

THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

JUNE 1978

Price 5p

ELECTION IMMINENT? Action NOW!

"I am very conscious that National VALA is, and always has been, a non-party organisation. However, realising as we do that success or failure in achieving our aims is inextricably bound up with the willingness of a Government to respond effectively to public anxiety and, where necessary introduce legislation, then our strategy must be to turn our aims into election issues.

"I know there are those, both within and without this organisation, who would claim that moral issues are no affair of Government, and in one sense of course, this is true. But, in practical terms, Government is inextricably bound up with moral issues. It is the Government, and of course the public which has to foot the bill for the broken homes, disturbed lives, vandalised properties, and the sick minds which are the inevitable consequence of immoral action. 'As I am, so is my nation' and so the morality of an individual, for better or worse, ceases to be a purely personal affair."

Mary Whitehouse at the 14th Annual Convention.

For full text see booklist.



How would the Tories deal with VALA'S concerns?



Whitelaw spells it out at Convention. See page 4

QUIZ YOUR MP!

Moral issues are election issues and they could decide the result of the next General Election.

We need to know where every Member of Parliament stands in regard to the moral issues in which we are involved.

SEE ENCLOSED QUESTIONNAIRE

- Please send this to your MP NOW —WITH A COVERING LETTER— and return to Headquarters as soon as possible so that we can build up a nationwide picture and nationwide pressure.
- Let your local paper know that you have sent it. The editor will wish to know how your MP has replied. Please tell him—but do not part with the Questionnaire as we need it at Headquarters.

NATIONAL VALA has to do with ACTION! Our initiative over child ABUSE was immensely effective and by supporting that campaign you helped to make history.

LET US DO IT AGAIN.

The Other Parties?

Where do the Government and the minority parties stand?

How real is the Prime Minister's new found commitment to the family?

YOU CAN GET THE ANSWER VIA THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

WHAT PRICE ANNAN!

Since the publication of the Annan Report, March 1977, standards have markedly fallen in those areas of TV programming which are so obviously a matter of general concern, i.e., the treatment of violence, the exploitation of sex, the use of bad language and of blasphemy. It is as though certain writers and producers who restrained themselves, to some extent, while the Annan Committee was sitting, now feel increasingly confident that the Government proposes to do little or nothing in support of 'Annan'.

Nothing more clearly demonstrates both this confidence and the ineffectiveness—one is tempted to say irresponsibility—of the BBC, than the recent series 'LAW & ORDER'. It would appear that the intention of the Far Left group who wrote and produced it was to destroy public confidence in the police and the judiciary system, with all that could mean to the liberty and security of every citizen.

On May 8th, just 12 months after the publication of the Annan Report, N.V.A.L.A. published its own Report 'What Price Annan!' which documented the grounds for our concern.

Copies were sent to the Home Secretary, to the Broadcasting Authorities and the press. The Daily Express (6.5.78) carried a centre page spread on the Report while BBC Radio 4 mentioned it in the 'Today' programme (8.5.78).

Now we need to get a copy of the Report into the hands of each M.P. Printed to sell at 60p copies are available FREE from headquarters on the understanding that they are sent personally by VALA members to their own M.P.

PLEASE INCLUDE A COVERING LETTER ASKING YOUR M.P. TO TAKE ACTION. Parliament was very responsive to our ABUSE petition. They will take action over this if we each play our part.

THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

NATIONAL **Ardleigh**

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COMMUNICATIONS

A not unexpected title, perhaps, for the Editorial of a newspaper concerned with broadcasting! But, this time, we wish to comment on one particular aspect of communication, namely, that which passes between the broadcasters, the broadcasting authorities and the viewers and listeners.

Elsewhere in this paper (page 3) we publish some very apt satirical verse by Peter Murcott, Chairman of National VALA's Midland Regional Council. It needs no elaboration from us, only a heartfelt "hear, hear". However, our readers will remember that in this column in the previous issue of 'The Viewer & Listener', we reported on correspondence between ourselves, the BBC and the Director of Public Prosecutions over the programme "Nipper" (15.11.77) during the course of which play a "13 year old boy (actual age 15) was shown a pornographic magazine by an elderly homosexual, who then knelt in front of the boy, the clear inference being that he touched the boy's genitals."

This programme has continued to be the subject of correspondence between ourselves and the BBC and in his last letter the Secretary of the BBC, Mr. J. F. Wilkinson, who appears to be acting on behalf of the Director General, says that he would "like to think that some of these points would reach readers of the Viewer & Listener. I hope that you are as concerned as we are to allow both sides of a case to be heard when matters of controversy arise." We are only too happy to and put alongside this Editorial relevant extracts from two letters exchanged between National VALA and the BBC.

One is driven to comment upon Mr. Wilkinson's defensive reaction to the Hon. Gen. Secretary's claim that "it really is not an adequate defence to say that the incident with the boy about which we complained was 'honestly and genuinely part of the story'".

The British Broadcasting Corporation is financed by public money and must always be prepared to "defend" its actions and decisions publicly. Not particularly to National VALA, but to everyone, individually or collectively. One senses that the BBC likes to feel that one letter in response to criticism is all that anyone should expect and that to take the matter further is somewhat unsporting or presumptuous. We, like everyone else, have a right to challenge not only programme policies but the BBC's—or IBA's—justification for those policies. If that appears to be putting the BBC "in the dock", so be it. One should add that this phrase is the BBC's interpretation, not ours.

One further point. In his letter Mr. Wilkinson refers to fictional coverage of social problems, 'Oliver Twist' in particular. But 'Oliver Twist' was a fictional character and not an actual boy as in the case of "Nipper". It is the more depressing to realise that even some of those at the very heart of our broadcasting services do not, apparently, recognise the fundamental differences between literature and television.

We are grateful to those who send copies of their correspondence with the Broadcasting Authorities. We are filing them. Perhaps one day we will publish a Report entitled "Dear BBC"—and, of course, "Dear IBA". Keep writing.

Mrs. Whitehouse writes to the Director General

1st March, 1978

"As we are commenting on the D.P.P.'s response to our letter in the next issue of 'The Viewer & Listener', I would like to take the issues raised by the programme 'Nipper' (7.11.77) rather further. We submit that it is really not an adequate defence to say that the incident with the boy about which we complained was "honestly and genuinely part of the story" . . .

Here is a young actor, whose actual age was 15, involved in practices which are themselves illegal. I have done enough television myself to understand how editing can bring together shots which were filmed quite separately, so I am not suggesting that the boy would have been fully aware at the time of the full significance of the shots which are being filmed. However, the boy would very probably have watched the finished product, therefore, one is bound to ask what could have been the psychological effect upon him of seeing himself projected in such a situation of compromise. He is a real person, his friends and acquaintances would have recognised him, and the implications of what he was apparently involved in are very real.

Having been involved, as I have, during the last six months, with boys and their families who have been involved in the production of "boy" magazines I know something of the profound psychological distress caused by having been recognised in such compromising situations. I wonder if such issues have formed part of the consideration of the B.B.C.?

If I may say so, with respect, surely such consideration exposes the inadequacy of the philosophy which apparently permits anything so long as it is "honestly and genuinely part of the story".

Would it not be possible to justify anything on those grounds?

Yours sincerely,

Mary Whitehouse.

Secretary of the B.B.C. replies

20th March, 1978

Dear Mrs. Whitehouse,

I am sorry that you consider we have not entered an "adequate defence" to some of your comments about the play "Nipper". I am afraid that I do not accept that implied definition of our relationship. Your remarks suggest that, despite the outcome of your correspondence with the D.P.P., you feel that you have the right, figuratively speaking, to put the B.B.C. in the dock. If you have genuine programme points to make they will, as ever, be carefully considered here . . .

As I said in my letter to you of 24th November, the author of "Nipper" was trying to examine the causes of delinquency in the young. The play was certainly a tough one, but it had a serious social purpose. In order to achieve his objective the author had to suggest some of the causes of delinquency, of which he regards corruption by adults as one. There have been numerous similar cases in drama and fiction: "Oliver Twist", for instance, and no one to my knowledge has suggested that, despite its realism, the effect of Dickens' novel has been to turn boys into pickpockets. To do so would be to confuse the messenger with the message and that, I am afraid, is what you have been doing with "Nipper". The boy who played the part of "Nipper" was not, of course, in reality shown pornographic photographs or placed in any sort of moral danger.

I should like to think that some of these points would reach the readers of "The Viewer and Listener". I hope that you are as concerned as we are to allow both sides of a case to be heard when matters of controversy arise.

Yours sincerely,

J. F. Wilkinson,

The Secretary.

BRITAIN SPEAKS . . . but anxiety persists !

99.96% of people given a chance to sign the ABUSE petition did so.

1½ million signatures were presented to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street on 18th April, 1978. Later that day Mr. Callaghan said he would ensure that time was made for the Protection of Children Bill to pass through Parliament and get on to the Statute Book before the summer recess.

So far. So good. And we should all be encouraged by this demonstration of the power of public opinion to move a reluctant Government.

Does a statement like that mean that National VALA is politically motivated as several of our members have questioned. Not at all. The FACT is that Mr. Merlyn Rees and his civil servants at the Home Office have been most reluctant to take action over child pornography at this time, preferring to wait until the Report of the Williams Committee looking into the Obscenity Laws is published—in at least two years time. N.V.A.L.A. said that the corruption of children must not be allowed for any time at all and the might of public and press opinion won the day.

BUT at the time of writing N.V.A.L.A. has two major concerns about the Bill.

FIRST it does not cover the printed word which often surrounds the indecent photographs and which stimulate men to child abuse. A letter has been sent to the Prime Minister along with an example of the type of text asking if he will give his support to the inclusion in the Bill of a new clause to prohibit the publication of such text. The P.M. did not reply—the Home Office, in effect, said "no".

SECOND the Bill, in its present form, contains a defence clause which enables a defendant to show a "legitimate reason" for taking, producing or distributing indecent photographs of children. Mary Whitehouse's letter in The Times (18.5.78) pointed out

"Surely the question must be asked—what can possibly constitute 'a legitimate reason' for the distribution or possession of child pornography? It is our contention, as initiators of the campaign against child pornography that clause (a) should be removed from the Bill since it would present defence counsel with what might best be described as the statutory loophole. I'm tempted to add—just imagine what our old friend John Mortimer would do with that!

If the Home Office insists on the inclusion of such a clause then, at the very least, any "legitimate reason" which could be admissible in court should be spelt out in detail in the debate and voted upon.

One is concerned enough that the Bill as it stands does not include the text which so often surrounds the photographs and which so powerfully incites to the corruption and violation of children. But if the defence clause to which I have referred is allowed to stand then the Protection of Children Bill will have lost its teeth and the British people who virtually unanimously back the campaign to outlaw child pornography will feel themselves betrayed. More importantly, they are unlikely to forget that the Government did not dutifully—or adequately—protect its children."

FRESH FIELDS !

"I am proposing," said John Beyer, Organising Secretary at VALA's Convention, "that our members should form themselves into Action Groups according to political constituencies. This is important for several reasons. Legislation depends on Parliament and normally the Parties remain neutral on moral issues and voting is left free for individual conscience. Many Members of Parliament have strong principles which they will not compromise but there are many more who are open to be influenced by their electors and by voting power in the constituency.

"Many of you," he went on, "have already established cordial relations with MPs through the ABUSE campaign. We should learn from this and build directly onto it.

"We are setting ourselves a huge task but I believe that National VALA has

the resources and the capability to make this into a practical proposition. I am available to help where possible and am prepared to come and discuss the practicalities of this proposal with any group, however small. I would like to hear from you if you would like to begin turning this idea into a reality."

Start by filling in the form below and return it to: John Beyer, National VALA, Ardleigh, Colchester, Essex.

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

.....

NAME OF MP

CONSTITUENCY

(if known)

How it was done

by Clifford Meade

On Saturday 11th March a further 1300 signatures were obtained at a "Sign In" in the Gloucester City centre. At the top of the list was the signature of the Mayor of Gloucester who arrived at 10.00 a.m. complete with official car and chain of office.

Considerable enthusiasm was shown by many who came forward to sign, some of whom commented that they thought it shameful that people should have to stand and ask for signatures before the Government could be compelled to act.

Many expressions of support have also been received through the post including letters from each of the five County M.P.'s who are wholeheartedly behind the campaign.

Considerable interest has been aroused by the extensive coverage given in the local press over the last few weeks.

With many apologies !

An irate viewer's protest
Evokes the bland reply:

"I'm sorry that you took offence
At this broadcast; but really I
Must inform you straight away
That many, who have written,
Considered it a work of art,
And commended its transmission.

"I'm sorry that you took offence
At the programme's sexual theme;
For many viewers found it
The most beautiful they'd seen—
'A thought-provoking message!'
Comments one—thus surely proving
That what some call indecent,
Others find most moving?

"I'm sorry you considered that
The dialogue was vile,
Which 'together with the violence
Would inevitably defile . . .'
But with ten awards behind it,
We felt the right decision
Was to show the programme quite intact;
It needed no excision.

"I'm sorry that you feel
Our 'Adult Viewing Time' was planned
'As a haven for erotica
That should be entirely banned' . . ."
And so the viewer peruses on,
Till semantics intervene:
Does 'I'm sorry' show a contrite heart?
Or what, then, does it mean?

Peter C. Murcott: 1978.

YOUNG MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

THANKS !

I was delighted to know that you had so much enjoyed the series. Though I say it myself, I did find it extremely moving, especially in the later stages. We have had an avalanche of letters of appreciation I am happy to say.

Yours sincerely,
Walter Todds,
Executive Producer
Young Musician of the Year,
BBC TV.

CONVENTION '78

"A Responsible Society"

the Conservative View

The Rt. Hon. William Whitelaw, MP, deputy leader of the Conservative Party and the Shadow Home Secretary, speaking on "A Responsible Society—The Conservative View" said:

"But I do not accept that in response to some current event it is sufficient to sit back in a 'waiting for Williams' frame of mind. That is why I greatly welcomed the initiative of my Conservative colleague, Cyril Townsend, in introducing his Bill to deal with the photographing of children for pornographic purposes for which Dr. Denson-Gerber from America produced such horrifying examples when Mrs. Whitehouse brought her to see me.

"At first it seemed that the arguments against acting piecemeal and in favour of waiting for comprehensive legislation following 'Williams' appeared to have official support. But fortunately the pressure of public opinion upon Members of Parliament and the pressure of Members of Parliament of all parties on the Government triumphed and the Bill is now through the House of Commons and well on the way to the statute book.

"Of course it only deals with a narrow aspect of a much wider problem but it is at least a start. So also is the Conservative G.L.C.'s clean up Soho drive. It is sad that in the last few years the area within a few hundred yards of Piccadilly Circus has changed from being the greatly admired centre of the life of a capital city to the tawdry scene of debased displays and advertisements of London's vice racketeers.

"But Cyril Townsend's Bill and the G.L.C. action must be regarded as only the forerunners of a more comprehensive reaction following the Williams Report. In deciding how far such new legislation should go it will be essential to be guided by a balanced approach to a responsible society. There will always be those who regard any action by the State to protect its citizens and maintain standards of society as unjustified censorship and interference.

"Such people regard as antiquated and prudish prigs those, amongst whom I include myself, who believe that we have a duty to conserve the moral standards on which our society has been based and so preserve them for future generations."

(For full address see booklist.)

Published by National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, Ardleigh, Colchester, Essex. Printed by CPC Ltd., Christchurch, Dorset.

"Whatever happened to sex"

Now PUBLISHED IN PAPER-BACK

"WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SEX?" by Mary Whitehouse. Published by Hodder & Stoughton. Price £1.25.

From all booksellers.

Autographed copies from Headquarters.

Essential reading — all you need to know about the ideological and cultural threat to healthy sexuality.

Mary Whitehouse sets out in full her passionately held views on sex and how it has been deformed and cheapened in our modern society. She castigates not only "sexperts and pornocrats" but also churchmen, educationalists, parents, politicians and TV bosses for failing to provide moral leadership.

"How much of her critique is justified? The honest answer is a great deal."

Jack Dominian, The Times

"Her call is not for the creation of a heavy machinery of puritanical restrictions — as her enemies assume — but for an awareness of our situation and our subsequent education into responsibility."

Dr. Edward Norman,
Dean of Peterhouse



BOOK LIST

Unable to be at the Convention?	
Hear Mary Whitehouse and Mr. William Whitelaw on cassette tape.	
Ideal for small meetings	£1.10
Printed address by Mary Whitehouse	15p
Printed address by Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP	15p
'WHAT PRICE ANNAN!' National VALA report	60p
(But to send to your MP FREE: postage 9½p please)	
'WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SEX?' by MARY WHITEHOUSE	
Paperback edition. See above.	£1.25
'Books and Bookmen' MAY 1978	
Mary Whitehouse reviews Enid Wistrich's 'I Don't Mind The Sex Its The Violence'.	Free
Copies available on request.	
Open letter to the Prime Minister from Mary Whitehouse, published in The Times, 31 May 1978	5p

OTHER USEFUL LITERATURE

'Mary Whitehouse' by Max Caulfield (Reduced from £4.50)	£1.00
Research Cards	30 for 25p
'Television Violence and the Adolescent Boy' — Dr. William Belson speaking to the British Association, 1977	50p
Extracts from Dr J. Denson-Gerber's evidence on Child Pornography to the U.S. Senate Committee	15p
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We have back numbers of the Viewer and Listener available FREE but please send adequate postage. Ideal for recruiting new members.

'KIDDIE PORN' a FREE booklet attacking child pornography published by Ambassador College Press. Please send 10p stamp.