

DIRECTOR

David Kennington, Litt.D.

NO/DAW/DP

22nd September 1983.

Jerry Hayes, Esq., M.P.,
House of Commons,
London, SW1A 0AA.

Dear Mr. Hayes,

Thank you for your letter of 19th September ~~inst.~~^{inst.} in reply to mine of 6th September.

I and the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts are, indeed, gratified to learn that you are very much against censorship, even though puzzled as to how you are able to reconcile such a stance with your sponsorship of the proposed Bill to regulate the content, sale and hire of video cassettes, and the Conservative Party's avowedly unswerving adherence to freedom of choice and the freedom of the individual.

We are, however, very pleased to learn that you will be prepared to meet with a delegation from the N.C.R.O.P.A. provided that we are prepared to discuss "not just the general issues of censorship, but the content and rationale of the Bill". I confirm that we are certainly prepared so to do, although, as we see it, the issues are indivisible.

You will not be surprised to learn that we certainly do not accept your assertion that our observations on the proposals for the Bill, submitted to the Home Secretary "were far too, general, badly researched, and, quite frankly, lacked a coherent structure".

First of all, our observations were only "preliminary", as our press release of 13th September made perfectly clear, based as they inevitably were on so-far-known available information about the Bill contained in Mr. Bright's press release of 14th July, and as pointed out in our letter of 6th September. Since no Bill, even of a draft nature, has yet been published, it is only to be expected that any observations will be "general".

Secondly, the N.C.R.O.P.A. has been actively in being for the past seven and a half years and has the 'back-up' and 'know-how' of, arguably, some of the keenest intellects in the country. We find your suggestion that our observations are "badly researched" and "lacked a coherent structure", quite frankly, arrogant and insulting. They are especially so when, in the second paragraph of your letter, you write, and I quote, that you "very much agree with the rationale behind the Wolfenden Committee". For your information, the

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Wolfenden Committee was in being from 1954 to 1957 to examine homosexual offences and prostitution. What we are concerned with, and as our observations clearly refer to on pages four and five are the findings of the Williams Committee (the Home Office Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship) which was appointed by 13th July 1977 by the then Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, M.P., "to review the laws concerning obscenity, indecency and violence in publications, displays and entertainments in England and Wales, except in the field of broadcasting, and to review the arrangements for film censorship in England and Wales; and to make recommendations". That committee's unanimous report was presented to Parliament by the Home Secretary in November 1979, some twenty-two years after the deliberations of the Wolfenden Committee. I really think that before you take others to task for their supposedly inefficient research, you should ensure that your own is beyond reproach.

However, I feel sure that all these matters may best be resolved by a face-to-face meeting and we are most grateful to you for agreeing to such a meeting in principle. Our over-riding complaint has always been that proper, rational, unemotive and open debate on this subject in the past has been denied us, and I hope that this will help to explain some of our anger. That is why we very much welcome your accommodation in this respect. Perhaps your secretary would be kind enough to telephone me so that we can arrange a mutually convenient time and place for our discussions.

Once again, thank you so very much for your reply.

Yours sincerely,

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