

~~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

5th April 1993

The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, M.P.,
Paymaster General,
H.M. Treasury,
Parliament Street,
London,
SW1P 3AG.

John Hincks,

I an interview broadcast on LBC Newstalk radio programme on 30th March (around 12.30 p.m.), you referred to H.M. Customs "anti-pornography" operations. There is no legislation which renders "pornography" per se illegal in the U.K. and certainly no Customs and Excise legislation which proscribes the importation of "pornography" into this country. In fact the concept of "pornography" exists nowhere in British law and the indiscriminate and inaccurate use of this term by a Government Minister is regrettable.

It is hardly surprising that many H.M. Customs and Excise officers under your control are also guilty of this same wrong in the course of carrying out their duties at Customs posts at ports of entry into this country. This practice has become very apparent to the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) from having had sight of a considerable number of copies of records of interviews supplied to us by an ever growing number of, in our view, justifiably extremely irate U.K. nationals returning to this supposedly 'free' country from trips abroad to other E.C. countries, with small quantities of sexually-orientated articles which are rightly and justly freely available to consenting adults in these visited foreign destinations. (Whatever happened to the Barrier-free E.C. internal frontiers we were promised by virtue of the full implementation of the Single European Act?!).

In the latest of these records of interview, received last week, the terms "pornography" of "pornographic" are used by the Customs officer nine times, putting specific questions to the passenger about the "importation of pornography" and referring to the prohibitions on "pornography". This distortion and inaccuracy in the interpretation of the law by customs officers undoubtedly encourages many of them to apply their own highly subjective, personal standards of propriety when intercepting and checking U.K. travellers. This is highly improper and I very much hope you will take this up with the Chairman of the Commis-

continuation/.....

ioners of Customs and Excise requesting her to issue strict guidelines to her officers directing them to operate only objective tests of a universal, consistent level throughout the Customs and Excise service. This will still not quell passengers' anger and outrage against these fascistic actions of the agents of the U.K. 'nanny state', but it will at least bring a more uniform - if still impossible - standard of seizure-of-goods criteria.

Finally, may I emphatically reiterate the plea I made to you in my letter dated 3rd March 1992 (in your capacity as joint deputy chairman of the Conservative Party) for the legalisation of sexually-explicit material here in the U.K., to bring us into line with virtually all other E.C. Member States, and most other 'free world' countries (including the U.S.A.), and to thus truly honour the United Kingdom's purported commitment to 'freedom of expression' ... 'regardless of barriers' enshrined in both the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), and to both of which great charters of liberty the U.K. was an original, inaugurating signatory.

Yours sincerely,



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

P.S. A NCROPA promotional leaflet is enclosed herewith for information purposes.

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