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On the Line



An overworked and sorely outnumbered group of decent Americans is embarked on a crusade against a Goliath-sized foe, the tidal wave of pornography that has inundated the land.

Their commendable efforts are impeded by lack of funds, by well-heeled publishers and purveyors of smut, by organizations that spring to the defense of obscenity-pushers, and by the general public's indifference to (or lack of knowledge of) this malignant decay.

In San Francisco, a dealer is offering an illustrated children's textbook on sodomy. A publisher now offers the lengthy report of the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, fulsomely laced with photographs of erotica and perversion. The cover of this \$12.50 book, which apparently has access to the special rates offered to printed matter by the U.S. Post Office Department, is adorned with a deceptive facsimile of the American eagle and is printed in red, white and blue.

It looks quite official on its exterior but is pure Pompeii, Sodom and Gomorrah inside.

This is the report that was rejected by President Nixon and the Senate, and by a minority of the committee members appointed originally by President Johnson.

The rejected study took about three years and cost \$2 million. The majority continues to move for its acceptance, and has powerful support. The minority has felt forced to print its dissenting report, but is having a hard time making its voice heard.

I spoke the other day with Father Morton A. Hill, a Jesuit, who is co-author of the minority report, and with Dr. Winerey C. Link, a Methodist minister from Hermitage, Tenn. Father Hill also is president of the struggling organization that bears the brunt of the abuse from the richer majority. It is called Morality in Media, Inc., and its board chairman is Dr. Julius G. Neumann, of the Congregation Zichron Moshe, New York City.

"We stick by the original statement that this majority report is a Magna Carta for the pornographer," the quiet gray priest said. "The customary attack on us is that we are attempting to impose censorship on the country. We stand for enforcement of the laws, for the Constitution, not censorship. Our minority report carries out the mandate of Congress to recommend means to regulate the traffic in obscenity and pornography effectively and constitutionally.

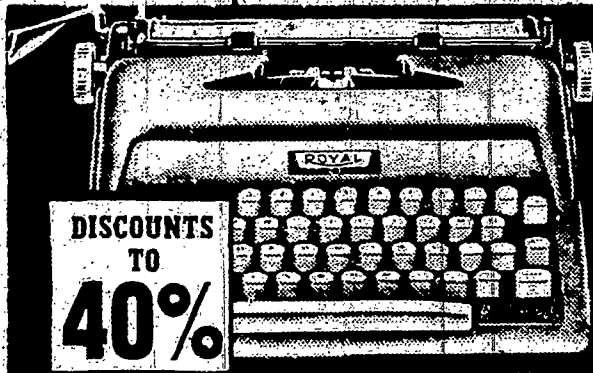
"On the other hand, the majority of the commission ignored that mandate, and instead recommended repeal of obscenity laws, except for token statutes for minors, public display and invasion of privacy through the mails."

Father Hill stated that he and a handful of assistants, including Dr. Victor Cline, a Mormon, had a difficult time obtaining access to the reports amassed by committee investigators. For example, only the minority report reveals statistics on the relationship between high exposure to pornography and imprisonment in the 16-21 age class. Some 96 per cent of 476 questioned young male prisoners had engaged in group sex, the subject, incidentally, of a new best seller.

The Hill-Link report also equates exposure to pornographic material to bad grades in school, dropouts, and a steady erosion leading to sex crimes. The Morality in Media Newsletter recently took due note of two suits challenging the constitutionality of the new postal regulation which enables recipients of unsolicited pornographic mail to sue the offending distributors. In Los Angeles, one suit was filed on behalf of "several mail order distributors and several individuals who wish to receive such mail."

In Brooklyn, a lawyer representing a book company brought suit, saying that the new regulation in behalf of morality could drive his client out of business!

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