

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 6th July 1989

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

1. Apologies for Absence: Alexander Barrie, Gerald Fowler & David Kennington
2. Minutes of the last meeting, held on 29th Sept. 1988 were read and approved, with one minor amendment.
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes. It was noted that the prosecution of the manager and artist of an art gallery for outraging public decency had resulted in a £500 fine for the artist (Richard Gibson) and one of £350 for the manager (Peter Sylveire), but that there was an appeal pending.

The Committee reconsidered the proposed invitation to Ms. Tuppy Owens to serve. It was decided that it should be made.

It was decided not to pursue the complaint to Sir Peter Imbert, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. It was regretted that the new head of New Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Squad, Superintendent Leslie Bennett, had advised a <sup>complaint</sup> magazine for disabled people to tone down articles on sexual matters.

It was noted that Norwich City Council had lifted its ban on stage nudity. It was also noted that the DPP had decided not to commence a prosecution for blasphemy regarding the film "The Last Temptation of Christ", about which the NCROPA Director had had a correspondence with the DPP.

It was decided to include a review by Committee member Ted Goodman of the book received "Civil Liberties in Conflict" by Larry Gostin, and a review by Committee member Alexander Barrie of "Porn Gold", also received, by David Hebditch and Nick Anning, in the next issue of either "NCROPA IN ACTION" or the NCROPA Newsletter.

The Director reported how he had written to all MPs in the Private Members' Ballot and had received eight (out of twenty) sympathetic replies.

It was decided that lack of funds precluded a change of venue for committee meetings at present.

4. Director's Report. Lord Rees Mogg, Chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, had, as a result of the Director's letter to him of 26/9/88, invited the NCROPA to participate in the BSC's Code of Conduct Consultation Exercise. The submission which the Director had prepared was shown to the Committee.

Paul Fox, Managing Director of BBCTV, had replied to the Director's letter of 27/9/88 regarding the Prince of Wales' comments on British television. Mr. Fox said that he was satisfied with the BBC's own guidelines on 'violence'.

The DPP had considered action (2/10/88) against Henry Miller's "Opus Pistorum". It didn't happen. The Director had written to the publisher's managing director (W.H. Allen) on 6/10/88 but had received no reply.

The Director reported that he had had correspondence with a number of M.P.s, including a protracted one with Gerald Howarth MP. Also with Timothy Renton MP (Minister of State Home Office) concerning aspects of the Broadcasting Bill. Mr. Renton hadn't really answered the questions put to him except a request for details of the salaries of the members of the B.S.C. - Mogg (Chairman) £30,000 a year, Dep. Chairman between £15,000 and £20,000. Others around £9,000 each.



The Director read a further letter (dated 25/10/88) sent to the Minister.

An article had appeared in "The Stage" newspaper on 6/10/88 headlined "NCROPA Attacks His Royal Ignorance". (regarding Prince Charles' speech at the opening of the Museum of the Moving Image.)

Eric Miller had followed up an item in the TV programme "4 What Its Worth" on 4/10/88 - re reference to a "pornography empire etc". Eric Miller then gave details about this exchange and their use of this emotive terminology.

An interview filmed at the Director's flat, regarding Prince Charles' MOMI speech, was transmitted in the "Right to Reply" programme on Channel 4. Introductory and visual credits re his Honorary Directorship of the NCROPA, which had specifically promised at the Director's request, were omitted. The Director had twice written to the Editor of "Right to Reply" but had so far received nothing more than an acknowledgement.

A letter from the Prince of Wales' office (14/10/88) was read to the meeting.

Replies from both the Director General of the BBC and Lord Thomson, Chairman of the IBA had been received - to letters concerning the P.O.W.'s MOMI speech.

The Director had sent letters to all seven members of the B.S.C. regretting their acceptance of such a post. Replies had been received from Jocelyn Barrow (Dep. Chairman), an irate one from the Bishop of Peterborough and Alf Dubs.

"The Guardian" had reported on 24/10/88 that "Stronger laws to prosecute pornographers were .... enacted" in the U.S. Congress final session. Ted Goodman was asked to explore and clarify this report with our American associate Al Gerber, Director of the U.S. First Amendment Lawyers Association.

A letter had been sent to Bob Hawke, the Australian Prime Minister, regarding the planned legislation there to ban X-rated videos. A reply had been received dated 7/11/88 stating that the contents had been noted and referred to the Australian Attorney General.

Russell Twisk, the Editor-in-Chief of "Readers' Digest" had kindly sent me an edition containing an article "TV, What Viewers Really Think". A reply and thanks had been sent on 25/10/88.

A copy of the new "Sex Maniac's Diary" had been received, gratefully, from Tuppy Owens.

The International Freedom Foundation had sent information about itself, as requested by the Director on 28/10/88. The Director explained that this organisation - heavily U.S. orientated - was chiefly concerned with international political issues outside the NCROPA's immediate remit and that he did not therefore think the pursuit of closer liaison with it was appropriate.

A further letter had been sent to Jocelyn Barrow regarding her conflict of interests as a member of both the BBC's Board of Governors and the Broadcasting Standards Council. She replied on 8/11/88 saying that she had now given up her BBC post.

Individual letters to each of the 64 members of Lambeth Borough Council had been sent re 'strippers' and their back-door banning by means of prohibitive, extortionate licence fees (for pubs & etc.) The Tory opposition were entirely supportive of our protests, especially Councillors Bird & Keegan. The Director had attended Council Meetings when the issue had been discussed (Ted Goodman ~~and~~ <sup>and Eric Miller</sup>, David Kennington <sup>and Eric Miller</sup> had also attended) AND the opposition eventually demanded the



convening of a special Council Meeting which was held on 18th January 1989. The militant feminist factions on the controlling Labour benches unfortunately had their repressive way and the oppressive legislation was enacted. The Director had visited the landlord of one Lambeth pub which included female strippers in its entertainment - the Queen Anne. As a result, and after the Director had contacted Thames TV, an item about the issue was transmitted in their "Thames News" programme.

The Director reported that Ted Goodman had brought the religiously imbalanced make-up of the Broadcasting Standards Council to the attention of Barbara Smoker, the President of the National Secular Society (2/11/88)

A letter had been sent to Professor Andrew Rutherford regarding the removal of "The Invisible Man" exhibition a day early because the Princess Royal was visiting the (Goldsmith's) College. Professor, the Warden, had said that it (the exhibition contained pictures of naked men) was "not appropriate" for Princess Anne's eyes. The Director had asked him what was? (3/11/88). No reply.

At the request of Alex Sharkey of ID Magazine, the Director had written to Malcolm Field, the Managing Director of W.H. Smith, asking for a copy of their guidelines re the content of magazines and periodicals they are prepared to stock in their shops. In his reply dated 10/11/88 Mr. Field had said that there were no such guidelines, and invited the Director to a meeting so that he could be briefed.

The Director also explained why he had written personal letters to the editors of "The Guardian" and "The Times" regarding their now continual refusal to publish any letters from the NCROPA. Had they issued a directive to their letters editors that any NCROPA letters were not to be afforded space?

"The Independent" had featured NCROPA (23/11/88) in a piece headed "Readers' views on TV Plans" - about the Broadcasting Bill.

A letter of congratulations was sent to Judge John Shand at Stoke Crown Court re a case involving someone who had been prosecuted for offensive car window stickers, which he said should never have been brought and for which he castigated the Crown Prosecution Service. (25/11/88).

The Home Office had sent, at the Director's request, (26/11/88) a copy of the Council of Europe Agreement on Broadcasting made in Stockholm re the transmission of programmes containing 'indecent' or 'pornographic' material (whatever they are!) Definitions of these two terms were not included.

On 8/12/88 a letter was received from the Australian Attorney General's Dept. re the Director's letter to Bob Hawke. The 'Caucus' decided to establish a working party and NCROPA's views will be taken into consideration.

A letter had been sent to Colin Shaw (9/12/88) after his appointment as Director of the BSC. He replied on 14th December saying that he only accepted the post, which the Director had regretted, "after a great deal of heart searching".

On 21/12/88 nearly half a million pounds worth of mags, videos and negatives belonging to Goldstar Publications, were ordered to be destroyed by Judge Jean Graham Hall at Croydon Crown Court. This was an appeal hearing against a magistrates' Court ruling dating back to May 1985!

A copy of "Certainty" magazine had been received in January 1989.

On 14th December 1988, Noncyp (Gay's the Word bookshop) lost their appeal against seizure and forfeiture by H.M. Customs - a "public good" defence was not permitted and this was not an infringement of the provisions of the Treaty of Rome against quantitative restrictions on imports of goods from the E.C.,



the Court ruled.

The Director and Ted Goodman had attended the 'Freedom of Information' Awards Ceremony at the City Conference Centre, London on 30/1/89.

On 31st January 1989 the Director had written a letter to the Home Secretary re the Government's proposals to extend the Obscene Publications Acts to Broadcasting and also to set up statutorily the Broadcasting Standards Council. Both measures were included in the Government White Paper on Broadcasting which had just been published.

The Director attended the House of Commons debate on broadcasting on 8th February 1989. The M.P. advocating most closely NCROPA's views on the White Paper was Robert MacLennan, M.P., Social Democrat member for Caithness & Sutherland. He wrote to the NCROPA enclosing a copy of an article he had written on the issue which was published in the "House Magazine" of the House of Commons.

A Press Statement had been issued to the Press Association on 10/2/89 deploring the conviction of Richard Gibson & Peter Sylveire at the Old Bailey, on a charge of outraging public decency, and calling for the abolition of this archaic legal absurdity.

Lord McGregor, Chairman of the Advertising Standards Authority, sent (15/2/89) a copy of the British Code of Advertising Practice and their Annual Report, as requested by the Director after the ASA's condemnation of advertising posters for the "Sunday Sport".

A letter was sent to the Attorney General (Sir Patrick Mayhew, MP, QC,) on 20/2/89 re the Gibson/Sylveire case and calling for action to abolish the offence of 'outraging public decency'. Reply from one of his staff on 24/2/89 which clearly indicated that the Director's letter had not really been read. After further correspondence the Director received an apology but a still most unsatisfactory answer.

A letter was sent to George Russell on 15/2/89 on his appointment as new Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and Chairman-Designate of the new Independent Television Commission. Nice reply received on 20/2/89.

Reply received on 17/2/89 from the Home Secretary to the NCROPA's letter of 31st January. Usual waffle about implementing the promises made in their election manifesto.

A letter was sent to the Prime Minister on 22nd February 1989 re the NCROPA's horror and outrage at the Ayatollah's death edict on Salman Rushdie, author of "The Satanic Verses", which was read out to the meeting. It was acknowledged on 24th February.

On 22nd February 1989 the Director sent a letter to the D.P.P. listing nine named people in this country who had publicly endorsed Rushdie's death sentence. Waffly reply sent 20/3/89, and so a further letter had been written.

Reply to Home Secretary's reply of 31st January sent on 23/2/89 requesting a meeting. No reply and a further request sent on 15th March 1989.

The Director had sent a letter to the Chinese Ambassador, H.E. Ji Chaozhu, regretting his acceptance of an invitation to attend the National Viewers and Listeners Association's Conference and to present their annual award (23/2/89). Personal reply received on 4th March.

The Director was a guest speaker at the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Seminar on censorship held at the British Academy of Film and Television Awards premises in London on 26/2/89. Ted Goodman also attended.

4. Director's Report (Continued) David Kennington had brought to the Director's attention remarks made by Gerry Bermingham, M.P. during an LBC radio interview, about Italian TV audience participation programmes of the 'stripping housewives' variety. He wanted such programmes to be banned. The Director had written to him on 13/3/89 and Mr. Bermingham telephoned him back on 14/3/89 to refute the allegation. He subsequently sent a letter dated 15/3/89 to confirm this in writing.

The manager of the Chelsea branch of Lloyds Bank, where the NCROPA account is kept, agreed on 15/3/89 to give the NCROPA free banking provided that the account remained in credit.

One of our supporters who is in the video business offered to give us free advertising and news space in his promotional magazine. The Director explained why he thought this would not be suitable and a diplomatic letter kindly declining his offer was sent on 23/3/89.

The Director had taken part in a discussion programme on "pornography" for BBC Radio Kent in Chatham on 16/3/89, called "The Brinton Line" (hosted by Tim Brinton, former M.P. and TV Newscaster). It was transmitted on 19th March, and the producer had kindly sent a tape of it.

A letter had been sent to the editor of a new magazine for lesbians called "Quim" on 22/3/89, in response to their promotional leaflet which they had kindly sent. We wished them well.

A copy of the new Producers' Guidelines was received from Ian Hunter, Chief Assistant, Policy and Planning Unit at the BBC. This was in response to my letter to the Director General.

On 19/4/89 the Director had attended the first night of "Iranian Nights" at the Royal Court Theatre. This was Howard Brenton's and Tariq Ali's play about the Rushdie affair. He had subsequently written an article about it for the June 1989 edition of "The Freethinker" magazine.

The Director had also attended a meeting of the NCROPA Council on 19/4/89, and an interview with the BBC on 20/4/89. He had also written a letter to the Director General on 19/4/89.

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The NCROPA's name was added to signatories of the declaration of the International Committee for the Defence of Salman Rushdie and his publications (being handled by the publication "Index on Censorship"). (CONTINUED ON PAGE 4A)

5. Members' General Meeting. It was decided to hold a members' general meeting in late October 1989 in Conway Hall London. It was also decided that subscription renewal slips would be sent with the notice of the meeting and also an issue of "NCROPA IN ACTION" or a NCROPA Newsletter, dealing with our activities over the last eighteen months.

Eric Miller said that he had addressed all the envelopes for members. At Ted Goodman's suggestion, it was decided that the second half of the Members' General Meeting would be devoted to questions from the members to the Committee. Isabel Koprowski agreed to speak at the meeting, particularly addressing herself to issues concerning the female viewpoint.

6. The NCROPA's Dispute with the NCCL. The Director described how, despite the NCROPA's opposition, a pro-censorship motion had been narrowly passed at the NCCL Annual General Meeting in April. He gave an account of the NCROPA's continuing efforts to have the motion invalidated on the ground that it breached the NCCL Constitution and Rules. These incorporate required adherence to the Charter of Civil Rights and Liberties, now an integral part of the Constitution and Rules. Article 7 of the Charter commits the NCCL to campaign for freedom of speech and publication.

7. Any Other Business. Isabel Koprowski gave an account of her own anti-censorship activities. Since the last Committee Meeting she had appeared on two TV programmes, viz "The Time... The Place" and "Kilroy". On each she had spoken about sexual satisfaction. She thought the former programme a success but not the latter.

In addition she had been interviewed and reported on in "The People" magazine, "Elle", "She", "Company", "Cosmo" and in a Norwegian magazine about women in the (O horrid phrase!) 'sex industry'. She had spoken on the same subject on LBC and other local radio stations. She noted, with concern, the increasingly censorious attitude being taken by "Time Out" magazine regarding sexual matters, which she attributed to feminist pressure.

She reported that Jill Posner, a former anti-porn feminist campaigner, had changed her stance and an interview with her about this would appear in the August 1989 issue of "Forum" magazine.

Ms. Koprowski said she would be attending a conference at Sheffield in September 1989 about sexin literature. She admitted that she always described herself as being a writer of "pornography". She said she would arrange for an article about the differing legalities of "pornography" in European Community countries to appear in Forum after the members' meeting. She pointed out that Norway was gradually liberalising, but was still more restrictive than other Scandinavian countries. She said that pictures of men masturbating were now lawful there, but not yet of copulation.

The parlous state of the NCROPA's finances was discussed. It was noted that only a recent anonymous donation of £300.00 made it possible for NCROPA to be able to afford to hold a members' general meeting this year.

8. Date of Next Committee Meeting. It was decided that this would be after the members' general meeting of October 1989.