

Criminal Code

Mr. Manly: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the Fraser Commission pointed out that it is difficult to draw direct connecting links because a lot of the base research has not been done. However, there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence that violence toward women is promoted and encouraged by this kind of pornography.

Material which shows violence against women desensitizes people until they think that this kind of conduct is acceptable. It sets up a model of an acceptable way in which men will treat women. Even the so-called soft-core pornography portrays women as being "bimbos", to use the word of Jessica, as less than fully human. That in turn encourages some men to treat them as being less than human.

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter into debate on this legislation. I think we are at an historic turning point in the public debate on pornography. There is a reshaping of the debate on pornography to deal with the emergence of equality between the sexes, with the new demand that women be treated on an equal footing with men rather than as objects, the victims of society, and second-class citizens. The whole debate on pornography is rightly being reframed in order to achieve equality between the sexes.

I want to make it clear that I believe there is some need for legislation with regard to pornography. However, I believe there are a couple of extreme points of view on pornography which have entered this debate. There are two opposite points of view on how we should deal with the matter. The first point of view may be called an extreme civil libertarian point of view. It is that there should be no censorship whatsoever of any adult material including violent pornography. This position is taken by the Civil Liberties Association, a respectable organization, and by some feminists including June Callwood and Varda Burstyn.

On the other hand, there are those people who say that there should be censorship of all sexual material. The position that all material including sexual acts should be censored is taken by fundamentalist religious groups such as the Inter-Church Committee on Pornography, Canadians for Decency, the Canadian Coalition for Family Values, REAL Women, and right-wing members of the Conservative caucus. Those are the two opposite points of view with regard to pornography which, of course, cannot both be sustained. One must prevail over the other.

I do not share the point of view that all sexual material should be censored. I believe that there is a need for balance in our approach on pornography as well as a need for a modern perspective. I, my Party, and, I believe, the majority of Canadians, take the position that there is a need for censorship of violent or degrading sexual material, but not of erotica. There is a need for a distinction to be made between violent and degrading sexual material on the one hand and erotica on the other. Violent and degrading material should be censored.

This position is shared by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, many women's groups across the country, and large numbers of the public. It is also the position of the federal New Democratic Party.

We need a balanced and modern perspective on pornography. The debate is no longer limited to freedom of expression on the one hand and the banning of all materials describing sexual activity on the other. The original debate on pornography was framed in that way, and those with the point of view of freedom of expression won the day.

Society has changed since then. Women have become equal partners in society. They are equal partners in the decision-making process of society and have raised their voices to indicate that they are not prepared to tolerate the violent and degrading depiction of sexual activities, which has become an \$8 billion industry on this continent that sells violent activity under the label of sexual material. In fact, the essence of it is violent activities with a sexual aspect only as a backdrop to what is taking place.

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This enormous industry lives off the profits from selling violent and degrading depictions of women in sexual activity. While this industry flourishes and defends itself under the rubric of freedom of speech and expression, it is being challenged by women who are demanding to be treated as equal members of society. These women are also challenging legislators and citizens to redefine the debate on the whole question of pornography. We must recognize that the depiction of sexual activity in a violent manner and the depiction of women as the willing victims of violence is unacceptable in our country.

As my colleague said, it may be too early to conclude whether these depictions of violent pornography have an impact on human behaviour and encourage men to engage in rape or other violent activity toward women. Obviously, there are studies that indicate that these images have such an impact, but there are other authorities who claim that these images do not have such an impact.

Personally, I want to see more evidence before I am persuaded that images of violent sexual activity do not have an impact on human behaviour. I have three children aged 10, 8 and 6. I have observed them as they watched violent images on television during a Saturday morning program of cartoons. In spite of my best parenting efforts, they of course act out those images in the stories they see on television. As a layman, I think that is *prima facie* evidence that theatrical or video portrayals have an effect on human behaviour. Unless there is some sound scientific studies that overwhelmingly lead to the conclusion that people can watch such images without having any impact on their behaviour, I have serious concerns about an \$8 billion industry which continues to show violent sexual activity with women and portray women as victims.