

MEMBERS' GENERAL MEETING

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1.

7.30 p.m., WED., 2nd MARCH 1983

ORGANISER'S REPORT

Mr. Chairman, fellow members, even though this is the first general meeting of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts since its inauguration nearly seven years ago, it is not my intention here to go into ~~every~~ ^{ot} detail ~~about~~ our activities throughout that period. For one thing there wouldn't be time and for another I am conscious, of course, that I am amongst friends and speaking to the converted. The "NCROPA IN ACTION" booklet, with its resumé of some of our activities over the past two years, ^{and a copy of} ~~and~~ which you have all been sent ~~to~~, will also give some indication of more recent events. However I would just like to give a very brief review of our progress (or perhaps the reverse!) from the NCROPA's beginnings to the present day.

Way back in 1973, Noris McWhirter (He of the Guinness Book of Records and one of the leading lights of THE FREEDOM ASSOCIATION) endeavoured to prevent the transmission of a TV documentary about ANDY WARHOL. The IBA, under its then chairman, Lord AYLESTONE, refused to stop the programme and public-spirited Mr. McWhirter went to court to try and force the IBA to ban it. He lost the action. I wrote to Lord AYLESTONE ^{at the time} /applauding his stand against self-appointed censors like Noris McWhirter. I concluded my letter thus:-

"Personally I would like to see the eventual abolition of all forms of censorship. This achievement will not be possible overnight, of course, but, in the meantime, we can at least hope for, and indeed have come to expect, a gradual movement to such an end." When he replied, Lord Aylestone said that they had received thousands of letters on the subject, the majority of which had opposed the transmission. However, and I quote, "independent research commissioned by the Authority has shown that in the event only 6 per cent of the sample who viewed the programme spontaneously said that they

found it disgusting, obscene or offensive." I mention this episode for two reasons. First it indicates how ^{naively} optimistic, albeit cautiously, I then was (1973) about the future demise of censorship in this country; and secondly how Lord Aylestone's letter, with its revealing statistic, had so clearly endorsed what I had always believed to be true about this country, which was that the vast majority of the public are not intolerant bigots and puritans and are not in favour of ■ retaining our out-moded, restrictive and repressive censorship laws. That was ten years ago and, although Mary Whitehouse had already been rearing her ugly head for the previous eight years, she had not, up till then, made any discernable impact on the scene, nor could she claim any real successes.

Two years later, in September 1975, however, there was a noticeable ~~increase~~ ~~in the activities of the authorities, and a result that I was prompted~~ change and the authorities began to increase their activities ^{considerably} ~~noticeably~~. I was concerned that perhaps she and her cronies were ~~perhaps~~ beginning to be listened to and taken seriously, so much so that I was prompted to complain to the Home Secretary, one Roy Jenkins, about ever increasing seizures of so-called "obscene" magazines. I urged that the only way of stopping such police practices and of ensuring that consenting adults had the freedom to choose for themselves what they saw, read or heard, was for the complete ~~abolition~~ abolition of the Obscene Publications Acts, except for certain safeguards for the "protection" (in inverted commas!) of children. This seemed to me to be very much in line with his much publicised "civilised society" interpretation of the much maligned "permissive society". He replied thus:-

"The Government is satisfied that for the time being at least, the law is justified in ~~imposing~~ imposing some limits on freedom of expression in this field".

Shortly after this rebuff, early in 1976, came the absurd, lengthy, and costly "Inside Linda Lovelace" trial at the Old Bailey which, although the book

was adjudged not "obscene" and the defendant, publisher Heinrich Hannou, acquitted, demonstrated so clearly just how ludicrous the O. P. Acts were. This "last straw", if you like, was what ~~some~~ ^{finally} triggered off my action to found the NCROPA in April 1976.

The next 5 months were largely devoted to the onerous task of recruiting a suitable and willing Committee and I am delighted to say that we have been very well served by its members, except in two instances, which I will come to later, ever since. Two of those founder members are still serving, Dr. Brian Richards and Eric Miller (and are both here tonight). *(Mention Bill & Martin & Lily too)*

Probably the biggest "bombshell" during the rest of that ^{one hit} year, 1976, was the furore over the plans to make a film on "The Sex Life of Jesus Christ" by Jens THORSEN, a Danish film producer and when he announced he intended to come to Britain to make it here, the "Puritan Brigade" predictably enough went practically berserk! They were joined in their condemnation and outrage by the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, the Home Secretary, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, now Cardinal Hume, the Organiser/Convener of the Sikh Divine Fellowship in this country, the President of the Standing Conference of Pakistani Organisations in the U.K., the General of the Salvation Army, the General Secretary of the Free Church Federal Council, Mary Whitehouse, of course, and, indeed, even the Queen. I wrote to them all. Mrs. Whitehouse didn't reply but at least the Queen did, from Balmoral Castle! Not that my letters did any good, ~~as you might expect,~~ ^{for} in February 1977, Merlyn Rees, who had taken over as Home Secretary from Roy Jenkins, issued an exclusion order prohibiting entry to this country of Jens Thorsen.

The various pursuits and activities up to July of 1977 were listed in a newsletter which was distributed to all members at the time. This was intended to be the first of regular newsletters to keep the membership informed of the campaign ■

and its progress. With the ever-increasing pressure on Committee members, but principally because of insufficient funds, the newsletter did not appear again and, until the "NCROPA IN ACTION" booklet which you've just had, this meant, most regrettably, that apart from press and media stories about the NCROPA, the membership was ^{largely} in the dark as to what was going on, even though there was plenty. I ~~apologise for this and~~ ^{was} ~~most unhappy about~~ ^{it}. One or two members (but only one or two) did want to know whether the NCROPA had gone the same way as the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society - and they had every right to wonder. Most presumably assumed that we were carrying on the battle and were content in that ^{assumed} ^{happily,} knowledge. They were, indeed, right and the NCROPA had not ^{gone}, nor has any intention of going, the same way as the DLAS. The Committee simply felt that the very meagre financial resources at our disposal should, in the first instance, be used in pursuing the campaign, that is in working towards our sole aim, and that ^{is} ~~is~~ changing the law - rather than in producing newsletters, however desirable, for the already converted, that is our own supporters. In the circumstances we trust that the membership will ^{understand and} support the Committee's decision. We are, however, fully conscious of the importance of proper regular communication with our members and, future finances permitting, and with some kind offers of additional help, we hope to remedy this ~~omission~~ henceforth.

It was also in 1977 that Merlyn Rees announced his intention to set up a Committee of Inquiry on Obscenity and Film Censorship. Since he had been in office, on behalf of the NCROPA, I had been bombarding him (and also his predecessor) with protests and demands and we like to think that it was at least partly due to this unrelenting pressure that he ~~intended~~ ^{setup} this ~~action~~ ^{Committee}. I summed up our campaign's feelings on the situation in February 1977 when I wrote to Mr. Rees Thus:-

Every day sees the erosion of individual freedom of expression in some new area or other - Mrs. Whitehouse's resurrection of the antiquated blasphemy laws against "Gay News", the new spate of customs seizures, the invocation

by the police of the ancient common law offence of "keeping a disorderly house" to prosecute private cinema clubs, the sudden unexplained withdrawal of a series of television sex documentaries and, most serious of all, the censorship of thought and ideas ^{down} by your own acknowledged action in refusing admittance to this country of Jens Thorsen ... on the grounds that his presence in Britain may lead to demonstrations and possible breaches of the peace and would ~~not~~ be 'conducive to the public good'." In the light of what has been going on since then ^{however,} and particularly since the present administration took office in 1979, ~~Even only say~~ ^{I feel I should be saying,} "Come back, Merlyn, All is forgiven!" - well, nearly all!

On 18th April 1977 we sent a personal letter to each of the 631 members of Parliament in the House of Commons (4 seats were at the time vacant), urging legislation for fundamental changes to our censorship laws. ~~The letters urged each M.P.~~

- ~~(1) to afford this matter the priority it warrants~~
- ~~(2) to reject the unfounded assertions and fanatical intolerance of the pro-censorship lobby, recognising how completely unrepresentative it is of the country as a whole and~~
- ~~(3) to ensure that Parliament no longer permits the perpetuation of these anti-quoted laws but rids itself of the hypocrisy of the past".~~

Many MPs didn't reply at all, of course. ^{replies} Many were ~~non-committal~~ simply acknowledgments and most were non-committal. Some were, as to be expected, violently opposed to all that we stood for but a surprising number said that they agreed with us. It is sad to report, therefore, that of those in support who are still M.P.s, not one has ~~either~~ had either the will or the courage to speak out on our behalf in any of the debates in the House either then or subsequently, and especially recently. And this, Mr. Chairman, is one of the biggest difficulties we have to overcome if we are to get MPs to vote for the kind of changes to the law we both require and demand - the great difficulty of getting MPs to come out of the closet, have the courage of their private convictions and stand up and be counted in the public arena. One member of Parliament, John Wheeler, M.P. for Paddington, wrote

3rd December 1979

to me on expressing his unsolicited support for NCROPA. He said that *I'vey much appland you approach to these issues and* "I think you would like to know that I ~~support~~ *share a support of your* philosophy" ~~philosophy~~. However, even he, when it came to the debates on the licensing of sex establishments and the Williams Report in general, stopped far short of the kind of unequivocal support we both desire and require for the basis of any fundamental, reforming legislation. My experience of M.P.s since running this campaign, is that, whatever they may think privately, they fight shy of getting involved in this debate publicly. Our own Committee member, Gerald Fowler, himself a former M.P., has always maintained that issues of this kind - "obscenity", abortion, homosexuality, prostitution and so on, do not win or lose votes for an M.P., and I am sure he is right. My own worry is that most M.P.s are not so sure and will not, therefore, take the risk. I also think that they fear vicious, dirty smear campaigns, like the one we have just seen in the Bermondsey By-election *(party* politics aside). I mentioned earlier two previous members of the NCROPA Committee who had, unfortunately, let the side down. They were both M.P.s and their resignations clearly underline my worries. One of them was Clement Freud, the Liberal M.P. for the Isle of Ely. He was one of the first people I approached to serve on our Committee because it appeared that he shared our views. When I met him to discuss this, he said that censorship and "obscenity" was a very dangerous area to get involved in, especially when one had as small a majority as he had. However the principle was absolutely right so, in his own words, "Count me in."

In February 1978, Mary Whitehouse initiated a carefully orchestrated, emotive campaign against child pornography and M.P. Cyril Townsend swallowed the bit and introduced a private member's Bill, now the ~~Protection~~ *of Children* Act (1978). We were of the opinion that Mary Whitehouse deliberately stirred up ~~the hysteria~~ all the fuss to attract public support for her views and away from liberal-minded bodies, like ours, whilst the Williams Committee, which by then ~~had been appointed~~ *was being appointed*, was deliberating on the whole, much wider question of "obscenity" and censorship. We also contended that there were already sufficient laws in existence to take care

of any abuses against children and that Cyril Townsend's Bill would simply be duplicating that legislation. (It is interesting to note that I think I am right in saying that the Act has only been used twice since it became law).

The hysteria over this ~~issue~~ mythical deluge of child pornography became so great, however, that ~~we~~ I decided to issue a press statement on the lines I've mentioned, to try to take some of the heat out of matter. As a result, "The Sun", on 18th February 1978 published a story about us, as well as a leader comment, headlined "Just Nasty!" -which referred to us as "well-meaning fools". ~~The~~ articles were blatant distortions of what ~~we~~ I said in our statement and I issued another on 20th February saying just that and re-iterating our condemnation of child pornography. Clement Freud, however, whose name had been mentioned in the articles as being on our Committee, got 'cold feet' and immediately resigned from the Committee. Not only that. He contacted my very recently-won recruit to the Committee, Andrew Mackay, M.P. For Stechford, and panicked him into resigning also. When I phoned Clement to ask him to reconsider his impulsive action, he ~~said~~ ^{confirmed} that there was nothing in the statement with which he disagreed. I suggested, therefore, that he should take it out on "The Sun", not on me and the campaign. It was apparent, however, that the emotive impact of the ~~words~~ "child pornography" ^{outcry} ~~was~~ too much for him. I reminded him of what he said to me when he first consented to serve on our Committee - i.e. about it being a very dangerous area to get involved in, but that the principle was right. "I've got my constituents to think of!" he said. "I've had over 600 letters about this. "But ~~what about~~ ^{you agree} ~~with what~~ ~~my~~ statement said?", I asked. "You're saying to hell with my principles" ^{Don't look what} ~~is~~ ~~showing~~ ^{is} ^{showing}". "Yes, I am", he said. And that was 'goodbye' to Mr. Freud - and that shows quite graphically the kind of thing we are up against.

On 2nd June 1977 I wrote a letter to "The Times" (not published, ~~published~~ ^{surprise! surprise!}), in response to Mary Whitehouse's complaint that, in thirteen years of campaigning, she had only been allowed something less than two hours television time in which to

state her case. I telephoned all the commercial TV networks covering the whole of the U.K. to find out what this would mean in revenue for them. That two hours TV time represented, in terms of the then current advertising rates, £3,707,520 worth of free advertising for promoting her cause. In spite of incessant efforts on our behalf, Mr. Chairman, the NCROPA, at that time, had been allowed precisely no television time at all. And this is the second greatest problem - or maybe the first ^{greater problem} - we have to contend with in promoting our campaign and disseminating our views. Publicity.

There are about 75 names on our current news media list - that is the national daily press, radio and television news, current affairs programmes, relevant magazines etc - who each receive a copy of every news media release we issue. Unfortunately the banners and complainers of the 'Puritan Brigade' are nearly always considered to be much more newsworthy than ~~those, like ourselves,~~ ^{like ourselves.} the tolerants, the freedom-fighters, the live-and-let-lives. ^{I sometimes think} Mary Whitehouse only has to blow her hose and it ~~■~~ appears in the media. We would have to stage a mass copulation on the balcony of Buckingham Palace before the media reported us. It is fair to say that the situation has improved slightly in more recent years, and ~~some~~ of you may have heard the interviews I gave, for instance, a week last Monday on BBC Radio London, LBC Radio and Thames Television, about our protest to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner over the recent massive police raids on sex establishments and the subsequent handling of publicity for them. However, in the main, it is ^{regrettably} the more meretricious, more gimmicky stories which attract major attention. For example, when we went to the Home Office for a personal meeting with Willie Whitelaw, the Home Secretary on January 21st 1981, we held an expensive press conference afterwards. Yet nothing at all about it appeared either in the national dailies or on television next day. True the news unfortunately coincided with the release of the American hostages in Iran, but still. However, when I wrote to the Prince of Wales pointing out that the beasts supporting his coat of arms as depicted on the cover of the official Rpyal Wedding programme, had erect penises,

and that it was a good job it had been published before October, when Tim Sainsbury's Indecent Displays (Control) Bill became law, that story made the front page of "The Guardian".

ITV have been kinder than the BBC/^{TV}and, as yet, the BBC/^{TV}have never once interviewed anyone from our campaign or allowed us a say in any of their programmes, in spite of my continual protests to the Director-General downwards.

The fact is that we cannot make them publish or show our viewpoint. All we can do is to keep bashing on, as Whitehouse did, until they jolly well do. It isn't easy when one is so short of funds but somehow, we must find the adequate resources to keep up the momentum ALL THE TIME.

In July 1977 we were most grateful to secure the services of Gerald Fowler, then M.P. for The Wrekin constituency, and he agreed to become a member of the Committee. He has remained so ever since.

Throughout the rest of 1977, the police raids and seizures continued and increased, particularly with regard to films and cinema clubs, and hardly a day went by without a story of one kind or another connected with these raids, splashed across the newspapers, most of them written in the most lurid, sensationalist language. It is significant to note here that, in September 1977, the then Leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, wrote to the Home Secretary asking him to consider immediate changes in the 'obscenity' laws because of pressure exerted upon her by Mrs. Whitehouse. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, having since attained power herself, she has proved so intransigent on this issue and has consistently refused to take any action on 'Williams'. I think we all know what we are up against!

After The Sun/Clement Freud/Andrew Mackay fiasco I wrote to all members of the Committee saying that I had decided to give up the running of the NCROPA. The last

thing either I or the NCROPA needed was the kind of petty dissension shown by Messrs. Freud and Mackay. The remaining Committee members assured me, however, of their 100% backing and I agreed to stay on at least for the time being. Well, as you can see, I'm still here. That one incident was the only time in our 7 years existence when the NCROPA's future was in the balance. It was just at that time, however, that we were preparing our official ~~XXXXXXXX~~ submission to the Williams Committee and that was, without doubt, the most important activity undertaken by us thus far, and, probably, since. I'm very glad we did continue in operation because I believe, in all modesty, that our evidence to 'Williams' was a most thorough, rational and effective piece of work and it has been much complimented since. Incidentally Futura Books asked our permission to print extracts from it as an appendix to their publication "The Amazing Mary Millington". It was with great regret when we heard in August 1979 ~~that~~ of Mary's tragic death. On behalf of the NCROPA we sent a wreath to her funeral with the inscription:-

"In tribute to and with fond remembrance of dear Mary - a freedom fighter"

With deepest sympathy from the Organiser, Committee and Supporters of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts".

and Eric Miller and myself represented the NCROPA at her funeral in Dorking on 24th August.

We submitted our written evidence to the Williams Committee in April 1978 and were subsequently invited to go before the Committee to give oral evidence on June 30th. Dr. Pickard, Dr. Richards, Edward Goodman, William Wright, ^{Eric Miller} and myself formed our delegation.

On 13th May 1978 William Whitelaw, then Conservative Opposition spokesman on Home Affairs, made a speech to the National Viewers and Listeners Association Convention in Birmingham in which he said that the Child Protection Bill and the G.L.C.'s drive to "clean-up" London, then in full swing, were "only the forerunners of a more comprehensive reaction". I wrote to Mr. Whitelaw asking him to explain

just what he meant by this ominous comment. He sent me a copy of his full speech with his reply. The reply is interesting and I'll read it to you:-

"Dear Mr. Webb, etc., etc. ...to.... talk of censorship!"

Twice, you will note, he rejects censorship.

In February 1979 we decided to affiliate to the NCCL. Edward Goodman and I have attended all their Annual General Meetings since, as NCROPA's official delegates. Each year we have put down a motion relevant to our campaign against censorship and in the past three years, motions urging Government action to implement the ~~findi~~ recommendations of the Williams Report plus our own. We had little trouble in getting support for these motions until 1981 when opposition appeared from a feminist orientated group. Although our motion was carried on that occasion, last year, 1982, that same opposition had grown considerably. A great deal of inaccurate, emotive nonsense was spoken by those who claimed that 'pornography' degraded women and encouraged violence towards them and that our motion was in conflict with NCCL policy on women's rights. Our motion was eventually remitted to the Executive Committee for further consideration and resolution. Their report is not yet ready. I am bound to say, Mr. Chairman, that when we first affiliated to the ~~NCCL~~ NCCL, I never for one moment contemplated any opposition whatsoever. An organisation dedicated to civil liberty would surely be bound to support the aims of the NCROPA. Some years ago, Edward Goodman and I both joined The Freedom Association ~~because~~ as individual members because their name and published aims seemed to embrace our aims. When it became clear, however, that they did nothing of the sort (you will remember my story about Noris McWhirter, one of their top officials) and that their whole outfit was a sham, we severed our association with them pronto. We didn't see the point of paying out £10 each per year to assist a bunch of hypocrites. The NCROPA'S affiliation fee to the NCCL is £21. If the NCCL is going to go the same way as the Freedom Association, and it certainly looks that way as far as we are concerned, my

recommendation is that we should dis-affiliate at once. We have another motion down for this year's AGM on 16th and 17th April on similar lines. The same opposition group has also tabled a motion which reads thus:-

"This AGM resolves that the NCCL's campaign in support of women's rights, including sexual harassment at work, should be extended and further developed to include a far-reaching campaign against the production, distribution and exhibition of pornographic material, including advertising, films, video and magazines; these constitute a major factor in the continuation of sexist attitudes in our society and contribute greatly towards the continuing violence against women."

If that motion is carried and ours defeated, ^{by the NCCL} I would certainly not wish to be associated with such an organisation. Our £21 would be put to much better use in our own hands. Perhaps members will have some views on this when we throw open the meeting to general discussion later on.

The General Election was held on May 3rd 1979 and I wrote to the leaders of all three major political parties (James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher and David Steel) on 24th April. I put to them one fundamental question as follows:-

Will you, if elected, bring in legislation to rid this country, once and for all, of its repressive, out-moded and unnecessary consorship laws, so that consenting adults may have the freedom to choose for themselves what they see read and hear, thus bringing us into line with virtually all other countries of the so-called free Western World, who have already had the wisdom to enact such legislation themselves?"

Time does does permitt me to read you their separate replies but, since Mrs. Thatcher won, you might be interested in hearing what she said:-

"The Conservative Party are, of course, in favour of the absolute maximum amount of individual freedom provided that society as a whole is not offended by it."

I will leave you to make up your own minds as to whether or not she has lived up to that pledge.

Throughout 1979 the situation remained much the same and the police harassment of cinema clubs and sex shops continued to increase, in spite of our innumerable protests and complaints to the Home Office, the police, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Attorney General, even the Magistrates' Association. Verdicts on cases brought before the courts under the O.P. Acts were still as unpredictable as ever.- Sometimes the defendant was cleared, other times he was found guilty. It was in fact a lottery.

In July 1979 M.P. Dr. Brian MaWhinney ~~introduced~~ introduced an Indecent Displays Bill which didn't succeed. We had a meeting with him on 13th November to protest against his Bill and against any piecemeal legislation in this area before the Williams Committee had reported its findings. Happily the Home Secretary agreed with our view on this.

By far the most important event in 1979 for us - or since the NCROPA began - was the presentation to Parliament ~~of~~, on 28th November, of the Williams Report. You will all know what that Report contained, of course. We didn't agree with everything in it by any means, but the most significant finding was that sexually explicit material was basically harmless and should therefore be legally available for consenting adults, albeit strictly controlled. It also recommended one completely new statute to encompass the whole area of "obscenity" and censorship.

Needless to say the Whitehouse Brigade were white with fury and from that day onwards have done ⁿ everything in the book, used every conceivable device and dirty _e

trick to try to discredit the members of that Committee and their report. In a debate on the report in the House of Lords on 16th January 1980, it was already becoming clear that nothing was going to be done about it and Lord Belstead, the Home Office Under Secretary at the time, was certainly pessimistic rather optimistic. The House of Commons had to wait until June 26th 1981 before the report was debated there - and what a disgraceful farce that occasion turned out to be with only 16 members present out of 635 members of the House of Commons!

On 14th April 1980 we presented the Home Secretary, Mr. Whitelaw, with NCROPA's appraisal of the Williams Report, in response to the Home Office's invitation to interested parties. Both that and copies of our evidence to the Williams Committee are available at £2 and £3 respectively. When we presented our appraisal we also asked for a meeting with the Home Secretary to discuss the matter further. He declined and this was the first of a long series of refusals to meet us, although he was seeing Whitehouse, and people like Dr. John Court, all from the opposition, all the time. I was not to be denied, however, and my persistence paid off on January 21st 1981 when we had an official personal meeting with Mr. Whitelaw and his Minister of State Patrick Mayhew at the Home Office. The NCROPA delegation consisted of Edward Goodman, Pamela Manson, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Eric Miller, Dr. Pickard, Dr. Richards, William Wright and myself. We didn't achieve much at that meeting, unfortunately, but the fact that it took place at all was very significant for our campaign in that it indicated that we were being taken seriously and had been accepted as the ~~majorxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ country's major anti-censorship organisation. Mr. Whitelaw held out no hope, he said, of any Government legislation based on or in the wake of 'Williams' in that session. And as we now know, he might just as well have said, or in the life of this Parliament!

Fifteen months after that meeting, on 23rd April last year, I wrote a long letter to Mr. Whitelaw detailing just what had actually happened in the interim and expressing our dismay at the appalling train of events. We had never been

particularly hopeful of any spectacular changes to our archaic censorship legislation whilst the present Government is in power, notwithstanding that it is formed by a political party whose whole philosophy is, as the Prime Minister stated on a BBC "Panorama" programme on 11th January 1977, "based on freedom of the individual", but we did at least expect that the 'status quo' would remain and that there would certainly be no further increased censorship restrictions to add to the very repressive measures already in operation, i.e. the O.P. Acts, ^{and} especially in the light of what had been said in the Williams Report. How very wrong we were.

First of all Tim Sainsbury introduced his "Indecent Displays (Control) Bill" ~~xxxxxx~~ which became law on 27th October ~~xxxxxx~~ 1981. Ostensibly this was a private member's Bill but, in reality, it was not so at all. The Government's attitude to it was originally "neutral", developed into one of "affectionate neutrality" as Patrick Mayhew, described it at the time, and finally it gave its undisguised, outright support. Our two main objections to the Bill were (1) it contained no legal definition of (indecent' and (2) it contained no safeguard to curb private prosecutions. ~~xxxxxx~~ We need look no further than Whitehouse's vexatious private prosecution of Michael Bogdanov, director of "The Romans in Britain", to see just how dangerous such an omission would be.

Then, on 22nd December 1981, Timothy Raison, announced in the House of Commons and quite out of the blue, that the Government would be introducing amendments to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, whose passage ^{through the House} was already under way, to incorporate measures for the licensing of sex establishments. These measures had, in effect, been taken over from the Greater London Council's (General Powers) Bill, which we had been fighting since we first knew of their intentions. Edward Goodman, Nigel Ley and I ^{on behalf of the NCROPA} were given the opportunity of discussing the Government's proposals with Home Office officials on 5th January 1982 but the only concession we eventually managed to wring out of them was that offenders under the provisions would only be fined and not sent to prison. As we all know these measures, even

more stringent than originally, thanks to some of the most emotive, sanctimonious, intolerant clap-trap ever heard in Parliament, I shouldn't wonder, these measures are now law. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of all is that Local Authorities can decide to ban sex shops in their area completely, if they so wish, and, horror of horrors, there is absolutely no right of appeal whatsoever if a licence is refused. 1984, Mr. Chairman, is already with us!

Thirdly, on 9th December 1981, Peter Lloyd, M.P. announced that he was introducing the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, which was a Bill to render all private commercial cinema clubs illegal. Again, this Bill, purported to be a private member's Bill. In reality it was nothing of the sort. It was a Home Office Bill. We knew that because on October 2nd 1981 we had been invited to take part in discussions with officials at the Home Office on the very proposals contained in Mr. Lloyd's Bill. Apart from fire and safety regulations, we had found them totally unacceptable and had said so. The Home Office were using Mr. Lloyd to front one of their own nasty little pieces of legislation for them - and again, like the other two I've just mentioned, yet another piece of censorship legislation and, like them, now law.

I told Mr. Whitelaw that none of these three legislative measures were, in our opinion, necessary. They were not, as claimed, control measures, but prohibitory measures. I also expressed our extreme concern at the alarming progress of events in the courts, the appalling case of John Lindsay whereby he had been acquitted of offences under the O.P. Acts/^{four times} in cases involving exactly the same films, and had then been sent to prison at Preston Crown Court for the same "offence".- how Lord Justice Lawton had ruled in the Appeal Court that even first "offenders" should receive prison sentences, in spite of his (Mr. Whitelaw's) earnest plea to the judiciary for non-custodial sentences for first offenders involved in non-violent, victimless crimes - the preposterous maiden speech made in the House of Lords by the Lord Chief Justice Lord Lane when he made the lunatic assertion that the rise in crime among

young people in this country was the result of very large quantities of 'pornography' imported into this country disguised as Dutch tomatoes or Danish bacon!

I concluded my "state of the nation"^{letter} to Mr. Whitelaw on that occasion as follows:-

"Let us not delude ourselves. This increasingly depressing country's censorship laws are ruthlessly repressive by Western World standards. People on the continent and in America are shocked and stunned when they learn that people in this country are being imprisoned for selling sex magazines. When in the name of reason, are those intolerant, bigoted, sanctimonious, often hypocritical M.P.s in both Houses, going to face reality, rid themselves of their absurd sexual inhibitions, stop pandering to the noisy, "Puritan Brigade" minority and stop interfering in matters of private morals? When in the name of sanity, are those M.P.s (and there are many) who support the aims of this campaign, going to have the courage of their private convictions and stand up ~~publicly~~ to be counted, publicly to denounce the undiluted crap spouted by the opposition, and present a truly representative face/^{of} public opinion on this ludicrously overblown issue?"

Mr. Chairman, I am coming to the end. I have had to leave out an enormous amount. It isn't easy to try to cram seven years activities into a few minutes. I haven't mentioned "The Romans in Britain", and the demonstration outside Horseferry Road Court, my correspondence with the D.P.P. when I first wanted him to prosecute Mary Whitehouse for wasting police time over this affair and then, when he refused, when I asked for his consent to prosecute her myself. I haven't mentioned Whitehouse's C.B.E. (Crown Bigot Extraordinary?) and the protest letters I sent to the Queen and Margaret Thatcher. or my meeting in New York with the Director of the United States First Amendment Lawyers' Association, and Ted Goodman's ground work in bringing this about. Then there was my battle with the Director General of the BBC over bias in the reporting of the matters we are concerned with and why

the NCROPA was never afforded opportunities to put across its views on the BBC (except once - an interview I did with Jimmy Young on his radio show), our battles on various occasions with the Greater London Council, both with the Horace Cutler and Ken Livingstone regimes. I haven't had time to ~~write~~ report all the ~~many~~ ^{hundreds of} ~~press statements~~ correspondences concerning many topics, that we've engaged in, nor the many press statements and news media releases we've issued, including the most recent ones about the protest letter Edward Goodman and I delivered to No, 10 Downing Street on 7th February about the mass sex establishment raids during the week ending 5th February and the one about my complaint to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner on 16th February, ~~which I mentioned~~ ^{which I mentioned} referred to briefly earlier on. Events and activities during 1981 and 1982 are listed, albeit very sketchily, in the NCROPA IN ACTION booklet so I have not concerned myself with reporting those, which you will have already seen.

Supporters of our campaign often ask me how best they can help. My answer is always the same. Money. You will see from the balance sheet that we are and, I fear, always have been, short of money. We could do so much more if we had more money. Outsiders often assume that money must be no object to us, because they ~~think~~ ^{think}, quite erroneously, that we are funded by the sex establishment proprietors.

It is true to say that a few of the entrepreneurs in the business have done more than their fair share in sending us donations. I don't like singling people out but I must express our thanks to people like Ron Coleman, John Lindsay and Godfrey Gold, David Sullivan, and, earlier on, ~~the~~ John Perrin and the Holloway Brothers. I regret to say, however, that many others have promised us donations on a regular basis, and Eric Miller was energetically instrumental in organising this, but has not, unfortunately, honoured those promises. I would remind the meeting that, when the two gentlemen ~~who~~ set up FOREST (Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco) in 1979, they were given an immediate donation of £12,000 from the tobacco companies.

Obviously it would be wrong for me to preach about money to a meeting of this

kind, ~~xxxxx~~ to keen supporters who have certainly done their bit. But I do urge you to do the next logical thing which is to help us increase our membership. There are membership ~~fax~~ application forms here so please take some with you and spread the word. The other way you can best help is by taking up any relevant issue over censorship your self., ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ particularly with M.P.s. The response I get more than any other from M.P.s is that my voice is the only one they have heard raised from our side. They play the numbers game. However irrelevant to the argument that may be, if they've had 100 letters from the Whitehouse mob and only one from our side, they interpret those numbers ~~xxxxxxxx~~ as an accurate guide to their constituents as a whole - or, at least, many of them do. It is absolutely essential to show them and keep on showing them that not all people believe what Whitehouse believes and to convince them that they would not be doing an unpopular thing if they stood up for our cause in the one place that whether we like it or not, really matters, Parliament. As far as we are concerned the situation ~~will~~ never be satisfactorily changed until we get the law changed and the only place ~~where~~ that can be achieved is in Parliament.

The situation worsens daily and nobody but an idiot would believe that we are winning. But we must fight on. We are almost the only pressure group left which is making a stand against the forces of repression in this country, the puritans, the bigots, the kill-joys. Our critics may scoff and consider that we don't appear to be making much head-way, but I think one of our supporters sums it up best (he is not a particularly literate supporter but certainly makes up what he lacks in literacy ^{by his} ~~xxx~~ enthusiasm.) He writes:-

~~The theme of this meeting is, Where do we go from here? and~~ In a minute the discussion will be thrown open. I hope you will have many questions and suggestions. but I hope ~~they will all have~~ the answers ~~to~~ you will have to the ^{question which is the} theme of tonight's meeting "Where do we go from here?" will all ^{contain one} ~~have~~ word in common and that is - "Forward"!