

5 February 2004

Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
LONDON SW1X 5DH

Dear Tessa Jowell


When considering the re-negotiation of the BBC's charter, I urge you to preserve the invaluable independence of a wonderful organisation.

At 61, I am clearly a member of the "wireless generation" but I still rely on Radio 4, as do millions of others. There is a place for commercial radio but the BBC offers so much that would not find a place on wavelengths that are designed for an undemanding audience. Far from dying out, the over-60s are living longer and our ranks are swelling all the time. Just because someone listens to pop music doesn't mean they won't progress to Radio 4 when they reach years of discretion! Some of them sooner than later.

The robust independence of the BBC is of inestimable value for those of us wishing to find our way through the tangled web created by government briefings and much of the press media. It may be that funding the BBC via a licence fee is not now the best method, but some way must be found to preserve its distinct character so that we can continue to benefit from journalism of a high standard, and enjoy programmes that are both informative and entertaining.

In addition, I believe that the BBC is best placed to cover all national occasions, whether State, sporting, or whatever, and should be enabled to do so with their established professionalism without having to worry where the next month's salaries are coming from. Just give them the money and let them get on with it. Hands off the BBC!

Yours sincerely



Jan Newbury