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PAID TO BE DECADENT

DISGUSTING, outrageous and obnoxious were just some of the adjectives used by angry viewers to complain about the appearance on a Thames Television tea-time programme yesterday of a pop group calling themselves the Sex Pistols.

Even by today's standards, this was an appalling exhibition, especially as the most offensive aspect — the filthiest language ever heard on British television — was encouraged by the presenter.

There have, of course, been the usual apologies and excuses, but the damage has been done. Tens of thousands of impressionable youngsters have seen and heard gutter language and behaviour given what they accept as the cachet of respectability. No doubt some of them will now seek to emulate a group being promoted as the pioneers of a new sick cult.

And that surely is the worst feature — that young people are so blatantly exploited in the name of naked commercialism. The Sex Pistols are reported to have signed a £40,000 contract with a major record company who are quoted as saying: "They may not be very proficient musically but we don't think that is a major consideration." What an appalling commentary on the ethics of an industry aimed predominantly at the young.

Unrepentant

A similar attitude has been displayed by Thames Television over another of their shows that has created a furore. In a recent edition of "Pauline's Quirkes," another tea-time programme, the teenage hostess generated near hysteria among her teenybopper audience over an apparently nude view of another pop group.

Despite angry protests from parents, the TV company are unrepentant. After all, they point out, none of the complaints came from children at whom the show was aimed. Or, as a spokesman explained with brutal honesty, "The programme was made exclusively for partially-literate teenage girls."

What a shocking admission. And how arrogantly irresponsible. Or have we finally got to the stage where even the most fundamental standards of morality and decency are to be abandoned?