

DIRECTOR

David Kennington, D.Litt.

NO/DAW/DP

26th May 1983.

Dr. Margaret Joachim,  
c/o Mr. Bruce Standing,  
112, Oakleigh Road North,  
London, N.20.

Dear Dr. Joachim,

GENERAL ELECTION 1983 - FINCHLEY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

When the S.D.P. was first inaugurated, I, like many other supporters of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, was cautiously optimistic that, at last, a party of genuine tolerance, moderation, rationality and understanding - not to say compassion - was emerging. My optimism was, I fear, sadly misplaced and it would appear that the SDP/LIB Alliance has bungled its golden opportunity of "breaking the mould of British politics". Some of the alarming things said in Parliament by SDP members - and Liberals, e.g. Alan Beith - as well as lack of firm direction and individual dissension outside the Palace of Westminster, have not exactly commended the Alliance to our supporters, who had initially been given to understand that the SDP was committed to the liberalisation of much of our hide-bound, archaic, repressive legislation and, in particular, the Obscene Publications Acts, which prevent consenting adults from choosing for themselves what they see, read and hear. To this end it was in favour of implementing the findings of the Williams Report, *we were led to believe.*

Any tenuous support ~~they supporters~~ may have loyally retained for the Alliance however, has been well and truly demolished by the SDP/Liberal Alliance Election Manifesto "Programme for Government".

On page twenty-five of that document, you make great play of promoting individual rights and proclaim your commitment to introduce "a series of measures to buttress our now shaky structure of liberties and rights and guarantee them by law". All well so far. On page twenty-six, under "The Rule of Law" section, you go on to state that you are "dedicated to extending individual rights". Even better. You then, however, disastrously conclude the section with an alarming totally inaccurate and irrational reference to State censorship and you declare that the new technologies of cable TV, video cassettes and satellite TV "carry dangers to our society if they become vehicles for pornography and violence. This must not be allowed to happen", you pontificate.

Notwithstanding that it is a nonsense automatically to associate pornography with violence, it really is very depressing indeed to discover that the Alliance is yet just another party of repression and committed to the perpetuation of unnecessary, out-moded and improper censorship - just as Margaret Thatcher and the Tory Party are, in spite of their hypocritical protestations to the contrary.

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I have written to Margaret Thatcher and the candidates in the Finchley Constituency, of which I am one, to challenge them to a public debate on this issue and I invite you to participate in such a debate also. I hope you will have the courage to accept.

Yours sincerely,

David Webb,  
Director,  
National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts,  
& Anti-Censorship/Reform of Obscene Publications Acts Candidate  
for the Finchley, London Parliamentary Constituency.

Copies to: Mr. Roy Jenkins, M.P.  
Mr. David Steel, M.P.  
President of the S.D.P.  
Chairman of the Liberal Party.