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~~Comments on Draft Guidelines to be submitted
to BBFC by 17th December 1999~~

BBFC PRESENTATION AT BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON, 27 OCT 1999
~~By invitation~~ Ted Goodman, Chair of CAC, attended, as also did David Webb, Honorary Director of NCROPA. Dave Bird of CAC also managed to obtain admittance, although he had no ^{ticket} invitation. He distributed leaflets (published by him as an individual, not CAC) impugning the good faith of the organisers of the event. He gave one to Robin Duval, Director of ^{the} BBFC, who described the contents as "silly."

The event commenced with a presentation of film clips by Duval, explaining policy on classification. He stated that the UK had the strictest grading in the Western world. By way of example he stated that the BBFC had cut 18 seconds from the hanging scene in the children's film "The Mummy," whereas no other country had done so. He said that he had done this because twelve year old children might be tempted to imitate the hanging! Duval explained that the BBFC received little feedback, namely a few letters (mostly demanding more cuts), whereas television companies received a huge amount of mail from the public.

After a break for refreshments and chatting, the event resumed with questions to a panel consisting of the Director and BBFC examiners. Unfortunately many questioners did not appreciate that the BBFC has no authority over television and therefore asked why certain films were shown at certain times on Channel 5, etc. The Director of the BBFC explained that television companies could use his certification as a guide, but were not bound by it.

David Webb of NCROPA commented that neither the Cinemas Act nor the Video Recordings Act had any connection with the law of obscenity. He asked why the BBFC did not therefore ignore the difficult question of obscenity, which could be left to the courts. Duval responded that the BBFC had to operate within the limits, not of the law of obscenity, but of what was acceptable to the British public, which was very unEuropean in its attitude. He said that focus group investigation had shown that two-thirds of the British public expected the BBFC to make cuts. He declared that he was trying to accommodate serious films and had thus given a certificate without cuts to the French film "Romance," whereas it was refused one in the Republic of Ireland.

Speaking to Duval privately afterwards, Goodman asked him why he did not lead public opinion to greater acceptance of sexually explicit material. Duval replied that the BBFC had to follow, not lead public opinion, otherwise there would be an outcry and it would be abolished and replaced by direct government censorship; but the British were getting less prudish.

Just a few typos. And I should prefer 'ticket' to 'invitation' -
'invitation' doesn't make it clear that people had to apply - sounds
like collusion. M.