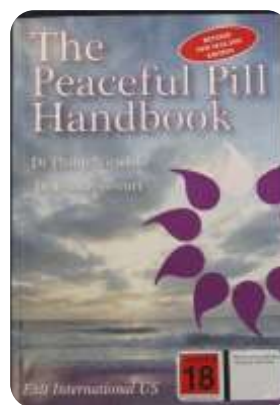
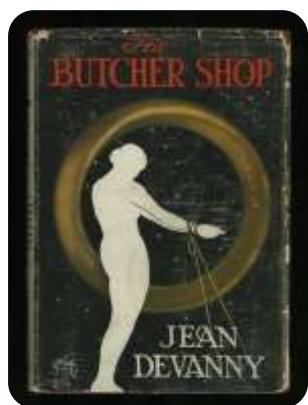


From *The Butcher Shop* to *The Peaceful Pill*: A history of book censorship in New Zealand.

- Paper presented at the LIANZA 2010 Conference in November 2010.



The media which our society produces and consumes has always been cause for debate about the effects, positive or negative (though more often than not focussing on the negative), on its audience. From the influence of the written word on perceptions of religion and politics, to the concerns over films chipping away at society's moral fibre, to the debates over whether video games make people violent – the media, who accesses it and who stops them has been a constantly evolving and ongoing story both in New Zealand and around the world.

Today, I'm going to share a chapter of that story with you by looking at how censorship in New Zealand has evolved over the last 100 years or so. We'll look at the sort of content that has been subject to censorship, the various systems and bodies that have been created over the years to deal with this, and how the issue of book censorship has fitted into the broader story of censorship in New Zealand.

I should begin by saying that we don't have a lot of information about the censorship of non-film publications prior to the creation of the Indecent Publications Tribunal in 1963. The main reason for this is that prior to 1963 book censorship was not the primary function of any organisation – instead it was the responsibility of New Zealand Customs operating under the Indecent Publications Act of 1910. When the 1963 Act came into force, there were no 'transitional provisions' which explained what happened to all censorship decisions made prior to that Act. As a result, it appears that decisions classifying, censoring or banning books prior to

1963 are no longer in force. However, the decisions made under the 1963 legislation do remain in force today and Gazetted decisions of the Indecent Publications Tribunal provide us with insight into our decisions were made during the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

So what this means is that I'll cover a couple of notable examples of book censorship from the early part of the 20th century, then move on to the IPT era and the work of our current Classification Office.

Censorship is often bound up in debates over morals and values – yet in New Zealand's history it has also been guided by government and legislation. New Zealand's first piece of legislation relating to film censorship was created in 1916 – however the first piece of legislation created to deal with censorship of written material was the 1892 Offensive Publications Act. This Act outlawed “any picture or printed or written matter which is of an indecent, immoral, or obscene nature”. This was followed shortly afterwards by the 1893 amendment to the Post Office Act which allowed suspected indecent mail to be opened and destroyed.

In 1910, the Indecent Publications Act came into force, and was not amended until 1954. The 1910 Act replaced earlier censorship legislation, with its purpose being to ‘censor smut while protecting worthwhile material’, or as put by the Attorney General of the time, John Findlay, its purpose was to protect the "liberty which improves and ennobles a nation" while removing the "license which degrades." Notably, this Act took into account the literary and artistic merits of publications – these elements were not included in England's censorship legislation until 1959.

In the first few decades of the 20th century, New Zealand was developing a new culture and economy. The 1920s also brought us one of our first ‘watershed moments’ in New Zealand's history of book censorship.

The New Zealand novel by Jean Devanny entitled *The Butcher Shop* is on record as the first New Zealand novel to be banned in this country. It was, in fact, banned before it went on the market in New Zealand. It is the story of the lives of a rich and cultured farming family in New Zealand, and of their marital and extra-marital relationships.

In the introduction to the 1981 edition of the book, Heather Roberts notes that it presented ‘a contemporary interpretation of the decade of the 1920s’. She comments that:

Devanny does not so much interpret the atmosphere of the society in which she was living as comment on its fears and prejudices and show how irrational they were.

The 1981 edition contains a section at the back of the book on the Banning of the novel. In this, Bill Pearson cites correspondence received by the Prime Minister's secretary in March 1926 from London, a cable which warned:

'Instruct: watch for new novel entitled 'Butchers Shop' by Jean Devanny

Wellington lady

Publishers Duckworth, London,

alleged depiction station life New Zealand disgusting indecent communistic.'

In its decision made in April 1926, the Censorship Appeal Board of Customs, comprising of 2 librarians and a bookseller, concluded:

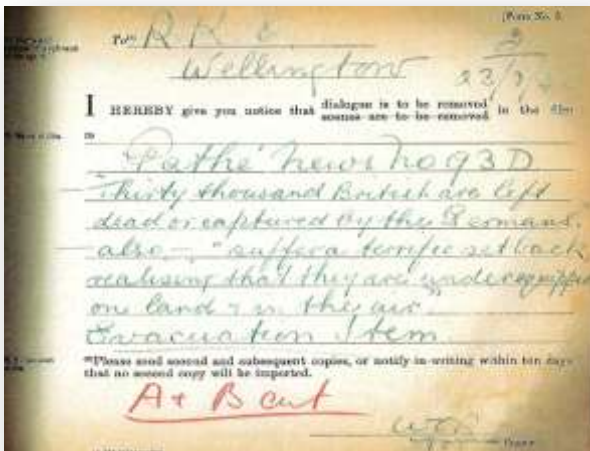
The Board considers this a bad book all round – sordid, unwholesome and unclean. It makes evil to be good. We are of the opinion that it should be banned.

At the time, the editors of *the Christchurch Sun* and *The Press*, who had both read the book, expressed their confusion as to why it was banned and guessed that this was because while the content was perhaps equally offensive as many other books in circulation, the difference with this one was that it was set in New Zealand.

Some commentators have felt that the book was banned because of its frank portrayal of colonial farming life and that there was concern that this might put people off immigrating to New Zealand. Others have suggested that the banning may have had some to do with the book's challenge to the social standards of the time by promoting women's right to be independent of their husbands and families. As mentioned before, decisions made prior to 1963 are no longer in effect today – *The Butcher Shop* was reprinted in 1981 by Auckland University Press and is available in a number of public libraries.

During the 1920s, '30s and '40s, there was a lot going on in relation to censorship in New Zealand. To put what was happening with books into a broader context, the first piece of film legislation, the Cinematograph Film Censorship Act had been introduced in 1916 to deal with material and information that people were for the first time seeing in visual form. Specifically, the 1916 legislation included war regulations allowing the banning of films about the war in Europe. These regulations were aimed at films which might discourage army recruitment by showing the conditions under which the war was being fought. Throughout the 30's and 40's, there were a number of instances of this kind of political censorship.

This certificate outlines the Chief Censor's cuts to a World War II newsreel about the British troops left behind at Dunkirk. The excision notice reads as follows:



23/7/40

I hereby give you notice that dialogue is to be removed in the film Pathe News No. 93D

1. *'Thirty thousand British are left dead or captured by the Germans.'*
2. *also – 'suffer a terrific setback, realising that they are under equipped on land & in the air.'*

This type of censorship was also evident in the treatment of newsreels, newspapers, and mail sent by troops through the 1930s and '40s.

Foreshadowing decisions on publications that were to be made in the following decades, in 1945 Customs prohibited the importation of Kathleen Winsor's best-selling novel *Forever Amber*. The Minister of Customs used import licencing regulations to prohibit the book on the grounds that it gave 'undue prominence to sex'. In the book *Censored: A Short History of Censorship in New Zealand* (1989), Paul Christoffel acknowledges the protests of the New Zealand Library Association against Custom's actions:

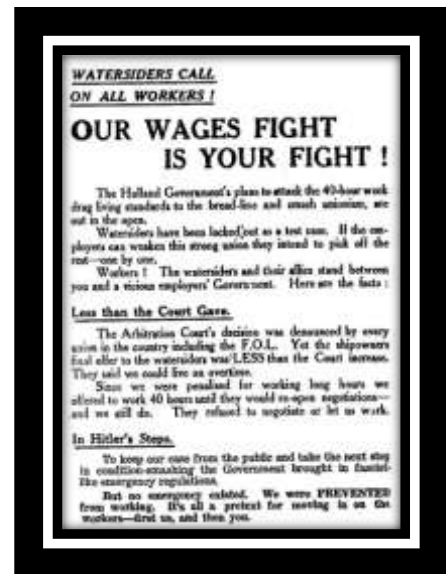
The New Zealand Library Association, while agreeing the book had few literary merits, objected to the somewhat arbitrary action on the part of the Minister. The NZLA was concerned that the import licencing regulations could be used to place an uncontestable ban on any imported publication whatsoever.

Again, no need to worry if your library holds this novel, as the 1945 decision is not in force today.

Themes of juvenile delinquency, rebellion, and moral panics were prevalent features of the 1950's society both in New Zealand and in other parts of the world. The beginning of the decade was also a time of political upheaval in New Zealand with the issue of worker's rights coming to the fore.

In 1951, 20,000 workers went on strike in support of waterfront workers protesting financial hardships and working conditions. The dispute lasted for 151 days from February to July and was subject to some of the harshest censorship in New Zealand history. The National Government under Prime Minister Sidney Holland declared a state of emergency, and amendments to legislation made possession of seditious literature an imprisonable offence. Union meetings were also banned and it was an offence to give aid, including food, to striking wharfies or their families.

This is part of the first leaflet banned during the strike.



The 1950s was also notable in New Zealand's censorship history for the creation of the Mazengarb Committee. There was a lot of concern in New Zealand at the time about the moral state of the nation's youth, as rock and roll and films like Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* brought on the era of Milk Bar Cow-boys.

The Wild One, was rejected by both the Film Censor and the Appeal Board five times between 1954 and 1959 because of concerns about teenage motorbike gangs and teenage behaviour in general.

Part of the background to these concerns was the moral panic which erupted after the discovery by police of a large gang of teenagers in Lower Hutt who were meeting for illicit underage sex. The Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents, which became known as the Mazengarb Committee after its chairperson.

At this time, comics and 'pulp' literature aimed at teenagers were flooding into the country – the concerns over moral delinquency can in part be attributed to these publications, which resulted in the banning of a number of them on the basis that they were 'so harmful to children and adolescents that their sale should not be permitted'(Christoffel, p.22). To add to public concern, 1954 was also the year of the Parker-Hulme murder in Christchurch.

The report produced by the Mazengarb Committee led to law changes which made it illegal to provide contraception to, or discuss it with, children under the age of 16. It was believed that giving young people information about sex would encourage them to try it at an earlier age. The report also led to legislative changes targeted at comics and other graphic novels.

The 1954 Indecent Publications Amendment Act deemed all literature that placed undue emphasis on sex, horror, crime, cruelty or violence to be Indecent. This test of 'undue emphasis' was not defined, and led to a lot of confusion amongst retailers. In their book *In The Public Good* (1998), Shuker and Watson discuss this situation, and note that as in other countries, anti-comic campaigners in New Zealand "argued that children would identify with and possibly copy what they saw in the comics" (p.132), tying into the existing concerns around juvenile delinquency.

In 1959, Vladimir Nabokov's infamously controversial novel *Lolita* was banned by New Zealand Customs, against the advice of their own literature committee. This Literary Advisory Committee, named the Gordon Committee after its chairperson, was established to advise the Customs Department on the literary or artistic merit of publications which Customs was considering banning. However the Department was not bound to act on the Committee's advice, and on this occasion it was disregarded. Following the ban, the New Zealand Council of Civil Liberties imported the book into New Zealand in order to challenge the ban through the Supreme Court. The appeal lost on the grounds that the book 'placed undue emphasis on matters of sex'. The Supreme Court decision was then appealed to the Court of Appeal, where the ban was upheld by majority decision.

The 1960s was an era of significant social change, with a number of movements changing the way people related to one another and in some instances the way society was structured. In New Zealand, we had a tour by the Beatles, protests about nuclear testing and the creation of new censorship legislation.

In 1964, after having been banned by numerous courts, *Lolita* was again submitted for classification to the newly established Indecent Publications Tribunal (the IPT). The IPT was established by the Indecent Publications Act of 1963 and was responsible for the censorship of books, magazines and sound recordings. Its decisions were published in the Gazette, and provide insight into how the Tribunal applied the criteria of the new legislation. Provisions in today's legislation mean that decisions made by the Tribunal are still in force today.

Under section 10 of the 1963 Act, the role of the Indecent Publications Tribunal was to ‘determine the character of the book’ using the criteria set out in the legislation. This criteria directed the Tribunal to consider such things:

- as the dominant effect of the book
- the book’s literary or artistic merit, or medical, legal, political, social, or scientific importance
- its likely audience
- the price at which it was going to be sold
- whether any person was likely to be corrupted by reading the book and whether such corruption would benefit others
- whether the book displayed an honest purpose and an honest thread of thought or whether its content was merely camouflage designed to render acceptable any indecent parts of the book

When the IPT examined and classified *Lolita*, using this criteria, they determined that the book be classified as ‘not indecent’, meaning anyone was legally able to access it. The majority decision of the Tribunal noted that:

It is important in our view that the central figure, a middle-aged man in the grip of his obsession for a child of twelve, is represented as a pitiable, remorseful creature. There is nothing romantic or admirable about him, and his course of conduct leads him to disaster. Far from condoning that conduct, the author throughout implicitly reprehends it.

This is not a book which adolescents, unprompted, would be likely to read “for the dirt”. Prompted, some would be likely to explore, and this, in itself, is not necessarily unhealthy. Ignorance is not to be confused with innocence: by whatever means and from whatever motives children will gradually find out about sex and the existence of perversion. It is not the locked cupboard but a developing discrimination that will provide the remedy against any harm that books can do. If we thought that *Lolita* was a pornographic book written to corrupt, our decision would be different.

- Majority Decision, Indecent Publications
Tribunal (1964)

Another prominent book from this era that often comes up in discussions of censorship is *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D. H. Lawrence. The book soon became notorious for its story of the physical relationship between a working-class man and an aristocratic woman, its explicit descriptions of sex, and its use of (at the time) unprintable words. It was the subject of a trial in Britain which tested the scope of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act (where ultimately the publisher was found to be not guilty of producing an obscene publication) as well as a trial in Japan where the publisher was found guilty; it was also banned at one time in Australia, Canada and the United States.

The book was submitted to the Indecent Publications Tribunal, with the consent of the Minister of Justice, by its publishers, Penguin Books – the same publishers who had fought and won the obscenity trial in Britain. The Tribunal acknowledged that the novel had been the subject of ‘judicial consideration’ in other countries, but noted that “such decisions as there have been in other jurisdictions have only a limited application to New Zealand since the Indecent Publications Act 1963 is a considerable advance on any legislation in this field hitherto enacted here or elsewhere” (this was in 1964, only a year after the legislation was created). The legislation showed innovation by allowing the Tribunal to not just allow or ban a publication, but to consider restricting it to persons over a certain age, or to a particular class of person, or restrict to a particular purpose.

In its decision on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the Tribunal noted that the book contained “accounts of several acts of sexual behaviour described in language which is exceedingly frank and to some readers must be repellent”. They also pointed out that while the test for other jurisdictions was whether the book was an undue exploitation of sex or whether it offended against community standards, the test under New Zealand law of the time was whether the book dealt with matters of sex in a manner which was ‘injurious to the public good’. By majority decision the Tribunal classified the book as not indecent.

By the end of the 1960s, the IPT was operating in full swing, having classified 37 books (banning 3) and over 7000 magazines and comics (banning just under 3000). Other notable decisions by the IPT in the 1960's included:

- *The Story of O* – classified as ‘Restricted to psychologists or psychiatrists or any adult bona fide student of literature or philosophy’
- *Juliette* by the Marquis de Sade - classified as R18 and Restricted to those engaged in work or research in sociological and related fields; and

- *Why was He Born so Beautiful and Other Rugby Songs* – which was banned. Here is the decision from the IPT on this book in its entirety:
 - “This is an anthology of bawdy songs, said to be popular among players of Rugby union football. Some are diverting; many are crudely indecent. The question for the Tribunal is not whether footballers should amuse themselves by bawling these songs off the field, but whether their text should be given a wider circulation in what may be called the decent licence of print; and the Tribunal decides that it should not. It is accordingly declared to be indecent.”
- Indecent Publications Tribunal (1968)

Because these books were classified under the 1963 Act, the decisions remain in force today.

At this time, the censorship legislation in force in relation to film was the Cinematograph Films Act of 1961. In a speech to the Wellington Catholic Adult Education Group in 1965, the Chief Film Censor Douglas McIntosh explained that under this Act:

The censor is not to approve any film which is contrary to public order and decency.

Public order in essence concerns the security of the State, but public decency is a phrase with no precise definition and the censor must try and reflect public opinion as a whole, which naturally changes with the times.

- Douglas McIntosh, Chief Film Censor, 1965.

To this end, he noted some of the cuts that were made to films, including scenes depicting eye-gouging, razor slashing, acid throwing, strangling, rape, women fighting, mob violence, sexual intercourse, prostitution, bottom pinching and open-mouthed kissing.

It's also worth mentioning one of the most unusual classifications assigned to a film in New Zealand's censorship history, which was made in 1967. The novel *Ulysses* by James Joyce was controversial in some parts of the world when it was published, though not in New Zealand, and was the subject of a famous trial in the US which helped define obscenity standards in that country. The film was equally controversial. This was partly because of its sexual references but mainly because the film contained one use of the word 'fuck'. This had been enough to ban it in Australia where films could not be restricted by age (such as R18) like they could in New Zealand.

In 1967 the film *Ulysses* reached the New Zealand film censor. It was screened to two test audiences, one made up of church representatives (all men) and the other made up of married couples. While the first group recommended an R18 or 'Restricted to Film Societies' classification, the second felt it could only be shown to gender-segregated audiences aged 18 and over.

The Film Censor followed the second group's recommendation and men and women were separated during screenings, under the argument that some of the dialogue in the film would cause embarrassment in 'mixed company'. In larger theatres the aisle separated men and women, or one group sat upstairs and the other downstairs. In smaller theatres a rope was put down the middle of the cinema, as shown in this image from the Alexander Turnbull Library of a segregated audience at a screening of *Ulysses* in the Memorial Theatre at Victoria University in Wellington. Note the rope down the centre of the audience 'separating' the men and the women.



- Image used with the permission of The Dominion Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, ref EP/1972/3506/15a-F

The 1970s were an equally interesting time for censorship, as social values, media and censorship legislation came head to head over a number of publications.

The Little Red School Book was referred to the Indecent Publications Tribunal in 1972 for classification under the Indecent Publications Act. In its consideration of the book, the IPT noted that:

The stated purpose of the book is that it should be a reference book used by young people when needed ... that it will help to solve problems ...for school children ... and to show... them how they can influence their own lives.

The Tribunal received a number of submissions on the classification of this book, with some people concerned that the book was "intended to be totally destructive of the school system and anti-authoritarian" while others feared the book would "incite schoolchildren to violent revolutionary action". On the other hand, there were arguments made that it "intended to be

constructive and to improve the school system for all concerned, pupils, teachers and parents” by informing young people how they could act within the system, advising them “to try dialogue before direct action”. Upon weighing of these factors, as well as considering the book’s discussion of sex, the Tribunal classified it as ‘not indecent’, meaning it could be made available to anyone.

The 1963 Indecent Publications Act did not allow the Tribunal to give age restricted classifications to pictorial publications which were likely to appeal to children. This was a hangover from the 1954 amendments to the previous legislation, and presumed that all comics were likely to be read by children and should therefore be judged accordingly. Section 11(3) of the 1963 legislation stated that:

“Where the Tribunal decides that any picture-story book likely to be read by children is indecent in the hands of children under a specified age, that picture-story book shall be deemed to be indecent in the hands of all persons.”

This section led to the banning of a number of graphic novels and comics that might have otherwise received age restricted classifications, given that they were targeted at, and had content suitable for, older teen and adults. An example of this is the decision dated 14 December 1973 which banned 20 comics. In its decision the Tribunal noted that:

In a large number of these comics sex, violence, horror, and crime are depicted in gross and explicit detail... the Tribunal considers that their explicitness... makes all of the comics equally unsuitable for children.The treatment of sex and violence where these subjects occur is likely to have ill-effects upon children and these books would therefore warrant some form of restriction... The Tribunal however, is not free to impose restrictions on the circulation of comic books when they are likely to be read by children.... The Tribunal has no alternative but to classify all these comic books as indecent.

Other notable decisions during the 1970’s included the R16 classification of *The Joy of Sex* and the banning of the book *The 120 Days of Sodom*. It was also in the late 1970’s that books dealing with the production, cultivation and consumption of drugs began to be submitted to the IPT for classification.

In September 1978 eight books with such titles as *Marijuana Growers Guide*, *Ancient and Modern Methods of Growing Extraordinary Marijuana*, and *The Complete Psilocybin Mushroom Cultivators Bible*

were classified as Indecent – banned – by the Tribunal due to the way they dealt with matters of crime in relation to the production, manufacture, possession, use and supply of controlled drugs, and the cultivation of prohibited plants. This was the first time the Tribunal had dealt with books of this nature - up until then it had dealt almost entirely with publications on the basis of their sexual content.

During the 1980s the era of the video recorder and ‘Video Nasties’, along with the Monty Python film *The Life of Brian* and the work of the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards dominated censorship in New Zealand. The 1980s also saw the IPT classify a number of books dealing with guns and weapons.

In August 1983 the Tribunal issued a decision on a group of books which had been submitted by Customs. The Comptroller of Customs informed the committee that these books had been seized over the course of the previous 12 months, and were being submitted in order to give Customs and the Police guidance and assistance when dealing with similar publications.

One of the books, *The Improvised Munitions Handbook*, was an official publication of the United States War Office, produced in 1969 "for official use only"- remember that this was a book that was seized by Customs on its way into New Zealand! On page 5 the book stated that:

This manual contains simple explanations and illustrations to permit construction of the items by personnel not normally familiar with making and handling munitions.

The book also included methods for fabricating explosives, detonators, propellants and similar objects from items which were obtainable without very much difficulty by any member of the public.

Home Workshop Guns for Defense and Resistance Volume 1 gave illustrations for making a submachine gun, while *Volume 2* illustrated how to make a hand gun. The final book in the submission from Customs, *Bare Kills*, gave complete step by step instructions on how to kill with bare hands. In its decision on the books, the Tribunal concluded that:

Publications which could very easily lead members of the public to criminal offending can properly be classified as indecent.

- Indecent Publications Tribunal (1983)

In 1987 the Video Recordings Act established the Video Recordings Authority to deal with the influx of home entertainment into New Zealand. And so at this time there were then three censorship bodies operating within New Zealand:

- The IPT, responsible for classifying books and other literature
- The Chief Film Censor responsible for the classification of films; and
- The Video Recordings Authority, responsible for classifying video content.

In 1989 the Minister of Justice appointed a Committee of Inquiry into Pornography. The Committee reported back with 202 recommendations for changes to the structure of New Zealand's censorship system. Some of these were realized in the creation and introduction of new censorship legislation and a new censorship body in the early 1990s.

While these changes were in progress, the Indecent Publications Tribunal was still operating, and in 1990 it was asked to classify a number of publications dealing with sexual health and advice about contraception. The Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act 1977 had made it illegal to provide contraceptives or contraceptive advice to anyone under the age of 16 years.

Consequently, books such as *Teen Guide to Birth Control* and *The Complete Book of Pregnancy & Childbirth* were classified by the Tribunal in July 1990 as R16. This part of the legislation was repealed later that same year, in September 1990, allowing books about sexual health to be distributed to persons of any age.

However, it is important to remember that unless the publication has been resubmitted for classification, the original classifications on books classified since 1963 are still in force. That means decisions such as the R18 classification of the Marquis de Sade's *Juliette*, the R16 classification on the *Joy of Sex* and the R16 classifications on the sexual health books I've just mentioned are still in force and must be complied with. For example comic books which were banned in the 1960s and 70s – these are still banned today. Another example is Brett Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho*, which was classified by the IPT in 1991 as R18.

In 1994, the Office of Film and Literature Classification replaced the three censorship bodies that were operating, combining their functions under the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993. This is the organisation



and legislation responsible for the censorship of books, films, and other publications today.

While the content of comics and books that were banned in the past might in some cases not be objectionable under today's legislation, the law makes this point moot. The classification remains in force until someone seeks to have it reclassified. And while some publications may receive different classifications were they submitted today, it is likely that others would not. Some social values shift and evolve more than others as time passes – sexual content which was previously banned might now receive an R18 or even R16 classification - comics which are targeted at teenagers (not children) can now be made available to their target audience through age-restricted classifications such as R13 and R16.

However there are other values or social mores which shift less rapidly or not at all. For example, the book *The World of the American Pit Bull Terrier* was submitted to the Indecent Publications Tribunal in 1991 by the Chief Executive of the SPCA. The Tribunal noted that the dominant effect of the book was to actively promote and encourage dog fighting, and used exhaustive text and wide-ranging illustrations to discuss activities which very clearly [were] offences under the Animals Protection Act 1960.' I won't go into the Tribunal's full description of the book's content, as some of it is quite graphic, however to give you an idea of what it contained, the Tribunal's classification decision makes references to:

- A graphic description of a dog fight in which an injured dog was allowed to continue to fight.
- The description of a device known as a "cat mill", which is designed to have a live animal or bird suspended in it as bait for the pit dog being trained.
- The author's advocating of bribing of veterinary practitioners to treat animals that are injured in illegal dog fights, without reporting these activities to the Police.

Due to the way the book dealt with horror, crime, cruelty and violence, the Tribunal placed a ban on the book which remains in force today. Over the past few years the Classification Office has classified and banned cock-fighting magazines and explicit scenes of the killing of animals such as pigs, monkeys and turtles filmed purely for shock or entertainment value. The arguments used by the Office to ban these publications featuring animal cruelty echo those used by the Tribunal.

Let's spend the last few minutes looking at the sorts of books that are classified and censored today. The Classification Office uses the criteria set out in section 3 of the Act to determine whether a publication should be classified as unrestricted, restricted, or Objectionable (banned). The test for the Classification Office is whether the availability of the publication will be

injurious to the public good – this is somewhat of a departure from earlier tests of indecency or offense. When restricting or banning something, the Office has determined that it would injure the public good – that is, harm society – if underage people were allowed to access the publication, or in the case of a ban, it was made available to anyone at all.

Books are not required to be classified before they are supplied to the public in the same way that films are. For this reason, most of the books we classify come to us through the enforcement agencies of Customs and the Department of Internal Affairs, or as a result of a complaint by a member of the public. Each year the Office classifies a few books – usually around 5 or 6.

Perhaps the most notable recent example of book censorship in New Zealand is the case of *The Peaceful Pill Handbook*. This first came to the Office in 2007, when it was submitted by its author for classification. The publication is a reference book on various methods of suicide and is intended for the seriously ill and the elderly. Although the style of the book is sober, informative and instructional, it is permeated with the authors' advocacy of voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide. It also provides explicit instruction on how to obtain illegal drugs for the purposes of euthanasia.

After applying the classification criteria, the Office concluded that:

The publication is a well-intentioned book that advocates law reform and gives advice to enable the seriously ill and elderly "to make carefully considered and fully informed decisions about their own life, and death."... The book does not however appear to distinguish between, on one hand, advocacy of law reform and offering advice on how to structure one's activities so that they will be within the law, and on the other hand, offering instruction in how to break the law and conceal the fact... Parts of the book go beyond advocacy and advice and give instruction in how to get away with committing crime, thereby promoting or encouraging criminal acts.

Specifically, these parts of the book instruct in how to smuggle Nembutal into the country without detection, how to manufacture pentobarbital in contravention of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975, how to manufacture and use cyanide in violation of the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997 and the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996, and how to conceal one's involvement with the commission of a suicide, exposing one to prosecution under ss113, 116 and 179 of the Crimes Act 1961.

As some of you may know, the author proceeded to produce an edited version of the book. In February 2008, the Comptroller of Customs seized and submitted the revised edition for classification. The book was found to be in the same format as the original but sections dealing with practical instructional detail on how to commit crime had been blacked out. In its consideration of the book the Office looked at how the *New Revised International Edition*, with its blacked out sections, should be classified. In its decision the Office noted that:

...the book's clinical accounting of meticulously planned suicides by various methods, its sometimes self-congratulatory do-it-yourself ethos and its many photographs and diagrams could appeal to young readers. The book may have the effect of making self-inflicted death appear acceptable and even desirable as a means to solve life's problems for such readers, given its approving and encouraging tone with respect to suicide.

Younger readers are less likely to recognise that the book is not intended for them or be able to weigh the information in the book against the knowledge that troubles can be overcome ... with time and effort.

The revised edition was classified as R18, primarily due to its discussion of the infliction of serious physical harm to oneself. The Office concluded that the restriction reflected the concern of New Zealand society to limit the availability of publications that may significantly increase the risk of children and young persons killing or causing serious harm to themselves, others, or both.

So there you have it – snapshots of the past few decades which hopefully have given you an overview of how book censorship has played out in New Zealand over the past 100 years or so.

You can find a list of books which required official classification labels in the Libraries section of our website, www.censorship.govt.nz, or search decisions of the IPT and our Office on the NZ Censorship Decisions Database on the homepage of our site.

So from undesirable accounts of settler life in New Zealand, to moral panics over the effects of comics on youth, to texts which instruct and promote crime, the story of book censorship in New Zealand over the last 100 years is an interesting and ongoing one. Thank you.