

Smut Rides High With Court Backing

THE Supreme Court of the United States has made it virtually impossible for citizens to protect themselves and their children from daily exposures to obscenity and pornography.

First, the court ruled (1973) that "people in different states vary in their tastes and attitudes and this diversity is not to be strangled by the absolutism of imposed uniformity."

Then, in a Georgia case (1974), the high court limited the power of local juries to declare offensive books or films obscene.

"We made it plain that . . . no one will be subject to prosecution for the sale or exposure of obscene materials unless these materials depict or describe patently offensive 'hard core' sexual conduct," declared Justice William H. Rehnquist.

What is obscene? Webster's Third International Dictionary says: "Something that is disgusting to the senses usually because of some filth, grotesque or unnatural quali-

ty; something grossly repugnant to the generally accepted norms of what is appropriate."

Refusal of the court to establish workable national standards or to allow local juries to do so opened the way for movies, television, books and magazines to blast away at decency and morality.

An army of 300 angry Oklahoma Cityans encountered the frustrations of battling pornography last week when they marched on City Hall with banners demanding prosecution of obscene book sellers. They represented views of many citizens.

About all they got was sympathy and a promise that police would help them file complaints. Police have made token raids since, but dealers regard such actions as nuisances, not as shutdowns.

"If I were a pornographer," a federal official is quoted in a recent pornography roundup article in Forbes magazines, "I would not fear any city, state or federal authority. Once you know what the climate of law enforcement is, you can under-

stand how people get into it (pornography)."

Buyers of the vulgar materials insist that society must accept pornography as a way of life, regardless of rights of the majority.

"The presence of pornography is evidence of decadence," wrote Anthony Harrigan in a U.S. Industrial Council pamphlet. "If America is to enjoy ordered freedom in the future, based on civilized values, it will have to determine that pornography is outside the allowable limits of free expression."

Sen. Dewey Bartlett said of the 1973 ruling: "Something is wrong in America when our Supreme Court forbids prayer, yet sanctions obscenities under its interpretation of freedom of speech."

It should be politically advantageous in Oklahoma for public officials to battle pornography, but smut dealers hold the upper hand, backed by rulings of the Supreme Court.