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"... You see, General, the Fallujah battle was starting to show success, and quite frankly, we were running out of things to gripe about."

BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

■ In my opinion

Real sex happens

A woman in a bath towel asks a football star to hold off on playing the game and take care of some of her desires. He refuses, she drops the towel and jumps in to his arms; football will have to wait.

This pre-game skit during an ABC Monday Night Football intro Nov. 15 has been deemed offensive by viewers and the Federal Communications Commission, as it made the grave mistake of alluding to the fact that people sometimes have sexual relations. In accordance with rules that also limit allusions toward women who have body parts, the FCC is questioning ABC's judgment (read: moral integrity?) in airing the incident. Many upset audience members have called the commission to complain. Rest easy America: Thousands of your citizens are spending their energy pretending that sex doesn't exist, so now you don't have to.

There certainly does seem to be something wrong with the acute momentum against this situation, which is quickly becoming costume malfunction number two. Instead of a nude breast, this skit showed actress Nicollette Sheridan's bare back leaping into the embrace of football player Terrell Owens. Not that there aren't serious problems with both of these television events: De-clothing women's already sexually exploited bodies is no great step forward in the movement of sexual progressives. Yet no one seems upset about those issues; instead, there is an uprising of furor over the simple idea that sex occurs.

Sexuality on television is not a novel concept. According to a 1999 CNN article, 67 percent of network shows contain sexual content, and one can only assume that this count



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

has most likely risen. Of course, the sexuality portrayed in most instances is ambiguous, and occurs outside the view of the camera. Still, condoning sexuality as long as it happens away from the lens can only leave citizens with the message that sex is okay, as long as we don't see it. Instead of real sex, and the implications or responsibilities of this act being shown, we promote fake sex wherein everyone is white and heterosexual, always blond or muscular, and fears such as pregnancy, STDs or rape do not exist. Everybody orgasms at the same time, every time, as observed in the disembodied sighs from beyond the viewpoint of the audience. This fake form of sex is readily accepted. Wait, but, I thought everyone has amazing orgasms when they wash their hair. ...

Another important facet of this obscenity charge is race. With so many covert images of sex on television, it seems more than mere coincidence that this particular incident involving an interracial couple is causing conflict. Are we that backwards of a society that racial and sexual stereotypes would result in cries of obscenity? The diversity present in this scene, sadly unique to network television, should be lauded rather than regarded with disgust.

Much of the argument against the sexual innuendoes present in this sports broadcast is that it was shown during a time when families weren't expecting a sex scene. True, which is why we should also eradicate every beer commercial ever made, as well as Herbal Essences ads, from sports broadcasts. When families don't acknowledge, and indeed campaign against, the image of real sex, children come to believe that the act is something to be hidden and not discussed. Further down the road they are less likely to talk with their parents or other adult figure about birth control, disease prevention, or, heck, even technique. If the message is that two consenting adults having sex is bad, but oiled up women in bikinis swooning over liquor is fine, kids receive a seriously skewed version of sexuality.

It may be cliché, but when it comes to issues of sex, the European model is still the best. According to a 2001 Advocates for Youth document, France has 550,000 fewer teen pregnancies per year and 160,000 fewer abortions. The average age of first sexual intercourse is 18. Yet, commercials and television in this and other European countries commonly feature explicit references to sex, as well as bare body parts. Interesting that the opposite of U.S. indecency guidelines garners the societal results that we are still searching for with our hopelessly puritan ideals.

So, what does this say about our nation's policy? If the definition of insanity is repeating an action over and over and expecting different results, then U.S. policies of obscenity on television as related to healthy sexuality and family morality are clearly insane.

aileeslater@dailyemerald.com

■ Editorial

For better or worse, U.S. bureaucrats are changing

For better or for worse, bureaucratic reshuffling is a post-election reality for every administration. There is nothing unusual about this year's exodus of officials from Bush's Cabinet, the CIA, the State Department and other levels of government. But some second-term replacements are better than others.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Penn.): BETTER

A shoo-in to head the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Arlen Specter's appointment hit a bit of a snafu last week after he said in public that the Senate was unlikely to confirm a justice to the Supreme Court that would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Oops. Cue the Christian Right. Radicals always save their best venom for the moderates in their own party. And from this side of the aisle, it is kind of fun to watch. Will the pro-life "pray-ins" bury Specter? Only God knows.

Alberto Gonzales: BETTER

Sure, he called some Geneva Convention provisions "quaint," and he supports the USA PATRIOT Act. But let's look on the bright side: The man picked by President Bush to fill John Ashcroft's crazy shoes disagrees with his predecessor on numerous points. For example, Gonzales doesn't think that dancing is a sin, so we're already moving in the right direction. Furthermore, he has anti-abortion groups up in arms, à la Arlen Specter. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* in 2001, Gonzales said, "There are no litmus tests for judicial candidates. ... My own personal feelings about (abortion) don't matter. ... The question is, what is the law?" Such reasonableness has the president of the American Life League, Judie Brown, foaming at the mouth. In a letter, she wrote, "Why is President Bush betraying the babies?"

Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nevada): WORSE

With the loss of Sen. Tom Daschle, the Democrats have elected Sen. Harry Reid as their new Senate minority leader. Calling this four-term, red-state donkey a moderate is a significant understatement: He is a pro-life Mormon who often breaks party ranks. For example, he voted for a ban on partial birth abortions. On Tuesday, Reid spoke of uniting the two sides of the Senate and working with the President, not against him. The *New York Times* describes him as "close to Mr. Bush." We describe him as a Bush ally. When will the Democrats become a true opposition party? Apparently not for the next four years.

Stephen J. Hadley: WORSE

The new national security adviser, replacing Condi Rice, is probably the last person who should be advising the president on national security matters. The Sept. 11 commission blamed Hadley for the lack of pre-terrorist attack focus on al Qaeda. He has been connected to almost every bit of misinformation coming from the White House, including the lies in the president's 2003 State of the Union address, the lies leading to the war in Iraq and the lies about an Iraq/al Qaeda connection. Most significantly, he led the planning for postwar Iraq, according to the *Washington Post*, and we all know how that turned out. I guess we get four more years of not believing a word that the administration is saying about anything.

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