

~~CENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

FIGHTING SEXUAL CENSORSHIP

HONORARY DIRECTOR - David Webb, R.A.D.A. Dip., 15 Sloane Court West, Chelsea, London, SW3 4TD - Tel: 071-730 9537

NO/DAW/DP

1st July 1992

Ms. Liz Lynne, M.P.,
House of Commons,
Westminster,
London,
SW1A 0AA.

Liz Ms. Lynne,

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) is astonished and horrified that you and 68 other M.P.s have seen fit to put your names to Ann Winterton's House of Commons Early Day Motion (Reference No. 312) entitled, no doubt deliberately emotively and provocatively, "Arrow Books Ltd., & Torture, Rape & Murder".

It is doubly astonishing that endorsement for what the implications of this motion undoubtedly are, should come from a member of the Liberal Democrat Party.

It is nearly 200 years since the novel "Juliette" by the Marquis de Sade was first published and it has long since been generally accepted as part of French classical literature. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is rightly legally available in all other EC countries and, of course, in many other places elsewhere where freedom of expression is valued including the U.S.A. Notwithstanding that "Juliette" is a novel and thus a piece of fiction, but whether it be fiction or fact, and horrifying though it may be, are you and the other signatories of the EDM seriously suggesting that any work which horrifies, or is concerned with horrific themes, should be banned? If so, you are travelling down a very slippery and dangerous slope indeed.

That a member of the British Parliament should be condoning censorship at all is disturbing enough. That she should be campaigning for even more state censorship than we already have in Britain is positively alarming. I cannot believe that you have really thought this matter through.

It is an incontrovertible fact that the U.K. already has the most draconian state censorship legislation of virtually every other EC country (with the possible exception of Ireland - a tiny country of a mere 3½ million people, let's not forget, less than half the size of London!), of most other so-called 'free' Western-World countries, and now drastically harsher state censorship than even countries of former Communist Eastern-Bloc, totalitarian regimes (viz. Czecho-

continuation/.....

slovakia, Hungary, Rumania, East Germany etc.) It is strikingly significant that the first thing all these newly-free countries do is to remove their erstwhile state censorship. Here in the U.K. state censorship not only still survives, it flourishes! It is a national disgrace.

The NCROPA has been vainly fighting for a change in our antediluvian so-called 'obscene' publications legislation for the past 16 depressing years - but certainly not a change in the direction you obviously wish to take, i.e. the addition of still more restrictions, controls and prohibitions!

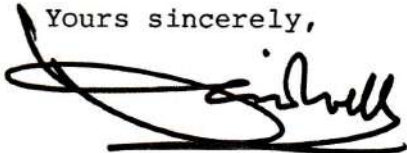
If any publication is considered to be likely to encourage the commission of a criminal act (which seems to be your concern over "Juliette"), it can always be prosecuted (or rather the publisher can) under the provisions of the general law of incitement to commit a criminal offence. This is surely safeguard enough and, indeed, the only sensible, practical, realistic and just way in which legislation proscriptive of publications can be reasonably implemented.

Because the contents of one single novel offend some people is no justification in a 'free society' for it to be banned or, indeed, for blanket, 'knee-jerk', panic legislation to be enacted which would dangerously and intolerably restrict 'freedom of expression' in this censor-obsessed country even further.

If you believe that by banning "Juliette", all of society's ills will be solved, or even some of them, may I remind you of German poet and philosopher Heine's prophetic words "Where books are burned, in the end people, too, get burned". Hitler began his 'reign' by burning books and ended up by burning people in the ovens at Belsen, Dachau and Auschwitz. As distinguished freethinker and rationalist Nicholas Walter wrote in the January edition of "Index on Censorship", "Confront Sade, don't ban him".

Please re-think your position as a matter of the utmost urgency.

Yours sincerely,



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

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