

## Great Britain

# Legislating Against Pornography

*Dawn Primarolo is a Member of Parliament for the Labour Party in Great Britain. She presented a Bill to Parliament last year designed to limit the availability of pornographic magazines. In this article, which was first published in "Labour Party News" in October 1990, she explains why she is anti-pornography and why she believes we should be challenging its right to be published. She argues for its replacement by sexually explicit material which reflects equal relationships between men and women.*

Pornography is sexually titillating material which has the woman as the victim, enjoying either violence or implied violence, humiliation and degrading behaviour. Erotica is sexually explicit material which portrays equal partners exploring their sexuality sensitively and sensually. Pornography is not erotica, nor is it the coarser version of erotica. It is about power and domination.

Pornographic material is not sexually therapeutic material produced by some philanthropic publishers as a social service. Twenty million top-shelf (editor's note - pornographic) magazines are sold in Britain each year. It is a multi-million pound business selling women's bodies for profit. Its constant presence in our every-day lives desensitizes us to its violent images and helps to legitimize

those images which spread throughout the media and advertising.

Pornography severely limits women's freedom and prevents them from playing a full and equal role in society. It reinforces and perpetuates women's subordination by sustaining an image of women as objects or parts which can be sexually used by men. Women are undermined, degraded, humiliated and dehumanized by pornography which reflects the distorted and often brutalized version of human relationships inherent in a capitalist society.

As women we must define our own sexuality, challenging the legitimacy of pornography. We have to speak out, enough is enough. Porn causes pain and suffering in women's lives but banning it will not stop the demand for it. Any legislation attempting to challenge its legitimacy and availability must be accompanied by a massive public debate to raise the issues surrounding pornography, to combat sexist ideas and win support for women's rights. Pornography censors women and their sexuality. Its images contribute to both women and their labour being undervalued and thus to low wages and status of women. We must break out of this censorship by isolating pornography and providing positive images of men's and women's sexuality. Being anti-porn does not mean anti-sex or anti-nudity. Anyone who believes that sexually explicit material should be available for those who wish to see it must surely accept that material must be based on equality.

Don't let porn masquerade as sexually explicit material - it is dangerous to women and it inhibits our civil liberties. Porn is incitement to sexual hatred.

