



DEFEND GAY'S THE WORD CAMPAIGN ARCHIVE

(DGWC)

DGWC Defend Gay's The Word Campaign Archive 1970-1986

Name of Creator: Various.

Extent: 2 Boxes

Administrative/Biographical History: Gay's the Word is the UK's oldest LGBT bookshop, established in January 1979 by a small group of people from Gay Icebreakers, a gay socialist group, as a community space where all profits were funnelled back into the business. For a period of time it was the only LGBTQ+ bookshop in England. In 1984, Customs and Excise mounted a large-scale raid and seized thousands of pounds' worth of stock. Works by Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Christopher Isherwood and Jean Genet as well as the Joy of Gay Sex and Joy of Lesbian Sex were among the books seized. Directors were eventually charged with conspiracy to import indecent books under the Customs Consolidation Act 1876. A campaign was set in motion and the charges were vigorously defended. A defence fund was set up and raised over £55,000 from the public. Many well-known writers also gave their support. Newspaper articles appeared, various MPs visited the shop and questions were asked in the House of Commons. The charges were eventually dropped in 1986.

Custodial History: Deposited with Bishopsgate Institute by Charles Brown, March 2021

Scope and Content: Legal documents, press and publicity material, leaflets, information pack, newsletters and other papers and publications regarding the Defend Gay's the Word campaign against a legal case brought against the bookshop charging the directors with conspiracy to import indecent books under the Customs Consolidation Act 1876, [c.1970-1986]

System of Arrangement:

The Defend Gay's The Word Campaign Archive is divided into the following three series:

DGWC/1: Legal Papers

DGWC/2: Defence Papers and Compounding Order

DGWC/3: Campaign Documents

Language/scripts of material:

English

Access conditions:

OPEN

Copying conditions:

Photocopying, scanning and digital photography (without flash) is permitted for research purposes on completion of the Library's Copyright Declaration form and with respect to current UK copyright law.

Finding Aids:

Copy of handlist available in researcher's area.

Rules and Conventions:

Compiled in compliance with General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD(G), second edition, 2000; National Council on Archives Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names, 1997.

DGWC/1	Legal documents	1984-1986
	<p>Prosecution and defence documents in the case brought by HM Customs and Excise against the Gay's the Word bookshop directors (Regina v Noncyp Ltd, Cutbill and Others), [1984-1986] OPEN</p>	
DGWC/1/1	Synopsis of Committal Papers	1985
	<p>Synopsis of HM Customs & Excise committal papers, compiled by Gerard Walsh, one of the defendants in the case, indexing (with page numbers) particular documents in Regina v Noncyp Ltd, Cutbill & Others (04 January 1985) OPEN</p>	
DGWC/1/2	Witness statements	1984
	<p>Spiral bound notebook of witness statements in the case of Regina v Noncyp Ltd, Cutbill & Others, by 19 separate Customs Officers, a postal executive, a clerical officer, a civil servant (employed by the Register of Companies), a housewife, three retirees, an estate agent and a dancer/choreographer. Incomplete list of witnesses on the first page, (106pp) [June-November 1984] OPEN</p>	
DGWC/1/3	Interviews with defendants	1984
	<p>Spiral bound notebook of interviews with defendants, with copies of the handwritten interview and typescript transcript. Includes interview statements by Glenn McKee and A S Russell (Directors of Gay's the Word), (73pp) [April 1984] OPEN</p>	
DGWC/1/4	Exhibits (volume 1)	1981-1984
	<p>Spiral bound notebook of exhibits - list of exhibits for both volumes 1 and 2 on the first page, (203pp) [1981-1984] Includes: - Board meeting minutes - correspondence</p>	

- specimen of literature
 - copy of the seizure notice
 - wholesale catalogue
 - schedule of books re-ordered by Gay's the Word after receipt of the seizure notice
 - schedule of pages alleged to be indecent or obscene
- OPEN**

DGWC/1/5 Exhibits (volume 2) 1980-1984

Spiral bound notebook of exhibits, (466pp)
[1980-1984]
Includes:

- correspondence
- copies of invoices
- papers regarding discussions with Camden Council establishing that Gay's the Word was not a porn shop
- Board Policy statements on stocking policy

OPEN

DGWC/1/6 Prosecution witness statements 1984

Prosecution witness statements; includes typescript statements by Customs officers and copies of handwritten Record of Interview documents with bookshop staff. Includes interviews on the day the raid was carried out and witnesses had no solicitor present, and later 'no comments' interviews carried out with solicitors present. Incomplete list of witnesses on the first page, (c.200pp)

OPEN

DGWC/1/7 Depositions c.1985

Typescript depositions including those made by six HM Customs and Excise Officers, five postal workers and other witnesses not identified by profession, (36pp), [c.1985]

OPEN

DGWC/1/8 Statement of Charges c.1984

Copy of the statement of charges from Central Criminal Court listing the offences and particulars in The Queen v. Peter Richard Dorey, Jonathan Cutbill, Charles Joseph Francis Brown, John Alexander Duncan,

Amanda Sara Russell, Glenn McKee, Gerard
Martin Walsh, Lesley Dorothy Jones, Patrick
Michael Mary Hegardy and Noncyp Limited
(4pp), [c.1984]

OPEN

DGWC/2	Defence Papers and Compounding Order	1984-1986
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Defence papers for the bookshop and compounding order (formal withdrawal of the charges), [1984-1986]

Includes:

Defence Papers

- court statement by Glenn McKee on behalf of his co-defendants
- statement of Charles Brown, giving the history of Gay's the Word imports and problems with Customs
- statement concerning advice given to Gay's the Word bookshop leading to the Board's policy not to challenge earlier seizures (based on Charles Brown interview with Michael Mason of Capital Gay magazine)
- comments prepared by Charles Brown on selected items in the bound Exhibits volumes (including comments on Glenn McKee's note on Pornography - volume 2, page 269)
- miscellaneous correspondence with Gay's the Word's lawyers for the committal hearing
- summons for Gerard Walsh to appear with his co-defendants before the Magistrates' Court
- compounding order (27 June 1986)

OPEN

DGWC/3

Campaign documents

**1984-
1986**

Press and publicity for the campaign to defend Gay's the Word, [1984-1986]

Includes:

- two publicity photographs; the depositor describes these as a 'happy' photo for positive stories and a 'sad' photo for unhappy developments (1985)
- NCCL press notice (17 June 1985) on the committal hearing
- Defend Gay's the Word press release following the withdrawal of charges (June 1986)
- press cuttings regarding the case and its precedents and outcomes (1984-1986)
- statement by Sir Angus Wilson, President of the Society of Literature (18 June 1985)
- statement by Gerald Kaufman, then Shadow Home Secretary (21 June 1985)
- list of seized books
- documents regarding the establishment of the Gay's the Word Defence Trust, set up to administer and distribute the approximately £60,000 raised from donations to help Gay's the Word and the Gay Christian Movement in their defence against prosecutions for the sale of books or other literature (May-June 1985)
- the first Defend Gay's the Word Campaign leaflet (1984)
- Defend Gay's the Word Campaign information pack (first edition). This includes information on Operation Tiger (the raid on the bookshop); the bookshop story; the bookshop stocking policy; Customs & Excise law; and papers including The Customs Action: a wider political context and a lesbian response, the threat of Customs law, the aims of the campaign and what you can do
- Defend Gay's the Word Campaign information pack (revised May 1985). Adds further information regarding the seized titles, the first year's campaigning achievements and fundraising efforts
- Defend Gay's the Word Campaign newsletter 'Updates' numbers 1-4 (June 1984-November 1985)

- Advice for demonstrators outside the Magistrates' Court for the committal hearing (24 June 1984)
- flyer for the Communards (Jimmy Somerville and Richard Coles) benefit concert for Defend Gay's the Word, at Heaven nightclub (27 June 1985)
- speaking notes for campaign supporters travelling around the UK speaking to gay groups, trades unions, political groups, etc.
- circular letters to campaign supporters (August 1985, May 1986, June 1986)

OPEN