

Don't touch that dial

Public access channel must not be unplugged

When the City Council considers whether to tune out Lincoln's cable public access channel Sept. 4, the public should tune in and turn up the heat.

The channel came under fire Tuesday for broadcasting "Race and Reason," a film produced by white supremacists. Complaints about that program have motivated members of the City Council to consider canceling the channel.

Yes, the programming broadcast on public access is often amateurish. Yes, it sometimes sends messages that won't be found on network TV. Yes, anyone can broadcast, even white supremacists.

But those are the reasons the channel should be preserved.

Although Lincoln resident Stan Hulse may exaggerate when he observes that pulling the plug on public access would be like "pouring gas on the flames of ignorance," his reasoning is sound.

Television programs cannot make anyone do anything. Theories of subliminal messages and hypnotic control powers of television have been proved false.

Television can be used as an educational tool. Anyone who saw "Race and Reason" can attest that the program is educational — it shows how ugly white supremacy can be.

But to think that the program will cause others to become racist is ludicrous. If that were the case, public access programmers would need only broadcast a show discrediting white supremacy before and after "Race and Reason" to counter the punch.

Just as a program sending a message of love among warring nations would not bring about world peace, a program teaching racism will not make Lincolniters racist.

Unless they already are.

"Race and Reason" is an easy target. Parents should use it as a tool to teach their children about the evils of racism. If they choose, parents can use controls to prevent their children from watching the channel.

But the City Council should not act as parent. By eliminating public access to get rid of "Race and Reason," council members also would eradicate the opportunity for other groups to speak up, such as gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

Council members have said they also received complaints about a public access program on homosexuals. In the case of that program, perhaps a more appropriate City Council action would be to encourage Lincolniters to watch.

The beauty of public access is that it is not often beautiful. And it is not intended to be. To clean it up by turning it off would be a mistake.

If the City Council earnestly wants to follow Mayor Mike Johanns' goal of promoting cultural diversity in Lincoln, it should support the public access channel and find better ways to combat racism.

As Hulse said:

"Public access is a reflection of the Lincoln community. Not looking at the reflection doesn't solve the problem."

—J.P.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tactics rescue or assault

There are a couple of issues I wish to address concerning Stacey McKenzie and Kristin Karnopp's Wichita articles ("Protesters rally at Wichita abortion clinics," DN, Aug. 26).

McKenzie wrote, "Operation Rescue" has attracted national attention by using civil-disobedience tactics similar to those of the civil rights movement in the 1960s."

Actually, civil disobedience is practiced when one or more private citizens intervene against the actions of their government. If a government were to require women to have abortions under any circumstances — a policy enforced by local Communist committees in China — then citizen intervention, only against officials enforcing that policy, would in fact be civil disobedience. However, when private citizens intervene against the actions of another private citizen, it is something else: a rescue or an assault, but not civil disobedience.

Obviously a moral decision is

required of the observer, then. Are the Wichita actions rescue, or assault? My view was clarified by Patricia Weaver, the woman interviewed in Karnopp's story. Weaver admits, courageously, to a history of extremely low self-esteem, underscored by addictive or obsessive behavior and abuse by male authority figures. When Operation Rescue-type activists tell their stories, these dysfunctions are mentioned again and again.

Our society is just now beginning to recognize that excessive religious fervor is a form of addiction.

Of course, Weaver isn't wrong in her personal spiritual belief that abortion is a horror. Her experience was indeed a horror. Some of my dearest friends are alive today because their legal abortions weren't horrors; their experiences don't invalidate Weaver's, nor does it work the other way around.

Joan Ratliff
Lincoln



PAUL DOMEIER

Kerrey should take 'bullet'

Sen. Bob Kerrey is considering running for president next year. His looks, charisma, independent thinking, obvious liberalism and military record could rally voters, spread his name across the country and push him to the forefront of the Democratic party.

But, for practical purposes, he has a greater asset:

Kerrey can afford to lose.

Some Democrat is going to lose. President Bush is riding a tremendous wave of popularity because of international events. Had the Soviet Union returned to the hard line last week, his international reputation would have been tarnished, but the failure of the coup has helped Bush even more.

It's like the movie scene where the lone gunman with one bullet left in his gun is surrounded by a half dozen unarmed enemies.

One of the unarmed men always yells, "Rush him! He can only shoot one of us." But no one moves, because no one wants to be the one to get shot.

Bush has one more bullet, the 1992 campaign, and all the legitimate, well-known Democratic possibilities are gathered around him, afraid to move.

Tennessee Sen. Al Gore and Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt have said they won't run. New York Gov. Mario Cuomo hasn't committed either way, but he's leaning toward an extended stay in Albany.

Someone has to take the bullet.

Against a real candidate such as Cuomo, Gore or Gephardt, Bush's campaign would be tough. The Democrats could bring up domestic problems and the budget deficit. Bush's popularity would drop, and his opponent might get as much as 46 or 47 percent of the popular vote.

And Bush would win. The Democratic nominee would be flushed into political oblivion.

Remember that Gephardt and Gore would be considered viable candidates, while Michael Dukakis would be a sad joke if he decided to run. Only four years ago, though, Dukakis was considered a better candidate than



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Gephardt or Gore.

Dukakis won the nomination, took 46 percent of the popular vote, was crushed in the electoral vote and drifted into history.

The same would happen this year to Gephardt, Gore, Cuomo or any other legitimate candidate. None can afford to run, just in case he wins the nomination.

Only former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas is running, and he won't be a nominee; he'll be a trivia question.

Jesse Jackson could take the bullet. He has been a formidable campaign force for years, but he never will be elected president. He is "too black," too controversial, too liberal and he really is an activist, not a politician.

In fact, his political career is just about over. He's contemplating hosting a talk show on CNN.

He might as well end on a glorious note, becoming the first black to receive a major party's nomination for president, eloquently exposing the internal problems neglected by the

government, further bringing America's racial difficulties to the fore and losing badly in November. As a sort of 1990s William Jennings Bryan, Jackson could shake the political dust from his feet and walk off with his urban populist throngs to the talk show studio.

But it looks like Jackson isn't going to do that. It looks like he's going to avoid the bullet and grab the CNN microphone.

That leaves the young stars of the Democratic Party, such as Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder and Kerrey. Those men could afford to run and lose and still be strong enough to return in 1996. West Virginia Sen. Jay Rockefeller would have been perfect in this role, but he too has decided not to run.

The candidate who finishes second in the 1992 Democratic primaries would be even better off. That candidate would enter the 1996 campaign well-known but without a general election defeat hanging over him.

That's where Kerrey probably would fit in, because it is unlikely he could win the nomination.

Kerrey could get maximum exposure at minimum cost. In a normal election he would be drowned out by Cuomo, Jackson or Rockefeller. For this campaign, even Tsongas can dominate the publicity.

The 1992 national response of, "Bob who?" would change by 1996 into, "Oh, it's you, Bob." By 1996, Cuomo, Gore, Gephardt and the other big names, having spent too long in the public eye, would be as exciting in a presidential campaign as Ted Kennedy. Kerrey would battle Rockefeller, Wilder and Clinton for the nomination, and that nominee actually might have a chance to win.

So Kerrey might as well accede to the wishes of the grass-roots "Run Bob Run Committee" and start his campaign. He's got nothing to lose but the election.

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