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ATTACK ON RESTRICTIVE ATTITUDES TO SEX

"Our society is adopting an unhealthy restrictive attitude to natural sexuality. It pays the penalty in marriage breakdown, violent sexual crime, psychiatric illness and numerous other ways." This warning was given by Francis Bennion, addressing the Brighton and Hove Humanist Group on 3 September. Mr Bennion, a member of the Executive Committee of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society (DLAS), was speaking on "Sex, Violence and Censorship-the limits of permissiveness."

Mr Bennion criticised the way the Whitehouse view of life has gained an ascendancy. "Mrs Whitehouse complains to the BBC about the bad language used in *Gotcha*, whereupon the BBC obediently cancel a repeat showing of the play. *The Times* refused to publish a letter of protest from DLAS, pointing out that dramatic treatment of a sociological problem must show people as they really are. Mrs Whitehouse is a prude who seeks to fling a veil over the unpleasant things of life. There is a growing army of people like her."

Mr Bennion attacked local manifestations of this growing intolerance. "The police raid sex shops in Brighton and take away their stock. These shops meet a genuine public demand, and this should be recognised. They deserve the protection of the law. Another public demand is for a beach where people can sunbathe in the nude. This is healthy in every way, as those who know the naturist beaches of Europe can testify. Puritanical councillors refuse permission.

Describing the growing power of moral censors, Mr Bennion said that our society denied any legitimate outlet to the sexual drives of many of its citizens, particularly young unmarried males. "This is asking for trouble, and we get trouble. We get hooliganism, vandalism, rape and assault. Sexuality denied and repressed is behind many of these outrages. We need a new outlook on the natural, healthy sexual instincts of mankind: less censorious, more welcoming, more understanding."