

9/Mar/04

I understand that the inquiry into the BBC Charter is interested in ideas from the general public. I submit the following.

It has long seemed to me as a regular television viewer that the BBC should never have been allowed to see itself as in direct competition with the Independent channels, concerned as they are at every moment with the ratings. It has meant that when the Independent companies, whose very existence depends on securing high viewing figures to attract advertisers, hit on some programme that appeals to the greatest number of members of the public, the BBC has felt obliged to reply with a similar programme targeted at the lowest common denominator.

If the new Charter lays it down categorically that the success of BBC programmes should not be measured in the same way as Independent programmes, then the Corporation which has produced from time to time work of excellent quality (not necessarily appealing only to a minority of the public) would be free to do what the receipt of the proceeds of a licence fee should entail as its duty: to produce quality programmes in all fields where quality is called for, whether in drama, documentaries, music (of all varieties), programmes encouraging sporting activities and even of quiz programmes that enlighten. Such a scheme would, as an incidental advantage, free the BBC from the necessity of buying enormously costly football coverage thus increasing funds available for other fields.

H.R.F. Keating

H.R.F. Keating