

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CENSORSHIP

NATIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.45, Friday, 31st October, 2003, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Present: Ted Goodman (Chair), Nigel Meek, Mark Taha, Mary Hayward. Brian Seager as an observer. Guest speaker: Carlos of the Sexual Freedom Coalition.

1. Apologies for absence: Steve King, Basil Stein
2. The Minutes of the previous meeting were signed with minor corrections.
3. There were no matters arising.
4. Balances:

HSBC - £486.07p as at 25/8/03

Alliance & Leicester (formerly Giro) - £83.69p as at 22/10/03

Abbey - £4688.89 in 4/03.

5. Guest speaker and Chairman's Report

Carlos explained that the SFC has a small membership, no political affiliations and no funding. Many of the basic freedoms it campaigned for have been won; British society is more liberal (and French less so). Gains have been made on the legal side but the corporate world has moved in, attempting to commercialise people's lives, which makes some members uneasy.

Carlos spoke of local authorities' high charges for licences for events with a sexual content. This affects eg. lapdancers who have to pay to work and then recover the money.

SFC would be taking part in the Sexual Offences Bill consultation. Carlos pointed out that the child porn laws come close to criminalising sexual fantasies.

SFC's most recent conference was held in March at the Round Chapel, Hackney, under the title 'Let's start the real sexual revolution'. It seems the chapel had no quarrel with that but SFC sometimes has problems booking events. He assured us that SFC will continue.

The Chair expressed CAC's thanks and said that CAC and SFC would work together on the Sex Offences Bill. (CAC is affiliated to SFC.) Under the Bill as it now stands public male nudity is criminalised and female not, and there are other anomalies.

6. Members' Reports

Mark Taha attended the SFC conference for CAC. Disabled actor Nabil Shaban spoke about sex and disabled people. Paul Tavener of Censorfree TV described their campaign for porn on pay-to-view and plans to lobby Ofcom. He spoke about 'body fascism' on TV - the limited range of physical types considered suitable to appear.

PTO

There was a speaker from the Liberal Democrats and various more or less enjoyable goings-on.

Nigel Meek is now editorial director of the Libertarian Alliance, so can publish material by CAC and CAC members. He can desktop publish for CAC eg. newsletters. He asked for copy to be e-mailed as an attachment and knew of a printer CAC could use.

e-mail address: gervas @ tiscali.co.uk

Note: party political views must be avoided and unqualified support for censorship is not acceptable - there are other places for that.

7. Secretary's Report

Mary Hayward said that our friends at Feminists Against Censorship had been having sickness problems too and she had not heard from them recently.

Mrs.Hayward attended the Liberty AGM. A motion upholding "the principle of free speech in all cases unless there is specific evidence of clear and present danger" was passed virtually unopposed. However, a motion linking racism with government policy towards refugees was opposed on behalf of the Executive on the grounds that it would upset Liberty's contacts in the Home Office. It is your Secretary's opinion that a human rights organisation that jibs at upsetting the Home Office is dead and she recommends that CAC's affiliation to Liberty be not renewed.

In April she provided a soundbite on Talk Radio about a show at the Riverside Studio, Hammersmith. The show, by a Spanish theatre company, is based in part on de Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. The company has been in existence for 25 years and has performed widely in Western Europe. Mrs.Hayward suggested that the British are still not as relaxed as their fellow-Europeans about sex and when people hear the name 'de Sade' they panic.

Mrs.Hayward did a soundbite on BBC Radio West Midlands about 'sex in teen magazines', meaning magazines aimed at teenage girls. Since her daughters are too old for teen mags and her granddaughter too young, she had to go out and get some. Sex? - there isn't any. Flirting, snogging and fancying boys, yes, but sax, no, except in the agony columns where the aunts never fail to point out that sex with under-16s is illegal. Her opponent rather did for herself by admitting that, by contrast, she hadn't actually looked at what she was talking about. Mrs.Hayward suggested that the trouble might be that teen mags are a relatively new phenomenon and the novelty may be the problem. Certainly the person on the other side seemed to be even older than your secretary, with attitudes dating to some time in the 1950s.

The Communications Act is now law. For health reasons Mrs.Hayward was not able to do as much lobbying for CAC as she would have liked and anyway nobody seemed interested in any aspects of the Bill apart from media ownership. She has downloaded and printed the sections of the Act which are important to CAC and if anyone wants copies - to save wading through a very long document, please say.

TO NEXT PAGE

Mr. Goodman said that Ofcom appears to be a weaker censor than there was before and satellite TV proscriptions may be less likely.

8. CAC website

Mrs. Hayward has passed Mr. Meek some material to use.

URL: www.dlas.org.uk

9. Any Other Business

Mr. Taha warned that the UK Life League is pro-censorship as well as anti-abortion.

10. Date of next meeting - not fixed.