

Sent: 13 December 2003 18:13
To: BBC Charter Review
Subject: BBC Charter Review Feedback

Tessa Jowell's Foreward makes a number of incorrect assumptions:

'The BBC is a unique institution. Unique in the role it plays in public life. Unique in the way it is funded. Unique in the place it holds in the public's affections.' Recent polls suggest that the majority of the UK is against the TV Licence tax. Nor do the public trust it.

I also find it difficult to describe the BBC as a 'public service broadcaster'. 90% of what the BBC produces is poor quality commercial TV. The only difference between the BBC and ITV is that one is funded by the tax payer the other by advertising.

The BBC TV Licence Fee was enacted in the Wireless and Telegraphy Act 1949 when there was only one channel. In those days, owning a TV and watching the BBC was one and the same thing. However, today one can choose from literally hundreds of channels. With such a plethora of choice how can the TV Licence be justified?

Quality

One reason often cited is that the BBC offers programs of superior quality. I think this was once the case. But not now. The BBC has irrefutably 'dumbed down' (in an attempt to win the ratings war) to such an extent that it is indistinguishable from its commercial rivals. Please tell me where the public service element can be found in Eastenders, Doctors, Neighbours, Changing Rooms, DIY SOS, Home Front, Teletubbies, The Naked Chef, Casualty, The Weakest Link, The Saturday Show, Absolutely Fabulous, Only Fools and Horses, Top of the Pops etc etc.

Political independence

With successive Director-Generals Sir John Birt and Greg Dyke any notion of political independence has gone out the door. The BBC is now openly biased towards its socialist agenda. Greg Dyke is a political donor to New Labour.

Advertising

Another reason is the lack of advertising. Again this is no longer true. The BBC dedicates more and more of its airtime to plugging its own products (programs, magazines, videos, radio etc.). All this in addition to what it spends on advertising itself on billboards, the web etc.

Value for money

Fans of the BBC feel that the BBC is good value for money. It is certainly less than Sky, but obviously more than the free terrestrial channels. There is only

one way to put this to the test. Let the market decide and allow freedom of choice. Making the BBC a subscription channel would be the real acid test.

In summary, the BBC can no longer describe itself as a public service broadcaster and therefore is not deserving of public money. Furthermore, the BBC is totally unaccountable to its customers who must pay under threat of prosecution. TV is not a public service like street lighting or garbage collection. It is a commodity that is offered by numerous providers accounting for all tastes. Opinion polls constantly underline the strength of public opinion against the TV Licence Fee.

It is time for the BBC to stand up on its own two feet. We the public are no longer willing to foot the bill.

Yours,

Juan T Kelly