

RECEIVED 24 MAR 2005

MMC

Philip E. Wynn, B.A. (Hons)

Dear Tessa Jowell,

I recently read the government's Green Paper on the future of the BBC, and your own biography and voting record in the Commons. Both make for interesting reading.

Both you and I are members of the post-war 'baby-boom' and grew up in this country in the 1960's. We both benefited from student maintenance grants at university and the absence of any form of tuition fees. I find it curious that you, having had that early assistance from the State, now deem it fit that undergraduates should start their working lives in debt. But then it is easier to control a population manacled, than a truly free populace.

You and I also witnessed the 'Glory Days' of British broadcasting, both radio and television. From Barry Took and Marty Feldman's *Round the Horne* on radio, through the reporting of such luminaries as Robert Kee, Ludovic Kennedy, Rene Cutforth, James Mossman et al, to the *Horizon* of Gordon Rattray Taylor - author of the seminal work *How To Avoid the Future* - Sydney Newman's *Armchair Theatre* ABC TV (Newman later became Head of Drama at the Beeb, of course - a Canadian, interestingly enough), and the staggeringly popular film series and variety shows of 'Uncle Lew's' ATV, our luck was overflowing. Big broadcasters then... Media minnows today...

I was personally relieved to read that you do not ridicule the Reithian concept of public service broadcasting - information, education and entertainment - IN THAT ORDER. Hopefully the Green Paper and succeeding legislation will ensure that Auntie - whose siblings ABC Australia, NZBC New Zealand, CBC Canada and even PBS United States - goes from strength to strength during the lifetime of the next Royal Charter. It is also to be hoped that politicians, of every persuasion, will cease their decades-old habit of attempting to bring the BBC 'to heel'.

It is, however, an enormous sadness to witness the destruction of the public service remit in commercial television. From the invention of *World in Action* by Australian Tim Hewat, to the Intertel documentaries (Rediffusion/ABC Australia/CBC Canada) and the early valiant attempts at LWT to transfer something of the BBC ethos to the commercial sector, now we have a wasteland. If viewers wish to live in an electronic cess-pit there are enough channels

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nowadays to cater to their every whim. The ITV franchises are in the gift of Government - Southern Television, TVS, TWW, Thames. all had theirs snatched from them. The Franchise Auction under the Conservative government, with its 'rolling' contracts, heralded the end for the least-worst commercial television system in the world. Apart from the many thousands of innocent victims made redundant as a direct result of this political chicanery, ITV in the regions and on the network, died. When Charles Allen recently jubilantly reported pre-tax profits of £340 million for ITV plc, the phrase coined by Roy, Lord Thompson of Fleet, then owner of Scottish Television describing an ITV franchise as 'a licence to print money' echoed down the years.

I am reliably informed that the BBC is actively seeking up to 3000 staff redundancies over the next three years. One must hope that Messrs John Humphries (ex TWW) and David Frost (ex Anglia, Rediffusion, BBC, LWT, Westinghouse (US) are among those whose services will be dispensed with, but maybe contractual difficulties could impede a quick resolution of their futures. As opinion has replaced reporting of news, as chat has replaced interviews and as smut has replaced creative innuendo and double-entendre on the frequencies that are in the gift of Government, small wonder that the myriad of social and economic problems facing the nation grows in ever-increasing circles year by year.

Michael Grade is perhaps the only man left in this country who has 'hands-on' experience of television in both the commercial and public sectors. More power to him, and more power to your department which decided on retaining his services at the head of the Corporation. Hopefully his colleagues will be chosen, not from the great and the good of film, television, politics or academia, but from concerned individuals who reveal a knowledge of radio and television from having 'been there, done it and got the T-shirt', the internal pressures and external threats facing Auntie, the need to be innovative without alienating the audience and above all, individuals who are conscious of the debt they owe to the pioneers of broadcasting in the '50s and '60's who all of them, went through the horrors of World War II and came out the other end to educate and entertain the succeeding generation.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'I. G. G.' or similar, written in a cursive style.