

THOSE TAKING A KNEE ARE STEALING THE SHOW

By David Morse

There has been much made by certain football players that they exercise their “freedom of speech” by kneeling as the National Anthem is played at football games. They claim they must act to “right wrongs”.

Setting aside patriotism and respect for the flag, let the discussion consider theft.

These individuals are not exercising their personal right to freedom of speech. They are stealing valuable air time from advertisers and denying the viewing public entertainment they have paid for...all to feed their egos. These individuals are paid, and paid very well, to entertain those watching the game. Fans bought tickets to sit in the stadium while other fans tuned in on the radio, television, internet or whatever other medium is used to “watch” the game. Advertisers paid piles of money to place their wares in front of those eyeballs.

No one paid to watch a football player kneel. Everyone paid to watch football players run, throw, tackle, catch and generally perform as players of football. If they want to express their personal opinions, let them buy air time and run an advertisement. They have no right to take it for free.

Would Pepsi be allowed to have young ladies sprint around the stadium in Pepsi suits carrying cans of Pepsi while players take the field free of charge? Heck no, the owners and players would scream for Pepsi to pay up. Why should well paid entertainers (we jokingly call them football players) be allowed to display their personal messages free of charge?

After nearly two years of inaction, the NFL has finally addressed this issue. Teams who take to the field during the Anthem will stand, any who do not stand will be fined. Staying in the locker room will be OK. A little late and a bit weak--but at least a clear policy.

The fines should be over and above whatever advertisers would have paid for the time period involved. Every advertiser and ticket holder should be given some form of refund for each knee that hits the ground.

Is kneeling during the National Anthem over? This writer predicts some “kneelers”, seeing their rants going largely unnoticed, will find their way to the field for a more public spectacle. If the NFL fails to react quickly and decisively, the locker rooms will empty and the fields fill. The dilemma will rise even larger than before.

As the “buying public” you can chose to watch, you can write a letter to the NFL or you can change channels. NFL revenues were down 10% last year. Was this due to a public reaction to kneeling? Who knows for sure. If kneeling continues this year and revenues drop another 10%, the NFL might find itself on both knees, asking the public for forgiveness.