Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With Families on Television Programming

March 1, 1996

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. I might say, aren’t we all glad to be in his big, beautiful office here. I love to come over here. I want to thank all of you for coming and to say to you and to the members of the media who are here, yesterday we heard for 2 hours from a remarkable assemblage of people who are involved in the television industry, people who broadcast the programs; we heard from cable people; we heard from the people who write the programs; people who represent the actors; producers. It was an amazing assemblage of people who got together and came to Washington to announce that they had decided to develop a rating system for television programs like the movie rating system, and that as the Vice President said, that that would be able to be used then when the V-chip becomes available in televisions.

Now, the V-chip, of course, will start coming into televisions in a couple of years. And we replace about 25 million televisions a year, I think, in America, so it will quickly be a fixture in a significant percentage of America’s televisions. But the rating system presumably will still be helpful for parents even before they have the V-chip.

We wanted to have you in here today because we want to get a feel and we want the country to get a feel for what kinds of things parents feel about this rating system and the V-chip, what the young people feel about it, what you expect out of it, what do you think it will do, what won’t it do, what would you like to see, how would you like to see it work? And of course, we have some advocates and professionals here who can talk about the impact of this on child-rearing in America and on childhood.

I must tell you, this is going to be a very complicated and difficult thing for these people in television to do in the sense that they have—there are many, many thousands of—tens of thousands of programs on all of these television stations, and as we get more cable channels, they will multiply exponentially. So the job of rating them is very different from...