

BBC CHARTER REVIEW CONSULTATION

Dear Sirs,

I refer to the above and would like to thank you for inviting the general public to submit comments by 31st March 2004, although after speaking with Anna (0207211 6418) on 23rd March 2004, I understand that there can be a small extension to this deadline; circumstances have required that I need such.

I would request that the following comments, in part, are a result of my working and training for over 10 years in the field of Conflict Transformation and Resolution across a wide spectrum of society, including those of education, health, law and order, community, religious and ethnic divide, business et al, both in the UK and Overseas. [Please see my short Bio, as attached.]

One of the major causes of conflict I have experienced throughout this time is that of the many forms of **DISTORTION** of which we are all capable i.e. the difference between totally objectivity (non-judgemental) as distinct from relative subjectivity (judgemental/interpretation). This especially applies to the media in all its applications - and even more so for such as the BBC! - **"BE CAUTIOUS WITH YOUR WORDS. AS THOSE WHO LEARN AND HEAR THEM WILL FOLLOW YOU AND MAY DRINK AND DIE.** (Ethics of the Fathers ChI para II).

The recent events involving the BBC and the Government, culminating in the Hutton enquiry and report, was to use a cliché "an accident waiting to happen". I attach just a small selection of the letters/emails that I have sent over the recent years to the BBC. The responses I received were, in my understanding, nothing more than bland denials and assurances that the BBC, its editorial staff and interviewers were ever only totally impartial and lacking any form of prejudice. This has most definitely not been my experience over a range of subjects as my attachments record. I am quite clear referring to the Hutton report again, that BBC personnel, at least subconsciously, exhibit the normal human programme and frailties, i.e. that attitudes, feelings and thoughts are never 100% objective. However it appears that the BBC and its personnel claim otherwise - a classical case of being in denial!

This has caused me great concern and anxiety over the years because I had hoped and expected that the BBC, being a publicly funded and therefore independent corporation requires far higher standards than the current levels of other more commercially based media entities. It is clear that the BBC is **NOT** adhering to significant fundamental principles, as stated in the BBC Charter.

More specifically I would summarise the main areas that require urgent attention as follows:

1. The presentation, especially of news and current affairs is fragmented, full of sound bites and driven by the clock and ratings.
2. There is not equal time, treatment and opportunity given to all the parties to a dispute or conflict on the same occasion.

3. That the BBC through its editorial and interviewing staff continuously, and in my view destructively, looks for points of conflict between peoples and exacerbates these by seeking continuous divisions and contradictions within and between people. Being so adversarial is akin to an existing fiercely burning fire being further fuelled by pouring a can of petrol over it. The can, of course being the BBC and the petrol being its way of presenting. I know the damage this causes. It recycles the violence by pandering to the distortions and spin that the BBC brings to various topics, no less than the politicians and the newspapers - a sad reflection of the negative side of society and an indictment in itself.

4. My other points are collectively contained within the attachments. My need and request is that there should be clear standard applied to existing and future employees of the BBC, certainly those that are responsible for delivering broadcasts to the nation. Such standards will include the following in endeavouring to establish the moral, ethical aptitudes and objectivity of the attitudes of members of the BBC. Inter alia this will include establishing the political, ethnic, religious or non-religious beliefs, the age and gender of any employee of the BBC not in any judgemental way but to know how editors and interviewers have been programmed in their childhood and formative years in a way, which even if only subconsciously, affects their judgement. If the BBC claim, as they do i.e. that this is not necessary, then perhaps the degree of training and preparation that is applied, so as to nullify such normal human programming, needs to be explained to the general public.

5. I would also request that in future if a crucial and/or important interview or topic is not able to be properly dealt with in such programmes as Today or World at One etc they should not be started in such circumstances, but left to more in depth treatment with more time given.

6. It is essentially my view, especially where conflicts involve clashing beliefs and cultures often resulting in death and destruction, every and all opportunities to exacerbate these conflicts should be avoided and all opposing points of view need to be broadcast at the same time, in the same programme on the same day in an effort to encourage mutual understanding and empathy. That would really be for me, the BBC genuinely practising its motto "**Nation shall speak Peace unto Nation**". The above are just some of the main improvements to any new BBC charter and practice - I am sure that here are others.

It is possible that the Charter itself needs very little change in this regard - rather its full and proper application and practice in accordance in with its existing clauses around impartiality!

I am available for further comment if required but in any case I would appreciate a proper response - not just a bland acknowledgement!

Yours truly,

Leonard Daniels.

CC Mark Byford, Acting Director General