

make Canada more repressive than many religions. "Catholics are not excommunicated if they do not follow edicts from the Pope. Christianity is based on choice." Ritter proposes that restrictions and definitions of pornography take into account freedom of choice.

"Anything can be degrading if it is not done on a consensual basis," says Ritter, but he concedes that there is a grey area when it comes to the matter of consent. Many people still hold the opinion that someone who is raped somehow "deserves it" — either she was a "slut" or he was a "fag". "This is obviously not a black and white issue, in spite of parliament trying to make it black and white. There is always a grey area, and that's for the courts to decide. When does something become mutual consent? When is it a questionable consent?"

Ritter says churches, schools and regional social services should be educating children and adults about the kind of sexism and exploitation that precipitates pornography. "It is not a matter for the law. Morality is a matter of conscience, and that is a matter for education.

Essentially, the government sees sex as evil, Ritter believes. Why else would it link graphic depiction of sexual activity with violence, child abuse and degradation? "No evidence exists to support the theory that explicit sexual activity is harmful," he points out. "There have been studies that show that violence is probably bad, but that sex itself is not harmful."

Even feminists who advocate the censorship of pornography are disturbed by the two bills. Susan G. Cole, a contributor to the Toronto-based feminist review *Broadside*, told the *Body Politic* in August that the bills revealed "anti-woman sentiments." She hinted that feminists were being used by the Canadian Right in their crusade against sex. As an editorial in the July issue of *Broadside* points out, "... the interests of the two groups (the Right and pro-censorship feminists) are not the same."

The bills may be anti-sex, but they're hardly anti-sexist. In fact, says Varda Burstyn, co-founder of Feminists against Censorship, "they ignore feminist concerns altogether."

Brenda Humber believes that explicit depictions of sexual activity can be helpful. Humber was in Edmonton last month to open the seventh in a chain of Love Shops across western Canada. Humber became greatly worried about the status of her business when she read about the proposals in the newspapers. Formerly a psychiatric social worker, she opened her first Love shop with her husband in Calgary in 1973.

"People want to be able to see the sex act," Humber says. "They don't want bodies covered up." The Love Shop has carried so-called pornographic or erotic periodicals such as *Playgirl*, *Blueboy* and *Playboy* as well as sex manuals, but Humber says she has had to stop carrying a number of those publications, "mainly because the laws are so unclear right now."

Humber, along with Ritter and others, hopes the government will scuttle Crosbie's proposals in

favour of the recommendations of the Fraser Report. "Fraser basically said that everything should be allowed except abusive activity, child porn and bestiality. Everything else fits in with community standards."

Humber disputes Crosbie's claims that the majority of Canadians are in favour of his propos-

have the right information." Almost all of the stock at the Love Shop is imported, mostly from Scandinavia, whose laws dealing with sexual material are open-minded. "You can be right-wing and be for or against pornography," Ritter says. Britain, which has a right-wing government, regulates porn but does not

and C-113." Ritter had collected 2,000 letters just days after it was released and is sure thousands of Edmontonians have sent the letter themselves or written one of their own.

Others are articulating their stand against the proposed legislation. The Periodical Writers' Association of Canada has passed

"Anti-censorship and pro-sex forces need to join together locally, regionally and nationally in anticipation of the Justice Committee

als. 'The silent majority' had a write-in campaign of 700 letters. We have seven stores across western Canada and we count every single customer — 3.5 million customers since the first day. That's half the population of the Prairies. And we know where they're at sexually."

Humber says she is amazed at "how normal everybody is and how they don't realize it. People come in and say 'I've got a problem' but often they just didn't

prohibit it.

Meanwhile, individuals and groups are mounting an attack on Crosbie's anti-sex bills. Ritter's Committee for Freedom of Choice (P.O. Box 9065, Station E, Edmonton, Alberta, R5P 4K1) is circulating a form letter asking the government to scrap Crosbie's bills and to adopt the recommendations his committee formulated in a paper called "Criticisms and Recommendations with Regard to Bills C-114

a resolution asking that the proposed legislation be withdrawn and redrafted, and the Playwrights' Union of Canada has

slated a discussion of the bills on its agenda. Latitude 53, a gallery run solely by artists which presented an exhibit about censorship this spring, has stated its opposition to any form of censorship, although it has not released a statement specifically about Crosbie's proposals.

"Now is the time to let your MP, and the editors and readers of your local newspaper, know what you think of the government's proposals," writes Bearchell in the *Body Politic*. "Anti-censorship and pro-sex forces need to join together locally, regionally and nationally in anticipation of the Justice Committee hearings. . . And they need to analyze and criticize all the repressive aspects of these proposed laws, not just the obvious absurdities."

Ritter hopes the new Justice Minister, Ray Hnatyshyn, heeds the opposition and either scraps the bills or uses them as an election platform in a couple of years so Canadians can more directly comment on the proposals and the authoritarian and secretive style of Mulroney's boys in blue pinstripes.

In the mean time, here's to 1984 in 1986.

Suzette Chan is Prairie Bureau Chief for Canadian University Press.

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