



29th June 2000

Mr Goodman
23 Budgeb Drive
Redhill
Surrey
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Dear Mr Goodman

REFS/10788

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry for the delay in my reply to you.

The Commission sees it as one of its principal tasks to articulate concerns on behalf not only of particular complainants but also, when justified, on behalf of a wider constituency. The audience, faced with the gathering complexity of new technologies, deserves the means of having their anxieties focused for the attention of broadcasters, whether the anxieties are about new and developing trends or about particular programmes.

However, the Broadcasting Standards Commission is not in a position to censor anything and, indeed, there is now no body within British broadcasting with the power to intervene before transmission in the decisions of the broadcasters. By contrast, the cinema and video-industry are very tightly regulated to a degree now unknown elsewhere in Europe.

The Commission's predecessor, the Broadcasting Standards Council was established in 1988 on the grounds, perceived by the Government, that there were considerable public concerns about the portrayal of violence, sexual conduct, and matters of taste and decency. The Members of the Council decided, very early in its existence, that the level of those concerns should be established regularly by the conduct of research, which would invariably be made public.

The Council, and now the Commission, has pursued that policy, producing an annual research survey which is devoted, year by year, to a different aspect of its remit, but also contains trend data. Its research provides a very valuable guide to public attitudes, to which

individual complaints provide a supplement, their value qualified by the fact that complainants are a self-selected group.

The Commission's trend data does show a significant level of concern among the sample, assembled independently by MORI, about violence, bad language, and sexual explicitness. Other research shows that this concern is spread across society and not simply concentrated in those sections where one might expect to find it. It is the Commission's business to address those concerns and, in its advisory role, bring them to the attention of the broadcasters and of the public. The Commission has repeatedly said that it regards one of its primary tasks to be informing the public debate so that an intelligent dialogue may replace the unhelpful business of exchanging unsubstantiated assertions.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Whittle
Director