

~~GENCENSURED~~

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

16th February 1990

The Editor,
"The Guardian",
119, Farringdon Road,
London,
EC1R 3ER.

Dear Sir,

When the defenders of censorship have to resort to the kind of irrational and fatuous arguments put forward by the Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship, and the Campaign Against Pornography ("The Guardian" 15/2/90) in order to justify their positions, the impoverishment of their cause is instantly apparent.

It is, of course, essential that in any discussion on "pornography" the terms of reference are clearly defined, since such a concept exists nowhere in British law. The two, admittedly ill-defined, concepts which do exist, however, are 'indecent' and 'obscenity', both unlawful in certain, also often ill-defined, circumstances. Both the CPC and the CAP now, apparently, wish to add another dimension to these already highly subjective and absurd legal tests, one of 'purpose'. In effect, the kind of legislation on sexually explicit (or even implicit!) material they are demanding would have to include the requirement for any Court to determine the thoughts and intentions of the creator of the offending material (book, magazine, film, video), and, if those thoughts and intentions in any way conflicted with those deemed acceptable by the CPC and the CAP (i.e. in relation to or depiction of women), the material would be in breach of the law. A more chillingly authoritarian and positively Orwellian attempt at 'thought control' is difficult to contemplate, notwithstanding the impossibility of any Court being capable of so determining.

Having founded the NCROPA 14 years ago and directed it ever since, I think I can modestly claim to know something about sexually explicit material, why so many people like and want it, how it is heavily proscribed here, and why virtually all other countries of the so-called free Western World have legalised its free availability and long since discarded the repressive and out-moded censorship laws to which we alone in the UK are still disgracefully and unjustly subject. Even if certain material is offensive to a majority of others, that majority is still not justified in proscribing it for the minority who are not so offended and who wish to have it. That in 1990 demands for the strengthening of our already draconian censorship legislation are being made, rather than, sanely and justly, its liberalisation, is frightening.

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Sexually explicit material is mainly used by two groups, (1) by consenting adult partners (both in and out of marriage and including homosexuals) as a stimulus and aid to enhancing their own sexual activities, and (2) by individuals as a stimulus and aid to achieving orgasm in solo masturbation when and where a consenting sexual partner is not available and, in cases of disablement, misfortune or sheer bad luck, not even possible. The enormous harmless pleasure of sexual gratification which such material assists, vicarious though it may be and, of course, infinitely less preferable to the 'real thing', is of significant importance psychologically for all and, furthermore, often acts as an invaluable safety-valve for that tiny minority of anti-social inadequates who might otherwise resort to the potentially violent criminalpursuit of unwilling, unconsenting sexual partners.

The convoluted, obsessive and dishonest claims made by the Catherine Itzins and Sam Chuggs of this world that sexually explicit material involving women necessarily degrades them are ridiculous. It can just as validly be claimed that such material glamorises or ennobles them. Besides, since men are also often involved with women in such material, why are they not deemed similarly 'degraded' - or in their eyes, is sex only degrading to women? If the Misses Itzin and Chugg get their way, and W.H. Smith do remove all 'sex' magazines from their shelves, where, one wonders, will it all end? Will Smith's next remove all boxing magazines from their shelves to satisfy the demands of the anti-boxing lobby? Will Agatha Christie 'who-dun-its' disappear because some might feel they incite copycat murders? Will cookery books be removed at the behest of anorexics or the grossly obese because they encourage people to eat?

In a supposedly 'free society' the right to choose to have "pornography" is no different - and no more, nor no less relevant - than the right to choose to have "Delia Smith's Cookery Course" or "The Satanic Verses". Are we to cave-in to the fascistic diktats of those whose censorious philosophies are so flawed and insecure that they know they cannot survive the exposure of the honest and open forums that 'freedom of expression' alone can provide? We would do well to remember that Hitler started his rise to power with the imposition of rigid state censorship. He began by burning books and ended by burning people.

Yours sincerely,

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

Indicates text edited out ('censored'?!) by 'The Guardian' before publication

*My letter - 757 words
Their 'edited' version - 271 words.
"The Guardian" article (15/2/90) - 1571 words (CAP + CPC section 1037 words
FAC section 434 words.)
CPC allowed further 104 word letters on 22/2/90
P.T.O*