

CENSORED

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

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PRESS STATEMENT

"CHILD PORNOGRAPHY"

Whilst in no way condoning the use of children in sexually explicit material, the NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS is greatly concerned that the recent hysterical over-reaction to the "child pornography" issue will blind many to the much more important over-riding issue of obscenity, the law and the freedom of the individual.

We believe that the factually inaccurate, exaggerated and alarmist publicity recently showered on this highly emotive subject, has been deliberately engineered by the pro-censorship lobby in an effort to gain unwarranted sympathy for its much wider and sinister aims of substantially increasing our already draconian censorship legislation.

We also believe that it has deliberately chosen to do so at the present time to seek maximum publicity for its narrow-minded views whilst the Government Committee of Inquiry into Obscenity and Film Censorship is in session. The media and many M.P.s have fallen for this wily action hook, line and sinker, unfortunately, but we of the N.C.R.O.P.A. are not so gullible.

There is no vast, widespread proliferation of "child pornography" in this country. Our shops and cinemas and theatres are not overflowing with it and the ridiculous reports of "mutilation, physically and morally, of tens of thousands of children", from people like Sir Bernard Braine, M.P., are nothing short of idiotic. They are totally without foundation, grossly irresponsible and quite clearly mischievously intended to incite maximum alarm. In any case, there is ample adequate legislation for the protection of children already in existence. This is the view, not only of the Director of Public Prosecutions, but also of the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Widgery. In a Court of Appeal judgment (R. v Sutton) delivered on April 28th 1977

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in a case which involved a man, who, under the 1956 Sexual Offences Act, had been wrongly convicted of indecent assault against three boys (aged 11 to 13) whilst photographing two of them in the nude, Lord Widgery, whilst reluctantly upholding the man's appeal, said that:-

"the proper course where there was an act which no-one in their right mind could call an assault but which took place in an indecent situation, was to prosecute under the Indecency with Children Act 1960 and not under the 1956 Act".

The Indecency with Children Act is still very much on the Statute Book and Mr. Cyril Townsend's Protection of Children Bill is, therefore, unnecessary.

It is also a moot point as to whether or not children in the 14 to 16 age group (which is, apparently, Mr. Townsend's main concern) are so gravely at risk. We believe that young people of this age are not as naive or unintelligent as he obviously does. Like it or not, from the age of puberty onwards, children have a sexuality. This is a biological fact and, therefore, presumably as nature intended. Psychologists universally agree that the suppression of such sexuality can be extremely damaging whereas, as Professor Iver Mills, of the Department of Investigative Medicine University of Cambridge, has stated, evidence that pornography in general is damaging to children is "surprisingly difficult to find".

The implication in Mr. Townsend's Bill that the naked human body is "indecent", is quite clearly absurd. Photographs of naked children - not sexually explicit photographs - are no less "decent" than those of naked "Miss Worlds" or "Mr. Universes". That they may sometimes be used for the vicarious gratification of deviant, sexual pleasures, is no justification for their prohibition, any more than hooliganism at football matches is justification for the banning of football.

N.C.R.O.P.A. very much regrets that the Home Office, which originally refused to be intimidated by the Whitehouse Brigade on this matter, has now, once again, yielded to the devious, mischief-making antics of this dangerous lady and her miserable, following band of self-righteous bigots.

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