

Some of the Report's more specific recommendations read as follows:

Each denomination should embark on a programme aiming at equalising stipends for ministers of all races by 1975.
Churches should concentrate on building ecumenical and multi-functional buildings.
Church members should be taxed to assist African education.
Churches should plan symbolic acts of resistance to what is false and unjust in the life of the community.
Every congregation should have a clearly visible notice board announcing that Christians of all races are welcome.□

CENSORSHIP

This article was the proposal speech for the motion "that Censorship should be abolished" delivered to the University of Natal Debating Society in Pietermaritzburg on 12th September, 1972. The motion was carried by a comfortable majority.

by Donald Beale

Some of you here tonight may not be aware that Censorship is a problem, either because you've always been shackled within its mind-structure, or because you don't care. Either way points to its insidious effect, subtle, lethal, like radioactivity slowly and silently rotting the bone.

Let us be clear at the outset: in debating the abolition of censorship we are not debating the abolition of moral standards nor of moral discrimination. We are concerned with censorship as a government-sanctioned institution which takes upon itself the right to intervene in our normal human habits of discrimination and choice in determining that which it deems fit for us, and that which is not fit for us. It seeks to impose itself on individual human moral choice, and it is our right to that, that I am concerned to defend in proposing the abolition of censorship, since I do not believe that any outside body has the right of control that blanket censorship insists on. In subverting our own right to free choice and free thought, it substitutes a definite corruption and immorality for what is only a possible one, since it lessens and evacuates the area of choice. Censorship is not unique to South Africa, but even if it is worse elsewhere, that cannot justify it here. The two most frequent imposers of censorships are invariably the State and the Church — one thinks of Blake's aphorism: *As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.* A pattern emerges: it is almost axiomatic that the severer the censorship, the more likely it is that the government be repressive and authoritarian, and the greater the incidence of indoctrination.

Our concern tonight is with the principle of Censorship, not with Pornography and Obsenity, and while Censorship includes the latter, they are not the central focus of the motion, and I trust we shall not be side-tracked into heady moral disquisitions on degrees of sexual acceptability: censorship extends beyond these to areas of political, theological, and philosophical speculation, and seeks to curtail these areas also. It is as well to bear in mind that censorship bans not only books and films, but ideas, and, without compunction, people also.

NOT STATE'S PREROGATIVE

To advocate the abolition of censorship is a sweeping move, and obviously I am not asking for a wholesale and indiscriminate indulgence in pulp and filth. What I am claiming is that moral discrimination at this level is not the prerogative of the state at all, but something private, and domestic. Parents are understandably concerned if children are reading distasteful literature, but it seems to me to be the parents task, not the state's, to deal with it. State and church, however, violate the individual right of moral choice and discrimination, at the same time claiming that it is moral concern which justifies their intrusion, all the while, however, fashioning an exclusive and rigid framework within which the very notion of individual

freedom in matters of morality becomes suspect and subversive, until morality itself is equated with blind, mindless acquiescence in state decisions. (In this context the chain is interesting: State = Government = Party in Power. Morality therefore = Party in Power). Even the arguments for moderate censorship are going to have to offer pretty clear definitions of criteria, and to insist on censorship as something entirely other than party political propaganda, active or by default. The recent furore on the Wits "Lavatory Cartoons" in (dare one say?) upper and lower chambers of Parliament revealed just how out of perspective things are. But it also revealed more insidious possibilities when a Nationalist MP rose, brandishing a UCT newspaper, and bitterly criticised the fact that such journals were allowed to publish articles treating Lenin "warmly". The point is pretty clear.

GUARD

The central impetus of Censorship, one gathers, is to keep guard over those things likely to corrupt and deprave, thus preserving healthy moral standards. But these words are loaded. We're all familiar with such formulations as, "all right-thinking people will agree . . ." or "no decent person would claim . . ." etc. This conspiratorial, cliché-ridden, morally self-congratulatory argument tends to blur the real issue, precluding serious evaluation by its assumption that anything they disagree with, or disapprove of, ought to be put a stop to on self-evident moral grounds; and one notices that those most vociferous in advocating censorship adopt a tone of absolute certainty as regards their judgement on matters of public and private morality. "Morality" itself in these contexts is a catch word: the very use of it, signifies less an attempt to confront moral issues, than the bogus use of a value judgement to support, sanction, and justify personal prejudice, the crude apotheosis of a self-image. The word invokes an absolute standard of reference, and its gathering momentum tends to negate awareness rather than to generate it. Once "morality" is invoked regarding a book or film, it's very easy to insist that anyone who defends the free circulation of the book or film is immoral. These words "corrupt", "deprave", "defile", "moral", etc. are all crude verbal stratagems: the forces of censorship do not seek to prevent, but to impose values by removing others from circulation. In political censorship, it seeks to suppress other values, and hence prevent questioning of its own, and since the Government sanctions Censorship, this censorship is part of deliberate Government policy, and since the Government seeks to remain in power, all motions of censorship are geared to that end. Thus, any and all things outside the accepted area are corrupt and subversive: to oppose is to be corrupt, immoral, seditious — the sequence is clear. It has nothing to do with moral value at all. It's more than the simple problem of "I dislike that . . .", since censorship seeks to impose its governing principles on others. Its strategy is to bring everything under State scrutiny, and exert suppressive pressure on anything likely to promote questioning of the status quo: it seeks, in short, to curtail growth and change. Simply, Censorship does not prevent: it suppresses. It attempts to close the mind, compelling a frame of standards bogusly evolved by the pseudo use of words like "morality", proscribing our right to discriminate and evaluate for ourselves. In case of authoritarian government, it implies values based on its own ideology, shuffles "morality" into its own camp, and evades the real issues.

SEXUAL ASPECTS

This is why the over-emphasis on merely the sexual aspects of morality is really a bluff and diversion. Of course many books and films are distasteful: censorship however tends to produce no serious evaluation of pornography and obscenity,

but rather, a sickening notion of moral purity that wholly excludes sexual candour.

One thinks of Byron in an early poem:

Queries to Casuists

The Moralists tell us that loving is sinning,
And always are prating about and about it,
But as love of Existence itself's the beginning,
Say, what would Existence itself be without it?
They argue the point with much furious invective,
Though perhaps 'twere no difficult task to
confute it;
But if Venus and Hymen should once prove defective
Pray, who would there be to defend or dispute
it?

and in a much later one:

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
Expurgated by learned men, who place,
Judiciously from out the schoolboy's vision,
The grosser parts; but, fearful to deface
Too much their modest bard by this omission,
And pitying soon his mutilated case,
They only add them all in an appendix,
Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;
(Don Juan, Canto I, XLIV-XLVI)

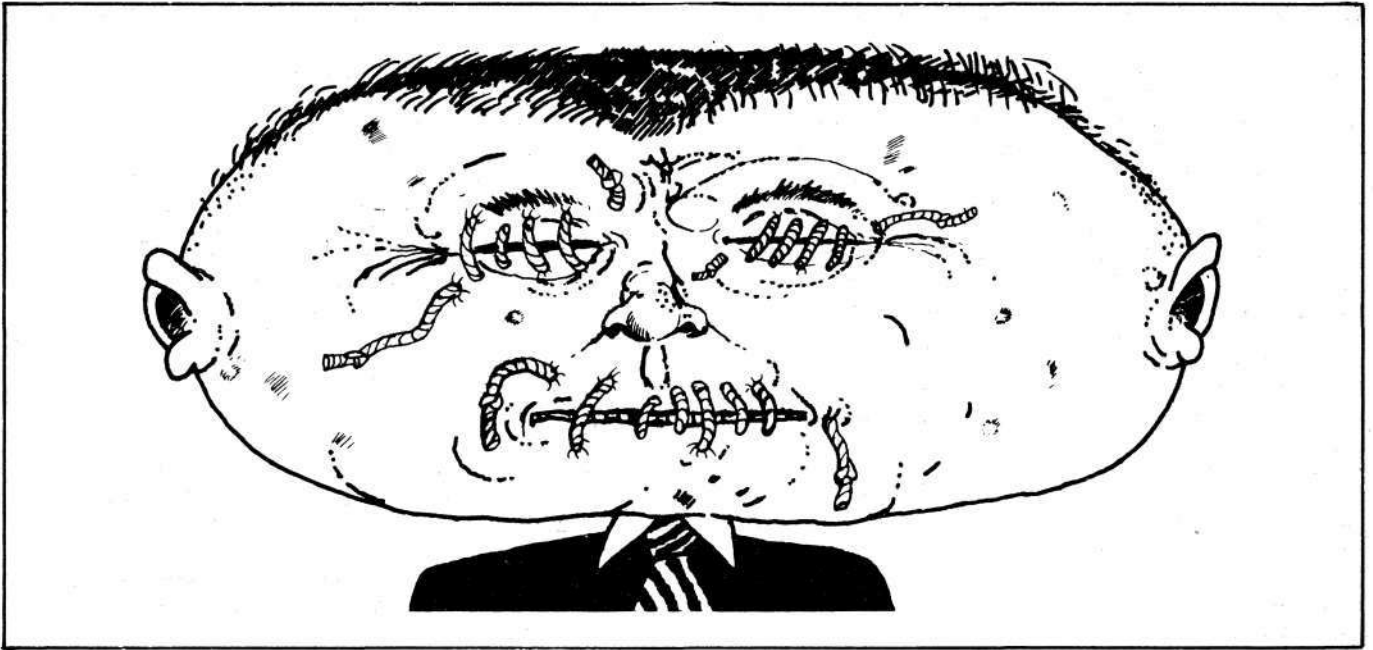
Sex itself, and nakedness becomes filthy and despicable, like psychotic obsessions. Even Milton's puritanism could distinguish between hypocrisy and the "naked majesty" of man: after their evening prayer, Adam and Eve retire,

into their inmost bow'r
Handed they went; and eased the putting off
These troublesome disguises which we wear,
Straight side by side were laid, nor turned, I ween
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refused;
Whatever hypocrites austere talk
Of purity and place and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.
(*Paradise Lost*, Bk. IV, 738-747)

CONSEQUENCE

The consequence in South Africa is that much fifth rate pulp reaches the bookstalls, while great creative achievements like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are banned, and since censorship tends to exclude the good rather than the bad, no censorship seems infinitely preferable to the misguided and heavy-handed censorship that exists at present. It's within this context that one must consider recent authoritative pronouncements by the Moderator of the N.G.K. who is reported as saying that censorship should be increased, that the right of appeal be removed, that adverts for contraceptives be banned in the public press, and that husbands and wives have separate dressing rooms to avoid each other's nakedness. Milton seems a licentious, decadent, orgy-mad hedonist by comparison! (Could Milton have been a Communist?)

If, however, discussion of Censorship is confined only to matters sexual, much of its insidious significance is missed. This is not to claim that there isn't a great deal in the treatment of sexuality that's offensive, but it is to say that morality is not confined to sexuality alone. Censorship tends to distort those moral imperatives it purports to defend. Certain things come under scrutiny — philosophy, political, theology, sexuality, but sexuality becomes so



fixed that it carries more moral weight than it should, with the consequent assumption that if censorship is severe on sex, the nation is moral. By becoming hysterical about nude film scenes, or nude statues in Pretoria, the illusion is fostered that moral issues only arise here, that these are the critical moral cores. In terms of moral acceptability, for example, which is worse: a nude film scene, or 16 million people without political rights living in poverty and starvation? To me, the latter is inexpressably more obscene in human terms than a film sequence of sexual perversion: I don't like the perversion, but I detest the other even more. Censorship, clearly, seeks to move the question of morality out of the public sphere, and into the private one, thereby insulating the status quo from questioning. Apartheid, we're told, is not a moral issue: "Let us be bold and fearless in our fight against permissiveness, sexual license, blasphemy, and communism, but let us not bring morality to bear on the condition of the non-Whites". This, I submit, is hypocritical cant.

POP MUSIC

An eminent militarist at OFS University recently informed his audience that pop music is a Communist weapon (even though it is regarded as decadent in Russia!). Minister P.W. Botha has recently predicted the collapse of science, the arts, and knowledge in SA if the "minority" of protesters succeed, and it may be as well to bear in mind here that in the arts at any rate SA is distinguished internationally by no truly great poet, novelist, dramatist, painter, composer, etc. etc. Behind the fine phrases, it all amounts to censorship of political opposition, and of related areas, since Atheists apparently are persona non grata as immigrants. Censorship is thus a crucial organ in maintaining an atmosphere of controlled information (to comment on this or that is not in the National Interest ...), of secrecy, of the curtailment of individual freedom. Once permitted to act without having to give reasons for its decisions, Censorship possesses a carte-blanc for crude suppression. It becomes another weapon in seeking to control the mind, and freedom of thought. Even at the level of sexuality, there seems to be conflicting evidence that censorship has any significant effect on human behaviour, while it is obvious in SA that severe censorship in sexual matters takes place in a society where there is much incest, adultery, rape, and a high divorce rate. Is there any

more of these things proportionately in the more liberal UK? and if there is, even, can it be attributed to less severe censorship? . Even in the UK we've had the undignified spectacle of geriatric Lord Longford haunting the sin-bins of Denmark with aristocratic hysteria. Further, Mrs. Mary Whitehouse self-appointed arbiter of moral acceptability on TV, and infallible thermometer of degree of sexual decency, has gathered her forces to pronounce on large matters with great authority. In her wisdom, it seems, she has not yet realised that all TV sets are equipped with an "off-button". There is no compulsion to continue viewing should programme be offensive. The power of choice is fully operative here. This is crucial: no-one compels us to read this, to watch that, or to go to the cinema: we can choose not to, if we wish. Why should X impose his choice, prejudice, on Y? Can a generally imposed standard hold good for a range of minds from sub-normal to brilliant? Should it presume to? Perhaps these aphorisms of Blake's provide sufficient. *"The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction."* *"The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow; or the lion, the horse, how he shall take his prey."* And most central of all, this: *"One law for the lion and Ox is oppression."* The general effect of imposed Censorship is a tyranny on the mind, a kind of oppression. Coming to terms with the distasteful, the offensive is our responsibility, not the divine right of state interventions.

CAN CORRUPT

It may be that de Sade can corrupt, but he does not corrupt everyone. It could be argued that *The Bible* can corrupt also. Which is worse: an isolated perversion deriving from de Sade, or an inhuman political system that claims to derive from the Holy Bible? Only one is censored, but both are morally unjustifiable. De Sade's perversions, however, do not necessarily encourage us to follow suit, we can choose not to: but in the second case, the whole weight of state machinery, including censorship, insists that we do follow suit, and deports, bans, or otherwise expurges, those who do not. Morality as a necessary and meritable concomitant of censorship seems less positive here!

To insist that choice be left to the individual doesn't mean he will choose the bad, but it is to insist that to claim virtue without choice is hardly morality. Even Milton in 1644 found it necessary to attack his own faction for seeking to impose

rigid censorship: human freedom mattered more than party interest:

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness . . . Since therefore the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with less danger, scout into the regions of sin and falsity than by reading all manner of tractates and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read . . . Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."

IDEAL BOARD

It was recently suggested that the ideal censorship board would comprise Socrates and Bertrand Russell, Lawrence for novels, Shelley for poetry Ibsen and Shaw for drama. Attractive though this "ideal" group is, it still maintains an outside body controlling and supervising individual freedom, and in any event, a panel so constituted can only be a dream. Most boards are made of lesser men with specific affiliations politically. For them, moral responsibility means scrupulous deference to those laws that delimit, so we can feel protected, insisting that their formulations alone chart the actual and may be taken as real. I deny their claim: it's a weird view of morality, and of human destiny generally,

that works by avoidance and default rather than by choice. In the end it raises to perennial dilemma of liberal tolerance versus doctrinal infallibility. The greater the variety, the greater the potentiality for change, richness, and growth "Expect poison from the standing water" for "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom". By removing certain things, censorship seeks to adjudicate over our growth. It claims to prevent evil, but perpetuates evil itself, since its notion or moral excellence is bogus and *parti pris*. Imagine a garden with certain essentials removed,—the receiving of contrasts of light and shade, little water, and so on, and imagine that every plant couldn't bear its flower. It's a crude analogy, but it illustrates the grotesque unfulfilled condition of the stunted growth of the mind.

IMAGINATION

For Milton, "books promiscuously read" give an insight into the reality of Good and Evil. But their value goes further; the imagination is not only the great creative faculty, but also a central force in society: Shelley perhaps expressed it most powerfully:

"The great secret of morals is love, or a going out of our own nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or persons not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination . . ."

Authoritarian, politically motivated censorship is no instrument of moral defence, but an attack on the central principles or morality itself. Abdicate your right to think and choose, and you abdicate your humanity.

The choice, fittingly enough, is yours. □

ASSECA

— A MIGHTY ADVENTURE

A REPORT ON THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ADVANCEMENT OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA.

by M.T. Moerane (President)

"ASSECA is the biggest thing happening in South Africa, my greatest disappointment would be if it should fail".

This is an evaluation by a Director of one of the most powerful efforts for race relations in this country.

Mr. J.W. Nxumalo, Executive Officer for Education in the Kwazulu Government in a Graduation oration at Ngoye in May spoke about the disparity in funds for Black and White education.

While the Government spends R248 per white child only R17 at best is spent on the black child. As a result in a complex like Soweto about 500 extra classrooms are needed to cope with the number eager to get education. The classrooms that are available need equipment, in some cases even basic furniture such as benches and desks. By and large they are overcrowded as many as 70 students forming one class even at matriculation level.