

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

NCROPA

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

NO/DAW/DP

12th September 1989

The Editor,
"Civil Liberty",
National Council for Civil Liberties,
21 Tabard Street,
London,
SE1 4LA.

Dear Sir,

Your article in the August edition of "Civil Liberty" is by no means "an accurate account" of the NCROPA's actions and views regarding Catherine Itzin, as it claims, if only for what it has omitted. It would take more than a whole issue of "Civil Liberty" to report the full and accurate story of events surrounding this unhappy affair and of the disgraceful way in which our entirely proper representations have been handled by the Executive Committee throughout. However your interpretation of the NCROPA's logic regarding adherence to the rules, something required as a condition of membership of the NCCL, is patently flawed and cannot be allowed to go unchallenged.

The NCCL has a written Constitution and set of Rules by which it operates. Rule 2 of the Constitution lists the objects of the NCCL which include the promotion of its Charter of Civil Liberties. The Charter pledges the NCCL "to ensure and safeguard" ten essential rights, one of which (Article 7) is the right "to freedom of speech and publication".

Rule 8 concerns eligibility for membership of the NCCL and categorically states that membership "shall be open to all persons who accept its Constitution". The NCROPA affiliated to the NCCL in 1979 because it unequivocally accepted NCCL's Constitution in accordance with the requirement of that rule. There is nothing extraordinary, therefore, in the NCROPA expecting - nay, demanding - that all other NCCL members adhere to the afore-known rules of an organisation which they have, in any case, freely chosen to join. In our view there is absolutely no doubt that Ms. Itzin has not so adhered and, until those rules are constitutionally changed, it is only right and proper that she, and, indeed, anyone else who is in such obvious, identifiable open conflict with them, should not be allowed to continue their membership and thereby subvert the integrity of such an erstwhile tolerant, just and respected organisation, and one which I and the NCROPA care about deeply.

In no way is this a suppression of free speech and, in the light of the appallingly

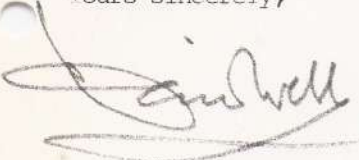
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authoritarian, Catherine Itzin promoted/EC motion 24 at this year's AGM, which brazenly endorses new legislative measures for the further drastic restriction of freedom of expression in this already censor-obsessed country, your contention that it is the NCROPA which is "embarking upon a very slippery slope" is, to say the least, impertinent, but certainly absurd.

The NCROPA has not conducted a personal vendetta against Catherine Itzin, but the "maintenance of civil liberties" does not extend to support for the 'liberty' of destroying the civil liberties of others, particularly when they are as clearly defined as in the NCCL Charter. Your claim that the NCCL is, or, indeed, can be that broad a church is, frankly, a nonsense. It is the unquestioning tolerance of irrational intolerance (the kind manifested in Motion 24) that will destroy the NCCL, and if the NCCL membership at large doesn't soon wake up and open its eyes to the subversive dangers of the 'enemy within', it will deserve its fate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Webb", with a stylized flourish underneath.

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