

18th Mar 2004

BBC Charter Review Public Consultation

Dear Sirs,

In response to your leaflet on the above subject I have the following comments.

I greatly value the BBC and believe **it should continue broadly in its present form**. I would like at this stage to make **special mention of Radio 4**. I have travelled abroad a great deal on business and for pleasure and have never encountered another service like it. It provides a good variety of speech-based programmes including news, current affairs, radio plays (which I particularly like - eg The Pallisers, McLevey etc), investigative journalism, good quizzes (eg Brain of Britain, Round Britain Quiz) science and the Arts. They have maintained their high standard throughout the years and in my opinion have kept the programme mix about right. Most importantly there are **no adverts** !

Turning to television, the BBC provides a good range of 'non-fiction' such as 'Horizon', 'Panorama', 'The Nile', 'Dunkirk', 'Your Life in Their Hands' etc. History, politics and business are well covered, but in recent years there has been a **shortage of quality drama**. I am thinking especially of costume drama like 'Pride and Prejudice', which the BBC does superbly well, but no longer does very often. In contrast there is **much too much sport**; hour after hour of it. It is not unusual to have sport on both BBC1 and BBC2. In Wales we seem to get all the sport on the English channels as well as some extra events of our own.

As the change over to digital TV becomes established **I would like to see one or two channels dedicated exclusively to sport**, with little or no sport on the other channels, so that the enthusiasts can watch sport, without the programmes that I like being delayed, postponed or cancelled as so often happens at present.

I strongly believe that **politicians should have no control over the BBC**, except during the charter review. When there is a row between the government (of either party) and the BBC, I usually find that I agree with the BBC and that they represent my interests better than does the government. **I like the present arrangement, with a board of governors** and do not see why it should change.

I certainly think that **the BBC should continue commercial operations**, such as selling DVDs and the 'Radio Times', which I buy regularly. These fit in well with their other activities. I use the BBC as an Internet Service Provider and find them very satisfactory.

I favour the licence fee as the best way of paying for the BBC. It maintains the integrity of the organisation and is very good value for money. As a tax payer I would not object to a subsidy, to help genuinely poor people to pay the fee. Funding the BBC out of direct taxation could only be justified for a few services such as BBC World (TV), BBC World Service (Radio) and possibly Radio 4. We need to show a face to the world and Radio 4 is so special. Turning the BBC into a subscription service would inevitably cause fragmentation. The BBC would lose its special qualities and become just another media organisation, which would no doubt suit some politicians.

The introduction of adverts to pay for the BBC is too terrible to contemplate. The ones on commercial TV are absolutely awful. They interrupt the flow of the programmes and are an insult to the intelligence of the audience. Many encourage uncouth or ridiculous behaviour in impressionable viewers and the car adverts encourage dangerous driving. It is a real pleasure to watch programmes on the BBC without adverts. The 'Sherlock Holmes' series, originally an ITV production, was recently repeated on BBC 2, where it was much more enjoyable without the adverts.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment and hope you find the above a useful contribution to the consultation exercise.

Yours sincerely,

R. D. Garbett

Richard D Garbett