

~~CENSORED~~

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

7th February 1983

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

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

"Pornography" Raids, the Williams Report & the Freedom of the Individual

During your recent visit to the Falklands Islands, you spoke much of the necessity for standing up and fighting to preserve freedom in that territory. Freedom and the freedom of the individual is something to which you and your Government profess constant devotion and it was, of course, something on which you laid great emphasis in the Conservative Party 1979 Manifesto, when campaigning for election to office.

It is a pity, therefore, that these noble sentiments are so hurriedly forgotten when it comes to their practical application to the citizens of the United Kingdom. How can a country, like ours, which now has more censorship laws than virtually any other in the Western World, be said to be "free"? How can a country which wastes hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money every year seizing and destroying millions of harmless books, magazines and films, and for which there is such a huge public demand, be said to be "free"? How can a country which imposes gigantic fines and savage prison sentences on those who are doing nothing more than fulfilling this demand, be said to be "free"?

Last week's massive raids on sex shops and establishments by the Metropolitan Police are a clear and alarming manifestation of the sham and hypocrisy of your fine words about "freedom" and those of many members of your Government and party. The NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS protests in the strongest possible terms about these recent, repressive police operations and, indeed, about all such operations carried out under the iniquitous Obscene Publications Acts.

It is now more than three years since the Report of the Home Office Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship, the Williams Committee, was presented to Parliament, in November 1979, by your Secretary of State for the Home Department. The N.C.R.O.P.A. does not pretend to agree with this Report in its entirety, but most of its conclusions are in line with our thinking and its most fundamental finding was that sexually explicit material

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is basically harmless and should be legally available to consenting adults. This came as no surprise to us, of course, since all the major, bona-fide world investigations previously conducted on this subject have also reached that same conclusion.

Notwithstanding the findings of this distinguished Committee, which were unanimous, your administration has not only failed to take any action to implement its recommendations, but has actually increased censorship restrictions even further, either by passing legislation initiated by the Government itself (e.g. the Local Government [Miscellaneous Provisions] Act 1982, with its measures for the licensing of sex establishments), or by giving undisguised backing to private members' Bills which have, in any case, invariably originated in reality from the Government (e.g. the Indecent Displays [Control] Act 1981 and the Cinematograph [Amendment] Act 1982). What price "freedom" now?

The NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS demands that you and your Government have the courage of your convictions by converting the much-flaunted Conservative Party philosophy of "the freedom of the individual" into practical reality and thereby ridding this sexually-repressed country of the tyranny of censorship, thus bringing us into line with the rest of the Western World, as well as honouring our commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 18 and 19) and the European Convention on Human Rights (articles 9 and 10).

In the past, you have consistently refused our requests for an urgent meeting to discuss this burning issue, even though you have received deputations from those with the opposite view to ours. We hope, however, that you will now appreciate the very serious implications of this matter and agree to such a meeting as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



David Webb,  
Organiser,  
National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts