

Week Ending Friday, March 8, 1996

The President's Radio Address

March 2, 1996

Good morning. Something remarkable happened this week, something that can forever help parents, children, and anybody who cares about what our children watch on television. We took an enormous step toward controlling the images of violence and vice that can enter our homes and disturb our children.

Television is one of the most influential voices that can enter a home. It can be entertaining, enlightening, and educating. But when it transmits pictures or words we wouldn't want our children to see and hear in real life, television can become an unwelcome intruder, one that parents have too often found too difficult to control.

In study after study, the evidence has steadily mounted that television violence is numbing and corrosive. It can have a destructive impact on young children. In my State of the Union speech, I challenged the Members of Congress to give control back to parents. I asked them to require TV's to include the V-chip, a device that lets parents filter out programs they don't want to let into their homes and their children's lives.

Congress answered that challenge, and 3 weeks ago when I signed the telecommunications bill into law, the V-chip also became law. Now it will be standard in new television sets sold in our country. We need this.

To make the V-chip work, I invited leaders of the media and entertainment industry to come to the White House to work with us to help our families. And this past Thursday I met with the leaders of the television networks, the production studios, the cable companies, actors, directors, and writers. Their response was overwhelming, and our meeting was a great success.

For the first time ever, leaders of the television and entertainment industry have come together as one force and agreed to develop

a rating system for their programming that will help parents to protect their children from violence and other objectionable content on television. They said this system will be in place by next January.

Like the movie ratings have done for 27 years, the ratings for television will help parents to guide their children's entertainment choices. The system will provide families with a standard they can rely on from show to show, from channel to channel. Parents are the best judges of what their children should and shouldn't see, and this new rating system will help them to make those critical judgments. The best programming director for our children is a parent.

At my meeting with the entertainment industry, we also discussed the need for more programming that is suitable for children and that is educational and attractive to them. I want to preserve public broadcasting and the innovation it has brought in educational shows for children.

These days, a typical child will watch 25,000 hours of television before his or her 18th birthday. It's up to us whether these shows stimulate their minds or numb them. Let's build on the good shows that we have as models for educating and informing our children. I applaud the entertainment leaders for what they have done voluntarily. Through their action, they are being responsible for the product they produce, and they are showing greater concern for our American community and our children's future.

With the V-chip and the rating system, we mark a sea change. We are harnessing technology, creativity, and responsibility, bringing together parents, business, and Government to meet a major challenge to our society. After all, it doesn't do a family any good to have a nice television if the images it brings to our children erodes their values and diminishes their future.

We should look at this breakthrough as part of a bigger picture and as a lesson for

even greater achievement. As I have said many times, this is an age of great possibility when more Americans will have more opportunities to live out their dreams than ever before. But we also know that this is a time of stiff challenges as well. If we are to meet those challenges, all of us must take our proper responsibility. Government must play a part but only a part. Only if each of us measures what we do by basic standards of right and wrong, taking responsibility for our actions, moving us together, will we be able to move forward as a Nation.

Let me say again: Only if we work together in our businesses, our schools, our places of worship, our civic groups, will we transform our lives and our country. That is what I mean when I talk about corporate responsibility.

The actions of the television industry show us what can happen when visionary business leaders make a commitment to values and the common good as well as to the bottom line, and when they live up to their responsibilities as corporate citizens of our great country. I hope their example will be matched by the executives in other industries to address other problems and other challenges we face as a people. That means corporations helping to improve our schools, helping to connect them to the information superhighway, helping to demand high standards. That means corporations finding new ways to protect our environment even as they grow the bottom line and improve our economy.

That means businesses recognizing that workers are an asset, not a liability, and that a well-trained work force is any business' most important competitive edge. All these things demand a renewed commitment from business. And I am confident that the leaders of other industries will also rise to the challenge just the way the leaders of the entertainment industry did this week.

We can celebrate a giant step toward realizing the possibility of a great instrument of communication in the homes of our families. I believe we can meet our other challenges as a Nation in the same way. We'll all want to stay tuned for that.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:42 p.m. on March 1 in the Roosevelt Room in the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 2.

Remarks on the Terrorist Attack in Israel and an Exchange With Reporters

March 3, 1996

The President. The suicide bombing in the Middle East last night shows once again how determined the enemies of peace are. In just a few moments I will be calling Prime Minister Peres to express our condolences, our solidarity, and our outrage. We must spare no effort here in the United States to support Israel and the other supporters of peace in defeating the forces of terrorism. I will also be in touch with Chairman Arafat and others in the region to ask for their support.

It is clear that there are forces at work in the Middle East who don't want peace and who exist based on the continuing misery and division of the people there. And we have got to do everything we can to defeat them and to stand with those in the Middle East, beginning with our friends in Israel, who are determined to defeat them.

This is a troubling moment, but I am determined to see that it does not defeat the peace process, and I am determined to do everything I can on behalf of the United States to support those who are standing against terrorism and standing for peace.

Thank you very much.

Q. What can the Palestinian leadership do to prevent these kinds of attack?

The President. Well, I'm going to encourage them to do more, to do everything that they can do, and we'll be working with them over the next few days. And I'm sure we'll be in touch, and we'll be answering more of your questions over the next few days. But we're going to work very hard on it.

I do believe that Chairman Arafat has made efforts, and I think he will make more. We have to build the capacity of all the forces in the Middle East, including the Palestinian authorities, to promote law and order and to stand against terrorism. It's going to be