

Censorship debate rages over porn

analysis by Jens Andersen

The message put forth at the debate on pornography held last Wednesday between Lois Sweet and Brit Griffin was quite clear: the two feminists were adamantly opposed to censorship (as Lois Sweet said, "To advocate censorship is to fall into the hands of the moral majority and the new right"); nonetheless, something absolutely *has* to be done about the graphic and literary sewage polluting our society.

The way out of this thorny dilemma, Sweet said, is to amend the Criminal Code statute against hate literature to include hate literature against women (and the aged). Griffin gave qualified agreement, saying this would get rid of such things as "snuff" films, but would leave things like Harlequin Romances unscathed. Thus she also strongly emphasized that to get rid of sexist prejudice we have to "educate these attitudes out of society."

And all the familiar catchphrases were there, from the "sexist underpinning of our society" (Sweet) to the "male dominated perspective of our society" (Griffin). In short, nothing much new or different was said that would surprise anyone who has been following the feminist debate on porn.

It was refreshing, however, to see a certain amount of self-criticism emerge, as when Griffin noted the general ineffectiveness of night marches in stopping rape or porn.

The criticism, it seems to me, could go further; to their proposals on curbing porn as hate literature, and about education.

There is the very real possibility, for instance, that the peddlers of sadism against women could bypass hate legislation by a) depicting women-hating matter-of-factly, along with the standard ploy of punishment for the perpetrator, and/or a sermon against his evil practice; or b) by sublimating the sadism.

There is the second (and related) very real possibility that honest criticism of women will be construed by a judge or jury as "violence against women" or some such crime. If you think this is a remote possibility, think of the recent attacks by feminists on the innocuous *National Lampoon* and *Heavy Metal* (which even has feminist cartoonists as contributors).

Think of the unpublicized incident at the *Gateway* last year, where a cartoonist caricatured a "dizzy dame" whose thoughts revolved around lipstick and *Vogue* magazine. The cartoon was censored by staffers of the feminist persuasion, although they admitted this unliberated type of woman existed, and that criticism of such women was necessary. The cartoon could be misunderstood, they said, and might, in some unspecified way, lead to bad attitudes against women.

Think again of Brit Griffin's synopsis of the typical Harlequin Romance plot (from last Wednesday's debate): "Women meets man; man rapes her but it's OK because he's the right man."

To begin with, it is Harlequin Romance's policy that portrayals of sex are absolutely verboten (the accent is on romance, as in knights in shining armour, tender kisses and moonlight serenades). Secondly, it would take some pretty abstruse metaphysics to prove that a woman who is passionately in love with a man (as all the ladies are at the end of each romance) could be raped by her always charming and con-

siderate heartthrob.

Isn't Ms. Griffin imagining hostility where none exists?

The moral of these examples should be plain: people see hatred (or any other such "thought-crime," to use Orwell's penetrating word) wherever they want to see it. And ignore it where it coincides with their own hatred. Ultimately what would happen if Lois Sweet's proposal were implemented is that we would end up, not without hate literature, but with a literature that merely reflects the arbitrary likes and hates of judges and juries. And if these people happen to like such exploi-sadism as Sydney Sheldon's *Bloodlines* (as I suspect they would), and hate things like Robert Crumb's brilliant convoluted satires on feminists and misogyny (as I suspect they would) then you can kiss good literature goodbye.

As for education, I think a close examination of the screaming that goes on between feminists and anti-feminists (or pro-nukes and anti-nukes, or pro-abortion and anti-abortion, or pro and con any controversial issue) shows just how little change in opinion is accomplished by the



Brit Griffin



Lois Sweet

"education" foisted on the public by advocacy types. When was the last time, for example, that a *Gateway* letter writer changed his mind because of criticism from an opponent? 1926?

The fact is, people's opinions are far more entrenched than they will admit. And this is not just because of indoctrination, either. After all, many of the most disgusting woman-haters and many of the most decent

gentlemen had the same upbringing, and went through the same "sexist" school system. Doesn't that say something?

And some men react to exposure to porn with increasing boredom, while others brought up in a similar enough environment become addicted. Doesn't that say something?

Let's hope the feminists take a good second look at their philosophy and proposals, before they make a bad problem worse.

CFS membership stalls in Calgary

by Peter Michalshyn

Students at the University of Calgary voted overwhelmingly 'Not Yet' in a recent referendum for full membership in the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

Immediately after the vote, the U of C Students' Council reaffirmed its prospective-membership in the new national student organization.

"It was not an anti-CFS campaign overtly," says Jim Stanford, editor of the U of C's student newspaper, the *Gauntlet*.

"They weren't saying it (CFS) was a bad organization," Stanford says.

Led by U of C student president Richard O'Gorman, the anti-forces assumed a 'Not Yet' stance, preferring to stall the full membership decision at least until the CFS-Alberta founding conference scheduled tentatively for next fall.

At such a conference, the

membership of the Federation of Alberta Students (FAS) would vote to merge the strictly provincial organization with the national organization.

If the merger takes place, FAS members would have about two years to join CFS-Alberta or drop out of the student movement altogether.

Students at the University of Alberta will have to decide in a referendum if they want to join CFS-Alberta; the U of A, like

Calgary, is now a prospective member in the national organization, and a full member of FAS.

The Calgary vote was almost 2:1 'Not Yet,' a result that shows "some people are not sold on the idea" of CFS, says Brian Bechtel, soon to become Board of Governors student rep at the U of A.

Bechtel says CFS will have to answer a lot of questions before U of A students will support it in a referendum.

Such a referendum could take

place as soon as spring '83, possibly along with the annual SU general election.

Bechtel says CFS membership would be the ideal election issue, and he says he might even consider running for president against membership.

"With the information I've got now, I wouldn't support it," he says. As for the presidency, "It's crossed my mind, but at this point it's just an idea."

Offensive mags pulled after protest

MONTREAL (CUP) — A demonstration by McGill students has convinced a local store owner to remove pornographic material from its magazine display cases.

After the March 10 McGill Women's Union demonstration, the Cigare Avenue du Parc removed all pornographic material from its display cases. The offending

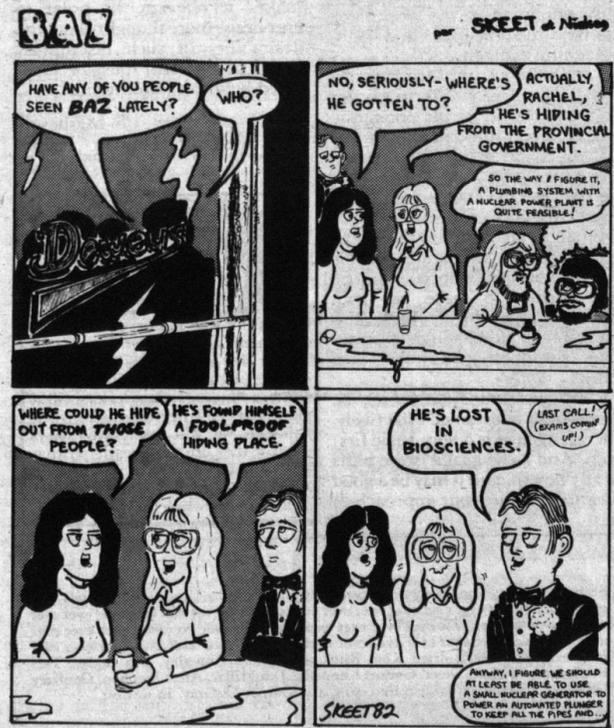
magazines are now available only from behind the counter.

According to one of the store's owners, the magazines were removed because he and the co-owner realized the material was insulting.

"I don't want all these people standing outside screaming and yelling," he said. "It's not worth

the revenue that the magazines bring in."

Participants in the demonstration and members of the Women's Union say they are pleased with the action. According to Margaret Fulford, a Women's Union spokesperson, "It's exciting because it shows that activism does influence people."



Olivia Butti's Diary

March 29

Dear Diary:

Well, I've taken another important step in revitalizing our fair city. Obviously one of the major problems we have is that the members of the media, particularly the press, have always fostered a negative image of this city and particularly city council. How can people feel good about living in Edmonton when their leaders are made out to be a pack of bumbling fools? Especially me. Well, no longer.

I'm having my researcher draw up plans for a new city commissioner for truth and ethics in media. Actually my researcher, Terry Goebels (everyone calls him Gonzo Diary, just like in that TV show) has worked so hard at this project I think I'll make him commissioner once I'm mayor. The office will work like this: all news items, columns, editorials and such will be submitted to the commissioner 72 hours before they are to be published. He and his office will screen them for errors, inaccuracies, and the generally sloppy, biased reporting that characterizes the Edmonton media.

The idea is simply brilliant, if I do say so myself. After all who would know better what goes on at council meetings than the aldermen and especially the mayor herself. I for one am tired of being misrepresented and quoted out of context. And furthermore wouldn't it be better if we had

some means to eliminate all those little slips and stutters that occur when one is talking quickly in debate. The people of Edmonton would be better served if they knew what councillors meant to say, not what they said.

As for critical columns and editorials, of course they will be allowed. But first the people who write them will be compelled to mention all the relevant facts that until now they have so bitterly ignored. The media is too powerful to be left in the control of people who are only interested in their own ends and not the benefit of the whole city.

There are good, honest, insightful reporters in this city, and they have to be encouraged. Vivienne McRoberts of the *Edmonton Journal* for example. Their material however usually winds up buried in the back of the Sunday paper or in the fashion section, while the front pages and editorial pages are filled with the politicking of secret URGE and EVA supporters. Gonzo and I are not going to let this media miscarriage of justice continue. We are going to create a media that puts good news ahead of bad, that doesn't compromise city policy with ill-timed leaks, that defends morality, justice and the Christian way of life, and that works hand in hand with the city to achieve worthwhile goals. As Gonzo says, the people in this city will understand what council is trying to accomplish only when we have a media who are free to print the truth.