

Kate M. REC

19th January 2004

The Rt Hon. Tessa Jowell, MP,
The House of Commons,
London SW1A 1AA.

Dear Ms Jowell,

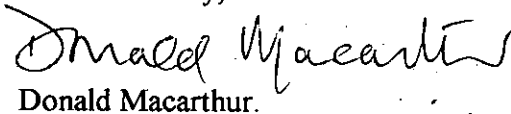
Renewal of the Charter of the BBC

I am concerned about comments in the press that the Government is considering restricting the independence of the BBC when its charter is renewed in two years time. I consider that it is vital that the BBC should have its charter renewed along the lines that exist at the moment.

My principal reason for taking this view is that it is essential that the BBC should have the freedom to comment on all aspects of public life without fear or favour of any interest group, including the government of the day. Decision making has become much too centralised over the past twenty years. This is seen in local government where local authorities are now constrained by the requirements of central government to such an extent that they have very little freedom of action. You will have seen this yourself, when you compare what you were able to achieve in your years as a Councillor in the London Borough of Camden compared with what that authority can do today. It is seen in Parliament which has very limited influence over the direction of Government policies. It was seen in the run up to the war in Iraq when no account was taken of the millions of people who opposed (rightly, as it has turned out) the action against Iraq on which the government was clearly determined. It is essential that this country avoids the situation in the USA where most of their TV stations and newspapers generally accept their government's position and simply become apologists for their government. Consequently I wish to see the BBC retain the maximum possible independence, as at least some check on those fewer and fewer people who are gathering the power of decision making into their own hands.

My secondary reason for advocating that things stay much the same as they are is because I think it would be a great shame if the BBC were to be required to raise its income from advertising revenue. It is not just that the members of the public provide the income whether that be through a licence fee or through the increased prices that come about to pay the costs of advertising. It is also because it is worth a great deal to be able to watch programmes without the annoying interruptions from advertising.

Yours sincerely,



Donald Macarthur.

Cc: The Rt Hon Paul Boateng MP, Brent South

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	
Treat Office	Correspondence
Ref. No.	03/20039
Action	BPD
Date	18/2/04