

BBC Charter 2006

Reference to the leaflet" Your BBC Your Say.

First can I say that the way you advertised the way we licence payers could air our views on the BBC prior to its forthcoming charter was not beyond reproach. I picked up a leaflet from the library which was one of many on the leaflet turntable that was completely ignored by the library users. I am a frequent user of the library system and apart from myself I have not seen any one pick up any informative literature. Who goes to the library anyway? Most of them are pensioners seeking books and students on the internet. Why did you not include one of your leaflets when issuing the TV licence during the past year? Nobody that I know has mentioned the BBC's forthcoming charter. Apathy you might say. My view that the BBC has grown out of control and that we licence payers are unable to influence those that run the BBC at all.

Under no circumstances can it be right for any person who watches a television program without licence ending up in prison, particularly if it is one of the commercial channels they are watching which we indirectly pay for anyway. These so-called criminals are in the main the poorest of our society, mostly I suspect students, people living alone on benefits, and the unemployed. I take on board they may be others who are capable of paying the licence fee but refuse to do so, these I suspect are in the minority. It would of interest to know the breakdown of the status of those who end up in prison. A further point regarding the conviction sentences for using a television without a television licence, it would be interesting to know how many offenders receive absolute, conditional discharges, or other types of sentences not involving fines or imprisonment. Nowhere else do I know of such enforced payment as for our television licence? The penalties are draconian to the extreme and make a mockery of the outcry about prison numbers. Could statistics be published re above? The public have a right to know.

The BBC is funded by we licence payers but we have no say in what is shown on our television screens. The times I have heard people say "What a load of rubbish on television tonight" "There is nothing worth watching tonight" are very frequent. The BBC has two main channels, coupled with the popular digital box which gives ample scope for the BBC staff to please most of the people most of the time. With politicians we can change them by the vote but we have no say in choosing or getting rid of the people who run the BBC. How many dockers, council workers, nurses, builders and

the like are on the board of governors? all good licence payers. Watching a live open meeting sometime ago between the senior management of the BBC which included the then governor, most of the audience were critical of aspects of the BBC, but those on the platform I felt had things going their way and did not want any change. These types of meetings should be a regular thing, and should include, on the platform, professional media people who feel the BBC should be run differently, and perhaps a member from the Howard's League could also be included to enforce the contents of my ~~first~~ ^{2nd} paragraph.

A lot of talk is expressed by the serious television commentators about public service broadcasting commitments. This again is covered by statute. News plays a substantial part of this commitment. We can obtain this news just as well from many sources and it is just as accurate for free. I have one of these digital boxes and there are many good news programmes on "the box". The BBC numerous reporters are not needed, just to duplicate what other reporters are reporting on our television screens.

Why does the BBC keep expanding? The vast majority of licence payers want good entertainment (I include documentaries and the like) on BBC1, BBC2 and the four radio channels. All the rest of the BBC television and local radio stations should be privatised. They would still be run as efficiently giving the people what they want and reducing the amount we pay in licence fee. Much talk is given to the educational value of the BBC. This very important component could be taken over completely by the Open University who should be given their own dedicated television channel giving free coverage to all educational subjects.

I do watch and listen to sport on both television and radio, including those events on BBC TV and radio 5. Without doubt the BBC wins hands down in its cover and no one should complain. It is also too congratulated on its coverage on those sports other than football which generally dominates the sporting media. However showing more women's events would not be amiss, as would the change in the ever present "experts" who seem to dominate particular sports.

Funding of the BBC. I stand being corrected, but I believe that the BBC now has to import a quarter of their programmes. I do regularly listen to the radio, including radio two, four and five programmes; some of the items on these latter are privately made. These are just as good as those made by the BBC. This quota of privately made programmes should be increased so that the BBC only buys the best possible programmes that the people want. Should there be a need for the BBC to commission programmes to suite our varied wants this could be done via private companies. The saving on personnel and buildings would be immense.

I can only envisage three ways of funding the BBC. First by the government via taxation, which in my view a none starter, taking into account the possible "sway" politicians may have on the BBC. Second, via advertising, the same as the commercial channels, but there is only a limited amount of advertising available and I can foresee uproar from the independent channels. Third. Those that watch BBC should pay for it by subscription. This is the fairest way to fund the BBC, leaving the other channels to be funded as they are at present. Technology is such that this could be achieved without much difficulty. As in my first paragraph it cannot be right for

those who only watch the commercial channels should contribute to the upkeep of the BBC.

When the charter is being debated consideration should be given to include an equal right of reply to anyone criticized on the BBC (indeed to all forms of media). I find that deliberate interruptions, gestures and quips at the end of interviews most annoying. Accuracy, balance and "all relevant information" should be terms included in the charter as indeed in all media statutes.

The BBC offers some very good and varied programmes. Having said that, so it should with the money it receives from we licence payers which we are compelled to pay by law. This being so I (and most others) want to know how our money is spent and I do not mean in general terms. The licence payers should be told how much a program costs including the salaries of those involved then let us be the judge if it is worth it.

I hope the above is of some use.



John E Taylor