

davidwebb

071-730 9537

15 Sloane Court West,
Chelsea,
London,
SW3 4TD.

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Paul Simpson, Esq.,
Chairman,
Student Liberal Democrats,
Liberal Democrats' Party,
4 Cowley Street,
London,
SW1P 3NB.

Paul M. Simpson

I have just been shown a copy of your "Pocket Guide to Student Liberal Democrats Policies".

As a Liberal Democrat voter, I am horrified by what I read on page 11 of this booklet regarding what you choose to call "pornography".

- (1) "Pornography" (assuming that by that term you mean sexually explicit material) is not per se "sexually degrading";
- (2) is rarely (not "often", as your booklet claims) about men and women being subjected to violence for the purpose of sexual titillation or arousal;
- (3) does not categorically 'exploit' women and children and 'degrade' men;
- (4) and does not 'sanction' "sexual violence".

Furthermore, the tactics of the 'Off-the-Shelf' campaign organised by the 'misterogynistic' organisation "Campaign Against Pornography", which is largely composed of fanatical, fascistic, feminist extremists, whereby bundles of publications of which their members did not personally approve were taken off newsagents shelves and dumped on their check-out desks, were distinctly reminiscent of the kind of activities carried out by Hitler's supporters in the 1930s, and were, in any case, quite unlawful.

Lastly your policy of a ban on so-called 'page-three-girls' in

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newspapers is the kind of extreme repressive measure implemented by the totalitarian regimes of former Eastern Bloc Communist countries and other dictatorships like China and North Korea, where 'freedom of expression' is not permitted, even as a figment of the imagination!

That you, as citizens of a supposedly freedom-loving democracy, could even contemplate such ruthless policies is alarming. That you should do so as proclaimed 'Liberal Democrats' is truly terrifying, and frankly disgraceful.


That such a policy, which so savagely denies a consenting adult individual the right to choose for him or herself what he or she sees, reads or hears, is propagated alongside such diametrically opposed slogans as:-

- "We aim to promote the values of liberty" (page 2)
- "We should be free to do as we please, liberty the world over" (page 2)
- "Freedom of individual of individual expression is the very basis of the society we want to create. No governing body is justified in suppressing the thought and will of individual people." (page 6),

displays a level of hypocrisy which is quite breathtaking in its effrontery and outrageousness.

Perhaps you would be kind enough to let me know the official relationship between the Student Liberal Democrats and the Liberal Democrats Party proper, and what influence, if any, your organisation has on official Party policy?

Yours sincerely,



David Webb

Copies to: The Rt. Hon. Paddy Ashdown, M.P.,
Charles Kennedy, Esq., MP, President, Liberal Democrats

Pages from the "Pocket Guide to Student Liberal Democrat Policies"

(Published by Student Liberal Democrats of England,
4 Cowley St., London, SW1P 3NB.

Section 1: The Student Liberal Democrats

The Student Liberal Democrats are the student wing of the Liberal Democrats. Together with the main party, we aim to promote the values of liberty, equality and community and fight poverty, ignorance and conformity throughout society. We believe strongly in community politics, involving all people unlike Labour and the Conservatives who are primarily concerned with their "own people" - the Unions and big business respectively. We believe in a Bill of Rights protecting the individual irrespective of sex, race, creed or sexuality. We believe in caring for the Environment by eliminating the root causes of pollution, not by trying to clear up the problem after it has happened. We believe in a federal Europe with common policy on defence, foreign affairs and the environment.

We also aim to ensure that the voices of students are heard both within the party and in the country as a whole through our involvement with groups such as N.U.S. (National Union of Students) and B.Y.C. (British Youth Council). We would like to see an N.U.S. run by committed student unionists and fighting for student rights effectively. We hold two conferences a year at which we decide policy, elect the Executive and plan our strategy for the year. Any member can attend and this is the ideal opportunity to get involved!

This policy handbook is a brief introduction to our policies and the way we think. We hope it will inspire you to become a Student Liberal Democrat and take an active part in our organisation!

"We should be free to do as we please, liberty the world over; people exerting power themselves within their own community, but making that power real by giving equality of opportunity. Acting together we can eradicate poverty, ignorance and conformity."

Freedom of Speech

Freedom of individual expression is the very basis of the society we want to create. No governing body is justified in suppressing the thought and will of individual people. In particular:

- ◆ The policy of "No Platform" - where particular individuals, or people belonging to certain groups, are denied the opportunity to speak in a public forum - is flagrantly abused, and is a grotesque contradiction of freedom. We will continue to work within NUS and the many individual colleges which operate such a policy to ensure "No Platform" is stopped.
- ◆ The Government ban on broadcasting the speech of members of Sinn Féin and other groups is counter-productive, a surrender to the terrorists and contrary to the principles of a genuinely free, democratic society.

NUS

Student Liberal Democrats are sickened by the complacent, corrupt and incompetent leadership of NUS, yet we will fight to save it from destruction, whether it be from inside or from outside. The National Union of Students exists to act in the interest of all students, providing welfare services to students, support and information to Students' Unions, and running political campaigns on student issues. To achieve these aims NUS must be independent of any national party or grouping. However, since many areas of NUS's work are political they must be debated and voted on as such.

Any moves to allow individual students to 'opt out' of NUS would threaten the excellent work that NUS undertakes on behalf of students and the essential services it provides. Individual students are not members of NUS: college Unions have corporate membership of NUS - just as Britain has corporate membership of the European Community - and each Union's membership is subject to the democratic decisions of its members. We would not want NUS to become a trade union. Nonetheless, it is far from perfect in its present form, and we are fully committed to radical reform to make the organisation better able to fulfil the aims set out above. We also advocate a change of name to better represent the true nature of NUS.

Reproductive Rights and Parenthood

We support a woman's right to choose whether or not to continue with her pregnancy, and would extend the 1967 Abortion Act. However, abortion should never be considered as an alternative to contraception, and sex education is very important in this respect.

We also believe childcare provision is a right, and we condemn the inbuilt ideological preconception that once a woman becomes a mother, the right to a life of her own ceases and her own needs come second to those of her child. There is a dual responsibility for the child, and both parents should ensure the child is well provided for.

We would:

- ◆ Extend the 1967 Abortion Act to include self-referral and abortion on demand up to twelve weeks.
- ◆ Improve the sex education available in schools.
- ◆ Ensure the provision of artificial insemination facilities to childless couples, including to single women and lesbians on an equal basis.
- ◆ Allow the use of human embryos in research, subject to stringent controls, since a ban on embryo research would significantly set back scientific research into fertility, congenital disease and miscarriage, the development of better contraceptive methods, and the improvements in detecting gene or chromosome abnormalities in embryos.
- ◆ Supply adequate childcare without discrimination to all those who need it, regardless of the financial position of the carer.

Pornography

Pornography is the depiction of women and men as sex objects or in sexually degrading poses, often being subjected to violence for the purpose of sexual titillation or arousal. It exploits women and children and degrades men, and sanctions and imitates sexual violence.

We support the 'off the shelf' campaign organised by the Campaign Against Pornography to try to ensure pornography is not displayed or sold in inappropriate places, including the top shelves of newsagents. We would ban newspaper 'page three girls'.