



Pat Robertson

after the exchange was over, that the critics on the other side were primarily concerned with the question of the separation of church and state. By which I mean that their fears of the religious right seemed hypothetical and ever so abstract.

I remember 40 years ago when it was fashionable to suppose that Sen. Joseph McCarthy threatened the Bill of Rights and maybe even the balance of nature. In the middle of the putative reign of terror, Professor John Roche, who was steadfastly opposed to McCarthy and was serving as president of the Americans for Democratic Action,



WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

of being eaten alive by piranhas. No. 24 is my fear of college presidents."

That didn't seem very loyal to the forces who insisted that McCarthy was about to close down American liberties.

What surprised me in the fortnight after the televised debate was the volume of letters from people who seem to have a most extraordinary fear of Pat Robertson. He is the dominant figure in the evangelical right, formerly a minister. He ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988, and before doing so he resigned his ministry. He continues now, as a layman, attempting to mobilize the Christian right specifically.

One very bright young man wrote to tell me that Pat Robertson had driven him and others he knew into the arms of the Democratic Party.

erston so very much exercised? I wrote to one correspondent to say that as far as I could tell, if Robertson were to wake up and discover that he was omnipotent, and therefore wrote into law every proposal that makes up the program of the Christian right, America would be in no way different from the country I lived in until I was approximately 30.

In those days, true, you couldn't go to the movies to see a "Deep Throat," but that was not a stifling imposition. Pornography had to be bought from dirty old men, who are the best fitted to serve that purpose. You couldn't find a liquor store open on Sunday, which represented whatever you want to call the hardship of laying in enough booze on Saturday to last you until Monday.

What else? Well, you couldn't get a legal abortion. But up until very close to Roe vs. Wade, there was a

the power were to be returned to them. But of course there were lots of illegal abortions, well over half-million per year.

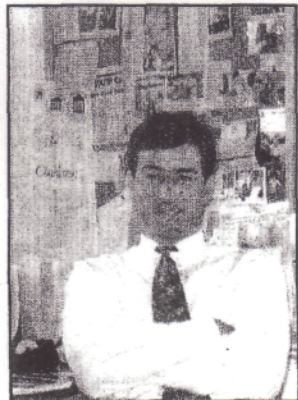
If American freedom is to be measured by that one index — do the American woman have the right to abort? — then Pat Robertson's America would not be free. But we should be prepared to sum up historical perspectives before denouncing as unfree the America that existed until 1973, the year in which the Warren Court discovered a right of privacy that extended the right to extinguish unborn life.

OK, now why is Pat Robertson's exercised? Well, one reason is that there has been, in the period we are talking about (the last 20 years), a 500 percent increase in crime. When more than 600 people are murdered every day, a lot of people are losing their freedom pretty definitively. When 10 times that many are robbed or mutilated

# At least Beavis, Butt-Head are on restriction

By Patrick Harwood

MTV has done the right thing by finally moving its immensely popular, profitable, and controversial hit cartoon "Beavis and Butt-Head" from 7 p.m. to a later time — 10:30 p.m. — so that fewer impressionable children will be watching.



Patrick Harwood

The network has been under fire for the way the cartoon's stars love playing with fire and watching things burn.

Sadly, and perhaps inevitably, it took a real-life tragedy to compel the network to make this scheduling change. Earlier this month in Ohio, a 5-year-old boy set his

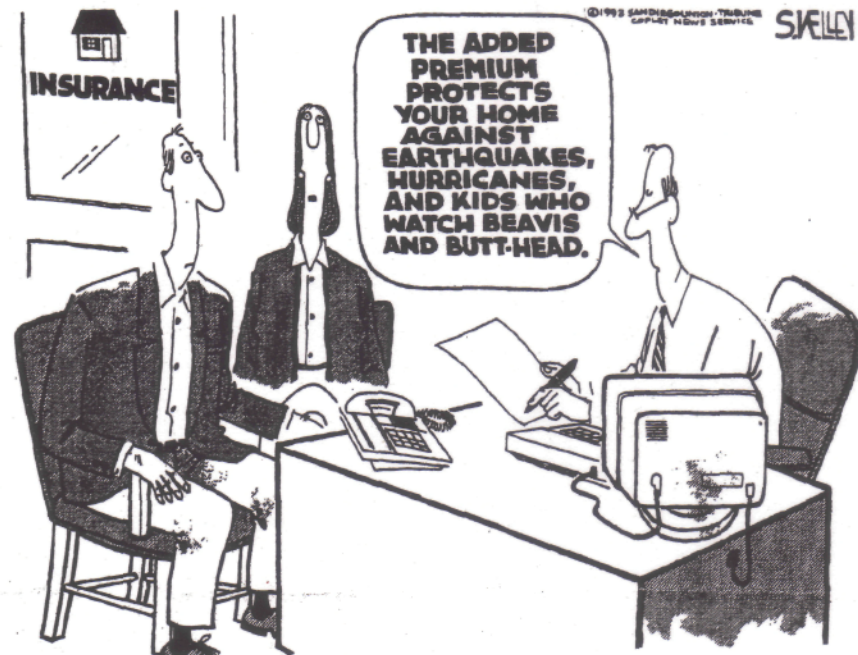
house on fire, killing his 2-year-old sister. The mother says her son was incited to play with matches by those juvenile delinquent firebugs Beavis and Butt-Head. Television's power of persuasion is again frighteningly displayed.

MTV has also promised to ease the more extreme story content of "Beavis and Butt-Head" to make it less violent and inflammatory (literally). This too is badly needed, because, let's face it, these two are a parent's worst nightmare. They're the type of bad influences we want our children to avoid.

But the problem is, these troublemakers aren't out on the street; they make themselves right at home in our children's living room or bedroom. Right after dinner at 7, it was just too easy for Beavis and Butt-Head to drop in and hang out for half an hour of obnoxious, crude and, as evident in Ohio, dangerous behavior for impressionable youths.

"Beavis and Butt-Head's" anti-social message is hardly limited to their fascination with flames. Vulgar language is also a trademark. If you're not familiar with the show, you might be startled to hear some of the words and disgusting references used. But then, with a character named Butt-Head, maybe nothing should be surprising here.

When not profane, communication by these two in-



tellectuals is pretty much limited to idiotic, grunting laughs, burps and other obscene noises. When they do speak, their vocabularies usually consist of the words "cool" or "sucks" — even their slang isn't original!

Disturbing, too, about these brats is their inaction. They are spectators, not participants, in life. Most of their time is spent on a filthy, beat-up sofa staring at music video after music video on television.

In one episode called "Couch Fishing," they even came up with a way to fish without having to go outdoors. Finding a pole and using as bait old food scraps scrounged from under the sofa cushions and a broken radio, the boys cast their line outside, catching animals and neighbors that happened by, including an elderly woman who went for a can of prunes attached to Beavis and Butt-Head's hook.

Sure, Beavis and Butt-Head's sophomoric and "so stupid they're funny" antics and dialogue provoke a few laughs, even from adults. But this type of program was a powder keg that, unfortunately, MTV —

in its quest to be the hippest and most provocative thing going — waited too long to defuse.

A few weeks ago, prior to the fatal fire, "Beavis and Butt-Head" creator Mike Judge was quoted as comparing his show to a '90s version of "The Three Stooges."

Said Judge: "There's nothing to worry about. This whole thing is a fad and it'll burn out." Great choice of words there, Mike.

Sorry, parents. "Beavis and Butt-Head" hasn't been canceled outright.

But the boys have been put on restriction and now they can't come out until 10:30 at night.

At least at bedtime it might be easier to keep out their bad influence than at dinnertime.

Harwood is a College of Charleston adjunct professor of communications and associate director of college relations.

# Fren spec

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# Prescription for politicians

## Candidates around country will have to go to school on health care proposals

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Almost two years ago, Bill Clinton came to California looking for a state campaign chairman for his fledgling run for the White House. He sold himself to John Garamendi, the California insurance commissioner, and Garamendi, in turn, made Clinton his first out-of-state apostle for a new approach to health care cost containment called

the health care issue occupies a larger and larger place on the public agenda.

The 75 people in the county supervisors' meeting room the other night (less than half the size Garamendi says he has been drawing elsewhere, but the World Series was tough competition) were a cross section of the community.

Garamendi did a reasonable imitation of Phil Dona-

'Garamendi did a reasonable imitation of Phil Donahue, using a hand-held microphone as he wandered in the audience, getting reactions to his opening question: What do you like

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