

CAMPAIGN

AGAINST

CENSORSHIP

PLEASE REPLY TO:-

23 Budgen Drive
Redhill Surey
RHI 2QB
12th April 2008

The Secretary
30-year Rule Review
The National Archives
Kew TW9 4DU

Sir,

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON 30-YEAR RULE REVIEW

CAC believes that there must be changes to the 30 year rule to augment the Freedom of Information Act. A democracy can only function effectively if the electorate is fully informed of how the Executive is working. The 30 year rule impedes this by concealing information until it is no longer relevant to anyone other than historians.

The Public Records Act should therefore be amended so that the period is shortened and the exemptions are restricted to currently relevant secret service work. It is ridiculous that the minutes of the Cabinet Meetings of June 1940 are still closed merely because they deal with Peace negotiations which were denied and subsequently regretted.

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The Access Act in Canada provides for declassification after a maximum of twenty years. Records dealing with the First Gulf War of 1991 have been published there. The same should happen in this country.

In addition something like the US Public Interest Disclosure Board should define exemptions to declassification. That task should be removed from politically motivated, naturally secretive Government Ministers, as is currently the case in the United Kingdom. This board should not include members of the Executive but instead be composed of independent historians and journalists.

Yours,

Goodman

E Goodman
Chair of CAC