

Penthouse photos draw ban

By SHEILA BEAN

The December issue of *Penthouse* magazine is being pulled off newsstands across the Prairies.

After federal customs officials barred further importation of the issue into Canada, provincial attorneys-general in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta took steps to have the magazines removed from store shelves.

In Saskatchewan, police are instructed to charge the magazine's distributors with distribution of obscene materials if copies are found on sale anywhere in the province.

In Manitoba, the attorney-general's department has charged the distributor, but store owners may use their own discretion in removing the magazine.

Alberta's attorney-general department has "invited distributors to voluntarily remove the issue," according to Angus Fraser, director of communications for the department. Fraser said no criminal charges will be laid against offenders but he is confident that all of the offending issues are off the shelves.

The magazine entered the country about a month ago after passing inspection by a federal customs official, said Tom Greig, assistant deputy minister of customs programs for Revenue Canada.

When the issue hit the newsstands, the customs branch heard many complaints from the public about a bondage segment. The issue included photographs of "a

female dangling, suspended from a tree," Greig said.

"We concluded that the original classification was not an appropriate judgment."

The customs tariff contains an item "prohibiting immoral or indecent material," Greig said.

Nov 22/84

Kathryn Habberfield of the Alberta Women's Institutes.



File photo

Customs then advised the publishers that no more shipments of that issue would be allowed into the country. That's all the federal department can do, Greig said. The provincial attorneys-general then decide whether the product should be removed from the shelves.

Happy with response

Kathryn Habberfield, president of Alberta Women's Institutes (AWI), said she's "delighted that the issue has been pulled."

She hasn't seen the issue yet, but she said she's heard it contains degrading pictures of women in bondage.

"That's the type of thing we're objecting to," she said.

Habberfield is satisfied with the way the federal department handled the issue, but she said it proves

that the public has to keep alert. It has to show the government what it will or will not tolerate.

"This is a good example that we can't expect the government to do everything," she said. "The public has to do some testing ourselves."

The National Action Committee for the Status of Women saw the magazine, and president Chaviva Hosek directed all of the member organizations to complain to their local attorneys-general and police.

Saskatchewan Action Committee president Palma Anderson said, "We were simply horrified. We couldn't believe it."

Anderson said the magazine contained an eight-page photo feature of "beautiful Japanese settings." But in those settings were "women tied in heavy ropes to trees — some wearing death masks."

The pictures are not just obscene, Anderson said.

"They're really frightening," she said. "They're terrible. They're hate literature."

The federal and provincial governments acted very quickly to take the magazines out of circulation, Anderson said, but a public outcry had to be heard first.

"Had we not been looking at the magazine ... it may well have passed."

Anderson said there should be more decentralized control over pornography.

"There is a need to make sure that the municipalities have more control over what is distributed on the newsstands in their cities," she said.