

15 March 2004

Dear Sirs,

BBC Charter Review

Here are my responses to your questions about the BBC.

What do I value most? - definitely the BBC's network of foreign correspondents who send us vivid and revealing reports from around the world. I enjoy drama, comedy and arts programmes, but the foreign correspondents and programmes on TV and radio such as "From our Correspondent" are what makes the BBC unique and precious.

Changes in technology - I think the fuss about digital television has been very exaggerated. So far, anyway. I have a Freeview box and only ever watch BBC4 and UK History. Most of the items are repeated several times. I don't object to repeats but we are not getting the vast array of new programmes that were promised.

Views on Services - on the whole I am satisfied with TV and very satisfied with the radio. (I am a radio 4 listener). I have very strong criticisms of the style of production of many programmes but these apply to all channels, not just the BBC, and isn't what you asked about.

Commercial Services - I don't object to the BBC making extra money from offshoots of programmes to help with funding, providing the programmes come first and the commercial side a long way after. This particularly applies to children's programmes. The BBC should be very careful about getting involved with, for example, junk food firms.

How should we pay? - the TV licence is the best value for money I know. I feel very strongly that it is the best way of financing the BBC so it keeps its independence, which is essential.

Organisation - I don't know if the BBC is organised in the most effective and efficient way - two words which are not necessarily compatible - and in my experience very few big organisations are so organised, but I would be very suspicious of any proposal to change the organisation emanating from the Government.

Regulation and Accountability - the Governors are very important and I do not know how they are chosen. If there is an honest and upright system of choice, I think the present system is satisfactory. The whole point of the BBC is that it should not be swayed by outside pressures, or every little frenzy that arises. If it is felt that the BBC ignores the general public, why not appoint several "ordinary members of the public" to the Board of Governors? I see no need for the BBC to be specially accountable to Parliament, any more than any other big organisation or body.

Yours faithfully,

M.I. Brooks

M.I. Brooks (Mrs)