

**TRANSCRIPT OF EXTRACT FROM MEETING  
OF THE BBC CHARTER REVIEW  
HELD IN CARDIFF  
ON MONDAY, 15 MARCH 2004**

**(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

FACILITATOR

What are your views, do you think it should or shouldn't be retained, do you think it should be changed in any way?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, listening to the arguments there, I have always believed in that if it ain't broke, why fix it? Because I was a soldier for 22 years and I have seen television in various places, and what must be God's home of television over in America. Have you seen all this stuff that they have got over there? There is no public service broadcasting, it is just an absolute joke. You listen to some of these people saying yes it is now going to be £121, £2.23 a week, that is easily saved for, it is the cost of one pint of beer a week, and some of these old ladies say well we can't afford to pay that. I am not running down old ladies, but they go to the bingo and they will spend at least £15 in the bingo and gamble it and get nothing for it. That £15 is how many weeks, I'm getting old now, I can't count. And another thing that annoys me, there are a lot of people about and they seem to think that as far as sport goes, sport on the BBC is absolutely second to none, you can't beat it. There's lots of people, they say oh I don't watch the BBC, I never bother, why should I pay a licence, and they are going on and they are robbing me and they are robbing me I said how many times have you seen Wales on the television in the last two years in the Six Nations? Oh I don't miss a game. I say well there you are. Would you have paid a couple of hundred quid to go to Rome, or Glasgow? Oh no, it is too expensive. And yet you have paid £121 and you have seen all Wales's games in the last two years. So that throws their argument out with their saying that we are being robbed.

FACILITATOR

So you are saying that you think it is good value for money.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Absolutely. They go and buy these videos and films that are made, it don't matter, you might go across the road and you pay a tenner, or you buy a video for a tenner.

FACILITATOR

Who would like to react to that position?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I worked in the States for a couple of years and came back about 18 months ago, and about the same time I was due to renew my TV licence. I switched the TV on and literally I was getting exactly the same programmes on digital TV, I had NTL at the time, as I was getting off the BBC and all the other channels, so basically television as a whole has totally dumbed down and repeats itself continuously, including the BBC. So I stopped my licence fee, I wrote them a letter and said I wasn't going to watch television, and I didn't watch television for a year, and I have to say the only thing I sort of cheated on was the occasional game of rugby, to be perfectly honest with you, and I did. And when my children came to stay, round about the same time a year later, I decided to buy a licence fee again, because I didn't think it was right to cheat. However, when I was discussing this with a lot of people they all say well I am thinking of not paying my licence fee any more because the BBC, we think we pay

for the BBC, I know we pay for all the channels out of that licence fee in terms of the airwaves etc, but the BBC, as the actors were saying, the high quality, the BBC is no longer high quality, it is dumbed down and the successor under John Birt, his regime, and Greg Dyke who frankly I think is a disaster, why is it that the public broadcasting service has to bring in people from commercial services which are not making any money, to run the BBC to make them more marketable, when really we pay the BBC licence fee for a public broadcasting service which is meant to have a higher quality of intelligence and observation which one didn't see of course. Well I don't hear it on the radio for example, or the Today programme which I listen to quite a bit, the BBC has become totally editorialised and has almost an identical opinion to say something like the Times, or the Guardian or something like that, wherever it chooses to come from. Whereas the BBC I want to see is the public broadcasting service which in many ways embraces some of the broader intelligence of the public broadcasting service in the United States, which is funded in an entirely different way, which I don't absolutely approve it. I think the BBC is funded perfectly well out of a licence fee. Personally I would pay £5 a week if it regained its quality as a public broadcaster.

FACILITATOR

And what sort of quality would you see ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well let me give you an example. I am a writer and a director and I make films, and I was Head of Drama at the BBC. 12 years ago the BBC produced 118 single dramas a year, now it produces 8. The documentaries it produces now are not documentaries. I used to work for Eamon Andrews a long time ago at Thames Television where we did a weekly programme, they now call these magazine programmes, documentaries. They are not documentaries, they are bloody useless, you don't need a brain to understand them. So the kind of intelligence you got, say, in the coverage of the miners' dispute 20 years ago, or the wars of the 70s, or the troubles in Ireland in the 70s, you no longer get, you get this very, very sort of Sun newspaper approach on BBC broadcasting in basically all areas.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Inaudible.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The point I am making is the BBC is not like all channels, it is a public broadcasting channel. There is no reason for having the BBC if it is going to be like ITV 1 or ITV 2, it is as simple as that. It has to regain its identity as a public broadcaster. And let me tell you this, as somebody who has travelled in the States a lot, in the last year as well, the standard of the BBC is seen as dropping all over the world, because the only programmes we export from the BBC to the world are basically pretty dress programmes or posh Oxford voice programmes, you never see cockney programmes in the United States, you never see Welsh programmes in the United States, and regionalism is another thing altogether, individual states, Scotland, Wales is another thing, we will come to that later. But you don't see the true reflection of Great Britain, you basically see a tourist view of Great Britain outside of Great Britain, and they certainly see it as England.

FACILITATOR

So you have raised a number of points there. One is about the quantity as well as the quality.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Inaudible.

FACILITATOR

But you specifically said 118 some years ago and that is down to 8, so there is a quantity issue as well as a quality issue for you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

There is also one other very important thing. I firmly believe the BBC is a very racist organisation. You do not see black people there, you do not see Muslims employed there, you don't see Christianity there as you used to see it, you see a very, very narrow ethical view which excludes an awful lot of people.

FACILITATOR

So you think it is an exclusive club as well. Who would like to react to any of those points?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't know how you follow a former higher employee of the BBC, but I will try my best. As to his points about the contents of the BBC, in many ways I am in agreement, certainly when we have fame lobotomy on a prime time channel of supposedly public service broadcasting. I do think something is wrong there. But despite this, I think the BBC has a vital role to play in our society that it may not be able to play if it was funded in different methods. I think it would be an absolute tragedy for example for it to become a commercial broadcaster itself, just the privilege of seeing a lot of very good quality programmes, and I still think they are there, without the advertising in the middle, I think that is almost worth the licence fee itself frankly. I have my doubts about the subscription fee in practice, if not in theory. Two specific ones in particular: the price, you would have to come up with a very good system to manage that, and given what I have seen of the commercial broadcasters, I doubt at this point whether it is as practical as it is sounding good; I also have my doubts about how information about people will be held, because again this is something I have seen a lot abused in my line of work. So as I say, I do think the BBC have a vital role to play. The content we are coming on to later, so I won't go into that now. I do agree with the gentleman about a lot of his points there, but despite that, I think at present the way that we pay for the BBC is a guarantee of a kind of integrity that otherwise we may not have. In that way I think it is a good thing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would like to echo some of the thoughts of the gentleman there. I also have lived in the USA and they have a very good public broadcasting service, they have the national public radio, people pay by subscription and they have a choice to pay or not, and I sometimes thought that might be a system to introduce here. However, I think overall I would rather see the BBC go back to what I always thought the BBC was about, which was about what is good, what is for the good of the country, what reflects the country, what are the important events to the country, our institutions in other words. What I found is, over the years that I have been living back in this country, is that the BBC is more interested in its own political agenda, which seems to be on the left wing side of centre. And as far as the broadcasting, I think it is limited from what it was in that the BBC was something good and great. I don't think it is great. I am not so sure either that it is good any more. What I have found objectionable is the kind of news programming where the questioning is very much done in what I would say is almost a legal sort of style. If the interviewer agrees with a certain point of view, what he thinks the interviewee is going to say, then he will ask them as if he was a defence lawyer; if it is not, if it is the opposite, then it is as though he is a barrack room prosecutor, and I don't think this is the right kind of interviewing. Also they beg questions a lot, and by that I don't mean raise questions, which is how the term is often used today, but they beg questions in the sense they ask the question in a way that makes it apparent what kind of answer they expect or want. And I think that working in my line of work – I am a

doctor – we have to be extremely objective about the way we interview people, because otherwise they will tell you what they think you want to hear from them, and that is not scientific, it is not good practice and I don't think it is good practice for anybody, whatever line they are in. So really I would like to see the BBC go back to those standards that it used to have, and if the people who are in charge of the BBC now don't like that, well then let them get out and pay for themselves and raise their own funds, and do it their own way, and compete with everybody else. But I think that you can't have it both ways. At the moment, like the gentleman there, when it came to renewing my licence last July I didn't do it, I was fed up mostly with what I call the news broadcasting, because I don't watch a great deal of television, so you might say it wasn't a great sacrifice, but on the other hand why wasn't I watching more television? That is another question. And I have had no reason to regret my decision. There are lots of other sources of news and lots of other sources of professional information if I want it, or any information, and I don't know if I will renew it or not. But on the other hand I would also say that I would be prepared to pay more than the licence fee is to go back to have something I can be proud of and that I am not ashamed of when I talk to people in other countries.

#### FACILITATOR

And so would you fund your particular choice via a subscription or via a flat licence fee? What would your feeling be?

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well I think there is something to be said for a licence fee, but if you are paying a tax or a licence you want to get a service. The BBC needs to rediscover its role I think. They are information providers, they are not the people who are protecting our country. Our lives don't depend on the journalists, they are not that important to be honest. Our lives depend on the Services, our police, our coastguards and these other bodies, and I think the BBC has got a bit above itself. It is in a very powerful position but I think they need a bit more humility.

#### FACILITATOR

That does come to a question we will raise later about how responsive the BBC is, and we will perhaps pick that point up later. Who else has a view about the way in which the BBC is funded, whether this is the correct way to do it, whether you would like to see it done differently?

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

This is just a comment really, I actually do think the BBC delivers value for money, and that doesn't mean I think everything it produces is brilliant. I teach about media at Cardiff University and have done for a long time. But I am interested in the motives of the people who are saying it doesn't, and what the agenda is here. I am not aware of a huge wave of public dissent from the licence fee. Every now and then you get the odd grumble, but mostly people have in general been satisfied, they have not been complaining. Every so often the BBC hits the headlines, as we saw with Hutton, there seemed to be a huge public reaction in defence of the BBC there, which was actually quite interesting and perhaps surprising. So who exactly is it who doesn't want the licence fee? And it is clear, and I think our actress pointed this out, that it is the commercial competition, and of course they are going to complain about the lack of a level playing field, but the fact is that they don't do all the things that the BBC does in terms of radio, in terms of online, in terms of the various ancillary services that the BBC provides. So the BBC is a public service, there is no question about it, and to hear people say they don't watch very much television, or don't listen to very much radio, that is fine and that is their right, but they are not in the best position to judge exactly what the BBC is doing. It clearly is fulfilling public service functions along a

whole range of services, it is not perfect, there are things it doesn't do so well. I think one of my concerns, and we may come on to it, is the accountability to the licence payers. How do we keep an eye on what they are doing with it? This question of who gets employed, there is a narrow range of voices, there is a narrow range of representations, how can we the public say what about us, what about the kinds of people we know, the ways in which we can make our voices heard seem to me to be rather limited. And of course if you are on Question Time, that is in the hands of the producers as well. So I think there are ways of keeping track of the value for money, you could involve the public more, but in general terms certainly people think the licence fee is value for money and I come back to my point which is I am a bit suspicious of the people who are saying it isn't, because they are after the BBC's audience, they are after the BBC's resources and that is not in the public interest.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

I once heard a very famous journalist on the radio on the Today Programme and he spoke an awful lot about the foot and mouth disease without actually mentioning to the viewers that he was a farmer. So there is an awful lot of vested interest with journalists and I think the standard of journalism has dropped hugely over the last 10 or 15 years for all kinds of reasons. But you see I am a left winger, I have left wing views, I fundamentally believe in public broadcasting and believe in the education that can come to people from public broadcasting and the ethics that can come from public broadcasting. So you can be opposed to the BBC and be opposed to capitalist interests, you know the desire by various Cabinets to own the BBC, but also be very critical of it. And I think the lady over there used the word humility, the BBC has certainly become above itself, it has become extremely elitist and self-supporting and it uses the BBC to advertise its own agenda, and the only people I think who support it, shall we say, on the liberal left are people who want to work in the system. Well having worked in the system and seen how corruptible it is, and got out, I can promise you that if I was a black person the chances of me working in the BBC are very slim, the chances of being a black male are worse than if I was a black woman, and all sorts of things like this go on. And I can give you ample evidence of all of this, and it is fundamentally wrong. It is a very unequal system and it preaches to people in a very, very elitist way. So I certainly think the licence fee is a very sensible and intelligent way of paying for the BBC. I personally think the fee should go up, but I certainly think it should become a fundamental broadcaster again and not a sort of copy of the other channels.

#### FACILITATOR

So the theme that seems to be coming up here is responsiveness as well.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

That gentleman, I can't resist, twice he has had a go, and it is a particular issue. Earlier on he mentioned about the ethnic minorities not being employed by the BBC, and he has just mentioned it now. Well Sir, I suggest that you open your eyes up a bit, because if you look at BBC Wales for a start off, and you look on there and you have got Jason Mohammed, who fronts up on radio and on television, he is from the ethnic minority. For where I live in Newport I can pick up the Midlands channels, ITV and BBC, and the number of ethnic people that work on that destroys your argument pro rata as to how many ethnic people there are in this country compared to white people we will say. And also I have got relatives who live up in Shepherds Bush, and we all know what is there, and we walk around Shepherds Bush and drink in the pubs and you see BBC people and you see them going there, and the number of ethnic minorities, the people that are going in there to work for the BBC, pro rata, there is a heck of a lot of them. So I believe, Sir, your argument doesn't stand up.

#### FACILITATOR

Thank you. It is not something we can prove or disprove in the room this evening.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Inaudible.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You could ask a very simple question, ask the BBC to do some research on the number of black people they employ in the kitchens, as opposed to the number of black people they employ in front of camera, which is increasing I think. But the really important thing ....

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Another typical left wing argument, that is.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The really important thing is the number of producers, the people who produce the programmes, the people who ...

FACILITATOR

I think we have got that point. Just to fill you in on where we have got to. We are going to talk basically about three areas. We have just talked about funding, we are coming to the end of that section, how the BBC is funded, should it be funded in a different way, should it be funded by subscription for example, is it giving good value for money. We are going to go on to talk about the way it is run, the role of the Governors, and then we are going to talk about the role of the BBC in society, is it fulfilling its role, what is its role, what should be its role. Those are the three broad areas, just so you know where we are. Is there anything you want to say on funding before we go any further? We have split this into three areas, but obviously as we have already seen, it kind of overlaps.

**(ACTORS NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

FACILITATOR

Right, so you have heard a few views there, you have heard, look it has worked for 81 years, it is perfectly all right, you have heard well the fact that it has run for 81 years means that it is out-dated, the Hutton report brings that to light. So what are your views on this, how do you think that going forward now the BBC should be governed?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Actually I want to really start by going back to the previous subject, because no-one really made the point in talking about funding about the fact that we have a licence fee because we don't want the BBC funded out of general taxation, which would lead to a situation where the government would be in a position to dictate to the BBC.

FACILITATOR

So that is your argument for keeping the licence fee.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Indeed, and one of your actors, or one of your script writers talked about tension between the BBC and the government as being a bad thing. I don't think many people would agree with that at all, I think the fact that the BBC is independent of the government is absolutely crucial. It is a bit worrying that the BBC Board of Governors is ultimately appointed by the government with a two-stage hands off process, but it is still the great and the good and it is the people who have been to the right clubs or have got the right kind of Oxbridge background that tends to end up as a Governor. So maybe there should be some changes in those terms.

FACILITATOR

Is it your feeling it is a mechanism that works?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I haven't got any really positive suggestions here, but I am uneasy about the way that the Governors are appointed and work at the moment.

FACILITATOR

What in principle about it troubles you?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The fact, there is this phrase the great and the good that oversee ...

FACILITATOR

So if it wasn't the great and the good, ostensibly representing the interests of the viewer or listener, who might it be, what is your intuition?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

People from more walks of life I think, like a jury as it were, people randomly selected even.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think that the Hutton report that was mentioned before, basically Greg Dyke as Editor in Chief, that role has been for 83 years, his role has changed but his title hasn't, and as Editor in Chief he was responsible for regulating news programming. Now 20 years ago that was 2 hours of broadcasting a day, now it is something like 60 hours of news broadcasting over all the networks, so the role has completely changed. And historically there were the Governors, same role, same position, a lot smaller organisation but they are responsible but they are not responsible for creating it, they are just responsible for overseeing it. So whether it is a change in the name or a change in, do you see?

FACILITATOR

Yes, is it a change in the name, is it a change in the function, should they be doing completely different things? This gentleman was arguing for different personnel and different style of person perhaps, so where do you come down on this?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

OK, the 12 Governors are party political and they are going to react in whatever way how they were recruited, but the blue collar strategy, you know the local managers and the local strategic officers, or whatever you want to call them, they haven't got an axe to grind or they haven't got anything to rebel against, they are just responsible for creating good programming, and the Governors just manage them. Do you see what I mean?

FACILITATOR

So are the Governors a good thing, or a bad thing, should it change? I am not quite clear what you are arguing at the moment.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Their role has got weaker rather than stronger, it has become more of a token rather than 12 men responsible for the running of the organisation, which they are not. They are just responsible for overseeing and when it comes down to it, they are ultimately responsible.

FACILITATOR

So is that a good thing or a bad thing in your opinion?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I haven't thought that far ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Accountability is very, very important with the BBC. I will give a simple example. 2 years, 3 years ago, if you complained about a BBC programme, you could ring up the BBC, say it was the Today Programme, you would then speak to somebody in London who would put you through to somebody at the Today Programme and they would take notes, or somebody would take notes at the BBC and your complaints were met. Now if you complain about a London programme, you are then put through to a Welsh speaking person in Cardiff and it all goes on to a machine. So the BBC is using its technology to make it inaccessible to start with. You just try ringing the BBC and you run into millions of tapes. The real thing that has never been tried with the BBC is whether you can vote people in, in the same way you vote in, say, a Mayor of London, whether you can vote in people to be Governors. Now the real problem you have is that any way of appointing somebody, whether it is the current system, and in a funny kind of way the current system works when they assert themselves oddly enough, but I have dealt with the BBC Governors directly, as a former employee, and they are very conservative in a sense, they don't really know how the BBC works and they tend to represent the interest groups they come from, be it a trade union, or a medical board, or a political party, and they tend to have rather vague views on broadcasting and what it is. So in many ways the senior executives of the BBC get their own way, which is what happened in Hutton and that is why you have all the problems you have. But nobody has ever tried voting in people and saying OK you have changed the House of Lords, Mr Blair, change the BBC. Why can't we just vote in people into the £2.5 billion a year organisation, we are the shareholders, let's vote our board in.

FACILITATOR

And what would the benefit of that be?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well it would stop this kind of argument to start with, but it would then mean that the people who represented us took themselves less seriously and us more seriously.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Firstly, the Hutton inquiry, despite the public backlash against the results of the Hutton inquiry, was a fiasco for the BBC I think, an absolute fiasco. It showed a whole trail of incompetence I think bordering on corruption from the lowest levels of the BBC right up to the highest levels and in that way I think displayed a side of the BBC that perhaps most people would like there not to be.

FACILITATOR

Just to get you to expand upon that, because incompetence is one accusation, corruption is another, so how would you justify those two things?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well basically Andrew Gilligan, he made this unjustified statement, retracted it later on, well didn't include it in a later report. That is where it should have ended, but it didn't due to him being backed by his boss, the Governors backing that boss in such a way that the Governors then were taking responsibility for a statement which was not in effect true. The motives behind that statement I think are where the element of corruption may come in. I

think in that way the BBC does have an agenda, again we are getting to the actual content of the BBC.

FACILITATOR

It will cross over, so don't worry about that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well in that way I think the BBC does have an agenda, and as a self-confessed left wing luvvie – as the gentleman beside me puts it – I do think that even though my views are often the same as the BBC's, that there is not a broad spectrum of views being represented here.

FACILITATOR

And is that a problem of governance specifically?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it is, yes.

FACILITATOR

And how so?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I knew you were going to say that. I agree with the gentleman who spoke first. I think he is quite right, he did I say I think that the job had changed an awful lot over the 83 years, there is now far too much to be done by one board of Governors with the amount the BBC has taken on. Maybe devolution of some kind is the possible answer, because I don't agree with the jury idea, I think you need a group of people trained in management, and that takes very specific skills that perhaps a randomly selected group of people wouldn't have. Neither do I agree with the idea of voting people in, if only because of my own lack of confidence in the idea of voting at the moment. But I think maybe devolving more power to local broadcasters, and leaving the centralised governance to things like the news, which as several people have said is not what it once was, maybe concentrating on that side of things and leaving a great deal more power to local governors might have positive effects. Just an idea.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am on a learning curve, and I didn't realise that the governors were government appointees. May I ask, is that in the same way as judges are and Archbishops are?

FACILITATOR

I think I would need the Minister to perhaps comment on that, because I am not qualified to answer.

LORD MCINTOSH

The BBC Governors are appointed, as you said at the beginning Aiden, by the Crown. In practice that means that they go through Nolan procedures under the control of the Commissioner of Public Appointments which requires that there should be public advertisement and there should be independent consideration of the applications, and a body of people interviewing a shortlist, but formally it is the Minister in charge, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, who makes a recommendation to the Crown as to who the final choice will be. Archbishops are basically appointed by the Church of England itself, although the final decision is made by the Prime Minister from a shortlist of two, and it has been the practice for many years that the Prime Minister takes the top

recommendation of the shortlist of two put forward by the Church. Judges have been in theory appointed by the government for a very long time, but the government has set up a Judicial Appointments Commission and has established the principle now, in legislation which is yet to be passed, that the appointment of judges will be completely independent of government.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Thank you very much for that, thank you. That should perhaps be the road down which the BBC should go to please me. But I am slightly in the dark as well, could you give me an example of how the BBC and how the Governors champion and regulate the BBC in the sense that over the Andrew Gilligan affair I understand at one point they were all about to resign and leave the BBC leaderless.

FACILITATOR

We will just have to record that view. But I think what that point is making is that they have a role in setting the strategy and direction of the BBC, but also regulating its performance. And so what the argument is, is that a good mechanism or is it not? So if I put that back to you, is the principle of having a regulator in the same position as someone who come as champions and says this is what we are all about. Is that right or not, in principle?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It seems to me from my observations of the BBC, as someone who is very interested in media and very interested in communications, very interested in what is coming out of the BBC, that they are a set of grey figures that don't figure for me.

FACILITATOR

So you don't know necessarily who they are?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I know Pauline Neville Jones is one of them. She happens to be somebody I quite admire for her outspokenness, but the others, no, and I am not aware, perhaps we shouldn't be, but I am not aware of what they are doing and how they are doing it. So perhaps this does come into accountability, I would like to see them have a higher profile, I would like to know what is going on there, if it is going on at all.

FACILITATOR

I don't want to put words in your mouth, but a degree of more transparency so you can see what it is they are doing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't like the word transparency because it is too politically correct, but I would like to know who they are, I would like to see them working, I would like to know, as you say, it is not very easy to make complaints to the BBC now, you are I am sure clocked into a computer and weighed up and then dismissed.

FACILITATOR

Have you been clocked in, and dismissed and weighed up then?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well I feel I have. Yes they listen yes we will forward that, but then I have been told by people in the BBC, and perhaps you could corroborate, that if there are 50% who are for, and 50% against, the producer doesn't take a lot of notice, but that is what I mean.

FACILITATOR

So that is your perception.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That is my perception.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Unfortunately I have got to go now, I have got to take my three women, they are called Rianan, Bethan and Lily, five granddaughters, and you can't argue with them or my daughters will slap me. No, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport have organised this thing and I am very disappointed in them in the fact that it hasn't been very well advertised. Joe Public is not here. Look at the amount of people here, about half of them are journalists from the BBC. Right, so goodnight and thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Customer practice in the BBC in the last 30 years, and probably in the last 10 years, was that if a Labour government was in power they would appoint Conservatives as Governors to the BBC, and vice versa, and it seemed to work because then the government in power, the opposition existed in the governors of the BBC so the government couldn't manipulate the BBC. Given the centralising of politics, that has changed obviously, so things have changed an awful lot.

FACILITATOR

And that wasn't a formal arrangement?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It was an informal arrangement. For example there was a guy called Hill, Lord Hill, who was a Tory Minister, and Wilson made him head of the BBC. So it kind of worked then, but it is a much bigger organisation now and in many ways democracy, I am surprised how many democrats are afraid to vote people into this kind of situation, it is something that has never been tried, I think it would work wonderfully.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hello, thank you the BBC for inviting me. It was well advertised, I listened to it all week on the radio, and I never got on on Monday. First of all, your question on financing, I live locally and of course I represent a lot of people but I am independent, I represent a group and I am independent of political parties and my group is called Crisis, and basically the funding problems with the BBC is the affordability, because the divide between rich and poor is growing stronger, and with the new digital age I think that the BBC will have to in the future look at the swipe card system, pay as you go, I am afraid. I know that the BBC is unique in the service it delivers and therefore the financial structures are completely unique in its structure in a way, but it has become a monster and unfortunately all monsters become expensive to run and you have to justify at the end of the day the £100-odd pounds to why you can get on a digital channel.

FACILITATOR

Like you, I have a problem with the fact that they have invented this word digital, because I also have trouble with it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

But then again you have to look at what the BBC is delivering for that money, which is very important.

FACILITATOR

Let me put this point to you then, if people were asked not to pay the licence fee, and you are talking about people who can't afford it, but then it was put on to subscription, those people potentially would then not be able to afford it at all because they wouldn't have access to it. How would you get round the fact that they now have universal access.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Who said they wouldn't have access to it?

FACILITATOR

How would you fund it then?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

That is what I am saying, that they have a wide choice of purchase, and what you are going to find is that with technology going the way it is, they are going to be picking cheaper channels which are supportive, there is no way, it is all going to come down to the dollar at the end of the day, as you say, and people will look that way. It is frightening, and how do you fund a unique service? I think one of my ideas would be probably when you purchase a television set to have a one-off in with the purchase, because television sets have dropped significantly.

FACILITATOR

So a levy on sales?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

A levy on sales. I can't see, it really is hard for pensioners to struggle to pay this fee, and people on income support. The last thing in their minds is well do I go out and buy a stamp, or do I go and buy a packet of fags, or something to eat? Let's be honest, this is what is happening. The second thing I would like to bring up, you said the governance role. I would like to see some independence from the Governors, I would like to see people elected, just the same as the Lord Mayor of London is elected, and then we can't criticise anyone really for being one way. And I would like to come in here as well on the governance aspect of it, I am not politically involved in any way, but I think Tony Blair has seriously damaged the BBC's character and I am ashamed to say I did vote for the Labour Party myself, and I just see a patch-up job going on now, that the BBC has been scared and having to go out and consult with the public like this. It is terrible what has happened to the BBC.

FACILITATOR

It is worth saying this is not a BBC consultation, this is the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's consultation about the renewal of the charter. So this is not the BBC doing this, I just need to point out to you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think ... when they go on about Lords and one thing or the other, you have got one person, Tony Blair, screaming about bringing us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and then he is putting one Lord in charge of an inquiry. I didn't think that was fair at all, I thought the BBC had a rough ride.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

As I think I have already made it clear, I do disagree with some of this gentleman's points. I have grave concerns about the subscription fee, in particular relating to the security of the system that would be used to implement it, because in my line of work, which by the way is on a help desk, I see a lot of this kind of abuse of that kind of information, enough anyway

to make me very concerned about any additional, what I see as collection of information without, shall we say, a good purpose, and does not seem to me to be a necessary purpose. As to the idea of voting in a board of governors, again my previous point was that maybe the responsibility which is currently taken on by the board of governors could be regulated in some way, but actually having a vote for it. It seems to me a scenario of nightmarish logistics. How on earth would you go about that? Do you have electioneering potential governors giving their different policies on what the BBC would be about? How can it be a public service any more than Tony Blair getting into parliament on 40% of the vote can claim to be in the public interest. How many people opposed the war in Iraq? That is a road I just do not want to go down.

FACILITATOR

So your argument would be that voting would not necessarily deliver independence, is that what you are saying?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't think so. Well I wouldn't say the opposite because at least some people did vote for Tony Blair, enough for him to get into power, but I do not believe a voting system would be practically implimentable, I think that is very flawed.

FACILITATOR

Now before we break for coffee, I just want to check that there is nothing else on the subject of either funding or the role of the governors that you came here tonight that you really did want to say, but you haven't had the chance to say yet.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am a great believer in biting the hand that feeds you, I think it is a very important principle of being an honest citizen, you have to be able to bite the hand that feeds you. And clearly what happened to the BBC and its accountability over the Hutton report, that nobody bit the hand that fed them, nobody was prepared to blow the whistle from within the BBC about what was not being done properly there, and nobody was able to blow the whistle with the governors because they all stick together, let's be the BBC. Had there been a system of election where people were accountable not just to being nominated members of the BBC, sorry paid members of the BBC, or nominated members of the board of governors, then you could have a kind of Ken Livingstone figure, or a Margaret Thatcher figure, just blowing the whistle on secrets that the public should know about, and we would have found out what was going on a lot earlier and the whole humiliation of people during the Hutton inquiry wouldn't have happened in the way it did. But the fact is it happened that way and we all have different views on that, and you don't want to hear mine.

FACILITATOR

I think that is probably a good place to leave it, that voting delivers independence, and no it doesn't. So let's break for coffee now.

- **Break** -

FACILITATOR

Looking at the broader role, I guess what we might want to begin thinking about is that some of the tension that comes out there is the relationship between what might be called the citizen and the consumer. We had the greater good argument about improving the citizen, it is there as an educational resource, as a resource of showing people things that they wouldn't otherwise get to see, there is the other argument that I will buy what I want. So there are a number of different approaches here that are being discussed and a balance

to achieve. So I am just interested now to hear what your views are about the role – and feel free to contribute in any particular area.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

... about the actors, they didn't mention anything about regional, national television. Are we talking about national regional television or are we just talking about the BBC from London?

FACILITATOR

You are talking about the BBC and what its role should be in your opinion, so that is quite a good place to start, to say actually I never heard anything about this and we should have discussed it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well if you are Welsh and live in Wales, the only place you can get that really is BBC Wales, or BBC Cymry Wales you see. So to avoid it suggests that you are making the same mistake that maybe the BBC makes, it thinks it is London-centred and the rest of the country, especially actually English speaking people in Wales who have the worst local television service from the BBC ever, simply because you have a competing language, and the BBC produces Welsh programmes itself. Let me give you an example. I think Welsh people should have English language programmes, English language drama, reasonable to expect, we get Granada Television produces drama from Manchester about northerners, we get Coronation Street from up the north, we get all sorts of programmes from the north of England, we get programmes from London, we get programmes from Scotland, we get programmes from Ireland. Now when did you last see a Welsh programme on network television? You haven't seen one since 1997, because I produced it, and that was only 8 shows. The problem you have in Wales is a substantial one, but which is ignored by London because the Labour politicians ignore it because they are more interested in national politics in Wales that is to say, and leave it to local people in Wales, the Conservatives don't bother at all, because they are not really interested at all, and nobody really wants to take on the real issue that 80% of the people in Wales speak English, 20% speak Welsh, 80% of the money the BBC spends on broadcasting in Wales goes to Welsh language broadcasting, and they get S4C. I will explain, S4C gets £16 million a year to spend on drama in the Welsh language. The BBC, which is the only broadcaster in Wales that produces drama in English, gets £800,000. They get another £6 million which they produce Pabla Cmwld (phon), which is a Welsh language programme. You see if that young kiddie there wants to be an actor when he grows up, the chances of him getting a job with BBC Wales is very, very limited, partly because he wouldn't speak Welsh, which is another problem because you have discrimination in BBC Wales against people who don't speak Welsh, in fact in order to answer the telephone you have to speak some Welsh. My argument is, and I hope the government seriously addresses this, because I am going to create a huge political campaign in Wales if it doesn't do something about it in this review, because it is very, very important, because there is huge discrimination against English speaking people trying to get jobs at the BBC. These actors would never work in Wales, they wouldn't get a job. The unemployment rate of actors in Wales is enormous. And I am a former head of drama at the BBC so I know exactly what I am talking about, exactly what I am talking about.

FACILITATOR

So you are arguing for a greater role for English speaking ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am asking the government to consider moving all Welsh language produced programmes out of the BBC in Wales over to S4C. The Welsh language is fine, let it thrive, but let's create an English language pool. You see one of the real problems you do not have, and this is very

important, if you have English language drama say from Manchester then the people start reading the Brontes, the Brontes get translated, you get literature. There is no literature in the English language in Wales, there are no Welsh writers producing, one or two writers producing novels in the English language because they can't get into the television from this stuff because there is nobody making the programmes. And London plays an equally humiliating part as BBC Wales by actually treating Wales as a second class citizen and saying that the Welsh accent is not sexy, and that is a real argument, it also applies to Birmingham and to people from Norwich.

FACILITATOR

I think Birmingham is a lovely accent, for my good self. Who else wants to make a point about this, thinking about the role, what do you think the role of the BBC should be in society?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I just want to say that I think the BBC, especially in Wales at the moment, do some fantastic work in both the Welsh language and the English language, but on a very local level with things like the Capture Wales project, or the Community Studios, these sorts of things, and there is content being produced but it kind of disappears. There is a real sense of the BBC going out there and working with communities and making content, but it then tends to get buried online somewhere and nobody really gets to watch it unless they tune into 2W or something, which we all know has very, very low audience figures.

FACILITATOR

So they are doing some good work in the community, but your question is why doesn't it appeal.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, that is in my opinion.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Excuse me, that is actually factually incorrect.

FACILITATOR

We will come back to you in a minute, but we have got to let as many people as possible have a view.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I do agree on communities not having a first say. I have campaigned in my local community, we are one of the worst represented and deprived communities in the whole of Wales and I have written time after time to the BBC to take up some of the issues about deprivation in where I live, and some serious issues about the money which is being spent in Ana (phon) and I find all the time that our pathway is locked. We are kept out. There is a Welsh thing going on. I agree that if people want to speak Welsh, that should be encouraged, but not at the expense, I think it has increased now to 3% in Wales. I would just like to ask in this room, from the people who have come from the public, how many people today in this room speak Welsh, fluent Welsh.

FACILITATOR

What is the point of your question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The point of the question is I have constantly asked the BBC to do something in our community, and yet when it comes to a Welsh community for their schools and one thing and the other, they are quick enough to run up there. Well we are discriminated against, and discrimination works both ways, and the BBC hasn't seen this, and I will take that up myself as well with the Minister if he is good enough to listen to me later on.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would just like to say first of all I think the BBC is dumbing down, and one of the main reasons I think that is, I don't know whether you could say I was lucky or unfortunate to be allowed in the inner circle and actually go and see what the BBC is saying they are doing for the public. First of all they discriminate against certain minority groups, like the private groups as you say, but also they discriminate against people like myself. I take reasonable access requirements to them, up to some of the biggest people within BBC Wales. They say yes we will do something about it, they don't do anything about it because it is not everyone is going to be using that service. What happens to the BBC being led by the people, and basically it is having to come to things like this, basically I see these type of events as crisis management, because we all know before long, this report, or whatever you are doing, will end up going back on to somebody in BBC Wales so they can only see minority groups. Whoever has decided to turn up here tonight, that is all they are going to see, they are not going to see the wider community. The BBC is for everyone, not just for middle classes, and I can guarantee most of the people in this room are from middle classes. People need to be starting to be listened to, otherwise you are going to start revolts.

FACILITATOR

So again the point that a number of people have made this evening, somehow the BBC needs to be more responsive, whether that is dealing with if you like a majority, which is treated as a minority in this particular instance, which the gentleman is making there, or reasonable access and how we make some sort of balance. Is that right?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes. And also another point I would like to just quickly bring up before you move on, is why not actually allow members of the public to actually go in as an independent adjudicator to some of these wider committees. Let their voices be heard there.

FACILITATOR

OK, so again a role for people going in and doing a sort of form of governance and looking in at what the BBC is doing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Sensitive to being a member of the middle classes, though I wasn't always, thanks to the BBC you have gone up in the world, and I think a lot of people, not only the BBC of course, but the point I want to make really is that if we are talking about access, the original role of the BBC was to be available to everybody, that the part of its charter that deals with actually the engineering side of it, the reception side of it, was that it should reach every single citizen, every single member of society in the United Kingdom, that is what it is supposed to be for, and I think that is rather a splendid ideal. And so the question is how do you make sure that everybody who might ever need it or want it does have access to it? And the argument is being made, and I love the Rupert Murdoch parody that we got, but the argument is being made that somehow access will be increased if we go to a subscription system where people have choice. Of course it won't, and there will be lots of people who

will not have access, and one of the groups that won't have access is a group that I am very interested in, and I have done a lot of work with children, the child audiences, and one of the problems with subscription is that you have to rely on parents to subscribe or the child doesn't get the service. One of the great things about the BBC's children's service, and the commercial system actually models itself on the BBC, I mean the BBC serves as a kind of touchstone for the commercial programme makers, and one of the great things about it is it appeals directly to children without having to go via adults, and the programming is there whether or not mum and dad have decided to subscribe to it or not, plus it is also available to other kinds of people. So the universality of access that we have with broadcasting, with traditional broadcasting, seems to me, regardless of whether the content is good, bad or in Welsh or whatever, but the universality of access is what it seems to me we are now in danger of losing when we start thinking about going over to subscription or whatever. And as I say, I have a special interest in the child audience, but the child audience grows up to be the adult audience, so you have really got to make the very best service available to the young, and I don't think subscription is going to do that.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hi, hello again. First, I agree with the lady about subscriptions, but I would like to go on to a different point if I may, which is about the role of the BBC in today's society, and that is the one innovation which I think has been briefly raised by this gentleman, the gentleman on my left. Now of late it seems that in British Television in general and the BBC in particular, there has been a dearth of genuine innovation, innovative programming. A lot of the best dramas and comedies in particular seem to be coming out of America these days, at least in my opinion, people might disagree with this. But we had the hospital comedy, Scrubs, from America, which was hugely successful, then we had the bloody awful – pardon my language – pilot series, pilot episode of something called TLC which was supposed to be the British answer to this. It never got past the pilot, which having watched it myself I can say is definitely a very good thing in my opinion. The same with the drama series 24, again we had the series Spooks which I personally just found, although not as awful as TLC it was definitely an inferior kind of copy.

#### FACILITATOR

So what is your argument, are you arguing that we are mimicking the USA?

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

My argument is that there doesn't seem to be as much innovation on the BBC challenge. This again goes to the point this gentleman raised about the idea of racism in the BBC and the fact that there are not many ethnic minority producers of drama and comedy in the BBC.

#### FACILITATOR

OK, I think that might be a separate issue in terms of what innovation is. What is your specific point about what is an innovative programme, because one could argue that whatever TLC is, it could be innovatory, it just didn't work. So what are you arguing?

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am arguing that one of the roles of the BBC should be to encourage innovation in drama and comedy, among other things.

#### FACILITATOR

So tell me what that is, give me a definition of what that is.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

Can I start again here. I think in terms of its services the BBC provides one of the best internet services in the world, without question. I also think its radio services in general are abysmal, and I will give a specific example of that. I was going home with a friend - who does listen to the radio - from work and there was a news programme about the one and only paedophile treatment centre in Britain closing, and will put the question as I remember it. The interviewer was talking to a doctor from this centre, she said something like right doctor, you are out of a job, the only treatment centre in Britain is closing, this is something you have devoted 10 years to, how do you feel about this? I mean the questioning never got more specific. That is the standard I have seen throughout the range of radio services I have heard.

FACILITATOR

OK, that is a quality issue.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

A separate issue I think. It seems that everybody has their own opinion, so I won't go into it. I am taking too long here, aren't I?

FACILITATOR

Slightly. If this gentleman wants to comment, because you want to comment specifically on innovation?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think what the gentleman there was trying to say was that the BBC no longer takes any risks, it no longer takes any risks. It doesn't have the budget to take risks, and as a result it makes a lot worse programmes because the programmes that were best were the ones that it took risks with. It is worth looking at what they have produced over the last 30 years, just buy a Radio Times for 1971, 1969, 1983, and compare it with 2004 and you will see exactly what people are trying to say. It has dumbed down enormously, not just marginally but enormously. And you said earlier on it is there to educate as well as to entertain. It no longer educates except in a very patronising kind of way. The BBC used to be better than books, now it has really lost its way, and it is very serious this.

FACILITATOR

I have heard an argument put forward in response to that point which goes something along the lines well why do you want the BBC to educate you, isn't that what the schools are there for?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It is in the charter, Sir.

FACILITATOR

I appreciate that, but I am just putting forward an argument here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It is in the charter that it is there to entertain, and I buy comics because it has become a comic cuts channel. It is very important, because if children are only offered coca cola, they will have rotten teeth and rotten stomachs and the BBC has become the Coca Cola Channel. Not entirely, let's be absolutely clear, but let's be absolutely clear what it could be, as opposed to what it is, and you can't just change one programme, you have to change the ethics of the whole organisation, and start with this new review they are doing with actually something that is going to be refreshing. I actually personally, having worked in

broadcasting for 30 years, would not want to work in it today because it is not challenging in any way.

FACILITATOR

OK. In the content?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

In the contents of what I see on television, it is as simple as that, what you see and what you get. Obviously you get the same rugby matches, they are better or worse, depending on who you support, but the BBC has certainly lost its way significantly, and unless the government addresses the ethics of the BBC, it is going to have a serious problem.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Heaven forbid that this government dictates an ethical policy to the BBC. Let's not forget that this is not a meeting that has been called by the BBC to ask our opinion about what it is, it has been called by the government, to gain ammunition probably to do what it wants to do with the BBC and to change its charter in a way that suits the government.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Inaudible.

FACILITATOR

That is a point of view, but what other point do you want to make around that, because that is just an assertion, they might or they might not.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

OK it is an assertion and I am a cynic, yes I am sorry I am a journalist too. I would be interested too incidentally to know how many people are actually from the public in this meeting, how many people are from the DCMS, or employed by the DCMS here.

FACILITATOR

I don't want us to particularly get side-tracked about doing a little consensus among this small room, but what I am interested in is what you think, what do you think is the role of the BBC?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think the BBC has been in general a force for good, I have been employed by it myself and I had a lot of complaints about it over the years.

FACILITATOR

What do you think it should be then. Do you think it is fulfilling its role?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it needs to be responsive, but I don't think the government can legislate to make it more responsive, it just has to do it itself.

FACILITATOR

Well one might argue that no-one is ever particularly responsive, unless they are forced to be responsive by somebody, so who should be forcing them to be responsive if the government is not doing it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

There are other ways of selecting governments, as we talked about earlier. That is all I have to say.

FACILITATOR

Who else wants to comment around the role of the BBC. We haven't really talked about whether it should be involved in digital channels for example, should that be something that is left to the commercial sector to fund, or do you think that is something the BBC should be involved in?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

.. the thing it is involved in digital servicing, it is involved in commercial services, OK, you can't change that. What you have to do is say OK this is what we have, how do we make it work well and ethically. The word ethics has to come into the debate, this is all I am trying to say. It is as simple as that. If you want that child to grow up where television has a meaningful part in his life, or he ends up just becoming a mimicker of dumbed-down television, the BBC has a responsibility to help that child have a mind. And the fact is the media overall, whether it is Hollywood or the BBC, are hurting children's minds with their awful attitude to the idea that we are all thick, that we are all stupid people.

FACILITATOR

I am still not clear from what you are saying though, I can understand in a world of five channels how that could happen, I am not quite clear ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I only have five channels, we all have a choice, we can all pay the licence fee or not, that is a real choice. Yes or no. OK, I have a choice, I can not pay it. I can choose to watch 26 channels a night, or 5, or 1. If I want to watch a public broadcasting service called the BBC, I want it to be a public broadcasting service. As simple as that. If I want to watch junk, I can watch junk, I actually like some junk.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Why aren't there more kids channels on there?

FACILITATOR

My son would agree with you. In fact my daughter would certainly agree with you. I can't answer that, but you would like to see more children's. What would you like to see on a children's channel?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

More Dick and Dom in the Bungalow.

FACILITATOR

And what do you like about them?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Because they are stupid and they throw cream ... muck over everyone.

FACILITATOR

And what sort of things do you like watching, apart from that what other things do you like watching?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Action, sword fighting

FACILITATOR

And what do you like about them?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well it is all fast, so I can't really see it.

FACILITATOR

But it is fun?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Like Jackie Chan because he always get the stick off of Mopp, and these Ninja's and they just appear from anywhere and they just throw blades at it. And when he chops off the end of the stick, he just whacks them and they just disappear to another place.

FACILITATOR

I have got one more question for you. If you could have your own programme, what would be on it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Dick and Dom.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Welcome to America. I think I grew up with a better idea of television, more educational television, than what is. I can remember dramas called Cathy Come Home, an excellent drama on telly, related to life and poverty and stuff like that, which the BBC was great in my time when it delivered. Now Geoffrey – my son – loves Dick and Dom. That is an American thing, I find that was rubbish, but on the same thing it wouldn't be fair to America because they had Sesame Street, and I really enjoyed Sesame Street, and they helped me because I was a difficult learner at school. And I think a lot of pressure is coming from around the world, but children's TV is sliding a bit on the educational side I think. There is a lot of good stuff out there, like the Wild Show and stuff like that. But let's not forget, what we haven't mentioned is HTV, because they do a good job – HTV – and they do cater for children. As much as we don't like to address about paying for digital channels, what I brought it up earlier on for is I don't think we are going to be able to get away from it, so we are going to have to talk about it. I didn't mean in any way like I am going to force my opinion, we are going to have to pay ...

FACILITATOR

... your opinion, there is nothing wrong with that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

This is what I mean, it is like the gentleman behind me said, it is about pressures, it is about getting the balance right. But I agree with him as well, the drama series, in Wales I think it could be definitely improved as well, and especially children's TV.

FACILITATOR

So what is coming out quite strongly is the educational role of the BBC. Did you want to make a point?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I agree with a lot of what the gentleman was saying. Personally I could never stand any children's television, even when I was a child I could never stand children's television, I just

did not get on with it at all. But I think the point about America especially is a valid one. Probably 70 – 80% of what I watch on television nowadays, and I don't watch that much of it, is American, because I just do find that they do do things a lot better in a way than we do, and in that way we have got stuck in this sort of rut, and the BBC, which should be a guiding force in British drama and comedy, it is just how long it has to remain there. But there again the BBC has brought 24 and things like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, who are screens, so maybe in that way its role is a good one. But it is sad that we have to rely on these American drama series so much, because we don't seem to be producing the same kind of thinking.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

I am loathe to enter this debate, to be honest, I just wanted to have a quiet time and observe. But I just want to make the point that I don't think people here are reflecting the general opinion out there. The fact that a lot of people have turned up tonight because they have got an opinion to make, they have got a vested interest, there is probably a lot of negativity spreading around. On the whole I think a lot of people would just regard the BBC is doing a very good job. OK there are arguments about dumbing down, there are arguments about too much American programming, but the fact of the matter is that 24 is a very good programme, why not show it? There is no point in making a British version of it. And the reason we are being infiltrated by so many American programmes is because there is a wealth of networks out of America producing these programmes, and obviously they select the best. Obviously some people here don't agree that they are good programmes, and vice versa, and obviously Australian programmes are ... with Australian soaps. But the point I just wanted to make is I don't think this is probably a reflective debate of the wider general public, because obviously they haven't turned up. I think at this moment in time satellite and digital TV is still fairly new. The last 10 years ... taken place, and I think the next time the charter is reviewed, or the next time after that, I think there is more of an issue about the role of the BBC. In its current form I think it does provide a valuable service, but in the future maybe it is going to have to change.

#### FACILITATOR

Just articulate for me what you think is valuable about it?

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

That is the killer question. It is difficult to say. It is there and everybody regards it as being there, it is just an ever present, it has been part of our history, everybody from people can recall Churchill's speeches during the war, things like that. But it is an institution and it is regarded as such, and for a long, long time people have only had 4 channels and BBC and ITV. A gentleman mentioned ITV, Channel 4, they are all regarded as the core programming that people watch, and now it has expanded to digital TV, satellite TV, people have got a wider choice, but people still come back to watch the four core channels.

#### AUDIENCE MEMBER

I slightly disagree. I do think the BBC does educate, I am only 21, so obviously I can't remember sort of really what it was like more than obviously 10 years ago. But I mean like just this morning sort of I had BBC Breakfast on when I was getting ready, and I learned about things that I wouldn't know if I didn't have the BBC on. If I was watching ITV or Channel 4, I wouldn't learn things, they might have a poet on, but just general little things, and I think throughout the day you do have to look sometimes for the more educational programmes, but if you do look, I think they are there. And I think children's programmes as well, I think you can find educational programmes and I think it is so hard to get the balance of entertainment for kids, and education. But it is there. And the point about the American programmes, a lot of the American programmes are not shown on the BBC, so it doesn't ....

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The ones I mentioned are.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes, the ones you mentioned are, but I think the majority, I think the BBC tends to make a lot of their own products, and I do think it does educate, maybe the age I am, it is not a fair view, but.

FACILITATOR

And its role for you, what do you think it should be doing?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I think it does educate, I think it does entertain. There are gaps and there are problems, but generally on the whole I am satisfied with that I think. It does provide a good news service, I do learn a lot about the world through it, and yes, if I do want to find a documentary programme I think on the whole they do tend to ... there is a lot of crap on it, but then that is the way it is, but some people enjoy that crap.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would just like to pick up the point about the representatives of this audience. We are all I think quite sensitive to the fact that we can't really speak for the public as a whole, and I think I would be a bit unhappy if I thought, there have been some very interesting opinions expressed today, but I don't think they can be taken as anything that represents the public view of the BBC and its role in society, it is just a group of people in Cardiff who happen to be able to come along at a not very convenient time and give their views. So my concern really – perhaps it is a question for you – is I would hope that what has been said here today is not being seen as representative of the public's view of the BBC, it is a lot of interesting opinions, but that is it.

FACILITATOR

I can tell you that it is part of a much broader process, and if I may, I will ask the Minister to deal with that in his few words at the end, because there is a much broader consultative process going on, as well as these events.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

With the public involved in that?

FACILITATOR

Yes, exactly, and looking to make it representative in various ways.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Good.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

While I have been listening, it seems to me that it is a pity that we are almost exclusively talking about television, and we are ignoring radio. Now radio hasn't changed so much because it hasn't had competition, and television I think has changed because it has had to compete for an audience, and unfortunately in some cases it has had to lower its standards to compete in that way. I think it is interesting that you keep referring to ethics, because I wonder what you mean by ethics. I wonder what you mean? Do we have common and absolute standards any more under ethics? I don't think we have. And much as I would like to see the BBC adopting certain ethics, I don't think that would be reflected now with the

British public, because I don't think the British public has anything like that, so I don't think it can be reflective.

FACILITATOR

So you are saying that there isn't a broad set of agreed ethical ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Rules if you like, or ethics. What are ethics, what are ethics in Britain today, and so how can the BBC reflect them?

FACILITATOR

Before anyone thinks about responding to that, I really don't want to get into a three day debate on ethics. But it is a very important point in itself. I just want to ask you then, what you were saying about radio, as I understand it, the spectrum now is being opened up, so there will be many more radio stations available. What advice would you give to the BBC about how it should adapt its role in that area, if you don't want to see the same thing happen to radio that you claim has happened to television?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I happen to think that British radio is very good, I don't have a lot to compare it with. We do have a lot of choice, for me it is enough choice, 5 or 6 different things you could easily go into, with no problem, and I think we have got a good balance. So I think probably what the BBC would do, if it sees a channel that is competing strongly against it, will raise a channel to compete, and we will just keep what we have got. But I do think, because I suppose I am old-fashioned and I want the BBC to be a flagship reflection of old British society where there were standards and there were ethics, but I don't think there are now, and I think it should take its chance and I don't think it should be seen, here or abroad, as this is Britain. And I didn't think I would ever hear myself saying so, but I don't think it should play the National Anthem, and I think it has got to take its chance with the wider media scene.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Can I just say something.

FACILITATOR

Yes, and we will take this as the last point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The reason we need the BBC is this, let's assume Steven Spielberg couldn't have made Schindlers List in Hollywood, because they didn't want to make it because they didn't think it would make money in the box office. They could have come to London and probably persuaded the BBC to make that, nobody else in the world would have made it. The BBC would have made that very, very well. Do you see what I am getting at? So we need the BBC because it has the capacity to produce the very, very best of broadcasting. Because it has played the game over the last 15 years of competing for audiences with the commercial services it has dumbed down. Most people would agree with that, whether we like it or not, they don't like it. What I am saying is this, that if anybody in this room wanted to go out and make an independent film say about something that they were passionate about, they couldn't raise the money. The only way you are going to be able to raise the money to produce a programme or whatever, anything like that, is to go to the BBC or Channel 4. The problem is that the people, as this gentleman down in the front mentioned, Ken Loach, Les Blair, Mike Leigh, and loads of other people across a whole range, you know people you have never even heard of, are no longer making these programmes because the BBC has stopped making them. What I would like to see is the balance return to what it was prior to Thatcher.

FACILITATOR

So that was the earlier point you made about getting back to greater quantity of the challenging programmes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It should spend its money properly and produce quality and forget the quantity perhaps.

**(VOTING NOT TRANSCRIBED)**

LORD MCINTOSH

Thank you very much Aiden. I am not going to detain you at all, but I just want to set this in context. No, we don't think that the views of 20 people here are fully representative of the views of people in Cardiff, let alone the whole of Wales. On the other hand, I have to say, having done this now in Belfast, and in Edinburgh and today in Cardiff, the variety of views that I have heard expressed in these meetings has been very great indeed, and the number of views that I had not thought of myself, and the range of opinions that people have about issues on which it is terribly easy to generalise, but quite difficult to be general. The views have been very great and they have been very original, and it isn't just the voting, but the transcript, as Aiden has said, the transcript is fed into our consultation and it has a value. I think it is much more significant for example that people, having heard what other people have said, expressed their views in the way that you have this evening, than to have a single e-mail from somebody who may have just given 5 seconds attention to it or may have given it a great deal of thought, but we have got no way of knowing. So I am very grateful, we are very grateful, the government is very grateful, those who are responsible for conducting the review are very grateful, even the BBC might be grateful, I don't know, we will see the result of it. For the time that you spent this evening, I agree it isn't a very convenient time, but then no time is very convenient, thank you for spending the time, thank you particularly to Aiden for his skilful conduct of this evening's meeting.

**(END OF TRANSCRIPT)**