



Department of Justice

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Following are excerpts from a speech delivered by Attorney General Edwin Meese III before the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in Los Angeles on Tuesday, February 10 at 10:30 a.m.:

"In the fifteen years since a previous commission submitted its report on pornography, the obscene matters being distributed in the United States have become more and more frequently associated with violence and depravity. Consumers of this more violent and perverted material are now the major portion of the pornographers' clientele. This clientele also has been reported to have a frightening but not surprising degree of overlap with the police blotter's lists of sex criminals and violent assailants.

"So, by 1985, it was clearly time for a fresh look at the social effects of obscenity. That year, at the request of President Reagan, my predecessor, Attorney General William French Smith, established the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. By May of that year I had become Attorney General, and therefore I had the honor of announcing the Commission's formal creation, and the names of its eleven distinguished and

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diverse members -- including such Californians as Dr. James Dobson, Judge Edward Garcia, and Ms. Deanne Tilton.

"The mandate of the Commission, as spelled out in its charter, was to 'determine the nature, extent, and impact on society of pornography in the United States, and to make specific recommendations to the Attorney General concerning more effective ways in which the spread of pornography could be contained, consistent with constitutional guarantees.'

"The Commission published its report in July of last year, and it confirmed -- with reams of statistical evidence and some heart-rending personal testimony -- certain conclusions that many experts had already reached:

- that violence, far from being an altogether separate category of pornography, is involved with almost all of it;

- that there are empirically verifiable connections between pornography and violent sex-related crimes;

- that the pornography industry is a brutal one that exploits and often ruins the lives of its 'performers' as well as its consumers, and that the 'performers' often include abused children and people plied with hard drugs;

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- that whether or not it is directly imitated by those who consume it, pornography has a deleterious effect on what its consumers view as normal and healthy; indeed, many marriages have been destroyed this way, according to testimony taken by the Commission.

"I could go on, but the report has been out for a while now and the outline of its findings is well known. Pornography hurts people, both by the way in which it is made, and the way in which it affects people who get hooked on it, which can happen to people all too easily.

"In brief, the report of the Commission indicated vary clearly that something had to be done. So, last October, I outlined a seven-point program which constituted the response of the Department of Justice to the problem of obscenity as described by the Attorney General's Commission. Today, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you, a distinguished group of local government leaders, how we are getting along with the task of implementing these seven points.

"Before I review our efforts so far, I would like to stress three things: First, 'obscenity' is a term denoting the more violent and offensive forms of pornography which the Supreme Court has proclaimed to be outside the scope of First Amendment

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protection. Thus, 'hard-core' obscenity, as defined by the courts, is the focus of our efforts. Second, while some new law is needed in this area, there is already on the books statutory authority for the federal government to act vigorously against obscenity. Third, great care will be taken to be sure that Constitutional protections of freedom of speech and press will be strictly observed.

"The first point of our implementation program was the creation of a center for obscenity prosecution within the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. Today I am pleased to announce that we have indeed created the Center for Obscenity Prosecution, within the Justice Department's Criminal Division. It will be a resource bank for all prosecutions of adult obscenity and child pornography, maintaining files of statutes relevant to those crimes, and also of sample indictments, briefs, and sentencing memos. It will also provide a statistical and reference service, legislative assistance and maintain a public information program.

"Point Two of our program was the creation of a task force of attorneys, also within the Criminal Division, which would spearhead prosecutions and assist in training activities. There will be six attorneys on the task force in Washington, with others stationed around the country.

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"This task force will work closely with U.S. Attorneys' offices and with the Organized Crime and Racketeering Strike Forces, and will be instrumental in developing and implementing the other initiatives described in our program.

"Point Three of the program I announced in October was an enhanced effort by each of the 93 U.S. Attorney's offices, with concentration on international trafficking in child pornography and interstate trafficking in obscenity. Each of the U.S. Attorneys will designate a specialist on his or her staff to handle prosecutions for obscenity and child pornography. The prosecution task force is helping to coordinate these efforts around the country. In the first week of March, we will be holding a special training course in Washington for the designated specialists from each U.S. Attorney's office.

"Point Four of the program was to enhance the efforts of the Organized Crime and Racketeering Strike Forces, in coordination with the new National Obscenity Task Force, against organized criminal enterprises involved in the production and distribution of obscenity.

"In addition, the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, William Weld, has brought together Justice Department attorneys specializing in organized crime with top-level agents from the FBI, the IRS, the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. These officials are

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discussing ways to conduct effective nationwide investigations and prosecutions of interstate producers and distributors of obscenity.

"Point Five of the program is a legislative program to be introduced in the 100th Congress. We are now drafting legislative proposals, which will increase the protection of children, provide for civil and criminal asset forfeiture, and strengthen laws against the distributors of obscenity.

"That brings us to Point Six, which involves coordination with the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children, to eliminate the phenomenon of kidnapped or abused children being used in pornography. A hideous new form of the slave trade has developed, one that has expanded along with the problem of missing children generally. The so-called 'red light' districts of our cities continue to attract confused and helpless runaway children into a world where they can expect nothing but rape, beatings, and disease. What is more, the Commission found that child pornography involving very young children -- infants, even -- is not unknown. That is why this area of activity has a particularly high priority.

"Finally, Point Seven of our program called for assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies, through training and the sharing of information. This will largely be carried out by the Center for Obscenity Prosecution. The Center will provide

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them with sample indictments and briefs, it will store information for use by local investigators, track important federal and state court cases that are relevant to obscenity prosecutions, and disseminate analyses of relevant decisions.

"The report of the Commission on Pornography has received overwhelming support from the public, governmental officials at all levels and experts in child protection. The implementation steps will assure that the work of the Commission is carried forward into specific action so that the objectives of a safer, more decent society can be achieved."

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