



NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

NCROPA

FIGHTING SEXUAL CENSORSHIP

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NEWS MEDIA RELEASE

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ORDER BILL - 'OBSCENITY AND 'PORNOGRAPHY' MEASURES AN ABOMINATION IN AN ALREADY CENSOR-SATURATED SOCIETY

The measures included in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to extend still further the U.K.'s already draconian legislative restrictions and prohibitions on so-called 'indecent', 'obscene' or 'pornographic' publications are a total irrelevance to the Government's declared aim of fighting real crime in this country and an abominable affront to freedom of expression in a supposedly free society.

The NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS (NCROPA) is opposed in toto to all provisions contained in Part VII of the Bill which will ^{be} given its Second Reading debate in the House of Commons on Tuesday, 11th January. Part VII ("Obscenity and Pornography and Videos") is concerned with, amongst other things, computer 'pornography'; the introduction of a new legal concept of 'pseudo-photography' (yet another inevitable field-day for the lawyers!) and the victimless crime of mere possession of allegedly indecent, under-16 'pseudo-photographs'; the conferring of alarmingly extended 'police' powers on local weights and measures authorities to hound commercial suppliers - and potential suppliers - of videos, plus an unprecedented extension of the jurisdiction of local magistrates courts; the increasing of the penalties for allegedly 'Obscene' telephone calls; and, in particular, the addition to the list of arrestable offences without a warrant of an alleged offence under Section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959. This will mean, in

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effect, that the police will be able to arrest anyone publishing (i.e. selling, hiring or showing) allegedly 'obscene' articles which the police themselves decide are 'guilty' of such an offence in on-the-spot assessments, long before the Crown Prosecution Service or the Courts have adjudicated thereon. In an area of law notorious for uncertainty and unpredictability in judicial interpretation, this measure is grossly unjustified and a dangerously repressive weapon in the hands of bigoted and over-zealous policemen.

The NCROPA is making the strongest representations to the Home Secretary against these Part VII provisions and has requested an urgent meeting with him to seek to persuade him and his Government colleagues to withdraw and/or amend them. In a country which uniquely already has the toughest, most repressive anti-"pornography" state-censorship laws in Europe and, indeed, most of the rest of the free Western World (laws prohibiting sexually-explicit material for consenting adults, that is), and where its citizens are flagrantly denied the freedom to choose for themselves what they see, read and hear, the British Government should be enacting legislation to repeal most of our harsh and intolerable censorship laws and not concerning itself with strengthening them even more. Such action is clearly a blatant infringement of our human rights, the epitome of authoritarian state-nannyism and, in the present-day world, nothing less than an outrage. It must be curtailed and reversed forthwith.

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