

# RIGHT TO READ

**KNOCKABOUT COMICS PRESS RELEASE - MARCH 1984**

**THE CONSUMPTION OF CERTAIN DRUGS IS ILLEGAL. READING ABOUT THEM MAY SOON BE ILLEGAL. WHAT HAVE YOU ON YOUR BOOKSHELVES?**

Seizures of drug-related literature have continued since Knockabout Comics and Airlift Books were raided in July 1982. The most recent raid, on a well known London shop, was in February this year. Charges have so far been brought under section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act (forfeiture in a magistrates court) against shops in Reading, Nottingham, Bristol, Birkenhead, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle and Doncaster. Two titles charged under section 2 (indictment in front of a jury) were not proceeded against in Manchester earlier this year, but they may be recharged under section 3. The magistrate at Airlift Books' committal hearing last year decided not to proceed against some of the titles that are still on Knockabout Comics' indictment.

There are no written laws specifically prohibiting the publication of books about drugs. However the police, expanding the Obscene Publications Act to cover more than sex, have held £1000's worth of our stock for the past 21 months, including 4000 copies of our publication MAMA COCA which the Director of Public Prosecutions refuses to let us defend in front of a jury.

**INTERESTING NOTE 1.** The cost of the first Old Bailey trial on May 8th this year (R. v. Toskanex Ltd, t/a Knockabout Comics) will cost considerably more than the total value, of all sales to date, of the titles charged in that case.

Lost sales have cost us many thousands of pounds, and we have to find £12,000 to pay our legal defence costs. If we lose the case at the Old Bailey we may have to pay the prosecution costs plus large fines; and possibly have to serve prison sentences. All this without having wittingly or unwittingly broken any laws. Knockabout Comics' (Toskanex Ltd.) case features 12 informative books on cannabis, cocaine and psilocybin mushrooms; and 3 humourous comics. If the case is lost then the others to follow will include famous works of fiction by, among others, Hunter S. Thompson, William Burroughs and Tom Wolfe, and our much-loved Freak Brothers and Fat Freddy's Cat comics.

**INTERESTING NOTE 2.** Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* has not been subject to seizure, even though it has been continuously in print for 150 years - possibly because it exists in many leather-bound editions on members of the establishment's bookshelves.

It is perfectly acceptable to publish information about drugs in academic books and journals. The same information in our books is considered by the Home Office to 'deprave and Corrupt', perhaps because they are generally available. Considering the amount of, often ill-informed, publicity given to drug use and abuse, surely the more factual information the better.

Another notable anomaly. Timothy Leary, psychedelic proselytizer of the 1960's is banned from entering this country because of Drug-related convictions in the U.S.A. But his autobiography (mainly about drugs) was published here with much publicity in late 1983. We who live here without criminal records, however, are not allowed to publish anything about drugs.

**SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT CONTROL WHAT WE READ.**

**RIGHT TO READ defence fund: a/c no. 7337635 Lloyds Bank, 32 Oxford Street, London W.1. Contributions can also be sent direct to us at the address below. For more information contact Tony Bennett on 01-969 2945 or Don Skirving/Beth Grossman on 01-609 3368.**

**Question: Who wears a tie with a motif of a book being cut by a pair of scissors?  
Answer: Officers of the Obscene Publications Branch of the Metropolitan Police!**

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THESE ARE THE TITLES CHARGED AT THE OLD BAILEY ON MAY 8th.

AMAZING LOVE STORIES  
COCAINE COMIX no.2  
DOPE COMIX no.3  
CANNABIS ALCHEMY  
COCAINE CONSUMERS HANDBOOK  
COCAINE HANDBOOK  
COOKING WITH CANNABIS  
GUIDE TO GROWING MARIJUANA IN THE BRITISH ISLES  
GUIDE TO BRITISH PSILOCYBIN MUSHROOMS  
HOW TO GROW MARIJUANA INDOORS UNDER LIGHTS  
HOW TO IDENTIFY AND GROW PSILOCYBIN MUSHROOMS  
INDOOR MARIJUANA CULTIVATION  
DELUXE MARIJUANA GROWERS GUIDE  
PLEASURES OF COCAINE  
PSILOCYBIN MAGIC MUSHROOM GROWERS GUIDE

Of the 62 books and comics seized from Knockabout Comics the above titles were considered by the prosecution to be a representative selection. There are 15 counts of having an obscene article for publication for gain contrary to section 2(1) of the Obscene Publications Act of 1959 as amended by section 1(1) of the Obscene Publications Act 1964. That is one count for each title. We are also charged with conspiracy to contravene section 5(1) and (2) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 by causing such persons as might purchase or obtain books relating to controlled drugs unlawfully to possess such drugs namely cocaine and psilocybin. And under section 6(1) & (2) to cultivate plants of the genus cannabis.

So this first major test case ( the Director of Public Prosecutions' words ) is against 3 humorous comics, and 12 books of information which is readily available in reference libraries. Many of the better known and more interesting titles the DPP refuses to put in front of a jury, despite our stated willingness to defend them. Our publication MAMA COCA, of which more copies have been seized than any other title, can only be defended in a magistrates court. This is also true of the many works of fiction that are subject to seizure - section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act allows one magistrate sitting alone to make a destruction order on any books he or she does not like. The next jury trial after Knockabout Comics will be of Airlift Books who are charged similarly with 12 informative titles under section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act, and conspiracy under the Misuse of Drugs.