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Dear Sirs, BBC Charter Review Consultation.

The present period of consultation regarding the renewal of the BBC Charter in 2006 will lead, it is to be hoped, to decisions that will not irrevocably damage its independence.

As a retired member of the BBC staff I remain loyal to the BBC and to its renowned position in the world as a source of truth and objectivity.

Governments, in general, and others with their own vested interests, are wary of any source of information that tells things as they are, rather than as they would have us see them. The response can be seen in recent attacks.

The present type of Charter and licence fee system have worked well since the beginning and to state a polite paraphrase of a well known technical saying: "If it is working, leave it alone".

Furthermore it is not a trivial observation to say that any democracy worth its salt needs purveyors of satire and lampoonery for its proper working. This is in a long tradition in this country (as far back as Chaucer) and, in a way, defines a part of our Englishness. The BBC, when independent, is in an ideal position to dole out this medicine.

Subscription TV has been proposed as an alternative method to pay for the BBC and, in truth, the technology is already available. The TV set which accepts a "smart card" with which the viewer pays up front for those channels he wants to see, is quite feasible today when only digital services are considered. But, if you think about it, this method of payment will detract from true independence because of the need to obtain the money before the programmes can be made.

And what about Radio? BBC Radio is now more popular than ever and, presumably, would have to be subscribed to as well, instead of being free.

The onset of digital services does not in any way need to influence the governance of the BBC or its funding.

My earnest wish is that the status quo is preserved and with it, the independence of the BBC.

Yours faithfully,

J. L. EATON

