

CHAIR'S REPORT

The CAC Council

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

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Despite the continuing ill health of the Secretary, CAC continued its activities.

The main achievement was the creation of the Internet Archive, which enables the public to read most CAC correspondence and replies since 1986. Thanks for this must go to Dr Nigel Meek, CAC's indefatigable webmaster.

CAC is the successor of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society. It is therefore hoped to add DLAS correspondence to the Archive.

Anyone with background information of pre-1986 activities (because a new Committee then took office) is asked to contact Dr Meek . The Chair of CAC is also now Acting Director of NCROPA (National Campaign for Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts) pursuant to the death of David Webb (the founder and previous Director). It is therefore planned to merge NCROPA into CAC (which will retain its present name and organisation)

The archive will also help Alwyn Turner, an author writing a history of UK censorship since the war and campaigns against it. Anyone with background information should email him at alwynturner@blueyonder.co.uk. CAC sent a delegate to the London "Don't Spy on Us" conference in June 2014. This is reported in more

detail overleaf by Adam Scarborough. In addition, an invitation has been received to attend the Adult Industry Gathering in September 2014.

CAC wrote to the DVLA stating that it should stop banning supposedly offensive number plates because of the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the *COPSLIE (sic)* case in New Hampshire, where it was held that the same practice there violated freedom of expression.

CAC supported the representations made by Backlash against the proposed Section 16 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill, which would criminalise possession of depictions of violence against women (even if it is consensual such as bondage).

In addition, CAC supported the Open Rights Group in its opposition to default filtering of the UK web. Contact was also maintained with Big Brother Watch, Consenting Adult Action Network, and the Sex & Censorship organisation.

Ted Goodman

DON'T SPY ON US
7th JUNE 2014
SHOREDITCH TOWN HALL

Adam Scarborough

It was refreshing to attend this conference organised by a coalition of proactive groups including Open Rights, English Pen, Liberty, Privacy International, Big Brother Watch and Article 19. Other supporters include Index On Censorship and Public Concern At Work.

Despite the number of groups involved they all work to defend privacy, free expression and digital rights in the UK and abroad, coming together to fight mass state surveillance. Right now, many believe that the UK's intelligence services are conducting mass surveillance that violates the right to privacy of internet users and so chills freedom of expression.

Current privacy laws haven't stopped intelligence services expanding their reach into our private lives. Don't Spy On Us is calling for an inquiry to investigate the extent to which the law has failed and suggest new legislation that will make intelligence services accountable to our elected representatives, put an end to mass surveillance, and let judges not the Home Secretary decide when spying is justified.

The conference was the largest of any free speech gathering that I've ever attended. On entering the main building you were given a choice of which meetings you preferred to attend, as the subject matter differed in each.

I attended the meeting in the main hall where apologies were given for actor and writer Stephen Fry's absence. Instead, he gave a short speech via video screen stating his unequivocal support for the campaign and how censorship stifles thought and creativity.

Following this, the first event was an interview with the editor of the Guardian. He gave an insight into problems journalists face, also discussing the Magna Carta and the need for a Bill of Rights. I will confess to a feeling of

inconsistency when he remarked 1984 had not yet arrived.

Each meeting was followed by an opportunity for members of the audience to ask questions which gave me the chance to argue that things in the UK had gone beyond a 1984 Orwellian scenario and if we had a genuine inalienable Bill of Rights, Teresa May would not be able to stifle freedom of expression by preventing an individual entering the UK for the 'public good'. I also pointed out that recently a young man had been jailed for six weeks merely for conversing with a friend on Facebook and I was applauded for questioning how something said in the privacy of their own home could possibly contravene any public order act!

The debate included investigative journalist Duncan Campbell, himself jailed briefly in the 1970s for violating the Official Secrets Act. Another Guardian journalist spoke of the paper's recent problems with UK security services, leaving them with no option than to transfer files to their New York offices where the British government still pursued their inquisition. Eventually the New York Times offered a temporary sanctuary for the files. This debate would have caused dismay to anyone under the impression the UK is an example to the world when it comes to freedom and transparency.

Other speakers followed, but the highlight of the day had to be the final debate which included American digital and security expert Bruce Schneier, Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, and Shami Chakrabati the director of Liberty. A multitude of liberty related topics were discussed.

Bruce Schneier gave an outline of how empowerment of the individual equals less government control and how increasing government control diminishes freedom of the

individual. I spoke with him afterwards and he admitted that the USA, despite its First Amendment, still had people jailed following individual prosecutions. He also spoke of how technology may impede privacy in the future with apparatus that could transmit thought waves. At present this is more science fiction than fact, but the implications sounded mind-blowing.

Jimmy Wales gave an interesting talk on how information comes to him and how the humble origins of Wikipedia took shape from the advent of the Internet.

Shami Chakrabati concentrated on legal aspects of individual digital rights, admitting that the UK Government would love any opportunity to curtail our freedoms and the few avenues (such as the Internet) have come about not because Westminster wants us free but because the technology had overtaken their ability to control it.

This certainly hasn't stopped politicians mounting patronising "we know what's best for you" moral crusades to curtail freedoms that many take for granted. Ms Chakrabati made an analogy between individual freedom and the family unit, stating many UK homes over the

decades had been a murder scene (or close to it) but this didn't result in throwing the baby out with the bathwater, in other words banning the family unit. By the same token, because there have been and will be abuses of freedom doesn't mean that we need across-board totalitarianism.

I managed a few words into the microphone after this event saying that the continued presence of civil libertarian groups such as ours, especially in UK where there is no Bill Of Rights, is invaluable to counter the never-ending bombardment of measures from our government to curtail that freedom.

I recall the campaigner Tuppy Owens back in the 1990s saying a time will come when younger people will get together, fed up with the UK's double morality, meaningless non-interpretation of freedom and hypocrisy. This wonderful event was a sign that day may be arriving.

There will be future events of this kind and for anyone interested in digital freedom and technology, it's a day not to be missed.

Adam Scarborough is a member of the CAC.

EDITOR'S REPORT

As noted in the Chair's Report, the big news this year concerns the progress that we have made in digitising and making available online the CAC archive.

The quality of the documents, all now in PDF, is "mixed". Many of the originals, dating back years and years, were in poor condition in the first place and the scanning and uploading has been a laborious task.

Nevertheless, this is an extraordinary miscellany of documents: letters, memos, submissions, minutes and more.

It testifies to the CAC's (peaceful and lawful) harrying of those who would trample on

freedom of expression and our support for those who find themselves the victims of censorship.

There is more to come!

There has also been a little light housekeeping of the CAC's website, not least an updated history – or pre-history – of the organisation going back to the 1960s.

Wearing my other hat, if CAC members would care to look at unpaid subscriptions for 2014 then I would be most grateful.

Dr Nigel Gervas Meek

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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.

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.

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 £10 or £5 for students, senior citizens or the unwaged.