

**TRANSCRIPT OF EXTRACTS FROM
MEETING OF THE BBC CHARTER REVIEW
HELD IN BOURNEMOUTH
ON MONDAY, 29 MARCH 2004**

LORD MCINTOSH

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. My name is Andrew McIntosh and I am the Minister for Media and Heritage, which being interpreted is broadcasting and press, but in this case of course particularly broadcasting. Can I warmly welcome you to this part of our BBC Charter Review. As you know, the BBC's Charter comes up for renewal every 10 years and the next time is the end of 2006. So for several decades now we have consulted the people of this country about their BBC, about your BBC, what do you think about it, what are the good and bad things, how do you think it should be run, how you think it should be paid for, and all of the questions, any of the questions that you want to discuss and you want to express your views about to us this evening.

I am not going to be running the session. We have Kate Blackshaw, who is our Facilitator for this evening, and she will be explaining the process that we have. My only purpose is to say that this is the first stage in our consultation process. We have already put out something like 600,000 leaflets and quite a number of booklets about the BBC and about the Charter Review. We have had thousands of responses, in advance of our deadline of 31 March, letters, phone calls, e-mails, everything have all been coming into us, and at the end of this process, this is the last of 6 meetings which we have been holding around the country, and at the end of this process we will be analysing the responses and we will be publishing a Green Paper, Green Paper meaning with lots of decisions still to be taken towards the end of this year, and that will perhaps reduce the number of options in the light of what people have been saying to us, but I don't think it will close too much off and there will still be an opportunity after that for people to express views, knowing what other people think I think basically.

Now the government's position is very straightforward on this. We are not now expressing opinions on all of the issues that we might wish to. All we are saying will come out of this process is that we will have a strong BBC and a BBC which is independent of government, and although I would like to express my views, just like everybody else, I have taken a vow of silence for the process of this consultation process. I will be available in the back if there are any questions of fact that I can help with, but I will not be expressing any opinions on the issues you are going to be discussing. So I think that is really enough that I can say.

(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)

FACILITATOR

So, quite a lot to think about there. Over 50% of the households in the United Kingdom currently have digital television. I believe more than 90% can actually receive it. Is the BBC good value for money? Do you want to retain the licence fee?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am happy with the licence fee, I think it is a sensible way of getting the money, but I have a suggestion about an alternative means of collecting it. At the moment the licence attaches to a person. Could we not attach the licence to a property? In that way you could pay local authorities to collect television licence money with your council tax. Now local authorities have a record of collecting something over 99% of the council tax that is due – that is a record that television licence authorities can never match.

FACILITATOR

That is very true. How do you propose that that money would be collected from people, for example, who said I haven't got a television, I don't watch the BBC?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

There would have to be exemptions. People over 75 for example don't pay for a TV licence. And there are people, not many I don't suppose, but yes if they could prove to somebody that they didn't have a TV, then they would be exempted as well.

FACILITATOR

Any other exemptions that you would bring in there, like low earners or anything like that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

No. They enjoy the same programmes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The unemployed should be exempt, because I have been stitched £600 through the courts for non-payment of fines because I claimed poverty, and I just wondered if you actually got my £600 in fines until 2006. But I think that jobseeker, disabled people and other low income people should be exempt.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am definitely in the minority here because I don't have a television set. I choose not to have one. But I am being hounded by the television licensing authorities because every 3 years they send me letters, they request my confirmation that I do not have a television set, and then they say that even if I reply, saying no I don't have one, they will send somebody to my house who can gain entry and search my flat to see if I have a television set, and I think that is appalling. And so I do disagree with this gentleman here, I think it should be related to a person, rather than a property, because you do move round sometimes, and obviously as in the past I have had a television set occasionally, I have always bought a licence before I have even switched it on, I have informed them when I got rid of it, and as I say I came along tonight because I have just had yet another letter, and I have steam coming out of my ears, and I just felt I had to come along tonight to make a protest on behalf of the people in this country who do not have a television set, and a lot of people don't because they have perhaps a holiday home which doesn't have one, and I have spoken to people who have also been on the receiving end of these numerous letters.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much, that is a very good point. Would anyone else like to pick up that point?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I notice that you collect £2.7 billion in total for your licence fee, and I looked at your annual report and it showed either £104 million, or £124 million, I can't remember which, that it costs you to collect that licence money.

FACILITATOR

Can I just point out that this evening isn't actually being run by the BBC, it is actually by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, but I take your point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

So it costs £124 million to collect. Now if the government was to pay them one cheque out of general taxation, which is paid by a person's ability to pay, you would then need £124

million less to collect in, so everybody would benefit, except the few people in the country who haven't got a television. But it is a more economic way of getting that money in.

FACILITATOR

So the only people that would be out of pocket, as it were, would be this lady here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The few people who haven't got any need for having a licence, which is very few out of the 62 million in the country, but it would save £124 million, which is worth saving I think.

FACILITATOR

So a fraction of a penny on taxation would be a fairer way.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

And on the question of funding, although we pay the BBC licence fee, let's not forget, we pay for ITV by purchasing products that are advertised, and that is so often forgotten, and we the viewer gets no choice on either programmes, so they compete against each other for points and we pay either way.

FACILITATOR

So as the BBC is a system broadcaster, do you think we are more consumers these days or do you think it should be a citizens' broadcaster?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Value for money is represented by management, and I think it is very difficult to justify the management of the BBC as being amongst the top sphere of management companies. Secondly, I have been in television, I was Chairman of a group of television franchise companies in the United States for a number of years. Has anybody done a percentage analysis of what is on television during the day – and if you do, you would be amazed to see what percentage is represented by American TV rubbish. It is a very high percentage.

FACILITATOR

Is that the BBC that you are referring to, or is that across the board? The BBC.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes. Thirdly, although I no longer have to pay for my television licence, nevertheless for a number of years I have been buying Sky, and I get nothing extra from the BBC because I pay for Sky and I was paying for the BBC, and there are, what, 5 million subscribers or more to Sky now, amongst the households here, so there is a great duplication of money going down the drain really. And if I could just make one other point, and that is the sports programmes that have been lost by the BBC, their inability to compete. Their inability to compete just tells people we are not in a position to compete, and that in itself I think justifies commercialism.

FACILITATOR

So you think the BBC would be best situated competing in an open market.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Either that, or being a production company, and not being a transmission company.

FACILITATOR

A very interesting point. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am wondering how far the question you are asking is relevant. I suspect that you are a Civil Servant. Am I right?

FACILITATOR

You are incorrect. No.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well OK, you are from the department, yes?

FACILITATOR

No, I am not, I am independent.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You are independent?

FACILITATOR

Yes I am.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

So then why is this department ...

FACILITATOR

I am just making the point ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

OK, well I will continue with the point.

FACILITATOR

Yes, please do.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It seems to me that it all depends upon whether the government considers as a matter of fact it is desirable to have a public broadcasting association. If the government as a matter of fact decides that it is to the advantage of the country to have a public broadcasting association, then they are going to underwrite it, however it is funded. And if it is to be a public broadcasting association, then if they think it is going to compete in an open market, would they allow it to go under – as ITV 2 did? I have very grave doubts about that. And if they are then to underwrite it, that means that it has to be funded by public taxation, which it is at the moment through the licence fee, which of course limits choice, as indeed this evening has been limited by the department setting the agenda of what is to be discussed, rather than what might interest the audience, as to how the BBC performs. Therefore one wonders whether we serve any useful purpose by being here at all this evening. And perhaps the Minister would like to say whether or not whatever is determined there is going to be, as a matter of fact, a public broadcasting organisation. And if so, is that going to be the BBC in any event?

FACILITATOR

Obviously I can't answer for the Minister. Perhaps you would like to answer that.

LORD MCINTOSH

I can't do more than I said at the beginning. We have said – and the only thing we have said – is that the outcome of this will be a strong BBC and a BBC independent of government,

and if that equates in your mind to a public broadcasting company, then so be it. But I am not going to be drawn into the debate because it would be quite unfair of me to do that myself.

FACILITATOR

In fairness I should have said earlier, the questions that we put up on the board as suggestions for discussions this evening were just suggestions. You are free to bring anything into the debate that you would like to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I was just wondering about independence, if the licence fee guarantees independence, what difference does it make if you take the licence fee out of general taxation, how does the government interfere with the process of being a public broadcaster, because if you just take the money out of general taxation, eg add on a penny to tax, are there rules and regulations that can guarantee the BBC's independence, even though the government is funding it directly through taxation?

FACILITATOR

Again, I am afraid I am not able to answer. I don't know if there is anyone in the room this evening that can give you an answer on that. Certainly it will be recorded.

LORD MCINTOSH

I really don't think I ought to be drawn into the debate, forgive me, but I think it would be unfair on you and unfair on the government to do that. The point that you are making is a legitimate point which has been made by a lot of people in the last few months. It is a perfectly legitimate point, it is a question as to whether, if you had a BBC funded out of general taxation it would be genuinely independent. There are those who think it would, and there are those who think it wouldn't, and I don't think I can go any further than that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

... an option, to take it out of general taxation rather than charge a licence fee, because income tax for example is means tested, which means that you only pay tax if you are working, and I am unemployed, and I have been ..., like I said, would that not be a fairer system of payment.

FACILITATOR

This evening is a series of comments of options and ideas and we are not actually obviously making any decisions tonight, but we are registering everything that is being said tonight, and as I said earlier, that really will all be put together towards the process.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would like to suggest that there is no fee to be paid by those people who are aged 60 and over. Secondly, I don't know this evening if you are going to talk about the BBC Charter, but I tried to obtain information from the BBC on their charter, a summary would have been helpful, but it was impossible to get. And I think that one of the important things in this discussion is to know the details under which the BBC operates for its charter.

FACILITATOR

Can I ask you how you tried to obtain that information?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I telephoned the BBC and I was referred to a very expensive document. I would have thought it is the duty of the BBC to provide a cheap or a free summary of their responsibilities and duties.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much for your point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

On the screen it says: Does the BBC deliver value for money? I don't think they do. I think before they do anything at all they need to have a good close look at the quality of the programmes that they are putting out at the moment – drama, entertainment, news, whatever. Should the licence fee be retained? Well I agree with that in some form or another, and there have been several ideas put forward this evening. So the other two questions on the board, as far as I am concerned, are not applicable. But if there are two programmes on in an evening, say at 9.00 for an hour, one on ITV and one on BBC, then what I would normally do is watch the BBC programme, record the ITV programme and then fast forward through the commercial break.

FACILITATOR

I am familiar with that one, yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Having said that, the BBC is commercial to a certain extent. It spends a lot of time advertising its own programmes, sometimes talking over the end of the programme as if they are scared to death that you are going to switch off, and they are advertising the next programme, often they are advertising programmes up to 6 days ahead and it is continuous, continuous, continuous, and that has the effect on me of putting me off that programme. If they want to advertise their future programmes they should do it over a much shorter time period, because it certainly puts me off. I think they spend for example in the news programmes a lot of money unnecessarily on outside reporters. The classic example I can think of recently, and I can't think of the personality concerned, but it was a person who was in prison. Something had happened and a reporter was sent to stand outside of the prison and give a report about that person. They didn't interview the person, they didn't go into the prison, and to my mind that was a waste of time and money.

FACILITATOR

That is very commonplace, isn't it, if someone is in hospital they send someone to stand outside the hospital, of it is prison they send someone to stand outside the prison.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, there are other examples of this. Too much time is spent speculating on a decision that is about to be made. The Budget for example, they spend hours and hours interviewing people, what do you think will happen. That turns me off, because it is a waste of time, let's wait for the decision and see what happens.

FACILITATOR

So you would like to see it more concise, less wordy?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would, and certainly as far as outside broadcasts are concerned, sometimes with admittedly quite serious programmes, they will spend a lot of time interviewing about six different people on the same subject, all outside reporters, and I do feel that that is a waste of time. Today they sent a reporter, it might have been more than one, I can't remember, to

Dublin. They have decided in Ireland, no smoking in public places as from today. It is a controversial subject and it should have been on the news. Fine. But they sent a reporter over there who started interviewing people in the street to see how they felt about it. Well of course with a controversial subject of any kind, you will always get people for and always get people against, and that doesn't do anything for me at all.

FACILITATOR

Can I just take you back to one of the earlier points you made about quality. I would just like to make that open to the rest of the audience, what you feel is quality broadcasting and what perhaps isn't.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That actually comes in quite nicely to the point I wanted to make. But can I just first comment very briefly on the question of whether it is a licence fee or taxation. As to what the government of the day determine at the moment the BBC licence fee, the government of the day will always determine our level of taxation. There is no distinction between them as far as the independence is concerned, so how does one – which is the question I am throwing back to you and your colleagues – how do you have true independence and yet something publicly funded? There are examples of course here and in other countries. May I now turn to the point which was raised by the gentleman over there – the BBC Charter. As I remember, the mission is, it may be plainly false, the mission is to educate, to inform and to entertain.

FACILITATOR

As I understand it, that is correct.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, that is correct but that is an inadequate summary. But nevertheless, we have talked about entertainment. Can I just have a couple of words on the other two points. First of all on the educational aspect, there is a distinction to be drawn between educational and educative. The BBC education service does a reasonable job, though I think perhaps not as good as it did in the past, but nevertheless there is this great mission which it ought to have, is to produce general output broadcast of sufficient quality and interest so that people may be stimulated to learn further in a world where we talk about lifelong learning. I am bothered about the lack of co-ordination between broadcasting authorities. You look at what is on, and if you indeed use digital – as many people here do – then you will see there is the history programme on there, their history programme on there, often competing in ways which are not entirely desirable. And I think this whole aspect of education or educative, and that first mission should be looked at. May I now turn to the first one, and I am never sure in which order these things come, educate, inform and entertain. I would have thought that to inform is a very important aspect, and one of our splendid actors just now used the word, well we get the news we trust, don't we? I come from a generation, looking round, I think that other people may well be coming from the same sort of generation, when I trusted the BBC absolutely implicitly, and as I listened as a child to Lily Balero (phon), I had this feeling, as people all over the world, this is the truth, never mind what anybody else thinks. And I would like to think that this is still the same, that this country leads the world in quality broadcasting. I have to say, and perhaps other people will come to this point later in some more detail, that having particular knowledge of one part of the world, when I do see some of the broadcasts which seem to me to be slanted or incorrect, then it makes me wonder about other parts of the world. Am I getting the right information about Continent A, or Continent B? So I suggest that we don't bother too much about the entertainment aspect, I think we are doing reasonably well on that, though there

are many caveats which have been said before, but that we do look very carefully at the educational aspect and particularly to import the information.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much indeed for your points, some very good points brought up there. I think that one thing I should have mentioned earlier was the funding, the governance and the role of the BBC. They are obviously all intertwined, there is no way that we can discuss one without the other. Has anyone got one more point on funding specifically before we move on?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think the problem that I see with the whole debate about the BBC, particularly when it comes to funding, is that we are in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water. Now I believe that any form of commercialisation, or any form of turning the BBC over to subscription or reducing its role, I think would be a disaster. Many people say the BBC isn't providing quality programmes, but if you actually look at the alternatives, if you actually look at what Sky puts out in its general entertainment programmes, I could quote you from here that tonight you will get Stargate, the Simpsons, Star Trek, about three times over each thing. ITV, it seems to be fairly thin on good programmes, Channel 4 is perhaps the exception, but that tends to be a bit specialist. But I do think that the only way that you can realistically support the BBC is some kind of licence fee. But the gentleman earlier on, and I was quite impressed to actually hear a view that I hadn't heard before, when he said well why not collect the licence fee as part of the council tax, and if the council tax exists in the future, an excellent idea. Why not then also make it subject to the same benefit system that government tax is governed by? If we went over to a local income tax, or another way of collecting local finance, then why not collect it as a small supplement on top of that? Because to me that is the only way that I think you can finance the BBC, you have got to make it available to all people, and if you think deeply about it you actually start to realise that most of what the alternatives are in the way of broadcasting is actually quite mediocre, much of it is recycled old BBC programmes anyway, and so we ought to not lose sight that we do have quality there, it is not perfect but there is quality there, even down to the radio service and so on, and I think we should at least keep what we have got and fund it in a similar way to the way that we are funding at the moment, but maybe collected in a different way and, as I say, subject to benefits.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much indeed for that point. I am afraid we do have to move on now, and the second item for discussion this evening is that of governance and regulation - or how the BBC is run. Currently 12 Governors that are appointed by the Crown and they have the dual job of both overseeing the BBC and regulating it.

(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)

FACILITATOR

So, is it time we changed the way we govern the BBC? Is the BBC being run in the most effective and efficient way possible?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think the phrase today in many contexts is if it ain't broke, break it, and if something has been continuing for 81 years then that in itself is a reason to look at it. But I want to pick up on one thing first that the actors said in the last few minutes, that the BBC is respected worldwide. And one of the reasons why I think many of us are here this evening is because we sense that respect is diminishing, and the idea of independence has already been aired

and independence as it is linked to the financial arrangements for the BBC. But what is just beginning to come up, and I hope will be explored more in this section of discussion, is not so much independence but impartiality and objectivity, and if it is in the gift of the governors to actually take on board some of the criticism, some of the tidal wave at times of criticism, that the BBC generates because of its perceived lack of objectivity, lack of impartiality, albeit independent perhaps of government, that that is not really all the independence that is required in this day and age because we are influenced by far more, and controlled by far more just in our own national government. I think in the section on governance, the debate really needs to get deeper into those areas of objectivity, impartiality, how as consumers we can actually be heard more clearly and in a more timely fashion when we perceive very clear examples of lack of impartiality, lack of objectivity, all of which contribute to an overall diminishing of the respect that the BBC has had and needs to preserve if we are to retain our confidence in it and pay for it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Two ideas. One is citizen panels, can they regulate and scrutinise the work of the BBC. And secondly, why can't the independent broadcasting authority regulate the BBC like they regulate ITV and Sky?

FACILITATOR

Two very valid points there. If you were to choose a citizen unit, where would it come from, let me ask you that, where would you like to see it come from?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am in a bit of ... situation, I used to work for the BBC. There is a regional way of getting your point across in our regional governance. As far as the BBC currently, I finished working for the BBC in 1983, I had quite a lot to do with them during the last Conservative Charter, or the application to the Conservatives. I think what has happened in the 20 years since I have left is get rid of anybody who knows anything about broadcasting, staff the entire BBC with people who used to work at Asda, and basically if you are going to have any form of respect for people, get rid of them, because then you will have a frustrated and demoralised staff who if they want to get their point of view across, they can't, it is blocked. And as for impartiality, I used to take part in MP Seminars at the BBC, probably lost a few MPs down in the deep dark annals of Broadcasting House. I myself have been asked the question many times – is the BBC impartial? And while I was at the BBC I used to go, I can't exactly remember, I used to shake my head and say no, and nod my head and say no, because I couldn't say anything out loud. No, it is not impartial, it never has been impartial and it never will be impartial. I don't think it stands a chance really in this day and age. It is very sad.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much. So the Board of Governors at the moment, as has just been said, is comprised largely of non-experts in the broadcasting industry. Can I ask for comments from the floor about that, whether people would prefer it to be from within the industry or from outside, independent – that word that has been used a lot this evening.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You will have to forgive me, I have got to go soon, because I have made the trip from Bristol today. Can I say about the sufficient response of viewers and listeners. I have put many ideals, which I am not going to go all the way through, but simple basic things that can kind of improve the quality and standards of the Beeb, which I hope stays as it is. And with that is just washed to one side, look we are the BBC, we know what we are doing for you, and with that they will not listen to any fresh ideals. One of the ideals that annoys me, on

Saturday morning just gone on the local Ceefax, the same stories were still there this morning, two days later, and there have been quite a few incidents that have gone on over the weekend, and it is basically look just bang it on there, nobody will recognise it while it is up there. Message boards are very annoying from my point of view as a football fan because with that they are shut down at 10.00 at night, so if you have been to a football match, night-time, you can't unload your views on the game against anybody else. That is another thing that really frustrates me. If I can just go through a couple of other ones and then I will come back to your original about leadership and that sort of thing. As regards to the standards of English, I think the standards of English, as we all know, is atrocious, and unfortunately mine is not a lot better. But I have suggested on the ceefax stories that they have the e-mail address of the composer of the story. I have suggested that, but no, no, we aren't going to have that because with that we could find out the people who could write English. Sorry, I mean to say oh no, we don't want that, but as you know in all good quality newspapers it always has the e-mail address so that ... your English is good, your English is bad. From a football point of view, if I don't bore any non-football followers, the thing that I would like to see, and I am talking from a Bristol City fan – we do come down here from time to time and we do enjoy ourselves – is the fact that I would like to see like with Swindon, Swindon Town's football matches are broadcast home and away live, all matches, and I think that BBC Bristol should have the same privilege.

FACILITATOR

So that is really the local ... which we probably will come on to once you have left unfortunately.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes. As regards to the new Commander in Chief, I am led to believe that Bill Thompson is one of the ones that is mooted for the new job. I do hope he gets it because he does like football. So I am going to listen for another half an hour and then I shall have to make the train journey back. Thank you for your time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think the problem is in the three questions that you are asking. Firstly, the answer is no, but that really depends upon what is decided as to how the BBC is to be paid for and what it is to be. If it is to be a commercial organisation, then it should be run by a Board of Directors and be regulated in the same way as the independent broadcasters are now.

FACILITATOR

Do you think it should be a commercial organisation?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well the short answer to that is no, and the reason is that it would be very unusual to have a country without a public broadcasting association, which is why I have said that I don't think the government intends anything other than the BBC should be a public broadcasting commission. If it is to remain a public broadcasting commission then you can't have a board of governors that is there to champion, and also to regulate, because the two functions are inconsistent and irreconcilable, as was proved recently and led to the resignation of the Chairman.

FACILITATOR

So you would like to see those two functions separated out into two separate bodies.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Indeed, but then to whom should the BBC be accountable? Well obviously the BBC should be accountable to its consumers, who are the general public. But is then to be the representative of the general public, if not someone like the independent broadcasting commission. I have grave doubt in fact whether if there is a public broadcasting association, which the BBC is, that the government would be prepared to allow regulation to pass to something like the independent broadcasting commission, but doubtless I will live to be proved wrong. Is the BBC sufficiently responsive to its viewers and listeners? Who would know? They regulate what goes on the notice boards, they edit out what views they don't like. The problem is, as has already been said, who regulates in effect the independence and objectivity of the BBC?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't believe the BBC should be accountable to its own governors, I believe it should be regulated by an external body, the same regulation as other broadcasters, so I think they should be accountable to somebody outside themselves. And that is related to the last point – is the BBC sufficiently responsive? I am a keen listener to Radio 4, although I am tailing off with the huge amount of advertising, every time I hear an advert for something I want to turn off, and it makes me deliberately not want to hear the programmes.

FACILITATOR

That is a point that has been brought up before.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That is right, that really, really annoys me, that is the biggest thing of all to me. So anyway, I listen to Feedback on Radio 4, which is about all on BBC Radio 4, which is about all of BBC Radio and people can come in with complaints about ... but what seems to me perhaps all the time is that somebody comes up with a valid complaint that is important to them, ie the advertising thing, and then they get somebody on from the BBC who is a Director in charge of several programmes or something, and they say oh no we are right and you are wrong, and that is it, that is all that happens.

FACILITATOR

So you come across a brick wall basically.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That is exactly it, and because the BBC is only accountable to itself, nothing more can happen. That person might get it mentioned to them by their boss, but that is all private and nothing more happens. The only time any mistake is made, and is admitted, is when there is a technical problem, when somebody says ah yes well that was because of a tape machine, or somebody put the wrong CD in or something, it is never yes I admit it, that was a bit of a naff policy, yes we will change it. They never say that.

FACILITATOR

So you are very much in favour of an external assessor and independence.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Particularly on the Feedback thing, I think what they should have is a listeners panel and let, after the BBC producer or whatever it is has responded and said no I think we are right and you are wrong, a lot of people think this, they should get viewers voting on something and saying was he right or wrong, and let that be the final arbiter, not somebody who just happens to be ...

FACILITATOR

I ask you the same question as I asked just now, where do you get that listeners' panel from, just out of interest? All walks of life?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

All walks of life, ordinary people, because we are the consumers, we are paying, and I think we should be the final arbiters of whether something is adequate. Obviously you need regulators who are semi-professionals, a bit like the governors are at the moment, but I don't see why the BBC should be governed and regulated separately from other broadcasters. I want to see the BBC separate, I want to see it funded separately, I want it to stay public and as impartial as it is possible to make it, because when there is some doubt about whether the BBC has made some mistake or not, not to be judged internally but to be judged by an external body. You have to submit to somebody.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it comes down to trust, is the key element, and anything that involves the Crown means the government, and the government appointing the BBC, how could that ever be impartial? And when it comes to appointing the governors and regulating themselves, it obviously comes down, you have to again look at the standards of the programming and what do the public think, and do the public trust them to be able to put in the right standards of programming and get the right programming that society wants.

FACILITATOR

Is that what you are thinking about doing?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

No, and me being quite young here, I have a different approach than everyone else. But when I talk to friends about what we watch on TV, we don't talk about the BBC programmes, we don't watch them, bar sport, and maybe a couple of others like Eastenders – yes, bar Eastenders, which obviously everyone watches – that is a separate show. Joke. It is mainly satellite and we watch – the young people watch – because we think the standard of programming that is coming from America, or Sky 1, or Discovery, is to a much higher standard, and we see that and we don't trust the government. But also if you look at the internet, the BBC website where they put up all these debates and topics, a lot of the times you can go on there, and see a lot of points, and you can see they are biased, or you can see how they are approached and you can put your points through and just nothing will happen, they will go up only a certain point, it is when you go to other independent websites, they will put up your points much more freely and much more proactively, so you get a much more split view of what actually public opinion is.

FACILITATOR

So do you think the BBC has been paying lipservice to you, just put your point down here but it is not going to go any further.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It very much is lip service. It puts up a question, and then the views it takes are very much pointed to one side or how its reporters have actually covered the situation, if we were to take the news for instance. And I do feel that with an independent regulator covering it, and the governors were appointed independently by someone separate other than the government or by themselves, then you would get a much fairer view and a much better standard of programming, because they won't be then just saying well we have chosen this programme and we think it is excellent. They will be of a better quality, and I think that is shown by an article in the Times yesterday which is saying that the most popular programmes on the BBC are Fawlty Towers and Only Fools and Horses, and they are still

taking up peak time on a Saturday and a Friday night. And that says something about the standard and that says why people are leaving BBC. And if we have the choice, coming back to licence, I wouldn't pay it, because I would just buy digital, if I had the choice.

FACILITATOR

So you would like to see that completely separate, the option of buying the BBC or the option of Satellite or whatever.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would just like to pose the question, we have heard it from so many people in the room that everybody thinks it is a case of the BBC, we tell you what you are going to watch, you have got no choice, and the young gentleman who has just spoken said it, you put your views on the internet, nobody listens to them. How do we know, and I don't know if the Minister would like to tell us, the views that have been given in these meetings around the country are actually going to get taken notice of this time, or is this just another BBC scam?

FACILITATOR

I am sure the Minister will address that at the end of the meeting. Thank you very much for your point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

... at the moment, doesn't it. The BBC do have them around the country, so how are they appointed?

FACILITATOR

Again I am afraid I cannot answer that question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You just see it in the paper, you might see it on a website or something like that. I took quite a few years to find out where it was, so I managed to get on the panel eventually.

FACILITATOR

So it is just adverts in the press and you apply, just like any other job.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You mentioned earlier on about the annual report. Perhaps I am just interested, but I have never seen nor heard anything about annual reports on the BBC Television. If we wanted to see it, how would we see it in fact? I am sure that the BBC should give much more publicity to the annual report from the comments which are made. But like the gentleman from Bristol, we have to leave shortly, so could I just mention some of the things that concern me? One is that the standard of your news coverage is becoming absolutely abysmal. If I want to learn about the news I would go to Channel 4. And also, as has been mentioned, you appear to be biased in many ways, your political correctness goes beyond belief. You seem obsessed with political correctness.

FACILITATOR

I will try not to take that personally, but I can ... where you are coming from.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It is not that I am against the ... what I am against is the way in which you portray things and which you seem, might I just say, the chance of an Englishman getting on interesting views is getting rather difficult. You set a very bad example to young children. When you do put good programmes on they are usually at the wrong time. Why you have to put Panorama on a Sunday night at 10.15 strikes me as being absolutely stupid.

FACILITATOR

A programme issue.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You ignore the needs of Christian people to have a church service on a Sunday morning. You forget a lot of people are disabled, or in hospital, and can't go to church. Surely you should be able to give one denominational service each week so that people can actually attend church on television. Also we are utterly fed up with the bad language and explicit sex. Most people have a vague idea of how people make love. Do we have to have it so explicit, and is that good for young children to see? What is the deadline for? People have television in their rooms and they can see it. Sometimes to turn on television at midnight and hear the dreadful language which is used is dreadful, and I really shudder that my little grandchild should hear this language and have to say to her that this is not to be used. ... uses it. Well maybe, but the BBC should set a high standard, and quite frankly I agree with the gentleman earlier on who says that the standards of the BBC have dropped very badly. There was a time when I could say that if the BBC says it, it is true. But not any more. And on the whole, if I had the choice of having the BBC and paying a licence or not, I wouldn't waste my money.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much for your point. Someone mentioned in one of the earlier meetings, who has got the Mary Whitehouse role these days. In days gone by people knew where they could write to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I have got to go soon. This gentleman asked where you can get the annual report. It was advertised on the television, it gave you a phone number to ring, which I rang and a copy was sent to me. That is where I read that it costs £124 million just to collect the money. Somebody was talking about competition between ITV and BBC. At the end of the day, we pay for both, either with a licence or the products, yet they compete against each other for sports events and things, and they end up paying horrendous millions for it. The BBC are paying £104 million for certain soccer matches. Now if the BBC withdrew from main sport, ITV would show it, the BBC's fees would be slashed by billions, the ITV wouldn't have to pay so much because they wouldn't have any competitor. The only people that would suffer would be these overpaid soccer stars and Formula One. The viewers would all save millions in their payments either to the licence fee or to the product. And the last point, one thing that annoys me intensely and has got worse recently is the way the BBC cancel programmes and change programmes at the last minute, often without any reason, occasionally a sport event overruns and they do, but the times when they just completely change the programme for absolutely no reason whatsoever, and I find that extremely annoying and I think we ought to have a viewers panel that can comment on ITV and BBC to try and spread the programme, like they have the news the same time, so why not have it at different times so that the viewer, who is the one who pays all the time, can see the news on one or the other. And they compete against each other, but really we are suffering because of that, and I think the viewpoint of the viewers should be expressed in a panel, say 50 volunteers

come forward, different times, to look through the week's proposed programmes and try and present it as one for our benefit, not for the benefit of the points ratings of the BBC and ITV. You sometimes get a film overruns 5 or 10 minutes with another film on another channel. It is all very annoying, we are the ones that suffer, not the points ratings, so I think the viewer should have more input into what is put on and the timing of it.

FACILITATOR

It is a very interesting point and thank you very much for that point, because if you think about the soaps for example on BBC and ITV, they very rarely cross over each other, but the news programmes very often do. Well ladies and gentlemen, we are going to take a quick break now. We will be back with you in about 10 minutes time, those of you who are staying with us. If you are not staying with us, thank you very much for your time this evening and a safe journey home.

(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)

FACILITATOR

What is the role of the BBC in the 21st century? We could look at the commercial activities, we could look at the programming content, the focus is local presence. Where would you like to start?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am going to ignore those questions there. I don't think there is any doubt that the BBC is important, it knows it is important, the government knows it is important, the problem is that it places its importance above and beyond its responsibilities and its responsibilities are to its listeners and watchers to be umpires, to be professional, to be, if I could put it this way, to ensure that its objectivity goes right from the top to the bottom, and in particular to define its roles and define its specifics, and also to define its language so that people can understand that a spade is not a shovel, and conversely a shovel is not a spade. In particular, when is a terrorist a terrorist and when is a terrorist a militant? Why should a young child in Warrington be blown up by IRA terrorists, but a young child in Jerusalem on a bus to be blown up a militant? Why should innocents in Afghanistan or in Iraq be blown up by militants?

FACILITATOR

So consistency ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It needs to explain why it uses terms that it does. Why should editors generally report matters in a way that is slanted. And we know it is slanted because news is not reported on other channels in the same way. And yes other media channels do have their own agenda and do slant news. The advantage we have in the multiplicity of channels is that you can actually determine the slant, and what we expect of the BBC as a public broadcaster is to be unslanted, and if they do have an agenda, to have the honesty and truth to announce that they have an agenda, and not to use reporters who support the agenda, and/or are allowed to show an agenda of their own, or to report the truth which is then edited in a particular slant that is set by editors at home at the BBC.

FACILITATOR

I think a gentleman made a point earlier about there was a time when you could listen to a BBC news report and know it was saying the truth, obviously something that you have thought as well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well you listened to a BBC programme with great respect and knew that it was the truth because you had very little else to listen to. I think we also have a very protective view of the BBC in that the BBC is very quick to suggest to us that it is a leading broadcaster and is respected throughout the world, but actually when you go to other countries they are very quick sometimes to criticise the BBC and its reporting, and indeed some news channels in other countries are vastly superior to the news that the BBC generates. And I think that the BBC, before it is congratulatory of its own performance, should in fact be much more prepared to be critical of its own performance, and that perhaps goes back to the point before of the Board of Governors. So far as programming is concerned, it is all very well for the BBC to boast that it gives 33 digital channels, but in fact what a lot of those digital channels are broadcasting is old BBC programmes, it is next week's BBC terrestrial programme and it entices people to watch its own channel by actually broadcasting programmes that are going to be shown terrestrially later, or have already been shown, and one wonders what the value is of having 30 channels, or whatever number of channels the BBC now has, when it just repeats previous performers.

FACILITATOR

I don't wish to interrupt you, but I am going to this lady here who would like to make a comment.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It may be that one of the things the BBC ought to be tasked with looking at is whether it should uncouple some of its output from other of its output. It is very clear to see that a programme which is a news provider benefits in the establishment of a trustworthy brand by the very nature programmes that you have mentioned, by the very high class drama. So if you see a faithful rendition of a Jane Austen Book for example on the same channel that is giving you the news, there is an incipient respect for the news, which has been a carry over from the quality of the drama or the quality of a completely different sector. So it may be that if we really want something of quality from the BBC that we can dispense with BBC news and let the BBC get on with what it does do at a quality level, and that is to give us drama and natural history and comedy. We don't look to CNN for example for theatre or for humour, we look to CNN as a news provider. Let CNN provide the news, and its competitors, and let the BBC, if it can't pick up the responsibility that is being hinted at this afternoon that it is not picking up to give its news objectively and unbiasedly, let it concentrate on what it does well and we will pay for that.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much. So taking away the news programmes in favour of quality programmes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Really when you ask what is the role of the BBC in today's society you should go down to the fundamentals of what television or radio really is, and it is divided at least into two main factors: one is production and one is distribution. And what you have got in the BBC is a mix, and it isn't capable of doing both of those things. The BBC has over the years been respected for what it has produced, and it should carry on doing that. Instead of which it is spending an enormous amount of public money in distribution in an area that it cannot compete with. Today terrestrial television, it is impossible for terrestrial television to compete with satellite television, you are talking about 4, 5, 6, 7 channels as against 500 channels. It is like chalk and cheese. So whilst we should not actually possibly completely divide the whole thing into two aspects because it is not just black and white, there is no question that there should be a lot more focus on production and a lot less on distribution.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

If you can remember what the actors were talking about, they were talking about choice with satellite channels and paying out for a free box and all that kind of stuff, I just want to make a note that not everyone can afford 500 channels. I have only got the choice of 4, and 50% of those 4 channels are BBC, and as for objectivity and stuff like that, well that is part and parcel of the BBC, isn't it. And you have had so many comments, I have forgotten what else I was going to say.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much, it has been recorded.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes I guess I would go along with some of what has been said. I am concerned that the BBC seems to want to be all things to all men, and all women, and all children, and it has already added 6 channels. It is too much, it should concentrate its resources, which will always be limited because they are governed by parliament, and it should stick to running 2 channels, and with the extra money that will release it can provide us with the best channels.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I have got a feeling that part of the trouble is because it is 81 years old, it thinks it is the Grand Ellie (phon) of broadcasting, which it may well be, but as the gentleman behind me just said, it is in a very competitive world now, it is not the power that it was but it still thinks it's the power it was.

FACILITATOR

Do you think the BBC can't compete any more?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't think they can and it is a case of put up or shut up when it comes to the general public. They listen, like I said earlier on, but do they do anything. Tonight, when this all comes to fruition, we will find out, but they still think that they are the big power and they can't compete, they do produce quality programmes, but it is no good producing quality programmes if you mess up on the other side of it with the distribution because people's attitudes, people's opinions of them are going down the plug hole. And if they don't get their act together, and the government don't get their act together and do something about making changes and not letting the BBC be the almighty power, you do as we say, not as we do, then I think we will lose the BBC completely.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would like to say something about BBC quality. I am not really complaining at all about BBC quality, and I have never really heard many complaints about BBC news and current affairs impartiality. I know it is not perfect, I know it is done by human beings who have got their own views, but I am surprised to hear somebody say that there are other countries who have got better national broadcasters, I am very surprised if that is true, I think it is probably totally untrue. Anywhere I have been in the world people respect the BBC, admittedly that has mostly been Third World nations and Commonwealth countries who maybe their own national broadcaster is not up to funding something as big as the BBC, but I would be surprised if there was anything more impartial or of higher quality anywhere. But I also have to say that I haven't got much in the way of channels to compare it with, I am like the chap over there who has only got 50% is BBC 1 and 2, and 50% is ITV and Channel 4. But BBC quality, I don't see anything to complain about at all. Do you remember those adverts a few years ago where they were saying the BBC is like it is because of the way it is

funded, and I think the quality of the BBC in terms of news, current affairs, drama, all sorts of other higher quality programmes, history programmes, documentaries and things, are able to be funded properly because we all pay a little bit towards it and therefore they have got the money to do the things at the high quality, instead of all sorts of little companies all round the country trying to make their own little local documentaries.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think if you look at the credits now at the end of things like historical programmes, that you will find that it is funded, along with the history channel, that the BBC does co-presentation, and the co-presentation and funding comes from digital channels so that there is funding from independent channels and cross-fertilisation, so so far as that is concerned the BBC is becoming integrated with other funders, and from the point of view of BBC claiming credit for production, as this gentleman would like to give them, that is not wholly correct. Furthermore the BBC sells its programmes for broadcasting abroad and some of the programmes, especially in the States, which have been rubbished earlier this evening and criticised, actually present in respect of national broadcasters, and particularly I am thinking of the NBC, news and current affairs in a much superior way than the BBC and I suggest this gentleman, when he criticises me for having made that observation, should go somewhere else in the Third World and he might see the quality of production. And unlike him I have, and am very fortunate to have, the benefit of all the channels through the satellite, and as I have said, whilst I do see bias on other news presenters, I see a far slicker and a far broader presentation than the BBC and the advantage of that is you are able to determine, or one is able to determine, that the BBC in respect of broadcasting, especially in the Middle East, of which I have a particular interest and particular knowledge, is slanted and it is the view that is projected because BBC has 50% and pretty well that share of terrestrial broadcasting is able to influence its viewers and has always influenced its viewers and listeners and did so in the '30s when it followed Chamberlain's government and presented a slanted view. So the broadcasters influence the public and unfortunately the BBC has become more so.

FACILITATOR

OK, I think we have got the point where you are coming from. I must allow a few more other people to speak as obviously there are people who haven't had a chance to speak, but I thank you for your comments.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

A question of fairness. A commentator should be made to be impartial. If you have got an opinion to the left, then somebody should be able to give an opinion to the right.

FACILITATOR

So a question of balance, if we get one side we should be able to get the other one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes. I feel with the BBC we have it one way, and let's be fair, let's have it both ways.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would like to raise two issues, if I may. The first, which is to pass on the views of a stepson of mine who has just been appointed to ... programming in a new satellite producing company in America, and he expressed the view when he was in the UK recently that he is very concerned about the path that the BBC is taking, he thinks that the endeavour to compete with commercial channels is a folly, it is bound to lose and that he as a programme buyer is particularly interested in quality programmes, and if the BBC is to pursue the current task that they are endeavouring to do then they will lose that reputation for producing quality programmes. I must say I endorse that too, I think that the opportunity to

produce something of quality will be certainly prejudiced in an attempt to follow popular demand, I think the independence of the BBC as a result of public funding is something to value and preserve. The other issue I would like to raise is a personal one, and that is that I think the BBC is becoming somewhat schizophrenic in its own future. I don't know whether anybody in this room is aware of a phenomenon known as top-up TV. Currently I am most sure that most people know what Freeview is, that you buy yourself a digi (phon) box, plug it into your television and you immediately receive something like 30 channels a month. At the end of this month there is a new phenomenon known as top-up television which for the princely sum of £20 you can register, unless you do it online and it is £10, and you will buy yourself a viewing card for the princely sum again of £7.99 a month and you will receive a number of channels, most of which I have forgotten, but it certainly includes things like E4, UK Gold, Discovery, TCM, a number of children's channels, and these are all going to be available if you buy yourself a card. So the BBC is already apparently embarking on a subscription service. Is it going to be a subscription service in future, or is going to be a licence paying service, or can it be both.

FACILITATOR

Currently something we don't know but ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That is why I said, I believe the BBC is already somewhat schizophrenic. You are talking about the role of the BBC in today's society, analogue stations are due to be switched off by 2010, which is why our block of flats has just invested a vast sum of money in converting itself to digital. Where will that leave gentlemen like over here, who currently only receives free to view analogue stations, and if the digi boxes which are to be produced in the future will be card readers only, that excludes this gentleman even further. They need to decide where they are going, even on today's information.

FACILITATOR

Thank you very much indeed for your point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

A couple of points. Going back to this thing about bias of BBC one way or another, which so many people have raised, I have got this theory that as long as the BBC annoys the government, the official opposition, the extreme left, extreme right, liberal minded people and conservative minded people, they are probably getting it about right.

FACILITATOR

Irritate everyone.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Whatever angle you look at things from, as a person you look at things from your own personal view and I will get annoyed at things that the BBC and other people will say, I get even more annoyed when I read the newspapers, but as for whether the BBC should be operating the range of programming it does at the moment, I am very much of the opinion that it shouldn't withdraw from anything that it does at the moment. But being one of those people who isn't supposed to receive digital TV on a Freeview box, but can actually get it, although it is only the BBC and a few other programmes that it can receive at the moment, whilst there are some worthy and interesting content on these extra channels, both radio and television, it is very thinly spread and I actually wonder whether the BBC would be better off compressing what it has got into one or two really good extra channels and promoting that so that the BBC, say, operates four good first-class channels, and then maybe allow other people to provide all these extra services, because effectively if you

actually look at the way it works, I am pretty certain that say CBBC and BBC3 are one station broadcasting on two channels at different times. But as I say, I think there is an argument for just tidying things up a little bit, but I still think that it should provide the range of programmes that it does, and I certainly think, and the one thing that hasn't got mentioned today because I have often heard talk about taking some of the radio services away from the BBC, again I actually think that at whatever end of the spectrum you look at, the BBC is actually providing something unique, whether it is the way they present pop music, because they are providing something which no other broadcaster in the world seems to be able to do, and as a result it gets listened to all over the world on the internet. So do what they are doing now, but just tighten it up a little bit, just make sure that it is the best possible quality and if someone wants to run additional specialist sports channels or whatever, let them do it, let's say what they can't afford to do they can't afford to do any more.

FACILITATOR

So you can't be everything to everyone but you can tighten up the ship you have got and then put the rest out ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Without losing the range, because as I say the range that they cover is quite spectacular really.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I had the experience of the media for about 25 years as the Press Officer for a professional organisation and I found that the BBC tended to steer interviews the way they wanted to and would brook no interference to get on to a middle course. They knew best and you were just there to kind of agree with what their view was, not to give a professional view, but to confirm what the attitude of the BBC is, and I found this very irksome and at one stage I threatened that I would only go to the independent media. And I think this is echoed in discussion. One of the previous speakers said that if you have somebody from the left, have somebody from the right. Often the BBC does this, but one side receives preferential treatment to the other, one is allowed to say exactly what he wants without interference, another one will be heckled, may not have as long and it is obvious that this is unjust. And on a personal trivial matter, we have been persuaded to get a digital radio and it tells you all the stations that are on it, but we cannot find out what is on those stations, there does not seem to be anything like the Radio Times, the TV Times which has the programmes which are on the digital wavelength, so what really is the use of having this.

FACILITATOR

So needing a TV Times for digital radio. Impartiality being brought up yet again. We are running down our last few minutes of open discussion, so if anyone has specifically come here tonight with a point to make, can I encourage you to make it now please, otherwise I will pass back to some of the people who have spoken earlier.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

People are talking as if the BBC is a person, it represents many people and as far as I can see, for me it represents generally high standards. OK I can understand how people react to different topical issues of the moment. I cherish the BBC, as I cherish the National Health Service, in the same sort of bag I would place the BBC, and I would not like to see total commercialisation of the BBC, even sometimes sitting here I feel rather a dinosaur in that I feel that high standards most of the time would really be in jeopardy were it to commercialise. I also would like to add a word for the radio, which I just couldn't live without.

FACILITATOR

We haven't heard much about the radio this evening. Would anyone else like to bring anything up about the radio service.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think we are living in a golden age. Radio 4 has never been better.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Take the adverts out of the BBC would you.

FACILITATOR

Take the adverts out of the BBC, it seems to be echoed around the room. Anybody else like to bring up any point before we move on to the voting?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Just a quick one. First of all from the radio side of things, Radio 2 is superb, that is also the Radio 1 of people of my generation, years ago Radio 1 listeners, now Radio 2.

FACILITATOR

I am one of them as well, yes I am with you there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

We gradually will be Radio 4. And on the question of commercialisation, he who pays the piper calls the tune, so if you go that way there will be bias, it will be inescapable.

(VOTING NOT TRANSCRIBED)

LORD MCINTOSH

I am not going to hold you up for more than a minute or so. It has been an immensely frustrating evening for me, as you can imagine. I hate you all because you have the opportunity to express your views and I don't, and I shan't have the opportunity to express my views probably for a couple of years to come. So I am going to go on standing on the sidelines repeating the phrase strong and independent of government until I am sick of it. The one question that did come up a number of times to which I ought to respond is what notice is being taken of these meetings. Well let me say to you that barring technical error, virtually a complete transcript will be produced of what has been said this evening and it will be published on the DCMS – the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's website, and you will be very welcome in due course, I can't say how soon it will be, but it certainly will be published, together with the thousands of responses we have received. We won't, I don't think, be publishing the results of the voting because we will be following this with a proper sample survey of a representative sample of the population and we would simply be duplicating it, because clearly the people who have shown the enthusiasm that you have, and the dedication that you have to come out on a cold March evening for a period of more than two hours, you are lovely people and I hate you, but you are not typical of the population as a whole I suspect.

Thank you again for coming and thank you for contributing to what is after all your verdict on your BBC.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)

