

① BBC Charter Renewal Consultation

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

2-4 Colindale Avenue,

London

SW1Y 5DH

13.3.04

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope that the following comments might be added to the observations being gathered from members of the public during the BBC Charter Renewal Consultation.

1) Things particularly appreciated:

- News & current affairs programmes on television and radio, whether the gravitas of "serious" reporters or the lighter presentation via e.g. the Today programme, the clarity, depth of analysis, timing in the schedules (though: we miss the 9 p.m. television news slot - 10 p.m. is too late) and of respective programmes is something we even "plan" our day's rhythm around.
- Comedy slots of the Radio 4 (6.30 pm / 12.30^{ish} pm) variety are something loved by all 3 generations. It is something that draws the children away from their activities when it comes on: ranging from Just a Minute, The News Quiz, Quiz - Unquizzed, Word of Mouth, I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue to the milder "After Henry" type of entertainment. If there are to be repeats - can we once again have "My Word" and "My Music"? The original masters of the game would be worth hearing again and new recruits (e.g. Stephen Fry?) would no doubt entertain another generation. Desert Island Discs is another hit with all 3 generations.

② Educational programmes are much loved - whether as formal documentaries or in the shape of "Walking with Dinosaurs", "All in the Mind", "Does he take sugar" or historical and costume dramas. The dramas that bring classics from literature alive are very popular too. The Food Programme - "Woman's Hour" are also slavishly followed.

For the children (aged 11 and 12), they did not enjoy "Go for It" at all, but liked the kind of Sunday evening serial such as the Phoenix and the Carpet aimed at a younger viewer, but not as patronizing. Since "Dead Ringers" 's version, none of us can listen to "Go 4 It" without hearing the satirical version!

• Soaps: the gangsters are better on East Enders than the parents are on, say, the Archers. I wish that more "normal" characters would appear, rather than only those apparently surviving off alcohol and little money, yet endlessly getting into crime swapping "love" interests, starting numerous dysfunctional families and passing that off as some sort of norm. I object to the awful language and "Kool speak": not everyone speaks like that and it doesn't help those trying to develop their reading skills and discovering what a marvellous tool having a wide vocabulary can be.

3

4 Things we'd like to see changed:

• As a tri-lingual 'European' & British nationality and as a modern languages teacher, I wish we could hear more / longer snippets of any foreign language in reports / on the news / when experts are interviewed. On television, subtitles would be far preferable, or a speaker, having been allowed to finish a sentence, then being followed by the interpretation or summarized view when you know the reporter clearly knows the language e.g. seeing Nagi Omar speaking Arabic, may well be a wonderful role model to encourage our youngsters to open their minds to the need and possibilities of knowing another's language as a window on other cultures and a way to reduce harmful prejudice. Daily, we could thus encounter examples from around the world at a time when we so desperately need to come together and act "globally" in our understanding of world events.

I lived many years in Holland (where everyone's linguistic ability is so admired): it is not surprising that you get "good" at languages when your media is delivered in foreign languages with the constant support of subtitles. It's about time we improved our appalling record and xenophobic attitudes. Particularly where our own citizens have such a variety of languages to offer.

• Bring back the excellent television and/or radio programmes for learning "survival" / "holiday" languages

(4) The video / tapes for such BBC language courses are great for evening classes, personal study; the quality is high, it is entertaining and not at all patronizing. The English as a Foreign Language students enjoy the clarity of the language and the videos can be suitable to use with all sorts of learners of different ages.

• Could some children's radio programmes be put on to rival those presented on television? There are some good serials, but there is much "rubbish" put on at the 3.30 - 5.00 p.m. time on television. A magazine-style format, but with a mixture of entertainment and information, or issues being discussed such as - what SATs are - or - how to choose your GCSE options; the attractions of Sixth Form / FE colleges; work experience + how to prepare for job interviews; problems such as "bullying" or coursework deadlines in school with maybe a "panel" of guests and presenters who can offer insights or guidance (a sort of cross between John Craven's newsround, gardeners' questionnaire and ~~any~~ questions - but firmly for school-aged children)!

• On Sundays, it would be nice to have part of the Sunday service include specific slots for grandparents too.

5. There is support for BBC 1 and BBC 2 for the differences they cover in our household. Likewise, we switch and vary between chiefly Radio 4, but also Radios 2 and 3. None of us are keen on Radio 1 (too much noise!); we occasionally listen to local radio and flit about the World Service for news, occasional broadcasts you don't get on the other channels.

• We only get the "Radio Times" bumper issue at Christmas as other papers cover the schedules and related stories/background to programmes.

• Licence fee: maybe it could vary according to how many hours' actual viewing per household or according to the number of televisions per home? It should be free for the elderly and those in institutions, care homes, etc.

I'd prefer less frequent trailers advertising programmes and dislike the sponsorships starting to creep in.

I hope this is of interest to those trying to sift through all the comments!

Yours faithfully,
Slater

(MRS. S. CARTER)