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Open letter
From John Bancroft

Dear Tim Tate

So you have joined the campaign to discredit Kinsey's work, a campaign characterised by a great deal of misinformation. Your article in *The Observer* last Sunday adds more. Kinsey did not revolutionise ideas of sexual development, and he did reveal that a part of his data on children's sexual response was supplied by paedophiles. Kinsey did not conclude that children were 'fully fledged sexual beings from birth'; he did not denounce children's need for legal protection; he did not insist that children could enjoy 'orgasms' from the moment they are born.

You omit to mention that Judith Reisman published a book, called *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, followed by media appearances in which she alleged that Kinsey carried out sexual experiments on children. The institute's response to these totally unfounded allegations led to her suing the institute and Indiana University for libel, a case which after four years of major time- and money-wasting was thrown out by the court. As for Clarence Tripp, he speaks neither for Kinsey nor the Kinsey Institute.

Kinsey concealed one piece of information about the 'paedophile' data – that it came from one paedophile, rather than three or four. You say that I have republished both of the Kinsey volumes without qualification or *caveat* about this controversial material. Yet I know that you have read my introduction to the republished volumes in which I clearly stated my reservations about his use of it (relevant section: Kinsey and Children, is on our web site, http://www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/controversy.html). But this tiny part of his huge undertaking, and the rest of it, should be judged in historical context. At that time little was known about sexual behaviour, even less about child sexual abuse. By passing no moral judgements, which he saw as outside the province of science, and by guaranteeing confidentiality, he obtained a large amount of sensitive and important information about many aspects of sexual behaviour. Fifty years on, we are less naive about the objectivity of science and we do things differently.

This campaign you have joined, falsely asserting as it does that Kinsey's work is the basis for modern sex education, is aimed at stopping that education, and misguidedly believes that discrediting Kinsey will aid the process. Sex education, child sexual abuse, and the crucial, related issue of normal child sexual development, are too important to be exploited for sensationalist journalism.

John Bancroft is director of the Kinsey Institute, Indiana University