

DOUGLAS VILLA

17 February 2004

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

To whom it may concern

I feel very strongly about the need for an independent responsible BBC. Having lived in a country where only the Government line was available through the media, I think independence is extremely important, if we are to be able to make informed decisions about issues on which we need to give opinions and make judgements. Having been in China during the Tiananmen Square period I know how much the World service and, through it, the whole BBC service are respected and admired by the rest of the world. It would be a tragedy not only for this country but for the whole world if that voice of reason and compassion were to be lost.

I believe that the best way for that standard to be maintained is:

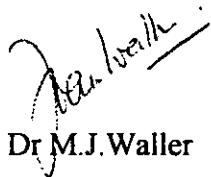
- for the BBC to be funded by the issue of licences so that it is independent of both political and commercial
- for the BBC to be overseen by a non-political Board of Governors and regulated by a non-political appointee
- for an impartial arbitration board to negotiate between both sides should a situation like that which occurred recently occur again
- for regional and truly (as far as possible) representative panels to be set up to promote local views and to act as a conduit for information to the central office
- for the BBC, given its freedom from other pressures, should give less consideration to ratings and more to its role within the community, to which end it should screen responsible programmes conveying positive values and civilised behaviour rather than pandering to the less attractive side of society and human nature. (I know I sound a prig, but we seem to be inundated with sex and violence and aggression; can we hope to have a civilised society while these are accepted as the norm? Please don't tell me that TV has no effect on our

behaviour – I know from my own experience that is not true.)

- for more consideration to be given to minority interests – it seems ridiculous when we have four mainline channels for all of them to be devoted to sport!
- for less aggression and confrontation, fewer “five minutes of fame experts”, less gossip and more programmes which can be enjoyed by people of all ages without embarrassment or irritation.

I am sorry I have become over-passionate, but I am a firm believer in the importance of communication, and the potential value or harm of any message which comes directly into the home, particularly when it is a visual image. You may certainly make use of my comments if you feel they are of use/interest, but I should prefer to know before you do, and to be able to qualify them if necessary.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dr. M.J. Waller", written in dark ink. The signature is slanted upwards to the right and includes a horizontal line at the end.

Dr M.J. Waller