

Sent: 14 December 2003 14:45
To: BBC Charter Review
Subject: Licence Fee Opinion

Importance: High

Thank you very much for allowing me to air my views on the BBC's funding.

I am totally against the licence fee. One flat fee, for a single mother or an elderly person, compared to a rich person in a large house with many TV sets, seems unfair to me.

I believe we can look at the BBC as a public funded media institution in two ways. Either:

A) We decide that the BBC is so essential to public life, culture, and information then it is essentially almost a state service. Therefore it should be funded like any other state service like the NHS, via variable taxation, so people pay according to their means. To ensure independence from the government (although the BBC is never truly independent as it relies on government for its charter) levels of funding would be pre-set according to inflation etc and can not be changed.

B) We decide that the BBC is not as essential as other state services like the BBC. We then have to ask ourselves why a service that is no longer central to people's lives is paid for by direct enforced subscription, which failure to abide with can lead to court proceedings.

I believe funding the BBC through direct taxation, or alternatively asking the BBC to pay for itself via commercial enterprise is the only way forward. A compromise where a vastly reduced licence fee pays for BBC2 and possibly BBC4 only could also be considered. I believe the programmes on BBC1 and BBC3 are neither distinctive enough or of a high enough quality to be paid for by public funds.

I feel these points are salient in regards to the licence fee:

-The BBC should exist, but let's face it, it is not an essential public service. Therefore we should not prosecute people for failing to contribute to it.

-Removal of the licence fee would mean no more money wasted on detector vans, enforcement officers and court proceedings. This could be ploughed back into programmes.

-Rich and poor currently pay the same for their licence fee. If the reason for this is because the BBC is entertainment, why should we be forced to pay for it. If the reason for this is because the BBC is an essential public service, why not pay out of tax.

-Vulnerable people such as the elderly, students, single mothers and the unemployed should not be forced to scrape the 2 pounds a week together for the fee.

I believe the BBC can do good work, and is a bulwark against media barons, but the licence fee HAS to go. It is from another era when not everyone had a TV set. The choice to go without television instead of paying the fee is no real choice, the vast majority rely on TV (and not just the BBC) for information and cheap entertainment.

Besides, if the fee also pays for BBC radio, why don't radio users without TVs pay a fee? It seems a muddle to me.

Thank you.

Mark Cordell