



Bill Kidd MSP
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

2 November 2009

Dear Mr Kidd,

Thank you for your letter of 29 October to Mark Lewis concerning the sale of golliwogs on eBay.

As you will appreciate, eBay is an online marketplace and therefore does not sell any of the items on its various sites. Nor do we create, edit or approve any of the content on our site. However, we do have a range of policies which govern what may and may not be sold.

With over 17 million items on our UK site at any given time, and over 13,000 categories, we often face difficult judgements as to how to balance historical value for collectors and ideals like freedom of speech against the views of wider society, whilst accepting that there will always be items on our site which are offensive to some. For example, except where local or national laws require us to do so (e.g. in Germany), we would not ban copies of Mein Kampf, even though we would entirely reject the views it expresses as abhorrent.

It is right, however, that we keep our policies continually under review to make sure they keep pace with changing social views, and we have therefore carefully considered the representations made in your letter. As your letter acknowledges, these dolls have a literary significance but also have a wider significance for others.

We believe that a key principle is whether the items on our site are designed to promote race hatred, violence, or racial intolerance. We are therefore clear that we would not allow items which use the term 'golliwog' as a racial epithet to promote intolerance.

However, having reviewed the items currently on our site, we have found that none of these fall into this category and are instead overwhelmingly listed as collectibles – for example, books by Enid Blyton, old badges, toys, and vintage postcards. As such, it is our policy to allow these items.

Nonetheless, we reserve the right to ban items on a case by case basis where we believe they violate our principles of a marketplace that promotes racial tolerance and respect for others.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Yours sincerely,

Alasdair McGowan
Head of Public Affairs
eBay UK Ltd

