

Cultural Diversity Advisory Group to the Media

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The Rt. Hon Tessa Jowell M.P.
The Secretary of State
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MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES

The declared government policy, further outlined in your above consultation paper on the creation of plurality and diversity, falls greatly in line with the aims and objects of our group. We have for many years voiced our feelings, regrettably to no avail, that the fast growing parallel cultures as well as double standards, largely promoted by the media, is not compatible with a democratic multicultural society.

We hereby reiterate our views on the broad principles of your proposals as follows:-

- a. Firstly we applaud and support Her Majesty's Government's wish to legislate, regulate and monitor the communication industry. Raising public awareness and expectation ought to be a media requirement. Lack of clarity for the ordinary lay person, in our view, unwittingly creates suspicions of autocracy. The past record of numerous broken promises has, quite understandably, created distrust for that "trade". There is a massive task of restoration. We believe that your proposals might assist.
- b. Cultural Diversity in media portrayal, has so far received neither genuine government focus nor the attention of the powerful public or

be under local control and not part of a huge and powerful conglomerate with its own agenda, unrelated to domestic issues.

- e. The proposal to hold all broadcasters accountable to provide training for their existing staff and to meet the challenge of a new culturally diverse Britain seems vital. Currently, encouragement for staff to go out and build links with isolated and segregated communities is patchy or a mere *box ticking* exercise. Self-regulation, in an atmosphere of gentility, in our experience has regrettably but abysmally failed. Hence, we hope that tighter control, through the above proposal will take the matter further forward. We believe that Licences for those sectors of news providers and related organisations must be reviewed and revoked on the basis of non-compliance.
- f. There does not appear to be a defined requirement on broadcasters to broaden their workforce to include minority communities at all levels within a reasonable time frame. In this context, retention and meritorious promotion is of far greater importance than recruitment. We hear of a perception of being unwelcome in an exclusively White environment, not conducive to self-respect and retention of those painfully recruited. The proposed rules ought to specifically require multiracial OFCOM to monitor this process effectively and with greater transparency. The present system of relying on the *old gatekeepers* has proved to be largely unsatisfactory and lacks credibility. We believe that the Ownership Rules must firmly address this issue
- g. There appears to be no commitment that OFCOM and its advisory panels will reflect the plurality of our communities. Neither the White Paper nor the above proposals appear to address this issue, either explicitly or implicitly. With no indication that plurality will be encouraged, we must conclude that it will be suffocated as at present

We hope our above contribution is useful. However, we would be happy to present further oral evidence and examples, if invited to do so. We authorise this response to remain in the public domain and widely circulated.

Yours etc.

Anver Jeevanjee
 Hon. Secretary
 Cultural Diversity Advisory Group to the Media

