

31/03/04.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to your pamphlet, "Your BBC. Your say", realising that I am no great authority on how the BBC works or indeed about many of the programmes.

**What do I value most about the BBC?**

The quick answer is that it is there ! At eighty I have seen a complete change in the use of radio and it's development T/V. For many years we were limited to radio and very few stations at that. The BBC, through it's quality children's ,drama, current affairs, comedy and news programmes was part of my early life. In addition the Corporation brought us coverage of all the news regarding the run up to WW2 and then, through excellent reporters, kept us in touch with the good and bad events of those six years. It provided music for the workplace, contact across the world with serving forces personal and lightened many a dark, dreary or noisy evening with humour. Since those days the BBC has been ingrained into my psyche and doubtless biased my present day opinions, a bias of which I am not ashamed.

During those war years the BBC built up a large overseas audience, many of whom listened in peril of their lives because the news could be trusted in lands where integrity of reporting no longer existed. That basis has been used and developed to this day when millions listen in all manner of countries to the voice of the BBC.

In the UK we now have the BBC regional services on radio, and to a lesser extent on T/V, which are welcomed for their very localised approach... We are very fortunate with R. Suffolk.

My main interest on radio is the news and comment together with some of the discussion programmes and also the late Alistair Cook. The tribute to him broadcast last night was both interesting and very fitting. It was also a good example of the part the BBC plays in the National life. The morning service is a must and provides a wide range of approaches to the gospel and it's application. Classical music is also well catered for. I do not now listen to much radio drama, but before T/V the Saturday night play was a must. I am not sporty but the broadcasts of cricket have always been very good, there have been some really excellent commentators over many years. .

Some of the best programmes on T/V are the archaeological, environmental, travel, natural world, historical and classical novel presentations. I enjoy Songs of Praise too. However with the former list I think that simulated scenes often detract from the very good substance and photography of the programme (a recent example was "The Nile" where superimposing pictures of ancient Egyptian towns on the banks of the great river added nothing, and for me were a distraction from the otherwise excellent history of the discovery of the route of the Niles. In the Songs of Praise the use of new technology often masks the real depth of the programme by showing singers and choirs in differing surroundings within the same song.

There has been a bumpy patch for the Corporation over the Kelly affair. It is clear that some of the systems for checking stories were faulty... nevertheless I still have great confidence in the integrity of this national institution.

I think some of the standing of the corporation is reduced by the use of all those programmes with prizes on screen I realise that it is unlikely the BBC could ignore these developments if the other channels are doing them....but a shame nevertheless.

As for areas where it serves the population less well,I do not know.One has to accept that things have changed totally in society and this must be reflected in the broadcasting industry.I do think that the BBC does not serve the cause of good spoken English as well as it did.One could not now always rely on the grammar being correct.I know language is a live medium which is always changing but I think the BBC could well be more conservative in it's approach to English.The increase of the use of foul language is regrettable and with few exceptions serves no real purpose.

I think that reporting and news coverage has been made less convincing with the coming of instant communication.I preferred reports that were sent ,edited and transmitted without any conversations between studio and reporter.Some of these latter,especially on T/V seem too contrived to be natural.I also believe that it is too easy to misconstrue events through too instantaneous transmission.

Of great value to me is the absence of ADVERTISING !The presence of this on other channels...sound and vision annoys me immensely and detracts from the presentation.

#### **How should the BBC adapt to cope with changes in technology and culture ?**

In the old days the BBC was the change in technology.Now it is much greater than that.There are so many developments so quickly that the mind boggles.It is necessary for the BBC to keep up to date although this may disenfranchise people who do not use the internet or e.mail.I suspect that is a common view with people of my generation.I have no such additions to my systems nor have I got digital T/V.

#### **Provision of services – Radio,T/V and online.**

It seems we have a very good service of T/V and Radio (world-wide).I cannot comment on the online service as I am not connected.

#### **Commercial services , should there be any ?**

An absolute yes to the question as to whether the BBC should run these services.Some of the publications are very good and so well produced.If programmes can be sold elsewhere so much to the good of the finances.

#### **Should there be a licence fee ?**

Definitely yes.I do not agree with the blanket non-payment of this fee because of one's age!Those of us who are on good pensions should not get preferential treatment over hard working people who may be on a lesser income.

**Organisation ?.**

I really do not know whether the present is the best that could be. I really have no way of knowing as I only see the results in programmes and few of those at that. I suspect that no organisation the size of the BBC should never think it is organised in the most effective and efficient way. All such organisations could do better and must change as the societies they supply change with time, so it is right that the BBC should review the way it operates. It is also right that, being a public body, there should be some form of independent assessment. Ideally the government should have no say in the matter. However as the licence fee is a political matter and the BBC handles important Government business, it would be a bit unrealistic to think the latter would have no say in the matter. BUT they must have no say in the reporting of news including political matters, which must of course conform to the laws of the land

**Should the BBC be regulated ?**

Yes. I think there should be a board of control that deals with the running of the organisation like any other business. There should be an independent regulatory body representing public interest. This relates to accuracy, morality and balance of comment on topical and political matters. The setting up of such a board and its composition seems to be a major question which I cannot answer.

**Accountability to public and parliament.**

The first of these is very difficult...who is the public ? In extreme cases it could be the legal system. Otherwise there has to be some sort of tribunal representing many sides of communal life...without becoming too large and unwieldy and hence ineffective. The second is easier. Parliament would appoint an all party BBC committee of MP's which should include some members with experience in broadcasting. It is imperative that parliament does not equate with government.

I am sorry that this is a bit hurried and late, but I only had a copy of the questionnaire a few days ago.

Yours sincerely,



Ewart Walls.

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