

Dear People:

Thanks for sending me a copy of your BBC review document.

Here's Aneurin Bevan, contemplating a Labour government's duty towards the young of Britain: *These boys and girls are to be asked to wield the royal sceptre. We must therefore give them the souls of kings and queens. Otherwise it may be said thus that we took the ordinary man from the shadows of history and set him in the fierce light that beats upon the throne and he was blinded and ran away.*

Not only is there a duty to give fine souls to the young, but to all humanity. In that, there is no more important entity than the BBC. Commerce cannot be relied on to provide the refinement sought; its aim is to make money for the minority that has invested in it. The BBC, being dependent on a broad levy of funds among the national population, retains an opportunity and a duty to help us all to cope with Bevan's fierce light.

That light stands for the best of human cultural achievement – much of which is the most difficult to reflect upon, understand and benefit by. Here's Harold Bloom: *Aesthetic value rises out of ... pain, the pain of surrendering easier pleasures in favour of much more difficult ones.* One cannot rely on commerce to promote that surrender necessary for civilisation to flourish.

The fierce light also stands for the best and most demanding political thought, by which citizens may most extensively understand and take part in the debates and decisions of the nation and the world. The best informed and most active citizens are apt to be the least biddable and the most free, as they should be. Again, that demands a great conduit of information and opinion that is independent of an urge for black figures in the bottom line of the accounts. It also demands such a conduit independent of politicians whose urge is to win votes en masse by glib image-polishing and lies.

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2 (of three) Quiaro on BBC Charter Review

The BBC, despite continuing reduction and compromise visited upon it by many barbarians and bean-counters, remains an essential creator and protector of the finest souls. It should not have to depend for its money on sale of goods and services. Also, it would be dangerous for the BBC – or any part of it – to rely on income from subscribers. Anyone who has heard classical music radio stations abroad - constrained to plead over and over again for listeners to sign up, constrained also to broadcast the soothing fare deemed most apt to bring in the cash – knows what a demeaning business that is likely to be.

This leads to my main concern among the BBC's services: **Radio 3**. It has done incalculable good in promoting happiness by the creation of enlightened, thoughtful human beings who are equipped to understand any artistic creation, any natural phenomenon. It is essential that Radio 3 be kept, protected and improved.

Some 40 years ago, BBC Radio launched The Music Programme to provide serious music all day, which represented a pre-emptive move by the BBC lest a commercial broadcaster fill day-time air with such music. William Glock, grand panjandrum of what was then The Third Programme, expressed misgivings. Such long stretches of music broadcasting might become "aural décor" for listeners, he said. Later, Glock reflected that this had come to pass, with "people half-listening, quarter-listening". The finest music, through such an excess of availability, had become less special.

I suggest that Radio 3 might seek to repair the specialness of its classical music and other broadcasts by reverting to operation for fewer than 24 hours a day. One might object that other stations would snaffle even more listeners by keeping those who had switched away from Radio 3 while the latter was putting out only a tuning signal. Perhaps, but Radio 3 already seems to be making few inroads into the 98-99% of radio audience share that is divided among other stations. A revision of Radio 3, as the network that makes the best of human culture special, might be just the ticket – and would trim its costs.

Radio 3 might also reduce its expenditure by a change in the way that the various BBC regional orchestras – of Scotland, Wales, Ulster *et al.* – are funded. There are well-founded suggestions that some two thirds of the network's total spending goes on these ensembles (which are less than first rate).

Reduction of the BBC's support for the orchestras would be dangerous – it might lead to their disappearance – and would be politically touchy as MPs and councillors in the various regions clamour for maintenance of the orchestras to entail no greater financial demands on national and/or local taxes. However, a smaller contribution by Radio 3 to those orchestras could be safely achieved, given the right concern for classical music and the necessary political will.

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3 (and last) Quiaro on BBC Charter Review

It might be suggested that the BBC reduce its costs – and expand its income – by the sale of **Radio 1**. Tempting though it is to advocate that this part of the cargo be thrown to the sharks, it is important that those adhering to Radio 1, and so spurning the pain of embracing more difficult pleasures, are at least being shown that broadcasting can be untainted by commercials.

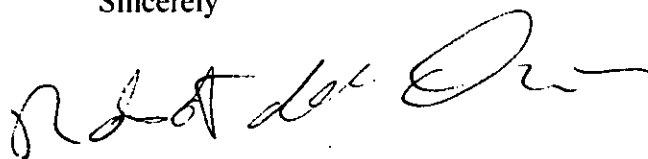
As for the **World Service**, it not only provides much enlightenment for its listeners but also generates vast goodwill and therefore income for the UK, via the Service's abiding demonstration that this country is competent, industrious and fair in many areas of human life. This goodwill and income cannot readily be calculated, but its existence is made clear by the great respect held for the Service throughout the world.

I don't have a **television** set, so I'll say only that my points about fine souls, aesthetic value and independent funding apply throughout the BBC.

If the BBC didn't exist, we would need to invent it. These days, though, would we? I doubt it. So, keep the BBC, in its most uplifting form and functions.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert del Quiaro', written in a cursive style.

Robert del Quiaro