

Opinion

33203 Grand River/Farmington, MI 48024 Bob Sklar editor / 477-5450

14A(F)

O&F Thursday, June 20, 1989

Hard-core porn

Guard against sale to minors

SMUT HAS no place on our bookshelf.

But the First Amendment protects pornography, unless community standards determine it to be obscene.

So it's unlikely the Farmington Hills Police Department will find a jury willing to prevent the sale of pornography to adults. Prior restraint isn't the answer when adult patrons are involved.

The law enforcement tactic of using a 15-year-old undercover patron is debatable. But the police are on target in cracking down on the sale of the hard-core stuff to minors. State law specifically prohibits selling obscene materials to them.

There's a distinction between selling sexually explicit pornography to adults and selling it to minors — even the police acknowledge that.

That's why they've charged a party store owner, accused of selling it to a 15-year-old undercover patron in a June 20 sting, not only with violating state obscenity laws but also distributing obscene materials to children.

The sting — the first of a series of undercover operations aimed at pornography — underscores that the police are poised to prosecute store owners who sell adult entertainment magazines to minors.

THE CRACKDOWN stems from today's no-holds-barred world of adult entertainment. The notion that viewing porn inspires rape isn't very convincing because virtually every adult has at some time seen the bare facts. Rape is still an aberration, not the norm.

But we think anyone convicted of selling the hard-core stuff to kids should be prosecuted to the fullest — a substantial fine and possible jail time for first-time offenders and the maximum fine and some jail time for repeat offenders. Asking for proof of age can't be that much of a burden.

AIDS

Business must face the disease

IN A SOCIETY comfortable only with solutions solved in half-hour TV melodramas and 30 second sound bites, the concept of combating a disease with no cure in sight is nearly unimaginable to most Americans.

But dealing with AIDS will be the challenge of American business at least into the next century. A recent survey of Detroit area businesses demonstrate that this segment of society is anything but ready for the challenge.

Most companies participating, 94 percent, in the Crains Detroit Business survey admit having no AIDS policy on the books. Only 29 percent of responding companies would allow workers displaying symptoms to remain on the job.

These demonstrably naive attitudes, if continued, spell disaster for American business. And because of the fragile nature of business in metro Detroit, our market could be especially vulnerable.

NOT ONLY can't it afford the lawsuits wrought by an uneducated leadership, it can hardly afford to lose valuable employees because they, too, went without the proper education.

Business just can't expect to sit and wait for a miracle cure. It's not on the horizon. It must take action.

In the next five years many of those undiagnosed will see their cases become active. AIDS does have a deceptively long incubation period, leaving many with a false sense of security.

Many of those people whose AIDS will become active in the near term are those who up to this time have been considered outside the high risk groups — the heterosexual community.

Recent statistics show that the spread of AIDS is much more prolific than imagined, even by the experts.

Government officials project that up to 480,000 persons in the United States will be infected by 1991. Previous estimates stood at from 185,000 to 320,000, as reported by the Center for Disease Control.

Much of that underreporting exists in the heterosexual community, which seems to nearly have forgotten that the epidemic exists.

Metro Detroit certainly has its share of homo-

What grinds us is that even the hardest of the hard-core can be found on aisle magazine racks, within ready view of impressionable teenagers.

Five stores in Farmington Hills sell magazines that police believe are hard-core by any definition. Since some of the slickest, most eye-popping publications sell for upwards of \$20, it's easy for a store owner hungry for a sale to look the other way at a patron's age.

Given such fare is moving from behind the counter to the browsing areas in more and more stores, it's reasonable to assume community tolerance is up or community awareness is down — it's not clear which.

THE SERIES of undercover stings isn't a matter of the police having nothing better to do. They're triggered by the community — in this case, the Farmington Hills Police Department's citizens crime prevention advisory committee.

So while we respect free enterprise, we also think the community sets the tone for local merchandise.

If the people of Farmington Hills and Farmington don't want pornography sold locally, it's their right to boycott merchants who sell it. The marketplace does talk.

Meanwhile, parents who clutter the den magazine rack with action-packed centerfolds are role models worth ignoring, not emulating.

The police, trying to enforce subjective obscenity laws, shouldn't have to shoulder the pornography fight alone in Farmington Hills.

The citizens crime prevention advisory committee said the June 20 sting was intended to make the community aware of just how available adult entertainment magazines, which leave nothing to the imagination, are.

If nothing else, we hope the sting has pricked the community's conscience.

Government officials project that up to 480,000 persons in the U.S. will be infected by 1991.

sexuals and more than its share of intravenous drug-users, high-risk people for sure.

But this is a disease that is an equal opportunity employer. Any of us could be at risk if we aren't educated properly. And the survey certainly shows that many in the business community are uneducated.

More and more businesses will soon find themselves with employee next to employee — one with AIDS, one without.

COMPANIES must act now to establish policies so the rights of the AIDS-infected employee are protected.

To make it easier for all employees to work in this environment, education is a key. And that education must include all employees, from the maintenance crew to the CEO. Everyone must have a clear understanding of what AIDS really is and how it is and isn't transmitted.

The Crains survey demonstrated that many executives polled didn't have a clear understanding of the disease.

Many believe the fear of AIDS has been blown out of proportion.

Nearly half of those surveyed feared a negative public relations image if they have an AIDS-infected employee. Most were either unsure or definitely opposed to retaining such employees.

The disturbing results of the survey is the number of executives who are unsure of how they would handle AIDS in the workplace. Most agree such a case would cause great distress to other employees, but beyond that, they just aren't sure.

It is certainly true that the American business psyche has inhibited the typical executive from dealing with social problems at the workplace. For years the advice has been to make personnel decisions on a business basis and leave personal problems to other agencies.

But AIDS is a social crisis that just won't allow for this head-in-the-sand attitude.

for people of all nations. Sadly, the road to democracy is paved with sacrifice. Recent events have not only proved that point but brought it into our own living rooms. This year, while on our way to a pleasant holiday in the sun, let us pause for a moment to remember those who have been willing to make that sacrifice — from our nation's founders to those, from other nations and other times, who have followed in their footsteps.

Don't take freedom for granted

THIS July 4, some of us will go to the beach, others to parades, others to a cookout or ballgame. That is as it should be.

But this year, give a thought to those brave people, in China and elsewhere, still struggling to achieve the kind of freedom we often take for granted.

Democracy, the right to self-government, is an inalienable right, not just for we Americans but



Reaching out

If one thing characterized the Great Flood of 1989, it was the camaraderie among neighbors in Farmington and Farmington Hills, no matter how much damage a home sustained June 21. People reached out to help sop up water, check sump pumps, scrape away crud, rescue heirlooms and share a tear —

the health threat posed by floodwater notwithstanding. "Friends came on," said Nova Woods Condominiums resident Carl Hassel. In times of need, caring neighbors really do make a difference.

RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Anti-smut crusaders

wound a free society

I, FOR ONE, refuse to have my First Amendment rights trampled because some parent is too lazy to watch out for his kids.

Censorship, the weapon of the weak and unsure, often is touted as a socially necessary weapon. For those of us who believe free speech is more important than stopping Susie and Johnny from reading naughty magazines, the First Amendment is all we've got with which to fight back.

While some governments use tanks to crush ideas, others use morality. The object is the same — preservation of the status quo through control of ideas.

And if censorship is no good in China, it sure is back in no good in this country.

The most recent example is the holy war being lead by Farmington Hills police chief William Dwyer. His troops have hit the streets in an ideological war against, of all things, pornography.

Urged on by the erstwhives from the local Citizens Crime Advisory Committee, the anti-smut ghostbusters recently arrested a party store owner for selling what Dwyer has judged to be pornography. The hit was made after the police talked a 15-year-old son of a police officer into buying a magazine.

NOW THAT really is sick — using a kid to do your dirty work.

Dwyer feels justified in this little act of exploitation because "we aren't going to tolerate this kind of trash in Farmington Hills."

Tough talk is cheap, chief, cheaper than the garbage you're trying to keep off the shelves.

His allies from the advisory committee lead up with some pretty faulty logic in their battle to uphold the standards and morals of Farmington Hills, as committee member Betty Nicolay portrays it.

Jim Dorrell put his concern this way:

"If you are acquainted enough with this stuff, you begin to fantasize and you begin to do these things," he says.

Show of hands, please. Wrong, Mr. Dorrell. Most everyone in this country has had a peek, even a long look. And most of us haven't turned out to be sexual perverts.

The committee's logic dictates hiding the material out of youthful eyesight.

Nicolay: "The thing that bothered all of us was that it wasn't undercover."

But putting the material under the counter will solve nothing.

THE REAL problems rest elsewhere.

• This material sells because a



Steve Barnaby

very profitable market exists and in this country, the bottom line dictates social standards. Until we change the standard by which we measure society, pornography will continue as a booming market.

• Until concerned parents become more willing to monitor their children's source of income and spending habits, our youth will continue to buy pornographic magazines and drugs and junk food and . . .

Dwyer noted that some of the material garnered in the 38-store taxpayer spending spree costs as much as \$40, pretty easy pickings for children whose parents let them earn and spend at will.

Parents must spend more time with their children, influencing them by example — not by police state coercion.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor of the 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Yes, governor

backs effort

To the editor:

I have been belatedly made aware of your June 1 article concerning my visit with numerous health care and substance abuse professionals in the Detroit/Oakland county area.

You certainly were correct in your comment that the consensus of those whom my wife and I met with that day was that we must concentrate our efforts upon prevention of drug and substance abuse — both from a humanitarian and from a cost-effective standpoint.

I must take issue, however, with any implications contained within your article that Gov. Blanchard has been anything less than totally supportive of my efforts.

It is true that the time I spoke at Maple Grove, I had no staff — but I had not yet formally taken office. My wife was traveling with me, not as a temporary secretary, but as a health professional who is interested and challenged by the issue, particularly as they impact upon pregnant women, newborns and young children.

I formally took office on June 15, 1989. My secretary on staff, and I will, as necessary, build an appropriate staff — but not a bureaucracy. The message I was attempting to

deliver to the audience at Maple Grove was simply the existing shortage of dollars at both the national and state level for all of the important prevention and treatment programs that we would like to implement.

We must not only conserve our resources but reallocate them as we establish new priorities.

I thank you for your reporting and commentary upon these important issues, and appreciate the "focus" that you have given to the creation of intelligent and effective substance abuse policies and strategies for drug eradication.

Donald L. Reising, director, Michigan drug agencies

Police given

vote of thanks

To the editor:

The Farmington Hills police are to be commended for their June 10 service to the patients of Women's Center in Farmington Hills.

We appreciate the prompt response, the care in escorting patients, the security within the building. The (pro-life) picketing was kept orderly.

Marysue E. Long, Michigan Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights Farmington Hills

Ideas posed

in good faith

To the editor:

The suggestions offered by Lorne Leon, a parent and resident of the Farmington School district, at the June 6 school board meeting with respect to improving school-community communications were, in my opinion, made in good faith and should be given good faith consideration by the board.

The parents and community would be well-served by his proposals to cablecast board meetings, to keep copies of salient school documents at the Farmington Library, and to have periodic evening office hours for school administrators.

Communication between the schools and community might also be enhanced by making all of the district's School/Community Forum meetings open to the public and by posting in the board room an extra copy of the consent agenda and the previous meeting's minutes.

I agree with the Observer's June 15 editorial on this subject and feel Mr. Leon's ideas should be given legitimate consideration by the Farmington School Board.

Richard I. DeVries, Farmington Hills

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor
Judith Donner Berne assistant managing editor
Dick Itham general manager
Richard Brady director of advertising
Fred Wright director of circulation

Suburban Communications Corp.
Phillip Power chairman of the board
Richard Agninan president