

# VIEWER AND LISTENER

## MURDER AND MAYHEM

**T**HE latest Metropolitan police area statistics show that crimes of violence against the person (murder, attempted murder, wounding) increased from 19,637 in 1986 to 33,698 in 1990 – a shocking increase, which demands that we seek to find the reasons for such an appalling situation.

One cause surely stares us in the face and is highlighted by the latest research from the States. This presents further strong evidence that violent entertainment is a major cause of violence and property crime in the USA. At the recent annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, researchers from across the country linked television to 50% of the crime in the USA, and suggested that it may play an important role in teen suicide as well.

Dr Brandon Centerwall, psychiatric researcher, formerly with the University of Washington, presented figures showing that it was the young children exposed to TV violence in the 1950s and early '60s who later fuelled the initial dramatic increase in murder, up by over 100%, and property crime, up by 300% per capita. He showed that areas of the US that received television earlier actually had earlier increases in their murder and property crime rates.

### What is the situation here in Britain?

A new Report 'Murder and Mayhem' published 21st October by the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, details incidents of violence in late evening programmes on BBC1, BBC2, ITV, and Channel 4 between 1st April 1991 and 30th September 1991. A breakdown of these incidents reveals –

- 5 incidents of property set on fire
- 74 shootings with various types of firearms
- 19 incidents involving knives, swords and other weapons, such as a sickle and an axe
- 29 incidents of violence involving women
- much physical and hardware violence including damage to cars and property

The crudity and sadistic nature of much of the violence shown in these programmes makes absolute nonsense of the obligations in the Broadcasting Act 1990 not to "give offence to public feeling" and not "to transmit programmes likely to incite to crime or lead to disorder."

This report demonstrates that the Governors of the BBC, the controlling bodies of ITV and Channel 4 are failing in their duties. They are, presumably, hiding behind what they claim is an inability to *prove* a link between TV violence and social violence.

Such a link can never finally be proved since it is impossible to read the minds of those involved in social violence. This fact serves to underline the culpability of the broadcasting authorities who continue to transmit the type of programme covered by this report. The seriousness of the problem of violence in our society has again been demonstrated by the rioting which erupted recently in North Shields, Oxford, Cardiff, Handsworth etc.

The broadcasting authorities also hide behind the prior warnings given in certain cases. On this we would draw attention to the statement by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Watkins, VC in his (Queen -v- IBA ex parte Whitehouse) declaration (1984) on the transmission of 'SCUM': "The inclusion of material which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to be offensive is not cured by a broadcast warning at the start of the programme. The requirements of the Broadcasting Act 1981 apply, regardless of the time of day at which a programme is broadcast."

The seriousness of the situation chronicled in 'Murder and Mayhem' demands that each one of us takes what steps we can to remedy it. Our readers are well aware of the need to write and telephone (cards containing all the necessary numbers and addresses are available from headquarters for 30p) but it is vital also that our MPs receive a copy of this report (£1 from headquarters). Will you ensure that YOUR MP receives a copy?

## CONVENTION —1992—

*Sorry!*

We cannot, as we usually do at this time, give a firm date yet for 1992 Convention! This is due to delay in the engagements of speakers but we have provisionally booked 4th and 11th April 1992.

Full details will appear in the next issue of 'The Viewer and Listener'. In the meantime we're grateful for your patience.

## Ignoring REALITY

**B**Y dismissing our complaint against the gross violence and racism in 'SCUM' the Broadcasting Standards Council has, in effect, set a new low in acceptable TV violence and racism for producers. As we said in our letter to Mr. Duke Hussey, Chairman of the BBC: "The type of violence shown – snooker balls in socks, iron bars, razor blades, the atmosphere of cruelty, of racism – makes one ask how the screening of such material could ever be justified?"

The BBC's excuse for transmitting the play is nothing more or less than the usual intellectual claptrap with which it justifies all its excesses. The pity is that the BSC has fallen for it. Sadly it has to be said that the watchdog which Parliament intended the BSC to be has little bite.

Research shows that many children with TV sets in their own bedrooms will have watched the play, but that is the kind of reality which sadly the BSC and the BBC fail to take into account.

# THE AUTUMN 1991 VIEWER AND LISTENER

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## TIME TO UPHOLD!

**T**HE Broadcasting Act 1990 gave statutory status to the Broadcasting Standards Council from 1st January 1991. Whilst this important development is welcome, the performance of the BSC, so far, has been very disappointing despite the very promising public statements made by Lord Rees-Mogg, the Council's Chairman. Out of 1,276 complaints from the public about programmes received this year up to 16th October, only a mere handful have been upheld, and, as members may well be aware, our complaint against the transmission by BBC2 of the sadistically violent, racist play 'SCUM' was *not* upheld. (See front page, Ignoring Reality)

Mr. Kenneth Baker MP, the Home Secretary, speaking at National VALA's Annual Convention, 23rd March 1991, declared that "the adjudication on complaints from viewers and listeners will become one the Council's *most important functions . . . the force of public opinion cannot be ignored*" (our emphasis). It is obvious from the number of complaints that there is considerable public dissatisfaction with the broadcasting services. A survey carried out by MORI for the National Consumer Council in March 1990 bears this out. Over 50% of those asked felt that they do not receive value for money from the broadcasting authorities or feel that their complaints are listened to.

Since the Broadcasting Standards Council has been established, standards of taste and decency in numerous programmes have significantly deteriorated. The BSC seems to be having the opposite effect of that intended by the Government and hoped for by those who were its inspiration.

The Broadcasting Act removed the exemption of broadcasting from the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act. Whilst this is welcome, it still leaves intact this unsatisfactory law *which can control only the most extreme material*. Other long standing provisions (The Television Act 1954) on taste and decency and offending public feeling seem to have little bearing on programme content. This means that ever more explicit sexual and violent material, which is well short of the most extreme, is now becoming commonplace on British television. *Without effective law this situation can only worsen.*

Since the Director of Public Prosecutions can find "*insufficient evidence*" to prosecute the ITC for allowing transmission of 'Sex and the Censors', which contained a compendium of cuts made by the British Board of Film Classification, including the vicious gang rape and murder scenes from 'Death Wish II' and other scenes of sexual mutilation, and the film 'WR - Mysteries of the Organism' which included very explicit scenes of sexual intercourse, the future for Broadcasting in Britain - and the long suffering public - looks very bleak indeed.

THE CASE FOR NEW LAW ON OBSCENITY, IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, IS OVERWHELMING.

## SHOCKS AT

"I SHALL report you to the Commissioner!" shouted the single opposing voice at one of National VALA's fringe meetings at Blackpool last October. This was directed at Supt. Michael Hames, head of the Obscene Publications Department at New Scotland Yard, who was our Guest Speaker. Supt. Hames smiled at his accuser, pointing out that Mrs. Whitehouse had written to Sir Peter Imbert, requesting permission for him to speak at the meeting. In his reply the Commissioner had expressed his pleasure at the "important opportunity" being given to one of his staff.

At the commencement of each meeting under the Chairmanship of Jim Bradshaw, Chairman of the Wirral branch of National VALA, we showed an eight minute video, which John Beyer had edited - "with considerable difficulty" he says - of extracts from the two Channel 4 films 'Sex and the Censors' and 'WR - Mysteries of the Organism'.

We had reported these two films to New Scotland Yard who brought them to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions. He refused to prosecute, presumably because, as we have emphasised elsewhere, the obscenity law is not strong enough to secure a successful prosecution, even against material as obscene as these films.

The shocked expressions on the faces of the audience as they watched the scenes of simulated sexual mutilation and gang rape and their remarks afterwards underlined the horror which these short extracts had aroused.

In her address, Mrs. Whitehouse said that "unless the Government takes decisive action now to tighten up the present obscenity law, the outlook

## ALIEN TO T

**O**N the 23rd August, Mrs. Whitehouse wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hume, Rev. Ronald Hoar, President of the Methodist Conference and to Rev. David Coffey, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain alerting them to the intention of the BBC to show 'The Last Temptation of Christ' in its Autumn schedules. The film shows Jesus being assailed by serpents which he is told have come from inside him. He says 'Lucifer is inside me'. He is depicted as being weak, fearful and confused, not knowing the difference between the voice of God and that of the devil. Jesus is shown hallucinating on the cross. The devil comes to him in the shape of a beautiful girl masquerading as a guardian angel. He fails to perceive the deception and follows her.

The film depicts Jesus making love to Mary Magdalene to whom he is married, but Mary, the sister of Lazarus is also pregnant by him, and Martha too has children by him. Jesus is shown to be an adulterer.

The film shows Jesus behaving in a way that denies his own teaching on adultery. In fact Jesus is made to say of himself 'I am a liar, I am a hypocrite'. Even without the scenes of lovemaking and adulterous behaviour, such words put into the mouth of Jesus cause deep offence and are contrary to Christian belief.

The President of the Methodist Church wrote to Mr. Michael Checkland, Director General of the BBC, expressing his concern and urging the BBC to "think again about the adverse affects that are likely if this film is put in to your Autumn schedules."

In the absence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. Paul Handley, his Secretary for Broadcasting, Press and Communications,

# T THE FRINGE!

will be very grim indeed. The bringing of broadcasting under the obscenity law was very welcome in theory but until the law is itself made effective then no good will come of it. The law as it now stands means that the DPP himself refuses to act over a programme like 'From Wimps to Warriors' with its sado-masochism and bondage practices shown in considerable detail. She went on "The behaviour of the BBFC compounds the problem. It gave an 18 certificate with no cuts to the Japanese film 'In the Realm of the Senses' with its graphic shots of full sexual intercourse, oral sex, a man ejaculating and a woman inserting an egg into her vagina. The film ended with the woman carrying the severed genitals of the lover she has just murdered."

On a more optimistic note, Mrs. Whitehouse referred to a letter she had received from the Prime Minister in which he stated that he shares entirely her Association's concern about the impact of pornography upon society, and states his and the Government's willingness to support private members' legislation to tighten up the law. However, he fails to reassure us that the Government itself will initiate any action. Yet there can be no doubt that, bearing in mind the link between pornography and child abuse and sexual violence, there would be enormous public support for such an initiative, particularly in the run-up to an election.

It is worth recording also that the Labour leadership is adopting a most casual and uncaring stance in the matter as witness the fact that neither Neil Kinnock nor Roy Hattersley has even replied to our letters.

It was obvious that many people had been deeply moved by what they had seen and heard and stopped to collect COP forms from the bookstall which was so effectively manned by Kay and Steve Stevens - refreshed, one hopes, by the tea and biscuits served by local members for which many thanks.

See also: NO POWER OF ARREST back page.

# THE GOSPELS

wrote that he was "convinced that the best form of action is for viewers to avoid BBC2 on the evening the film is shown, perhaps not just for that film but for the whole evening. Hopefully, low audience figures will convince where arguments of artistic taste and religious sensibility have failed."

Both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland have left the BBC in no doubt about their concern over this matter.

Cardinal Hume in a letter to us made clear his own view that the film was bound to cause considerable offence with a portrayal of Jesus Christ which is so alien to that of the Gospels.

Rev. Coffey, in his reply said that he would be writing to the BBC and would be "using what other means I have at my disposal to ensure that they realise that the broadcasting of that film is liable to give offence to Christians in the United Kingdom."

Will any of our readers, who have not yet written to Mr. Hussey, please do so as soon as possible. We thought this extract from a letter from one of our members will inspire action!

"The proposed showing of the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' by BBC2 has brought a great response from our church members. Many have written to Mr. Marmaduke Hussey, Chairman of the BBC, but after receiving the very unsatisfactory standard reply, some have also written to their MPs and the Bishop of Liverpool, who is Chairman of the Central Religious Advisory Council, which advises the BBC and Independent Television on religious matters. One person wrote to Her Majesty the Queen as Defender of the Faith. Others alerted friends and family around the country."

## STOP PRESS

THE BBC ANNOUNCED ON 2nd NOVEMBER 1991 THAT PLANS TO SHOW THIS FILM HAVE BEEN DROPPED! WELL DONE EVERYONE!

# False Images

A new book "Telling the Truth about Pornography" by Nigel Williams. Available from bookshops or CARE, 53 Romney Street, London SW1. Price £5.99

THE argument that there is no *proof* that there is a link between pornography and sexual crime is the never ending defence of those who oppose any tightening up of the obscenity laws. Along with that goes the claim constantly used by those - especially the BBC and ITV - that there is no *proof* of a link between what is seen on the TV screen and human behaviour.

It all depends, of course, on what one means by *proof*. The truth is that we can never see into the human mind and therefore our conviction has to be based on common sense and human experience which tells us that, *of course*, we are affected for better or worse, by what we read and see.

So what can be done about the growing menace of pornography? Nigel Williams' timely book 'False Images' will be an enormous help to those who, for the sake of all of us, and especially the children, want to do something about this menace which so despoils the lives of all of us to a greater or lesser extent.

The details of organisations and groups already involved in the fight to purify the airwaves and the bookstalls are invaluable. I was particularly struck with Nigel Williams' chapter 'A Practical Response' in which he says "Individual letters or a petition can help, but it is important that these do not concentrate on the moral aspect of pornography as the legislation does not allow that to be taken into account in decisions by the council. A letter which says, 'I think that the location of the sex shop at 24 Porn Lane is highly unsuitable because it is close to local schools and my house,' is worth far more than a letter saying "pornography is evil, wicked and condemned in the Bible."

No one reading and digesting this book can ever again say "But what can I do" - all the answers are here.

## CHRISTIAN TELEVISION NETWORK

PAUL GEDDES, Founder of Christian Television Network has, in joining National VALA, written to ask whether we would like at some stage "to provide a regular programme on issues dealt with by VALA."

In his letter he says that "By the end of this year cable will have passed nearly 2 million homes, by next year 5 million, and within 4-5 years two thirds of the country will be passed by cable. CTN will be available to all subscribers at no extra cost. We are working with churches and organisations to encourage new subscribers - this is very attractive to the operators."

We have replied saying that we would be delighted to help.

# BOOKSHELF

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The Home Secretary £2.00p
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# NO POWER OF ARREST

by Supt. Michael Hames of New Scotland Yard

I am grateful to the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association for inviting me to address this meeting once again. This annual fixture affords the Head of the Obscene Publications Branch an opportunity to update the public on the current state of the issues with which we are dealing. This is now the sixth consecutive year that my predecessors and I have contributed in this way.

The work of the Obscene Publications Branch has changed quite significantly over the past few years. As you may know, most of our efforts are now directed against people whose preferred sexual objects are children i.e. paedophiles.

Paedophiles have well developed techniques in obtaining victims. They are skilled at identifying vulnerable children, they identify with children, they seek access to children by means of their jobs or part-time interests and are skilled at manipulating them.

Probably the most important characteristic, however, from an investigators standpoint, is the way in which they are driven to collect photographs and pictures of children. Many of them may be apparently innocent.

They collect erotica of this sort, which includes published and unpublished material relating to children, pictures, photographs and videotapes.

They also collect what is often termed child pornography. I don't particularly like that term - 'kiddie porn' is even worse, because it detracts from the true horror of what is recorded. It actually amounts to serious sex offences on children recorded on film or photograph.

The police were relieved when possession of indecent photographs of children was made an offence in 1988 under the Criminal Justice Act, because it was a recognition of the true nature of this material, enabling police to break into the cycle of offending.

Imagine the frustration of having to hand this material back to possessors prior to this piece of legislation!

However, the maximum sentence for this offence in the UK is a fine of £2,000. Dealing with the offence by way of a fine is totally and utterly irrelevant. It is an obsessive crime and we know that it is a precursor and an adjunct to 'hands-on' abuse.

The police also need to be given a power of arrest where a person is suspected of being in possession of indecent material involving children, with intent to supply and distribute it.

With a few listed exceptions, an offence is not 'arrestable' unless it carries a sentence of 5 years imprisonment or more.

Therefore, a suspect can just walk away and warn other offenders before we have a chance to act on the information we often observe at a scene when we execute a warrant. A power of arrest would also give us power to take fingerprints which would tend to prove or disprove the offence.

A three or four line amendment to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act which would have made it an arrestable offence was laid at the Committee Stage of the recent Criminal Justice Bill. However, I understand that the Parliamentary Clerks decided that the legislation was inappropriate because it dealt with sentencing and not powers of arrest.

We therefore have to wait, but I wonder how long it will take for this important but minor amendment to be made?

Incidentally, we also do not have power to stop and search anyone who we believe may be in possession of indecent material.

These are some of the concerns we have currently in our field of work and I hope that they can be addressed soon. Our aim is to protect children.