

"Stripped to the Essentials"
(BBC Radio 4 - 13/2/86)

Partial Transcript

The 1959 O.P. Act has not enabled more ^{here} extreme pornography as Mary Whitehouse wrongfully asserts.

Superintendent Ian Donaldson - circulation of 300,000 per month of one magazine, - puts the turnover at one billion pounds per year, - absurd exaggeration but even if correct, so what? what does it show? that there is a great demand for this type of material - and why shouldn't there be?

Rip-off merchants (who sent copies of "house and Hound")

"One ~~century's~~ century's pornography is another 8S recommended reading".

"How the law responds to clearly distasteful material" - Presenter Jenni Mills

"obscen is an inducement of actions" "case law" (Mary Whitehouse) - very little exempt except child pornography.

"Offensive to reasonable people" (Williams) - unacceptable

"lurid displays" - presenter Jenni Mills.

"Causes social harm", "can trigger sexual crime".

Over the past decade has the picture become at all clearer?

GEORGE GASKELL - lecturer in social psychology LSE. "Evidence for a direct causal link has not been found". Carefully selected individuals in the laboratory - not told the purpose of the experiment and of their being there - what nonsense! Isn't it all rather unreal?"

"PRESENTER: "So how firm can we be in any ~~any~~ conclusions that we draw generally about possible links between pornography and sexual crime or pornography and anti-social behaviour?"

GEORGE GASKELL: "I don't think we can be very firm at all. I think the prudent conclusion would be that the weight of evidence suggests that there may be some links but we really don't know whether in the first place these are causal links and we, I really don't think we can come to any firm conclusions concerning particular

types of pornography, particular types of people and particular types of crime. If people stood up in Parliament and said there is a direct causal link, I think they would be misleading the public."

PRESENTER: If a sexual attacker has a stack of 'dirty' magazines in his wardrobe, it could be a symptom of, rather than a trigger for his activities."

Decrease in sexual offences in Denmark after legalisation. "Rape" remained constant. Decrease in child molestation. It had to be a real decrease. (in 1967 & into 1974) What about those in this country who claim that there is harm done by making pornography available?)Presenter.

Dr. Berl Kutchinsky

"I would say that this traditional view of pornography has not been borne out by solid facts especially the facts that are available from studies of criminal offences. The most important conclusion is that the availability of pornography did not influence the commission of sexual offences in such a way that it increased. I mean this is the main reason for not criminalising pornography. The secondary conclusion is, of course, that it is likely that it, actually, in certain types of offences, had the opposite effect, that it led to a decrease, because it is likely and it is also shown in other studies, that child molesters can use pornography as a substitute to the sexual satisfaction that they get from contacting children. So this is a substitution theory, which remains a theory of course, as it hasn't been proved.

Presenter: Would you come out and say positively that pornography is not dangerous, or are you simply saying 'case not proven'.

"I would say that after so many years of availability of pornography in Denmark, it has been proved that pornography is not dangerous to the Danish Society or to Danish individuals. I don't think there is such a great difference between Denmark and the U.K. that wouldn't apply there also."

George Gaskell: But we have Kutchinsky's finding, his research, I think of high quality, and he was assiduous in trying to eliminate competing and compounding explanation for his finding, so I think it's another of these unanswered questions just as the experimental literature itself cannot be seen to be conclusive. Neither, I think, can Kutchinsky's research."

Mary Whitehouse: Ultimate proof in these kind of fields is an impossibility. You

can't prove that sort of thing. You can only use what we've all got. Our common-sense. Our understanding of human nature. And the evidence. I mean if you constantly get cases coming up where pornography is seen to be involved, it's commonsensical to assume that it has some link, and I would suggest this, that the risk is so great to particular children and to particular men even as well as women, that to wait on one side until you can prove in some kind of academic fashion, is to do a terrible disservice to those who are at risk. So I don't go with all that 'proving' business. Let's get back to our common-sense and the way, what we understand about the way people do behave."

According to recent surveys 75% of people in this country now believe that pornography can trigger sexual crime and that view has strengthened by over 10% in the last 5 years.

Geoffrey Robertson - some of the worst examples of the degradation of women