

Mail order filth may destroy your child

The *Menace*

in Your LETTERBOX

by Herbert and Maxine Cheshire

EVERY YEAR a staggering 50 million lurid advertisements—the “come-on” for a flourishing, lucrative racket the Post Office Department calls “mail-order pornography”—are pouring into American mailboxes, addressed to impressionable teenagers. From 12 to 15 major filth merchants, operating on the fringe of the law and profiting to the tune of \$350 million annually, are responsible for this outpouring of smut. The lewd photos, slides, movies, novelties and books they peddle have been labelled “Wanton, depraved, nauseating and despicable,” by the United States Senate’s subcommittee on juvenile delinquency.

A 13-year-old boy was the target of one piece of this sordid advertising bait, offering photographs posed in the nude and in suggestive positions. The description of the pictures offered left no doubt that they were of a kind

barred from the mails. The price was \$3 for a set of 12, \$15 for a set of 72. The offer arrived, unsolicited, in the family mail at the boy’s home in Washington, D. C. It was camouflaged as a handwritten letter, its message in carefully reproduced handwriting on blue stationery, complete with an intimate postscript and sealed in an envelope marked “personal.” A free sample photograph was enclosed.

In Des Moines, Iowa, a father intercepted a similar circular mailed to his 14-year-old son. In part, the letter ran “I have been called the ‘Body Divine’. Why don’t you stay around the clock with me? You can do this by buying my latest movie . . .” In rural Tennessee, a 16-year-old found in his mail an order blank for French Art Slides, described as “sizzling” by the advertiser.

Your home may be the next tar-

get of the filth-merchant. Your own child, through a simple and innocent act, could put himself on the mailing list of one of these dealers. Perhaps he is a camping enthusiast, a stamp collector, a model car builder or a hobbyist of almost any kind. He spots a magazine advertisement inviting him to fill out an order blank and send for a bargain item of his particular hobby. He orders the item and his name goes on the mailing list of a legitimate firm catering to juveniles.

Then not infrequently, a broker buys from that firm the names of its youthful customers. Many people think there is nothing wrong about that: trading in customer-lists is a recognized part of American commercial enterprise these days, although not everyone agrees that it should be permitted. At this point, your child's name and address may get into the hands of a dealer in pornography if a mailing list broker, either unknowingly or unscrupulously, sells him the hobby firm's list.

Then the advertisements begin to arrive. First, your child is likely to be invited to be "the life of the party" by buying a booklet of racy comics. If he orders this booklet, the follow-up sales campaign begins, and he is offered such items as "unretouched photos of the most beautiful female bodies in Hollywood" or "exciting movies."

Writing off for a cowboy's

picture brought such circulars to an 11-year-old in a small Nebraska town. Similar ones reached a 16-year-old in New York City after he ordered a pamphlet on hot-rod cars. Outraged parents protest to the Post Office Department at the rate of 50,000 a year.

"It is shocking to know that even little children are able to obtain such filth, just by answering an ad," one father wrote. "How many more sex crimes must be committed before the public wakes up?"

From the Milwaukee mother of a 15-year-old boy: "I have been having an awful time trying to keep these things from him, but he must have his name on a lot of lists. All I can do is ask that you take care of people like this in whatever way you are able."

A Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, mother asked: "What can one do if children get to the mail and see pictures of this kind. . . . Why should they be in the mail boxes of people who are trying to be decent?"

THIS PARENT pinpointed the particularly invidious aspect of mail order pornography—the fact that it is aimed at children who are not deliberately seeking out obscenity, yet nevertheless find its lure delivered to their doors. The youngster who intentionally seeks out an illicit newstand or a street corner peddler and clandestinely

buys a sordid picture or book must share some of the blame with the seller. But mail promoters aim at the innocent.

Smut peddling once centered mainly on the underprivileged minors of big city slums; now its advertisements and products, sealed against postal inspection and forced upon the backs of unwilling mailmen, are invading the serenity of the best suburbs and small towns. A girls' training school in rural Michigan has been one target; a fashionable boys' academy in Pennsylvania another.

THERE is a growing conviction among law enforcement officers that this rising flood of pornography, whether spread by mail or through a dealer operating from an automobile near a schoolyard or playground, is responsible for a great part of today's rapidly increasing juvenile sex crimes.

"There is no doubt about it," said former New York police commissioner Francis Adams. "It can be proved in all too many cases." A Detroit police inspector told the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency: "I have yet to see a sex murder case in the history of the Detroit police department but that I can show you obscene literature."

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover has pointed out that the obscene photo, film or book, "unlike the narcotic cigarette which is reduced

to ashes after degrading one unfortunate victim . . . can be transmitted on an almost endless round of moral destruction."

Protesting parents often indignantly ask why the Post Office Department doesn't "do something" to halt peddling such objectionable merchandise by mail. After all, they argue, there is a federal law against mailing obscene material. It carries a maximum penalty of a \$5,000 fine and/or five years in jail. Why isn't the filth-merchant punished?

The fact is that the Department battles mailed filth unceasingly, but its legal weapons frequently prove ineffective. The promoters of pornography know this. Indeed, they blatantly boast of using the Post Office Department, their worst enemy, to deliver their goods. One circular advertises that the films it offers are so "objectionable we can no longer offer them to you through the leading magazines; therefore, we are contacting our select list by direct mail."

One post official puts it: "Postmen are being used to carry mail they don't want to carry into homes that don't want it." Forbidden to examine first-class mail, the Postal Department cannot act against mailed pornography until a complaint is made by someone who has received it. Even then, a long investigation and legal struggle are required before the Department can make a case. The mere job of establishing a promoter's

identity is frequently a prolonged one, because he may operate from as many as 50 different rented post office boxes simultaneously and under as many as 200 names.

ONCE identified, complicated legal proceedings begin. This may require months of hearings or trial. If civil action is instituted, the Department tries to get a hearing examiner to put the dealer out of business by authorizing it to stop mail deliveries to him, thus cutting off the flow of returned order blanks. But, even if so authorized, the examiner's decision is appealable to the courts. The purpose of criminal action, of course, is to win a court conviction that would send the promoter to jail.

As the hearing or trial stretches out, the peddler collects perhaps \$100,000 from the mailing under attack. Before a final decision is reached, he probably is sending out new circulars under a new name and address.

Postal inspectors have no authority to impound obscene advertisements, sent as first class mail and sealed against inspection. Government agents can have no knowledge of their existence without opening sealed envelopes, which is a violation of the law. They have no authority to make raids on the promoters' headquarters. Federal law takes effect only when the objectionable matter goes into the mail. State and local officials often

can make such raids under local laws; but, usually if federal agents have not been successful in cracking down on the promoters, local police think their chances of obtaining convictions are not much better.

The department's principal legal problem, especially in borderline cases, is proving that the objectionable material is obscene. It must prove its case under a legal definition of obscenity that is, of necessity, liberal and broad. The Supreme

[H.R.6239, 85th Con., 1st sess.]

A BILL To amend section 1461 of title 18 of the United States Code, relating to the mailing of obscene or crime-inciting matter.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the eighth paragraph of section 1461 of title 18 of the United States Code is amended to read as follows: "Whoever knowingly uses the mails for the mailing, carriage in the mails, or delivery of anything declared by this section to be nonmailable, or knowingly causes to be delivered by mail according to the direction thereon, or at the place at which it is directed to be delivered by the person to whom it is addressed, or knowingly takes any such thing from the mails for the purpose of circulating or disposing thereof, or of aiding in the circulation or disposition thereof, shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both."

Court has made the definition so to avoid restricting too sharply the cherished Constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. In its most recent decision on the question, the court ruled that obscenity is that which "appeals to the prurient (lascivious)" interest, and said the standard for judging it is: "whether to the average person, applying *contemporary community standards*, the dominant theme of the material *taken as a whole*" appeals to such interest.

The Post Office Department welcomed this ruling. Its general counsel Abe McGregor Goff, said the decision was a "milestone" and that the definition of obscenity, although broad, was specific enough to outlaw much of the flagrant pornography spreading across the country. However, another court decision, this one made by the court of appeals at Denver, has postal authorities worried and, they say, has seriously hampered their crackdown on the promoters and dealers in filth. This decision holds that the government can prosecute a dealer in obscenity only *where the material is dropped into the mail* and not where it is received. This means if your child receives what is unquestionably an obscene advertisement or product from a dealer in another city or state, the promoter must be prosecuted in the place where he operates, not in your community.

Remember that under the Supreme Court's definition, obscenity must be judged by "contemporary community standards." Remember, too, that such standards vary. They are not the same in rural areas as in large cities. They even differ by sections of the country. Thus, if obscene photos were mailed to your child from Los Angeles, the case against the sender would have to be filed there and would be judged by standards prevailing there. Standards in Los Angeles are more sophisticated than those in, for example, Topeka, Kansas, or Spartanburg, S. C. This is the reason, according to postal officials, that virtually all major dealers in pornography have taken refuge in Los Angeles. The federal court there takes a lenient view of what is obscene, and the promoters escape conviction or are given light sentences or fines.

THE JUSTICE and Post Office Departments are asking help from Congress. They have proposed that postal laws be revised to enable them to prosecute obscenity where it works its evil—at the point of receipt—not at the point of mailing. "We want to give the offended community a chance to decide what is obscene and what they want to do about it," a postal official said.

However, neither the present law nor the proposed new legislation carries increased penalties for

second and third time offenders. Goff, in his congressional testimony, said he thought "a mandatory increased penalty for a second conviction . . . would be efficacious." Congress eventually may write this into the new legislation.

Congressman Francis E. Walter of Pennsylvania, a member of the House subcommittee considering the proposal, says it has a good chance of being approved by the current session of congress. Catholic and Protestant church groups, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Association of Postmasters and other groups have endorsed the legislation.

The American Civil Liberties Union and the American Book Publishers Association oppose it on grounds that it might violate

Constitutional rights and lead to harassment of legitimate book publishers. The Civil Liberties Union pointed to the fact that defendants would be placed at great hardship if prosecuted in courts remote from their homes and from their lawyers. This seems an unwarranted tenderness for criminals of their ilk. A murderer is tried in the county seat of the county in which his crime is committed. It is not considered too great a hardship on him and he has more at stake. The Union's concern for the smut-seller appears to be misplaced.

BUT WHILE congressmen debate and the courts rule, dealers in the obscene and near-obscene continue to flourish and to take their easy profits. They remain a menace to your child's moral well-being.

Listening to God

Prayer is opening the heart to God. It is not all petition. It has its listening side. Prayer is more than speaking to God; it is giving God an opportunity to speak to us.

Oftentimes we are so persistent in our appeals that God has no opportunity to answer. We must learn to be silent while He speaks. After a period of communion and petition, if one will listen, simply wait with a worshipful heart while the Spirit quickens the conscience and understanding, God will speak in accents as clear as the voice of a friend.

Our hearts are assured and the way is clear. God's answer to the listening heart is the true reciprocation of prayer.

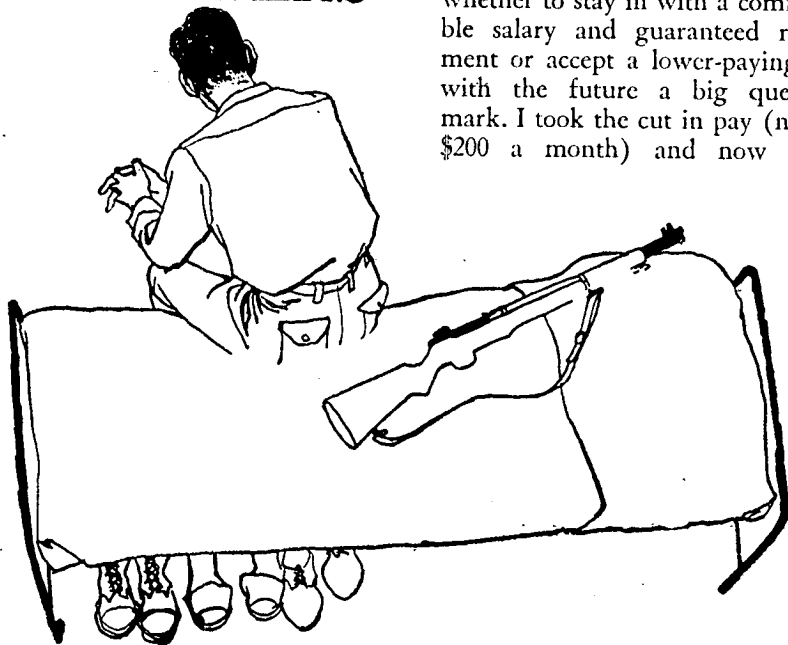
For one who prays, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth," there are many who pray, "Hear Lord, for Thy servant speaketh."

—COSTEN J. HARRELL

*An Ex-service Man
Expresses His Views*

Charles Holmes

dollars
don't
make
good
SOLDIERS



THOUSANDS of words have been written and spoken on how to keep trained personnel in the Armed Forces. Most writers and speakers reach the same conclusion: more pay for the serviceman. But is this the real solution?

The basic argument is that trained personnel can get much higher pay in civilian life. In some cases this is true. However, there are many men who are leaving the armed forces but are not stepping into higher paid jobs. They are knowingly taking a big cut in pay because they are fed up with military life.

I well know the pros and cons of a military career. I had to choose whether to stay in with a comfortable salary and guaranteed retirement or accept a lower-paying job with the future a big question mark. I took the cut in pay (nearly \$200 a month) and now must