

This publication, like thousands of similar ones the world over, quite unashamedly concerns itself with erotica, treating the subject informatively, pictorially and with humour. Indeed, my byline is associated with an ironic style, be it my video review column or the odd feature piece, but don't expect smiles from this piece, because I am writing it with a sneer and a sense of growing desperation.

The reason? How far are you, the reader, willing to be pushed by unjust, unasked-for restrictive legislation, which is being brought in through the back door, and created in an atmosphere of hysterical misrepresentation?

Too ambiguous? Then how would it be if the situation arose where you, wishing to buy this magazine, were told that it is no longer available because a minute, albeit dedicated, group has decided that - for your own good - the publication should be banned forever. Harsh words? True, but they also happen to represent a murky reality, which is growing progressively worse with every passing day.

The main reason for this piece is to bring your attention to the already infamous Bright's Bill for the video field, but let us remember that its

talons are already sunk into the cinematic field as well, and one must ask the question, when exactly will the target be shifted to the written word or the still photograph?

Actually, when video started, for the first couple of years there was a sort of barely tolerated honeymoon period and, at last, people who were interested in sex had the opportunity to purchase quite hard material to watch in the privacy of their own home; but those sylvan days are over. Indeed, there were many attempts to prosecute the originators of these films, but, lacking hard evidence as to how their products did deprave and corrupt otherwise perfectly sane and responsible members of society, the professional virgins were clobbered time after time and scores of cases were simply thrown out of court.

The sudden magic button these sexually retarded fanatics discovered was **The Nasties!** There is no denying that a lot of video distributors, especially in the early days, produced gory tales for the small screen which were almost as bad as practically any tale by those famed Grimm Brothers, but at least the latter possessed a patina of respectability, due to the passage of time.

However, the ostensible introduction of the Video Recording Bill to try to establish a standard, to prevent too horrific material from falling into children's hands, was soon, and not too subtly, embellished; with the result that such worthies as Sir Bernard Brain, not to mention the Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, have now come into print, pledging to curb and, hopefully, to stop the sales of R18 designated videos.

I won't even belabour the fact that R18 primarily means only soft porn material; the important fact is that for the first time since the middle ages, there is a piece of legislation pending which can affect your life and behaviour in the sanctity of your own home.

If you fear that now I'll start enumerating all the pedantic points and sub-clauses in the Bill, you may relax, because my most violent and stringent objection is to the very existence of our obscenity bill, which must be about the most outdated in Western Europe. Mind you, there is nothing new about it. In the 1920's, there was an uproar about the corrupting influence of filthy pamphlets as distributed by that arch-villain, Dr Mary Stopes - on birth control. Then, too, similar erotic cretins were wondering what would happen if such material fell into the hands of children. Going further back, Macaulay wrote, in 1831: "We

know of no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality."

My sentiments are, of course, entirely with Macaulay, but I dare to suggest that it's not the British public who are responsible for many of the absurd and anachronistic laws in our society, but the usual, small groups of fanatics, who often wield power way out of proportion to their numbers.

Naturally, these devotees have never lacked 'scientific expertise' (invariably Bible-thumpers), who'd even tell God that he'd fucked up creation by providing such obscene appendages as sexual organs.

Alan Rusbridger wrote an amazingly-amusing piece in the Guardian in 1980 describing the work of one such brilliant morale-saver. A certain Dr Hall, a professor of Psychology and Pedagogy at Clerk University, USA, 'created' a monumental work in which a full quarter of the 589-pages of the first volume was dedicated to the sin of self-abuse. Like, masturbation.

Heed this, you pagans: taking it for granted that blindness is an obvious possibility, the following other mishaps are likely to occur: "Neurasthenia,

cerebrasthenia, psychic impotence, optical cramps, purple and dry skin, clammy hands, "many digestive perversions", epilepsy, "dwarfing of the organs themselves", Basedow's Disease, stunted growth (especially in the "moral regions"), baldness, a "stooping and enfeebled gait", and eventual insanity."

It is no good merely having a giggle about the obvious idiocy of the above crap, because his counterparts, our own contemporary moral crusaders, are using it as very telling ammunition; in the same way, the same group doesn't hesitate to twist the latest contemporary statistical sampling for their own purposes.

In fact it is wryly amusing that there is a Parliamentary Group Video Inquiry publication (just in time to sway the untutored), with the lofty title of **Video Violence and Children**, which was first questioned by the Rev David Bridge of the Methodist Church Home Mission Division and Mr Adrian Speller of the Division of Social Responsibility.

Having expressed their concern over videos which depict pain and mutilation, they say: "At the same time some aspects of the present report disturb us. We understand from conversations with members of the research team

that the report was largely written before the research was completed. Even now the research has not yet been properly evaluated and may not support some of the claims being made by the report's advocates."

In scientific circles, this is called cooking the books to fit a theory. If my accusation seems harsh, it is simply because, even to the uninitiated, the quoted figure of over 40% of children watching 'nasties' seems a very telling one - just before crippling legislation is to be considered. Breaking down the figures, some rather awkward conclusions appear: according to the report, in the age group, 5-6, 37% watch nasties, a figure which grows to 44.6% in the 9-10 age group. Let's face it, it looks a dubious result in the first place, but it gets better. In the 5-6 age group, 55.8% of the parents are supposed to own video machines, which is reduced to 40.0% in the 9-10 group. Considering that it is estimated elsewhere that there are about four million machines being used, which means 20%-25% ownership, who is lying?

I don't hold any brief for horror films - I simply don't like the genre - but with all this kerfuffle about the danger we run by exposing children to them, I'd like to see some no-nonsense medical research which can prove (or disprove) the harm. Do you realise that none as yet exists? I'm very suspicious

that, the same as with pornography, we're fed pre-masticated, carefully slanted 'authoritative' conclusions, which, to me, are akin to a grocer attempting to function as a brain surgeon.

Let me quote from the 1980 publication by the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA); the writer is Dr Brian A Richards, MB, BCh:

"Pornographic material unquestionably informs (whether deliberately or otherwise is beside the point). It is known that sexual ignorance is a monumental cause of sexual problems. It may seem to many that because of the abundance of sexual material now available there can no longer be any sexual ignorance. This is an entirely fallacious standpoint. I am in a position to declare that sexual ignorance is at this stage and in this country a subject of great concern. Knowledge is minimal, experience is limited and the concept that people are now sexually knowledgeable is totally wrong. I meet repeatedly (as a daily event), in my work, the disastrous results of total sexual ignorance. This is not confined to the lower classes but is present to an alarming degree throughout all echelons of society and education."

Disregarding the fact that, like the act of bringing a child into this world, the upbringing must also be the responsibility of the parents, there are several locking devices on the market, with which one can immobilise any cassette. BUT the key must be with the parents, and not, figuratively, with an outside authority. Or don't you remember? Hitler, too, burnt books on your behalf!

The curious point is that, while all sorts of arguments have been aired against the impending Bill (let alone the one we already suffer), from the demands and ethical points of different religions to different ethnic groups, no one has as yet mentioned an even more galling fact: how about single people of all ages and both sexes whose individual freedom is being curtailed on behalf of other people's children? It's almost a moot point, but, of course, we must also include childless couples, who, nevertheless, have the right to vote.

At this moment in time, apart from the sheer impertinence of infringing on personal liberty in a somewhat amorphous manner, why don't we talk about today's reality? It was Jeremy Deedes in **The Standard**, who brought to public attention a gruesome example of authority missing the essential justice and humanity, in dealing with today's problems. He recounts two different court

cases when video dealers appeared before the same judge, were prosecuted by the same barrister and employed the same defence counsel.

"Litchfield got four months in gaol and was ordered to pay £5,000 costs. Clive Woosey was cleared of all charges. As today's issue of **Video Week** points out, however, the two were tried before different juries. And in Litchfield's case the jury contained eight women. And in Woosey's there were ten men."

Now, the punchline. They both kept the same two video titles, the reason for the prosecution.

Of course, I could have brought up any number of examples, let alone the views of the gross majority of people working in the video industry, and the only reason I haven't done so, is because it would have been reams and reams of identical feelings of frustration and fury over the inept, prejudiced and, up to a point, illegal interpretation of the shaky law. However, the heartfelt anger being voiced in the trade can be so beautifully and visually represented by the following advertisement:

[Sorry, David, can't find copy - the ad. facetiously
described war films - R.]

Let's put it this way: the name of Bowdler, among English speaking people, evokes derision, because he had the religious convictions and the intellectual audacity to believe that he could improve and enhance both Shakespeare and the Bible. With marvellous hindsight, we can recognise him as a bigoted arse-hole, but, what about our own contemporary Bowdlers? I, among millions of others, often question the righteousness and wisdom of our elected representatives, but I think it is dark days if we must also pay attention to the self-propagating, jumped-up creeps who purport to speak on our behalf. By what right?

And, talking about elected representatives, how do you dig this clause proposed by Sir Bernard Brain?

"It shall be the duty of the designated authority to satisfy themselves that, so far as possible, video works certified by the Authority, for viewing in the home, do not include anything which offends against good taste or decency, or is likely to encourage or incite crime, or lead to disorder, or to be offensive to public feeling." (my italics)

Have you ever seen a more comprehensive, carte blanche damning? And this is not the subject of a referendum, not an election platform, but sneaked

through the back door! On the strength of this suggestion (and the basic Bill is already full of this kind of ambiguity), we're supposed to say yea to an idea which could put to rest ANYTHING which is not in line with the constricted, behind-the-times and partisan moves by an anachronistic, stick-in-the-mud, dogma-ridden minority, who are supposed to be acting on YOUR behalf.

I am in the business of communication, and I love all my readers, even those who happen to be diametrically opposed to the ideas that I propound, but I insist on my right (and theirs), to be able to disagree and yet live on parallel levels, with the freedom to prove to each other who is right.

This Bill stinks. And, for that reason... would you please make your voice heard? Or would you prefer to be stoned to death for being caught at adultery? No jokes, please, this is reality in many Islamic countries, where the plethora of oil money means that the existing regimes can mete out punishments which rightly belong to the times when crusaders raped the middle east.

But this is supposed to be Britain, where one is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, and proven guilty before punishment can be considered.

So how come that we suddenly have the Napoleonic code, through which quite a few lives have been lost?

Don't just sit there, mush; back us - we're fighting on your behalf.