

The Right Honourable Tessa Jowell MP,
House of Commons,
Westminster,
LONDON.

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March 30th, 2004

Dear Ms Jowell,

I have learned in the past few days that a consultation process concerning the future of the BBC is about to conclude. I also understand that the government has requested the public to submit their views. The future of the BBC is of such immense importance that I am at a loss to understand why this consultation exercise has not received greater publicity.

Television and radio should have been used by the government to advertise this and to invite the people to contribute their views.

The BBC must remain totally independent of government. This is essential in a democracy. Totalitarian regimes always seize control of the media as a first priority. Despite recent government criticism of the BBC the British people regard it as a shining beacon of truth and integrity in an uncertain and dangerous world. It attracts intelligent, free-thinking individuals to work in it. These sharp, questioning people are bound to cause any government discomfort: that is their role. However, when they are in opposition, sooner or later all political parties will come to need a critical, questioning BBC.

I think Radio Four is superb and I often feel extremely grateful that I can switch on the radio in the morning and listen to such varied and interesting people.

Certainly I would like the BBC to provide more "serious programmes" on television: music, art, drama etc together with brilliant comedy. I often wish that some of the wonderful programmes that are broadcast by Radio Four could be translated into television. You might argue why use television for discussion programmes when they are so well suited to radio? However the visual impact of television is so strong that a few of these programmes might prove very successful and may reach an audience who would otherwise miss them.

There is not much wrong with the BBC. I think the recent problems concerning the Hutton affair have been blown out of all proportion and should not have led to the crisis which occurred. In particular, Alistair Campbell who was not even an elected member of the government, behaved in a disgraceful way and he should have been prevented from causing such vicious damage to the BBC. Gregg Dyke who had the confidence of the employees at the BBC should be offered his job back and allowed to continue with his work. ~~More than anything else~~ this would draw a line under the events of the past months and re-assure everyone

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that the government has no political agenda so far as the BBC is concerned.

The licence fee must remain. The thought of commercial interests seizing control of the BBC is a nightmare. It must be resisted and the BBC must remain free of all commercial advertising. I would be prepared to pay an increased licence fee providing that it was properly justified and the money used wisely. I do feel that the current licence fee is too much for people on low incomes and something should be done to help them. BBC television and radio is of supreme importance to low income families who do not have much money to spend on entertainment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anthea Connell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Anthea Connell