

Ted

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CENSORSHIP

NATIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.45, Friday, 16th June, 2000 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Present: Ted Goodman (Chair), Dave Bird, Kent Boulton, Damian Steer, Basil Stein, Mark Taha, Mary Hayward.

Observers - Nigel Meek, Morris Riley

1. Apologies for absence were received from Chris Hardman and John Irving.
2. The minutes of last meeting were corrected and signed.
3. Matters arising:
 - i. Select Committee on Culture - on hold, awaiting Home Office reaction to outcome of Video Appeals Committee judicial review.
 - ii Westminster Sex Shops - held over.
 - iii. The End of the Affair - Mary Hayward had written, no reply.
 - iv. Basil Stein and Mark Taha had attended another BBFC consultation exercise. The majority of those attending were opposed to censorship.
 - v. Mary Hayward to attend the Liberty AGM as CAC's delegate.
4. Balances: HSBC - £211.56p, Girobank - £38.26p.
5. BBFC - decided not to appeal against result of judicial review (against them). Damian Steer attended the first hearing, but judgement in the review was reserved and the decision released later in the media. The full judgement had not so far appeared on the Court Services website or the BBFC website.

The Home Secretary then announced a review of video censorship, CAC to make a submission to it.

Members of Council to write as individuals to Andreas Whittam-Smith, who had asked at the end of a newspaper article (Independent, 22/5/2000) for people's views on whether children are harmed by viewing pornography. Ted Goodman had written on behalf of CAC. He and Dave Bird had sent the article to other organisations.
6. ITC - Ted Goodman was in correspondence with them. They accept that UK TV is the most controlled but claim (focus group finding) 85% of women, 59% of men do not want explicit 'continental type' sex on TV. Mr Goodman has asked them to reconsider their position with reference to satellite.
7. Internet censorship
 - i. Libel - Dave Bird reported that the Oxford meeting been about 'control' in general but did touch on libel issues. The Portia Trust site had shut down under threat from the Police Federation over an accusation of planted evidence.

Note: In English law the internet is treated as publishing. For websites that's reasonable, for user nets and bulletin boards, not. It is thought that ISPs count as distributors. The Godfrey and demon case set no precedent (demon caved in) but there is a chill factor. Demon have produced a document on libel.

Mary Hayward had written to Liberty asking for their support for the idea that ISPs should have common carrier status.

11. Regulation of Investigative Powers Bill - The Federation for Information Policy Research (an umbrella group for ISPs, cyber-rights campaigners, etc.) had been monitoring the Bill's progress and drafting amendments. Commercial organisations were having a panic over the effect on e-commerce.

There is no doubt that the Bill is an attack on dissenting politics and that the powers granted will lead to censorship and self-censorship. It may breach Human Rights law on privacy.

8. Arrangements for meetings

i. Council to meet quarterly unless something comes up.

ii. no fixed day of the week

iii. Conway Hall is OK as a venue.

9. Any other business

1. Review of sex offences - The Home Office asked permission to publish CAC's evidence. We said yes, of course. Ted Goodman to buy a copy of the report for CAC when published.

11. Religious censorship - Dave Bird reported that there had been a report to the Council of Europe by non-governmental organisations (eg. Liberty) wanting stronger laws against religious discrimination (cp. race relations legislation) and claiming that such laws exist elsewhere in Europe. However, he drew attention to French and German anti-cult moves. Dave Bird and Damian Steer to draft a response.

10. Date of next meeting - not fixed.