

12-6-1992

## COMMENTARY

## Warning signs from Lush Rambo's locker room

We are a nation run by little boys. To the post-pubescent Peter Pans all around us, life is just one big locker room. The hottest acts on radio are filled with low humor and sex hangups.

Lush Rambo has serious trouble with girls and his work reflects it. Los Angeles Times book reviewer Patrick Goldstein recently wrote "what's helped Rush Limbaugh achieve culture-hero status — and what's attracted a heavily male audience — involves something rooted in his outrageous jibes about pushy women, homeless fakers and Hollywood poseurs. Armed with a Stone Age sense of humor, Rush is the ultimate guilty pleasure for guys weary of being bound by the cultural strait-jacket of political correctness... the key to Rush's provocative presence is somehow embedded in his fear of rejection. As a kid, he didn't date or have a girlfriend. Even today, his relations with the opposite sex remain in a Cold War-like state of suspicion and distrust," Goldstein wrote.

"Twice-divorced, Rush informed Vanity Fair that he still isn't dating. 'Relationships are fantasies to me now. When I hear that women are interested in me, I don't believe it,'" Limbaugh said.

"Wherever you look in (Limbaugh's book) 'The Way Things Ought to Be,' you find sexual tension, with Rush in one corner, bare-knuckled feminists and



ANDREW  
BARBANO

wacko Hollywood-actress activists in the other," Goldstein concluded.

Lush Rambo is tame compared to other lost boys lamenting petered-out youth. Howard Stern's morning radio show currently achieves TV-size audiences in major markets. Stern specializes in peepee-doodoo jokes with simulated sex acts thrown in. "I think he's a pig," one New York City TV network producer told me.

Unfortunately, her opinion doesn't matter. Stern's audience is much the same as Limbaugh's: white guys. "Howard says the things that other people think but are afraid to say out loud," according to his agent, Don Buchwald. I have heard the same said of Lush Rambo for years, and it's an insult. These guys are saying they really reflect you and me, but we're just afraid to admit it.

Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott recently played the familiar Lush Rambo defense against charges of racism. Schott said she was just misunderstood. What a great red herring to drag across the path of the bloodhounds!

If that one doesn't work, there's always the mindless frontal smear. Apparently irked by any opposition, militant anti-abortionist Randall Terry asked comedienne Robin Tyler if she were a lesbian. "Why, are you the alternative?" Tyler shot back. She undoubtedly misunderstood him.

It is little wonder that a presidency which loves Lush Rambo's radio show would foster an environment where officers and gentlemen acted as neither during the annual Las Vegas Tailhook Convention and sailor's gang bang. Operation Desert Storm, George Bush's proudest moment, left in its wake multiple charges of soldier raping soldier and a military establishment in maximum denial.

We too often laugh off the dangers of locker room mentality. More than 40 years ago, in his still-widely read book "The True Believer," philosopher Eric Hoffer wrote about "the process by which the discrediting of existing beliefs and institutions makes possible the rise of a new fanatical faith... not for a society of free-thinking individuals but for a corporate society that cherishes utmost unity and blind faith." Remember the Republican national platform?

"A wide diffusion of doubt and irreverence thus leads often to unexpected results," Hoffer wrote. "Thus by denigrating prevailing beliefs and loyalties,

the militant man of words unwittingly creates in the disillusioned masses a hunger for faith.

For the majority of people cannot endure the barrenness and futility of their lives unless they have some ardent dedication, or some passionate pursuit in which they can lose themselves," Hoffer stated. I give you the true believers who listen to Limbaugh, support Pat Buchanan and Jesse Helms, voted for George Bush and now look to Pat Robertson to lead them out of the wilderness.

"In spite of himself, the scotching man of words becomes the precursor of a new faith... The militant man of words prepares the ground for the rise of a mass movement... the stage is now set for the fanatics," Hoffer concluded. The election of Bill Clinton has not ended this disturbance. If anything, the removal of George Bush and his millionaire patricians will lead to the ascendance of the more vulgar elements. These will be men and women who demean while preaching respect for the individual, who spew their hatred and defend themselves by saying "you just don't understand what I really mean."

David Duke talked that way a lot. "The influence of the fanatics is bound to be out of all proportion to his abilities," Hoffer wrote.

"Thus, though hatred is a convenient instrument for mobilizing a commu-

nity for defense, it does not, in the long run, come cheap. We pay for it by losing all or many of the values we have set out to defend."

In Las Vegas a few weeks ago, a group of teens killed a 15-year-old classmate named Rory Sharp. For no particular reason.

"In my 22 years as a prosecutor, the biggest change in violent crime, and certainly the saddest, is that more young people are using violence to make themselves happy," Clark County deputy D. A. Dan Seaton told the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

After the L.A. riots, experts said we are five years away from organized, well-armed guerilla warfare in the U.S. "We as a society should be more afraid of these young people who are part of the United States than any outside force," warned prosecutor Seaton. "We are getting torn up from within, and the responsibility lies with the parents," he added.

We may have won the Cold War, but in a world devolving toward tribalism, the oldest democracy on the globe proceeds along a similar path. While we send troops to help victims of tribal war in Somalia, we ignore the symptoms at home.

Andrew Barbano is a Reno-based syndicated columnist. Barbano by Barbano originates each Sunday in the Daily Sparks Tribune.