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The Porn Industry

What distinguishes the pornography of today is the hypocrisy with which it is defended. To the vastly lucrative industry of marketing pornographic goods of one sort or another is joined a great company of advocates clamorous in its defence. In the courts and out of them, in newspapers and in hired halls, on the air and perhaps under the water too a persuasive chorus of voices tells us that pornography is the business of nobody but the purchaser of it, is essential to the wholeness of works of art, and that its unimpeded circulation represents a triumph of human liberty over the dark forces of repression. To end all argument we are informed there are no statistics to prove it has ever done any harm. And finally to silence anyone impervious to argument a witness will step forward to say that he personally has actually benefited from it. But not of course enjoyed it: few of its defenders admit to doing that. They are concerned to strike away the chains imprisoning the human spirit or, more simply, to advance the wellbeing of man.

But even those hearty spirits who deny that pornography has any effect whatever on the minds of its readers and viewers will usually admit that it should be kept away from children. Why? Because the adults might be embarrassed if the children see what they are up to? Not these adults. The fact is that the educative effect, for good or evil, of books and films and plays on children's minds is undeniable. Yet for many people immaturity extends far beyond childhood into adult life—into middle age, and beyond. Civilized society accepts the obligation of protecting its children from influences harmful to their health. To impose reasonable safeguards for the benefit of immature adults is a far more difficult question unless they are seriously defective. But when relatively healthy people decry attempts to limit the citizen's freedom of expression they should remember that limits already exist and that the weaker members of a community deserve protection, not exploitation.

As well as being matters of public concern these deserve the attention of the medical profession, for the flourishing trade in pornography serves to distort the loving and biological expression of the sexual instinct. In so far as it succeeds in doing that it impairs the health and well-being of the people in its thrall. But, though many readers of the report issued last week by Lord Longford and his committee¹ would agree that reform is needed, the manner it should take is more debatable and not primarily a matter for the medical profession. In fact the difficulty in controlling pornography begins with defining it, for the amusingly erotic passes imper-

ceptibly through the acceptably amatory or bawdy or educational to increasingly obsessional insistence on sexual activity with pathological, violent, or political accretions. The law appears to have had some effect in stemming the flow of magazines portraying obscene violence,² even if the deterrence has been only slight. It needs examining again to see whether it can be amended at least to stop the distorted portrayal of man's instincts in the shop windows of many cities and in unsolicited advertisements sent through the post. In questions of this kind the law cannot go far beyond the limits of public opinion, but there is ample evidence that the merchants of pornography are already doing precisely that. It is time the law caught up with them.

Among the more harmful myths of our time are, firstly, that drugs such as cannabis and LSD expand the mind, and, secondly, that pornography extends man's freedom. Both offer debased substitutes for the real thing. Yet both have their fashionable advocates in many walks of life. The medical profession is uniquely qualified to recognize the ill health that may follow the distortion of man's instinctual drives whether by pornography or in other ways. A doctor's special responsibility is to distinguish the healthy from the unhealthy and to teach the facts. And though he must be understandably sensitive about interfering in moral problems he should not shrink from giving guidance on the medical and biological components of them where people's health is concerned, for he can do much to help parents and teachers educate children on the healthy development and expression of human instincts.

¹ *The Longford Report on Pornography*. London, Coronet Books/Hodder Paperbacks Ltd, 60p net.

² *British Medical Journal*, 1954, 2, 1038 and 1042.

Stagnation of Bile

Cholestasis is defined as stagnation of bile within the intrahepatic and extrahepatic biliary passages (extrahepatic cholestasis), or the intrahepatic passages alone (intrahepatic cholestasis).¹ Certain pathological changes are common to both.

Under the electron microscope biliary canaliculi are seen to be dilated and their microvilli are blunted. Under the light microscope the canaliculi contain amorphous bilirubin-