

~~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

4th July 1988

Sir Peter Imbert,
Chief Commissioner of Police,
New Scotland Yard,
Broadway,
London, S.W.1.

Sir Peter,

On 14th June members of the Metropolitan Police Obscene Publications Branch, headed by Superintendent Iain Donaldson, raided the premises of Quietlynn Ltd. in Farady Road, London, E.15., and seized hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of books, magazines and video-cassettes, all of which were, we believe, by any rational standards, harmless.

There are two matters of serious concern to the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) arising from this latest raid and which we would like to raise with you.

Firstly, the material published by this company is not "obscene" and does not infringe the provisions of the Obscene Publications Acts. This is not merely our view. It is a view endorsed by the Courts on a number of occasions in the past, in cases against this company after similar raids and seizures, and when the Courts have subsequently ruled that the material was not "obscene", was not therefore unlawful, and have ordered its return - albeit many months, sometimes years even, after being seized and after having thus punitively deprived the company of hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of valuable marketable merchandise in the meantime.

The NCROPA believes it is quite disgraceful for costly and valuable police time and resources to be so irresponsibly used by Superintendent Iain Donaldson and his Department in repeating, yet again, such an already tried and failed exercise, especially when the public have been so recently subjected to a barrage of claims from police chiefs that their forces are seriously undermanned. Further more we believe that to continue to harass and persecute this company in such a way is most improper.

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Secondly, we would very much like to know if it is the accepted practice for the Metropolitan Police to notify the press and media in advance of police operations such as that carried out by Superintendent Donaldson on June 14th? Quite clearly on that occasion, prior notice had been given to them, otherwise television cameras, film crews, photographers and journalists could not possibly have arrived on the scene of the raid almost simultaneously. Again, the NCROPA believes that such a practice is wholly unethical and improper, especially when, as has often happened in the past with this company, they are found to have committed no legal offence.

From our observations of Superintendent Iain Donaldson and his activities throughout his tenure of office as Head of the Obscene Publications Branch, he appears to have donned the mantle of 'crusading moral zealot'. That may be acceptable in an ordinary member of the public, but is totally inappropriate for a police officer, whose role is to implement the law as it stands, fairly and impartially, and not as he personally may, perhaps, wish it to be.

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) is, as you may know, a law-reform organisation whose main aim is the enactment of parliamentary legislation to bring about far-reaching changes to the U.K.'s draconian censorship laws which would enable consenting adults the freedom to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear, and thereby bring us into line with virtually all other countries of the so-called 'free' Western World who have long since almost universally rid themselves of the kind of intolerably authoritarian state censorship restraints to which the people of this increasingly depressing country are still ruthlessly subjected.

Our campaigning is not, therefore, usually directed at the police or other law enforcement agencies, but rather at our legislators who are responsible for creating the framework of our laws, within which you are permitted to operate. However, on this occasion we believe, in the light of the circumstances I have herein detailed, that we have just cause for complaint to yourself. We believe it is time for the present Head of the Obscene Publications Branch to be replaced and for an officer imbued with qualities of supreme objectivity to be appointed to the post, and we respectfully urge you to consider this course of action.

Yours sincerely,



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