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8/10/92

C SPAN
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ATTN: Brian

Gentlemen:

I can't tell you how informative I find C-Span!

But I have a bone to pick with you.....your call-in in the morning starts too late for us working stiffs to participate... I can catch about 15 minutes of the morning show which starts at 8 A.M. then it's on the road.....and I dare not take my portable in the car -- I'd be dead in five minutes on I-95 (don't have cable on the portable, anyway).

I know you can't please all the people all the time (just as you can't fool all the people all the time) -- but I sure wish you'd start earlier for us middle class, working people!

Also, I do wish you would review the book "Washington Racket" by Martin L. Gross (sub-title: "Waste from A to Z"). or perhaps you have already reviewed that great book and I missed it.

I have never been a TV junkie -- ~~pre~~fering to get my news in print -- but that was before I had C-Span!

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Maybe the guys at Warner Bros. are a bunch of jerks; ever think of that?

I really hate to bring it up again, since the big fuss over the cop-killer record by Ice-T seems to have died down. The artist, if we can stretch the term, took it upon himself to pull the song from the market.

He said he did so because of the many death threats that were received by executives of Warner Bros., the corporation that markets his creations. (He said that the death threats were probably made by cops. But who knows? They might have come from music lovers.)

This gesture shows what a non-violent guy Ice-T really is. Maybe his song seemed to encourage the killing of cops, but he is sensitive to the well-being of corporate executives.

And by pulling the record, Ice-T also permitted Warner Bros. to maintain its artistic integrity. Despite pressure by police organizations, Warner Bros. stood by its decision to keep the cop-killer record on the market. To do otherwise, its top executives said, would have meant buckling under to censorship and betraying the great American traditions of free speech and artistic integrity.

Of course, a few skeptics snickered and said: "Yeah, artistic integrity, and

anything for a buck." But some wise guys don't appreciate courage or integrity in principles when they see it.

So with Ice-T's unselfish act, the story drifted to the back pages and from there into the squib-item columns. And I thought we were done with it forever.

But I just heard from a reader in North Carolina, who wrote: "I'm a country music fan, but I have been following this business about this iced tea guy, or whatever his name is, and his record. What I'd like to know is, how come there wasn't all this excitement about Holly Dunn? Why didn't you write anything about what happened to her record?"

I was about to drop the man a note back, saying that the reason I had not written about Holly Dunn and her record was that I had never before heard of Holly Dunn and her record.

But I had the paper's library check to see if there had been any news stories about a Holly Dunn and her record. To my delight, there had been.

Why delight?

Well, it appears that Holly Dunn is a popular country performer. And about a year ago, she had a record out called *Maybe I Mean Yes*.

MIKE ROYKO

Tribune Media Services



Dunn said the song was meant to be a "lighthearted look at one couple's attempt at dating, handled in an innocent, non-sexual, flirtatious way."

Well, maybe that's the way Dunn saw it when she wrote the song, but others saw it in a different light.

That's because the lyrics included these words: "When I say no, I mean maybe. Or maybe I mean yes."

This brought protests from women's groups. They said the song appeared to justify, encourage, or make fun of date rape.

As everyone knows, date rape is a subject that sort of exploded in the news during the past few years, with the Kennedy-Smith and Mike Tyson trials.

So when the protests came in, the recording company considered their merits. After doing so, it decided that there was some validity to the protests.

While it didn't agree that Dunn was encouraging date rape, it conceded that some people might misinterpret the song that way.

The record company took action, pulling Holly Dunn's record from radio stations and video outlets. That was a serious marketing decision, since radio and video shows are important to a record's potential popularity.

Dunn graciously shrugged it all off, saying that even though she hadn't meant the song to be offensive, it was possible some listeners might misunderstand. And so she didn't object.

And she wasn't mad at the recording company for buckling under to the protesters.

Now, I'll give you three guesses as to the name of the company that handled Dunn's record.

Of course. You didn't need that many. Sure, it was Warner Bros. You remember Warner Bros. Same company that stood so bravely by Ice-T's record that was obscene, disgusting and seemed to encourage the killing of cops.

So why, you ask, did Warner Bros. defend Ice-T's artistic integrity after giving the fast hook to Dunn's record? Doesn't that nice girl have any artistic integrity worth fighting for?

I can't answer that question. To try, I'd have to call Warner Bros. Then I'd wind up talking to some corporate public relations stooges who would give me a run-around, a quick shuffle and some double talk, and I still wouldn't know.

But there appears to be a double standard here. On the one hand, Warner Bros. was sensitive to the feelings of those who might misinterpret a song about a couple on a date. The song, incidentally, didn't use the F-word even once. Or even the ever-popular mother-word.

On the other hand, Warner Bros. dismissed complaints from those who thought that a song that flatly glorified the killing of cops might encourage someone to kill cops. A song, incidentally, that made frequent use of the F-word and the ever-popular mother-word.

So what does this tell us? What does it mean? How are we to interpret or misinterpret the message?

I don't know. Maybe that the guys at Warner Bros. are jerks? I mean, does everything have to have deep meaning?

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* No, no, these "wings" pulled by their women! (After all, she had to be tied w/ cops)

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