

Morality Forum Update

Standing up for family values in society

Issue 24

Spring 2006

Freedom /and Responsibility/ of Expression

By John O'Neill

In recent months there has been a lot of discussion in the media and in society regarding freedom of expression. The recent cartoons in a Danish newspaper concerning Mohammed caused outrage and there were demonstrations throughout the world. Some people lost their lives. Early last year around fifty thousand people complained to the BBC about their decision to show the *Jerry Springer the Opera* production, which contained over three hundred swear words and ridiculed Jesus in various very offensive ways. There was also a play in Birmingham which offended Sikhs. Following the demonstrations all planned performances were cancelled.

Freedom of expression, I believe, should be about courtesy, respect and manners. People of course should be free to expose doubts about various religious beliefs etc; however, it is the manner and the way such views are expressed that is the relevant point.

All kinds of obscene and violent materials are hoisted onto our society by the media etc. in the name of "art", "freedom of expression", and "exploring". I find it quite shocking /and revealing/ that a number of media and political people are justifying the ridiculing of Mohammed with the freedom of speech issue. Probably the same people would defend the right of the producers of the *Jerry Springer the Opera* to go ahead with their vile production. The same people would act very differently if people close to them were ridiculed and subjected

continue on page 5

Inside this issue:

Freedom and Responsibility of Expression 1

Letters and Testimonies 1

Porn Free Newsagent Hamdy Shahein's Parliamentary Campaign 1

On Sex Education 3

WAIT UK Kicks off! 3

True Family Values 5

Marriage Savers 7

Morality Forum Update
43 Lancaster Gate
London W2 3NA
Email:
moralityforum@yahoo.com



W
A
I
T
U
K
p.3

Letters and Testimonies

>>>Sex Education as Early as 5?

To Morality Forum from Renata Parker (23 March)

There has been an aggressive campaign on the TV channel 4 programme at 10.20am for a few days this week about sex education for children. Davina McCall campaigns for a radical overhaul of sex education, advocating that it should start as early as five.

She went to Holland and filmed some lessons of school sex education there, taking 4 teens from UK and 2 headmasters from UK schools. The UK teens were shocked first time, but after a few days they liked it. She returns to the UK with her enlightened teens (words from website) and goes to the Minister for Children, Beverley Hughes who was luckily not so open and she said that the

continue on next page

Porn Free Newsagent Hamdy Shahein's Parliamentary Campaign

A guide called "How to Minimise Consumer Complaints About Child Exposure to *Grown-ups' Titles*" tells newsagents to put lads' mags (such as Nuts, Zoo, FHM, Maxim, Front, etc.) on top shelves above children's eye level. It also advises shopkeepers to conceal sexually explicit pictures on tabloid newspapers such as the Daily/Sunday Sport and the Daily Star, by such measures as folding them to conceal the images, overlapping them with other titles or displaying the back page uppermost.

This new guidance is being issued by the National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN) in the April edition of trade magazine The Fed. Whenever NFRN introduces a certain code it is voluntary but usually widely obeyed.

The guide has 3 sections- 1) pornographic publications (which should remain restricted to the top shelf and be sold to over-18s only); 2) "lads' mags" (which have raised many concerns at their increasingly explicit sexual nature) and "ladies' mags" ; and 3) national newspapers and other titles - usually on lowest shelves (the problematic Daily/Sunday Sport and Daily Star in this category).

continue on page 8

continued from page 1... **Sex Education as early as 5?**

opinion of parents is important.

However Davina McCall campaigns with strong determination bringing teachers from Holland to talk to parents about having sex education even at the primary school (view videos at www.channel4.com/letstalksex).

Davina McCall said that if Holland is so successful in having fewer teenage pregnancies why UK still cannot do it. Their teachers and porno-like videos say that value-free sex is normal, good to do it but do it safely. They also teach about the homosexual people to children 6 year old saying that it is good and normal. There is nothing about family and parenting.

Probably Beverley Hughes needs support now. This material from Holland shouldn't be included in our curriculum and destroy the original concept of stable family and responsible parenting. Thank you, Renata Parker

From John O'Neill: *Thank you for sending the information about the Channel 4 programmes. I watched small sections of some of them and was disgusted with what I heard and saw. What Davina McCall said about Holland was totally false. There are a number of relevant factors to take into account as to how teenage pregnancies are so low in Holland. The churches are involved much more regarding sex education. Also parents play a leading role. The young people themselves are more clear about not having sexual relationships, and becoming pregnant as a teenager is still stigmatised in Holland. Also the government does not give benefits to teenage girls who become pregnant.*

The Family and Youth Concern moral group have brought out a pamphlet about teenage pregnancies in Holland, as Davina McCall is not the first person to try and use Holland as a reason for even more explicit sex education to be taught in schools. This pamphlet gives clear details and the true reasons as to why Holland has low teenage pregnancy rates. It is a total myth to say that it is because of explicit sex education.

I already sent this information to D. McCall, Channel 4, and the TV company that made the programme, to Beverley Hughes (Minister for Children, Beverley Hughes, House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA) and the headmaster of the school in Nottingham, which wants to teach sex education to primary school children. I also sent a number of articles etc., to the relevant people explaining why value-free sex education is wrong, and giving the proper contexts in which sex education should be taught. I have asked Family and Youth Concern to contact Channel 4 (I phoned Channel 4 directly). I will also write to my MP about this matter. I will send you the information about Holland, and other relevant items.

Thank you very much once again. John O'Neill

>>> Thank you a Million Times
from Grace Downie, Barnet

Dear John,

Thank you very much for sending me the information and encouraging me without even knowing that I was looking for the next step to stop the shops. You and others gave up your precious time to help collect signatures. You may never fully know how grateful I am how much it meant to me. Also how grateful so many people are that we have no shops of the nature we were petitioning against. THANK YOU A MILLION TIMES.

Continuous thanks to God every time I pass the now empty shop.

And well done and thank you to all who stand up for what is good and right; even when it is difficult.

Thank you John and thank you for all the time and effort you give to help people like myself; and for the great benefit to this country you have been.

Take care, GOD BLESS

Yours sincerely

Grace

Morality Forum wants to thank Mrs. Grace Downie for her appreciation. A number of Morality Forum volunteers supported Mrs. Downie in her campaign to challenge various licence applications for sex shops in her area. Mrs. Downie herself played a major role in the various campaigns.

>>>Life and Peace

by Theresa Quarmby

The following letter was published in January in the HUDDERSFIELD EXAMINER. Mrs. Theresa Quarmby is a regular contributor to the newspaper with her wonderful letters. Letter writing can play a major role in influencing opinion in society. One doctor changed his mind about the morning-after pill after reading a letter that Mrs. Quarmby had published in her local paper, which highlighted the negative aspects of the pill.

As we stand before the dawn of a new year I find myself reflecting on some of the events of 2005 which seems to have been a year of so many personal sorrows and tragedies.

We can think of conflicts and wars, mass starvation, natural disasters, terrorism, the breakdown in family life and so on.

Six million unborn children have lost their lives under the 1967 Abortion Act. The toll cannot be counted just in terms of lives lost, for many women (and some men) the cost of aborting an unborn child brings unbearable sadness.

The latest New Labour Government abortion policy now urges that girls as young as 11 should be offered the abortion, including morning-after pill. Should that fail the girl may see a doctor, with a view to offering her an abortion, and with a guarantee that her parents need not be told.

Recently scientists said they were "shocked" to discover a large number of pre-school children had mental and behavioural disorders serious enough to affect their lives.

continue on page 5

On Sex Education

by John O'Neill

There have been a number of articles in recent times in newspapers about "explicit" sex guides being used in many schools. Parents have been horrified at the kinds of explicit materials being used. In an article in the Sunday Telegraph recently it stated that: "parents have demanded the removal of a study guide that gives *shockingly explicit* details to children." The book talks about oral sex and suggests that pupils engage in "sexual touching, talking dirty face to face or on the phone, even sexy e-mails and text messages" as a "warm up" to sexual intercourse.

The book produced by Coordination Group Publications costs £4.50 and is aimed at 14- to 16-year-olds. 60,000 copies have been sold.

Jacqui Davies a mother of two teenage boys from Kent, found the guide in her son's bag and has written to the head teacher to ask for the book to be withdrawn. "I was absolutely horrified", she said. "I had no idea that this kind of material was being covered, and speaking to other parents, neither were they."

Nick Seaton of the Campaign for Real Education said: "Most parents will be disgusted that their children are learning about sex from these type of guides. They should be removed from the classroom." One teacher recently stated that "if I was using this kind of material outside school I would be arrested for child abuse".

It is nothing short of a national scandal how our children are being corrupted by value free immoral so called "sex education" lessons. Such lessons blatantly encourage the children to have sex. All parents with children at high schools need to know clearly the contents of such lessons. It is still the right of any parent to withdraw their child from sex education classes.

The real answer to the teenage pregnancy problem, I believe, is abstinence. The abstinence teams in America are gaining very good results. There has been a 30% drop in the rate of teenage pregnancies in some states where abstinence programmes are being used. An inspiring example of this is the WAIT UK team which has already performed in several schools and churches and is enjoying rising popularity. □



WAIT UK Kicks off !

by Nicole German, March 2006

(WAIT UK is a pro-active youth project aimed at preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS through abstinence and inspiring young people to live a healthy lifestyle by developing their talents and creativity)

Since the American team came last September, WAIT UK got a real kick off!

Besides being full time students (aged 12-19) themselves the WAIT UK members have been training regularly since and performing in various places! We feel more confident the more we perform and become more established as well.

We started off by performing on World Aids Day (1 Dec'05) at the Royal Holloway University, which was very well received by the students! The message was conveyed and we had a few people dancing with us at the end. Most of the students were

impressed by our sincerity that we are actually living our message and our positive attitude.

From the 10th- 18th of December we had a so called "WAIT Performance Week". Following a training session held on Saturday, 10th Dec in central London, we performed at four different churches, and finished on Saturday evening, the 17th Dec. The enthusiasm and commitment of the WAIT members was incredible.

On Dec 11 we performed at St.Gabriel's Church in West Acton. During the next Friday and Saturday (16 & 17 Dec) we had three exciting performances, the first one at a Youth Christmas Dinner (organised by the Tower of Refuge Ministry) in Finsbury Park. Secondly, we performed at a Youth Convention in Vauxhall (organised by Unity Faith Outreach Ministry) in front of a very responsive audience - four pastors are interested in inviting us to their churches, or to perform at special

I love walking into a school with the team, and seeing the bored, frustrated faces of the students, and then see them transformed in just 45 minutes into kids who have glimpsed their own value, and can believe in their ability to choose something that will save lives. I love watching the WAIT team members get on stage and use their talents selflessly, giving to this audience of strangers who they see as their own brothers and sisters, working so hard to reach them with every ounce of energy they have. I love the shock on the teachers' and parents' faces when they see kids they know jumping up on stage and singing and dancing with us at the end, or proudly raising their hands to agree that the best way to prevent HIV is abstinence. ' Kate Tsubata, WAITteam founder, USA

meetings, next year. And finally, the performance at the Light Of The World Church in Holloway Road did not take place at the church that we expected, instead it was at a night club nearby, but nevertheless, was warmly received. We were treated to a dinner afterwards, and our lads were able to start training a young man in break dance, whilst our girls made friends with two girls from the Church. The minister in charge, Rev. Theresa, shared deeply with Farhad and Marshall (both in the WAIT Steering Committee) during the dinner; she will be planning a huge Islington (North London) youth meeting later in 2006, at which WAIT UK will perform, and later hopefully train interested youth.

We also had a few Parents' Open Days. They are made to give parents a clear idea what WAIT is all about, what their role as a parent is in connection with WAIT and how they can support. It is also about inspiring them and if they have any questions to get them answered.

Beside performing and informing we also get into dialogue with other young people, like the event on Saturday, 4th of February for example, which was a Christian Youth meeting in Tottenham.

One of our biggest events and probably most successful was the one in Berlin this year at an international & inter-religious event.

Toby Dracup wrote about this trip: *"For me this trip was not only the first time to perform outside the UK but also to really test our unity and efforts to see if we could pull off something that could be laid down as a great achievement that wasn't accomplished alone, this was done with everyone throwing in everything they got for each other, with each other!"*

After 3 or 4 rehearsals and improving every tiny detail, the performance was better than they expected: *"We received such applause, it was so big, so loud it really did show to us how successful we were!"*

After that event we got invited to come to various countries to perform as well.

To help keep us going and live up to all our big plans in the future, we are doing a few fundraising events and would like to do more soon, like a "Talent Concert" in May this year. It is inspiring to know, that the WAIT members themselves are taking initiative to sponsor themselves. That is a sign of their sincerity about the WAIT message. One of those fundraising events was a cake sell in South

London. Stephanie Coombs wrote: *"After our trip to Germany, South London (WAIT members) were talking about how great an experience it was. We felt that we should raise money to help fund these trips so they can happen more often! We decided to hold a cake sale, something small and simple to start off with. We managed to raise £63.78. We are very happy with this total and it has inspired us to do more fundraising."*

The last performance was on Saturday, March 25. We had a successful event in the Finsbury Park/ Tottenham Hale area of northeast London, following an afternoon of training in central London. It was in a Pentecostal church as part of a musical talent competition and was even filmed for possible showing on a cable TV channel ('OBE TV')!

Afterwards, we were invited by various members of the audience to do WAIT performances in some churches and youth clubs.

Our future aims are to become an official charity and start touring Britain, visiting as many schools as possible and going abroad as well! We are already invited to various other countries, including Africa, where AIDS is spreading very quick.

As a Youth Coordinator, I am extremely inspired by everyone's sincerity which makes me proud of them and what they do. Their enthusiasm and the changes I have seen in young people keeps me going to invest in this project!

I believe we can achieve a lot as we gradually build ourselves up and perform at more & more places. Everyone deserves the chance to be given the message of AIDS Awareness and the solution of staying abstinent until a solid relationship as a healthy lifestyle choice not only for their physical health, but also their emotions and those of others.

WAIT gives hope to young people. It empowers them by showing how they can make right choices without being influenced by peer pressure or carried away by their emotions without thinking of the consequences and using their talents to do something positive in their life! Being abstinent is not restricting, but gives the chance to prepare properly for one lasting relationship and on top of that, it can be very fun too, which is shown and proven by the WAIT team. □

*For more info contact: wait-uk@waitteam.org
Marshall de Souza Tel: 07799450703*

***'Work with
youth, passing on
your skills and your
dreams. Give everything
you have. Don't be afraid
to love. Believe that your own
dream - maybe the one you
buried long time ago and thought
would never happen - can
become fulfilled through your
helping kids. If you show kids
their goodness, their power
and their value, you will
also feel your own'.***

Kate Tsubata

continued from page 1... **Freedom /and Responsibility/ of Expression**

to gross gratuitous remarks, as was the case with the cartoons and *Springer*.

It is little wonder that we live in a "job culture" when people feel free to grossly insult what others hold to be sacred, all in the name of "freedom of expression". What kind of messages does such behaviour give to our young people?

There is clearly a battle going on in our nation at the present time between secular humanistic ideas and policies, and the moral and spiritual values, which are the true and only values which all aspects of society should be relating to. Those values, which have stood the test of time, as history shows conclusively, are contained within all the religions. The core message contained within all the religions is, "to live for the sake of others." Living for the sake of others and following the true dictates of our consciences is not meant to be an option. Those tenets are given to each one of us to ensure that we will develop into mature, stable and prosperous human beings.

Our nation urgently needs to see moral and spiritual values predominant again in society. In previous generations when this was the case people could safely walk the streets, and divorce and teenage pregnancies were rare. In those days our society was not receiving numerous wrong messages from the media etc.

One positive point to come from the freedom of expression issue is that people will respond in numbers when they feel grossly insulted. What is needed is for all decent minded righteous thinking people to respond to "lesser" unacceptable moral issues. If we all do this we can surely play a part in helping to turn our nation around and back on the right track. Public opinion still counts for a lot. Woolworths and Tesco recently stopped selling the Springer video because of the numerous complaints they had received.

As Edmund Burke said, "evil will prosper when good people do nothing." Harmful standards are rampant in our society. Good can come from the freedom of expression issue if we are all willing to play our parts. Let us all try and do this, especially for the sake of our young people, many of whom have received no clear moral guidance. □

continued from page 2... **Life and Peace**

Dr Adrian Angold, addressing a conference at the Institute of Psychiatry in London said that: "A mixture of genetic and environmental influences was likely to be at the root of the problems."

Another example is the new law on how people should be treated when they have serious dementia, stroke or similar conditions. This law, the Mental Capacity Act, undermines the right to life. It sanctions the practice of euthanasia by neglect, and for people with conditions like severe dementia and stroke, it will add a sense of oppression to the difficulties they face.

As the Queen said on Christmas Day: "This world is the only one we have got", so my hope for 2006 is that we

will reject the prevalent death culture and teach young people the true value of the gift of life - of working together with others in mutual respect and a shared commitment to co-operation and good governance.

We derive our existence from a common origin and we share a common purpose and destiny.
That destiny is peace. □



True Family Values

(compiled by Frank van der Stok, continued from previous issue)

A Model for Family Restoration

A. What has been lacking is a family model which meets the challenge of modernity, a universal theory and practice revealing how the healthy family should function no matter which culture one lives in.

To approach this problem, we first must understand the purpose of the family. That purpose came ultimately from our Creator, God. Second we must understand the root cause of family problems. That is, what we did, and continue to do, in violation of the purpose of the family.

1. God's purpose in establishing the family: To establish a partnership of love with human beings.

God is love; love is the force which unites two into one. Love therefore requires two partners, a division of complimentary pairs. Therefore God created all things in pairs so that they can unite in harmony.

- Male and female.

- Plus and minus.

When they create unity through true love, humans fully manifest the image of God and recreate the wholeness of God.

- Mind and body.

- Husband and wife.

When we live in harmony, we make a base for God to enter.

We draw God and God draws us; we meet in the middle, in harmonious give and take.

God exists where there is oneness of love.

- He wants to dwell in the midst of the family.

- The love of husband and wife.

- The love of parents and children.

God rejoices when He beholds us, in His image, as His partners in substantial bodies. This is the fulfilment of God's love.

Love in the family was to expand to a society, nation and world filled with divine love.

Therefore the family is the environment in which each person learns to live for the higher purpose. This is another important purpose of the family: the school of love through which we can perfect ourselves.

This is the path toward individual maturity of completion (Matt. 5:48) and the application of personal responsibility to the creation of a world in which all people live for the higher good.

This would be the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the fulfilment of God's ideal of creation.

2. Self-centeredness destroys the purpose of love and cripples the family, creating a hellish society, a hell on earth.

We did not inherit true love from our parents. This problem logically takes us back to the failure of the first parents to establish a true family based upon true love.

- This means that the first human beings consummated love prematurely.
- They must have been selfish and immature.
- They engaged in physical love without spiritual love. We call this false love.
- Their wounded hearts became cold and self-centered. Filled with guilt and shame, they fled from God, the source of true love.
- Human beings thus lost the potential to realize true love.
- Human beings came into conflict and crippling disharmony: mind and body, parents and children, husband and wife, brother and brother.
- All problems, beginning with selfishness, blame, anger, falsehood, seduction, fear and so forth, originate in the false love between man and woman.
- This flawed love has been passed on from generation to generation, infecting and corrupting the entire human race, no nation or religion being exempt. This is the real meaning of the original sin.

3. All religious traditions have accounts of how humanity is corrupted and unable to function in an ideal manner.

Some are similar to the biblical Fall. Others are not. Yet all regard humanity as having a wounded spirit that needs repair before we can have an ideal world.

- Evil inclination (Judaism)
- The biblical Fall
- The Fall in Islam
- Pandora's box (Greek mythology)
- Buddhist Noble Truth of Suffering.
- Hindu myths on the origin of karma.
- Native American and African stories.

4. As a result of this inability to create true families, all attempts to create a good society have fallen short.

5. This repeats in history because of the incompleteness of man-woman love, which prevents the family from being the dwelling place of God.

6. The restoration of the true family means to establish true love between husband and wife.

The First Principle:

Make a commitment to your family and hometown.

The Family of True Love

A. Love is the true foundation for commitment.

1. The family needs to make a commitment to a life of true love. A life of true love is not partial or half-way. It reaches for the highest ideals, for ourselves and our children and

children's children. This ideal for which we long is nothing less than what Christianity calls "The kingdom of God."

2. Can a family as a whole make this commitment?

-Jesus said that if you "seek first the kingdom and his righteousness" then God will provide for your needs (Matt. 6:33). This has been considered a "counsel of perfection" for individuals. Families did not even consider it applied to them.

-This is why Paul counselled against family life, observing that it drags people into the concerns of the world and away from God.

-We believe that God, the family and the world can be harmonized. Our responsibilities to serve God, the world and our families completely and simultaneously can be fulfilled through true love.

-This is the significance of the entire family making the commitment to begin with our own family in our own hometown, the real environment which we face everyday, and the people who need us and whose lives we can effect.

(from the book "True Family Values" by Wilson and Pak)

(To be continued....)

All Around the World: Marriage Savers (USA) in Close-Up

By Diana van der Stok

In a land with family breakdown spiralling out of control, "numerous cities" among those with Community Marriage Policies have had a "substantial decline in their divorce rates" according to a 2001 analysis by the Institute for Research and Evaluation of Salt Lake City -- Modesto CA - 56%, Kansas City KS - 46%, Salem OR - 33%, etc.

We find outlines of the Community Marriage Policies in Mike McManus's book *Marriage Savers: Helping Your Friends and Family Avoid Divorce*. He provides details on how some churches which he called "Marriage Savers", helped couples 'avoid a bad marriage before it begins, strengthen existing marriages, save troubled ones, foster reconciliation of the separated/divorced, and push down divorce rates on a community-wide basis'.

Through research and first-hand experience in their church, Fourth Presbyterian in Bethesda MD, Mike and his wife Harriet developed a highly effective set of premarital preparation and marital strategies. Based on their success they created Marriage Savers, a non-profit organization, as well as Community Marriage Policies in which a cross-section of local clergy comes together and pledges to implement these programs.

The nation's first policy was created by the Modesto clergy in 1986. By 2001 there were CMP's signed in 162 cities or towns.

In Modesto, California, 95 pastors, priests and rabbi signed the CMP and started applying it. Comparing the divorce rate of 1983-1985 with 2001, Modesto's divorce rate went down a stunning 56%! Equally important, Modesto's marriage rate rose 12% while America's marriage rate fell a big 18%.

Kansas City, Kansas is another case with a remarkable 46% plunge in the divorce rate since signing its CMP in

1996. Within 6 years its divorce rate was nearly cut in half while divorces in Kansas City, Missouri (on the other side of the state border) fell only 6%. Apart from the clergy, the media played a major role, namely the local *Kansas Star*.

The idea for the premarital program begun at Fourth Presbyterian Church came to Mike McManus after a decade of research and writing of his weekly column "Ethics and Religion", published by various newspapers since 1981. In 1991 he started writing his book *Marriage Savers*.... He decided he did not know enough as a journalist, on the subject and dared to violate a basic journalistic rule and become personally involved. So, he and his wife, Harriet, volunteered in their own church's marital preparation program and oversaw it from 1992-2000.

The premarital program evolved with 4 components - inventory, meetings with a Mentor Couple, attending special Sunday school lectures, and completing a workbook. The couples who complete the course are given an 80% guarantee that their relationship will work.

Options to strengthen existing marriages and save troubled ones followed naturally, including weekend retreats called *Marriage Encounter* or *Retrouvaille*, watching a video series *Before You Divorce*, and a *Reconciling God's Way* course where there has been a separation/divorce already.

While most fragments came from already existing

programs, the Mentor Couples was the innovation that the McManuses brought. In the *Manual to Create a Marriage Savers Congregation* Mike says "In every church and

synagogue there are couples with strong, vibrant marriages who could be of help to other couples, but have never been asked, inspired or trained to come alongside another couple and share what they have learned about how to make a marriage work." "First, they provide premarital couples with their unconditional love," Harriet continues. "Second, they offer their time. Thirdly, Mentor Couples offer the gift of their own marriage - a strong, healthy, yet realistic marital role model for the premarital couple. This gift passes on their experience about what has worked in their own marriage". Mike and Harriet personally trained more than a 1000 Mentor Couples whose role is central in both the premarital program and the options for existing marriages.

In the marital preparation each participating couple receives a Mentor Couple especially matched for them. For example, in the case where it's going to be a second marriage for the participating couple, they get a Mentor Couple with the same situation as well as an inventory and a workbook that match their specifics.

The McManuses ask clergy to see that there needs to be an alternative to cohabitation - some way to allow a couple to test their relationship while holding on to the good, and avoiding evil. Because churches, synagogues, etc. bless three quarters of the marriages in America, they have a unique responsibility to become part of the solution to marital disintegration. With ballooning numbers of couples cohabiting before marriage, the McManuses believed the church should provide a better way to test the relationship rather than just staying in the position of a "blessing machine" or "wedding factory". According to a George Barna poll in 1999 (US), "Christians are more likely

to experience divorce than are non-Christians." Meeting with a mature married couple to discuss the inventory results is an appropriate form of testing. It is a much better way for a couple to decide whether their relationship should lead to marriage.

What about "the preparation" for marriage that millions of couples are choosing - simply living together? Many couples rationalise that living with someone before they got married is an excellent way to discover whether they are compatible for a lifetime of marriage. A *Newsweek* study showed that the majority of college students find it "helpful", reasonable to "try on the shoe before you buy it." However, as Dr. B. Markey, the creator of the FOCCUS inventory says, "it is not possible to practise permanence."

The University of Wisconsin's National Survey of families and Households (1989) reports that of 100 couples that cohabitated, 40 broke up before they get married, and of the 60 who did get marry 45 will divorce, leaving only 15 couples still together after a decade.

"Why does cohabitation increase the divorce rate of those who marry after living together? What is not being tested in these relationships is commitment, the very glue that holds marriage together." (Catherine Latimer, an intern at Marriage Savers)

Concerning existing marriages, a research report by the University of Chicago of couples so unhappy that one or the other considered divorce, states that if they lived their



vows "for better or worse", and stayed together, they saved their marriages; five years later, 80% of the once unhappy marriages report their marriage is healthy and happy. At Marriage Savers' weekend

retreats participants receive guidance by Mentor Couples as well as write to their spouse on an assigned subject such as "What do I admire about you and our marriage?" or "What feeling do I find most difficult to share with you?", etc. Mentor Couples whose own marriages almost failed tell their stories of recoveries from adultery, alcoholism, etc. and so achieve an average 80% success rate of saving marriages. In "Reconciling God's Way" reconciliation happens 50-70%.

Catherine Latimer concludes: "Why do most marriages fail? Selfishness. Why do the best ones succeed? Selflessness. What is the best way to help move a couple from selfishness to selflessness? With a living parable, a Mentor Couple who has learned to place the good of their spouse ahead of themselves. Less than a fifth of couples who seek help from professional counsellors are able to save their marriages. Yet back-from-the-brink couples routinely save four out of five marriages - the mirror opposite!"

Must Reads suggested by Marriage Savers: "The Divorce remedy: The Proven 7-step program for Saving Your Marriage"; "Getting through to the Man you Love: The No-nonsense, No-nagging guide for Women" by Michele Weiner Davis; "The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce" by Dr. Judith Wallerstein; "A Case for Marriage" by Dr. Linda Waite & Maggie Gallagher; "Willing to Try again" by Dick Dunn; "Preparing to Marry Again" by Dick Dunn; "Marriage Savers, Helping Your Friends and Family Avoid Divorce" by Mike McManus; "Insuring Marriage: 25 Proven Ways to Prevent Divorce", a short version of "Marriage Savers". □ For more info : www.marriagesavers.org

Porn Free Newsagent Hamdy Shahein's Parliamentary Campaign

(continued from page 1)

The guide encourages that if it is followed "...you may find that parents with children are much happier to shop in your store". It also stresses that shopkeepers could stop stocking titles that customers find objectionable.

Even though the Periodical Publishers Association insisted that lads' mags are different from X-rated pornography publications, they welcomed the guidelines.

Concerning this issue though, Ms Diane Abbott, Labour MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington says, "We need to re-work our definition of what constitutes a pornographic publication. So-called lads' mags and some of the tabloids contain very disturbing and degrading images of women and are readily available and in full view and reach of young children." "We are not the ones profiting from the £100 million lads' mag business. But we and our children will be the losers if we don't speak up."

In March Ms Abbott put down a motion in Parliament calling for WHSmith to recognise certain titles as pornography, and for legislation to ensure that offensive material is kept out of the reach and sight of children and that it be an offence to sell adult magazines (=lads mags) to under 18s.

Nearly 100 MPs of all parties have signed the motion. The MPs stirred the Home Office and it held a meeting with retail groups. One result is the above-mentioned new guidance from NFRN. Home Office Minister Paul Goggins comments having received a lot of complaints and is willing to address the concerns in further meetings.

Beyond doubt the code from NFRN will pile pressure on major retailers such as WHSmith to introduce similar rules.

This parliamentary campaign began in a north London newsagent's. For 17 years since 1989 Hamdy Shahein had been battling against his supplier WHS who persisted sending sexually provocative titles to his, Hamdy's Newsagent's at 167 Stoke Newington High Street. Mr. Shahein objected, saying that his store was used by many women and children and he didn't wish to sell material that might offend his customers. Being a monopoly holder, WHS's policy of distributing porn & the so-called lads' mags, etc. was through a system known as "box-out", under which a pre-packed selection of titles is sent off to retailers (WHS shops as well as independent newsagents). Even though Mr. Shahein on many occasions asked WHSmith to stop, he continued receiving the selection until 1996. He collected 1500 unwanted titles that he refused to sell but for which he had to pay.

"Though my shop used to make a lot of money selling pornographic magazines, one day a man opened one of them in the middle of the shop and standing next to him were a woman and child. That was the day I decided it had to stop."

Between 1989 and 1996 his campaign grew as he involved national press and TV. 500 other shops joined his "porn free" network. The fact that he is a Muslim, he says, played only a small part in his decision to launch the campaign. It was



more to do with what he believed to be the degrading effect of the magazines on both the shops and vulnerable customers.

In 1996 the result came and WHSmith agreed to stop sending the material to his shop. Together with that WHS conceded to change the system to one where retailers could opt out of selling porn, the lads' mags, etc.

As the magazines, though, started coming again 5 years later, Shahein threatened legal action against the company claiming they were in breach of contract and 'in breach of Human Rights Articles 8 & 9'. WHS's Managing Director apologised and offered him a compensation hardly covering his expenses so far, on the condition of confidentiality on the matter. Shahein refused it and took his case further -

Unlike alcohol, cigarettes, and even glue, at present it is not illegal to sell adult magazines to children

to the Industry Standard Service Agreement which found against WHS, and to the Monopolies Commission and the Office of Fair Trading. As he continued to receive some unwanted material now and again, and with no appropriate compensation for the way he's been treated for 17 years, he is determined to

take the company to court. That's when he contacted Diane Abbot, his MP, and received her assurance about raising the issue in Parliament. Since then he started participating in meetings with MPs lobbying them together with Diane to also introduce appropriate legislation concerning sales to under 18s.

Apart from describing WHS's office as 'unprofessional', the 54-year-old father-of-3 says about WHS, "People don't know how deeply a household name like WHSmith is involved in the porn business because they can't see the distribution process. Its image is protected by the hidden nature of the trade." "We've lost a lot of money, but gained respect. I have to be responsible as a retailer."

Mr. Shahein says his sales rose 20% when he became porn free. "This was due to support from the public, who felt more comfortable in my shop than in those where naked women are openly on display," he says. "Many people feel offended and embarrassed at having to go into newsagents and see this material whether they want to or not."

National public recognition is coming his way too. A leading women's group, London's Lilith Project, gave him "That Extra Mile Award" in 2005. Womankind, a women's charity, is joining his campaign through its website. He has also been nominated for an Ambassador of Peace award by the International Interreligious Federation for World Peace.

We would like to support Mr Shahein and hope that many more MPs can join his effort. Mr Shahein can be reached on Tel.07762147454/ E`mail:hamdyspornfree@yahoo.co.uk. □

(interview taken by F&D van der Stok)