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CAMPAIGN

CENSORSHIP

AGAINST

THE DEFENCE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS SOCIETY)

PLEASE REPLY TO:-

POLICY STATEMENT - BLASPHEMY LAW

1. Blasphemy is not a statutory offence. The Blasphemy Act was repealed in 1969.
2. Blaphemy remains a common law offence. It involves 'any contemptuous, reviling, scurrilous or ludicrous matter relating to God, Jesus Christ, the Bible or the formularies of the Church of England as by law established'.
3. This is clearly discriminatory in that it covers 1) no religion other than Christianity and 2) no sect other than the Church of England.
4. Two possible remedies have been suggested: 1) extension of the law to cover other religions and other sects or 2) total abolition.
5. The law cannot logically be extended to other religions. Muslims and Jews regard the basic claims of Christianity as blasphemous. Christians return the compliment. Buddhists do not worship a 'god' at all. The problem of definition is not solvable.
6. To extend the law to other sects would 1) provide opportunity and ammunition for sects to attack each other at the expense of our already overloaded legal system and 2) offer the protection of the law to 'fringe' organisations whose methods and motives are highly suspect.
7. The law discriminates against people (atheists and agnostics) whose convictions are just as strongly held as those of religious believers but who refuse to subscribe to any religion. Any extension would make it worse.
8. The only fair, practical and sensible course is to abolish the law of blasphemy altogether.
9. The Campaign supports and will work for complete abolition of the law of blasphemy.
10. The Campaign opposes and will resist any future attempts to impose constraints on freedom of religion, including the freedom to have none.

January 1990