

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

MINUTES OF THE NCROPA MEMBERS' GENERAL MEETING ON 17TH FEB. 1993

HELD AT CONWAY HALL, REDLION SQUARE, LONDON WC1

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOMING ADDRESS

Ted Goodman, speaking on behalf of the Committee, explained that he had been asked to chair the meeting. He apologised for the fact that there had been no General Meeting in 1992. He explained that it had been planned for the Autumn of 1992, but had been postponed because of the death of the Director's mother. He reiterated the NCROPA's commitment to hold a general meeting every calendar year and stated this would be honoured by treating the present meeting as the postponed 1992 meeting and holding the 1993 meeting this autumn. Mr. Goodman recorded the apologies for absence of Committee Member David Kennington, because of ill-health, and of ten ordinary members.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12TH JUNE 1991

These were read and approved with one small amendment. A corrected copy was then signed by the Chairman and placed in the NCROPA Minute Book.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Committee Member Tuppy Owens explained that her planned sex industry support group, referred to in the Minutes, had not yet materialised.

4. HONORARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

David Webb regretted the delay in holding the meeting, which had been largely due to his own personal problems, but over which he had little control. In spite of this he believed he and the Committee had managed to keep the momentum going for the NCROPA cause.

He reported in detail on several major issues in which he, as Hon. Director, had been involved on behalf of the campaign, including the April 1992 General Election, when, because we knew of his support for the NCROPA philosophy right back from our early days, we very much hoped for a 'Neil Kinnock' win. Also standing in that election as a Labour candidate, in the Tunbridge Wells constituency, against former Attorney-General Sir Patrick Mayhew, was our own Ted Goodman. The return of John Major to Downing Street, and his proud boasts about the dreadful page 25 Conservative Party Election Manifesto claim that "We (the UK) have the toughest anti-pornography laws in Western Europe and we will keep them that way", were already prompting ever more outcries for still more, stronger censorship legislation, he said. It was all too depressing, but the new 'European' dimension in politics would, hopefully, be to our advantage and help our cause.

That dimension was already prominently displaying itself with regard to the fuss over the new "Red Hot Dutch" television channel whose sexually-explicit pictures were already being beamed in by satellite from the Continent. David Webb told of his meetings

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with the directors of this channel, including Gorm Oldorf, the channel's director in Denmark (with whom he had participated in a BBCTV programme), as well as the protracted correspondence he was engaged in with the Secretary of State for National Heritage, Peter Brooke, MP, concerning the interpretation both here and in the EC of their Directive on Transfrontier broadcasting, and also of the Council of Europe Agreement, and of his implementation of the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (UK) wherein he was empowered to proscribe an unacceptable (in the UK) TV broadcast in certain circumstances. Mr. Webb said he had also written to all 17 European Community Commissioners in Brussels on the matter, and to ten European Community Heads of Government where viciously repressive censorship of the UK kind was not imposed.

The Director also gave an update on his own 'test' customs importation case, which had been going on since November 1990 and which was awaiting a Judicial Review hearing in the High Court any day.

He told the meeting that the NCROPA had had its first Political Party Conference 'Fringe' Meeting at the Bedford Hotel Brighton on 8th October 1992, during the Conservative Party Conference, which had been a great success. On that occasion he had been joined on the platform by guest speaker Sean Gabb, Secretary of CASC (Conservatives Against Sexual Censorship) who had very kindly since agreed to serve on the NCROPA Committee. David Webb expressed the Campaign's huge thanks to Quietlynn Ltd. for printing free of charge all the promotional leaflets for that meeting, and to David Sullivan and his associated companies for all his continued help and support, including the supply of stationery and office sundries and a photocopier.

The NCROPA's desperate need for office premises was emphasised and explained to the meeting. The Director's small flat, from which he had run the campaign ever since its inception in 1976, was simply inadequate and unsuitable for the purpose. He appealed for any help or suggestions which could solve this pressing problem.

Cassells, the publishers, had asked him to write a book about the NCROPA since its founding, he said, but he feared he would never have the time to do this unless and until he was relieved of some of the work and demands of the campaign.

Finally, David Webb paid a special word of thanks to the NCROPA's committed Committee Members, especially to Ted Goodman for his, unflinching, always available and enthusiastic help - and also, of course to the loyal members themselves for their refusal to become dispirited in the face of the very slow progress we were only to make against so bigoted and intransigent a UK Establishment.

5. REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Eric Miller stressed the importance of the issue of freedom for the cross-border television "Red Hot Dutch" and suggested the NCROPA try and obtain free advertisements there.

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Isabel Koprowski gave details of her appearances on television, radio and at meetings in her capacity as Managing Editor for Northern & Shell Publications (publishers of "Penthouse" & "Forum"). She told the meeting that Tuppy Owens, a fellow Committee Member, would be taking up the position of Editor of the new magazine "Women Only" in May.

Alexander Barrie described his correspondence with the former Minister of Justice of The Netherlands, who is now a Senator there, about the reform of the law relating to the age of consent. (It is now 12 years in most European countries). He said that this had relevance to the NCROPA's aims because our opponents used the issue of 'protection of minors' and British Law criminalised the mere possession of "indecent" photographs of minors as legally defined. Mr. Barrie said that his article on the subject had been published in the "New Statesman".

Tuppy Owens said that this year marked the 20th anniversary of her "Sex Maniacs' Diary" and that legal restrictions on what she could include in it had increased. She gave an account of the activities of the allied organisation "Feminists Against Censorship", of which she is an active member, and said that its latest conference had brought out into the open the question of female pornophiles and their masturbatory habits. She said that when she became editor of "Women Only" in May, she would be writing explicit articles on many erstwhile taboo topics regarding women's sexual habits. She decried the prison sentences imposed on the consenting adult sado/masochists in the "Operation Spanner" case and said she was pessimistic about the House of Lords reversing the verdict. She believed the case would have to proceed to the European Court of Human Rights.

Ted Goodman mentioned NCROPA's written submission to the Law Commission regarding the Draft Criminal Code. He also alluded to his and the Director's appearances in BBCTV's "Kilroy" programmes. He said that he (Ted Goodman) had a forthcoming article in "2 i's" magazine on the British attitude to sexuality.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Hon. Director stated that the NCROPA had a stable membership of around 700 but that many were in arrears with their annual subscriptions.

7. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Peter Jansen asked why the NCROPA's submission to the Law Commission regarding the Draft Criminal Code had included views on bestiality, which issue he believed lay outside the sphere of activities of the NCROPA which he supported and for which he had joined. The Director did not agree and pointed out that this issue was often raised when he was being interviewed by the media and that the NCROPA had therefore to address it. After the ensuing discussion, Mr. Jansen sought an assurance from the Director that he would not in future do so. David Webb felt unable to give such an assurance and this prompted Mr. Jansen's walk-out from the meeting.

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OPEN DISCUSSION

Comments about the relevance of bestiality were made by Adrian Parsons, Brian Seager, Basil Stein, Thomas Kavadi and Adam Scarborough. Kent Boulton decried Britain's continuing obsession with sexual repression. Clive Whitburn stated that he had technical knowledge of television broadcasting. He said that a satellite beam created a "foorprint" covering several countries and therefore could not be stopped at the border of any one of them. David Boncey stated that more cross-border television stations would soon start, including a gay one called "Man to Man" in April. Ian Morgan lamented the continuance of British Customs controls against "pornography" from other European Community countries, notwithstanding the introduction of the single European Market on the 1st January 1993.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Committee member Eric Miller stressed the importance of trying to recruit new members through the use of the new satellite television channel, for publicity.

10. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

Ted Goodman, in thanking everyone for their attendance, stressed the dire need for no let-up in their and all members' continued, dedicated support.