

1. WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST ABOUT THE BBC?

This is a loaded question. We are asked to specify our choice between a list of areas that the BBC covers. What I value most is the totality of the BBC – news, sport, arts, drama, educational and childrens' programmes, nature and science, its coverage of historical events – providing that it maintains its quality, distinctiveness and, above all, its independence. That is what makes it unique.

2. HOW SHOULD THE BBC ADAPT TO COPE WITH THE CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE?

The BBC should move with the times. It should lead rather than follow in the field of technological advance and should use those advantages to reach out to all citizens of whatever age, creed or ethnic origin. It should challenge and stretch its audience. Interactive services should be developed and used to promote environmental issues and community relations, as well as to provide a cultural service to everyone in our society. The BBC should cover cultural, sexual and religious matters without discrimination. It should have a strong regional presence. However it should not overexpand at the cost of quality on the main channels.

3. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE TELEVISION, RADIO AND ONLINE SERVICES THE BBC PROVIDE?

Good on the whole although there has been some deterioration in quality and choice in recent years. (See Question 4)

Documentaries remain a strength of the BBC and should be extended. Programmes such as Panorama should not be tucked away at a late hour.

Music is an area in which the BBC should excel. Radio has always provided a wonderful service, giving choice of music to listeners at all levels. It should strive to provide the very best of music, from rock to opera and to encourage new and innovative work.

Drama (See Question 4)

World Service. This is a jewel in the crown of the BBC and should not be tampered with.

4. SHOULD THE BBC RUN COMMERCIAL SERVICES?

Yes, but not at the expense of quality or of cutting back on minority interest programmes. The battle for ratings should never be the BBC's priority. In the last ten years the Corporation has tended to deviate from its public service role and this has led to some deterioration in the quality and nature of its output. This has become especially evident in the increase of so-called "reality TV" and makeover shows, and the increasing number of soaps and formulaic dramas with over-hyped storylines. These have taken the place of the original and innovative one-off plays and quality series which, together with the classic serials, were the hallmark of the BBC.

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BBC Radio is the one remaining outlet for original plays and interesting dramatisations and should be valued as such. Radio drama has traditionally nurtured new writers and given established writers a platform for original work. Many of today's leading dramatists started out in radio where they were encouraged to develop their own voice, something that is largely missing in television these days.

Casting, in both TV and radio, has suffered because of the need for a "name". One continually sees and hears the actors, often mis-cast, but whose names are acceptable to overseas markets. Radio used to create its own stars, known to listeners by their voices.

The BBC's reputation should rest on its integrity. Excellence will sell regardless of gimmicks.

#### 5. HOW SHOULD WE PAY FOR THE BBC?

There should be no advertising on BBC TV or radio. Advertisers could exert pressure on programme-makers and therefore threaten impartiality. The BBC's lack of interruption during programmes is one of its main attractions and is unique. Other countries envy us that privilege. Having said that, I deplore BBC TV's current trend continually to trail their own programmes. This irritates many viewers and should be discontinued. The money used on these endless trailers would be better spent on programmes.

Although there are some disadvantages, the licence fee remains the best method of funding the BBC. It is cost-effective and, most importantly, means that all listeners and viewers have a stake in the BBC. The public should also be reminded that radio is included in the licence fee as well as TV.

Paying by subscription, as has been suggested, would lead to a drastic lowering of funds in some minority areas and therefore the lowering of standards and, ultimately, to less choice.

#### 6. IS THE BBC ORGANISED IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WAY?

Probably not, but it had improved under Greg Dyke who had also managed to restore the morale of the staff. It would be unwise to sell off sections of the BBC. It should continue to operate as a single entity which gives it more flexibility and ensures that it maintains its basic values and identity. The right choice of Director General and Chairman of the Governors will go a long way to addressing the problems of efficiency and effectiveness. (see Question 7)

#### 7. & 8. HOW SHOULD THE BBC BE RUN? HOW SHOULD IT BE REGULATED? ACCOUNTABILITY TO PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENT.

The BBC should continue to be overseen by a board of Governors who should be accountable to both Parliament and the public, and regulated by Ofcom. There should be a clearly defined distance between the Governors and BBC management. There should be a more democratic system of appointing the

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Governors. A proportion (1/3) should be elected by the public, possibly through an electoral college. The BBC should be accountable to the whole of Parliament, not just to the government of the day.

The Director General and the Chairman of the Governors should both be committed to the ideal of Public Service Broadcasting and have relevant experience in that domain. They should strive to promote and develop the BBC in the interest of all listeners and viewers. While rightly endeavouring to attract a younger audience, programme makers should not forget their older listeners and viewers who hunger for good programmes. With an ageing population this will soon be a considerably larger audience.

The public should have a greater say and influence on the BBC, through their elected governors and by participation in discussions through new technology. However those without access to computers etc. should not be excluded from this process.

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Finally - The BBC, in spite of its recent problems, continues to be respected throughout the world. To lose, or radically change, such a unique institution would be to lose part of our heritage. Improvement, development, reorganisation, yes, but let it remain essentially what it is - a public broadcasting service that seeks to put quality before market forces and to educate and entertain as wide an audience as possible.