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## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

# N C R O P A

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

SENT TO ALL 650 M.P.'S (HOUSE OF COMMONS) 18TH APRIL 1986

### OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS (PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, ETC.) (AMENDMENT) BILL

On Friday, 25th April, Mr. Winston Churchill's private member's Bill to amend and extend the 1959 Obscene Publications Act will reach the Report Stage in the House of Commons when its supporters hope it will be given its Third Reading.

Although the present version of the Bill, as amended in Committee, is considerably altered from that presented to the House at its Second Reading on 24th January, it still remains a monstrously authoritarian measure, quite unnecessary and totally unacceptable in a society in which freedom of choice and freedom of expression are supposed to be paramount.

Whatever its protagonists may claim otherwise, this Bill is yet another repressive censorship measure to add to the already existing massive arsenal of censorship restrictions to which this country is shamefully subjected. It is an indisputable fact that the U.K. now has more censorship than virtually any other country of the so-called 'free' Western World. Far from adding to it, Parliament should be reversing and removing it. Please, therefore, attend the debate on 25th April and vote against this ill-conceived piece of legislation.

The Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964 are intolerably draconian already and the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (N.C.R.O.P.A.) has, for the past ten years, been campaigning for their liberalisation. During that period, in spite of the recommendations of the Home Office Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship (the Williams Report, Cmnd 7772, November 1979), which were unanimous, the complete reverse has occurred and five major censorship legislative measures have been added. Mr. Churchill's present attempt to add yet another, and extend the Obscene Publications Acts to cover television and sound broadcasting is an outrageous incursion of free artistic and cultural creativity, especially since these media are already rigidly restricted and monitored by the various broadcasting Acts.

The further limitations the Bill places on the publication of innocuous books and magazines and their marketing are even more absurd when considered in the light of the O.P. Acts expressive straitjacket which already confines, restricts and prohibits so many of them, 'laundry list' or no 'laundry list'.

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The N.C.R.O.P.A. is totally opposed to this Bill and urges you, of course, to reject it completely. However, even if there were any justification in the need to take some action to 'protect' children from possible exposure to sexually and/or violently explicit material (they are not inseparably intertwined as many seem to assume), Parliament has seen fit to legislate in a much less rigid and prohibitory fashion with regard to many other products which are, or are considered to be, harmful to children. The sale to children of tobacco, alcohol, glue solvents, for example, is merely regulated where they are concerned, but not prohibited for adults. All those products are known, proven killers (one child dies every six days as a result of glue-sniffing), yet Parliament deems it an acceptable level of 'protection', in the wider, over-riding interests of a free society, simply to make it an offence to sell them to children. Why not apply the same criterion to so-called 'adult' material, which has never yet been proved to have even harmful, let alone lethal effects even if it does accidentally get into their hands?

Drastic reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, which would allow consenting adults the right to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear, is long overdue, but in quite the opposite direction to that Mr. Churchill has allowed himself to be persuaded to take in his shabby Bill. Please vote against it on 25th April and help bring about the beginning of the end of this country's obsession with censorship.

Yours sincerely,

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National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts