

At the 1987 NCCL AGM, Catherine Itzin tabled a motion on so-called 'pornography' which called for it to be censored. (It was remitted to the EC).

In June 1987 Catherine Itzin contributed to an article entitled "The Pawns of Porn" for the "Girl About Town" magazine. Notwithstanding that the article gave the clear impression that Ms. Itzin was an official spokesperson of the NCCL, it was a clear call for support for her pro-censorship views.

On 17th July 1987 the NCROPA reported Ms. Itzin to the Chairman of the EC for her actions, and claiming that, since her beliefs ~~were quite clearly~~ and the public expression of them quite clearly contravened Article 7 of the NCCL's Charter of Civil Rights and Liberties - viz. 'Freedom of speech and publication' which forms part of NCCL's Constitution and Rules - and were quite incompatible with it, her membership should be terminated forthwith.

We received no reply. We wrote again on 25th August and on 2nd September 1987 the deputy GENERAL Secretary replied saying that Ms. Itzin had been warned "that she be very careful when speaking or writing on this issue to draw a distinction between her views and those of the NCCL since the press and public may otherwise fail to understand that the two do not correspond." The letter went on "It remains the case that NCCL's policy on this issue differs from the personal view of Catherine Itzin and can only be changed through resolution by the AGM." No mention was however made of our request for termination of her membership. We therefore wrote again on 8th September 1987. (In the meantime Ms. Itzin had got herself elected to the EC - in our view quite improperly.)

A further letter was sent to the General Secretary's Deputy on 20th October 1987, there having been no reply to my 8th September letter. On 26th October, Sarah Spencer replied confirming that Ms. Itzin had been told of "the need to take care in drawing a distinction between her views and those of NCCL" and that NCCL had received "a perfectly satisfactory reply" from her. Ms. Spencer then went on to say that "NCCL does not expel from its membership individuals who express points of view which differ from our own".

Madam Chairperson, we would challenge this. If it doesn't, where fundamental principles are concerned, it should and, indeed, it must, in compliance with its own rules - incorporating the ten basic principles which are clearly and unequivocally enshrined in the Charter and thus the Constitution and Rules.

We wrote again on 9th November 1987 expressing our bewilderment at the NCCL's response, thus:- "Support for the Charter, or certainly article 7 of it, is quite clearly not forthcoming from Catherine Itzin and our opinion is that this renders her ineligible for membership. [She has the freedom to join (or institute) other organisations like the National Viewers and Listeners' Association, which will much more accurately represent her pro-censorship, anti-libertarian views, if she so wishes."]

On 24th November 1987 the NCROPA submitted to the CEC a motion for the 1988 AGAM demanding that Catherine Itzin's membership be terminated. It was refused acceptance because "under Clause 10.1 of the Constitution, the termination of membership is a matter to be considered by the EC." Isn't it extraordinary how eager the EC is to apply the Constitution and Rules of the organisation when it suits its convenience, but ignore them when it doesn't!

We protested to the CEC and appealed, but in vain. At last year's AGM I was even prevented from mentioning Ms. Itzin's name!

On February 2nd 1988, Ms. Itzin further proclaimed her extraordinary and diametrically opposed views (to the NCCL that is) in a half-page article she wrote for "The Guardian" (SHOW) headed "The Campaign Starts Here". It was, of course, an article [in part to plug a ridiculous fanatical/feminist publication (SHOW) called "Pornography and Sexual Violence: Evidence of the Links" - a mis-title if ever I saw one -] and also] to re-iterate her call for more censorship - whilst at the same time having the temerity to peddle the absurd pretence that her proposed legislation to ban 'pornography' did not constitute censorship legislation! How dare she presume to insult all our intelligences so brazenly!

The day after "The Guardian" article, on 3rd February 1988, the General Secretary replied to my letter 9th November 1987 and informed me that the EC had not taken ~~the~~ our view that the position adopted by Catherine Itzin was incompatible with NCCL's Charter! (Of course, by this time, Ms. Itzin was herself a member of the EC!)

On 7th April 1988 we had cause to write yet again to the EC's Chairman. This was to report of further activities of Ms. Itzin who had been interviewed for an article in "Time Out" magazine entitled "Women Against Porn". In spite of the previous NCCL warning, Ms. Itzin was referred to as "someone who works for the NCCL". Ms. Itzin does not work for the NCCL any more than I do. We repeated our request for termination of her membership.

On 16th June 1988 we were told in a letter from Sarah Spencer that Catherine Itzin had denied speaking to "Time Out" magazine, ~~however~~ and that the EC had again rejected our demand to terminate her membership. However I had had a telephone conversation with the writer of the "Time Out" article, Sarah Baxter, shortly after it had been published and she had confirmed that she had talked to Catherine Itzin. I duly wrote to the EC Chairperson, Christine Jackson with this information and a renewed termination of membership request, on 27th June 1988. That letter has never been replied to.

And now, of course, Ms. Itzin's absurd and repugnant notions- absurd and repugnant to true civil libertarians, that is, if not to those factions who are simply trying to hi-jack the NCCL in furtherance of their own ^{spurious} ~~alienated~~ causes - have been patently exposed and compounded by this week's launching of her "Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship". (Just how gullible do we think we are, for pity's sake?!) and ^{by} the two large articles she wrote in last Sunday's "Observer" and last Monday's "Independent" - ~~XXXX~~ the editors of both of which newspapers ought to have more sense than to publicise such a ludicrous organisation which is clearly intent on more restrictions over 'freedom of speech and publication' than we have already!

Catherine Itzin's undoubted breach of the provisions of the NCCL's Charter, as incorporated in its Constitution and Rules, renders her ineligible for membership of such an organisation. The NCCL's own rules must be adhered to and implemented and the EC should be - indeed, must be - censured for refusing to do so.