

# Fighting Pornography

by Sarah Cox  
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"The photographs in the August issue of *Penthouse* displayed women bound up in chains. One photograph showed the top half of a woman's body in a meat grinder. It was hideous. I felt really disgusted. Every time I turn around there are those magazines staring me right in the face."

Angered by the objectification of women in pornographic magazines, Simon Fraser University student Laurie White is fighting to have pornography removed from the SFU bookstore and concession stands. The university encourages a negative attitude toward women by selling pornography on campus, she says.

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"Pornography has no place in a university bookstore because it is contrary to the ideals of the university," she says. "It demeans and



Brenda Crider

degrades women. Women are exploited. Pornography reminds me that to most of the population I'm nothing but a sexual object."

White began her campaign in July, after being confronted by *Penthouse* and *Playboy* when she went into the university bookstore to buy a magazine on photography. She and a friend headed for the campus women's centre to find out more about pornography, passing a Canadian National Institute for the Blind concession stand on the way.

"To our great surprise, they had seven pornographic magazines on display," says White. "We told the man we objected to pornography being displayed and sold on our campus. CNIB was very cooperative. As soon as they understood that students were objecting to it they removed it."

White has not been quite as successful in dealing with SFU bookstore manager and head librarian Ted Dobbs. "He wasn't very receptive to our complaint. His basic line was that we were asking him to participate in censorship. We pointed out to him that they practice censorship every day."

"At the end of the summer, the SFU bookstore received a shipment of the book *The Olson Murders*. They were removed from the shelf an hour later because they were in bad taste. We asked them to do the same with other 'tasteless' stuff," White says.

Despite cries of censorship from the university administration and other students, White has many supporters. A motion asking that pornography be removed from campus has been passed by the student council, the student society staff union, and the teaching support staff union. The group has also received numerous letters of support from the community.

The issue has reached SFU president George Pedersen, who seems unwilling to make a judgement on the degrading image of women in pornography.

In a September 10 letter to White, Pedersen stated, "I have no intention of assuming the role of SFU censor."

Despite Pedersen's reaction, White plans to continue to fight for the removal of pornography from the campus. "It's become a really important issue. We haven't dropped the issue and we won't," she says.

At the University of British Columbia, Josephine Evans, an education instructor, has been the most vocal person about pornography sold on campus. She took up the issue on her first day at the university when she found herself unexpectedly facing a display of pornographic magazines in the campus bookstore.

"I felt very personally degraded when I saw women's bodies packaged and displayed to please men. It was a disappointment to be in a university that sells stuff



which degrades 50 per cent of the human race," she says.

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Evans compares the depiction of women in pornographic magazines to the treatment of colored races by white men. "It took a while for whites to understand racism. Plenty of men don't understand how it feels to be at the receiving end of sexism. It's about time men took women's word for it."

"You're either for the degradation of half the human race or you're not. It's time to take a stand. I think removing the porno-

graphy will show that this university does respect women," Evans says.

John Hedgecock, manager of UBC's bookstore, disagrees with Evan's perception of pornography. "What is obscene to one person is not to another," he says. "Until somebody can define what pornography is, I don't know if I've got any in the bookstore."

Regardless of its portrayal of women, removing pornography from the bookstore constitutes censorship, Hedgecock says. "The moment someone says 'I don't think you should read that', it's censorship. The last place that should occur is on a university campus. The university is one place where things ought to be read and judged."

The theme of one *Penthouse* article was that modern 'liberated' women like to be tied up and raped. Hedgecock declines comment on the depiction of women in this particular issue. "I don't read them so I don't know if that happens to be there. I am told

## Women march to reclaim the night

HALIFAX (CUP) -- Aside from sexual harassment, women also have to battle media attitudes, if an October 22 Reclaim the Night march is any indication.

According to Dianne Gilbeault, one of the march organizers, someone from the CBC phoned organizers asking to interview one of the marchers. When told that only the organizers would be available for comment, he said he wanted someone who had been sexually harassed.

"He does not realize how hard it is for any woman to talk about it," said Gilbeault.

As well, a male photographer covering the march was there waiting for trouble to occur, said Susan MacIntyre, chairperson of the Women's Committee at Dalhousie and one of the marchers. "We weren't there to draw trouble."

The march, which protested the fear of rape marchers say keeps many women off the streets, drew 90 women. Last year's march attracted 150 women.

The philosophy behind the march was more important than its size, said a student from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

MacIntyre agreed. "I feel good about it. I knew very few of the marchers in the beginning, but by the end of the march I felt I had made a lot of friends who had the same concerns."

"We are first trying to reach women, to tell them they are not alone," said another marcher.

"I think it's great," said one woman as she left work. "It's not publicized enough."

The march received both support and heckles from bystanders as it wound its way through the city.

Though some men said they were supportive, there were many more who harassed the marchers from behind the windows of their cars. "Hey man, I am for rape," yelled one man from a yellow van.

"That's why we're marching," retorted two students from the University of King's College.

## - A Matter of Taste?

She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another.

Men survey women before treating them.

Consequently how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. To acquire some control over this process, women must contain it and interiorize it. That part of a woman's self which is the surveyor treats the part which is the surveyed so as to demonstrate to others how her whole self would like to be treated. And this exemplary treatment of herself by herself constitutes her presence.

that there are a lot of serious articles in *Playboy*. I'm totally opposed to censorship and will be to the day I retire," he says.

Head UBC librarian Tony Jeffreys shares Hedgecock's views on the value of *Playboy*. The library subscribes to *Playboy*, which is available in the special collection stacks. "I would hardly call that (*Playboy*) pornographic," Jeffreys says. "We are dealing with a magazine that has other uses. *Playboy* is regarded as having some literary merit. If a library this size begins to censor material useful to scholars, then its function tends to diminish."

The Thunderbird shop in the SUB sells in total 150 copies of *Playboy*, *Playgirl* and *Penthouse* a month, comparable to the number of *Scientific American* magazines sold in the store.

"We also sell dirty sort of fun things," shop manager Sally Alston says. "We've got quite a demand." Alston says the best selling book in the store is a join the dots 'dirty fun book'. The store has sold more than 500 copies of the book in two years.

Alston says she cannot make a judgement on the image of women conveyed by pornographic magazines. "It's not my position to say. If they sell, I give the people what they want. More people buy them than complain."

University campuses are not the only places where the battle against pornography is being fought.

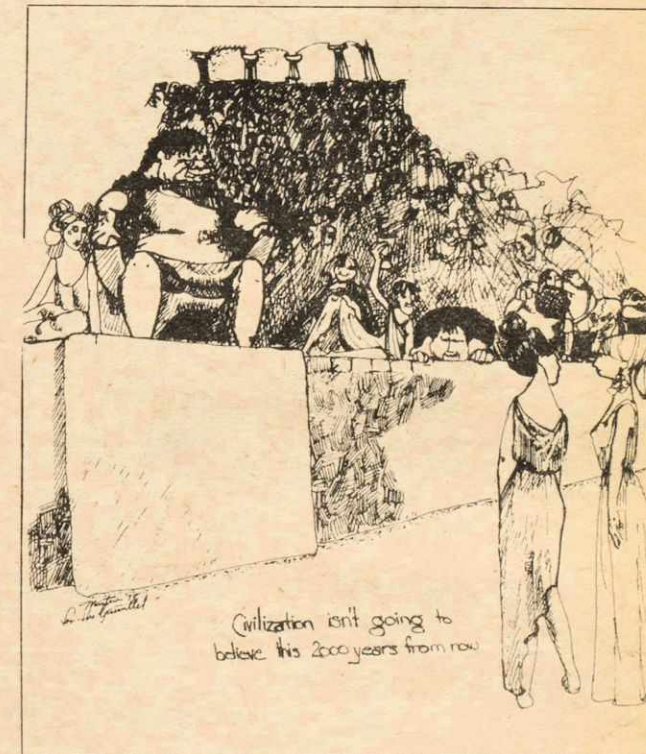
University campuses are not the only places in town where the battle against pornography is being fought. In August the Vancouver East Cinema cancelled a midnight series of pornographic movies after about 40 people demonstrated outside the theatre.

"It did come as a surprise," manager Al Patel says. "We thought we'd try showing pornographic movies and see if people came. When we saw that there were people out there who didn't want these things, we decided we didn't want any problems. With that in mind we cancelled the whole show."

Patel says he is still happy with his decision, even though the theatre has lost money. "There are more important things than money. What's money when it comes to principles?" he asks.

"The film was stopped in the interests of the community. Their feelings were that these films exploit women. Maybe they do. We pursued that angle purely from a business angle, and not with the intention of exploiting women."

"The outcome was important. We did get letters in support that such things were stopped. It definitely gave us a good feeling," he says.



Civilization isn't going to believe this 200 years from now