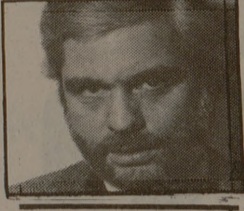


Opinion

'Causal link' between commission and censorship

As a teen-ager afflicted by a raging and nearly life-threatening interest in sex, I happened upon a book called "Pornography and the Law." Ostensibly a serious treatise on the problem, it had the virtue of including some examples of the very pornography under discussion. I bought it.



Richard Cohen

Never mind some of the things I learned. What matters now is a chapter in which a social scientist was asked if pornography sexually excited teenagers. This is a variation of the old Is-The-Pope-Catholic? question. The answer, of course, was yes.

But the social scientist listed other things that do just as well: They included girls, riding on trains, getting up in the morning, walking and almost anything you can name. To a teen-age boy, all life is a sexual stimulant.

Now an administrative commission has taken a strong look at pornography and is about to issue yet another report. This one, reportedly gamier than the one I bought as a kid, finds a "causal link" between pornography and violence.

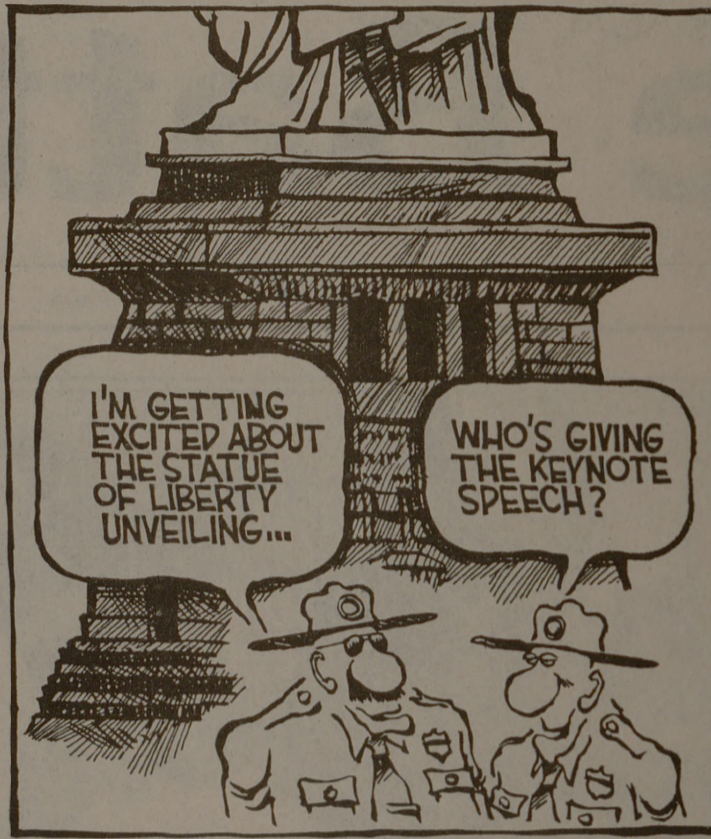
The conclusion, more a wish than a scientific finding, was a foregone conclusion. The panel was chosen by Attorney General Edwin Meese and includes persons whose preconceived anti-pornography views have long been known. It's a wonder they did not find a "causal link" between pornography and the farm crisis.

Still, let us assume there is a link between pornography and violence. Let us make that assumption even though most social scientists do not and a previous presidential commission has found otherwise. Let us assume, in fact, that the social scientist of my memory, the one from "Pornography and the Law," is once again testifying before Congress and concedes a "causal link." What else might he say?

Well, for starters, he might say that the same link exists between television and violence, movies and violence and music and violence. He might point out that there is as much sexually oriented violence toward women in afternoon soap operas as there is in pornographic movies. He might further point out that in much pornography there is no violence at all. Certainly, if violence is our concern, there ought to be a presidential commission to study Sylvester Stallone.

But the social scientist should not stop there. He should say that the term "causal link" is claptrap, an admission that hard evidence is lacking and the sort of opportunistic reasoning that governments have employed in the past to justify the urge to censor. After all, if a causal link to violence is what we are seeking, then it may exist in areas having nothing to do with sex at all. It might exist in the political sphere as well, beginning with the Declaration of Independence. That statement is nothing less than a call to revolution and if that isn't violence then nothing is.

But why stop there? We could include, also, Tom Paine's writings, which were radical even to radicals, as a causal link. How about the writings and speeches of American abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison which pre-



ceded that bit of violence called the Civil War? Let's include the speeches and the pamphlets of union organizers and, more recently, the utterance and writings of both civil-rights and anti-war activists — and (just for Meese) some of the speeches and writings of the anti-abortion movement. All these movements have been accompanied by violence.

Indeed, it would be hard to draw the line. Fortunately, it already has been drawn. That bit of writing is called the

First Amendment and, according to it, is immaterial if anyone alleges a "causal link" between the written word or, by extension, film and violence. You could argue that there's a world of difference between the film "Debbie Does Dallas" and some political tract, and indeed there is. The differences have to do with substance, intent, purpose — a whole range of things. What they now purportedly have in common is the fatuous reasoning that if violence is a result, then the government has the obligation to do

something. Censorship comes to us. Over the years, the American censorship system has tried to distinguish between speech or writing and their violent consequences. The Meese commission has trampled right over the distinction. Commission members say that they are just stating facts, calling for censorship, but their methodology and attitudes say otherwise. As they would say, there is a causal link.

Multinationals abuse their privileges

In 1868 the Fourteenth Amendment formally was recognized by the Secretary of State, thus becoming a law of the highest stature and imperative. It stipulates that, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of the United States and of the states wherein they reside," and forbids the states from depriving any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law.

William H. Clark
Guest Columnist

This amendment was intended to formalize the citizenship of the blacks who had just been freed from the shackles of slavery. It also states a powerful judgment which since has become an important means for protecting the rights of all Americans against such infringement as had been perpetuated by the Southern states before the Civil War.

A strange thing about the Fourteenth Amendment, though, is that it was interpreted by the Supreme Court in 1886 to apply not only to the rights of all citizens, but to those of corporations as well. In the hundred-odd years since, the corporation gradually has come to be legislated for all practical purposes as a full citizen — to the point where it almost has more rights and privileges than real U.S. citizens.

As such, a number of laws have since been passed to formalize the concept of the corporation as a citizen, gradually giving it greater freedom of operation, while simultaneously allowing the labor unions — the people which the corporation is supposed to serve — less freedom and influence.

This subtle shift in power began with the passage of the Sherman Act in 1890, a Congressional adjudication which expanded the Supreme Court's lenient interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment as existing within the limited context of the states. That is, the Sherman Act recognized the corporation as an interstate enterprise and gave it full power to conduct interstate commerce, with certain restrictions.

At the time the Sherman Antitrust Act was passed, America essentially still was an expansionist, isolationist nation with a free, frontier attitude.

This vital and enthusiastic outlook was abruptly deprived of its drive and vitality by our participation in World War I — a brutal, bloody war which not only defined our limitations as a nation and restricted our scope as a people, but which established within the United States a finite industrial structure. Only in technological areas would continued growth not result in illegal trusts or mergers.

Then, in 1935, another law — the

Public Utility Act — was passed by Congress, allowing corporations greater freedom concomitant to the changing status of America from a nation unto itself into an international power. It formalized the corporation as a multi-state enterprise and mandated it to simplify its structure and geographical distribution.

This ruling, then, allowed the expansion of technology to proceed uninhibited into new and broadening fields of endeavor in the industrial boom years of World War II and the subsequent reconstruction period. An explosion of the American productivity into the vacuum of destruction wrought by the two world wars soon reached its limit when the foreign industries spawned by the Marshall Plan began to compete with their American forebearers.

Consequently, U.S. corporations were limited in their expansionism to a few "feelers" or affiliates, many of which have since been nationalized.

This complexity was recognized by the Celler Anti-Merger Act of 1950, which prevented a corporation from gaining control of another company which substantially would lessen competition or create a monopoly.

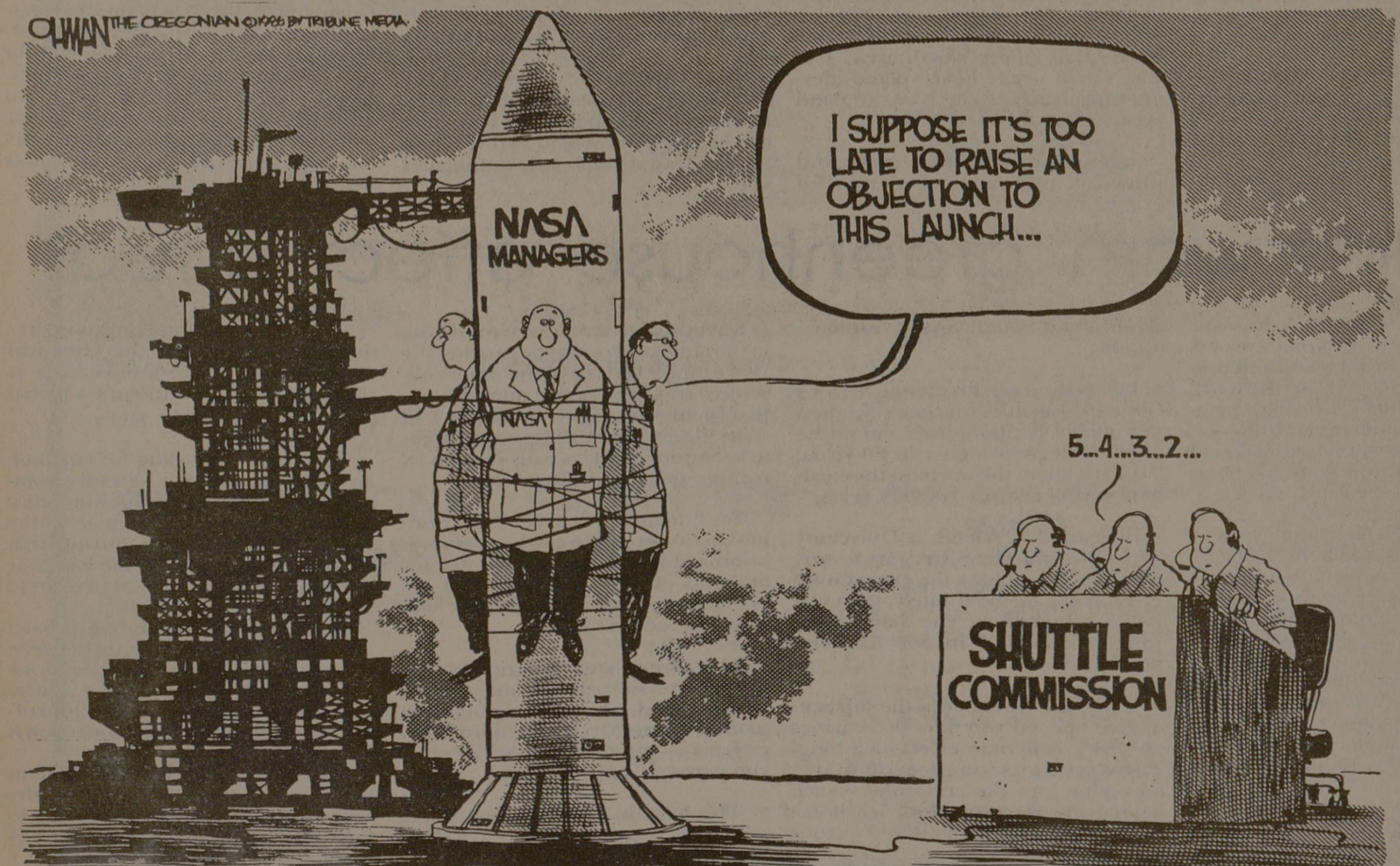
The key word here is "substantially." As such, the Celler Act recognized the necessity of some corporate conflicts, and overseas competitors increased their

productivity and output. By 1946, one-tenth of 1 percent of all American companies owned 49 percent of the corporate assets. This trend steadily escalated through the Vietnam era, when foreign companies began to practice assiduously their own expansionism upon American companies.

The latest stage of this progression — in which, for example, the Japanese auto makers have been recognized above and beyond American companies — represents a situation in which the multinationals have abused their privileges as American citizens by folding to foreign influence and needs of their foreign competitors.

As such, the corporation has refused to recognize the rights and privileges of those Americans who depend on it for a livelihood. It has become a multi-international competitor, no longer interested in the needs and interests of the country which has allowed it such freedoms and privileges in the past.

William H. Clark is a College Station resident and frequent contributor to The Battalion.



Mail Call

Turned off by wasted energy

EDITOR:

In light of recent budget cuts for many departments at Texas A&M now is a better time than ever to try to reduce some of the University's costs.

One such way is to reduce energy consumption on campus. Students need to learn to turn off the lights in their dormitory rooms when not in classrooms not in use and in restrooms and hallways at night.

Perhaps you think that turning a single light off does very little in the scheme of things, but if everyone were to become a bit more aware and concerned it could really make a difference.

Having lived overseas where the cost of living is higher for almost all necessities, I learned to conserve electricity at an early age. Consequently it is very annoying for me to find lights on without benefactors.

An energy conservation effort could be made by the University on a large scale. For example, reminder stickers could be put on all light switches saying, "Are you turning me off?" or by instructing the maintenance and janitorial staff to turn off lights when finished with their work.

The potential to conserve is enormous and it is really a shame to see so much waste going on. So everyone open their eyes a little and please turn out.

Jarek Dahdah
MEEN Graduate Student

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