

Replied
21/4/05

Mr Scott G. Gallego

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RE- B.B.C ROYAL CHARTER

Dear Sir/ Madam

I offer my response to the B.B.C Royal Charter consultation document of March 2005.

Question 1 : The B.B.C, need to re-define their whole approach to P.S.B. Over the recent years the broadcasting output of the corporation has been a large duplication of the commercial networks. Soaps, D.I.Y shows and minority interest programs have lowered the overall standard of B.B.C programming. The foundations set forth in this document are good in theory but would the B.B.C use them in practice?

Question 2 : These are the right purposes to follow, if they are adhered to, we have seen these types of standards set down before.

Question 3: Again the Characteristics are right, but will they be followed. You speak of programmes that are challenging, original and innovative. Where does this come into programmes like 'EastEnders' or 'Changing Rooms'.

Question 4 : The B.B.C will have to be at the forefront in Digital television in order for it to work. During this charter period, the switchover from analogue to digital should be complete, if the government pulls its finger out, as the licence fee is to be retained the public must see clear signs that B.B.C money is being used, to ensure switchover does not become the farce that we saw at the launch of Channel Five.

Question 5: The funding of the B.B.C cannot last forever. The licence fee is expensive, outdated and not in the public interest. In the year 2005, we have access to over 400 television stations from home and abroad. Subscriptions for digital services offer many channels for relatively small fees. The licence fee is a large charge for the maintain of one corporation. A far better solution for the future would be for the B.B.C to become a privately owned company, free to use commercial and private revenue, in the digital age, PSB is no longer the social necessity it once was.

Question 6: Only to say that the way in which the corporation spends it should be tighter controlled, with less being spent on unnecessary ventures.

Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 : I can summarise my answers to questions 7-13 in one point. The formation of a B.B.C Trust sounds no better than the existing structure. What is the point in replacing the Board of Governors with exactly the same people. How many of these people would be genuinely representative of the general public. The board is currently made up of 50 something's who are to closely linked to the company and the industry. The proposals for this Trust would be for exactly the same. Highly educated, business orientated, middle aged people. They do not represent ordinary people. It is time to make the B.B.C genuinely public. Appoint people to this trust who are consumers, who can oversee the B.B.C with the public accountability it needs. Government appointed members only means more cronyism and government interference. You need of course to have legal expertise and financial brains, but as far as overseeing output, give this to ordinary people not a ever increasing bunch of non representative 50 something's.

Question 14 & 15: The window of Creative competition is a fine idea. Anything that can improve the quality of output should be commended. A mandatory quota of 15% should be set. The B.B.C will do nothing about this unless compelled to.

Question 16 & 17: The ever changing world of broadcasting will mean the B.B.C have to make changes over the next ten years. However I again dispute that the proposed B.B.C Trust can assess this in the public interest when they are not representative. A public consultation should be carried out when big changes are proposed, complete with detailed costs.

Question 18: I would like to see the B.B.C free to generate income from any commercial services it sees fit. Anything that prevents the increase in the licence fee should be welcomed. The more money they earn from commercial activities the less they will need to burden the licence payers.

Question 19: no comment

Question 20: It should be kept under review. The B.B.C, in my view, offers far less of defined P.S.B output than that of Channel Four. They tend to give greater emphasis on original and innovative programming than the B.B.C do. No soaps, DIY, or copy-cat programming. I would support a distribution of licence money to other broadcasters, it may make the B.B.C pull its socks up.

The B.B.C Charter is still the way forward, but look back. Since Charter renewal in 1996, the B.B.C has not flourished. They are becoming more expensive to run, content standards are continuing to fall. Scandals have rocked the corporation in recent years, public accountability is failing and the consumers are being ignored. The B.B.C is becoming an ever greater liability in an ever expanding market. They offer very little which cannot be found elsewhere. On Television and Radio they are have become lost in the digital world. My elderly grandfather says he never watches the B.B.C any longer because he finds nothing worth watching. The B.B.C's reliance on soaps and reality shows must end. Cutting edge comedy and drama are no longer the B.B.C's strength. This title belongs to their commercial rivals. The B.B.C needs to go back to its roots, back to what made it great and respected in the world. The B.B.C cannot afford to get the next ten years wrong.

Submitted with respect
Yours Sincerely


Mr Scott G. Gallego