

Your reference:

Our reference:

Date: 16th September 1996



METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

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Dear *Chr Goodman*

Obscenity on the Internet

Thank you for your letter dated 4th September. I apologise for my delay in replying, but I have only returned from leave today.

I am disappointed that you have been somewhat selective in your reading of the points raised in my previous letter to you, and in particular that you have failed to acknowledge the central theme of this issue which is about individuals and companies complying with the criminal law. I of course acknowledge that the final arbiter of whether material is obscene or indecent is a court. However, I reiterate the point I made in my previous letter that when presented in other forms (magazines and videos) the material is leading to prosecutions (and convictions) on an almost daily basis.

I am not totally clear of your position but I find it hard to follow the argument which contends that because the material is available electronically to a computer screen the police service should neglect their duty and responsibilities to combat such illegal activity. Indeed, the Criminal Justice Act 1994 specifically addressed the question of "pseudo photographs, and data stored on computer disks, or by other electronic means which is capable of conversion into a photograph".

You seem to be suggesting that this is an issue about censorship. This is not the case, it is about complying with the law. Indeed, I find your comments regarding "Orwellian Thought Police" bordering on the personally offensive and certainly totally irrelevant to the subject under debate. I am sure that you do not condone the availability of hard core pornographic material that, for example, depicts scenes of serious sexual abuse of children and the sexual torture and humiliation of men and women. This is why we are working with the industry to introduce structures and systems which will effectively remove the availability of this 'illegal' material from the Internet. Enforcement, whilst always an option, is not our preferred way of tackling this complex problem.

continued.....

I trust this has further clarified the Metropolitan Police Service position.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen French', written in a cursive style.

Stephen French
Chief Inspector