

26th March 2004

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

CHARTER REVIEW

I only heard about the Charter Review after the BBC Panorama Programme on the subject. Therefore in view of the time scale and my other activities I have not had the time I would have wished to respond to the Review.

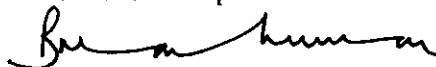
On the whole I think the BBC does a good job. I would not wish it to be funded from commercial sources, or for it to be paid for by subscription. One of the joys of listening and viewing BBC programmes is the absence of commercial breaks. Having said that, I am doubtful if enough thought has been given to the situation of those persons who genuinely cannot afford to pay for a license. Likewise I am unable to understand why those of us over 75 who can afford to pay for a license receive one 'free'. These are two aspects of funding which I think should be considered further, although I appreciate a form of means-testing would mean more bureaucracy and perhaps political unpopularity. We do not need government interference or attempts at back-room control which appears to be increasing.

It appears to be money is not always spent wisely at the BBC. In the search for popularity ratings fees paid to some individuals are vastly 'over-the-top'. Some programmes at peak viewing time are rubbish. In an effort compete with other Channels. The BBC should be concentrating on quality and not viewing figures.

I find it sad that most of the output on Radio 4 is only heard once, some of it excellent, is rarely repeated so that it can be heard at another time either on the same day or later in a week. I would like to know if market research can produce accurate listening figures for radio programmes, rather than generalised figures of market share, and if so, are they published? And what listening figure is considered viable by the BBC to maintain broadcasting a programme, or maintaining a channel? I think the 3-minute criteria are in need of revision to make listening research figures more meaningful.

Some of the more serious programmes are put on late on TV which is a subtle part of a dumbing-down process. Not all viewers have video-recorders.

I would hope that the Government will publish a synopsis of views received, and as part of the consultation process, invite further comments. Being made aware of responses would encourage people like me to participate more fully in the Review. I am only sorry time has not allowed me to make a fuller response.



Brian V Newman