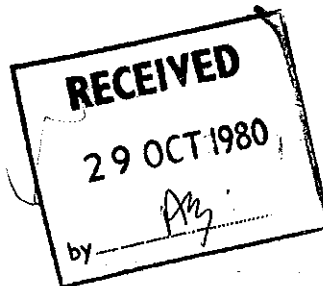


P.O. Box 2420  
CHRISTCHURCH

27 OCTOBER 1980

Chief Censor of Films  
7-9 Walter Street  
WELLINGTON 1



Dear Mr Tunncliffe

Re Film "LIFE OF BRIAN"

Your Ref 4/20/5

You will be aware from previous correspondence that a nation-wide petition for the withdrawal of this film under Section 85 of the Act was undertaken in July last. The petition forms were returned direct to Parliament Buildings, and a count of the signatures has only recently been obtained.

I enclose a copy of a letter from the Secretary for Internal Affairs showing the total at 12,352. It is pointed out that this total would doubtless have been greatly exceeded if more time had been available. As the film was already running, petitioners were asked to send the forms to Wellington by the end of July, which gave only 2 or 3 weeks for obtaining signatures. Furthermore it became evident that a number of interested groups did not receive forms and were unaware of the petition.

From a survey of a number of forms which were returned to me personally for transmission to Wellington, it was evident that the petitioners represent a wide cross-section of the Christian public.

It is submitted that the results stated, having regard to the circumstances outlined, give substance to the second clause of the Petition which reads "That the Chief Film Censor be aware of the weight of public opinion against the release of films of this nature."

Under cover of my letter of 18th August I sent copies of letters to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs dated 15th and 18th August 1980 respectively. The evaluation of the nature of the film given in both letters may help you to understand the views of a solid section of the public in relation to Sec 26 (2) (d) of the Act. Please also note the reference to the film "Wholly Moses" which will doubtless be submitted to you - referred to as "This bastard son of Monty Python's Life of Brian" in "Time" Films Review - 14 July 1980.

I now enclose a copy of my submissions in regard to proposed further amendments. These summarise proposals previously made.

I trust that the contents of this letter and enclosures will be of some assistance to you in your difficult task.

Yours sincerely,



# DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

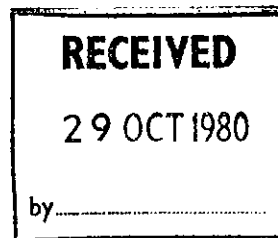
Telephone 738 699

Telegrams and Cables: Internal

Private Bag, Wellington N.Z.

14 October 1980

Mr H. G. Oram,  
P.O. Box 2420,  
CHRISTCHURCH.



Dear Mr Oram,

I am replying to your letter of 17 September about the petition for the withdrawal and review of the film "Life of Brian".

I have now completed a count of all signatures to the "Life of Brian" petitions organised by you. These include those submitted to the Prime Minister's Department as well as to the Minister of Internal Affairs. The petition contained 12,532 signatures, 7,216 from the North Island and 5,316 from the South Island.

Yours sincerely,



(B. D. Fry)

for Secretary for Internal Affairs

29 OCT 1980

by \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir,

SUBMISSIONS RE REVIEW OF CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS ACT 1976.

I enclose copies of correspondence with the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Prime Minister, which include references (marked) to suggested amendments to the Cinematograph Films Act 1976. I understood from the last paragraph of the Minister's letter of 17th July, that proposed amendments would be considered, but was not aware of any closing date for submissions until my return to Christchurch last week. (I had to leave Christchurch on private business some weeks ago).

In view of the fact that I had already proposed amendments to the 1976 Films Act (see my letter to the Minister dated 26.6.80), will you please accept this late submission.

My previous proposals are now summarised and amplified in this formal submission; as follows:-

1. Sec 26(2)(b) and (c)

It is considered that an effort should be made to achieve a fairer balance between these two sub-sections. It does seem that since the 1976 Act, the leaning has been to Sec 26 (2)(b) - ("Artistic Merit"), at the expense of sub-para (c) ("Anti-social behaviour", etc). It may assist the Chief Censor to achieve this balance if there was an addition to sub-sec (c) providing for the specific banning of such scenes and dialogue as explicit and overt sex acts, and perversions; and extreme violence, cruelty and brutality - such scenes and dialogue to be excised from the film. Where however, they are the dominant theme of the film, the film should be banned.

With the existing trend from the suggestive to the explicit and the portrayal of raw brutality and horror, becoming more pronounced, the Censor's task becomes more onerous, and there is increasing danger of injury to the public good. There is evidence of anti-social behaviour resulting from a diet of such films, and it is considered that this factor should outweigh any "artistic merit". A line needs to be drawn in legislation now by specific wording such as that suggested, before things go from bad to worse.

It has been stated that "the role of the Chief Censor is to reflect the attitudes of the community at large and not to impose standards" (Prime Minister's letter 12-8-80). However the very fact of Sec 26 (2)(c) of the Act being there, shows that the public, as represented by their elected government, require certain standards to be maintained in the exhibition of films. They are not prepared to accept an "Anything goes" policy. Thus the Act requires that standards be observed. It would appear to be the role of the Censor to see that they are observed, and in doing this he cannot avoid moral decisions. It is submitted that the community at large prefer the standards to be higher rather than lower, and will back a tighter censorship in the public interest.

2. Sec 26 (2)(d)

Where the dominant effect of the film is to denigrate any particular class of the general public, the film should be banned. A restricted rating is quite inadequate. My arguments in support of this contention are set out in the attached correspondence. (See particularly the paragraphs marked X in the letters to the Prime Minister dated 15-8-80 and to the Minister of Internal Affairs dated 18-8-80).

The banning of "Death of A Princess" in terms of the Broadcasting Act is a precedent, as Sec 26 (2)(d) of the Films Act provides a similar safeguard against public denigration.

3. A RIGHT OF PUBLIC APPEAL

most unfair that Exhibitors, who are interested primarily in profits, should have rights which are denied to those amongst the general public who have a genuine concern for, and a sense of responsibility towards the public good. This need could doubtless be met by establishing an independent authority empowered to receive submissions or petitions from individuals or groups, and submit the film to the Board of Review if it considered that, on the evidence provided, this course was warranted.

Yours Sincerely,

---

H.G. Oram

HGO:rmb