

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CENSORSHIP

NATIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30, Wednesday, 22nd September, 1999 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Present: Ted Goodman (Chair), Dave Bird, Kent Boulton, Chris Hardman, Steve King, Basil Stein, Mark Taha, Mary Hayward. The meeting started late because the Chair's arrival was delayed.

1. There were no apologies for absence.

Mary Hayward had had no reply from Neville Hunnings.

2. The minutes of last meeting were signed as correct.
3. Matters arising.

Basil Stein had spoken to Stephen Twigg who said that he would raise the banning of Rendezvous with Chris Smith.

Mary Hayward had not been able to attend the Liberty AGM. Dave Bird had attended and reported that the only motions relevant to CAC were on internet encryption and webpage rating and on privacy. Steve King said that there were government plans for a de-encryption unit.

Mary Hayward had had a reply from Westminster City Council giving the number of sex shop licences existing and applied for but nothing about policy. To write again asking about policy and specifically whether they favoured concentrating the shops in Soho or dispersing them.

Basil Stein had had a reply from the Home Office about prostitutes' cards in phone boxes, claiming that the cards were 'offensive' and that people cleaning the boxes had been abused and threatened by people posting the cards. Also suggesting that banning the cards would not lead to an increase in the number of prostitutes on the street (letter to be copied to Mr. Goodman and Mrs. Hayward). The banning proposals are in a consultation paper; Basil Stein to buy a copy for CAC.

Mary Hayward had written to the NUJ about listing banned satellite channels - no reply.

According to the *Southern Daily Echo* (Southampton local paper) footballer Matt Le Tissier had already severed his connection with the club that lost its licence before the events referred to in the *Daily Sport*. The *Echo* reports had more facts and less titillation. Chris Hardman phoned Liverpool City Council and asked for a copy of their rules on table-dancing - it did not arrive. Hammersmith Council had made very detailed rules, including a requirement that the girls must not shave their pubic hair (!).

No developments on the Youth Justice Bill.

PTO

4. Chair's Report.

Ted Goodman had not written again to the Dept. of Culture. Instead he would try to speak to Chris Smith at the Labour Party conference. He had bought a guide to MPs for CAC use.

Dr. Evans Harris (L., Oxford E) is sympathetic to CAC but not prepared to be active on our behalf. It was decided by 4 votes to 1 that Mary Hayward should write to all the members of the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport using letters written by Ted Goodman and/or a draft version to be sent to her by Chris Hardman as models. Council members to bring to the next meeting any suggestions for other MPs to write to for support.

5. Video censorship.

CAC welcomes the release on video of *The Exorcist* and some other notorious titles.

No-one from CAC attended the Video Appeals Committee hearing. The Committee allowed the appeal against the refusal to grant 18R certificates to 7 videos on the grounds that it was unlikely that children would see videos available only through licensed sex shops. The BBFC has three months in which to decide whether to dispute the decisions.

Chris Hardman reported on a case in Bristol on 20th July where the judge, having satisfied himself that the videos contained 'no violence, no animals, no children, nothing otherwise a crime', threw out the case. (Defendant's name Chris Mullens, judge Graham Jones).

Dave Bird drew CAC's attention to a website: www.melonfarmers.co.uk/ which deals with the misdeeds of the BBFC, eg. cuts.

Dave Bird to speak to Shaun Hollingsworth for details of any BBFC roadshow to be run this year. Chris Hardman said that the forms handed out at the last series of meetings were all about 'children'. Copy to Mary Hayward, please, and also of an interview with James Ferman published in *The Independent* in the last two weeks. Chris Hardman also asserted that the BBFC shows were a PR exercise, a con and a waste of time. Mary Hayward attempted to reassure him that CAC knew the first two and the third need not concern him if he did not wish to attend.

6. Internet.

Resolved that if CAC has a website, only one contact name and address, that of the Hon.Secretary, should appear on it. A CAC site would have to be so arranged that it could be updated quickly and easily. Dave Bird said that this would take some time.

Dave Bird had given his draft report on the internet to Mary Hayward. Mr.Bird and Mrs.Hayward to finalise it and circulate it to all members of Council.

Dave Bird and possibly also Steve King would be attending a conference on encryption: 'Scrambling for Safety' at LSE on 23rd September - to report to next meeting. An Electronic Commerce Bill and an Interception of Communications Bill were at white paper stage. The latter proposed an offence of refusal to decrypt material and an offence of tipping a subject off that tapping was taking place.

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Internet item to be included in the agenda for next meeting.

7. Membership and income.

Current balances: HSBC current account - £125.18p

Girobank - £94.86p

Abbey National savings account - £4606.83p

Mary Hayward had drawn up a programme for publishing and distributing a CAC newsletter to existing and prospective members. She pointed out that people paying a subscription expected to get something back for their money. The outline of the programme was accepted against strong opposition from Chris Hardman who wanted to approach individual donors instead. Each Council member to make a list of people they thought were potential donors and bring it to the next meeting. Mr. Hardman wanted to know the size of the Campaign's mailing list. He was unable to accept Mrs. Hayward's statement that she could not give detailed figures and gave no reason for the question. Mrs. Hayward to do a count and bring an answer to the next meeting.

8. Expenses - item held over.

9. Any other business.

Ted Goodman is in correspondence with the Association of Chief Police Officers who are planning to revise their way of dealing with obscenity in the light of the Video Appeals Committee decision.

Chris Hardman got in a soundbite on a Radio 4 afternoon discussion programme on censorship on 14th September. He said he got a fair hearing. He had also rung up the editor of *Better Satellite* and persuaded him to take a press statement about Ted Goodman's plans to lobby Chris Smith.

10. Date of next meeting - early December.