

Sisters,

In the past week, the movie SNUFF has become a focus for our outrage at the daily violence which assaults us: the reality, and the threat, of rape, of wife and child beating, of sexist advertising, of violent anti-female pornography, of police harassment of lesbians and gays, and of prostitutes. These, and much more, force us to live out our lives in fear of violence and victimization. Mass protests by the women's movement against movies like SNUFF are part of beginning to fight back against these assaults. They are one of the ways in which we can educate the majority of women, and men, to understand the roots of this violence, how it perpetuates our oppression and why they should oppose it. Such protests can aid the women's movement in pointing towards the need for a different kind of society where it will be unthinkable for anyone to make a profit through depicting the physical and sexual degradation of women.

For such protest to play this role, however, it must stand clearly against state censorship and the tightening of laws governing 'morality'. So far, there have been big problems with the direction of the S.O.S. campaign. Though a number of important demands were put forward, the campaign became rapidly focused on the demand for the banning and shutting down of the film: calling on the province and Crombie to shut the film down, discussing launching suits against the theatre owner via the hate literature laws, etc. Such actions feed right into the right-wing campaign to clean up Yonge St. Our protest is being used by Crombie, Grossman and their ilk to build their anti-woman, anti-gay campaign to crack down on pornography and clean up the streets. Their campaign is designed to shore up a disintegrating social system by re-introducing tighter morality laws which have the purpose of strengthening the family, keeping women in their 'place' and lesbians and gay men in the closet.

It's no accident that Crombie and others have so readily expressed interest in the call to ban the film and want broader bans to include such movies as 'Looking for Mr Goodbar'. It's no accident that Crombie wants to look into the idea of more cops--a special female rape squad: ostensibly to prevent rapes, in reality to add a female gloss to a system of 'justice' designed to further victimize and humiliate us, the rape victims.

Tighter censorship laws or hate literature legislation won't work in our interests. It has always been those fighting for social change who have had to fight to end censorship. It has been women like ourselves who have had to fight for the right to distribute birth control pamphlets in highschools, who will have to fight hate literature laws which judge some lesbian novels as anti-male and therefore impermissible. The state should not be allowed to censor what we see, read and hear. It will always use its power much more against us than against the interests of those who perpetuate our oppression.

The women's movement needs to launch a counter-campaign to the Yonge St. clean-up campaign one which will build a much stronger and larger women's movement capable of winning the labour movement and other movements for social change to a struggle against the right-wing campaign. Instead of the demand to shut the film down we should be fighting for the demands which have fallen into the background in the past week. We must demand of the different levels of government :

Freedom of movement
serve & protect
new campaign wh. takes profit out of violence vs. $\frac{0}{T}$

- * that public funds being used right now to victimize gays and lesbian and harrass prostitutes via the Yonge St. Clean-up campaign be turned over to the women's movement, under our control, to be used in the interests of women. To use this to fund the much needed rape crisis centres and transitional houses such as Nellies, and to enable the women's movement to carry a massive educational campaign through the schools and the communities to expose the violence committed against women and explain its causes.
- * for an end to police harrassment of prostitutes
- * for the end to all victimization of lesbians and gays
- * for an end to the laws and legal procedures which treat the rape victim as the criminal
- * for an end to the forced sterilization of native and immigrant women.

Re-orienting the campaign around these kinds of demands will enable us to build much broader support for the fight against violence against women. And next time, when thousands of women march down Yonge St. there will be no confusion of our campaign with that of the right-wing.

And we must link this fight to that against the other fundamental aspects of our oppression. As long as women are seen in society as second class citizens, violence and sexual degradation will be condoned and legitimized in the same way as racism is condoned and encouraged because of the racist myth that non-whites are inferiors. We have to win other women and allies to understand and oppose the violence contained in movies like SNUFF, around the kinds of demands listed above. At the same time, we need to fight for demands which will change our situation fundamentally: for an end to restrictions on abortions which force so many of us into unwanted pregnancies and back street abortions and possible death; for child care facilities, for equal pay and equal job opportunities, for Lesbian rights.

It is by building a strong women's movement to fight for all these demands, and to carry the campaign against violence that it will no longer be profitable or publically acceptable for all such movies to be shown.

Simon
Jess
Revolutionary Workers League