

22 December 2003

Madam

BBC Future: Consultation

I suggest that, in negotiating the terms of the review of its Royal Charter, some encouragement should be given to the BBC to ensure that programmes normally run for their allotted time and should not consistently over-run.

This applies particularly to its television programmes on BBC1 and BBC2. Programmes in *Radio Times* are frequently devised to start at the same time to allow viewers to switch channels as one finishes and the other starts but the BBC inability to stick to its schedule conflicts with this benefit. It is now very common for a BBC programme to finish late and, instead of moving onto the next programme quickly, two or three trails are added delaying the subsequent programme by a further three to four minutes. BBC4 has been more accurate.

I have written several times to Greg Dyke, but my letters are answered by underlings who make bland statements such as "Our experience suggests that they (trials) are much appreciated by our audience as a whole." which entirely misses the point I am making. Both my brothers worked as producers in television – BBC and ITV – and they were clearly under pressure to finish on time, especially in the days when programmes were all live. ITV still usually achieves the conclusion of its programmes within their time slots.

I hope that this is helpful. I am copying this letter to Greg Dyke.


(Dr Michael Essex-Lopresti)