

~~GENCENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

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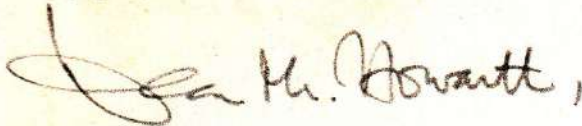
COMMITTEE — David Kennington Litt.D., Gerald Fowler, M.A.Hon., F.A.B.E.,
E.A.C. Goodman, LL.B.(Sol), Clifford Hanley, Pamela Manson, Eric E. Miller,
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The N.C.R.O.P.A. is affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties

NO/DAW/DP

31st October 1988

Gerald Howarth, Esq., M.P.,
House of Commons,
Westminster,
London,
SW1A 0AA.



Thank you for your further letter of 23rd October in reply to mine of 11th October.

You state that you are "concerned with standards". So am I, and so is the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts. The difference between us is that yours are narrow, bigoted, restrictive, repressive and intolerant, whereas ours are broad, unprejudiced, unrestrictive, libertarian and tolerant. Moreover, with complete disregard for individual freedom of choice, you, like Mary Whitehouse, believe that your standards should be enforced on everyone else, and by law if necessary. By any "standards", that is an authoritarian viewpoint and there is, therefore, absolutely no need for me to "try harder" to demonstrate it. On the contrary, it is you who will have to "try harder" to justify your position.

It is simply no answer to talk of the necessity of freedom of expression operating within a framework of law, without, at the same time, reference to just what those laws should be, in a 'free society'. The NCROPA is not in conflict with the laws of libel, of "certain race relations legislation", nor, indeed, with certain legal measures to regulate (but not censor) publications and the media. However, we, like your Conservative parliamentary colleague, Ms. Teresa Gorman, M.P., believe that the state should always interfere "as little as possible". You obviously do not. Your example of the cinema selecting its audience according to the classification of the film on show, is dishonest and absurd. It is the audience which does the selecting, but in this country, even then only after 'Nanny State' has first decided what it should be allowed to see. It is just that kind of authoritarianism which people like you in the Conservative Party endorse and even wish to strengthen, and which makes your purported adherence to Tory ideals and philosophy nothing short of farcical. Your credibility is diminished still further by claimed commitment to the aims of an organisation devoted to the pursuit of individual freedom.

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Neither will it do to wheel out the tired old Hailsham war-cry "liberty not licence", which upon intelligent examination is revealed as nothing more than a meaningless contradiction. Much more relevant is the kind of plea made by former Conservative Party Prime Minister Edward Heath in the House of Commons on 17th January 1984. In a debate on the Government's ratecapping Bill, he recalled that he had first been elected to the House in 1950 on Winston Churchill's slogan "Set the people free". "It was not", he went on to say, "a proposal to set the people free to do what we tell them to do".

If you believe that your views "are wholly in keeping with the ethos of the Conservative party", I doubt very much whether either Mr. Heath or Ms. Gorman would agree. I and the NCROPA certainly do not, and we think it is high time that such disgraceful pretence was exposed for its true worth, and faced up to and dealt with by Conservative Party managers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Webb", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

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