

## BBC CHARTER REVIEW CONSULTATION

### Submission from J.H.Clark

This consultation does not appear to have achieved widespread publicity and any weaknesses in response should be a reflection on the poor distribution of leaflets and the disastrous notification of public meetings and locations, not on any lack of interest amongst the public.

The public consultation document has not been presented in a manner to ease response by the general public. I am responding in sequence to the publicly issued leaflet, employing bullet points against abbreviated question headings as no numbering system was used.

#### 1. Value?

- no advertising, no commercial manipulation or exploitation
- major contributor to democracy with obligations to be impartial
- provides cultural input and output
- universal access attempting to engage all levels of society
- diversity of output
- importance of radio in society
- training ground for talent

#### 2. Adapt?

- role as credible source of on-line services vital to future development
- public service broadcasting must develop with the technology
- universal digital access only likely through BBC

#### 3. Services?

- popular programming like soaps part of democratic/social fabric
- BBC must show continuing creative lead at all levels
- dumbing down to meet commercial channels unhelpful
- channel remits should be met - BBC2 faltering badly, BBC 3 questionable
- radio services largely very good, reflected in listener growth
- on-line services should continue to be developed
- World Service invaluable representative of nation

#### 4. Commercial?

- BBC very valuable brand to be exploited
- need to make money to hold down licence fee
- fair trading controls tight and justified by lack of complaints to OFT
- but BBC must always act sensitively in this area
- some on-line services may develop for transfer to not-for-profit sector

#### 5. Funding?

- licence fee as hypothecated tax best method to ensure independence
- top-slicing of fee to support the commercial sector unsustainable
- method to avoid criminalising poorest needed
- conversion to subscription service destructive of universality and diversity
- World Service continue to be funded by FO grant in aid

#### 6. Organisation?

- retention of single BBC essential, reputation supported by scale

- ineffective to fragment structure
- cohesive organisation best suited to training/developing skills
- 7. Run/regulate?
  - relationship between Governors and management needs new clarity
  - management should be accountable for all operating aspects like a public company
  - Governors role (or another similar independent body) be responsible for advancing public interest
  - OFCOM disqualified as regulator of BBC as it is set up to span public and private sectors, should not be responsible for a fully public body, already exhibits over-commercial tendencies
- 8. Accountability?
  - flows from 7 above
  - responsibility more directly to Parliament
  - Governors actively need to develop more direct public contact

*Alank*

*26th March 2004*