

~~GENCENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

N C R O P A

FIGHTING SEXUAL CENSORSHIP

HONORARY DIRECTOR - David Webb, R.A.D.A. Dip., 15 Sloane Court West, Chelsea, London, SW3 4TD - Tel: 071-730 9537

071-730 9537

10th April 1991

George Russell, Esq.,
Chairman,
Independent Television Commission,
70 Brompton Road,
London,
SW3 1EY.

Dear Mr. Russell,

Channel Four TV & the Censorship Season

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of 2nd April, in reply to mine of 19th March.

I note what you say and do, of course, appreciate the ITC's great difficulties in interpreting the absurd requirements of the Broadcasting Act 1990, wherein each licensed TV service is precluded from including in its programmes anything "which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling;". Such a requirement in effect renders every programme ineligible for transmission, since there will always be some members of the public who will find elements of any programme 'offensive'. Indeed, I myself find many programmes offend my own feelings - e.g. boxing. Would, I wonder, the ITC ban all transmissions of boxing matches because I (and a significant section of the public) are offended by such activity? I think not, and, indeed, I certainly have no wish to ban such transmissions simply because they happen to offend me. Moreover, I do ^{not} consider that I have any right to expect them to be so proscribed - and I, and the NCROPA, do not consider that the Government has that right either.

Of course, you may well respond by saying that, as Chairman of the ITC, such a right has been conferred on you by the Government. The wording of the 1990 Act is, however, important. It states that, in Section 6 (1):-

"The Commission shall do all that they can to secure that every licensed service complies with the following requirements, namely - " etc.

It is that phrase "all that they can" which interests me. Since the

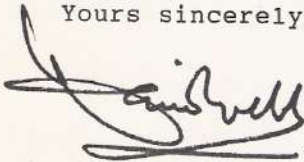
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task the ITC has been set in this respect is so absurdly impractical and virtually impossible, it would be my contention that "all" that the ITC "can" do is to pursue one of two options. It can either (1) ban every programme, or (2) ignore the direction completely as being capable only of the most subjective interpretation - the very concept of 'offensiveness' being so. That, sensibly, as I see it, would be "all that they (the ITC) can" do.

May I repeat the NCROPA's warm approval of your lifting of some former bans on programmes (although we very much regret the censoring of the "WR, Mysteries of the Organism" film on Monday night), but very much hope that you and the ITC will, infuture, see fit to extend your boundaries of acceptability for TV transmissions far more widely. In so doing we do not believe you will in any way infringe the provisions of the Broadcasting Act, as I hope I have shown, and you will be performing a most necessary public service in contributing to the long overdue demise of this country's repressively authoritarian, draconian censorship restrictions.

Yours sincerely,



David Webb,
Honorary Director,
National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts