

31.03.04.

BBC Charter Review Consultation,  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport,  
2-4 Cockspur Street,  
London, SW1Y 5DH.

Response to leaflet Your BBC Your Say

Britain is singularly fortunate in having the BBC, which is probably the most highly valued and respected media institution worldwide and a great credit to this country. Its reliability, impartiality and breadth of coverage and the quality of its programmes on the whole are appreciated by millions of people and the World Service deservedly enjoys a great following. Through my own international travel and contacts I can say this with confidence.

In every respect Britain is well served by the BBC, and it is unfortunate that not all political parties fully recognise this fact. It is in this country's interest that the BBC should be adequately funded, and the only way to ensure this is by the Licence Fee, which should cover the needs of the Corporation and allow it to maintain high standards. It is sad to see that in some areas the BBC is already having to drop standards to appeal to "popular taste" in order to gain ratings. It is not in the public interest that the BBC should be overpressurised to "sell itself" at the expense of quality. We see this happening so much in journalism generally.

No doubt there are necessary economies which the BBC can and should make. This should receive its urgent attention. I see no harm in trying to make profit from such activities as Radio Times and much other paperwork relating to its programmes or commercial operations like the production of DVD's of popular programmes. These efforts can help the funding of its work.

In adapting to cope with changes in technology the BBC must not lose sight of the value of radio, which is still vitally important to so many people in this country and which can reach so many parts of the world

I do not feel competent to tell the BBC how it should be run internally or regulated, but this always <sup>must</sup> be on behalf of the public interest, and it must never be suspected of being an instrument of ~~the Government.~~ That would undermine its strength and value and the esteem which it enjoys globally. To be influenced in policy by commercial interests, which may even have a base outside this country, could be even more disastrous and dangerous.

Regarding all the "key questions" in the leaflet, may I suggest that very serious consideration be given to the views of that excellent organisation "Voice of the Listener and Viewer", which is reliable, rich in expertise and totally dedicated to the maintenance of high standards in British broadcasting, not only for the benefit of this nation but for the world at large.

Joan Belcher (MA, JP, FRSA)

*Joan Belcher*