

Censorship: a superficial solution

By Kathy O'Brien

Over the last decade pornography has become more explicit, more violent and more readily available. Angered by pornographic images of women, some Canadians call for an increased censorship on pornography.

But censorship is a dangerous and a simplistic solution to a complex problem. Pornography is a symptom of the sexist nature of society and censorship covers up the problem, but doesn't cure it.

We already have censorship in Canada, albeit in an arbitrary and erratic fashion. Some provinces have film review boards which classify and censor films. Often films banned or cut in Ontario are shown uncut in Quebec. The Border Act enables border officials to seize materials of "an immoral or indecent character."

This clause allows law enforcers to decide what is or isn't obscene. And a good deal of what they do find obscene is literature aimed at the gay community. *The Joy of Sex*, a sex manual for heterosexuals, is freely shipped into Canada, but *The Joy of Gay Sex*, has been denied entry on several occasions.

Last June, Justice Minister Crosbie introduced Bill C-114, which called for outlawing "any visual matter showing vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse, ejaculation, sexually violent behaviour, bestiality, incest, necrophilia, masturbation or other sexual activity." The legislation died, but the bill, or a modified version, will likely be reintroduced.

Bill C-114 attempts to legislate morality, and that's something that can't be done. The obscenity of any matter lies in its effect on

the mind of the viewer or reader.

Censorship takes away the freedom of the individual to read what she or he chooses; on the other hand if pornography harms and degrades women, should it be allowed?

Some studies show that an increase in violent pornography corresponds with an increase in violence against women, but so far there is no hard evidence that violent (or non-violent) pornography is directly linked to rape. Furthermore, to dwell on the amount of violence in pornography is to avoid the crux of the issue; that is, the sexist nature of pornography.

In our society sexism is widespread, it's reflected in pornographic films and magazines as well as fashion magazines and advertisements. Sexism is also a part of

most organized religions as well as an economic system that places a higher value on men's work than on women's.

You can no more ban sexism than you can regulate sexual fantasies.

To eradicate sexist pornography, women must work to produce permanent and radical changes in the status quo. For there to be deep and permanent changes in the economic and social conditions that lead to sexist pornography, change must come from the bottom up, not the top down. Feminists cannot rely on the state to deal with sexist pornography because law makers and law enforcers do not share the same goals as feminists.

As well, women who object to pornography in their community can write articles or letters to

We also need more cultural products that reflect an alternative aesthetic vision. Women can pressure the government to subsidize feminist books, films and plays as well as feminist bookstores and theatres. Alternative magazines should be distributed more widely. As it stands now they are only found in alternative bookstores in large cities. Here too the government could subsid-

ize the costs of distribution. For there to be a truly cultural democracy women must be seen and heard more often.

newspapers. Women can let their views about pornography be known to retailers who stock pornographic magazines or to theatre owners who show exploitive films. Boycotts are often effective measures as are demonstrations against sexist spectacles

What can we do for you?

By ALISON BREWIN

What can Patchwork do for you?

Well, first off, do you know what Patchwork is? You've probably heard that it's some kind of women's group or feminist organization or some such thing. Patchwork is a women's resource centre — the only one in Halifax and it is located right here on campus. Though active in the Halifax community at large, there are many things that Patchwork can do for students and staff at Dalhousie, but it depends on what you are looking for.

If you are looking for:

- 1) A book about women and health, politics, literature, feminist theory, international development, family, sexuality, gay/lesbian issues, psychology, sociology, history, the arts or miscellaneous women's issues.
- 2) Information on different women's groups in Halifax, such as The Black Women's Congress, Association for Women's Residential Facilities, Canadian Federation of University Women, Women's Employment Outreach, Mediawatch, Metro Birthing Organization, Newsletter for Christian Feminists, Voice of Women and many others.

3) You want to read a women's journal that has academic and non-academic information from around Canada and the world, such as *Atlantis Signs*, *Breaking the Silence*, *Pandora*, *Communique*, *Femmes D'Action*, *Off Our Backs*, *Broadside* and more.

4) You are interested in getting involved in a community outside the Dalhousie community.

5) You are interested in starting a women's support group or a men's anti-sexism group.

6) You want to learn about women's issues and feminism but you're scared to death of feminist rhetoric.

7) You want to learn skills such as public relations, administration facilitation, fund-raising etc. and you want to be active while you learn.

8) You want to become an active and responsible member of the Patchwork collective.

... then Patchwork can answer your needs. Patchwork is run by a collective of young women who would like to play an active role in ending the sexism that still exists in our society.

Patchwork: Community Women's Resource Centre, 1247 Seymour St. (in the basement) 424-2526.



Super sexploitation at a steal

The "executive" of the *Gazette* received an interesting invitation in the mail the other day. Yes, for only \$155, we too can enroll our secretary in the "Super Secretary Seminar" scheduled to appear March 24 in Halifax.

The "Super Secretary Seminar" is boasted as a "one day professional development seminar" for female office workers. The seminar trains women to create a stress-free winning team, manage their time under pressure, enhance their professional image and go home each day feeling great.

The seminar leader is Paul A. Douglas, Ph.D. Although he's had not training in typing skills, he can, he says "hold your attention every minute of the day." Lucky secretaries will feel at ease with Douglas, since he is "people oriented and communicates with warmth, wit and enthusiasm."

Designed to provide secretaries "with tools and knowledge they need to be more valuable to their boss," the "Super Secretary

Seminar' has attracted more than 30,000 lucky women who type for a living. A few women have attended the P.A. Douglas and Associates annual administrative assistants conference, where, for just \$895, they have learned, grown and reflected on their careers.

If the *Gazette* decided to send our "secretary" (oh, if only we had one), we would join the ranks of other big-time corporations who enroll their female staff. General Motors, Mattel Toys, Ford, IBM, Rothman's Sears and Coca-Cola are a few examples of multinational companies who care enough for their women workers to give them a day off for the super secretaries' course. Chartered bands and the media are big P.A. Douglas customers the brochure lists the Bank of Montreal, the Bank of Canada, Barclay's Bank, the CBC, NBC and CTV as a sample of the "more than 25,000 organizations that have sponsored their secretaries.

Since we don't have a secretary, the *Gazette* would like to make a few practical suggestions for Mr. Douglas. Like most major corporations we do have editors and business managers and we would like to attend a seminar designed for bosses and middle-management flunkies.

Douglas and Associates could charge \$1555 for a proposed seminar for the big-wigs called "Executives Exploitativeness: Learn How to get Blood from Human Beings". Topics that could be covered include how to dress for that mean look, how to pressure your secretary to buy flowers and pick up your laundry; how to hide your profits and deny wage increases; how to create a stress-ridden office environment and cranky capitalism — using sexism to further your economic gain.

Boy, we can't wait to get the new brochure in the mail. It will just brighten up our day.

— by Lois Corbett

