

~~GENCENSURED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM  
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

HON. DIRECTOR — David Webb, 15 Sloane Court West, Chelsea, London SW3 4TD — Tel: 01-730 9537

COMMITTEE — David Kennington, Litt.D., Gerald Fowler, M.A.Hon., F.A.B.E.,  
E.A.C. Goodman, LL.B.(Sol), Clifford Hanley, Eric E. Miller,  
Dr. Christine Pickard, M.B., Ch.B., Alexander Barrie AADipl, MAIE, Isabel Koprowski BA

The N.C.R.O.P.A. is affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties

NO/DAW/DP

15th January 1990

BY RECORDED DELIVERY

Recorded  
Delivery

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

COPY

*Jean Sir Peter,*

I wish to lay an information before you regarding the commission of a criminal offence and/or offences by the British Broadcasting Corporation and their agents, the producers, journalists and staff employed in the making of an investigative report on 'child pornography' for the BBC2 television programme "Newsnight", transmitted on Thursday, 4th January 1990 at 10.30 p.m.

During the course of the programme, its presenter/reporter, Ms. Janet Trewin, gave precise details, in sound and vision, of how she and her BBC colleagues working on the programme, responded to an advertisement in the magazine "Exchange and Mart", solicited the procurement of "illegal child pornography" and themselves offered for publication for gain such similar material "involving subjects between the ages of eight and thirteen, and ..... a baby" to the original advertiser(s), for which they subsequently received a cheque for £150.00. A transcript of this part of the programme is appended herewith (and from which the above quotations are taken).

An offence contrary to the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act 1959; AND/OR contrary to the Protection of Children Act 1978, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1988, has, I believe, been committed; AND/OR other offences contrary to the provisions of the Post Office Act 1953, AND/OR the Theft Act 1968 (whereby it is an offence to obtain pecuniary advantage by deception), AND/OR possibly the Common Law offence of conspiracy to corrupt public morals.

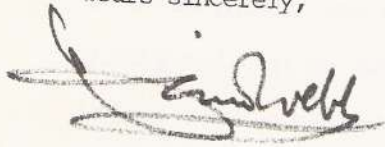
The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA), whilst vigorously opposing censorship for consenting adults, in no way condones the use and abuse of children in sexually explicit material. It is, therefore, basically in sympathy with the general theme of this BBC programme and does not doubt the "Newsnight" producers' honourable intentions. The NCROPA is, however, appalled that such a reputable national institution as the BBC should itself apparently resort to

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continuation/.....

breaking the law in the pursuit of exposing other law-breakers, and it can see neither ethical nor legal merit in such action. Your concern, however, is with the legalities involved. In my view the BBC has clearly breached the criminal law here and I therefore request you to carry out an official investigation.

Yours sincerely,



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

Copies to: Mr. Allan D. Green, Q.C., Director of Public Prosecutions  
Mr. Ian Hargreaves, Head of News and Current Affairs, BBC Television  
Mr. John Morrison, Editor "Newsnight", BBC2 Television

Appendix attached

APPENDIX

Transcript of Part of "Newsnight" Programme, BBCTV2, 4th Jan. 1990, 10.30 p.m.

JANET TREWIN: "We decided to find out just how easy it is to get illegal child pornography. We went into a high street newsagent and bought a collection of magazines from the top and bottom shelves completely at random. We searched the ads and replied under a pseudonym implying we required child pornography and that we had some of our own for sale or exchange. Within days we received letters connecting us to others of a similar persuasion. We were also sent sample photographs from other people's private collections. We received a particularly interesting reply when we responded to an advertisement placed in this magazine "Exchange and Mart". The particular video company concerned appears to go to elaborate length to avoid being associated with the pornography that it sells. In one envelope we received only an order form along with a warning that some of the material might be uncensored. In another envelope arriving on the same day, we received only a list of video titles. This time there was no address, but the post-marks are identical. And this is the list that they sent us. It is a computer print-out of dozens of uncensored, illegal pornographic videos, many of them apparently involving children. But it didn't end there. We wrote again to the same video company detailing the kind of child pornography we said we had for sale. We told them it involved subjects between the ages of eight and thirteen, and even featured a baby. By return of post we received another letter from them. This time it enclosed a cheque for £150.00 to buy the home-grown material we claimed we could provide. We've obscured the name of the company to prevent others using the service and we've passed our information on to the police."

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Prepared by the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts

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15th January 1990