



Independent Television Commission

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Dear Cllr Goodman

Taste and Decency

Thank you for your letter of 8 May.

One can of course argue the points you make at great length but I will attempt to deal briefly with them. The Video Appeals Committee decision has been subject to a judicial review, the outcome of which has not yet been announced. Whatever the verdict, it has always been the case that television has been more strictly regulated than other media, though as the media change these differences are gradually being eroded. I should say also that R18 videos are available only in licensed sex shops, the majority of which are in London. I think I am right in saying that there are none at all in Wales and Scotland suggesting that some regional standards are being maintained.

We do know little about what the public really thinks about explicit sexual material and the ITC is considering doing research in this area though it is not an easy subject to investigate. But I do not believe that the public acceptance of a programme like **Private Parts** gives much indication of what it might think about 'pornography'.

You are right to say that one should not be slavishly obedient to the views of the majority. On the other hand it would hardly be appropriate to conclude that, because some people might favour the acceptance of representations of bestiality on television, that this should therefore be allowed.

I would point out that the UK is not entirely alone in Europe in its attitudes to explicit sex. Whilst we are the only country to proscribe satellite services, the standards imposed in countries like Germany, Ireland and Norway are not very different from those in this country.

Finally, you suggest that the ITC should cease recommending proscription orders to the Secretary of State. The ITC performs this duty under the terms of the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Whilst this Act remains on the statute book and while the Secretary of State's subsequent proscription is found to be acceptable in terms of European legislation, which is the position to date, it is hard to see how the ITC can evade its responsibility in the way that you suggest.

Yours sincerely



Guy Phelps
Head of Drama, Entertainment and Religion