

## Censorship . . . a film

# 'Death of a Princess' or . . . death of the right to know?

**T**HE SCENE is set . . . a market place in Jeddah . . . the year 1977 . . . a Saudi Arabian princess arrives on the scene . . . she is shot because of alleged adultery with her commoner student lover . . . the lover is beheaded after the shooting.

We all know by now that this wasn't just a lot for a movie and that these incidents actually happened. But a film has been made about these incidents. How accurate the celluloid version is remains to be seen — if, in fact, it is ever shown to Australian audiences.

When the Channel 7 Network announced that it had bought the film *Death of a Princess* there followed a storm of protest in all the media:

### Inbuilt arrogance

A spokesman for the Arab Information Bureau warned that 'Saudi Arabia could cancel trade contracts worth millions of dollars if the film was shown in Australia';

*The Australian's* editorial on 15 April took the view that, 'The row over a television program purporting to reconstruct the execution of a Saudi Arabian princess for adultery is a demonstration of the inbuilt arrogance of the European Christian mentality — and, perhaps, the supercilious arrogance of the western television industry . . . Why should we ask offending one of our best (and most valuable) friends in the Middle East? . . .';

The Acting Prime Minister, Mr Anthony, said . . . if the television station goes ahead and shows this film it will not do any good to the relationships which many of us have been trying to build up with the Islamic countries. These countries are important and influential';

Mr Hayden, Leader of the Opposition, replied 'Can we assume from that answer that it is the intention of the Government that where special commercial interests, as decided by

the Government, are concerned in the future, the rights of people in this country to read, hear and see material will be determined by the standards imposed by the other country?'

### Sad day for freedom

It looked as if the Letters editors in all the papers were having a field day with comments from readers ranging from: 'If this film is shown in Australia it will not only offend the Saudi royal family and the Saudi people, but the entire Moslem world . . .' and ' . . . It would surprise me considerably to find that such an inviting topic was treated by film-makers with broad-minded impartiality and due regard to all the historical and cultural factors involved . . .' and ' . . . If the film is banned or censored solely because it may jeopardise our trade relationships with Saudi Arabia, it will be a sad day for personal freedom in this country'.

### The need to know

There have always been (and we hope, always will be) films, books, newspapers, etc which may offend some people.

It is essential that Australians are not denied the right to examine material, however unpleasant it may be, so that opinions can be formed about what's happening in the rest of the world as well as in Australia.

In the Library Association of Australia's *Handbook* under the heading 'Information Policy Statement: The Need to Know', it states: 'The Role of Government — The LAA believes that government has a particular responsibility to ensure that information is available to the individual'.

Democracy, by definition, means 'government by the people or their elected representatives'. It is time for individual librarians to speak out and let the country know that we, as librarians, will not condone such forms of censorship.

## AA/NZLA Combined Conference

**W**E ARE only eight months away from our next Biennial Conference and it is now necessary for you to make plans to attend.

This Conference, as most of you already know, is being held in conjunction with the New Zealand Library Association, and will be held in Christchurch from 19-24 January 1981. The theme of the Conference is *Sharing*.

The Conference (Monday, 19 January to Thursday, 22 January), will be held in the Christchurch Town Hall. Seminars and workshops for sections and special interest groups are being planned for Friday and Saturday, 23 and 24 January, on the campus of Canterbury University, also in Christchurch.

If you wish to visit libraries, many throughout NZ will be welcoming visitors both before and after the Conference.

One point of special emphasis is that this conference will be held during a peak travel

season, and travel arrangements must be made by August at the latest. See forms and information concerning block bookings in the Conference preview section. Plenty of accommodation will be available in Christchurch, and sufficient space is available for all who may wish to attend, but air travel is at a premium, and anyone considering the trip *must* organise their travel first!

The tentative program is printed in the Conference preview section and the Conference Committee hope that you will feel that it is balanced and has sessions of interest to you.

Initial feedback leads us to believe that visitors from Pacific countries including the USA, UK, Japan, PNG, Cook Islands, Fiji, and others will be attending.

We hope many Australians will find it possible to attend and to help build a foundation for co-operation amongst libraries in the Pacific region in the '80s through *Sharing*.

## Censorship . . . a book

# JOY OF SEX — HARD TO FIND

**T**HE STATE Classification of Publication Board, Victoria has restricted the book *The Joy of Sex* and the magazine *Forum* to Librarians' offices in Victoria.

The LAA Vic Branch Council set up a sub-committee to determine what action should be taken to influence the Board. The sub-committee wrote to the Minister of Arts about the restrictions; the Minister replied stating that he had passed the letter on to the Attorney-General.

The Branch would like to hear from other librarians of any form of censorship which has been applied in their library. We hope to publish a compilation of such instances in this newsletter.

The Chairperson of the sub-committee is Carmen Hannaker and she can be contacted on (03) 311 8511, or you can get in touch with Irene Strachan, Editor, *Incite*, 35 Clarence Street, Sydney, 2000, (02) 29 7724.

## College moves to boost archives

**I**N AN EFFORT to overcome the severe lack of qualified archivists in Australia, the Melbourne State College has moved to establish a graduate diploma course in archives and records.

A proposal, seeking accreditation for the course, points out that there is a growing demand for speedier and more efficient access to archival material and published records.

When accredited, the 'Graduate Diploma in Archives and Records' will become the only course in Australia to offer studies in both archives administration and records management.

Development of the course, already approved by the Tertiary Education Commission, carries strong support from Australia's leading archivists and records managers.

Accreditation of the course is now in the hands of the State College of Victoria.

In support of the need for this course, the Melbourne State College says in its recent proposal that 'increasing appreciation of the significance of archives has led to a higher demand for access to them. Therefore, the workloads of archives staff are being augmented, leaving them less time to train novices'.

Participation in the course, planned to start next year, would require one year full-time study or the part-time equivalent (normally two years).

For further information contact Geoffrey Richards, Registrar, Melbourne State College, 757 Swanston St, Carlton, Vic (03) 341 8111.