

BBC Charter Review Consultation

Department of Culture, Media and Sport

2 – 4 Cockspur Street,

London SW1Y 1SDH

25th March 2004.

Dear Chairman,

Please find attached my contribution to your consultation process as it relates to broadcasting in Scotland.

I have been disappointed by the cursory nature of the consultation on the ground in Scotland; both in its restricted ambit (including lack of publicity) and in the shortness of notice given to the public to respond to your enquiries. Perhaps these are matters for Mr Simon Cooper in your adjoining office.

Over and above the views I have listed there is one further matter I would draw to your attention. Already a number of prominent Scottish Labour MPs and MEPs are saying that the underlying motives for seeking Scottish broadcasting autonomy are political ones. I would submit that such a view is itself political in that it seeks to deny the Scottish people any enhanced opportunity to recognise and celebrate their own historic national identity.

I will be most interested to read your eventual findings when they are published.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Campbell

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SUGGESTED CONCERNS FOR BROADCASTING REVIEW

- a. Failure to reflect devolution settlement.
 - TV and radio political programmes from London, eg Breakfast with Frost, Any Questions, Any Answers and others with little or no Scottish relevance.
 - News broadcasts reflect Anglo-centric norms and presumptions as do morning TV magazine programmes on all channels.

- b. Scotland's national rights and expectations ignored regardless of new constitutional state.
 - BBC Scotland deliberately addresses and appeals to tabloid equivalent audiences.
 - There are no appropriate television or radio stations catering for other categories of Scottish audiences.

- c. Religious broadcasting deficit.
 - From England: Songs of Praise, Sunday services, Choral Evensong, Sunday Half Hour.
 - Surreptitiously organised demise of BBC Scotland's Religious Affairs Department.
 - From Scotland: No Sunday Worship (other than Gaelic radio service) of any denomination or creed - apart from 6.30 am, 30 minute recorded service on Radio Scotland.

- d. Political Bias.
 - Prominently displayed Red livery colours of BBC Scotland. BBC reporters wearing red ties when reporting from Holyrood or Westminster.
 - Manipulative use of trailers to denigrate Scotland as in the case of Scotland's Empire, which was trailed, together with damaging innuendo, in between episodes of a Film depicting British heroism in the Great War.
 - Constant reshowing of War films to boost a political sense of Britishness illustrates subliminal Unionist political motivation.
 - Constant use of a slanted satellite image of the British Isles which portends to show a relatively large (and thus important) SE England and a diminished Scotland. (Clever subliminal propaganda.)

- e. News (apart from the controversy over the Scottish Six and Newsnight Scotland.)
 - At peak listening times, on a Saturday and Sunday at mid-day, for example, there is no Scottish news following that from London.

This reflects the priority which the BBC places on Scottish audiences being supplied with Scottish news.

f. Sports coverage.

- **Inappropriate mass coverage of sports news for a main national station as opposed to a designated light entertainment station.**
- **More appropriate for tabloid equivalent broadcasting.**
- **English sports news given ahead of Scottish results in all main TV and radio news programmes – even throughout Scotland.**

g. Glasgow bias. Following a policy of deliberate centralisation of broadcasting to Glasgow at the expense of previously well –established and popular regional stations such as Inverness, Aberdeen, Dumfries, the Borders and a now downgraded Edinburgh operation. This would seem to represent a covert policy of divide and rule by ghettoising Gaelic and other culturally diverse traditions as a means of undermining any sense of a pan-Scottish identity.

h. Lack of public accountability.

- **Method of appointing Broadcasting Council for Scotland.**
- **Lack of democratically based consultative process in all areas.**
- **Autocratic appointments procedures for all posts including those of Controller and so-called National Governor**
- **London based Board of Governors with only one Scottish member.**
- **Audience research seriously flawed by partial nature of consultation processes.**

i. Unbalanced ownership and restricted political nature of the Scottish press and media, including Independent Television Companies. Incestuous relationship between the BBC and exclusively unionist-owned newspapers circulating in Scotland.

j. Culture.

- **Who decides, and on what criteria, what should be encouraged and reflected on TV and radio in Scotland?**
- **Who is responsible for the appalling treatment of Gaelic listeners and other Scots language users? Why is there no dedicated service for Gaelic speakers on either radio or television?**
- **If BBC broadcasting were to be officially English, rather than nominally British, would programming be any different? (No)**
- **Would audiences in England accept a regime where the only designated English stations were the equivalent of BBC and Radio**

Scotland? (No)

- Radios 3 & 4 are celebrations of English culture and social norms- and there is no harm in that – provided that Scotland has access to its own equivalent stations.
 - If Scotland were to have its own broadcasting structure what range of services would be expected and demanded? (Compare with Ireland's RTE services)
- k. **Funding anomalies. Scottish licences fee payers spend over £50 million more to the BBC in England than is spent on broadcasting in Scotland (viz: approximately 1£ to each English viewer/listener each year). This represents a subsidy towards production facilities and costs in England for which Scottish fee payers receive no balancing benefits. Thus programmes that could be produced in Scotland are instead researched, financed and produced in England.**
- l. **Responses to the Broadcasting Review in Scotland may well be muted on account of listeners/viewers having no other experience from which to make comparisons than a BBC that has dominated their airwaves since broadcasting began. The fact that it was started by the Scot, Lord Reith, is cold comfort to today's audiences.**