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Dear Paddy

I am resigning from the Executive Committee of Liberty. My resignation is not, as it may first appear, simply a gesture of support for my partner Peter Young, although I do feel he has been treated badly. As Peter's partner I know only too well the hours of work he has put into the organisation, the battles he has had with our unions Executive Council in order to secure funding and loans for NCCL, and the support he has given to previous General Secretaries, both Larry Gostin and most of all Sarah Spencer.

I have been considering my membership of the Executive Committee for some time, and although I was unable to attend this year's AGM, I was particularly disappointed to hear of the stand the organisation has now adopted on the issue of pornography. At recent AGM's I have been very concerned at the level of influence which has been exercised by organisations such as NACROPA. Single issue organisations which have sought to hijack for their own purposes. I had hoped that this trend would be halted, if not reversed, and that I might be able to use some of my energies to mobilise support within my trade union and the womens movement to achieve that end. However, NACROPA and its friends, such as the misguided Feminists Against Censorship, have proved to be very effective at exercising a stranglehold on the organisation, and to organise a counter movement would take far more time than I currently have available.

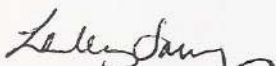
I have just read the paper produced by Roz Kaveney for discussion at Friday's EC, on the subject of Dawn Primarolo's bill. I realise that the proposals have yet to be agreed by the EC, but I fear that there is little prospect of the EC doing anything other than endorsing the paper and the recommendations contained therein. I do not consider myself to be an "authoritarian feminist" whatever that might be, but I am nevertheless one of a significant number of women who find pornography, and its display in public places, deeply offensive. I would not be prepared to write to my MP as part of a campaign of opposition to the bill, as I have a great deal of sympathy with the objectives of the bill. I hope that Liberty will refrain from openly campaigning in favour of pornography, but I feel that is almost the inevitable conclusion that will be drawn by the media once the strategy in the paper is adopted.

At the moment I am prepared to remain a member of Liberty, but I will keep my membership under review as I need to be convinced that Liberty is still an organisation with whose aims I can broadly agree. I did not join the EC on a single issue ticket, and I had hoped that the issue of pornography would not be so much in the forefront of Liberty's campaigns, and that I would be able to make a contribution to the debate on a range of issues. However I feel the time has come to make a stand.

I regret that since the arrival of my daughter Helena, it has not been easy for me to attend EC meetings. It is not a question of payment for childcare costs as was suggested by another EC member, but that I prefer not to leave her with someone else and then spend the meeting worrying about her. I have found it possible to attend all my Labour Party ward meetings, and most GC meetings with Helena, simply because there is much more space in the venues and I am able to move around with her while still playing a fairly full part in the meeting, and without disturbing everyone else. It is also less distressing for her if she is not crowded into a small room full of strangers.

I am copying this letter together with a copy of Paper E to James Undy, a member of the Executive Council of my union, NUCPS. I feel that Liberty's position on pornography is now at odds with my union's policies on sexual harassment and equality of opportunity, and that the union's Executive Council should at least have the opportunity of reconsidering its position on affiliation to Liberty.

Yours sincerely


Lesley Sawyer