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BBC Charter Review Consultation.
Dept. for Culture, Media & Sport,
2 – 4, Cockspur St. LONDON.
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Dear Sirs,

I picked up a leaflet in my local library, asking for opinions about the BBC, so here are my responses to the Key Questions:

Most Valued:

I most value that it is (largely) free from commercial influence. Most valued programmes are all Arts and Education subjects. There is far too much news and sport, which often over-runs or even causes cancellation of other programmes.

As resources are obviously limited, the BBC should mainly concentrate on programmes for Great Britain, and of course its famous World Service.

Covered less well:

Comedy – see below in “Changes”. Religion – hardly covered at all – there should be much more, and mainly Christian, since that is our State Religion.

Changes in technology & culture:

The rush into Digital technology was a huge mistake! Who was consulted? The cost is much more than suggested originally, and most people just cannot afford to buy up to 5 new radio-sets.

Signal strengths seem very variable for an acceptable performance from portable equipment. With Digital TV, there are additional problems & expenses. I can buy a good 14” colour set with tele-text for £50, try and compare this with a digital set-up! At the moment, my family has the choice of three sets in different rooms to cover our various interests. At our age and income, we could not cover the cost of replacing these for digital sets. Looking at the lists of additional programmes on offer, I would never consider it worthwhile.

Perhaps half the population are still NOT on the internet, but dozens of times a day I am infuriated by the ‘www’ announcements. When I hear of the computer problems encountered by friends, (viruses, spam, fraud), I consider that the BBC should drastically cut expenditure on web-sites and spend more on high quality programmes. They should lead – not follow! While talking about expenses, why is it necessary to send a camera crew to stand outside somebody’s front door or public building, while reporting a story? The subject is rarely interviewed, so a good picture of famous sites would be just as informative. Disasters are a different matter.

TV has far too many similar programmes, e.g. gardening, house-repairs, cooking, sometimes as many as three in one evening. Even when we get historical drama, the facts are often distorted or completely changed by some trendy writer.

Radio 4 still has many good programmes, e.g. “Our Own Correspondent”, “File on Four”, “In Touch”.

Changes:

Attention should be paid to improving pronunciation; (place names for a start) I enjoy dialects, but not sloppy speech and slang! Get rid of so-called contemporary comedy, which is now crude, childish and in some cases obscene. Bad language has been excused ("Feed-back") as "robust and contemporary". If I want manure I will go to the farm-yard for it! BBC should set high standards.

Commercial Services:

Definitely NO commercial programmes, but continue with sales of BBC Books, Magazines and Videos.

Licence Fee:

This should be kept, as I cannot see any other way to ensure that we keep the standard of radio stations we have at present, and be free of commercial interests.

Organisation:

I suspect that programmes have cost more, and the standards in some cases have dropped badly, when in-house groups and producers were replaced by outside companies. Engineering standards and technical quality have definitely dropped in the past few years. Transmissions are not sufficiently monitored by engineers, to spot when you have a problem.

Regulation:

This MUST remain completely independent of political and commercial organisations, and set the highest possible standards.

Accountability:

It seems almost impossible now to get anyone at the BBC to admit that they are wrong! For cases of serious misconduct or items/comments in bad taste, there should be an outside body (non-political, non-commercial), which has, as a last resort, the ability to censor presenters or programmes.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs. M. Stapleton.