

# THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

OCTOBER

Price 5p

## NATIONAL V.A.L.A. VINDICATED

### White Paper on Broadcasting

Much of what National VALA has been claiming and working for during the last fifteen years is reflected in the Government's recently published White Paper on Broadcasting. BUT the Association has considerable misgivings.

● **Televised Violence.** The White Paper echoes National VALA's frequent claim that the broadcasting authorities "should work on the assumption that it has undesirable consequences unless proven otherwise". BUT the White Paper qualifies this by referring to programmes portraying violence which "might have" effect on "susceptible people". National VALA asks who and what criteria will decide what "might have" means?

● **Broadcasting Complaints Commission.** By accepting the need for an independent Complaints Commission, the Government acknowledges National VALA's argument that the voice of the viewer and listener has been treated with, at best, indifference, at worst, contempt and ridicule.

● **The 4th Channel.** To be given to an Open Broadcasting Authority. This channel would be free of any obligation to maintain a "proper balance" and would provide an outlet for independently produced and "minority interest" programmes.

National VALA foresees serious trouble. Such a concept, in a different moral and cultural climate, could hold out hopes of quite new and exciting televisual experience. In our present climate we see it as an open door for licence and propaganda which the proposed non-statutory obligations would be incapable of containing. There are, no doubt, writers and producers waiting in the wings, who would see such a channel as the vehicle of programmes now considered unacceptable by the BBC and IBA. More, for instance, from the team who produced "Law and Order"?

Due possibly to some innate modesty, but more likely to a fear of offending "liberal" attitudes, there is no specific mention in the White Paper of what the Annan Report refers to as "the brutalisation of sex" and "the gratuitous use of bad language". The issue of violence, concern about which is responsible — and



HOME OFFICE

trendy — is one now more easily handled. In making this point National VALA in no way diminishes its satisfaction that a strong line has been taken in the treatment of violence. It only fears that in its failure to condemn equally, as did Annan, the exploitation of explicit and gratuitous sex and bad language, the Government may well have given encouragement to those within the broadcasting profession who depend and thrive upon controversy.

In this regard the weakness of the White Paper is underlined even further by the failure of the Government to recommend that broadcasting be included in the legislation covering obscene publications. Evidence of the unwillingness of the Government to grasp this particular nettle exists in the specific exclusion of broadcasting from the terms of reference of the Home Office Committee now sitting under Professor Bernard Williams investigating the workings of the Obscenity Laws.

*The omission of broadcasting from this legislation can in no way be justified. One is bound to ask — of whom is the Government afraid? Such an omission is seen as even more incredible in the light of the Government's recommendations that the Open Broadcasting Authority should function as a publisher.*

● **Annual Parliamentary Debate.** National VALA has long called for a regular Parliamentary debate on the Broadcasting Authorities' Annual Reports.

● **Children and Television.** Central to National VALA's argument about the role of television in society has been the claim that it is totally unrealistic for the Broadcasting Authorities to work on the assumption that after 9 pm "anything goes". The White Paper declares that it "does not consider that the Broadcasting Authorities are entitled to assume that the entire responsibility of protecting children after 9 pm can be safely left to the parents." GOOD!

## "GOTCHA"

### BBC Has Second Thoughts

The BBC TV play "Gotcha" which National VALA, in its report "WHAT PRICE ANNAN!" (see book list) described as "one long obscene gesture" to the Annan Committee and to the Government, was scheduled for a repeat showing on 15th August.

*Amazed at the insensitivity of the Corporation — not least in the light of the recently published Government White Paper — National VALA wrote immediately to the Home Secretary drawing his attention to "the constant stream of foul language and violent abuse" which characterised the play and to the reply received by National VALA from the then Director General Sir Charles Curran.*

In his letter Sir Charles said he would "... readily agree, as would many of my colleagues of the Television Service that the play was excessive in its use of language and that its length did not help to moderate the general impression of excess. I particularly disliked myself the final scene because I thought it unnecessary to the play." He admitted, too, that the sexual assault on the young teacher was "a shocking incident".

National VALA asked the Home Secretary to ask the BBC to reconsider their decision to repeat the play. Twenty-four hours later the BBC announced the "GOTCHA" would not be transmitted.

HOW MANY NEW MEMBERS HAVE YOU ENROLLED THIS YEAR?

Enrolment forms free: See Page 4



## THE VIEWER AND LISTENER

NATIONAL **Ardleigh**  
**VALA** Colchester Essex CO7 7RH  
Telephone: 0206 230123

## THE FAMILY

The fact that both the Government and the Opposition are now emphasising the importance of the family must mean that they are aware of the growing demands in the country for a more stable and healthy social climate in which to bring up the nation's families.

More and more people are coming to accept that the problems which confront Britain today are the result of the morally bankrupt philosophies which have afflicted this country since the war.

On the one hand there are the rocketing rates of juvenile crime and violence, the disturbing increase in VD and abortion in ever younger children, the assault mounted upon the family by the free display and circulation of pornographic material, the increase in broken homes, children in care and mental ill-health, all of which spell suffering and instability.

On the other hand there is oppressive taxation, a national and international debt of immense proportion, a quite unacceptable rate of unemployment and low productivity in employment.

It is our contention that these, apparently different, aspects of what many see as a collapsing society, are by no means unconnected either with one another or with the deliberate undermining of ethical values and moral standards during the last two decades.

Politicians should realise that by bringing the family into the centre of an election campaign they touch the very heart of the nation. The people will watch with the utmost vigilance how real is the commitment of the various political parties to a better deal, all round, for the family — not just financially.

Unless their worthy sentiments are translated into practical commitments and spelt out before the election, then the public will suspect that the welfare of their children is being used as an election "gimmick". That is something they would not forgive or forget. In even wider terms such exploitation would give rise to a cynicism so deep as to seriously undermine confidence, even further, in the parliamentary system.

Finally, one is driven to ask — IF the family is so important, WHY has nothing been done before when public unease and official statistics can have left the Government in no doubt of the threat to the very existence and stability of the family?

*"The family is entitled to protection by Society and the State."*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## THE 'FAMILY' GROUP

A delegation armed with a package of proposals aimed at curbing the "moral manipulation and corruption" of Britain's young people called on Mr Merlyn Rees, the Home Secretary, and Mrs. Margaret Thatcher who was accompanied by the Shadow Home Secretary, Mr William Whitelaw, to put the family at the centre of their future planning.

The delegation included Mrs Mary Whitehouse, Mrs Valerie Riches, National Secretary of the Responsible Society, Miss Ann Whitaker, Founder of the Community Standards Association, Mr Peter Dawson, Headmaster of Eltham Green School, London, Dr John Scotson, a family doctor from Cheshire, and Mr Anthony Bush, Founder of the Bristol Family Life Association.

They asked for the Paedophile Information Exchange to be proscribed, for an urgent investigation into sex education, for a curb on television violence, an early interim report by the Government on the broader aspects of child pornography and the reform of film censorship. On the matter of television violence the delegation told the Home Secretary "While we, of course, acknowledge that there are many deep and immediately irremediable causes of social violence, we believe that television violence, which plays a real part in creating a violent climate, is the one element in this disastrous scenario which could be dealt with simply and without delay. We also believe that the failure of Government to insist that the Broadcasting Authorities fulfill their obligation not to 'incite to crime and disorder' has made a significant contribution to the problem."

Mr Peter Dawson, speaking as an educationalist, said "One of the most significant influences upon children's view of the world and how they should behave in it, comes from television, films, magazines and so on. Too often the message presented by these channels of communication is that marital faithfulness and filial loyalties are things to be derided rather than valued. In my experience, many parents are baffled by the contradiction between the views they hold of marriage and parenthood and the message of the media."

At the end of a long interview Mrs Whitehouse said "Mr Rees listened with sympathy and interest and promised that he would pursue some of the matters we had raised."

Mrs Thatcher said that she was completely "in tune" with the anxieties expressed by the delegation and said that she was "particularly interested in restoring standards" and that "right and wrong must be taught in schools and re-established in society".

*NB: Copies of the submissions presented are available from National VALA, price 50p.*

**STOP PRESS:** The Government has announced that it will produce a Green Paper (for discussion) on The Family in October.

## Down Under Again

As we go to press Mary Whitehouse is preparing to leave for her second visit to Australia. There is immense public and media interest in her tour, which will take her to Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne; to Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland in New Zealand, and Hobart in Tasmania.

One of the highlights of the tour will be a reception and dinner given in her honour by the Primate of All Australia, Sir Marcus Loane, Archbishop of Sydney.



# "I DON'T NORMALLY ANSWER QUESTIONNAIRES... BUT..."

At the time of going to press 263 MPs have replied to the Association's questionnaire on moral and family issues. These include the control of Broadcasting, the need to make the Obscenity Laws more effective, the maintenance of Religious Education, parental rights in the field of Sex Education and the protection of the Blasphemy Law.

Of those who replied 163 were Conservatives, 84 Labour, six Liberal and 10 from other parties. It was gratifying to see how many wrote accompanying letters, often indicative of considerable thought. There were, however, a number—18 Conservative, 31 Labour and four others—whose replies were non-committal—often because the MPs concerned objected to filling in questionnaires though offering to meet with constituents to discuss the issues. Only two—Mr Denis Skinner (Labour, Bolsover) and Mr John Lea (Labour, Handsworth)—were hostile. Space does not permit us to reproduce a detailed analysis of the MPs' replies but a Report on the questionnaire giving full details is available from Headquarters, price 20p.

The following extracts give some indication of the trend which the analysis reveals:

Of those who replied 111 (80%) Conservative, 27 (52%) Labour, and all the minority party MPs would support legislation to include Broadcasting under the Obscenity Laws—a very encouraging response.

130 (92%) Cons, 35 (67%) Lab, 12 (75%) others support a tightening up of the Obscenity Laws.

On the question of Religious Education in schools 123 (86%) Cons, 34 (65%) Lab, nine (56%) others, would ensure that Religious Education is based on the Christian Faith. An even higher percentage would wish to make sure that a "Daily Act of Worship is maintained in all schools."

There was stronger support, 87% Cons, 76% Lab, 100% others, for the proposal that parents should be "fully informed in advance of the nature and content of sex education" than for that which suggested "written consent". 71% Cons, 50% Lab, 75% others, would resist any attempt to make sex education compulsory in schools.

As far as the Blasphemy Law is concerned 119 (85%) Cons, 29 (56%) Lab, 14 (87%) others, show a determination to "resist any move to repeal the Blasphemy Law" while a majority of 60% Cons, 52% Lab, 56% others, would wish those laws to be extended to cover other faiths, eg Hindu, Moslem.



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

From Cyril D Townsend MP:

Dear Mary,

As you will know the Protection of Children Bill safely received Royal Assent yesterday, and it is therefore a very good moment for me to write and thank you for being first in the field and foremost in the fight on the issue of child pornography.

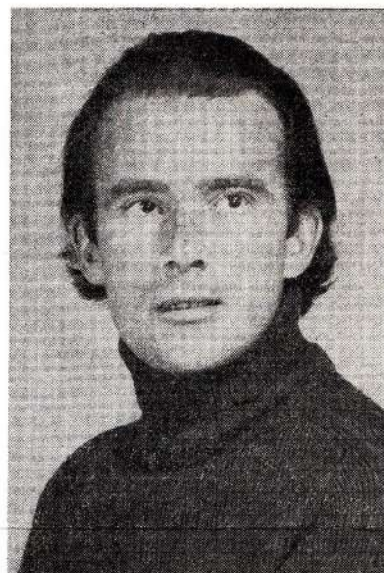
There can be no doubt that public pressure over the last year forced the Home Office and the Government to think again and it is fascinating to compare recent ministerial letters and statements with those of a mere six months ago.

I am naturally sorry that you and I could not come to an agreement on the vexed question of texts. As you know I am greatly concerned at some texts that we have seen but I do not believe that it would have been right to attempt to move into this wider and particularly difficult area in a short Private Member's Bill.

I would be grateful if you could pass on my sincere thanks and best wishes to all members of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association for their invaluable help in the national campaign.

Let us all hope that the Bill will prove to be a sound and workable measure to deal with this present day evil in our society.

All good wishes,  
Yours sincerely,  
Cyril.



*Mr Townsend points to what National VALA has always claimed to be a serious weakness in this law. The Protection of Children Bill omitted reference to obscene text that might be published alongside an innocuous photograph which taken alone might not be illegal under the terms of this law. VALA fought for the inclusion of this at every stage of the lengthy procedure through both Houses of Parliament.*

*Both Mr. Townsend and Lady Faithful—who so competently piloted the Bill through the House of Lords—were convinced that the Home Office would "kill" the Bill if such a clause were inserted.*

*"Better a limited Bill on the Statute Book than nothing at all," was their conclusion.*

## GENERAL COMMENTS

To those members of National VALA who were concerned that their MPs had received more than one copy of the questionnaire we can only say that our experience in the battle to get legislation to deal with child pornography left us in no doubt that the more approaches from constituents an MP received, the more seriously he would take the matter!

To those who have wondered why an organisation like VALA, primarily concerned with broadcasting should become involved with issues like Religious Education and the Blasphemy Law we would reply that it has long been the excuse of broadcasters that offensive programmes merely "reflect" society. Our role, therefore, is to deal with those issues which create the quality of the society in which we live. There is no doubt, for instance, that the successful outcome of the Gay News blasphemy case has acted as a brake upon those writers and producers who give gratuitous offence to viewers and listeners.

Religious and Sex Education help to create the moral climate in which children grow to maturity—they are the architects of tomorrow's society and therefore tomorrow's broadcasting standards.



# BLASPHEMY LAW MUST STAY

Well over 180 leading churchmen, politicians, intellectuals, trades union leaders, writers, actors and actresses have publicly declared their support for a new campaign, launched by Mr. Charles Oxley, principal of Tower College, Rainhill, and Scarisbrick Hall School, Ormskirk, to retain the Law of Blasphemy.

Mr. Oxley's action follows the publication of a leaflet recently produced by the Committee Against the Blasphemy Law which had the support of a number of prominent people.

"It would be quite wrong," said Mr. Oxley, "for the impression to be given that all 'intellectuals' and 'perceptive Christians' are opposed to the Blasphemy Law."

In 1977 a jury found Denis Lemon and Gay News guilty of publishing a blasphemous libel about the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. The CABL, initiated and supported by humanists and atheists, demands the repeal of all laws relating to Blasphemy.

(This would inevitably affect the Broadcasting media were this law to be repealed.—Ed.)

A brochure about Mr. Oxley's campaign complete with a list of 180 names can be obtained from him at: The Tower, Rainhill, Merseyside, L35 6NE. Please send sae with order.

## ROUND & ABOUT

Back from Australia in early October Mary Whitehouse's Autumn engagements include:

Guest Speaker at the Women's Conference of the Baptist Union;  
Oxford University Conservative Association and Fabian Society;  
Sixth Form Day Conference, Leicester University;  
Family Life Conference, Birmingham;  
Union of Welsh Independents, Swansea;  
Parent/Teacher public meeting, Lincoln;  
Southampton University;  
"Any Questions?" (Jewish Students);  
Crown Woods Comprehensive School, London;  
Adult Education, Tonbridge;  
Royal Academy of Music;  
Luton Library Theatre lecture;  
Canons High School, Harrow;  
Marlborough College;  
Belfast;  
University of Sussex;  
Ellen Wilkinson High School, Ealing;  
Whitworth Arts Society, Manchester;  
The British Council Christian Fellowship;  
Cranborne School, Dorset.

Pye Report :

## RESEARCH SUPPORTS VALA'S WORK

by David Hobbs

A condensed version of the Pye Ltd survey into children's TV viewing habits—the survey that attracted immense press, radio and television coverage earlier this year—is available to members of the National VALA at an exclusive price of £2.00.

Pye Ltd announced recently that as a result of the enormous public interest aroused by the survey and the subsequent demand for copies of it, the company have produced a smaller, cheaper version which they are making available at cost price. The survey which was carried out for Pye by an independent research company, revealed many startling facts about children's viewing habits. Facts which prompted such newspaper headlines as "How the TV children get their own way", "35-Hour week of the TV addict children", "Many seven-year-olds watch TV until 9.00 pm", "Kids watch the box for five hours a day", when it was first published. Should you wish to read the full report, a copy will be sent by return post.

Published by National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, Arleigh, Colchester, Essex. Printed by CPC Ltd., Christchurch, Dorset.

## BOOK LIST

### BOOKS

"WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SEX?" by MARY WHITEHOUSE (p & p 15p) £1.25  
"MARY WHITEHOUSE" by Max Caulfield (reduced from £4.50) £1.00

### REPORTS

"What Price Annan!" National VALA Report (But to send to your MP FREE, post 12p please) 60p  
"Children's Viewing Habits" National VALA Report 50p  
Extracts from Dr J Densen-Gerger's evidence on Child Pornography to the US Senate Committee 15p  
"Television Violence and The Adolescent Boy"—Dr William Belson at the British Association, 1977 50p  
"MP'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE" National VALA Report 20p

### OTHER USEFUL MATERIAL

CONVENTION '78 address by Mary Whitehouse 15p  
CONVENTION '78 address by Rt Hon William Whitelaw 15p  
Addresses on Cassette Tape £1.10  
Open Letter to the Prime Minister from Mary Whitehouse published in THE TIMES, 31st May 1978 5p  
Parents' Sex Education Charter 1p  
RESEARCH CARDS 50 for 25p  
"THOUGHT FOR THE DAY" by Mary Whitehouse 40p  
TV Station 'phone number cards 3p  
Copies of THIS Viewer and Listener: 10 for 60p; 20 for £1.00; 30 for £1.40

FREE but please send stamps:-

Books and Bookmen May 1978: Mary Whitehouse reviews Enid Wistrich's "I Don't Mind The Sex it's The Violence"  
"KIDDIE PORN" a booklet attacking Child Pornography published by Ambassador College Press  
Copies of April 78 and June 78 Viewer and Listener—Ideal for recruiting New Members.

NATIONAL VALA ENROLMENT FORMS FOR NEW MEMBERS