

Television: Freedom and Responsibility

by Roy Shaw

Just over ten years ago, as now, there were debates about the freedom of television; but they had a very different emphasis. Then, the argument of a commercial pressure group was that the BBC represented 'state' broadcasting, too official, too unfree. To counteract this, *Independent Television* was introduced. Now, the argument of a puritan-Christian pressure group is that the BBC is too free and should have the measure of control stepped up to the level already prevailing in *Independent Television*. How and why has this happened, and for what party is the aid of all good men required? These are the questions which this article tries to answer.

The Clean-up Television Campaign (CUTV) began in January 1964, when Mrs Mary Whitehouse, schoolmistress-wife of a company director, and Mrs Norah Buckland, wife of an Anglican vicar, jointly issued a five point manifesto:

- 1 We men and women of Britain believe in a Christian way of life
- 2 We want it for our children and our country
- 3 We deplore present day attempts to belittle or destroy it, and in particular we object to the propaganda of disbelief, doubt, and dirt that the BBC pours into millions of homes through the television screen
- 4 Crime, violence, illegitimacy and venereal disease are steadily increasing, yet the BBC employs people whose ideas and advice pander to the lowest in human nature, and accompany this with a stream of suggestive and erotic plays which present promiscuity, infidelity and drinking as normal and inevitable
- 5 We call upon the BBC for a radical change of policy and demand programmes which build character instead of destroying it, which encourage and sustain faith in God and bring him back to the heart of our family and national life.

The number of people who have signed the manifesto was claimed to be four hundred and twenty five thousand by January 1966. These are signatories to a petition, and not paid-up members of a movement. Late in 1965, Mrs Whitehouse set up the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association (NVALA) to provide an organisation which people could join, and the only report I have seen gives it a thousand members. Its aims are stated as follows:

- 1 To promote the moral and religious welfare of the community by seeking to maintain christian standards in broadcasting by sound and vision in Great Britain, and to co-operate with other bodies who share the Association's concern
- 2 To press for the creation and maintenance of a Viewers' and Listeners' Council, in order to influence the output of all the agencies of broadcasting by sound and vision in Great Britain
- 3 To provide means to ascertain and collate public opinion on radio and television items, and to bring positive and constructive criticisms, complaints and suggestions to the notice of the proposed Council, and of Parliament
- 4 To provide for the setting up of local branches of the Association, so that the views of the general public may be made available to the proposed Council
- 5 To ensure that the British Broadcasting Corporation maintains the high standards of public service which Parliament and the pioneers of broadcasting clearly hoped to secure when the British Broadcasting Corporation was created and granted its royal charter; and that it should respect the ideals proclaimed in the dedication panel in Broadcasting House
- 6 To ensure that the Independent Television Authority receives the full support of the general public in its efforts to implement the Television Act 1964, and to call upon television operators of all companies to honour their obligations to the nation.

The relationship between CUTV and NVALA has confused some people. They are parallel organisations with the same secretariat, and Mrs Whitehouse has explained that NVALA does not supersede CUTV 'and will not do so until the principle of Viewers' and Listeners' participation in broadcasting, and an effective Broadcasting Council are fully established'. CUTV diagnoses a cultural disease; NVALA proposes measures for curing it.

CUTV and NVALA have until now shared the same Newsletter. In January 1966, however, it was announced that in future Newsletters would be sent only to paid up members of NVALA. Previously the Newsletter had been sent to seven thousand 'active workers' at a cost of £100 every six weeks. The only paid staff is said to be a typist. Mrs Whitehouse resigned from teaching to devote her whole time to the campaign, but is presumably unpaid. She has said that the campaign costs £250 per month to run. This is obviously far from being covered by membership subscriptions, and since the founders and most people prominently associated with the campaign are known to be also associated with the Moral Rearmament (MRA), there have been speculations about where the money comes from. Questioned about this, Mrs Whitehouse denies that she gets money 'from MRA headquarters'. It comes, she says, in the form of 'contribu-

tions from our well-wishers'. These well-wishers are not identified and they could, of course, be MRA supporters.

The campaign claims to have the support of bishops, and chief constables, but a *Sun* journalist found (December 1965) that of 41 church of England bishops, only two had written letters of support, and of 156 chief constables, 16 had done so. He also showed that some of the claims made for support (from individuals and from a town council) were unfounded. These ill-founded claims of support have their parallel in the history of MRA. The main christian bodies seem to have reacted at first favourably, and then unfavourably. The Rev Kenneth Greet, secretary of the Methodist Christian Citizenship Department, announced in July 1965 that following a vain attempt to persuade curv to take a more positive and constructive line:

It was necessary for me, with deep reluctance, not only to withdraw my support, but that of those who might be thought to stand behind me. The Roman Catholic and Anglican official representatives have now taken the same view. There is urgent necessity for us to make quite clear that there is no official support from the Churches, or among our own people for this negative, destructive, and harmful approach.

The Catholic Radio and Television Centre, which runs a Look and Listen Movement, obviously had many enquiries about curv, and Father Agnellus Andrew, Director of the Centre, issued a reasoned statement saying that the Centre could not support it. However, the Council of the Catholic Teachers' Federation did decide to support it (Summer 1965). The decision was challenged but the secretary claims (*Catholic Herald*, 17 March 1966) that the vote supporting the decision was overwhelming, 'whatever the manner in which it was ensured'. (This last phrase arouses misgivings about the procedure involved.) A curv Newsletter (September 1965) claims to have the 'full support' of the Knights of St Columba.

After this account of curv and its support, let me turn to the main arguments used by the campaign. There are only a few, and they tend to be used over and over again by the indefatigable Mrs Whitehouse in her many interviews and letters to the press.

Early in her campaign Mrs Whitehouse claimed that the BBC 'was exercising built-in censorship against the Christian faith, and plays which inspire a sense of purpose and hope'. The theme of conspiracy constantly recurs:

I don't see how anyone can reject the idea of a conspiracy. Everybody knows there is a conspiracy to take over the whole world... The general world conspiracy is bound to have its reflection within the big set-ups of the TV world. It is a conspiracy to remove the myth of God from the mind of man.

Her colleagues in the campaign also stress the conspiracy theme. Dr Ernest Claxton, Vice-Chairman, warned a curv meeting:

Make no mistake, a group of wily, dedicated people, firmly entrenched inside the BBC are plotting to denigrate the morals of the nation . . . They intend to sap away our beliefs, ridicule our moral standards and decry everything that the Union Jack stands for.

A letter from an Essex clergyman's wife read to the same meeting claimed that the evil plotters in the BBC were the agents of communism. Mrs Whitehouse has suggested vigorous measures for dealing with the conspirators.

The Director of Television 'should be given a public scrubbing in Trafalgar Square'. More seriously, 'If the people at present in control of the BBC cannot or will not see the disastrous effect their policy is having on the nation, they then should be replaced by men who can'. That was one of her earliest demands. More recently she wrote to the Prime Minister about a BBC sketch, saying that if he could do nothing to stop such things:

You should at once set up an outside authority with full powers to dispense with the services of those administrators and producers who find themselves unable to interpret the Charter of the BBC with due responsibility

The first comment to be made on these views is that in content and tone they belong to the MRA tradition. The line of attack on the BBC had already been laid down by the late MRA leader, Peter Howard. Speaking at a London meeting only six months before CURV was founded, he said:

Parliament should deal with the corrupting influence of the British Broadcasting Corporation. A spiritual sewer flows from some of their programmes into the nation's homes. It is time decent men and women resigned from the Governorship of the BBC in protest if this sort of diet of dung continues to be served to the people.

Both Mrs Buckland and Mrs Whitehouse make no secret of the inspiration they have derived from MRA: 'My own ideals', says Mrs Whitehouse, 'through 30 years have been inspired by the movement, and without its ideals I cannot see that I would have been interested in starting this campaign'. Mrs Buckland is said to have hired a TV set for the first time after hearing Mr Howard on the BBC's pernicious influence. But if it owes its inspiration to MRA, the general outlook of CURV is part of a wider phenomenon. A guide-book to this is probably *The Cult of Softness* (1965) by Sir Arnold Lunn and Garth Lean, which Mrs Whitehouse has several times commended. The first chapter discerns 'a conspiracy to destroy our nation', and later ones catalogue the conspirators, including those who psychologise criminal responsibility, Humanists, South Bank religionists and the BBC for propagating it, advocates of sexual licence, and anarchists in modern literature. The book is really a scrapbook of quotations. A few of them are telling, but the general impression is of fanaticism and over-simplification, supported by highly selective quotations. The writers

are not simply concerned about the issues they discuss; they are obsessed. It is this obsessional quality which it shares with CUTV. Just as MRA leaders in the past are alleged to have been obsessed by sexual sin, so CUTV is obsessed by sex in television.

Its leaders have no doubt that there is a direct causal relationship between what is seen on the screen and human behaviour, especially youthful behaviour. Mrs Whitehouse has spoken more than once about 'a fourteen year old girl who was so physically affected by a sexy play that she went out and offered herself to a fourteen year old boy', and of a boy who had listened to a doctor expounding the virtues of pre-marital sex, and went out and got VD. Her conclusion is that 'the BBC is sex mad'.

These anecdotes would hardly satisfy any serious student of the effects of television. For two years a national Television Research Committee has existed to initiate and co-ordinate research on the influence of television, particularly on young people's moral concepts. A progress report published in 1966 comments: 'It is easy to form opinions about the impact of television on young minds, but only careful research will make it possible to form considered judgments'. (*Problems of Television Research*). An earlier report, summing up the scientific evidence on effects, showed how little there is, and made the point that effects result not merely from the material broadcast, but from an interaction of this material and the state of mind and emotions of the person receiving it. This suggests a psychological interpretation of much CUTV criticism.

When they say the BBC is sex mad, they may be projecting, in the psychological sense. Peter Howard himself has observed that 'people give themselves away by their criticisms', and the rigour of CUTV's proposals suggest both the authoritarian personality and a repressed fear of sex. In fact the two subjects which CUTV finds most intolerable are sex and doubt – characteristically translated into 'dirt and disbelief'. Their disproportionate distress could be a sign of psychological or religious insecurity – or both. CUTV doth protest too much.

These conjectures about the pathology of CUTV are supported by the experience of another writer who ventured to criticise the campaign. He received many letters, and had this to say about them in a letter to the *Catholic Herald* (March 1966):

Despite over 20 years of study and practice in clinical psychology I was shocked at the pathologically obscene nature of many of the letters I received from supporters of Mrs Whitehouse.

Extreme attitudes provoke extreme reactions. In December 1965 the COSMO group was founded by Mrs Avril Fox. The group exists to combat Mrs Whitehouse and all her works. In an encounter with Mrs Whitehouse, (characteristically staged by the *Daily Mirror*), Mrs Fox declared that the BBC is 'helping us to hammer out a new set of values based on experience, wisdom and joy, rather than the barren virtues of chastity, innocence and restraint'. Challenged to

say whether there were any restraints she would accept – for instance, whether she would allow her children to watch sexual intercourse or murder on television, she roundly declared that she would allow them to watch both. Mrs Fox has said that she looks forward to a new dawn when ‘the present era and its religious values will be seen in history as the darkest hour that preceded the dawn of true civilisation’. Well might the BBC say ‘God save us from our friends’ – if these were the only friends it had. Mrs Fox is as *simpliste* as Mrs Whitehouse. Neither of them has grappled with the really complex problem of striking a balance between freedom and responsibility in broadcasting. Despite repeated assertions by Mrs Whitehouse that her movement does not want censorship, but only responsible broadcasting, it is clear that CUTV’s attitude and policies would lead to harmful censorship. It is equally clear that for Mrs Fox, *anything* goes, and what she wants for television is not merely liberty, but license.

There are, of course, some things that should not be broadcast, though it would take another article devoted to detailed programme analysis to show what these are. The exploitation of sex is obviously to be excluded, though it needs more subtlety than CUTV shows to define the exploitation of sex, which is not the same as dealing with sex.

There are also other vices to which CUTV seems strangely blind. Has Mrs Whitehouse not noticed, for example, how many television advertisements commend to the young a James Bond style of living? I have never seen a single complaint on this score. Turning to a different field of discourse, the point in a sketch where a parson hung his pipe on a crucifix, *was* gratuitously offensive to christians. (Though the sketch as a whole was a funny and perfectly fair gibe at the unhelpful response of many christian moralizers to people in real trouble). The notorious birth-control sketch *was* a grotesque parody of catholic views. However, since there is so much television, and since script writers and producers are human beings, it is inevitable that they will commit errors of taste from time to time. What is unreasonable is to fear for the fabric of christian civilisation, to demand the dismissal of senior staff and the institution of new mechanisms of control because of these lapses. One television critic has expressed the view that ‘it is a positive duty for the BBC to put on programmes that occasionally shock, disturb and anger’. Positive duty or not, it is clear that in a society of mixed beliefs (and doubts) many things will be said and done, on television as elsewhere, which displease those of us who hold christian beliefs, particularly about sexual morality.

Irritation, and even a letter to the BBC may be appropriate responses; inordinate anger and sweeping proposals are not. The further step of attributing such lapses to a deliberate conspiracy to corrupt seems positively paranoid. It is clear to reasonable people that the

Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation, like the Members of the Independent Television Authority are responsible and moral men, doing their best to exercise editorial responsibility over their respective programme outputs. But with the volume of broadcasting (about 150 hours a week BBC TV, for instance) it is clear that 100 per cent pre-broadcast censorship is as impracticable as it would be undesirable. Undesirable, because it would certainly stifle creative workers in television. In fact, the present degree of control may be excessive rather than inadequate. 'Perhaps it is just as well', Lord Hill has shrewdly remarked, 'that Shakespeare isn't still alive and writing for television.' If he were, we may be sure that Thomas Bowdler would also be still alive and ready to clean up the plays. Indeed, the spirit of Bowdler is not dead. In Italy recently the censor demanded cuts in a performance of *Henry IV*.

One of the most delicate decisions in the area of freedom and responsibility which the BBC has had to make recently, has been whether or not to show *The War Game*. Where the Director General has deliberated, discussed, and hesitated (and was criticised for doing so), Mrs Whitehouse rushed in with a letter to the Prime Minister saying that the Home Office, not the BBC, should decide whether there should be a showing of the film. More recently she has expressed concern that owing to 'extreme Left Wing pressure' the film is being shown to MP's. In all this, I would guess that Mrs Whitehouse is unprejudiced by actually seeing the film. Her proposal makes it difficult to take seriously her claim that she does not want censorship.

One problem demands discussion: Why is the BBC the prime target for CUTV's attack? Professor Hoggart has suggested (in *Censorship*, Autumn 1964) two reasons. First, that commercial broadcasting is not expected to toe the line as much as public service broadcasting. He finds 'this easy accommodation to the profit motive' nasty, and detects the shadow of MRA. This is a conjecture which it is equally difficult to confirm or deny. Secondly, he suggests that public service broadcasting is likely to be more adventurous, and hence to give more scope for lapses. Commercial television tends to keep its eye on the ratings, and avoid too much experiment. There is more in this suggestion, but not enough to explain the puzzle. Thanks to competition, the BBC as well as ITV has become acutely sensitive to the ratings. I suggest two other reasons, one too complex to analyse fully here, and the other remarkably simple.

The first is that there has been a great change in the intellectual climate of Britain during the past decade. *The Scotsman* has charted some of the landmarks in this change: the Wolfenden Report in 1957, the Obscene Publications Act in 1959, the *Lady Chatterley* trial in 1960, *Private Eye* in 1961, *That Was the Week that was* in 1962, Carstairs' Reith Lectures in the same year, and *Honest to God* in 1963. One indication of this change is that whereas when Mrs

Knight broadcast talks on a humanist's view of morals, ten years ago, there was a great outcry, but when Professor Ayer and other well-known humanists broadcast similar views last autumn, there was scarcely a murmur. This suggests that the majority of viewers and listeners accept the changed climate, in which minority views are no longer excluded from broadcasting, whether or not they agree with these views. (It may be remarked that the recent round of humanist statements was itself far more urbane and less intolerant of christian views than the earlier one.) Confirmation of this hypothesis seems to be provided by the results of research commissioned by the IFA in 1965 to discover the 'extent to which viewers find items in programmes distasteful'. Those who thought everything was all right outnumbered by two to one those who thought there were objectionable items. Further, three out of four thought that even 'distasteful' programmes should be shown, and most gave as their reason the facts that 'opinions differ' and 'it's a free country, they can turn it off'. The majority of people have become more tolerant of a diversity of views, but a minority, perhaps a sizeable minority, feel threatened and insecure in the face of these changes, and so react aggressively, censoriously. There is perhaps an emotional affinity between the CUTV supporter, and the type of person who wants to bring back the birch and capital punishment – to banish 'softness'.

The BBC was once regarded as the pillar of the establishment and of moral edification. The Reith tradition was well-known — and much criticised. In 1961, Mr A. J. P. Taylor declared with satisfaction that 'the ending of the BBC monopoly was the biggest knock respectability has taken in my time'. Under the pressures of competition the BBC itself has changed. There is loss and gain in the change, but in the face of competition from audience-hungry commercial television, such a change was inevitable. It has been described with candour and restraint by Mr Oliver Whitley, Chief Assistant to the Director General of the BBC:

The influence of commercial television on the BBC and vice versa forced them to become more like each other than either, left to itself, would have wished. IFA knew that in order to win and hold enough esteem in the corridors of power to survive, it must make a good showing in some serious programmes, carrying prestige of the kind the BBC had pioneered and set standards for. The BBC knew that if it were to content itself with the role of purveyor of news and culture, which some of the programme companies openly hoped it would, it would cease to count as the national instrument of broadcasting in Britain or the world. So both had excellent reasons for competing with each other in most of the main kinds of programme. With results, both good and bad, which you know as well as I do.

To a minority this change seemed a betrayal of the Corporation's hallowed duty to be the moral mentor of the nation. Mrs White-

house recently quoted on several occasions what she calls a 1964 declaration of policy by the BBC on 'Moral Codes in Broadcasting'. The quotation runs:

We are citizens of a Christian country. The BBC bases its policy on a positive attitude to Christian values. It seeks to safeguard these values and foster acceptance of them.

I have tried to trace this declaration, and am told by the BBC that it is in fact a quotation from a talk given 18 years ago by the then Director General (Sir William Haley), and that he was talking specifically about religious broadcasting, and not broadcasting policy as a whole. Since that statement was made, the climate of opinion has changed a good deal. Some will regret the changes: some, like Mr Taylor, will rejoice in them. In any case it is clear that the BBC can no longer exclude from the air the variety of christian and non-christian views which make up the great complex of British public opinion today.

It is unscientific and unfair to make the BBC the sole scapegoat for this general change. Nevertheless, one can see how plausible and attractive it is to the simpliste mind to load all our frustration and guilt on the BBC. Long before curtv came on the scene social critics like Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart were trying to discern the cultural roots of the changes in our society. They found them not in BBC policy, but in the mass media as a whole. (Ironically, they were then condemned as moralisers, whereas today curtv casts Professor Hoggart in the villain's role). Confirmation of this view comes from the most recent report of the Television Research Committee, which says that it has come to the conclusion that it is not possible to study the effects of television in isolation, but that it must be studied in relation to other media such as film, press, and advertising.

At the risk of being accused of over-simplification myself, I suggest that the second main reason for curtv's continued concentration of its fire on the BBC is that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. Mrs Whitehouse several times requested an audience with the Chairman of the BBC Governors, and he has refused to see her. She has repeatedly referred to this refusal, and contrasted it with the more generous treatment she has received from the IFA, whose Chairman she has seen, and with whose officials she claims to have built up a 'constant liaison'. The BBC's refusal to recognise her representative status obviously rankles, and while the BBC's attitude has been entirely correct, it is tempting to suggest that it has erred in its public relations (as Lord Hill would never do). Then, however, one remembers that the original curtv manifesto condemns the BBC root and branch, and hardly provides a basis for constructive discussion. Moreover, the curtv movement has produced very little in the way of argument which *could* be discussed. It has mainly confined itself to simple assertions, and these mainly the opinions of Mrs White-

house herself. She has had such good press that the Corporation can scarcely be unaware of her views.

However, there could be developments in this area. Although she still seeks signatures to the original manifesto with its condemnation of the BBC, Mrs Whitehouse shows some signs of narrowing her fire. In a letter to the *Catholic Herald* (17 March 1966) she said she was objecting to drama and discussion programmes, not to the general output, 'much of which is, of course, excellent'. On another occasion she granted that 50 per cent of the Corporation's output was satisfactory. Her colleague Major Dance MP (December 1965) has conceded that as much as 95 per cent is excellent. The difference in these estimates is such as to suggest a very casual approach to statistics, and if the latter figure is accepted it seems difficult to justify much of CUTV's propaganda.

I have tried in this article to be fair to Mrs Whitehouse. This is difficult because she is often so unfair herself, and her emotive language is provoking to those whom it does not elate. She has shown a remarkable flair for publicity and has made herself a national figure with only the most nebulous organisation behind her. Partly, this is due to the press's liking for simple, swashbuckling attitudes, particularly in anyone who talks about sex, and perhaps particularly anyone who attacks the BBC. Sex has always been news; BBC-baiting is a new fashion. The organisation's very virtues are a provocation to large sections of the press who so conspicuously lack them themselves. The *Daily Mirror*, with its own well-known interests in both sex and commercial television, has viciously attacked the BBC on several occasions. On one occasion it devoted four pages of a single issue to reprinting *in extenso* a confidential BBC report intended for internal circulation only. The only other place at which I have heard expressions of unreasoning hatred of the BBC to equal Mrs Whitehouse's, was at a meeting on local broadcasting attended largely by advertising men with an interest in commercial radio. It seems appropriate to let a newspaper (*The Guardian*) pass comment on this:

The commercial broadcasting lobby has never forgiven the BBC for coming out top in the Pilkington Report, and in so far as Sir Hugh Greene was directly responsible for the brilliant presentation of a pretty good case, they will never forgive him. More than anything else, it is the solid achievement of the BBC that blocks the path to further rich pickings from commercial television and radio.

When the debate on commercial television was running in 1954, those in education and the church who opposed the introduction of commercial television were stigmatised as 'prigs, prudes, and priests'. Now, prudes and commercials alike attack the BBC. I do not suggest any unholy alliance here, but it is certainly an ominous coincidence.

Recently, party leaders have shown a disturbingly sympathetic interest in the hunt. In the recent election campaign, Mr Heath

delighted CUTV supporters by saying that there could be a case for considering closer control of the BBC. Since the election, Mr Wilson has been reported as wishing to make the BBC more responsive to the interests of the Labour Party. The BBC just can't win. One minute it is said to be dominated by Catholics, and the next by communists; one day it is full of socialists, and hence unfair to the Tories; the next it is full of Tories, and hence unfair to the socialists. Any day now, someone will discover that the BBC is really dominated by a clique of homosexual Quakers who are agents of the Liberal Party.

With so many pressures it is astonishing that the BBC continues to function as independently and courageously as it does. In the summer of 1965, a group of distinguished television writers, in response to the *Guardian* leader quoted above, called in its correspondence column for 'an organisation capable of counteracting the pressures which are attempting to subvert the BBC'. This led to the foundation of TRACK (The Television and Radio Committee) an alliance of people in broadcasting and 'informed laymen who have a particular interest in broadcasting'. (To declare an interest, the writer is Chairman of this Committee, but this article is not written in that capacity, and I do not know whether my colleagues in it would agree with all that is said here). It is not an organisation to fight Mrs Whitehouse, and it has not, as Mrs Whitehouse alleges, 'made common cause with Mrs Fox'. It seeks to work at a different level, and to preserve a rather different tone and style. Its three main aims are:

- 1 To create an open and responsible approach to the possibilities of television and radio
- 2 To stimulate informed exchanges among broadcasters and the public, and to so raise standards of criticism on both sides
- 3 To define the freedoms of broadcasters and to oppose any pressure which reduces them.

In pursuance of these aims it has recently set up study groups on restrictive pressures in broadcasting, on television drama, and the development of radio. TRACK has no axe to grind, though it has inevitably been insinuated by CUTV that it is a BBC stooge organisation. It is too early to say yet what will be the outcome of its studies, but it is possible that they may produce evidence which is in part critical of the BBC, of ITV, or both. Its policy is to investigate, weigh and consider before it pronounces.

Like CUTV and COSMO, TRACK is a small part of the spectrum of public opinion in Britain. The majority of viewers and listeners probably know and care little about any of them. This is a pity, because the freedom and quality of television has become as important, and perhaps more important, to the health of democracy, than the freedom of the press for which so many struggled and suffered from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. We have only to cross the Channel to see what happens when the state controls broadcasting, and the Atlantic to see what happens when commercial

values predominate. The English tradition, admired throughout the world, has been one of public service broadcasting, which seeks to keep broadcasting both responsible and free. The combination is not a simple one, and its continued preservation will tax the wisdom of those who control the great broadcasting organisations. They have a right to expect thoughtful concern by all who care for the quality of our national life, and who realise that freedom is not something which is won once and for all. It needs to be constantly defended against erosion by government or commercial pressure, and by what Hoggart has called 'the false democracy of aggressive Philistinism'. Some creative workers in broadcasting feel that it needs also to be defended against bureaucratic control within the broadcasting organisations.

There is therefore obviously a need for continued study and vigilance. The danger is that whereas intellectuals can readily identify themselves with the problems of press freedom, since the press is part of the literary culture which they know, today many intellectuals may decide that the visual culture of television is not their concern, but is simply an adjunct of show-business. Such a judgment could plausibly be made from a superficial look at television; a failure to look again, however, to take the true measure of television would be a new form of the *trahison des clercs*.

Despite the existence of the Press Council, there are far more abuses of freedom in the popular press than there are in television. To focus attention on television alone, indeed on one broadcasting organisation, is a remarkable example of selective perception due to prejudice. NVALA's proposals for the democratic control of broadcasting have a superficial plausibility. They ignore, however, the way artistic creation, even in a mass medium takes place. The Pilkington Committee on broadcasting found that the plausible doctrine of 'giving the public what it wants' was rejected by all the witnesses actually working in television. Pilkington came to the conclusion that the broadcaster must give a lead, 'but it is not the lead of the autocratic or arrogant. It is the proper exercise of responsibility by public authorities duly constituted as trustees for the public interest'. curv might take warning from Mr Norman Collins, of ATV, that 'if one gave the public exactly what it wanted, it would be a perfectly appalling service'.

There is no need for a broadcasting equivalent of the Press Council. The controlling bodies of the BBC and the ITA already exercise much closer control over broadcasting than the Press Council does over the press. Here is part of an account by Lord Normanbrook, Chairman of the BBC's Board of Governors, of how editorial control is exercised in the BBC:

The nature of this broadcasting operation is such that a large measure of discretion must inevitably be left with individual producers and with those exercising immediate supervision over

their work. What can be done and is done, is to encourage producers to refer upwards for guidance in any case of doubt: to reinforce that encouragement by adverse comment and criticism when mistakes are made: and to ensure that Heads of Output Departments and the Controllers above them are vigilant in passing guidance downwards, as and when it is required, as well as encouraging those below them to refer upwards for advice. This process is essentially one of editorial control by retrospective review. It is a constant flow of comment and criticism, praise and blame, which goes on continuously at all levels within the Corporation. This constant exchange of views and ideas is, through its continuity, designed to develop among producers a sense of what is right. Programme staff are required to apply their own judgement to particular problems but they do so within a framework of general guidance arising from the continuing discussion of individual programmes by themselves and by their seniors up to and including the Board of Governors itself.

This procedure seems designed to preserve the delicate balance between freedom and responsibility.

Freedom *and* responsibility. We need both. Where there is freedom, there will be mistakes, and where there is responsibility there will be self-regulation. The philosophy of public service broadcasting in Britain has always affirmed that in matters of day to day control, Government should not interfere with the freedom of the broadcasting organisations. In the case of the BBC, its Governors are appointed by the Queen in Council, on the recommendation of the Government itself. It is the Government's responsibility to select Governors who can be relied upon to act as 'trustees for the nation'.

The Governors, like the Members of the ITA, must be given freedom – and that includes freedom to err occasionally. The freedom of the press has often been described as one of the prerequisite of the democratic way of life. So is the freedom of television, and it is deplorable that in 1966 this should still need to be argued.

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