

david webb

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22nd February, 1978.

I very much regret that I have decided to relinquish the post of organiser of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts.

It is clear that I no longer enjoy the solid backing of the Committee for which I strived so strenuously to form and subsequently to serve over the past two years.

I accept that I made an error of judgment in not clearing the press statement on "child pornography" beforehand with other members of the Committee, although I do not accept that it was ill-considered and stand by every word of it. I can only say, in all honesty, that in issuing that statement I could see no conflict with opinions held by members of the Committee and by N.C.R.O.P.A. itself. I was merely responding to ever increasing pressure from our supporters for a more forceful, positive declaration of our views and aims. There has been mounting criticism that the voice of N.C.R.O.P.A. is barely heard, although goodness knows, I've done my best. I was trying to help remedy that situation, not by irresponsible, inflammatory hand-outs, but by attempting to get things into perspective and "take the heat" out of the highly emotive propaganda that has been bandied about recently. That "The Sun" should have so wickedly distorted the truth of what was said in that statement is totally reprehensible but, alas, beyond my control. All I can, and fully intend to, do is refer the matter to the Press Council if no appropriate redress is forthcoming.

I apologise for any embarrassment or annoyance I have caused to any of the Committee, although I cannot believe that you think this was deliberate when I

have devoted so much of my leisure time to our cause both before and since N.C.R.O.P.A.'s inception. I have neglected my acting career, taken off an enormous amount of time from my publishing and editorial work (at considerable financial loss, I may say) and have forsaken personal friendships and relaxations to a large extent. I can cope with outside opposition but when it appears to come from within I am finished.

I have always believed that the main reason for the indisputable success of Mary Whitehouse's campaigns is that she has largely been given a free hand. She has been left to her own devices, unhindered and unfettered by cumbersome Committee decisions and procedures. In fact this was borne out by Dr. Michael Tracey, Research Associate at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester during the course of an interview I had with him. He has written a book about Mrs. Whitehouse. I am not suggesting that I should have been given "carte blanche" to do just as I liked, but I feel a certain amount of latitude is absolutely essential in running a campaign like the N.C.R.O.P.A. Restricted thus, I am unable to continue to do so. Any impact we would be likely to make in the news media would become so emasculated by the time we had gone through tedious Committee procedures, it would simply not be newsworthy. Such constant hesitation is certainly not acceptable to many of our supporters who want to know why our voice is not being heard loud and clear.

I thank those of you who have given so much of your time and support to what I see as a thoroughly sensible and civilised cause and, of course, I pledge my continued support and loyalty to that cause and to whoever takes over my post. The over-riding concern is that the aims of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts should be realised.

With very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

David Webb.

P.S. I apologise for the duplicated nature of this personal letter but my long-suffering typing arms are getting very tired.

Copy to: Clement Freud, M.P.