Freedom – Obscenity Essay, Research Paper

Freedom – ObscenityThe freedom to read is essential to the democratic way of life. Buttoday, that freedom is under attack. Private groups and publicauthorities everywhere are working to remove both books and periodicalsfrom sale, to exclude certain books from public schools, to censor andsilence magazines and newspapers, and to limit “controversial” books andperiodicals to the general public. The suppression of reading materialsis suppression of creative thought. Books and periodicals are not theonly ones being suppressed by pressures to the political and socialsystems. They are also being brought against the educational system,films, radio, television, and against the graphic and theatre arts. However or whenever these attacksoccur, they usually fall at least one of the following categories: Religion War & Peace (Violence) Sociology & Race Language Drugs Sex Inappropriate Adolescent Behaviour What is Obscenity? Clearly something hard to talk aboutconstructively. “Obscenity” is difficult to discuss honestly. After all,what makes a thing obscene? It is Something too vague perhaps to bedefined. It’s an elusive term we use, but can’t explain. Differentpeople often see things differently. Some see obscenity in nudepictures, statues, paintings, etc. While others find less obscenity inthese things. All the same, “obscene” isn’t the same as “wrong” or”bad”. Clearly obscenity is not identical with evil. It only covers asingle segment of it. But what is that segment? A look at the words”obscenity” and pornography” suggests that it is a segment that didn’tworry people very much till relatively recently. Though censorship was known in english law quite early on, itwasn’t for obscenity but for heresy and sedition.”Undue” exploitation ofsex” is what criminal law in Canada prohibits. This is how criminal lawdefines obscenity. But it is rather vague. It doesn’t differentiatebetween “ordinary obscenity” and “hard-core pornography.” The firstdenoting the ordinary run of “girlie magazines and the second denotingpictures , literature and so on that deal with rape, sadism, masochism,bestiality, necrophilia and other perversions. People tend to object farmore to “hard-core pornography.” Another distinction unfortunatelyoverlooked by our criminal law is the distinction between isolatedinstances of obscenity and the products of vast commercial enterprise. There has been an increasing trend towards children’s literaturethat reflects a more realistic approach to the life both fiction andnon-fiction, with subjects that include sex, homosexuality, divorce,child abuse, drugs, violence, etc. And they are these realistic booksthat have people outraged. In school libraries, the most frequentcomplaints come from parents about the school’s selections. And inpublic libraries, parents were once again the single greatest source of

challenges to materials. The world is filled with “obscene” things. And it would seem thatthose parents are just trying to protect their children from the outsideworld. But does it really help? These day, an average elementary schoolstudent knows many things. They are influenced by a wide range ofsources, from television and other forms of media, their environment athome and school, their personality and their background. Why they readdoes not necessarily mean that they will follow. Literature is a valuedsource of knowledge for these children, and should not be held back. Sorather than applying full censorship, it should be made an age-relatedcensorship. Many of the complaints that were issued were of theimmaturity of the readers. And younger children should be prevented from borrowing materialintendedfor an older age group. Controversial materials should still beheld either in reserve stock, available on request, or under a sectionfor parents and teachers who can decide for themselves whether thematerial is suitable or not. Our would is not perfect. We are a world filled with violence, sex,racism, etc. Certain literature like “hard-core pornography” should becensored to the general public. These types of “explicit sex” truly haveno meaning. They degrade the human race by increasing physical, mentaland sexual abuse against women, animals, and sometimes against men. These inhuman treatments should not be shown to prevent other potentialpeople from “experimenting” these acts of disgust. “Ordinary obscenity”should be censored closely, but with an objective view. They may alsocause an increase in the violence against women, so they must be reducedand kept out of reach of the immature readers. To make a tree growcorrectly, you must start caring from the very beginning. You must notblock its nutrients, water nor sunlight, but allow it to move around abit. We have a governing social system that mainly frowns upon theviolence against women. There should indeed be access to most types ofliterature, but in varyingdegrees of freedom, determined not by censorship, but by controlledaccess. Parents are trying to protect their children from the harshrealities of life, but are they really helping, or hindering? BibliographyThe Censorship Iceberg: The results of a survey of challenges inschool and public libraries. By Dr. David Jenkins. School Librariesin Canada. Fall, 1985. v.6 n.1 p19-22Sanitized textbooks reflect a pious paradise that never was. ByJune Callwood. The Globe and Mail. March 18, 1987. pA2-A3Suffer the little children. By Janet Collins. Books in Canada. October 1991. v.20 n.7 p25-27Court bans ‘humanist’ books from Alabama public schools. By RobinToner. The Globe and Mail. March 5, 1987. pA10Censorship in the children’s library. By Rupert Colley. The JuniorBookshelf. June 1990. v.54 n.3 p121-123Censorship News. Spring 1985. n20Limits of criminal law – obscenity: a test case. By The Law ReformCommission: working paper no. 10. p7-9Censorship: stopping the book banners. By the book and periodicaldevelopment council. August 1988. p1-17

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