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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

ND/DAW/DP

21st February 1990

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

Dear Sir,

I never thought it possible that I would agree with anything that Dr. Kalim Siddiqui utters, but his citing of the Director of Public Prosecutions' decision not to prosecute him for incitement to murder Salman Rushdie on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence, as an example of the "dishonesty and duplicity" of the British establishment (The Guardian 19/2), is devastatingly accurate. As the original complainant and 'layer-of-information' to the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester about Dr. Siddiqui's behaviour at Manchester Town Hall on October 21st last, an event which was witnessed by millions of viewers on BBC Television News, I am especially outraged by the DPP's refusal to take action against him or, indeed, against anyone else who has clearly behaved in like fashion.

On 22nd February last year I sent the names of nine such persons to the DPP, Mr. Allan Green, QC, asking if they were to be prosecuted. After much persistence, I eventually elicited the information from his office that they had had no reports of any cases involving seven of these (presumably mine didn't count) and, with regard to the two others, that the "public interest does not require a prosecution". Perhaps Mr. Green would explain why it is not in the "public interest" to prosecute those who publicly declare their intention to murder or those who encourage them? He might also like to explain why he considered there was "insufficient evidence" to bring a prosecution against Dr. Siddiqui when the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 (Section 4) states, quite categorically, that "whosoever shall elicit, encourage, persuade, or endeavour to persuade, or shall propose to any Person, to

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murder any other Person" shall be guilty of an offence. Remember, too, that, apart from the millions of TV viewers who will have seen Dr. Siddiqui's Manchester speech, there was a 'live' audience present of over 300 people, including the Bishop of Manchester, who was an invited guest and with whom I have subsequently corresponded. He was as horrified by what took place as I was and, indeed, thanked me "for your (my) support" - in reporting the alleged crime to the police, that is.

Dr. Siddiqui's latest pronouncement that "We want to stay within the law, but we will also see to it that the law does not protect the enemies of Islam" is nothing more than a deceitful, word-play device to re-affirm his earlier total disregard of British legislative rule. The 'Death to Rushdie' campaign will not be quelled by the feeble-minded inaction of our legal authorities and the wholly improper, not to say illegal, highly selective suspension of law enforcement on a privileged, minority religious group. It is a scandal that, more than a year after Khomeini's original 'fatwa', not a single offender guilty of making death threats against Mr. Rushdie has been brought before any Court, and a damning indictment of the DPP and his office. If Mr. Green has really taken all the decisions in this matter himself, as he claims, he should be dismissed immediately. If, however, there has been political interference from above, the Attorney General should own up and himself resign.

Fanatics, whether political or religious, do not respond to reason. Neville Chamberlain discovered that somewhat late in the day in 1939 with Adolf Hitler. A policy of appeasement failed then and a policy of appeasement with the religious fanaticism of the Ayatollahs will also fail now. Safe in the knowledge that, according to the DPP, 'incitement to murder' is, apparently, no longer a crime here and that we shall be free from prosecution, perhaps it is high time some of us pacific atheists began issuing a few 'fatwas'. I offer no prizes for guessing who's at the top of my list, but best you keep a beady-eyed look-out, Dr. Siddiqui!

Yours sincerely,



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