

# **The Freethinker**

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## **MRS THATCHER CHALLENGED ON "THE TYRANNY OF CENSORSHIP"**

David Webb, Organiser of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, accompanied by the Campaign's legal officer, Edward A. C. Goodman, handed in a letter to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street last month. They were protesting against police "pornography" raids and the Government's failure to introduce comprehensive legislation to liberalise the United Kingdom's repressive censorship laws along the lines recommended by the Williams Committee in their report to the Home Secretary more than three years ago. NCROPA has also made a formal complaint to the Metropolitan Police about its handling of publicity concerning raids on sex shops.

In his letter, Mr Webb reminded the Prime Minister that during her recent visit to the Falkland Islands she spoke much about the necessity for fighting to preserve freedom in that territory.

"It is a pity, therefore, that these noble sentiments are so hurriedly forgotten when it comes to their practical application to the citizens of the United Kingdom. How can a country, like ours, which has now more censorship laws than virtually any other in the Western world, be said to be 'free'? How can a country which wastes hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money every year seizing and destroying millions of harmless books, magazines and films, and for which there is such a huge public demand, be said to be 'free'? How can a country which imposes gigantic fines and savage prison sentences on those who are doing nothing more than fulfilling this demand, be said to be 'free'?"

Mrs Thatcher was told that "massive raids on sex shops and establishments by the Metropolitan Police are a clear and alarming manifestation of the sham and hypocrisy of your fine words about 'freedom' and those of many members of your Government and party".

The Prime Minister was reminded that it is more than three years ago since the Williams Committee's Report on Obscenity and Film Censorship was presented to Parliament. The Committee concluded that sexually explicit material was basically harmless and should be available to consenting adults.

"Notwithstanding the findings of this distinguished Committee, which were unanimous, your administration has not only failed to take any action to implement its recommendations, but has actually increased censorship restrictions even further, either by passing legislation initiated by the Government itself—e.g. the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, with its measures for the licensing of sex establishments—or by giving undisguised backing to private members' Bills which have, in any case, invariably originated from the Government—e.g. the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981 and the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act 1982".

### **Police Discrimination**

Mrs Thatcher is challenged to have the courage of her convictions "by converting the much-flaunted Conservative Party philosophy of 'the freedom of the individual' into practical reality and thereby ridding this sexually-repressed country of the tyranny of censorship, thus bringing us into line with the rest of the Western world, as well as honouring our commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 18 and 19) and the European Convention on Human Rights (articles 9 and 10)".

The Organiser of NCROPA severely criticised the Obscene Publications Squad for the way in which they have conducted their operations against sex shops. In a letter to Sir Kenneth Newman, the

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# The Sect That Breaks Up Families Loses Appeal For New Trial

The Rev Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church in Britain has lost its battle against the *Daily Mail* which had accused the sect of brainwashing converts and breaking up families. Three law lords turned down the Moonies' appeal for a re-hearing of their libel action against the newspaper.

The appeal was heard by Lord Justice Lawton, Lord Justice Dunn and Lord Justice Griffith. They said that the trial judge's summing up was fair and that there had been no miscarriage of justice. There were no grounds for ordering a re-trial and leave to appeal to the House of Lords was refused.

Denis Orme, former head of the British Moonies, was ordered to pay costs of the case which would be over £500,000. The sum of £350,000 had been paid into court as security for the *Daily Mail's* costs for previous hearings.

A spokesman for Family Action Information and Advice (FAIR) commented: "The media must be heaving a collective sigh of relief that they can now begin to print cult reports again without alarming their legal advisers. There is a general feeling of

gratitude to the *Daily Mail* for having stood firm and borne the brunt of this important legal battle.

"The next stage is the question of charitable status and we hope that in 1983 the Government will grasp this nettle firmly".

Now that the Moonies have lost the battle against the *Daily Mail* their charity status must be in serious jeopardy. But will the Government really "grasp the nettle" of charity law with all its injustices and anomalies? The churches and religious sects—many of them as harmful as the Moonies—enjoy considerable benefits under present charity law.

The Goodman Report of 1967 made some modest proposals for reform which have so far been ignored by the Government.

## CHRISTIAN PROTEST

Freethinkers are not the only critics of a resident astrologer appearing in BBC Television's *Breakfast Time*. Peter Horrobin, writing in the evangelical Christian Weekly Newspapers, fulminates against the inclusion of star-gazer Russell Grant with the early morning news and weather reports.

Mr Horrobin finds it almost unbelievable that the BBC could have been seduced into permitting such a thing. "God hasn't even got a back seat", he laments.

The very idea of an alternative brand of superstition to Christianity getting an airing gets up evangelical nostrils. They whine and fuss as though Christianity is treated as a poor relation in broadcasting and television studios. In fact the national, regional and local stations churn out hundreds of hours of Christian propaganda every week. God seduced Auntie on the back seat a long time ago.

Mr Horrobin requests Christians to send "carefully worded" letters of protest to the BBC about the *Breakfast Time* astrologer. We hope that *Freethinker* readers will do so too, and at the same time urge that the astrology act is not replaced by yet another "God slot". Letters should be sent to the Producer, *Breakfast Time*, BBC Television Centre, Wood Lane, London W12.

## Mrs Thatcher Challenged

Metropolitan Police Commissioner, David Webb condemns police use of their "discriminatory" powers. And when police raid such establishments, "it is totally unnecessary for hundreds of thousands of items to be impounded. . . Such police practices were strongly condemned by Judge Cassel in Knightsbridge Crown Court on 5 March 1981 in a case (*R v Browlie*) under the Obscene Publications Acts concerning 8 mm films. He said 'To repeatedly raid and take away similar films was a decision which, in fact, is an act of censorship. It is an attempt to put a man out of business and I deplore it'. Judge Cassel's sharp rebuke to the police has obviously gone unheeded by your officers involved in the operations of the first week of February".

Mr Webb also condemned Scotland Yard's stage-managed Press conference and general handling of publicity over these raids "which could gravely prejudice the right to a fair trial of any defendant who may subsequently be charged".

NCROPA has welcomed the initiative of Sir Michael Havers, the Attorney-General, who has issued new guidelines to chief officers of police and which are specifically aimed at reducing unnecessary prosecutions, particularly of those concerning so-called "obscene" publications. In no other area of law are there so many unnecessary prosecutions, it declares.

There were red faces in the diocese of Chicago when it was discovered that a sermon on the theme, "Freedom From Futility" had been printed in a church bulletin as "Freedom From Fertility". To make matters worse, the sermon was followed by the hymn, "O Love That Wilt not let me go".