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Obscenity Report's Critics

To the Editor:

Like the Warren Commission, the Federal Commission on Obscenity and Pornography is revealing, not so much for its findings, but for the reaction to its findings.

The present Administration did not disavow the commission until it became clear that its findings were not to President Nixon's liking. One takes it that if the commission had found that pornography was harmful, Vice President Agnew would not have made the point that the commission was appointed by President Johnson.

I find much of the reaction to this report disturbing. It seems that many people in high places are not willing to accept the results of an objective study, but insist that the findings coincide with their preconceived ideas on pornography.

One Congressman has even asked for an investigation of the panel. This certainly smacks of the kind of thought control practiced in countries that insist on dogmatic adherence to rigid party line.

More disturbing is the frequent use of the word permissive. In a truly democratic society, one cannot be permissive toward adults in the area of ideas, because it is assumed that all adults have the right to see, hear and read anything they want. The word permissive implies that someone has the right to decide what adults will or will not see and read. When that happens, we have taken the first step toward totalitarianism.

If the findings of the commission are ignored by Congress and the President, and legislation is based instead on old assumptions with no basis in objective data [Editorial Oct. 3] then we have taken that first step.

MICHAEL I. FRISCHBERG
Matawan, N. J., Oct. 2, 1970