

Letter from Lord Pearson to Tessa Jowell, 23rd March 2002

The Lord Pearson of Rannoch



House of Lords

The Rt Hon. Tessa Jowell, MP,
Secretary of State, Dept. for Culture Media & Sport,
2-4 Cockspur Street,
London, SW1Y 5DH.

23rd March, 2002

Dear Tessa -

Thank you for your letter of 28th February. You say you cannot see any objection to the arrangements which the BBC Governors have in place to ensure that their political coverage is impartial, wide-ranging and fair. With respect, it cannot be right for detailed independent analyses which criticise the management's output to be submitted to the same management for judgment.

It would appear that the Chairman does recognise this (as do several Governors, past and present), which is presumably why he is setting up a new committee to assist the Governors with their public service remit.

I have therefore written to Gavyn Davies suggesting that those who work in this new committee should not merely be shuffled across from the existing secretariat. They should instead be employed by a new trust, paid for by the licence fee, but with impeccable trustees who are not Governors. Those who work in this unit would therefore owe their loyalty solely to the Governors' public service remit. They would not be frightened of criticising management, as they would if management remains in charge of their careers. I hope this is helpful.

I have also suggested that the latest Minotaur report on the BBC's political coverage of the "European" issue (of the issue of euro notes and coins from 1st - 8th January) should be submitted to an independent arbiter, acceptable to both the Governors and to David Keighley, rather than once again to the management. I await his reply with interest.

Yours faithfully
N. Lord Pearson



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