

'Nintendo Joe' Saved Killer Game Producers

by Don Phau and Scott Thompson

If there are more massacres like the ones at Littleton, Colorado or Erfurt, Germany, give Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) the responsibility. On April 20, 1999 in Littleton, two students addicted to Hollywood's violent movies and video games killed and wounded nearly two dozen of their fellow students and teachers at Columbine High School. Within days, Lieberman, aided by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), mobilized to defend Hollywood's "entertainment industry" against a nation in an uproar against Hollywood's film and video-game makers. Lieberman succeeded in getting Congress to enact impotent legislation, nominally designed to stop the violence caused by these games.

Lieberman spearheaded a nationwide movement for video "ratings and labeling," including an "Appeal to Hollywood" signed by two former U.S. Presidents. The whole campaign was a fraud: Lieberman had helped in the creation of the same rating and labelling scheme four years earlier in 1995. That scheme's ineffectiveness was already being shown by the waves of violent school shootings, including Littleton.

Lieberman's "rating and labelling" legislation had the exact opposite effect of its supposed intention. Violent video games are now more popular than ever. Any teen now knows where he can go directly to get the "cool" videos. Lieberman's "rating" system has printed on the front of each video-game package, a description of the contents. The videos marked "M" may state, "contains animated violence"; "sex"; "blood"; and "gore." The "M" means "Mature," that is, intended for players over 18, but it only signals to any kid that it's *the* game to get. And Lieberman's campaign legitimized the most violent videos, allowing them to openly be sold by major retailers such as K-Mart and Wal-Mart.

The Senator's 'Appeals' to Hollywood

Less than three weeks after the Littleton massacre, Lieberman had legislation on the floor of the Senate designed to deflect any anger against Hollywood. As early as 1994 Lieberman had been praising the creation of the video rating and labelling scheme overseen by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). The ESRB was established by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), comprising 32 of the leading companies which market over 90% of the entertainment software. It includes the makers of the most violent video games such as Nintendo and Sony. The ESRB

"rates" every video each year. Lieberman has followed this, issuing his own annual "report card" on the new games being produced.

In the shock and outrage following the Littleton massacre, Lieberman repackaged his old rating scheme. To get it adopted, he had to discredit the influence of Lyndon LaRouche's Commission on the New Violence, and Col. David Grossman's detailed proof that "point-and-shoot" video games were training kids to kill. The head of the IDSA, Douglas Lowenstein, was brought in by Lieberman to tell Senate hearings, "There is no scientific basis to argue that entering the fantasy world of 'Doom' in the home, using a mouse, causes players to gun down their friends in the schoolyard."

Lieberman admits in his book, *In Praise of Public Life*, published in 2000, "I did propose a government board to develop a rating system for video games which, as we had hoped, induced the industry to produce one of its own." In short, Lieberman never had any intention of applying censorship to even the most violent video or computer games.

Working With 'Manchurian Candidate' McCain

Did "Nintendo Joe" know his legislation would only encourage the spread of violent video games? Again, in his book, Lieberman admitted that the multibillion-dollar so-called entertainment industry hides behind the First Amendment to "market music centered on cop-killing" and "video games that reward players for graphically splattering human targets with semiautomatic weapons." He acknowledged that Hollywood was replicating the degrading conditions of spectators in the Roman Empire's Coliseum. He wrote: "Too often in recent years, the entertainment industry executives have responded . . . by producing television shows, movies, music and video games that reach for the lowest common denominator of sex, violence and vulgarity. This is often an act of executive consciousness because you can usually attract an audience by appealing to the lesser inclinations of people: remember, the Romans regularly filled the Coliseum to see Christians fed to the lions."

But in April 1999, just after the Littleton shootings, Lieberman presented an amendment to a Senate bill which exempted the entertainment business from anti-trust laws "to allow them to develop and enforce voluntary guidelines." On May 12, 1999 the amendment passed the Senate 98-0. Less than two months later, Lieberman and McCain (who is a *bona fide* "Manchurian candidate") had a full legislative package presented to Congress, called the "21st Century Media Responsibility Act." Touted in the press, and by both Lieberman and McCain, as Congress' "get tough" response to Hollywood's deadly entertainment, this bill was simply a repackaging of the same "rating" scheme, now added on to the law labelling cigarettes.

In a press release with McCain announcing their new leg-



Al Gore and I would never do anything to censor this industry, Lieberman (left, with Gore) told the Hollywood moguls, including makers of the most violent "point-and-shoot" video games.

isolation, Lieberman praised his own work: "This is a common-sense, forward-looking response to the growing culture of violence surrounding America's children." He unabashedly admitted that his legislation would not have any effect. "It won't singlehandedly stop media standards from failing, or substitute for industry self-restraint." All it did, was to make violent video games available in far more locations than ever before.

The *New York Times* candidly reported a sample of video-game manufacturers' opinions of Lieberman's efforts, quoting one CEO, James Harvey, "We tend to ignore all that hype." The *Times* added: "Mr. Harvey compared the political hubbub around the video games to the outcry from some Senators in the 1950s, screaming that rock-and-roll was going to destroy the country."

Lieberman Gets His Payoff

Now that Lieberman had gotten his cronies in Congress to go along unanimously with the "hype," it was time to gear up the propaganda mill. The "public" had to be convinced that labelling killer video games "M" was going to prevent future Littletons. Millions of dollars were poured into an advertising campaign to get people to pay attention to the "labels." Golf superstar Tiger Woods was hired to pitch for the "rating system" in advertisements throughout the country. Then, an "Appeal to Hollywood" was printed in newspapers nationally, signed by hundreds of "prominent" names, including former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, as well as Colin Powell, William Bennett, and, of course, Lieberman and McCain.

Lieberman issued a press release on the day the "Appeal" appeared, July 21, 1999: "So today we are issuing an appeal

to industry leaders to adopt a single, reasonable reform that we believe would go a long way toward attaining a safer, saner culture, broad based, multi-media, self-enforced code of conduct. The key word here is 'Appeal.' This is not an attack on Hollywood. It is an appeal to Hollywood to work with us as a national community in a joint effort to reduce the corrosive messages the media too often send our kids."

In September 2000, Lieberman himself hosted the payoff, a Hollywood \$10,000 a plate dinner for the Democratic National Committee. Speaking of his running mate, Al Gore, he said, "Al and I have tremendous regard for this industry. It's true from time to time we will be critics, but I promise you this: We will never, never put the government in the position of telling you through laws what to make." The Hollywood studios and their prostituted celebrities paid Lieberman for his dirty work: A record \$4.2 million was raised at the dinner.

After this dinner, former Reagan/Bush Education Secretary William Bennett, whom Lieberman describes as a "close friend" in his "advocacy," denounced him for selling out to Hollywood's "filth, sewage, and mindless bloodletting."

The truth is worse. Lieberman is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Mega, the secretive group of Zionist mafia billionaires co-founded by Charles Bronfman and Leslie Wexler (see "Sen. Joseph Lieberman: The Senator from 'Mega,'" *EIR*, March 8, 2002). The Vivendi Corp., for example, which merged with Charles and Edgar Bronfman's Seagram's, Universal Studios, and PolyGram records, and with the Bronfmans on its board, produced a video game known as "Counterstrike," where the player assumes the identity of a terrorist assassin. This game figured large in the fantasy world of Robert Steinhäuser, who slaughtered 16 people and himself on April 26 at a school in Erfurt, Germany.