

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CENSORSHIP

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CAC Newsletter New Series No. 6

The CAC Council

- Ted Goodman - Chair
- Mary Hayward - Secretary
- Dr Nigel G. Meek - Editor
- Mark Taha
- Brian Seager

Inside this issue:

<i>Chair's Report</i>	1
<i>A graphical depiction of attitudes towards censorship</i>	2
<i>David Webb & Basil Stein</i>	3
<i>CAC website and subscription renewals</i>	3
<i>About the CAC</i>	4

CHAIR'S REPORT

The CAC apologises for the non-appearance of its newsletter. The Secretary, Mary Hayward, has been seriously ill and we all wish her a speedy recovery.

However, the CAC has not been idle. Just after the last newsletter, the CAC offered its detailed submission to the Deputy Prime Minister's 2010 Law Review (a version of which can be found on the CAC's website).

For the rest of **2010 and 2011**, CAC lobbied: the Liberal Democrats about its conference decision to try to ban Page 3 photos; the Secretariat for the Commission on a Bill of Rights (established by the Government in March 2011 and concluded at the end of 2012); Norwich City Council about a licensing application for a barber's topless staff. CAC also assisted an academic with her study on censorship of the arts.

In **2012**, the CAC lobbied: Ms Maria Miller MP, new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; the British Board of Film Classification about film censorship pursuant to the acquittal of Michael Peacock on obscenity charges; Portsmouth City Council about its plan to ban all sex establishments. CAC wrote to Philip Davis MP supporting his opposition to television censorship.

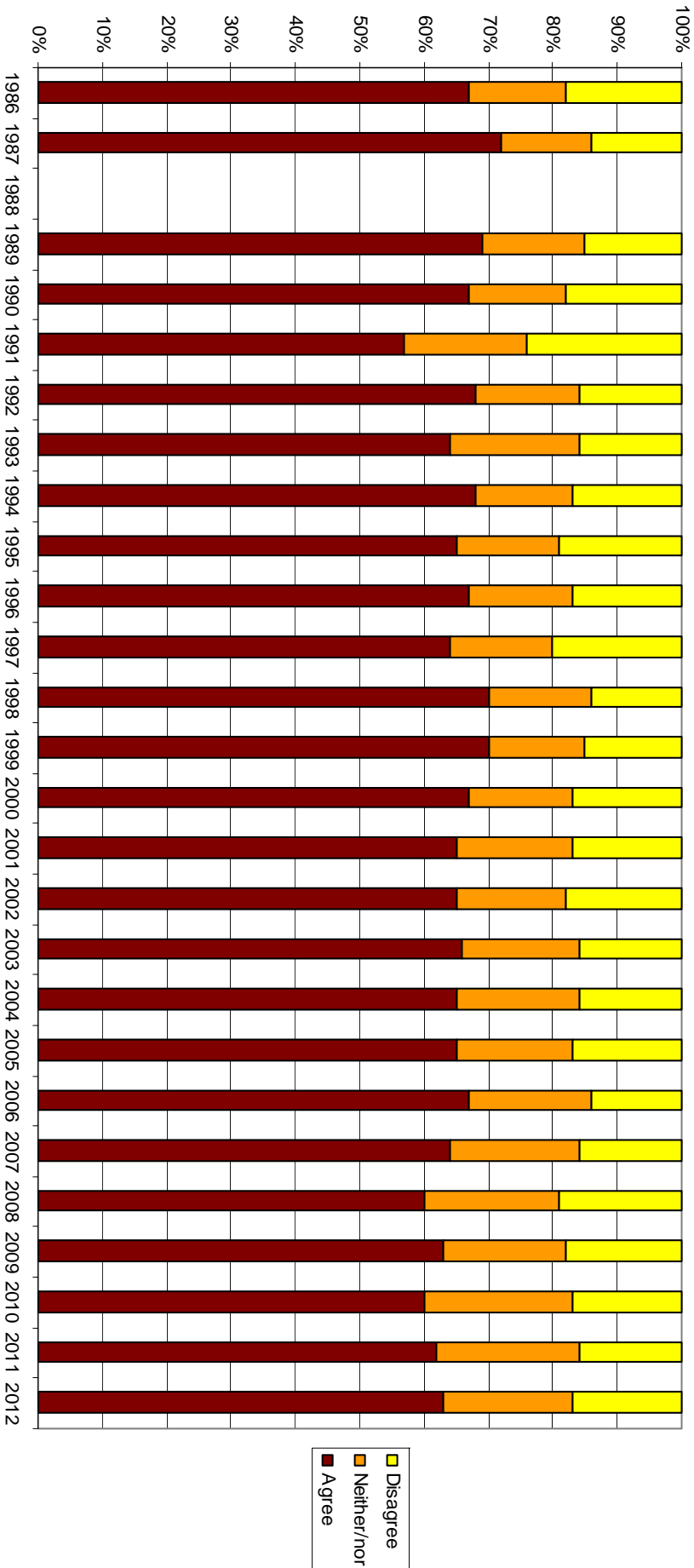
The Chair participated in a Voice of Russia radio discussion about British prosecution policy on Twitter users. The Chair and other council members attended the funeral at Mortlake of David Webb, Director of the National Campaign for Reform of Obscene Publications Acts and a supporter of CAC. An obituary is on page 3 of this Newsletter.

During **2013**, the CAC lobbied: the Ministry of Justice about laws on Public Nuisance and Public Decency and also about the criminalisation of mere possession of "extreme pornography"; the BBFC about its ban on depiction of ball-gags; Norwich City Council about its proposed ban on all sex establishments; the Open Society Foundation supporting its opposition to pre-registration of internet-users; the DVLA opposing its censorship of number plates; the All Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution about sex-workers' advertisements; Ms Miller (again) enclosing the CAC response to proposed press regulation (a version of which can be found on the CAC's website).

The Chair attended a Backlash meeting about restrictions imposed by OFCOM on the content of British BDSM websites.

Edward Goodman

Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards



A DIFFICULT BUT RIGHTEOUS CAUSE!

Since the mid 1980s, the widely cited *British Social Attitudes* and/or *British Election Study* surveys have included the following item using a standard five-level "Agree strongly" to "Disagree strongly" format: *How much do you agree or disagree that censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards?* As the chart shows, generally speaking never more than a fifth of respondents take the actively anti-censorship position.

As suggested or at least implied by both the wording of the question and the Chair's report overleaf, "censorship" still seems primarily to concern issues of a sexual nature. But as I noted in the August 2006 issue of this newsletter, what of those concerned with religious sensitivities?

Dr Nigel Gervais Meek

DAVID WEBB and BASIL STEIN

The CAC is sad to record the loss of two doughty opponents of censorship.

David Webb was an actor on stage, screen and television, and Director of the National Campaign for the Repeal of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA). It is partly thanks to David's tireless, and often thankless, campaigning over the years that we enjoy a present semi-relaxation of the laws against sexual expression. In the 1990s he campaigned against the Customs and Excise when he challenged their use of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 to seize a mass of pornographic videos that he had imported from Holland and declared on arrival here as "for personal use!" Though his challenge failed on a technicality in the Court of Appeal, the 1876 Act is nowadays used far less aggressively than in the 1980s and 1990s. Otherwise, David was a frequent speaker throughout the United Kingdom on issues of sexual liberation, and he stood for Parliament on more than one occasion.

He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in early 2012 and he died peacefully in his sleep at Trinity Hospice in Clapham. He was unmarried and without children. All who were privileged to

know him will agree that David was a good and generous friend, with a fine sense of humour and an endless fund of anecdotes about his main career as an actor. His funeral at Mortlake in July 2012 was a splendidly attended affair and included many touching reminiscences from friends and family. The CAC was represented by Edward Goodman, Mark Taha and Dr Nigel Gervas Meek.

Basil Stein was born in South Africa to parents who were both doctors. He studied mathematics at university and then became a lecturer. A Jewish intellectual with "left-wing" sympathies, he became involved in the anti-apartheid movement and was acquainted with such luminaries as Nelson Mandela and Jo Slovo. These activities made it wise for him and his English-born wife Sheila (who died a few years ago) to move to the UK, soon settling in London. As well as being a member of the CAC Council, Basil was active in the Labour Party and became a distinguished Egyptologist. His funeral was a private one.

CAC Council & others

CAC WEBSITE and MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Since the last newsletter, the CAC has launched a new website. The old one was getting a little tired. It also required a degree of technical knowledge to maintain that none of the members of the Council felt inclined to acquire! The new one is simpler to update.

All material produced since the CAC went digital – newsletters, position papers, formal submissions – has been copied over to the new website and can be downloaded as free PDFs.

The address remains the same: dlas.org.uk. At the time of writing it has received about 28,000 hits which is not bad for an organisation that has been rather quiet – at least overtly – of late.

Would CAC members who have not renewed their subscription please do so.

Members of the CAC council offer their time as a labour of love. The Royal Mail, printers and Internet service providers cannot be expected to be so generous! We also need to know who are our paid-up members for any future meetings or other consultations.

The minimum regular subscription is £5. Our address is on the back page. Thank you.

Dr Nigel Gervas Meek

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About the CAC

The CAC is the successor to the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society that was founded in 1968 to assist writers, artists, and others threatened by censorship, and to campaign for reform of censorship laws.

In 1983 the DLAS was re-launched as the CAC with the object of promoting freedom of expression in all its forms and combating restrictions on that freedom and its exercise.

We believe that the repressive dangers of censorship for adults outweigh any possible benefits, and that what is acceptable for adults to read, see, or hear should be decided by personal judgement and taste, not by the law.

The Guiding Principles of the CAC are:

1. The right to obtain and impart knowledge.
2. Freedom from censorship.
3. Freedom for creative artists to present their perceptions, interpretations, and ideas.
4. Support for victims of censorship without discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, race, politics, or religion.

Further policies guiding the work of the CAC are:

1. Vigilance in defence of the freedoms of information and expression requires continued monitoring of attacks on and restrictions of those freedoms, and of the effects of new technology on the control of information gathering, so that the public may be made aware of any dangers that may ensue.
2. Individual or group privacy should not be used as a weapon in defence of censorship or to restrict free access to information.
3. Reaction to any threat or restriction must be positive and expressed in simple, comprehensible terms.
4. The CAC is and should remain independent of all political parties.
5. Collaboration with individuals and organisations in Britain and elsewhere pursuing similar purposes should be pursued where appropriate.
6. The problem of access to material by children is different from that of access by adults. The principles listed above apply to adults.

Joining the CAC

If you support our work and would like to join the CAC, then please write to us at the address at the top of this page. The minimum annual subscription is £5 or £2.50 for students, senior citizens or the unwaged.