

~~CENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM  
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

**N C R O P A**

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**FIGHTING SEXUAL CENSORSHIP**

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NO/DAW/DP

16th August 1998

The Editor,  
"The Guardian",  
119 Farringdon Road,  
London, EC1R 3ER.

Dear Sir,

Welcome news though it is, I am sorry it has taken the B.B.F.C.'s Director, James Ferman, so long to appreciate that our "obscenity law is an ass" ("The Guardian" 13th August). The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) has been saying just that for the past 22½ years, ever since I founded it in 1976 and at just about the same time as Mr. Ferman took over his job as censor.

That the NCROPA's call for the repeal of all restrictive and repressive U.K. legislation against sexually explicit material for consenting adults is still unmet by the British Parliament, when virtually all other 'free-world', western nations have long since abandoned such curbs, highlights the shameful denial to the British people of their fundamental human right to freedom of expression and their right to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear.

The 'nanny-state' mentality of successive Governments, which, sadly, so many of our M.P.s lamely and gutlessly endorse - albeit often so hypocritically - has meant that no politician has had courage enough publicly to accept what all these other countries have properly accepted, and now, happily although tardily, the BBFC censor himself, that matters of taste and individual morality are not the business of the State, nor to be enforced by the dictates of Parliament.

Unlike the taking of drugs, which Charlotte Raven (in her article "Post Porn") so ludicrously equates with the consumption of "pornography", sexually-explicit material is not harmful and, in a great many instances, is positively good for us - unless, of course, like her, one believes that anything sexually pleasureable is wrong unless it conforms to one's own idiosyncratic standards and tastes.

In 1979, after an exhaustive two-year investigation, the distinguished Home Office appointed Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship (the Williams Committee) unanimously recommended to Parliament fundamental

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COMMITTEE - Alexander Barrie, A.A.Dipl. M.A.I.E.; Dr. Philip Stokes; Ted Goodman, LL.B. (Sol.); Clifford Hanley;  
David Kennington, M.A. (Hons.), Litt.D., B.A. (Psy.); Sean Gabb; Tuppy Owens, B.Sc., Dip.H.S.; Dr. Christine Pickard, M.B., Ch.B.

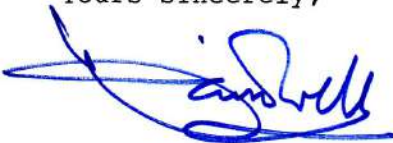
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changes to the laws in this field, including the legalising of "pornography" for adults. Nearly twenty years have passed with no action whatsoever having been taken to implement any of these recommendations. In fact, during that time, a constant stream of ever more curbs and restrictions on individual freedom of choice has been enacted.

Whilst it is gratifying to note that even the police have given their blessing to Mr. Ferman's long-overdue proposition, as far back as 1973, former Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Robert Mark, in promulgating much the same approach, said in his BBCTV "Dimbleby Lecture" - "Our experience with pornography shows that some activities, even if most people think them undesirable or offensive, cannot, in practice, be stopped. The most/<sup>can</sup> hope for is to regulate the way in which they are carried on."

If Jack Straw still refuses to listen to the NCROPA, or to the Williams Committee, or to Mr. Ferman, or, indeed, to your own leader comment plea, perhaps he will heed the respected voice of someone who has had first-hand experience of trying to police the un-policeable - and the unjustifiable.

Yours sincerely,



David Webb,  
Honorary Director,  
National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts

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