

GENERIC
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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

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COMMITTEE - ~~The Viscount Norwich, F.R.S.E.~~, Gerald Fowler, M.A.Hon., F.A.B.E.,
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David Remington, Litt.D.

The N.C.R.O.P.A. is affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties

NO/DA/DP

30th January 1984.

The Viscount Norwich, F.R.S.E.,
24, Blomfield Road,
London, N.9.

Dear Lord Norwich,

Thank you for your letter of 9th December last, which I read with much regret and disillusionment.

At the House of Commons on 30th November, I was introduced to Mr. Tim Brinton by Mr. Norman Abbott, chief executive of the British Videogram Association. Mr. Brinton is the B.V.A.'s sponsored M.P. and he told me he was at school with you. In that conversation I paid tribute to the unswerving backing you had given to the N.C.R.O.P.A. and commended your steadfastness even in moments of crisis when the heat in the kitchen sometimes became intense. It is ironical that, less than a week later, that loyalty had evaporated, you had tendered your resignation from our committee and had arbitrarily ditched us.

When I relayed this news to other members of the committee, their universal reaction was, like mine, that you had been "got at", even though your response appeared so uncharacteristically spineless. It was, nonetheless, extremely disconcerting to discover during the fourth sitting of Standing Committee C at the House of Commons on 14th December, just how accurate our assessment of the situation had, apparently, been, when Mr. Geoffrey Finsberg, M.P. (now horrifyingly Sir Geoffrey!) read out a copy of your letter of resignation to myself, during that debate (copy of Hansard enclosed). That you should have seen fit to send him a copy of a letter concerning a N.C.R.O.P.A. internal matter which you had refused even to discuss, I find most regrettable and reprehensible. By your action, you have played straight into the hands of our enemies and done the N.C.R.O.P.A. a grave disservice which could certainly considerably weaken our cause and the cause of freedom of expression in general.

It is obvious that Sir Geoffrey Finsberg has, from the outset, been determined to undermine the N.C.R.O.P.A. and to do everything possible to discredit the members of its committee. I wonder if you have studied just exactly what this appalling gentleman has been saying? In the very first debate on the Video Recordings Bill, in the House of Commons on 11th November, he made a wholly unwarranted and abusive attack on us. (Copy of Hansard enclosed). I should have been failing in my duty if I had not replied to such a vicious attack in the strongest terms, and defended my committee - yourself included - and our members. I am enclosing copies of all the correspondence and reports because it is essential that everything is seen in its proper context.

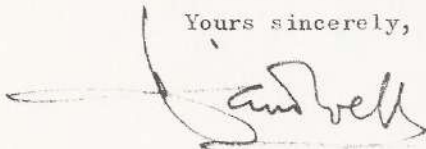
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In your letter of resignation, dated 5th December 1983, you stated that "for some time now I have been concerned about its (N.C.R.O.P.A.'s) policies" and you went on later to state that "I cannot whole-heartedly endorse all the principles involved in your campaign". I must point out that the principles involved in our campaign are exactly the same as they were when I founded it in April 1976 and when I first invited you to serve on its committee. A copy of my original letter to you, dated 3rd May 1976, is also enclosed herewith, as well as a copy of your reply of 18th May 1976 in which you express your unequivocal support for our cause. (I have sent copies of these letters to all eighteen members of the Standing Committee). You have been kept fully informed of everything concerning our campaign ever since and, in the course of nearly eight years, you have never once expressed even the slightest doubt or disagreement with the N.C.R.O.P.A.'s principles or policies. That you should suddenly do so now indicates, either that, for some extraordinary reason, you have impulsively changed your mind (something I find hard to believe of someone with your pedigree and credentials, and of your intellectual calibre), or, and which now seems much more probable, that you have been pressured and panicked into defection by mischievous-moral fascists from the opposition. Whatever the real reason, I feel sure that you will come to regret your untimely and irrational action and will, eventually, return to the fold.

There is another point which puzzles me and which will puzzle all other supporters of the N.C.R.O.P.A. You are a listed sponsor of the Campaign Against Censorship and you will have recently received a copy of the C.A.C.'s official Critique of the Video Recordings Bill, which has been sent to the Home Office and M.P.s, including Sir Geoffrey Finsberg. The C.A.C.'s Critique and the N.C.R.O.P.A.'s are virtually identical, both in the stance they take against the provisions of the Bill and in their overall opposition to it. In the interests of integrity, credibility and consistency, will you now, therefore, be withdrawing your sponsorship of the C.A.C.? Furthermore, will you be sending Sir Geoffrey a copy of your letter of withdrawal so that he can read it out to Standing Committee C, in anticipation of the similarly vicious attack he must now surely make on the C.A.C. as those he has made against us, and if he, too, is to be consistent?

Finally, on behalf of the committee, may I thank you, most warmly and sincerely, for the support you have given the N.C.R.O.P.A. during the past seven years, but also express our great sadness that you have felt it necessary to desert us just at this time and in this puzzling way. I still believe I was entitled to the courtesy of a meeting to discuss this matter and, even at this late stage, still hope that you will agree to such a meeting. In any case, I would be grateful for a considered reply to this letter since we shall almost certainly be issuing a press statement on your resignation and would prefer to have your comments before we do so.

Yours sincerely,



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

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