

I SHOULD LIKE TO START WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS OF A GENERAL NATURE, WITH REGARD TO PROTECTIVE LAWS IN GENERAL AND CENSORSHIP IN PARTICULAR.

(1) I KNOW OF NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, HOWEVER LIBERAL ITS REPUTATION, THAT DOES NOT HAVE SOME LAWS REGULATING THE MANUFACTURE, IMPORTATION OR POSSESSION OF HARMFUL SUBSTANCES. OBVIOUS EXAMPLES THAT COME TO MIND ARE VARIOUS TYPES OF POISONS, DRUGS ETC. OTHERS, PARTICULARLY APPLICABLE TO SOUTH AFRICA, ARE CERTAIN LIBIDO AROUSING OBJECTS - VARIOUS TYPES OF VIBRATORS, SIMULATORS AND THE LIKE. AN ENTIRELY NON-CONTROVERSIAL EXAMPLE IS FIREWORKS. THESE ARE BANNED BECAUSE THEY ARE CONSIDERED HARMFUL TO VARIOUS DEGREES, AND BY AND LARGE SUCH REGULATIONS ARE ACCEPTED.

ONCE WE COME TO ANY KIND OF INFORMATION MEDIUM - THE ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE (OR CERTAINLY SOME PEOPLE) SEEM TO UNDERGO SOME SORT OF METAMORPHOSIS, THOUGH FOR THE LIFE OF ME I CANNOT FULLY GRASP WHY.

IF THE POSSESSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF A BOMB IS DANGEROUS AND UNLAWFUL, SURELY EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE THAT BOMB FALL INTO THE SAME CATEGORY. IF CERTAIN MECHANICAL DEVICES ARE REGARDED AS ILLICITLY AND UNNATURALLY STIMULATING TO THE SEX URGE THEN WHAT ABOUT PORNOGRAPHIC FILMS, PICTURES OR ARTICLES?

EVEN THE MOST "LIBERAL" AND EMANCIPATED COUNTRIES MUST FACE THIS PROBLEM.

ENGLAND HAS ITS LORD CHANCELLOR AND ITS D- NOTICES.

THE USA, IN SPITE OF THE FAMOUS FIRST AMENDMENT ("THERE SHALL BE NO ABRIDGEMENT OF THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH") IS CURRENTLY WRESTLING WITH THE NASTY PROBLEM OF HOW TO CURTAIL THE DISTRIBUTION OF FILMS DEPICTING THE MOST EXPLICIT, SADISTIC AND CALLOUS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN LESS THAN THE AGE OF TEN.

"AH!" THE CRITIC MIGHT SAY, "YOU ARE CHOOSING THE MOST EXTREME EXAMPLES". EXACTLY. IN MAKING THAT COMMENT HE IS IMPLICITLY CONCEDED THAT ABSOLUTE NON-CENSORSHIP IS A CHIMERA - AN IMPRACTICAL PROPOSITION IN ANY REAL SOCIETY - AN IDEA TO BE CONFINED TO THE REALM WHERE "NO OPINION IS SO ABSURD THAT SOME PHILOSOPHER CANNOT BE FOUND TO ESPOUSE IT". PHILOSOPHER, YES, BUT THE LAWYER'S REASONABLE MAN, NO.

ONCE THE PRINCIPLE OF SOME KIND OF CENSORSHIP IS CONCEDED IT THEN BECOMES A QUESTION OF WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE, OF HAGGLING OVER THE DETAILS. THAT IS A VERY DIFFERENT, AND FAR LESS EMOTION-LADEN, QUESTION THAN THE EXTREME DOGMA "ANY FORM OF CENSORSHIP IS REPUGNANT".

[G.B. Shaw said]

(2) THE MOST GENERAL SOCIETIES ARE NATIONS OR STATES. "WHY NOT THEREFORE LEAVE MATTERS TO THE COURTS AND STATE CENSORS?" IT IS ARGUED. THIS RATHER COMFORTING AND SIMPLE MINDED DOCTRINE LEAVES OUT OF ACCOUNT ANOTHER FUNDAMENTAL FACET OF HUMAN NATURE - OUR GREGARIOUSNESS OR TENDENCY TO FORM OURSELVES, INTO INNUMERABLE SMALLER GROUPINGS - FAMILIES, SOCIETIES, PROFESSIONS, CLUBS, CHURCHES, POLITICAL PARTIES, SCHOOLS, COMMITTEES, UNIVERSITIES.

MEMBERSHIP OF ANY OF THESE GROUPINGS IMPOSES FURTHER OBLIGATIONS AND SANCTIONS OVER AND ABOVE THOSE OF CITIZENSHIP - AND FURTHER (THOUGH THIS TIME OFTEN VOLUNTARILY) CURTAILS OUR FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PUBLICATION. SUCH GROUPINGS APPLY SANCTIONS FOR INFRINGEMENTS OF THEIR RULES WITHOUT REFERENCE TO, (AND ON OCCASION IN ADDITION TO) THE STRICTURES OF THE COURTS.

DOCTORS ARE THE MOST RESTRICTED OF ALL, BUT MOST PROFESSIONS ARE CONSTRAINED.

NO MEMBER OF AN ORGANISED PROFESSION IS FREE TO CRITICISE ANOTHER IN PRINT, OR TO ADVERTISE HIS SERVICES. IN SHORT, HE IS CENSORED.

LET AN EMPLOYEE OF ALMOST ANY INSTITUTION SERIOUSLY CRITICISE HIS EMPLOYER IN PRINT, OR EVEN AUTHOR OFFENSIVE MATERIAL, AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT AS TO WHAT HIS FATE IS. MUCH THE SAME, MUTATIS MUTANDIS, CAN BE SAID OF CHURCHES, POLITICAL PARTIES, CLUBS AND SOCIETIES. WHY SHOULD UNIVERSITIES BE EXEMPT? OUR STOCK IN TRADE IS IDEAS, ALL IDEAS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. WE ALL KNOW THAT IDEAS CAN BE VERY EMOTION-PACKED. THEREFORE, WE HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY, ESPECIALLY IN THE WRITTEN WORD, TO PRESENT IDEAS CALMLY, DELICATELY, DISPASSIONATELY IN UNIVERSITY PUBLICATIONS, ALL UNIVERSITY PUBLICATIONS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. SCABROUS OR OFFENSIVE MATERIAL IS UNWORTHY OF ANY UNIVERSITY, MORE PARTICULARLY RHODES UNIVERSITY.

(3) How to decide whether material falls into these categories? This is sometimes a difficult (or even an arbitrary process), particularly in borderline areas. Ultimately, people have to decide. Let them be formal censors (where this proves necessary) panels or vice-chancellors. The details of the process are of lesser moment, once the principle is determined. In cases of emergency or recess there will, inevitably be administrative action, even if it is only suspension pending further process.

Given the structure of Rhodes, with Senate responsible ultimately for discipline, and given the views of Senate and Council, and your Vice-Chancellor (and these are not all that significantly different from those prevailing at other, supposedly more liberal English-speaking universities), then it is obvious that absolute freedom of publication of student newspapers is simply not on. I hope, therefore, that this symposium does not degenerate into a sterile discussion of "What must editors do barely to stay out of trouble?" Rather, let us look at the constructive side of things: "What should a student newspaper do to be excellent, or at least good?"

We at Rhodes are the smallest, least financially viable and most vulnerable of all South African universities. To remain in existence we can only afford to do things well, even at times excellently. If we cannot do something well, then the best survival strategy for a small university is not to do it all.

We have all the ingredients for producing excellent publications - keen and dedicated editors, a unique department of journalism. A publication can attract notice by being excellent. There is always

THE TEMPTATION TO TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT AND SEEK NOTICE BY BEING SENSATIONAL. IF THIS TEMPTATION CAN BE AVOIDED AND THE NECESSARY DEDICATION DISPLAYED WE COULD PRODUCE MATERIAL THAT WOULD BE THE ENVY OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY. IT IS PERFECTLY POSSIBLE. HARVARD PUBLICATIONS LIKE LAMPOON AND CRIMSON DO IT REGULARLY. THE CURRENT EDITORS OF WITS STUDENT DO IT. IN A RECENT ISSUE THAT I SAW, THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF CERTIFIABLY THE MOST LIBERAL CAMPUS IN THE COUNTRY CAME OUT WITH A LIVELY, VIRTUALLY TYPO-FREE PAPER WITH

NO FOUR LETTER WORDS

NO GRUBBY CARTOONS

NO SCATOLOGICAL PICTURES

NO EXTRAVAGANT ATTACKS ON PERSONALITIES OR DEPARTMENTS

CONTENTS INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING ON KLIPTOWN
THOUGHTFUL ARTICLE ON ALL ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA
FILM AND DRAMA CRITS
SPORT (OF COURSE)

THIS EXAMPLE ENABLES US TO CONSIDER SOME HALLMARKS OF GOOD STUDENT NEWSPAPERS.

THEY ARE TECHNICALLY WELL PRODUCED.

TEMPERATELY WRITTEN AND DISPLAY GOOD JOURNALISTIC MANNERS.

TRADE IN IDEAS RATHER THAN PERSONALITIES.

HAVE A FOCUS OF VISION BEYOND THE PAROCHIAL BOUNDARIES OF THE CAMPUS.

ARE INTERESTED IN THE MAIN SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND HUMAN PROBLEMS SURROUNDING THEM, BOTH REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY.

THINK OF SOME OF THE WEALTH OF MATERIAL LYING TO HAND IN OUR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS THAT ONE LOOKS FOR IN VAIN, AT PRESENT.

HOW DOES GRAHAMSTOWN AS A CITY WORK?

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE ON AN ALBANY FARM?

RHODES' RESEARCH INSTITUTES?

WHAT ARE THE RESEARCH INTERESTS OF LEADING ACADEMICS, WITH PROFILES OF THEIR WORK AND ITS WIDER SIGNIFICANCE?

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE KOWIE AND KENTON LOCATIONS?

INTERVIEWS OF PROMINENT VISITING ACADEMICS.

LOCAL PLACES OF INTEREST.

THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF GRAHAMSTOWN.

THE SUPREME COURT.

THE MAGISTRATE'S COURT (IMMORALITY CASES)

THE MICROECONOMY OF THE EASTERN CAPE.

THE ST. CROIX SCHEME.

SHOULD (OR COULD) GRAHAMSTOWN INDUSTRIALISE?

FASCINATING SOCIOLOGICAL SITUATIONS WITHOUT NUMBER

THE COLOURED COMMUNITY

THE Ciskei

FINGOES AND XHOSAS

SUBCULTURES: RHODES STUDENTS

RHODES STAFF

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

THE LAW

FORT ENGLAND