

# "Lighten up! Sex is fun!"

by Janice Bloomfield

In my brief pilgrimage on this earth, the "privilege" has been mine to associate with many church types, not your run-of-the-mill sort, but the kind whose every action stems from the unwritten, "Thou shalt not dance. Thou shalt not drink. Thou shalt not play cards or go to movies." As I rubbed shoulders with these people, I was amazed often to learn the logic behind their statements. Have you ever wondered at the fundamentalist promoting abstinence because that first drink could lead to alcoholism?

The parallel with Goldstein in the debate on pornography last week is inescapable. He justifies

*Screw* magazine and other porn material on the basis that censorship, once begun, could exclude anything and everything. In other words, all censorship is a dictation of thought, a type of propaganda. He has a point. God knows Ontario's concerned parents wreak havoc in high school curricula, their latest crusade blocking Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* from innocent tenderlings.

However, Susan Cole, while agreeing that freedom of thought and speech are worth defending, finds yards and yards of space between dictatorships and total license. She does not promote censorship, but instead asks about the individuals behind the

camera. Are they people, like Marilyn Chambers, who, as Goldstein stated, "would rather fuck on screen for money than have to fuck backstage in order to get a job"? Should this exploitation be legally permitted?

Goldstein, ignoring this reality, insisted that freedom of speech justifies his magazine. "One of my issues showed a picture of Reagan getting fucked in the ass.... When I got a tracheotomy, my staff joked that I was getting it done in order to be fucked in the throat as well. *Screw* magazine is not racist or exploitative. I make fun of everyone, myself included." As one questioner pointed out, there's something wrong with justify-

ing behaviour on the grounds that "I do it to everyone".

But, in Goldstein's case, what motivates him to threaten, "Thou shalt not censor"? Although he claims to be a renaissance man who firmly believes that the negatives of freedom of speech are preferable to the positives of exclusion, I question if he truly loves knowledge and liberty and whether or not there is a logic behind his dogmatism.

I'd like to suggest that Goldstein's call for freedom has more to do with economics than open-mindedness. Let's be realistic, anyone who donates half of his income to American civil liberties and with the other half sup-

ports two other publications, lives, and pays taxes and alimony, is making big money. And I rather doubt that Goldstein, promoter of unchecked thought and speech, has a lightly chequed budget either. Undoubtedly his generosity gets him big tax cuts. No wonder he believes in freedom of speech.

Goldstein's abstinence is an odd one. It is a kind which we often mistake because it sounds so open-minded and modernly progressive. Often we hear the "thou shalt not's" of the fearful and unthinking. But with Goldstein, we hear a puritanism of the irresponsible. Why be open to change when that change would affect my wallet?

## Puritan In Disguise

by Elizabeth Hiscott

"The Great Pornography Debate" held last Wednesday at Dalhousie University was neither great nor a debate, but it was a very good argument between Al Goldstein, editor of *Screw* magazine, and Susan Cole, a feminist writer.

The confusion of meanings attached to the word pornography — erotica, sexual violence, obscenity — contributed to the loss of formal structure in the 'debate'.

Goldstein, a New York native who has been tried and acquitted on obscenity charges in the U.S. several times, spoke of his "creative outlet", *Screw*; bragged about being a defender of freedom; and described himself as a Renaissance man. He was likely right for the wrong reasons. For the Renaissance period in history, an age of revival in arts, literature, and learning in Europe, was also a time of oppression of women and domination of females by hedonistic males.

Goldstein summed up the

issues against pornography as "people against pleasure". Some of his comments were... "pornography is fantasy... we have a right to our fantasies... individuals in our society have the freedom to develop their own sexuality... we don't want bedroom police..."

When accused of exploiting women, he asked how one can do that with an adult who has consented to participation (in pornography for magazines, films, etc.).

In our capitalistic society, which, he says, is characterized by exploitation, Goldstein sees his magazine as, like McDonald's just "filling a need".

Susan Cole noted that "pornography subordinates women and debases sexuality". She said "... it is because of women's economic inequality in society that some sell sex, for survival... some of these women are from the 69 per cent of females who are sexually abused before the age of 16... some are runaways who see prostitution and a friendly pimp as an improvement over being sex-

ually assaulted by a family member."

She said that "Goldstein offers women 'help' by asking them to sell their body... so he can sell magazines... he's their pimp." She contends that "as long as there is pornography we'll never get equality... as long as men see women as the sum of their sexual parts, we'll have difficulty getting a raise".

Goldstein insisted he was against violence; and said he didn't believe magazines like his contributed to it. Cole noted that it is hard for men to recognize violence against women after they have been conditioned by magazines like *Screw*.

Goldstein noted that there was more violence in 'slasher' movies than in pornography; a if its being less violent than the worst kind made the sexual violence in magazines such as his, acceptable.

He appealed to the audience, many of whom frequently jeered him, to "lighten up!... sex is fun!... *Screw* magazine is fun and entertainment."

Cole commented that Goldstein "makes money on pornography by keeping it the way it is... it is not a fantasy for the woman involved in it... it's their real life."

She appealed to males in the audience to "express outrage at

being made to look like all you can do is exploit women". She said that "we need to build a world in which men and women are treated with respect".

The only aspect of this public argument which might be considered "great" was its potential to do what Susan Cole had set out to do — to induce people to look at pornography and admit that it does debase sexuality as it presents women in submissive and dehumanizing roles, dominated by men; to inspire them to think about what kind of sexuality they want in their own lives; and to encourage them to attempt to change the way things are — to "reclaim sexuality".

