



**Voice of the
Listener & Viewer**

Bulletin

Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting

Winter 2004/5

Issue 80



Secretary of State to speak at VLV Westminster Evening Seminar

Tuesday, 22 March, 6.30pm

The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport will speak at the first of VLV's 2005 Westminster Evening Seminars at the Palace of Westminster on Tuesday, 22 March. The seminar will be held in one of the committee rooms at the Palace, starting at 6.30pm.

We expect the Government Green Paper on the BBC to be published within the first few weeks of 2005. The Green Paper, which is now being drafted, will be

presented to Parliament by Ms Jowell and we expect that the recommended twelve week period of public consultation will follow. We are delighted therefore that the Secretary of State has kindly agreed to outline her hopes for the BBC at this VLV event. It will provide probably the only opportunity that members and their guests will get to hear her views direct, and to question her at first hand.

There is no charge to attend the seminar but tickets are essential. Please send an SAE if you wish to attend, together with full details of any guests you wish to bring.

BBC Chairman to Speak at VLV's Spring Conference

Monday, 25 April 10.30 - 4.45pm
Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1

A large turnout is expected to hear Michael Grade CBE, Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors give the keynote morning speech at VLV's 22nd Spring Conference Building Public Value in Broadcasting in London on Monday 25 April.

We anticipate that the Government Green Paper on the Future of the BBC will have been published by April. The conference will therefore provide Mr Grade with a timely opportunity to give his reactions to it. He will also outline the views of the BBC Governors on the plans for the Corporation's future published by the new Director General, Mark Thompson, at the end of last year.

The plans, entitled *Building Public Value* involve cutting costs across all departments, moving several departments, including children's sports, formal learning, Five Live and New Media, to Manchester, and a new focus on the arts, music, news, comedy and children's programmes all of which have traditionally contributed to high public esteem of BBC programmes.

Michael Grade intends to avoid giving a long set speech, so that there will be plenty of time for



discussion and questions from the floor. Please submit questions to the VLV Chairman in advance if you would like to do so, or are unable to attend the conference.

In order to enable us to react to other topical events, the afternoon session of the conference will not be arranged until nearer the time. For details please refer to our website: www.vlv.org.uk or telephone the office from March onwards.

European, Commonwealth and UK Broadcasters to debate the future of Public Service Broadcasting

The Royal Society,
Carlton House Terrace, London SW1,
Friday, 11 Feb 09.30 - 5pm

Delegates at VLV's 10th international conference will examine the prospects for public service broadcasting in Europe and the Commonwealth at a time of unprecedented economic, political and technological change.

The event will provide a rare opportunity for the exchange of views about current developments between leading broadcasters, policy makers and representatives of civil society from around the world. Among them will be members of EURALVA, the European Association of Listeners' & Viewers' Associations from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Portugal and the UK.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Jacques Briquemont, Head of Public Affairs, European Broadcasting Union

Ken Clark, Chief Executive, Fiji Broadcasting Corporation

Ian Fraser, Chief Executive, New Zealand Television Corporation

Karol Jakubowicz, Vice Chairman, CDMM Committee, Council of Europe & Polish Broadcasting Council

Richard Sambrook, Director, BBC World Service and Global News Division

K. S. Sharma, Chief Executive, Prasarati Corporation, India

Adam Singer, Content Board member, Ofcom & former Group CEO, Telewest & CEO Flextech

Elizabeth Smith, Secretary-General, the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association

Dr Verena Wiedemann, Head of European Affairs, ARD, Germany.

KEY SESSIONS INCLUDE:

- Can the public service broadcasters still deliver accurate, impartial news and information?
- Can PSB survive the impact of digital technologies, fragmenting audiences and changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks?
- Can PSB be safeguarded in Europe - what are the commercial, governance and funding issues facing European broadcasters?
- What role can citizens play in ensuring good governance and the principles of public service in broadcasting?

For more details and to book a place at all events visit www.vlv.org.uk or call the VLV Office on 01474 352835.

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Voice of the Listener & Viewer

Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting

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VLV's sister charity

which supports VLV's educational work

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VLV office hours:

9.00am - 5.00pm Mon-Thurs

Voice of the Listener & Viewer Ltd (VLV) represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and works for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV is free from political, sectarian and commercial affiliations. VLV is concerned with the issues, structures, institutions and regulation that underpin the British broadcasting system and in particular to maintain the principles of public service in broadcasting. VLV does not handle complaints.

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Changes in the VLV Board

Bob Fletcher has resigned as VLV's Secretary after holding the position for two years. We are most grateful to Bob for seeing the Company through its first two years of trading and delighted that he remains a Director of the Company.

Messrs Waterlow Registrars Ltd have been appointed to handle the formal duties of Company Secretary.

Mrs Jocelyne Tobin has resigned as a director of VLV Ltd, following a serious illness. She has also resigned as a Trustee of the Voice of the Listener Trust. We are very pleased, however, that she remains a member of VLV's Membership and Operations Committee, and that she still retains her interest in the VLV Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting. Jocelyne helped Chris Bell to set up the Awards in 1991 and she herself organised them for several years in the 90's.



Dr Andrew Taussig, who was elected to the Board of VLV Ltd at the AGM in July, has been appointed a Trustee of the Voice of the Listener Trust, replacing Mrs Tobin. He provides an extra link with the VLV Board.

Before his retirement three years ago, Andrew was Director of Foreign Language Services at the BBC World Service. He maintains a strong interest in international affairs and broadcasting matters and brings the benefit of his experience and contacts to VLV, which he represented at several overseas events during 2004.

Obituaries

ANTHONY SAMPSON

Anthony Sampson, the author, journalist and broadcaster who died suddenly in December, had been a Patron of VLV for many years. He was due to speak in March in the current series of VLV celebrity evening lectures.

Mr Sampson made his name in the 60's with his book *The Anatomy of Britain*, a bestseller which focused on the idea, first put forward by Henry Fairlie and the historian A J P Taylor, that despite its constitutional democracy, Britain was run by an 'Establishment'. The book was re-published in a number of up-dated revisions under slightly different titles, over succeeding years. The latest edition, *Who Runs This Place? The Anatomy of Britain in the 21st Century*, was published in 2004.

Mr Sampson was also concerned with the development of South Africa. In the early 50's, when Apartheid was being imposed and a dangerous time for anyone trying to advance the cause of the black population, he lived in Johannesburg where he started and edited the black magazine *The Drum*. He returned to South Africa in 1987 and in 1999 published the authorised biography of his old friend Nelson Mandela.

Mr Sampson is survived by his widow Sally and a son and daughter, to whom we offer our profound sympathy.

ROSEMARY WATERS

Rosemary Waters, better known professionally as Rosemary Horstmann, died on 1st January following an earlier fall.

Rosemary was one of the original three members of the Steering Committee which in 1983 set up Voice of the Listener (as it was then called). With her good organisational skills, she took on the role of Honorary Secretary, while Margot Edwards became the Treasurer and Jocelyn Hay the Chairman. Rosemary retained her interest in the association until the very end, and following her husband's illness and her move from London to Edinburgh some ten years ago, continued to attend events in Scotland and to support VLV enthusiastically.

Rosemary Horstmann served with the WAAF during the Second World War, when one of her tasks was the interpretation of aerial photography. After the war she went to work for the BBC, where she had a distinguished career in radio, including a happy stint with *Children's Hour*. She was also a drama producer and following her retirement, put her skills and experience to productive use by engaging in training and writing about the medium. Her highly successful book *Writing for Radio* was re-published several times.

Rosemary is survived by her son James and his family, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

VLV's 21st Anniversary Lunch in the Cholmondley Room at the House of Lords on 29 November 2004

Lord Thomson of Monifieth, host, Jocelyn Hay, VLV Chairman and Lord Bragg, guest speaker.



VLV Student Essay Competition 2005



Jon Snow.

VLV, in association with Channel 4 Television, has launched a new Student Essay Competition aimed at students studying for a UK registered undergraduate or postgraduate degree or qualification, or an NCTJ recognised journalism qualification.

The essay title *'The Future of UK Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Age'* allows students to tackle issues such as new digital technologies, the new Royal Charter for the BBC and new regulatory and commercial pressures which will all help to shape the future of Public Service Broadcasting.

Eddie Tulasiewicz, VLV Education & Development Officer, who is administering the competition said: "We're looking for exciting ideas about what Public Service Broadcasting might be like in the future. For example, will digital technology allow new forms of PSB to

emerge, and how will the UK's existing public service television and radio broadcasters cope with the changing demands of regulators, politicians and audiences? This competition provides a great opportunity for students to be imaginative and creative and to come up with some ideas to make us all think about what the future holds."

Entries can be submitted as either a written essay of a maximum of 2,000 words or as a video or radio feature no more than ten minutes. Closing date for entries: Wednesday, 31 May, 2005.

The author will receive a cash prize of £1,000, and the top three will receive two weeks work experience with a television production company.

Judges include Professor Steven Barnett, University of Westminster; Roger Graef, Managing Director, Films of Record; Andrea Millwood-Hargrave, Principal, Millwood-Hargrave Ltd; Professor Vincent Porter, VLV; and Jon Snow, Channel 4 News.

Full details and an entry form which must be completed visit the vlv website at www.vlv.org.uk or send an SAE to: VLV Essay Competition, 101 King's Drive, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5BQ

Charles Wheeler



On Monday,
31 January

Charles Wheeler, the distinguished BBC Correspondent and documentary film maker will look back over a long and inspiring career when he gives the second in the current series

of VLV Celebrity Lectures In London on Monday, 31 January.

The event will be held at the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1. Drinks and light refreshments will be available from 6.30pm, before a 7pm start.

Charles Wheeler, who has won many prestigious awards, began broadcasting during the Second World War. He has covered many conflicts and natural disasters since and is widely known and respected both for his radio reporting and for his televised documentaries, including from the USA.

Space is limited so book quickly to avoid disappointment.

VLV's 2004 Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting

The final voting papers with the short-list of nominations for VLV's annual Awards for Excellence in Radio & Television are enclosed with this Bulletin. As usual they cover an extremely wide diversity of programme genres and channels.

As the Awards are nominated and chosen by viewers and listeners they are highly valued by the recipients, so please do not miss this positive opportunity to reward high quality and innovation.

The Awards will be presented at 1.45pm, immediately after lunch, during VLV's spring conference on Monday, 25 April at Hamilton House, London WC1.

Less taxing ways to support VLV

If you are a tax payer, you can support VLV's educational work by making a tax efficient donation to The Voice of the Listener Trust (VoLT), our sister charity (registered number 296207) and so increase its value by more than a quarter.

Two simple ways to make donations less taxing are;

- Gifts of quoted stocks and shares – If you have any surplus stocks or shares, perhaps a small holding in a privatised utility, any gifts that you make are not only free of capital gains tax, but can also be offset against your taxable income. Shares which qualify for tax relief include all those listed on a recognised stock exchange.
- Gift Aid – Donations to VoLT qualify for Gift Aid. This means that if you are a tax payer, VoLT can claim back an extra 28p from the Inland Revenue for every £1 you donate. Higher rate taxpayers can reclaim the marginal rate of tax for themselves or pass all or part of their tax rebate to VoLT.

TAX REPAYMENTS

It is also now possible to donate any tax repayments you may be lucky enough to receive from the Inland Revenue through a Self-Assessment return, directly to a charity. If you would like to nominate VoLT as your preferred charity, you will need to use the Trust's unique code on your Inland Revenue Form. This is BAR 43SG. If you need any advice on tax efficient giving to VoLT, please call VLV on 01474 352835 or e-mail us at info@vlv.org.uk

VLV introduces online payments

VLV has introduced a secure online payment system for members and others to book and pay for events and membership. The aim is to make payment easier and to increase the efficiency of the VLV office by reducing paperwork.

The new system will enable VLV to benefit in many ways and allow people living outside the UK to join VLV or to book a conference place straight away.

VLV's system uses the secure and long established PayPal service. If you wish to pay for any VLV event or membership, or to make a donation to support our work, just go to the VLV website at www.vlv.org.uk and select either Events or Join Us from the Menu. If you have any questions about the new system, please e-mail us at info@vlv.org.uk or telephone 01474 352835.

Join Us for an Afternoon of Light Music

With the BBC Elstree Concert Band

Sunday, 13 March, 4 –6.30pm

The BBC Elstree Concert Band will give its annual spring concert in aid of the Voice of the Listener Trust on Sunday, 13 March at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios, by kind permission of the BBC.

The Band's Musical Director, Mike Crisp, will conduct the performance, and those who have attended before will know just how entertaining and enjoyable these events are. Refreshments will be available before the concert.

Programmes cost £5 each. Please send an SAE with cheque made out to VoLT to the VLV Office.

Golder's Green Hippodrome

In December the BBC advertised the Golder's Green Hippodrome for sale. The Hippodrome was for many years the home of the BBC Concert Orchestra and 'Friday Night is Music Night'. Sadly, it seems that, despite extensive refurbishing during the 90's, the theatre has proved too costly to maintain.



The future for the BBC and Public Service Broadcasting in Britain

THE COMING GREEN PAPER

We expect a Green Paper on the Future of the BBC within the next few weeks. The consultation that will follow will provide the last opportunity for you,

or anyone outside government, to influence the future of the BBC. Make sure you use it!

For all its faults, and arrogance at times, the BBC contributes more to the cultural and democratic life of Britain – and indeed of the world – than any other institution.

THE BBC'S NEW PRIORITIES

The Corporation's new Director General, Mark Thompson has now described some of his plans which include a new emphasis on the arts and quality programming and on cost-cutting.

We expect to hear what the BBC Governors have to say about these plans from the new Chairman, Michael Grade, at VLV's spring conference at Hamilton House, London on 25 April.

BBC GOVERNANCE

Both men have already embarked on moves to make BBC governance more transparent and to improve its accountability to the viewing, listening and also the web-browsing, public. But we are entering an era of increasing power, concentration and exploitation in our commercial media – all of which are now open to take-over by foreign multi-nationals who may not fully value or understand British traditions – the BBC's role as a bastion of British cultural and democratic life becomes more and more important.

The Green Paper consultation will provide the last opportunity for you to influence the future of the BBC!

It is imperative that we preserve the BBC's independence from Government, commercial companies and pressure groups bent on imposing their particular views on the whole of society.

So please help us to help you maintain and strengthen the independence, quality and diversity of British broadcasting – in which the BBC is the leading player.

We must also support the BBC in resisting pressures which are unreasonable or damaging to its public service remit – be those pressures, political, commercial or sectarian. At the same time we must remind the BBC that with independence and strength must also go a sense of responsibility and wisdom in the exercise of power.

VLV's 21ST ANNIVERSARY APPEAL

The next six months will be crucial to the future of British broadcasting. As it happens, they will also cover the final six months of VLV's 21st anniversary appeal.

If you have not already done so, please send a donation if you possibly can – Address it either directly to VLV or if you are willing to use gift aid, to the Voice of the Listener Trust, which supports VLV's charitable activities. (Both are based at the Gravesend office).

We are extremely grateful to all our members for the many ways in which they show they support our aims. Thank you. We believe that our strength and your public service broadcasting go hand in hand.



VLV will launch the campaign Broadcasting Matters on 1st March. It is timed to coincide with the consultation that will follow publication of the Government's Green Paper on the Future of the BBC. The Green Paper is expected before the end of February, and Broadcasting Matters will run until the end of the consultation period.

Ofcom is also due to publish its final report on its Review of Public Service Television in February with recommendations about the future role and regulation of ITV, Channel 4 and Five.

We are grateful to the Andrew Wainwright Trustees for providing financial support for our campaign and to CSV Media and The Hansard Society for their practical support in developing specific aspects of the campaign. We are keen for VLV members and other organisations to join in and help us to multiply the effect across the country.

Our aim is to raise awareness of the importance of the Green Paper – which will provide the last opportunity for anyone outside Government to influence the future of the BBC! And to help inform VLV members and the public of what is being planned for the future of the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five, all them broadcasters with public service responsibilities and remits.

Countrywide Events

VLV will be holding a series of events around the country focused on the Green Paper and the Ofcom Review. They will include speakers from the BBC, the commercial sector and from academe. Some will be in partnership with other organisations.

- **Thursday 3 March**
Evening seminar held jointly with CSV Media in Birmingham from 6.30–8pm
- **Thursday 10 March**
Evening seminar held jointly with CSV Media in Manchester from 6.30–8pm.
- **Tuesday 15 March**
Evening seminar held jointly with Napier University in Edinburgh, venue to be confirmed.
- **Tuesday 22 March**
Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, MP, has kindly agreed to speak about the Green Paper at a VLV evening seminar in the Palace of Westminster, London SW1 from 6.30pm. (See front page.)
- **Wednesday 23 March**
VLV briefing for MPs and VLV members, kindly sponsored by John Grogan, MP, Chairman The All-Party Parliamentary BBC Group, in The Jubilee Room, Palace of Westminster, London SW1, from 12 noon to 3pm.

Ways you can become involved

Watch out for phone-ins linked to the Green Paper on BBC Radio and for events mounted by other interested players.

We want to involve people right across the country. Why not help by organising a discussion at a local club or church? Depending on where you live, VLV might be able to provide a speaker. Members of the VLV speakers' panel and I will be travelling widely during February and March to spread the message and set the scene. For instance:

- Rosemary McCulloch will be speaking in Nottingham;
- I will be going to the Standing Conference of Women's Organisations in the Wirral;
- VLV will be mounting a display in the Gravesend Public Library.

It has not been possible to confirm all the details before this Bulletin goes to press, but we shall have them shortly, and once the Green Paper has been published VLV will produce a summary of it, a suggested response and ways you can make your voice heard.

For more details and to keep up to date, please visit VLV's website or contact the VLV Office on 01474 352835 or visit www.vlv.org.uk

VLV's Autumn Conference Debated the Future for Channel 4, ITV and the BBC

in London on 30 November

Ed Richards, Ofcom's Senior Partner Strategy & Market Developments reported on Phase 2 of Ofcom's Review of Public Service Television in the opening session of VLV's 21st annual Autumn Conference: 'Public Service Broadcasting: Charting the Future' in London on 30 November.

Ofcom considered that the BBC should remain the cornerstone of British public service broadcasting (PSB) into the digital age, he said, with funding from the licence fee at least for the period of its next Charter. However, all the terrestrial channels would lose audiences in the multi channel digital future. This loss would result in ITV and Channel 4 losing advertising revenue, and make it increasingly difficult for them to fulfil their public service remits.

One solution proposed by Ofcom to make up the loss and provide competition for the BBC, might be to establish a Public Service Publisher (PSP) with the £300 million of public money which is currently spent on subsidising PSB. The PSPs remit would be to provide high quality, original programming and to distribute it by a mixture of delivery methods. (See VLV response to Ofcom's consultation on page 5).

Luke Johnson, Chairman of Channel 4, agreed that the Channel would need an extra source of income as digital switch-over approached and, although the Channel had eschewed public subsidy in the past, he felt Channel 4, with its proven record of public service, should have the benefit of the £300 million rather than a new, untried institution. Ray Snoddy, columnist on *The Independent*, and former media editor of *The Times* chaired both speakers.

Stewart Purvis, Professor of Journalism at City University and former Chief Executive of ITN, chaired the afternoon, which began with a panel of 'Pundits': Connor Dignan, Editor, Broadcast, Matt Wells, Guardian Media Editor and freelance Kate Bulkeley, who gave their views on the future in a lively and provocative session.

Finally, Caroline Thomson, Director, BBC Charter Review Team, Professor Patrick Barwise, author of the independent Inquiry into the BBC's new digital TV Services, and Steve Hewlett, former Programme Controller, Carlton Television, now consultant to Ofcom and the DCMS, focused on the BBC's own vision of its future as set out in its document Building Public Value, published in July 2004.

Audio cassettes of the conference are available from the VLV office price £15.

VLV Responses to Consultations

Phase 2, Ofcom Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting

VLV responded in detail to the questions posed in Ofcom's consultation. The following is a brief summary.

PSB in General

VLV does not accept Ofcom's analysis that the Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) system is unlikely to survive the move to digital. It does support Ofcom's view that PSB will need to take new forms across new technologies and new media; and that plurality is vital. VLV agrees that continued public funding is justified at similar levels to today.

The BBC

VLV agrees that the BBC should remain the cornerstone of PSB and that the BBC should continue to be funded by the licence fee. BBC governance needs to be clarified but the Corporation should remain independent. Its regulation should not come any further under Ofcom.

ITV

ITV is a highly profitable company. Many of its losses in recent years were due to poor judgement and cannot be blamed solely on the advertising recession. VLV does not support Ofcom's proposals to start relieving ITV of some of its PSB obligations as early as 2005. There is a continuing need for programming to serve the needs of listeners and

viewers in the nations and regions. VLV welcomes the BBC's intention to increase its service to the nations and regions but the BBC should not become the sole provider of regional programming or news.

VLV is extremely concerned about the future of ITV children's programmes. (see report of VLV's November 2004 Conference on Children's Radio & TV).

Channel 4

Channel 4 remains a crucial element in the plurality of PSB providers. Ofcom should initiate a public debate now about its future involving all stakeholders. Although Channel 4 currently makes a healthy profit, the issue should not be postponed.

New Public Service Publisher

VLV finds Ofcom's proposal to establish a new Public Service Publisher (PSP) to replace some of the programmes currently provided by ITV and others, and to provide competition for the BBC after digital switch-over, interesting and innovative. The PSP idea needs much more thought, however, before it can be considered viable. If viable, it would be a long term development requiring approval from the Secretary of State and Parliament. It should not be allowed to divert attention from more urgent issues, such as the future of Channel 4.

European Commission Consultation on Proposed Revisions to the Television Without Frontiers Directive

Professor Vincent Porter is representing VLV at the EC Focus Groups 1 – 3 on the Regulation of Audiovisual Content, and has drafted VLV's response. VLV does not support the proposals for a graduated regulatory framework for the

delivery of audiovisual content to TV viewers. VLV considers that restrictions on audiovisual content in the revised directive should be limited to those necessary in a democratic society.

The full texts of these responses are available on the VLV website: www.vlv.org.uk Members may obtain hard copies in return for a large SAE for each.

Meetings Arranged and attended by VLV



VLV held a seminar, in early November, on 'Who owns the BBC, its assets and intellectual property rights'. Among those who joined members of the VLV Board were Anthony Salz (left), BBC Vice-Chairman, Mark Stephens, intellectual property rights lawyer, Mike Hollingsworth from Rag Doll Productions, Debbie Manners, BBC Head of Rights and Business Affairs and Bernie Corbett, General Secretary of the Winters' Guild of GB.

VLV Board members and speakers addressed a range of audiences and attended a variety of events including with, or organised by; the Social Market Foundation, Westminster Media Forum, Ofcom, BBC, BFI, Citizenship Foundation, CSV Volunteers, Digital Television Group, Digital Stakeholders' Group, World Service Trust, European Association of Viewers Interests, European Commission, EURALVA and four seminars held by Lord Burns' Committee reviewing the BBC.

Current Consultations

Broadcasting the Courts

The Dept for Constitutional Affairs on whether the televising of court proceedings should be permitted. **Deadline 18 February.** Send to the DCA, Selborne House, 54 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QW, or email at M.morse@dca.gsi.gov.uk

Public Diplomacy Review

Lord Carter of Coles is conducting a review of Public Diplomacy, including the work of the BBC World Service in building esteem for the UK overseas. **Deadline 18 February.** Send to the Public Diplomacy Review Team, K.4.418, FCO, King Charles St, London SW1A 2AH, or email PDReview@fco.gov.uk

Ofcom
BSkyB's application to broadcast exclusive coverage of test match cricket. Contact Ofcom, 2a Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9LD.

Indigenous Children's Programming under threat in the Multi-channel Future

Despite the many exciting new services and benefits that new technology and media are bringing, the main conclusion drawn from VLV's annual conference on children's radio and television held in London on 8 November, was a growing threat to the range of indigenous programming available to children in the multi-channel world.

The UK is fortunate to have the BBC whose children's programmes are widely admired. The UK is, however, the most competitive market for young viewers in the world with 22 channels competing for their attention of which only four -



Estelle Hughes, Nick Wilson and Dorothy Prior.

the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five - bear any public service obligations in regard to the quality, range or source of their programmes. Satellite channels targeting the UK are exempt from these obligations, although they are supposed to conform to European quotas which require 51% of programmes to be of original indigenous production 'where practicable'. Most of the satellites are owned by multi-national corporations based in the USA whose programmes are made for international or American markets. These Corporations claim that it would not be practicable for them to originate material in Europe.

In Britain, homes with children have the highest penetration of multi-channel television and many children who spend most of their time watching these channels miss out on access to their own rich cultural heritage of literature, language and music. The competition is particularly damaging for ITV which depends on advertising to finance its programmes, and, despite assurances from Estelle Hughes, Editor of CITV a speaker at VLV's conference, ITV is reported to have been seeking more 'flexibility' in its public service remit, and to have been in discussion about the possibility of one of the multi-national corporations taking over the production of CITV

programmes. VLV is concerned that such a move could deny many young British viewers access to programming made in the UK especially for them. It would also undermine the viability of several British production companies.

Following the conference, VLV Chairman Jocelyn Hay, therefore took a group of representatives from the VLV Forum for Children's Broadcasting to discuss these conclusions with officials at Ofcom. She later outlined their concerns in a letter to Floella Benjamin, the member of Ofcom's Content Board with a special interest in children, who also spoke at the VLV conference. VLV will continue to fight for a wide range of UK programming to be made available to UK viewers.

OTHER SPEAKERS AT THE CONFERENCE INCLUDED:

Dorothy Prior, Controller CBBC; Nick Wilson, Controller, Children's Programmes, Five; Andrea Millward-Hargrave, Consultant; Professor Steven Barnett, University of Westminster; Cathy Aitchison, Co-founder, Children & Radio; Robin Blake, Ofcom; Rosalind Bates, Senior Examiner, BBFC; Greg Childs, Child's Eye TV; Angus Cormio, O2; Justin Gibbons, Media Agency PHD; John White, Innovative Production Company, Hi8tus; and Lewis Rudd, former Controller, Carlton Children's Programmes.

VLV is grateful to the British Board of Film Classification for supporting the conference. Cassettes of the proceedings: price £15 per set.

Book Review

UNCERTAIN VISION

Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC by Dr Georgina Born, h/b £17.99 published by Secker & Warburg, Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA. www.randomhouse.co.uk ISBN: 0436205629.

Over more than 80 years the BBC has attracted controversy, criticism and political pressure from governments of all hues. Dr Born was allowed unprecedented access to all ranks of the organisation during the late 1990's when the BBC underwent controversial change under Director General John Birt. She provides a provocative and unmissable account of this great institution during a fascinating period in its history.

Who's Who

NEW BBC GOVERNOR FOR SCOTLAND

Jeremy Peat succeeded Sir Robert Smith as the BBC's national Governor for Scotland on 1 January. He will also replace Sir Robert as Chairman of the BBC Audit Committee. Mr Peat has served as economic adviser in a number of government departments, including eight years with the Scottish Office and the Treasury. He is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland and Group Chief Economist at the Royal Bank Of Scotland.

OFCOM

David Edmonds, former Director General of Ofcom, is stepping down from the Board of Ofcom to pursue public and commercial interests.

Digital Update

I have just up-dated a small survey on digital transmission s which I undertook a year ago. Little seems to have changed. The emphasis is still on selling wide screen and big sets, with plasma and liquid crystal now edging in at the top end of the market. All retailers took the attitude that 2012 was long way off. Set top boxes ranged from about £90 downwards but the cheaper versions were not recommended. In December I telephoned Freeview and quoted my postcode. The answer was - buy a set top box and probably a new aerial, and see if it works!

Peter Seldon, Carterton, Oxon

I wrote to my MP because I live in a block of flats where it is not possible to receive Freeview and there is no prospect of receiving it in the near future. The block gets its TV signal via an analogue cable system installed by Westminster Cable. This replaced a signal received by rooftop aerial. When NTL took over Westminster Cable, it had no plans to convert to digital. However, other Westminster Cable blocks, like the Barbican, have solved the problem by installing an integrated radio system communal distribution network using existing cabling. The same company has surveyed our block and confirmed its suitability for conversion to the same system. Unlike at the Barbican, however, it is alleged that NTL will not allow the cables at our block to be used for an integrated system.

It is suggested that analogue switch-off could start as soon as 2008. The first pilot studies start next month when two communities in Wales become the first to receive a digital-only signal. Residents have been given equipment to receive digital terrestrial TV - Freeview. Your advice on how licence payers can overcome this impasse would be appreciated.

Michael Sharman, London NW8

Editor's note: Below is a summary of responses to these letters from VLV member Bob Fletcher.

These reports demonstrate the gap between the Government's perception and the reality of the audience's situation. The authorities say that Digital TV is available to 73% of the population and that over 50% have converted to digital. But many viewers are currently only able to obtain mediocre analogue signals, either because they live at the limit of transmission, or because they have an inferior aerial. A new aerial can cost up to £150.

Also, the digital signal does not appear to be so robust. The signal from my new aerial fixed to the chimney stack is susceptible to interference from some passing traffic, so I lose a section of the picture or the picture freezes. When the local digital transmitter goes on to full power after analogue switch-off I will get a stronger signal.

Many viewers, and listeners, obtain their programmes through a community aerial system similar to Mr Sharman. The Government has now issued a booklet explaining to landlords how to ensure that all digital signals, terrestrial, cable or satellite, are available. The implementation will, of course, cost money, either from the owner or the tenant. The resulting installation should be capable of delivering signals from a roof top aerial array for VHF/FM radio, Digital Audio Broadcasting and Digital Terrestrial TV. A satellite dish will be required for BSkyB reception and possibly, but not yet confirmed, the BBC's Free Sat service.

Please keep us informed about your experience of digital equipment and reception, whether it is terrestrial, cable or satellite. If you write to your MP please copy your letter to VLV.

Jocelyn Hay has written to the Culture Secretary, the Trade Secretary and the broadcasters pointing out these problems. The government and the terrestrial broadcasters must co-operate in launching a free-to-air digital satellite to give the viewers free access to all existing services.

Letters to the Editor

Letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Association and may be shortened for publication.

VLV'S 21ST ANNIVERSARY APPEAL

As I now qualify for a free TV licence, I would like to make a further contribution to VLV's funds.

The BBC is under attack from all sides and I am desperate to see that it survives in the form that we have valued for so long. But we live in threatening times and it will not be easy.

Joan Darwent, Sheffield

Congratulations on VLV's 21st Anniversary! My husband (Geoffrey Turner) was proud to have been amongst VLV's Founder-Members. I know he would have been happy to see how it has grown and it is in his memory that I am sending a donation to mark the anniversary.

With very best wishes

Helen Turner, Ormskirk

Editor's note: It is with much gratitude that we acknowledge the valuable support of members like Joan Darwent and Mr and Mrs Turner. Without their support over the years VLV just would not exist.

One good way to help Voice of the Listener & Viewer raise its profile is for members to get in touch with local stores to hold awareness and fund raising days on behalf of VLV.

I have done this for different charities and it is a very effective way of contacting the public, of all ages. As well as handing out VLV literature that informs viewers and listeners of impending changes to our broadcasting landscape, these events could also provide a useful opportunity to raise funds for the Voice of the Listener Trust.

Bill Chard, Cornwall (by e-mail)

Editor's note: if you are interested in holding an event or in mounting a display at your local library or elsewhere during the Broadcasting Matters campaign or at another time, please contact the VLV office for advice and a display pack.

OFCOM REVIEW OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

I was shocked to learn of the Ofcom finding that people do not attach much priority to arts programmes (VLV Bulletin Summer 2004). If for no other reason – and there are plenty – I am enclosing a contribution to your appeal. Couldn't VLV or Lord Puttnam lead a mission to persuade the powers-that-be to question such a finding? I am sure the BBC must have statistics which point in a contrary direction. If not, could it be the consequence of dumming down which should also be questioned? We must get away from the notion that market appeal is the sole measure of value.

Unfortunately, I am not in a position to do much else to help with the campaigns at the moment but I think they are absolutely vital to the health of our society. So, all power to you in your work, and my very best wishes

Colin Low, London E8

WORLD SERVICE SHORT WAVE BROADCASTS

Are the BBC World Service short wave broadcasts to the USA still in existence? I'm aware of FM broadcasts in big cities Stateside, but what about rural areas?

Patrick Xavier, Billericay, Essex

Editor's Note: The World Service stopped its short wave broadcasts to the USA in 2001. However, it is possible to receive World Service short wave in many parts of the USA and Canada intended for other regions. Contact the BBC World Service Press Office on 020 240 3456 or visit: www.bbcworldservice.com

You can also get World Service radio broadcasts in Europe on digital satellite via BSKyB~ and via the Hotbird satellite at 13 degrees East.

THE LOSS OF TEST MATCH CRICKET

The public interest in watching sport on TV is being denied by the continual outbidding of public service providers of terrestrial TV by BSKyB for its own commercial ends. Is it not high time that the Government intervened for the benefit of the majority of viewers?

Cricket is a game which many people love to watch. If they cannot get to cricket grounds, they look forward to seeing matches – particularly Test Matches – on TV. The news that the English Cricket Board has awarded an exclusive contract to BSKyB for all Test Matches from 2006 means that watching these matches will continue to be denied for the foreseeable future to those only able to receive terrestrial channels.

The possibility of the Government taking powers to require all the major sporting events to be made available for televising on at least one of the terrestrial channels needs to be considered urgently.

EJ & M Guy, Carshalton, Surrey

Editor's note: Ofcom has published a consultation on BSKyB's application for consent to broadcast exclusive live coverage of cricket test matches in England from 2006–2009. Under the arrangement, Five would show highlights. Ofcom is inviting broadcasters and any other interested parties, to comment on BSKyB's request. For more information visit www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/cricket/ or telephone the Ofcom call centre 020 7981 3000.

Apparently BSKyB is going to take the lion's share of televising Summer Test Matches from 2006. I thought that cricket was one of the mass appeal sports that had to be shown on terrestrial TV, like Wimbledon, and the World and European Cup Finals. I have written to the Sports Minister, Richard Caborn, and to my own MP. I wanted to write to others but I am told I am not allowed to do this. Is that correct?

I would love to see more sport on terrestrial television, especially one-day cricket but I do not subscribe to Sky. There is so much sport I want to see but I believe that television and radio are a service for the whole nation. No single company should have a monopoly over something so important.

Graham Pryce, London SE20.

Editor's Note: What do other readers feel? Surely anyone can write to any MP as well as one's own? The list of protected events is actually quite small and refers mainly to final days or games, for example only the last two days of Wimbledon are protected; there is no bar on earlier games being sold for exclusive showing on a satellite or cable channel.

THE FUTURE OF THE BBC

Like Jocelyn Hay I am dismayed that most people seem unaware of changes which will affect radio and television, or that the BBC Charter is due for renewal very shortly. I would support any steps to stimulate interest and awareness.

My own special concern is for the quality of radio, in particular BBC Radio 3. It is a minority interest, but I have derived much of my musical interest and education from Radio 3. Nobody would pretend that it is an 'easy' listen but then why should it be? Its quality is unique and deserving of special care.

I have seen in the press that BBC staff is to be cut prior to Charter renewal and I trust that Radios 2, 3 and 4 will not suffer unfairly. These stations offer something very special to those of us who prefer to listen rather than watch.

John Harvey, Basingstoke, Hants

CAN YOU HELP?

I am a VLV member of German nationality and remember the war years vividly, especially 1942 and 43, when I attended grammar school in this small spa town – Bad Salzflun. My schoolmates and I had to join the Hitler Youth but even at that age we had doubts, as some of our teachers and neighbours voiced dangerous thoughts at a time when any opposition could land them in a concentration camp. My friends and I used to gather to do homework. One of them, with a father in the Air Force, knew how to operate a wireless set that could receive BBC broadcasts. It was forbidden, of course, and dangerous to do so, but it was the only reliable source of information and we soon learned enough English to understand them. I remember the reports from the North African campaign, Sicily and Italy when two names constantly recurred: Lindley Fraser and Hugh Carlton Greene. They reported directly from the front line.

In 1944, aged 15, we were enlisted into an anti-aircraft unit and used the chance to use Luftwaffe air surveillance channels to listen into the BBC and to two fake Wehrmacht radio stations: Soldatensender Calais and Soldatensender Atlantik. They were set up by Sefton Delmer and pretended to be genuine German stations while spreading demoralising news. Could you help me to find out more about these three gentlemen, please? Mr Green was the brother of Graham Greene, and after the war became director general of Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk. Sefton Delmer was the star reporter of the Daily Express. But this is all I know. I should be grateful for any news or address where I could contact them.

For entertainment the names which impressed us most were Glen Miller and Nat Gonelia. Jazz and swing music were forbidden in Germany at that time. In the 50's we used to enjoy Take it from here with Jimmy Edwards and June Whitfield. Do you know if recordings are available of these programmes and where I could purchase them, please?

E H Kleine, Bad Salzflun, Germany

Editor's note: We will send Mr Kleine information about the availability of archive recordings and would be glad to pass on replies to his other requests.

**Deadline for next issue:
20 March, 2005**

Write, fax or e-mail your letters to the Editor at:
VLVbulletin@btinternet.com

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Diary Dates

Monday, 31 January

An Evening with Charles Wheeler
The National Liberal Club
1 Whitehall Place, London SW1
6.30-8pm

Friday, 11 February

VLV 10th International Conference
The Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton
House Terrace, London SW1
9.30am-5pm

Tuesday, 1 March

Launch of Broadcasting Matters
Campaign

Sunday, 13 March

Concert in aid of Voice of the
Listener Trust by the BBC
Elstree Concert Band,
BBC Maida Vale Studios
3.30pm

Tuesday, 15 March

VLV Visit to BBFC,
3 Soho Square, London W1
2-4pm

Thursday, 3 March

Joint VLV/CSV Media Seminar
on the Green Paper
The Custard Factory
Birmingham B9 4AA
6.30-8pm

Thursday, 10 March

Joint VLV/CSV Media
Seminar on the Green Paper
The 2nd Floor Board Room,
St James Building
Manchester M1 6FQ
6.30-8pm

Tuesday, 15 March

VLV Evening Seminar on
the Green Paper
Edinburgh, Venue & time tbc

Tuesday, 22 March

VLV Westminster Evening Seminar,
with Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP,
Palace of Westminster, London SW1
6.30pm

Wednesday, 23 March

VLV Briefing for MPs and Members
hosted by John Grogan MP,
Jubilee Room, Palace of
Westminster, London SW1
12 noon-3pm

Tuesday, 19 April

VLV visit to Ofcom
Radiocommunications Section
Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1
2-4pm

Monday, 25 April

VLV's 22nd Spring Conference
Hamilton House, Mabledon Place,
London WC1
10.45am-4.45pm

Wednesday, 18 May

VLV Visit to British Forces
Broadcasting Service,
Chalfont St Giles, Bucks
2.30pm

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