Censorship Review Committee Report 1992
Dear Minister

CENSORSHIP REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT 1992

In May 1991, you appointed us to the Committee to review and recommend changes to the existing censorship policy and practices.

We have completed our work and have the honour to submit our Report for your consideration.

In our deliberations, we were conscious of the need to achieve a balance between allowing more scope for creativity and maintaining a morally wholesome society. The Committee also felt that, with the advent of technology and the rapidity with which information is transmitted, it is not possible to prevent all objectionable materials from reaching us. The family and the schools should inculcate in our young good moral values and attitudes to inure them against influences that are morally undesirable. Censorship alone is not the solution.

We agreed generally with the present censorship practices, and in particular, the practice of applying varying degrees of censorship to the different media because of their differential impact. We have recommended more stringent censorship of TV programmes as they penetrate the homes and are easily accessible to the young. We have recommended more public involvement in the censorship process as censorship policies should reflect society's social mores.
To allow more scope for intellectual pursuit, we have recommended that "publications with educational value or research merit be less stringently censored. This less stringent approach is also recommended for serious films screened by bona fide film or cultural organisations. In the performing arts, theatre groups should be given more room for creativity but adequate measures should be taken to ensure that children are not allowed to attend plays with themes or language which are unsuitable for them.

On the present film classification system, we have recommended that the present age restriction of 21 for viewing Restricted (Artistic) films be retained. The Committee recommended that R(A) films should be restricted to specially licensed theatres with controls over their advertisements. The Committee also noted that some films which are suitable for general viewing may have themes unsuitable for the young. To protect the young from watching "PG" films with adult themes, we have proposed the introduction of a new category, NC 16 (No admission to children below 16).

On broadcasting, we have recommended that all broadcasting stations carry warning indicators for programmes that require parental guidance. With the prospect of more TV programmes from more local stations, we have recommended the setting up of an independent advisory body to establish censorship standards for broadcasting.

Warmest regards.

Yours sincerely

[Signatures]

Prof. Tommy Koh (Chairman)

Mrs Hedwig Anuar

Mohamed Gunter Sadali

V T Arasu

Ms Pang Cheng Lian
15 October 1992

Prof Tommy Koh
Chairman
Censorship Review Committee

Dear Professor Koh

The Report of the Censorship Review Committee is balanced and comprehensive. I agree with the philosophy and the general approach of the Committee. MITA will now study the details and implement the recommendations over a period of time.

2 Because the Committee went about its work in an open manner, there is hardly any recommendation which startles or surprises. Indeed, over the last few months, MITA has adjusted a number of its policies in consultation with your Committee. Thus, we have already asked SBC to tighten its censorship standards and limited the screening of R(A) films to approved cinemas.

3 We have to strike a good balance between allowing more room for creative expression and maintaining moral standards. We have to take into account the fact that we are an open city, that Singaporeans travel freely and that technology has made it extremely difficult to prevent individuals from bringing in undesirable material. At the same time, we should not liberalise in an unthinking manner just because other countries are also liberalising. We ignore at our peril the link between moral depravity and the decline of civilizations. Above all, we must do nothing to weaken the structure of the family.

4 Of course censorship alone is not sufficient. Whether we are able to maintain the moral tone of our society depends critically on the family, our schools and what we establish to be the standards of public behaviour. Censorship is only a supplement. Censorship is not simply a matter of enforcement; it is also a public declaration of what we want our society to be.
You have been very kind to take on the job of Chairman. The members of the CRC were drawn from a wide cross-section of society precisely in order to represent a wide cross-section of views. You had the very difficult task of getting everyone to agree on a common set of recommendations. Only a man with your patience, wisdom and diplomatic skills could have generated consensus in such a divergent group. You persuaded everyone to focus his mind on what is good for our society as a whole, not just what is in the interest of particular individuals or groups of individuals.

On behalf of the Government, I thank you and the members of your Committee for your invaluable contribution and for your months of hard work.

GEORGE YEO
Executive Summary

The Censorship Review Committee (CRC), under the chairmanship of Professor Tommy Koh Thong Bee, was appointed in May 1991 to review and recommend changes to the present censorship policy and practices.

Representations
To assist in its review, the Committee considered written submissions from individuals and organisations and held discussions with relevant organisations, including the Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association and the Singapore Booksellers Association.

CRC Survey
The CRC also commissioned a survey to ascertain public reaction to some censorship issues and to gauge whether there was a change in moral values since the last censorship review in 1981. The survey showed that Singaporeans have a strong regard for the traditional family unit and resist other lifestyles. The survey also showed that Singaporeans are deeply influenced by their religious beliefs and moral principles.

Principles of Censorship
The Committee's recommendations are based on the following principles:

(a) **DIFFERENTIATION**
The Committee recognises that the different media impact differently on their readers and viewers. The degree of censorship should, therefore, vary according to the type of medium. Television programmes should be subjected to more stringent censorship than movies, "live" performances, audio recordings and publications. Censorship should be stricter with pictorials than with words.

(b) **PROTECTING THE YOUNG**
In the censorship of materials, particular attention should be paid to those that may be harmful to the young.

(c) **PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC CONSUMPTION**
A distinction should be made between materials for public display and those for private use. Materials for public display, such as posters and calendars, should be more stringently censored as they may cause offence to unwilling viewers. Materials for private use can be more liberally treated as they will be read or seen only by people who choose to see or read them.
(d) ARTISTIC MERIT
The artistic or literary merit of a publication or film should be given due consideration in censorship.

(e) EDUCATIONAL MERIT
Works which have research or educational value should be vetted less stringently as they aim to educate and inform the public, or contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

(f) SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL INTERESTS
Publications inimical to Singapore's national interests should continue to be disallowed. These would include materials that erode the core moral values of society, subvert the nation's security and stability, cause misunderstanding or conflict in our multiracial and multireligious society, or denigrate any religion or race.

(g) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
There should be greater public involvement in the decision-making process of censorship.

(h) SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCEDURES
Censorship procedures should be simplified to avoid burdensome enforcement and to minimise inconvenience to the public.

(i) TARGETING AT MASS DISTRIBUTORS
The enforcement system should target at mass distributors (i.e. the media, distributors and vendors) rather than at individuals. Penalties under the law should be heavy to deter the distribution of uncensored and objectionable materials.

Summary of Recommendations
Below is a summary of the Committee's recommendations:

(a) PROHIBITED PUBLICATIONS
□ The ban on Playboy, Penthouse and magazines of a similar nature should remain.
□ A contextual approach should be applied to magazines with adult themes which consist mainly of printed words.
□ The current status of communist publications should be reviewed.

(b) NUDITY IN CALENDARS, POSTERS, MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS
□ Stringent standards should be applied to materials intended for public display, such as posters and calendars.
□ A less strict approach should be taken towards nudity in magazines which serve a small group of readers.
□ Photographic nudity should be permitted only if it is in good taste or relevant to the context.
Generally, newspapers should not feature nudity. Nudity can be featured if it is a work of art, or tastefully done and relevant to the text. It should not be featured on the front page.

(c) SEX MANUALS

- Educational sex manuals should be allowed.
- Illustrated sex manuals which are not pornographic can be allowed on a selective basis under the Restricted Publications Scheme.
- Pictorial illustrations of sex acts such as group sex, sadomasochistic acts, pedophilic acts, homosexuality, bestiality and sex involving children should not be allowed.

(d) HOMOSEXUAL MATERIALS

- Materials encouraging homosexuality should continue to be disallowed.

(e) RELIGIOUS MATERIALS

- Existing censorship guidelines on religious materials should be retained.
- A balance should be struck between respecting the sensitivities of religious groups and giving greater leeway to works with literary, artistic or research merit.

(f) FOREIGN LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS, FILMS AND VIDEO TAPES

- Wherever possible, the censorship criteria applied to materials in our official languages should also be applied to foreign language publications and films.

(g) WORKS PUBLISHED IN SINGAPORE

- The current practice of not vetting books prior to publication in Singapore should be continued.

(h) COMICS

- The existing criteria should be retained for comics meant for children.
- Comics, such as collectors' comics, which would appeal to adults but with contents unsuitable for the young, can be allowed under the Restricted Publications Scheme.
- Comics with homosexual contents, depictions of gratuitous violence or which denigrate any religion should continue to be disallowed.

(i) MAGAZINES FOR SUBSCRIBERS

- Certain types or issues of magazines with contents unsuitable for general circulation can be allowed for subscribers.

(j) AUDIO MATERIALS

- Album covers should be vetted in the same way as posters and calendars.
- Audio materials with (i) excessive vulgar language; (ii) obscene sexual connotations; (iii) satanic themes; or (iv) lyrics encouraging drug taking should be disallowed.
Voice-over effects and the mood conveyed should also be taken into consideration in vetting audio materials.

(k) "LIVE" PERFORMANCES
- The National Arts Council (NAC) should be appointed the vetting authority for plays, with a panel of experts to advise it.
- Theatre groups with proven track records should be exempted from submitting their scripts for vetting. New theatre groups whose productions are found suitable can be granted the exemption as well, if they apply for it.
- Exempted theatre groups should exercise self-regulation. If some of their plays contain themes or language unsuitable for children, this must be announced in their publicity materials.
- Theatre groups staging plays with themes or language unsuitable for children should deny entry to them. The appropriate age limit for such plays should be determined by the theatre groups in consultation with the NAC.
- Theatre groups which are granted exemption from vetting should not stage plays which:
  (i) erode the core moral values of society; (ii) subvert the nation's security and stability; or (iii) create misunderstanding or conflict in our multiracial and multireligious society.

(l) CLASSIFICATION OF FILMS
- The present age restriction for viewing R(A) (Restricted [Artistic]) films should remain at 21.
- The screening of R(A) films should be restricted to specially licensed theatres.
- A new category of NC16 (No admission to children below 16) films should be introduced.
- Films screened by bona fide film or cultural organisations can be less strictly censored.

(m) CLASSICAL MUSIC VIDEO TAPES AND VIDEO DISCS
- Classical music video tapes and video discs of all traditions, including opera and jazz, which are meant for individual use, should be exempted from censorship.

(n) EXEMPTION FOR ADVERTISING AND PRODUCTION HOUSES
- Materials produced by advertising agencies and production houses for internal use can be exempted from censorship and the need to be licensed.

(o) EXEMPTION FOR TRAINING AND INDUSTRIAL VIDEO TAPES
- All training and industrial video tapes meant for companies' internal use can be exempted from censorship.
(p) VIDEO CLASSIFICATION

- Video classification should not be introduced.

(q) COMPUTER BULLETIN BOARDS

- Self-regulation should be the primary means of control for electronic bulletin boards.
- Legislation should be enacted to allow the government to act against bulletin board offenders.
- Heavy penalties should be meted out to those purveying pornography.

(r) COMPUTER SOFTWARE

- Severe penalties should be meted out to those disseminating pornographic computer software.

(s) RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING

- In the case of cinematic films, broadcasting stations should regard the version passed by the Board of Film Censors (BFC) as the threshold.
- Broadcasting stations should carry warning indicators for programmes that require parental guidance or which may offend some viewers. TV guides and listings should also carry warning indicators for such programmes.
- An independent advisory body should be set up to establish censorship standards for television and radio and these should be stricter than those for cinemas.

(t) VETTING PROCEDURES FOR VIDEO TAPES/DISCS

- The BFC should practise censorship by exception. It should exempt from censorship certain classes of video tapes, such as those meant for companies' internal use or for individuals' personal use.

(u) APPEALS

- There should be an advisory panel comprising members from a cross-section of society to advise the Minister for Information and the Arts on appeals for publications.
- The NAC should set up an appeals body to advise the Public Entertainments Licensing Unit (PELU) on plays.

(v) CENSORSHIP LAWS

- The Undesirable Publications Act should be amended to provide for the severe punishment of repeat offenders who willfully and deliberately sell obscene/objectionable publications.
Background
1. Singapore's present censorship policies are based on the 1981 Report of the Review Committee on Censorship. The central premise of that report was that a realistic censorship policy must be founded on national interest, and on keeping a delicate balance between being strict and being liberal. For instance, on the censorship of films and publications, the 1981 Report advocated that a contextual approach be applied, taking into account the whole and its relationship to the parts. Ten years have passed and in that interval, society, technology and communications have undergone tremendous changes. The level of education and affluence has increased significantly, leading to expectations of more relaxed censorship. An increasing number of Singaporeans are also travelling, studying and working abroad, exposing them to the values and practices of other countries. In the field of technology and communications, compact discs have largely replaced records and audio cassettes. Even the ubiquitous video cassette appears threatened by the growing popularity of the laser disc. Electronic pornography in computer software and bulletin boards are also posing new challenges to censorship.

Censorship Review Committee
2. To keep pace with social and technological changes, censorship policies must change. The Censorship Review Committee (CRC) was appointed in May 1991 by the Minister for Information and the Arts. It was asked to review and recommend changes to censorship policies in the light of Singapore's twin objectives of becoming a hub city of the world and of building a wholesome society that is economically dynamic, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant.

3. The CRC's terms of reference were:
   (a) to consider the changes in Singapore's domestic and external environment since the Jayakumar Report in 1981.
   (b) to review and recommend changes to:
       (i) censorship policies and guidelines on printed materials, audio recordings, audio-visual materials and "live" performances;
       (ii) the laws on censorship;
       (iii) censorship procedures and enforcement; and
       (iv) other related matters.

4. The Committee was chaired by Professor Tommy Koh, Singapore's Ambassador-at-Large, Chairman of the National Arts Council and Director of the Institute of Policy Studies. It comprised 18 other members drawn from a cross-section of society. The Committee is listed in Annex A.
5. The Committee held its inaugural meeting on June 20, 1991 and completed its review on September 10, 1992. During this period, it held 32 discussion sessions, reviewed a number of films, publications and audio-visual materials, and met a number of organisations (see Annex B).

6. From the outset, the Committee recognised the complexities of the task ahead. It had to give due weight to the diverse opinions of Singaporeans in seeking to formulate a rational and balanced censorship policy.

Guiding Principle

7. The Committee's concern is to set the limits of acceptable expression and not to judge the private behaviour of individuals. Nonetheless, the Committee has endeavoured to ensure that its recommendations would serve to protect and uphold values and institutions that Singaporeans hold dear. To assist it in its task, the Committee commissioned a survey and the results (see para. 10) suggest that many Singaporeans are unprepared for rapid changes in censorship policy at this stage of the country's development.

Representations

8. The Committee sought to take into account public opinion and the views of producers and distributors of materials by inviting submissions and representations. The Committee met a number of relevant organisations. As with the survey, the Committee made use of these sources of information in its deliberations without being bound by them.

Survey

9. The survey commissioned by the Committee aimed to assess changing moral values and social trends and responses to sensitive issues like nudity. The Committee felt that the results would guide it to a more accurate understanding of the degree of censorship which would be acceptable to the majority of Singaporeans at this stage of the country's development.

10. The findings showed that Singaporeans generally disapprove of sexual activity outside marriage. They have a strong regard for the traditional family unit and resist other lifestyles. (A summary of the survey is in Annex C.) There was a clear difference between opinions expressed on questions of sexual behaviour and those expressed on the appropriate degree of censorship. On certain specific issues, a majority of respondents desired greater liberalisation of censorship. But on the whole, the survey showed a concern for some controls to be maintained, especially in relation to materials to which young persons may be exposed.

Recommendations

11. The Committee upholds the present censorship practices in most instances and also recommends some changes. In particular, it proposes more public involvement in the process of censorship. This will allow censorship policies to keep pace with social changes. To this end, the Committee recommends more public participation in censorship decisions, and that an advisory body be set up to advise the Minister for Information and the Arts on appeals for disallowed publications.

Introduction
12. The Committee has sought to provide a framework for greater creativity in the arts by recommending that the individual productions of established theatre groups need not be subject to prior vetting.

13. The Committee notes that while censorship is necessary to safeguard values and racial and religious harmony, it is becoming increasingly difficult to prevent undesirable materials from reaching the public. This is because modern media, international mobility and miniaturisation technology have enabled individuals and entrepreneurs to disseminate any material with little or no control.

14. Since enforcement at the level of the individual consumer has become increasingly difficult, the Committee recommends a shift of emphasis to distributors and deterrent punitive measures to be imposed on such offenders.

15. The Committee also strongly believes that the education system should play a more active role in imparting sound values and the ability to make ethical judgements to the young. In this way, the young will be able to evaluate materials to which they are exposed and develop into critical and discriminating adults.

16. The Committee wishes to thank everyone who has contributed to its deliberations. It hopes that its recommendations will help Singapore maintain a morally wholesome society while giving more room for creativity.
Chapter 1 Principles of Censorship

1.1 Is Censorship Necessary?

1.1.1 Censorship is practised in all societies to some degree. It is a way of reconciling the concerns of different sections of the population. In Singapore, censorship plays a role in creating a balance between maintaining a morally wholesome society and becoming an economically dynamic, socially cohesive and culturally vibrant nation. It helps protect the young against undesirable influences and safeguards central values such as the sanctity of marriage, the importance of the family, respect for one's elders, filial piety, moral integrity, and respect for and tolerance towards different racial and religious groups.

1.1.2 While there is no conclusive proof of a direct link between materials which may be judged to be pornographic or violent, and deviant or criminal behaviour, the possibility that such materials may have a detrimental effect on some individuals cannot be ignored. Those who share this view would agree that censorship is necessary to avert the possibility of harm to both individuals and society. Others argue that censorship stifles self-development and the spread of knowledge.

1.1.3 Hence, while there is no perfect solution, the Committee feels that in such matters, it is better to take a cautious approach. It may take years before the consequences of our actions become clear. The role of censorship, then, is to help safeguard our moral values and social stability, while allowing individuals the freedom to create and to express themselves.

1.2 Existing Censorship Principles and Guidelines

1.2.1 The censorship practices in place today are based on recommendations made in the Censorship Report of 1981. The salient features are as follows:

(a) Publications, films, videos, etc. are disallowed if they:

(i) erode the moral fabric of society;
(ii) subvert the nation's security and stability; or
(iii) create misgiving, misunderstanding and disharmony among the various racial and religious groups, resulting in unrest and civil disorder.

Generally, these studies fall into three categories:

(i) Those that say there is no link, for example, the 1970 U.S. Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography found "no evidence to date that exposure to explicit materials plays a significant role in the causation of delinquent or criminal behaviour".
(ii) Those that say there is a link, for example, the 1985/1986 U.S. Attorney-General's Commission on Pornography stated that "the available evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that substantial exposure to sexually violent materials bears a causal relationship to anti-social acts of sexual violence and for some groups, to unlawful acts of sexual violence".
(iii) Those that say that the link between pornography and sexual crime is not clear but that it has a dehumanising effect on attitudes to women and family relationships. Studies like the British Home Office Report, "Pornography: impacts and influences", December 1990, support this view.
A more liberal approach is adopted, for printed words than for audiovisual materials. This is because films and other audio-visual materials have greater visual and aural impact and can be enjoyed *en masse*, while reading is more of an individual and private activity. Hence, written descriptions of sex acts are treated more liberally, provided they are not obscene or exploitative.

1.2. The Committee largely endorses these existing principles and guidelines. It also suggests other factors which have to be considered. These principles are listed as follows:

### 1.3 Recommended Censorship Principles

#### DIFFERENTIATION

1.3.1 The Committee recognises that the different media influence their readers and viewers differently. It, therefore, feels that the degree of censorship should vary according to the type of medium. Television programmes should be subjected to the most stringent censorship as they can penetrate into homes, followed to a lesser degree by movies, "live" performances and sound recordings. Publications should be treated less strictly and, within this category, printed words should be treated more leniently than pictorials.

#### PROTECTING THE YOUNG

1.3.2 The Committee notes that young people are vulnerable to undesirable influences purveyed through audio-visual and print materials. Schools and homes should, therefore, inculcate in the young values which would inure them against such influences. In the censorship of materials, however, particular attention should be paid to those which may be harmful to the young.

#### PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC CONSUMPTION

1.3.3 The Committee recommends that there should be a distinction between materials for public display and those for private use. Materials for public display should be more stringently censored because of the possibility that they might be seen by unwilling viewers. Materials for private use can be less strictly treated because they will be seen or read, in the ordinary course of events, only by people who choose to see or read them.

#### ARTISTIC MERIT

1.3.4 The Committee feels that the artistic or literary merit of a publication or film should be given due consideration. The principle of artistic freedom and the intrinsic value of art are matters to be balanced against the factors invoked for disallowing materials, without necessarily overriding those factors in every case. A majority of respondents in the survey commissioned by the Committee also felt that some form of control or censorship should be exercised for "artistic work". Annex D sets out the guidelines for determining artistic merit and the censorship considerations to be applied.
EDUCATIONAL MERIT

1.3.5 Works which have research or educational value should be accorded greater leeway as they aim to educate and inform the public, or to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL INTERESTS

1.3.6 The Committee feels that certain publications and films, which are inimical to Singapore's national interests, should continue to be disallowed. These include materials that may:
(a) erode the core moral values of society;
(b) subvert the nation's security and stability;
(c) cause misunderstanding or conflict in our multiracial and multireligious society;
or
(d) denigrate any religion or race.

1.3.7 In applying these criteria, the Committee recommends that consideration and weight be given to the artistic or research merit of a publication or film, and the relationship of the whole to its constituent parts.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

1.3.8 The Committee feels that censorship should reflect public acceptance of moral and social codes of conduct. It recognises that while it is possible to set broad guidelines, the application of these guidelines requires judgement and sensitivity to society's attitudes. This can be better achieved with wider public involvement. The Committee, therefore, recommends increasing the existing level of public participation in the process of censorship.

1.4 Recommended Enforcement Principles

SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCEDURES

1.4.1 Censorship procedures should be simplified to avoid burdensome enforcement and to minimise inconvenience to the public.

TARGETING AT MASS DISTRIBUTORS

1.4.2 Enforcement efforts should be targeted at mass distributors rather than at individuals. The law should also impose a heavy penalty to deter those who distribute uncensored and objectionable materials.
Chapter 2 The Committee's Views and Recommendations on Specific Issues

The Committee's discussions and recommendations on current censorship practices are outlined below:

21 Prohibited Publications

2.1 The Committee considered lifting the ban on some of the publications gazetted under the Undesirable Publications Act. Among these were communist publications and 31 foreign magazines, including Playboy.

2.1.2 Communist publications and songs were banned between the 1950s and 1970s, a time when communism had considerable appeal for Singaporeans and could pose a threat to Singapore's security.

2.1.3 Playboy was banned in 1959 for purveying a hedonistic philosophy and lifestyle. Cosmopolitan, a women's magazine, was similarly banned in 1982 for advocating promiscuous values. The remaining foreign magazines were banned in the 1970s as they were considered pornographic.

2.1.4 The Committee sought the public's views on the acceptability of some of the banned magazines. The survey findings revealed that a majority of respondents felt the ban on Playboy and similar types of magazines should stay, but that magazines with printed words could be treated less stringently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1.5 The Committee suggests that the decision on communist publications and songs be reviewed as they no longer pose a serious ideological threat. On the international scene, the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have resulted in a worldwide loss of confidence in communism.

2.1.6 The Committee recommends that gazetted foreign magazines, such as Playboy and Penthouse, continue to be banned because they feature nude photographs and are exploitative of women. Their circulation may erode Singaporeans' core moral values concerning the family and marriage.

2.1.7 It also recommends that a contextual approach be applied to magazines with adult themes, such as Cosmopolitan. If the magazines consist mainly of printed words, greater leeway can be accorded to them.

22 Nudity in Calendars, Posters, Magazines and Newspapers

2.2.1 The Committee recognises that nudity itself is not obscene or offensive to many people. There are, however, certain sections of the public to whom nudity is
offensive and censorship should protect these people from being unwittingly exposed to materials containing nudity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.2 The Committee, therefore, recommends that stringent standards be applied to materials intended for public display, such as posters, calendars and newspapers, which are readily available.

2.3 For magazines which serve only small groups of readers in the market place, a less strict approach towards nudity is acceptable, since readers who find such materials offensive may read or subscribe to other magazines.

2.4 The Committee recommends that while reproductions of artistic and non-photographic renderings of nude figures can be allowed, photographic nudity should be permitted only if it is in good taste or relevant to the context.

2.5 The Committee also recommends that newspapers generally should not feature nudity. Nudity can be featured if it is a work of art or if it is tastefully done and relevant to the text but it should not be featured on the front page. Care should be taken to avoid provocative poses as these are disturbing to some readers. Editorial judgement must also be exercised.

23 Sex Manuals

23.1 Sex manuals are publications which deal explicitly with the subject of sex, its nature, role and/or morality. They can and often do include illustrations. The Committee noted that while good sex manuals are both educational and useful, the main difficulty lies in the control of such manuals, in terms of the availability of suitably graded materials for different age groups (e.g. children's manuals for children, teen manuals for teenagers and marriage manuals for adults). The Committee noted, however, that some sex manuals verge on pornography and are not suitable for distribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23.2 The Committee, therefore, recommends that educational sex manuals be allowed. Those with illustrations and which are not pornographic, but may not be suitable for children, should be allowed on a selective basis under the Restricted Publications Scheme. Under this scheme, publications are sold under conditions that they should not be promoted through advertising, active marketing and prominent display.

23.3 Since there is a possibility of pornography appearing in the guise of sex manuals, the Committee recommends that sex manuals with pictorial illustrations of sex acts such as group sex, sado-masochistic acts, pedophilic acts, homosexuality, bestiality and sex involving children continue to be disallowed.

24 Homosexual Materials

24.1 At different times and in different cultures, homosexual behaviour has variously been approved, tolerated or banned. In Singapore, homosexual acts in public or private are illegal. Censorship policy currently disallows materials which endorse
or encourage homosexuality. This includes materials containing pictures of homosexual acts or which portray homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Serious printed works on homosexual issues are allowed, however.

2.4.2 The Committee discussed at length the current practice of disallowing materials containing homosexual themes or illustrations. A number of viewpoints were expressed. One was that our society has expressed its disapproval of homosexuality through the law, which in turn, has reflected the underlying beliefs of our citizens that homosexuality is a form of unnatural sexual behaviour. Therefore, the censorship of materials containing homosexual themes or illustrations should be stricter than that for materials containing heterosexual themes or illustrations.

2.4.3 Another viewpoint was that a person should be given the freedom to develop his sexuality so long as this did not cause harm to others. It was also pointed out that, in the particular context of the arts, much work of considerable merit has been created by homosexuals, sometimes with explicit homosexual themes. The view was also expressed that acceptance of, rather than hostility towards, homosexuals is an attitude to be encouraged.

2.4.4 The survey provided some feedback on the public's attitude towards homosexuality. On publications, the findings showed that 48 per cent of the respondents felt that printed and audio materials which encourage homosexual or lesbian behaviour as a way of life should be banned, but 46 per cent wanted some form of access at least. On films, 34 per cent disapproved but 46 per cent approved themes or sub-plots accepting homosexuality, provided certain restrictions were imposed.

RECOMMENDATION

2.4.5 The Committee recommends, in the light of the sensitivity of homosexuality as an issue, that materials encouraging homosexuality should continue to be disallowed.

2.5 Religious Materials

2.5.1 The existing practice is to disallow religious materials which denigrate any religion or which may cause misunderstanding or conflict in our multiracial and multireligious society.

2.5.2 More specifically, the following are disallowed:
(a) contents which denigrate or attack any particular faith, religious figure or deity;
(b) teachings of banned cults; and
(c) subversive religious teachings, such as revolutionary teachings that advocate violence.

2.5.3 Debates on and expositions of theological differences between different religions or between denominations and sects of the same religion are allowed, if they do not denigrate or attack the faiths that are being compared.

2.5.4 Religious tracts and video recordings of sermons are treated with circumspection. If they denigrate any religion, they are not allowed even for the religious group's own use.
2.5.5 The Committee discussed whether allowing controversial religious materials would promote better understanding of the different religions. Some members felt that controversial publications would have this effect as they would encourage public debate. Others felt that rather than shed light on the issue, such discussions could arouse resentment and cause conflict.

2.5.6 The Committee also discussed whether the artistic or literary merits of a particular publication could potentially outweigh any offence it might cause to a religious group. While it accepted that artistic and literary merits are important factors, some members felt that works such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* and the book, *The Satanic Verses*, should continue to be disallowed.

2.5.7 The Committee then explored the issue of whether religious materials with controversial contents, but with scholastic merit, could be treated more leniently. It felt that materials which fall into this category should be treated less stringently than a religious pamphlet meant for the public.

2.5.8 The Committee examined the question of who should decide the parameters of religious tolerance: the general public or the religious group that is offended by particular materials. The Committee felt that in order to maintain religious harmony, certain religious taboos should be respected and materials trespassing such taboos be disallowed, such as illustrations showing the face of the Prophet Muhammad to which Muslims would strongly object.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2.5.9 The Committee recommends that in implementing the guidelines, a balance be struck between respecting the sensitivities of religious groups on the one hand, and allowing religious freedom and greater exposure to works with literary, artistic and research merit on the other hand.

2.6 **Foreign Language Publications, Films and Video Tapes**

2.6.1 Under the Films Act, all films and video tapes have to be censored before they can be imported, possessed, distributed or exhibited. This includes foreign language films and video tapes.

2.6.2 Foreign language materials, including films and video tapes, are vetted for illustrations depicting violence, sex and nudity. In the case of audio materials like gramophone records, compact discs and cassette tapes, only the covers are examined. Foreign language materials are subject to the same censorship criteria as those applied to similar materials in our official languages.

2.6.3 The Committee was informed that there has been an increase in the import of foreign language materials in recent years. Their contents are generally more offensive in terms of nudity, sex and violence than in the past.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2.6.4 The Committee recommends that, wherever possible, the same censorship criteria for materials in our official languages should be applied to materials in foreign languages.
27 Works Published in Singapore

2.7.1 Publications published locally fall into two categories: magazines and books. A permit is required to print and publish magazines. No approval is required to publish books locally. Publishers have, however, occasionally submitted manuscripts for approval which the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) is not empowered to give.

2.7.2 The Committee noted that in the past, books published locally did not usually carry objectionable contents. But the trend has changed. Now, local books carry explicit sexual descriptions and controversial themes, e.g. *Harlots: A Personal Sex History*.

2P.Z The Committee felt, however, that vetting these books would impede the creativity of local writers. If the contents of the books are objectionable, action could be taken after sale and distribution.

RECOMMENDATION

2.7.4 The Committee recommends that the current practice of not vetting books prior to publication in Singapore be continued.

28 Printing for Export

2.8.1 The Undesirable Publications Act does not require printers and publishers to seek MITA's approval to print materials. However, printers seek the Ministry's advice since materials, if found objectionable, can be confiscated under the Penal Code and the Undesirable Publications Act.

2.8.2 The Committee met officials from the Economic Development Board (EDB), who presented to the Committee the concerns of the printing and publishing industry. They explained that the industry felt that existing laws and practices inhibited its growth, and that greater flexibility should be given to help the industry maintain its competitive edge internationally.

2.8.3 The Committee noted that printers do not require approval to print materials for export but that the laws of Singapore still apply to them, even if the materials are strictly for export.

RECOMMENDATION

2.8.4 The Committee suggests that printers, who print materials which may offend the moral sensitivities of Singaporeans but do not contravene our laws and the laws of the country of export, should exercise strict control over the printed materials to ensure that they are not available here.

29 Comics

2.9.1 The Committee noted that comics are severely censored because they appeal mainly to children and consist largely of illustrations which can be easily understood by the young. At present, comics which contain nudity, vulgar language, love-making scenes, excessive violence, homosexual activity and denigration of established religions are disallowed.
2.9.2 The Committee observed that while comics were meant primarily for the young in the past, they now cater to adults as well. This is because a growing number of adult Singaporeans are becoming interested in comics with sophisticated themes, complex plots, and good scripts and artwork.

2.9.3 As a result, many comics today deal with adult themes and contain explicit scenes of sex, nudity, violence, homosexuality and vulgar dialogue. While these comics are meant for adults, the Committee was concerned that children might gain access to them.

RECOMMENDATION

2.9.4 The Committee recommends that the existing criteria be retained since comics appeal to children and the public is in favour of strict censorship. It proposes, however, that collectors' comics with contents unsuitable for the young, but which appeal to adults, be allowed under the Restricted Publications Scheme. These must not be obscene or homosexual in content, depict gratuitous violence or denigrate any religion.

2.10 Magazines for Subscribers

2.10.1 The Committee looked into the possibility of allowing certain types or particular issues of magazines for subscribers only. Magazines which might offend certain sections of the public but possess redeeming merit in terms of artistic, literary or research merit, or contain information useful to those in certain trades/professions, could be allowed under this scheme. Publications of interest to certain people only would then be made available to them. By not allowing the publications for general release and circulation, offence to particular sections of society would be avoided.

2.10.2 The Committee felt that there should be some control measures to prevent exploitation of the proposed scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

2.10.3 The Committee recommends that certain types or issues of magazines, which would not be allowed for general release and circulation because they might offend particular sections of the public, be allowed for subscribers, subject to approval on a case-by-case basis.

2.11 Audio Materials

2.11.1 Audio materials such as gramophone records, audio tapes and compact discs are vetted more stringently than printed materials as they can be played at a shop's premises to attract customers or performed "live".

2.11.2 Both the album covers and lyrics are examined. If the cover is objectionable, the record is released without the cover. For instance, album covers featuring nude models or models in sexually provocative poses are considered unacceptable and detained. If one or more songs in an album are objectionable, the whole album is detained.
2.n.3 At present, songs with themes on or which encourage drug-taking are disallowed. These include songs describing the blissful effects of drugs and those which have drug references like marijuana, coke, "magic dragon" and "monkey on the back" (restless behaviour after taking drugs).

2.11.4 Songs are also disallowed if they contain four-letter words, moaning sounds of sexual ecstasy and descriptions of sexual acts; if their lyrics advocate worship or glorification of Satan; if they offend any religion; or if they encourage or portray perverted or anti-social behaviour.

RECOMMENDATIONS
2.11.5 The Committee recommends that album covers should be vetted in the same way as posters and calendars. It suggests that when vetting songs, censors should consider not only the lyrics but also the mood conveyed and the voice-over effects.

2.11.6 The Committee recommends that songs with drug references should not be disallowed simply because they contain explicit drug terms, as some can also have anti-drug themes. It also feels that drug terms and references in some of these songs will not be understood by listeners today. Should the songs appeal to the listener, the attraction will be in the music rather than the lyrics.

2.11.7 The Committee, therefore, recommends that songs which openly encourage drug-taking and can be understood in Singapore be disallowed.

2.11.8 The Committee recommends that songs which contain excessive use of four-letter words be disallowed.

2.11.9 The Committee agrees that songs with obscene sexual references and connotations or Satanic themes continue to be disallowed.

2.12 "Live" Performances
2.12.1 At present, three government bodies — PELU, the NAC and MITA — are involved in vetting play scripts and approving stage performances. PELU, which is under the Ministry of Home Affairs, licenses all entertainment, including plays, while the NAC promotes and sponsors plays. Plays performed under the NAC’s aegis are exempted from PELU’s licensing requirements.

2.12.2 The present practice is to have all scripts submitted for vetting before they can be staged, except for plays staged or sponsored by government departments and educational institutions. PELU and the NAC consult MITA on scripts for stage plays. MITA draws the attention of PELU and the NAC to controversial contents in the scripts, such as abusive language, love-making and nude scenes. The final decision and responsibility lies with PELU, upon the recommendation of the NAC.

2.12.3 The Committee considered the feasibility of removing the need for vetting. Some members were in favour of this because they felt that prior vetting would impede creativity and affect the quality of plays. They asserted that plays, unlike nightclub shows, generally had literary and artistic merit and need not be pre-censored or previewed.
Some members expressed reservation on granting a blanket exemption as it would be difficult to draw the line between art and entertainment. They felt that without prior vetting, some groups, especially experimental ones, might put up objectionable performances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that the present practice of vetting play scripts be changed by appointing the NAC as the vetting authority for plays, with a panel of experts to advise it.

The Committee also recommends that theatre groups with proven track records need not submit their scripts for vetting. This exemption can be granted to new theatre groups as well, if they apply for it and if their productions are found suitable. The NAC will be the final authority for assessing the contents and suitability of the script. PELU will have the final say on the licensing of the play, taking into consideration public order concerns and the NAC's assessment of the play's contents. Where a theatre group has been exempted from submitting its plays for vetting, PELU will decide whether to grant a licence based on public order considerations.

The Committee also suggests that these exempted theatre groups exercise self-regulation. If some of their plays contain themes or language unsuitable for children, this must be announced in their publicity materials so that audiences know what to expect. If the drama groups fail to do so, the NAC should revoke their privilege of exemption.

The Committee feels that theatre groups should deny entry to children for plays with themes or language unsuitable for them. It recommends that PELU and the NAC require theatre groups to exercise this control. The appropriate age limit should be decided by the theatre groups concerned, in consultation with the NAC.

The Committee has suggested some guidelines on the types of plays which exempted theatre groups should not stage. These include plays which may:
(a) erode the core moral values of society;
(b) subvert the nation's security and stability; or
(c) create misunderstanding or conflict in our multiracial and multireligious society.

The Committee recommends that, in general, the censorship guidelines for films can be applied to "live" performances. It adds that the artistic and literary merits of a production should be taken into account as redeeming factors.

Classification of Films

Film classification was introduced in Singapore in July 1991, under a two-tier system comprising a "G" or General category (with a "PG" or Parental Guidance sub-category) and an "R" or Restricted category for those aged 18 years and above. It was designed to allow greater choice for adults while protecting the young, as well as to preserve the artistic integrity of films.
2.13.2 Following public concern that the influx of "sexploitative" "R" movies might erode morals and lead to an increase in crime rates, the film classification system was modified to allow only films with artistic merit to be shown under an R(A) classification, with "A" standing for Artistic. The R(A) classification is given to a film if:

(a) it is well produced, with a strong story line and a credible cast;
(b) it does not exploit issues of sex, violence, etc.;
(c) scenes of sex, nudity, violence, etc. are relevant to the theme/plot and are not inserted to titillate the viewer; and
(d) the film is critically acclaimed or possibly award-winning.

2.13.3 The minimum age for viewing these films was also raised to 21. This prompted a number of Singaporeans to write to the press, arguing that the age restriction should be left as it is when a Singaporean male has to do national service and so, the majority of males in this age group should be considered mature enough to make moral choices.

2.13.4 One of the issues the survey addressed was the question of age limit. The majority of respondents (71 per cent) felt that the present age restriction of 21 for R(A) films should be retained and not lowered to 18.

2.13.5 The Committee also discussed the merit of modifying the film classification system by adding a new category called Restricted Special or R(S). This would enable films which are not critically acclaimed or award-winning, but with good scripts, to be screened with few excisions at some cinemas. It decided not to recommend the creation of this category as the survey results showed that while the majority of respondents were in favour of the scheme, a sizeable proportion was against it.

2.13.6 The Committee also discussed the merit of allowing R(A) films to be screened in housing estates. At present, only cinemas situated in areas outside housing estates are allowed to screen R(A) films.

2.13.7 The Committee felt that Singaporeans would, at the present time, be against the screening of R(A) films in housing estates as this could bring about a change to the ambience of the estates. Restricting R(A) films geographically would meet the objections of those against R(A) films. However, there is a case for specially licensed cinemas in suitable locations to screen R(A) films. There should be controls over their advertising.

2.13.8 The Committee noted that the "PG" category was only advisory. Young children could still view films which might be unsuitable for them. As many parents might not know that their children have been going to such films, it was felt that another category was needed to take care of this. Hence, it recommended the NC 16 category, which would not allow children below 16 years of age admission to such films.

2.13.9 The Committee recognised that it was difficult to set a particular age limit as the issue depended on the individual viewer's maturity. An age limit of 16 for this category was suggested in the light of the Children and Young Persons Act.
RECOMMENDATIONS
2.13.10 In keeping with public sentiments, the Committee has agreed that the age limit for R(A) films should remain at 21.

2.13.11 The Committee recommends that greater freedom be given to bona fide film or cultural organisations like the Singapore Film Society, the Singapore International Film Festival, the Alliance Francaise, the Goethe Institut and the British Council to screen R(A) films, and that these films be less stringently censored than those screened in cinemas.

2.13.12 The Committee recommends that the screening of R(A) films be restricted to specially licensed theatres. It also recommends that in licensing cinemas for the screening of R(A) films, the location of the cinema should be considered and, where appropriate, the licence should include conditions and controls relating to advertisements for R(A) films.

2.13.13 The Committee recommends the introduction of a new category to be called NC16 and that enforcement be similar to that for R(A) films, that is, through the licensing of NC16 film exhibitors.

2.14 Classical Music Video Tapes and Video Discs
2.14.1 Classical music video tapes and video discs which cater to connoisseurs of music include solo and chamber recitals, operas, jazz music and musical concerts performed by renowned philharmonic orchestras. They are vetted for objectionable insertions.

RECOMMENDATION
2.14.2 Nearly all video tapes and video discs in the classical music category do not contain objectionable insertions. The Committee, therefore, recommends that materials in this category be exempted from censorship, if they are meant for personal use.

2.15 Exemption for Advertising and Production Houses
2.15.1 Under the Films Act, all films and videos are subject to censorship. These include finished advertising materials, whether for public exhibition or internal use. Unfinished materials, such as film rushes, are released without censorship.

2.15.2 Production houses need to apply for a licence if they are involved in producing video tapes containing commercials. They normally work under the supervision of advertising houses which conceptualise the commercials. As the BFC does not license film makers, production houses producing advertisements on celluloid films do not require licensing.

RECOMMENDATION
2.15.3 After studying the nature of the work of advertising and production houses, the Committee feels that these agencies can be exempted from licensing and censorship, as the contents of advertising films and video tapes are generally innocuous. Such an exemption can be granted by the Minister for Information and the Arts under Section 35 (2) of the Films Act. The Committee also feels that abuse is unlikely, as
the advertising industry is regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore, which ensures that commercials conform to a code of ethics.

2.15.4 The Committee suggests that certain conditions be imposed to ensure that abuses do not take place. These are:
   (a) The BFC should be informed whenever advertising materials not meant for public release are imported or produced. This will enable it to conduct random checks to ensure that the materials are not objectionable.
   (b) If random checks reveal any abuses, such as importing obscene or objectionable materials under the guise of commercials, the errant company will have its exemption status withdrawn and be prosecuted under the Films Act.

2.16 Exemption for Training and Industrial Tapes

2.16.1 Under the existing criteria, training and industrial tapes are subject to censorship as the Films Act requires all video tapes to be submitted to the BFC for approval. However, if these tapes are meant for institutions of higher learning and statutory boards, they are exempted from censorship.

2.16.2 The Committee deliberated on the possibility of exempting all training and industrial video tapes from censorship. It observed that of the 7,500 video tapes received in a month, training and industrial video tapes constituted about 40 per cent. Of these, over 99 per cent had innocuous contents.

RECOMMENDATION
2.16.3 The Committee, therefore, recommends that all training and industrial video tapes meant for companies' internal use be exempted from censorship.

2.17 Video Classification

2.17.1 The introduction of film classification led video distributors to appeal for video classification as well. The Committee met the Video Distributors Association (VDA) to get a better understanding of its concerns. The VDA requested the Committee to consider video classification in the light of two developments overseas: a video dispensing machine known as the Keyosk Video Rental Centre, and anti-piracy recording electronics.

2.17.2 In considering the VDA's request for video classification, the Committee looked at how countries with video classification enforce the system. It found that developed countries which practise video classification do not impose any control on the distribution or circulation of classified video tapes.

2.17.3 The Committee noted that the implementation of a classification scheme for video tapes would require public acceptance of parental responsibility for and control over their children's access to classified video tapes. The Committee felt that at present, the public is not ready to accept such a scheme because of the possibility of abuse and the more immediate appeal of audio-visual materials to a younger audience.
2.17.4 The Committee does not recommend the introduction of video classification in Singapore.

2.18 Computer Bulletin Boards

2.18.1 The Committee studied the issue of electronic pornography being transmitted through electronic bulletin boards. It was told that both local and overseas electronic bulletin boards provide a means of accessing pornographic software in Singapore. All one needs is a personal computer with data communication software, a modem and the telephone number of an overseas electronic bulletin board. By making an international telephone call, one can receive pornographic materials from overseas databases.

2.18.2 The Committee met representatives from the National Computer Board (NCB) to discuss ways of regulating electronic pornography.

2.18.3 The Committee agreed with the NCB's observation that self-regulation is the only practical way to control electronic bulletin boards.

2.18.4 The Committee also recognises that while some form of control can be imposed on Singapore-based electronic bulletin boards, it is not possible to regulate electronic bulletin boards overseas.

RECOMMENDATION

2.18.5 The Committee agrees that self-regulation should be the primary means of controlling electronic pornography. It recommends that severe penalties be meted out to those found purveying pornography. The Committee also recommends that legislation be enacted to allow the government to act against electronic bulletin board offenders.

2.19 Computer Software

2.19.1 Some computer software contains pictures of nude women, role-playing games involving sex and animated programmes where couples perform sex with vivid clarity. These materials usually come in the form of diskettes and can be purchased through mail order or directly from computer shops.

2.19.2 The Committee was told that these diskettes are sold discreetly. Sale of such diskettes is restricted to computer buffs and known customers. Unlike video tapes, these programs require a computer and knowledge of computers for access.

2.19.3 At present, there is no law specifically regulating computer-related offences. The Committee, therefore, met police representatives to discuss the powers under the Penal Code for dealing with such materials.

2.19.4 Currently, Section 292 of the Penal Code is used to take action against those engaged in the sale, hire, distribution, public exhibition or circulation, but not mere possession, of obscene computer diskettes.
RECOMMENDATION

2.19.5 The Committee recommends that the law continue to be vigorously enforced against those who possess pornographic computer software for sale, hire, distribution, public exhibition or circulation. The Committee recommends that the penalty be made sufficiently heavy to deter would-be offenders.

2.20 Radio and Television Broadcasting

2.20.1 The Censorship Review Committee examined the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation's (SBC) censorship process and guidelines for programmes produced or purchased by SBC for television and radio. It also examined SBC's censorship practices for commercials, and met its representatives to gain a better understanding of SBC's operations.

2.20.2 The Committee noted that SBC's censorship practices were much stricter in the 60s and 70s, but that they were relaxed to a certain extent in the 80s, in line with SBC's policy of adjusting its censorship policies to keep pace with society. The Committee agreed with this approach and stressed that as a national broadcaster, SBC should continue to exercise censorship with responsibility and propriety in providing programmes for home viewing.

PRINCIPLES OF CENSORSHIP

2.20.3 SBC observes the following principles in censoring television programmes:
(a) the overall theme of a programme is more important than individual scenes, which may at times be objectionable;
(b) censorship takes into consideration the time of telecast and the target audience for a particular programme; and
(c) censorship of programmes must take into account the prevailing moral standards and expectations of society, and it must be congruent with social responsibility and national interests.

2.20.4 In addition to these principles, SBC's programme executives and producers are guided by its Programmes Censorship Code which lays down guidelines on important issues like racial harmony, public morality, crime, violence and religion.

CENSORSHIP PROCESS

2.20.5 Programme executives from SBC's Acquisitions and Programming Division examine both local programmes and those acquired from overseas before they are screened. In addition, SBC's Film Advisory Panel (FAP) and the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) provide censorship feedback and advice to programme executives. To ensure consistency in film censorship, the BFC regularly sends details of its decisions on films to SBC.

RADIO PROGRAMMES

2.20.6 SBC censors radio programmes according to the guidelines in its Radio Programme Censorship Code. In censoring songs, SBC takes into account the fact that songs may have a greater impact if they are played repeatedly.
2.20.7 In censoring musical programmes, SBC is guided by a list of detained songs compiled by MITA. In addition, it restricts songs allowed by MITA if it feels that the lyrics are unsuitable for listeners.

CENSORSHIP OF COMMERCIALS

2.20.8 SBC vets commercials according to the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice. The basic guidelines are that commercials should be legal, decent, truthful, in good taste and should not offend the religious and racial sensitivities of any group. The advertisers also have to abide by the principles of fair competition and substantiate any claims they make.

2.20.9 Commercials which are controversial or of a doubtful nature are referred to SBC's Assistant General Manager (Administration) or to the General Manager.

2.20.10 SBC decides whether a commercial is suitable for broadcast. If a client appeals against its decision, his appeal may be forwarded to the PAC for its views.

"LIVE" SATELLITE TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

2.20.11 SBC noted that it was not possible to carry out prior censorship of direct, satellite programmes like those broadcast by the Cable News Network (CNN). The Committee agreed that with the rapid advancement in satellite technology, it would become even harder to keep out direct satellite transmissions, and that censorship problems related to "live" transmission might, therefore, increase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.20.12 The Committee recommends that there be better co-ordination between SBC and the BFC, as both organisations are involved in censoring films. The Committee notes that according to letters in the press, SBC sometimes teleplies films which are less stringently censored than those passed by the BFC for screening in the cinemas. While it recognises that the lower number of cuts could be due to the time lapse between the film's initial release in the cinemas and its subsequent screening over SBC, it still recommends that in the case of cinematic films, SBC should regard the version passed by the BFC as the threshold. SBC can impose additional cuts, if required, to make the movie acceptable for television screening. This should also apply to Singapore Cable Vision.

2.20.13 The Committee feels that all broadcasting stations should formalise the practice of flashing codes on screen to indicate programmes which require parental guidance or which may offend some viewers. It recommends that TV guides and listings carry information on such programmes as well. This will help parents make informed choices on the types of programmes their children should watch.

2.20.14 Broadcasting stations must bear in mind that television programmes have an impact on the audience, and should exercise caution and judgement in their broadcast of programmes.

2.20.15 In view of the possibility of other private television and radio stations being formed, the Committee also recommends that an independent advisory body be set up to establish censorship standards for broadcasting, and that these be stricter than those for cinemas.
Chapter 3 Procedures of Censorship and Licensing

3.1 Vetting of Publications and Audio Recordings

3.1.1 Publications are vetted under the Undesirable Publications Act. The term "publications" includes books, magazines, calendars, posters, cassette tapes and compact discs.

3.1.2 The Censorship Section in MITA works closely with the Imports and Exports Office (I & E), the Customs Department and Singapore Post to control the import of undesirable publications. The I & E office will issue a permit for importing publications only with the endorsement of the Censorship Section. This control is necessary to regulate and monitor the types of publications imported, since undesirable publications, once imported and distributed, cannot be easily controlled.

3.1.3 Regular importers need not forward their whole consignment for examination. They merely need to submit those samples which the censors indicate they wish to examine. Occasional importers might have their whole consignment examined, depending on the titles imported.

3.1.4 Publications which are hand-carried or brought into the country by parcel or speed-post do not require an import permit and are checked on the spot by the Customs Department and Singapore Post for objectionable contents. Those publications that require vetting are referred to the Censorship Section.

3.1.5 The Censorship Section does not vet all publications but adopts a system of selective examination or censorship by exception. Under this system, certain categories of publications are exempted from examination, such as company and personal materials, cookery books, brochures, and technical books and magazines. Publications which need to be examined are released on the spot after a quick inspection, and only doubtful ones are retained for further scrutiny.

3.1.6 This selective examination process allows the Censorship Section to handle the high volume of publications imported each year.

3.1.7 In addition to censoring publications, the Censorship Section also carries out enforcement activities. It conducts inspections and raids whenever it receives complaints from members of the public.

RECOMMENDATION

3.1.8 The Committee agrees that the procedure of selective examination of imported publications should continue.
3.2 Vetting of Films and Video Tapes

3.2.1 Under the Films Act, all films and video tapes meant for viewing in Singapore require the approval of the BFC. Films and video tapes are brought in by companies, institutions, business establishments and individuals. The video tapes vetted by the BFC consist of features, TV serials and training and industrial recordings. These are either passed with or without cuts, or banned.

3.2.2 The Committee recommends that the BFC should also practise censorship by exception for video tapes. Exemption will be given on condition that the owners are able to assure the BFC, in a form of a statutory declaration, that the contents of their videos do not contain sex and nudity, gratuitous violence, drug abuse, or any denigration of race, religion or politics. This system will enable the BFC to clear video tapes faster, thereby reducing its workload. It will also remove the need for the public to pay censorship fees for exempted video tapes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.3 The Committee recommends that the following categories of video tapes be exempted from censorship:
   (a) training and industrial video tapes;
   (b) promotional and advertising video tapes;
   (c) ballet, opera, classical and jazz video tapes;
   (d) educational video tapes;
   (e) documentary video tapes;
   (f) sports video tapes; and
   (g) cartoons meant for children.

3.2.4 For categories (a) and (b), the exemption applies only when the tapes are for the company's internal use. For categories (c) to (g), exemption only applies to tapes meant for personal use.

3.2.5 Tapes which fall into the exempted categories will be released by the BFC when it is satisfied with the declarations. Tapes in the non-exempted categories will have to be submitted for approval.

3.3 Advisory Panels for Films and Publications

3.3.1 The present consultative bodies for films and publications were set up as a result of a recommendation by the 1981 Censorship Review Committee. Their aim is to provide for more balanced and objective censorship and to keep in touch with changing mores. These advisory panels are consulted whenever decisions need to be made on controversial films or publications. The panel members are appointed by the Minister for Information and the Arts for a period of two years, and comprise people drawn from a cross-section of society, including educationists, sociologists, writers, lawyers and doctors.

RECOMMENDATION

3.3.2 The Committee recommends that this consultative process be maintained with wider participation from members of the public.
3.4 Appeals

FILMS, PUBLICATIONS AND PLAYS

3.4.1 At present, an appeal is lodged with the Films Appeals Committee whenever a film owner is dissatisfied with the BFC’s decision. The Films Appeals Committee comprises nine members, including the chairman and the vice-chairman. It is appointed by the Minister for Information and the Arts for a year. Its members are drawn from the various racial and religious groups and are respected in their professions.

3.4.2 The Films Appeal Committee is empowered under the Films Act to approve, classify or recommend excisions to any objectionable parts of a film. Its decision is final.

3.4.3 As for publications, all appeals are submitted to the Minister for Information and the Arts, whose decision is final. In the case of stage plays, all appeals are presently decided by the Minister for Home Affairs, whose decision is final.

RECOMMENDATION

3.4.4 The Committee recommends that the procedure of appeals for films be continued. It also recommends that there be an advisory panel comprising members from a cross-section of society to advise the Minister for Information and the Arts on appeals for publications. It recommends that the NAC, which is in a position to judge the artistic merit of stage productions, set up an appeals body to advise PELU on plays. The person aggrieved by a decision should be entitled to make representations in his appeal.

3.5 Licensing of Video Businesses

3.5.1 Under the Films Act, any person engaged in importing, making, distributing and exhibiting video tapes is required to obtain a licence from the BFC. A licence is granted only to a private limited company incorporated in Singapore with a minimum paid-up capital of $100,000. The applicant and directors of the company should not have criminal records. The licence fee for each business is $1,200 for two years and the company needs to furnish a security deposit of $20,000 in the form of a banker’s guarantee for each of the businesses mentioned above.

3.5.2 Religious organisations, societies and clubs can apply for exemption from these financial requirements if they are non-profit making and provide a free service to their members.

RECOMMENDATION

3.5.3 The Committee recommends that the present requirements for a licence to operate a video business remain. It also feels that since advertising agencies and production houses that make commercials and promotional materials for their internal use are already regulated by the code set up by the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore, there is no longer a need for them to be licensed.
Chapter 4  Censorship Laws

4.1 Undesirable Publications Act

4.1.1 The major provisions of the Undesirable Publications Act (UPA) are the power of prohibition under Section 3, the power of detention under Section 10 and the power of search and seizure under Section 12(1).

4.2 Section 3

4.2.1 Under Section 3 of the UPA, the Minister for Information and the Arts is empowered to prohibit the import, sale or circulation of any publication found contrary to the public interest. The prohibition order is published in the Gazette. It becomes an offence for any person to sell, distribute, reproduce or possess a prohibited publication. The penalty is a fine of up to $2,000 and/or a jail term of up to four years. The power of prohibition is exercised sparingly and only in very serious cases.

4.3 Section 10

4.3.1 Section 10 is the most frequently used power in the UPA. Under this Section, publications found prejudicial to public safety or the public interest can be detained. Besides confiscation, no further action, such as a fine or prosecution, is taken against those who repeatedly sell such materials. This loophole is exploited by vendors who repeatedly sell detained or objectionable publications.

RECOMMENDATION

4.4 The Committee recommends that the UPA be amended to provide severe punishment for repeat offenders who wilfully and deliberately sell such publications.
5.1 The Board of Film Censors (BFC) and the Censorship Section in MITA carry out enforcement activities to ensure that only approved films, video tapes, publications, audio tapes, etc. are circulated and distributed in Singapore. The police and the Customs Department assist the BFC and the Censorship Section in carrying out these activities.

5.2 All entry points in Singapore are manned by Customs officers, who check for items on behalf of various government agencies, including the BFC and the Censorship Section. Entry points are the port, railway, airport and Causeway. In addition, air-freighted cargo and parcels posted from overseas come into Singapore through the Air Cargo Section at the Changi International Airport and the Chai Chee Mail and Parcels Centre.

5.3 Passengers and cargo arriving through these entry points are checked for controlled items. The Customs officers will forward video tapes, discs or films to the BFC, and publications and audio materials to the Censorship Section for follow-up action.

5.4 The BFC and the Censorship Section conduct regular checks. Raids are conducted upon complaints. Sometimes, censors conduct raids with the assistance of the police. Offenders are prosecuted under the relevant laws.

RECOMMENDATION

5.5 The Committee feels that the present enforcement system is adequate. It proposes that the enforcement system be targeted at distributors and vendors, rather than at individuals. It also recommends severe penalties for those who sell and distribute uncensored and objectionable video tapes and publications.
6.1 The Committee is mindful of the need to maintain Singapore as a morally wholesome society and to indicate the parameters of acceptable expression. Within those parameters, room should be given for the creative exploration of artistic themes and for materials catering to different interests.

6.2 The Committee has recommended changes in areas where it feels they are necessary, and in the belief that they will be acceptable to the majority of Singaporeans. It endorses the classification and labelling of materials as an important mechanism for reconciling different interests and preferences.

6.3 The Committee has also tried to simplify censorship procedures wherever possible. It has recommended that a substantial category of video tapes be exempted from censorship requirements in order to help speed up the work of industries like advertising. It has also sought to relieve individuals of the burden of having to pay censorship fees for innocuous materials.

6.4 The Committee acknowledges that advances in the electronic media will make censorship more complex in future. Nevertheless, it feels that some form of control must still be exercised and that, where possible, those who repeatedly and wilfully violate the law should be penalised.

6.5 The Committee also recommends that the censorship authorities maintain a close rapport with the film and publishing industries in order to understand and respond better to their needs and problems.

6.6 Censorship alone is not enough to safeguard morality, however. The Committee feels strongly that public education has a role to play in helping Singaporeans, especially the young, evaluate the merits of what they see, hear or read. Education would also help transmit wholesome values that would serve as a ballast against undesirable influences.

6.7 Education, however, is not to be restricted to institutional learning. Parents should inculcate moral values in their children and guide them in developing their capacity for ethical judgement. Ultimately, it is for the individual to take responsibility for his values and convictions.
List of Annexes

Annex A

Members of the Censorship Review Committee

CHAIRMAN:  Professor Tommy Koh Thong Bee

MEMBERS:  Ms Jacintha Abisheganaden  Singer and actress
Mrs Hedwig Anuar  Librarian
Dr Robert Balhetchet  Educationist
Mr Hashim Yusof  Broadcaster
Mr Philip Jeyaretnam  Writer and lawyer
Dr Khoo Kim Choo  Childcare specialist and social-worker
Mr Koh Buck Song  Journalist and writer
Dr Lee Soo Ann  Economist and church worker
Dr Catherine Lim Poh Imm  Writer
Mr Mohamed Guntor Sadali  Journalist
Ms Pang Cheng Lian  Bank executive
Mr Seng Han Thong  Journalist
Col. Tan Kim Siew  Military engineer
Mr Tooh Fee San  Principal, secondary school
Mr V T Arasu  Journalist
Prof. John Wong Chiu Hon  Economist
Mr Robert Yeo Cheng Chuan  Lecturer and writer
Mr Thomas Yeo Chew Hong  Artist
Organisations consulted

- Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association
- Economic Development Board
- Golden Village Entertainment (S) Pte Ltd
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- National Computer Board
- Singapore Booksellers Association
- Singapore Booksellers and Stationers Association
- Singapore Broadcasting Corporation
- Singapore Phonogram and Videogram Association
- Video Distributors Association
Annex C  Survey Issues and Findings

i  Issues
   (a)  Societal perceptions
   (b)  Moral outlook and attitudes
   (c)  Homosexual/lesbian materials
   (d)  Classification of films and printed materials
   (e)  Religious materials
   (f)  Political publications
   (g)  "Artistic" works
   (h)  Prohibited publications
   (i)  Sex manuals
   (j)  Comics
   (k)  Nudity
   (l)  Censorship standards for local and foreign magazines

The Committee commissioned a survey to help it in its review of censorship policies. The
survey was designed to ascertain changes in moral values and social trends in Singapore over
the last ten years and to get feedback from the public on certain types of printed, audio and
visual materials like sex manuals, calendars and posters featuring nudity, and magazines like
Cosmopolitan and Playboy. The Committee's aim was to determine the general level of public
acceptance of such materials.

2  Methodology
One thousand, one hundred and two respondents aged 17 and above were surveyed in
face-to-face interviews. The respondents were selected from the different age, racial,
gender and dwelling groups in Singapore and represented a cross-section of the
population.

3  Survey Findings
The key survey findings are summarised below: (a)

SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS
   □  86 per cent of respondents perceived a change in moral values over the last ten
years.
   □  Of those who perceived that there was a change in moral values, 89 per cent
saw the change as being towards the more permissive.
   □  The largest number (29 per cent) of respondents felt that society was more
permissive because of the values of the younger generation.
   □  Other reasons given for the change included education, the increasing societal
shift towards permissiveness/tolerance, the perceived increased accessibility to
previously restricted materials, and a changing trend towards parental
openness.
58 per cent of respondents were concerned about the perceived change towards a more permissive society.

(b) MORAL OUTLOOK AND ATTITUDES
   - The majority of respondents disapproved of extra-marital sex (90 per cent), homosexuality (86 per cent), pre-marital sex (67 per cent) and cohabitation (66 per cent) as a way of life.
   - Most respondents disapproved of these practices because of their religious beliefs or moral principles.

(c) HOMOSEXUAL MATERIALS
   (i) Printed or Audio Materials
       - 48 per cent of respondents felt that printed and audio materials which encouraged homosexual behaviour as a way of life should be banned but 46 per cent also wanted some form of access at least.
   (ii) Materials with Illustrations
       - On pictures or images depicting aspects of homosexual behaviour, 45 per cent disapproved but 38 per cent were tolerant.
   (iii) Films
       - On films with themes or sub-plots depicting homosexual behaviour, 34 per cent disapproved but 46 per cent approved, provided certain restrictions were imposed.

(d) CLASSIFICATION OF FILMS AND PRINTED MATERIALS
   - 71 per cent of respondents felt that the present age restriction of 21 for R(A) films should not be lowered to 18.
   - A high proportion of respondents (40 per cent) approved of the new R(S) film classification for non-exploitative commercial films, but a sizeable figure of 32 per cent also disapproved of the classification. 28 per cent of respondents were indifferent to it.
   - 31 per cent opposed the notion of an "adults only" classification for printed materials but 55 per cent were in favour.

(e) RELIGIOUS MATERIALS
   - 56 per cent of respondents felt that publications or films that explored religious doubt should be banned but 44 per cent wanted some form of access.
   - 73 per cent of respondents felt that publications or films that offended a religious group in Singapore should be completely banned.

(f) POLITICAL MATERIALS
   - The majority of respondents (59 per cent) felt that books or films which criticised the Government could be made available with certain restrictions instead of being completely banned. Only certain groups should have access to these books and films.
"ARTISTIC" WORKS
- The majority of respondents (57 per cent) felt that some form of control or censorship should be exercised over "artistic works".

PROHIBITED PUBLICATIONS
- A high proportion of respondents (55 to 57 per cent) felt that Playboy and Playgirl magazines should not be sold to the public, even if they were classified "for adults only".
- Of those who have heard of or read Cosmopolitan magazine, the majority of respondents (55 per cent) felt that the current ban should be lifted, while 22 per cent were not in favour and 23 per cent were indifferent.

SEX MANUALS
- 37 per cent of respondents agreed to the sale of sex manuals if they were classified "for adults only". 17 per cent were indifferent while 46 per cent were not in favour of the sale of sex manuals, even if they were classified.

COMICS
- The majority of respondents (about 62 per cent) objected to the sale of comics with illustrations of love-making, violence and obscene language. A fifth of the respondents would support the sale of such comics with restrictions on circulation.

NUDITY
(i) Male/Female Nudes
- A higher percentage of respondents were against male nudity, compared with female nudity, in local newspapers, magazines, comics, calendars/posters, and record and album covers.

(ii) Acceptable Degree of Nudity
- Two-fifths of respondents would not allow nudity of any form in local newspapers, magazines, posters and calendars. Others would accept back-view nudity, and subjects with bare chest displayed, in lingerie/revealing garments or sexually provocative poses.
- The majority of respondents (71 per cent) were against publishing nude pictures with private parts blotted out in comics or magazines, while 14 per cent felt that it could be allowed and 15 per cent were indifferent or tolerant.

(iii) Local Dailies/Magazines
- The majority of respondents disapproved of nudes (in photographs, sketches or paintings) printed in local dailies, quoting easy accessibility to the young as the main reason.
- A high proportion of respondents were opposed to nudity in any form in local magazines, as against nudity in foreign magazines.
(iv) Nudity in Posters and Calendars
   □ The majority of respondents (52 per cent) disapproved of posters and calendars featuring nudity, even if they were only for personal use, while 33 per cent felt they should be allowed.

(I) CENSORSHIP STANDARDS FOR LOCAL AND FOREIGN MAGAZINES
   □ A high proportion of respondents felt that the same censorship standards should be applied to articles in locally published magazines and foreign magazines.
Annex D  Definition of the Term "Artistic"

Definition of the Term "Artistic"

1  The Committee recognises that the judgement of what is artistic is essentially a subjective and timeless question. Some effort, however, should still be made to set out broad guidelines.

2  In assessing the artistic merit of a work, the following considerations could apply:
   (a)  The skill/technique used to create the work of art and the extent of its innovativeness.
   (b)  Notwithstanding that the content may be ugly and shocking or subtle and fine, the form and structure should be aesthetically pleasing and must move and engage.
   (c)  The artistic vision must be true to human experience. The truth could be presented in realistic or symbolic or surrealistic form, but the audience reader, drawing from his deepest experience, must find it recognisable.

3  In censoring artistic works, the following considerations could apply:
   (a)  The extent to which the work takes into account social norms and prevailing concerns.
   (b)  Works of art are meant to be viewed as a whole, and the parts are important to overall understanding. Hence, effort must be made not to violate their integrity without just cause.
   (c)  By its nature, art must be understood, at times, to challenge orthodoxy and provide a stimulus for social change and evolution.