

NO/DAW/DP

20th May, 1981.

Louis Kirby, Esq.,
Managing Editor,
"The New Standard",
121, Fleet Street,
London, EC4P 4JT.

Dear Mr. Kirby,

On Tuesday, 5th May I placed an order for a quarter-page advertisement in "The New Standard", at a cost of £1800.00, on behalf of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, regarding London's sex cinemas, the Williams Report and censorship in general. I personally delivered our cheque with the copy to your offices yesterday afternoon, 19th May.

This morning I received a telephone call from Mr. Peter Marsh, your "entertainments advertising manager", as I understand, to inform me that the 'ad' had been refused. He didn't know the reason.

I immediately telephoned your office and was told that you were out until 4.30 p.m., judging an I.P.C. award. I was then connected, at my request, to your deputy editor, Mr. Roy Wright, and I asked him why our 'ad' had been refused. He said that he didn't like it because it was primarily concerned with only one aspect of the so-called "obscenity" issue and that he feared its publication might give your readers the impression that you condoned our cause and campaign and the message we were trying to convey. After discussing the matter with him for some time, during which I pointed out that we were a bona-

...../continued

fide law reform pressure group, were of serious intent and had been in existence for over five years, he agreed to have a closer look at the copy and asked me to call him back in an hour, which I did.

Mr. Wright then told me that his decision was unchanged, that it was a personal one but made on behalf of "The New Standard" and was final. During the somewhat lengthy conversation which followed I suggested, therefore, that he, the deputy editor of a newspaper, was in favour of censorship. He said that he was. When I suggested that in refusing our 'ad' his action was dictatorial and a denial of our free speech and expression, he agreed that that may be so. He had earlier asked me if the sex cinema clubs referred to in the 'ad' were those of the type which advertised in your paper and I said that they were. When I pointed out that in accepting the cinema owners advertisements, for which they paid a good deal of money over long continuous periods, whilst refusing ours, "The New Standard" was acting with gross hypocrisy, he agreed that I did have a point there.

The fanatical obsession with the repression of all things sexual in this increasingly depressing country is sickening. As the wording of our 'ad' itself indicated, we now have more censorship in this country than virtually all others of the so-called "free" Western World. It is nothing short of disgraceful that a newspaper in a country where we are supposed to have a free press, should actively endorse, even support, such repression. It is doubly disgraceful when such a policy is pursued by a newspaper which is now in a monopolistic position as regards London, with which the matter raised in our 'ad' copy is chiefly concerned. I was once a great champion of editorial freedom but am no longer so, since experience has taught me that such freedom in ^{my} impartial and irresponsible hands is often abused. I believe that it is being abused in this case, and I find it deplorable.

I ask you to investigate this matter, to consider its serious implications and to take appropriate action; I shall be grateful to have your comments.

Yours sincerely,

David Webb,
Organiser,

National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts