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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

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The N.C.R.O.P.A. is affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties

NO/DAW/DP

19th October 1983

John Selwyn Gummer, Esq., M.P.,
Chairman,
The Conservative Party,
Conservative Central Office,
32, Smith Square,
Westminster,
London, SW1P 3HH.

Dear Mr. Selwyn Gummer,

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) congratulates you on your appointment to the post of Chairman of the Conservative Party.

We cannot, however, congratulate the Conservative Party on its abysmal record whilst in office during the past four years, regarding civil liberties and the freedom of the individual in this country where even more repressive legislative restraints have been introduced to add to those draconian measures which were already on the Statute Book, and where we are now subjected to more censorship than virtually any other country from the so-called 'free' Western World.

This is a damning indictment of a Government formed by a political party which so stridently proclaims the cornerstone of its whole philosophy to be "the freedom of the individual". In her foreword to the 1979 Conservative Manifesto Margaret Thatcher wrote:-

"No one who has lived in this country during the last five years can fail to be aware of how the balance of our society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the State at the expense of individual freedom.
This election may be the last chance we have to reverse that process."

Well, you had your chance. Pray, what went wrong? What has happened to all that "individual freedom" we were promised? For it is not simply a matter of the 1979 status quo remaining, but a present situation whereby the British people are subject to more and more controls and prohibitions, more and more State 'nannyism', more and more censorship than ever before, and certainly before the 1979 general election. However it does not even stop there. Still more controls and prohibitions are planned. The iniquitous video recordings Bill, which is being 'fronted' for the Home Office by Government lackey Mr. Graham Bright, M.P., is one such measure already in the pipeline and which

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the Government hasn't even got the guts to introduce openly as a Government Bill. For ~~make~~ no mistake about it, this is not a private member's Bill whatever Mr. Bright or anyone else may claim. The Conservative's intention to introduce such a Bill was unequivocally spelt out on page thirty-four of its 1983 General Election Manifesto. On page five of that same document, Margaret Thatcher had the effrontery to cite the defence of "Britain's traditional liberties" as one of three main challenges faced by the Tories and she then went on to add insult to injury by claiming that "Our history is the story of a free people! What nonsense and what hypocrisy!

Writing in the 11th October edition of "The Guardian", James Cameron reminded us that Disraeli once said that "a Conservative Government is an organised hypocrisy" and that as a Conservative himself he should have known. In your speech to the Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool last week, I was interested to hear that, after the Conservative election win in 1951, your mother commented that she felt "much freer". I and the supporters of the NCROPA ought to be able to say the same after your win on June 9th. Alas, we cannot because we do not. Bitter experience has taught us not to trust the Conservatives and that their professed, almost fanatical devotion to individual freedom is nothing more than a sham. We are duty bound to expose it and all those who condone such hypocrisy.

We note with great interest that you, too, made perhaps predictable enough play in your speech with many loftily noble sentiments about "freedom".

"That is the key word in our creed", you said. "It is 'freedom'. Freedom first for every one of us to live unmolested and untrammelled".

"It is freedom too for each one of us to breathe, to have elbow room to make our own way in life without the deadening burden of the over-mighty state."

"It is freedom to be an individual, freedom to be ourselves. But it is more than that. For the great Conservative insight is that freedom does not just need to be protected, it needs to be extended"

and then

"it is the Conservative Party which gives to new generations a freedom of choice which their fathers never dreamed of."

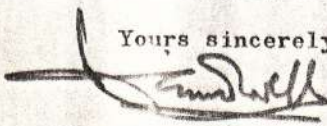
What unadulterated rubbish, when the consenting adults of this country are ruthlessly denied the fundamental freedom to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear because of viciously repressive State censorship of a totally intolerable kind, and which the Conservative Party not only cherishes, but wants to increase. It is a situation nothing short of scandalous.

Finally, we shall certainly not forget the promise with which you had the temerity to conclude your Blackpool speech:-

"This Conservative Government will set the people free!"

Pull the other one, Mr. Gummer. It's got bells on!

Yours sincerely,



David Webb
Director,

National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts

P.S. I am enclosing herewith, for your information, a copy of our written observations on the proposals for the forthcoming video recordings Bill, which the Home Secretary invited us to submit and which we presented to him on 1st September.

P.P.S. In answer to the question posed by your book "The Permissive Society - Fact or Fantasy?", the answer is 'fantasy'. It has never existed in this country, except perhaps in Pimlico and Petters Bar!

JW.