



From the Acting Chairman
Rt Hon Lord Ryder of Wensum OBE

4 May 2004

Lord Pearson of Rannoch
c/o 52 Minories
London EC3N

Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your letter of 12th March. As you will know, Michael Grade was recently appointed Chairman of the BBC and will take up his post on 17th May. I know that the whole issue of impartiality will be one of critical importance to him, as it must be for any Chairman of this organisation. However, as there will be many important issues vying for his attention and it will take some time for him to get up to speed I thought it best that I should reply to your letter in my capacity as Acting Chairman after studying your previous correspondence.

Over the past two years the BBC Governors have undertaken several new initiatives to satisfy themselves that BBC output continues to meet the highest standards of impartiality. In October of last year the Board commissioned a monthly tracking poll on public perceptions of impartiality. The results of this survey are presented as part of the quarterly management report on impartiality that the Board requested last year. In addition to this the Board has commissioned a series of detailed studies on specific subjects. For instance, last October the Board received a study on impartiality on Rural Affairs which included a report by an independent panel. The Board are committed to the use of external experts to assist in this important work.

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The subject currently under review is the BBC's religious reporting and the Board has already decided that another subject for review in the latter part of this year will be the BBC's reporting of Europe. The precise terms of reference for this study and the full details of its remit have not yet been decided but when they are I can assure you that the views of yourself - including all of your previous correspondence - and your colleagues will be properly examined, together with those of the many others to whom this is an issue of critical national importance. I very much hope that the terms on which this study is conducted will fully address the many concerns that you have expressed in your correspondence with the BBC in recent years.

Yours,

Richard.

Richard Ryder