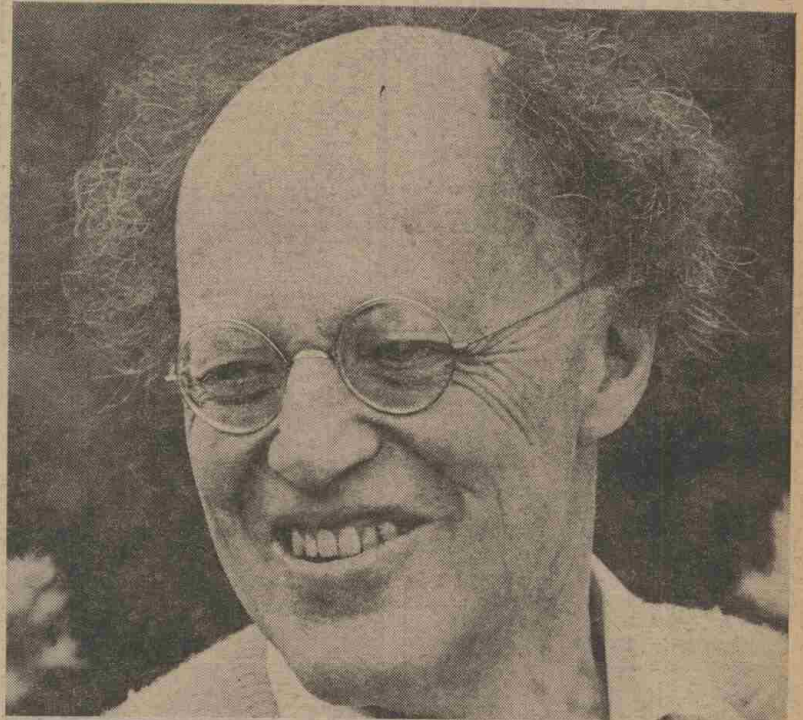


EXCLUSIVE

## Lord Porn hits out



# WHY ARE PEOPLE LAUGHING AT ME?

by LORD LONGFORD

**T**HEY are wrong to laugh at my committee of inquiry into pornography.

Of course, sex is regarded as a funny subject and it is an easy exercise to make me out as a figure of fun.

But I don't want to start crying if people laugh at me.

The whole trip to Copenhagen, I suppose, had comic overtones.

But now we have all had a good laugh, let

us get down to the very serious business. I think people at the moment are bewildered about where the line should be drawn over sexual behaviour and attitudes.

Older people are alarmed by the younger generation's apparent refusal to condemn or be shocked by literally anything.

People accuse me of having made up my mind (and closing it as well) about pornography.

I am against it they say, and therefore any

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argument presented in defence will be of no avail.

This is untrue. I am maintaining an open mind to investigate—and this was the reason we went to Denmark.

But I have no hesitation in immediately being shocked and condemning some of the depravities that some of us saw there.

What possible merit—morally, aesthetically, philosophically—can there be watching two people copulating in a loveless and mechanical manner in a seedy club to the baying of crude, unwitty remarks?

Wouldn't any balanced person be disgusted by such a spectacle?

If I am to be branded as a prude for being disgusted then most people in this country are prudes, too.

Obsessive pre-occupation with pornography must be like heavy drinking. It cannot do any good in the end.

The argument is always that it has some therapeutic benefit; people might do awful things if they did not have this safety valve.

I had a letter from a man only this morning saying that he masturbated reading pornographic magazines, and that it helped him get through life more easily. What I think this man probably needs is a psychiatrist.

Lord Attlee, then Prime Minister, once wrote to Professor Laski, then chairman of the Labour Party: "A period of silence on your part will be welcomed."

**Wisdom**

It may be that our committee of inquiry would benefit from a period of merciful oblivion withdrawn from the blaze of publicity. We shall be lucky if we get a respite and perhaps we ought not to expect it. I am the chairman of this committee of inquiry which is full of mature wisdom and youthful independence and ardour. When the report comes to be composed next year, I shall only count for one.

I believe that the three following propositions would be accepted by the overwhelming majority of the British public.

**WE ARE ALL** profoundly affected in our moral character in the lous run by what we see in books, newspapers, magazines, at the theatres, cinemas, on TV and in advertisements.

**THERE IS A LINE** somewhere which each one of us draws for him or herself. If a production falls below that line in certain directions we consider it dirty, filthy pornographic or what you will.

**THE MORE** one is submitted to the pornographic whether by choice or accident, the greater the risk of moral danger. There will of course always be the two extremes in life: The celibate monk and the libertine.

**Barrage**

But between the two lies that immense middle area. And intruding dirty books and magazines into family newspapers for all to see including impressionable children seems to me and my correspondents to be utterly wrong.

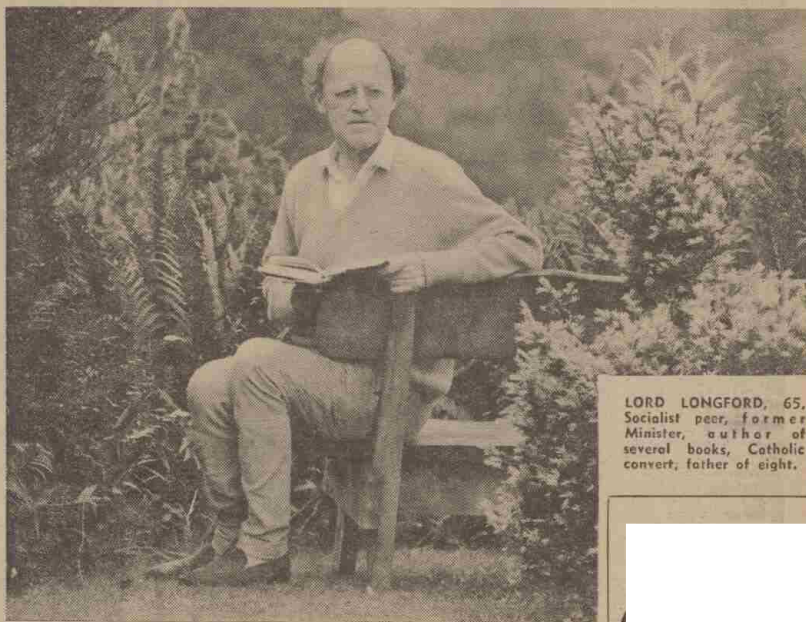
Furthermore to be subjected to a barrage of filth and obscenity in for example the cinema seems to me quite intolerable.

Pornography appears to be creeping in all over the place. A lot of ordinary decent people tell me that they find it hard to escape.

Why should they be so exposed?

In the House of Lords in April, I insisted that pornography "has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished."

**What possible merit is there in watching two people copulate, asks Lord Longford**



LORD LONGFORD, 65, Socialist peer, former Minister, author of several books, Catholic convert, father of eight.

The 64-dollar question is, of course, what do we do about it? How do we reduce pornography without reducing essential freedom?

Freedom, however, is not itself a simple concept.

The Danes, who have gone further than any one else in liberating pornography, still try to prevent it being imposed on those who do not wish to see it.

No one who has walked around Copenhagen recently will feel that they have yet been very successful.

I have been concerned directly or through my family with the production of books and plays for many years.

I am myself a publisher and I am not unfamiliar with the worlds of journalism, radio and TV.

I am aware that anyone who feels that he is

performing an artistic function is instinctively hostile to any form of censorship.

The majority, however, of the best artists and communicators agree that bad money drives out good. That genuine standards both of art and morals are lowered by pornography and that a line must certainly be drawn somewhere.

**Unsweet**

But they and all of us are at once faced with the question: WHO DRAWS THE LINE?

And on what principles is it to be drawn?

DO we allow Oh! Calcutta! to go on its own unsweet way?

CAN the Press Council idea be expanded so as to affect public opinion without altering the statutory position?

CAN any of us honestly

say that the structure of the film censorship is impossible to improve?

These questions have never been comprehensively explored. It is high time they were. Hence the present inquiry.

It was inevitable that we should go to Denmark, the mecca for students of pornography since the radical removal of restrictions in the past few years.

Our extreme libertarian friends here have rushed in to present Denmark as a country where the liberalisation of pornography has reduced sex crimes.

I wrote a book on the causes of crime some years ago and have done a good deal of work on criminal statistics.

**Sickness**

It is clear to me that expert opinion in Denmark is far from agreed on whether a real decrease in sex crimes has happened.

When I met a leading young pornographer in Denmark I ventured to suggest that he was worthy of a better job. Pornography for both the producers and consumers of it must surely be regarded as a sign of sickness.

But in any inquiry such as ours we must never cease asking the questions:

WHY do the consumers of pornography think they need it? and

WHAT, if anything, is helping them to find something better?

