The Home Secretary established the Broadcasting Standards Council to consider the portrayal of violence, of sex, and matters of taste and decency in broadcast and video works.

The BSC was set up initially on a non-statutory basis pending legislation. During this pre-statutory phase the Council's role, as outlined by the Home Secretary, is to:

i draw up, in consultation with the broadcasting authorities and the other responsible bodies in the broadcasting, cable and video fields, a code on the portrayal of violence and of sex and standards of taste and decency;

ii monitor and report on the portrayal of violence and of sex, and standards of taste and decency, in television and radio programmes received in the UK and in video works;

iii receive, consider and make findings on complaints and comments from individuals and organisations on matters within its competence and ensure that such findings are effectively publicised;

iv undertake research on matters such as the nature and effects on attitudes and behaviour of the portrayal of sex and of violence in television and radio programmes and in video works;

v prepare an annual report, which the Home Secretary will lay before Parliament.

In addition, the Council is consulted by the Government on developments in Europe on the future regulation of trans-frontier broadcasting.

Lord Rees-Mogg was appointed for a five year period, the other Members for three years.

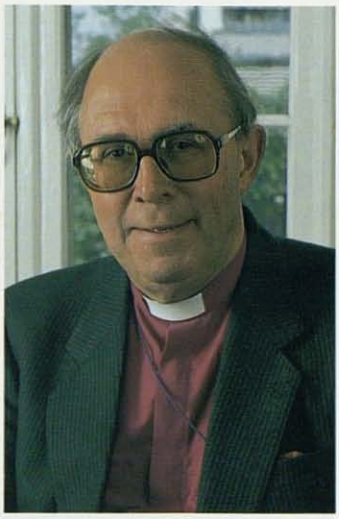
Lord Rees-Mogg, Chairman.
Former Editor and Director of The Times, Vice-Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors and Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain. He is Chairman and proprietor of Pickering and Chatto Limited and a Director of GEC.

Jocelyn Barrow OBE,
Deputy Chairman.
Formerly a BBC Governor, Senior Lecturer in Education, Vice Chairman of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and Member of the Community Relations Commission.

Alf Dubs,
former Labour MP for Battersea South and for Battersea. He is currently Director of the British Refugee Council.

Richard Baker OBE.
He began broadcasting for the BBC in 1950 and continues regularly to present programmes on BBC television and radio.

Dr. R Brinley Jones,
former University lecturer, Director of the University of Wales Press and Warden of Llandovery College. Member of the British Council Board and University Examiner.



The Rt. Rev. William J Westwood, The Bishop of Peterborough. A former member of the Press Council, IBA Panel of Religious Advisers and the BBFC Video Consultative Council.

Dr. Jean Curtis-Raleigh is Consultant in Adult Psychiatry at Queen Mary's University Hospital, Roehampton.

The Rev. Charles Robertson is Parish Minister, Canongate, Edinburgh (The Kirk of Holyroodhouse).

Colin Shaw
Director

David Houghton
Deputy Director

Dr. David Docherty
Research Director

Katherine Lannon
Press & Programmes Officer

Introduction by The Director

The Council spent the opening months of its existence within the Home Office, but, from the beginning, Members were concerned to demonstrate their independence by having premises of their own. These were found, shortly before Christmas, 1988, in a Victorian office-block close to Westminster Abbey. The fact that the building was reportedly put up by an ambitious railway company when competition was at its height in the last century provided an interesting pre-echo of the age of deregulated broadcasting.

Following the appointment of the Director and the Deputy Director in November, 1988, the Council accepted proposals for two further senior appointments: those of a Research Director and a Press & Programmes Officer. Between them these four people handle the day-to-day management of the Council's business. It is the task of the Research Director to initiate proposals for research into different subjects within the Council's remit, to promote proposals from outside the Council and to oversee the efficient conduct of the Council's research activities. We are mindful of the importance of research in the Council's work which was stressed by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee in its report on broadcasting, published in June 1988. The role of the Press & Programmes Officer is to ensure adequate publicity for the Council's findings and to ensure that programmes of particular interest to Council members are brought to their attention. The management group is supported by a further ten posts, dealing with the routine handling of complaints, administration, and finance. Unless events, in the shape of a rising tide of business, demonstrate that some expansion is inescapable, it is the intention to remain small in numbers.

The Council, in common with many organisations, made its response to the Government's White Paper on Broadcasting at the end of March, 1989. It set down what it considered to be the statutory powers necessary for it to perform the role foreshadowed in the White Paper. Some of these provoked criticism from broadcasting organisations which felt that their own independence was being threatened. The Council has conducted useful negotiations with these organisations with the object of allaying their concerns and stressing the Council's position as a non-regulatory body.

At the end of August, 1989, the Home Secretary announced his proposals for statutory powers for the Council, forming part of forthcoming broadcasting legislation. One of the main statutory provisions will be the granting of powers to the Council to require publication by the broadcasters, in whatever form the Council decides, of its findings on complaints. It is the Council's view that the measures proposed for it will enable it to make a constructive contribution to the process of change which British broadcasting is currently undergoing. The legislation is expected to make clear the relationship between the Council's Code and guidelines issued by the BBC and by the new regulatory bodies, the ITC and the Radio Authority.

In the remainder of this section, we report in detail on the main activities undertaken by the Council during the period under review.

First among the Council's objectives was the drafting of a Code of Practice covering the issues under its remit. The Council was required to consult in the drafting with the broadcasting authorities and other responsible bodies. The Council interpreted this requirement more widely to embrace a broad range of public consultations, with individuals and organisations, in order to base its Code on a full understanding of feelings among consumers as well as among professional broadcasters.

The Council considered an initial draft at its meeting on 9 January and called for changes to be made before the presentation of a further draft in the following month. With the Council's approval, this version was circulated widely towards the end of February. It attracted a good deal of Press comment, much of it sympathetic in tone, with only a small number of articles critical of the Code.

Consultations

The Council's consultations with professional and public opinion were of three distinct kinds. First, there were meetings with bodies representing organisations independent of broadcasting. These included, inter alia, the NUT, the Churches, the Police Federation, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and Liberty, the renamed National Council for Civil Liberties. Also included in this series of meetings were two organisations which speak on behalf of certain sections of the audience, the National Viewers' & Listeners' Association and Voice of the Listener. Secondly, there were the broadcasting authorities, the television and radio franchisees of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, and such bodies as the Writers' Guild and the Society of Authors. Allied to these meetings were others held with the British Film Institute, the British Screen Advisory Council, and the British Board of Film

Classification whose responsibilities for video works call for close co-operation with the Council. (A full list of the bodies consulted is given in Appendix 2).

The Road Show

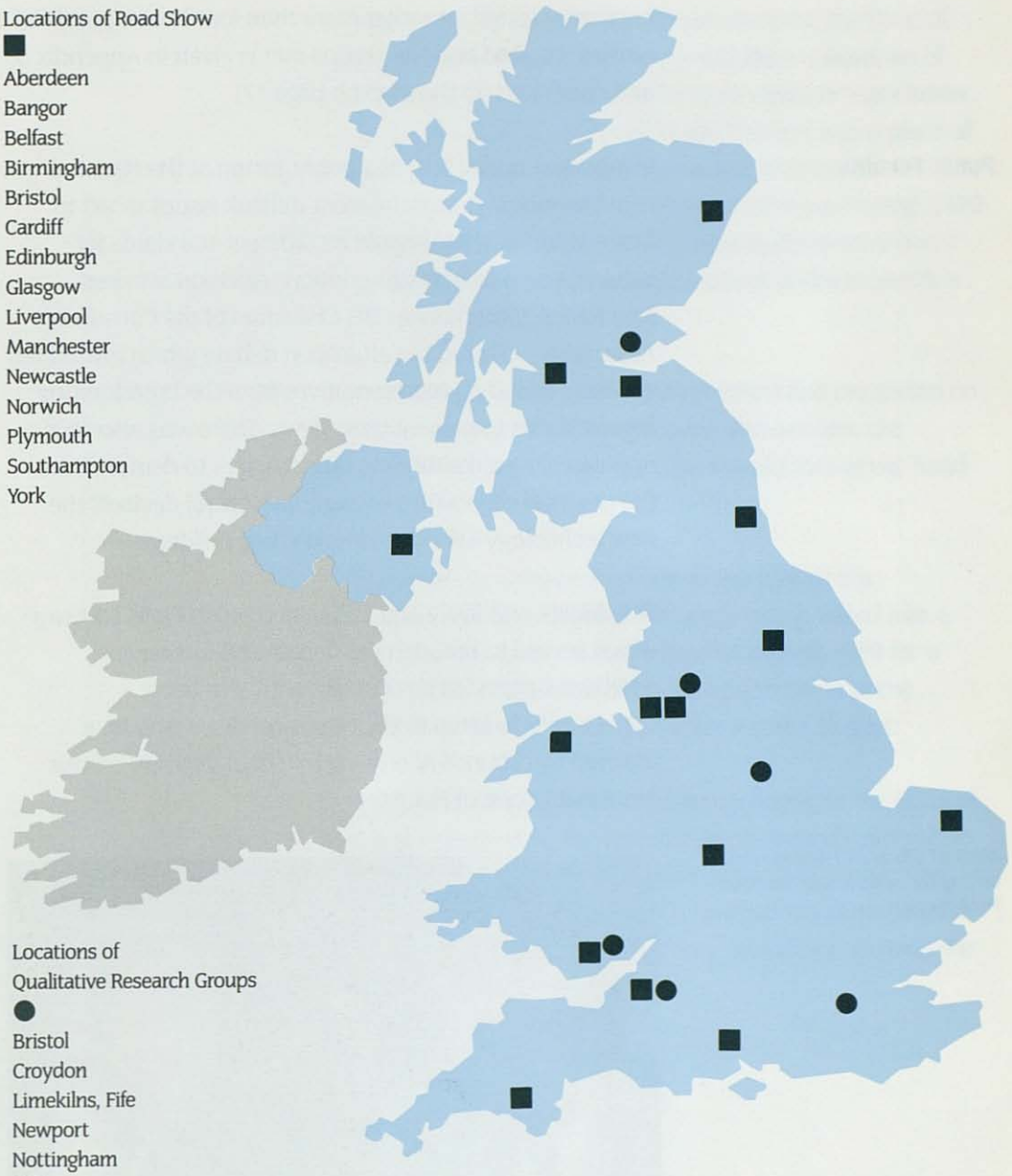
The third phase, which occurred during the Spring of 1989, involved the Council in visits to over a dozen towns or cities up and down the country. Under the general title of the 'Road Show', it was the Council's purpose to meet groups of not more than ten people, all selected independently by a market research organisation. Most of the groups shared common interests, as teachers or single-parents, for example. One, however, consisted exclusively of men, another of women. The decision was taken in Belfast to meet groups of Catholics and Protestants separately, in the belief that each would speak with greater freedom about some of the topics within the Council's remit without the presence of the other.

The form of the meetings and particularly the involvement of Council members and senior staff may be of interest to others needing to take a closer look at public attitudes in the areas of their special concerns. Each group was initially given a brief description of the Council and its work, followed by an indication of the course the discussion would follow. With a single exception, never fewer than four Council Members, led by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, then joined the meeting, accompanied by the Director. For the following two hours, the group was led through the main points of the draft Code, of which copies had been provided in advance. The emphasis in each discussion varied a little, reflecting the particular interests of the group involved, as parents, students, or Trades Unionists, for instance. After each discussion, the meeting broke into smaller groups for lunch or supper, so that each

Locations of Road Show

■

Aberdeen
Bangor
Belfast
Birmingham
Bristol
Cardiff
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Liverpool
Manchester
Newcastle
Norwich
Plymouth
Southampton
York



Locations of
Qualitative Research Groups

●

Bristol
Croydon
Limekilns, Fife
Newport
Nottingham
Oldham
(see research on
page 19 and 24)

encounter lasted for rather more than four hours. (A full list of places visited and the groups met is given in Appendix 3 and illustrated on the map on page 17).

Public Forum

In July, the Council staged a public forum at the National Film Theatre on one of the most difficult issues it had to face – whether there should be different standards for subscription and non-subscription television services. Mrs Rachel Waterhouse CBE, Chairman of the Consumers' Association, chaired the afternoon debate which invited ten speakers including representatives from the broadcasting organisations to present their views. There was also an opportunity for the satellite broadcasters to demonstrate the practical capabilities of 'parental control devices', the new technology aimed at safeguarding children.

The debate was lively and stimulated much Press coverage, which served to broaden the debate still further. In addition, it provided the Council with a valuable opportunity to listen to the opposing views, and later assisted the Council in coming to a final decision on this issue in its Code of Practice.

Michael Grade and Andrew Neil, among the speakers at the BSC's Public Forum

PHOTOGRAPH REPRODUCED WITH THE PERMISSION OF EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS PLC

Research

At the end of this sequence of consultations, the Council considered the points made to it and the implications of two major pieces of research commissioned in association with the work of drafting the Code. The first was a piece of qualitative research, consisting of workshops and discussion groups. The second was a survey covering 1,320 people, each responding to a questionnaire in interviews lasting fifty minutes. A detailed account of the research is given on pages 23-43.

The Council's survey confirmed, clarified and expanded on the impressions of public attitudes derived from the qualitative research and from the experiences of the Road Show.

The revisions made to the Code in the light of the consultations and the research were incorporated into a further draft which was circulated in August 1989 for a final round of consultations before publication of the version appearing at the end of this Annual Report.

The Future

The Council envisages the regular up-dating of the Code of Practice responding to the findings of research into public attitudes and with the evolution of programme-services or technological change. It would expect to maintain regular links with interested organisations within and outside the broadcasting profession.

Developments in broadcasting technology mean that pan-European broadcasting via satellite is now a daily reality, and there is a potential for the transmission of programmes to Europe from non-European states. These developments emphasise the changing character of broadcasting as we move towards the 1990s.

Against this background, the Council of Europe has drawn up a Convention on Transfrontier Television which contains a number of rules in relation to programme content and advertising. In particular, the Convention requires that programmes must not be indecent, pornographic or give undue prominence to violence or be likely to incite to racial hatred. It also provides that programmes unsuitable for children must not be shown at times when children may be expected to be viewing. The Convention was opened for signature in May 1989. At the same time, a draft Directive covering broadly similar ground has been under discussion by the European Commission.

In the light of these initiatives, the Home Secretary announced in August, 1989, that the BSC will have a leading role in monitoring the standards of programmes broadcast into the UK from abroad. Following reports from the BSC, the Government could then take action under the Council of Europe Convention on Transfrontier Television, including suspension of an offending service, or take remedial steps under other powers to be included in the forthcoming Broadcasting Bill. The BSC will also be part of the UK's representation on the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe's Convention on Transfrontier Television. The BSC welcomed the Home Secretary's statement, and looks forward to playing a full part in the operation of the Convention. As the House of Commons Home Affairs

Committee noted in its report (June 1988) on the future of broadcasting, the rapidly developing character of transfrontier broadcasting makes it essential for some system of European regulation to be in place as soon as possible.

More generally, the BSC has begun to develop a dialogue with European broadcasters, and will continue to monitor developments in the potential for broadcasting from outside Europe.

Uncertainty is the defining characteristic of the public debate about broadcasting standards. In the wider controversy, and in representations to the Council, researchers, interest groups, broadcasters and politicians have accused one another of misrepresenting evidence, of underestimating or exaggerating public concern, and of general bad faith. The Council, concerned that its findings should reflect generally held values rather than those of partisans of either side of the debate, initiated research on public attitudes and on the effects of television. In November, 1988, the Council commissioned the Broadcasting Research Unit to summarise and comment upon research on public attitudes to broadcasting standards in the UK, the US and in Europe. In February, Dr. Guy Cumberbatch, Director of the Communications Research Group at Aston University, was invited by the Council to subject research on the effects of the media to close scrutiny.

In July, Dr. Cumberbatch's controversial findings, and those of his colleague Dr. Dennis Howitt of Loughborough University, were published by the Council as a monograph – *A Measure of Uncertainty – The Effects of the Mass Media.* The publication is intended to be the first in a series which, as part of its commitment to research, the Council is launching as a forum for discussion: the views expressed by contributors will not necessarily be those of the Council.

As well as summaries of existing studies, the Council commissioned two original research projects on public attitudes. In May the Council requested an independent market research company – Fusion Research and Consultancy – to conduct four workshops on viewers' attitudes to the regulation of broadcasting. The rich

information afforded by these groups encouraged the Council to extend Fusion's project and fourteen discussion groups were commissioned from the company, which explored the balance in public opinion between freedom of choice and the need for regulation. (Further information about the groups is given in Appendix 3 and the locations illustrated on the map on page 17). This research fed directly into the drafting of the Code of Practice and it is summarised in the next section.

As the Council was developing its Code of Practice, it was also formulating plans for a major national opinion survey which would probe the nature and complexity of the public's attitudes to broadcasting standards. In July, the Council's Research Director, in conjunction with the market research company, Research International, designed a questionnaire in which the Council's concerns, as well as those expressed in the Council's consultations with the public and with broadcasters, were investigated.[1]

1. Freedom and Regulation

Over half the children in Britain aged five or over have a television set in their bedroom. For this reason, if no other, the Council believes that research on television must inquire into the nature of moral responsibility. The electronic media have become entangled in the process whereby one generation transmits to its successor standards of decent, humane and reasonable behaviour, and parents have come to realise that the television set in the bedroom may short-circuit, undermine, or reinforce their advice and guidance.

Almost every programme highlights, sanctions or criticises actions and attitudes. Drama, for example, thrives on confrontation; it explores intense emotions and, therefore,

1 Surveys are snapshots of societies. Individually, they provide no reliable information as to how someone came to hold their views, nor indeed how a society came to sanction certain views rather than others. Moreover, surveys cannot predict the future: an event may happen tomorrow which may overturn attitudes. Surveys will, therefore, guide the Council's findings but will not dictate them. The survey was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1600, and had a response rate of 70%. The questionnaire was also administered to a quota sample of 100 Asians and 100 Afro-Caribbeans.

inescapably introduces complex dilemmas to children with which some parents are uncomfortable. The news, likewise, introduces a world of extreme, powerful and dangerous actions and activity which most British children would not otherwise have to confront. Consequently, parents are called upon to assess not only the suitability of individual programmes, but of the whole broadcasting service.

The moral instruction of children is not the only problem posed by the media. In public debate on the regulation of broadcasting, two issues recur: first, the majority of households in Britain do not contain children, and adults in such homes must balance their own pleasure against the difficulties which parents face in bringing up children. Secondly, much concern has been expressed in the media and elsewhere that psychologically frail people may have few immunities against the media, or that others may exhibit pathological behaviour which they feel is sanctioned by the media. The Council's survey of public opinion focused, therefore, on the extent to which the audience believed that broadcasting should restrict the portrayal of images which may influence unstable personalities, disturb children, or which are deemed offensive.

Surveys are normally reported in the form of assertions such as: 'four in five people say that there is too much/too little sex, violence or, indeed, football on television'. These statements are all too often misleading; moreover, they miss the point. In everyday conversation, as well as theoretical speculation, individual assertions are embedded in trains of thought which admit qualification, in the connection between ideas and ideals which allow for uncertainty and changes of mind, and in ways of living which are rooted in wider values, and which seem to allow

for a little creative hypocrisy. At their best, surveys explore what the philosopher, John Locke, called: 'the several views, postures, stands, turns, limitations and exceptions our minds are capable of.'[2]

The Council's survey demonstrated that the relationship between broadcasters and their audience revolves around the range, intensity and consistency of moral values. The evidence suggests that disquiet about broadcasting issues from three sources: worry, guilt and fear. Worry about the effects of the media on others; guilt at not being good enough parents, or at wishing away the problems associated with programmes which we, as viewers, may enjoy; finally, fear about the long-term effects of broadcasting.

Attitudes to the moral or causal influence of television vary in the intensity with which they are held. One-third of those interviewed for the survey were indifferent as to the question of the moral influence of television, whereas around one-fifth of respondents thought that television had powerful educative benefits and few drawbacks.[3] A roughly similar number of respondents disapproved of the present television service fearing that it causes more ill than it does good; a fourth group subscribed to the view that television had indiscriminately powerful positive *and* negative influences; finally, around one person in ten adamantly asserted that at present television makes no impression whatsoever on children.[4] These general attitudes do not, however, adequately represent the strength of some responses to some aspects of television.

Most parents cast a jaundiced eye over some television programmes. Almost seven out of ten parents with children

2 Before finalising the questionnaire, the fieldwork company, Research International – whose Media Director Dr. David Morrison acted as co-author of the questionnaire – and the Council's staff conducted extensive pre-testing of the language used in the questions. This involved intensive discussion with around 20 members of the public, chosen at random, who answered the questionnaire and were then cross-examined to ascertain their comprehension of the questions and the match between the researchers' concepts and those of the public. Further pre-testing and refinement took place in the weeks which led up to the main interview stage.

3 We asked our respondents to rank on a seven point scale – from extremely good to not good at all – whether television was good at doing the following:
Teaching children to be more considerate of others.
Discovering the difference between right and wrong.
Encouraging children to be more inquisitive.
Encouraging children to take up hobbies.
Helping children to make sense of social problems.
The following question asked respondents to rank on a five point scale, from extremely powerful influence to no influence, whether television had an influence on the following:
Encouraging swearing.
Lowering respect for parents.
Lowering respect for schools.
Limiting children's imagination.
Encouraging aggression.
The responses to these questions were gathered together and re-analysed to produce five characteristic types of response.

4 All ages and classes, both sexes, and all political parties are represented in each of these groups. However, some types of people are over-represented in each cluster: for

example, those who tend not to identify with a political party or to attend church, along with those who are aged in their mid-20s and early 30s, are more likely to be sceptical about the influence of television.

5 The older the child, the more likely the parent is to have turned off or over.

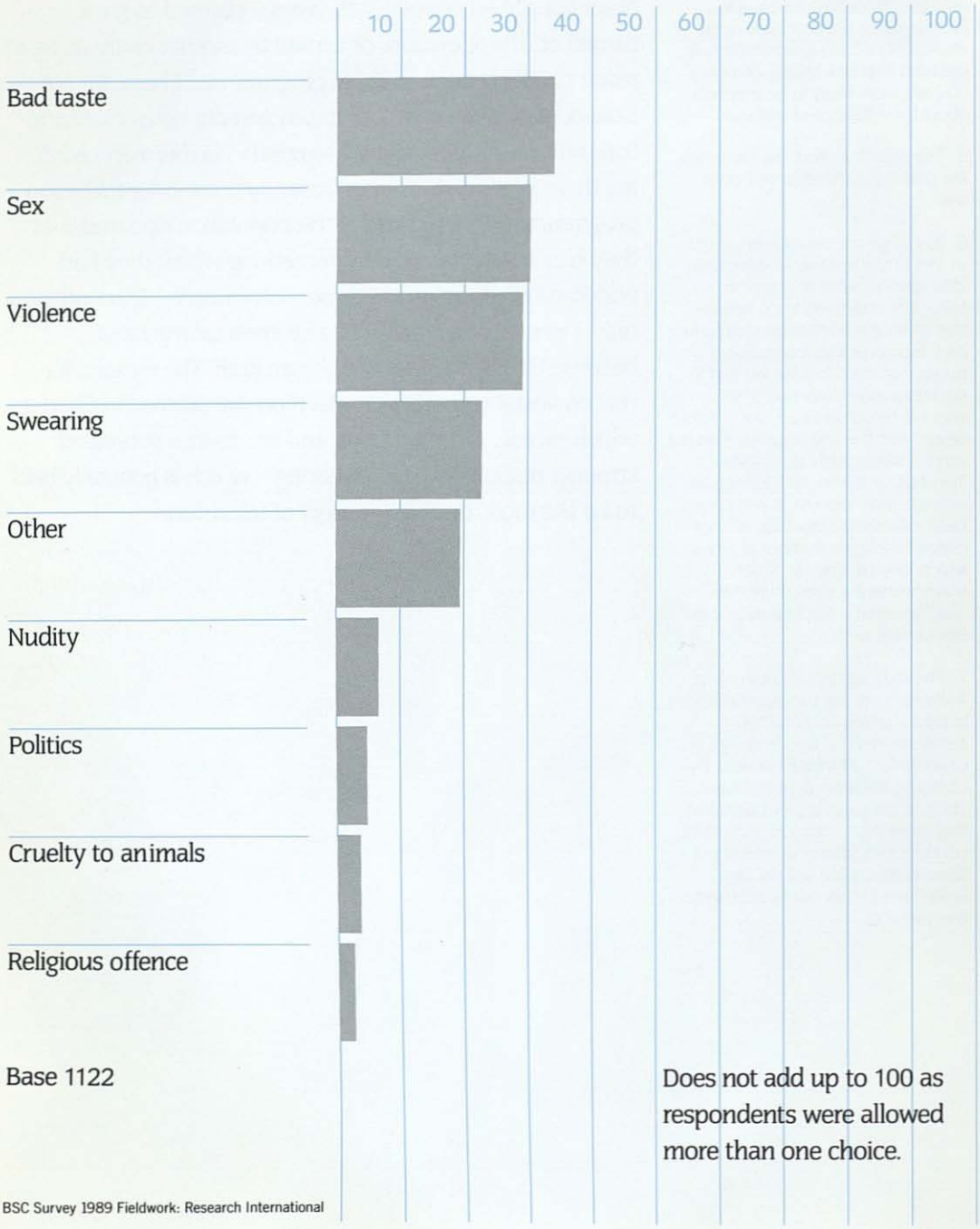
6 It is usual in questionnaires such as this to ask whether viewers were 'offended' by what they see on television. It seemed to us, however, that offence is a relatively mild term and, moreover, that it conceals a number of emotions. We wanted to tap into a more powerful, almost visceral, response to television. At our design and pre-test stage we tried out various words such as 'appalled', 'horrified', and 'shocked'. Eventually we settled on 'disgust.' It has long been established that interviewees over-estimate the number of times which they perform an action; nonetheless the strength of this reaction reveals that television is not emotionally neutral.

7 The Independent Broadcasting Authority's annual survey on attitudes to broadcasting consistently demonstrates that bad language causes most offence to viewers. By choosing the more powerful word, 'disgust', we seem to have identified that swearing is the most immediate concern, but deeper worries about taste, violence and sex will be unearthed if other words are used in the question.

of school-age – between 5-15 years – claimed to have turned off the television, or turned to another channel, as a result of seeing an unsuitable programme.[5] These are not isolated incidents; over four in ten parents claim that they turn off or over at least once a month. Furthermore, adults are themselves disturbed or upset by occasional television programmes. One quarter of the population declared that they had been disgusted by something which they had watched on television in the previous month.[6] By contrast, only 3 per cent claimed to have turned off the radio because they were disgusted by an item. The reasons for this powerful response to television are profiled in Chart 1, which reveals that bad taste and sex scenes generated stronger responses than swearing – which is generally held to be the most troubling aspect of television.[7]

Chart 1

Reasons for Disgust



Base 1122

Does not add up to 100 as respondents were allowed more than one choice.

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

2. A Moral Contract

In workshops and discussion groups commissioned by the Council[8] most discussants organised their thoughts about the media around two metaphors: television as a guest in the home, and the unwritten contract between broadcaster and viewer. The first metaphor is more complicated than is generally recognised. The 'guest' is not always uninvited. Before 9 o'clock on BBC1 and ITV, most viewers demand of television that it conform to reasonable standards of behaviour. After this time, however, and on the minority channels, television is more like an invited guest, one from whom viewers are prepared to tolerate more relaxed and informal conduct.

The metaphor of the contract is also complex. It states that there is an unspoken agreement between responsible broadcasters and reasonable viewers; if the former do not unduly provoke viewers by scheduling unsuitable material on the mainstream channels before 9 o'clock, or by breaking long-established rules without warning, the latter will continue to trust broadcasters' intentions.
The main clause of the contract concerns the time after which programmes may be shown which are unsuitable for children to watch. The existence of this period – known by broadcasters as the 'Watershed' – allows adults to justify the presence on television of programmes aimed specifically at them. Eight out of ten respondents disagreed with the assertion that all television programmes should be suitable for children. However, although the principle is accepted, the exact time at which the changeover should take place is a matter of considerable debate. The older the children, the more likely the parent is to nominate a later time in the evening. This trend culminates in the parents of children over the age of thirteen, a majority of whom nominate 10pm or later as their Watershed (Table 1).

8 The groups were moderated by Dr. Alison Lyon. The Afro-Caribbean and Asian groups were sub-contracted to an Afro-Caribbean and an Asian researcher.

Table 1

Preferred Time of Watershed for Parents with Children Aged 13-15

	Preferred time for children 11-14	Preferred time for children 15-16
Base:	125	125
	%	%
Before 8.30pm	10	1
8.30 – 9.00pm	21	2
9.00 – 9.30pm	22	10
9.30 – 10.00pm	19	20
10.00 – 10.30pm	18	27
After 10.30pm	8	31
Should never be unsuitable	1	0
No time limit	1	9

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Sometimes, in the tables, percentages will add to 99 per cent rather than 100 per cent due to the effect of rounding off exact percentages to the nearest whole number for the sake of clarity.

More than eight out of ten parents know of the existence of a Watershed policy on the part of broadcasters, and seven out of ten parents can spontaneously identify the cut-off point as 9pm. However, as Table 1 demonstrates, parents of teenage children are uncomfortable with the present Watershed. Moreover, in a separate question one-third of parents with children over the age of 13 claimed that 9pm was too early. The reason for this worry on the part of parents of older children was identified in the discussion groups. It appears as a final attempt by parents to control the behaviour, and shape the attitudes, of teenage children.[9]

9 There is great ambivalence as to whether the news should conform to the Watershed – 49 per cent say, yes; and 44 per cent say, no.

The Watershed is not enough by itself to fulfil the contract between viewer and broadcaster. A more sophisticated and extensive policy of issuing warnings before particularly

upsetting programmes was called for by most respondents in the survey. Indeed, a considerable number wished for spoken warnings before every programme (Table 2, Table 3 and Chart 2).

Table 2 Approval of Policy on Warning Viewers about Feature Films which contain Upsetting or Offensive Scenes

	Base	Male	Female
Base: Total sample	1122	469	653
	%	%	%
Approve strongly	77	72	81
Approve slightly	14	15	13
Neither approve/disapprove	7	10	6
Disapprove slightly	1	1	0
Disapprove strongly	1	1	0

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

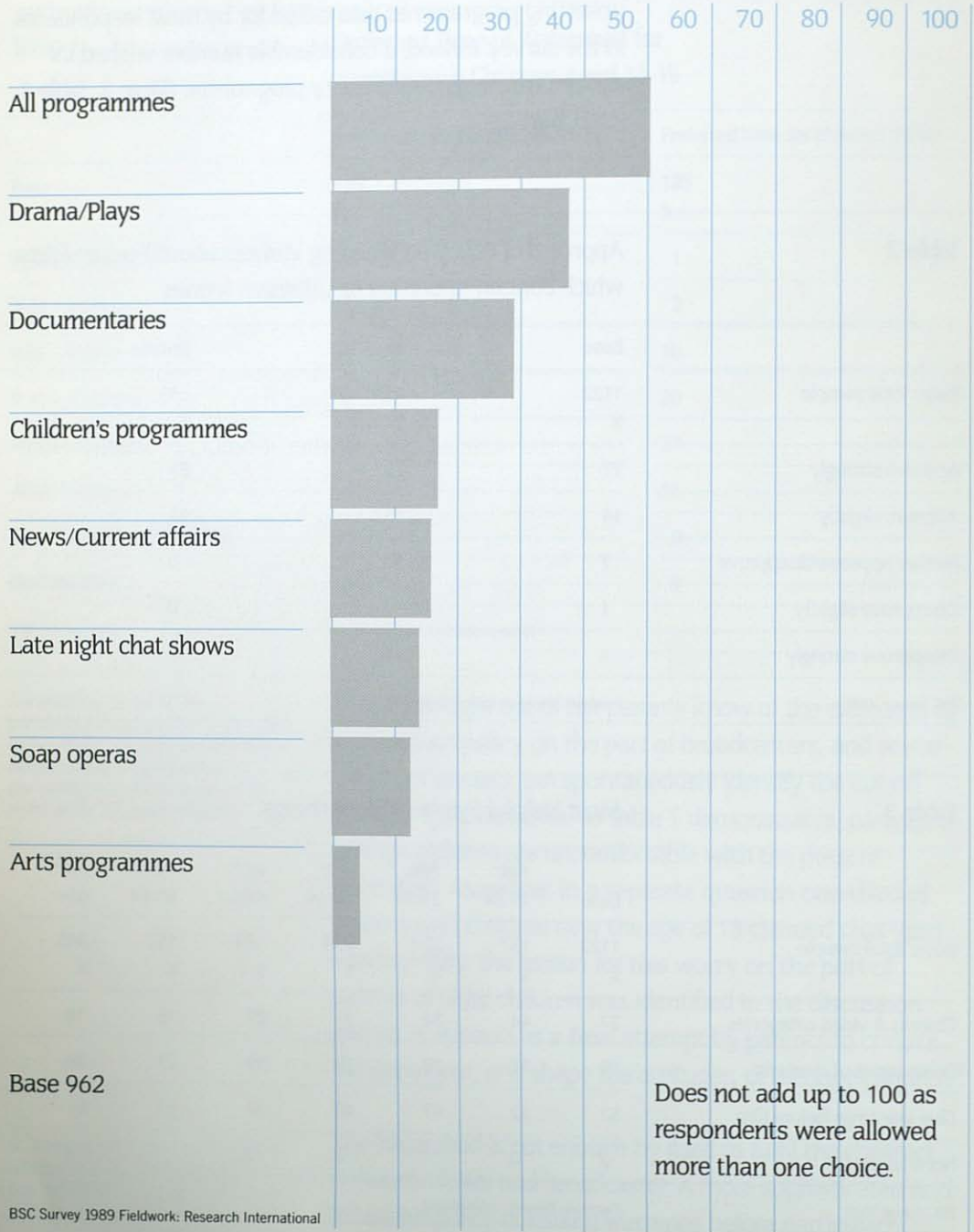
Table 3 Most Helpful Symbols or Warnings

	Base	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
Base: Total sample	1122	137	224	224	139	153	245
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cinema & video categories	27	44	34	31	27	16	16
Other types of symbols	19	13	18	19	19	21	20
Give warnings before film	52	42	47	48	52	61	61
None of these	2	0	1	2	2	1	3

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Chart 2

Programmes which should have Warning Symbols



Base 962

Does not add up to 100 as respondents were allowed more than one choice.

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Watersheds and warnings are devices which protect people from embarrassment and alert them to programmes which contain difficult and potentially disturbing images or words. The Council's survey delineated those images and words which viewers and listeners felt that the Watershed and warnings policy should cover.

3. Individual Concerns

Swearing is frowned on when it is heard on television to the same extent that it is considered by the individual viewers to be in bad taste in everyday life (See Chart 3). This chart demonstrates that swearing is most inappropriate when it takes place between a mother and a daughter in a public place, and more acceptable when it occurs between a father and son in a public place.[10] Television mirrors these general responses and, indeed, more people are relaxed about swearing on television after 9 o'clock than they are about its use in everyday life.[11] At first sight, our survey seems to reveal an unconditional aversion to the use of 'hard' swearing on television. However, further exploration disclosed that setting and timing can affect viewers' acceptance of such words (See Chart 4). For example, respondents felt that a play about a prison, which is broadcast after 9 o'clock, is more likely to be justified in its use of swearing.[12]

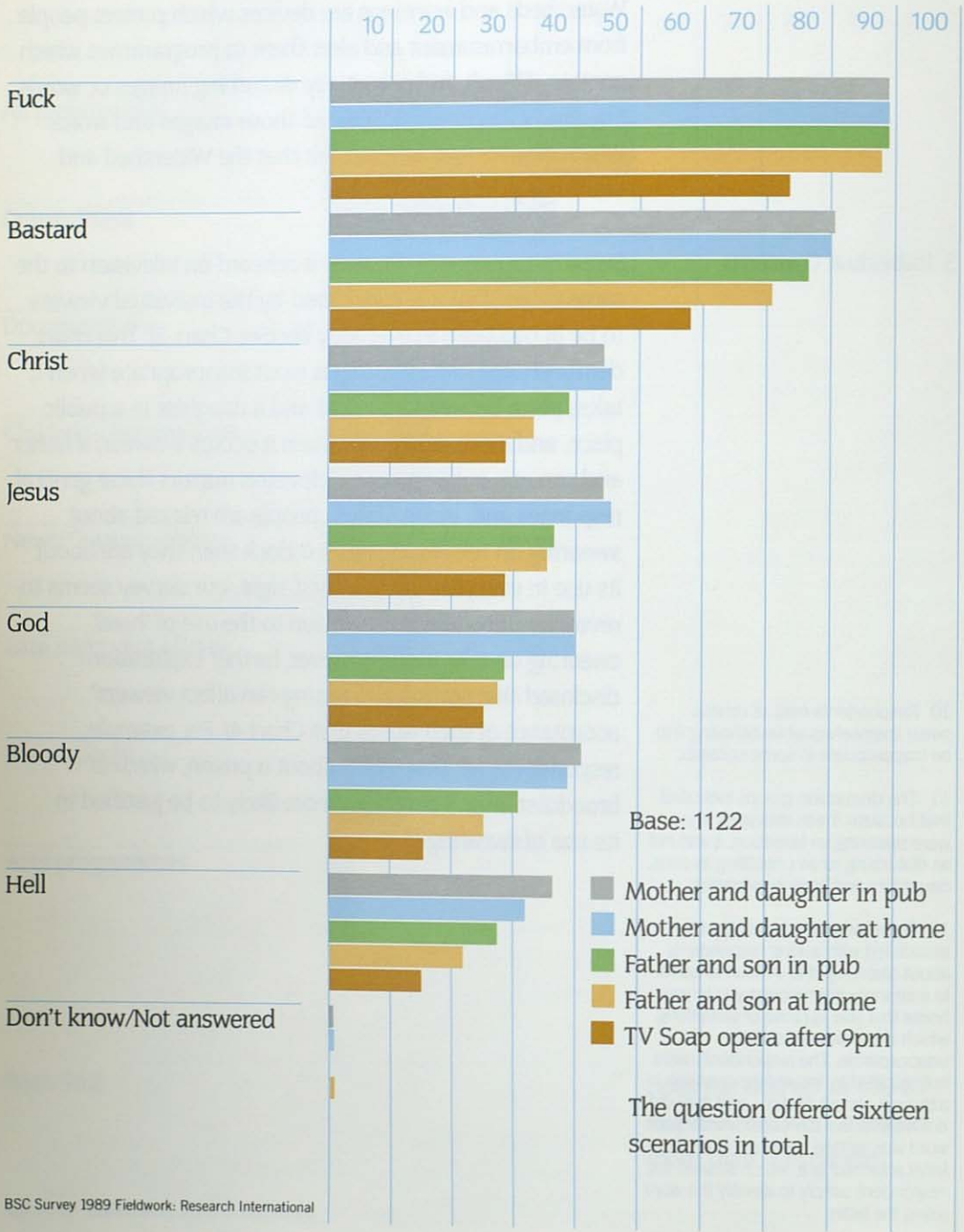
10 Respondents may, of course, swear themselves while believing it to be inappropriate in some contexts.

11 The discussion groups indicated that because it was strangers who were swearing on television, it was not as disturbing, or as unsettling as sons, daughters and parents swearing.

12 There were many problems associated with asking respondents about swearing. It is difficult to admit to a stranger interviewing you in your home that you approve of something which is considered socially unacceptable. The respondents were not required to answer the question – although almost all did – and they did not have to use the swear words. Each word was written on a card and had a letter attached to it, which allowed the respondent simply to identify the word using the letter.

Chart 3

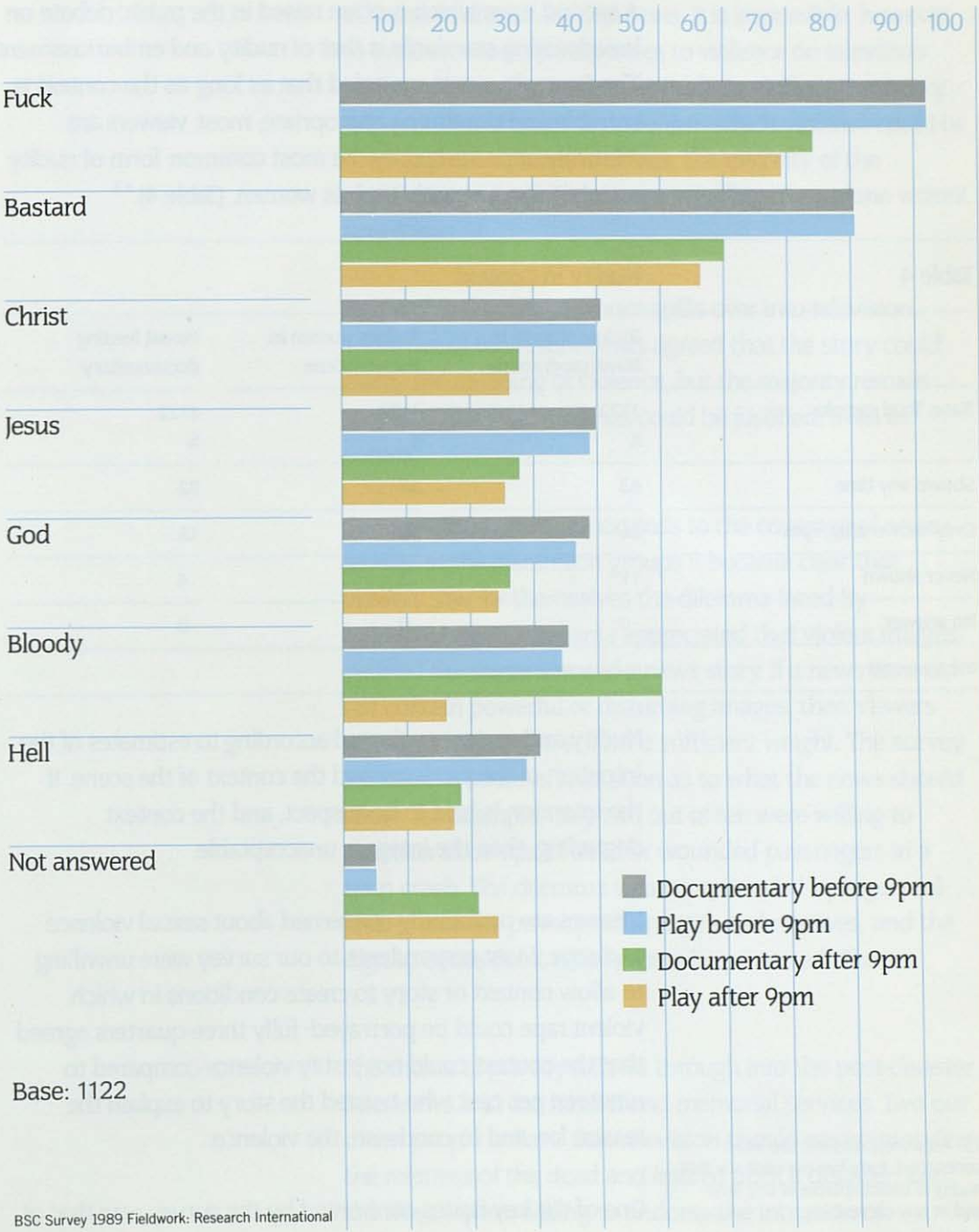
Unacceptability of Swearing in Everyday Life



BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Chart 4

Unacceptability of Swearing on Television
Play/Documentary about Prison Life



Base: 1122

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

A second issue which is often raised in the public debate on broadcasting standards is that of nudity and embarrassment. The Council's survey revealed that as long as the context is sensible and the timing appropriate, most viewers are relatively unperturbed by the most common form of nudity on television – namely topless women. (Table 4).[13]

Table 4 Nudity in Context

	Topless women in travel programme	Topless women in shower scene	Breast feeding documentary
Base: Total sample	1122	1122	1122
	%	%	%
Shown any time	63	38	82
Only shown after 9pm	26	50	13
Never shown	11	12	4
No answer	0	0	0

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Nudity and sex are evaluated according to estimates of the intention of the producer and the context of the scene. If the intention is held to be suspect, and the context degrading, then the image is unacceptable.

Viewers are profoundly concerned about sexual violence and rape. Most respondents to our survey were unwilling to allow context or story to create conditions in which violent rape could be portrayed: fully three-quarters agreed that the context could not justify violence compared to nineteen per cent who trusted the story to explain the reason for, and to condemn, the violence.

One of the key issues confronted by the survey was that of

13 Asian respondents are more concerned: forty five per cent say that nudity is unacceptable at any time and in any context.

violence in drama and the news. It is impossible, however, to evaluate viewers' responses to violence on television without first knowing their attitude to violence in society. When offered a range of options in which violence could be used to prevent harm to others, the majority of the population indicate that they are willing to condone violent acts (Chart 5).

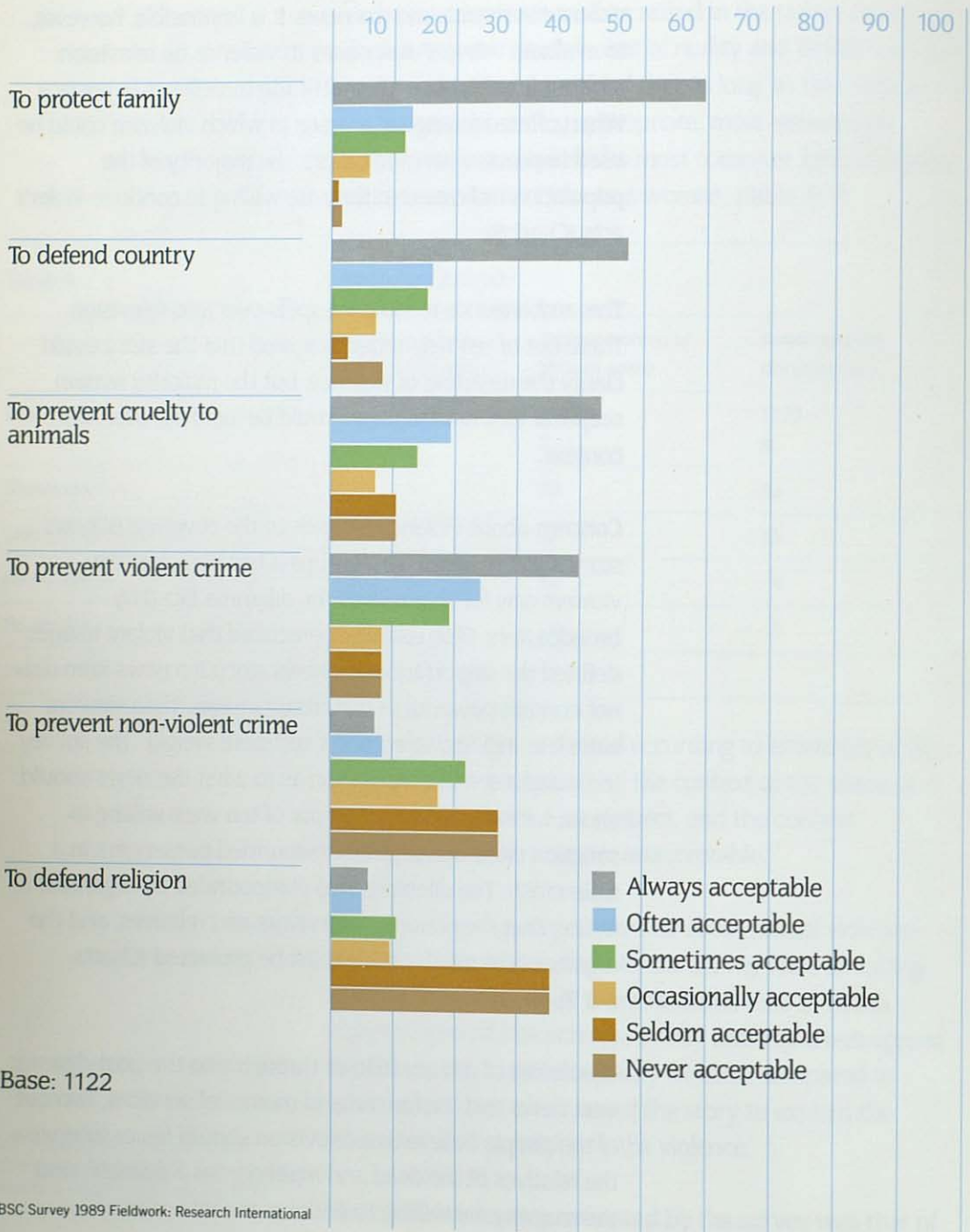
This ambivalence to violence spills over into television. Three out of ten respondents agreed that the story could clarify the meaning of violence, but the majority remain sceptical that hard violence could be justified, even in context.

Concern about violence extends to the coverage of news stories. In the discussion groups it became clear that viewers saw for themselves the dilemma faced by broadcasters. Discussants appreciated that violent images defined the importance of a news story. If a news item did not contain powerful or disturbing images, then viewers were less inclined to accord it sufficient weight. The survey indicated a sense of hesitation as to what the news should show; for example, only two out of ten were willing to sanction close-ups of dead or wounded passengers in a train crash. The dilemma was compounded by a general feeling that the privacy of survivors and relatives, and the dignity of the dead, clearly must be protected (Charts 6 & 7).

The theme of privacy follows through into the post-disaster interviews and the funeral and memorial services. Two out of ten people believe that television should never interview the relatives of the dead and injured from a disaster; and the majority are willing to endorse the intrusion of

Chart 5

Acceptable Reasons for Violence

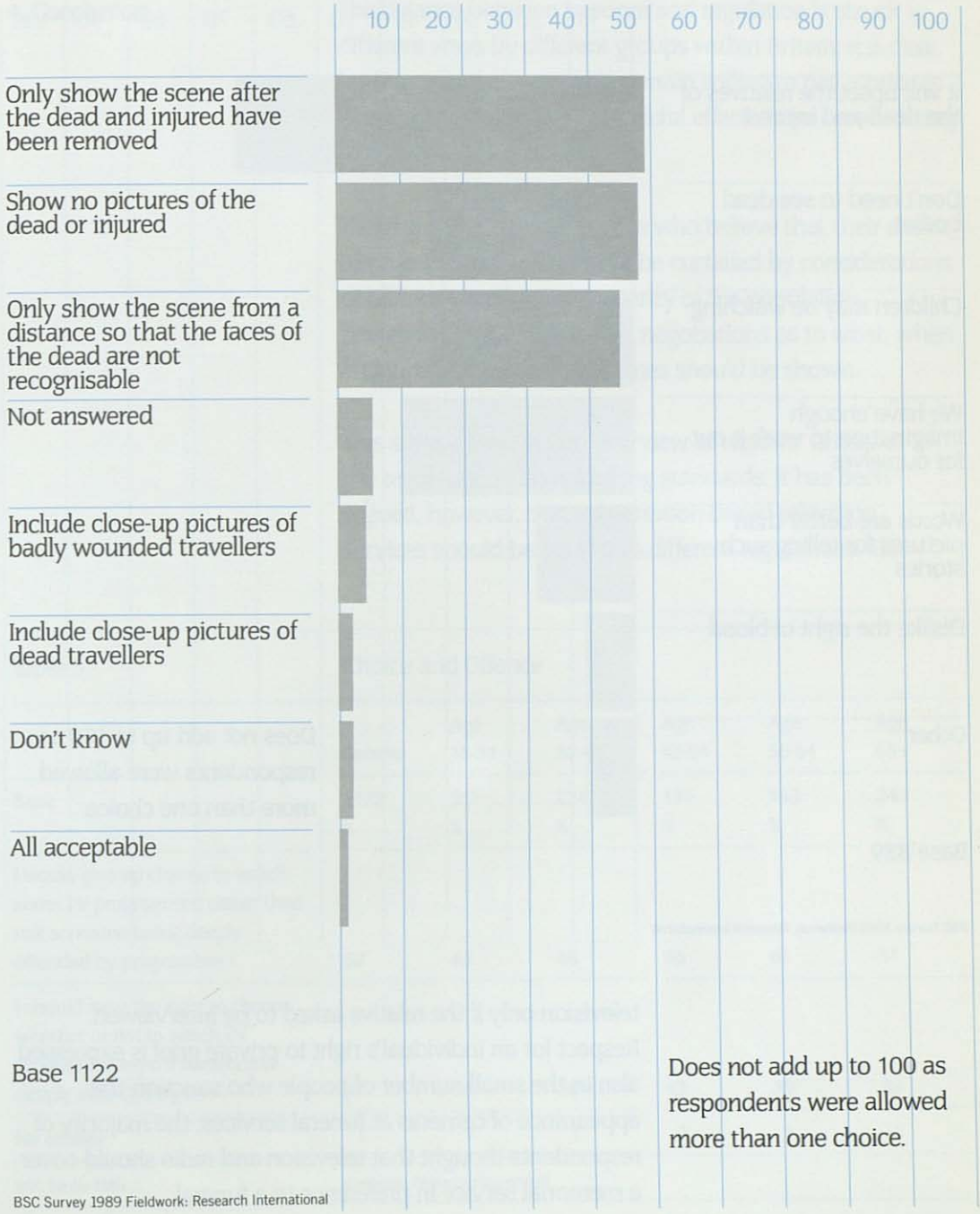


Base: 1122

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Chart 6

Reporting of Train Crash Detail on Television News before 9pm



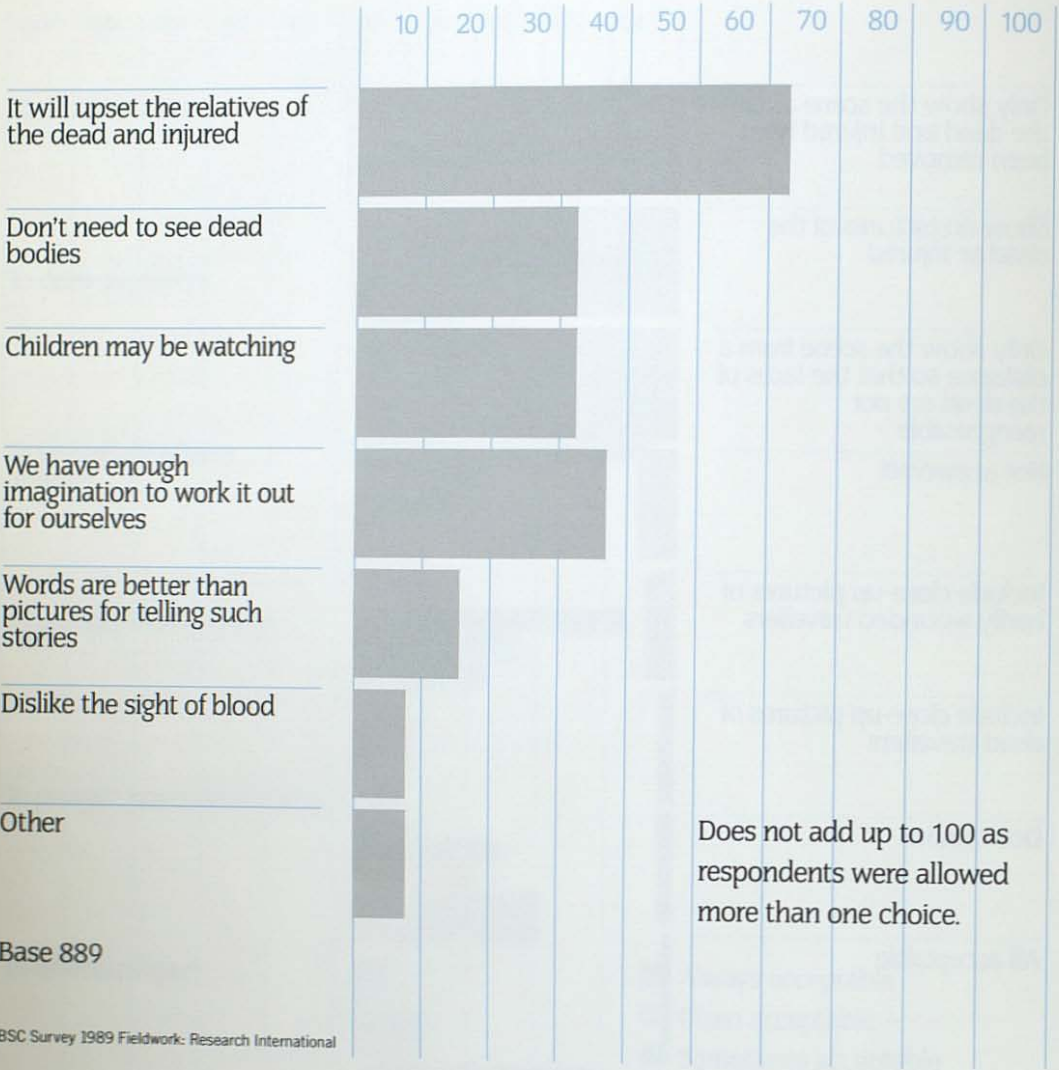
Base 1122

Does not add up to 100 as respondents were allowed more than one choice.

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Chart 7

Reasons for Not Showing Close-up of Dead and Injured on Television News



Base 889

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

television only if the relative asked to be interviewed. Respect for an individual's right to private grief is expressed also in the small number of people who sanction the appearance of cameras at funeral services; the majority of respondents thought that television and radio should cover a memorial service in preference to a funeral.

4. Conclusion

The balance between freedom and regulation is struck in different ways by different groups within Britain; it is clear, however, that most people remain willing to pay a price to guard against potentially harmful effects from broadcasting (See Tables 5 and 6).

There are clearly some people who believe that their choice of what to watch should not be curtailed by considerations of offence or harm. The majority of the population, however, are willing to enter negotiations as to what, when and where certain programmes should be shown.

This survey presents an overview of viewers' attitudes to the regulation of broadcasting standards. It has been argued, however, that subscription-based television services should be subject to different regulations. The

Table 5 Choice and Offence

	Sample	Age 18-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
Base	1122	361	224	139	153	245
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would give up chance to watch some TV programmes rather than risk someone being deeply offended by programme	52	43	48	56	61	61
I should have the right to choose whether or not to watch TV programme even if someone is deeply offended by it	47	56	50	43	39	38
No answer	1	1	1	2	1	0

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

Table 6 Choice and Harm

	Sample	Age 18-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
Base	1122	361	224	139	153	245
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would give up chance to watch some TV programmes rather than risk someone being harmed by it	70	66	72	69	74	71
I should have the right to choose whether or not to watch TV programme even if some people are harmed by it	28	32	26	29	25	27
No answer	2	2	2	2	1	2

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

public, on the evidence of this survey, is ambivalent over this issue.

The concern for the protection of children on satellite channels remains strong; almost half of the respondents felt that satellite channels, funded by subscription, should have the same rules about the portrayal of violence as other television services. However, around two in ten accorded subscription sufficient weight to allow such a service to portray more feature film violence than is available on terrestrial or open channels. Furthermore, 11 per cent of respondents were willing to dispense with the Watershed for a 24 hour Satellite News channel (Table 7).

5. Future Research

This survey is the first of many which the Council will commission as it seeks to ensure that its findings are based firmly on public opinion. Over the next year the Council will focus on the relationship between the media and children,

Table 7 Satellite News Watershed

		Parents with children aged:		
	Sample	0-4	5-12	13+
Base: Total sample	1122	172	224	152
	%	%	%	%
Should be before 9pm	10	13	10	12
Should be after 9pm	45	49	53	39
Should be after 10pm	22	22	18	23
Should be after 11pm	4	3	2	4
Should be after midnight	1	0	0	1
Show any time of day/evening	11	12	12	15
Never show pictures unsuitable for children	7	2	4	5

BSC Survey 1989 Fieldwork: Research International

and on the question of the representation of women and sexual violence. However, as the media change, and as problems present themselves, so the Council's research strategy will be adjusted.

With an increasing number of terrestrial and satellite television channels and radio stations, monitoring of standards on the portrayal of violence, of sex and matters of taste and decency by the Council clearly has to be undertaken on a selective basis. Some monitoring is already undertaken by the Council's members and staff, but the Council is considering what additional arrangements might be made. In the Council's view, monitoring should fulfil two purposes. First, it should aim to assess compliance with the Council's Code of Practice. Second, it should be a source of prompt and reliable information on public reaction to particular programmes. (This latter function overlaps with the Council's responsibilities in relation to drawing up a Code of Practice, complaints and research). The indications are that these different purposes require different approaches, both of which give rise to questions of practicality and finance. The Council will be considering various options with a view to introducing a revised monitoring system in the next financial year. In the meantime, and as a first step, the Council is exploring the possibility of commissioning and training a small team of monitors to provide independent scrutiny of programmes likely to contain matters within the Council's remit.

The Council has not invited complaints about programmes during the past 15 months. It decided that the priority task should be the preparation of a Code of Practice, and that complaints could better be assessed when there was a defined set of standards in the form of a Code. In the meantime, the Council took the view that it would be better not to prejudice the consultations on a draft Code of Practice by seeking to make findings on complaints based on the guidelines reflected in the draft Code. During this period, it has not therefore sought to distinguish, for statistical purposes, between those letters commenting on or complaining about particular programmes or broadcast services generally, and those either supporting or criticising the establishment of the Council or raising other issues. Indeed, a number of letters could have been categorised under more than one heading.

During the long consultation period on the Code of Practice, the Council nevertheless had in mind the points raised by correspondents, as well as those brought out in the discussions on the draft Code itself. Now that the process of consultation is complete and the first edition of the Code of Practice is in place, the Council intends to adopt a higher profile in relation to complaints and comments on programmes. As a first step, the Council is drawing up a framework for the recording and handling of complaints, including establishing a Complaints Sub-committee which will be chaired by the Deputy Chairman. The Council is also considering how the procedures it introduces can best be brought to public notice, including the preparation of an explanatory leaflet. The Council will review the complaints procedures in the light of experience.

Broadcasting Standards Council	If you have a complaint about the portrayal of violence, of sex or matters of taste and decency on broadcast services, please write to: The Director Broadcasting Standards Council 5–8 The Sanctuary London SW1P 3JS Telephone: Complaints Staff: 01-233 0405/01-233 0544
Broadcasting Complaints Commission	If you have a complaint about unjust or unfair treatment or unwarranted infringment of privacy in sound or television programmes or in licensed cable programme services, you should write to: The Secretary Broadcasting Complaints Commission Grosvenor Gardens House 35–37 Grosvenor Gardens London SW1W 0BS

Receipts and Payments Account
for the Ten Months Ended 31 March 1989

Unaudited Receipts and Payments Account for the Ten Months Ended 31 March 1989

Receipts	Notes	£	£
HMG grants received	2		465,318.01
Salaries and wages			
Members' remuneration	3	(55,742.70)	
Staff salaries		(102,834.74)	
			(158,577.44)
Other operating payments	4		(72,458.13)
Surplus from operations			234,282.44
Interest on investments received			
Interest on bank deposit account			538.26
Other payments	5		(132,376.10)
Excess of receipts over payments, being surplus for the 10 months ended 31.3.89			£102,444.60

Statement of Balances as at 31 March 1989

	Notes	Bank and Cash £
Balance at beginning of financial period		–
Add excess of receipts over payments for the 10 months ended 31.3.89		102,444.60
Balance at end of financial period	6	£102,444.60

The notes on page 50 form part of these Accounts.

Rees-Mogg (Chairman)
Colin Shaw (Director)

Notes to the Accounts

1.	These accounts are drawn up in a form directed by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs and approved by the Treasury.	
2. HMG Grants Received	Grants received from Miscellaneous Broadcasting Services Section L, Vote 3 (Class XI), 1989/90, Home Office Administration, Immigration and Police Support Services, England and Wales	£ 308,000.00
	Notional Grants Received (Salaries and other expenses paid by the Home Office)	157,318.01
		£465,318.01
3. Salaries and Wages	a. Council members' remuneration	£55,742.70
	b. The emoluments of the Chairman were £24,583.33	
	Other members' emoluments fell within the following ranges:	No.
	£5,000 – £10,000	5
		£
4. Other Operating Payments	Research	10,589.45
	Recruitment Costs	35,308.65
	Members' travel, subsistence and hospitality	6,624.06
	Staff travel and subsistence	3,303.34
	Stationery	7,336.56
	Telephone and Fax	2,043.54
	Postage	625.40
	Rental of television and video equipment	3,958.30
	Other expenses	2,668.83
		£72,458.13
5. Other Payments	Purchase of satellite, television and video equipment	44,340.16
	Purchase of office equipment	37,348.17
	Purchase of office furniture and fittings	31,582.44
	Purchase of motor vehicles	19,105.33
		£132,376.10
	A substantial proportion of capital expenditure is initial setting up expenditure not likely to recur to the same extent in future years.	
6. Balance at End of Financial Period	Cash at bank	102,243.49
	Cash held at headquarters	201.11
		£102,444.60
	The Council is not authorised to retain funds not used by the end of the financial year in excess of 2% of total grant-in-aid. Surplus funds retained in this way may be deducted from the following year's grant-in-aid.	
	The total of unexpended grant-in-aid for 1988/89 is £101,906.34 of which £9,306.36 may be so retained.	

Staff of the Council	The Council is served by a staff of fourteen. Senior members of staff include:-
	Colin Shaw – Director David Houghton – Deputy Director Dr. David Docherty – Research Director Katherine Lannon – Press & Programmes Officer Clare Reynolds – Assistant Press & Programmes Officer Pamela Stevenson – Manager, Administration
Advisors to the Council	Professor Jay G Blumler – Research Advisor Peter V H Smith CB – Legal Advisor
Press Office Staff	Telephone: 01-233 0398/01-233 0402
Complaints Staff	Telephone: 01-233 0405/01-233 0544

Broadcasting Standards Council
5–8 The Sanctuary
London
SW1P 3JS
Telephone: 01-233 0544
Fax: 01-233 0397

A. Organisations Consulted by the Broadcasting Standards Council while Drafting the Code of Practice

Advertising Standards Authority
Association of Independent Radio Contractors
Board of Deputies of British Jews
British Association of Social Workers (Scottish Office)
British Board of Film Classification
British Broadcasting Corporation
British Film Institute
British Satellite Broadcasting
British Screen Advisory Council
British Videogram Association
Broadcasting Committee, General Synod of Church of England
Cable Authority
Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship
CARE
Catholic Broadcasting Centre (Scotland)
Catholic Media Office
Channel Four
Church of Scotland and National Committee (sub-committee on broadcasting)
Commission for Racial Equality
Educational Institute of Scotland
Free Church Federal Council
Girl Guides (Scotland)
Independent Broadcasting Authority
Independent Programme Producers Association
Independent Television Association
King's Fund Centre
NALGO Scottish District
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (Scotland)
National Council for Civil Liberties (Liberty)
National Union of Teachers
National Viewers' and Listeners' Association
Police Federation

Professional Association of Teachers (Scotland)
Radio Academy
S4C
Samaritans
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Community Education Council
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Scottish Film Council
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
Scottish Trades Union Congress
SKY
Society of Authors
Victim Support
Voice of the Listener
Writers' Guild

B. Organisations that Provided the BSC with Written Comments

Association of Chief Police Officers
British Action for Children's Television
British Council of Churches
Campaign Against Censorship
Health Education Authority
National Association of Head Teachers

C. Other Organisations Invited to Comment

A range of other organisations were invited to comment on the Code of Practice including organisations representing Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Afro-Caribbeans, British Film and Television Producers' Association Limited, Cable Television Association, Directors Guild of Great Britain, Equal Opportunities Commission, Incorporated Society of British Advertisers, National Consumer Council, National Federation of Women's Institutes, National Union of Students, Royal Television Society, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Appendix 3

Schedule for Broadcasting Standards Council Road Show

		Location	Composition of Group
10 April	Monday am	Aberdeen	Women
10 April	Monday pm	Glasgow	Social workers and people concerned with law enforcement
11 April	Tuesday am	Edinburgh	Mixed group of regular television viewers
11 April	Tuesday pm	Newcastle	Men
12 April	Wednesday am	York	Regular attenders at religious services
12 April	Wednesday pm	Manchester	Teachers
13 April	Thursday am	Birmingham	Students, teenagers
13 April	Thursday pm	Bristol	Ethnic minorities
14 April	Friday am	Cardiff	Mothers of young children
17 May	Wednesday am	Norwich	People of pensionable age
24 May	Wednesday am	Belfast	Catholics
24 May	Wednesday pm	Belfast	Protestants
30 May	Tuesday am	Plymouth	Single parents
30 May	Tuesday pm	Southampton	Trade Unionists

As a preliminary to the Road Show, Council Members also attended meetings in Bangor, Cardiff and Liverpool during March 1989.

Research Group Discussions conducted by Fusion Research and Consultancy

		Location	Composition of Group
19 April	Wednesday	Newport	1. Women under 35 2. BC1 men over 35
20 April	Thursday	Bristol	1. Teenage girls 2. C2D men over 35
25 April	Tuesday	Nottingham	1. Teenage boys 2. BC1 women under 35
26 April	Wednesday	Oldham	1. BC1 women over 35 2. C2D men under 35
27 April	Thursday	Limekilns, Fife	1. C2D women over 35 2. BC1 men under 35
4 May	Thursday	Nottingham	1. Asian women 2. Asian men
		Croydon	1. Afro-Caribbean women 2. Afro-Caribbean men

BROADCASTING
STANDARDS
COUNCIL

A CODE OF PRACTICE

NOVEMBER 1989

Broadcasting Standards Council

A CODE OF PRACTICE

NOVEMBER 1989

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The intention to establish the Broadcasting Standards Council was announced by the Government in May, 1988. Four distinct strands of thought may be seen to underline the Council's creation. First, there was the perception of public concern about the portrayal of violence and of sex on the screen. Secondly, there was the prospect of new services delivered by satellite, some of them from Britain. Thirdly, there was the need to develop new policies within Europe, through both the Council of Europe and the Community, to meet the changes brought about by trans-frontier broadcasting. Finally, there was the expectation of a widespread growth of new radio and television services within Britain which would call for the supplementing of the existing means of consumer protection.

The first meeting of the Council was held in September, 1988, and, two months later, in its White Paper on Broadcasting (CM517) the Government reaffirmed the tasks it expected the Council to carry out in the period before it became a statutory body, as the Government proposed. These were in summary:

i to draw up in consultation with the broadcasting authorities and the other responsible bodies in the broadcasting, cable and video fields, a code on the portrayal of violence and of sex and standards of taste and decency in television and radio.

ii to monitor and report on the portrayal of violence and of sex, and standards of taste and decency, in television and radio programmes received in the UK and in video works.

iii to receive, consider and make findings on complaints and comments from individuals and organisations on matters within its competence

and ensure that such findings are effectively publicised.

iv to undertake research on matters such as the nature and effects on attitudes and behaviour of the portrayal of violence and of sex in television and radio programmes and in video works.

v to prepare an Annual Report.

In addition, the Council is consulted by the Government on developments in Europe on the future regulation of trans-frontier broadcasting.

The Government's proposals for granting the necessary statutory powers to enable the Council to carry out these tasks were published on 31st August, 1989. They are expected to be included in forthcoming legislation.

The Code which is set out in the following pages is a revised version of the draft circulated in February, 1989. Throughout the succeeding six months, the Council undertook a variety of consultations: with a number of organisations working in fields close to the areas of the Council's responsibilities, as, for example, in education, social work, or the administration of the law; and with bodies representing the broadcasting audience. Similarly, it held consultations with the broadcasting authorities, with the British Board of Film Classification, with bodies responsible for cable, satellite and video interests, and with organisations representative of a variety of professional concerns in television, radio, video and the cinema.

As a further element in the process of consultation, it initiated a considerable programme of research: a review of the literature on public attitudes to the issues within the Council's remit and, secondly, a review of the literature on

the effects of the mass media. No less importantly, it undertook research, through workshops and discussion groups as well as through a nationwide survey, into current public attitudes towards the issues underlying the draft Code of Practice; the broadcasters' right to free expression, the consumers' right to free choice, and viewers' concern about the effects of broadcasting. It staged a Forum on the question of differing standards for subscription and non-subscription services.

Finally, Council Members attended a series of meetings in thirteen cities or towns throughout the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. At each meeting, which lasted between three and four hours, Members, usually four in number, discussed the main elements of the draft Code with small groups of men and women selected by a market research organisation. Apart from two groups composed respectively of men and women of different ages, the groups shared common interests, as teachers, single-parents or regular worshippers, for example. The Council acknowledges that these meetings could not provide any scientifically-valid evidence, but the encounters allowed Members, in hearing the experiences of listeners and viewers at first-hand, to form a richer understanding of the formal consultations and the findings of researchers.

The Code which now appears reflects the results of the extensive consultations described above. There will need to be further revisions from time to time, in the knowledge that many of the issues are ones on which public attitudes undergo changes. In attempting to shape the basis of an implied contract between the audience and the broadcasters – what each may reasonably expect of the other – it regards the Code as having only the validity

provided by the Council's success in its initial measurement of those attitudes and its monitoring of subsequent shifts. It has rejected the suggestion that it should produce more than one Code, dealing separately with radio, for instance, or with subscription services. It believes that a single set of standards is more readily comprehensible to the audience, the key to their understanding being the provision of the guidance they need to make informed selections between programmes.

The Council hopes that it will contribute to a continuing debate on standards in broadcasting. Its remit is a limited one and it has no role in the areas of political broadcasting which are often the cause of profound controversy. It decided that it should not interpret its remit as extending to those forms of violence which may be expressed in certain kinds of broadcast sport, whether as elements deliberately foreseen in the rules of particular sports or arising incidentally.

Within its remit, therefore, the Council hopes that the Code will be recognised as a statement, taking account of the viewpoints of both audience and broadcasters, of the general principles which broadcasting services in Britain or directed to Britain will observe. It hopes that the providers of television and radio services, as well as the producers of video works, now or in the future will regard the Code in that light as they revise or draw up their own Codes to reflect their own particular responsibilities.

The Code is intended to provide a basis for members of the audience choosing to raise with the Council complaints against the broadcasters and for their investigation. It will also be used by the Council for the initiation of discussions

with the broadcasters on matters falling within its remit. Pending legislation, the Council's enquiries as a result of complaints or initiated on its own account will necessarily be more informal, contributing, however, to the formulation of an equitable system taking due account of the subjective nature of many of the issues raised.

November 1989

In a free society, there must be a presumption that, like the rest of the media, broadcasting enjoys a freedom of expression restricted only for a cause generally accepted as sufficient to justify restriction. British broadcasting has, however, traditionally accepted that it should observe limits which are set short of limits which might be imposed by law. The need for some of those limits in times when television and radio services were few in number is diminished in an era of greater choice. Those who dislike what they see or hear may now more readily change channels before adopting the last resort of switching off. Nevertheless, the assumption of freedom in broadcasting still requires some expression of a responsible understanding between audience and broadcasters on how and when it is to be exercised. The Council believes that the setting of standards and their widespread dissemination lies at the root of this understanding, representing a form of contract between the audience and the broadcasters.

In the light of its fundamental presumption of free expression, the Council, before attempting to identify a realistic set of standards and draw up the Code as it was asked to do, first considered what its members believed to be the major public concerns about the issues within its remit.

On violence, the principal concern appeared to be a rise in violent behaviour and, especially, violent crime, which increased by 12% between 1986 and 1987. The causes of this increase, at a time when some other crimes are diminishing in number, are not clear, despite many attempts at analysis. Although broadcasting is only one of a series of influences operating in society and the extent of its power uncertain, it shares a duty not to incite to crime,

so adding to society's problems. It has a parallel duty not to increase the degree to which vulnerable sections might be at risk. Recent statistics have shown that the fear of violence is widespread. A recent Home Office report*, for example, disclosed that almost half of all women were either a little or very fearful for their safety when out after dark. Although this fear is disproportionate to the real risk (young men are four times more likely to be attacked than women) its existence cannot be dismissed as insignificant. Programme-makers have a responsibility not to aggravate the imagined extent of danger.

The actual rise reported in violent crime directed at women has given expression to fear about the consequences for women, and society in general, of an increase in the availability through broadcasting in future of material not simply raising issues of taste, but pornographically violent. These fears provide a link between broadcasting's portrayal of violence, both fictional and actual, and the treatment on radio and television of sex and sexuality.

The third area of concern underlying the creation of the Council is less precisely definable than the other two. While Decency, as suggested in the introduction to that section of the Code, might be taken as the reflection of individuals' enduring regard for one another, Taste is much more ephemeral. By no means every breach of the conventions of taste and decency causes more than momentary harm or embarrassment. Yet as marks, even temporarily, of a civilised society, they give clues to the real health of that society. And in the use of epithets based on race or gender, the damage may be more profound and long-lasting.

The nature of contemporary radio is in many respects

* British Crime Survey, 1988 (HMSO).

different from that of television and video. Direct responsibility for what the listener hears usually rests immediately on a single individual who has a much closer relationship, therefore, with the listener. To a much greater extent than in television, the audience for radio is likely to be composed of individuals on their own rather than in the family groups which still remain typical of much viewing. Although much of the public debate about broadcasting in recent years has been concentrated on television and videos, the continuing importance of radio in the lives of many people makes the principles outlined in the Code of no less significance to the producers of radio programmes than to television producers. The next few years will see very considerable increases in the supply of radio services of all kinds, so that the acknowledgement of the Code by those entering the field should be a crucial element in the widening of listeners' choices.

Many parents acknowledge the enrichment of their children's education and entertainment which television and radio provide. Some, however, feel that broadcasting, by confronting their children with the dilemmas of adult life, encourages them to grow up too fast. While most parents feel that they have a duty to exercise responsibility over what their children see or hear, the Council acknowledges that it is not always practical for them to carry it out. The commonplace existence of numerous radios and more than one television set or VCR in many households, as well as the practice of time-shifting, compounds the difficulties still further even for the most conscientious parents. Responsibility for what is seen or heard in the home needs to be matched by responsibility for what is transmitted and when it is transmitted. The Council has found many people in households without

children prepared to concede in television the right of the child audience to protection up to the time of the Watershed, that is, 9.00 pm, the time traditionally set by the BBC and Independent Television for the ending of Family Viewing time*. The broadcasters have a responsibility to assist those parents able and willing to exercise supervision to make the right choices in the knowledge of their own children's capacities. It forms part of a broader responsibility to make the whole audience aware in advance of what their programme intentions are. The means by which this can be done are described in the section on Scheduling, Labelling, and Discretion which immediately follows this Foreword.

The Code is divided under four main headings:

Scheduling, Labelling & Discretion,
The Portrayal of Violence,
Sex & Sexuality, and
Taste & Decency.

It refers in the majority of cases to 'programmes', but treats the word as describing not simply broadcast programmes reaching the home as part of a planned schedule, but individual items available on video or by means of cable or satellite channels. The Code attempts to make clear the distinction between different methods of distribution when confusion might otherwise result.

The emphasis throughout the Code is on the need for scrupulous editorial control over every aspect of scheduling, including the choice of material and the timing of programmes. In using a variety of words for the approach needed for editorial decisions, the Council attaches no less significance to one rather than another.

* See page 15 *et seq* below for a fuller account.

'Discretion', 'sensitivity' and 'care', for instance, are all equal hallmarks of responsible broadcasting, as is regard for the expectations of the audience. They are the justification for the right to experiment and to challenge conventions which must be safeguarded if broadcasting is to remain the forum for fresh works of the imagination and the continuing exploration of contemporary realities.

1. Policies for Family Viewing: Television

As they become familiar with the particular characteristics of a television channel, audiences begin to develop expectations about its content and about the times at which particular programmes or kinds of programmes will appear in its schedules. Some of the controversy in recent years surrounding the areas of the Council's interest has arisen from the timing of certain television programmes. The BBC and the IBA have, for television although not for radio, operated family viewing policies in similar ways. In effect, both organisations have stated that, until 9.00 pm, the television programmes they transmit will be suitable for the family audience, with early evening programmes taking account of the presence in the audience of very young children. With their obligations, however, to give an adequate and varied service to adult audiences, not least in that majority of households without children – about twice the number of households with children – they have taken the 9.00 pm 'Watershed', as it became known, as the time after which it is possible to schedule some programmes which, in treatment or content, make greater demands on the experience or intellect of the audience than can be expected of the average child.

The broadcasters have, however, recognised that large numbers of children are still present in the audience at 9.00 pm and even much later. The passing of 9.00 pm has not meant an immediate switch into 'adult' material. Instead, as the evening goes on, so the broadcasters exercise a growing freedom to place material of this more demanding kind. For its part, the Cable Authority imposes similar arrangements on its franchisees.

The background against which the Family Viewing policies of the BBC and the IBA were first framed is undergoing

significant change. The growth of choice through the provision of new television services gives the audience a greater opportunity to discriminate in the kind of programme they choose throughout the day. Secondly, although, at almost any time there will be children watching, often without guidance or supervision, the existence of subscription-services, some capable of being secured against unauthorised use, raises the issue of whether such services are radically different from the rest of television.

The Council wishes to register a general principle that the mere fact of payment by direct subscription, with its implication of a deliberate decision to accept certain programmes into the home, as already occurs with video works, does not eliminate the need for careful editorial judgements about the material transmitted. The reason why the Council rejected proposals for different sets of standards for subscription and non-subscription services lay in its belief that there remain limits which any service must observe. The relative exclusivity of subscription services does not relieve them of their obligations to the social consequences of what they carry.

The Council believes that the kind of safeguard offered by a version of the Family Viewing Policy should be maintained and publicised. While there is nothing particularly significant about 9.00 pm, its importance lies in the by-now general awareness that 9.00 pm marks a turning point in the evening schedules.* The adoption of a different time for a 'Watershed' would be made more difficult to publicise if the change were confined to some, rather than all, channels. There is already some variation in the interpretation of the Watershed between different services

* Research undertaken for the Council in the summer of 1989 showed that about 80% of parents in the sample knew of the Watershed policy and just under 70% could identify the time of the Watershed at 9.00 pm correctly.

and it may be more appropriate to think of 9.00 pm as a fulcrum, with programmes graduating their demands on the audience as the evening progresses and as the expectations of the audience develop. In the Council's view, it should be for the broadcasting authorities to determine what limits, established in the light of the general principles set out in the current Code, are appropriate to the individual services under their control, whether directly or as licensees. The need, subsequently, is to ensure that each channel adequately signposts its policy towards the 'Watershed'. In that way, those responsible for children may have some assurance, even if they themselves cannot be present, about what their children are seeing.

With broadcast programmes and videos available in such abundance, there is no perfect way of guaranteeing the protection of children or anyone else short of an unacceptable and, practically-speaking, unworkable form of censorship. Nevertheless, observation of a Watershed principle and of a gradation of programme material throughout the evening remains a useful guide to scheduling, supported by the widest possible publicity in print and orally for its continued existence and by the maximum amount of attention to making known the nature and contents of programmes. It should be remembered that many children stay up later on Fridays and Saturdays and during the school holidays.

The growth of all-day television services has raised the issue of when family viewing policies should be applied in the morning. The Council believes that 5.30 am would be the appropriate time.

2. The Child Audience: Radio

The Council believes that, although the nature of listening to radio and of viewing television or videos are different, those responsible for scheduling radio programmes and producing them should always have in mind the particular responsibilities they hold for the welfare of the child audience.

3. Programme Trails: Television and Radio

Both in radio and television, problems can arise from the placing of programme trails at times of day for which the material is unsuitable. The problem is of two kinds: the nature of the trail itself and the programme being trailed. While it may be possible to devise a trail which does not include any material unsuitable for that time of day, its effect may be to encourage, say, children to listen to or watch a programme later in the day which, for one reason or another, is not suitable for them. Care is therefore called for in assessing the nature of a trail in relation to the proposed times of its use.

4. Repeats: Television and Radio

The same kind of considerations apply to the scheduling of repeat programmes. A play first scheduled on radio during the evening may not be suitable for transmission during, say, the afternoon. This is more likely, though not invariably so, to be true when the original scheduling decision was based on the programme's level of violence, sexual explicitness, or language. Care is also needed in the selection of material for repeating on either radio or television during the school holidays.

5. Editorial Control: Television and Radio

No policy for scheduling and labelling programmes in ways intended to increase the audience's ability to exercise choice can, however, be effective in the absence of strong editorial management. In much of modern radio, where a great deal of material is transmitted live, crucial choices are

often in the hands of a small studio team or even an individual, so that clear and detailed principles should be laid down for their use by those who carry the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the station.

Across all broadcasting services, it should be a general requirement where scheduling decisions are taken that the content, and its treatment, of every programme is known at a senior level in the organisation and that its suitability for transmission at the proposed time has been responsibly assessed. The Council believes that companies editorially responsible for transmission should each designate a senior official as the person entrusted by the Board of the company concerned with ensuring the proper exercise of this duty and that, while delegation will take place, to a greater or lesser extent, according to the size of the company, the principle of unified editorial control should apply.

Introduction

There is an initial distinction to be made between the reporting and reflection in programmes of real-life violence and the use of violent actions as elements in entertainment programmes. Both are the concern of the Council.

Real-life violence takes many forms: from the ravages of a natural disaster which lays waste vast areas of land, killing or making homeless many thousands of people, to the calculated murders committed by terrorists. Such events are the raw material of News bulletins, their causes and consequences the basis of Current Affairs and Documentary programmes sometimes prepared rapidly, sometimes developed only over a period of months. Their reporting has been shown over many years to inform broadcasting's audiences more fully about the world and to extend the opportunities which audiences have for understanding the world better.

Violence has had its place in fictional programmes since broadcasting began, inheriting traditions from the theatre and the cinema. Violence of this imaginary kind can help its audiences come to terms with the world, illuminating the situations and dilemmas which most people face at some time and making them more comprehensible. In this sense, it has its place in a civilising process of which broadcasting is a part. To ban either kind of violence, actual or imagined, from broadcasting would be to go against all the experience of everyday life and create for broadcasting a world constantly at odds with the real world.

Recent years, however, have seen a renewed intensification of threats to, and disturbingly serious violations of, that framework of rules, formal and informal, without which an orderly existence is impossible. It is inevitable that

broadcasting, so pervasive a part of people's lives for the past sixty years, should be seen as contributing to the contemporary mood, just as other aspects of modern life do: the quality of education, housing, nutrition, the decline of religion, to name only four such aspects.

The concern about the effects on violent crime of violence on television or on video can be broken down into separate issues. The first is the possibility that regular exposure to the exhibition or even the reporting of acts of violence, real or fictional, will desensitise the audience, making it apathetic towards the further growth of actual violence or to the plight of victims who may cease to be seen as individuals with distinct anxieties and needs. Secondly, there is the fear that there will be a copycat effect, with an outbreak of crimes similar to those demonstrated on the screen. The evidence supporting or running contrary to these fears is not conclusive. There remains, therefore, the unanswered question about broadcasting; 'How much of a contribution?' In the absence of an answer, the Council takes the view that a society which delights in or encourages cruelty or brutality for its own sake is an ugly society, set on a path of self-destruction. The section of the Code which follows has been drafted with these principles in mind.

1. News Bulletins

(a) The Raw Material: Television

Modern communications make it possible for News bulletins to reflect almost instantly events taking place anywhere in the world. For some years, the raw material of coverage has been reaching newsrooms in abundance, whether it concerns a terrorist incident in Beirut, an attempt to rescue trapped whales from the Arctic ice, or a disastrous launch at Cape Canaveral. More recently, there has been a development in the supply of complete items packaged at a distant location, whether by the broadcasting organisation itself or by a news-gathering company wholly independent of it. Unified editorial control over News services is increasingly difficult, with all the risks to standards which this implies. Broadcasting managements should therefore take special care to ensure that those exercising editorial judgements are aware of the principles which should underlie them. The supply of all-day news-services based on a rotating sequence of items, some repeated several times in succeeding cycles, is growing. Those responsible must pay close attention to each cycle to ensure the continuing suitability of the material for its times of repeated transmission and to guard against the possibility that repeated showings may breed indifference or revulsion.

(b) Pictorial Coverage: Television

For the majority of people in Britain, the only acquaintance with real-life violence continues to be through the media, especially television. It is the media which bring them news of motorway crashes in Britain or the murder of hostages in the Middle East. It is not the business of the broadcasters to falsify the picture of a world in which there is much violence and brutality. But in avoiding that trap, programmes should not fall into another, that of leaving the audience with an unjustified aggravation of any real threat to its own physical or mental security. For example, elderly people frightened

about the consequences of venturing out of doors at night may develop an unreasoning fear about the real risks of doing so. The choice of words is a matter for the greatest care if they are to put into perspective the pictures which accompany them.

(c) Degrees of Explicitness: Television

Where scenes of violence are necessarily included in television bulletins, the fact that violence often has bloody consequences should not be glossed over. However, it is not for the broadcaster to force a moral judgement on the audience and care should be taken not to linger unwarrantably on the casualties nor on the bloody evidence of violence. Decency suggests that people should be permitted to die in private and only in the rarest circumstances should broadcasting dwell on the moment of death itself. The repetition of such incidents in later broadcasts should be very restricted and their historical significance (for example, the assassination of President Kennedy) taken into account. A further relevant consideration is the nature of the programme for which the re-broadcast is proposed. Finally, telling the truth about an incident is the reporter's task, driving home the truth is usually something better left for the audience to do for itself.

(d) The Child Audience: Television

News bulletins are now part of the day-long output of many television services. At some times of the day, large numbers of children are present in the television audience or may be drawn to the screen by the pictures on it. There must continue to be discretion of the kind at present practised by the broadcasters in the choice of scenes at different times of day since images may have a disproportionate effect on children in comparison with words. A late-evening bulletin can be justified in carrying a greater degree of explicit

violence than a bulletin in the early afternoon or evening. The question is not one of concealing the truth, since accompanying words can convey to the audience facts which, at that time of day, would be unacceptable pictorially.

(e) General Considerations: Radio

Although radio does not face the problems created by images for those responsible for television news coverage, it must still deal with the questions posed by the immediacy of its ability to respond to news-events, usually greater for radio than television, and the difficulty of maintaining a perspective on the violence it reports. A reporter's first choice of words may be crucial in influencing the public's understanding of an event; where casualties occur, accurate reporting of their details will be equally important. In reporting certain kinds of crime, such as sexual assaults, the time of transmission must be considered and the degree of explicit detail given matched to the probable presence in the audience of significant numbers of children. The paragraphs which follow apply equally to radio and television.

(f) Violent Crime: Television and Radio

There are few crimes which are without victims and nothing should be done which encourages the victims to be forgotten. Sexual violence or violence directed at older people, children or people with disabilities should be reported with special understanding and an awareness of the time of day at which the bulletin is being transmitted. While in some cases, the victims of assault may be prepared to be interviewed, the degree of shock which they have recently experienced must be considered and no advantage taken of it. Account ought also to be taken of the stress which the act of recollection may induce, whether close to the event or a long time afterwards. This extends to

those affected, even if they are not directly participating in the broadcast.

(g) Dealing with Violent Criminals: Television and Radio

In reporting violent crimes, programmes should not glamourise the criminal or his actions. The use of nicknames for notorious criminals which may soften their image should be discouraged. The fact that, in fiction, some criminals can be made to cut romantic figures should not blind us to the ugliness of the real thing. A violent criminal under sentence, for example, remains one even if he succeeds in escaping from imprisonment. At the end of long criminal trials, it is not unusual for News bulletins to devote considerable stretches of time to reviewing the events leading to the prosecution. Such reviews should not present the defendants as heroic figures or as the stuff of legends. Neither criminals nor their relatives and associates should in general be allowed to profit from the retelling of their stories.

(h) Suicide: Television and Radio

It should be the rule, to be broken only after clearance at the most senior levels of editorial responsibility, that there should be no detailed demonstration or description of the means of suicide. This is of particular importance when the means may have some novel aspect to them or be readily copied – for instance, the use of plastic bags for self-suffocation. Where it is consistent with truthful reporting, the location of actual or attempted suicides should be withheld in order to discourage imitations. It should be kept in mind that the late evening or the early morning is a period when loneliness and isolation are at their most intense for people who may be vulnerable to talk of suicide. (See also Violence in Fiction, 3(g) below).

2. Current Affairs and Documentaries: Television and Radio

(a) General

The principles governing the portrayal of violence which apply to the presentation of News apply to Current Affairs and Documentary programmes: including attention to the time of scheduling, no undue lingering on the aftermath of violent actions (without glossing over the consequences of violence), and no incitement to or glorification of crime. The same caution called for in reporting in News bulletins certain kinds of violence is needed in less-immediately topical programmes. Though archival programmes form a rich and valuable contribution to television and radio programming, it should be borne in mind, when programmes are making use of historical material or material from the not-too-recent past, that attitudes change towards past events at different rates. The issue is as much one of Taste and Decency as it is of Violence. Although the spectacle of First World War troops going over the top to their deaths is still profoundly moving seventy years or more later, few people now remain with a direct personal involvement, either as a participant or a relative. But only twenty years have passed, for example, since the first showing on film of the street-execution of a Viet-Cong sympathiser and it remains a sickening spectacle for many people. The distraught commentary on the pre-war Hindenburg disaster continues to provide painful listening, while the explosion of the Challenger over Cape Canaveral, however spectacular, is still a living tragedy for many who witnessed it on television at the time it happened or immediately afterwards. In short, in drawing on a common stock of horrors for the purposes of illustration, care is necessary.

(b) Reconstructions of Crime

It is important, when reconstructing a crime as part of a programme aimed at assisting the police, not to give over-emphasis to the dramatic aspects of the incident,

including any violence used, nor discuss in unnecessary detail the weapons employed.

3. Violence in Fiction: Television and Radio

(a) General

The difference between the real-life violence of News bulletins and that occurring in fictional material is that, broadly speaking, the latter is premeditated, whereas the former in many instances forces itself upon the attention, first, of News-editors and, subsequently, of their audiences. Most fictional violence, whether performed by actors or drawn by the creators of cartoons, appears only after a process close to choreography: its duration assessed, its intensity agreed, its outcome pre-determined. To some extent, therefore, the quantity and, most certainly, its nature are much more a matter of choice. A good script will often justify the presence of more violence when a poor script will be overwhelmed by it. In scheduling a programme containing violence, it is necessary to look not simply at the proposed time of transmission, but at the programmes placed on either side of it. A sequence of programmes containing violence can rarely be justified. Paras (b)–(i) below deal with drama for adults and children, made for viewing or listening, with British audiences primarily in mind.

(b) Adult Drama: The Audience's Expectations

Violence is a legitimate ingredient of drama. It should, however, seldom be an end in itself for the purposes of entertainment, although, in the right hands, it can sometimes be so and not simply a sequence of gratuitous images. The context of violence is what matters and, with it, the ability of the audience to appreciate the conventions within which the drama is being played out. The sudden turning to violence of a much-loved and unviolent character can be deeply shocking to an audience which fails to understand his motivation. The same sense of shock can be

registered when an unknown character, drawn from a stereotype, behaves violently, in a way contrary to that stereotype and inexplicable. In both cases, the impression created can be of a degree of violence far greater than actually occurs. Some action-adventure series have been regarded as violent simply because they contain a great deal of noisy activity (running feet, spinning tyres, and shouting) and deal with subject-matter which might include violence; for example, crime in the East End of London. So the impression of violence once more may be not simply a matter of blows exchanged or weapons discharged, but is connected with the audience's expectations.

(c) Adult Drama: How Much Violence?

The presence of excessive violence in a production may be a sign that the writer and the director lack sufficient confidence in other aspects of their work and are using violence, as they might use bad language, to sustain the audience's interest. Care should be taken to avoid confusion between violence which may be legitimated by the situation, e.g. violence used in pursuit of a legitimate objective, and illegitimate violence, the kind perpetrated by villains. In some situations, violence can be a badge of courage and of leadership, but these opportunities are relatively rare in contemporary fiction. Some villains notoriously take pleasure in inflicting pain, but the way in which such pleasure is portrayed needs careful handling if the audience is not to be encouraged to share the pleasure at the victims' discomfiture. On television, the display of weapons should be carefully monitored, particularly when knives or other objects readily available in the home are involved. It is important when violence is portrayed that, as a rule, its serious consequences should not be glossed over: in real life, a blow to the head, for instance, which fells a man will not automatically be cured by a ritual head-

shaking as the victim gets to his feet. (See 4(c) below: 'The Western').

(d) Adult Drama: Violence Towards Women and Children

Where there is a legitimate dramatic reason for portraying violence directed at women, care must be taken not to exploit for their own sake the sexual aspects of the incident and so eroticise them. The degradation of women, as objects of male violence, should be handled with particular sensitivity, although there may be rare occasions when its portrayal is justifiable. When a scene involving rape or indecent assault forms part of the script, strong consideration should be given to alternative ways of achieving the same dramatic purpose. The details of an attack should always be given sparingly and the intention should always be to give an objective portrayal of the event, avoiding anything that might give the impression that rape was anything other than a tragedy for its victim. Similar reserve should apply to the portrayal of attacks on children.

(e) Adult Drama: The Child Audience

Evidence suggests that some children can be especially disturbed by incidents which take place in surroundings with which they can identify. Domestic violence in a contemporary setting is, therefore, particularly potent as a source of potential distress. Distance in time or geography may considerably soften the impact of a potentially-disturbing scene, but may not always do so, if, as an example, the episode involves an animal.

(f) Adult Drama: Cruelty to Animals

Violence which involves animals, even when no harm has come to the animals involved in the production, is deeply upsetting to many members of the audience, particularly children. It should, therefore, be kept to a minimum.

(g) Suicide

It should be the rule, to be broken only after clearance at the most senior levels of editorial responsibility, that there should be no detailed demonstration or description of the means of suicide. This is of particular importance when the means may have some novel aspect to them or be readily copied – for instance, the use of plastic bags for self-suffocation. It should be kept in mind that the late evening or the early morning, when more adult material is likely to be scheduled, is a period when loneliness and isolation are at their most intense for people who may be vulnerable to talk of suicide. (See also Violence in News & Current Affairs, 1(h) above).

(h) Hangings

In television, explicit hanging scenes should never be transmitted before the Watershed and at no time without careful editorial consideration. Any lingering over the details, which might invite imitation, should be avoided. (See also: 'The Western,' 4(c) below).

(i) Violence in Children's Drama

Most children begin watching television long before they come to a full understanding of the conventions which govern it and, indeed, long before 'good' and 'bad' have anything but the simplest meanings for them. Their ability to distinguish between reality and fiction takes time to develop. Drama for children must, therefore, take account of children's gradual development over the years when they are child-viewers, mindful that different children develop at different rates. In consequence, the themes, content and treatments of drama for children will, of course, cover a narrower range than is customary in drama for adult audiences, but the principles above must be observed with even greater strictness, particularly children's greater readiness to be affected by situations and characters with whom they can identify easily. The levels of violence, for

example, permissible in some adult plays would be inadmissible in plays for children. As well as particular care in avoiding the suggestion that violence does not injure people and sometimes do long-lasting damage, care is needed to avoid conduct which might easily be copied harmfully by children. In this respect, it is important that characters whom children are likely to admire should not too easily resort to violence as the means of resolving differences capable of other solutions. Children do, however, take delight, as part of the process of growing up, in seeing rules broken, but usually with a reassuring suspicion that the important rules will be back in place before the entertainment is over.

4. Acquired Material: Television
(a) Feature Films, TV-Ms, and Series

The growth in the demand for programme material of all kinds which the introduction of new channels will provoke means that an increasing amount of the material seen on British screens will have been bought outside the country. A limited quantity will come from Common Market countries and the Eastern bloc, but more will come from Canada, Australia and, particularly, from the United States. Since attitudes to televised violence in many countries and the portrayal of violence in cinemas almost everywhere differ from the attitudes adopted towards the televising of violence in Britain, it cannot be assumed that imported material, if shown unscrutinised, will always be acceptable to the British audience at home. Some of the material will have been classified by the BBFC and so its status will already be known, but much will arrive without classification. The responsibility of considering its suitability for screening in Britain will therefore rest on the management of the programme-service concerned. The Council expects that, in taking decisions of this kind, the managements will observe the principles set out in this

section and elsewhere in the Code. Material acquired abroad ought not to exceed the limits applied to programmes made or classified in Britain.

(b) Cartoons

While some small children may not recognise the difference between fantasy and reality, the evidence obtained by the Council shows that the great majority of parents do not regard cartoons as raising any concern for effective parental control. It should, however, be noted that the subject-matter of some cartoons may make the choice of the time of transmission a matter for careful selection.

(c) The Western

The Western has a long history, during which it has developed many conventions which are generally understood by the audience. Its setting is considered by many people to free it as a genre from many of the constraints which apply to other kinds of dramatic material. Early recourse to violence by both good and bad characters is an accepted feature of Westerns, with the eventual triumph of the good characters as the only price exacted for this licence. Hangings occur with greater frequency in such films, but with a minimum of explicit portrayal as a general rule. Bloodshed takes place and injuries are inflicted, but within a convention which allows the audience to suspend its usual judgements about the consequences of such incidents. From time to time, however, Westerns are made which challenge the conventions and it is important that care is taken in their scheduling and in the provision of any guiding information to the audience.

Introduction

The treatment of sex in documentaries or discussion programmes and its portrayal in fictional programmes have been the subjects of public debates since broadcasting began almost seventy years ago. They are not, of course, new debates since rival views have long existed about the propriety of sexual display as a part of entertainment and of sex itself as a topic for public conversation in mixed company. In recent times, the debates have been further complicated by, for instance, the decline of religion with strong moral codes of behaviour in sexual matters, the advent of contraceptive methods giving women in particular a greater freedom of choice, and the awareness of mass-advertisers that sex can be a powerful stimulus to sales. In the same period, many women have become more strongly aware of their identity apart from men. By certain standards, relations between the sexes have become more tense as a result, highlighting as unacceptably discriminatory conduct which would once have passed without open protest. For example, the wolf-whistles which, in a 1940's film, punctuated the progress of a pretty woman down the street and were usually represented as a compliment would nowadays be seen by many people as harassment. But such perceptions remain partial and broadcasting still reflects unthinking stereotypes of both male and female behaviour. This is particularly true of many commercials.

A broadcasting or cable channel acting responsibly will reflect the fact that, as with most other human activities, relations between the sexes often require the making of moral decisions and the adoption of moral attitudes by each individual. It is sometimes said by those with their own clear principles of sexual behaviour – insisting, for instance, on marriage as the only setting for intercourse –

that broadcasting, cable, and video, with their special access to the home, have a special responsibility for giving a lead in a particular moral direction. But what might be appropriate for a channel funded by and serving the adherents of a particular set of beliefs would not be so on channels funded by audiences regardless of their beliefs, political or moral. The role of these channels is to observe sensitively how and why offence may be given in their treatment of sexual matters so that they can avoid offending in ignorance or gratuitously. The need for sensitive scheduling and labelling decisions over material of this kind should always be kept in mind.

Sex touches the other areas of the Council's primary concern. This section of the Code, therefore, should not be read in isolation.

1. News and Current Affairs: Television and Radio

Where a story involves actual sexual relations, then it should be presented without undue exploitation of its sexual aspects. The explicitness of such reports must, in any case, be measured against the time of day at which they are transmitted and the likely presence of children in the audience. Many parents have found difficulty in explaining the phenomenon of Aids to their children and while it is important to report frankly about Aids to both young and old, stories about Aids and its victims must be treated with particular sensitivity. But stories are often more than simply the reflection of sexual relations between men and women or between members of the same sex. They can, for example, include reports of industrial disputes involving issues of equal rights or of women assuming traditionally male roles, such as bus-driving or fire-fighting. It is important in the language or illustration of such reports to avoid confirming stereotypes of male and female behaviour. The same principles apply to the treatment of sexual issues in Current Affairs programmes.

2. Documentaries: Television and Radio

Documentaries can deal with a variety of sexual themes: from abortion to the wild life of the African plains. Some of them are capable, if wrongly treated, of giving offence, making public and explicit what many people regard as private and exclusive. It is, therefore, necessary for producers to ask the question whether each sequence can be fully justified or whether the treatment might be differently approached. The borderline between sensitive observation for purposes of information and spectacle for the purposes of sensation is one to be walked with great caution.

3. Discussion Programmes: Television and Radio

Although it may have become more commonplace to discuss publicly varieties of sexual experience and

sometimes right in present circumstances to be explicit, it should not be assumed that such openness is universally accepted nor that it will be received without embarrassment or hostility by many people in the audience to whom reticence in these matters remains important. Programmes of this kind need to be scheduled sensitively with, if practical, an indication in billings or elsewhere of their likely subject-matter and the probable frankness (to some of the audience at home) of their language. Similar caution is called for in the scheduling of radio phone-ins which deal with sexual topics.

4. Drama

(a) Sexual Activity: Television

It is over the representation of sexual activity in televised or filmed drama that the most enduring controversies have arisen in recent years. Recognising the strong feelings of objectors, producers should consider carefully whether the degree of explicitness they plan is justified by the context in which it occurs. Explicitness ought not to be warranted simply by the youth and physical attractiveness of the protagonists for that can reduce the audience to the status of voyeurs. The scheduling of such scenes requires care. Actual sexual intercourse between humans should at no time be transmitted. It should be accepted that, in television, the representation of sexual intercourse before the Watershed should always be a matter for senior editorial judgement.

(b) Children: Television and Radio

Overt sexual conduct between adults and children should not be transmitted. A sexual relationship between an adult and a child or between under-age young people can be a proper theme for drama: it is the treatment of the theme which may make it improper. The Protection of Children Act, 1978, makes it an offence to take an indecent photograph of a child under the age of sixteen or to involve a child

below sixteen in a photograph which is itself indecent even if the child's role in it is not. 'Photograph' covers a film or a video-recording. Even if legal advice suggests that a proposed photograph or production-sequence is not likely to be caught by the law, very careful consideration should be given to the need to include it in the programme. Caution should be exercised even if the child is to be played by an older actress or actor. Where the theme of a play or film involves sexual relationships between children under the age of consent or between an adult and an under-age child, the treatment should not suggest that such behaviour is legal or acceptable, even if courts are nowadays inclined to be more tolerant towards the former.

(c) Incest and Child Abuse: Television and Radio

Recent cases have given prominence to these topics and their reporting may, indeed, have contributed to a hitherto-unknown unease between some parents and their children, especially fathers and daughters. Where a play or film takes incest as its theme, there should be a particular awareness of the relative ease with which some members of the audience, including children, may identify characters or actions with their own circumstances. Normally, in television, material of this kind should be placed after the Watershed and accompanied by clear labelling of the programme's contents, while sensitive scheduling and labelling are called for in radio.

(d) Animals: Television and Radio

Overt sexual conduct between humans and animals should not be transmitted and should be referred to in programmes only after consultations at a senior level.

(e) Nudity: Television

Nudity, provided that it in no way exploits the nude person by presenting him or her simply as a spectacle, can be a legitimate element in the material being transmitted.

However, it should be recognised that nudity as the prelude to or aftermath of sexual intercourse, like the simulation of the act itself, has provoked protests from those who feel such things have no place in public display. Justification, therefore, must come from the merit of the individual programme.

5. Light Entertainment: Television and Radio

The offence that is caused by sexual humour and innuendo is often connected with the time of its transmission. While it can pass over the heads of a young audience, it may nevertheless cause embarrassment to their elders. Care is therefore needed in the scheduling of programmes containing such elements. Programmes which, against the well-established expectations of the audience, contain material of this kind can also cause offence. Although the half-undressed young woman has been a staple element in farce and light-entertainment shows, the convention is becoming increasingly offensive to a growing number of people and should be used only sparingly.

6. Lyrics: Television and Radio

Care should be taken not to broadcast material which might incite to sexual aggression, to the debasement of human relationships, or encourage drug-taking. Pop-videos which combine music with mini-dramas should observe the limits applied to drama, having in mind the different times at which they are likely to be transmitted. The precise time of scheduling all pop-videos should be chosen with care.

Introduction

"In olden days a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking"
Cole Porter

Hardly any more. But the words of the song illustrate the passing nature of many issues which fall under the heading of Taste and Decency. In laying down guidelines, a distinction has been made between attitudes subject to rapid changes of fashion and those reflecting more enduring views of right and wrong. For example, the extravagance to modern British eyes of Victorian mourning is a matter of fashion, raising questions of good and bad taste. In contrast, the respect for the dead and the bereaved which present generations share with the Victorians and every other generation, reflects ideals of decency, acknowledging our common humanity.

Breaches of taste and decency can cause distress and embarrassment, especially when they are encountered with little or no warning, as may happen with a broadcast programme or, more rarely, with a video. But there exists in parallel a long-standing tradition in many countries of challenging or deliberately flouting the canons of good taste and decency for the purposes of entertainment. This tradition has a legitimate place in broadcasting or on video as it has in the theatre or the cinema.

As is pointed out elsewhere in the Code, much depends on the expectations surrounding a particular programme or a channel, as well as its conventions in the timing of its schedules. The treatment of a programme about death likely to be seen by an audience of mainly-older people will be different from that of a programme directed at younger people. So much depends upon the clarity with which the intentions of the programme are signalled in advance by whatever means are available to the programme-makers and, where they are involved, the schedulers.

1. The Limits of Language: Television and Radio

No subject within the Council's remit provokes a greater number of complaints to the broadcasting organisations than bad language. As a form of violence, it provokes greater unease among women than men, but both can react to its appearance in programmes with a sense of violation. Consequently, a significant proportion of the complaints arises from its impact on a group of people watching together; the different generations of a family, for example, or a mixed group of men and women. Just as each sex observes conventions on the use of language in such mixed company, so each generation has its own special language for use among its peers, often including many of the words which, in groups spanning more than one generation, can give the deepest offence.

For the majority of people, there are clear limits to the circumstances in which they would use words of this sort; rarely among strangers, for example. The presence in the home of broadcast programmes, cable services or videos is, for many people, one of trust, with the programme-makers expected to observe certain conventions. The protests which are often provoked by bad language in programmes are often protests at a breach of those conventions. Significantly, the level is reduced when the audience accepts the relevance of the language used to the situation portrayed in, say, a news item or a drama. In contrast, the language of football chants, a growing feature of professional Soccer matches, is disliked by many of the audience at home, even though it may not finally prevent them from watching or listening. With the growing use of repeated programmes, care has to be taken about the suitability of the language used at the new time of transmission.

Language of all kinds is rarely static and meanings undergo constant changes. The force of particular words can differ in their use by different generations. It can also differ in its force between different parts of the country and between different tones of voice. Thus 'bugger' and 'sod' are terms of near-affection in some districts of Britain, while remaining powerful terms of abuse elsewhere. Although 'bastard' is sometimes used in the same terms, it is a word whose repeated use generally appears to arouse deep resentment in a majority of people.

One of the strongest practical arguments against the repetitive use of bad language in programmes is that its impact is progressively reduced, even though the offence remains. Expletives provide us with the means of giving emphasis or of reducing tension. If they are in constant use, then they are no longer effective when they might be thought justified. Witness how Bernard Shaw's explosive use of 'bloody' in 'Pygmalion' proved inadequate for 'My Fair Lady' half a century later. In constant use, expletives represent an impoverishment of language and a barrier to communication.

Words and phrases which have sexual origins or applications can be a cause of special offence and they should be used only with great discretion. In particular, the abusive use of any of the synonyms for the genital organs, especially the female organs, or of 'fuck' and its derivatives should be permitted only after reference to the most senior levels of management. The fact that acquired material contains these words and others considered offensive by some people in Britain should not be taken as an automatic cue for their use in productions made here.*

* See pages 32-33: 'Acquired Material.'

Finally, much care is also needed in the use of words which have racist overtones. Britain is becoming an increasingly multi-racial society, but constant awareness of the deep cultural, religious and economic gulfs existing between the races is needed if they are to be bridged. The wrong choice of language has the ability to divide rather than unite.

2. Offence Against Religious Sensibilities: Television and Radio

The abusive use of names or expressions from all the religious traditions within Britain can give deep offence. For many Christians, and indeed for some non-Christians, the use of 'God' still gives grave offence, though probably now used more freely as a simple expletive than some years ago. More particularly, the use of 'Jesus Christ' and 'Christ' for the same purpose is especially offensive and should be actively discouraged except where there is dramatic justification in a play or film. It is difficult to think of many other situations, apart from some news-reports, where a strong case exists for permitting the use of these words. As with the use of certain other expressions, there seems no argument at all for using them to reinforce a weak script or a failing performance. With the establishment in Britain of communities with different faiths and accompanying cultures which are themselves different from that of the host-community, it is important for all broadcasters to make themselves aware of the particular sensitivities of those communities in order to avoid unintentional offence.

3. Preserving Dignity: Television and Radio

(a) Stereotypes

Much humour depends on stereotypes and there are many occasions when their use can be justified for the purposes of a particular programme. Care is, however, needed to avoid the unthinking adoption of stereotypes: for example, creating the impression of older people as a single, vulnerable group.

(b) People with Disabilities

Carelessness in the depiction of people with disabilities causes particular distress to many disabled people themselves and to their families. Programmes should give a fair reflection to the parts played in the everyday life of the nation by more than six million people with one form of disability or another. Those with hearing disabilities, which are largely invisible, are especially vulnerable. While both radio and television have staged highly successful appeals on behalf of disabled people, they have not always avoided an exploitative note which has been felt by some disabled people to characterise them as a devalued class rather than as a set of individuals. The same tendency has been detected in some charitable advertising in print and in Public Service Announcements (PSA's) on television. With the newly-authorised appearance of television advertising for charities, care will be needed in the portrayal of their subject-matter. In programmes involving disabled people, the individual should almost always be regarded as more important than the disability.

(c) Questions of Race

It is important that broadcasters should familiarise themselves with the law governing relations between the races in Britain. Apart from strict legal requirements within the country, sensitive treatment of the differences which exist between races and nations is called for. Such differences and the conflicts they cause, as well as the occasions when they are overcome, must be reflected in any accurate portrayal of both history and contemporary life. For example, there are times when racial or national stereotypes, whether physical or behavioural, may be used without offence in programmes, but their use should always be carefully considered in advance. Use of derogatory terms in speaking of men and women of other races and nations almost invariably gives offence and

should be avoided where the context does not warrant it. Great distinctions exist between many people within single countries, let alone whole continents, and a broad community of interests cannot always be assumed. The presentation of minority groups as an undifferentiated mass, rather than a collection of individuals with limited interests in common, should be discouraged.

(d) Privacy

For most of the time, people's private lives are of little public interest. It is important that when, for a short time, they are caught up in events which have a place in the news, their situation, often an involuntary one, is not abused or exploited. In some cases, lives have to be reconstructed or new lives built. Television and radio should do nothing through a disregard for privacy which makes that process even more difficult to achieve once the spotlight has moved away.

(e) Occasions of Grief and Bereavement

i Reporting

Modern communications can confront the programme-maker, the reporter and the audience with the reality of grief and bereavement much more starkly than a few years ago. Whether it is an earthquake disaster in Mexico or the savage murder of a schoolgirl, television and radio can relay the details of the tragedy to every household. Not every community nor every family stricken with disaster deals with it in the same way – witness, for example, the very public displays of grief practised in some cultures or the apparent wish of some bereaved parents to talk out their immediate sense of loss. Care must be taken not to take advantage of people in deep shock,

persuading them into the expression of views, for example, which they may later regret. Those linking the disaster and the audience at home must often, however, observe a difference between the two emotional climates. What may seem a natural question in one place may appear grossly intrusive in another. It is for the audience at home, with its own variety of experiences behind it, to come to its own terms with what has happened in the light of the facts presented to it. After each disaster, broadcasters should take stock to ensure that a growing volume of experience in handling such events is put to good use in the future service of the audience.

ii Funerals and Memorial Services

The significance of funerals as a turning-point in the story of an individual tragedy or a major disaster can sometimes justify the intrusion into privacy which the presence of reporters and equipment represents, but there should be an accompanying readiness not to exploit the drama of such events by a too-close concentration on the bereaved, whether they are already public figures or not. Memorial services generally have a different role, deliberately bringing a more public element into the situation of private grief.

iii Scheduling

There are some tragic events which so dominate the public imagination that broadcasters must alter their schedules to avoid clashing with the

public mood. It was so after the assassination of President Kennedy when major changes were made to programme plans. It can be so in the immediate aftermath of an aircrash when some programmes too close to that event in their subject matter must be postponed or cancelled. Both an increasing reliance in the future on the use of programme-material bought in from outside organisations and greater dependence on advertising revenue call for particular care in overseeing schedules so that the detailed content of each programme and commercial is well-established in advance and changes take place if the need arises.

4. Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs: Television and Radio

Programmes should not encourage smoking, especially by children or young people. Encouragement may be given by identifying smoking with maturity or as an expression of sophisticated manhood or womanhood. Programmes especially directed at children should, in general, not include smoking and people taking part in discussion-programmes should be discouraged from smoking as far as it is reasonable to do so.

Alcohol is consumed and enjoyed by many people without any serious consequences. The consumption of alcohol is, however, condemned by some people and it can be damaging in its consequences, especially for the young. Much crime, especially among young people, is drink-related, as are many traffic accidents and much domestic violence. The portrayal of alcohol in programmes ought therefore to be regarded with seriousness. Drinking should not be portrayed as a badge of adulthood nor should its effects be misleadingly concealed. Care must be taken to

strike a balance between the reflection of drinking as an acceptable social habit widely practised and incitement to its abuse. The Council draws attention to the dangers of the cumulative effect of repeated references to drinking. The appearance of alcohol in programmes intended for children should be permitted only after careful consideration. For programmes at other times of day when children may be present in large numbers, the need to feature alcohol should also be carefully considered.

A number of feature films is at the very least ambivalent about the use of drugs, implying a degree of tolerance towards the practice. Nothing should be done in programmes to encourage any extension of that attitude of tolerance towards the taking of drugs in Britain or the view that taking them was socially acceptable. This is particularly important in programmes expecting to attract large numbers of young people, who might be expected to model their behaviour on the leading performers. Detailed demonstrations of drug-taking techniques or the mechanics of procuring drugs should, in general, be avoided in fiction and included only after senior editorial decisions have been made.