

# The Great Harbinger Obscenity Bust

By HOWARD GLADSTONE  
 Toronto's underground newspaper, Harbinger, was recently fined \$1,500 for obscenity. The charge arose from an issue of last November which had a cover drawing depicting a very stylized birth, and the 'awful' heading "...The heavens stand in awe, as the Satanic Bitch bears the bastard son of God..." Heavy stuff. Roman Polanski did the same thing in the porno movie, "Rosemary's Baby."

The charging took place last November when officers of the Metro morality squad raided The Golden Ant, Harbinger's home and store on Spadina. Three staff members who happened to be present at the time of the raid were charged with "having obscene material for the purpose of distribution." Presumably, if more people had been there they too would have been charged. The police were originally tipped off about the obscene material by the Rev. Leslie Tarr.

The results of these charges was the conviction of all three and fines totalling \$1,500 or three months in jail each.

At the trial, the testimony of the two morality officers and Tarr was heard. Appearing for the defence was the cover artist Robert Greco, who stated that he felt the drawing depicted the struggle of good and evil, with man as the product of this struggle.

But Greco's aesthetic pronouncements did not affect the judge. He did show considerable imagination, however, in his sentences; he specified \$1,500 with NO TIME to pay. The Harbinger Three were handcuffed and led off to jail, presumably for haircuts and 90 days of Don Jail hospitality.

Fortunately, Harbinger had a few friends who were able to come up with the money in the form of a loan within two hours. Two benefits that have been held have hardly helped.

The Global Village benefit on March 8 raised \$120, but The Electric Circus on March 12 resulted in nothing, as the management planned to take the first \$500 to come in (which it never did). About \$60 was raised at York in one afternoon a few weeks ago in donations.

From the way in which this article is written my bias in the matter is obvious. I do not plan to come out with any heavy morality about freedom of speech and the rights of the individual. But I do feel that Harbinger is doing some good things and that there are some talented and intelligent people down there in the Spadina Village.

When something like Cinema 2000 gets busted for Vixen they reap the results of their crime with higher attendance. But when a paper like Harbinger, from which no one is getting rich, gets stepped on, it is a totally different matter.

They aren't playing the old 'leer' game to make themselves some bread, a la Ralph Ginzburg or Hugh Hefner or Russ Meyer.

Their so-called obscenity, and the rather silly way that people like Tarr react to it, are comments in themselves about the sick culture of the time. It isn't just a "bunch of freaks" in Chicago or here who are affected by this "insanity in the courts" — it's us.

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