

**The CAC Council**

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

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**CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair has continued his letter-writing campaign against creeping censorship in this country.

For instance, he wrote to the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency protesting at its censorship of car number plates on moral grounds. He pointed out that a similar ban in the United States had been ruled unconstitutional. To no avail: the DVLA replied, insisting on continuing to censor!

Far more serious was the extension of state censorship on 1st December 2014. By ministerial order the prohibitions imposed by the British Board of Film Classification were extended to on-demand programme services.

The BBFC bans a whole range of lawful, consensual sadomasochistic activities from all films and DVDs (even R18 ones). As a result of the new regulations many British S&M websites have felt compelled to close.

The enforcing body, the Authority for Television On Demand, is now formulating plans to prevent British residents from making credit card payments to foreign websites depicting such activities.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister attended a march for freedom of expression in Paris!

CAC has written to ATVOD, the BBFC, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Culture. Their replies (when and if received) will be described in the next newsletter.

The United Kingdom has the most oppressive anti-pornography laws in the western world. In 2014 there were 5,400 arrests for mere possession of prohibited material. All this despite the 2006 government consultation showing 61% rejecting the need for stronger laws against pornography.

Apart from State censorship, there is self-censorship. Shops all over France are selling Charlie Hebdo. Hardly any in this country are doing likewise - but perhaps they think that their customers can't read French!

**Edward Goodman**

**Archive update:** CAC put in *many* hours in 2014 scanning and uploading archive documents to its website. We covered *some* of the material from the mid-1990s until 2013. But there is much more to come!

## **REPORT ON THE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST NEW ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY LAWS**

**WESTMINSTER, 12th DECEMBER 2014**

**Adam Scarborough**

The government has brought in a new list of sex related acts which are from December the 1st illegal to view online and on any video within the UK. The Audiovisual Media Services Regulations 2014 came into force on December 1st, restricting UK transmission of online pornography which depicts many acts legal to perform between consenting adults.

I attended the well-publicised demonstration against these Draconian laws on a fine December day, organised by sexual freedom campaigner Charlotte Rose.

There was much media interest ([www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-30450489](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-30450489)). Photographers and journalists were abundant. Speakers included Ms Rose, award-winning lawyer Myles Jackman, and campaigner Janet Fae. I gave an interview to Amelia Smith of Newsweek who was clearly sympathetic. But the highlight was a mass display of (clothed) people sitting on each other's faces, one of the allegedly banned acts.

Ten years ago, a near-spontaneous demo on this scale would have been odd, if not unthinkable. Over the decade however, a broad coalition of civil liberty groups has grown increasingly uneasy at the way governments have sought to define and dictate what is sexually acceptable. To many, it appears as though sexual liberty itself is now in the balance. Today's event was not caused by the new regulations: they were merely the final straw, acting as catalyst to the beginnings of a very public fightback. The days of the easy ride on porn regulation are over.

There is no doubt that the advent of the Internet has been a game changer in people's attitudes towards censorship. It's had a profound impact on people's lives and autonomy.

These changes in the law will affect the artistic, creative and above all, personal freedoms of every UK citizen. The UK already holds the

dubious distinction of being the West's number one sexual censor, despite juries proving inconveniently unwilling to agree with the legal establishment when it comes to declaring material obscene.

In 1984 the Video Recordings Act created the first UK State censor of modern times. We are now a big step closer toward creating a series of censors, including Ofcom, the British Board of Film Censorship, and the Authority for Television On Demand. It's not an entirely new approach: but you really need to go all the way back to the 17th century Licensing Acts before you find governments that last thought that State censorship was a good idea.

On a slightly brighter note, the protest coincides with the debate of a motion put forward by Liberal Democrat MP Julian Huppert to annul the porn laws, which now has some albeit modest support amongst others MPs. Arguing for decriminalising pornography is seen by most MPs as political suicide. There have been people like Jerry Hayes' now defunct 'Conservatives Against Censorship', but they were and are rare.

Demonstrating today was loud, flamboyant and outrageous, which it had to be in order to generate attention domestically and abroad. There has to be more like it! Civil liberties and pro-free speech groups as well as more directly interested parties such as film producers must unite in the continuing struggle to protect political, artistic, & personal freedoms.

***Adam Scarborough is a CAC member***

## NOTICE

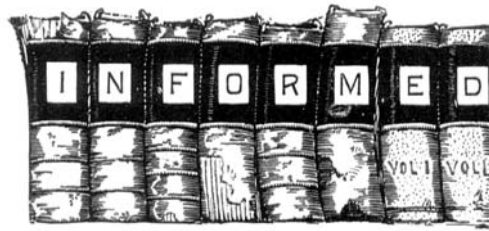
### THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REPEAL OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

On the death of its Director David Webb in June 2012, his Executor, NCROPA Legal Adviser Edward Goodman, became its Acting Director. NCROPA had been moribund for some time.

The following year, in his capacity as Chair of the Campaign Against Censorship, Edward Goodman asked the CAC Council to agree to allow NCROPA to be absorbed. On 28th November 2014, the Council agreed.

**Therefore, as of 1st January 2015, NCROPA has ceased to exist.**

If you were a member of NCROPA and are not already a member of CAC, please contact the Hon. Secretary at the address on page 4 or at [kmmhayward@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kmmhayward@hotmail.co.uk), using NCROPA as a heading.



### **SEX AND GOD: CENSORSHIP'S BATTLEFIELDS!**

Adam Scarborough's report opposite confirms that censorship of material of a sexual nature remains high on the agenda of CAC and the wider civil liberties movement. Indeed, CAC and many other groups have highlighted tragic instances of consenting adults dragged through the legal system merely for disseminating material of and to other consenting adults.

But, as CAC and others have also pointed out, the truth is that the literal battleground against censorship – and cowering self-censorship – is now routinely to do with religious matters.

Anti-censorship campaigners must reject privileging religious views on the grounds of multiculturalism. Religious beliefs are just that:

beliefs. Adherents to them have no more right to be protected from having their feelings hurt than those with secular socialist, conservative, liberal, or whatever beliefs.

Similarly, we must also reject attempts – sadly, rather successful to date – to conflate “religion” with “race”. The latter is inherent, the former is not. Disliking someone because they are (say) black is irrational and obnoxious. Disliking someone because they hold religiously-inspired irrational and obnoxious views about (say) women or gays is something altogether different.

***Nigel G. Meek***

## **CAMPAIGN AGAINST CENSORSHIP**

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### **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.

### **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.

### **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 £5 or £2.50 for students, senior citizens or the unwaged.