

Submission by Tom Macheon.

Topic: The BBC.

18/02/04

As the BBC's charter comes-up for renewal and with public views being sought, I submit, to the relevant committee, C/o Tessa Jowell MP Secretary of State, for Art, Media and Culture, my views on the topic.

I am a firm believer in public service Broadcasting. For me, The BBC, like The NHS, is a terrific, Unique, British body, unrivalled the world over. But like the NHS, The BBC must be open to scrutiny, review and change.

I, as a licence-payer, am not, of course, keen on the yearly charge, BUT to keep the BBC,

A Commercial-free.

B Doing some things commercial TV and Radio would never do.

C To keep it independent.

I feel the licence is worth it. That-said, I strongly feel that the BBC needs to connect more with its licence-paying-public. Above all, it must be able to cater for a diverse multi-cultural UK population. I therefore feel more public involvement in the selection process for BBC governors, is vital.

While I don't see that the BBC should be governed like I.TV, which is a wholly different animal, with

could . . . .

a limited public-service remit, and a wholly commercial mission, I do feel a more representative board of governors needs to be selected. By 'representative' I mean people with sound business and professional sense, who embrace public-service broadcasting and one drawn from diverse Britain, based upon their sound track-record. I do feel, as licence-payers, one or two governors should be elected by us. We have, at present no sense of the BBC being accountable to us. Indeed how many licence-payers know who the current BBC governors are?

I am concerned, post-Hutton, that the BBC will be less pioneering in its journalism. I hope not! It has a proud record, while being from Hutton, the BBC must be independent, free and pioneering in its journalistic brief, I feel.

Above all, I am concerned by the stronghold on our media generally, by just a few moguls. The BBC is a beacon of independent, public-service broadcasting. Long may it be so.

I am concerned that BBC 1 has dumbed-down its content in recent years. 'Lifestyle' programs, aimed at a limited viewership, and limited talents seen across the BBC channels do not show diversity. Too often the BBC puts up one or two faces and they become fronts for a chat show here, a game-show there, maybe a film-review programme too! One gets tired of the same old programs, the same-old-faces, variations on the same old themes. The BBC has to

could . . . .

look at its Diverse Viewership .

### Digital Channels .

Not everyone can afford a Digital Radio, which is still over £80 - for a basic model .

The same goes for Digibox - Freeview - decoders, which are cheaper than a Digital Radio, at present. They are still over £50 - usually .

There is a danger of a two-tier, two-world viewership, in my view .

Those with Digital Access, maybe IT access too .

Those without Income determining which category one is in . Unacceptable in my view .

As All pay the Licence fee, And as the Licence fee funds BBC Three + Four, CBBC etc, Licence payers should have access to these . So, the BBC, and

Government, I submit, have a duty to get the industry to reduce Digibox Prices, and digital Radio prices .

This should, in my view, be a prominent charter - renewal - condition .

The BBC is a queer thing . But it needs to connect to all . While it does do on some levels, on others it fails .

Tom Macken

Feb 2004