

HON. DIRECTOR

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NO/DAW/DP

23rd March, 1987

The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Home Department,
Home Office,
Queen Anne's Gate,
London, SW1H 9AT.

It has been brought to my attention that an official Home Office invitation has been sent to certain bodies and organisations for their views on Mr. Gerald Howarth's private member's Bill to amend and extend the Obscene Publications Acts. The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) has received no such invitation and we are, to say the least, angered and surprised by this apparently deliberate snub.

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts is not only the sole organisation in the U.K. specifically concerned with the reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, but is also this country's leading anti-censorship body. In a supposedly democratic society like ours, we would have thought that the sounding-out of our views by your Department would have been high up on their list of priorities - or do you only seek the views of those people and bodies who are known to be sympathetic to proposed legislation, or at least only mildly critical of it?

With regard to the legislation itself, Mr. Howarth's is supposed to be a private member's measure, he having drawn eleventh in the House of Commons private Bills ballot. Why, then, is the Home Office, a Government Department, sending out requests for submissions and representations on his Bill?

As you well know, the NCROPA has made many requests in the past for a meeting with yourself to discuss the whole question of censorship and the Obscene Publications Acts. These requests have been consistently refused on the grounds that "no useful purpose would be served by such a meeting". Notwithstanding this persistent 'fobbing-off' we are now further rebuffed by your canvassing of highly selective views on the issue and from which we are excluded.

The NCROPA is grossly offended and insulted by this unfair, un-impartial

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and improper Home Office behaviour and very much hopes that it will be remedied forthwith.

As a matter of urgency, therefore, the NCROPA repeats its previous requests for a meeting with yourself to discuss these matters and the U.K.'s excessive and repressive censorship laws in general. Certain vociferous factions from the pro-censorship lobby constantly claim that they speak for the 'silent majority', but the truth is that the vast majority of the people of the U.K. are firmly against the kind of draconian censorship imposed on them here virtually now alone amongst all other countries of the supposedly 'free' Western World. They look to a general lessening of censorship restraints and not, as the present Government and Mr. Howarth apparently desire, their strengthening even further.

Yours sincerely,

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