

**DIRECTOR**

David Kennington, D.Litt.

NO/DAW/DP

26th May 1983.

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,  
Prime Minister,  
10, Downing Street,  
London, S.W.1.

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

GENERAL ELECTION 1983 - FINCHLEY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

As a fellow candidate for the Finchley Parliamentary Constituency in the forthcoming General Election, campaigning on a platform of ANTI-CENSORSHIP/ REFORM OF OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS, I would very much welcome the opportunity of a public debate with you and the other candidates on the very important issue of censorship.

As Prime Minister, you have presided over an Administration for the past four years which has been formed by members of a political party (the Tory Party) which claims to champion the cause of freedom and the freedom of the individual above all else. In practice, however, you and your Government have displayed the most blatant hypocrisy by actually eroding such freedoms. You have steadfastly refused to act on the eminently sensible and rational findings of the Williams Committee, amongst distinguished body by any standards, and which recommended drastic liberalisation of our appalling censorship legislation so that consenting adults would have the individual freedom to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear. Even worse for a party declaredly so pre-occupied with individual liberty, you have actually 'cocked your snooks' at that Committee and have, instead, enacted still more intolerably draconian censorship measures.

In your foreward to the Conservative Manifesto 1983, you have the temerity to say that the most vital decision that faces the people at this election is "How to defend Britain's traditional liberties", and you go on to maintain that for the past thirty-eight years we have enjoyed peace "with freedom and justice" and that "our history is the story of a free people" ... all linked by a "common belief in freedom". Pull the other one, Mrs. T. It's gott bells on!

How can you possibly claim that we are a "free" country, when people here are condemned to savage prison sentences and subjected to iniquitous massive penalties for the supremely innocuous pursuit of publishing sexually explicit material which our European partners, just twenty-one miles across a narrow stretch of water, and indeed Governments of virtually all other countries of the so-called 'free' Western World, including the U.S.A., freely permit with such natural and patent common-sense?

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The glaring implication of this is that you consider the Williams Committee - and all those other major investigations which have been carried out into this subject - and all those genuinely 'free', ~~Weestern-World~~ countries - are wrong, and that you and all those other Tory Party hypocrites who support censorship, are right. That, to my mind, is arrogance of the highest order.

Notwithstanding the hollow sham of your Conservative Party philosophy of the paramount importance of the freedom of the individual, your manifesto continues further to cite five great tasks for the future, one of which is to allow "the individual flourish" and another "to defend Britain's freedom". It goes on to proclaim that you will "continue to return more choice to individuals and their families". That is the way", you say, "to increase personal freedom". On page thirty-four, however, you then spell out just how you will do nothing of the sort and that you will actually curtail individual freedom of choice still more, by the introduction of "specific legislation to deal with the most serious of these problems (viz. "obscenity and offences against public decency"), such as the dangerous spread of violent and obscene video cassettes".

You are right, I grant you, in stating that 'pornography' is not a matter "for the police alone". It is not a matter for the police at all, unless children or actual physical harm are involved.

In the final paragraphs of your manifesto, you say "We shall never lose sight of the British traditions of fairness and tolerance". Whatever happened, one asks, during the past four years when the white stick has been so much in evidence? Judging from your current manifesto, and if the British electorate are gullible enough to swallow Conservative lies yet again, it looks as though it is going to be more in evidence than ever. It is a deeply depressing thought and I and this campaign trust that this time the voters will respond a little more intelligently. This is why I am standing against you at this election, as a protest candidate, and why, since you are not, apparently going to hold one single public meeting in your constituency, I throw down this challenge for a public debate on this question of real 'obscenity' - censorship! I do hope you will have the courage and resoluteness to accept it.

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

Copy to: Mr. Cecil Parkinson, M.P., Chairman, Conservative Party.