



FEMINISTS AGAINST CENSORSHIP

BM BOX 207, LONDON WC1N 3XX (081) 552-4405
MINUTES of the meeting of Feminists Against Censorship at
Conway Hall on Wednesday, 18 November 1992.

PRESENT: Juliette Wallbridge, Teresa Stokes, Niki Wolf, Deb Percy, Sheryl Willis, Diane Impey, Christina Lamb, Nettie Pollard, Carolyn Knott, and Val Langmuir. Apologies from Avedon Carol, Helen McDowell, Zak Jane Kier, Tuppy Owens, Saroj Nelson, Frauke Oehrich, Carmel Shane, Anna Ward, Suzanna Meredith, Jo Opie, Amanda Rowles, and Roz Kaveney.

FAC XMAS/SOLSTICE PARTY: Saturday, 19 December, at Val Langmuir's place. Bring food, a bottle, and a friend of any gender. Videos & games! Converted cellar! Address: 160 Portway, E15, junction of West Road. Nearest tube: Plaistow. From 6.30 pm

MEDIA/SPEAKERS: FAC issued a press release following the National Viewers and Listeners Association's 350,000 petition to Parliament calling for pornography to be banned because of "the rising level of crime and child sexual abuse."

Cathy Itzin's book and Ray Wyre's & Gracewell clinic's child abuse/pornography conference both generated a lot of media exposure for FAC:

Roz Kaveney & Lynne Segal's complaints about the Dispatches episode on Itzin's book resulted in Avedon Carol's appearance on Right of Reply, aired Saturday, 14 November. Avedon managed to get several points in and the producer, Anne Ross Muir, had to admit that the show was deliberately biased. The presenter, Sheena MacDonald, said later she was thinking of doing a show on the issue and would contact FAC if anything came of it.

Gracewell clinic's anti-porn conference, featuring Michael Hames of the Obscene Publications Squad, Andrea Dworkin, Cathy Itzin, John Stoltenberg & Wyre cost £80 to get into. Birmingham radio did a show on this with Zak Jane Kier and Bristol NCCL's Chris Hardman.

Also as a result of Wyre's conference, Granada Upfront in Manchester brought Zak Jane Kier, Avedon Carol, Dr. Bill Thompson, Alison King, Linzi Drew, Lindsay Honey, and others up to confront Itzin, Wyre, et al. on their Friday the 13th show. Thompson & Drew confronted Itzin & Wyre on stage while the others were called from the audience. Ray Wyre was astonished that: (1) there is such a thing as a feminist ~~pro~~-pornography position and (2) Andrea Dworkin believed all sexual intercourse was oppressive. (This contact also led to a later Granada request for a FAC speaker on the Viz controversy.)

Since Andrea Dworkin was in town, BBC World Service Your World asked Avedon to debate her, only to be told by Dworkin that she would not debate Avedon. This is a common tactic of the other side - but World Service dropped Dworkin instead of FAC, and Mary Kinney replaced her.

On the other hand, there was the sold-out public CAP meeting held on the 14th with Dworkin speaking. Suzanna Meredith, Deb Percy and Val Langmuir had worked on Roz Kaveney's open letter challenging the CAP leaflet, which was distributed at the meeting by Roz, Christina Lamb, Saroj Nelson, Val & Nettie. Lesbian & Gay Freedom Movement also distributed a leaflet. Alison Assiter sat through it and says Dworkin left out her more inflammatory beliefs. "If you didn't already have the information on the issues and know what Dworkin really believes," said Alison, "she sounded almost reasonable." It had been announced that Dworkin would take questions, but after her standing ovation, Cathy Itzin got up and asked that people who disagree with her not speak! This was, she said, in order to provide a "safe space" for pornography victims.

Avedon led a group discussion on pornography at Robinson College, Cambridge. The women's officer provided a copy of Madonna's book to pass around and discuss. A small number of anti-porn people started a dispute over whether Madonna, in one picture, is wearing a big smile or "a grimace of pain," leading others present to remark that it's all a matter of interpretation. The meeting was, overall, non-hostile and successful, and generated a lot of interesting comment, including after the meeting. The woman's officer has told Avedon subsequently that a fascinating dialogue has continued among students.

A note to members on media work: we realize it is difficult for many of you to do this because it is so often at very short notice, and usually on weekends or during times that require daytime travel or participation. However, it would be nice if we had a few more people who could do it. Anyone think they might be able to put their oar in?

CORRESPONDENCE: We received a couple of fan letters from women who saw our Right of Reply and were pleased to know that there were active anti-censorship feminists debating this issue. One was a 66-year-old mother who said she'd had "dirty mags" around the house for years with no ill effects on her three kids. We've also had quite a few requests from students doing work on porn & censorship and on the new market in women's sex magazines.

Niki Wolf will ring Oxford Univ. Press for a copy of Itzin's book for FAC.

Beyond Sexuality, an anarchist look at gender roles & sexual issues, from Anslim, quotes FAC but lists our old address.

FAC PORN SURVEY: The meeting looked at the latest draft and made amendments. Christina & Tuppy will do the final version.

RUBBER STAMP: Much thanks to Christina, who says she will do a couple of rubber stamps for FAC with our logo, address and phone number.

Carolyn Knott says Open Space 16 December, 7:30, will be on Nudism - set your videos as this is the FAC meeting night.

Nettie will contact Zak about getting publicity for meetings into Forum.

PUBLIC MEETING: Slated for late February or early March, open to all.
Subject: **The Dangers of Feminist Anti-Porn Proposals.**
Speakers suggested included Elizabeth Wilson, Lynne Segal, Derek Jarman, Angus Hamilton, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett, Robin Gorna and Linzi Drew.

SPANNER: We decided to have a table at the rally in UL Union after the march on Saturday, 28 November (the appeal is scheduled for December 1st.)

Nettie sent a letter to Capital Gay encouraging people to come to the demo to support the Spanner men as a feminist issue of control of our own bodies.

We are co-signers of public letter supporting the Spanner men (see Weekend Guardian) with Stonewall, NCCL/Liberty, and others.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be at 7:30 on 16th December at Conway Hall in Red Lion Square (nearest tube: Holborn). **Theme:** Male & Female Sexuality - how different are they? (Time permitting, that is.)

Remember, all meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month.

Don't Forget: An "x" on your mailing label means this is your last mailing unless you send stamps/money to cover postage.