

Mr Eddy Mair
c/o PM

The Ides of March

Dear Mr Mair,

Concerning the interview given by James Purnell:

As regards the government policy on the BBC's future remit I make no case except to say that I disagree entirely with it: coming from a so-called 'culture' minister who promoted casinos, 24 hour drinking and the Olympic Games that few actually want and fewer want to pay for, the BBC proposals are merely typical.

The reasons for keeping the BBC in its present form is something which may be put down to the way in 'public service broadcasting' is defined by its usefulness to the political establishment for the purposes of public opinion management, which brings me to Purnell's interview:

He claimed that the licence fee is supported by a majority. Really?
And just how did that consultation take place? No-one asked me, nor do I know a single person whose opinion on the BBC or the licence fee was sought.

In fact, in my last letter to the Director General I put it to him that out of the BBC's vast budget ~~(it could well afford to seek the opinion of every licence payer.)~~ However, BBC Information tell me the DG is too busy to read his correspondence and I was referred to the DCMS. Obviously despite opinion to the contrary, comedy is not completely dead at BBC.

So what was this consultation? By whom was it conducted? How many people were consulted? And why some and not others? The licence fee is universal and applied whether or not one makes use of any BBC service.

Was it conducted like so many of the BBC's own exercises, on an exclusively e-media basis, from pre-selected trustees (by the way, whatever happened to the PM Panel,) relied upon to give the right answers?

What a pity Mr Purnell didn't see the Teletext poll, a copy of which was sent to your DG, in which randomly, 2,355 people voted on the question: 'If the BBC licence fee was good value', 93 percent of respondents voted NO.

The idea of selling this licence fee hike on some promise that in the 'future' the BBC will become accountable to the licence payer is breathtaking: just how stupid do ministers think we are?

~~If that's the case, just to whom has the BBC been accountable all these years?~~

If there's one thing I hate it's having my intelligence insulted by such tripe.
As for your Head of Policy, methinks she doth promote too much.

Yours sincerely,



cc J. Purnell MP

D.J. TOLLEY

JAMES PURKELL, MP

Dear Mr. Purkell,

With reference to your recent interview with Mr. Mair concerning the review of the BBC Charter - I made the enclosed response to the programme which is self-explanatory and received the usual BBC response. Rien.

Leaving aside the ultra caution of the BBC, Padd-Hutton, it's hardly likely they are going to give any government spokesman a hard time on an issue, the outcome of which, is one in which the BBC has a major and direct material interest.

Your claim of majority finding support for the licence fee was obviously lacking in substantive evidence.

Was this perhaps yet another of "public consultations," like the recent one on pensions, 1,000 (invited?) people in six urban centres? Or another of the BBC's e-mail only surveys from among its middle-class advisers?

You people must think we are all stupid! ~ and maybe we are, to put up with it ~ xob that we have much choice,

Yours etc

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YOUR VOTING LICENCE FEE

AS ORDERED BY THE BBC LICENCE FEE

2,355 voted:

YES 7% NO 93%

PREVIOUS POLLS

68% OF 1,451 CALLERS WERE YES

94% OF CALLERS THOUGHT THAT SHOULD BE DECREASED

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Today's POLL >>>

In Focus