

THE DIRECTORS GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN
WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS

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Mr. David Webb,
National Campaign for the Reform
of the Obscene Publications Acts,
15 Sloane Court West,
Chelsea,
London SW3 4TD.

26th February 1986

Dear Mr. Webb,

Thank you for your letter of 22nd February. I enclose a
Press Release we sent out today.

All good wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Winner, M.A. (Cantab)
for THE DIRECTORS GUILD OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Enclosed: Press Release dated 26th February 1986

Honorary President: Fred Zinnemann *Chairman:* Barry Chattington
Vice-Chairmen: Michael Bogdanov, Alan Parker, Sue Dunderdale, Piers Haggard, John Glenister, Anthony Simmons
Council: Alan Bell, Les Blair, Alan Bridges, Bill Bryden, Christina Burnett, Robert Chetwyn, Anthony Cornish, John Crome, Mike Dormer, Philip Draycott,
Geoff Dunlop, Jaime Dworin, Richard Eyre, Andy Jordan, Jonathan Wright Miller, Christopher Morahan, Gerry Poulson, Wolf Rilla, Pennant Roberts,
Harry Sanders, Margaret Sheehy, Antony Thomas, Terry Williams, Michael Winner

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PRESS RELEASE

From: 6-8 Sackville Street, W1X 1DD
(01) 602 3725/6191

February 26 1986

From: Michael Winner

WINSTON CHURCHILL AMENDMENT -
THREE VERSIONS SO FAR - LATEST
WORSE THAN THE ONE BEFORE!

Mr. Winston Churchill, in full retreat and knocking over the furniture as he goes, has cobbled together a new version (his third in a few weeks) of the proposed Amendment to the 1959 Obscene Publications Act. The latest version is as absurd as the "laundry list" it replaces.

The Directors Guild - comprising Directors from all media - continues to oppose this Amendment as strongly as before.

In consultation with representatives of the Guilds, Unions, Institutions, individuals and others in the creative community we can find no-one whose opposition is lessened in the slightest by the current Amendment put forward by Mr. Churchill.

Television

Regarding television Mr. Churchill's new Amendment states that in considering any broadcast (sound or television) the Court or Jury, in determining whether it is obscene, shall have regard in particular to the probability of it being viewed or heard by children and young persons.

If this Bill were passed the result would be that we would have 24 hours of kiddie's television on all channels. "Blue Peter" forever.

Our members did not enter the profession of creating television programmes in order to work solely in childrens' television.

No other country in the world imposes this limitation. It would make a laughing stock of British television which is pre-eminent in the world. It would mean a programme such as "A Jewel In The Crown" could not be transmitted because of the torture scene which Mary Whitehouse was at length to attack in a recent television broadcast (Sunday, Feb. 23rd).

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It would mean that hundreds of other television programmes would be neutered to a point of unacceptability. Why adults, at any time of the evening or night, should have to have their television produced for an 8 year old child (who probably isn't watching anyway) is something we totally fail to understand.

It would make the production of television in this country, for international distribution an impossibility. It would mean that film companies and television suppliers would have to make two versions of each programme, one for the United Kingdom where this nonsensical Act would be in force and one for the rest of the world which retained its sanity. This would make the production of programme material an impractical matter financially, and cause great unemployment among actors, writers, directors, producers, and technicians at all levels in the industry.

The idea of putting forward the proposition that anything remotely accessible to children must be suitable for children is preposterous. It could soon be applied to the Theatre, Art Galleries, Books and all other forms of Art.

Books, Magazines etc.

Already Mr. Churchill's new Amendment does apply this absurd principle to any picture, be it in a sex-magazine or serious book. He calls for any picture published (whether it is in a newspaper, book, magazine or anything else) to be suitable for children under 18 unless it is heavily wrapped and labelled with cautions and warnings.

If this preposterous idea was followed it would mean that serious art books and serious medical books (among others) would have to be wrapped as if they were pornography and made unavailable to people under 18.

It would mean that illustrations of Grecian urns, Indian art, and thousands of other famous works of art - The Rape of the Sabine Women? - would be off limits. Anyone publishing such material and not wrapping it up and guarding it as pornography would be liable to a jail sentence.

Commercial art galleries exhibiting paintings would be likewise threatened, the paintings on display come under the Act.

Mary Whitehouse and her supporters would have a field day going round the book shops and Art Galleries of Great Britain instituting prosecutions against items which have previously been protected by the 1959 Obscene Publications Act which meant that you had to show that the items would "deprave and corrupt" the normal person and not the young child.

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Objections

Every Institution in the creative field has damned this Amendment, including the new version of it. The Times in a perceptive leader headed "Mr. Churchill's Bad Bill" says:

"Mr. Churchill's Bill is bad, and no amount of last minute refurbishment in Committee will salvage it. It is unnecessary.... its methods are those of the authoritarian State's policemen. It is a Bill that should proceed no further."

The creative community, its Institutions, its leaders, and its workers have had to gather together, protest, write, and generally waste time attacking one version after another of this absurd and thorough condemned Censorship item. Those protesting against it include The British Academy of Film & Televisions Arts, The British Film Institute, The Film Industry Council of Great Britain, The Association of Cinematograph, Television & Allied Technicians, The Advertising Film & Video Tape Producers Association, The Association of Independent Cinemas, The Association of Independent Producers, The British Film & Television Producers Association, The British Videogram Association, The Film Artistes' Association, The Independent Film Distributors Association, The Independent Programme Producers Association, The Musicians' Union, The National Film & Television School, The Society of Film Distributors, The Writers' Guild of Great British, The British Actors Equity Association, The National Theatre, The Royal Shakespeare Company, The Royal Court Theatre, The Independent Broadcasting Authority, Independent Television News, The Independent Television Companies Association (representing the ITV companies) as well as many individuals such as Sir Richard Attenborough, David Attenborough, Melvyn Bragg, Michael Frayn, Colin Welland, David Puttnam, Sir Alastair Burnet, representatives of the Royal Opera House, the English National Opera, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, John Mortimer, QC, representatives of many of the country's leading Art Galleries, etc.

All realise that with television and picture reproduction threatened in this way it is a short step for the idea to be extended to plays, films, and all other forms of visual and written Arts.

As Anthony Smith, Director of the British Film Institute said recently "It is a ridiculous and humiliating caper to have to explain to Parliament why this Bill should not be passed. If it is we will become a laughing stock as a supplier of childrens' programmes to the market."

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The Directors Guild in common with other Institutions in the creative community calls for this absurdity to cease and for the Bill to be withdrawn.

For further information Mr. Michael Winner's phone numbers are 602.3725 or 602.6191.