

FILE COPY

Cllr E Goodman
Campaign Against Censorship
Defence of Literature and the Arts
Society
18 Brewer Street
London W1R 4AS

11 May 2000

Dear Mr/Ms Goodman

Thank you for your letter of 2 May. I apologise for not having got back to you sooner.

In answer to your question, I would firstly say that we have not actually prohibited any of the advertisements featured in the cutting you enclose. The ASA does not censor non-broadcast advertisements (we don't see them before they go out) but instead responds to complaints from members of the public who have been offended by advertising in the press, on posters or in other non-broadcast media.

Most of our work (about 75%, in fact) involves protecting the public from misleading advertisements, for example where advertisers cannot back up their claims with hard evidence, or where a product is not as described in the advertisement. Dealing with complaints that advertisements are offensive represents a small but well-publicised part of what we do.

As you will see from the enclosed literature, the majority of people that we have surveyed recognise the need for a body such as the ASA to ensure that advertisers do not push the boundaries of taste too far and cause offence. We certainly take public opinion into account when looking into a complaint that an advertisement is offensive, and try to reflect that opinion in our decisions. We also consider the likely audience - if an advertisement is in targeted media that will only be seen by broad-minded adults (such as the *Sport*, from which your cutting was taken) we would be far less likely to uphold a complaint than if the advertisement was, for instance, a poster on the high street.

The Advertising Standards Authority is an independent body which administers a self-regulatory Code, written by the advertising industry itself. For this reason it enjoys the respect and support of the industry it regulates, who realise that the alternative, statutory regulation, would represent a far greater restriction on its freedom of expression.

I hope that this goes some way to answering your query.

Yours sincerely

Steve Ballinger
ASA Press Office