



Feminists Against Censorship

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Spring 1995 Update

A note from your typist:

Yes, you've been wondering why you haven't heard from us lately. Maybe we'd left you off the mailing list? Maybe your subscription had run out?

If only life were that simple. You know that we are busy in the best of times, but when the one and only person who can get all the typing and mailing done suddenly has economic, health and family problems all at the same time, something is bound to give, and this was it.

Don't worry, though — your subscription covers the cost of four mailings of the updates no matter how long it takes for them to come out, so you haven't lost anything; in fact, the slower we are, the longer your membership is good.

SMUTFEST Some of you may have heard about the Smutfest last October and wondered why you didn't hear about it from us. Well, the truth is, it all happened so fast that it was all we could do to arrange a stall for the event ourselves.

The idea was inspired by an American event merging politics, performance art, and the trappings of the sex industry. We had barely discussed planning it in meetings when one morning we woke up and discovered we were holding the first of Smutfest events that very weekend.

And yes, we really did have a necrophile poet — among others. The teenage fantasy about Andy Gibb seemed to be a hit with the press. Unfortunately, one reporter annoyed an attendee by reporting that she'd been wearing a leather bra with fake nipples attached; she wasn't — it was a leather bra with cut-outs and real nipples peaking through.

We also managed to have a discussion of what liberated pornography would be about — unfortunately, the panel was a bit meandering and it didn't seem anyone was quite sure what they should be talking about.

We felt the event was quite successful, although we think that if we can arrange a future event along the same lines, it will owe less to the American experience and be geared more specifically to the UK. We need more ground-level politics up front, too. There are

hopes of getting something together for the coming winter.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL ACT: It's not just a dumb idea, it's the law. There have already been several public order arrests under the Act.

Disturbingly, absolutely everyone talks about the anti-porn sections of the bill as if they dealt entirely with child porn. We've had very little luck getting the message out that it affects non-violent adult pornography.

MAD COP DISEASE That autumn raid on Whiplash turns out to be just one of a series, and it now appears that the Crown does intend to prosecute — probably for disorderly house. (FAC has continued to send observers to clubs in the meantime.) | ♀ | Meanwhile, a raid on Clone Zone, a gay sex shop in London, ended with the seizure of the entire stock (18 copies) of Peter Tatchell's book, *Safer Sex*, and a load of magazines with pictures of erections in them. And they say they're only looking for child porn? (17 copies of Tatchell's book were later returned.) Although another distributor that had much of the same material seized have had their stock returned, Clone Zone have been informed of a destruction order for their stock. Daisy have also received a destruction order on their stock, including material that is carried in W.H. Smith's — among them Virgin's Nexus and Black Lace books! Richard Branson does not seem moved to contest this...

Meanwhile, the porn cops have told the press that there are "warehouses full of child pornography" up and down the country, but they can't get any evidence because their hands are tied by the laws. Is it too much to wonder why there would be more child pornography in this country's warehouses than there is in the whole of the United States? Or, more to the point, how the cops know all this child porn exists if they don't have any evidence of it? Maybe the real reason they can't find evidence is that it doesn't exist — after all, why on earth would anyone have a

warehouse full of child porn?

Five fetish magazines have recently suffered seizures and the Crown looks set to prosecute at least one of them. This looks like a clear pattern of harassment aimed at fetishists — we guess they're really ticked off at the recent decision by the European Court to hear the Spanner Case's appeal (see below).

Scapegoat, a new anti-censorship magazine, launched in November. Write to: PO Box 146, Plymouth PL1 1AX, or phone 0579 340 100.

BAN, BAN, BAN

They've been at it again: at the

University of Westminster, a student publication was banned because it contained fetish material. Oddly, the students really didn't expect this at all... | ♀ | W.H. Smith's banned an issue of *Company* magazine after a journalist wrote an article condemning a feature in that issue about suburban fetish/SM. Smith's also banned *Gay Times*' issue reviewing Peter Tatchell's *Safer Sexy*, because of the photo content, although they have been selling the book itself. | ♀ | Bradford University has banned all computer newsgroups that have anything to do with sex, on the grounds that they want a "non-harassing environment for women". One FAC member left a message on the net saying this ruling is itself insulting to women.

Neep Neep And speaking of the net, FAC can now be reached on-line:

avedon@cix.compulink.co.uk

— let us know if you'd rather have your updates e-mailed, which would save us the cost of the envelope, paper, copying and stamp, and also save us some envelope stuffing.

SPANNER

The hearing in Strasburg for the admissibility of the appeal of the original Operation Spanner SM case was held on 18 January. The case was ruled admissible, although a supporting case by "the Liberty 5" — a group of straight and gay women and men who had not been prosecuted but were bringing a case arguing that the Spanner ruling affected their rights — was ruled out. The ruling on Spanner, however, may make the government think twice about whether they can continue to treat SM as a crime.

Press Horrors Some of you saw the odious *Guardian* series on pornography late last year — we know, because you phoned

us to express your disgust. For those who missed it (and again when it was reprinted in the *Standard*), it was the usual run of CAP-inspired fallacies complete with such heroes of women as retiring head of the Obscene Publications Squad Michael Hames and Ray Wyre, the man who gets his patients to blame pornography so he can say they say porn made them abuse children (interestingly, when you get them away from Wyre, they admit that they just say that because he likes to hear it; in fact, they say, they would have done what they did anyway and the responsibility is their own). And yes, they did trot out that good old myth about snuff movies (what, no UFO abductions?) — and there was one bit of "testimony" that sounded remarkably like a classic false memory case, right up to those thousands of feet of film (never found) that show an entire neighbourhood abusing all its children for years and years... The *Guardian* was singularly unmoved by letters asking for more responsible coverage, and failed to print the many letters we know FAC's members and supporters sent them. A stropmy letter from their editor to FAC itself accused us of sounding like Margaret Thatcher for having asked for balance — failing to note that, unlike Thatcher, we had asked that this pack of lies be balanced with some actual truth.

The sad part is that some leftist organizations that ought of have known better seem to have swallowed it whole and are now publishing anti-porn articles based solely on this entirely undocumented piece of rubbish — most noticeably, the Progressive League itself has done this for the last two issues of their newsletter.

Don't Forget The number next to your name on the envelope represents the number of mailings you are paid up for. An (x) means you will receive no more mailings unless we receive further encouragement from you.

Sales Pitch:

Black tee-shirts are still available in small, medium and large sizes, at £7.50. (The larger white ones are still in stock.)

Badges available: "FUCK censorship", "another feminist against censorship", and a new, larger one with our name and logo.