

Video porn battle set for fade-out?

The pornographic video controversy should fade into the background now that a sensible new classification system is in place in B.C. The system, to start next June 30, is a model of problem-solving in this difficult area.

It will not get rid of home-viewed porn except the most grotesque (including child porn). We still have some freedoms left and freedom from out-and-out censorship of what we read, see and hear is one of them.

As with most of freedoms, this one costs. Legislation just proclaimed — or activated — requires distributors of adult material (what censor-mongers would call pornographic) to pay annual licence fees of \$400. They will also pay substantially to have their videos viewed and approved or otherwise by the B.C. Classification Branch — \$30 for the first 10 minutes of the video, \$3 for each

additional minute and \$1 for each copy of the submitted tape.

Retailers will pay a \$100 annual licence twice the cost of the licence for non-adult video retailers.

There is some financial censorship there. Adult distributors and retailers will have to be sure they have a market to support the cost, which will be passed on to the consumer. So the purchaser of adult material will have to pay more for his choice of video.

But there are two points favoring the new system.

First, the distributor of movie house film pays to have his movies vetted by the classification branch. So a precedent has been set without much complaint from anybody.

Second, the video industry worked with the classification branch to develop the system. It prefers to pay up front rather than risk obscenity prosecutions in an atmosphere where nobody knows what the accepted standards might be.

Videos classified as truly artistic will face no fee. And children are protected by the rule that says adult videos must be kept in special areas in stores.

B.C. has always been so much more progressive than some other jurisdiction, notably Ontario. This equally progressive video law should satisfy most people, even if it still falls short of the objectives of the most strident anti-pornographers.

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