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Dear Mr Goodman,

Thank you for your letter of 10 October concerning the Secretary of State's decision to proscribe the Swedish satellite service *Rendez-Vous*. I have been asked to reply.

I note the points you have made. It might be helpful if I outline the regulatory framework governing broadcasting in this country. Under our broadcasting arrangements, responsibility for what is broadcast on television and radio rests with the broadcasters and the broadcasting regulatory bodies - the Governors of the BBC, the Independent Television Commission (ITC), the Welsh Fourth Channel (S4C) and the Radio Authority. These bodies are constitutionally independent of Government but are subject to clear responsibilities about programme standards. Some of these responsibilities are established in statute law and supplemented by formal codes of practice.

The Government is aware of public concern about the portrayal of sexual conduct in television programmes and keeps this matter under careful review, in consultation with the chairmen of the regulatory bodies. The Independent Television Commission (ITC) is the public body responsible for licensing commercially funded television services, including satellite services provided in and from the UK. Any channel which has been licensed by the ITC is expected fully to comply with the ITC's programme code and the conditions of its licence.

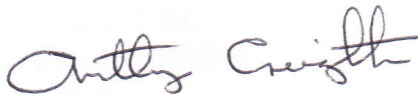
The Broadcasting Act 1990 gives the ITC responsibility for drawing up Codes of Practice on programme content, advertising, sponsorship and technical standards. These Codes are designed to protect viewers' interests. Among the provisions of the ITC's Programme Code is a total ban on any material which has been refused a certificate by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), and on any film to which the BBFC has granted an "R18" certificate. The nature of any programme included on a subscription channel is not, therefore, permitted to go beyond that which is available in the average video rental shop.

The satellite service, *Rendez Vous* had been broadcasting "hardcore" pornography of a kind which far exceeds the rigid standards which the ITC imposes upon its own licensed

services. Therefore the Secretary of State took the decision to have the channel proscribed. Under Article 22 of the European Community Broadcasting Directive of 1989 provision is made to protect minors from, "programmes which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, in particular those that might involve pornography or gratuitous violence". These provisions were implemented in the Broadcasting Act 1990.

The Government will not permit the broadcasting of obscene material to the UK, and will not hesitate to take to take similar action in the future should it prove necessary.

Yours sincerely,



A T Creighton
Media Division