

David Lloyd

Hi Jacquie,

Eureka-I can

only hope!

I was tipped off that you were now sitting in judgment on BBC obligations by Sophie Chalk at IBT/VLV who is preparing a submission on the corporation's commitment-or lack of it-to non-news international coverage, and asked if I would second it, which I'm very happy to do. After all, if the transfer of BBC programme regulation to Ofcom means anything, it is surely in this vexed area, where I myself laboured long and hard to persuade holders of C4 budgets to release cash for international voices and stories, in the name of public service broadcasting and in defiance of ratings!

For those managers and programme editors at the BBC who growl against external regulation as an interference to their work I offer the following eye-witness anecdote of my time as Head of News and current affairs at Channel 4, as demonstration that a dialogue with regulation can be constructive and creatively fruitful.....

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One day in the early 2000s when Michael Jackson was chief executive he returned from a routine with the(then) ITC having been grilled on the inadequate amount of international current affairs at the channel; I was asked to 'sort' the matter and immediately set to work with George Carey of Mentorn to assess the gaps and niches of contemporary coverage and style which we should look to fill-and so Unreported World was born. Many Emmys later, and under George's nominated executive editor, it has become definitional of the channel's worldwide reputation!

Now, from my vantage point of visiting professor at City University, I am making this submission on the subject of the BBC's current inclusion of non-news international coverage across all four domestic channels.

Aside from Panorama's very occasional forays across the Atlantic to enjoy the latest manifestations of Trumpery, or to gasp at the lack of firearms control, BBC One seems to pay little attention to contemporary life outside this island, bar very occasional 'high concept' documentaries about dying children or vigorous sexual activity, or celebrities, or all three-even Brexit is treated as a wholly domestic affair. The torch has therefore long since passed to BBC2, where 'This World' used to be its weekly, guaranteed slot for international current affairs(open, incidentally, to independent production companies). Recently, and quietly, this slot and budget has been given over to an increasing number of programmes, from a variety of continents, from the back-packing Simon Reeve.(made'in house')In internal, corporation parlance, this move is referred to not as 'dumbing down' current affairs but as 'braining up' travel,and it would be instructive to learn whether Ofcom will sympathise with this distinction.

In practical terms, though, this surreptitious change suggests to me a re-think of BBC2'S licence obligations and performance review to match, and the quiet manner in which it has been done exactly the kind of editorial initiative that used to hoodwink the unlamented BBC Trust so successfully!

If ratings are prayed in aid, how is it that Channel 4 was able to sustain Unreported World in the teeth of a devastating advertising recession four years ago? It,after all, has a license obligation to 'voices across the world', (or similar) and has won that succession of Emmys therefrom. Something akin,or more indicative,as sustained solely by public money, should surely apply to BBC2, and be monitored and performance reviewed as such.

This brings us to BBC Four,where at

least, ratings are not seen to be dominant, but- alas- no budget exists for current affairs!

My concluding submission, therefore, suggests a fundamental re-write of BBC Four's license obligation, not just from a concentration on history to a mix of the contemporary, but to voices and coverage from outside this country; after all, if even within present budgets, money-again and again- can be found for steam trains returning to the rails, it can surely be found for the integration of successful Radio 4 current affairs brands like 'The Report' or 'File on 4' with BBC Four output. Such integration has already been attempted with BBC World Service output, to other channels, in the interest of economy and amortisation, and penury can not or should not be pleaded to forestall it, but should give plenty for Ofcom to review!!

Throughout this submission I hope you will recognise that I've sought to limit myself to the practical, and achievable. I do regard BBC One, regrettably, and for reasons of its ingrained ratings culture, as having flown this coop,

and now being beyond this pale, so have concentrated on 2 and Four-even if to quite radical effect.

I do hope you and colleagues at Ofcom will find it useful.

With very best wishes,

David.