

SEIZE THE VIDEO NASTIES!

Government wants High St detectives to go under counter

By SHEREE DODD

THE Government is to flush out banned video nasties from under the counter — by giving "shopping detectives" the power to seize them.

Perverted and violent films will be confiscated in raids by trading standards officers, the people who usually check the local supermarket cheese counter isn't selling you short.

It's a dramatic new role for the High Street watchdogs who up to now have stayed out of the war on evil porn merchants.

Police already have the power to prosecute shopkeepers who sell or hire videos which do not carry film classifications, or hire "15" and "18" certificate films to underage youngsters.

But there are fears that video nasties are slipping through the net because of lack of police time.

Home Office Minister John Patten said yesterday that with earlier laws "the hateful video nasties have largely been driven from our streets."

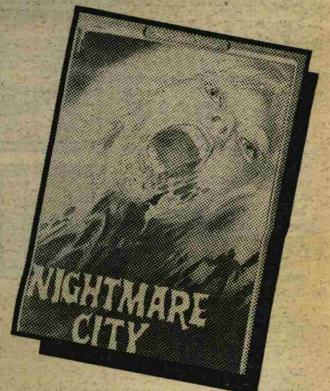
But he added: "We must not allow this position to falter."

"Enforcement must be

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stepped up and the most effective people to carry out this task, supporting the police, are trading standards officers."

Mr Patten said it was "very unsatisfactory" that if a standards officer sees a video shop break-



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Video nasties

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ing the law he can't do anything himself.

Now he is proposing that from September the officers will be able to raid video shops, and to enter them to make test purchases.

Trading standards officers, once known as weights and measures inspectors, have been used in campaigns to catch retailers who sell cigarettes and fireworks to youngsters.

A Home Office spokesman said last night that under the new proposals the officers were not being asked to be censors of videos.

Watch

But he added: "It would not be beyond the realm of possibility that they will have to watch some of these videos to check that they are the correct versions."

Under the existing law, retailers caught selling or hiring videos without classification or the wrong classification can be fined up to £20,000.

If convicted of selling an adult film to a youngster they face a fine of up to £2,000.