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February 14th 1981

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*ack. letter
19/3/81.*

FLORINDA

NEW and SECOND-HAND BOOKS

Dear Mr Webb,

Having completed the accompanying letter I realised that I had forgotten to ask if you can -

- (A) Give me an address and/or information about The Legal Action Committee/Council? as I wish to get in touch?
- (B) Can you give me an individual and address at the Home Office? (Re O.P.A. and Williams Report.)

I feel also that it is only common courtesy for me to tender my sincere apologies for all typing errors and occasions of confused syntax in the accompanying pages. Whilst I don't seek to excuse scruffy workmanship as being just that I am coping with a lot of problems in any matter of dealing with correspondence.

Thanking you for your attention,

George Brassey Lewis

P.S. I would have no objections to your writing/speaking on my behalf if necessary. In fact, it would be an immeasurable help in view of certain difficulties I am in at the moment. ErBl.

We may turn town into Soho of North, say sex shop firm

THE firm which opened a sex shop in Blackburn has threatened to turn a Yorkshire town into the Soho of the North.

Conegade Ltd, who run the Private Shop chain, are involved in a bitter battle with clean-up crusaders in Barnsley.

Young mums protesting about the sex shop's siting near a junior school have formed a picket line outside the shop.

And the firm claim that there has been more than £3,000 worth of damage to their property.

Now they are planning to retaliate.

The man in charge at the new Blackburn shop, Mr Mark Gainsford, managed the Barnsley shop for its first stormy week.

His Ford Granada car was badly damaged by vandals when he parked it near to the Barnsley shop.

He said: "That car is my pride and joy and it needs a complete respray now. These people have got our backs up and we are going to give them something to really complain about."

School meals demo on menu for minister...

MEMBERS of the National Union of Public Employees will be among demonstrators waiting to see the Education Secretary Mark Carlisle when he visits Blackburn on Friday.

And they will be pressing him for a statement of policy on the school meals service.

NUPE official Neville Davies said a delegation of union members would be at Blackburn's College of Technology and they would be hoping to meet Mr Carlisle.

"We want to point out to him that the equivalent of 1,000 jobs in the school meal service in Lancashire have disappeared," said Mr Davies.

"Many of our members have lost between £10 and £15 a week in pay. It is also important we impress upon him that it would be a disaster if the meal price were allowed to increase any further, particularly in the primary schools."

"We want a statement of policy from him on the future of the service," said Mr Davies.

Expand

"They will never get us out. It has come right from the top that we are going to expand in Barnsley. Even if it means not making a profit, we will bring more shops into the town. It's no idle threat."

But Mr Gainsford said that he thought a repeat of the Barnsley uproar was unlikely in Blackburn.

Conegade publishing director Mr David Reed said: "If Barnsley think they have a problem now, they won't know what has hit them soon. We are seriously considering opening up about ten shops and developing Barnsley as the Soho of the North."

Mr David Webb,
National Campaign for the Repeal
of the Obscene Publications Acts,
15, Sloane Court West,
LONDON, SW 3.

Mr G. A. Lewis,
2, Pearl Street,
Accrington,
LANCASHIRE BB5 0BN

February 12th, 1981.

Dear Mr Webb,

I have corresponded recently with Mr A. Bristow, Chairman of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society, with regard to the appended Petition to the European Court of Justice and other related matters. He has suggested that I should contact you.

My purpose is twofold; contrary to my initial hopes and expectations I am getting more static than music in striving to get this Petition circulating widely. My legal representatives - both barrister and solicitor - also my local Member of Parliament are just three of the individuals showing a strange, but not ineluctible, desire to keep their heads well down where this matter is concerned. I am also anxious to put in, on behalf of both the trade and the general public, a few comments on the William's Report. From those two angles the Report is one helluva dogs-breakfast and capable of multiplying rather than eliminating the mess of anomalies currently debauching the freedom of the private citizen.

I have been in continuous conflict with Manchester's Blue Mafia, and the contemporary Ghengis Khan who leads it, for eight years-plus. I shall be going to Manchester Crown Court on the 9th of next month, and for the umpteenth time, fighting the last of several Forfeiture Orders. It is my intention to go straight from there to the European Court of Justice. Long experience teaches me that Justice is not a commodity freely available in English courts. That is particularly the case in Manchester where no Judge or Magistrate will risk incurring the displeasure of Ghengis Khan. Juries, on the other hand - and thank God - are not susceptible of the same kind of intimidation.

As the Petition makes clear, my primary argument against the Obscene Publications Act (Amended 1959) is its unconstitutional nature. It swyves asunder the very bed-rock of English jurisprudence in a way which is quite frightening when you analyse it in terms of plain, ordinary commonsense. At a time when very strong undercurrents of extremism in a variety of guises is tearing at the sub-structure of society the O.P.A. provides an ideal machine capable of modification to serve any minority form of social, religious or political extremism able to muster the kind of clout displayed by The Listeners and Viewers Association.

That is the critical point I am struggling to get across and, so help me God,

I CANNOT PERSUADE ANYBODY OF THE REQUIRED CALIBRE TO LISTEN. I am beginning to believe, quite seriously, that I shall only ever attain that end by setting fire to myself in the Crown Court. I feel a very real and deep concern for the fact that millions of ordinary citizens are going quietly about their daily affairs completely ignorant of the way in which their most basic freedoms are at risk by virtue of judicial default in playing Judas with a fundamental principle of law.

I have been at pains, over several years, to discuss this point with folk from all walks of life and have found them in unanimous agreement. It was that practise and the results it produced which led to the framing of the Petition and it's gathering of more than 500 signatures to date.

But I have also found a startling degree of public concensus on another aspect of censorship's implicit threat and adding urgency to the need for reform. As I have already tried to indicate to the D.L.A.S and others, society is now into the fringe of a deep-seated crisis that must ultimately build up to the destruction of civilisation as we know it today. The closer that crisis approaches to it's inevitable boiling-point the stronger will become pressures of extremism and it is then that the evil precedent set by the O.P.A. will be seized upon - if it is still available for use.

As regards the Williams Report, and speaking with the benefit of very many years in bookselling, I can make a good case on behalf of the public and the trade alike explaining why the Committee has not done as good a job as it could and should have.

No trader should be allowed to deal exclusively in adult material.

Bookselling is not wholly about making profits nor, in any final analysis, can be considered as nothing but a form of commercial enterprise. Any bookseller or newsagent worth his salt recognises himself as performing a useful and beneficial service to the community. The public which provide his daily bread have, on that basis, a moral right to expect that the individual trader will offer a stock which is reasonably comprehensive along lines, the nature of which, the public themselves will indicate by their patronage. These general patterns of trading, differing as they do according to locality, also fluctuate in terms of public taste and fashion. For a long time now it has been very obvious that the majority of customers are NOT moronic "pornophiles" slavvering over fruity words and pictures. They are plain ordinary joes and janes, mature, sane and sensible, who see no hurt, hear no hurt or know no hurt in adding items of adult material to their main body of purchases. This is the point which balefully repressive Authoritarina busy-bodies persist in ignoring. The

public's attitude to sexually explicit material has undergone a radical shift in the past ten years - as I have good reason to know. In two jury trials at Manchester Crown Court, in 1978 and 1979 respectively, both juries "rigged" with more than the average proportion of ladies, resulted in acquittals. The total of 26 charges all related to items of "hard porn" and nobody - apart from the D.P.P. - was more startled than myself by 23 acquittals and three "hung" verdicts. So this shift of public attitude IS real enough and MUST be taken into account by those who seek to fortify their inadequate egos by pushing their ideas and beliefs onto everybody else quite arbitrarily. On that basis alone the Williams' proposals to hive adult material off into licensed premises is without either moral or ethical validity.

The business of making adult material freely available to adults only as part of a general stock offering a reasonable range of choices is purely and simply a matter of the shopkeeper conducting his premises with a proper sense of social responsibility. I speak from practical experience. Between 1969 and 1973, trading to the letter and in the spirit of my advertised name, "The Family Book Exchange", I kept all my customers quite happy without offering the slightest hurt of offence to public sensibilities. Adult material was available on the counter for those who wanted it. But it was always out of sight of those who did not. Indeed, when the local Press leaped in joyfully to headline news of my shop having been "raided", there were regular customers who, apart from expressing their commiserations, expressed regret at having failed to realise that adult material had been available all the time.

I have absolutely no sympathy with the many newsagents who have been getting "turned over" in recent years. They have been the major culprits in giving offence to the general public with reckless displays of their wares. Nor, in the process, have they been offering the public any real service. Avaricious self-interest has always restrained them from offering exchange facilities. Contrary to popular belief, such a service does NOT produce vast additional profit. But it IS highly inconvenient for the shopkeeper in several ways. Nonetheless, in my book, the customer is entitled to expect to be shown that consideration.

But the major proposal put forward by Williams, that of licensed premises operating behind blacked-out windows, HAS GOT TO BE KICKED INTO TOUCH. I refer you, Mr Webb, to the attached newspaper-cutting.

First and foremost, such licenses would be issued, presumably, by the same route as a Publican's License, i.e., under the auspices of local magistrates. These are the self-same pompous and self-righteous so-and-so's who are currently inflicting their personal

hang-ups, neuroses and general inadequacies of personality on a hapless public under the auspices of the O.P.A.. One might as well instruct a conservationist to distribute licenses for the culling of grey seals. Pitiless, arrogant, uncharitable attitudes are prime characteristics of those who champion the O.P.A. but the bums on the Bench are, in my experience, the crème ~~de~~ la crème of the entire breed.

But both before and after the worthies on the Bench have performed their public duty with obstructive zeal the individual licenses themselves are going to attract the attention of the most undesirable elements in society. The police corruption incidents in W.I. a few years back were just the tip of an iceberg having a very broad base in the underworld. It is typical of the do-gooders narrow outlook that, despite the warnings and protests of small people like myself who always knew what was (and IS) going on, the O.P.A. can only work to inflate commodity prices a thousandfold or more and so offer an irresistible invitation to the undesirables. In short, by eliminating the O.P.A. in its present form, you cauterise a suppurating sore which cannot be cured in any other way. It is literally true to say that, in terms of practical effect, the most effective censorship is that which resides with society's joes and janes rather the Authoritarian, self-righteous do-gooder.

In the meantime, referring back to the attached cutting, the commercial parasites featured there in conflict with the public are behaving in a manner which underlines and amplifies the truth of everything I have just said. More than that, they operate as mere rip-off joints, exist for no purpose other than to fleece the public. I have in my possession at this very moment, two small magazines which I would be happy to flog at 30 or 40p and on a half-price exchange basis. BOTH MAGAZINES WERE PURCHASED, NON-RETURNABLE, AT 24 EACH AND SEALED IN POLYTHENE WRAPS. More than that, BOTH magazines are good examples of kind of trash being peddled. The sheer animal crudity of their literary "style" is appalling beyond description. Never in a million years of Christmas Days will this state of affairs lead to the progressive lifting of standards of presentation generally which is what the public are really looking for. The joes and janes of this world, contrary to what the do-gooders choose to believe, ARE possessed of aesthetic sensibilities sex-wise and it is their God-given inalienable right to expect that those who supply them with sexually explicit material will play a fundamental role in assisting them to cultivate those same sensibilities in a truly civilised manner. Man is always an animal but at least he can learn to rut in a refined way.

BUT NEVER IF THE LIKES OF CONEGATE LTD HAVE 'OWT TO DO WITH IT.

To a final point which, in many ways, is one of critical consequence as regards

the implications behind the Williams recommendation for the licensing of premises.

Of the 700 magazines I shall be fighting to retain on March 9th, at least 500 are thoroughly innocuous publications such as "Mayfair", "Penthouse", "Men Only", "Forum", "Fiesta", "Knave", "Club Continental", "Cinema X" and "Hotshot"/"Game". When the worthy Judge comes to pronounce an opinion on these publications he will be applying no objective criteria consistent with the Absolutes of Natural Morality - the principle applying otherwise as fundamental to the rules of admissible evidence. The judge will merely draw upon his own personal, private prejudices - which, even then, will not necessarily reflect a TRUE picture of his personal likes and dislikes.

It is the O.P.A. and the O.P.A. alone for which I shall be gunning at Strasbourg as a result of what I already know will be an unfavourable judicial ruling in respect of my property. And where, if I fail, will that leave the harmless publications listed above? With no outlet other than literary brothels monopolised by Messrs Congate Ltd. No newsagent will be allowed to stock such publications unless his windows are blacked-out and his business properly licensed. Anybody who believes that such a state of affairs is in the best interests of the general public can only be a member of The Listeners and Viewers Association or the Festival of Light. If the Williams Committee had included "grass-roots" elements, businessmen trying to give the public a square deal from the small shops of the land, immediate recognition that commercial trap would have been immediate.

I can only repeat what I said before; let every joe and jane be his/her own censor and they will do the job properly and in a manner hopelessly beyond the capacities of Authoritarian cranks with an inflated opinion of their own sense of values.

Forgive me, Mr Webb, if this letter sounds pedantic, magisterial, self-opinionated or what-have-you. The fact is this; had I chosen to go around assaulting old ladies, interfering with children, robbing banks or conning people out of their cash I would have been treated by Authority with far more leniency than has, in fact, been the case over the past eight-plus years. I have been all but destroyed and I mean just that. Right now I am too old, too tired and too weary of this lousy world to be deeply stirred by any emotion other than that of a burning belief in the need to try and leave society humanised and enlightened in a way which will be a blessing to my children and grandchildren. Their future is dark enough as it is.

Sincerely (and hopefully)

George Bernard Shaw

PETITION TO THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, STRASBOURG.

WE the undersigned, being freeborn English men and women in the heritage of Magna Carta and of mature years, beseech your intervention upon our behalf in the cause of common justice.

WE are long beset by an Act of Parliament (The Obscene Publications Act, (1959) the letter and spirit of which we hold to be in open violation of the principles and rules of Natural Justice. We contend that this Act of Parliament is in moral, and therefore legal, default by admitting into the administration of common justice an element otherwise proscribed in Natural Justice and English Law alike i.e. subjective judicial opinion based upon private, personal prejudice invested with the authority of prima facie evidence. In consequence, all persons arraigned under the provisions of this Act of Parliament become ensnared with total liability for proof of innocence when confronted with allegations of a wastefully presumptive nature.

WE further complain that the Act of Parliament here referred to is in open defiance of Article 83 of the Convention of Rome. Sectional commercial interests having strong Parliamentary representation actively promote and defend this Act, despite widespread public opposition, for the purpose of eliminating competition from publishers outside an established confraternity. The individual citizen's democratic right to freedom of personal choice is thereby constrained in a manner wholly inconsistent with the principles and rules of Natural Justice.

WE challenge the moral/legal validity of the Obscene Publications Act (1959) in a sincere belief that the Law is Divinely appointed to serve society and the cause of common justice by invoking the principles and rules of Natural Justice on behalf of the individual citizen, maintaining an equitable balance between his inalienable social rights and their concomitant responsibilities. Present popular opposition to this Act arises from a recognition of it's failure to observe the critical principle of equitability. We therefore seek amendment of the Act so that the individual's inalienable democratic right to freedom of personal choice is upheld and dignified by responsible concern for an inalienable public right to be spared any embarrassing affront caused by open display of adult material.