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Government banning the Downloading and Possession of Extreme Pornography

There are probably few ETO readers who know that, buried inside the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill 2008, are sections 63-66, which aim to criminalise the downloading of extreme pornography. This would mean up to three years in nick for anybody caught with images involve life-threatening sadomasochistic acts, sexual acts with a dead person, or an animal.

The government say there is no evidence that such images do any harm, but want them banned because they find them disgusting!

This has received very little publicity or public uproar because most people either don't care, or are holing up, pretending it won't affect them, for fear of drawing attention to their own personal fetish and subsequent potential threats to their freedom.

You may be thinking that anybody "sick" enough to want to look at extreme porn deserves punishment. But remember this, most fantasies are by nature, naughty things we can't really do in practice, and much better they are kept as fantasies, with porn to support them, however extreme or bizarre.

The fact of the matter is that most sadomasochistic images look as if they are life threatening – people thrashing, asphyxiating, or in some way threatening each other – that is the nature of the fetish. And the fetish is really common.

Another worry is that the more the government ban the downloading of porn on the Net, the more time will be devoted to watching who logs into what site, thus delving into our private lives, so that even our deepest erotic treasured secrets will end up in official files, together with our fingerprints, driving offences etc. You may feel safe now, but what when a modern-day-Hitler comes along, hey?

With little support, the two main activist groups, Backlash and the Spanner Trust were wondering how to lobby, to help politicians understand that this move is unwise, unnecessary and unfair.

Politicians are a strange lot. We all know they are up to endless sexual gallivanting, because they quite often get caught out. But they present themselves as purer-than-pure devoutly religious, happily married saints, claiming to never look at porn and when they have to for "research purposes", they find it oh! so distasteful. Baaah!

So the activists turned to me, as founder of Outsiders, a charity for disabled people to find partners and enjoy sex. In desperation for some support that politicians might feel they are compelled to listen to, they asked if I would lobby with my disabled colleagues.

I took the idea to one of the Outsiders lunches, and was delighted that most of our disabled members wanted to offer their support. We sat around a big table in the restaurant and discussed what to do. We decided to hold a demonstration on Westminster Bridge on the day that the House of Lords would be debating these sections of the Bill. At that time, there were actually more offending sections, one threatening to criminalise the purchasing of sex, and the disabled people wanted to demonstrate against that as well. They came up with some brilliant slogans, such as "Everybody Needs a Sexual Outlet" and "How can Pictures be Dangerous?"

The one thing the disabled people asked was that I collect together testimonies from sex workers and people who take part in extreme pornography, to say that they do so of their own free will, and are not forced into it. I managed to get many testimonies. I should clarify that many such images appear on enthusiasts' websites, and are not part of mainstream porn.

"I am an independent woman and make extreme pornography, in front and behind the camera. I find it interesting, and enjoy helping others reach the most far-out fantasies, shot in an intelligent and artistic way. I don't feel exploited or threatened, but feel powerful. I have never known anyone forced into this specialist area; it is 100% suitable for me and my colleagues. We do it because we love it."

Mouse

"From age 18 to 38 I made porn movies of all kinds. For their day, some of those films were considered extreme. A little SM, a little bondage, a rape fantasy, an incest fantasy... Now those old films seem rather tame compared to some films today. Even I am sometimes shocked at the extreme porn of today. But as long as no one really gets hurt and has to go to the hospital, or is forced against their will (like in REAL violence), I see no reason to limit people from acting out the kind of sex they want to act out. It can actually be liberating, and enjoyable and bring pleasure to others."

Annie Sprinkle Ph.D Porn star turned sexologist and artist

"I was in some of the most extreme videos and Internet images ever seen.

I wanted to show people how extreme I could be and hard I could really push the envelope. I guess that sounds almost militant or

radical. Up until that point I had just fantasized about some of those things. Once the producer heard that I wanted to have my tits nailed to a board he just wanted to know I was serious.

The experience was just as I had expected: the high I got from the extreme act was more than I could have ever imagined. At no time did I ever feel as if I couldn't handle anything that was being done to me.

There isn't anyone out there that could make me do something I didn't want to do. In some ways I think being in extreme porn makes me stronger. I know that I can try some of the most extreme things a human body can handle and that gives me power, a secure sense of confidence that most people don't have."

Kathie

At the same time, I was furiously writing letters to MPs and members of the House of Lords. There are real reasons why disabled people might want to see extreme porn more than other people. It is not uncommon for disabled people to develop fetish fantasies as a result of being hospitalised at an early age, experiencing pain, needle injections, surgical blades, enemas, isolation from their parents, and being surrounded by machinery and staff in uniforms. Many others are sexually and otherwise abused within the family or residential home, which can have devastating events on their personal lives. Sometimes their disability brings shame to their families and they develop very low self esteem, feeling unworthy of conventional sexual relationships.

I argued that people want to see a picture of sex with animals out of curiosity. Many amazing images exist from Leda and the Swan and before. I personally don't want to sift through my beloved porn collection and throw away books featuring Pork Girl or Linda Lovelace and the Dog (but I'm OK actually, because I reside in Scotland and this nasty Bill applies to England and Wales only). I argued that spouses may wish to take a photo of their dead loved one's body, and what is the harm in that? I ended one email by saying "After All, this is England, land of bad taste and land of the free"!

I was happy when *Outsiders* was mentioned in the House of Lords by Baroness Miller and also when I was mentioned by Lord Faulkner in the House some weeks later. I was thrilled that some Lords were supporting the freedom to possess porn. When Lord Faulkner emailed me to say he supports us, I emailed back to tell him he had made history, as no politician before, or at least not since the Gay Rights Movement, had supported any pro-sex activist.

Our demonstration took place in the sunshine on Tuesday 26th

February. Around fifty people lined the south side of Westminster bridge, many in wheelchairs. There were cameras galore, with a TV documentary team and journalists fighting to interview demonstrators. Placards included "Don't Disable My Libido" and "It's Hard Enough as it Is". Women wearing Gordon Brown masks carried placards saying " 'We will do everything in our power that...the needs of disabled people are properly recognised' Gordon Brown PMQs 23-01-07". The disabled demonstrators were joined by the Sexual Freedom Coalition, the English Collective of Prostitutes and the International Union of Sex Workers, carrying red umbrellas.

After the demo, demonstrators were treated to tea in the Marriott Hotel, by the bridge, where we heard that all clauses relating to prostitution had been dropped from the Bill. The extreme pornography clauses, however, were not dropped.

Do write to your MP and local member of the House of Lords, as the government want to make this Bill become law by 9th May. Many Mps and Lords are still unaware of the seriousness of this part of the CJIB and have never heard the opposition from the SFC, Outsiders, Liberty or the Joint Committee on Human Rights. Your support will be for freedom in your own profession, even if it does not directly effect you or your business. Remember the old quote:

*"First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a communist;
Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a socialist;
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a trade unionist;
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew;
Then they came for me—
and there was no one left to speak out for me."*

Martin Niemöller (who later died in a concentration camp)

Dr Tuppy Owens

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Chair of the Sexual Freedom Coalition www.sfc.org.uk

<http://www.backlash-uk.org>

www.spannertrust.org