

To: BBC Charter Review Consultation, DCMS

02/04/2004

I hope this is not too late. I will answer your key questions in order and as much to the point as possible:

I value the BBC particularly for news, current affairs, arts and programmes making history and science accessible to those of us with limited knowledge of their subjects. I love the opportunity to see and hear again those programmes on Radio and TV which I grew up with and influenced my cultural preferences, from Round the Horne and Hancock onwards! Living in London I have little knowledge of how the BBC serves the regions and different communities to my own. I have to admit here to being a typical 65year old white middle class licence owner and there are A LOT OF US ABOUT! So mind what you do to the future of the BBC! I am also a member of Voice of the Listener & Viewer.

I have not sufficient knowledge to presume to advise how the BBC should adapt to cope with changes in technology and culture, especially as it is only now at the beginning. Sufficient to say that when I buy my next digital equipment I hope the myriad channels will not have resulted in making choice so wide and diffused that it becomes almost impossible to select competing programmes. Of course, this will not matter two hoots to the masses who only want to watch game shows, soaps and indifferent fictional entertainment and never expose themselves to the possibility of seeing something which they find unexpectedly interesting and give them a new hobby, ambition or curiosity to know more.

I have no knowledge of the online services at present and probably would not have much time to use them.

I certainly approve of the BBC running commercial services. In this day and age any organisation of such diversity and value which serves such a wide variety of people, especially in this case, world-wide, must take advantage of generating extra funding to the benefit of its future achievements.

I think the licence fee is still the best idea. To think that for just over £2 per week we can receive so much news, entertainment, knowledge, drama, sport, music, laughter, education, weather and shipping forecasts, prayers. We must be mad to even question such value!!! I would even go so far as to say I think at BBC Radio alone is worth the licence fee. Radio 4, particularly in the mornings, significantly adds to my general knowledge and areas of interest. Just for comparison, the National Theatre means so much to me that it would significantly diminish my enjoyment of life if it could not afford to exist, so I pay £60 a year as a Friend. I have a similar regard for Welsh National Opera and support that company to the tune of £3 per week. I support other arts organisations for the same reasons. But if the day should come when

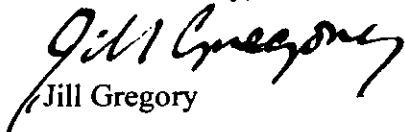
I could no longer afford to do so, I would cancel every one of those subscriptions in order to pay the BBC licence fee as Radio and what I judge to be the best of its TV output,(together with Channel 4 News!) is ultimately the most important means of news and entertainment to me. It is fantastic value and anyone suggesting otherwise must live on a different planet.

Without knowing how the BBC is run I do not wish to comment as to its effectiveness and efficiency. There certainly doesn't seem to be as much talent around as there used to be, which I attribute mainly to the lack of training grounds where valuable experience was gained in the past. But there is clearly something wrong judging from the endless TV repeats we have had since the end of the Autumn schedules.

As to how the BBC should be run and perhaps regulated. Your question asks 'Is this the best approach.' This Government is absolutely full of approaches! It's why they have wasted so much time and money in running the country so unsuccessfully. Of course, some regulation is necessary in all matters and walks of life. The most important aspect seems to me to make sure of putting knowledgeable and experienced people on the Board of Governors. People with the proven capacity of delivery, monitoring, impartial and fairminded people who know the business of running the greatest broadcasting organisation in the world.

Lastly, I don't actually set much store by inviting Joe Public to have their say with the BBC. Most of us have such limited knowledge, we know what we like but don't have a clue about the nuts and bolts. It's why we have a parliamentary system. Perhaps we could have more programmes such as 'Feedback' and a TV version, 'Viewers' Question Time' perhaps quarterly. But if those were to take place, I hope that producers were not allowed to flatly contradict viewers' and listeners' opinions except on very rare occasions when they can be made to admit to an error of judgment.

Yours sincerely,



Jill Gregory