

People Who Favor Moral Society Not Making Their Feelings Known

MORALITY, by whatever definition, is not a natural characteristic of mankind. Guidelines for peaceful living have been found necessary by even the most primitive societies, in spite of arguments that morality cannot and should not be legislated.

Morality is best learned by precept and example, but for some people, enforcement of rules of conduct is required.

In addressing the Men's Dinner Club, Associate Justice Harry A. Blackmun of the U.S. Supreme Court said:

"Law and morality are not necessarily the same. There is still room for moral teachings over and above the law. Law and morality may overlap. The (Supreme) Court attempts to expound constitutional principles; not moral law."

Pornography and licentiousness are representative of many issues where law, morality and religion may overlap, agree or conflict. A current question is whether showing of low-rated movies on television is forcing pornography into homes.

Objectors may simply turn off programs they find offensive, but that will not get pornography off the air. Broadcasters claim that they show what people want to watch and report that they receive few protests against immoral films. Only an avalanche of complaints after each showing is likely to change the situation.

A recent case in Oklahoma City federal court involves what was described as "hard core pornography" shown in a local theater. The complaint was not against the movie itself, although the jury ruled it obscene by Oklahoma City standards, but the theater owner was convicted of causing the obscene film to be transported interstate.

Prosecution of producers and distributors, instead of censorship of materials, may be a way to slow output of pornography.

A young assistant U.S. district attorney in Memphis, Tenn., Larry Parish, has obtained more than 60 indictments for persons and companies allegedly involved in production and distribution of pornography. An actor who made only \$100 for his role in a widely publicized obscene movie is being prosecuted along with those who reportedly made large sums from the same movie.

Promoters insist that pornography is harmless, but most religious leaders and educators, as well as many authorities on crime, think otherwise. Few argue that children should be exposed to such materials, but if

it is available, youngsters will see it.

Most people favor a moral society. A Gallup poll found that the vast majority of Americans would like to see public and parochial schools instruct children in morals and moral behavior.

Religion is closely associated with morality. A survey of 22,000 "high achievers" among high school students showed that the proportion who believe that religion plays a significant role in their own moral standards increased from 63 per cent in 1972 to 86 per cent in 1976.

The so-called "permissive society" has been blamed for our rising juvenile delinquency and crime problems, and it sometimes appears to be the majority. If most people hold positive feelings about morality, as surveys indicate, not all are making it known.