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## Scotching the Sex Haters

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**A new journal, "Uncensored", has recently been launched by the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society. It is planned to be twice yearly and to cover the whole field of the campaign against censorship. In this article from the first issue. Francis Bennion, a prominent human rights campaigner and a member of the Executive Committee of the DLAS, calls for a Festival of Delight. He argues that it is necessary to move into the offensive in attacking sex-haters. so often emanating from religious quarters.**

The Scotsman stood on my desk, wearing a kilt of tartan unknown to any clan. The Home Office official pressed a button. The front of the kilt was pushed up by an enormous erect penis. "That's what we want to stop", the Home Office man said. "No bloody public good in *that*."

I was the assistant draftsman of R. A. Butler's "liberal" Obscene Publications Bill. The year was 1959, just before the short-lived era of flower-power, hippies and gentle understanding.

The 1959 Act, which is still in force, was not all that liberal. It gave statutory effect to a common law rule laid down by the 1868 case of *R v. Hicklin*. This said that a book, picture or other object was "obscene" if it was likely to deprave and corrupt those unfortunate enough to come into contact with it. At no time has anybody really known what this resounding phrase means. The present-day judge, Lord Salmon, is at one extreme in saying that it covers anything that makes you feel randy (though naturally he put it in more dignified language). At the other end are more sensible suggestions that it betokens something so degenerate as to be likely to cause psychological harm of a lasting nature.

The truth is of course that no one has been able to prove that written or pictorial matter causes harm to anybody. In 1970 a Presidential Commission which examined the subject more thoroughly than any enquiry before or since told President Nixon that it could find no evidence that pornographic material caused harm. Nixon made a typical response. He said: "The Commission on Pornography and Obscenity has performed a disservice and I totally reject its Report."

Nixon used a subtle argument to support his position. No one, he said would deny that great art uplifts. Who could say that Shakespeare had not influenced mankind for the better? If good art uplifts then bad art must debase. Like so much in this field, it is a non sequitur. We all know that the tendency of anything bad is to get rejected. People see through it.

Still, the 1959 Act gave us one clear advance. It provided the "public good" defence. Even though an article is found by a jury to be so obscene as to be likely to deprave and corrupt it may nevertheless escape conviction if the jury are convinced that it is for the public good to publish it. The jury is not given a free hand. As always, Auntie is peering over its shoulder. The jury can only acquit if publication is justified in the interests of science, literature, art or learning, or of other objects of general concern. The House of Lords has just confirmed, in the celebrated Jordan case, that this does not permit the whole statute to be circumvented by experts testifying that all pornography is for the public good because it provides outlets for the frustrated.

As you might expect from the title of the journal *Uncensored*, those behind it think the public good requires *all* material to be freely available without interference from busybodies. Indeed we require all

aspects of sexuality to be released from prudish inhibitions. Require is a strong word, but nothing less meets the case.

## **Festival of Delight**

It is time we stopped playing around with this issue, and stopped being apologetic. The truth is that the sex-haters have caused, and are still causing, immense harm. Once a society has satisfied the most pressing requirement of human beings, namely adequate nutrition, sexual fulfilment assumes the dominant position. Our children are still being armoured from birth by unwitting parents. Sex suppression rules, and mankind will not know happiness until its rule has ended. Sex-haters are led by so-called Christians, who have assumed postures their founder would be likely to disown if he knew of them. His followers need to be reminded of what that splendid pioneer Van de Velde said in his epoch-making book *Ideal Marriage*: "there is too much suffering endured which might well be avoided, too much joy untasted which could enhance life's worth." Even for those who unwisely insist that sexual fulfilment outside marriage is immoral there is need to ponder on Paul Goodman's words in his *Little Prayers and Finite Experiences*:

“ . . . it is at peril that I resist what attracts me, however dangerous, unavailable, inappropriate or perverse I may judge it to be. I must love it and suffer rather than be bored and caged as the horizon closes in. I cannot choose my paradise to be convenient, moral or prudent.”

Blake had much the same idea: "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires."

For those who reject orthodox religious belief.....

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### *The Sex Haters*

.....(and they are the majority) it is insufferable to be subjected to a censorship tailored by religious adherents. It contravenes freedom of thought-a freedom protected by article 9 of the Council of Europe's convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which this country signed back in 1950. We do not need merely to resist the putting down of sex. We need to go over to the offensive. The enemies are plain: the so-called Responsible Society, the so-called Nationwide Festival of Light, and many others of that ilk. Let's create a Worldwide Festival of Delight, and rout the sex-haters and sex-suppressors. It will need all our effort though. The pendulum is strongly swinging back into the age of inhibition.

Copies of "Uncensored" (20p for one issue) may be obtained from DLAS, 1 Brewer Street, London W1R 4AS.