

30/03/04

VALUE MOST

THE SMALL, EMBATTLED SANCTUARY OF MAINSTREAM 'HIGHBROW' CULTURE NOT YET EXTERMINATED FROM RADIO 3.

SERVICES

A) T.V.

I'VE NOT HAD ONE FOR OVER 10 YEARS, BUT OCCASIONALLY SEE PROGRAMMES WHEN VISITING. WHEN I WAS A REGULAR VIEWER THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS' OUTPUT WAS LARGELY INFANTILE AND IT WAS BECOMING APPARENT THAT THE CORPORATION HAD EMBARKED UPON A SCANDALOUS LOWERING OF STANDARDS. TEN YEARS ON, I NOTICE THE ADDITION OF THE PERNICIOUS TO THE MONOTONIC AND, SADLY, LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STATIONS.

B) RADIO.

THE CORPORATION REMAINS FAR SUPERIOR TO THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS FOR OVERALL PROGRAMME QUALITY. IT MUST BE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THE EXCELLENT MUST SHARE WITH THE INEPT AND THE LAUGHABLE. FOR EXAMPLE, ANYONE LISTENING TO 'THE ANCHORS' IN RECENT YEARS COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR ASSUMING IT WAS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS PREPARING FOR AN 'O' LEVEL IN P. C. THE CORPORATION NEEDS TO RECLAIM THE LEVEL OF OVERALL EXCELLENCE THAT WAS THE NORM, UNTIL ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO. IF THAT ENTAILS A RECRUITMENT POLICY WHICH DOESN'T FIT SOME DENRANGEN 'QUOTA' IDEOLOGY, THEN SO MUCH THE BETTER.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

THE CORPORATION WAS ESTABLISHED AS AND IS FUNDED BY THE PUBLIC, TO BE A BROADCASTER OF EXCELLENCE. IT IS APPARENT THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR CORPORATE STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME POLICY OVER RECENT YEARS HAVE EITHER IGNORED OR LOST SIGHT OF THIS FUNDAMENTAL POINT. THE CORPORATION NEEDS

(2)

TO GET BACK TO MAKING HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMMES AND NOT
ITSELF OF ALL THE DREAMY, IMITATIVE, 'LIFESTYLE' AND
'CELEBRITY' AND 'GAMESTON' DRAG. IF THE REST OF THE
WORLD THEN WISHES TO BUY BBC OUTPUT, FINE, BUT WOULD
THAT MEAN AN ARMY OF SALESMEN / BUREAUCRATS?

PAY FOR

BY DIRECT ANNUAL GRANT FROM THE TREASURY,
DECISION NOT BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT BY AN
ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING COMMITTEE.

ORGANISATION IN
EFFECTIVE / EFFICIENT
WAY?

IT CLEARLY CANNOT BE, AS IT IS
MANIFESTLY FAILING TO DO WHAT IT IS
PAID TO DO.

How run?

BY A BOARD OF GOVERNORS, UNDER A FULL-TIME
CHAIRMAN, ALL APPOINTED FOR 4-5 YEARS BY
AN ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE.

How regulated?

BY THAT SAME COMMITTEE, WHOSE POWERS WOULD
INCLUDE DISMISSAL AND REPLACEMENT OF GOVERNORS
AND CHAIRMAN.

ACCOUNTABILITY

PARLIAMENT REPRESENTS THE PUBLIC (I REFER TO
THE ONE IN LONDON, NOT STRASBOURG). THE
PHRASE 'ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC' IS REALLY
MEANINGLESS. THE PUBLIC VOTES WITH ITS
REMOTE CONTROLS, BUT, (AND THIS, SURELY, IS THE
TRUTH MOST CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED IN RECENT YEARS)
THIS DOESN'T MAKE IT THE CORPORATION TAKE TO
PARADE TO THE VULGAR AND THE DEMOTIC. PROGRAMMES
DO NOT NEED TO BE CENSORED OR LUBRICIOUS IN ORDER TO
BE A POPULAR SUCCESS.

PHILIP J. O'BRIEN