

25th March 2004

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

Dear Team,

It is vital that the BBC retain its Charter. 'To inform and entertain' is its brief. It provides the voice of sanity in a mad world; demonstrates the possibility of rational discussion. It extends the horizons of the increasing numbers of people in one-person households, often isolated by child care, illness, disability, poverty or location. It breaks down prejudice by presenting ethnic and other groupings in a more rounded and sympathetic way; it makes such groups feel more valued and integrated.

This last is a quality even more desirable in future years.

The BBC provides an antidote to the crazy pursuit of 'celebrities' and other trivia in the tabloids and elsewhere.

Abroad, the BBC stands for what is best regarded in Britain. The World Service does more than any number of diplomats can, and does it more pervasively and fruitfully.

The public must be protected from rampant commercialism: young people and immigrants are specially vulnerable; the BBC's information and help with the practicalities of life is exceptionally good and increasingly necessary.

Of course there is much to criticize in detail; there is arrogance and complacency - it is well exposed on Roger Bolton's programme, 'Feedback'. Of course there is much to praise on other channels: the BBC keeps them up to the mark, to some extent.

But if the Beeb were scrambling around for advertising, the whole structure would deteriorate, and commercialism would dominate the media.

I have not always approved of the emphases in news coverage in recent months, though clearly many people have approved. As in the IHS, shortcomings seem to be largely managerial. Standards of civility in interviewing on the 'Today' programme are poor - too much bullying and interrupting.

I, personally, value the BBC for art, archaeology, history, drama programmes, and literature, on Radio 3 and Radio 4; BBC TV: 1, 2, 3 and 4. But discussion programmes on both radio and TV are excellent, so is classical music.

If the Government seeks to emasculate the BBC because of the events of the last year or so, it will result in a serious deterioration in what the majority value highly; it will also be a political blunder.

Yours sincerely,



A.J. Kitson