

11 March 2004.

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Having received a copy of the leaflet 'Your BBC Your Say' I will attempt below to comment on the topics raised in the document.

1. What do you value most about the BBC?

I value most the news, documentaries, drama (major classical works) and comedy (provided that it is free from 'smut' and bad language). I view and listen to only national broadcasts and do not search for local broadcasting. I find religious broadcasting generally disappointing as it tends to be more entertainment than serious provision for the earnest person.

2. How should the BBC adapt to cope with changes in technology and culture?

Because receiving broadcasts is not a major part of my life I am not keen to exploit everything that is technically feasible. Picture and sound quality is entirely adequate via analogue transmissions and I regret having to spend money to keep up with system changes. Technology pushes forward for commercial reasons, not for the mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing of the nation.

3. What do you think of the television, radio and online services the BBC provides?

The BBC provides a large number of channels of television and radio, almost for 24 hours each day. Most of it is unused by my family. The breadth of activity must put up costs greatly. I would be happy to see quality broadcasting over the BBC 1 and 2 channels, Radio 1, 2, 3 and 4 only.

4. Should the BBC run commercial services?

It would be ludicrous, having spent very large sums on programme preparation, e.g. 'Pride and Prejudice' and show them say once every five years. I am entirely happy about recovering costs by selling to other broadcasters and marketing DVDs etc.

5. How should we pay for the BBC?

We have a fundamental problem at present because the BBC, paid by licence fee, competes with commercial broadcasting paid by advertising.

There will be a continual spiral of costs as the BBC compares itself by ratings against commercial broadcasting. The role of the BBC should be public service and selected quality programmes, without reference to ratings. I am happy to pay for the licence provided that it gives consistently high quality programmes. If the standards are not maintained then there is no point in continuing with the BBC – we might as well hand over to the competitive commercial channels which will always aim at pleasing as many people as possible, without reference to standards.

6. Is the BBC organised in the most effective and efficient way?

I have no knowledge to comment on this.

7. How should the BBC be run? How should it be regulated?

Having written to the BBC on a number of occasions, occasionally to congratulate the authority on an excellent programme but commonly to complain about low standards, I have found that the BBC always justifies what it has done. I presume that a much stronger independent body is needed to ensure that standards are upheld. Currently sex, bad language and violence are presented very frequently. It is my conviction that broadcasting influences how the public think and behave. Broadcasting should lift up the nation, not drag it down. Therefore it would be necessary to agree that standards are to be upheld so that the appointed powerful independent body could change the present trend.

8. How do we ensure that the BBC is properly accountable to the public and parliament?

I suspect that in the present climate the public would not want to see present trends changed and the views which I have expressed are a minority opinion. Therefore I do not want to see the BBC giving the public what it perceives is wanted. I favour an independent body, chosen for its mental and moral stature, which monitors broadcasting and considers complaints/commendations from the public. Whilst our government must be involved in policy and standards of broadcasting we must ensure independence so that the BBC does not become the government's propaganda machine.

Yours faithfully,



R I Ostler