

by L_Brent_Bozell

Our cosmopolitan elites have embraced the smutty Fox cartoon "Family Guy." A month ago, oh-so-sophisticated National Public Radio used their parody song "Everybody Poops" to report on Julius Genachowski (FCC), the incoming chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Perhaps it was NPR's way of welcoming in an Obama appointee who everyone expects will "lighten up" at the FCC and let Hollywood go wild with its "poetic license."

Now it's ABC's "Nightline" paying homage to "Family Guy," and in the process telling us a lot more about "Nightline" than about this stupid show. They presented the show's lame-brained "mastermind" Seth MacFarlane as a man of incredible talent, even a genius. At the top of their April 6 show, anchor Martin Bashir cooed: "Funny guy. No topic is too taboo, no subject off limits for this critically acclaimed cartoonist."

"Critically acclaimed" — remember that phrase. That may be the DVD-sales lingo that MacFarlane wants, but it's a stretch. When "Family Guy" first debuted in 1999, Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales called it "utterly excremental." Last fall, a Radar Online critic dismissed the show as "increasingly forced and tired. In short, the show sucks."

But to ABC, this was a heartwarming story of a Connecticut boy who grew rich by never maturing past the seventh grade. Bashir toasted MacFarlane as the story began: "His sense of humor may not appeal to everyone. It's often base, insulting and blasphemous, but to many, it's also the stuff of comedic genius and at just 35, it's made him the highest-paid TV writer in history."

MacFarlane reportedly signed a \$100-million contract with Fox and is now working on a third cesspool of a cartoon series.

The reporter for this segment, titled "Seriously Funny," was ABC's Bill Weir, last seen goofily hailing Barack Obama's inauguration as a day when "even the seagulls must have been awed." Weir didn't come to this interview like it was time for a "60 Minutes" interrogation of an oil company CEO. Apparently, the more MacFarlane pollutes the airwaves, the more reporters like Weir will merely bow and scrape.

"In a town full of talent, Seth MacFarlane is a rare quadruple threat," Weir exclaimed. "A guy who can write comedy, score music, animate characters and provide their voices." He then repeated "at age 35, he is reportedly the highest paid writer/producer in television history." Weir listed the show's protesters, but "his shows raise the most ire with religious and parental watchdog groups. If there is a taboo line, chances are MacFarlane has leaped over it."

This is where ABC tossed aside any semblance of fairness in favor of a one-sided puff piece. Weir chose not to interview a single religious spokesman or parental watchdog. The only man given a voice was MacFarlane. Weir also went too easy when it came to chronicling how low "Family Guy" can go.

He smiled as he said, "I just started jotting some of the topics covered and some of the jokes made at the expense of paraplegics, the deaf, pedophilia, bestiality, AIDS. You've got an opera version of the Nicole Simpson murders. The JFK Pez dispenser, where candy comes out of his wounds. Where is the line for you? Is there a line, or is that the point?"

MacFarlane said he regretted the JFK Pez dispenser. Apparently, there is a line, at least when you're interviewed by ABC News: Don't insult the Kennedys.

As for anything else, in ABC's eyes, it's "comedic genius." Take the March 8 episode that featured the baby eating horse semen; that suggested Ronald Reagan had sex with Mikhail Gorbachev; that showed the 11-way gay orgy scene; and played it for laughs when a horse trampled a class of deaf second-graders at the race track. Weir left those trampled "taboos" out of the discussion.

Fed these softballs, MacFarlane swung for the bleachers. "It's not like television is a God-given right. You hear the Parents Television Council raving about 'Family Guy' did this. Nobody is forcing you to watch this show. They say 'Is this taste?' No, it's not. It's terrible taste. That's what's funny."

Weir laughed and replied: "They make the argument ... with an animated show, a kid's going to stop the remote." MacFarlane insisted, "you can't hold a whole medium hostage" because animation appeals to children.

Instead, ABC allowed MacFarlane to make an unrebutted argument that the censors are arbitrary and ridiculous. Weir wrapped up the interview by warmly noting how "Family Guy" was a show Coca-Cola used to avoid with its advertising, but now "Baby Stewie stars in Coke ads alongside Charlie Brown and Underdog." Just like Coke, ABC is defining MacFarlane's deviancy down, welcoming his radioactive TV waste into the "mainstream."

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Fox's "comedic genius"™ by L_Brent_Bozell