

# "Persons Against Repression Against Persons"

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On Saturday, 14 May, as part of their two-week campaign against pornography, a preposterous, but dangerous group of fanatical feminists, parading under the tired, old banner slogan, "Pornography is Violence Against Women", organised a series of bonfires in public places when "the stuff will be ceremoniously destroyed . . . accompanied by singing, dancing, celebrations, music, etc for women and children". The next day they held candlelight vigils "in remembrance of all the women who have suffered from the brutality of men — to make the connection between pornography and male violence". Their suggestions for action between 17 and 20 May included "identification and public embarrassment of men using these (sex) establishments e.g. taking their photographs, etc" and, most lunatic of all, since 24 May was the international women's day of action for peace, the organisers suggested that their supporters should get involved in "putting forward the connection between male violence and the nuclear threat"!

Poor old porn! What has it done to deserve such a reputation? The answer is, of course, nothing at all. It really is high time that the ludicrous assertions made about it by the absurdly named "Women Against Violence Against Women" organisation and other misguided militant feminist groups were exposed for the unmitigated rubbish they undoubtedly are. Over the years, publication after publication, thesis after thesis, investigation after investigation about sexually explicit material — or "pornography" if you will — has drawn the same central conclusion, which is that basically it is harmless and should therefore be freely available to those consenting adults who desire it. Instead of acting on these sensible and rational findings, successive British Governments have not only chosen to ignore them, unlike virtually all other countries of the "free" Western World, to which the United Kingdom almost jokingly nowadays claims to belong, but have paid ever more heed to the "repressionists" and have consistently actually *increased* our censorship legislation.

The "repressionists" once largely comprised of religious groups, as epitomised by the Nationwide Festival of Light (now rejoicing in the equally inappropriate new name of "Care Campaigns"), by Mary Whitehouse of course, and by the Unification Church—the Moanies, the Meanies and the Moonies! —each peddling their own particular brand of moral fascism. Mrs Whitehouse then seized upon the spiffing idea of hitching her depressing band of pilgrims on to the emotively charged child-porn band-

wagon and initiating a carefully orchestrated campaign against a nigh on mythical deluge of such material, which was supposed to be flooding this country from abroad. Having successfully incited the necessary amount of wild hysteria, she managed to persuade a gullible Member of Parliament, Cyril Townsend, to bring in a totally unnecessary private member's Bill which simply duplicated perfectly adequate legislation already on the Statute Book.

Then the "law and order" lobby muscled in on the act with their anti-libertarian, pro-Establishment brand of fascism, which contended that the "permissive society", and pornography in particular, was responsible for the rise in crime in this country. This point of view was colourfully aired in an absurd maiden speech in the House of Lords on 24 March 1982 by Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, when he said that imported "pornography" was to blame for the rise in crime among young people in this country and "quite obviously traceable to the glossy imports which come into this country disguised as Danish bacon or Dutch tomatoes, in very large quantities and which percolate through various shops to find its way into the hands of young people, with the inevitable result which we see increasing every day". This was an extraordinary deduction for someone to make in so high a legal office, since in the crime statistics for 1981, which had just then been published, whereas there was a dramatic increase in all other areas of criminal activity, the only categories which had actually *decreased* were homicide and sexual offences! Furthermore, in both Denmark and Holland, the countries of origin of this supposedly crime-inciting material, and where it had been freely and legally available for many years previously, crime figures generally had not shown anything like the increase we had experienced here.

I suppose it was inevitable that it would not be long before an otherwise very worthy body like the Women's Movement, would tumble to the idea of drumming up some cheap, emotive publicity for their aspirations by citing "pornography" as the root cause of basic inequality in women's rights — and think how much more startlingly effective that publicity would be if it could also be coupled with men's violence towards women? The very names that some of the more extreme offshoots from the movement have adopted are silly enough, but "Pornography is Violence Against Women" is as blatant an untruth as one could find, and "Women Against Violence Against Women" as sexist a slogan as any quoted in "The Naked Ape" columns of "Guardian Women", from that erstwhile excellent



newspaper, now, alas, seemingly obsessed with equal—or perhaps more accurately, unequal—rights for women. The clear message in their sexist slogan is that men—all men and, indeed, some women—are actually in *favour* of violence against women and I and many like me bitterly resent so offensive an implication.

If a campaign were to be launched for, let us say, “Men Against Murder Against Men”, its organisers would rightly be showered with ridicule. And ridicule is the appropriate counter to these feminist dictators who want to suppress the harmless pleasures of others and of which they personally do not approve. Their incitement to the sexual hatred of men is as repulsive and disturbing as incitement to racial hatred. Already their anti-men, anti-violence demonstrations have led to some ugly scenes involving them in actual “punch-ups”. They have engaged in the picketing of sex shops, which is illegal, according to a High Court case in 1976 when an injunction was granted against pickets protesting outside the private premises of a London estate agent (*Hubbard et al v Pitt et al*). They have set fire to sex shops in Leeds and, more recently, they have attempted to intimidate an eminent tutor at a North London Polytechnic into abandoning an erotic arts course there by slashing his car tyres, daubing slogans on the car’s bodywork and sending him “obscene” and threatening letters.

These are just some of the criminal tactics being used by those women who are seeking a tolerant and non-violent acceptance of their otherwise largely just, fair and equal demands. They are doing their cause immeasurable harm if they believe that they can employ the blunt-edged weapon of censorship to help achieve its aims.

In February 1979, the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, which I founded in 1976, decided to affiliate to the National Council for Civil Liberties. It seemed only right and proper that a body like the NCCL, committed, as the NCROPA is, to fighting censorship, should receive our support. Since then we have sent delegates to every NCCL annual general meeting and at each one have proposed motions in one way or another opposing censorship, usually involving reference to the Williams Report and urging the NCCL to press for urgent Government legislation to liberalise our oppressive censorship laws, to enable adults the freedom to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear.

Originally we experienced no real opposition at all and, indeed, neither did we expect to in a national forum dedicated to upholding civil liberties. In more recent years, however, opposition from some women’s rights supporters has been steadily growing and this year, on 17 April, their twisted thinking again manifested itself. Our proposed motion was as follows:

As a body committed to championing freedom of expression, the NCCL strongly condemns the present Parliament’s enactment of repressive censorship measures (e.g. the suppression of cinema clubs and sex establishments by viciously restrictive licensing laws), which curtail this freedom even further than the already existing, unacceptably draconian legislation on the Statute Book; and the NCCL further demands immediate Government action to liberalise this country’s out-moded censorship laws on the lines indicated in the NCCL’s official response to the Williams Report.

Although our motion was carried, another one, still offensively pro-censorship even though its original wording was amended, was also carried. It read thus:

This AGM deplores the production, distribution and exhibition of pornographic material, including advertising, films, video and magazines, as these are symptoms of the sexist attitudes in our society. This AGM considers that suppressing pornography will drive it further underground and will not end sexist attitudes or violence against women. This will only come about through changing society’s attitudes. We therefore endorse NCCL’s continuing work on women’s rights, including opposition to sexual harassment at work.

It was quite incomprehensible to me that many of the NCCL members and delegates apparently found no conflict in voting first of all for the NCROPA motion, which called for sweeping liberalisation of our censorship laws (the NCCL’s response to the Williams Report is almost identical to the NCROPA’s), and then also for one which “deplores” the very existence of the kind of material the NCROPA motion would, if implemented, legalise. Feminist fascism had, I fear, arrived on the NCCL scene, just as Establishment fascism had arrived on the Freedom Association’s scene somewhat earlier, another body purporting to champion freedom and the freedom of expression in its articles of principle but, in practice, dedicated to retaining this country’s hide-bound, repressive and restrictive status quo. I found the sight of the NCCL’s first steps down that same hypocritical path a sad and deeply depressing spectacle which can only surely signify the beginning of the end of this so desperately needed watch-dog organisation.

Even the Health Visitors’ Association — another almost exclusively female body, but one which should know better — has fallen for the insidious propaganda churned out by the moral and feminist fascist factions. At their AGM in Bristol on 14 May, a motion submitted by their Northern Ireland Centre proposed “. . . that the availability and distribution of pornographic material, including literature and video cassette films, be brought under effective control by means of appropriate legislation”.

In the background notes to this resolution, published in *Health Visitor* (Vol 56: 4 April 1983), the Northern Ireland Centre readily admitted that “the

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subject of sexual behaviour is still 'taboo' in Northern Ireland", and that "beyond family planning it is rarely discussed". It then went on arrogantly to assert that "Lurid porn is spurring sex crimes in Northern Ireland" and cited as its authority for this extraordinary piece of nonsense "the National Festival of Light, a charity in Great Britain supporting Christian standards in social life". A Northern Ireland women's rights campaigner, Eileen Evason, was then quoted as reporting "that porn is feeding the very things that prompt rape". I wonder if she has ever given a thought to the opposing view that porn is *not* feeding the very thing that *prevents* rape? Perhaps she should be more generous in handing out her health education material.

That "pornography" is distasteful or even causes offence to some people, whether they be men or women, is simply no justification for it to be banned. Women are no more entitled to this "right" than they are of depriving others, including other women who do not think as they do—and men—of their "rights".

In *German Philosophy and Literature*, published in 1840, the German poet and philosopher Heinrich Heine wrote: "When books are burned, in the end people too get burned". I do hope the women book-burners of 14 May will remember that. I am sure lucky Jewish survivors from the last war will. They will certainly not need to be reminded that Hitler began by public book-burning and ended by burning people in the incinerators of Auschwitz, Dachau and Belsen. Sieg Heil, Meine Damen!