

BBC Charter Review Consultation
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur St
London SW1

4 Apr 05

Dear People:

Thanks for sending me a copy of the green paper.

Board, **trust**, sub-committee for croquet lawns – no matter what you call the bunch at the top of the BBC, its job is to keep the corporation clear of government interference and commercial dependence, while not wasting money. That way, the BBC has the best chance of remaining a great conduit of information, opinion and cultural expression that can eschew an obsession with black figures on the bottom line of the accounts and can jab any politician who fibs and flannels.

So, I support the **retention of the licence fee** to fund the BBC. Well, I would, being one of that small company that has no TV set, takes delight in the absence of advertising from BBC radio and celebrates the day when the radio licence was abolished. At the rate that broadcasting technology is galloping, it might soon be even more difficult than it is now to prevent everyone else joining me in not funding the BBC via the licence fee – what with images and sounds being sent directly to folks' retinas and ear-drums, for all I know.

With that in mind, the Department, the BBC, Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all had better **review** developments and options as often as need be.

All this carry-on, as the paper's writers seem to know, tends to **exclude the poorest** people – that is, those who don't extend their dodging of the licence fee to pirating the gadgetry needed to tap into the latest broadcasting services. Difficult though it may be, ways should be found to give everyone – however hard-up – a crack at whatever is being pumped out.

As for **additional funding** for the BBC, aside from the licence fee, advertising won't do. The BBC was set up to provide public service broadcasting that could function without the commercial cash that brings to the cheeks a pinkness that betokens poisoning rather than health.

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Sponsorship as a source of extra funding is also dangerous, for similar reasons. However, it is worth noting an example from Radio 3: on Saturday evenings, the live broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York are topped and tailed by a simple statement that help from certain foundations has made the broadcasts possible. Until the current season, the acknowledgement referred to an oil company as the benefactor. Even then, however, the name-check was not obtrusive because – and this is crucial – it consisted of just one sentence, spoken by an announcer as part of a list of credits for the programme.

If push came to shove - at Radio 3, say – it may be that even the crusty aesthetes who revere the shades of William Glock and the Third Programme would allow such brief, discreet salutes at the start and finish of programmes. There would be much harrumphing about thin ends of wedges, but they would be better than funding by **subscription**. Anyone who has heard classical music radio stations in the USA - constrained to plead over and over again for listeners to sign up, constrained also to broadcast the soothing fare deemed most likely to bring in cash – knows what a demeaning business and what dreary listening are apt to attend such funding.

A compulsory **levy on personal computers** that have no facilities to receive TV signals would be illegal and unfair.

If the BBC didn't exist, we would need to invent it. These days, though, I doubt that we would. So, let's keep the BBC, in its most uplifting form and functions.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert del Quiaro', written in a cursive style.

Robert del Quiaro