

Robert MacLennan, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd March, 1984

David Webb, Esq.,  
Honorary Director,  
N.C.R.O.P.A.,  
15 Sloane Court West,  
Chelsea,  
LONDON SW3 4TD.

Dear Mr Webb,

Thank you for your letter of 13 March, principally about the Video Recordings Bill. I was, frankly, surprised by the tone of your letter.

In my view, 'video nasties', so called, are unacceptable in a civilised society and should not be made, distributed or shown. In so far as the 'Bright Bill' was designed to eliminate this socially unacceptable manifestation, I accept its purposes. However, I have at all times made clear my view that the Bill goes too far.

I alone sought to incorporate into the Bill the provisions of Article X of the European Convention of Human Rights to ensure that it would not be capable of being used unacceptably to extend the curbs on the freedom of expression which the Convention guarantees.

./...



It is plain nonsense to say that "not one word of dissent was forthcoming from the entire House of Commons". Not only I, but also Mr Brinton and Mr Parris moved amendments designed to confine the scope of the Bill. But you ought to be aware that the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister herself were attempting to widen the scope of the Bill, and that from the beginning it was clear that this was a measure which enjoyed the support of the Government. Indeed, to all intents and purposes, it was a Government Bill. You will recall the size of the Government's majority in the House of Commons.

Such hyperbolic language as you used in your letter to me could be employed in the House of Commons only at the ~~risk~~ of forfeiting any influence over the proceedings. There was never any question of the Bill being rejected. Parliament overwhelmingly accepted the originally expressed intent of its sponsor to stop the production of video nasties. You may not like that fact, but fact it is. Those such as myself who are concerned not to see the erosion of our fundamental rights and freedoms (in this case freedom of expression) have to take account of facts in considering how best to respond to such a situation.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert H. ...*