

The following brief excerpt is taken from the chapter on the Presidential Commissions on pornography. Sources are listed; endnotes are not included.

Conclusions

Upon receiving the report, which he did not read, President Nixon “repudiated” the \$2 million spent on the two-year study. In total, the 646-page report contained 150 pages of dissent, including the thoughts of Hill, Keating and Link. As previously stated, Congress followed Nixon’s disgust by rejecting the report which conservative critics declared a product of liberal thinking. Even die-hard feminists, while touting their demands for workplace equality and abortion rights, complained that the commission was too male. Ironically, despite the firestorm of criticism that followed its release, much of the report’s research would quickly become outdated. It was from a time of stag films, under-the-counter print material and peep show booths in adult bookstores, an age in which *I am Curious Yellow* (1968) was labeled smut and “exploitation films” were about as lewd as the average American would see. With *Deep Throat*’s emergence a scant two years later, the country experienced a dramatic shift in its acceptance of porn. Social mores were in flux as a handful of performers from the hippie generation found employment in pornography. The “Porn Chic” era was about to begin just as the nation, tiring of the liberalism of the 1960’s and early 70’s looked to a revisit traditional values. The commission hinted at a changing social climate and the need for tolerance concerning the legality of obscenity and pornography when it remarked, “Concern about rigidly codifying in law definitions which may soon be outmoded by changing social custom can be alleviated by building into laws a periodic review of their content.”

By the 1980’s, pornography secured its foothold in American culture as an entertainment medium. As society was inundated with porn videos shown in the comfort of the American home and erotic magazines became more explicit, discussion of women as objects of male gratification became commonplace, especially in the feminist movement. Women performers were subjected to infantilism and were thought incapable

of making their own choices. In fact, the industry itself, referring to female and male performers as girls and boys, did nothing to dispel that view. Public attitude was predictable: smut encouraged men to react sophomorically toward women, viewing them as sexual objects for purposes of satisfying male lust. Moreover, the drive for censorship implied that women needed protection and thus reinforced their second-class status. By denying porn as a choice for both women and men, society's moral conservatives and anti-pornography feminists secured the notion that women were childlike creatures who could not comprehend the dangers of pornography and who would inevitably become victimized by it. And most egregiously, society, expected women to repress any interest in their own sexuality insisting they remain demure and incurious. But traditional institutions, the family, church, and school, could not go it alone and reminded everyone that the young person, whether male or female, was easily corruptible. It was to suggest that pornography had such an overwhelming effect on the populace as to entreat the legislature and the judiciary to extirpate the infestation that enslaved the vulnerable, the weak, and those who lacked the capacity to exercise thoughtful decisions.

So in the end pornography would become politics and the American political winds were slowly shifting. Just as the pornography industry was expanding and gaining in appeal, it would soon feel the heat again. As previously stated, within the next fifteen years, one of the strangest political alliances in recent history was formed. The anti-porn feminists from the '60's left --- remnant anti-establishmentarians and believers in a woman's choice --- would join forces with the Christian conservatives on the right and "(t)he bizarre seed of an alliance between radical feminists and Christian fundamentalists was planted." The vehicle, which inspired their union, was the next Presidential venture into investigating porn: the Meese Commission.

Sources

Heidenry, John. *What Wild Ecstasy: The Rise and Fall of the Sexual Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.

Kendrick, Walter. *The Secret Museum*. New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1987.

The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. Toronto, New York, London: Bantam Books, 1970, 2nd printing.