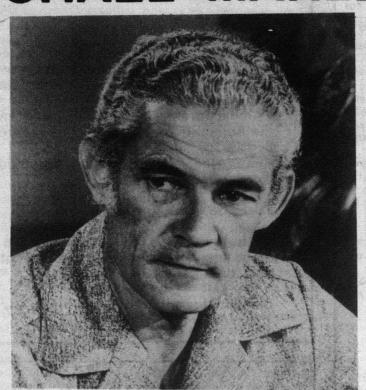
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The merits of the Med Show, and why it shouldn't be banned

analysis by George Koch

Before the inevitable howls of outrage from every self-righteous corner of campus concerning this year's Med Show reach this newspaper, a few words of caution to those eager to outlaw this and other such events.

Firstly, a clarification of terms is in order to properly understand just what sort of animal is the Med Show. We must distinguish between acts considered wrong and punishable, wrong but not punishable, and either not wrong or of uncertain status. Society considers murder, for instance, to be both wrong and punishable, whereas watching a staged murder on television or reading about one is considered neither wrong nor punishable. Society might well consider thinking about killing someone morally reprehensible, but few would outlaw such activity (for a number of reasons); in any case, the problems of enforcibility would be virtually insurmoun-

So, how does all this relate to the Med Show? Having attended this year's event (unlike so many of its detractors), I can say, that it was on occasion witty, usually crude, sometimes downright obscene, invariably iconoclastic. Whether it was sexist, racist, or otherwise degrading is a debatable point, perhaps insoluble, but for the sake of this argument let it suppose it was all of those things. Still, the Med Show should not be

Few would argue with the notion that public displays of racism or sexism are wrong and should be punished. In the same moral category as murder, they involve direct action taken with intent to harm. Neither the victim nor the bystander has any choice by to receive or witness the said act. Furthermore, laws concerning such acts are easily enforced.

Proceeding with our analogy, few would consider the bystander in any way culpable, so long as he withholds any would be tantamount to advocate encouragement of the perpetrator. In- end of free speech in our society.

deed, the bystander could in many cases be grouped alongside the recipient in that he may be indirectly harmed by the said

Now what about the case of someone harbouring racist or sexist thoughts, or expressing them in private? Many or most people consider the attitudes themselves wrong or repugnant, but ought they be made punishable, i.e. outlawed? I think

A few of us still cling to that nebulous notion of free speech, that archaic concept much battered around the world - that one has the fundamental right to publicly utter anything non-libelous, and privately utter anything at all. The implications of a law restricting that right are staggering; the government, under the pretext of protecting society, could outlaw any thoughts or expression it deemed harmful to society, and we would be in the same unfortunate situation as so many of the world's people, namely the police state. The very real dangers posed by censorship far outweigh any conceivable benefit to society.

So how does all this relate to the Med Show? The Med Show, and indeed all other small-scale theatrical events, films, printed material, insofar as they are not foisted upon the public (for example, television advertising or 'iterature received in the mail) and insolar no one is coerced into participating, constitute essentially private functions and are not governable by the same rules as public acts. People must pay to witness these events; in so doing, they exercise free choice. You can't outlaw the Med Show because neither the public nor any individual is targeted for abuse, nor indeed is is the material presented made public, as it were. So while it may be perfectly legitimate, even called for, to disagree with any material presented or opinions expressed by the participants, to restrict or ban such events as the Med Show would be tantamount to advocating the



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