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27th September, 1975.

The Rt. Hon. Roy Jenkins, P.C., M.P.,
Home Secretary,
House of Commons,
London, SW1.

Dear Mr. Jenkins,

CENSORSHIP

After the last General Election, no-one was more delighted than me when you were once again appointed to the post of Home Secretary, a role in which you had so distinguished yourself in a previous administration. I well remember your staunch defence of the so-called "permissive society" by preferring to interpret it as the "civilised society" and I enthusiastically warmed to those sentiments.

I have observed of late, however, a very disturbing trend in the opposite direction with much tougher implementation of ever-increasing curbs on the individual's freedom by censorship of one kind or another because of out-moded and repressive legislation still on the Statute Book. The most recent and deplorable example of this was the seizure by the police of 16,500 copies of a homosexual magazine called "Him Exclusive" from their printers on August 19th, on the grounds that two features in it were considered "obscene". Whilst I wish to protest against this police action with all the vigour I can muster, such forms of censorship will continue while the Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964 survive.

In spite of the claims of some very vociferous minority groups, who seek to force their own bigoted opinions on all others, arrogantly setting themselves up as guardians of the nation's morals, it is my opinion and the opinion of millions of others that these out-of-date, repressive and arbitrary laws, which long ago fell into disrepute, must go. What is obscene to one person, is nothing of the kind to another. I, personally, find boxing obscene and pornography wholesome. But because boxing is legal, I do not clamour for its repression and campaign for it to be outlawed. I simply exercise my own free will and choose not to watch it myself. Even when it is shown on television, I always have the remedy of switching

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off! This freedom of choice is, however, denied me with regard to what I may see and read and hear. In 1975 I am surely more than justified in demanding the redress of this grave and archaic wrong.

The great censorship debate has dragged on far too long. Over the years I have collected hundreds of newspaper cuttings on the subject and it is quite staggering how many learned and eminent people, in all walks of life, have publicly expressed their opposition to censorship and urged urgent law reforms. As far back as 1968, a working party was set up by the Arts Council to investigate the working of the 1959 and 1964 Obscene Publications Acts and other relevant Acts and it recommended the complete abolition of these laws except for certain safeguards for the protection of children and young persons. Seven years later, still nothing has been done!

May I urge you, therefore, in the name of sanity and humanity, to further the cause of the "civilised society", which you so obviously and genuinely cherish, as I do, by introducing urgent legislation in the coming Parliamentary Session to completely repeal the obscenity laws and thus allow each and every one of us the right to choose for himself.

Yours sincerely,

David Webb

Copies to: The Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, H.C., M.P.,
The Attorney-General,
Mr. Nicholas Scott, M.P. for Chelsea,
The Managing Director, Incognito Publishing Ltd.
The Director, National Council for Civil Liberties.