

PRIME MINISTERHOME SECRETARY: OBSCENITY

The Home Secretary is coming in tomorrow to talk about the obscenity laws in general and Graham Bright's Bill on Video Nasties in particular. The particular points which came out of your meeting with Mrs. Whitehouse and which you will wish to raise with him are as follows:

- i. The desirability of general Government legislation to reform the obscenity laws. As you know, the Home Office believe there is no consensus within the House for such a Bill; your view is that a Government Bill (as opposed to Private Member's legislation) would command a majority in the present House of Commons.
- ii. On Graham Bright's Bill in particular, the Home Office approach is for a licensing ^{persuasive} system. You, however, found/Mary Whitehouse's arguments in favour of a list system under which the depiction of material listed in the legislation would be made illegal. The justification for such an approach is that there is a difference in kind between cinema films and video recordings. Films are for public exhibition and entry to them is controlled; video recordings are for private exhibition and there are no such controls over those who see them.
- iii. The Home Office doubt the effectiveness of the list approach but it is already embodied in legislation in Sweden and some American States. I have asked the Home Office to provide evidence of its effectiveness there.

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iv. Even if the licensing proposals in Graham Bright's Bill were implemented, there is still scope for a more stringent approach through the issue of guidelines to the licensing body (probably the British Board of Film Censors). The Home Secretary has turned down this suggestion from Mrs. Whitehouse. You might ask why.

The Home Secretary might well argue that to tinker with Graham Bright's Bill now might jeopardise its passage. If he convinces you, you might ask him to ensure that the question of obscenity legislation in the 1984/5 session should be properly considered collectively.

IF.