



• **The CAC Council**

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CHAIR'S REPORT

Ted Goodman

Orwell's *1984* has finally arrived, albeit over thirty years late. The authoritarian British Government intends to control the telecommunications, Press reports, and internet access of its subjects, i.e. us.

On the 1st January 2017 the Investigatory Powers Act ("the Snooper's Charter") came into force. The British Government can now compel telecommunication providers to allow it to secretly hack the email and telephone communications of anyone it chooses, subject only to approval by its own Commissioner. No other Western country allows this. In Britain, however, Orwell's "Big Brother is watching you"

Control of the British internet will follow. State censorship will be imposed by the Digital Economy Bill. The Bill creates the office of "age-verification regulator" for internet content, ostensibly to protect minors. An amendment, sneaked into it in November 2016, will allow the regulator to block websites. This power is supposedly to be used against those sites which, in the government's unfettered opinion, do not adequately exclude access by non-adults. The blocking will be delegated to the British Board of Film Classification. The BBFC prohibits, even for adults, the depiction of non-conventional (but lawful) sex acts.

Blanket state censorship by the Orwellian "Thought Police" will thus shortly be upon us, making this country one of the minority which prevents unrestricted access to the internet. Most other states have constitutions, entrenching freedom of expression. The United Kingdom, by contrast, is the only country in the world which does not have a written constitution and it shows. Most Afro-Asian, Continental and North/South American countries have internet freedom, but the UK will soon lose it.

Exclusion of minors from websites classified as sexually explicit will be implemented by the potential viewer having to produce adult identification. Each such request and the name of the site visited will be recorded, without any control over how this information will be used or to whom it will be passed. The privacy of British internet access will be destroyed. Orwell's "Big Brother" will be watching you!

CAC has protested about the Digital Economy Bill to Members of Parliament. Details of such communications will be included in the 2016 chapter of its website Archive. Some (but far too few) other organisations have also objected, but criticism and media attention have been deflected by the way the amendment was introduced

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(during a later stage of the Bill's passage through the Commons, shortly before Christmas) and the misrepresentation that censorship will only be used to protect minors.

CAC also made a detailed response to the Government consultation on the future of press regulation. The questions were whether Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, which would create a state-approved press "regulator", should be brought into

use (we said no) and whether Part 2 of the Leveson Inquiry should be scrapped before it could inquire further into unlawful or corrupt behaviour by newspaper organisations and the police and make recommendations for the future (we said no).

It is the old story. The British Government wants to control what its subjects say (telecommunications) and see (internet and the Press). In this country citizens are responsible to the State. In a democracy, the reverse should be the case.

A quick word from your editor...

Belated Happy New Year and welcome to the latest CAC newsletter. Eight pages instead of the usual four. But we have much to report. CAC members have been busy, usually in ways not apparent in these days of Twitter instant commentary etc. That said, a real-time social media presence is something that is being discussed.

And we've branched out into poetry!

In the past few years CAC has relied on members paying their subscriptions without prompting. But we can't do this forever. **If you haven't paid a sub in the last two years then please consider doing so.** Details are on the back page of this newsletter. Many thanks.

Nigel Meek

REPORT ON BLOCKED.ORG MEETING, 28th MAY 2016

Adam Scarborough

Accompanied by CAC Honorary Secretary Mary Hayward I attended the Blocked.org planning day organised by digital freedom campaigning group Open Rights who want to 'hack' the future of internet blocking policies and explore new ways of using Blocked to expose the harms they create. For that, they organised a full day of exciting talks and workshops at the Mozilla Space in Covent Garden. Blocked is exposing the lack of transparency and redress in the web blocking process. This tool has already helped Open Rights show how internet filtering in the UK has gone far beyond its original intent of protecting children from harmful content. The filtering var-

ies widely from ISP to ISP and judgements are kept secret. This leads to non-harmful content such as LGBT rights and business webpages being blocked without even knowing why.

Many of participants worked within the technical side of the computer industry and presented complex diagrams of how the system works. All coders, developers, designers, campaigners and users interested in fighting unaccountable web blocking were welcome to join. You did not need to know how to code to participate and move the project forward.

The day began around 10.30 with tea and coffee followed by a welcome and introduction from Open Rights Executive Director Jim Killock.

Despite censorship not being in the theme of today's talks, the word was recurrently used in each speaker's presentation.

Daniel Ramsay of Blocked's core team then gave an interesting overview of the first year of developing Blocked's technology. The basic objective of Blocked is to highlight and record data which demonstrates what is blocked. Daniel claims Blocked has so far highlighted over 200,000 blocked websites proving their methods effective in censorship measurement.

From the University Of Amsterdam, Dr Niels ten Oever, Head of Digital at Article 19, followed with a talk on using 'Blocked' to challenge censorship internationally. Niels gave details of censorship in Kenya where Bloggers have been arrested for 'abusing' social media. It became clear he put his safety at risk in his international travels to help bloggers. But he added that challenges weren't only from government intimidation, but also economic: the cost for ISP in Kenya being \$4,000 US Dollars per month. In Brazil, he continued, there are different laws in different regions of the country, but there is presently a 'Censorship Bill' going through the Brazilian Government. Niels's travels on behalf of Article 19 also took him to Bangladesh where there are many cases of attacks on atheist bloggers. With a hint of cynicism, he mentioned that, despite the blossoming flower of the 'Arab Spring', Tunisia had a history of assaults on privacy and ISPs and their equipment was owned by the Tunisian government. In conclusion, he added, there were cases of bloggers being tortured, which left the audience in no doubt of the serious dangers involved in his work.

In the UK, as we know, there is no democratic paradigm, and effectively we have state censorship with Government bodies such as the BBFC, Ofcom and the Home Secretary dictating what is blocked. As with the ongoing investigatory Powers Bill, each new law is a precursor to even more repressive legislation, all without prior public consultation.

Before lunch, Bindy, from the Radical Librarians Collective, spoke on content filtering in UK public libraries. The RLC was started three years ago by librarians following concerns around creeping consumerism within British libraries. Bindy's colleague Stuart,

spoke of a web filtering project in which he is involved which asks why the public should be subject to the arbitrary judgement of others, what is filtered/ censored and by whom, some cases filtering even carried out by IT consultancies. Some blocking was political, UNISON being one those blocked at the London School of Economics' library. Some libraries tried to justify filtering what they deemed 'pornographic' or 'terrorist' related material for, despite being adult libraries, the 'safeguarding of children'. Mary Hayward asked whether the local library is held responsible when something is deemed 'illegal'. Stuart hadn't considered on this question. Once again, however, awareness resonating from fear of prosecution is an effective way of governments controlling what we see. I contributed by mentioning the derisory state of my former local public library in Gants Hill compared with the one I remember as a teenager.

Following the presentations, the audience were invited to choose to participate in one of four groups:

- Improvements to the user experience (front end development requirements).
- Research and academic project ideas.
- International uses for Blocked.
- Campaigning and marketing against online censorship.

In my group, interestingly, one contributor stated he'd contacted the BBFC who told him there was no logic in blocking material for the over 18s. I am astounded at the diverse PR within such bodies and how they can alter on a whim. It does show a total lack of public accountability and inconsistent policies from a controlling body that employs a 'psychiatrist' as arbiter of what consenting adults can see and hear.

As the proceedings drew to a close, Jim Killock thanked us all for participating and said the day's work would be collated by the Open Rights team and used to move the project forward. With their new Legal Director, the renowned lawyer Myles Jackman, Open Rights, along with CAC and other organisations, continue as invaluable forces in countering the many guises of censorship.

For the newcomer and seasoned campaigner alike, the Blocked day proved to be fruitful one albeit at an early stage.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENSORSHIP IN THE UK AND WHY UNDERSTANDING AND PERSUASION MIGHT BE BETTER THAN CONDEMNATION AND HECTORING

Dr Nigel Meek

Censorship: The State of the Nation

Since the CAC newsletter seems to have become an annual event I feel justified in offering one of my yearly analyses of what the British people think about censorship. (Spoiler alert: They rather like it!) In this article, I am asking for understanding for people who hold pro-censorship views. Understanding is not agreement or approval.

As before I use the statement "*Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards*" which is followed by a five-level set of response options ranging from "Agree strongly" to "Disagree strongly".

This item has been used in British social surveys since at least the mid-1980s. It's most consistent use – usually as a component of a wider-ranging dimension analysing social liberalism or traditionalism which is interesting but outside of the CAC's narrow remit – has been in the major *British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA)* run since 1983. However, this time I have used data from the closely related *British Election Study (BES)* conducted since the 2015 general election. I acquired the data from that excellent academic resource, the Centre for Comparative European Survey Data (ccesd.ac.uk).

Note that the alleged reason advanced for censorship is "to uphold moral standards." One can easily imagine alternate forms of the item asking about censorship in other contexts.

Let us proceed with the overall results. When asked to respond to the statement "*Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards*" of the 2889 respondents (combining the five-level responses into three for ease of reference):

- 63% agreed to some degree.
- 14% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 23% disagreed to some degree.

This is not an "on the one hand, on the other hand" finding. The British public really like censorship provided that an even remotely plausible reason is offered. Sexual deviancy? Boo! Ban it! Religious fundamentalism? Boo! Ban it! Race-based nationalism? Boo! Ban it! Militant pro or anti anti-abortionist views? Boo! Ban it! But I suspect – be honest now – that many reading even that tiny list will have balked slightly at one or two of the causes. "Well, I support free speech *of course*, but I'm not so sure about *them*..." However, sympathy and support are different things and I return to this in a moment.

Returning to the *BES* data and moving to comparative analysis – such as longitudinal across time or, like here, cross-sectional within the data - to make life more interesting we can look at two pieces of bivariate analysis: attitudes towards censorship by sex (male v female) and by age (17-34 v 35-54 v 55+).

Looking first at men versus women:

- Amongst men, 59% agreed with censorship, 13% neither agreed nor disagreed and 28% disagreed.
- Amongst women, 66% agreed with censorship, 14% neither agreed nor disagreed and only 20% disagreed.

Women are relatively more censorious than men, at least for moral reasons.

Turning to the three age groups:

- Amongst those aged 17 to 34, 51% agreed with censorship, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed and 31% disagreed.
- Amongst those 35 to 54, 64% agreed with censorship, 14% neither agreed nor disagreed and 22% disagreed.
- Amongst those aged 55 and over, 69% agreed with censorship, 11% neither agreed nor disagreed and only 20% disagreed.

Older people are relatively more censorious than younger ones.

The CCESD website handily tells researchers that the results for both the sex and age analyses are statistically significant. Put crudely, that we can be reasonably sure within academic conventions that the results from the sample of almost 3000 respondents is a fair indication of the views of the public.

It is not my place to offer here an explanation as to why female and older respondents tend to be relatively more censorious. I merely report the data. Nevertheless, in both cases the key word is “relatively”. Even amongst the youngest group a majority support censorship. The pro-censorship attitudes detected by the *BES* and similar studies are real and generally cut across sex and age.

Dealing with the Reality of Pro-Censorship Views

I’ve been criticised in the past for publicising this sort of data on the grounds that I’m being pessimistic or even demoralising. I have little time for this view for two reasons. First, as someone with a foot in both camps, I confess that I loathe the increasingly common notion of the “activist academic”. These are – or should be – separate pursuits. It is the job of the activist to promote what they regard as desirable goals. It is the job of the academic to observe and report on the world as objectively as possible even if the results are personally unpalatable. Only a quarter to a third of the adult population oppose censorship on moral grounds? That’s the lie of the land.

But there is another reason that is important from a campaign perspective. The CAC is non-partisan and stays within its limited remit of censorship-related matters. However, a look at the wider political world can be informative.

Take the result of 2016’s EU Referendum. The CAC of course takes no view on the matter. Nevertheless, for many people that the UK’s membership of the EU was “a good thing” was axiomatically true. Anyone who disagreed with this was stupid, mad or malevolent and certainly not someone whose views should be acknowledged let alone engaged with in any sympathetic manner. This is why an awful lot of people woke up on the 24th June 2016 bewildered and wailing “But I don’t know *anyone* who voted Leave!” Perhaps if they had made an effort to understand why millions of people who were not stupid, mad or malevolent were inclined to vote Leave then – for good or for ill - the result might have been different.

And so it is with censorship. For most CAC supporters – almost by definition – censorship is axiomatically “a bad thing”. People who support censorship are written off as stupid or perhaps “fascist” (that catch-all term of abuse). No doubt some are. But I suspect that most of them are not.

Anti-censorship campaigners must be prepared to acknowledge that many of those who support censorship in some form do so not out of malevolence but out of a sincere wish to limit harm. “We must ban internet porn: Think of the children” might be a tawdry excuse used by censorious prudes. Or it might be a cry from concerned parents and teachers terrified of the sexually explicit and violent material that children might obtain even if this material is intended for adults. It is unjust merely airily to dismiss their fears.

In the year after ‘Leave versus Remain’ and ‘Trump versus Clinton’ I end with a simple plea not to assume bad faith on the part of those with whom one disagrees. Because if one does, then there is little prospect of listening, understanding, and persuading them to think otherwise.



IN THE HANDS OF THE CENSORS

Adam Scarborough

'It' was hidden from the eyes and ears of the public
Because of the censors anticipations of what 'it' may do

'It' was discussed in a censored boardroom
In a censored part of the city
to ensure nobody knew.

The censors arrived early in their censored black Limos
No one knew whom they were or where they came
from?

But their vicious purpose was clear
They were to hide from your eyes - the unseeable, the
unthinkable, the unspeakable

They are the select immune few who are able to view
What you would otherwise visualise yourself
Via your own natural curiosity

Who are they
What deemed them suitable to hide
May be older/younger than you
What motivates their need for the incognito research
they pursue?

They go through censored lists
Pondering what to censor first
Contrived reasons to condemn, oppress freethought
and destroy
Selfish objectives to justify their jobs
Repress your right to decide

These unelected Guardians of moral virtue scan and
raid book stores and cinemas
With regularity, to censor items they missed
Don't give a damn for you reactions
Notion of democracy or public consultation
For they care not you even exist
Dwelling on any subconscious fears you've got
A free society or what?

They censor 'that' 'cos they deem it subversive
They censor 'whatever' 'cos it may offend
Couldn't care a toss for an individual's rights and values
Where does the censoring end?

I can't make much sense of this?
Why do I have a brain?
For my own judgement
And not someone else's gain!

Can it be justified to censor?
Your imagination, enquiry and right to show
Who really knows what's being buried?
We shall never know.

Should there be some things to censor?
Maybe you'll say that there should.
But only the censor knows what they are
If we saw what he sees then we would.

Beware of the censor's lies
For they have taken away
Your own rights and freedoms to criticize

Forget variety
Cast your own choices to the wind
Forget your free will (as if you ever had any?)
For you are in the hands of the censors

How can someone you've never met
See what you will never see?
What gives this pompous sperm bank
Rights over you and me.

The censor's targets include things taken for granted
For society's religiosity and puritanical health
Each new repressive legislation is dictatorially passed
Next on the list is democracy itself

Mass Information society
Impressions of the promotion of freedom of access and
speech
Only those who decide what goes public know what is
free
The censors hang in their like a leech

Do they feel we've not minds of our own
They must see themselves as the mother protecting her
child
All this patronising controlling bull
Really makes me wild

To sit back and ignore
While they limit your freedom of choice
And yet more legislation shall follow
'til liberty has not a voice!

For whose real interests do they censor
Surely not ours or we'd know

Just what it is they are covering
In a really free system all would go on show

To those in favour of censoring
Those who feel they shouldn't know
If you don't get to see what's censored
How will you ever know?

One is only curious and has absolute rights to be free
To take or reject what is in front of him
To change his or her mind as they stare
We do not condone illegal acts
But one must be aware

Why should a censor censor
Is it the interests of national pride
To be a totalitarian dispenser

What is it they're really trying to hide?
Then one day at the censors
Yet more subversive items came down off the shelf
To be hidden forever
Whatever it was must have been a shocker!
For the censor couldn't see it himself!

Never was so much, denied for so many
Seen by so few

"Listen, Mr Censor"
I want to come to my own conclusions
I don't want you being a heavy blanket over me

Let me use my own sensory mechanisms!
Let my mind go free!

REPORT ON JERRY BARNETT, EDIE LAMORT AND PORN PANIC!

Dr Nigel Meek

In September 2016 I attended a talk at the Greenwich branch of Waterstones given by Jerry Barnett: tech entrepreneur, campaigner and owner of the Sex & Censorship website (<http://sexandcensorship.org>). Jerry was speaking about his book Porn Panic! (2016, Zero Books). As the book says, it "charts the rise of a new anti-sex, pro-censorship movement. Unlike the old morality movements, this one is focused on the left of politics."

This is Jerry's main thesis. He recounted his Jewish heritage and family history in socialist politics back to the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. He had always associated leftist politics with anti-fascism and freedom and so opposition to the same as coming from the political right. (I reject the terms "left" and "right" but I acknowledge their hegemony!)

However, he charted the rise of a newer form of supposedly leftist feminism. In his own words, whilst the old moralists wielded the Daily Mail the new ones wield the Guardian. At its core is a claim that pornography is inherently a literal assault against women. There are no qualifications to this. To defend pornography is ultimately to defend rape.

The second speaker was stripper and activist Edie Lamort. Edie, an engaging presenter as one would expect, features in the book and read some of her

own words as well as recounting her experiences of the problems faced by strip pubs in east London from a coalition including pro-censorship "feminists", mainly Labour local councillors and some Christians.

Edie argued that pro-censorship "feminists" refuse to believe that female strippers can ever freely choose this work. Instead they believe that they are suffering from a form of Stockholm Syndrome where they have come to identify with their (non-existent) male pimps.

I am sad about one aspect of this. There is some lack of perspective about how their work fits into the history of campaigning in this area. For example, in the book there is no mention of the CAC, Feminists Against Censorship, the Libertarian Alliance or the Society for Individual Freedom. These are groups that have toiled for decades in this area, a thankless task in pre-internet days. It might be suggested that Jerry and associates are reinventing the wheel. On the other hand, they in turn might question what good we have done since here we are, still fighting the same battles. "Eternal vigilance" and all that!

But that is a quibble. Jerry, Edie and the rest are doing good and necessary work and should be supported by all opponents of censorship. And they seem like nice people!

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CENSORSHIP

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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.