

28th March.

The Executive Staff i/c. B.B.C.

Charter Review.

You invite our views on the B.B.C.

This is a very important matter you are engaged upon: I

give you my views, directly and trenchantly.

I do not have a Television set and have no intention of acquiring one. I am a total radio listener. This will

give you a framework for my views.

We were all seriously concerned at the recent B.B.C.

dealings with the Government - and with its reportage -

over the Iraq Campaign. Lord Black's letter - 26 July 03 -

in the Daily Telegraph was an excellent summary of the stance to which the B.B.C. has descended. For the first

time in my life - I am 70 years of age - I learned to

disregard the B.B.C. broadcasts: and to feel

extreme anger in feeling a need to do so. Lord

Black's statements: "The B.B.C. is paranoidly hostile

to the Government and official opposition - - -"

" has shirked its formal obligation to separate comment from reporting in all political areas, to provide variety of comment ... it is a vicious culture of bias ... sadly it has

become the greatest MENACE facing the Country it was founded to serve and inform." "It is attempting to take over the formation of public opinion and is masquerading as the officially persecuted voice of truth against the Government." The BBC's only interest seems to have been to destroy and supplant the Government as a source of authority in the Country."

"They go bad wrong, in that they don't recognise the present news and public affairs service of the BBC as a greater enemy to them and to all they believe in than the Government." "... the BBC's assault on the Iraq war."

"The prime minister ^{should} use his office to expose the BBC for the rogue and putschist organisation it has become."

I wish to emphasize that I agree fully with Lord Black's views which I have quoted above - even his use of the word putsch may be appropriate! - and I feel ^{that} he speaks for thousands upon thousands of the British people who give ear to the BBC.

Q1. ... value most about the BBC.

Radio 3: with^{out} question. Regularly superb. Presenters Rob. Cowan and Jonathan Swain are not only the best company but are an education in themselves. Saturday and Sunday broadcasting on Radio 3 is superb - C.D. Masters 7.0 - 1.00 pm; the Cowan Collection, Private Passions, and the Concerts: all a reason for remaining at home to listen!

Q2. What do you think of the ... services the BBC provides?

(a) News presentation (b) News content.

(a) I find utterly repellent the zeal for presenting misery exhibited by James Cox. Others show reasonable moderation.

(b) News content frequently appalling in its appropriateness. Items frequently included simply to make up the programme time. This matter is not at all a question of taste!
Why, for example, did the News Department consider it necessary, and desirable, to report to the British people a case of cannibalism in Germany? How are the British people meant to

benefit from being informed of this? Why, for example, did the News department think it necessary to broadcast news from HAITI - where is this? - and the problems for its (then) President Aristide? What percentage of the British public would know of this and take an interest in it? True, we should be aware of the outside world - but should there not be some kind of balance in dealing with these external matters? And why does the News Dept. think the British public should - needs to - be given in depth reports of criminal matters, such as the recent Soham murder trial - dealt on relentlessly by the BBC - and the joyful news that the body of a young woman was to be exhumed for purposes of investigation - was this really a matter of national importance, to be broadcast to the British people? Something that we all should know? .. and think on? You see what I mean when I express deep resentment at the BBC News Department. It often makes us feel dirty (I give a simple image to express my meaning.) I should add that I find much more balanced presentation in French Radio news reporting.

Of course with time there will be changes, and we have lost Alistair Cooke. Jimmy Young reached

3.

retirement age, but his replacement Vine is, er, different.

He comes across too often as a jealous adolescent. Although,

clearly, a two-hour programme each day is a difficult

undertaking. Other programmes have changed for the worse -

Desert Island Discs is Miss Lawley, and I am myself happy

to avoid her. Any Questions is a Dimbleby - those of us

who knew the programme in days gone by - Boothby, Mary Stocks,

Neddy Criswood, A.G. Street - well, we don't recognise the

programme now. I quite understand (the then) Norman Fr. Jones

stevens when he said 'Jonesman, I'll forgive you anything'!!

On a brighter note, I have to mention Ken Bruce - he

really is quite brilliant with his programme: always

uplifting, grand company. I don't usually like the music

he puts on, but - the change from serious programming

is delightful.

Q.3. Should the BBC run Commercial Services? NO - not a

matter for discussion. Just NO.

Q.4. How should we pay for the BBC?

We the public should pay. I find it embarrassing that

I do not have to have a licence for my radio.

Q. 5. How should the B.B.C. be run?

Continue with the Board of Governors: but the Governors must be active in undertaking their responsibilities.

I would like to see the Universities providing a good percentage of the Governors - i.e. University academic staff. They would probably welcome a salary addition, too - which being a governor should entail.

Q. 6. How do we make the B.B.C. properly accountable to the public and Parliament?

If we involve senior University staff in running the B.B.C. then this question will resolve itself.

There might however be a case for a public advisory body, consisting of distinguished members of the public, to 'inspect' and report on B.B.C. operations. A body whose opinions will carry weight.

These are my opinions on B.B.C. radio broadcasting. It has become a document, which I did not intend, but I should like to think you will work through it, and perhaps find something of use.

Terence Charles BRAY.