

Comments of Edward A C Goodman on the GLC Report of the Cinema Policy Working Party on Film Censorship and related matters dated the 29th November 1983

It is noted that at the full meeting of the GLC held on the 14th - 15th February 1984 the report was accepted except that Clause 5 (b) was amended. This is an important sub-Clause. The report recommended that the GLC - if, after discussion, could not reach agreement with the BBFC then it should become deeply involved in details ^{of} censorship as suggested by many woman^e's groups. However, it seems that the full meeting of the GLC in February 1984 more or less accepted this, this sub-clause 5 (b), with hardly any amendment at all. In any event the documents sent to Mr Webb of NCROPA on the 22nd February 1984 do not make it clear how Clause 5 (b) of the Report was amended. It is also noted that the agenda paper of the full meeting of the GLC of the 14th to 15th February 1984 contained very abbreviated our version of the Report. This is deprecated. If a full Report had been prepared then it should be the duty of the GLC to consider that full Report and not a short 3 page digest. The full Report was prepared at the expense *of the ratepayers* and if the GLC is too busy to consider it then the *person* of drawing up that Report should have been so informed and would have prepared a shorter cheaper report. It is appreciated that a full copy of the Report was circulated to all member of the Council. That being so then that it what should have been voted on. As it stands what was voted on was the agenda. Also it is believed that the full meeting of the GLC on the 14th - 15th February 1984 spent most of its time on other issues (going on all night) and spent very little time considering this very important report which effects freedom of expression in the Capital.

Since the GLC has seen fit to produce two documents namely the

the extract from the agenda of the 14th February 1984 and also the Report of the 29th November 1983 then NCROPA will have to comment on each of the two documents. Dealing first with the extract from the agenda of the 14th February 1984 NCROPA notes that it was brought to the attention of the GLC that it has no statutory duty to censor films shown in licensed cinemas to persons over the age of 16. That being the case, it is surprising that the GLC did not seem to consider the option which has previously been suggested by Mrs Enid Wistrich when she was a member of the GLC that it should not concern itself trying to restrict what adult citizens of the Capital choose to watch in cinemas.

It is also noted that the GLC Working Party took an inordinate amount of notice of the views of certain small women's groups. This seems to have been caused by the fact that they received submissions from many different such groups which seems to have distorted their sense of proportion. They also seem to have lost sight of the fact that disapproval of certain types of material by certain groups should not be caused for banning access to that material by other adults. Otherwise if carried to its logical conclusion no material which offended any group would be allowed.

It is also noticed that the two trade unions that submitted evidence did so on the basis that their industry did not want competition from Cinema Club and the video market. It does not seem to have been realized that it is no business of the GLC to try and prevent any such competition. In any event imposing stricter censorship or indeed any censorship at all on cinemas will only increase the competition from video market which is (thankfully) not subject to GLC censorship.

It is also noted that the GLC seems to have accepted without any conclusive evidence whatsoever that there is a connection with violence in films and certain types of criminal activity. The expert Williams Report which was unanimous thought otherwise.

It is also noted that the GLC seems to have accepted that all sexual explicitness is connected with sexual exploitation in films. This is just not true. Also the GLC feel that sex films should not contain any violent scenes. The GLC does not seem to realize that this is already the case.

The GLC presumes to suggest type of ongoing plot to be included in 18R films. It also states that it feels that the level of sexual explicitness permitted in category 18 films should be reduced and that the same consideration should apply to other categories. Does this mean that it also wants it to apply to the "18R" category? In any event why should the level of sexual explicitness be reduced? Is sex inherently bad? If this is the view of the GLC it should be stated. It is not a view shared in other Western Countries all of which had liberalized their laws in this respect in the last 15 years beginning with Denmark and the Netherlands in 1969 and ending with Greece and Switzerland in 1983. The GLC seems to share the twisted traditional British attitude to sex namely that it is dirty and should be suppressed as much as possible.

It is also noted that the GLC states that it should represent the views of the electorate in this matter. This is not correct. The electorate of even a majority there of has no right to suppress the rights of others. Disrespect for the rights of minorities is not democracy, it is tyranny of the majority. The GLC does not seem to have been able to grasp the fact that even if a majority of persons disapprove of the certain type of film may have no right to prevent the minority from viewing it. The fact that a majority approve of a certain type of censorship does not justify. Censorship is the *negation* of democracy because it prevents freedom of expression on which democracy is based. In fact the first amendment to the United States constitution specifically prohibits any legislature in the United States from imposing censorship. Unfortunately the GLC, which is not even obliged to impose

censorship seems to have chosen so to do. It also makes the fundamental error of thinking that censorship can be used positively instead of completely negatively. Censoring existing films will not ensure that other films of the type of which the GLC approves will be made.

The GLC proceeds to confuse its censorship role with the encouragement of the production of other types of films. The two are completely separate.

It is deeply regretted that the GLC are going to recommend that the British Board of Film Censors which already applies to the stricter form of censorship that exists anywhere else in the Western world (most of western countries having abolished all film censorship in any event) that make its film censorship even more strict. Nowhere it is recommended that the British Board of Film Censors be asked to liberalize. All the suggestions are for representations to be made on how the Board can make its censorship more restrictive. This is intolerable.

SEE SEPARATE SUBMISSION REGARDING THE FULL REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY DATED THE 29th NOVEMBER 1983