

GENCENSORED

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REPEAL
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

ORGANISER — David Webb, 15 Sloane Court West, Chelsea, London SW3 4TD — Tel: 01-730 9537
COMMITTEE — Lord Norwich, Clement Freud, M.P., Dr. Brian Richards, Clifford Hanley, Eric Miller, William J. Wright,
Bernard Brick, John Sussams.

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As a democratically elected member of what has often been described as the mother of Parliaments, you will, no doubt, espouse the cause of freedom, of individual liberty and the freedom of expression. You will also, therefore, surely agree that everyone should have an inalienable right to see, read and hear whatever they choose for themselves. Yet, in this last quarter of the supposedly enlightened twentieth century, this country is still denied such a right because of the out-moded, repressive censorship laws which remain on the Statute Book.

The highly organised, vociferous pro-censorship factions, in their role as self-appointed "guardians of the nation's morals", have, for far too long, succeeded in forcing their minority opinions on those of the opposing, liberal-minded majority, often employing highly emotive, factually inaccurate propaganda to further the spread of their bigoted doctrines. Parliament has hitherto paid them heed out of all proportion to the numbers they represent and, in consequence, has done absolutely nothing to bring the censorship laws up to date and in line with contemporary, progressive thinking. In fact in many areas we appear to be returning to the rigidly restrictive standards of the past, aided and abetted by the ever increasing legal pronouncements of antediluvian Law Lords, zealously circumventing the already narrow-minded will of Parliament as expressed in the ridiculous and unjust Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964. We believe that such standards are totally unacceptable in 1977 but are forcibly perpetuated by the existence of these Acts which, in any case, have been shown time and time again to be chaotic in both interpretation and implementation. As recent police corruption trials have so clearly demonstrated, it is not the existence of allegedly "obscene" material which "depraves and corrupts" but its preclusion by law.

The only sensible and realistic solution is for the repeal of these Acts, except for certain provisions for the protection of children and of those who do not wish to be forcibly affronted by material offensive to them. Certain amending legislation to a number of other Statutes would, of course, also be necessary, including the abolition of common law offences, but it is by no means the impossible task some politicians and lawyers would have us believe. Most of the United States and the majority of the countries of Western Europe have satisfactorily dispensed with censorship (with the exception of Spain and the Republic of Ireland) and it is no exaggeration to say that we now have more censorship in Britain than in nearly all the countries of the so-called "free world". What a damning indictment against the "Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free"!

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One often hears a great deal about the supposedly "harmful" effects of uncensored - or, what some would term, "obscene" - material and yet, despite differing opinions, no-one has ever proved such harmful effects. In fact many professional people, doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and other experts in this field, regard the availability of such material as of positive benefit to some people. The three major investigations into the impact of pornography on society so far carried out (the Danish Forensic Medicine Council's Report to the Danish Penal Code Council 1966; the Arts Council of Great Britain's Report on the workings of the Obscene Publications Acts 1968; and the exhaustive, two-year \$2,000,000 United States Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography 1970) have all reached the same conclusion which is that pornography, or sexually explicit material, of whatever kind, is harmless and should be freely available to consenting adults. It is also important to note that those countries which have abandoned censorship have experienced, as a result, a pronounced decrease in local "consumption" of pornography. Nothing is guaranteed to provoke prurient interest more than prohibition. No better analogy of this can be found than the notorious liquor prohibition period in the U.S.A. Can anyone justify the case for the retention of prohibition of so-called "obscene" material when the general consensus of opinion is that it is harmless and whereas alcohol and cigarettes (both of proven, even lethal, harm) and gambling are freely and legally available? It is, in truth, unanswerable.

The National Campaign for the Repeal of the Obscene Publications Acts has been set up to press for fundamental changes in the law. The Government has recently announced that it is to set up a Committee of Inquiry to investigate the laws on obscenity, indecency and censorship. It is essential that a team truly representative of the general public is chosen and not one comprising largely of those tired, old war-horses from the "Puritan Brigade". N.C.R.O.P.A. will, naturally, expect to be consulted itself but urges you, as a voting member of the House of Commons, (1) to afford this matter the priority it warrants, (2) to reject the unfounded assertions and fanatical intolerance of the pro-censorship lobby, recognising how completely unrepresentative it is of the country as a whole and (3) to ensure that Parliament no longer permits the perpetuation of these antiquated laws but rids itself of the hypocrisy of the past.

Your acknowledgment and comments will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

David Webb,
Organiser,
National Campaign for the Repeal of the Obscene Publications Acts.