

21st February, 2004

BBC Charter Review Consultation,
Department for Culture, Media and Sport,
2-4, Cockspur Street,
London,
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Sirs,

I would like to register my views on the future of the BBC.

Firstly, I would like to see the Licence Fee continued indefinitely and these are my reasons:-

1. It is relatively very good value at about two pounds sixty pence per week; we pay much more than this to get even Sky Sports.
2. Because the BBC does not run commercial breaks between or during programmes, viewers can enjoy documentaries, dramas, news programmes etc. without interruption.
3. My point in number two leads me to add that the attention span of children is being shortened by the stop/start nature of commercial television, if not also that of adults.
4. Further to point number two, because two, at least, of our channels are non-commercial, we have the experience of uninterrupted programming which, if lost, will lower our expectations of television enjoyment. That is to say that the very existence of uninterrupted programming encourages a higher standard of intellectual participation.
5. Again, relating to non-commercial channels, I believe that they prevent the almost certain deterioration of programming which

would be the result of the introduction of more and more commercials into television.

I lived in North America for nine years during the seventies and I know what kind of damage that all-commercial television does to programme standards. Ultimately, the kind of programmes aired is determined by the advertisers and the standard of programming reduces to the lowest common denominator.

I draw your attention to a passage from 'Notes from a Big Country' by Bill Bryson-

'.....I have just taken a half-hour, at no extra cost to you, to monitor a typical CNN programme, and here are my findings. In a single 30-minute period, CNN interrupted its programme five times to show twenty commercials. Altogether it showed 10 minutes of commercials in a 30-minute slot. Apart from a 7-minute span at the start of the programme, the longest period without commercials was 4 minutes and 59 seconds. The shortest interval between commercials was 2 minutes. For the benefit of people who suffered a serious brain injury during the programme, three of the commercials were repeated.'

I realise that the above may seem very extreme and not a bit 'British' but I am quite sure that, if television becomes all-commercial in this country we will experience exactly the same kind of television. I give it five years.

The same, in my view, applies to radio.

We must not allow 'ratings' to dictate what we see on television. It is unfair to minority groups of all kinds. Totally commercially-funded television and radio is also inequitable as a significant portion of the population will not be able to afford to participate in what is available.

I hope you will give my views your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Davis (Mrs.)