



Father Peter Deckman, our man in Bolivia, talks with a La Paz doctor serving in the slums. For more pictures from the missions see Centerfold.

An Interview: District Attorney on Pornography

The diocesan radio program, "God in the Headlines", aired on Rochester's WHAM, each Sunday evening at 6:45, last weekend carried an interview with Dist. Atty. Jack Lazarus of Monroe County, on the subject of the control of obscenity and pornography. Father Richard Tormey, executive editor of the Courier-Journal talked with Lazarus. Excerpts of their discussion follow:

Fr. Tormey: Ten days ago a presidential commission made public recommendations to our government that it should remove all laws against the adult use of obscene movies and books. The majority view of the commission declared that pornography did not cause crime nor contribute to delinquency. It stated that there was no reason for continued interference by police and courts with the full freedom of adults to read and view any kind of printed material or films which have been generally considered sexy or dirty.

Mr. Lazarus, as an attorney with long experience in this field, what was your opinion of the report of the Obscenity Commission?

Dist. Atty. Lazarus: My personal opinion was one of regret but not surprise because it had been anticipated. I personally agree with the minority view on the commission and not the majority.

Fr. T.: Would you comment on the two principal suggestions of the report: repeal all laws against adult use of pornography, and shield children.

Mr. L.: I strongly believe that children should be legally protected from exposure to pornography. Our legislatures have right along made distinctions on what is obscene as far as adults and children are concerned.

I am opposed to the section that says repeal all laws against the adult use of pornography. I think we need these laws on the books for the general welfare of the community as a whole.

Fr. T.: The commission said that scientific surveys provide no evidence that exposure to sexual materials leads to any individual harm or to any social harm, like crime or delinquency. In your experience, have dirty books or movies any-

thing to do with crime or assault?

Mr. L.: I think it's awfully hard to determine what motivates a person when he rapes or commits other antisocial behavior. I have had the experience in my 14 years as a prosecutor in this county of one case where a girl was taken from a car and forcibly raped by three individuals and in their car at the time they were apprehended was a magazine entitled "Rape" depicting just such action.

We had a homicide of a small girl here in our area where the killer was in the neighborhood at the time for the sole purpose of seeing one of the X-rated movies that was being played there.

I know of another instance where a boy had gotten into trouble and was just about flunking out of high school, and in his locker was found a large number of pornographic magazines. All tests the boy had taken showed that he should have been a B or an A student.

It's hard for me to believe that these items did not have

an effect on these individuals.

Fr. T.: Supposing that 80 or 90 people out of a hundred who see a dirty movie or read a porno magazine would say: "It doesn't affect me, not at the time or later on." Is that a reason for repealing the law, when you have another 10 people who could be affected?

Mr. L.: I think that society in general must protect the other 10. If this material affected just one or two I think there is reason to have the law.

We have laws that say no one should steal another person's car; I venture to say that if you gave 90 people the opportunity there would be only one or two out of the 90 who would steal the car, even if the law wasn't on the books. But

we need the law for the protection of society in general.

Fr. T.: But no one forces these 10 people to buy the dirty magazines—no one forces them to go to these bad movies. They have free choice. Isn't the law taking away a degree of free choice when it says to all the 100: "You are not capable of making a moral judgment; we'll make it for you"?

Mr. L.: Of course, law does take away some of your individual liberties and freedoms. Any section of the penal law does that. Using the example of the car again: I may like your car better than mine but I can't go out and take it because there is a law saying I can't do it. We must look to

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