

10 March 2004

Tessa Jowell

Dear Minister

I was hoping to attend your RTS meeting in Birmingham yesterday to discuss the future of the BBC. Unfortunately, a hospital appointment made it impossible. However, I would like to put a thought to you concerning network radio and television production in England outside London for consideration in the Royal Charter debate.

Just so you know a little about me, I am the only person to have done all senior non-Metropolitan jobs in the BBC: Manager BBC Radio Bristol, Regional Television Manager BBC South West (Plymouth), Head of a Network Production Centre (Pebble Mill) and Head of Broadcasting BBC Midlands & East which combined the three programme disciplines. I also invented the concept of the English National Forum as a member of the Bloomfield Committee and wrote the paper which led to its inception. Since leaving the BBC in 1994 I have worked extensively in new media projects and commercial radio.

Over the last ten years Regional Television and Local Radio in the BBC have achieved much higher profile and funding. However, network production outside London in England--so important for social and economic reasons--has not even kept pace with increased finance and technological opportunities. In Birmingham, where you spoke yesterday, BBC network television production actually halved in two years during the mid nineties at roughly the same time as ITV also withdrew its massive network base; this at a time when expenditure on network programmes was higher than ever before and there were more channels than ever before, but not one outside London.

The BBC has never invested adequately in talent and resources for network programmes in the English Regions. They should now be made to do so in order to help higher the profile of these areas (where most of the population live) and to spread outside the South East the wealth generated by the licence fee which is paid for equally by citizens living throughout the land.

The way to do this is to impose via the Charter and Licence a **network radio and television production quota measured in money**. It happened for Independent Production, why not for network production in England?

Assuming the present regulatory structure remains for the BBC, the quota would be monitored internally by the English National Forum chaired by an English National Governor whose position would have to be created by Charter.

I hope this contribution is of use to you. If I can be of further help during the debate your office has only to let me know.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Waine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end. Below the signature are two horizontal lines, the first being a simple underline and the second being a slightly longer, more decorative flourish.

David Waine