

Interviewer suspended over TV swearing

Interviewer Bill Grundy was suspended for two weeks by Thames Television last night after angry viewers complained of four-letter words used in an interview with the group Sex Pistols.

Thames also reprimanded Grundy for being responsible for the group's appearance on the company's Today teatime show on Wednesday.

Grundy's suspension means he will not appear on any of the company's shows—though he was due to present the 7.30 edition of Today this evening.

The statement from Thames came soon after Rank Leisure announced it was withdrawing promoters of the

group's current tour that it was cancelling the Sex Pistols' appearance at Bournemouth next Tuesday. Cancellations from other venues followed.

A Thames spokesman said: "The director of programmes, Mr. Jeremy Isaacs, has expressed his views firmly to all on the Today programme describing the incident as 'a gross error of judgment' caused by 'inexcusably sloppy journalism'."

Earlier unofficial sources at Thames hinted that Mr. Grundy, one of television's most experienced interviewers, was not to blame.

After Mr. Grundy spent 2½ hours with senior Thames executives for a post-mortem,

a Thames spokesman said some viewers had said they felt sorry for him.

"He was clearly embarrassed by these people and they appreciated what he was trying to do — to show what a disagreeable lot of lads they were, and they thought he was right to do so."

Angry viewers jammed the studio switchboard after the programme and Thames broadcast an apology that was repeated last night.

It said: "Last night on the Today programme, Bill Grundy interviewed the Sex Pistols pop group. The language they used understandably offended many viewers. We very much regret this offensive interview

and apologise most sincerely to all our viewers."

But Mr. Ray Mawby, Conservative MP for Totnes, claimed it appeared Mr. Grundy was inciting the group. He would be lodging a formal protest with Lady Plowden, chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Mr. Grundy said yesterday: "The object of the exercise was to prove that these louts were a foul-mouth set of yobs. That is what it proved."

"I ended the programme by saying 'I don't ever want to see you again' — and I meant it."

Sex Pistols have been banned from appearing at Lancaster

University on December 10, but given the go-ahead for a concert at the University of East Anglia in Norwich today. But the students' union has warned that there must be no bad language.

The group has also been banned from one of the north's leading entertainment centres, the £2 million Preston Guild Hall.

The BBC issued a statement yesterday which said: "In response to Press inquiries concerning the group Sex Pistols, Radio One points out that their single Anarchy in the U.K. is not being played in its daytime programmes."



Bill Grundy . . . at the centre of a storm over four-letter words.