts in prayer and in contacting our New York legislators to end the use of our tax money for abortions.

Mary Studier
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continue to speak an outright lie to our brothers and sisters in Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Salvador or Guatemala. One wonders. Since repentance is necessary for forgiveness, do we not have to either amend the Lady's message or change our official policy in order to ask forgiveness?

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Seminaries need donations

To the Editor:

Thanks to Mr. Fromm and his bequest to Becket Hall, the diocese will be aided in training of young men to the priesthood. It is not so easy in other parts of the world. There is no scarcity of vocations in mission lands, yet the financial resources are lacking.

In our sister diocese of Tabasco, over 90 young men have expressed the desire to study for the priesthood. With financial help from concerned Catholics, just think of what this would mean for the future: priests to serve in Mexico and also to minister to our own Spanish-speaking people.

Many organizations ask for our help and we, as American Catholics, respond generously. For those who are concerned about vocations and are able to help, please remember not only Becket Hall but also the Propagation of the Faith and our own sister diocese in Tabasco, Mexico.

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who learns to love him in this life.

I believe that without the experience of death there would be no reason to recognize God. If we don't die, then let us eat, drink and be merry, as St. Paul suggests.

I have coped with my personal loss through a faith that says my wife lives on with God in the next life, in a life as real as our own. My faith in her continued life gives me the strength to continue my own life here on this earth as long as I shall live.

I am also reminded that we all die and although my experience has been painful, there may be other sorrow on the horizon. One day my parents will die; my friend may die before me; and, God forbid, my own daughter may die before me.

These kinds of thoughts are understandably difficult to deal with for most people, including myself. Therefore, I will not dwell on them. Let me say, however, that I have been brought to a personal end point about life in my quest to figure out our existence here on this earth. No, I have not taken the "plunge," nor do I intend to, but neither have I figured out all of what life is about. What I have not figured out about life is what I call mystery. Mystery is a real part of all of our lives.

The friend about whom I spoke earlier has a stake in these issues and in the words I have just written. He tells me that his 33-year-old sister has melanoma.

I pray for her. I urge the Body of Christ to do likewise. In the meantime, I believe that God gives us what is necessary and more to go on living. I have a beautiful

daughter whom I hold in my arms and of whom I am very proud. No, she does not take away my pain, but she helps me to cope with the pain — the pain that is almost always present, the pain about which Jesus spoke when he urged his followers to pick up their crosses and follow him.

It is the pain of life that brings us to the foot of the cross, where we find a mother whose soul has been pierced with a sword; where we find friends whose spirits, hopes and dreams have been shattered; and where we find a God who experiences the ultimate pain of life. He suffers and dies out of love — to pave for us a way out of life's pain.

I suppose that is the only answer I can give to myself, to my friend, to his sister. I recall reading an article when I was a young boy in the seminary. The article was a true story written by a man who was dying of cancer. The last line he wrote has for some reason stuck in my mind over the years. The author of the article, which was entitled "Six Months To Live," summarized his future with these words: "Fall approaches and it gets darker a little earlier every day."

Unfortunately, life ends for all of us. Perhaps that is the greatest physical and psychological pain we suffer. Though the end appears darker and darker, if we have faith, God will turn that darkness into His light.

I like to think that God's light — the light of heaven that lights up our earthly darkness and eases the burden of life's pain — is not so far away.