

24 February 2004

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Sirs,

What I value most about the BBC is the breadth and quality of its output. News is trustworthy and unbiased, drama is excellently produced, documentaries are informative and entertaining and in its coverage of sports it caters for all tastes. The golf and snooker coverage is exemplary. It sets a standard of excellence to which other broadcasters can aspire.

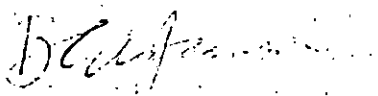
This is only possible because of the way it is funded. **It is imperative that the licence fee is retained.** Without core funding of this nature, the BBC would be at the mercy of commercial interests and public apathy. Anyone who has lived abroad can testify to the dreadful results of relying on sponsorship or subscription. Quality, public service and interest quickly disappear. This is not to say that the BBC should not continue to run commercial services itself. That is clearly a good way to supplement its income to enable it to continue to provide the wide range of programming to cater for minorities as well as the mass market.

How should the BBC be run? The day to day running should be independent, run by the governors as at present. The governors should only be accountable to the regulator. It is essential that the BBC is not seen as the mouthpiece of the government or unduly influenced by it. The public has many opportunities to respond to BBC programming and can switch off. I see no need for more formal "accountability" procedures.

The BBC is one of the main reasons for heaving a sigh of relief on one's return to these shores. Of course it needs to move with the times and adapt to new technology and new commercial realities, but we should all be the poorer if the BBC were to be damaged or destroyed. We need to be informed, educated and entertained by a body that has public service in its remit and is run by persons who have that motivation.

Finally, I mention the importance of the World Service, which is so instrumental in promoting the values of freedom and tolerance and integrity which we value, and is accessible to so many. Without the licence fee, such a service would have to be government-funded, and would immediately lose its reputation for impartiality. The independence of the BBC must remain, whatever changes to its governance are contemplated.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs B G L Jackson