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More censorship

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ence on the grounds that many male artists share an interest in the creation of anti-sexist imagery, and also because men are the primary viewers of the sexual imagery that exists.



Paula Levine

The conference did produce some resolutions. A Vancouver group to fight censorship was formed. There was a call to help the B.C. Teacher's Federation Women's Committee in their battle for sex education in the schools. One woman urged us all to get out there and make our own erotica. And there seemed to be agreement that what Vancouver now needs is a sexuality conference.

Emma Kivisild

More Censorship

VANCOUVER, B.C. — And now, introducing yet another piece of Social Credit legislation: a new video censorship law. With the new year, B.C. artists will face an imitation of Ontario's popular Censorship Board. B.C.'s legislation will require all existing video to be reviewed, classified and cut, and will require any new work to be submitted.

Any tapes that depict sex between or with those under eighteen; "unnatural acts" (now what could those be?); explicit sex and coercion, and dismemberment or torture, will be banned in the province. Educational institutions will

be exempt from the legislation. Historical footage and documentary may be exempt; as of yet there is no protection for tapes by artists or for artist-run centres or galleries.

Predictably, but sadly, many feminists, as well as the Christian right, support the legislation. This despite the terrible record of the Socreds in dismantling women's services and services for child victims of abuse, their morality campaign against street prostitution, the letting out of Transition House to the Salvation Army and their crusade against sex education in the schools. Somehow, some women think that on this issue the Socreds will act in their interests.

Resistance has mounted from the ar-

tists' community, recently from the gay and lesbian movement, from educators and from anti-censorship feminists as the legislation becomes an impending reality. The Vancouver Artists' League spoke out against the bill at a recent meeting with Brian Smith and received support from many in the audience. A petition is currently being circulated by women's groups opposed to the bill. Unfortunately, the resistance may be too late and feminist artists may soon be asking serious questions of their pro-censorship sisters as video dealing with lesbian issues or sexual imagery is classified or banned.

Sara Diamond

Sex Speaks Louder than Words

TORONTO — At "Challenging Our Images: The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution," a conference organized by the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) in Toronto November 22 to 24, the most common complaint was that there were too many interesting things from which to choose going on at once.

The conference broke new ground by focussing discussion on these two inter-related issues within the same forum, providing an opportunity to discuss prostitution in a political, rather than a social-worker, context, and putting the issue of pornography into its proper context — as a part of the sex industry.

But an opening statement by a disguised prostitute, "Cathy," graphically illustrated one of the major obstacles to organizing both women in the sex industry and those in the conference itself: pervasive external (and internalized) hostility that keeps sex workers "in the closet." "Cathy's" remarks hinted at some of the acrimony that marred preparation for the event and that would raise hackles in the course of the weekend.

Conference organizers explained in information distributed to participants that the event was a response to the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes' (CORP) challenges to International Women's Day last year. A contingent from the CORP joined

the march because they believed it would focus on women's labour rights, an approach they felt might finally give them a chance at a fair hearing among feminists.

They were naturally horrified when some of the literature for the event blamed pornography for the oppression of women and a segment of the march stopped outside a Yonge street strip club to chant their disapproval of it. Not only did CORP members work that particular club, but they found it to be one of their more enjoyable and dependable bookings. The rights and needs of women workers in porn and prostitution clearly did not qualify as labour issues.

The March 8 coalition listened patiently to CORP's complaints and — because of the strong and mixed feelings evoked by the discussions — felt there was a need to broaden the discussion to involve other feminists and so approached OPIRG with a proposal for a conference.

With the imminent passage of anti-soliciting legislation, the women in the business felt an urgent need to find support among potential political allies and to develop organizing skills. Sex-trade workers were initially drawn into the organization of the conference with the promise of input into the agenda and the content of conference sessions. Not all of their aspirations were to be realized.