

DIRECTOR

David Kennington, D.Litt.

NO/DAN/DP

15th August 1983.

The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, O.C., M.P.,  
Secretary of State for the Home Department,  
Home Office,  
50, Queen Anne's Gate,  
London, SW1H 9AT.

Dear Mr. Brittan,

Thank you for your reply to my letters of 19th July and 2nd August, conveyed in the Private Secretary's letter of 9th August.

I am surprised and greatly disturbed by your refusal to meet a delegation from the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts to discuss the forthcoming video-cassette recordings Bill and the existing, alarming censorship situation in general in this country, as requested.

On the one hand Mr. Taylor mentions in his letter that "consultations on the contents of the Bill are still in progress", but on the other says that you regret that you are not able to meet our association but that you are very ready to receive any written observations we may care to submit on Mr. Bright's proposals. With respect, "written observations" are no satisfactory substitute for face-to-face "consultations" and these proposals are, in reality, Government proposals, even though Mr. Bright is backing them and has been prepared to put his fortuitous, top draw in the Private Member's Bills lottery, at the Government's disposal. The Government are committed to bring in this legislation whether or not Mr. Bright or any other Member of Parliament who has drawn lucky for Private Member's Bills was prepared to take it on. Page thirty-four of the "Conservative Party Manifesto 1983" clearly spells it out thus:-

"We propose to introduce specific legislation to deal with the most serious of these problems, such as the dangerous spread of violent and obscene video cassettes."

The situation is, therefore, that, if a Private Member's Bill's Draw winner could not have been found to front the Bill, the Government would have had to introduce it itself and would, of course, have done so.

In any case, you have already received a delegation for consultations on the Bill, from the National Viewer's and Listeners' Association, as I mentioned in my letter of 2nd August but to which no reference at all was made by Mr. Taylor in his reply. Why is it that Mrs. Whitehouse and those with the

...../continued

opposing point of view to our own, apparently have an automatic entrée to Government Ministers, and Home Secretaries in particular, whilst we are refused? This is surely gravely unjust and displays gross bias, as well as being a serious slur on the integrity of the N.C.R.O.P.A., the members of its Executive Committee, all of whom are volunteers, and its many supporters, all of whom share a passionate belief in the freedom of the individual and are deeply concerned about its alarmingly accelerating erosion by State interference.

The proposals for the Bill outlined by Mr. Bright in his Press Release of July 14th will undoubtedly substantially add to this erosion in a most frighteningly authoritarian way. I am currently filming a programme about George Orwell and "1984", for transmission next year. I am not sure, however, that 1984 is not already here with us. Certainly the proposed video Bill will bring it very much nearer.

I do hope that wise counsels will prevail, that drastic changes will be made to these proposals and that you will reconsider your refusal to meet us, and thus allow us a fair, proper and equal opportunity of discussing with you personally, the changes we propose, just as you did with the N.V.A.L.A.

Yours sincerely,

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