

STATEMENT BY BBC BOARD OF GOVERNORS

---

The Board of Governors, at their regular meeting today, discussed issues arising from the portrayal of sex, violence and strong language in broadcasting. The Board expressed its continuing commitment to the maintenance of responsible standards. Governors considered a paper on the subject from Colin Morris, Head of Religious Broadcasting and Special Advisor to the Director-General, and received an interim report from Will Wyatt, Head of Documentary Features, Television, whose committee is currently looking at the existing guidelines on violence and the ways in which these are applied.

In a wide ranging debate, Govenors confirmed their support for creative programmes and their belief that the judgement of programme makers should continue to be informed by internal guidelines which reflect practical experience and can be refined by continuing editorial debate. The Board believes that the application of such guidelines represents a better method of maintaining more demanding standards than the proposals contained in the current Bill to bring broadcasting within the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act.

The existing Act has been widely regarded as confused and ineffective over many years. The Board is concerned that imposing it on the broadcasters would result in its minimal provisions, rather than the more stringent and comprehensive standards laid down in internal guidelines, forming the reference point for what is acceptable in British broadcasting.

The Board re-affirmed its belief that the BBC has a responsibility to maintain the highest standards. It considers this a cardinal concern and will continue to review the issues in the light of research and public debate.

N.B. This statement should also be used on noticeboards and in Ariel.

27.2.86