

From: Graham Bright, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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ACTION ON VIDEO NASTIES

Mr. Graham Bright, M.P., Conservative Member for Luton South, confirmed today that he intends to introduce a Bill - with Government support - to regulate the content, sale and hire of video cassettes.

Speaking at the House of Commons today (July 14) Mr. Bright, who drew first place in the Private Members' Ballot, said "I am particularly pleased to be able to introduce a Bill to deal with a subject which is rightly a cause of great public concern.

"In my view there is an overwhelming case for legislation to control the sale and renting of objectionable video cassettes. The great bulk of the trade is, of course, entirely harmless, and the industry itself is one of the most dynamic and exciting developments of recent years. But, this development has been accompanied by a proliferation of video cassettes of a violent and horrific nature - often accompanied by scenes of sexual sadism - which are grossly offensive to all reasonable people and whose unrestricted availability, particularly to children, can no longer be tolerated.

"The law as it stands cannot operate as effectively as we would like. Some of the worst tapes have been caught

by the Obscene Publications Act 1959, but there are a large number whose content falls short of the strict test of obscenity in that Act; and the present law, moreover, provides no guidance to a retailer on what is suitable for different age groups. My conclusion, therefore, is that the law should be strengthened. Some form of pre-censorship is needed, coupled with clear guidelines as to the suitability of particular cassettes for particular age groups.

"I pay great tribute to the efforts made by the industry, in the shape of the British Videogram Association, to introduce a system of voluntary self-regulation. I think that the likely effectiveness of this system, however, is fatally limited by lack of sufficient sanctions and this is another reason for my Bill. But I hasten to add that the work done by the Industry and the British Board of Film Censors has provided an essential basis for what I now propose.

"The Bill will create a new offence which will penalise a person who sells or rents or who offers for sale or rental at any stage of the commercial process a video cassette which has not been classified by a body designated for the purpose by the Secretary of State. It will also make it an offence for a person to sell or rent or to offer for sale or rental a video cassette in breach of the conditions attached to the classification certificate.

"The Bill will confer a power upon the Secretary of State to designate a body which he considers suitable to undertake the task of classification. This body will be independent of Government who will have no control over its day to day operations. If, however, the designated body should fail to discharge its functions in a satisfactory manner it will be open to the Government to remove the

designation and appoint some other body for the purposes. I naturally envisage that the body to be designated would be the British Board of Film Censors. But I would expect that the Government would wish to be satisfied with such matters as, for example, the Board's consultation with and liaison with the video industry.

"The Bill will also provide a power for the Secretary of State to regulate the fees charged for classification by the designated body.

"Finally, it may be necessary for the Bill to exempt certain types of video cassettes from its provisions. The scope of exemptions which will be necessary is not yet clear but consideration will need to be given, for example, to material of an educational or religious nature, advertising material and cassettes of sporting events.

"I must emphasise that these proposals represent only the basic framework. A lot of flesh remains to be put on the bones and a large number of details remain to be settled. The Home Office will be assisting me in the next few weeks by initiating urgent consultations with those likely to be affected by the proposals."

NOTE FOR EDITORS

The Bill is expected to receive its Second Reading debate during November 1983.