

~~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

5th December 1990

The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Home Department,
Home Office,
50 Queen Anne's Gate,
London,
SW1H 9AT.

Ken Secretary of State,

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) congratulates you on your appointment as Secretary of State for the Home Department.

As the leading, longest-established anti-censorship campaigning law reform organisation in this country, the NCROPA is deeply concerned about the ever-increasing restraints imposed on freedom of expression in the U.K., which is now one of the most censored countries in the so-called 'free' Western World. Indeed, with the recent collapse of many of the old repressive, totalitarian régimes of the Eastern Bloc countries, even they are now beginning to be free of the tyranny of state censorship. Nowhere is the heavy hand of U.K. state censorship felt more severely than in the implementation of our draconian sexual censorship laws, at the centre of which are, of course, the Obscene Publications Acts.

Consenting adults should have an inalienable right to see, read and hear whatever they choose for themselves. Such a right is an integral component of the "freedom of the individual" and "freedom of choice" rationale, a rationale which the Conservative Party, of which you were Chairman until your new appointment, claims to be the cornerstone of its whole philosophy. It is a claim, however, that rings hollow with the NCROPA and its many supporters, since the Government's record on this issue throughout the past 11½ years has been appalling. Instead of removing repressive state 'nannyism', the Conservative Government has, in fact, greatly increased it.

Furthermore, with the advent of the Single European Market in 1992, the lifting of trade barriers and the harmonisation of the laws of E.C. member states, the U.K. should be bending over backwards to emulate the example of virtually all other E.C. countries who have long since rid themselves of the curse of authoritarian state sexual censorship, and set their people free to enjoy the harmless pleasures and

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and delights of sexually explicit publications, if they so choose. 'Sex' is an instinctive, perfectly natural, human driving force, and an enthusiastic interest in matters sexual, including publications about it, is thus also perfectly natural.

It is high time that the U.K. grew up, like its European and other 'Western' partners, accepted that all these other nations cannot be wrong whilst it alone is right, and brought an end to the out-moded, puritanical sexual repression imposed on its subjugated citizens by the obscenity of unnecessary and unjust state censorship.

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts urges you to make this matter a number one priority of your new Home Office Administration. The implementation of the findings and recommendations of the 1979 Home Office Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship (the Williams Committee), which have quite disgracefully been totally ignored for the past eleven years, might well be an appropriate starting point and we commend that course of action to you.

When you have had sufficient time properly to settle into your new high and important Office, we very much hope you will receive a delegation from the NCROPA to discuss this much-neglected but highly important matter with us personally.

We shall look forward eagerly to receiving your response and we do, of course, wish you a happy and successful tenure of office.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Webb', with a horizontal line underneath.

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