Censorship and Social Control

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Preface

This issue of *The Raven* originally set out to try to identify, discuss and comment on some of the ways in which the governments of the nation states aim to establish and maintain their control over the people who happen to live within their territorial boundaries. It was soon apparent that taking a world view on a topic that penetrates a significant part of the fabric of society was well beyond our capabilities and we have limited our coverage to Britain, sometimes in comparison with its near cultural neighbours in Europe and the US. Censorship is just one of the ways in which the state affects the dissemination of information to the people and we have tried also to look at some of the other techniques of social control which are becoming more important in a parliamentary democracy. Perhaps we should have called this issue *Social Control including Censorship*, but that doesn't scan nearly as well.

Information is power and our story would be incomplete if we did not give space equally to the ways in which the state is now able to obtain such detailed information on all of its subjects, a process greatly aided by modern developments in information technology.

The end result is that we can offer no more than a few snapshots of what is a very complex picture in the hope that others will be stimulated to explore in more detail these non-economic aspects of our political society, as it is today, when seen through mainly anarchist spectacles.

With so many contributors, not all of whom are anarchists, and such a wide range of contributions, this editor is defaulting on his obligation to introduce them individually to the reader. They are, I am sure, able to speak for themselves far more effectively.

Editorial

Political, religious and sexual censorship as a way for the state to control its populace is a commonplace throughout the world, although in Britain, the rest of Western Europe and the US it now has only a minor role in political society. In Britain it has apparently been largely abolished but still persists in various guises and could be reintroduced at any time by a government that felt sufficiently threatened. Its relative absence should be seen as a convenient redundancy rather than part of a general liberalisation process as the state machinery continues to evolve more effective methods of social control, often so subtle that most people most of the time may be quite unaware of its presence.

Roger Scruton in his *A Dictionary of Political Thought* defines censorship as the practice of examining, restricting and prohibiting public acts, expressions of opinion and artistic performances. He identifies the following forms.

Preventive Censorship
Direct interference by the state prior to the publication of offending material and

Punitive Censorship
1. Subsequent prosecution before a court of law against obscenity, blasphemy and sedition.
2. Indirect control through responsible but autonomous bodies, e.g. churches, Press Council.
3. Indirect control through private actions for libel.
4. Self imposed censorship as in 'decision not to publish' based on expectations as to what is socially and politically acceptable.

It is Preventive Censorship in Scruton's classification that virtually disappeared from the British government's agenda in 1968 when the office of the Lord Chamberlain ceased to be responsible for the censorship of plays in the theatre. But the censorship of films and videos is very much with us although disguised as a system of classification in which a failure to obtain a certificate from the British Board of Film Classification leaves the distributors and cinema owners open to prosecution. The various forms of punitive censorship remain to inhibit a variety of activities which are deemed

subversive, being seen as in some way a threat to the authority of the state. Censorship in essence is a way of reducing choices by withholding information from all or a significant section of the population. In its more covert state it takes a variety of forms.

A question of class, a matter of numbers, a concern with age and a passing of time

Despite all protestations to the contrary, Britain is still very much a class-divided society. There is an implicit understanding that the ruling elite and the associated upper classes may have access to much politically sensitive and sexually explicit material which is considered unsuitable, even damaging, to members of 'lower classes'. There is clearly considerable concern at the moment that this limitation on the spread of informative material is threatened by its increasing availability on the Internet and ways of coping with this situation are being desperately sought by the authorities.

Allowing the dissemination of material but limiting the numbers that are likely to come in contact with it – a kind of semi-censorship – is quite common in the arts, particularly when sexual material is involved, and runs in parallel with limitation by social class which in practice amounts to much the same thing. If a film is a foreign 'art film' unlikely to be taken by mainstream distributors the censors are now inclined to be rather more lenient. Two recent examples are the Danish film *The Idiots* and the French film *Romance*. *Romance* has since been issued on video but with a significant cut and one doubts whether a video version of *The Idiots* will be issued in Britain in the near future. Examples of censorship by price occur occasionally as a minor variation of the class and numbers types. Most of these are in the category of very expensive art books which can usually contain the most sexually explicit material undisturbed. An odd example of censorship by price occurred recently with the publication of *The Irish War* by the military historian Tony Geraghty. The hardback edition encountered no problems and continues to be available, but the publisher came under pressure from the Ministry of Defence not to publish a paperback edition. The book is believed to contain some sensitive material about the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Censorship is often time-dependent in that information of public interest is suppressed for long periods, fifty years or more, when knowledge at the time might induce public outrage. This is a familiar

device used in wartime but has also been applied to industrial nuclear accidents, e.g. at Windscale (now called Sellafield) in 1957. It is only now admitted that over the years since 1916 some 20,000 uninformed military volunteers have been used in experiments at Porton Down Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment. Concern centres on experiments during the '50s and '60s using nerve gases such as Sarin in which some of the volunteers are believed to have died or been severely incapacitated as a result.

The last bastion of preventive censorship – sexual activity, real and simulated

Although the authorities have always been obsessed with the idea that moving images of sexual activity will corrupt all age groups and especially the young, film censorship in Britain seems to have started as an accidental by-product of unfounded scare stories about the fire risks associated with the use of inflammable nitrate film. The Cinematograph Act of 1909 gave local authorities the responsibility for ensuring that buildings were not a fire hazard before licensing them for the showing of films. However the powers given to local councils by the Act were so wide that, within a year or two, many councils were using them to censor content by stipulating that the films shown should be 'neither immoral nor indecent'. This extension of their role was, when challenged, supported by the High Court and the censorship of films in Britain had begun.

The film industry responded in 1913 by setting up its own, but independent, British Board of Film Censors, announcing that 'no film subject will be passed that is not clean and wholesome and absolutely above suspicion'. The administration of film censorship evolved over subsequent years in a somewhat convoluted manner to the present day. Now although technically the power to license films remains with local authorities, and this power has been occasionally exercised, the present Board, although having a measure of independence, is essentially under the control of the Home Secretary of the day. We now have a system of classification according to age with, often hilarious, rules to help the individual censor decide what or if cuts are to be made, e.g. 15 Certificate allows simulated sexual activity but without genital images; 18 Certificate allows an occasional erect penis to be shown. The latter is quite a recent relaxation of the rules, apart from a few previous examples that

escaped by claiming to be educational, and it could be rescinded at any time now that a more puritanical attitude infests the British Board of Film Classification.

Television producers, continually pushing at the boundaries of the 'permissible' but restricted by rules of what is allowed by their own regulatory authority, have increasingly resorted to showing images in which a small area of the screen is hidden by pixelation. Should the present slow relaxation of the rules continue could we expect such areas to be gradually reduced in size? We have also been subjected to a spate of documentaries on what is called the porn industry, again in an attempt to get the occasional brief image past the controlling authorities. Censorship of films and videos is certainly a growth industry. In 1974 the Board consisted of four examiners and its secretary James Ferman. Ten years later, the year of the Video Recordings Act which made the certification of a video compulsory in law, there were over fifty people involved. Although supposedly designed to protect the morals of the population, it is a structure ready made for providing political censorship when needed. The Board is self-financing and the distributor pays, so some small distributors of innovative films could be effectively censored by the cost.

Self-imposed censorship

This must be the most common form and the easiest to regulate because, by definition, it is self-regulating. It is, on occasion, practised by everyone, even anarchists, in the interests of good taste or to protect someone's feelings, but is dangerous when practised by those sections of the media which control the flow of information to us and has been backed up since 1912 by a system in which the government invites the press not to publish material when told in the form of a 'D notice'. And they don't. Information on some topics is completely taboo, apart from an occasional hint, and becomes public knowledge, if ever, only decades later.

A subtle form of self-censorship is widespread in the arts. Plays are withdrawn or never staged because of one or two complaints that they may cause offence, and posters advertising productions have to be bowdlerised for word or image or even withdrawn. Arts administrators can stifle innovation in the interests of good taste, or fear of bad publicity. A minor example of the latter, recently witnessed by the editor, occurred during a production of *The Trackers*

of Oxyrhynchus at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds. This play, by Tony Harrison, directed by Barrie Rutter of The Northern Broadsides Company, based on the satyr plays of Ancient Greece, involves male characters over endowed with false phalluses. Sadly, following just one complaint from the general public, the main publicity material was scrapped and replaced with the offending appendages cut off – ouch.

Manufacturing consent

In a nation state such as Britain, which is a parliamentary democracy, the political party or parties in power at any one time constitute an oligarchy which rules by the consent of the majority, defined in a particular way, or at least in its acquiescence. Censorship as an instrument of state control of the populace has become quite marginal and when used is a silent admission of failure. However it remains in reserve, able to be brought into use quite rapidly should dissident activity receive sufficient support as to be deemed a significant threat. With recent developments in information technology, far more effective ways are now available to manipulate public opinion and especially to record people's activities and opinions and so detect any traces of perceived subversive or dissenting activity, although fortunately not yet any such thoughts.

Information means power

Social control to be effective needs as much knowledge as possible of the people who are to be controlled. Historically governments and indeed all kinds of rulers had little information about their subjects in terms of numbers, occupations, health or lifestyles. Until quite recently information was collected by a wide range of separate government agencies and departments working independently, each profiling certain aspects of an individual's life, e.g. employment, health, income or criminal record. But this information was mostly kept on paper or cards and processed manually. Exchange of information between departments and agencies was limited, slow or even non-existent, offering some protection for the individual against the state's intrusion into his or her privacy.

Within the current information technology revolution, facilities are being created to store such information in vast electronic databases which can be linked together to provide the authorities with almost

instant access to all the information collected on a particular individual. The Data Protection Act is supposed to protect such information from unauthorised access but the authorities are by definition authorised and access can in some situations be much wider. The electoral role for instance, intended to be a record of admittedly limited information on every adult in the country, is exempt from the Data Protection Act and freely available for purchase by any one who wants it and can afford it. It is the database used by credit reference agencies – if you are not on it you are unlikely to be able to obtain credit for any purchases.

The amount of information already collected is considerable and a number of pilot schemes are now being tested to increase it. When doubts are expressed about the need for all this collecting and filing, best cases are used to justify it. Who can doubt, for instance, the potential benefit to the individual of their complete medical record being available, virtually instantaneously, to any doctor in any part of the country? The way this data collection is justified means that most people most of the time would find it quite reasonable.

More information means more power

A pilot scheme now being operated by West Lothian police is said to be attracting considerable interest from other police authorities. They are DNA profiling everyone they arrest for any offence, however trivial, (a swab from inside the mouth or a strand of hair is all that is needed) and consider that more than half the population will be on record within a generation. The scheme extends even to traffic offences and is claimed to be justified because the culprit might just turn out to be a dangerous or wanted criminal. Best thing since fingerprinting came into use in the early 1900s, they say, and there has been no public opposition. Indeed a survey found that 75% said that they would be willing to give a DNA sample in pursuit of a serious crime. No doubt they were thinking of a rape or murder enquiry not, say, a group of mothers blocking a road, protesting at the absence of a pedestrian crossing.

Most police authorities already take DNA samples on people for what they consider more serious offences, and this can include non-violent direct action. When a group of eco-activists protested at the Nestlé UK factory in Halifax, West Yorkshire, against its policy of marketing baby foods in third world countries to coincide with a

series of world-wide demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation's meeting in Seattle in November '99, the building was scaled and a protest banner hung from its roof. Sixteen were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit burglary. Of course they never had to appear in court to answer to this ludicrous charge as on turning up on the day outside the magistrate's court they discovered that their cases had been 'discontinued'. But it did provide an opportunity for the police to photograph and video all those who turned up in support, as they left the local train station, outside the court, and at the local police station later when they went to help collect the previously confiscated banner. But the protesters had already been fingerprinted and DNA profiled and if they wished to see these records destroyed they had to go to another town some thirty miles away with no direct public transport link. And what proof would that have been anyhow? The rule that fingerprints and DNA records of anyone not subsequently convicted of an offence must be destroyed was a recommendation of the 1981 Philips Royal Commission which become incorporated into the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984), but it may not be around for much longer. A case is being built up for its removal, supported even by some members of the Commission that originally recommended it, based on the argument that it can and in one case did mean that evidence (a DNA profile that the police said they had forgotten to destroy) that would have secured a conviction in a subsequent case had to be disallowed by the judge. One suspects that this example of police forgetfulness is not an isolated event but just an anticipation of plans to build up a database of most of the population, starting with the DNA profiles given by volunteers during the mass screenings that are sometimes carried out during a police investigation. DNA profiles of some 75,000 police and forensic scientists are reported to have already been collected on to a database so that they can be 'eliminated from their inquiries' at the scene of an incident.

The end of privacy

With well over one million closed circuit television cameras (CCTVs) already in operation in the streets, open spaces and public buildings in Britain we are being watched by police and security guards a lot of the time we are out and about. This is often demanded by the very people who will be watched. For again there are obvious benefits –

nobody wants to be mugged, what's the problem if you have nothing to hide. It's just privacy that is dying and let's not talk about any hidden agenda. People believe that CCTV cameras reduce crime, but this is not supported by government-funded research for the Scottish Office, an earlier and similar Welsh study, reports from Brighton University or Hull University's Centre for Criminology.

A pilot scheme, this time in Newham, covering a large area of East London, again with public support, claimed to be 92%, has involved the introduction of software which in combination with CCTV can scan and recognise faces. How useful this would have been for the police if they had had such refinements during the 1984-85 miners' strike. At the nerve centre of Newham's CCTV system a team of 26 uniformed security officers scan 67 television-monitoring screens. Of course most city centres already have good CCTV coverage and internally shops and offices add to the scanning that goes on outside. We have all seen the results in television news programmes but with this pilot scheme there is a difference. It uses a new American designed computer programme with software that can recognise biometric details in video images of the human face to detect physical traits unique to each of us. The software can recognise a face by checking against a database of 'known suspects' and alert the operator if that person is picked up on camera, even if the operator isn't looking at the screen at the time, and then transmits the picture to the police. The system is said to be able to cope with almost any lighting conditions and take into account the ageing process, the use of cosmetics, sunglasses and even a newly grown beard. Or is this a sick joke to put a little fear into the equation?

Drugs of use and abuse

"Nothing is not toxic but that the dose doth make it so" – Paracelsus (1493-1541)

Britain has some of the strictest drug laws in Europe, particularly with respect to cannabis, according to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. British government policy on drugs is not only severe, it is confusing and chaotic, but also perhaps more cock-up than conspiracy, an aspect of social control that is out of control. Use of heroin and cocaine can be hazardous to health and it is easy to understand, without agreeing with them, that those who consider that it is the government's responsibility to protect people

from the dangers of over indulgence should welcome attempts by the authorities to restrict access. It is the attitude to the recreational use of cannabis and members of the amphetamine family such as ecstasy that is so perplexing when successive governments find it so rewarding to tax alcohol and cigarettes whilst paying only lip service to their dangers. The lucrative taxation possibilities of heroin, cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis are so obvious.

From time to time learned bodies examine the effects of the use of illegal drugs in Britain and publish their conclusions. These invariably recommend decriminalising the use of cannabis and greatly reducing the penalties for distribution. The most recent was chaired by Viscountess Runciman of Doxford and sponsored by the Police Foundation, a 21-year old independent think tank that specialises in providing research on crime and policing. This report recommended greatly reducing prison sentences for taking heroin or cocaine and even then only after treatment and community punishment had failed. It recommended downgrading cannabis into the lowest category of drugs alongside tranquillisers and anabolic steroids, with possession being treated by a caution or a fixed penalty like a minor car parking offence. The hysterical outburst from a range of government authority spokespeople can only begin to be understood if one assumes that drug regulation is a method of social control that the British Government and the establishment in general continues to believe invaluable.

Trained to conform

Alongside the socialisation process which children experience in the home, and later also through the educational system that builds on and reinforces inherent biological constitutions, they also experience a process of state social control even from their early days in the infant classes. Depending on the individual teachers, this may be applied with a light hand, maybe with a touch of almost hidden subversion, or applied with considerable rigour. In the prestigious fee-paying private schools discipline may be more rigid but here it operates within a system designed to train the children of the establishment to be ready in their turn to take part in the controlling process themselves.

Outside the state system a number of independent schools have existed in Britain based on the principles of free expression pioneered

by the innovative educationalist A.S. Neil who founded his own school Summerhill in 1921. Today only Summerhill itself survives, run by his daughter Zoe Readhead and although small, fee-paying, independent of the state system, and now with more than half its pupils coming from overseas, it has been a major influence on education for the past eighty years as a reference point for child-centred learning. All lessons are optional and the only rules are the ones invented, discussed and agreed by the weekly Summerhill meeting where all children and adults in the school community have an equal say and an equal vote.

Lack of funds and state interference have already forced the closure of the other schools in Britain run on similar lines and Summerhill itself has in recent years come under increasing pressure from the Schools Inspectorate to conform to the disciplinary standards supposed to operate in state schools. Following the most recent inspection in March '99 by an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) team, the Secretary of State issued the school with a statutory 'Notice of Complaint' demanding that unless six specific changes were made, it would be closed down. The school accepted that three of these criticisms were justified and they were soon rectified but rejected the other three because they represented a fundamental attack on the founding principles and practices of the school. The contested complaints related to: 1) the non-provision of segregated lavatories, 2) voluntary attendance at lessons, and 3) the regular and compulsory testing of the children. The matter ended up in the High Court where at the end of a three-day hearing the Education Secretary in return for a pledge from Summerhill to 'encourage attendance at lessons' lifted the threat of closure. So on this occasion the judiciary did not back the executive and for the present the school survives with its principles largely intact, but rest assured the inspectors will be back again and again, until it finally meets the demands of the state or is closed, Unless ...

The power of argument defeated by the argument of power

Commenting on the views, never mind the morals, of wealthy public figures is particularly hazardous in Britain with its exceptionally strict libel laws, something Robert Maxwell used most effectively to keep those he robbed in the dark. Consider that it is only safe to publish the above sentence because he is already dead. But it is not

only individuals who can use the laws of libel to protect themselves from criticism, organisations can do it as well unless, as McDonalds found out in their 314 day libel case, they take on the likes of Dave Morris and Helen Steel, the two anarchist environmental campaigners.

The magazine *LM* formerly *Living Marxism*, but in recent years less Marxist and more libertarian, was sued for libel by the powerful Independent Television News (ITN) organisation and two of their journalists, lost and now faces extinction with well over half a million pounds in costs and damages awarded against them in March 2000. All this because they published an article by a German journalist which questioned the veracity of ITN pictures obtained by the two journalists which showed emaciated Muslim prisoners behind barbed wire in what was purported to be a Nazi-style Serbian concentration camp during the Bosnian civil war. The article claimed that the images had fooled the world by the selective use of camera angles and videotapes. Both sides in this conflict committed appalling atrocities, but *LM* backed the wrong side and are paying the cost despite widespread support from many prominent writers and lawyers. What should have been a matter of debate became a question of money.

A card to tell you who you are – and more

The days when a microchip is inserted into everybody at birth may lie in the future and the days when the German Nazis tattooed an identification number on the arm of Jews are in the past, but in Britain today the personal identity smart card hovers just out of sight with numerous testings of public opinion or more specifically the strength of the civil liberty lobby. Moves so far have been sideways with the issuing of photo driving licences with computer readable strips containing information about the holder to which he is not privy. With a card due soon to identify benefit claimants, at two strokes most of the population will be covered. Add in the proposal for a photo-card passport intended as an identity document for travel in Europe and the few still without anything to tell themselves who they are may feel very left out. The next step would replace all these by one identity smart card. The five-year business plan for the UK Passport Agency published in May 2000 suggests that by 2005 the government may have built a national identity database and that

passport pictures could be replaced by other means of identity such as electronic fingerprinting or automated facial recognition.

Your pornography is my erotica

Censorship of erotica in Europe only acquired significance with the development of printing in the fifteenth century. This brought books within reach of much larger sections of the population including erotica previously only available to the educated ruling elites. Resulting concerns within the church led in 1559 to Pope Paul IV producing an Index of Forbidden Books, the first of many. Nevertheless erotic publications continued to reach more and more people, leading in the eighteenth century to an explosion of sexually explicit publications, many written by French philosophers of the enlightenment, who adopted a popular form of writing "which lifted the skirts of the whores and the cassocks of the priests to engage the reader in issues of freedom from the moral strictures of church and state", to quote an art historian in the excellent Channel 4 television programme *Pornography: the secret history of civilisation.* As the revolutionary forces in France were calling for democracy and the abolition of the monarchy, erotic literature aggressively promoted the rights of the individual to express their sexuality free from control of church and state. This movement reached Britain in 1748 with the publication of John Cleland's astute political satire *Fanny Hill.* The subversive power of erotica was well understood by the French Republican government who on gaining power immediately tried to suppress it.

In the early nineteenth century, evidence from the excavations at Pompeii suggested that scenes of copulating couples had been quite acceptable as wall decoration in the public rooms of households in Roman times. The upper class Victorian gentlemen, whilst enjoying erotica in the privacy of their clubs, realised the dangers to themselves should such material reach the eyes of their women and children and especially the working classes. The latter, it was feared, might become so enfeebled by masturbation as to become incapable of working twelve hours a day in the factories of the industrial revolution. Our male ruling élite invented pornography, in the modern sense of the word, as erotica unsuitable for their women and children and for the masses, and in 1857 the first Obscene Publications Act became law. The effects we live with to this day.

A dismal future

In Britain today the civil liberties lobby is on the defensive with few successes to celebrate. Protest it does, but there are few who listen. New bills restricting choice or creating new offences pass through the Houses of Parliament in quick succession, often directed against those who protest peacefully or attempt non violent direct actions.

The 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, by introducing a new offence of aggravated trespass, made trespassing a criminal offence for the first time if it could be claimed to involve the intention to disrupt a legal activity. It is a potential threat to fell walkers, animal rights activists, anti-road protesters and other campaigning groups. The anti-terrorism bill, which passed though the Houses of Parliament with negligible opposition and even less media publicity, so widens the definition of terrorism that it could readily be applied against eco-activist, anti-war demonstrators and many other campaigning groups and individuals. Human rights lawyers believe that aspects of the legitimate activities of human rights organisations would become criminal offences. It also reverses the traditional burden of proof in a number of instances so that defendants are no longer 'innocent until proved guilty' but have to prove their innocence, a sinister deterioration in civil liberty also being proposed for defendants accused of rape.

For some of those who have the misfortune to appear in court, the Criminal Justice (Mode of Trial No 2) Bill is not encouraging. Of the near two million trials before the courts each year in England and Wales, 90% are heard in magistrates' courts without a jury. This might already seem to make a mockery of the principle of trial by jury as being the cornerstone of British justice, however this bill proposes that some 20,000 more defendants accused of quite serious offences will join the 90% who already do not have the option of a jury trial. Not surprisingly, the rate of conviction in magistrates' courts is much greater than in higher courts.

The aim of the British ruling oligarchy has always been to tell its subjects as little as possible and notwithstanding any Freedom of Information Act that may appear on the statute book, this is likely to continue undiminished. Conversely the government's enthusiasm for monitoring the activities of its subjects seems to be increasing exponentially. Each year the publicly admitted authorised number of phone and mail intercepts increases significantly and is seen as a

relatively easy way of 'gathering intelligence' costing only some £15 million a year. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Bill, which will be law by the time you read this, proposes giving law enforcement agencies new powers to intercept e-mails and decode encrypted data. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are required to install traffic surveillance systems linked to an MI5 monitoring centre and police do not even need a warrant to view such 'traffic data'. Police and security services can then obtain a read-out of all the web sites a customer has visited and with a warrant from the Home Secretary inspect the contents of e-mails. They can demand encryption keys to coded information from individuals with a ministerial warrant and anyone failing to comply faces a two-year prison sentence. The burden of proof is on the defendant to show that information is not being withheld.

Whilst we may be saddened that parliament now offers us less protection than ever for those liberties we do possess, gained in the streets and factories by our forbears, we can take some comfort that this surge of new regulations and penalties is some evidence that the extra-parliamentary opposition is having an effect. Although we are experiencing a consistent hardening of authority's attitude towards dissent it is increasingly failing to suppress a tendency towards a more liberal attitude in sexual matters, already enjoyed by people in most of our neighbouring nation states, and one might dare to predict that a similar attitude to recreational drugs such as cannabis will eventually follow. So to end on a lighter note, you may soon be able to pop down to the corner shop for a porn video. Come to think of it, you probably can already.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Article 19 of the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Adrian Walker

Public Information and Censorship in Britain: Does More Mean Worse?

The purpose of this article is to provide a potted history of official censorship in this country, to look at the current situation, particularly as it relates to what may be termed 'informal censorship' and finally to suggest ways by which the ordinary citizen can retain some freedom of speech. Censorship is an important area – Whitaker's *Books in Print* lists more than seventy works under this heading.

The idea that ' knowledge itself is power' is by no means a new one, being originally formulated by the polymathic Francis Bacon (1561-1626) some four centuries ago. Throughout his lifetime, and for some decades thereafter, this was recognised as a political truism by the Crown, which accordingly claimed a monopoly of printing presses as being, apart from word of mouth, the only means of disseminating information. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 this regulation was abandoned and for about two hundred years the press in Britain was as free as 'the prejudices of the owners and the susceptibilities of their owners would allow' – that is to say not very, especially in the light of Lord Northcliffe's dictum "News is what somebody somewhere doesn't want printed". In the last year of the nineteenth century, with the outbreak of the Boer War, a government department known as Section 'H' was set up. This was part of the Military Intelligence system and among other things it was responsible for censorship. Then in 1911 an updating of the Official Secrets Act made it illegal to "obtain or communicate information useful to an enemy". This of course covers almost everything under the sun, as was demonstrated as recently as January 1999 when there were reports in the newspapers of attempts to gain a 'pardon' for a medium convicted during the Second World War because she 'foresaw' certain military and naval actions and passed the details of these on to her clients.

Inevitably the power of the state is greatly increased in time of war and is accompanied by a concomitant erosion of the rights of the individual. During the two global conflicts (and myriad smaller ones)

which have so disfigured this century, the combatants invariably imposed rigorous systems of censorship while simultaneously peddling their own idiosyncratic brands of propaganda. At the outbreak of World War One in 1914 the British government tightened its grip on all means of communication via the imposition of various Defence of the Realm Acts (DORA). These produced some interesting hiccups, most notably when a censorship form was left inside an envelope which had been opened before being passed on to the addressee, who happened to be a Member of Parliament! During 1939-1945 the British authorities extended and strengthened their control, so that in this respect as in so many others we were at least as totalitarian as our Nazi opponents.

During the 1930s official censorship could on occasion be imposed with a rigour usually associated with wartime. News of the Simpson divorce case and details of the then Prince of Wales' involvement were kept from the British public for many months. American and other foreign newspapers entering the country had damaging references to these events cut out by the official censor and this was backed up by a virtual conspiracy of silence among those 'in the know'.

World War Two brought an inevitable tightening of the state's grip on the dissemination of news. Events such as the loss of capital ships of the Royal Navy were kept from the British public so as not to undermine their morale, and conversely the losses by the Luftwaffe over this country were greatly magnified. There is no indication that there has been any great relaxation since 1945 – witness the GCHQ affair and the manner in which the Gulf War was presented in the media.

Since the end of World War Two there has been an enormous increase in the amount of information apparently available to the man or woman in the street. This has led to a widespread if somewhat ill-defined feeling that we are much more knowledgeable than we were before. This is not the case – for reasons that I hope will become apparent as you read on.

It seems to me that the very word 'news' has changed its meaning and no longer describes what we actually get. Before the spread of mass literacy in Britain (c. 1850 onwards) and the much more recent development of information technology, news would consist of pieces of information to which the recipient could react by, for example, running away. This would include items like 'the Vikings

are coming' and 'there's plague in the next village'. In other words, in pre-literate societies the individual could glean all he wanted to know about his immediate and, by our standards, very restricted environment, without the use of anything other than his own senses. Now each of us is almost totally dependent on complicated technologies controlled by strangers. In addition to the more traditional forms of censorship the age of electronics has brought into play other, more insidious, forms of mind control. We have now reached a point where news, printed or electronic, is a hotchpotch of four intermingled elements, all of which can be manipulated both officially and unofficially (particularly the latter) by those in positions of power. These are:

1. carefully *sanitised* presentations of real life events;
2. novelty items which are all form and no content, i.e. pure *noise*;
3. disinformation in the form of *scaremongering*;
4. widespread *conspiracies of silence* by various interest groups.

Taken together the above factors ensure that virtually everything we see or hear has been subjected to some form of distortion and thus more, in this instance, really has meant worse. The keeping of 'unpalatable' truths out of the public domain has become almost an art form in its own right.

Sanitisation (or putting a 'spin' on events) is often the result of war or of a national crisis such as the General Strike (1926) – periods when the power of rulers is greatly increased at the expense of the ruled. This is not a recent development – a noted Official War Artist of 1914-1918 is on record as saying "I was not allowed by the War Office to put any dead men in my pictures as apparently they did not exist".

Nevertheless, as a small child in 1944-1945 I can remember seeing newspaper photographs of Mussolini's corpse hanging head down outside a filling station in Milan and also ones of British troops bulldozing human remains into mass graves at Belsen. Undoubtedly these were only allowed past the censor because they depicted the enemy in a wholly unfavourable light, but they do represent a kind of truth, giving valuable insights into the way human beings are. But by the time of the Gulf War almost half a century later, when communication systems had expanded exponentially and the world had effectively become a global village, a single newspaper photograph of an incinerated Iraqi soldier produced a public cry of

horror. This despite the fact that it was known that he was but one of tens of thousands of fatal casualties, many of them civilians, caused by allied air strikes. Apart from this one image, most people now associate that conflict with the display screen of an electronic gunsight (complete with pilot's voiceover) in an American aircraft as it homes in on a vehicle full of young men who die horribly a few seconds later. This little event was seen on television screens around the world. Thanks to the marvels of modern technology war has become a species of video game. All this stems from the desire of those in power to control the emotions of the masses coupled with the realisation by media executives that their viewing figures might drop if they showed the naked truth.

It is not only the desensitisation of the spectator we should be worrying about. Men can be more readily made to do these terrible things if they have been conditioned to see their victims as less than human. It can be argued that at least a few of the Allied pilots in the Balkans would have refused to obey if they had been ordered to round up a few hundred Serbs, douse them in petrol and set them on fire, rather than being allowed to view this situation from five miles up as a set of carefully calculated coordinates.

What has brought about this playing down of the realities of war? The American involvement in Vietnam seems to constitute a readily identifiable turning point. At the time the Freedom of Information Act, and a generally relaxed attitude on the part of a publicity hungry top brass, meant correspondents and cameramen could roam at will and record whatever they desired. However, it turned out that seeing their sons being killed in full colour on prime time television was more than Joe and Jane Public could stomach. The resultant outcry was an important factor in bringing the conflict to an end and constituted an all too rare triumph for freedom of speech. This was too much for the authorities and the next time the USA was involved in a major war, in the Gulf in 1990, the activities of the media were strictly controlled.

It may be some time, if ever, before we are able to assess the truthfulness or otherwise of news that came out of Kosovo. But no doubt it was subject to sanitisation and the other factors cited above by all the participants. What was ostensibly a humanitarian mission became a series of atrocities, but perhaps we should be grateful for small mercies – NATO spokesmen didn't reach the point of blurting

out 'We had to kill the refugees in order to save them'.

This is not a phenomenon confined to times of war. Some years ago, towards the end of the Thatcher era a youngish man from the north of England, who had recently lost his job as a result of the government's economic policies, loaded his car with cans of petrol and drove to London. Once there he made his way to Whitehall and immolated himself opposite the gates barring public access to Downing Street. This unfortunate man left a note saying "Too old to work too young to die". All this was frontpage news for one day and nothing more was heard. Presumably a 'D Notice' – 'D' for Defence – was enforced although it is difficult to imagine national security being threatened by news of this tragic event. This constitutes a pretty good example of 'sanitisation' at an official level with the willing complicity of the fourth estate.

To be fair, there are a few examples of voluntary censorship via 'sanitisation' that were directed towards an alleviation of human suffering. During the Dunblane tragedy bereaved parents complained that long delays occurred before they were allowed to see their dead children. To someone like myself, familiar with the weapon used by the killer – the standard NATO issue 9mm Browning, noted for 'good stopping power and high wound capacity' – it is obvious that the medical teams needed time to render the little corpses more or less presentable. For once the British press behaved well and none of these details ever appeared in print or on television.

The word 'noise' is used by scientists in a very specific way to describe information that is in itself useless or even misleading and which by its very existence obscures or prevents the identification and analysis of genuine data. There is also a technical term 'gone to noise' which television engineers use to describe what occurs when the picture is lost and replaced by an electronic snowstorm. It is becoming increasingly apparent that much of what is presented on the airwaves and in the newspapers as hard news and real life documentaries should really be reclassified as 'noise' in the first sense and is nearly as valueless as the latter.

The proliferation of television channels in particular has lent momentum to the current process of dumbing down. News bulletins are not immune to this. Increasingly they consist of soundbite sized items, many of which are human interest stories of the order of 'Faithful fox terrier pet gives kiss of life to old lady'. Similarly,

documentaries are composed of ancient disaster footage or are fly on the wall programmes of almost unbelievable banality – 'Neighbours from Hell', 'Parking meter attendants from Hell' and the like.

The media handling of the death and funeral of Princess Diana, an insignificant sequence of events, which engaged the attention of nearly everyone on the planet for a week or two during the silly season of 1997, is a prime example of 'noise'. Although it does occur to me that from a sociological viewpoint, as far as this country is concerned, it did provide a wonderful example of recreational grieving.

A significant feature of 'noise' particularly as it relates to television is a blurring of the distinction between fact and fiction. Disclosures of fly on the wall documentaries and the supposedly real people appearing on chat shows have revealed that in both cases actors have been used and situations fabricated to provide a higher entertainment factor rather than attempting to arrive at some kind of objective truth.

Game shows and advertisements are by definition 'noise' – as George Orwell said of the latter sixty years ago, before it achieved its present level of sophistication, "advertising is the rattling of the stick inside the swill bucket".

Noise is particularly dangerous not just because it obscures the truth but because it creates a kind of no man's land of the intellect in which the mind is more or less permanently in neutral.

Scaremongering is another ploy much favoured by those near the centre of things. In mediaeval times, awful as they may have been, the average human being had only to worry about the four horsemen of the apocalypse – war, pestilence, famine and death. Nowadays, we in the west are more or less free of the first three and can significantly delay the last. However, we appear to have become entangled in some strange Faustian pact whereby we are in exchange, frightened half out of our wits by frequent media-led panics embracing such bizarrely diverse topics as gun ownership, global warming, Currie's eggs, overhead pylons and fluoride in the water supply. While some of these may have been for a time valid areas of concern, and I am not for one moment hinting at the existence of some massive unified conspiracy, there can be no doubt that there are those who have a vested interest in keeping the population at large in a state of mild and carefully controlled terror.

People will stay with nurse for fear of worse and Edmund Burke, that guru of the contemporary Right, was correct when he said "No passion so effectively robs the mind of all its power of reasoning as fear" (1756) – a demonstration that ideas are not responsible for the people who have them. Almost two hundred years later, H.L. Mencken was to express the same kind of sentiment even more specifically "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed – and hence clamorous to be led to safety - by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary".

Television, which is probably the main source of news for the majority of people in the industrialised nations, is particularly well suited to scaremongering, being a much more emotional medium than either radio or newspapers. It's difficult to imagine the recent 'mad cow' scare being whipped up by print alone.

Incidentally, I think 'sanitisation' may be the mirror image of 'scaremongering'. We should have been told earlier and much more gently about the dangers of catching BSE from beef products, however statistically improbable that may be. When hard information was eventually released the mood of the public changed almost overnight from complacency to near panic. This is understandable, if governments enshroud themselves in secrecy one can only assume that there is something to hide.

Disinformation in the form of crude scaremongering can become a two-edged sword. By the time of the Second World War the British public had learned to approach official pronouncements in a spirit of well informed scepticism. This meant that reports reaching the Allies regarding what was going on in the concentration camps were initially disbelieved because they echoed British black propaganda from the previous conflict which included stories about the Germans boiling down corpses to make soap.

The fourth factor to be considered is what may be termed the 'conspiracy of silence' entered into by large segments of societies which are engaged in unacceptable activities. This is what appears to have happened in Germany during the Holocaust years when virtually every adult, even if not directly involved, must have had some inkling as to what was going on, but resolutely played the part of the three brass monkeys. This is not a peculiarly German phenomenon. When I was in Cyprus during the campaign against

EOKA the torture of suspects by the security forces was a matter of routine – in modern parlance, it was institutionalised. As far as I know no-one in an army consisting largely of conscripts, that is to say civilians in uniform, ever protested by, for example, writing to tell their MP what was going on and the press rarely reported it. When in 1958 Barbara Castle, MP, who had somehow got wind of what was going on tried to raise the matter in the Commons she was howled down by both sides of the House. To quote again from Edmund Burke "when bad men combine, the good must associate, otherwise they will fall one by one". To return to the Abdication Crisis of 1936, it is obvious with hindsight, which of course gives one perfect vision, that as well as official censorship being imposed, there must have been a tacit agreement between press barons, politicians, civil servants and various opinion formers, together constituting many thousands of individuals, to keep quiet about what was really happening.

Recent events in the United States provide a source of some interesting background material. *The Times* of 6th February 1999 contains the following quotation from the periodical *USA Today*: "There will always be people with vital information who must remain anonymous. In the welter of allegations [regarding the sexual proclivities of President Clinton] the Lewinsky story also highlights the need for consumers to be editors". This is an interesting concept. What we apparently have here is a member of the Fourth Estate advising his/her readership to be more rather than less blinkered in their interpretation of news stories. This is doubly dangerous when one considers that the handling of the Lewinsky affair escapade may simply be part of a Byzantine plot by the Clinton administration to divert the attention of Prosecutor Starr (and that of the American voter) away from his original remit which was to investigate the involvement of both Clintons in Whitewater and other financial activities.

It is no coincidence that the three great political revolutions of modern times – English, French and Russian – took place in societies wherein the literacy rate was approaching fifty per cent. However, it does appear that freedom of expression alone leads inexorably to an upsurge in activism. Throughout the nineteenth century the Tsarist Empire constituted one of the most repressive regimes imaginable yet, paradoxically, out of sheer frustration, the

intelligentsia in that country became the cutting edge of revolution. On the other hand, in the West during the same period, relative freedom from censorship produced for the most part apathy. It might be that industrialisation coupled with basic literacy, rather than freedom of political expression, is the catalyst. As Stuart Cloete says (referring to modern Africa): "If a man can read the manual for a tractor, he can read the Communist Manifesto".

But technological progress may be a poisoned chalice. At first sight the rise of the Internet seems to favour the citizen rather than the state. Although the ever-ingenious Chinese are apparently already working on a screening system, for the moment it appears to be a viable conduit for free speech. Also, dedicated amateurs hacking into government computers have produced what may be termed 'reverse censorship', i.e. the release of information which may otherwise never have seen the light of day, to great official embarrassment all round. But the authorities have one trump card: the internet is sustained by a power source which they control and, if feeling terminally threatened, can simply be switched off (although the states of the Eastern bloc never felt impelled to do this to prevent the use of photocopiers by dissidents). At least the printing press is free standing, portable and simple to manufacture and operate, as rebels in Elizabethan England were to prove. How many of us have any idea of how even to begin to make a microchip? Thus complexity seems to be to the advantage of the state rather than the individual.

In parallel with the increased use of computers over the past couple of decades there has been a quantum leap in the number of telephones in use in Britain and other industrialised countries. In the UK, quite apart from business subscribers, there is at least one telephone for every household, plus more than twenty million mobile ones. As a result phone tapping has replaced mail tampering as the favoured mode of official eavesdropping. Perhaps word of mouth will revert to being the only safe means of communication, unless those in power, like Ivan the Terrible, are prepared to go to the lengths of killing the messenger.

While I am absolutely opposed to any form of mind control, I do feel that society has a duty to protect the defenceless against those who would turn a fast buck through the production and distribution of snuff movies, kiddie porn and the like. And how far does tolerance extend? The neo-Nazis are among the most avid users of the

internet. It is an ugly but inescapable fact that you can no more have partial censorship than you can have partial virginity. For example, I know from first hand experience that all video tapes posted to a resident of the Republic of Malta are routinely viewed in their entirety by customs officers on the lookout for pornographic material – the recipient being charged the equivalent of £20 for this service. It is highly unlikely that these officials would ignore political material, stumbled over in the course of their duties, as being outside their remit.

Although at the time of writing (May 1999) one is in the pipeline, unlike the USA Britain has no Freedom of Information Act. In this country the burden of proof is placed firmly on the enquiring individual, who has to prove he or she 'needs to know' and that the release of state documents will not constitute a threat to the defence of the realm. By way of contrast, in the United States the citizen has the right (at least in theory) to be told anything they may want to know. Thus officialdom has to demonstrate that the release of such information would be prejudicial to the security of the state. Idyllic as this may seem, there are two problems to be overcome. First the inquirer cannot even begin to ask about something he does not know exists. Secondly, documents may be released in a purely legal sense but are so mutilated by the censor as to be useless. So it seems that in this respect, despite lip service being paid to the idea of freedom of information, the average American is little better off than the average Briton.

Censorship, a key element of mind control, has come a long way from a few clerks armed with blue pencils steaming open envelopes in dusty Whitehall offices. The scale on which governments can now suppress information almost beggars belief. Michael J. Kurtz, in his magisterial work 'The Crime of the Century', dealing with the assassination of President Kennedy, has calculated that an Act of Congress in 1992 released *more than four million* pages of evidence relating to this forty year old case. To give some idea of what this represents – it would take one researcher, working full time but with the usual holidays, weekends, etc., well over eighteen years just to read through this colossal stack of paper.

Leaving official censorship aside, it is a worrying trend that those who control the mass media, and can therefore to some extent appoint themselves as unofficial censors, appear to have no allegiance to

anything other than their own aggrandisement and enrichment. Rupert Murdoch, currently engaged in a vendetta to bring down the Royal Family (in itself a laudable enough ambition), is Australian born, was temporarily British and is now American. To a man like that nationality or indeed membership of any human group is simply a political and economic tool. The Murdochs of this world will always side with the big battalions and should therefore be regarded as part of an establishment with a vested interest in controlling and/or restricting the flow of information to the man or woman in the street.

We live in an era when the average person is bombarded day and night by unprecedented amounts of data of all kinds. If knowledge is power we should each of us be more in control of our lives than ever before. This is not so. Not only are we in danger of information overload, the sheer volume and complexity of the messages we receive and their inherent susceptibility to manipulation probably mean that in this instance more does mean worse. We should be constantly aware of the presence of the four horsemen - sanitisation, noise, scaremongering and conspiracies of silence. We should be selective in what we hear, read and view, treat all information with scepticism and, above all, obey Cockburn's Injunction which advises "Whenever a politician opens his mouth, ask yourself the question – Why is this bastard lying to me?" In the long run we must continue the fight for a free and open society where censorship, official or unofficial, is an impossibility.

"Cinema managers in Bournemouth have been told that any plan to screen the sexually explicit film 'Romance' must be cleared first by the town's licensing committee who will need a week's notice to consider it for public viewing."

The Times, 27th October 1999

"It is in the name of ordinary people of course that ever-sillier acts of censorship are carried out."

A Presenter in *The Raven* no. 32

Pat Arrowsmith

Under Surveillance

Whirlpool,
rings within rings within rings.
Whirlwind to suck you confusingly
up into hell.
Who is the tadpole,
pseudo-grassroot,
violent mole, plant,
bogus seagull?
Does she/he really want to be friends,
or has he/she other ends?
"I note you're alone.
How about you and I sharing a home? –
or at any rate thoughts,
feelings, ideas, politics, plans?"
Are they whom we/they believe them to be,
seem, what they claim?
Maybe ...
Wiser perhaps
to live as usual,
ignore such a problem
than dwell on this cyclonic,
yet ungeometric,
asymmetric,
paranoic,
disorienting,
fearful theme.

Written by Pat Arrowsmith in response to a statement in 1985 by ex-MI5 agent Cathy Massiter that an MI5 plant in CND had been submitting regular reports on her.

John Moore

The Day the Circus Came to Town

The day the circus came to town was the day the town died. The parade through the main road was like the victory parade of an invading army. The big top was the field headquarters of the triumphant generals. The victors gave no quarter, the vanquished offered unconditional surrender.

And then the reign of terror began. First the stiltsmen began constantly patrolling the streets, looming over people, peering in through windows, bearing down on the unsuspecting. Then, as if this was insufficient to keep us all under surveillance, the strongmen muscled in and rounded us up, sending us off to slave labour camps. The nearby valleys and hillsides were decimated within months. All life was stripped from the land around us, and the bare bones of the rock exposed. The slave labourers, spurred on by the whips of the under-ringmasters, hewed out huge blocks of stone and transported them, like the helots building the pyramids, across country to the town. The town square was demolished, and in its place, like a new Tower of Babylon, there reared up a glowering edifice, a towering lighthouse. Evidently all across the land a similar building programme was set in action. For no sooner than our lighthouse began its nightly eerie sweeps, beaming light into our eyes, our homes, our lives, than beams from other towers in nearby and faraway places began to scour the night sky. In every city, every town, every village, monumental lighthouses were erected. Cities had several, one per district. All were nightly subjected to the continuously circulating beams, turning the whole land into a concentration camp, with a guard tower in every place. Few could doubt that night and day, we were all kept under constant observation by telescope and binoculars.

The workers were cowed, the resistance driven underground. No public demonstration of any kind, let alone dissent, was permitted. Should any agitator be foolhardy enough to mount his soapbox, as if by magic the clowns would appear in their screeching, shrieking car. They would bundle out, slap pies in the faces of any spectators, spray CS gas from their buttonholes in the face of the agitator, slug

him in the guts or batter her with frying pans, drag everyone into their wailing jalopy, and that would be the last that would be seen of any of those people. Or, the acrobats in their black outfits would silently swoop from the rooves of surrounding houses and with peerless agility would kick-box any malingerers to the ground. These ninja warriors would then gather up the corpses and the subjugated, and like Tarzan swing away with them to who knows where. The outcome was the same, we assumed, whether gatherings were dispersed by clowns or acrobats: enslavement, torture and death.

But on the whole these demonstrations of brute force were unnecessary. Starved of information, kept in ignorance, the populace seemed at least to be subservient. People appeared to believe what they were told on the propaganda screens and in the propaganda sheets. The glamorous barebacked riders paraded the streets in their star-spangled outfits, contorting themselves into parodies of eroticism, and this seemed to keep men happy and women content. Sexual desires seemed to congeal and set into these twisted patterns like jelly in a mould. And if this wasn't enough, the psychological pressure of living and loving this way took its toll. Instances of madness, outbreaks of insanity, became commonplace. The number of mutilations, murders and rapes continued to rise, despite or perhaps because of the constant surveillance by the impresarios of the spectacle. The passive collusion of the authorities in these horrific crimes could not be doubted. Who could guess at the perverse erotics of the watchers stationed in the lighthouses? And anyway, their system benefitted from these crimes in the wider sense too. More crimes meant more surveillance, more crimes meant the need for more social control, more crimes meant we needed them even more to protect us from ourselves.

There seemed no way out of this intaglio of repression and control. But then, it came. Again, the psychological pressures of living a life of such suppression must have spurred something deep inside people. First in only a few, but then in more and more.

Like others, I could know nothing of this development until it was underway. Luckily for a storyteller, I found out about it relatively early on. We could not speak, remember. There was no freedom of speech. We were rendered dumb. If we tried to articulate, we were silenced – or ignored. We could no longer communicate with one another. We hadn't been able to, properly, before, and that must be

one reason why the circus found it so easy to take over. But now invisible barriers separated us one from the other more effectively than any wall. Our language became brittle and crumbled in our hands like dry autumn leaves. Meanings disintegrated before our very eyes. We led lives, not merely of quiet desperation, but of desperate quietness. All our senses were sealed, shut tight. But when sensory deprivation is that total, something has to give. Our lifeforce has to find a way to express itself, to breakthrough the silence and mingle our vitalities, and it did.

One night, as I lay on my bed in my dark, solitary room, watching the beams from the lighthouse sweep periodically across the ceiling, I heard a voice in my head. It said, "Can you hear me?" I thought that, as with so many others, madness had come to pay me a visit. My great-grandmother had heard bells tolling in her head in her later years, and so I was prepared for some such eventuality. So I said, mentally, "Yes, I hear you". And the voice replied, or rather seemed to say to itself, "Another one! This has been a good night!" Rather miffed at just being one of many, I said rather sarcastically, "I'm glad to hear it. But who are you anyway?"

The reply was a rather fantastic one, but I was filled with joy to hear it. I was not going insane. I was not having an hallucination, as I subsequently discovered. The voice – it gave me no name, and gave no indication of race or gender – explained that of late some members of the populace had begun to develop telepathic powers, and called themselves the whisperers. It cannot have been coincidental that these telepathic abilities first manifested themselves in those most inclined toward revolt and rebellion. Hence, once the first few isolatoes made contact with one another through trial and error, the network of contacts that emerged was from the first oriented toward social radicalism. There was no elitism about this clandestine band: anyone who developed telepathic capacity could join. And those given to such things had calculated that at the rate of development now unfolding, everyone in the subject population would sooner or later manifest these abilities. The significance of this evolutionary leap was that we now possessed a means of communicating, a very intimate and very secret means of communicating, which stood outside the spectacular systems of the circus. We were no longer dependent on their media: our contact with one another was immediate. No media, no intermediary, just immediacy.

The anarchic possibilities of this development were laid out for me by my contact and then with others over the following days and weeks. Once my initial astonishment had been overcome, I enthusiastically began my participation in the project. I became a whisperer, a member of the conspiracy in which people don't merely breathe together, but are together. I began the slow process of learning about the possibilities of telepathy, about shielding and scanning, about multiple connexions, about learning how to detect the subtle clues that slightly differentiate voice from voice, and so on. But this was never an end in itself, always a means to developing means of resisting. As our community of resistance grew, more ideas as to how to subvert, then overthrow the circus were shared. And in the process, a vision of what might replace the spectacle evolved. No more hierarchy! No more control! No more power! No more work! No more machines! Instead a sharing, an equity, a mutuality, and many, many communities living in harmony, blooming and dying like myriads of flowers!

And so we began our programme of fierce destruction and even fiercer creation. On the surface, to our watchers, all remained the same. Not a quiver seemed to ruffle the millpond. But underneath - in our homes, in our streets, in our forced labours, in our hearts and minds everywhere - all was in a turmoil of preparation. Spontaneous rebellions – spontaneously erupting, but carefully planned in the shared depths of our minds – broke out here and there, seemingly at random. Chains are rigged across streets to down the stiltsmen. Homemade bombs sail out of unlikely places and blast the clowns into oblivion. Slave labourers sabotage production and insidiously break machinery. And so it goes on.

But now the big test is about to take place. The whisperers have deduced that the lighthouses are not merely observation posts, but communication centres. If the spectacle is coordinated anywhere, it is here, in these seemingly impregnable fortresses. Here originate the signals for the propaganda screens. Here copy for the propaganda sheets must be written. Here the security forces must be controlled. Here production must be managed. The big tops are easily destroyed. Arson teams can burn them to the ground, and the ringmaster – that buffoon, that strutting puppet of the spectacle – can be burned to a cinder. But the lighthouse must be the centre. There are now many of us, whether enough, we do not know. More

become whisperers daily, but we cannot wait and risk detection. When we act freely, others will too, and this will undoubtedly spur the development of their telepathic capacities.

And so we plan to mount an assault on the lighthouse itself. Whether this will be successful, I do not know. I have participated in many other actions, but this is another matter altogether. The power wielded by the circus is not fully known, perhaps incalculable. Maybe it is far stronger than we imagine, maybe far more vulnerable. We shall see. Whether I shall return, I do not know. Whether any of us shall return, I do not know. But spread this message across the land, to all the other villages, towns and cities, to all the other whisperers. And say to them: Be wise, be wiser than us if need be! Be daring, be more daring than us if need be! And be free, be freer than us if need be!

And tell them above all: If anyone says that you need bread and circuses, blow them to hell!

"The head teacher of a Church of England primary school has banned younger pupils from reading the Harry Potter books because she says that the bible condemns the witches and wizards they feature as evil. 'Our ethos on teaching comes from the Bible', she said. 'The Bible is clear about issues such as witchcraft, demons, devils and the occult. It says clearly and consistently from Genesis to Revelations that they are real, powerful and dangerous. Throughout it insists that God's people should have nothing to do with them'. Mrs Rookwood said that the books would be available to older pupils once the subject matter had been discussed in religious education classes."

The Times, 29th March 2000

"The strongest bulwark of authority is uniformity; the least divergence from it is the greatest crime."

Emma Goldman

Arthur Moyse

Give 'em the mouth

It is accepted that my ghastly aunt was and is my *bête noire* and that rat-like hysterical screaming coward wielded a power over others by the evil that she daily spewed from her sewer mouth that no inverse saint or martyr could ever have achieved. But who are we to shit in judgement on the dead. Time and again she would stand upon the steps within that squalid little back yard screaming insults at the neighbours the length of that road, that the women were Irish whores, the men unwashed workshy and the sons thieves and spongers until, exhausted, she would strut followed by her daughters back into the safety of her kitchenette screaming "I gave 'em the mouth I gave 'em the mouth", for my aunt had one negative virtue in that she did not believe in censorship as she screamed her mantra "I give 'em the mouth".

I do not doubt that a large minority of *Guardian* readers, Bleeding Hearts, Superior Working Class and the wine identifying middle class literati would be adamant in their opposition to censorship but one must accept that what they mean as they wine and dine within their small sophisticated circle is censorship in relation to themselves and their pleasures.

My own attitude in relation to censorship is that I would not call upon any authority to censor any work of art be it genius or just plain crap. Not the film, the play, the painting nor the written word for, to misquote the Greek, and who else, no wall painting of a dog ever bit anyone, for all that I ask is a multiplicity of books, films, paintings, ham actors and music for if someone objects then get another newspaper, get another book, get another theatre ticket, get another television channel.

This is surely one of the answers to censorship, and it is not the public hangman, book burning or the trained bureaucrat with his HMS blue pencil but to leave men and women to solve their own choices in a multiplicity of choices for if it is right for the crazy many small breweries then it should be so for others not to have to seek their appreciation of the arts on the walls of a locked lavatory door.

I always saw George Orwell as a creature of the patronising right wing slumming within the left and I hold that he would have found his haven at Tony Blair's dining table and though I enjoyed his simplistic essays we parted company readershipwise when in an essay on censorship Orwell wrote that though he found Dali's autobiography disgusting he would allow it to be printed as it was a work of art. But, thundered Orwell, in print the only thing he would censor would be the filthy post cards that came from Port Said. And the pyramid wee Georgie is who decides, who arrests, and who does the burning in that Orwellian authoritarian society so unlike *Animal Farm*. We are communal animals who live out our lives within a particular society and out of simplistic self interest we bow to the tribal dictates of that society in that no matter how bursting the bladder we do not piss against someone's garden wall in day light and we do not address minority ethnic groups in a bemeaning manner that is left against we the noble labouring class.

Prate as one will we practise censorship in relation to what we say and write and we expect that from others in relation to ourselves. Time and again within my life I have heard the laughing cheers go up as a victory within the courts was held to be a defeat for a particular act of censorship but it was never so, just a loosening of the chain around the mind. The excitement when the word fuck was first used on television and it was good that it should be so along with nudity and the various physical and social ills of our society and all I ask again and again is that there should be a multiplicity to choose from and a simple warning of what to expect onto the eye or the mind. In life we go through phases to know all, to dispute and then as the ills of the body set in we don't give a fuck and become a non-voting non-card-holding Judas style keep filth off the television screens and drop the nuclear bomb.

To be young is to know and who dare contradict one. One sat on the steps of the Labour Exchange before the fashionable war when 'Fascism means Hunger and War' and censorship was but a minor evil in those days when blood was on the working class streets yet one still protested the censorship of naughty works of art that have long withered on the vine but censorship in Britain meant prison and in Europe death or the concentration camp and the choice was always there, but who plays the heroic goat for comrades when the Authorities come with that indifferent look the cheering band of


ARTHUR MOYSE

supporters goes smaller by the feet. Just before the European invasion a small group of about twenty of us were given a run off of a German anti-personnel foot mine and how to defuse it and that crude sheet of A4 paper was marked Top Secret and we were young and no more than fifteen potential heroes and how we laughed at that TOP SECRET because we were intelligent and read the Left Book Club and we laughed to each other that the Germans knew how to defuse those anti-personnel foot mines. And we were the fools for as long as that information was censored those deadly foot mines could be defused. When do we accept censorship out of grim necessity and save a foot being blown off? And yet I sincerely believe that if your cause is just then one no longer fears the voices of those who oppose you for I would hold that during the Second World War the German newspaper untouched in language, opinions, cartoons and its 'official' facts could have been placed on sale within these islands without any effect on the population's thinking, to which you must trace a circle in the beer on the table saying "For God's sake Arthur you were brainwashed". So many papers, so many magazines, so many meetings, so many demonstrations, so many marches civilian and military, so many truths, so many lies I should be so lucky to be brain washed and grow a window box. If one accepts a situation then one assumes that one accepts the conditions that come with it as when one distributes a leaflet that the authority, be it work or private, declare that they will seek to destroy both you and the leaflet. In that situation one cannot complain about censorship. Censorship is but a chain and every libertarian jangles his long length of links but every time authority has been beaten down like a sad dog it incorporates the libertarian victory into its own status quo. I have seen a platform speaker arrested for saying fuck during a speech but now as it ever was part of our native language, yet such is the moral code of our time that we censor ourselves in the company of those we do not wish to offend by not using the word. The only relation who will speak to me was offfended when I said that some one we knew had to swear on oath when in the witness box. And she was truly offended, and probably still is, in the use of the word 'swear' as in 'swear on oath' as she mumbled in her aged voice, "people should not be allowed to use that word". Censorship, censorship don't use that word '****' it is not nice.

Within a pub above the Tottenham Road, if that is logical, a young

keen eyed reading revolutionary asked in the required revolutionary whisper, "Let's start an underground newspaper" and when I asked what should be put into it and who should print and distribute it left contemporary history as we know it. Always we must reject the ideological academic and ask what is served, what is gained and to whom in writing 'The foreman is a cunt' on the lavatory wall. Some years ago the *Spies for Peace* was produced by hand and distributed by hand and on the summertime 'CND Ban the Bomb' march it was responsible for the break-away march within those country lanes as a few hundred of us forced our way through the dry bracken to the RSG site. We achieved our aim and struggled back, passed the raging Peggy Duff, Londonward. But on that CND march one saw CND marchers being arrested for chanting RSG, RSG, RSG, no more than that while others were arrested merely because they had RSG lettering on their T-shirts. This, comrade, is authoritarian censorship in action and not a cosy learned stand up comedian cross talk in her Majesty's Royal Court of Law. Within any society be it puritan, High Tory, Sweet Labour or collective meal sharing, censorship exists and if it relates to me then I demand to know, in my passionate voice, what is being censored, why, by whom and who gave them that authority. It is the practice in the performance of the logistics of war for a fringe outpost of guards to be posted around the main guards. Their break through by the enemy is the warning of danger. So too with any government military organisation in that minor and useless information is placed under safe keeping and marked Top Secret and when that is stolen then the warning is given without loss.

Some few years ago I was in conversation with a youthful idealist but who was ideologically unsound as the PC ratters mouth and during our philosophical lovefest on that busy London pavement I stated that I was opposed to all censorship to which the young Trotskyist glowed like fresh Morning Glory crying, on that busy London pavement, "Christ, mate, I'm in complete agreement with you, I'm opposed to any censorship except of the fascist stuff". You who are opposed to all censorship comrade what would you of your necessity censor ??????????????????????

Rufus Segar

Covering Ourselves from the Censor

To proffer a view on the theme of this issue of *The Raven* you need to examine the credentials of this contributor.

He is a designer / illustrator – almost retired. Born 1932, he was at his working best in the decade 1962-72, as freelance at what was then called graphic design, although he always had a sneaking admiration for the job description given in the passport of one of the best art directors of S.H.Benson in the '60s: 'commercial artist'.

His first jobs, in employment, were with manufacturing firms, advertising agencies and publishers, then, as soon as he was any good and as soon as work was to be had, he resigned and went freelance.

This process was aided by the last three paid jobs giving out freelance design jobs and worst of all was the offer of a free office in St James's in return for being available and guaranteeing two days work a week. The fool jumped at it and it was to be his downfall thirty years later.

This long freelance stint began in the early 1960s, the work was based on the design work done for publishers of books and magazines, the last one he worked for proudly called itself a newspaper because each week on Thursday night the editor made late night amendments to the leaders after tanking up at El Vinos. The set tasks, the jobs commissioned, were always the same, a visual help to the words at hand. The clients ranged from film and television companies to many publishers, and the sinecure was The Economist Intelligence Unit.

As he filtered through the outposts of the trade, watching and listening to how it was done, his libertarian training had armoured him to expect at each and every turn and at every brief a confrontation with control or censorship. In fact a long, long career passed and never a challenge to ethics or liberty was made. Forty years of constant work, a myriad mountain of small jobs shuffled and overlapped with longer projects floating through the practice. Never a challenge on any front.

Except *Anarchy*, the precursor to *The Raven*. Published through the '60s at monthly intervals by Freedom Press. The editor was Colin

Ward who managed a superb mix of contributors to fill his monthly slot. He numbered the pages each year to get twelve sections that could be bound together into a volume for the year to put on your shelves. This came as a bit of a shock to his cover designer. The wrapped round cover, back and front done by Rufus Segar from issue no. 5 to issue no. 114, once a month, amid a busy working life, disappeared.

The arrangement was to suit production, a rather quaint and extended process in those days. Colin would send a description of the issue and leave the designer about a week to make the artwork in two colours to provide the printing blocks for the printer and a reduced black two-column block to act as a promo ad in two issues of *Freedom*.

This design and artwork took between one and a half days for the longest and one and a half hours for the quickest. The cumulative results were like the practice: 10% brilliant, 10% awful and 80% adequate. And all on time. There was never a kickback from the body politic. Except on three covers. Two were trivial.

One was about the copyright of a shot taken by a French photographer of a repeated poster put on a colonnade during the May '68 riots in Paris. The only paper in Britain to use this particular photo was *The Times*. The *Anarchy* designer had lifted the newsprint, enlarged it to show the knobbly screen and wrapped it round the front and back of the issue. The photographer saw the cover and was offended that her image had been pirated. Quite right. Then and ever since Rufus Segar has valiantly supported copyright and the following rights of artists, illustrators and even photographers to have a fair share of the proceeds from their work.

But in this case the designer did not care one jot. The image had been about revolt, captured by the camera, sold to *The Times*, stolen and put on a libertarian magazine. The repeated poster image was that of a shield-bearing, baton-wielding CRS riot cop labelled SS, fly posted by French students, the product of a studio group working together to write, design and make silk screen posters to aid the struggle in progress. They had resisted overtures to sell the posters; they were part of the revolt, not commerce. As for this copyright theft, there was no profit in it, simply a cheering support of the original drive.

There was a subsequent large format paperback of the posters published in the USA by Bob Merrill and in the UK by Dobson

Books for £1.00 in 1969. Copyright Usine-Université-Union, and credited to the Atelier Populaire, they make it quite clear that the posters are weapons of the struggle and their rightful place is in the centres of conflict. For other memories of 1968 see *The Raven* no. 38.

This ripping off of photogapher and her quarry has an echo in a current comic case: Charles Saatchi is reported to have paid Damien Hirst £2 million for a twenty-foot bronze torso of a vividly coloured, flayed, half dissected body with eyeballs with no lids set in a muscle bound skull, not much skin to be seen. On publication it is spotted to be simply a blow up of an eight inch Humbrol toy model, in the shops for ten pounds or so. A toy and teaching aid, the same liverish bloody colours. The original sculptor only got £220 from Humbrol for the work; he is nonplussed by Damien Hirst's apparent exploitation of his work.

This recycling of images is disturbing and entrancing. There are three prominent collections that spring to mind that plainly thrive by selling the reproduction rights to the images they have collected. The Kobal Collection of film stills – no doubt they have arranged release contracts or have even bought all rights from every studio that originally commissioned or employed the cameramen who took the pictures. The Advertising Archive does the same for illustrations for adverts and magazines (John Bull family settings of the '50s are fondly remembered), mainly from the 1920s to 1950s. The same licensing procedure is observed but in this case much of the profit goes to the publishers and agencies and their successors rather than the artists involved.

Rather different is the Bridgeman Art Library, most of their ever increasing library is out of copyright as befits old and established artworks, Bridgeman provide a cultural resource as they find art from lesser European and provincial UK collections that would normally not see the light of day. They have embarked on, at great expense to themselves, a grand series of free CDs to show their collection.

These copyright stories are distractions and red herrings, let us return to more interesting subjects – anarchy and sex. The second trivial case of interference in the publishing of *Anarchy* was an attempt by a hot collar on the production line of *Anarchy* no. 63. All went well, the covers were two images, the front Michelangelo's David, in white line contours on a solid black ground. The back

cover was a curious Victorian vignette of a naked man on a mattress being tugged and bound and squeezed by three seen and sleeved hands. The subjects of the issue were an Early Renaissance Text and a Victorian planner's bit on Fit the Man to the Plan.

The choice of pictures was accidentally homoerotic. The David was okay for the Renaissance piece, although the Italian professor got no credit for the contouring and transformation of the statue. The back cover was a cutting supplied by Colin Ward, sent to him by the American contributor, Paul Goodman.

It was the back cover that caused the trouble. The foreman at the finishing factory said how could he expect 'his girls' to touch such a cover when stitching the cover to the insides? When asked to provide an actual objector his case collapsed.

The final case was more serious and the cover actually ended up censored and suppressed – albeit not by the printer nor by the law but by a comic act of self-censorship. The issue was to be all about Wilhelm Reich. The author, a one time partner in John Hewetson's medical practice on Denmark Hill, Dr Robert Ollendorff, a German jewish refugee of the 1930s, now in retirement but still keen on Reich, had just published a manual of sex instruction – in the new liberties of the 1960s. In pursuit of an idea for the cover the designer went to see the author, saw and borrowed a review copy of the sex manual. It was a severe and formal landscape book, about six by eight inches, bound in solid black peach-fuzz cloth. The contents were simply 38 or more couplings demonstrated by a Danish couple photographed in black and white on a bare white slightly textured ground. She brunette and nubile. He twentyish, slightly hairy but handsome. The text was opposite and by the doctor. This was two or three years before Alex Comfort's *Joy of Sex* (1972) which went on to sell twelve million and keep Alex in comfort and limelight for the rest of his life.

The book to hand was a premature instalment. The resolved and executed design for the covers was a skit on the (unmentioned) book. On the front there she sat, primly naked, the girl, drawn by Segar. Kneeling before her was the man. Out of the man's lips came a huge balloon that ran round to the back cover. The text, in flowery type with much use of hearts and flowers for letters was Reich's bibliography, twenty or so titles, all in their original German. Segar asked a German friend to read through the artwork. She passed it

for press but on seeing the proofs she spotted two errors. You should never trust Germans. The girl on the cover simply replied, in plain text 'Orgasm schmorgasm, how about a good lay?'

What could be the objection to that? The doctor exploded. "My contribution cannot go out with that cover. Either me or him goes." Colin caved in, he printed a plain type cover.

A possible objection (besides mocking Reich) was the joke, a variation of the chestnut about a Jewish lady being reproached for promoting an Oedipus complex in her troubled son. 'Oedipus schmedipus, what does it matter as long as he loves his mother?'

There was a coda to this story. In the 1990s Colin Ward was filing his weekly column in *New Society* and recalled the story and apologised for taking the wrong side. The art editor phoned to ask if RS had a print of the censored cover. As it happened the filing system worked and a copy was set and published, at last, in *New Society*. The story has an even better end, some weeks later a cheque for £30 arrived. That makes ten years work on *Anarchy* earn £3.00 per annum. That is the end of the episodes of censorship with the designer as producer. The total over forty years is a pathetic performance. Where the drama was during that time was with the designer as spectator and deprived consumer. From the start of art training one of the proper objects of study is your own peer group, which you can look at at close quarters. Also at one remove, usually by reproduction, the work of other artists, alive or mostly dead.

In the case of fellow students they were revealed as mostly myopic sheep, a diagnosis which was confirmed on observing fellow workers in employment, they were sheep as well. As for artists as heroes, they were either old masters too brilliant to emulate, or modern with dodgy reputations.

The trouble with art education in England at the time, the early 1950s, was that it was the fag end of the arts and crafts movement and the teaching crew at provincial centres were competent artists. They had had successful early careers in the 1920s as painters, sculptors, etchers and engravers, with the slump of the '30s the market shrank and they all fled to teaching. And they stayed on, modestly in control, until retirement. One strange effect of this regime was that almost all art stopped still at 1900, there was a total blackout about modern and contemporary art.

This designer illustrator was a well trained specimen and early on

was entranced with the mechanics of print and publishing and had a ravenous curiosity about art and architecture and inevitably society. As noted above he travelled through many jobs picking up skills until he settled for a solo role as a freelance designer, although he worked alongside many teams he never was a whole-hearted team player. It was said that he could never manage a whelk stall. Nor did he ever want to. Whenever the torrent of work built up, the two maxims obeyed were: *Never say no* and *Always meet the deadline*. So he would shift to be studio manager, never liked it, and was pleased when the demand fell back. There was one other rule, always observed, Never stint yourself on the publishing front, buy any new title that catches your eye and always subscribe to more than you can read; as for books, have them, old and new, like mice.

In front of this grandstand four decades passed. What startling lessons had been learnt about censorship and social control? Censorship is out there like an invisible frontier. The best analogy that fits its character is that of a long wobbly miasmic jellyfish like rope in a loop in a warm soup-like sea. Inside the loop is all human endeavour and behaviour, some of which gets curious about the other side and pushes out to see what is there, sometimes the swimmer gets through and a shoal usually follows, stretching the rope a little. The strength and definition of the rope is made by the stings and shocks it can give, it does not have to give many or very often, the contained biomass is docile and easily trained up to behave itself. Test this proposition against forty years of observation, in the area of direct participation, various branches of publishing, it holds up. In journalism there are three main strands to the rope: the fear of litigation, the temptation of sexual taboos and the borders of privacy. These same three also corral most of publishing, the novel is only life given a gossamer coat of fiction. Threats of litigation handed out to the press and publishers are usually given out by rogues, Maxwell is a wonderful exemplar. The stretching of sexual tolerance has still a long way to go, an erect member and explicit connections are yet to be seen in the newspapers and entertaining magazines.

There are all over Britain on top shelves in newsagents serried ranks of soft porn which prospers untouched by prosecution. This is due to a shift in emphasis some eight years ago when a new broom in the Dirty Squad at Scotland Yard saw that there was a current reluctance to carry through cases to court, too much time and effort

was involved: two years at least and ton upon ton of magazines to wade through. So a shift in focus was made, paedophiles were much more obnoxious so the team went after them. Rock stars, teachers, scoutmasters and stepfathers, all put in prison.

In all this the form of the media is not to blame, over the past century there has been a steady unpacking of Russian dolls, cinema out of theatre, radio out of books and newspapers, television out of cinema and radio. Now satellite multichannels and the internet gobbling the whole lot. The noose of censorship loosens in lazy swirls, a sudden jerk can quickly choke a deviant to death.

The strange thing about the process is that it is largely hidden and even those who deal with it find the call upon their services intermittent and infrequent. Except of course the censors themselves, the current Chairman of the British Board of Censors, Andreas Whittham-Smith, he of *Independent* fame, has emerged as an extreme control freak, overriding all his viewing committees he attempts to give his own verdict on every film and video that anyone wants to see. Mary Whitehouse, although self appointed, headed the same way. However, whenever they act it is never for themselves, like the foreman finisher or the prosecuting QC in the Lady Chatterley trial, there is always someone else the thing should not fall into the hands of.

There is the reason why censorship, however it might wriggle, will always be with us. It is delegated care, often pompous, misguided and ludicrous but care nevertheless. Time is a great progress chaser, standards and views remorselessly change and censorship's bonds will flex and bend as society sweeps through the next century.

"All censorship exists to prevent any one from challenging current conceptions and existing institutions."
George Bernard Shaw

"Governments of any type hate ordinary people having unsupervised communication."
J. Pilgrim in *The Raven* no. 32

"Without free speech no search for truth is possible; without free speech, no discovery of truth is useful."
Charles Bradlaugh

Mary Naylor

Carnival Capers and Catholics

The idea of a holiday in Spain invariably conjures up images. For the tourist, sun, sand, sea and, probably, sex. For the tourist who has visited the country more often, add in mediocre food but wine better than we used to expect – and fiestas.

The Spanish love their fiestas and carnivals. In traditional societies life is spent in remembrance of one festival and expectation of the next, and little seems to have changed in this context for much of the villages of southern Spain and its islands. Every village seems to have them and they are regular events, organised for the enjoyment of the locals and only very incidentally as a way of encouraging the visitors to spend even more pesetas in the cafes and bars. Tourists are not invited to participate in the real goings-on. Locals, however, dress in elaborate costumes and throw themselves into time-honoured rituals where there are clearly defined roles and even clearer expectations of having a right good time.

Many of course have written on the concept of carnival or fiesta as an escape valve to release the pressure built up under a catholic regime, notably Bahktin, whose ideas were rediscovered in the 1960s, but more recently articles relating to this theme have appeared in the quality and the popular press, in academic papers and theses and even in sports magazines. Are fiestas and carnivals happy combinations of sexual and political liberation or merely permitted naughtiness designed to dissipate and neutralise disruptive energies? Every festival is a miniature carnival because it is an excuse for disorder. As Giuilanotti typically described them, in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*: "... abandonment to hedonistic excesses and the psychosocial joys of eating, drinking, joking, swearing and the wearing of stylised attire and costumes". Carnival challenges the authority of social mores. It is a rebellious event in which prohibitions and their transgression co-exist and so create an ambiguous representation. Bakhtin's interest in carnival indicates a definite (if largely unarticulated) politics of culture that expresses the desire to understand and encourage the popular deconstruction of official

language and ideologies. This is dealt with more fully by M. Gardinar in Bakhtin's *Carnival: Utopia as Critique*, a paper submitted at the International Bakhtin Conference in Manchester in 1991.

Catholic domination and oppression and the uncorking effect of a fiesta were both witnessed during one recent weekend in Spain. Domination was publicly displayed within a ceremony which involved the offering of flowers to the Virgin Mary and oppression was evident in the restrictively costumed children, who patiently and obediently played their part when surely they would have preferred to play freely in the sunshine. Brought up in a catholic, working class, uneducated and unthinking family, the painful memories of enforced religious conformity came flooding back. How many times had the symbolic clothes been struggled into, how many times had the meaningless responses been mumbled, how many times had the innocent childish questions as to meaning and purpose gone unanswered? But here the hordes, and there were certainly many more than a thousand, of traditionally dressed women, young and old, looked happy as they very slowly processed six abreast along winding streets of the village, waiting their turn to mount the church steps and hand their bouquets to others of greater importance who used them to build a tower of flowers in front of the gilded effigy. Domination and oppression clearly being practised in that they knew what expectations there were of them and inevitably they conformed. Yet was not this procession and the gifts of flowers also a little in the spirit of carnival? It provided an opportunity for lengthy social interaction and after the offerings had been made a holiday spirit prevailed well into the evening. But what forms of censorship would have been invoked had the women not conformed, or the escape valve operated too freely?

Catholics, especially lapsed or rejecting catholics, seem to carry a greater burden of guilt than others. Work done on guilt points to the importance for carers of children in the timing of warning before, or punishment after, children's misdeeds. It is thought that a warned off child will have a more effective conscience in later life than one who was punished, whereas the child punished (or censored) for misbehaviour will feel greater guilt on that and subsequent occasions lasting well into adult life. The 'punishment' meted out to the penitent in the confessional after 'sins' have been confessed could well go at least part of the way to explaining that weight of guilt so

commonly felt by Catholics and, maybe especially, lapsed Catholics.

Censorship probably occurs in all families but back in that uneducated and unthinking catholic family of mine there were a few instances which now seem unimaginably pointless and cruel, as well as some that now seem absurd. A child of ten, living by the sea but unable to swim, befriended (taken pity on?) by a young adult from another family, was told, 'I'll teach you. I'll collect you at three this afternoon'. Joy on my part. A rare treat to be taken out and maybe I'd learn to swim. But consternation on the part of my mother who, aware of my early puberty, had me quickly dress in my white and nearly outgrown bathing costume, the only one I had, and who then, to my complete surprise, splashed me with cold water and said I couldn't go. Tears, pleadings, questions of 'Why not?', but no explanation. And to make it worse I had to go to the friend and say I didn't want to go with her. It was many years later before I connected the fact that white material often becomes transparent (when wet) with my sexually repressed mother's checking, which would have been to see whether my budding breasts and emerging pubic hair would be revealed in the water. The censor in her baulked at the prospect.

I did learn to swim, two years later, wearing a black costume.

At around that time, take a year or two, my mother asked, 'You don't ever touch yourself, do you?'. Given the negative nature of the question I naturally answered 'No'. But what did she mean? Did I hug myself when cold? Did I scratch an itch? It was obviously something I shouldn't do so I lay in bed at night, stretched out very carefully so no part of my body came into contact with another. That was fairly easy to manage, but what about during the day? I can remember jolts of guilt if I crossed my legs and felt my thighs close one upon the other, if when tying my shoelaces it involved a touch of my ankles. Ridiculous. Absurd. But this was a family where no questions were asked and all mention of sexual matters were implicitly disallowed through deep and obvious disapproval. The guilt when the clitoris was later discovered almost outweighed the pleasure – for a time.

In a similar vein I was forcibly told never to let a boy kiss me. I was to 'save myself'. For what, I wondered but never dared ask. Now I wonder whether it was really believed that by the censoring of even such small tokens of maybe just affection and not lust I and the

family would be saved the ultimate ignominy and shame of a pregnancy? Books of course were few and far between and were only of the improving kind so when I left home at sixteen and joined a public library I was constantly surprised at the content of what was available on open shelves for anyone to read. It was then I learned what I was supposed to be saving myself for.

Now an atheist I am frequently amazed at the strength of that early catholic conditioning and control. How else can I explain the tinge of guilt experienced when visiting a cathedral or mighty church, to enjoy the architecture and wonder at the superhuman effort it cost on the part of workers to create it, and I cross the aisle and fail to genuflect before the altar? Why have I not been able to shed the ridiculous notion that one should humble oneself before an artefact representing something I not only do not believe in but actively oppose?

So, back to Spain and that weekend. Two days after the offering of flowers to the Virgin there took place a costumed and commemorative re-enactment of the sixteenth century invasion of the Moors, the battle on the beaches and the defeat of the would-be conquerors. Again, hordes of locals enthusiastically took part, the men swaggering along in their colourful costumes before the set piece began and the young women swinging their peasant skirts to reveal petticoats and lace-trimmed bloomers beneath. The air was thick with gun smoke as throughout the afternoon blanks and live cartridges were fired and the noise when boats full of blackened 'Moors' arrived promptly at five o'clock was deafening. Half an hour's sword fighting and wrestling on the sand later it was deemed enough and the participants paraded through the town, calling in at every hotel and bar for a free drink hospitably dispensed. This had the expected effect and the previously swaggering men became clumsy and the skirt-swinging young women were suddenly bestowing kisses in liberal fashion while cigarettes had appeared in the hands of more than half of those who looked less than sixteen. The carnival had taken over, the elders had gone home, and the young were left to enjoy. So sad to think that the following Sunday they would all be at Mass, atoning for their perceived sins.

Historically a fiesta-cum-carnival can be seen in the guise both of social control and social protest. It gives people respite from the daily round, which in rural life often means the daily struggle. It

gives people something to look forward to and it usually celebrates the community. The safety valve aspect provides the means for a community to express its hostility to those who step out of line and so might discourage other breaches of custom. Masks or costumes often provide sufficient anonymity for acts of scapegoating or occasional violence to even up old scores. Long ago, in the fifteenth century, French clerics defended the Feast of Fools by saying 'We do these things in jest and not in earnest, as the ancient custom is, so that once a year the foolishness innate in us can come out and evaporate. Don't wine skins and barrels burst very often if the air hole is not opened from time to time? We too are old barrels'.

As social protest the occasion of carnival once provided an opportunity to make views known and so bring about change. In early modern Europe, from about 1500 to 1800, riots and rebellions frequently took place during major festivals. A few examples would be Shrove Tuesday in Basel in 1376, the peasant revolt in Bern in 1513 during the annual carnival, a May Day riot against foreigners in London in 1517, similarly in Dijon in 1630 and in Madrid in 1766 and, of course, the great revolt of Catalonia began on the day of one of the most important festivals in Spain, Corpus Christi. Coming bang up to date we have the recent (at least in the early part of the day) carnival type protests against the multinationals again taking place on May Day and other Bank Holiday weekends. It is well known that politico-economic history tends to repeat itself, but here we have politico-social events borrowing from the past. And at least those who took part will have nothing to confess and will, I hope, suffer no guilt.

"Muslims in Bradford, Yorkshire have painted over a poster of the Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova advertising a sports bra. Mohammed Shaukat, of the Karmand Community Centre, said that such advertisements were not acceptable in districts where Muslims lived and worked."

The Times, 28th June 2000

"On 13th August '97 cameraman Roddy Mansfield was arrested while filming a protest against Rank Ltd's proposed clearing of Lyminage Forest in Kent. Mansfield was asked by a member of the police Tactical Support Group to recite from memory the PIN number on his National Union of Journalists press card which also incorporates a laminated photograph.
When he got the number wrong, his tapes were confiscated, he was handcuffed and then detained for three hours on charges of forging a press card."
Undercurrents

"Controversial anti-terrorism laws have cleared the Commons. The Terrorism Bill gained a third reading by 210 votes to one, a government majority of 209, and now goes to the Lords.
It introduces a wider definition of terrorism, involving use of 'serious violence against persons or property'.
But opponents say campaigning groups such as Greenpeace, GM crop protesters, and striking workers could fall within the new definition of terrorism.
A Liberal Democrats attempt to remove a 'guilty until you prove yourself innocent' clause was defeated by 239 votes to 35."
The Times, 17th March 2000

"What may appear 'fun' at the parties of the chattering classes is extremely dangerous on the council estates of our towns and cities."
The Times, 3rd April 2000
(from a letter condemning the report 'Drugs and the Law', written by a member of the House of Lords)

Frank Fisher

Access Denied

In November 1999 the UK government announced that twelve million citizens would face strict censorship for the foreseeable future. No one cares, because they're only kids ...

In its 1997 UK general election manifesto, the Labour Party pledged to use the Web as an educational tool, establishing a policy to connect schools and colleges to the Internet as soon as possible. Even allowing for the flexibility of pre-election promises, IT enthusiasts were pleased. When in October 1997 the new Labour government announced a final date of 2002 by which all schools, colleges, universities and libraries should be connected via the 'National Grid for Learning', Internet groupies were overjoyed.

But the prospect of every UK child having full Web access was seen as a boon not only by the IT industry and digital utopians. For free expression advocates, this massive expansion of Internet usage was seen as a strong riposte to the growing consolidation and dumbing down of the UK mass media. Our children would be exposed to myriad opinions, countless voices, alternative news angles and news stories. Immersed in a world of diversity and dissent our kids could develop their own values, their own political and moral positions.

Coupled with a commitment from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to cover 'Human Rights' in the updated National Curriculum, including an examination of the value of free speech and tolerance of dissent, it appeared that an appreciation of free expression, warts and all, was close to the government's heart. Sadly, by October 1999, education minister David Blunkett had decided to excise those warts and, in doing so, he initiated one of the largest acts of censorship in British history.

The World Wide Web is a vast, largely unregulated resource – anyone with a halfway decent computer can not only surf the Web,

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they can also add to it. In consequence, the Internet is not a managed environment. Despite the explosion in mainstream commercial exploitation, the Web remains largely self-published. Websites of favoured dogs and cats jostle with tens of thousands of gurgling infants and excruciating teenage philosophies. Yet pan the datastream deftly enough, and nuggets of creative gold flash up from the unlikeliest places, from the crass but compelling Drudge Report to the macabre pleasures of Dial your Death. Fringe attractions of course, but then it is precisely that fringe which suffers elsewhere as the media focuses on its core commercial content.

Still, it is also true that the media horror stories do have some basis in fact: there are sites on the Web with detailed instructions on bomb-making and improvised firearms, even if the majority draw their deadly information direct from freely available US Army manuals. There are thousands of adult porn sites, even if the commercial pages raise few hackles away from the puritan shores of the UK. There may be some child pornography, even if the National Criminal Intelligence Service recognises that the 'problem' of child porn on the Web is largely illusory. Recent BBC research indicated that fewer than one-hundredth of 1% of sites on the Web were devoted to porn. Compare that with the magazine rack in your local newsagent.

One might have hoped that a government minister would base his decisions on facts not hysteria, aiming for proportionality in his policy making. Not so David Blunkett. In part inspired by, and perhaps in part fearful of, media raving, he has announced that the Web British kids access will not be the World Wide Web at all; in fact our children shall roam the tightly specified streets and heavily monitored avenues of the Whitehall Web – a truncated, narrowed Web, dominated by commercial operations and the neuroses of Nanny Blunkett.

In introducing a package of measures known as the 'Superhighway Safety Pack' Blunkett said: "I am ... determined to ensure that children are protected from unsuitable material. We all share a responsibility to make sure that children's use of the Internet is appropriate and safe. Suppliers are also expected to offer adequate filtering of the material which can be accessed through their connections to the Internet". To the student of historical attempts at censorship key words leap out: 'unsuitable', 'appropriate'. To the observer of Internet censorship one word looms frighteningly large: 'filtering'.

The process of connecting schools to the Internet has been largely left to private enterprise. Schools or education authorities have been able to make their own arrangements, or pick from a number of government-approved suppliers. Household names such as Apple, IBM and Bull have been quick to jump into the market, and it is certainly true that the UK education system is now among the most connected in the world. The crucial question is: connected to what?

Following Blunkett's instructions, each supplier is obliged to filter all communications to and from the Internet. Special software is used, either on the desktop or more commonly at server level – i.e. at the point of contact to the Internet proper – to monitor student traffic. Certain page requests will be denied, certain downloaded files will be confiscated, certain conversations will be terminated. Even Apple, famed for their 'Think Different' advertising campaign, knuckled under; their National Grid for Learning services page is headed: 'Secure, fast and filtered'. If this software removed all pornography, or information about home-made drugs or firearms, or censored anything else that even anticensorship campaigners would not want a five-year-old puzzling over and cut nothing else, then perhaps we could rest easy. But it does far more.

An example: Bull uses Symantec's I-Gear to filter UK schools access. The software is reckoned to be state of the art: the experience of students in New York suggests otherwise. In autumn 1999, I-Gear began filtering the Board of Education's access. Jan Shakofsky, a humanities teacher at Benjamin Cardozo High School, is reported in the *New York Times* as saying that her students hit the filter whenever they tried to 'research the pros and cons of an issue'. For instance, when looking at gun control they found the National Rifle Association's site was blocked. Similarly, 'Access denied' greeted attempts to research bulimia, child labour, AIDS – even a chapter of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* was off limits, because of a passage where a starving man suckles at a mother's breast. When it encounters an unfamiliar site, I-Gear uses the tried, if not to be trusted, method of filtering based on a set of prohibited words. However, the software can also check its internal file of blocked sites, regularly updated by Symantec's head office. In fact, left to its default settings I-Gear 'disappears' thousands of websites that find their way on to Symantec's 23 category, hand-compiled list. Whose hand?

Meet Michael Cherry – Michael's a hard-working guy. As systems administrator for Hory County schools, South Carolina, Michael keeps track of every Web page request made by students at local schools, sometimes live, sometimes after the event, perusing print-outs of access requests. His schools use I-Gear, but Michael knows Hory County: "We're deep in the Bible Belt" he says. He keeps an eye out for any offensive material that slips through the filters, and when he finds such a site, he tells Symantec. Symantec listens, and lists ...

Norman Siegel of the New York Civil Liberties Union remarked of I-Gear: "The blocking program sweeps far too broadly. It significantly undermines teachers' ability to conduct their lessons and students' ability to complete their classroom assignments."

Back in the UK, another best-selling filter program, CyberPatrol, is the choice of another government-approved supplier, Centerprise. CyberPatrol was one of the first 'censorware' programs, and in the last few years has been found to block the MIT Student Association for Freedom of Expression, Planned Parenthood, the Ontario Centre for Religious Tolerance, the 'Why AOL Sucks' website, the HIV/AIDS Information Center of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the alt.atheism and soc.feminism newsgroups and many more entirely legitimate and non-pornographic sites. This despite CyberPatrol's claims that they evaluate all sites manually. It also has a nasty habit of blocking sites that criticise it or its filtering techniques, or that suggest ways in which students can evade or disable its software.

British astronomer Heather Couper tells the story of a boy complaining to her that he cannot access a website she has co-developed – the filtering software in his school blocks it. Why? Because the site deals with back-garden 'naked eye observations'.

What is clear to anyone with knowledge of filtering software is that any automatic blocking of porn or violence is accompanied by a massive unintentional blocking of innocent and potentially useful sites. In addition, many censorware programs intentionally block non-pornographic dissenting or fringe content in areas such as drug abuse and race issues. Such heavy-handed gagging, if discovered, can only cause harm: does David Blunkett really believe a student will place *more* trust in a teacher's word if all dissenting voices are erased?

Filtering aside, Blunkett's 'Superhighway Safety Pack' also makes clear that material intended for educational purposes has to pass a number of tests before it can be considered suitable for inclusion on the National Grid for Learning website. In fact, the NGfL will not even link to sites unless they abide by strict rules and, again, do not contain 'unsuitable' material. But it doesn't end there. If you want to provide an educational resource online, you not only have to ensure your own site is squeaky clean, you must also ensure that you don't link to any other sites that might contain unsuitable material. Are we still talking pornography? Unfortunately not.

I asked a DfEE spokesman for clarification on exactly what material was considered 'unsuitable' for inclusion on, or linking to, the NGfL site. He was unable to come up with examples so I ran through some of the material *Index on Censorship* currently holds on its website. Linking to mirrors of *Green Anarchist* magazine would not be acceptable – the word 'anarchist' was enough to convince the DfEE that our children would not benefit from reading it. More shocking was the DfEE's reaction to Nadire Mater's ground-breaking article presenting the voices of Turkey's conscript soldiers. Her recording of tales of bullying, drug abuse, murder and atrocity has left Mater facing up to five years' jail for 'defaming the Turkish army' – free speech is not highly regarded in Turkey (Index 5/1999). Nor it seems in the UK. British teenagers could not be allowed to read of the brutalising treatment handed out to conscripted Turkish teenagers, nor the mutilations they in turn handed on to Kurds. Why? Perhaps because if they did they might ask why the UK sold arms to Turkey? Perhaps because they might wonder why a NATO army could carry out atrocities against Kurds while bombing others for the same crimes against Kosovars?

It might seem that provocative materials drawing on real-life situations that students see on television would form a strong basis for classroom discussion, that in Labour's much vaunted 'Citizenship' classes the analysis of democratic values would be enhanced by looking at the limits of tolerance, the boundaries placed on dissent here and abroad.

At times that is the message we hear from government. The reality is very different. Twelve million of our fellow citizens are having to get used to the idea that what they read, what they say, who they talk to is controlled not by their parents or their teachers, but at best by

a faceless bureaucrat in Whitehall, at worst by a dull little sub-routine on a UNIX server, humming away in the corner of an anonymous business unit somewhere in our grey unpleasant land.

"The Law Commission proposed that anyone who simply 'seeks to enter' a computer system without authorisation could be sent to prison for three months – like attempting trespass being made a criminal offence – unjust, unenforceable and totally absurd."
New Statesman and Society, 13th October 1989

"All human beings have the fundamental right to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity and to express their thoughts in public. The right to know and the freedom to express are two aspects of the same principle. The freedom of expression is realised by the preservation of the right to know. The right to know is related inherently to the freedom of thought and conscience and all other fundamental rights. Freedom of thought and freedom of expression are necessary conditions for the freedom of access to information. The right of access to information and ideas is vital for any society. If citizens are to participate and make informed choices, they must have access to political, social, scientific and economic information and cultural expressions. They need access to the widest range of ideas, information and images. Freedom, prosperity and the development of society depend on education as well as on unrestricted access to knowledge, thought, culture and information."
IFLA (International Federation of
Library Association and Institutions)

Lisa Forrell

Crossed Lines

New UK legislation will undo a centuries-old tradition protecting private individuals against state intrusions

Secreted somewhere in the middle of the Queen's Speech in November 1999, setting out the government's programme, was a reference to proposed legislation extending the scope of telephone tapping and secret surveillance. No sooner had that happened than a large bug in the form of a steel box was discovered concealed in the bodywork of Gerry Adams' Ford Mondeo. When confronted with the possibility that this was the work of the British secret service, a spokesperson for the prime minister said, "The security and intelligence services operate within the law".

In a world of complex organised crime and terrorist activity, the need for equally sophisticated methods of detection is understandable. But that must be balanced against the right to privacy of the individual, as enshrined by the European Convention on Human Rights and now incorporated into English law by the Human Rights Act (which comes into force in October 2000). These rights should be treated as inalienable, and only subject to the most precise of restrictions. They are not.

There are four ways the authorities can have your telephone calls intercepted or your post opened without your knowledge. The police may apply for a warrant under the Police Act; MI6 and MI5 may tap your phones under the Intelligence Services Act and the Security Services Act respectively; finally, the secretary of state can issue warrants under the Interception of Communications Act. Theoretically, four different organs of state could be interfering with your privacy at any one time.

These surveillances effectively overturn a centuries-old tradition

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condemning warrants authorising intrusion into property by a secretary of state in the classic case of *Entick v Carrington* in 1765. Most of this legislation occurred under a Conservative government not known for its overwhelming concern for human rights. Now a Labour government which claims to be committed to constitutional rights has proposed legislation to broaden the scope of interference and cement the previous regime's draconian legislation.

Home Office proposals published in 1999 state that permissible interception should include the breadth of new technology, such as mobile phones, faxes and e-mail. Communication service providers will be compelled to create systems capable of interference (and reasonably assist the authorities when intercepting), all of which will make them less private and secure. In addition, the law will expand to include both public and private networks (such as hotels and workplaces).

The grounds for obtaining interception warrants remain as in the old law. They are: i) interests of national security; ii) preventing or detecting serious crime; or iii) safeguarding the economic well-being of the UK. These criteria are a cause of legitimate concern. National security and economic well-being are not defined and could be subjectively interpreted. When these grounds were first suggested, the then government refused to accept an opposition (Labour) amendment which would have restricted national security warrants to those connected with subversion, terrorism or espionage. Where is that sentiment now? Activities need not be judged seriously criminal – warrants may be issued for unspecified purposes. It is not fantastical to suggest that having a drink in a pub with a suspected IRA sympathiser could allow for authorised interception of a mobile phone, as could submission of an incorrect tax return.

The definition of serious crime is also objectionable. Here, the offence under investigation must involve violence, substantial gain or 'common purpose' or alternatively be liable to at least three years' imprisonment. Surely, if a serious crime does not lead to that level of sentence, then it should never lead to this level of intrusion. The phrase common purpose is equally disturbing. It could mean a criminal conspiracy, but it could just as easily be interpreted to mean a collective protest. This leads to the frightening image of demonstrators having their phones tapped and e-mail intercepted and their comings and goings recorded merely because they had come together

in a legitimate democratic organisation.

There is a need for clear and detailed rules which specifically define the category of people liable to have their telephone tapped, the offences which might provoke such an order, the procedure for drawing up summary reports of conversations, and the circumstances in which recordings or tapes may or should be destroyed. The theoretical suspect, who spends the afternoon protesting in Trafalgar Square, has a drink with an Irish friend (suspected of links with terrorist organisations), then fills out his tax return incorrectly, could have his property tampered with on three grounds. If the suspect is never arrested for any crime, he will never know; if arrested and acquitted, he has no redress.

The supervision of such cases is not subject to adequate judicial review. The Home Office consultation paper proposes the maintenance of the current system of a commissioner and a tribunal. The commissioner oversees the actions of the home secretary and is appointed by the prime minister. The only permissible complaint to the tribunal by a citizen is limited to the validity of the warrant. The tribunal is conducted amid a shroud of secrecy as opaque as the subject matter under its jurisdiction. It is held in secret, it does not hear argument, it does not give reasons for any decision. At the time of writing, no complaint had yet been upheld. Although the European Court has described this procedure restrictive, it did not condemn it outright. But recent cases have shown an increased willingness to consider individual civil rights when balancing notions of fairness.

The secretary of state may issue a warrant for telephone interference. It is well established that prior judicial sanction by an impartial judiciary is preferable to the executive authorisation of a warrant. The Labour government's argument is that there is a need for the executive to issue warrants applied for on national security grounds. Yet telephone tapping is surely serious enough to be considered by a judge, as it is in France and Germany, rather than a politician or a police officer. The decision as to whether interference is warranted now depends entirely on subjective assessment by the executive branch of government. This is untenable. Excessive and unwarranted interference should be dealt with by a more independent tribunal so that redress is afforded the individual whose privacy is intruded upon.

During the 1996 House of Lords debate on the extension of the Security Services Act, a Conservative member said that "a definition [of serious crime] would distract us from our task and create loopholes that could be exploited by unscrupulous defence lawyers to challenge the legality of the security services involvement in a particular case". The zeitgeist then was to prefer the efficacy of the police and security services to the rights of the individual. The spirit of today's government is to champion human rights, yet this proposed legislation will only extend and entrench pre-existing policies.

Back in 1765, Mr Entick's eloquent lawyer pleaded: "If they [the search warrants] have been granted by the minister, then it is high time to put an end to them; for if they are held to be legal, the liberty of the country is at an end. Ransacking a man's secret drawers and boxes to come at evidence against him is like racking a body to come at his secret thoughts." And he won, on the basis that it was unacceptable for an executive to issue warrants authorising intrusion into property. Yet, early in the new millennium, legislation will be introduced which a judge found offensive more than two hundred years ago. That our freedom to speak and write through any manner or means can be so fundamentally interfered with, that redress is so limited and that public debate has been so scant, must be cause for concern.

"David Aubrey QC, the Recorder, said at Cardiff Crown Court: 'What is worrying is the degree to which the Net is not subject to censorship'."
The Times, 13th July 1999

"The opposite of censorship is self-expression, which we call literature."
Stephen Spender in *Index on Censorship*, 5/97, 1994

"Power does not come from the barrel of a gun, it comes from the control of all forms of human communication."
Joseph Toscano in the *The Raven* no. 35

Harold Sculthorpe

Two of a Kind?

Out of one brutal institution into another

We are watching a panel of the usual mainstream politicians with a token representative from the social sciences or the arts, although these days it is more likely to be the business community, answering previously selected questions from an invited audience. Yes, this is a typical current affairs panel game much favoured by BBC television, an important section of the government's social control programme. From time to time the chair tries to liven up the dreary proceedings by inviting spontaneous supplementary questions or comments from the audience. The topic this week is based on the suggestion/deliberate leak by the government that prisons might be a possible recruiting ground for the armed forces to make up for the shortage of volunteers from outside. All the obvious difficulties and problems with the idea have been exhaustively explored by the panel members and the chair takes a comment from a member of the audience, "that would be taking people from one brutal institution and putting them in another". An interesting point for discussion perhaps, but not on prime time television. The comment was completely ignored by all the panel members and they continued their desultory conversations as if it had never been uttered. An interesting example of a subtle form of censorship that usually passes unnoticed, not uncommon in democracies. The differences between the two state institutions are mostly obvious so let us consider what they have in common.

You can't have flowers on a Saturday

There are major similarities between the armed forces and the prison service. In both, social control is strong. In prisons it lasts for 24 hours every day, with only rare opportunities for leave for the occasional prisoner, whilst in the armed forces it is limited to the time spent in barracks, on duty and in uniform. Both are closed institutions which rely on the ridiculous and arbitrary application of mindless rules in the attempt to induce conformity and destroy any independence of thought. Particularly in prison, rules can change as

frequently as officers change shifts. Andrea Needham, a peace activist, illustrated this in an article in *Peace News* (January 1998) about her prison experiences. One Saturday she was, to her surprise, refused the flowers sent by well-wishers because the officer on duty that day had his own different interpretation of the rules. Readers old enough to have had the misfortune to have been conscripted into the armed forces will have their own stories to tell of the idiotic tasks they have endured, presumably on the principle that idle hands make for mischief.

Letters go in and letters come out, but not always

In closed institutions control of communications with the outside world is paramount. In prisons both incoming and outgoing mail is censored and, at the whim of prison officers, may be delayed or even never received at all by those inside. The censorship and banning of mail and parcels is a rule unto itself. "It seems to vary from day to day, what prison you are at, which guards are on duty, government policy and your status in prison" writes Tracy, another peace activist. When writing to prisoners it is essential to know what may be written and what may not be written or it is all just a waste of time, and if, for instance, you enclose a postal order or stamps, mention it in the accompanying letter or they will not be received. Letters containing sensitive political material often have to be smuggled out. In the armed forces censorship of the post is equally important but the rules are different. Incoming mail is so important for the maintenance of morale especially in war time that great efforts are made to ensure that it flows freely. In peace time censorship of outgoing letters is probably limited to situations that might involve the Official Secrets Act but in war time things are very different. Censorship is usually very severe primarily for fear of 'disclosure of information that might be useful to the enemy' but also for the detection of any seeds of disaffection. It has also been used by commanding officers to prevent any criticism of their behaviour and incompetence reaching the outside world, as was illustrated by R.C. Sherriff in his play *Journey's End* about life in the trenches during the First World War.

The Imperial War Museum has a collection of soldiers' letters sent from first world war zones, mainly France, which may, by special arrangement, be examined by members of the general public. Thinking

of the horrors experienced by soldiers in the trenches it is surprising to find that the letters on file make no mention of this, but give the impression of men who were buoyant, always joking, full of spirit, and out to get the Kaiser, until one realises that such letters have been donated to the museum by recipient relatives and are more likely to come from patriots than dissidents and are not necessarily a representative sample. So even the use of such primary sources could mislead a historian if ready to be obfuscated. And then of course there was censorship.

Soldiers in First World War battle zones had unlimited access to Field Postcards, which were coloured green, presumably for ease of identification There were also ordinary picture postcards available which portrayed Tommy as eager to have a go. Not much privacy in either case. Otherwise letters could be sent in plain envelopes but these were subject to censorship by the soldiers own officers. There were also green envelopes of limited availability, perhaps one a month, that were not checked by the soldiers own officers but subject to spot checks at base camp. The envelope had to be signed by the soldier on his honour that only private and family matters were dealt with. Censoring took the form mainly of crossings out (not always effectively) of the name of the town or battle referred to. Several books on the war written in more recent years by Malcolm Brown, including *Tommy goes to War*, are also available in the museum and have examples of soldiers' letters from the front which again give the impression of a Tommy full of enthusiasm for the war. The chapter headings say it all, e.g. 'Tickled to Death to Go', 'Keep the Hun on his Toes', 'Cheerio it's a Jolly Old War' and the macabre 'It's unlucky to be killed on a Friday'. Perhaps they were a consolation to the bereaved. Euphemisms abound as everything possible was done to keep all knowledge of the horrors of the war secret. Reporting was along the lines of the "sublime devotion and unparalleled cheerfulness when our heroic soldiers are facing death", as men fell for their country. According to the letters of condolence sent to next of kin, men always died instantly and suffered no pain and wounds were mainly internal with minimal disfigurement of the features. When faced with mutiny or disaffection because of appalling conditions the standard response was to improve conditions but shoot the ringleaders, i.e. use stick and carrot simultaneously, and of course ensure that all knowledge of the events was completely

suppressed. During the war 332 death sentences are reported to have been carried out but "they didn't shoot any Australians, they would have rioted. They weren't like us, we were docile". A lesson for us all perhaps.

From a book *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers Letters 1914-18* edited by David Omissi, published in 1999 and reviewed in *London Review of Books* in the September of that year, we learn something of their feelings from the letters written by Indians to mothers, fathers, brothers, mostly in the Punjab. As expressed, these are in a similar vein, almost as if they were enjoying the war, either because of censorship or more likely here because it was considered a matter of honour to sound cheery and conceal the real horrors from the folk back home. Also they were volunteers not conscripts and not subject to quite the full rigours of military discipline. Apparently if they became disaffected or shell-shocked they were not shot but sent home.

The role of drugs in institutional life

Drugs have an important role in both prisons and the armed forces but the drugs needed are different. For the forces off duty regular alcohol consumption to the point of extreme drunkenness is assumed by the authorities to be a necessary temporary escape mechanism and for foot soldiers in the trenches (whose skills needs were minimal) it was normally available and stimulated the desired 'fearless' aggressive behaviour. In prisons, by all accounts, some drugs are readily available despite repeated denials by the authorities and it is difficult to believe that this does not have the tacit approval of the authorities. It may be no coincidence that the drugs that so mysteriously get in are, in the main, the ones that favour docile behaviour.

Conform and obey

The theme common to both prison and army life is the effect of institutionalisation and this can have its effect when sentence or service ends. Many discharged long term prisoners are unable to cope with life outside and ex-prisoners sometimes set out to be sent back inside rather than face the rigours of a life on the streets. Interestingly many ex-service men also have similar problems. Both groups contribute significantly to the numbers who eke out a miserable existence in the shop doorways of our major cities. To

quote from a letter written by a man just beginning a long jail sentence: "With everything done for you and run as it were by numbers, I can see how some get into returning to prison time after time. It is after all in a twisted way a form of security". This could equally be said of life in the forces. Could that be the way to make society as a whole more compliant and docile? The similarities between life in prison and in the forces are substantial but with one important difference – in the forces you are trained to kill.

Censor:

"An official authorised to examine printed matter, films, news, etc., before public release and to suppress any parts on the grounds of obscenity, a threat to security, etc."
Oxford English Reference Dictionary

"An official who examines books, papers, telegrams, letters, films, etc., with powers to delete material or to forbid publication, delivery or showing."
Chambers 20th Century Dictionary

"An official charged with examining books, plays, etc., and news accounts, and empowered to prohibit them or suppress parts if deemed objectionable on moral, political, military or other grounds."
New Webster's Dictionary

"The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its shame."
Oscar Wilde

"The Williams report on Obscenity and Film Censorship published in November 1979 abruptly abandoned its principle of liberalisation of censorship to put forward what The Times called 'an apparatus of censorship exceeding in severity anything known at present to the laws of England'."
Guy Phelps in *Index on Censorship*, Vol.10 No 4., 1981.

"Advocating the mere tolerance of difference ... is the grossest reformism. Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for independence become unthreatening."
Audre Lorde, writer

"I think the regulator has to be very cautious before steaming in and telling British people they don't know sufficiently what's good for them and that they have to have it imposed."
Robin Duval before he succeeded James Ferman as the Director of the British Board of Film Classification in 1999, quoted in *The Times*, 10th November 1998

"City council officials in Bradford have banned the title of a play from a noticeboard. David Mamet's classic play 'Sexual Perversity in Chicago' is being staged this week at a Bradford theatre but the company has been told the title is too racy to be promoted on an electric message board in the city centre."
The Big Issue in the North, 9.98

BAD Broadside no. 5

An Anarchist Defence of Pornography

Pornography continues to be a controversial issue, including among anarchists whom one might expect to be among the strongest supporters of free sexual expression. However, many anarchists have criticised pornography and some have supported and/or participated in the anti-pornography movement, the members of which not infrequently strive to prevent those wishing to view pornography from doing so. Some anarchists in Canada even went so far as to firebomb a sex video store, an activity which many other anarchists either ignored or chose not to criticise. Meanwhile, those of us who defend pornography and freedom of expression, sexual or otherwise, are dismissed as sexists and reactionaries. Why is it that supposed lovers of freedom and sexual liberation seem to forget their principles when it comes to sexually explicit literature and pictures?

The anti-pornography movement, including its anarchist members and supporters, is not monolithic. Some dislike dirty books and movies, but support people's freedom to produce and consume such material. They rely on argument and protest in an attempt to change the attitudes of those who like porn, encouraging them to refrain from indulging in it, and do not support censorship. Others, again including some anarchists, feel that physical attacks on porn stores or government-mandated censorship are acceptable tactics in the fight against porn. While only the latter position is censorious, and therefore unanarchic, the former position, which is contemptuous of depictions of sex is also problematic in a movement which purportedly favours sexual freedom.

Pornography is simply a depiction, in words or pictures, of sexual activity. Most people find sex a good, pleasurable activity and looking at pornography is sexually arousing for many people. Anti-porn people frequently say that the images of women in porn are degrading and offensive to women. However, while some women certainly are

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offended by pornographic images they find degrading, other women enjoy pornography. (See, for instance, the book *Caught Looking* by Kate Ellis et al, or *Writing Sadomasochistic Pornography: A Woman's Defence* by Deborah Ryder.) While the anti-porn movement views women as a class, who all share the same goals and desires, women are not a mass of automatons who all think and feel alike; some are pro-porn and some are anti-porn, just like men. Additionally, the images of women in porn are no more sexist and demeaning towards women than the images of women in most literature and visual media, from novels to movies to television to magazine ads. In a sexist society, most images of women are going to contain at least some of the sexist attitudes common to both women and men. Besides, some pornography contains women characters who are very independent, self-motivated and concerned with their own pleasure, especially in S/M porn where women are frequently on top. What bothers these people is not the image of women in porn, which is like that elsewhere in society, but its sexual explicitness – they are uncomfortable with sex.

Anti-porn activists also claim that porn, with its allegedly degrading view of women is responsible for the attitudes and actions of men towards women, and therefore is different from other forms of expression. But, as with other types of writing and pictures, porn generally shows what people want to see and are comfortable with; it doesn't plant foreign ideas in people's minds. And, even in the few cases where novel ideas are introduced to people in porn, they remain just that, ideas. Men do not rape or beat women because they see it in a movie. Sexism, rape, and beatings of women by their partners existed long before the widespread dissemination of modern pornography, and societies with little or no porn are no less sexist and violent than those where it is common.

The claim that men are made violent by porn, besides being inaccurate, is also based on a myth: that most pornography is violent. Most porn is composed of depictions of non-violent, consensual, mutually pleasurable sex. Some of it also contains S/M sex, which, while including the trappings of violence, and involving (apparent) pain, is also consensual and mutually pleasurable. There is certainly some porn which depicts rape or other coercive and violent sex, but it is a small portion of the porn produced and consumed. Moreover, like violent non-sexual movies and books, it is simply a depiction of

a fantasy, made up by the author or performed by consenting actors. Violent porn is no more real violence than are the *Halloween* movies. And if anti-porn people are truly concerned about the violence and not the sex in porn, why is it that they protest only porn shops or destroy porn mags and video stores, while ignoring *Friday the Thirteenth* and horror magazines and books.

One aspect of the whole phenomenon of porn that is often left out of the discussion is that of homosexual porn. Much of the pornography produced today shows men having sex with men, with a growing proportion depicting woman-woman sex. The anti-porners tend to ignore homoporn because it gives the lie to many of their arguments. If depictions of inequitable sexual encounters between men and women are degrading to women, why aren't similarly inequitable encounters between men and other men (which are very common in all-male porn, with its tops and bottoms) degrading to men? And if they are degrading to men, why isn't such porn offensive to men, especially bottom men? And, if there is S/M imagery and (pretend) violence in this porn, why doesn't this result in widespread violence against men, and even rapes of men?

A discussion of such issues never takes place, since most of the people who oppose heteroporn are unwilling to talk about, let alone criticise, queer porn because they do not want to risk being seen as 'homophobic' or otherwise politically incorrect. This is due to the fact that porn has often been seen, rightly, as liberatory by homosexualist men (and recently also by some homosexualist women), and is a much more open part of mainstream life for queer men than heteroporn is in straight society. Because of this 'politicisation' of queer porn, any discussion of homoporn by the anti-porners, few of whom are homosexualist men, is likely to be criticised by gay liberationists as 'anti-gay', and thus effectively suppressed. This is unfortunate, since such a discussion would show the fallacies in the anti-porn arguments.

Even though it seems odd that sexual liberationists and anarchists would find porn offensive, it is certainly true that people have different tastes. Just because I like porn doesn't mean that you should. But, if one finds something offensive, one should simply avoid it, and thereby avoid the offence. However, anti-porners are not content with this strategy when it comes to porn. They feel that if it offends them, it must offend others, primarily women, and they take it upon

themselves to protect these others from it. Additionally, since they feel it leads otherwise non-violent, women-loving men onto the path of violence and sexism, they feel they need to prevent men from seeing porn as well.

As stated above, anti-porners differ on the strategy they employ to achieve these ends. While those who rely on argument and protest to influence others to avoid porn are preferable to the censors, their ideas about people should be problematic for those with an anarchist perspective. People are free agents who make choices and decisions based on what they observe, hear, and otherwise experience, and are responsible for the outcome of these choices. The libertarian way to deal with other free agents who choose to view or read materials of which one disapproves is to let them see these books or movies and then discuss the material with them and try to convince them of one's point of view. The issue should be debated in a free market-place of ideas, a market place where all should feel free to view the images or writings under discussion, not simply taking the word of the puritans that porn contains degrading or harmful images or words. People who pressure porn dealers to stop distributing porn, and who encourage others to avoid porn based on someone else's experience of it, while engaging in a non-coercive, and therefore acceptable form of activity, do not respect the decision-making ability of others. Nor do they trust the strength of their own arguments when up against a person's own experience of pornography. Such people feel that others need to be protected (in large part, from themselves) by those more enlightened, i.e., the anti-porn people. Urging others to restrict their experiences and rely on the opinions of others in such matters as reading and viewing preferences, including the reading and viewing of porn, while not unanarchic, is certainly illiberal.

More objectionable to anarchists, however, are the anti-porn activists who are frankly censorious. While we have not come across any anarchists who endorse laws banning porn, many anarchists support destruction of the property of porn dealers. Destruction of films and books which some people wish to sell to others who voluntarily seek to buy them is just as much censorship as any anti-obscenity law. While sharing the views of the other anti-porners who seek to protect others from porn, these people go a step further and use coercive force to achieve their ends. This is totally incompatible with the kind

of voluntary society sought by most anarchists, and should be denounced by all freedom-lovers.

Pornography, like any other form of entertainment can be good or bad, based on the individual merits of any particular work. However, as a genre of literature or film, it is no better or worse or good or evil than any other. If porn is bad or sexist, the best strategy is to criticise it and discuss it with others, and/or make good, non-sexist porn, not suppress it. Sex and its depiction are a source of pleasure for many and our freedom to indulge in both should be defended, or at least tolerated, by anarchists. Censors, including those who claim to be anarchists, are the enemies of freedom, and anarchists who support them call into question their commitment to a free society.

"Speaking to the Grimble Jury in an obscene publications case, Rumpole says: '... I leaned forward then, dropped my voice and addressed them confidentially. Members of the jury, Freedom is not divisible. You cannot pick and choose with freedom, and if we allow liberty for the opinions we hold dear and cherish, we must allow the same privilege to the opinions we detest or even to works of such unadulterated rubbish as Schoolgirl Capers, Volume I, numbers 1 to 6. Let those who wish to read it do so; they will soon grow weary of the charms of such elderly schoolgirls. You and I, members of the jury, stand, do we not, for tolerance? We are not intolerant of Alderman Pertwee. He is free to express his opinions. We don't seek to call him a hypocrite, or have him banned. Ours is the tolerant approach, and if we are tolerant in great matters, so we must be in the little, trivial matter of these puerile magazines, for once we start in the business of censorship and the banning of books, that is the ending of freedom. Our priceless liberties are in your hands today, members of the jury. There could be no safer place for them!'
He lost the case."
John Mortimer's novel *Rumpole's Return* (1980)

BAD Broadside no. 10

Insult and Injury, Ideas and Actions: an anarchist defence of unlimited freedom of expression

Virtually everyone in the United States claims to support freedom of speech and expression. When debate arises around attempts by certain individuals to exercise this freedom, however, one frequently finds purported free speech advocates among those hoping to suppress the speech of others. Unfortunately, the position taken by many anarchists and leftists on this issue is no more principled than that taken by more mainstream conservatives and liberals.

In practice, most people, whatever label they use to describe themselves, support the freedom to say things with which they agree, but favour efforts to prevent the expression of ideas which they strongly oppose. Many conservatives, for instance, wish to prevent any discussion of homosexuality which does not condemn it, but advocate the freedom of college students to use racist expressions. While, on the other hand, quite a number of liberals and leftists support allowing black racists to speak on college campuses, but oppose attempts by white racists to have public rallies. And anarchists have frequently sided with those who oppose free speech, going so far, at times, as to physically attack white racists.

One argument heard from those who wish to stop others from expressing themselves is that saying or depicting something nasty is the same as doing something nasty. By this logic, racist speech is the same as physically attacking someone because of their colour, or the acting out of a rape scene by performers in a video is an actual rape. This is simply untrue. But using expressions like 'verbal assault' to describe name-calling tends to blur the difference between speech and action, between insult and injury. Even as children, we were taught that 'sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will

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never hurt us'. And, while it is not true that we are not in some way 'hurt' by being called names or otherwise offended by the speech of others, a clear distinction must be maintained between emotional distress and physical pain. Self-defence is completely justified when one is physically attacked, whatever the reason. But offensive speech, while we may wish to respond to it using various non-violent methods, is something we must allow if we wish to have a free society.

Another rationale for stifling the expression of others is that, even though the speakers or writers are doing no more than propagating certain ideas, these ideas might encourage some people to engage in actions which could physically hurt others. It is certainly true that people's actions are motivated by what they think, and that their ideas may be influenced by others. Nevertheless, wherever people acquire the beliefs which motivate them, each individual is responsible for her or his own actions. If someone, after hearing a racist speech attacks someone of a different colour, or destroys someone's porn magazine after reading an anti-porn article, the attacked are justified only in defending against their attackers, not the speaker or writer. Only hostile actions merit a physical response.

The way to respond to ideas with which one disagrees is to propagate different ideas. Open debate of opposing ideas is the best method of finding the truth and promoting ethical philosophies. Only those who fear that they will lose in such a debate advocate that the views of their opponents should be suppressed. Those who advocate a new kind of society where people live in freedom, but feel it is necessary to suppress the ideas of others in order to achieve this new world, might benefit from a look back at the history of the Soviet Union, where exactly such a philosophy was implemented. As an early critic of the Leninists said: "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently".

"It is our attitude towards free thought and free expression that will determine our fate. There must be no limit on the range of temperate discussion, no limits on thought. No subject must be taboo. No censor must preside at our assemblies."
William O. Douglas

Protesters, with the radomes of the Menwith Hill Spy Station in the background.

Menwith: Information for them, not us

Take a short walk west from Harrogate, North Yorkshire, along the A59, cross a designated site of Outstanding Natural Beauty and you will soon find it polluted by a space age scene of very unnatural beauty. Twenty-seven going on twenty-nine enormous white golf balls (radomes) up to sixty metres in diameter, satellite dishes in abundance, and a host of towering aerial masts line the horizon. Invisibly, under your feet, fibre-optic cables carry 32,000 telephone lines while the space age hardware you can see monitors transmissions from land and mobile phones, radios, faxes, satellite communications and cyberspace. This is the United States Menwith Hill Spy Station (MHS). One of at least ten US spy stations world wide including Germany, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is capable of intercepting two million telephone calls every hour, sorting and sifting them, using artificial intelligence aids to pick out key words. Its targets are military, political, commercial, industrial and domestic and that includes you and me. "Anybody who is politically active will eventually end up on its radar screens" according to Wayne Madsen who was quoted in the *Sunday Times* (27th February 2000) as having worked for twenty years at the US national Security Agency (NSA) and other agencies. According to the *Sunday Times*, it is a loophole in the 1985 Interception of Communications Act that gives NSA officials the opportunity to put individuals and organisations under surveillance without a specific ministerial warrant because Section 3 (2) of the Act allows entire classes of communications to be monitored.

The first 'official' admission of this long suspected monitoring system, code named ECHELON, came from the publication in 1998 of a report from the Science and Technology Office of Assessment (STOAS) that had been commissioned by the Civil Liberties Committee of the European Parliament called *Assessing the Technologies of Political Control.* A second report, *Development of Surveillance Technology and Risk of Abuse of Economic Information*, was published in April 1999. The main concern of European govern-

Based on a report published in *Squall* (Summer 1998) that included an interview with the CAAB peace activist Lindis Percy. Additional later information is from various sources.

ments has focused on the potential it gives for industrial espionage and the advantage this could give to American industry. If governments can be embarrassed, they were, by these reports which stated that "within Europe all e-mail, telephone and fax communications are routinely intercepted by the United States National Security Agency transferring all target information from the European mainland via the strategic hub of London then by satellite to Fort Meade in Maryland via the crucial hub Menwith Hill". The report confirmed that this included diplomatic, economic and political communications, monitored though a massive global spy web at Menwith Hill. None of this may come as a surprise to readers, but European business leaders were said to be less than delighted at this confirmation that an arm of the US government routinely breached their commercial confidentiality.

Although labelled 'RAF Menwith Hill' this, the largest regional intelligence gathering station on earth, is actually run by and for the US National Security Agency (NSA) based in Fort Meade, Maryland USA, which within its annual budget of $10 billion is alleged to spend $1 million per minute spying on the communications of the UK, France and Germany, etc. The rapid expansion of the base, from four radomes in 1984 to 27 now and the foundations for two more already laid, keeps creating the need for more land. This means applying to Harrogate council for planning permission but there is a catch, for Harrogate council has no power to refuse permission or impose conditions. The base is part of a US government plan, with the connivance of British governments, to maintain and extend US economic, political and military domination. British Ministry of Defence (MoD) police who are paid for with American money protect it. It is a threat to civil liberty world wide, used to obtain information about us whilst attempting to keep its own activities as secret as possible.

From only 400 in 1980 there are now some 1,400 American and 400 British staff on site and it operates in close tandem with the British Spy Station GCHQ in Cheltenham although any information exchanges are at the discretion of the Americans. All military, commercial and private civilian communication in Europe is monitored at Menwith and through a special land line to the British Telecom 'Hunters Stones' nearby there is access to trunk and cross-channel calls, enabling US officers to spy on any British citizen without

a warrant. Information collected on political activists, for example, can then be passed on to MI5, Special Branch or Scotland Yard.

Menwith Hill Station, a product of the cold war with Russia, was created in 1956 when the US acquired 562 acres of Yorkshire moorland on a 21-year tenure in a secret arrangement with the British government. In 1976 tenure was extended for a further 21 years and although this has now expired and although the cold war is now defunct the base continues to expand, all without any approval or even consultation with that supposed guardian of our liberties, the British Parliament. Since the arrangements between the UK and the US governments that allow Menwith Hill to operate are secret, nobody knows on what legal grounds it now functions, but it appears that the US government has security of tenure established by an exchange of correspondence between the two governments.

Parliament is Powerless

A small group of MPs have attempted to impose some form of parliamentary accountability on MHS but without success. In a 1987 court case former Cabinet Minister Tony Benn testified that Britain is under contract to the US to buy nuclear weapons on the condition that bases like MHS are allowed to operate from here and provided that the US has access to British intelligence operations. In his last speech before his shocking and mysterious death in 1984, the Labour MP Bob Cryer made a blistering attack on the station and the fudging of ministerial replies on the subject. He described how the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Nicholas Soames) had said there is Parliamentary accountability for Menwith Hill, whilst the Minister for Public Transport Stephen Norris found the place so secret that whilst he was a minister at the Department of Defence he thought it was a railway station. Max Madden MP asked questions between 1986 and 1997. Norman Baker, Lib-Dem MP for Lewes, has asked dozens about Menwith Hill since entering parliament in May 1997. He told the radical magazine *Squall* "I'm a believer in freedom of information. I don't like the way Menwith Hill is shrouded in secrecy, and I'm not convinced that what happens is for the good of this country. Most of us assume that the cold war is over, so the question must be what are they using it for?" He, along with many others, believes that one of its uses is to give US companies an advantage over European businesses by indulging in industrial

espionage. Others are more concerned about its role in US domination and in assisting the British Government to monitor dissident political activity. The standard ministerial reply to almost any question on the subject is 'The use of Menwith Hill by the United States Department of Defence is subject to confidential arrangements between the United Kingdom and the United States governments'.

Extra Parliamentary Opposition

From the beginning, many people have worked to close the base. There have been vigils, demonstrations, peace camps, non-violent blockades, actions inside the base, letters to the press and some media coverage by investigative journalists, but it is still there. It is no surprise that the main campaign against this monstrous intrusion in the Yorkshire landscape comes not from the politicians or business leaders but from small groups of dedicated peace campaigners, often at considerable cost to themselves. Groups now involved include the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB), the Otley Peace Action Group and the WoMenwith Hill Peace Campers, with support from members of Yorkshire CND and others. From time to time the wider anti-militarism movement comes to Menwith. Most recently this was on 4th March 2000 in an event organised jointly by Yorkshire CND and CAAB. On a day when similar demonstrations were being held in other parts of the country, some five hundred people gathered outside the main gate to demonstrate against MHS. They followed this by walking the four miles around the perimeter of the base, a symbolic act of protest, and an activity that ensured the police had to close the main A59 road for a while. Many people decided to 'trespass' on to the base in breach of the military land bylaws but there was clearly a policy decision by the MoD police not to make any arrests on that day.

CAAB, a national organisation, works through the courts, local planning offices, Parliament, American Freedom of Information Act and the media to raise public awareness of Menwith Hill and other bases occupied and controlled by American visiting forces. They have also struggled to hold the American Visiting Forces to account for their violent behaviour towards non-violent peace protesters and many of its members initiate and take part in Non Violent Direct Action (NVDA) against military bases and the companies involved in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. The WoMenwith

Peace Camp, was set up in 1994 by women to maintain a permanent presence close to the base so as to be able to monitor its activities on a daily basis and remained there until its eviction in August 1999, an event which has not stopped the women continuing to meet there regularly and continuing their protests.

Permanently protesting for peace

Members of the Otley Peace Group and other peace groups have, since the 1980s, when there were only four radomes, been breaching the perimeter fence frequently, entering the base and carrying out many non-violent protests designed to disrupt its activities. There have been several hundreds of these peaceful incursions over the years despite all the efforts of the Ministry of Defence to keep them out and in 1991 one person was arrested 160 times. Activists have been arrested, assaulted, imprisoned, and injuncted but have never given up, continuing to maintain their peaceful protests against the spying activities of the American military, defying the military bylaws forbidding trespass.

Following legal challenges through the courts these bylaws were declared 'defective on their face' in the High Court in 1993. So for several subsequent years peaceful trespassers could not be prosecuted and were simply asked to leave. In the summer of '97, in a typical example of the lengths the authorities would go to in attempting to quell these activists, new bylaws became operative and these are now known as the RAF Menwith Hill Bylaws. Although Menwith Hill in practice is not and never has been an RAF base, it then was legally designated as such and it was again a criminal offence to trespass on the land. However when Anne Lee and Helen John, two women from the Womenwith Hill Peace Camp, challenged the validity of these new bylaws, Judge Crabtree on the 5th September 1997 ruled that they were also invalid. Following this decision the cases of bylaw transgression were not proceeded with although the arrests continued and the MoD refused to remove any of the notices. The first two activists to be arrested under the new bylaws, Helen John and Anne Lee, were acquitted by a judge at York Crown Court in the October. He ruled that since 70% of the land covered by the law was used for grazing sheep, it could not be considered primarily of 'military use'. Less than a week later,

activists Lindis Percy and Anni Rainbow, both from CAAB, were arrested under the same bylaw that had just been ruled invalid. They had been removing bylaw notices. It would appear that the authorities had decided to ignore the court's ruling. During the remainder of 1997 and into 1998, activists were arrested, detained, charged, reported, de-arrested, re-arrested, or ignored all for the same action, i.e. removing the invalid signs. This was always done quite openly, with the authorities being informed of the intention to take them down, keep them safe and return them when the matter had been resolved in the High Court. The various alleged offences ranged from a bylaw offence, criminal damage, attempted criminal damage, suspicion of criminal damage, possession with intent, inciting an officer to disaffect and theft. Very few alleged offences have ever actually come to court. Higher authority had clearly given instructions that the Crabtree ruling be ignored.

Since September 1999 the authorities appear to have abandoned trying to bring trespass cases against the protesters, instead they are escorted, carried out or arrested and reported with a view to prosecute, then told no further action will be taken. On the 19th September 1999 the Crown Prosecuting Service dropped 74 cases of people who had been arrested under the controversial bylaws at MHS. Eventually the MoD succeeded in getting Judge Crabtree's ruling overturned in the High Court on 15th January 1999 by Judges Buxton and Collins.

The WoMenwith Peace Camp

The WoMenwith Peace Camp began on the 20th May 1994 when a group of women peace activists set up a ten-day camp outside MHS to put pressure on this US intrusion. By the autumn, it had become a permanent feature on a site near the corner of Slack Lane and the main A59 Ilkley to Harrogate main road. But they were not to be left undisturbed for long. In 1995 The North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) decided that the A59 road urgently needed widening at this very point. When the campers failed to respond to an eviction notice served on them, the council decided to forcibly evict and on the morning of Wednesday 19th April they closed the road and came with thirty-odd police, fifty council bailiffs, contractors and engineers with cranes and low loaders, removed the caravans and their contents,

arrested seven of the campers, charged them with obstructing the highway and told them they could have their homes and possessions back only if they paid £1,728, the cost of the eviction. However the women soon re-established their camp in the leafy, relatively spacious Kettlesing Layby on the A59, close to the junction with the road from the spy base.

Ever since the camp was established the authorities have pursued a series of legal manoeuvres in their attempts to get rid of 'these troublesome women'. In November 1997 NYCC issued an injunction to stop women living outside MHS. The eviction issue was before the courts for the next twenty months and became a test case for the Human Rights Act (1998). On the 22nd June 1998 the High Court Judge, Mr Justice Hooper decided that the camp was unlawful and issued an injunction against three women, Anne, Helen and Jenny that they may not reside between 11pm and 7am on the highway in a wide area surrounding Menwith Hill. He did not issue a possession order for the land because NYCC forgot to apply for it. However on 29th October 1998 the NYCC did obtain their possession order and seven named women were summoned to appear in court. The judge ordered that the women could retain a presence on the site with one mobile home, but all other caravans and paraphernalia had to be removed before noon on 27th November otherwise the NYCC would have the right to remove them and would then have had to keep them in store pending any appeal. With this threat hanging over them the women complied with the order because it did allow them to maintain a presence on the site, and on the 20th May 1999 they celebrated the fifth anniversary of the camp, following this three days later with a blockade of the base.

Finally on 14th July 1999 Mr Justice Hooper in Leeds High Court ruled against a permanent presence at MHS and the camp was evicted on 18th August 1999. The ruling did allow the presence of one unobtrusive caravan but during daylight hours only. However, into the new millennium the women continue to meet at the campsite every few weeks, continue to penetrate the new security fence that surrounds the base and continue to observe its activities from the inside.

The fruits of persistence: one person's story

Lindis Percy from CAAB, who has had an injunction since 1991 banning her from the area around Menwith Hill, with the exception

of two public footpaths, has been a thorn in the side of the US military in the UK for many years. She has taken out civil and criminal actions against the US government for assault and false imprisonment at a number of US bases. However the Americans cited diplomatic immunity and the cases failed. In an interview with *Squall* published in the summer of 1998 she said "I firmly believe that out of bad things good things will come and that people can make a difference, when we know that what we are doing is right. My family know this is important work and accept that the arrests and court cases is what is going to be. Of course there have been problems and they used to get very angry, but I think it is sorted out now. This crazy zany world of secrecy, collusion and deceit is bizarre, I still work as a health visitor in Bradford which keeps me sane. They want you to give up – but the more they try to silence me the stronger I get".

In February 1997, in prison whilst serving a nine month sentence for breaking the permanent injunction against entering another US Base at Lakenheath, she was released 'with reluctance' by Judge Richard Tucker in the High Court after an application by the Official Solicitor on grounds of her health being seriously affected after she was subjected to forcible strip searches in Holloway Prison. In February 1998 Lindis was arrested for removing one of the bylaws notices from the side of one of the footpaths. "They deliberately moved the bylaw notices three feet to 'protect' the signs from protesters. The intent was entrapment! They say the notices are off the footpath, I say they are still on it. So by reading the notices you have to get so close you are, in their eyes, committing a criminal offence. The MoD police appeared out of nowhere and arrested me." Since her interview with *Squall* Lindis, continuing her campaign as a peace activist, was summoned to the High Court in London to say why she should not be sent to HMP Holloway for at least six months for breaking her permanent injunction and for breaking a six months suspended sentence for earlier breaches of the same injunction, in this case for entering MHS base and removing bylaw notices. This time, the Secretary of State for Defence and the MoD brought 114 breaches with evidence of fourteen videos which all involved Lindis taping 'INVALID' signs across the invalid bylaw notices, which the MoD police refused to remove from public display during the period leading up to their appeal against Judge Crabtree's

ruling that the bylaws were invalid. In March 1999 she received another nine months prison sentence for one hundred breaches of the injunction.

Any account of the ongoing campaign against MHS can only be incomplete and does not do justice to the efforts, using Non Violent Direct Action and legal challenges, that so many have maintained over the years. It should not be read as the full story but rather just as a glimpse at what must be one of the least known campaigns outside the world of the activists and their supporters. A few individuals are named so as to give a feeling of humanity and authenticity, but this must not be taken in any way to detract from the efforts of the many others who have also contributed to the campaign against Menwith Hill Spy Station. The full story will only be told when MHS no longer exists.

Son of Star Wars

It has recently been confirmed that there are plans for the continued expansion of Menwith Hill until at least 2005. The physical expansion will enable it to house the technology to transmit and receive communications and full-spectrum photographic images from military satellites, allowing the US military to see and hear what is going on, on literally any inch of the planet. It will also be able to control laser weapons which could be fired anywhere to an accuracy of six feet. The space probe Cassini, launched in Autumn 1998 with 72 pounds of plutonium on board, was directly connected to the need to fuel these weapons in space. There is every reason to believe that Menwith will continue to grow well beyond 2005 and who knows what technology it will house by then. As revealed in a BBC television programme in December 1998, Menwith Hill is the nerve centre of the US new 'star wars' plan. The two new radomes now being built will be part of the Ground Relay Station, for the new Space Based Infra-red System (SBIRS) that is part of the US Space Command system for the control of US space weapons. So Big Brother is not just watching you, he's getting bigger and more lethal all the time.

In conclusion

The pursuit of the women of the Otley Peace Group, the CAAB activists and the Womenwith Peace camp by the authorities in an

attempt to break their spirit is reminiscent of the British government's campaign against the suffragettes in the early years of the previous century. And that was not successful. The media interest in Menwith and the NSA has been increasing in recent months with the pre-existing veil of secrecy about its existence and intentions gradually being lifted. This is in no small part due to the efforts over the years of the peace campaign activists and we should certainly welcome this, but it must also be in part due to the arrogance of the US military authorities who, confident of their power, world wide, no longer consider that it matters if the role of the NSA receives some publicity. They will no doubt continue to keep secret anything they still don't want us to know. The US government, because of its technological lead, already has 'information superiority' and some analysts recognise a 'revolution in military affairs' in which military thinking, exploiting the growing importance of information technology, is developing a concept of the information war, the Gulf War being the first. This means that a new form of war is emerging in parallel with changes in society based around the control and use of information. When this is sufficient we will only know what the US government, and their minor ally the British government, want us to know. But they will be able to know everything about us that they need to know to maintain their power. So who will need censorship then? A terrifying prospect. But they are not invincible. Whilst, despite the threat of a millennium bug, for most of the world the first of January 2000 was uneventful, according to some reports, during the first three hours of the new millennium, MHS could listen to no one.

Privacy International presented the first annual 'Big Brother' awards at the London School of Economics on Monday 26th October 1998, the 50th anniversary of the writing of George Orwell's book 1984. The 'Big Brother Lifetime Achievement' award was given to NSA/Menwith Hill spy base. 'Winston' awards were also given to individuals and organisations which have made an outstanding contribution to the protection of privacy, as well as to people who have been the victims of privacy invasion. The 'Winston Lifetime Achievement' award was given to Lindis Percy. The awards were judged by a panel of experts including journalists, lawyers, academics, consultants and civil rights activists.

Censorship of Films on Television

Films shown in Britain are censored by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) although they call it classification not censorship. On occasion they do require cuts before they will issue a certificate and films not submitted or rejected by the board would have difficulty in obtaining significant distribution and would invite prosecution. It is surprising therefore to discover that when these films are later shown on television, as many of them are, they undergo a further stage of censorship, although this time it's called editing.

However censorship it must be, because the cuts made are listed under the six headings of language or swearing, violence, nudity, sex scenes, drug use and a mysterious category called content. We are indebted to the BBC publication *Radio Times* for this information. This journal each week lists all the films to be shown on the five terrestrial television channels with a brief description of each and in the final sentence informs the reader if the film contains any swearing, violence, nudity, sex scenes, or drug use, occasionally preceded by the word brief as in brief nudity or single as in single sex scene. This is no doubt intended to help the faint hearted avoid being distressed and incidentally (good for sales perhaps) helps those who would like to pick out easily those films offering something for their specialised taste. However that is not our concern here but rather the additional information also given about the bits you are not going to be allowed to see because the film has been edited. These cuts are of course in addition to any that may have been made before the film was shown in the cinema.

Of the 1,247 films shown on the five terrestrial television channels during 20 of the 21 weeks between 20th February and 16th July 1999, there were 201 (16.1%) 'edited' under one or more of the headings listed above. Week by week the number of films cut ranged from four (7.7%) to eighteen (29%) to give the average of 16.1%. There were 240 category cuts in the 201 films giving an average of 1.2 per film, but they ranged from one to the maximum of five. See the table overleaf.

Type	*No. of cuts*	*% total cuts*	*% total cuts excluding 'content'*
Content	20	8.3	
Language	116	48.3	2.7
Violence	73	30.4	33.2
Nudity	16	6.7	7.3
Sex	12	5.0	5.4
Drugs	3	1.3	1.4
Total	240	100%	100%

As one might expect, the number of cuts made for violence was high but, initially surprisingly, the highest category was for language. Apparently swearing on television provokes more complaints than anything else so clearly the old adage 'sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me' does not apply here. However, most of the films shown are American where the word fuck is commonplace at least in films and this must partly explain the high number of cuts for language. The cuts for nudity and sex scenes are surprisingly low given the amount of residual puritanism in British culture, but then again recent surveys have shown that the viewing public are not greatly concerned by seeing simulated sex on television provided they consider the context appropriate. Too few of the films shown had any drug related content for the figures for cuts to have much significance.

"Under the BBC's licence agreement and the 1981 Broadcasting Act that covers the IBA, these organisations have no obligation to tell us when the Home Secretary uses his limitless discretionary gag."
New Statesman and Society, 13th October 1989

"The Williams report on Obscenity and Film Censorship published in November 1979 abruptly abandoned its principle of liberalisation of censorship to put forward what The Times called 'an apparatus of censorship exceeding in severity anything known at present to the laws of England'."
Guy Phelps in *Index on Censorship*, Vol.10 No 4., 1981

Dave Cunliffe

An Authoritarian Feminist Virus

Over the last three decades a global feminist movement impetus has become more widely accepted and influential in mainstream society and culture. Its varied input has obviously not always generated a positive or liberating effect. Wherever there is injustice and inequality, it is helpful to understand root causes and identify perpetuators. Gender discrimination is endemic in most animal interaction. Sexual stereotyping, chauvinism, role allocation and mutual gender exploitation is deeply embedded in the human psyche. Relationships at all levels, and of myriad kinds, can be (and often are) constructively altered and changed. Much feminist activism and communication has improved and enriched many attitudes, experiences and bonding. Alternatively, some feminist initiatives have sadly reflected and mirror-imaged the very evil they oppose and struggle against. Authoritarian Feminism is arguably not the most regrettable thread of the feminist tapestry, but it is certainly one of the most negative, destructive and regressive components – a parasitic tumour on the female liberation host.

All of us, by our very nature and existence, are true co-feminists. More exactly, we are potentially true co-beings. The conscientious anarchists amongst us are busy working towards a non-exploitive and non-discriminating lifestyle. At least in utopian intention, if not in everyday reality. Homo sapiens are seemingly a relatively recent emergence on this planet. The many varieties or races of the modern human animal are undoubtedly pretty much the same. A few superficial cosmetic differences – but more importantly essentially interconnected and mutually dependent. When the late novelist William Burroughs repeatedly argued that "women were the first evolutionary mistake", he wasn't being sexist or chauvinistic. It wasn't just a clever '60s throw-way one-liner from an ageing queen. He often explained his belief that the evolutionary leap from single-sex reproduction was likely to screw up the then emergent counter-culture and global revolutionary impetus. I strongly disagreed with him. Hyperactive on numerous dissenting fronts – actively involved in anti-war, anti-racist, anarchist, environmental, animal defence.

voluntary poverty, alternative and radical publishing – I was enthusiastic about the early global feminist movement. In my youthful ignorance and naivete (and paucity of previous example), I mistakenly thought that all desired change would remain permanent and positive. History has proved Burroughs right and myself wrong.

Language, rather than manual dexterity, was the primary evolutionary tool that propelled the human animal out of the limiting jails of early reptilian soup mindscape and later medieval Dark Ages. Language accelerated the ever advancing and unfolding frontiers of creative and technological advance. It was fittingly the language insights of rudimentary feminism that clarified and illuminated many of the cruelties and injustices of gender stereotyping and discriminatory culture. Questioning our words helped us to question our attitudes and practice. What then seemed trivial 'word-games' were later seen and understood to be invaluable decoders of scrambled information. Revealing the real meaning behind many deliberately misleading sentences. Exposing much of our own self-deception, false image projection, bullshit and falsity.

Single issue movements (when defined and practised as such) can be self-destructive. Nothing exists in isolation. Such movements tend to attract a wide diversity of support; burdened by every conceivable political, religious and cultural dogma. This is especially true of campaigning feminist groupings. Like anarchist collectives and drug subcultures, they provide a non-judgemental sanctuary for the emotionally unstable and unloved. A supportive or reinforcing asylum for sociopathic and idealist alike. A last refuge for those who no other organisation will have, tolerate or endure. Single issue politics often function like much contemporary medical treatment and diagnosis. Undesirable manifestations are viewed in relative isolation and the wider picture neglected or unseen. Superficial symptoms are identified and eagerly attacked, whilst responsible malignant roots and causes are unrecognised and ignored.

Retrospective wisdom shows a random authoritarian infiltration of the feminist movement as far back as the seventies. This was no conspiracy. These women were not in disguise. They were transparently conservative, authoritarian and conformist at the time. Their overt chauvinism was tolerated in the light of overwhelming male economic and cultural oppression. 'Positive Discrimination' was already becoming 'reverse sexism'. A lot of academics who

adopted a rebel feminist posture during the seventies merged smoothly into the contra-moods of the eighties and nineties. They flowed with the trends and changes of the times – altering their opinions as easily as they discarded clothes and hairstyles. Contrary to conventional radical political mythology, feminist writers trapped in privileged academic closets have done much to shape Authoritarian Feminism. They may be shrouded in the bourgeois straitjackets of sheltered intellectual ghettos; but they have unknowingly unleashed a destructive demonic force in the real world of everyday living.

Male-hating hard-core butch lesbians, with a hidden or open agenda of sex-war infanticide of male babies, nazi-style test-tube genetically selected procreation and so on, are the fantasy hack-writing output of pulp fiction. Unfortunately these caricatures have real flesh bodies patrolling university corridors and urban gay clubs. Looking like pubescent males, they imitate the most pathetic macho masculine stereotype of extreme violence and indifference. More dangerous is the prudish, blinkered-vision, stunted-imagination, book-burning, censorship-advocating mind-set that lies, however uneasily, in bed with right-wing bigots and religious zealots. These authoritarian manifestations are nothing new in revolutionary, libertarian anarchist and counter-culture circles.

During the late '60s and early '70s many alternative city newspapers (in North America and Europe) outsold their commercial counterparts. This was mainly down to the sex-contact advertisement sections. It was first naively imagined (by editors, writers, readers and sympathisers) that their radical politics, imaginative honest journalism, accurate informative reportage, brilliant trailblazing graphics, general libertarian approach and innovative creative content was mainly responsible for an escalating readership. Authoritarian feminist infiltration of editorial collectives soon destroyed that utopian assumption. Puritanical Politically Incorrect censorial microscopes consigned sex-contact pages, adult cartoons, erotic writers and artists, etc., to the garbage can. They systematically destroyed every essential part of the underground global communications network. Alternative newspapers, magazines, bookshops, distribution-collectives ... all rapidly disappeared. Arts Council funding bodies, international charities – every imaginable group and organisation was touched and disorientated by this

invasive cancer. Peace, environmental, animal liberation movements and countless other initiatives were destroyed by an Authoritarian Feminist virus. Assaulted, and violated by these manic storm-troopers of anti-sexual politics. Today in these New Dark Ages, authoritarian feminism appears to have won the contemporary battle. Much of their original dishonesty is conveniently forgotten. Their early fiction of former matriarchal societies (which led to a rash of books and excessive psychic lubrication) is unquestioningly laid to rest. Not one shred of sustainable evidence was ever produced but that never got in the way of politicians of any kind. Their shared outrages with Christian fundamentalist social workers (false memory manipulation and all) raped many loving families and attacked young adult sexuality. They have very much acted like the witch-burning Inquisition Jesuits, created many victims and ruined many lives.

"House style favours the polysyllabic and the multi-clausal, punctuated every so often by the short sharp shock of * and **** – two words that we do not print but they do a lot."***
The Times, 29th April 2000, in a review of *The Erotic Review* magazine

"All despotisms should be considered problems of mental hygiene, and all support of censorship should be considered as problems of abnormal psychology."
Theodore Schroeder

"Books won't stay banned. They won't burn. Ideas won't go to jail. In the long run of history the censor and the inquisitor have always lost. The only sure weapon against bad ideas is better ideas."
A. Whitney Grisold

Peter Good

Censorship within the Anarchist Movement

To begin by an absolute truth: I, me, you, whatever, all occupy a unique position in time and space. No one else but ourselves can live in the exact coordinates you and I inhabit. We might all breathe the same air but each of us must negotiate an arrangement between our environment and our own, acutely unique, timespace. I confess that me and my body have had some good times in these spaces. There have been rotten times as well but then no one ever said the human condition was going to be an easy ride. In fact, like everyone else, for most of the time I'm in the grip of a variety of big and remote institutions and I'm only too willing to comply with instructions that I know to be against good sense and ultimately work against the fellowship of other uniquely positioned human beings. But as much as I am prepared to struggle and to protest I can only live through the life I have stumbled into. I try each day not to surrender more of my uniqueness than I have to.

All of this should be bread and butter to anarchists. Our defining characteristic is that we are fully capable of finding out and speaking up for ourselves. Ours is a long tradition of standing upright and proudly proclaiming the right to a unique position in this world. This is space and time that belongs to me and to no other. But there is a price, and a high one, to be paid for this knowledge. Whatever way I choose to complain about my lot I can never deny that I must take responsibility for my own contributions and the way it affects all those things around me. And it is a responsibility I must recognise at an individual level. It starts with me and no one else. Only I am responsible for what I do with the collection of bones and flesh given to me.

This glorious position cannot be sustained without some sort of relationship to others who occupy their own unique timespace. In the jargon of the day this is a relationship that must be truly an interactive one. An anarchist community can only hope to advance profitably by the need to exchange and interact with others. By no

means should this relationship be seen as passive activity. Life is only to be lived from timespaces expressed meaningfully. The positions of 'anything goes' or 'nothing really matters' are no more than trite soundbytes detrimental to life itself. There is little point in entering into a dialogue if its conclusion for the participants is to shrug their shoulders and walk away. Every enquiry would become destroyed by its response before it even had a chance to complete itself. What matters in active dialogue is that both participants carry a sense of answerability to each other. We are each answerable to the other for the acts we both perform. This respect for the other is not necessarily based upon love or comradeship but simply because the other is other. Without the other my own identity becomes superficial. I would carry a voice lacking real flesh and an absence of blood flowing in my veins. Censorship – the silencing of another's voice – is just a part of the extreme edge of this denial of the other.

Maybe we should say that a community worth living in is a community driven by differences in a constant process of mutual exchange. And present is the knowledge that real fellowship is not a passive state but one that is alive and choosing to engage with all the problems of life. But the translation of these principles into practice is not problem free. Present in equal measure, and one wonders if it will ever go away, is the temptation, that when things go wrong, we swiftly corrupt our sense of responsibility. It becomes too easy to import into our own timespace all the abstract – i.e. nonhuman – tools of oppression. We borrow, often without consciously declaring the fact, the everyday mechanisms of authority and pretend they are our own. In the terms of Mikhail Bakhtin, we become pretenders, people who live with *alibis for living*. We let slip too easily that these acts, denying the validity of another's timespace, serve to deny our own meaning as real flesh and blood people engaged in daily struggles. Every time we witness some of the more recent gutter press rantings in the anarchist press, we collude, however remotely, in the corruption of the only fuel that can feed the unlimited possibilities of an anarchist community. Those factions fighting against other factions do so with a degree of viciousness against the other that would do credit to the techniques of the most conspiratorial of government agencies. Interaction becomes merely noise and what dialogue there is becomes lifeless and ritualistic.

Censorship – itself the flip-side of free-expression – has always

been the integral ingredient of powerful bodies: the abstract ideology of all forms of authority. That's the way it is. That's the way it's always been. We need not be too surprised or waste too much time protesting against its activities. Collectively, our responsibility is to expose censorship for what it is – the denial of another's voice in order to secure particular gains. In my time I have been exposed to state secrets, pornographic narratives, and even those who advocate the collective inadequacies of others. I don't think I've been too corrupted by these encounters. Others may speak for themselves. Again, one needn't be too surprised to find that a living dialogue is mostly absent with those who disclaim the value or the need of an answerability to others.

As one of those whose contributions to *Freedom* suddenly began to be rejected at the beginning of the 1990s, I suppose I can claim to be on the unappetising end of the paradox of anarchist censorship. I know of four other veterans whose voices have been declared unwelcome. There are probably more. *Freedom*'s refusal to enter into dialogue with me – and I've asked them – means I can never know. Something tells me, under the rubric of responsibility and answerability, that a journal failing to *care* for its readership, in the end, fails to care for itself. After all, there is little to prevent anarchists pasteing onto themselves the more common dehumanising technologies of powerful groups that we proclaim we are so against. As a one-time Trade Union leader I was frequently made familiar with others who refused to answer letters or would regularly exclude the voices of others. But that was the game we played. It had little to do with the life we were all living through.

Whatever stance we adopt towards the somewhat easy target of censorship outside the anarchist movement the painful struggle to address its real presence amongst ourselves must continue. It would be a great pity if the needs of the latter were lost by concentrating on the former.

Editorial comment

Is it censorship or just the exercise of freedom of choice when an editor refuses to publish a contribution to his or her journal? Well of course it all depends on what you mean by censorship. In the view

of many contributors to the learned volume *Censorship and Silencing* reviewed briefly elsewhere in this issue of *The Raven*, yes, it is censorship but then they extend their definition of censorship to include any exercise of choice such as when an editor chooses one article instead of another or a librarian stocks one book but excludes others. To such academics these acts are as much acts of censorship as the banning of a book by the state, but nevertheless to them in the appropriate circumstances perfectly acceptable even desirable – all three examples that is. Such a wide dilution of the concept renders it all but meaningless and the editor of an independent journal, who after all carries a heavy responsibility for the journal in all senses of the word, is doing no more in my view than exercising personal choice. This may be regrettable for some, but the author is free to take his or her contribution elsewhere. And that is the end of the matter – or is it? Consider the editor of the official publication of an organisation who refuses to publish a contribution from one of its members without being able to claim it is illiterate, irrelevant, libellous, blasphemous or treasonous, then there is a case to answer to the membership and answered it should be. *Freedom* as a journal is in a category somewhere inbetween, respected within the anarchist movement but nevertheless independent, not answerable to any membership or indeed to any one part of the movement. Those who don't like the way it is run just will not read it and if enough don't it will just die. It is fortunate that at this time there are many publications reflecting between them all aspects of the anarchist movement so that no writers should find themselves unpublished. However I think *Freedom* has a moral responsibility because of its special position within the movement to reflect as far as possible all aspects of anarchist thought and ideas although without giving a voice to any divisive elements who would wish to spend their efforts attacking and disrupting the efforts of others. With that exception and remembering that a journal needs its contributors just as much as its readers, we hope, need the journal, dialogue between editor and responsible contributors should be possible, to resolve any problems as they arise. It would be sad if, for what ever reason, this could not happen.

Harold Sculthorpe

Review of Censorship and Silencing*

"A distinguished and interdisciplinary set of authors examine the issue of censorship from a variety of perspectives including the use of law and state power to regulate speech so as to redress private imbalances of power. It results from a collaboration between the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Getty Research Institute for the History of Arts and the Humanities and the Humanities Research Institute of the University of California".

And that just about says it all – you will know what to expect. It will be liberal, academic, intellectually exhaustive but managing to avoid challenging the conventional paradigm that the state's role in society is to balance the interests of the various groups, except of course those that challenge the power of the state.

The editor's introduction argues that the traditional understanding of censorship as a form of state repression is now complicated by the link between some feminists and fundamental Christians when the concern is pornography and because there are anti-racist liberals who want to repress racist speech, pornography is seen as a form of censorship because it functions as a form of "illocutionary disablement that prevents women from having the full power to speak in certain kinds of ways". And "if the free speech of men silences the free speech of women then there is a choice about which speech is to be protected". Major assumptions are made here without any discussion about the nature of pornography and the role of the state.

In part one, the specific dynamics of explicit legal control of speech through criminal and civil sanctions are discussed. Part two investigates other forms of state regulation of speech, while part three examines the justification for state interventions to regulate private power that constrains free expression. Although there are many quite interesting in-depth case studies of particular historic events involving censorship of one kind or another the overall assumption is that it is the state's role to prevent powerful people violating powerless people into silence, with this being seen not as

* *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation*, edited by Robert C. Post, 346 pages, Getty Research, £27.

repressive but as a normal condition of free expression. This, putting the state into the role of a god controlling the flock, is described as an exciting and important intellectual development but seems to me to be more like sociology providing a theoretical framework which can be used to justify state repression of dissenting ideas.

The definition of censorship used here is so broad as to make it virtually meaningless because as well as including the restrictions which we impose on ourselves and others by deciding to do or not do, tell or not tell, it includes mechanisms for denying freedom of expression as self restraint, peer disapproval, market devices, norms of unacceptability, the marginalisation of groups who are discouraged from speaking their minds and of course the decision of a newspaper or magazine editor not to print an article. Of the examples given, which they include under the all-embracing censorship label, there is one that does need to be addressed and this is the question of peer review in science as this does tend to favour majority views and can deprive others of publication and funds and deny publicity to new ideas and findings. There are plenty of examples of this but it is not, in my view, helpful to call it censorship.

In a society in which artists are dependent on grants doled out by some central authority, then the decision to favour one artist rather than another may be called artistic judgement or censorship and may sometimes be one and sometimes the other, but the discussion here of whether or to what extent repressive acts in the arts and literature really constitute censorship or not reminds one at times of the apocryphal theologians discussing how many angels can dance on the point of a needle, and really excels itself when it considers how an apparently destructive act like a book-burning could be understood as a symbolic rite of purification rather than an attempt to block completely access to forbidden books. Examples mentioned to justify the state's need to curb free speech, i.e. censor, degenerate to the point of including the problem of someone shouting fire in a crowded theatre or calling for the use of force or violence.

Whether this collection of papers is representative of sociological thought in the US I do not know, but if it is then sociology has become an instrument of government and a useful weapon in the state's armoury for social control. This book is much too expensive to buy, so if the subject is of interest, borrow it as I did through your local library, but then you will need to be a fast reader.

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