

28 May 2005

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

Dear Sir/Madam

BBC Charter Review

Comment has been invited from television viewers and radio listeners on BBC activities in the current Royal Charter Review.


Governance, Management and Staffing certainly becomes an issue in a period when programmes have been disrupted by union action over intended job cuts. A new Public Service Broadcasting Commission would like the long-established Board of Governors be politically appointed and Trustees are unlikely to be more or less accountable than those Governors they replace. A new two-tier system is certainly likely to usher in more bureaucracy at a time when the BBC claims it wishes to cut by 10% the present payroll.

The BBC Licence Fee has in effect become an annual tax for those who pay it and one it seems which is dodged by a not insignificant percentage minority. The idea therefore that part of the Licence Fee could go towards funding programmes by rival broadcasters seems a contradiction in terms. Unless of course the BBC were being completely transformed into a commissioning body for public service programmes and not producing any itself!

Long gone are the days when the BBC enjoyed a monopoly of the audiences in television and radio. Indeed it is more often in a minority. Instead of chasing ratings at the expense of quality it ought to retain a distinctiveness particularly as it is in receipt of public funds which are more predictable than advertising revenues in the private sector of broadcasting. Alas programmes and especially much that passes for News has become more speculative and time consuming at the expense of the informative which requires probing and questioning and some research effort.

Why not fund the BBC Licence Fee from the National Lottery? It will require double legislation for both BBC Charter and National Lottery. However besides putting Lottery Funds to better use than some current ones it would make the BBC more responsive to public support.

Yours sincerely


Jim Craigen