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TELEGRAMS AND CABLES: TELECASTS LONDON TELEX

15 May 1987

Mr D Webb  
Honorary Director  
National Campaign for the Reform  
of the Obscene Publications Acts  
15 Sloane Court West  
Chelsea  
London  
SW3 4TD

Dear Mr Webb

It pains me to have to take issue with you, when, in many respects I would agree with you. But in essence I feel you are not fair on 'The Page 3 Debate'. I will take you up on various points.

1. 'Open Space' is the programme where the public can make programmes under their own editorial control, but many people who suggest programmes do not wish to exercise that option. They can work in partnership, or merely ask that an issue be explored.
2. 'The Page 3 Debate' was suggested, as a debate, by one of the speakers from the floor, who spoke against the motion because she is opposed to censorship. She was not interested in taking credit for the suggestion, and certainly did not want the issue debated more effectively than it had been in the Commons. We would disagree about how effectively that was done, since the credits for production are ours, as clearly stated in the Radio Times and on the programme.
3. Equal time to an equal number of opposed speakers is at least one form of balance, and certainly a strange form to accuse of bias. Editing was scrupulous, as was casting, though performance is always variable on the day. The audience was researched and selected to cover all shades of opinion, for and against Page 3 - though one important opposition group failed to show up. People are fickle, but men and women spoke on both sides.
4. Girton is a mixed college now, with 60% male students. You speak of it as a "pro-women's" college. Aren't they all? The opposite would presumably be anti-women's college, and I don't think misogyny is the issue.

5. Before the debate we took a poll which found against the motion. To my astonishment, the arguments swayed the house to vote to ban Page 3, despite effective arguments about the dangers of censorship. People, as I say, are fickle.
6. Our sister programme, "Network", on BBC-1 in March featured a member of the public complaining about the BBC's self-censorship, in a film leading into a debate between Michael Grade, Director of Programmes, and Gerald Howarth, MP. This debate certainly exposed the inadequacies of that Bill, though television inevitably cannot cover all the angles in any one programme.

If you wish to make formal application to 'Open Space' for a programme, we would require an outline of what you propose, what it might include and with what purpose. We would then assess it along with the many other applicants, but there is obviously a backlog.

Yours sincerely

*Peter Lee-Wright*

Peter Lee-Wright  
Series Producer  
OPEN SPACE