

Taking all these factors into consideration, it is the Tribunal's view that *A Life on the Game* should have an age restriction placed on it. Therefore it is considered as indecent in the hands of persons under the age of 18 years.

Dated at Wellington this 3rd day of December 1984.

Judge W. M. WILLIS, Chairman.

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Decision No. 23/84

Ind. 12/84

*Before the Indecent Publications Tribunal*

IN THE MATTER of the Indecent Publications Act 1963, and IN THE MATTER of an application by the Comptroller of Customs for a decision in respect of the following publication: *Blood and Guts in High School Plus Two*, published by Pan Book, U.K.:

Chairman: Judge W. M. Willis.

Mesdames H. B. Dick and L. P. Nikera.

Messrs J. V. B. McLinden and I. W. Malcolm.

Hearing: At Wellington on the 8th day of November 1984.

Appearances: R. A. Simpson for Comptroller of Customs. No appearance for importer William Collins Publishers.

#### DECISION

WE were informed by the Comptroller of Customs that the publication, *Blood and Guts in High School Plus Two*, was imported through Auckland and was seized by the Customs Department in April 1984.

The importer has disputed forfeiture of the book and the department therefore referred the publication to the Tribunal for classification prior to the commencement of condemnation proceedings pursuant to the Customs Act 1966. The author of *Blood and Guts in High School Plus Two*, Kathy Acker, has been described by reviewers 'as everything from post-punk porn to post-punk feminism.' This paperback edition, published in 1984, is difficult to read and understand, and here we agree with Mr Simpson in his submission to the Tribunal. The story describes a girl locked in a room where twice a day the Persian slave trader comes to teach her to be a whore. 'One day she found a pencil stub and scrap paper in a forgotten corner of the room. She began to write down her life ...'

The novel purports to be an account of her experiences, almost solely of a sexual nature, written in a disjointed and difficult style, though liberally illustrated with diagrams and sketches.

We agree with Mr Simpson when he submits that 'in short, the book is considered to be mainly a vehicle for the writer to express and convey her sexual opinions', although we are not so certain that younger readers would be attracted to the publication because of its difficulty of presentation.

The publication seems to have little literary or artistic merit and does place considerable emphasis on sexual description.

The Tribunal classifies the publication as indecent.

Dated at Wellington this 3rd day of December 1984.

Judge W. M. WILLIS, Chairman.

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Decision No. 24/84

Ind. 4/84

*Before the Indecent Publications Tribunal*

IN THE MATTER of the Indecent Publications Act 1963, and IN THE MATTER of an application by the Secretary for Justice for a decision in respect of the following publication: *The Playbook for Kids About Sex*, published by Sheba Feminist Publishers, England:

Chairman: Judge W. M. Willis.

Mesdames H. B. Dick and L. P. Nikera.

Messrs J. V. B. McLinden and I. W. Malcolm.

Hearing: At Wellington on the 8th day of November 1984.

Appearances: No appearance for Benton Ross Publishers Limited. P. J. Carroll for Secretary for Justice.

#### DECISION

THIS publication was referred to the Tribunal by the Secretary for Justice following a complaint by a member of the public. It was originally set down for hearing in May 1984 when submissions were made by the Secretary. Prior to the decision being released R. M.

Ross of Benton Ross Publishers Limited, which is the holder of the New Zealand rights for this publication, sought a rehearing as he had had no notice of the hearing. The rehearing was granted and was set down for 8 November when there was no appearance on behalf of the importer.

The above publication was first published in Britain in 1982 by Sheba Feminist Publishers.

It is a soft covered 'picture' book of about 50 pages. The introduction or 'What this Book Is About' says:

"This is a book about sex. It is different from most childrens' books about sex because it is mostly for girls and boys whose bodies have not started to change into grown ups."

As the introduction also points out, another different thing about this book is that you will be invited to 'write and draw a lot of it.' The readers are also invited to 'help a younger boy or girl with the book, like your brother or sister or cousin or friend'.

The book covers 4 main topics:

- (a) The external differences between male and female bodies.
- (b) Childrens' bodies.
- (c) Sexual intercourse.
- (d) Masturbation and sexual orientation.

The Tribunal would agree with the Secretary for Justice that in its favour:

- the book is well written and well illustrated.
- there is no reason to doubt the author's honesty of purpose.
- the information contained in the book is presented in a straight forward and unaffected way.
- the price of the book means that it is unlikely to be bought by children.

However the book does cause the Tribunal a lot of concern. Because of this, we have sought opinions from Gary McCrae, Registered Psychologist, Inspector of Schools, Special Education and Dr G. W. K. Bridge, Consultant Psychiatrist.

In his report, Mr McCrae includes the following points:

- reading level is approximately 10 years and is probably sighted at the 8-11 year level.
- it is written prescriptively rather than descriptively, and as it is written by adults, children subjected to reading it would see the acts suggested as the correct thing to do.
- it is a very one sided viewpoint put forward and the age group for which it is produced accept adults as the authority therefore children will do as the book suggests, this book could be misused by another to encourage a younger child to touch and be touched, etc.
- the book may be acceptable for informing adolescents about sex, but it is dangerous and prescriptive to any pre-adolescents.

Dr Bridge says:

"In my opinion, the age group it is aimed at would be far too immature to either understand or cope with much of the information promulgated in it. It would only deepen, in my view, to confuse an already difficult area of development for children to learn about."

He goes on to say:

"I am also somewhat concerned at the obsession the authors have regarding masturbation and also their leap into homosexuality as being the norm for children. Children of this age have certainly not made their own minds up regarding homosexuality as it would be a foreign experience for them."

We have taken the opportunity of showing this book to a wide cross-section of parents of children of the age at whom this book is directed. It can be said, we think, without exception that all disapproved the book and its contents. By the same token we have to bear in mind that the book has been available in book shops in New Zealand since 1983. Indeed it was because a parent had purchased the book that it was referred to the Secretary for Justice for referral to the Tribunal.

We are aware from the Department of Education also that concern has been expressed that this book should have been available for sale in book shops throughout the country. This aspect has made it very difficult for us because it savours very much of locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. Had the book been referred to us prior to being made available for sale, our conclusion might have been different but because of its availability over such a long period we feel justified in classifying it indecent for those under the age of 13 unless under instruction or supervision of parents or professional advisors.

Dated at Wellington this 3rd day of December 1984.

Judge W. M. WILLIS, Chairman.

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