

THE ONSLAUGHT of pollution today is alarming. The air we breathe and the water we tap in our lakes and rivers are shadows of the grim reaper, silently driving to extinction thousands of humans and other creatures, including marine and plant life, everyday. But this problem, though it wreaks a heavy toll on the world's treasures, is a speck in the dust compared to the impact of mind pollution which, if not checked soon enough, might turn our country into a sanctuary of beasts, lunatics and criminals.

This mind pollution triggered by lewd films and pornographic pictures and literature knocks heavily on the youths and adults and has gone deeper into intoxicating even young children who now take to smutty comics as their second book inside classrooms.

The laxity of our law enforcing agencies in dealing with smut dealers is common knowledge. Anyone who treads along Rizal Avenue in Manila after eight o'clock in the evening will see groups of young men including boys engrossed over smut magazines and pictures spread on the concrete sidewalk. Also, it is not seldom that males waiting for their rides along the downtown area at night time would be tapped on the shoulder by young boys who offer for sale some mini pocketbooks which, they enticingly whisper, are bedtime stories. What adds to the discomfort of sensible persons is the fact that several vendors shout their smut wares like any other commodity under the very nose of policemen. And for some time now, the same shabbily clad urchins continue peddling smutty pocketbooks with utmost freedom.

Publishers' Agonies

The popularity of smutty comics nowadays can be seen from the fact



Publishers of legitimate comics magazines agonize over the abrupt decrease in their sales. Civic and religious organizations must rush to their aid by making war against smut reading matter.

Instincts Whetted

Scores of smutty comics magazines are in the newsstands and thousands are peddled, selling like hot cakes. These comics magazines are on sale everyday—each kind has a weekly frequency—and they hit the streets one after the other. While heretofore young boys and girls and even adults have been choosy in buying comics magazines, today they pick any of the various titles from the racks and get what they want—heart-tugging sex stories complete with telling and ghastly illustrations that whet their instincts of lust and curiosity.

It is disheartening that in spite of the watchful eyes of civic organizations primarily organized to guard the youths from corruption, not to mention the Board of Censors and law enforcement agencies, the sale of pornographic pictures and literature goes on unabated, bringing fortunes to some. But what is to be abhorred is the fact that these publishers are out to profit and destroy.

that publishers of legitimate comics magazines agonize over the abrupt decrease in their sales. A publisher of a legitimate comics magazine conducted a cross-country survey of vendors and was bluntly told that if he wished to catch up with the rest of the comics magazines, he should also print "bomba" scripts.

This temptation to rake in a fortune out of smut led to the change in format and contents of some formerly solely-for-entertainment comics magazines. Today, the popularity of smutty comics has trebled—narrow cubicles offering comics magazines for rent have mushroomed in the vicinity of universities and colleges and even elementary schools. Everyday, students and school children peruse various kinds of comics magazines in these nooks as part of their daily activity. Some even forget their classes while being engrossed in their readings.

Just what kind of stuff most comics magazines today offer to readers doesn't merit repetition. Suffice it to say that they tickle the

curiosity of teenagers and kids. After reading a smut magazine, would it be surprising if the teenagers will seek "places" and the children be infatuated and bewildered?

It is noteworthy, however, that some civic groups and associations have manifested their bounden duty to help cut short or minimize the production and indiscriminate sale of smut literature and pornographic pictures and the exhibition of indecent films.

Wholesome Reading

In view of the fact that Filipinos are avid readers and because of the dearth of reading materials especially those written in the vernacular, as compared to those in other countries, they always take to whatever cheap literature they can get hold of. Thus comics magazines easily get to their laps because they are cheap, even a school boy can have one for the price of a cheap snack. But what disturbs our imagination is the inevitable consequence that will crop up when our young boys and girls grow tall with experiences broached by improper and unwholesome literature.

In a measure seeking to repeal Sec. 10 of the Copyright Law, authored by Congressman Jose B. Laurel, Jr., he deplored the scarcity of wholesome beneficial products of the Filipino intellect in literature and in the arts and sciences, especially printed materials. The government, Laurel contended, should make available these products of human intellect at a price that every man in the rural area will not hesitate to pay, because these reading materials are also food for their intellect. "These kinds of literary and artistic printed works will help reorient the people's mind and encourage the fans of smut and pornography to seek better reading matter. Our youths will benefit most from wholesome reading because their impressionable minds can assimilate the best that good literature can offer, to replace the sex, crime and immoral information that now grip the minds of the curious who can afford to buy only this kind of reading materials," Laurel explained.

Vigilance

The Citizens Council for Mass Media (CCMM) which has gained prominence due to its vigilance over the proper use of the mass media in communications has been up to its neck in shielding the youth from

May-June, 1971



These youngsters, engrossed in their reading, are a common sight in comics for rent cubicles found in the vicinity of schools and colleges.

exploitation by unscrupulous publishers and movie producers greedy for money. Unfortunately, however, it is not clothed with police powers so that all it can do is to encourage the production of wholesome movie and TV entertainment shows and programs and the publication of similarly palatable reading matter. This mission is achieved through the CCMM's annual recognition awards.

Another commendable effort was the recent dramatic expression by the Reading Association of the Philippines of their war against smut literature and indecent films.

In a spirited demonstration that took them to the Malacañang grounds, the members of the association composed of parents, teachers, students and children, challenged the administration to "save the country from pollution." The demonstrators said the entertainment field is being flooded with smut books and magazines.

Citizens' Fight

They also appealed to the parents in their campaign against smut.

Concerned parents can do much to improve the reading habits and attitudes of their children by helping them distinguish between pornography and art, they said.

They declared that the reading habits taught in schools, our attempts to refine taste, instill higher values and upgrade instruction are futile in the face of the cheapening quality and coarseness of the entertainment world. They cited the glaring fact that even the vocabulary of the children at play is loaded with smut.

The fight against smutty comics and pornographic pictures and literature and lewd films should not only be a government but a citizen affair as well. The government represented by the Department of Education and the law enforcement agencies should seek the banning of smut magazines and the enforcement of the law to the later. The citizens, especially parents and teachers, should be doubly watchful over the weaknesses of the young and keep them from reaching a point of no return. ●