

27th February 2004

B B C Charter Review Consultation,  
Department for Culture, Media & Sport,  
2 - 4, Cockspur Street,  
London SW1Y 5DH.

Dear Sirs,

I recently picked up in our local library a pamphlet entitled 'Your B B C Your say'. It asked for views on the B B C and since this is an opportunity not to be missed, I am happy to answer the questions posed in the pamphlet.

1. My wife and I always view the 6pm news. We find it in the main unbiased and informative. (We count ourselves as about average.) We are not TV addicts and therefore are selective regarding what we watch. We prefer History, Wild life, Travel and Comedy. Non violent drama (Agatha Christie, or Pride and Prejudice, Sherlock Holmes) type of programmes
2. The B B C must obviously take into account new technology. Technology may be such things that we haven't even dreamt about as yet, the B B C has to keep up with everything in this line or lose its audience. (There is a lot of items that now require 'Cinema Sound' Surround sound, perhaps it's just round the corner for this type of sound to be broadcast.) — Not to mention digital transmissions.
3. From what we see, I believe that the services the B B C offer are adequate.  
This question harks back to such things as the 'Brains Trust', which you may remember had a panel discussing either topical subjects or questions sent in by viewers. The last thing we need is an 'Agony Aunt' sorting out personal questions. We already have programmes such as Alvin Hall helping people with their debt problems and Watchdog. Both are very good programmes, but do we need more? The Jimmy Young radio programme and to a lesser extent his successor Jeremy Vine are educational and at times helpful, and I daresay local stations all help in this direction.  
One thing that I do find annoying is the advertising of programmes on the B B C network. It is fine to have a programme occasionally "trailed" as a future event, but not every day almost at the end of every programme for a week in advance. The frequency of such adverts tend to put me off. (The worse the programme the more frequent the advertising). May I suggest that trailers be limited to only 24 hours in advance, or at the most 48 hours.
4. The B B C should have a commercial arm. There is no reason why it should not have magazines or books elaborating the contents of its programmes. Neither in the main, do I object to it selling its programmes. However, I do feel that the B B C should retain the copyright of the programmes in order to repeat specific programmes at a later time. I notice that a good number of B B C programmes

now appear on 'SKY' television, for which a subscription is required. Is it possible for it to be stipulated that SKY may only show the programme once only and then returned to the B B C for future screenings? There are a good number of programmes that are worth showing again which appear to be lost and gone forever.

4. Since I am now over 75 I get a free TV Licence, however, I feel that the B B C should be free of any commercial influence. Whilst the B B C should remain outside any political influence, it should be funded directly or indirectly by the government as it is at present.
5. We, the public, know very little of the funding of the corporation or how the funds are dispensed. Unfortunately, from time to time we hear of the Board of Governors with a chairman plus a Director General and various other chiefs and one wonders why such a hierarchy is necessary. It also appears that programmes are commissioned by the B B C to outside production companies. I daresay this has been going on some time, but it is a sad sign of the times that the corporation can no longer produce its own programmes.
6. The regulation of the B B C should be conducted internally, independent of government. Accuracy of course should be paramount, the laws regarding libel, etc. should be sufficient to keep it on the straight and narrow. I also feel that gratuitous violence should not be shown, neither should obscene language be used. (If you cast your mind back to the old comedies and dramas, they were either amusing or riveting without being obscene.)
7. Finally, if the B B C is required to be accountable to the public, then the public or suitable representatives (Not connected nor influenced by the technicalities of finance or production, or government) should adjudicate on the suitability of programmes in the long and short term future.

'Your say' is what you asked for, and is what you have got. I do hope that I haven't wasted too much of your time (or mine) in expounding some thoughts and that you may possibly find my views useful.

Yours faithfully,



(Mr.) R. Gray