



cc BG

BF. // HB will comment on
Thurs. by then if necessary

Prime Minister

INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT OF PROGRAMME STANDARDS

The Hungerford killings reinforce the importance of our manifesto proposal to strengthen oversight of the portrayal of sex and violence on television. The attached paper makes specific proposals for carrying out this commitment.

2. The central proposal is to set up a Broadcasting Council which would receive complaints on taste and decency and the portrayal of violence in broadcast programmes. As envisaged in the manifesto, responsibility for enforcing broadcasting standards would remain with the broadcasting authorities. But the Broadcasting Council would be a high-powered body which would exert a strong and independent influence. In particular, it would be able to reach views on individual programmes and publish them. It would also be able to take the initiative in studying the broadcasters' performance in relation to relevant programme standards.

3. The Broadcasting Complaints Council would subsume the existing Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC), and incorporate the Commission's role in relation to complaints of unjust treatment and the invasion of privacy.

4. In the wake of Hungerford I do not think it would be right to await the Broadcasting Bill planned for 1988 before setting up the Broadcasting Council. The paper therefore proposes that, by building on the BCC, we should establish the Broadcasting Council on an interim basis in advance of the legislation, and as quickly as possible. I would like to be in a position to announce this at the Party Conference. I shall be discussing provision for the additional expenditure involved with John Major in this PES round.

/5. Because

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5. Because of the pressure of business on MISC 128, and also because of the links with the Hungerford follow up and the implications for criminal as well as broadcasting policy, I would like, if you agree, to propose to put this paper to H Committee at the earliest opportunity.

6. I intend to have an early meeting with Mr Hussey and Lord Thomson about violence on TV. I will take this opportunity to let them know what we have in mind for the new Broadcasting Council, and to stress the importance we attach to the co-operation of the broadcasting authorities.

7. I am copying this minute and the paper to the Lord President and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Douglas Hurd

8 September 1987

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