

~~GENCENSORED~~

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

15th April 1988

The Editor,  
"The Times",  
1 Pennington Street,  
London, E.1.

Dear Sir,

The 1987 Labour Party Election Manifesto stated that "Labour's objective is to broaden and deepen the liberty of all individuals in our community" and "to see that everyone has the liberty .... to make real choices", and it went on to state that "These values are the essence of our democratic socialism." One wonders, therefore, just how do Clare Short and 136 of her fellow Labour M.P.s, all of whom were elected to Parliament on this 'ticket', reconcile their commitment to it with their support of Ms. Short's extraordinarily authoritarian and repressive Bill to censor the content of newspapers and thereby subvert the freedom of the press?

The outrage of this absurdly impractical and dictatorial proposal is further compounded by the fact that such formerly implacable opponents of censorship as Michael Foot, Joe Ashton, Gwyneth Dunwoody, Chris Smith, and even Neil Kinnock himself, have come out in support of it.

Since this is Ms. Short's second attempt to introduce such a Bill, I assume that she has taken a leaf out of Mrs. Whitehouse's book and is employing that grotesque lady's well-tried modus operandum of 'Say it often enough and people will eventually believe it'. There is certainly nothing new in the absurdly naive, simp-

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listic and, most important of all, conjectural and unproven arguments she cites in support of her views that the publication in newspapers of "pictures of naked or partially naked women in sexually provocative poses" degrades women and encourages rape.

When Clare Short first introduced this Bill, in March 1986, Joe Ashton, Labour M.P. for Bassetlaw, in his then regular column in "The Star" (13th March 1986) and under the headline "Here's Why a Ban on Bare Boobs Wouldn't Cut the Rape Rate", equated the claimed link between 'Page Three' pictures and incitement to rape with the stupidity of saying "that colour pictures of supermarket sausages will lead to more shoplifting." Why, then, this sudden turnabout of Mr. Ashton and his colleagues? Have they and their leader so soon discarded the manifesto "essence" of their whole philosophy? "Britain Will Win" was its title, you may recall. If Ms. Short's quirky activities are allowed to continue, both Britain and "democratic socialism" surely never can.

Yours sincerely,

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