

~~GENCENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM  
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

## NEWSLETTER

November 1989

Dear Member,

With the mailing of the notices for the Members' General Meeting on 4th December (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London W.C.1 - 7.30 p.m.), I had hoped to include another edition of a NCROPA IN ACTION 'diary' of some of our activities and involvements throughout the past year or so. Unfortunately lack of sufficient time and resources has prevented the completion of the booklet as scheduled. It will now be mailed to you at a later date, as soon as is feasible. Meantime, I will endeavour here to familiarise you with some of the more major concerns which have occupied the time of the NCROPA's Committee and which have been pursued in your name, as a supporter of the cause of free expression.

Undoubtedly the dominating issue has been the publication of and accompanying debate on the Government's White Paper on Broadcasting ("Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality", Nov. 1988), which incorporates in its proposals the extension of the provisions of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act to cover broadcasting, and the creation of the Broadcasting Standards Council as a statutory body.

From the outset, the NCROPA has made the strongest possible representations to the Home Secretary deploring both these proposals and asking for an urgent meeting to discuss them alongside the general intolerable situation in this country with regard to state censorship. Our numerous requests for such a meeting have consistently been refused. Nevertheless we shall continue to press for one and, hopefully, the new incumbent at the Home Office, David Waddington, M.P., will be a little more amenable and less dismissive of our views than was his predecessor. I wrote a first letter to Mr. Waddington on 31st October last and am currently awaiting his response.

Meantime we shall, of course, be following the Bill's passage through the new parliamentary session assiduously and making appropriate representations, particularly whilst the Bill is in its Committee stage.

Although Lord Rees-Mogg, Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council had already previously been made well aware of our total opposition to the whole concept of a B.S.C., on 29th September 1988 he invited the NCROPA to participate in its 'Code of Practice Consultation Exercise' and, after much deliberation and not a little reservation, we accepted. Our official submission entitled "Broadcasting in the '90s: Compulsion, Control and Censorship", (copies of which are now available price £2.00 post-free) was presented to the B.S.C. in January. Naturally enough it demolishes nearly all the premises upon which the separate sections of the 'Code of Practice' are based, and, of course, the very need itself for any such code.

I also wrote individually to each of the eight members of the Council regretting that they had seen fit to accept a paid post on an authoritarian body which was nothing more than another arm of state censorship. Some responded in temperate terms, but the Bishop of Peterborough, the Rt. Rev. William Westwood, was enraged and another letter was required to put him firmly in his place!

Ex-Labour M.P., front-bench spokesman on Home Affairs and member of the present Executive Committee of the National Council for Civil Liberties, Alf Dubs, has also agreed to become a B.S.C. member. In the past, whilst pursuing a number of pro-censorship parliamentary Bills through the House of Commons (e.g. the Winston Churchill private member's Bill) I have enjoyed a happy working liaison with Alf Dubs and it is therefore doubly sad that he has seen fit to defect to the opposition. For not only has he thereby opted for state censorship of broadcasting, he has incredibly and crazily opted for increased state censorship of publications, by giving his outspoken support to a new group of fascistic (I choose that word advisedly) feminists - of the Clare Short variety - who have quite improperly but successfully infiltrated the NCCL and persuaded them to adopt an absurd policy regarding certain kinds of sexually explicit material involving women, of which they personally do not approve.

This new 'policy', passed by a tiny majority at this year's NCCL Annual General Meeting, is, in our view, clearly "ultra vires" the Constitution and Rules of the NCCL which incorporate "freedom of speech and publication", and a requirement that all members accept such Rules. The NCROPA delegation led the fight against so outrageous a motion, but was unable to sway the 200 or so people present, who were almost certainly quite unrepresentative of the 12000+ members of the NCCL countrywide. We have since taken Counsel's opinion about the legality of the motion being included for debate at all and this has endorsed our views of the matter. This has been conveyed to the NCCL but, so far, they have refused to declare the motion null and void. We may well have to consider dis-affiliating from this organisation if it is to begin going down so anti-libertarian a road and surely to its eventual ruin. Meanwhile I am keeping our options open, but may well apply to the High Court for an injunction to force the NCCL to operate within its own written Constitution and Rules. No doubt members will wish to discuss this matter at the General Meeting.

Whenever the situation warrants it, the NCROPA issues 'News Media Releases' which are distributed to the press (the national 'dailies', sometimes the national 'Sundays' and often including special interest papers, e.g. "The Stage", "Capital Gay", "The Catholic Herald" etc.), to television and radio news and current affairs programmes and producers and, where the issue is relevant, to magazines and publications (e.g. "The Freethinker", "Him", "Forum", "Gay Times", "Time Out" etc). Some releases we have issued during the past year include one on Prince Charles and his ignorant remarks about "an incessant menu of gratuitous violence" in TV and films, in a speech at the opening ceremony of the Museum of the Moving Image, a British Film Institute enterprise, of which organisation he is, believe it or not, its patron!

Apropos of this I wrote a long letter to the Prince, and Channel 4's "Right to Reply" programme filmed an interview with me at my home for inclusion in their transmission on 8th October 1988.

Other news releases include one on "State Censorship and Public Service Broadcasting" (20/9/88 - about our strong representations to the Government not to extend the O.P. Acts to broadcasting but, instead, calling for drastic reform of the presently constituted Acts), another (23/8/88) giving advance notice of my 10 hour picket and vigil outside the BBFC in Soho Square, London on 25th August 1988 to demonstrate against the U.K.'s draconian censorship laws in general and, in particular, in support of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ", on which the Board were due to pronounce 'sentence' on that date. (In their infinite wisdom, they deigned to award it an '18' certificate without cuts. Hallelujah!), and a third, on 4th May, about the appalling 'motion 24' at April's NCCL AGM already mentioned, and its implications for the future of that organisation. A news release was also issued on 1st November about the hysterical claims made by a group of women M.P.s (including Clare Short, Dame Jill Knight, Alice Mahon & Dame Peggy Fenner) that so-called "pornography" was responsible for the brutal rapes of two teenage girls, and not the intrinsically evil, irresponsible and uncontrolled actions of the three rapists themselves. The fact that the use of drink and drugs - alcohol and cannabis - had played a hugely significant part in the commission of this serious sexual offence, had been almost ignored by the sensation-seeking, reporting media.

On 14th February the late (thank goodness!) Ayatollah Khomeini issued an edict ord-

ering the death of Salman Rushdie, author of "The Satanic Verses", an event which has had world-wide repercussions and instigated the severance of diplomatic relations between the UK and Iran. The NCROPA wrote to the Prime Minister on 22nd February congratulating her on her strong stand against Khomeini and in support of freedom of expression, which is, she said, "a fundamental part of a free society". We asked her if she would now, therefore, also initiate Government legislation for the removal of the myriad of British censorship laws which presently prevent British citizens from exercising this "fundamental right" within the UK. The letter was replied to with a formal "thank you" acknowledgement. When we pressed the question in a further letter on 27th February, we received another curt acknowledgement and told that our letter was "receiving attention". Nothing has been heard since!

Notwithstanding, the NCROPA has played a very active part in trying to force the prosecuting authorities to institute proceedings against those people in this country who had flagrantly breached the law by publicly endorsing the Ayatollah's 'death sentence' on Rushdie and inciting others to do likewise. The names of nine such people were sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 22nd February but, only after much persistence, I was informed that it was considered to be "not in the public interest" to prosecute these people!

However, on 21st October, I was incensed to see a filmed BBCTV News report of a muslim meeting in Manchester Town Hall showing the Director of the Muslim Institute, Dr. Kalim Siddiqui, calling for the death of Rushdie, and then a show of hands from the audience of those who supported him, which was almost unanimous and ended with a mass "death to Rushdie" chant. As a result, I laid an information before the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester (James Anderton!) requesting him to conduct an investigation. As you may now know, that investigation is now proceeding and, on 17th November, the BBC were ordered by the High Court to hand over all film (including untransmitted film) taken of the meeting. If the DPP persists in employing his past double standards when considering this case, and refuses to prosecute Dr. Siddiqui, I shall personally issue an execution order against Margaret Thatcher to see how he reacts to that! It's a national disgrace that these religious barbarians have been allowed to get away with it for so long.

In Parliament, apart from debates on the Government White Paper on Broadcasting, Labour M.P. Dawn Primarolo introduced a ridiculous Bill on 28th July under the Standing Order 58 procedure, which not surprisingly got nowhere. It was called the 'Location of Pornographic Material' Bill and was sponsored by M.P.s Alice Mahon, Audrey Wise, Clare Short, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Harriet Harman, Frank Doran, George Howarth and Jeremy Corbyn. If any of these is your M.P., make sure you do not vote for them in any future election. They all, quite clearly, favour the advent of a chillingly authoritarian, Orwellian society wherein the likes of you or I, whether in the majority or the minority, will be inconsequential and irrelevant.

The ham-fistedly drafted Bill (drafted for them, Ms. Primarolo informs me, by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom!) is so absurd that I will not waste precious space here in even discussing it. Suffice it to say that, should they be stupid enough to resurrect it, we shall be ready and waiting to hammer it into the ground.

The recent increased activities of this group of fanatical feminist M.P.s and assorted sex-hating, 'misterogynistic', pro-censorship, anti-'porn' campaigners, however, do demand more attention and the recent disgraceful, unlawful actions of Clare Short and her C.A.P. cronies, against the W.H. Smith bookshop chain must not be allowed to succeed in pressuring WHS into removing from their bookshop shelves perfectly legal publications, but ones of which they personally do not approve. Anyone prepared to participate in any counter-demonstration which the NCROPA may decide to organise, please contact me immediately.

Yet another area in which these feminist fanatics are successfully imposing their will is that of the 'pub' or club 'strip' act. In January, the London Borough of Lambeth Council introduced a new licensing scheme for premises which stage such innocuous shows. In future they are to be designated as "sex encounter establishments" and, as a result, will now be required to pay an annual licence fee of £13,000 plus -

instead of the previous music and dancing entertainment licence of £600-£700 - an increase of more than 1300%! Such an exorbitant increase is, of course, quite beyond the viable means of most such pubs and clubs and the net result will inevitably be the demise of this harmless form of entertainment, which is the real intention of the regulation. This is censorship by the back door - and all of it originated by these unrepresentative, dictatorial feminist agitators, of the likes of Lambeth's Councillor Linda Bellos.

Interestingly enough, Linda Bellos is employed by the London Borough of Hackney as their Women's Rights Officer, and guess what? - that Council is now to consider introducing the same anti-stripper licensing scheme as that introduced in Lambeth!

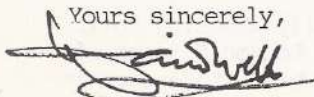
The NCROPA waged a fierce battle against the Lambeth Council (and we were, believe it or not, strongly supported by the minority Tory opposition group.) and I wrote individually to all 64 of its members. As a direct result of our continuous pressure, the opposition councillors insisted that a special council meeting was convened on January 18th for the sole purpose of debating the issue. At previous Council meetings any discussion had been deliberately 'talked-out'. We wrote letters to the press and I was instrumental in getting Thames News to film a report on the issue, as well as giving interviews for Greater London Radio et al, and so on. Alas, our efforts were all to no avail. Linda Bellos and her spineless colleagues from the Labour-dominated Council won the day. Whether we shall win the battle with Hackney remains to be seen. One thing is, however, very clear. After Westminster Council's virtual ruination of Soho's and Central London's 'exotic' night-life, and the present seemingly insidious extension of its 'nannyist', puritanical policies to other parts of the capital, London will very soon be about as exciting as a wet Sunday in Tehran!

I should also mention that the NCROPA made strong representations to the Attorney-General about the use of the archaic common law offence of outraging public decency, instead of the much more appropriate 1959 Obscene Publications Act to prosecute a sculptor, Richard Gibson, and a gallery owner, Peter Silveire, in the 'foetus earrings' trial. The Law Commission long ago recommended the abolition of this offence.

There is so much more that we have done and so many more issues in which the NCROPA has been involved, but time and space do not here permit me to include. I cannot, however, allow all the many activities undertaken by other members of the Committee to go unheralded and unsung, in particular the constant and unflagging efforts of Ted Goodman, and to whom our campaign owes so much. Our also loyal old stalwart and newly appointed membership secretary, Eric Miller must also be most warmly thanked for relieving me of the burden of much of the administrative work, and newcomer to the Committee, Isabel Koprowski, has been most active in propagandising on our behalf and promoting our cause in the media. During last week alone (15th, 16th & 17th November) she appeared in four different TV programmes. We should also be especially grateful to David Kennington, LBC's most prolific contributor, and to Alexander (Sandy) Barrie. Hopefully, any glaring omissions will be rectified in NCROPA IN ACTION.

Finally, and I make no apology for repeating this plea yet again, it is absolutely essential that our views - your views - are made well and truly known to our M.P.s. Letters to M.P.s, in sufficient numbers, definitely have an effect on them. Please don't ever think that yours won't make any difference and isn't important. IT WILL AND IT IS! Please, please write to your M.P. and/or Government Ministers NOW! Then write again - and go on writing in the future. We will never get the kind of changes in this country we so dearly seek unless we can command proper attention from those in our legislature. Please give them hell! And, of course, thank you for your continued, patient and much-valued support of the NCROPA. Reason will eventually prevail. We can, we must, and we will win!

Yours sincerely,



David Webb  
Honorary Director

November 1989