

REFLECTIONS ON THE ‘ROASTBUSTERS’

The “roastbusters” did some rotten stuff. But who created the kind of society in which they felt able to boast about it and show their faces without any sense of shame? Sure, previous generations did similar things. But there is a difference. We kept our heads down because we knew it was wrong. These kids don’t even seem to know it is wrong. That could be our fault, not theirs.

Why wouldn’t they feel comfortable in the kind of culture depicted in a recent news item (Sunday Star Times, Nov. 24, 2013) reporting that the Department of Internal Affairs has blocked 34 million attempts within New Zealand to access at least one of 502 child sex abuse sites blocked by government filters since 2010?

If that sounds like a description of adults acting as adolescents, the likeness actually goes further: adolescents don’t always make connections between their choices and the consequences. Well, *adults* aren’t making connections between the pornography and violence they countenance on TV and in films as entertainment, and the sexual abuse and violence we experience in our homes and streets.

Some even deny there is a connection. They ignore the natural dynamics of self-indulgence. What starts off at one end of the spectrum as “soft”, or even “just a bit of fun” doesn’t stop there, because it’s addictive. And those who aren’t practised in self-restraint and self-control eventually go to any lengths to get what they want. The connection between pornography and violence gets stronger along the spectrum of self-indulgence.

So, it seems, does depravity. That same news item reported: “experts say NZers seeking child pornography are increasingly demanding younger victims and more violent abuse.” It quotes the head of the on-line child exploitation unit Oceanz saying that “globally, abuse was becoming more disturbing and depraved, often featuring babies and young children being tortured.” When will we learn to make connections?

Those who become slaves of self-indulgence have accomplices. Their accomplices are those who jabber on about “the right of the individual to choose” and “no one else can judge” - both true, but not in the sense usually intended. (The individual’s right to choose isn’t what determines whether actions are right or wrong; and judging another’s conscience, which we can’t, isn’t the same as judging their actions, which we can!) Their other accomplices are those who are making money out of it: it is a multi-million dollar industry.

Of course, once sex is detached from its natural setting in marriage, then it can mean whatever individuals want it to mean. That is already abuse, even if there’s consent. And without consent, it is already violence.

Virtue is right choices made easier through practice. That calls for self-restraint and self-control, even in activities not directly related to sex. Little sacrifices – choosing to go without what one could choose – is how will-power is strengthened. Better still, of course, when one’s personal sacrifices benefit others as well. This forms a different kind of society. Is that where we want to go?