

Members' Room



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4th September 1996

To: Chief Inspector Stephen French
Clubs & Vice Unit
Metropolitan Police
Clubs & Vice Unit
Charing Cross Police Station
Agar Street
London WC2N 4JP

Dear Chief Inspector,

RE; CLOSURE OF CHATLINES ON INTERNET

Thank you for your letter of the 28th August, the contents of which are disturbing. You state that the newsgroups in question "had been found to contain material that breached the Obscene Publications Act or the Protection of Children Act." That is untrue. Everyone is innocent until proved guilty and there have been no prosecutions, let alone convictions, of the producers of these newsgroups. By declaring the material obscene the Metropolitan Police are usurping the function of the Courts and exercising illegitimate censorship.

This is such a serious constitutional issue that I intend to pursue it. Before so doing, however, I must ask you to let me know in writing if the Metropolitan Police intend to continue to unilaterally declare illegal any sexually explicit newsgroup of which it disapproves (like the Orwellian Thought Police!).

In any event it is unacceptable to state, as you do in the penultimate paragraph of your letter, that anything which is unsuitable for children should be excluded from the internet. No other country in the European Union or elsewhere has such a nannyist approach.

Yours for freedom of expression,

Cllr E Goodman