

CE
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

26th June 1988

Sebastian Cody Esq.,
Series Producer,
"After Dark",
Hillgate House,
13 Hillgate Street,
London W.8.

Dear Mr. Cody,

On 23rd February I wrote to you about the "After Dark" programme, extolling its praises and sending details of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA), a staunchly anti-censorship organisation which I founded twelve years ago and have run, as its honorary director, ever since. In that letter I expressed my keen desire to participate in one of your programmes and hoped that, when a suitably relevant topic for discussion arose in the future, you would wish to invite me to do so.

In your kind reply of 29th February you said that you "were very interested to hear about the NCROPA and one of the production team may well be in touch with you sometime in the future". I was absolutely devastated, therefore, to discover that last night's programme was devoted to our very subject - sexually explicit material, or 'pornography' if you must - and that you had thus chosen not to invite either myself, or at least a representative of the NCROPA. My 'devastation' changed to anger when, during the course of the programme, so many outrageous and absurd points made by some of the participants, especially James Bogle and Dr. Susanne Kappeler, were allowed to go unchallenged, unanswered and un-corrected, many of them outright lies (for example, for Mr. Bogle to claim, as he did, that the (permissive) barriers have been rolled back in this country since the sixties, is a patent untruth when, during that time there has been overt erosion of our civil liberties and freedom of speech and publication in particular. I can immediately call to mind at least six pieces of new legislation, with others currently in the pipeline, since 1978, in addition to the already existing draconian censorship measures to which we are subject).

I accept, of course, that you are free to ask whoever you please to take part in these programmes, but in the interests of "fair play" and "balance", I think it was unforgivable of you to invite a representative of the notorious National Viewers and Listeners' Association (the only representative of an organisation included - all the others were individual representatives) without inviting a representative from its counterpart campaigning for the opposite point of view, and of whose existence you were well aware, viz. the NCROPA.

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Furthermore, with great respect to "Dave", the anonymous Soho sex-shop assistant, I thought his contribution was of little value or significance to the debate, and I am very unhappy about such anonymous 'appearances'. I hope that it will not establish a precedent for the programme and that we shall not be confronted by more black screens and disembodied voices in the future. If you were looking for the views of the consumer - the 'punter' - of sexually explicit material, the NCROPA is inevitably the ideal representative voice. I would happily have sat in Dave's chair, full-frontal and all!, and, as Helena Kennedy said as she introduced him, "readily admitted enjoying the merchandise" even though I am virtually constrained to pursuing such enjoyment abroad. Without being immodest, I know that, having devoted virtually all of my free time of the last twelve years of my life to this issue and our cause, and, hopefully, to ridding this country of its manic obsession with sexual censorship, I would have been able to make a forceful and challenging case to demolish the opponents claims and arguments.

As the other members of my committee will readily confirm, the one programme I really craved to be on, where I felt that at last I would really be allowed a proper chance to put our case, was "After Dark". After your encouraging letter of 29th February, I felt sure you would afford me and the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts that opportunity. I make no secret of the fact that I am bitterly upset that such a potentially golden opportunity has been denied me, and that the 'Mary Whitehouse Mafia' has triumphed yet again.

Yours disillusionedly,



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

Copies to: Mr. Frankie Glass, Associate Producer
Mr. Don Coutts, Director
Mr. Jerome Kuehl, Programme Consultant
Ms. Kathy Ceaton, Programme Associate
Ms. Margaret Coen,
Mr. Bob Duffield, Assistant Producers
Mr. Ian Brown,
Ms. Keri Lewis
Mr. Alfie Fox
Ms. Carrie Longton
Mr. Glen Noble
Mr. Justin Scroggie, Production Team
Ms. Helena Kennedy, Presenter
Mr. Michael Grade, Chief Executive Channel Four Television Ltd.