

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS (NCROPA)

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT 15 SLOANE COURT WEST,  
CHELSEA, LONDON, SW3 4TD at 7.30 p.m. on 29th September 1988

PRESENT: David Webb (Hon. Director), Ted Goodman, David Kennington,  
Isabel Koprowski and Eric Miller.

1. Apologies for Absence were received from Alexander Barrie, Gerald Fowler, and Clifford Hanley.
2. Minutes of the last meeting, held on 26th July 1988 were read and approved.
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes. It was noted that Richard Gibson, a Canadian sculptor, and Peter Silveire, gallery owner, both charged with outraging public decency, had been committed for trial at the Old Bailey.

New Committee member Isabel Koprowski was welcomed and briefly detailed her deep commitment to freedom of expression, especially regarding sexuality.

It was decided that the Director should consider approaching Tuppy Owens about the possibility of her serving on the Committee, so as to strengthen its female membership.

4. Members' General Meeting. Eric Miller, newly appointed to the post of Membership Secretary, confirmed that all the envelopes to members were ready. The Director reported that the publication "NCROPA in Action", detailing in diary form some of the campaign's activities since the last members' meeting, would be ready within one month and that a copy would be sent to each member with the invitation to the General Meeting. It was agreed that the Meeting would be held on or about Wednesday, 9th November 1988 at Conway Hall Library, Red Lion Square, Holborn and that the meeting would be private (members only) but that a press release would be issued by the Director the next day. The format for the meeting was agreed as follows: Introduction by Chairman of the meeting, Ted Goodman; Director's Report, including financial report; Address by new committee member Isabel Koprowski; Report on work of the Committee by David Kennington; Members' Questions and Open Discussion.
5. Director's Report. David Webb gave details of a number of issues in which he had been involved on the NCROPA's behalf, although time did not permit a complete report.

His second letter to Sir Peter Imbert (27/7/88) had still not been replied to. Reminder letter to be sent after liaison with Rob Johnson of Quietlynn Ltd.

The names of members of the Broadcasting Standards Council were now published and included, regrettably, in the Director's opinion, Alf Dubs, former M.P. and Labour front bench spokesman on Home Affairs and with whom he had happily and profitably liaised in the past. The Director had already written to its Chairman, Lord Rees-Mogg, and would now be writing to all its other members.

He had recorded an interview for Raynbow Ventures, a sound tape-cassette company based in Wigan.

Letter sent to the Chairman of the Norwich Theatre Royal Trust and the Leader of their Council in response to a report in "The Stage" newspaper that they were planning to outlaw stage nudity at that theatre. Letters also sent to the General Secretary of Equity and the Secretary of the Provincial Theatre Council.

The "TV Times" had published a letter from the Director in response to an article by Mrs. Mary Whitehouse (13/19/88) about her appearance in "The Dame Edna

Experience" on ITV.

He had issued two News Media Releases - one regarding his 10 hour vigil picketing the British Board of Film Classification (formerly 'Censors' and now even more so) on 25/8/88, the day on which "The Last Temptation of Christ" was due to be 'classified', and another on 25/9/88 regarding his long, three page letter to the Prince of Wales about his extraordinary pontifications on screen violence during a speech he made when opening the Museum of the Moving Image at the South Bank in London. Film of the Director's vigil were shown on both BBC and ITN news bulletins. The Managing Director of Universal International, the company distributing the film, invited the director to see the film at the Plaza Cinema on September 22nd. Channel Four TV's "Right to Reply" programme filmed an interview at his flat about his criticisms of Prince Charles' speech, on 28/9/88 for inclusion in the 1st October programme.

He had written to the Chairperson of the Health & Consumer Services Committee of the London Borough of Lambeth regarding their proposals to impose a £13,000 'sex encounter' establishment licence on all 'public' places - including pubs - where 'strippers' provide part of the entertainment (24/8/88). He had also written to some pub landlords in the borough known to stage this kind of harmless entertainment.

He had written to the D.P.P. regarding his premature intervention over the public screening of "The Last Temptation of Christ" on 30/8/88 and had had a personal reply from Allan Green, Q.C., the D.P.P., saying that he would have well in mind the points the director had made when reaching his decision (about whether or not the film should be prosecuted under the blasphemy laws). The London "Evening Standard" had also published a letter from the director about this issue on 6th September. He had also issued a Press Statement to the Press Association on 1st September.

There had been an article published in "The Stage" on 1/9/88 about the new Broadcasting Standards Council and headlined "NCROPA fears an increase in Watchdog's powers"

A copy of the book "Civil Liberties in Conflict", edited by Larry Gostin, former General Secretary fo the NCCL, had been received from the publishers Routledge. The Director asked Ted Goodman to review it for inclusion in "NCROPA in Action".

A NCROPA subscription had been taken out for "Index on Censorship".

Letters had been sent to MPs Ivan Lawrence, Gerald Howarth and Timothy Renton concerning speeches they had made in the House of Commons during 'Question Time' on 19th May, about the Broadcasting Standards Council. He had not yet received any replies.

The director read a letter he had written to Lord Rees-Mogg on 26th September expressing the NCROPA's total disapproval of a Broadcasting Standards Council which it regarded as nothing more than yet another layer of state censorship.

The director had attended the Guardian Lecture given by Michael Grade at the National Film Theatre on 27/9/88 and had questioned him about his 'volte face' regarding the proposed forthcoming extension of the OBscene Publications Acts to cover broadcasting. Mr. Grade had given a very unconvincing and unsatisfactory answer, which ~~he~~ had regretted.

6. Private Members' Bills. <sup>the director</sup> It was agreed that the Director would send a copy of the NCROPA's 'Freedom of Expression' Bill to all MPs who were successful in the private members' Bills ballot.
7. Venue for Future Committee Meetings. It was agreed that the Director should explore the possibility of using the Policy Studies Institute conference fac-

ilities in Mornington Crescent, London, N.W.1. The director pointed out that he had never intended that Committee Meetings should be held at his flat, which was really most unsuitable, since the NCROPA was founded in 1976, but that financial restraints had sort of perpetuated the practice. He thought it was time that this was changed.

- 8. Any Other Business. It was decided that, when presenting the Committee report to the members at the General Meeting, David Kennington would ask for suggestions for future NCROPA activities.
- 9. Date of Next Meeting. Provisionally fixed for early December 1988.

*James Wells*  
 6th July 1989

*[Faint, mostly illegible typed text follows, appearing to be a continuation of a report or minutes. The text is significantly faded and difficult to read.]*