



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

E Goodman
Campaign Against Censorship
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4 August 2001

Dear Ernie Goodman

Tidying up papers before the summer break, I came across your letter of 15 April which I realise, to my distress, that I have not replied to. I do apologise for this oversight.

The Regulatory of Investigatory Powers Act is primarily designed to put police powers on a proper statutory footing, compliant with the Human Rights Act. It introduces limited powers for the police and other investigatory bodies to obtain e-mail and other electronic information, equivalent to the long-standing powers to intercept mail and telephone conversations. I recall from my own time at NCCL that we always supported the proposition that the police should have effective powers to investigate serious crime, but we wanted those powers to be proportionate and subject to proper scrutiny.

I would also draw your attention to the fact that it is this Government that introduced the Human Rights Act - a measure that NCCL, now Liberty, long campaigned for. As a result, every other piece of legislation, including the RIP Act, is subject to judicial scrutiny. The Act, which is of course based on the European Convention on Human Rights, strengthens the protection in our law for freedom of speech, and I am not sure that your Campaign has given us much credit for doing so.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Hewitt'.

PATRICIA HEWITT