

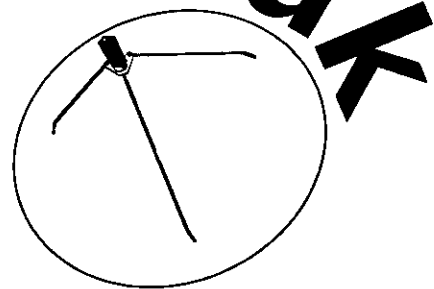
29/3/04.

Dear Sirs, As a subscriber to Media Watch (formerly Viewers & Listeners) I am of course concerned about standards in all aspects of Radio and TV. broadcasting.

- ① I would not like to see/hear BBC programmes being supported by advertising. There would be a strong risk of deterioration in general standards.
- ② I would rather pay a higher licence fee than have programmes interrupted by advertisements.
- ③ The present method of organising the BBC seems to work well. Perhaps the Culture Secretary should have a stronger advisory role e.g. to ensure that films showing sex and violence are limited to late night viewing or even censored!
- ④ I hope BBC officials take some notice of views aired in the Media Watch publications, showing a good cross-section of public interest.

Signed - OBarrett (Mrs)

mediawatch-uk newsbrief



SPRING 2004

- WRONG KIND OF LESSONS?
- MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES?
- ANOTHER SH**ING REPORT!
- THE DEAFENING SILENCE!
- IN YOUR HANDS
- 40 YEARS AGO
- RESPONDING TO OFCOM'S CONSULTATIONS

Have you overlooked it?

We would be most grateful if those members who have overlooked renewing would kindly send their £10.00 subscription now please.

Please visit our regularly up-dated website:

www.mediawatchuk.org
If you do not have the facilities please recommend it to others as a free source of comment, opinion and information on media issues.

Free with this issue

DIRECTORY



Wrong kind of lessons?

The average British 3 year old is glued to a TV or computer screen for nearly 5 hours a day and almost half of all 3 year olds have a TV in their bedroom. Suddenly the outside world is coming into these children's lives. So does what they watch influence their behaviour?" Professor Robert Winston posed this important question in the remarkable BBC1 TV series *Child of Our Time*, shown in January.

The series is following the progress of a number of children born in 2000 and Professor Winston examined the external influences that shape the children's lives. He said: "Most scientists now think that TV can encourage violent tendencies. At this age our children's ability to learn from the world around them is expanding rapidly. Experiments show how dangerous seeing the wrong kind of lessons on TV could be on a child's developing idea of how to behave". Writing in the *Daily Mail*, 9/1/2004, he said: "Awareness of the influence of the media should be an important part of teacher training. Schools should teach how the media works, what effects it may have, how to reject unhealthy messages and how to discriminate between fantasy and reality."

Challenge to investigate

Education Secretary, Charles Clarke MP, recently demanded that broadcasters investigate whether there is a link between television violence and bullying. He said: "What goes on television does have an impact on children's view of violence. The main argument I want to challenge ... is that violence on television has no effect on children. Violence on television encourages people to grow up thinking violence is an acceptable way of operating."

Children turn to crime

The number of criminals aged 11 and under has soared by 150 per cent over the past ten years, figures revealed in January. The alarming Home Office statistics show child offenders are becoming younger and more violent. There has also been a 50 per cent increase in the number of girls involved in crime. Children aged between ten and 17 committed 49,200 crimes in 2003. Their crimes included more than 6,000 acts of violence and there were nearly 400 sexual offences.

Violent crime out of control

The latest statistics show that violent attacks in England and Wales have shot up by 17 per cent. And the rise in serious violence - including murder and serious wounding - was even greater at 18 per cent. Criminal damage - offences of vandalism - was up by 7 per cent. Overall, offences of violence were up by 14 per cent.



Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP

Lessons in watching TV

Culture Secretary, Tessa Jowell MP, has suggested that lessons on watching TV would benefit Britons as much as maths and science classes. Ms Jowell has compared the discipline of understanding the media to 'understanding great literature' and said she wanted 'a nation of active and informed consumers'. She said: 'If people can take greater responsibility for what they watch and listen to, that will in itself lessen the need for regulatory intervention.' (See 'In Your Hands' page 3)



Have your say on the future of the BBC using the enclosed official leaflet.

**Annual General Meeting 8 May 2004 Birmingham.
Make a note now. Details inside.**

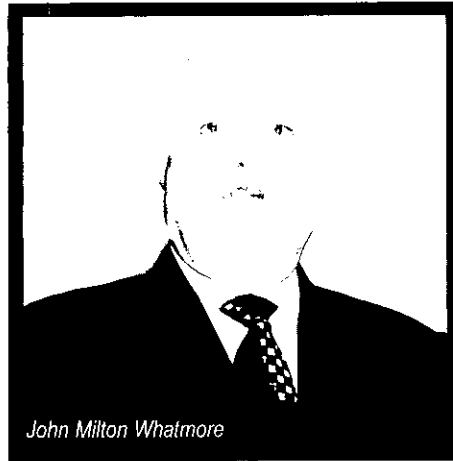
Making the right choices?

By John Milton Whatmore, mediawatch-uk chairman

Today, on average, the bedrooms of children are filled with £3,000 worth of gear including DVDs, Computers, Video Games and Televisions. Never before have the young been able so readily to access the media in all its forms. Closeted in their bedrooms they can view the appalling Channel 4 programme *Shattered* which offered £97,000 to someone who can supposedly stay awake the longest, or at worst, log on to a "Chat Room" during which they may be able to converse with paedophiles and perverts. French historian Jacques Bainville once said: "The old repeat themselves and the young have nothing to say, and the boredom is mutual".

mediawatch-uk continues to campaign for moral and social standards which make our lives more harmonious, decent, safe and fulfilling and our activities do not always meet with general approval because they get in the way of greed, contemporary fads and dodgy business ethics.

Just recently, and in the light of further evidence that our membership (and our only source of funding) is declining, your Executive Committee has conducted an audit of our activities. As members you have the right to know what we are doing on your behalf. Below are some of the things we are currently engaging in:



John Milton Whatmore

1. Use of more direct language in our written and spoken submissions.
2. Offering incentives to our members to introduce new members.
3. Special membership rates for Corporate and Groups.
4. Being more secular in our approach to membership.
5. Introducing a "Young People's" section in *newsbrief*.
6. Investigating payment of subscriptions by credit card.
7. Reviewing the procedures by which we remind members about renewing subscriptions.
8. Increasing the annual subscription from £10.00 to £15.00 from November 2004.

9. Strategically reviewing our role and responsibilities under EC member Roy Smith.
10. Organising a celebration in Birmingham in May 2004 for the 40th Anniversary of Mary Whitehouse's speech at the Birmingham Town Hall.
11. Co-ordinating and publishing *The Daily Grunt Part 2*. (See below)
12. Writing mediawatch-uk's response to OFCOM relating to the new Standards Codes for TV and Radio. (See page 4)

Woody Allen the American Film Star, Writer and Comedian once wrote in the *Jewish Chronicle*, "We stand today at a crossroads: one path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other leads to total extinction. Let's hope we have the wisdom to make the right choice."

Seriously, I hope we are making the right choices for you. All the choices we make at mediawatch-uk are positive attempts to make our world a principled, dignified and safer place in which to live. If you really care about the society in which you live, and want to make a difference, I hope you will continue to support the ideals we uphold. I hope you have a happy, successful 2004 and peace of mind.

Another sh***ing report!

John Beyer writes: "The overwhelming interest in mediawatch-uk's shocking report 'The Daily Grunt', published in July 2003, encouraged us to publish 'The Daily Grunt Part 2' so providing an analysis for the year 2003 as a whole. In a new report published in January, we analysed 86 more films shown on the five terrestrial TV channels from July to December 2003."

In the 86 films the word 'S***', and its derivatives, occurred 795 times. The word 'F***', and its derivatives, occurred 805 times. Holy Names 'Jesus' and/or 'Christ', used as expletives, occurred 328 times.

These figures, added to the findings of 'The Daily Grunt', give a staggering total, for the 146 films analysed in both reports, of: 1622 uses of 'S***' and its derivatives, 2234 uses of 'F***'

and its derivatives and 549 uses of Jesus and/or Christ used as expletives.

In most films very little bad language can be justified honestly on the grounds of authenticity or context and shows that the Codes and Guidelines continue to be ignored. We called upon the Office of Communications (Ofcom) to provide an effective means by which harmful and offensive bad language in the media can be stopped forthwith.

Steps are being taken in the United States to make swearing on mainstream television illegal. Concern and frustration on this issue has been heightened because the Federal Communications Commission recently rejected complaints about the use of the F-word saying it did not violate federal indecency rules!

The Daily Grunt Part 2' can be seen on our website in Publications. We will send you a copy free of charge if you undertake to send it to your MP.



John C. Beyer

John Beyer speaking at the Christian Broadcasting Council's annual conference on the theme 'A positive voice in turbulent times'.

mediawatch-uk comment



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Annual Subscription £10 newsbrief price 50p

The Deafening Silence!

Professor Robert Winston's conclusion that watching violence on TV can influence children and their subsequent behaviour confirms what the late, great, Mary Whitehouse said 40 years ago when launching the 'Clean-Up TV Campaign' in Birmingham Town Hall. The rocketing statistics for violent crime bear out the common sense view that normalising violence in the all-pervasive means of entertainment normalises and validates social violence and crime.

mediawatch-uk has consistently warned that this would result if the film and broadcasting industries continued to portray criminal violence as entertainment. Our monitoring of films shown on television over the last twelve years shows that the use of firearms is the most common form of violence followed by violent assaults and the use of offensive weapons. **In all of these categories real life is reflecting precisely what is shown on the screen. So far there has been a deafening silence from the film and broadcasting industries and no undertaking to take any remedial action.**

In Britain a new era of regulation has begun with the official opening of the Office of Communications. We outline elsewhere in this issue the responses made to a number of consultations. In all of these we have made clear our continuing concern about the damaging impact that film and television have on our society.

We welcome the consultation on the future of the BBC and we urge all members to respond to the leaflet enclosed from the Department of Culture Media and Sport. It is often said that we get the broadcasting we deserve and if we fail to use these rare opportunities to demand better programming we cannot then complain if things do not improve.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 8 May 2004

2.00pm - 4.00pm

Rooms 3 and 4

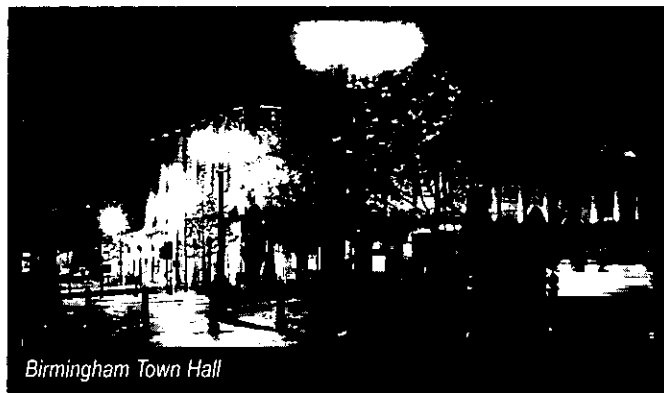
Birmingham Council House

Victoria Square

Birmingham

At 1.00pm assemble on steps of Birmingham Town Hall for a public recitation of Mary Whitehouse's address in 1964.

*Please support this unique occasion.
We look forward to seeing you there.*



Birmingham Town Hall

40 years ago

In the first letter to supporters of the Clean-Up TV Campaign on 15 May 1964 Mary Whitehouse and Norah Buckland wrote: "What a wonderful experience the evening of May 5 was! 'Perhaps never in the history of Birmingham Town Hall has such a successful meeting been sponsored by such a flimsy organisation.' This was how *The Times* described it. The sight of the packed hall of 2,000 people and the singing of the National Anthem was unforgettable. Everyone must have been tremendously heartened, and it will have given great satisfaction to those who worked so hard and came so far to register their support."

The letter went on to appeal to supporters to contact their members of parliament and that a 'Consumer's Council' should be established which would protect the viewing public.

In your hands

The Culture Secretary, The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, recently launched an extensive public consultation as part of the review of the Corporation's Royal Charter which runs out in 2006. The questions range from how the BBC should be funded to whether it should remain a single integrated organisation - or have a charter at all. The consultation comes against a background in which 50 per cent of UK homes will have digital television in some form by the end of this year. The review, Ms Jowell said, would be arguably the "most complex and significant in the history of public service broadcasting".

The Government wants to know

what the people think of the BBC's contribution to the life of the UK and whether there are better ways to deliver some of the contribution that the BBC has traditionally delivered.

Some of the key questions the Government is seeking answers to include: how well do the BBC's publicly funded services deliver its core purposes; does the licence fee remain the best way to pay for the BBC's public services; and does the BBC deliver value for money?

Ms Jowell said: "This review will be different ... the driving force will be the British people who,

through the licence fee, are in effect the BBC's shareholders." Opinions will be put directly to ministers in writing and at meetings to be held all over Britain. 400,000 leaflets will be distributed through public libraries.

The BBC is developing a series of programmes to allow viewers to take part in the consultation. The BBC is expected to air a number of radio and TV debates on its future and regional radio phone-ins are also likely to be used.

The full consultation paper can be seen at: www.culture.gov.uk

Responding to Ofcom consultations

Even before it was vested with its full regulatory powers in December 2003 the Office of Communications was issuing public consultations on a range of communications issues. mediawatch-uk has responded to some of these hoping to influence policy and bring about overall improvements in programmes. We have also sent in a number of complaints to the Contact Centre about unacceptable programmes.

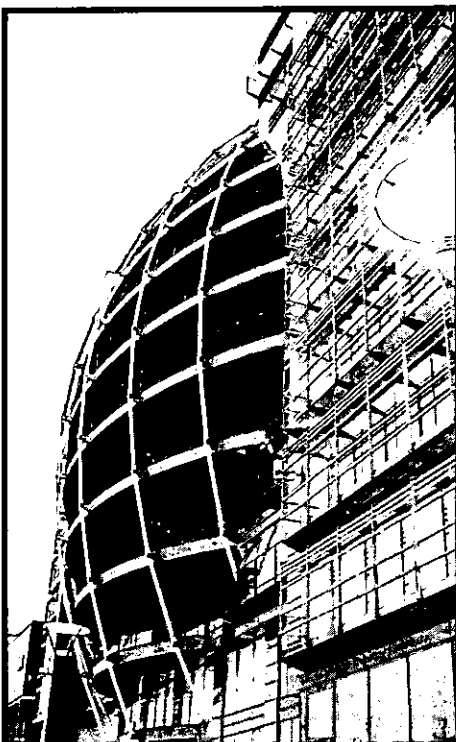
● On the Handling of Complaints we said:

Most people complain about programmes if they have been offended in some way or the content is in bad taste or is indecent or perceived to be harmful or just not acceptable. These judgements tend to be subjective and are not dependent on whether the complainant believes that a Code has been breached. The task before Ofcom to improve the overall level of media literacy in this regard is enormous. It would be helpful to know, therefore, what proposals Ofcom has to improve media literacy?

The consultation paper sets out surprisingly limited circumstances in which the Content Board will be involved in the overall scheme of content regulation. **The Content Board was established as part of the structure of Ofcom to be a representative body advising the main Board.** If it is envisaged that the Content Board will do more than conduct reviews of decisions on complaints it should perhaps be stated that this is only one of its numerous functions.

● On the Regulation of Advertising we said:

mediawatch-uk strongly believes that Ofcom should carry on the established practice of publishing monthly bulletins, not only about advertising complaints but programme complaints too. Moreover, the role of an effective regulator in safeguarding the public interest would seem to require that the power to pre-vet should be restored, even if not frequently invoked. So far as we know the Broadcasting Advertising Clearance Centre, which approves advertisements for transmission does not consult the public but uses the Independent Television Commission's Code of Advertising Standards and Practice for guidance. The ITC makes the BACC aware of any negative public reaction to promotions it has approved and the ITC decides if an advertisement may continue or should be withdrawn or shown within specified time limits.



The Office of Communications
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA
Tel: 020 7981 3000
Fax: 020 7981 3333

Comments about programmes should be sent to: The Contact Centre at the address above or by telephone on: 0845 456 3000 or by e-mail to: contact@ofcom.org.uk

We do not agree with the proposal to 'contract out' the regulation of TV advertising to The Advertising Standards Authority. This is an independent regulatory body set up by the advertising industry to police the rules for non-broadcast advertising. As such it has only voluntary, rather than statutory, public interest obligations although it claims to work to protect consumers by ensuring that the standard of advertisements is kept high whether a complaint is made or not.

We agree with Ofcom that people know what the ASA does and how to make contact. **This is because sufficient resources have been allotted to successfully achieve and maintain a high public awareness of its role.** By comparison neither the ITC nor the Radio Authority have adequately promoted their role in regulating advertisements and adjudicating on complaints. Merely publishing complaints bulletins evidently has not succeeded in giving this important regulatory function sufficient attention.

Consequently, it is no surprise that the ASA receives so many calls about TV and radio advertising for which they have no regulatory function. Ofcom must rectify the shortcomings of the previous regime.

● On Public Service Broadcasting we said:

Our members show concern about perceived harmful influences of television on our children and young people and on society generally. They also show that they are discerning and discriminating viewers and listeners who take great care over their choices. No one wishes the concept of Public Service Broadcasting to be abandoned because all recognise the benefits in the range and quality of programming.

We also believe that in a mature democracy it is essential that the system of broadcasting in operation provides information, education and entertainment in which a passion for excellence is the obvious and overriding consideration. We recognise, however, that excellence is achieved at a price and adequate funding for this is necessary.

Viewers and listeners do expect high standards from the BBC not only in technical quality but in programme content too. In our experience people resent paying, through the licence fee, for programmes that deliberately include violence, sexual conduct and obscene or profane language. This is rightly regarded as a misuse of funds especially in the light of obligations, set out in the Licence and Agreement with the Government, not to offend public feeling.

As a public service broadcaster the notion of 'service' seems not to apply on taste and decency issues about which viewers and listeners feel particularly keenly. Many people also feel that although the BBC and Commercial TV and Radio producers have Public Service obligations they are largely unaccountable, not only in terms of expenditure, but also in terms of the programmes commissioned and transmitted. **'Public Service' should imply greater accountability to the people who are the subject of the service, just like any other industry.**

The full responses are available on request and can be seen on our website in Publications.

For news and information visit:
www.ofcom.org.uk