Page 4, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 1992 Our opinion

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Ever hear of a movie called *Heaven's Gate?* Most people never saw it, but most people have heard about it. It was a film released in 1980 that cost nearly \$40 million to produce. Even in the age of the *Terminator* and *Batman* films, that's a lot of money. The director, Michael Cimino, was the hotshot movie mogul of the period since his previous film, *The Deer Hunter*, had been a huge success with both critics and fans. So MGM gave him full artistic control of *Heaven's Gate*, allowing him to spend piles of money to realize his 'vision.'

Well, his 'vision' turned out to be a three hour western, with a baffling plot line, poor cinematography and long, boring scenes during which the movie's characters stare into the distance. Out of the \$40 million MGM spent on the picture, they took in less than \$400,000 during *Heaven's Gate's* initial release. The film was quickly pulled, edited down to two hours, given an explanatory voice over and re-released. But it was too late. MGM went bankrupt, and Michael Cimino never

recovered.

Heaven's Gate has since become a symbol of the danger of giving too much power to well-intentioned but inexperienced people. Like a kid in the candy store, the young director ending up making everyone sick.

Michael Cimino's disaster was on my mind last weekend as I read my Globe and Mail. Buried in the back pages was a story entitled "Warning stickers considered for movies and videos." It seems that Ontario's censors—the Film 'Review' Board—is considering warning us when a video release is "sexist" or "racist" by placing politically correct warning labels on them.

Dorothy Christian, a native who has been nominated to become the next head of the censor board, has come out in favour of the idea. The idea, Christian says, is to provide consumers with more 'information' about what they're viewing.

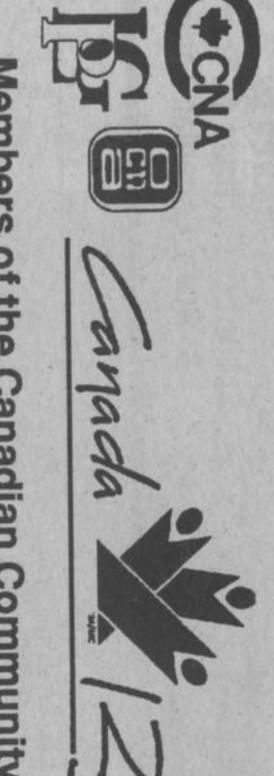
Hold on a minute. The only 'information' the board should be providing are recommendations about what movies are suitable for specific age groups—children, teenagers and adults. While those kinds of decisions are also debatable—for example, the censor's tolerance of violence over sex—they are a reasonable imposition. But sexism? Who knows for sure what's sexist? Put four people in a room, show them a movie, and you'll get four different opinions. For example, is June Cleaver cooking supper for Ward, Wally and the Beaver sexist? After all, they can cook for themselves. Is every single cowboy and Indian movie made before Dances with Wolves racist? After all, patives were anything but the murderous savages these movies portray them as.

I have no problem with governments telling me I must be a certain age to watch a movie. Children have rights, but adult certain age to watch a movie.

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