

THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

JANUARY 1978

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LAW - THE LAST RESORT?

Extract from a letter to:

Lady Plowden

Chairman of the Board of Governors, I.B.A.

11th November, 1977

The producer's claim that the programme "Dummy" would extend viewers' understanding was in our view an arrogant assumption — in the event the compassion and tenderness which we should have felt for the profoundly deaf Sandra was completely swamped by the repulsion one felt for the terrible and obscene violence of the programme itself. The I.B.A. believe, according to the "advice" given to programme makers, that sadistic violence is unacceptable; the use of every day objects in violent exchanges is to be avoided. Yet kitchen knives and razors were used in several dreadfully violent exchanges, and the violence to which Sandra was subjected was sadistic in the extreme.

The language, too, was upon occasion quite obscene. All this after Annan.

WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT THE TRANSMISSION OF THE PROGRAMME VIOLATED NOT ONLY THE BOUNDS OF COMMON DECENCY, BUT ALSO THE TELEVISION ACT AND WE ARE ASKING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

LEADERSHIP

"If we abandon the Christian doctrine of loving our neighbour and the personal responsibility of each individual for his actions, we shall most certainly revert to a state of jungle warfare.

"Hate will replace love, the gang will terrorise the individual and violence will take the place of reason, and expediency will be the only criterion for decisions.

"Any remotely objective estimate of what life is actually going to be like in the year 2000, as opposed to mere prophecies of doom, depends to a very large extent on the assessment of the ethical, moral and spiritual values which people are likely to adopt."

H.R.H. Prince Philip

JIMMY'S SPECIAL AWARD

Television personality Jimmy Savile was presented with the National VALA award together with a specially made silver medallion in recognition of his general social work.

At a lunch at the R.A.F. Club, Piccadilly, Mrs. Whitehouse said: "We always try to give the annual Award to a programme which breaks new ground and is presented in a responsible manner.

"This is the first time we have ever given a medallion, but Jim does so much good, we thought it appropriate." The medallion carried the words "We'll fix it for Jim".

Jimmy, wearing a track suit and running shoes, said he believed the programme reflected good times, happiness and dreams.

"It goes to show that happiness is not necessarily connected with the sordid side of life.

"While Mrs. Whitehouse possibly wouldn't agree with my personal life-style, it is through organisations like hers that there is some semblance of decency."

Extract from letter to:

Mr. Ian Trethowan

Director General of the BBC

16th November, 1977

"May I ask whether it is now considered policy for the BBC to allow the transmission of 'four-letter words', as happened during 'Panorama'? (4.11.77). Producers must know that by allowing such language they 'cock-a-snoop' at the law since using obscenities in a public place is actionable. Would you please clarify your position as Director General to the transmission of such obscenities? And are they transmitted with the approval of the Governors of the BBC?"

"During the course of the play 'Nipper' a 13-year-old boy was shown a pornographic photograph as stimulation towards what was obviously indecent behaviour by an elderly pervert. I SHOULD TELL YOU THAT WE ARE TODAY ASKING THE D.P.P. TO INVESTIGATE THIS SEQUENCE SINCE IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE USE OF A MINOR IN SUCH A WAY COULD BE A CRIMINAL OFFENCE."



Left to right: Peter Campbell, Jimmy Savile, OBE, Mrs. Whitehouse, Charlotte Standing, Roger Ordish, and Rupert Standing

THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

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What Price Annan?

To say that we have been disappointed with certain aspects of BBC and ITV programming since Annan reported, is to understate our feelings. Disillusioned would be a better word. The time and money put into Annan would appear to be time and money wasted.

It goes without saying that much broadcasting is of a high order, but in three areas particularly noted by Annan — violence, sex and bad language — the record has been so bad that one is tempted to suggest that the violence and foul language of the BBC's series "Target", the "Panorama" programme (BBC 1) on football hooliganism, the dramatised documentaries "Nipper" (BBC 1), "Billy" and "Dummy" (ITV network), amount to a gesture of almost total contempt to the Annan Committee, to Parliament and to public feeling—not to mention to the work of Dr. William Belson on "Television Violence and the Adolescent Boy".

The justification for these programmes was that they looked at the emotional problems surrounding delinquent, socially deprived, boys and a profoundly deaf girl. Such was the impact of the violence and obscenities of these programmes that the viewers' reaction, as far as we were able to judge, was not one of tender compassion and understanding but of revulsion and anger — not against those aspects of society which the producers claimed were creating the problems with which such people have to contend, but against the affront of obscene language and the nature of the TV violence itself.

"Target", strongly criticised by reviewers, portrayed the forces of law and order in sadistically violent activities; the status given to the football gangs in "Panorama" and particularly to the character "Jimmy" could be in our view nothing but counterproductive in terms of finding a solution to football violence; (Mr. Denis Howell, Minister of Sport, described the programme as "The most irresponsible seen for a very long time".)

That the transmission of these programmes grossly violated the Independent Television Act which controls Independent Television there can be no doubt. That the transmission of the series "Target" and the Play for Today "Nipper" violated the SPIRIT of the Television Act which the Governors of the BBC committed themselves to observe, there can be no doubt either.

And one's faith in the seriousness with which the BBC and ITV regard Annan is not deepened when, for instance, Sir Michael Swann, Chairman of the BBC, in his defence of the "Panorama" programme claimed that the problem lies with the "message" not with the "messenger". With respect, the message is already well known — it is the role of the messenger which raises so many questions!

When the Williams Committee was set up by the Home Office to look into the functioning of the Obscenity Laws and of film Censorship, National VALA claimed that broadcasting, also, should have been included. Not so, said the Home Secretary — Annan had recommended that such controls are unnecessary and that the responsibility for broadcasting

Obituary

JOHN BARNETT O.B.E.

It is with the greatest regret that we announce the death of Mr. John Barnett OBE formerly Chief Constable of Lincolnshire and first President of National VALA.

In the autumn of 1963 the Police Committee of Lincolnshire, and in particular the Holland Committee, were extremely concerned about the increase in crime, especially juvenile crime, in the county and believed that the kind of BBC plays being shown at that time was partly responsible.

During the following months records were kept of instances where there were clear grounds for believing that children had been influenced by television. Other Chief Constables were circularized and asked whether they had information which might be incorporated in a memorandum. Nearly every Chief Constable approached produced some evidence and a

document was prepared and laid before the BBC. Mr. Barnett expressed his great astonishment and disappointment when this piece of research was rejected by the Corporation on the grounds that its findings were of no significance.

It was then that Mr. Barnett joined forces with the Clean-Up TV Campaign and when National VALA was formed he became its first President.

Shortly afterwards he was called to the Home Office by the then Home Secretary Mr. Roy Jenkins, who put him under considerable pressure to make him withdraw from his position as President. This he would not do in spite of the implied threat to his professional prospects.

John was a great friend and a good and courageous man. We shall miss his wisdom and encouragement and send our love and sympathy to his wife Kathleen and his family.

AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE

THE WILLIAMS COMMITTEE invites comments and advice on the present state of the Obscenity Laws and film censorship. It is not necessary to be an *expert* to have an opinion about the present state of affairs in both these fields.

Write to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. John Davey, at the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AT.

HAVE YOU TOLD YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER OF YOUR MP'S RESPONSE TO CHILD PORNOGRAPHY? If we have his reply do not worry. Your local editor will contact him direct and enquire.

More petitions are available — please make sure that every person, every last house, church, shop, factory, organisation has the opportunity to sign.

standards should remain with the broadcasting Authorities.

The Home Office cannot have it all ways. If it bases its policy on the assumption that Annan was right in this regard then it has an overriding responsibility to ensure that Annan's recommendations in terms of broadcasting standards are adhered to. And in this it has failed.

The Government has one simple duty. It is to present, powerfully, public anxiety directly to the Broadcasting Authorities and ensure that they respond accordingly. Otherwise, with its own hand, it opens the door to cultural anarchy — financed by the powerless viewer and listener!

A. B. U. S. E.

Not for the first time, a National campaign was launched through the pages of the Viewer & Listener. National V.A.L.A. members have responded magnificently by taking up the campaign with great enthusiasm all over the country. We are very grateful for the replies received from letters sent to M.P.s, almost a 100 percent of whom have expressed concern about the problem.

However, many of you will have seen the reply sent to M.P.s by Mr. Brynor John, Secretary to State at the Home Office. He claims that "The Home Secretary has no evidence of the existence of any significant problem which the law is at present inadequate to cope with".

As a result of public anxiety — not least as a result of the "Tonight" programme — the first question to the Home Secretary in this new session of Parliament concerned the action he proposed to take to deal with child pornography. Mr. Rees replied: "I share the revulsion of most people at the use of children in pornography. Although the Williams Committee is already reviewing the laws on obscenity, I am looking at the particular problem of child pornography to see whether there are any aspects in which the law needs to be strengthened before the committee reports."

Mr. William Whitelaw, Shadow Home Secretary (15.11.77) has challenged the Government not to use "as an excuse for delay the argument that they must wait for the Williams Committee on obscenity to report". He called for an amendment to the Obscene Publications Act which would put "pornography that uses children" in a new category.

THAT WAS TWO MONTHS AGO! OUR READERS WILL BE ABLE TO JUDGE WHAT, IF ANYTHING, HAS HAPPENED SINCE! HAS THE HOME SECRETARY RESPONDED IN ANY PRACTICAL WAY? IF NOT WILL YOU PLEASE WRITE AGAIN TO YOUR M.P. (AS BEFORE) USING THE INFORMATION GIVEN ON THIS PAGE AND DEMAND THAT ACTION BE TAKEN. PLEASE SEND A COPY OF 'THE VIEWER AND LISTENER' TO YOUR M.P.



Shoppers queue at Enfield's market to sign the petition.

CLOSING DATE
31 MARCH 1978

*Big demonstration
planned for the*
**PRESENTATION OF
THE SIGNATURES**

WRITE FOR DETAILS!

ARE CHANGES IN LAW NECESSARY?

Interviewer: "Taking and publishing a photograph of a child in an explicitly sexual pose, is that within the law? A single child by himself?"

Mr. Tudor Price, Q.C.: "That is in a more difficult area and although there is an Act, the Indecency with Children Act, I don't think it's really competent to cover such an act as that and it's in that area that I think there needs to be improvement in the law."

"My opinion is that this publication of pictures of under age children, in this case the under age boy, is calculated to appeal to the tastes of people whose tastes in that direction lead to unpleasant crimes."

Interviewer: "Children go on from this and be caught in homosexual prostitution and that sort of thing"

"The critical factor that hampers prosecutions is that the sexual exploitation of children with a camera

is not in itself an offence."

Mr. Tudor Price: "I don't think, as the law stands at the moment that there's really anything one could do against the photographer who took the photographs in England . . . There ought to be some alteration to the Children and Young Persons Act to make it an offence not only to take such pictures but to disseminate them as well."

"Tonight" BBC1 8.11.77

Is TV too violent for Kids?

That was the caption used by the SUN in their searching inquiry into the effects of television on young people. Maybe their inquiry had its roots in an interview they did earlier with Patrick Mower, who stars in TARGET (BBC 1). He told the SUN reporter:

"I can't accept that the sight of me hitting someone is going to incite other people to go out and hit someone. No way."

The Sun commissioning MARPLAN to ask what young viewers thought about television violence, discovered that

"The more tough-guy programmes a child watches, the tougher the child wants to become."

Marplan found that 4 out of 10 children who were the most regular viewers of TV thrillers and crime shows would rather be considered "TOUGH" than "PEACEABLE"; that 3 out of 10 wanted to be seen as "FIERCE" rather than "GENTLE" and that 20 percent wanted their friends to call them "VIOLENT" rather than "SOFT".

On the other hand those who were not exposed to violent television opted for the "GENTLE" choice. Eight out of 9 who virtually watched no violent TV preferred to be called "GENTLE" rather than "FIERCE", whereas only 1 out of 3 who watched thriller and mystery programmes regularly, felt that way. The survey indicated that the same trend appears for "TOUGH" versus "PEACEABLE" and "VIOLENT" against "SOFT".

Clinical psychologist Paul Brown when asked:

"Are children influenced by what they see on television?"

replied:

"If television does not influence youngsters, then why is it used for educational programmes?"

and added:

"If we are to have a healthy society we have got to put over on the box very clear value systems."

Social psychologist Dr. William Belson who published a report which said that violence on television was a contributing factor in the present level of violence in society, believed that Westerns and police lawkeepers should be shown as people who shun violence and added:

"The goodie who is violent — as in TARGET — can do a lot of harm to young viewers."

Paul Michael Glaser who plays Starsky in STARSKY AND HUTCH, was quoted as saying:

"I abhor violence."

Last year when the beatings and shootings branded the show as the second most violent on television, it became too much for him and he tried to quit. But his contract forced him to continue. He was, however, able to get the violence toned down and commented:

"I think there was unnecessary violence in the show. To me the violence issue is the saddest thing about television. It shows the act of violence without the repercussions."

The BBC told the Sun that children are the biggest television viewers of all. Between the ages of 5 and 15, children watch about 22 hours of television a week. This means that by school leaving age many children have spent as much time watching television as they have in the classroom. They do more goggle-box watching than any other age group.

The Marplan pollsters interviewed 506 children between the ages of 6 and 14 and asked them their viewing habits and for their opinions of 13 major thriller series. 45 percent of all children felt that THE SWEENEY had too much violence. 20 percent felt the same about KOJAK and 19 percent the same about DR. WHO.

The Sun discovered that some television programmes have led children into danger and sometimes even death. They gave 7 telling illustrations, including:

- Mary Bell who, when she was 11, strangled two little boys. At her trial when she was asked if she knew what would happen if the throat of a three-year-old boy was squeezed, answered:

"Yes, he would die. I know because I watched THE SAINT."

- Anthony Stephens died because of his devotion to the SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN, Steve Austin. Anthony believed that he too was bionic and jumped from the roof of a porch at his home. He crashed head first on to concrete and died.

- A 13-year-old boy watched THE RIDE TO HANGMAN'S TREE in which a cowboy hanged himself. Next day his father found his son dead — hanging by a wash line at the bottom of the garden. The coroner said:

"I believe he was influenced by the film."

- Nine-year-old Andrew Middleton, trying to be Peter Pan, nearly lost his life. He said:

"I'd been watching him on television and I thought I could fly like him."

Andrew fell from a bedroom window and escaped with bruises. His mother said:

"Television puts ideas into children's heads. It should be more responsible about the programmes it puts out."

GOING LIKE HOT CAKES!

But single copies of Max Caulfield's biography "Mary Whitehouse" are still available from headquarters for £1.00 post free — and autographed!

OTHER USEFUL LITERATURE:

Report on Children's Viewing Habits	50p
National VALA's recommendations on Annan Report	50p
"Television Violence and The Adolescent Boy"	
Dr William Belson at British Association	50p
Mary Whitehouse — Convention '77 address	10p
Where There's Smoke — Fire! Dr John Court	10p
Revised TV Station phone number cards	3p
Whatever Happened to Sex? By Mary Whitehouse	£4.95p

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Copies of this VIEWER AND LISTENER	10 for 60p
	20 £1.00p
	30 £1.40p