

BBC Charter Review Consultation,
dCMS, 2-4 Cockspur Street,
London SW1V 5DH.

28th March, 2004.

Regarding the list of key questions:-

1. The most valuable provision is that of the news broadcast, but this does not include the incessant speculation mingled with 'vox pop'.
From time immemorial the population or group has desired news of events which may affect their way of life: speculation and opinion merely muddies the information.
The News should be arranged in a separate, discreet format, away from the inevitable speculation and comment.
The BBC should not follow the print media format with headlines then to repeat these headlines again as 'news': this is not the way in which intelligent people converse. After all, the BBC attempts to converse with people: confrontational interviewing is 'old hat' and a poor substitute.
2. Changes in technology are separate from changes in culture: the internet is already in use with e-mail, and digital television is really just a 'red herring' having little effect upon programme content (other than perhaps in the facility to record votes or polling).
3. I believe that the influence of the print media has been a deteriorating effect upon the BBC: most of the BBC staff has been trained as and by print journalists. Radio reporting is in a special category and reporters of radio and similarly television should be quite differently trained. With radio of course, the rate of delivery is particularly important as without vision of word formation, a slower rate (without over-voicing) is essential. It is surprising that programme producers are not clearly aware of this fundamental; commentators such as Quentin Cooper and Francine Stock are for the most part unintelligibly too rapid in delivery.
4. The BBC should continue with commercial services.
5. Perhaps only part of the licence fee should go to the BBC, with a remainder distributed by way of a proportional 'popular vote' among all broadcasters. This may produce an improvement in programme content, with some reduction in advertising.
6. There appears too much overlap between BBC radio programmes by attempts to broaden their once distinct character: for instance Radio 2 is to include Radio 1 music because it may increase listening figures. This is a mistaken endeavour and will only cause former Radio 2 listeners to transfer to another station: again, the music within news-style Radio 4 programmes is invariably Radio 2 style. Why have so many stations/channels, if overlap is apparently encouraged?
7. The functions of the BBC Governors should be separate from that of the Regulators: the Regulators should comprise a group of ranging maturity having creative but responsible attribute. The Governors would continue to receive comment, however the Regulators would deal with complaints; this should improve the accountability of the BBC to the public.
8. There is a dearth of comedy (possessing real humour) particularly on Radio 4: matters have reached a pretty pass, when the advertisements broadcast on Classic FM are more humorous than Boothby Grappa or Little Britain 'comedy' (6.30pm) slots. Caroline Raphael, the responsible manager, appears to have little appreciation of humour. It is important that the stresses of modern living should be mollified with real (unorchestrated) comedy.

Tom Rees