

Squadron leader D. W. TAMBLING, JP, RAF (Retd.)

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BENELLEN AVENUE,
BOURNEMOUTH.
BH4 9LT

29th October 1977

Mr David Webb,
Dofamies, Nkolosa,
18, Hoare Court West,
Chelsea, London.

File Mem.

Dear Mr Webb,

I received your letter about presenting our views to the Government Committee yesterday and thought you might like a copy of the letter I have sent to the Secretary. One can only hope that the Committee will see some sense and that Parliament will eventually take the necessary action.

Yours sincerely

D. W. Tambling

From: Squadron Leader D W TAMELING, JP, RAF (Retd).

a. The present law increases rather than reduces the public display of material likely to offend or cause alarm to be legally and freely obtainable in Bournemouth, and cinema vans from which young people would be excluded BH4 9LT. could be stopped.

b. education in club classes showing 29th October 1977. to be better rather than worse behaved than those in public cinema; their continuing membership depends upon good behaviour.

The Secretary to the Committee

on Obscenity and Film Censorship, which time, effort and public money, result of the pursuit of complaints from anybody about Queen Anne's Gate, even if the material is found to be obscene (this usually London, pornography rather than corrupting or depraving) and its destruction SW1H 9AT. the effect is only legal and, since much of the material is in the form of periodical publications, very short lived. This time, effort and money would be better spent in preventing, detecting and punishing.

Sir,

1. I am writing to ask your Committee, in its Report, strongly to urge on H M Government the repeal of the Obscene Publications Acts in so far as they concern pornographic material. I would not recommend their repeal as far as they could be used against subversive material positively advocating political extremism, violence, terrorism or piracy, although, despite the fact that such material corrupts and depraves, it is seldom proceeded against.

2. My reasons for advocating the repeal of the Acts in so far as pornography is concerned are as follows:-

a. an adult citizen (over 18 years) should have the right to decide for himself what material he reads or views; he is allowed to marry, to enter into contracts, to vote in parliamentary and local government elections and to fight and die for his country and should be allowed to choose the books he reads and the films he sees. The public display of material which might offend some people, but I am convinced that there is no justification for general

b. the only moral justification for censorship is national security.

c. censorship is at present imposed on a purely subjective basis and it is hard to see how it could be made objective.

d. even if censorship on moral grounds were acceptable, which I deny, there is no satisfactory way of selecting the censors and the effect of any censorship law is to say that what is illegal is what the censors do not like.

e. so long as there is a demand for pornography that demand will be satisfied, at least in part and clandestinely; the only parties to benefit from such a situation are the suppliers who can charge inflated prices for material of poor quality secure in the knowledge that they can flout the laws governing trade descriptions and the sale of goods with impunity.

f. there is no evidence that pornography is harmful per se; indeed, the evidence from countries which have liberalised their laws shows that sexual crimes diminish; it is not insignificant that even in this country, since attitudes became less repressive, the only category of crime which has diminished is that of sexual offences.

g. the present law increases rather than decreases the public display of material likely to offend some people; were pornography to be legally and freely obtainable in shops, theatres and cinemas from which young people would be excluded, this could be stopped.

h. audiences in club cinemas showing sexual films tend to be better rather than worse behaved than those in public cinemas; their continuing membership depends upon good behaviour.

3. As a magistrate I know how much time, effort and public money is wasted as a result of the pursuit of complaints from busybodies about books or films. Even if the material is found to be obscene (this usually means pornographic rather than corrupting or degrading) and its destruction is ordered, the effect is only local and, since much of the material is in the form of periodical publications, very short lived. This time, effort and money would be better spent in preventing, detecting and punishing crime.

4. The vociferous few who seek by repressive legislation to suppress pornography seek to impose their own narrow-minded if sincere views on the many by the force of law; those who seek to legalise it seek only to enable individuals to make their own choice; to deprive of pornography those who like it is as bad as to impose it on those who dislike it and to argue that it should be freely available is not to express an opinion in favour of it per se.

5. Film censorship should be replaced by a more comprehensive system of film categorisation, which would enable potential viewers to know what to expect but leave to them the decision whether to view or not. In any case, the censorship of films, if it is continued in any form, should be taken out of the hands of local authorities, which are totally unqualified for the work.

6. Proper safeguards would still be needed to protect children and to prevent the public display of material which might offend some people, but I am convinced that there is no justification for general legislation to render pornography illegal. While I question the need for yet another inquiry into this subject, I trust that good sense will ultimately prevail and I most strongly urge the Committee to report in this sense.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,