

Sent: 14 December 2003 09:47
To: BBC Charter Review
Subject: BBC Charter

The aim of the BBC should be to support Britain and its people. One primary way of achieving that is to provide a quality broadcasting benchmark that other broadcasters will be influenced by. Another way is to broadcast useful and entertaining programs that other broadcasters don't cover. A third method is to promote a positive view of Britain to the rest of the world. The World Service does a vital and excellent job of this and should continue to be well funded.

The main downside of the BBC is the cost of the License Fee which is a large cost to those on low incomes. I believe the License Fee should be frozen and future savings should be made by the following methods:

1. Stop spending large sums on sporting events that other broadcasters will cover anyway. The BBC should cover less popular sports that Britain is good at, for example Hockey and Netball. It may be that once the BBC had made a sport popular the other broadcasters may well want to spend large sums buying the broadcasting rights, pushing the BBC out of the field, but in such a case the BBC will have done its job and can move on to another less popular sport. Football coverage should be limited to cheaper games between clubs at lower levels, games just as enjoyable but without the celebrities. In fact the BBC should look out for clubs that are particularly good to watch because they have an attacking or entertainment philosophy. This practise would encourage all clubs to consider entertaining the audience, not just winning, which would be good for the game as a whole.
2. Stop going for the ratings. Large sums are spent competing with the commercial broadcasters. Please stop! The BBC should be more innovative. The License Fee gives them the unique advantage of being able to try out programs without the worry of financial disaster. So why are so many innovations found on Channel 4 and 5? Wifeswap is a good example of such an innovation. Cheap to make but a surprisingly entertaining program that also makes us think about our relationships, so it could be described as having a positive affect on the well-being of the nation. The BBC should concentrate on programs that positively affect the viewers in some way, without becoming preachy, obviously. The BBC must find a balance between being all things to all license fee payers and going for ratings. It can't become just a Middle Class refuge although it does need to be that too, amidst the dumbing down of much of the media (or am I getting old?).
3. The BBC is particularly good at nationwide 'event' programs. A great example is the Big Read where the BBC was able to bring its radio, TV and web audiences into a debate that encouraged reading and the discussion of books. I personally am now determined to read His Dark Materials, a book that I had not intended to read before watching the program. I particularly liked the way the celebrities were mixed with academics, providing us with a familiar face as well as a fresh and informative perspective. The event also gave the audience the feeling of being part of the nation, it brought us together and that's got to be a good thing. Can the BBC do more of this? And surely it was not a hugely expensive program.
4. If necessary the new digital channels should be axed. The BBC should limit its aim to the three goals mentioned in the first paragraph and numerous channels are not necessary.
5. Local radio stations should be closed in areas where there are other local stations or where commercial broadcasters are prepared to 'buy out' the BBC. The

BBC may want to retain a few key stations to support its nationwide network of reporters and interview rooms.

6. A feasibility study should be commissioned to look at using part of the license fee to support the British film industry, although, if used wisely this could be self financing by feeding profits from part-BBC funded films back into new films.

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