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7th March 1983

David Webb Esq  
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Dear Mr Webb

I think I heard you valiantly in action against the tedious Mrs Whitehouse during the Nick Page programme on Sunday morning, but I only caught part of the action. After three unsuccessful attempts to find out from the BBC whether the 'David' referred to actually was you I thought I would write a line on the assumption that it was.

Enclosed is a rather poor photocopy of a letter I wrote to Nick Page which might have had some connection with your involvement.

May I make a point which seems to have become fundamentally important in the argument with the censors? Mrs Whitehouse, when in debating difficulty, has a block buster to drop which always seems to be successful - she brings children into the argument. 'I am sure you agree that children must be protected from this kind of thing,' she says. As soon as her opponent says 'Yes' he's done for.

I support your campaign as the father of three children ranging in age from 15 to 24. My own view is that children are much more resilient than some adults seem to want to believe and that it would be unusual for the young to be harmed by seeing magazines or films which show violence or explicit sex.

You no doubt know that there were reports in the press recently of a survey which showed that British children were the most ignorant about sex in the whole of Europe. I mentioned this fact to a group of nine to 11-year-olds who retorted angrily that it was not their fault since they weren't told. They clearly felt cheated by adult secrecy. In my view there certainly is a strong and regrettable tendency for adults in this country to try to shield our children from information the children themselves not only do not need to be shielded from but have a positive right to be given.

When Mrs Whitehouse and friends agitated for the introduction of the Protection of Children Act in 1978 it was well known to parliamentary lawyers that the Act was unnecessary - as Geoffrey Robinson points out in his book 'Obscenity'. A simple amendment to an existing Act would have done all that was required. For the Festival of Light lot, however, something much more eye-catching was wanted and this new Act with its para-neurotic fear of childhood sexuality was imposed. It is frequently if unwittingly breached.

Forgive me for ranting on but I do think there is a nettle here that has to be grasped. We will never win arguments with people like Mrs

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Whitehouse if she can bowl us out by a simple hushed-voice reference  
to the need to protect children.

I suggest that it should be left entirely to parents and guardians to  
decide what children should see and that blanket banning of explicit  
material should be tenaciously fought.

Congratulations on the good work that is being done by you and the  
NCROPA - the 'NCROPA in Action' leaflet was most impressive. More  
success to you for the future.

Sincerely

A Barrie

I support your campaign as the factor of these children being in  
the way of sex education. My own view is that children are much more resistant  
to sexual abuse than we think they are. It is often the young who are  
most likely to be lured by sexual advances or films which show  
violence or explicit sex.

You do not know how hard it was to get reports in the press recently of a  
survey which showed that British children were the most ignorant about  
sex in the whole of Europe. I mentioned this fact to a group of the  
old 11-year-olds who reacted angrily that it was not their fault. In  
fact they were told they clearly felt shocked by what they saw in  
the country to try to shield our children from information the children  
themselves do not need to be shielded from but have a positive  
right to be given.

When Mrs Whitehouse and friends started for the introduction of the  
Protection of Children Act in 1978 it was well known to parliamentarians  
lawyers that the Act was unnecessary - as Dorothy Robinson points out  
in his book 'Obscenity'. A single amendment to an existing Act would  
have done all that was required. For the festival of light, however,  
the Government was determined to do it. It is interesting  
if anything to be noted.

I am sorry we are for wanting on but I do think there is a battle here that  
we will never win arguments with people like Mrs