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Members' General Meeting

6th February 1986.

Finch the Tawny Warbler had given a tribute - the editor once repudiated and ad' of ours.

Mr. Chairman, fellow members, yet again I have to begin with an apology and I'm afraid that there will be a fair sprinkling of apologies throughout this report. The NCROPA has, over the past (nearly) ten years ~~has~~ continued to function in spite of what have, at times, appeared insurmountable obstacles. At times we have, ^{been} the sole voice speaking out against this country's obsession with censorship (at my last count there were twenty ^{changes} pieces of legislation on the Statute book not to mention many other Common Law Offences). Many people - even some of our erstwhile supporters - have appeared to have thrown in the towel and to regard the position in this country as hopeless. When the appalling Video Recordings Act (about which I'll have more to say later) was passing through Parliament there was not a single M.P. who was prepared ^{publicly} to take one point of view. Not a single M.P. voted against what is, to my mind, one of the most authoritarian, sinister ~~and~~ legislative measures ever to have been passed in this country. The only Parliamentary voice ^{in my opinion} to have taken up the NCROPA ~~'s~~ cry was that of one ~~of~~ a ~~few~~ ^{were} leaders champion in August of this year eighty-eight years ago young ~~George~~ ^{George} ~~Samuel~~ ^{Samuel} ~~He~~ ^{he} has been a ~~great~~ ^{terrible} example to us all and I would like ~~to~~ ^{to} pay him a special tribute here tonight.

~~At the~~ ^{reunited} ~~with the others~~ ^{reunited} with the others so much against us, with ~~the~~ ^{many} ~~the~~ ^{tiny} lived cowards in Parliament and with disappointment and often despair overtaking some

of our supporters, our campaign has been and is now doubly ~~threatened~~. The NCROPA has never had sufficient funds for it to function as we would like it to function and, indeed, as it ought to function.

~~At least a few years ago~~ ~~our~~ ^{cooperative} finances were ~~run~~ by ~~our~~ business friends, the sex-shop, cinema club, ~~etc~~ proprietors and so on. But with the introduction of a succession of ~~harmful~~ draconian laws designed to put such ~~businesses~~ out of business permanently (indeed many of them ~~now~~ are still incarcerated behind bars), it is hardly surprising that this form of funding has virtually dried up. There are one or two exceptions — fortunately and I would like, as I did when we last met ~~for~~ three years ago, to mention in particular Mr. Ron Coleman of Gold Star Publications who has always ~~been~~ generously supported the NCROPA and is ~~now~~ concerned that it should continue to fight.

And this matter of funding brings me back to the apology I said I have to begin with. I apologise to members that, in spite of our intention after the last General Meeting, it has not been possible for us to have an Annual General Meeting. And moreover that I apologise that members have not been kept better informed about the NCROPA's activities during those intervening three years. The Committee has, however, had to take a conscious decision, with virtually no money, apart from that which ~~we~~ the Committee itself has coughed up, we had to decide whether we should spend time and money on expensive newsletters, circulars etc and so on, or whether we should devote all our energies

and the message finding, largely un-written by ourselves, to the ~~on~~ desperately more important task of fighting ever more ^{repressive} legislation and persisting with trying to make our voice heard. We decided on the latter. This all very well for members (~~only~~ very few, it's true) to complain that they have not received any news from us for ages ^{but}, the simple economics of roofing prevent it. Our membership, ~~Mr. Chairman is now down to just over 400.~~
~~members, (the~~ ^{as said in the notice, antismoking} ~~I sent out Subscription General~~

~~Members~~ As I said in the notice for this meeting, ^{when I sent} ~~the Sept 1983~~ sent out subscription renewal reminders to all, that response brought in ~~£~~ a mere £66. Since the cost of sending out 400 reminders in postage alone is £48-00, then add on printing and stationery costs, it doesn't take an Einstein to work out that at the end of such an enterprise, we are actually ~~in~~ ^{engaged on it} worse off than before we ~~were~~. I appreciate that I am preaching here to the converted and that the mere fact that you are here means that you are not those members I am ~~preaching~~ at. What I would ask, however, is that you do all you can to try and increase our membership, to unashamedly sell the NCRPA. I, personally, would be against increasing our subscription rates. I believe, the way to increase our financial resources is by increasing our membership. Only then will we be able properly to challenge and combat the NVBLAs, the Quality Standards Association, the WAVAWs and the like.

My task here is to try to give a ~~brief~~ review of what the NCRPA has been doing during the past three years. You will appreciate that any such review

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will have to be very much abbreviated otherwise we should be here all night. Please bear with me, therefore, if I only touch on some issues and ~~not~~ omit others completely! You may remember that just prior to the 1983 meeting ~~we~~ we did produce a booklet entitled "NCROPA in Action" (Slow) which detailed ~~on activities~~ for the two previous years. This still our intention to do likewise for the past three years, provided, of course, that we can afford it ~~not~~ ☺

Unoubtedly the most important activity we have been involved with is in fighting the monstrous Video Recording Bill. Tony Butcher had only been in office as Home Secretary a few days before he had announced his intention of legislating against videos. He used, as you know, Graham Bright to front his Bill but it was, of course, no more a private members' Bill than Glynis Goldsmith's. I first wrote to Mr. Butcher on 19th July 1983 requesting a meeting to discuss the proposed Bill. He refused. On 25th July, 6 days later he saw Tony Whitelocke and a delegation from the NCROPA. I wrote again on 2nd August - again meeting refused but we were asked to submit written observations. More again on 16th August and on many other subsequent occasions. All my requests for a meeting were refused until. On 16th August I asked for a meeting with Graham Bright. He said that he understood David Mellor (Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office) would be meeting us and he would try to be there. That meeting never materialised either. We did send written observations (albeit at that time based on what we thought the Bill would contain - it had still not been published) and then, later on, when the Bill did finally

appear, we produced a considered assessment in this -
 The Video Recordings Bill - A critique. I am
 particularly indebted to Ted Goodman for his
~~████████~~ tireless help in preparing this as indeed
 with so much else that the NCROPA has ^{done} and is doing.
 His value to this campaign is incalculable - and he
 didn't paid a penny - indeed none of us ^{are}. In fact
 Ted Goodman forked out £100 in order that this
 meeting could take place at all - and a few ~~weeks~~
 ago members of the Committee had a 'whip round'
 in order that we could send a £50 donation towards
 the administrative expenses of Ted Houghton's
~~████████~~ Committee to Monitor the Working of the
 Video Recordings Act, of which I am a member.
 Members have also paid their own expenses ~~████████~~
 to attend the VRA Act on NCROPA's behalf and
~~████████~~ paid NCROPA's affiliation fees.

I attended all but one (when I was ill) of the Study
 Committees of the Video Recordings Bill which was a
 most depressing experience as you might imagine
 and one M.P. on that Committee in particular Sir Geoffrey
 Drury M.P. for Hampstead was especially viciously
 mischievous in trying to discredit us.

The Bill's passage through the Lords was equally depressing
 except, of course, for the splendid Ted Houghton.
 He was, regrettably, a lone cry of sanity and tolerance
 in a hysterical wall of irrationality and intolerance.
 The full effect of the Act has still to be fully felt as
 yet since its implementation by stages. We are
 watching it very carefully and will see what happens.

In June 1983 with the passing of some of our snapshot

and, the backing of the Committee, I stood as an
~~local~~ Anti-censorship/Reform the Press Publications
 B.C. Candidate against the Prime Minister in her
 Finchley constituency. Although I did so ~~privately~~
 to get publicity for the NCROPA and its cause,
~~privately~~ the exercise was taken seriously and although
 it was extremely hard work and time-consuming,
 thoroughly enjoyable and well worth while.
 Maggie's daughter Carol wrote about about her mother
 called "Diary of an Election" (slip) and she has
 mentioned the NCROPA a number of times and there
 is a photograph of my demonstration at the Court
 in Hendon Town Hall. Again I would like to
~~thank~~ Particular thanks to Ted Goodman, Pamela
 Mrs Miller and David Kensington and other NCROPA
 supporters who helped with canvassing and
 leafleting.

I would like to thank all of whom have
 played a valuable part in running the NCROPA.
 Obviously some members, because of professional
 and career commitments, or in the case of
 Clifford Stanley, very based in Glasgow, have ~~not~~ not
 been able to be as active as they would have
 liked. Their advice is appreciated.

There have been ~~other~~ ^{the} resignations for personal
 reasons. Dr. Brian Richards ^{was} resigned and Wilson
 might resigned because he felt his business
 interests would conflict with the NCROPA's important claim
~~elsewhere~~ that its Committee members are not
 connected with any business enterprise which might
 be a potential beneficiary in the event of NCROPA's aims

Both Dr. Richards and Nillian Wright are (7)
still fine supporters of NCROPA. Lord Brumfitt
being advised. Members might have some ideas on this.
When the meeting is then open for discussion later,
we are delighted however, to welcome our newest
committee member, Elizabeth Goodfellow and perhaps we may have
around a few other late ^{arrivals} ~~arrivals~~.

We have fairly close liaison with the C.A.C. and
indeed two of Committee Members are on their governing
commit - Ted Goodman and Eric Miller.

Eric has depated for me on occasions when I been
abroad, including the C.R.C's Anti Party on Film Censorship
in June 1983 and has been particularly involved
with the Knockabout Comics presentations which he
may like to imagine a bit later.

David Remington has ensured that there has been
no let up in his constant vigilance in
monitoring and participating in matters aired in
the media particularly in sound radio and
he has ~~also~~ also given a number of talks about
NCROPA ~~like~~ ~~as~~, for example one to the Gifford
South Young Conservatives in July 1983.

I've already mentioned Ted Goodman who, has
given several talks including one to Yestermorrow ^{Brumfitt 1983}.
Pamela Mason, as I've said, was most helpful with the
Finsbury election. Until recently she was
living in Brighton which ~~restricted~~ ~~restricted~~ her participation, but now that she has returned
to live in London, is able to be more involved.

We are hoping ~~soon~~ to recruit at least two more members
to our Committee very shortly.

There have been many issues in which the NWROPA has been involved throughout the past 3 years. These will hopefully be detailed in the next edition of 'NWROPA in Action'. I'll just mention here ~~—~~ matters like taking on the militant feminists of groups like W.A.V.A.W. and their awful "Ponies" "Violence Against Women" campaign in May 1983.

The Leftist theatre "Theatre-in-Education" appealed for support when their programmes were attacked and censored by I.E.A. The South Glamorgan I.E. have, likewise, approached me to serve on a panel of inquiry to examine the withdrawal of all their funding — again largely because of disapproval of some of the content of their work.

We protested to the Chairman of Westminster City Council's ~~—~~ Committee which heard Sex-shop licence applications — because of the way in which these were being carried out. "Star Chamber" hearings. Incidentally only 10 licences were granted initially and this has, I believe, been reduced to 7. Many local authorities throughout the country have refused to grant any licences at all. The Country and I took up the matter with their Council and had a letter published in the local press. I believe that there are only 70 ~~—~~ licensed sex shops in the entire Country — none at all in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

We have issued numerous Press Releases on many ~~—~~ topics — e.g. on last General Meeting; on my Election candidacy ~~for the election~~ against Maggie Thatcher; Challenging the P.M. on Freedom & Censorship; on the video

Recording Bill (Several) and on the Malvern Inquiry (The Zoo) case
 + my letter about this was published in "The Guardian".

The NCROPP has written literally hundreds of letters on a whole host of matters ~~to~~. It has received many requests for help, and advice from individuals caught up with the ~~the~~ O. P. Bills and also solicitors acting for such clients but who are unfamiliar with such cases. The NCROPA also receives many requests for help and information from pupils ~~at~~ at school and students involved in various projects on censorship or writing theses for Ph.D's and so on. Some of the correspondences often develop into mean fare.

One such correspondence was that I had between Mr. K. S. Morgan the editor of Hansard who refused to print the four letters and from Reg Race's awful speech in a Commons debate when he was quoting from a sex contact magazine which contained the words "Phone them and fuck them", & wrote to protest that he was not fulfilling his responsibility to publish the verbatim report of the House's proceedings and asked him what "f---" stood for? He refused to say even though I pursued the matter for some time. I have also taken up ~~a~~ matter to people like Magnus Magnusson and Tony Wogan with whom stated publicly on Wogan's TV programme that they loved pornography - and that it was harmless. On the other hand I had to chastise Clive James - of all people - to say that he was glad that we don't now have censorship in this country!

I have taken part in several TV programmes and interviews including "Right to Reply" on Channel 4 TV - discussion programme about the Video Recordings

Bill, and a discussion with Mary Whitehouse in "Reporting London for Trainer TV, chaired by Michael Bennett (and in which she delighted to say she died stone-dead in mid sentence) and in Taiwan. I've also taken part in radio interviews including phone-in programmes for BBC Radio ~~and~~ Radio Mercury ~~and~~ L.B.C. and Capital Radio. I have also given a number of talks about Nazism widely; two recently Marlborough College and a large conference in Henley-on-Thames.

I have received copies of two important books. - one "The Influence of Pornography on Behaviour" contains a chapter by our own Dr. Christine Pritzard (Show). The other "The Video Nasties" edited by Martin Barker is highly commended to you because it is, so far, the best refutation of the Video Recordings Act. ^{that has} It was published by Pluto Press, (Show)

NCRPB's affiliation to the NCCL continues and we have annually put down motions on anti-censorship themes. Last year we tabled one condemning police raids on Gay workshops, like "Gays The Land" and called for the reform of the 1876 Customs Consolidation Act. This was carried overwhelmingly. The year before in 1984, we put down a motion insisting the NCCL's General Secretary to convey the NCCL's ~~the~~ condemnation of ~~the~~ state pre-censorship as proposed in the Video Recordings Bill. ^{to be done} This was carried. It has since come to light however that their General Secretary did not comply with this instruction at all and we have therefore put down a motion for this year's NCCL AGM in April censuring their Gen. Sec. and its Executive Committee for not carrying out an AGM resolution.

Letter to him
of March 1984 Also Needs Charter Card
Right and Liberties
Derry?

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In the wake of Terry Gortis' resignation from the NCC last year and the apparent inconsistencies in the thinking of some of its supporters (especially some of its extreme left-wing, and militant feminist supporters). Some members believe we should disaffiliate. However we have been urged to stay in and help to bring it back on an even keel. I must say that I agree with that. Members may ~~also~~ have some comments to make on that as well.

I also ~~proposed~~ ^{proposed} a motion at the British Actors Equity Annual AGM on 16 April 1984 expunging Equi's Gravel Clause over the repressive Video Recordings Bill and its very serious implications for freedom of expression by the introduction of state pre-censorship. Pamela Mason seconded this and it was sponsored by amongst others, Lynn Redgrave, Norman Rodway, Eleanor Bron, Vicki Henson, Helen Cotterill and Joann Sanderson. It was carried almost unanimously - only one vote against.

We supported Comedian Dave Allen when he was attacked by Mrs. Whitelocke - She demanded that he publicly apologise for his ^{last} Xmas programme or be banned from the screens. He ~~said~~ ^{gave} his thanks.

When Lord Harwood was appointed as new President of the BBFC we protested most vehemently and also at Lord Britnell and Monica Dux's appointments as Vice Presidents. To day consistently we also deplored all those thirteen people who accepted paid posts on the Video Appeals Committee - many of them supposedly

committed anti-censorshipers - including Barry Norman, Professor Jamie Taylor, Professor Eysenck and would you believe it, Neville March Hedges the Chairman of the CAC. I wrote to them all urging them to reconsid. I'm glad to report that at least Neville March Hedges has ~~had~~ since done the decent thing and resigned from the CAC's chairmanship - although he is still a member of their council.

After long pressure from me, Ted Worrall and Mr. Margaret Beckett MP, have resigned as Sponsors of the CAC. They both supported the Video Recordings Act which neither the NCOPA nor the CAC did and their sponsorship was therefore an hypocrisy.

The past year has seen unprecedented interference in the media and the banning of TV programmes both on the BBC and ITW. I wrote to about 70 BBC-TV journalists ~~and~~ applauding their stand (and strike) against Government interference over the "Real Lives" programme, as well as taking up the case of the banned "Channel 4 programme "Brazil, Cinema, Sex and the Generals" ~~which had been a~~ private show produced by Ted Goodman and I saw, given by the man who made it.

On 3rd Sept. Iler Brutton got the pink from the Home Office. As far as the NCOPA is concerned 'Good Riddance'. He has been no friend to us or our cause. Whether Douglas Hurd will be any better remains to be seen. Up until now it seems unlikely. He seems to be taking our word without much mitigation of his private views.

Bill to amend the 1959 O.P. Act. by extending it to radio & TV and also to ban immoral sex magazines completely from all newsagents where children are admitted. This is ~~a~~ N.C.R.O.P.A.'s current No. 1. concern. There is some hope. At least with this Bill there is some opposition and it received its Second Reading on 24th January, when I was in the House, by 161 votes for and 31 against. We must do everything we can to ~~the other~~ try and persuade many more MPs, many of whom we know ~~the~~ deep down to be on our side, to come out of the closet and stand up and be counted.

I want to close ~~this~~, if I may, with ^{your} recent letter to the new Home Secretary not because of any ego-trip on my part but because it introduces our own draft Bill — the Decent of Expression Bill which ~~we had~~ I have drawn up as a working ~~bill~~ draft and which we hope, ^{ideally} the day will be introduced — something very like it.

After preliminary congratulations on his appointment as Home Secretary the letter reads:—

It was magnanimous

But Mr. Winter ^{should he} agreed to ^{in fact he} ~~not~~ ^{meddle in} ~~so to speak~~ ^{want us to do so now} ~~we don't care~~

I regret to say that his response to that letter has not been encouraging. However I shall go on pressuring him, the Committee will join pressuring him and, I sincerely hope that you and all the other N.C.R.O.P.A. supporters will go on pressuring him. Please don't give up hope. I certainly won't, if you won't.