

## **The Future of the BBC**

We are writing to you in response to your consultation leaflet 'Your BBC : Your Say.' As listeners to BBC Radio and viewers of BBC TV for many years we would ask you to take into account our views on the following points raised in your leaflet :

### **1. The Value of the BBC**

What we most value in the BBC is its independence from political and commercial pressures, especially in the fields of news reporting and investigative journalism. We also value its thought provoking dramas, good magazine programmes such as '*Start the Week*', '*Loose Ends*' and '*Womens' Hour*', its satire programmes, like '*Have I got News for You*,' its humourous programmes, '*Sorry, I Haven't a Clue !*' and '*Just a Minute*,' and informative arts and educational programmes. Soaps like the *Archers* and *East Enders* we also enjoy.

### **2. Technological change, and cultural diversity**

We think the BBC should respond to new technologies, but should be careful not to put too much of its resources into marginal technological developments. It is better that these should be tested by the commercial sector. The BBC should devote more resources to creating home-grown programmes, and should be relying less on imported products. Cultural diversity should be reflected throughout the BBC staff, and not just in specific 'cultural slots' in the programme schedules.

### **3. Quality of Services**

Generally, we think that the services in current affairs, the arts and sport are very good, and that innovation and creativity should continue to be encouraged. We hope that the World Service of the BBC continues to be strongly supported.

#### **4. Commercial Services**

We think that the BBC should have only a secondary commercial involvement in say, the *Radio Times*, the sale of programmes to foreign channels and various ancillary activities. Its primary activity should always be as a public service broadcaster.

#### **5. Payment for the BBC**

The main source of income should continue to be the licence fee. The BBC should not receive money from general taxation, and should certainly not be dependant on commercial income. Income from commercial activities, sale of programmes and subcontracting of producing programmes should continue, but should never prejudice the financial independence of the BBC..

#### **6. Structure of the BBC, national and regional. The Royal Charter.**

The nation-wide structure seems to work effectively and takes into account the relative importance of national and regional activities. The basis of the existence of the BBC under a royal charter, issued under the royal prerogative, however, is wholly anachronistic in a democratic, modern state, and should be replaced by a statute, clearly defining the role and structure of the Corporation, and guaranteeing its total independence. The passage of the necessary Bill through both Houses will enable Parliament to make a proper contribution.


#### **7. Governors and Regulation**

We think that the present system of management, particularly the appointment of governors, is undemocratic and undesirable. It should be made more representative. It is suggested that all governors hold office for five years. They should number about 15. A third of those would be political nominees, a third elected by licence payers and a third elected by employees of the Corporation. They should elect their own chair. The current system under which governors are responsible both for policy and regulation is contradictory and unsatisfactory. The regulatory function should be transferred to a new body, the Independent Assessment Panel.

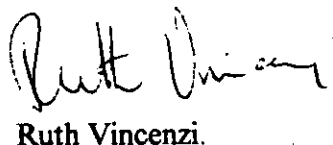
#### **8. The Independent Assessment Panel**

This Panel would have the role of monitoring the quality of broadcasting, dealing with complaints from the public and assessing, in cases of controversy, whether material is suitable for broadcasting, and if so, at what time. It would not be appropriate for public service broadcasting to be monitored by the body monitoring the commercial media, where different considerations apply. The Panel should be similarly composed as the governors, with a third of political appointees, a third of assessors elected by licence-holders and a third elected by BBC employees. We think this will enable the public to have a greater in-put into broadcasting and guarantee the continuing independence of the BBC which we value so much.

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Vincenzi



Ruth Vincenzi.