

Censors are Sick!

Fifth Estate Collective

From time to time over the past 25 years, a motley collection of cops, principals, prosecutors, factory foremen, army sergeants, prison wardens, mall owners, shop keepers and vigilantes have tried to interfere with the circulation of this newspaper. Almost always because, as the FBI once put it, the *Fifth Estate* “supports the cause of revolution everywhere.” The bastions of authority hate our message of indiscipline and freedom and have gone to great lengths in attempts to suppress it.

The latest effort came in the form of a notice of rejection from the Texas State Prison at Huntsville. Reproduced above, it takes censorship to new heights of absurdity. Usually, prisons reject the FE and other anarchist publications charging we “interfere with the order and discipline of the institution.”

However, at Huntsville we were informed the “problem” was a “picture of a nude child” on page six of our Spring 1991 edition which “qualified for clipping” and “is detrimental to prisoner’s rehabilitation because it would encourage deviate criminal sexual behavior.” It didn’t seem to matter that the photograph in question was of a napalmed young child running in terror after a U.S. air attack in Vietnam. Besides winning a Pulitzer Prize for its depiction of the horrors suffered by the Vietnamese at the hands of the U.S. war machine, the photo appears in every major history of the conflict, and is perhaps the single most recognizable image from that war.

That someone could view this gruesome photograph of the suffering of innocent civilians, read the accompanying text, and then contend it “would encourage deviate criminal sexual behavior” says less about the photo, but legions about the mind of the censor.

We availed ourselves of the official appeals procedure the prison offered and sent a letter to the Texas American Civil Liberties Union hoping they would perhaps intervene. Not surprisingly, the appeals board sustained the denial and sent back a letter stating weakly they weren’t accusing us of “advocating child pornography” (thanks!) and since “only one page” was deemed unacceptable, the paper, minus the offending item, would be given to the prisoner subscriber. The ACLU, for its part, informed us, “Because the court would likely find the TDC (prison) action reasonable, legal challenge of the action probably would not succeed.”

We finally sent a censored version of the page to the prisoner and decided to let the matter rest, figuring the dull, bureaucratic minds in the prison censorship department would not be moved by further requests. (Copies of the FE/prison correspondence will be supplied to readers upon request.)

PUBLICATION DENIAL NOTIFICATION

TITLE OF PUBLICATION, fifth estate Spring 1991 v 26 n 1

The above publication has been reviewed and denied in accordance with Section 3.9 of the TDCJ Rules and Regulations for the reason(s) checked below:

(d) A specific factual determination has been made that the publication is detrimental to prisoner’s rehabilitation because it would encourage deviate criminal sexual behavior.

REMARKS Page 6 contains picture of a nude child.

(Qualifies for clipping. Page 6 [1 page].)

If there is a desire to appeal the rejection of the aforementioned publication, this may be accomplished by writing to the Directors Review Committee, P.O. Box 99, Huntsville, Texas 77340. The appeal must be mailed so as to arrive at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Institutional Division, within two (2) weeks of the date shown below.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/337-late-summer-1991/censors-are-sick>
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