

20 February 2004

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

Dear Sirs

The BBC has been a greatly valued companion and friend to me since the dark days of WW1 when I, with my mother, father, brothers and sister, listened to the comforting words of newsreader John Snagge telling us what was going on in parts of the globe I had never heard of. I had been born in 1935 so my war was between the ages of four and eleven, from toddler to schoolboy venturing fearlessly to and from Primary School with gas mask slung around my thin shoulders.

But it was not always worrying news as we had so many laughter making programmes to entertain us such as ITMA and Workers' Playtime, Brain's Trust to test us, and, Radio Allotment to tell us to "Dig for Victory."

Today is not a lot different to me with high quality entertaining programmes such as Just a Minute, Gardeners' Question Time and the evergreen Desert Island Discs just to mention a few. Other 'friends' who mean so much to me would include such as John Humphreys, James Naughtie, Jenni Murray and the incomparable Terry Wogan. Yes, BBC radio follows me around in the bedroom, bathroom, garden and car - with frequent forays into the airwaves of BBC Radio Wales.

BBC Television is also pretty good overall but inevitably needs to pander to a less cerebral clientele. News, sports, the arts, nature, history and educational content programmes are first class (with BBC2 leading the way). Afternoon viewing, when I have time to watch, tends to be higher than the evenings, and I am afraid that too much violence and bad language is being allowed to drift in on evening drama viewing. Why not have more gentle viewing such as 'As Time Goes By' and 'The Vicar of Dibley.'

We are not at all well catered for in Welsh made networked programmes and this is probably due to both lack of funding and lack of creative talent in Wales. It is good to learn that the next Dr Who series is to be made in Wales.

I do not subscribe to Sky Television etc and am totally a 'loyal' channels 1,2,3 and 4

viewer. Also, being 68 and part of the growing 'grey army' I am not really interested the proliferation of more and more high tech facilities. There are only so many hours in the day and if I need to find something out on the internet I pop along and see my son and grandchildren who are all 'kitted up' computerwise.

Please continue to run your commercial services. It is great to hear that BBC Worldwide has put £123m back into 'auntie's coffers.' Radio Times is nowhere near as good as it used to be a few years ago. Please suggest to its Editor that she should revamp it by consulting copies from the 1980's for ideas.

I have paid for my licence fee via direct debit. This is easy, value for money and I can think of no better way.

You ask "Is the BBC organised in the most effective and efficient way?" My answer to this "I don't know." Although (as you will have gathered) I am a lifelong BBC radio and television 'supporter,' together with being a successful writer, regular BBC Radio broadcaster, very experienced Hospital Radio presenter, and, Equity TV actor/supporting artist, I have been turned down on numerous occasions when offering my services on various BBC viewer/listener committees. I later learn that such committees are made up of 'the good and the great' from local boards, quangos, universities, councils etc. Would it not be a good idea to have one or two committee members taken from the 'grass roots?'

I feel that I deserve your honest reply to this specific point. Can I be of Service?

Finally, the BBC must not allow itself to be castrated. Recent events which have led to the departure of both Chairman and Director General have been ridiculous kneejerk over reactions to a Government with their backs against the wall. The BBC should be encouraged to be as independent as possible from government interference.

Every business makes errors but the public should be allowed to make up their own minds and not be featherbedded by a collection of 'here today and gone tomorrow' politically correct self serving ministers.

You ask how can the public have a greater say? Well, not everyone has access to e-mail facilities but just about everyone has access to a phone. So why not have a weekly BBC related yes/no question put on CEEFAX with a 10p phone-in number for the public. Firstly no-one would complain about a 10p cost, secondly the BBC would not be out of pocket, and , thirdly the BBC would be able to be up a formidable factual body of public opinion for responsible discussion and use.

I have tried to be as constructive as possible and would like to be personally involved in the future of **My BBC**.

I wish you well and look forward to your reply in due course.

Yours faithfully,



(DAVID LEVERETT)