

## Letter from Tessa Jowell, Dept. Culture, Media and Sport, 28th February 2002

Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
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28<sup>th</sup> February 2002

*Dear Malcolm,*

Thank you for your letters of 10 December and 5 February enclosing copies of Minotaur Media Tracking's analysis of the BBC's coverage of the General Election, and Gavyn Davies's response to you of 8 January regarding the BBC's reporting of European issues during the last General Election campaign.

I note your concerns. However, the BBC's independence in programming content is enshrined in the Royal Charter and Agreement which contains a specific requirement on the Corporation to treat controversial subjects with due accuracy and impartiality. It is the responsibility of the BBC Governors to ensure that these obligations are met. I can see no objection to the arrangements which the BBC Governors have in place, which seem not dissimilar to those which the ITC adopted in approaching Channel 4 in relation to your complaint about other broadcasters. Both the ITC and the BBC Governors have rejected your complaints.

In your letter of 10 December you refer to the future relationship between the BBC and OFCOM. As you know the Communications White Paper describes a new system of regulation which is to be generally deregulatory and will apply similarly to all broadcasters. However, the regulation of the BBC's impartiality requirements will remain exclusively with the Board of Governors. We believe that the Governors are able to ensure that these obligations are met more effectively and sensitively across the whole range of the BBC's output than could OFCOM, given the latter's very substantial responsibilities across the whole of the communications industries.

*Tessa*

TESSA JOWELL



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