

# The Front Page

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## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

"For the first time, organizations such as Women Against Pornography (WAP) are advocating state censorship of films, books and magazines deemed degrading to women. In doing so, they've provided traditional pro-censorship forces with a new way to attack the First Amendment. They've also allied themselves with the most anti-feminist forces in the culture, those who are opposed to the ERA, abortion, gay rights, and affirmative action (the list could go on). That this has been done at all is appalling — that it has been done in the name of feminism is frightening."

— Lisa Duggan, Village Voice

The feminist anti-pornography movement in North Carolina is still in its earliest stages. How it will become active in the political arena is as yet unclear. But given the example of recent events in Minneapolis and

February 5, according to a report in the Winston-Salem Journal (12/27/84).

This effort has the endorsement of Dr. Norman Wiggins, president of Campbell College and president of the Baptist State Convention. Wiggins says that the media have helped make pornography "a multi-million dollar industry. . . [that] demeans women and destroys children . . . There is a casual relationship between hard-core pornography and violent crimes."

"The growing outcry against pornography is not limited to conservative right-wingers," writes one of the state's anti-pornography activists. But does this movement indicate a joining of forces by conservatives and feminists in North Carolina?

Recently, arch conservative U.S. Attorney for Eastern N.C. Sam Currin's views on

**"Sam Currin's 'New Reich Christians' will be nothing compared to the coming outrage when women find their voices after years of forced silence."**

Indianapolis, where feminists, fundamentalist and conservative Republicans worked side by side, there is reason to be concerned.

On January 11 and 12, a symposium jointly sponsored by Pornography Awareness and the Duke University Women's Studies Program, will be held on the Duke Campus. The day-and-a-half-long seminar is entitled "Is There A Relationship Between Pornography and Sexual Violence?" (For more information on the symposium, see the last issue of *The Front Page*, or call 919-967-5168.)

With a remarkably close sense of timing, the Christian Action League is organizing a statewide "consultation on pornography and decency" and hopes to hold it in Raleigh soon after the 1985 General Assembly convenes

pornography were criticized by columnist Hal Crowther in *Spectator* (a Triangle area newsweekly, 12/13/84). Dorothy "Cookie" Teer, one of the co-founders of N.C. Pornography Awareness (quoted above), responded in a letter to the editor (12/27/84): "Sam Currin's 'New Reich Christians,' as Crowther calls them, will be nothing compared to the coming outrage from women when they find their voices after years of forced silence."

"This will happen whether they are 'right wing' or 'left wing' — because victimization is non-partisan, because pornography is oppression, and because that oppression is called speech and is protected by the First Amendment."

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Andrea Dworkin, author of *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1981), will be a featured speaker at the "Pornography Awareness" symposium in Durham January 11-12.

by Sally Chew, New York Native

Since late 1983 when writer Andrea Dworkin and university professor Catherine MacKinnon were invited by the Minneapolis, Minnesota, City Council to draft an anti-pornography amendment to the city's civil rights code, the idea has made a lot of friends and enemies. It has split feminists and has won the opposition of civil libertarians, the backing of many right-wing groups, and the concern of gays and lesbians.

The principle of the ordinance defines porn as "a form of discrimination on the basis of sex...the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or words." It would entitle individuals to sue the producers or distributors of materials in which women are presented as "sexual objects, things, or commodities," "whores by nature," or "reduced to body parts," or where they seem to "enjoy pain or humiliation, or...experience sexual pleasure in being raped." A woman who could prove that such material incited violence against her, that she was forced to participate in the production of such material, or simply that it violated her civil rights not to be discriminated against, could cause it to be removed from the shelves and/or receive compensation for "damages."

Opponents of the bill, including various civil libertarians and feminist groups such as the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, say it amounts to censorship. They warn against giving the courts the authority to interpret the meaning of such terms as "subordination" and "sexually explicit." Feminist and homosexual art and political publications will fall easily under the law's jurisdiction, they say, pointing out that right-wing groups are in many cases running the campaign.

Anti-legislation groups also challenge the contention of anti-porn groups such as Women Against Pornography (WAP) that violence and sexism are encouraged—some say caused—by pornography. They consider the anti-porn movement a misguided distraction from the real sources of discrimination and violence against women. But proponents of the law seem to have a significant feminist following. Their civil rights approach and their insistence that "objectification is the precondition for violence," as Dworkin recently told *Gay Community News*, are appealing to those who see in the legislation some protection from society's cultural abuse of women.

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