

NO/DAW/DP

11th November 1991

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

Dear Sir,

I always thought Nicholas de Jongh was a staunchly anti-censorship protagonist, but his complacent assertion that the taboos against which the 1971 "OZ" trial defendants railed "have lost their salience", and that "we have come on" since then, is wildly off-beam. ('In those crazy old days of OZ' - "The Guardian" 9/11/91).

Only last week Island Records, the distributing company of 25,000 seized copies of the 'Niggaz with Attitude' record "Efil4zaggin", were prosecuted (fortunately, in this case, unsuccessfully) under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, the same Act under which the "OZ" defendants were charged and originally convicted.

Publishers of 'soft-core' sex magazines are constantly harassed by the police, have many thousands of copies of their harmless merchandise impounded and are then often prosecuted for alleged breaches of this outrageously draconian and out-moded piece of State censorship legislation.

In March a central London bookshop proprietor, Richard Waller, was prosecuted for selling an allegedly 'obscene' book "Modern Primitives" (about body-piercing and tattooing). He was also quite rightly acquitted, but in August publisher Michael Butterworth of Savoy Books was convicted by Manchester magistrates of publishing an 'obscene' novel, "Lord Horror" by David Britton, a fictionalised life of wartime traitor 'Lord Haw Haw'.

Linzi Drew, editor of "Penthouse" and Simon Honey are currently awaiting their Crown Court trial of video-films 'obscenity' charges.

In April Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Department reported two television programmes, transmitted by Channel Four TV, "Sex and the Censors" and "W.R. - Mysteries of the Organism", to the Director of Public Prosecutions for alleged transgressions of the O.P Acts.

In December 1990 15 men were sentenced at the Old Bailey on various 'obscenity' charges for committing sexual acts with each other and to which all of them had freely consented. Eight of them were given prison sentences of between 4½ years and 12 months.

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An attempt was even made by the Metropolitan Police in north London to prosecute the comic magazine "Viz"!

Moreover every week many other less publicised but equally indefen-
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sible obscene societies' are brought before the Courts, many of which
result in the imposition of swingeing fines or harsh prison sentences.

Moreover
None of these police prosecutions could have been brought in most
other so-called "free society" countries.

Apart from prosecutions brought under the O.P. Acts, many more are in-
stituted for infringements of a myriad of other allied censorship laws,
e.g. the 1981 Indecent Displays (Control) Act, the 1953 Post Office
Act, the 1984 Video Recordings Act, the 1982 Local Government (Miscellan-
eous Provisions) Act and the antediluvian 1876 Customs Consolidation
Act. In 1990 alone H.M. Customs officers seized nearly 33,000 items
of allegedly 'indecent' or 'obscene' material.

Since 1971, when the "OZ" trial took place, there have been no less
than twelve censorship statutes introduced in addition to the excess-
sively repressive weapons, like the Obscene Publications Acts, already
in the State censor's armoury.

If all this is Nicholas de Jongh's idea of 'coming on' and present-
day acceptance of the "OZ" trio's 'proclaimed heterodoxies', he is a
long way from the committed free-expressionist he has always appeared
to epitomise, and in a country now arguably the most heavily censored
(certainly sexually censored) of all 'free' Western World States, this
is very much to be regretted.

Yours sincerely,

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