

~~CENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

FIGHTING SEXUAL CENSORSHIP

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NO/DAW/DP

7th November 1995

Ms. Julia Somerville,
Newscaster,
Independent Television News Ltd.,
200 Grays Inn Road,
London,
WC1X 8HB.

Jan Ms. Somerville,

I write to express the NCROPA's outrage over the action of Boots the Chemists in passing on innocuous family photographs of your daughter to the police obscene publications branch, and to offer our great sympathy to you and your partner for the appalling ordeal to which you have been subjected by your arrest and interrogation over the matter, and for the damaging attendant press and media coverage it provoked.

This is by no means the first time Boots' film processing has acted in this way and thereby subjected other perfectly innocent, respectable, law-abiding citizens to a similar ordeal - an ordeal which has often been pursued as far as the Courts. I have written to the Chairman of Boots, Sir Christopher Benson, about their loathsome practice, demanding that it be ended forthwith.

More pertinently I shall also be writing to Michael Howard MP, the Home Secretary, because the legislation which is responsible for the operation of such vile police activity is his responsibility and is, as we forcefully pointed out when it was enacted, seriously and dangerously flawed. Furthermore it is being interpreted by the police (and customs officers) in a totally improper way, which the Home Office vowed during the passing of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (which amended the Protection of Children Act 1978, and which, in its turn, has been strengthened by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) was definitely not their intention (as my correspondence with the then Minister of State at the Home Office, John Patten, MP, clearly shows), but which they (the police) use to justify their operations in such cases.

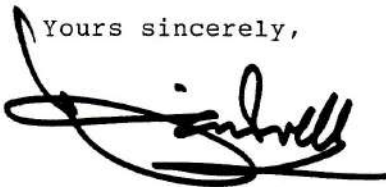
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Whilst the NCROPA deplores the coercive use of children in sexually-explicit material, as you and your partner no doubt do, we equally deplore the neo-hysterical, carefully orchestrated, exaggerated and excessive outcries against such 'crime' by fanatical moralistic and religious factions, like the National Viewers and Listeners' Association but also, regrettably, even well-meaning organisations like Esther Rantzen's "Childline" hobby-horse; aided and abetted by some, equally fanatical, empire-building obscene publications department police officers. Let us hope that the awful trauma to which you have been so cruelly subjected and the subsequent severely critical publicity against this area of policing which someone with your high public profile inevitably attracts, will at least, in future, put a brake on their outrageous 'gung-ho', immature, knee-jerk re-action methods of operating. Even more importantly, perhaps it will provoke Parliament to amend its legislation on the lines we originally suggested with the specific intention of preventing such calamitous incidents as the one in which you and your partner have so unwittingly and alarmingly found yourself, and over which we very much hope you will be taking legal action.

Once again, our profound sympathy and with all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,



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

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