



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

NO/DAW/DP

5th June, 1986.

The Chief Trading Standards Officer,
London Borough of Camden,
Weights and Measures Office,
Endsleigh Gardens,
London, WC1H 0EB.

Dear Sir,

Re: Zipper Store, 283 Camden High Street, N.W.1.

We understand that the police are objecting to the renewal of the Zipper Store licence, granted by the London Borough of Camden under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1982. The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) strongly opposes their objections and considers them quite unjustified. It trusts, therefore, that the London Borough of Camden will reject them and that a further licence to trade will be granted to this responsible retailer.

The NCROPA is, of course, opposed to licensing regulations of the kind incorporated into the 1982 Act. However Camden Council won our congratulations in the past when it awarded a licence to this mainly homosexual sex shop, the only one in a country of some 56,000,000 people and where, even by conservative estimates, there are at least 2,800,000 homosexuals. The number of licensed sex establishments of any kind is, apparently, only about 70 for the whole of the country – or one for every 800,000 people! We beg Camden not to discard its erstwhile more enlightened attitude.

When the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was passing through Parliament, categorical assurances were given to the House of Commons and to ourselves that it was not the Government's intention to prohibit such shops, but merely to regulate them. In answer to a letter I wrote to the Prime Minister on 7th February 1983, Sir Patrick Mayhew, M.P. (the present Solicitor-General, then Mr. Mayhew and Minister of State at the Home Office) wrote to me thus:-

"As for the legislation which has recently been introduced dealing with sex shops, indecent displays and bogus cinema clubs, I believe that this strikes the right balance between the rights of individuals to have access to material which others might find offensive, and the rights of others not to have such material thrust upon them. For example, the legislation dealing with sex shops does not seek to ban

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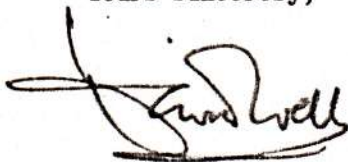
such establishments outright, but merely to control them so that they do not cause unnecessary offence to the majority of members of the public who do not wish to frequent such places themselves but who would not necessarily wish to prevent others from doing so."

The Zipper Store's immensely discreet shop frontage, rendering it almost invisible to any except those already aware of its existence and thereby being able to exercise a free choice as to whether or not they wish to go there, causes unnecessary offence to no-one, except, it appears, to over-zealous, busy-bodying policemen. We urge you to pay them no heed.

If all the London policemen engaged in the unnecessary persecution of, for want of a better expression, the 'Sex Industry' (I prefer to call it the 'Joy Industry') and in implementing this country's vast, intolerably repressive and absurd censorship laws, were to be drafted to other less futile, really useful duties, perhaps Sir Kenneth Newman's problems of serious under-manning would be solved at a stroke.

Incidentally, this letter from the NCROPA has not been solicited by anyone from the Zipper Store and they have had no fore-knowledge of it. Its despatch has been prompted solely in the interests of freedom of expression and freedom of choice and of, hopefully, furthering the ideals of the NCROPA and its many supporters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David Webb', written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

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

Copy to: The Managing Director,
Zipper Store,
283, Camden High Street,
London, N.W.1.