

THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

APRIL 1978

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Dr. Judianne Densen-Gerber of New York (photograph by courtesy of The Times) speaking at National VALA's press conference on Child Pornography—see story page 4. See also Book List page 4.

"I appreciate we have many hurdles to jump but nevertheless feel that this is an highly appropriate moment to write and thank you and all in your association for the tremendous campaign that you have all fought in the country over the last six months.

"All credit to you for being in the field long before the politicians got involved and for so successfully persuading them to take quick and decisive action."

Cyril Townsend M.P.
House of Commons.

Sir Bernard Braine speaking in the House of Commons debate on the 2nd reading of the Child Protection Bill:

"In all the many years that I have sat here, I do not recollect anyone who has managed to bring together the whole house in such a warm-hearted demonstration of unity on a single matter."

"THOUGHT FOR THE DAY"

by Mary Whitehouse

BBC Radio 4, 6th-9th February 1978:

"I listened with pleasure and profit and new hope too."

"I and many of my friends have been thrilled by the power and truth of her message."

"It was so good to hear 'Thought For The Day' with a positive Christian content."

"Thank you very much for your 'Thoughts For The Day' in the early mornings of last week. They were extremely powerful, cogent and moving appeals to the hearts and consciences of every sane listener."

See book list page 4.

IMPORTANT — MONITORING

We are most grateful to all our members who send to Headquarters copies of letters sent to the BBC and ITV. They are of the utmost value to us, especially at the moment when we are engaged in preparing a major report.

If you prefer to report simply to Headquarters remember that MONITORING CARDS are available. See Booklist p. 4.

ELECTION IMMINENT?

How would the Tories deal with NVALA's concerns?

COME, HEAR and QUESTION

The Rt. Hon.
WILLIAM WHITELAW, MP

Shadow Home Secretary

MARY WHITEHOUSE
and other speakers

ANNUAL CONVENTION

and Annual General Meeting

MIDLAND HOTEL
NEW STREET, BIRMINGHAM

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1978

11.00 am - 3.30 pm

Coffee 10.30 Lunch 12.45 - 2.00 AGM 3.30



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LIBERTY AND THE LAW

THE NATURE of the threat to our democratic way of life has become increasingly apparent during the last twelve months. And our readers will not need us to elaborate upon the challenge posed by the confrontation between the far left and the far right.

The classic pattern of the breakdown of democratic processes, followed by anarchy, followed by dictatorship is becoming clear to even the least politically conscious amongst us. It is at this point that the responsible citizen has to lay hold upon the safeguards which remain. One of the most important of which is the Law.

The use of children by the pornographers was not evidence of a sudden collapse of standards — it was the logical next step for those entrepreneurs who have discovered that the law in this country, as existing and exercised, had little power to halt their activities. So only a new law, **THE CHILD PROTECTION BILL**, could fill the gap through which child 'sexploiter's were pouring.

We make reference elsewhere to the battle now raging around the common law offence of **BLASPHEMOUS LIBEL**. Once again the law was invoked in the hope of containing the excesses of those whose insensitivities — to put it at its best — knew no bounds.

But there is another side to this particular coin which is of special interest to this Association. It was with some concern for example that we watched the 'Crown Court' series (Granada TV January 31st - February 2nd) which mounted its own **Blasphemy Case**.

Unashamedly using the names of National VALA and the Festival of Light, the producer linked the chief prosecution witness with Mary Whitehouse who was bitterly attacked personally, and unjustly accused of certain actions. The song which was the subject of the complaint was so innocuous that it made nonsense of the law of blasphemy and of people likely to invoke it. This was not only **'TRIAL BY TELEVISION'**, but possibly even more dangerous **LEGISLATION BY TELEVISION**.

Against the first there is no protection short of libel action since the IBA provide no facilities for any kind of **RIGHT OF REPLY**. A situation which **MUST** be corrected when Parliament debates Annan.

Against the second — protection on paper but not in practice. The Director of Public Prosecutions has now made it clear to us that he has now power to act to ensure that the IBA do not commit a breach of its statutory duty "not to take sides on matters of public interest". The only course open is for an individual to initiate a **CIVIL** action — a hopeless and unacceptable situation.

Readers will remember (The Viewer & Listener, January, 1978) that the DPP was also asked to look at the BBC 1 programme 'Nipper' (15.11.77). During the course of this play a 13 year old boy (actor's actual age 15) was shown a pornographic magazine by an elderly homosexual, who then knelt down in front of the boy, the clear inference being that he touched the boy's genitals.

In the resultant correspondence between National VALA and the Director of Public Prosecutions it became clear that, although the DPP asked Treasury Counsel to look into the matter, this gentleman did not, in fact, view the programme before coming to the conclusion that "no offence had been committed". This too is a totally unsatisfactory state of affairs. To have involved a minor in such a situation — whether any actual sexual interference took place or not — is likely to have placed him in moral danger. The psychological effect upon the boy of later seeing himself on the screen — and being seen by his family and friends as apparently being sexually assaulted, could be considerable.

These are considerations which appear to weigh not at all with those responsible for producing and transmitting such a programme, but should weigh with the Parliamentary Committee which sees the Child Protection Bill through its committee stages. The need for this Bill to apply also to the activities of TV photographers — camera men, call them what you will — was underlined also by the 'Top of the Pops' programme (23.2.78) in which a group of girls were dressed in precisely that kind of titillating "schoolgirl" outfits which this Bill will seek to cover.

The law remains the last defence of freedom when responsibility breaks down.

BATTLE NOT YET OVER

As Mr. Townsend says, we have "many hurdles yet to jump" but we too, at Headquarters, feel this is the moment to say a most heartfelt **'THANK YOU'**.

THANK YOU for all the wonderful effort put into the collection of signatures. That this was a highly gratifying and encouraging exercise became abundantly clear — so many of you have written about the tremendous response you experienced from the general public.

THANK YOU for all the letters written to Members of Parliament and for the replies sent here — around 350!

THANK YOU for all the letters to provincial and national newspapers. The press coverage of this campaign has been tremendous and extremely supportive.

THANK YOU for the enormous support and encouragement you have given to us at headquarters by all your hard work and encouragement.

A special **THANK YOU** to all those friends who have helped at Ardleigh with the distribution of Petitions and the counting of them.

BUT THE BATTLE IS NOT YET OVER!

By the time you read this we shall know whether the Government has appointed the group of M.P.'s who are to take the Child Protection Bill through its Committee Stage.

If that has not been done by Easter then it is unlikely that the Bill will reach the Statute Book before the Summer Recess in which case it will be lost. So please keep in touch with your M.P.'s and find out if they are being vigilant.

AMENDMENT: National VALA is very anxious that the Bill is amended to include Text. Much of the printed material accompanying indecent photographs of children is often, in itself, incitive. The Bill, as it stands, protects children used by photographers. We are convinced that it is equally important to protect those children — which could mean anyone — who are at risk from men sexually aroused towards children by the printed word. PLEASE WRITE YOUR MP ABOUT THIS TOO.

Presentation of the Petition will depend upon the progress of the Child Protection Bill through Parliament. **PLEASE RETURN ALL PETITION FORMS NOW.**

Move to Repeal Blasphemy Law Fails

Humanist peer Lord Willis failed in his attempt, on behalf of the National Secular Society, to get a Second Reading for his Bill to repeal the common law offence of Blasphemy. Although no vote was taken only five Peers, including Lords Willis, Soper and Ritchie-Calder spoke in favour of the Bill, while 21 peers, including the Bishop of Leicester and the Bishops of Norwich and Truro spoke against it.

The opposition to the Bill was led by the Earl of Halsbury. So high was the level of debate that we recommend our readers obtain a copy of The House of Lords Official Report (Hansard) for Thursday 23rd February, 1978. We quote from Lord Halsbury's opening statement.

"My own view, my Lords, is that blasphemy is an act of violence to the mind and spirit and deeply spiritual feelings of very large numbers, millions and millions, of people capable of entertaining such feelings. It is an assault upon the mind and spirit just as much as mayhem is an assault upon the body. . . . It is an assault on the source of consolation, strength and courage which we all need from time to time in our lives, and which an overwhelming number of people find in religion, not perhaps every day, not every religious person is a deeply religious person; they may not go to Church every Sunday, they may not say their prayers every day. But there are times when they are going to need religion, and it should be there for them unbesmirched."

This move by Lord Willis was just the latest in a 100 year old campaign by the National Secular Society to create a situation in which all are free to blaspheme when and where and how they wish regardless of the offence given.

That National VALA and, in particular, its Hon. Gen. Secretary, were Lord Willis's real targets became abundantly clear in the course of the debate — there is no cause to be concerned about that! But it is most important that, as the debate continues, we should understand the nature and purpose of the offence of blasphemous libel.

Judge King-Hamilton who presided at the 'Gay News' trial in July 1977, made it abundantly clear that this law is not there to protect God or the Christian religion from criticism or attack. Its purpose is, primarily, to protect the feelings of Christians and Christian sympathisers. There has to be such an element of vilification

Birmingham Evening Mail Feb 18th 1978

We back you... readers tell Mary



EVENING MAIL readers support **Mary Whitehouse's** views that there is too much sex and violence on television.

In the large mailbag that this subject attracted not one correspondent spoke out against Mrs. Whitehouse.

"When standards of decent behaviour fall, the abnormal becomes the normal and people are almost brainwashed into thinking that evil is good . . ."

"Swearing, sex in every form and violence play a big part in programmes on the media. What a disastrous effect it is having on society . . ."

Diana and Keith Potter Kings Norton

"I consider the bad television programmes together with lack of parental control, to be a grave danger to the future generation . . ."

"I consider a large number of the plays shown on television are immoral, blasphemous and violent for the sake of violence. Bad language is used in normal conversation when the point could be made in a far less objectionable manner."

Mrs. Margaret Clark Birmingham

Miss Margaret Robinson of Ward End, a qualified nurse in daily contact with children said she knew that many things shown on television are acted out on the playground, and added:

"It is the responsibility of each adult, writer, reader, or viewer to take a hard look and visualise the impact any film or book will have on young people. Then, and only then, will we be able to set higher standards for future generations."

"In the vast majority of cases there is no need to play out the explicit acts of sex and violence. So many times as a family group we have been watching what we considered a reasonable pro-

gramme when completely without warning we are subjected to performances which we would rather not have in our home."

Mrs. Mathews Great Barr

"I support Mrs. Whitehouse 100 per cent. Lack of discipline and a permissive society lead to violence and sex exploitation, as is apparent today. There is too much terrorism in our everyday news, without having the so-called entertainment on TV of violence and sex."

Veronica Miele Rednall

HOW IT'S DONE!

A headmaster member of National VALA complained to IPC about the magazine 'New Mirabelle' which he had found several 13 year old girls reading.

A letter in "Points of View" positively encouraged its young readers to have sex. The headmaster concerned took up the matter with the Press Council who forwarded his letter to IPC and he has given us permission to quote from the letter he received from John R. Sanders, Editorial Director of IPC magazines.

"When the letters page of the issue of September 17, 1977, which is the subject of your complaint, was first shown to me, I spoke to various members of the IPC Board. As a result of our discussion we decided to remove the Editor totally from all spheres of teenage contact, and I gave instructions to all my Editors that the free lance sub-editor responsible for putting together that page was not to be used again on any IPC magazine. Forty-eight hours later, the Assistant Editor of New Mirabelle, whose responsibilities included overseeing the letters page, left this company.

I had been unhappy about the editorial direction of New Mirabelle for some time before this incident and we decided to close down the magazine in October, 1977."

as would be likely to cause a breach of the peace.

One vital point here. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has declared that a person may not be "discriminated against" by virtue of his religion, as well as class, race and colour.

The "gay" / humanist / left wing lobby which shouts so loud against discrimination in class, race and colour, nevertheless leads the fight to deny Christians their basic human rights not to be offended in their religious beliefs.

This Distinguished American

DR. JUDIANNE DENSEN-GERBER, the American attorney, physician and psychiatrist described her time in Britain as "most memorable" — and indeed it was!

We believed that if anyone was able to persuade a reluctant Government of the need for immediate action against child pornography, Dr. Densen-Gerber was the person! For she and her colleague, Attorney Stephen Hutchinson, who accompanied her, had drafted the US Federal Bill, which made illegal all activities connected with child pornography. She is the world authority in this field and National VALA felt that it should invite her to come to Britain, whatever the cost, to make her expertise available here. It is all the more to be regretted therefore that Mr. Merlyn Rees, the Home Secretary declined an invitation to meet her.

However, there was no shortage of other opportunities! She spent an hour with the Shadow Home Secretary, Mr. William Whitelaw, and Sir Michael Havers, the Shadow Attorney General. She spoke to M.P.s and to Peers; she visited New Scotland Yard and was given lunch by the Director General of the Law Society. She appeared on BBC TV and ITV, on Woman's Hour, Radio 1, on the news, was the subject of features in the Daily Telegraph and The Times.

But perhaps the highlight of her visit was the day she spent in the House of Commons listening to the Debate on Child Protection Bill. "How different it all is from Congress" she whispered and was "amazed" she said afterwards "to see the Members lounging in their seats and shouting out". Throughout the day she kept whispering her conviction that the Bill would get a unanimous vote for its Second Reading — and how right she was. Certainly it was all very memorable for her — on the first day of her week in Britain she received a phone call from Washington to say that President Carter had signed the Bill for which she was primarily responsible and on Friday she heard her name mentioned, time and time again, with great appreciation of all her visit had meant to Britain.

Those of us who were privileged to meet this memorable and brilliant woman and to sit throughout that great debate in Parliament found that we too had a 'most memorable week'.

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GANGSTERS - BBC REPLIES

"... and some of us at the BBC have felt that the programmes sometimes lacked consistency of style and to that extent were not always successful.

Your members are not alone in their feelings about the strong language which some of the episodes contained. You may like to know that reservations have been expressed about it at a very senior level in the BBC. The producer himself now feels that the desired characterisation of off-hand nastiness could perhaps have been conveyed in another way. We regret the offence such language may have caused, but I hope that in considering the series as a whole you will remember it had the avowed aim of 'sending-up' the traditional genre of tough guy films."

THANK YOU . . .

THANK YOU to London Weekend for 'CREDO' the excellent programme on Mary Whitehouse.

THANK YOU to BBC 1's 'EVERY-MAN' for its very fair and gripping presentation of the Gay News Blasphemous Libel Case.

MUCH APPRECIATED!

YOU CAN'T BELIEVE . . . !

Some of our readers will doubtless either have read or have heard of the article in the Sunday Times (12.2.78) about National VALA or more accurately about members of NVALA's Executive Committee.

This article was, in our view, a contemptible piece of journalism — the only previous experience the Association has had of this type of attempted "debunking" was in 1965 when the SUN newspaper attempted a similar exercise.

The following letter from Ben Davis, our organiser in Scotland, puts the matter in a nutshell —

"You will no doubt have read the article 'How One Woman routs forces of darkness' in the Sunday Times of 12th February. A very snidly article!

"However you will have read that I am semi-retired. This is nonsense. I have never worked so hard in my life. A thirteen hour day six days a week as senior partner in an accountancy firm.

"Further and this is really startling! I am described as 'partially bed-ridden.' Even the photographer who took my pictures had me out in the street at 9 a.m. on a cold morning with his camera.

"You can't believe all you read in the papers!

"I trust that you are keeping fit,

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Ben Davis."

Editor's Note: Other interviewees tell similar stories.

BOOK LIST

Extracts from Dr. J. Densen-Gerbers evidence on Child-Pornography to US Senate Committee	15p
"Thought for the Day" By Mary Whitehouse	40p
STILL AVAILABLE: copies of biography "Mary Whitehouse" by Max Caulfield	
	£1.00p

IMPORTANT — MONITORING

Research Cards	30 for 25p
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OTHER USEFUL LITERATURE:

National VALA's Report on Children's Viewing Habits	50p
"Television Violence and the Adolescent Boy" Dr. William Belson at the 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
Copies of this VIEWER AND LISTENER	10 for 60p
	20 £1.00p
	30 £1.40p