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PORNOGRAPHY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

When the Commission on International Women's Year, funded by 5 million federal tax dollars, held its famous boondoggle in Houston on November 18-21, 1977, it passed 25 resolutions on issues which were deemed of importance to women by Chairman Bella Abzug and her feminist friends who stage-managed that media event. Pornography was NOT one of the 25; the feminists did not identify it as a "woman's issue."

Most feminists still dodge this issue, but there are beginning to be some cracks in their formerly united front of silence. The feminist-dominated Illinois Commission on the Status of Women has been holding forums on pornography at which academicians and researchers have presented new evidence of the connection between the $7 billion porn business and violence against women.

Daniel Linz, psychologist at the University of Wisconsin, presented his recent research which shows that exposure to violent pornography can lead to antisocial attitudes and behavior. He said it can increase the viewer's acceptance of the rape myth (that women enjoy rape), increase the willingness of a man to say that he would commit a rape, decrease sympathy for a rape victim, and increase violent behavior against women.

Edward Donnerstein at the University of Wisconsin measured desensitization to filmed violence against women. In his experiments, men were shown commercially-released, feature-length R-rated movies which depict violence against women. By the fifth day, the men perceived the films to be significantly less violent and less degrading to women. The men were then shown a video of a rape trial, and they were significantly less sympathetic to the victim.

Andra Gomberg, attorney and spokesman for Feminists Against Pornographic Propaganda, reported that her group believes that there is a definite link between pornography and violence, and that society has the responsibility to take action. She showed pornographic pictures from magazines and movie advertisements which glamorize violence against women, battering, bondage, child molestation, rape, and even murder.

Dr. Pauline Bart, sociologist of the Department of Sociology and Psychiatry at the University of Illinois (Chicago), stated that pornography is "pro-rape propaganda." She pointed out that the basic premise of advertising is that what you see or hear affects what you do; therefore, when violent sex is portrayed as enjoyable to women, it promotes assaults.

Dr. Bart is one of the many modern researchers who repudiate the notion that pornography is harmless or even beneficial in enabling men to drain off harmful sexual desires. She said pornography socializes men to believe that women enjoy pain, brutalization, and are sexually insatiable; and that sets the stage for the physical and mental abuse of women.

Dr. Bart's research shows that 35% of females believe that some of the recent increase in the rate of rape can be attributed to pornography, whereas only 16% of men think so. She cited a study by Diana Russell of women in the San Francisco area: 10% of the women questioned said a husband or boyfriend had asked her to perform acts he had seen in pornographic films.

Dr. Bart reported that modern research confirms a correlation between pornography and violence against women in the same way that studies show a correlation between smoking and lung cancer. There may be no proof positive that smoking causes a particular lung cancer, but the smoking-cancer correlation is beyond dispute; and so is the porn connection.

Joan Cmar, director of a shelter for battered women in Chicago called the Greenhouse, stated from her experience that pornography trains males "to see women as objects and less than human; therefore, no act of violence is too horrible to perform on a woman."

She described how pornography "teaches men to believe what they have seen in pornographic images: women love pain, they enjoy being degraded and tortured. They have no worth other than to satisfy men's wants."

She showed a typical ad in major Chicago newspapers depicting a woman in bikini underwear, on her knees, tethered to a wall, with the headline "she loved to be scared." The movie was not playing at porno houses, but in suburban neighborhood theaters.

Pornography is not a "victimless crime" and it is an insult to our Constitution to allow the profiteers of pro-rape propaganda to wrap themselves in the First Amendment.