'Does Television Represent Us?

Transcript of the event for Future for Public Service Television Inquiry

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The session was chaired by **Lord Puttnam** (DP), film producer, peer, and Inquiry chair, and introduced by **Stuart Borthwick** (SB), Chair of the WOW Board of Trustees.

SB: Welcome everyone. Welcome to Writing on the Wall. Welcome to the Black E. Amazing space. Thank you very much to the Black E for allowing us to use this building this evening. Welcome to tonight's panel, Cat Lewis, Ruth Fox, Phil Redmond, Ken Loach, David Puttnam. Thanks in particular to David for bringing his roving enquiry to Liverpool. I think it's very important that he did so because, as we know, following last week's inquest verdicts, the lens of the media is focused on Liverpool at this time, and we have a television industry in a broader media that's finally been forced to represent accurately the events of April 1989, so it does seem fitting that tonight we ask the question does television represent us. Over to the panel.

DP: Thank you. That's a very nice introduction. Welcome everybody. I'm David Puttnam. I've been chairing this enquiry now for eight months. We will report finally on, we think, the 29 June, which will be about five weeks after the white paper. Gives us a chance to review the white paper and finalise our thoughts. It's been a very interesting exercise, and tonight our very last public meeting. We've been all over the country, learned a lot, really learned a lot. Some of it quite surprising. We're doing one more session on training, the capacity of the industry to train and the role of public service broadcasting in the training component. Ken may well have something to say about that having come out of that world.

Trying to maintain that we have very high training standards is fantastically important.

I'd like to just, as I've got the microphone, a couple of things. First of all, I actually sat by the radio and listened to the verdict come in on questions five, six and seven, and cheered. I found it really emotional. As a southerner I found it a very emotional experience. And something happened afterwards, and I won't have another chance to say this publically, which I think was extraordinary. Kelvin McKenzie was interviewed, and he said, amazingly…he started protesting about how he'd been hopelessly misled and there was clearly a conspiracy and how the police had their own agenda and how he was made to look a fool. We in the House of Lords have been arguing for months and months and months that Leveson two… Don't want to get too technical about this. There was always announced two Leveson enquiries. The more important by far was called Leveson two. Leveson two is an enquiry into a relationship, the improper relationship between the police, politicians and the media, and what occurred to me was, quite brilliantly, and I'm sure accidentally, Kelvin McKenzie was giving the best possible argument as to why Leveson two has to happen, and happily that's been picked up in parliament, both in the commons and the lords. So all of a sudden as a direct result of last week's triumph, and it was a triumph, there may be another very, very important bandwagon to begin rolling. So that's solid good news.

Purpose of this evening is largely to listen to you. I'll sit down in a moment. I'm going to run a six minute clip from, I think, a very good BBC programme, and I want to use it to make a point. After that, the people on the panel will make a five or six minute presentation of their own views, and then we'll go to you and I'll try and manage the affair from there on in terms of ensuring that your questions are properly answered. But the purpose of the clip, which actually appeared in two different seasons of the same programme, was to establish, for those who didn't know it, how very, very difficult it can be if you don't live in Central London and if you don't have a reputation to actually get a programme on air. So enjoy this six minutes, I think it's fantastic.

[Video plays 00:04:20 – 00:10:55]

DP: …and I wish it was pure comedy. It really isn't. But it is that difficult, and of course television to an extent is that centred on a whole series of concepts that don't change very much. And one of the things we've been trying to do is does the BBC have a role in ensuring that the whole of the country does see itself as represented. So that's just one very simple thing. I'm going to start, if I may, asking Ruth Fox, who's a colleague of mine, she's the director of Hansard, does a fantastic job, we've known each other for a long time, to set out her stall because it's a very informed stall. Once every year she does the audit of political engagement. We get a sense of how the media are affecting people's views of politics. Ruth.

RF: Okay. Thank you, David. I should just explain, when he says Hansard, he doesn't mean that Hansard that you're thinking about. We're not the parliamentary record of debates. We're a political research and education charity that works to promote democracy and strengthen parliament, so you can guess from that what the theme of my contribution tonight is going to be, the role of regional television in relation to democracy and democratic engagement, citizenship and sustaining that. And it doesn't matter, frankly, which part of the country you live in, citizens are disenchanted, disillusioned, and disengaged. Barely more than six in ten of us vote. Only half the population say they feel interested in and knowledgeable about politics, and only a third of us are satisfied with our system of governing. When it comes to our elected representatives only three in ten of us are satisfied with the role that MPs…how they do their job. And those are just a few of the rather depressing headlines about the state of democracy. We could be here all night.

There are no quick solutions to addressing the democratic deficit, but the provision and portrayal of politics and politicians on television must be part of the mix, because despite the changing media landscape TV remains the biggest single source of people's news and information about politics. So I'm going to ask my colleague at the back to show…just got a couple of slides, because we've got a bit of data. We're a research organisation so got some new data for you. This first slide just shows newspapers and social media don't come close to the influence of television in terms of portrayal of politics. Some may catch up in time, but right now television is the lens through which the public's view of politics is largely framed. And I would argue that in light of that regional

television is crucially important in terms of tackling the democratic deficit because most of us actually engage with politics at the local rather than the national level. There's a greater desire among us as citizens, as our audit of political engagement shows, to get involved in politics locally rather than nationally that remains, frankly, largely untapped.

So tonight I want to focus just on one element of regional programming, that which is identifiably political in all its content and is a vehicle where we can hear direct from our elected representatives. Coverage that's offered over and above that which we get through the regional news programmes like Granada Reports. Now, David has a theory that since the 1990 Broadcasting Act and the breakup of the old network of regional television companies. The commitment to explicit political programming at the regional level has declined, and as a consequence MPs and other significant local political figures have far less of a chance to appear airing their views to their constituents, to the broader region, than was the case 30 years ago. This in turn then contributes to the wider democratic deficit at the regional level as political voice and accountability is eroded.

But is this true or is it a golden age theory, and if so what can be done about it? So I want us just to travel back in time. We've been doing some research looking at the volume and content of political programming in the region. Take us back to 1983. That year, general election year, citizens here in the North West had four hours of dedicated programming in the form of Granada 100 programmes in the run up to that year's local elections, with a talk back panel giving their views on the big issues at stake. For the general election the following month a Granada 500 programme saw 500 citizens from across the north travel to London to meet the party leaders and question them on matters of concern. But that was it in an election year.

Now, travel forward in time four years to 1987 and a new programme is launched called Members Only. It gave MPs a five minute opportunity on Sunday mornings at noon for them from across the region to speak out on an issue of their choice. It didn't run every week, but cumulatively provided just under five hours of dedicated programming, enabling most MPs in the region to have their five minutes' worth. Now, just bear in mind that TED X 'ideas worth thinking about' give us all at least ten minutes, so you can

imagine not much time with the opening credits, the closing credits to have much of a say in five minutes.

There's also state of the region programming, exploring what voters in the region wanted from the political parties. And the centre piece of the election coverage was a Sunday conference entitled case for a new north, held one Sunday with two hours ten minutes of programming interspersed throughout the day, exploring what the politicians were going to do for citizens in the North West. Added to that there were then six Granada 500 programmes mixing Q&A and deliberative discussions in key constituencies across the region with audience questioning of the national rather than party, local, regional leaders.

So cumulatively in 1987 there was 15 and a half hours of explicitly political programming throughout the year, but of that just under 11 was with regional political representatives. So how does this compare to last year in the general election. Now, across every region ITV currently commits to 30 minutes a month for 11 months a year for dedicated regional political programmes. That's five and a half hours of annual output. Those of you from this region will be familiar with Party People presented by Rob McLachlan last year. Goes out on a Thursday evening, 10:40, 10:45, so it's hardly peak time. And it provides a dedicated opportunity for three or four politicians to have a discussion about a range of regional local issues. But that is conducted from a studio in Millbank at Westminster, not here in the region itself.

The first four programmes last year were largely given over to interviews with Ed Milliband, David Cameron, George Osborne and Nigel Farage, and about what they would do for the North West. Now, given the dominance already of elite politicians, reinforced by the party leaders' TV debates, I think it's worth questioning whether these limited monthly engagements are best spent effectively on issues related to the national horse race, particularly when compared to 30 years ago the party political landscape is so much more fragmented and a wider range of party voices need to be heard. The programme after the election, so May last year, returned to the regional scene with a scoop interview focused on Liverpool with the news that Derek Hatton had re-joined the Labour party. And then the remaining programmes of the year focused on the NHS, extremism, assisted dying, transport problems and police cuts.

This year the programme's been rebranded Granada Debate. The four programmes so far this year focused on the EU referendum, on the housing crisis, whether the region is bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis, and the funding facing hospices across the region. My question to you I guess is do you think that this programme content really reflects an alternative to the London bubble, the London narrative about politics? Are these the issues that citizens here in the North West if they had a say would choose as priority topics for political discussion? What engages the public interest in politics is the local level issues, here at the regional level. They tend to be the most meaningful for people as they live out their day to day lives. So many of the subjects covered in these programmes are important, but do they reflect the priorities of the Westminster bubble back to the region rather than the priorities of the region back to Westminster.

Going back just briefly to the data, if we can just show the next slide. David's golden age theory doesn't quite stand up here in the North West. There was more dedicated political programming in 2015 than there was in 1983 and 1987. But to test his theory we looked at a neighbouring region, Central, to see whether there was a similar pattern, and here the picture is rather different, as this next slide shows. Central region's dedicated political programme is called Central Lobby, and it's not dissimilar in style to Party People and Granada Debate here. It goes out at a similarly late evening time, a similar format. 1983 there were 20 additions at just over 12 hours of total output. Four years later that had virtually halved to just over six hours, and last year the 11 monthly editions of course delivered five and a half. So here there's been a very clear decline in coverage over the years.

But here's the thing, as I have dug into the data to explore David's hypothesis I can't help thinking that this is all rather small compared to the scale of the democratic deficit we face, whether we're talking about coverage today or back in the 1980s. Add in the 15 to 20 minutes regional coverage on BBC's Politics Show on Sunday, and combined we're talking about no more than 90 minutes output per month across the channels. That's the value we're placing on coverage of a democracy in our regions, through the most important medium available to us. At a time when speed matters can 30 minutes programming once a month really respond to the ways in which particularly young people want to

consume content? Does the talking head, round table discussion model have longevity? How might relevant and more compelling political programming in the region look differently?

I don't deny that there are challenges in improving democratically focused output when there are such intense competition for audience share and for advertising. And there are huge challenges in conveying rich and compelling politics programmes in a fragmented party environment across such a diverse region and a large geographical footprint. But I do think television, specifically regional television, must have a role and responsibility in cultivating and sustaining our democracy concomitant with the size and scale of its reach and influence in terms of people's consumption of politics. We need it to make, I would argue, a greater contribution to the political literacy of citizens in every region so that they can navigate their way through the complexities of politics today. Here in the North West it was the region that pioneered by-election coverage in the 1950s in Rochdale. It was here in this region that the first ever televised hustings were held. It was this region that challenged the 14 day rule banning coverage of issues being discussed in parliament. Hard to believe that ever existed. The question I think I would set tonight is is there the creativity and the will to innovate again in that political space, and if so how might we do it. Thank you.

DP: Thank you, Ruth. I was very relieved to see the Central television figures. Phil, you're on.

PR: I'm on. Well, actually, David's right and he's wrong. The 1990 Broadcasting Act actually completely eviscerated realistic television. And it wasn't to do with the fact how many hours or minutes of this that you ever covered because reality is that television in terms of things like politics and current affairs and things has never really adequately represented the people. It never has. I went into television in the 1970s for the very reason that it actually wasn't doing that. I wanted to go in and make programmes like Grange Hill and Brookside and then later on Hollyoaks, because they weren't doing that. That was the thing. And when you look at all these figures and say oh well, we did five and a half hours here, there, and we did three hours there, when you look at the amount of broadcasting hours, I mean, the figures are escaping me now.

I used to live and breathe all these statistics every single day. But the BBC puts out something like 48,000 hours of transmission every year, and so when someone turns round and says hey, we did five and a half hours, isn't that fantastic... And when I ran Capital of Culture that was one of the biggest arguments I put to them, that they had 38,000 hours across their television networks and they devoted 22 hours to Liverpool. They could have done a little bit more, couldn't they, on behalf of the UK government, because that's what we were doing in Liverpool, we were the host to the UK government.

So we've got to be careful with this question because I believe that television's never really adequately represented the people, simply because it can't, because it was set up in 1920s with 1920s technology, big valves, big transmitters, licenses and structures were set up to reflect that, and we've still got it. So we know in Liverpool that the main transmitter is in Winter Hill, and there's a repeater in Storeton because they forgot that actually Liverpool's in a bit of a dip and so the signal went right across the city so they had to put one in the Wirral to send it back. And you can't do that. You can't represent the North West and 6.5 million people with a transmitter from Winter Hill that does everybody, and so for years and years and years we argued that Liverpool was overlooked by Manchester. Then when it came round to Granada getting another one of their franchise renewals they built the Albert Dock, and they put a few programmes in there, but they were national programmes really. Granada Reports was just fluff. One of the big things I used to argue with them was that Granada Reports main headlines was that Granada was actually in Liverpool. That's the kind of level of... Unless there was a strike or Degsy and his boys were at it again, then they came along and they told a story.

Now, we've still got that problem. So when we're talking about whether television actually adequately represents the people it can't do it from that 1920s transmission pattern. These grey hairs here were about arguing about getting Grange Hill on TV. Should have been in St Helen's. It had to be made in London. So I argued about getting Brookie on screen. No one else would touch it until Jeremy Isaacs launched Channel 4 and had to be different, and I said, if you come up and set it in Merseyside, everyone's skint, they'll do it on the cheap. That's why we came back. That's why we did it. Hollyoaks was supposed to be Richmond on Thames, and the only reason it's on is because I sent a crew to Chester, shot in Chester,

told them it was Richmond on Thames and they thought it was marvellous. And only when I revealed at release date that's in Chester you know, really? They've got nice people in Chester, isn't that marvellous?

When Channel 4 was originally started why didn't we have it in Manchester or even Birmingham? No, Phil, you don't need it, it's got to be in London. What about Channel 5 then? When Channel 5 came along, some of you, you've got grey hair, remember all that retuning of our VCRs because it clashed with the transmitter patter? Channels 35 and 37 are Heathrow air traffic control, French national television, so had to go round retuning everything. We said to them, set it in Manchester, there's no channel 35 or 37 in Manchester, it can start tomorrow. Let's have it in Manchester. Let's have it in Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, alternative to London, all that kind of thing, northern powerhouse type things. No, no, Phil, you don't understand, you don't need it, everybody's promised to do things in the north. Where did it end up? In London.

Satellite was the same. British broadcasting satellite originally collapsed in London, Rupert Murdoch bought it and went on to Sky in London. Every time we had a new opportunity, London, London, London. Never ever thinking about the regions. That's the problem. That is where it is. We've got Salford now, Media City. Okay, decisions are still made in London. That clip to people like me is both bitter sweet. I've been there. If that guy had longer hair that could have been me trying to sell Grange Hill. It's ridiculous.

So I think the challenge is not that. The challenge is now to think for the future. How can we reconnect television, which you saw that slide there with 75 per cent of people get their news from... The thing that's missing from that slide is the demographics, because that's another issue. Because it's okay 75 per cent of the population watching telly, but actually they don't make any decisions do they? So we don't need to worry about them. So it's down to where the particular demographics are, the influence makers. When we made Brookie there was two currencies, that was ratings and the broadsheet column inches. We had to have the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph,* and *The Times*, and we had to have the *Daily Mail,* and why did we have to have the *Daily Mail*? Because ministers' wives read the *Daily Mail* as it used to be.

So I think the challenge is this, that we have to look ahead to the future, we have to think that eventually that 80 year old transmission pattern is going to have to be broken. And they all talk about it's going to be online or whatever, but all those listening to that, the superhighway and all that, sitting at home watching the spinning wheel on their screen know we're still not there yet. But eventually we will get there. So what can we do? Well, I think the only real answer is to finally address the problem what do we want from our public service broadcaster. The BBC belongs to us. We pay for it. It's a compact between the public and the BBC that politicians find very difficult to break. We like the BBC. That's what it comes down to. And we need to ask what do we want from the BBC in the future, and I think we should ask the BBC to be connected much more to its regional and local audiences. They've got the model, it's called local radio. They've taken the cash out of it for years and years because it's a bunch of guys in London making the decisions.

So we need to say the public service broadcaster, we want it connected back into our locality. We want it connected to our health, we want it connected to our education, we want it connected to our law and order agendas, and we want to have it connected to our devolution agendas. The North West, 6.5 million people, is greater than BBC Scotland, BBC Northern Ireland and BBC Wales. They all have their own infrastructures and they have a lot more autonomy. Why doesn't the North West have it? But then it's about sustainability. We've got another public service broadcaster, and that's Channel 4. That belongs to us too by the way. It's a public service broadcaster. I worked for them for a long time. I kept it afloat for a long time. While they were losing all their money on all the daft horse racing and all the rest of it Hollyoaks was there bringing the cash in, keeping them going.

But that belongs to us too, so why don't we just put Channel 4 and the BBC in one building. Bring all the capacity of Channel 4 into the BBC, keep the BBC revenue, oh my god, it means you can't be a little bit pregnant with advertising. Well, you can, because Channel 4 is already a public service broadcaster. It's flogging the stuff on our behalf. So get rid of all the high paid cats at Channel 4, move them into the BBC, sell off the spectrum, and all that cash can go back into care homes and go back into dementia care that we're going to need in the future. A lot of valuable spectrum to sell off. And commercial television, well, let it rip. Do we really care

whether Granada pretends it's bringing in a few MPs to chat for 25 minutes when nobody's watching? And also they're sitting in Manchester and they're chatting about national politics, because they know if they get three MPs in from Bury and start chatting about the local bypass no one's going to watch that are they? But if they get there and say are you going to resign about Jeremy Corbyn, are you going to resign about this, are you going to resign about that, that becomes national television, it's not local television. So that's my solution really. All those years, all this grey hair, it's never represented the people the way we're talking about, and it never will until we change the basic structure. Merge Channel 4, BBC, let the commercials get on and make great programming.

DP: Next up I'm going to ask Ken Loach to speak. He needs no introduction from me at all. Ken has to leave at 8:30 on the dot, so I'm making absolutely sure we nail him for a decent amount of time. Ken.

KL: Thanks very much. Yes, I was about to say if I sneak off it's not that I've been caught short, it's just that I've got to get a train at quarter to. Does television represent us? No, absolutely not. Does it do justice to the nuances and the subtleties and the intricacies of people's lives and their concerns and their worries? No, absolutely not. It never has. It has marginally done better at some times than others. But I want to come at it from a slightly different perspective from the really important contributions we've had so far really to say really broadcasting is about control. Broadcasting is about ensuring that the main tendency of the state stay in place. Tony Benn said once Britain doesn't need the KGB, it's got the BBC. And there's a lot of truth in that. It's about control.

Back in the day there were investigative programmes, there were dramas, there was the voice of the individual writer, which did give some variety, which did give some acknowledgement of the diversity of the life that we should reflect. The voice of the individual writer is very rare now. You have one in Liverpool, Jimmy McGovern, who's a terrific writer, fine writer, and he does that and he does it brilliantly. But most writing in drama now is formulaic. The talent is there, but people are put into a situation where the formula transcends the writer because television is about making commodities, it's not about making communications, and in the making of commodities you have to shape it and fix it so that it will

sell, and then you refine it, it has a shelf life, you sell it for as long as you can and then you drop it. Writing individual communication is much more subtle, it's much more personal, it's much more driven by what people have to say. Broadcasting is now driven by commodities, not communication. It's rarely driven by unearthing something you should know about, which we do want to know about, it's driven by questions that the powers that be are happy for you to deal with.

The BBC in particular, there's one story that reveals the role of the BBC absolutely, and it was at its foundation in the early 1920s. Soon after the BBC, British Broadcasting Company I think it was then, soon after it had been established there was a general strike – even I don't remember the general strike, but there was one in 1926, and it was a major event, it was a week in May – Churchill, who was in the government, wanted to deal with the BBC as an agent of government. He wanted to control it. He wanted to use it as a propaganda machine. Baldwin, who was Prime Minister, said, no, no, no, you're very crude, what is much more convincing is if people believe the BBC is independent they will take what it says as important. If they see it as a government propaganda sheet they will ignore it.

So what happened was, Reith, who was the man in charge at the time, Lord Reith, moved into a government office, he wrote the news the government wanted the people to hear, he even considered banning the Archbishop of Canterbury from speaking because it was thought he might be too sympathetic to the strikers, and he put out government propaganda, but the people believed it because they believed the BBC was independent. The BBC has never been independent from that day to this, and that's why it doesn't represent us, because the people have interests that the BBC will not. And others follow suit of course that the BBC will not countenance to be heard.

Because you have to think who writes the news? You hear the news. Who writes the news? Someone writes the news. Someone writes the news. Someone goes through all the things that come in on the teleprompter or whatever, somebody says, well, that's important, we'll put that in, and we'll adjoin it to that, and this is how we'll frame it. And then you'll have the current affairs programmes. Somebody decides the editorial line. Somebody says we'll ask that question, we won't ask that one, that's the language

we'll use, that's the subtext of our questioning. And the BBC is the past master of this because the BBC, like the British ruling classes, urbane, sophisticated, nuanced, very subtle, knows how to appear to be fair minded while actually getting you by the goolies. And that's the subtlety of the BBC, and they tell you what to think without you realising it, and that's why it doesn't represent us. And it goes to the heart of who they are.

They've always had political pressure from the '20s onwards, but of course it's been more intense. When I joined the BBC in the 1960s it was very class conscious, but there was a space for a few ruffians from the Midlands in our case, from other parts of the country to come in and do stuff. That is largely closed up now. Broadcasting deals with people at the lower end of society. Benefit scroungers, poverty porn, fascist TV really. Setting people up to be diminished, demeaned, loathed, derided. You could make a list of what the BBC believes in. The BBC believes in monarchy. And how they believe in monarchy. They believe in organised religion. So, yes, most of the people in the country are probably not religious at all, but you won't get... Thought for the Day. When was the last time you heard a Humanist or Secularist on Thought for the Day? Don't exist. No other thoughts. No other view of what you might call one's spiritual imagination. Only organised religion gets a hearing.

Most of all they believe in the market. That is the political correctness that the BBC espouses. Don't challenge the market. Politicians are testing them, are you business friendly? That's the test. If you're not business friendly then obviously you're unspeakable. The free market equals freedom in the eyes of the establishment and has reflected through television and broadcasting. Because the BBC represents the state, not the government, so the BBC will be dismissive of the far right but give it huge coverage because they're fascinated by it. So you'll see Farage on and you'll see Trump on wall to wall. They're fascinated by the far right. They deride it, but they're fascinated by it. Did you see Berny Sanders as much as you saw Donald Trump? No, of course not. They hate Corbyn and the Labour party now. Absolutely hate it. That's why this whole fraudulent debate about antisemitism has been dominating the screens for the last week or so because it's just before the election. How strange. Anybody who's been involved in the Labour party and left parties like many of us...well, some of us here maybe, I've been in and out of it for 50 years, you know there's no antisemitism in the Labour party. The

Jewish Socialist Group has written about that, many Labour party Jewish members have written about that. Doesn't matter. It'll get airing, because it will damage Corbyn. They are ruthless in their determination to destroy Corbyn.

I don't know if anybody heard the Today programme this morning. If anybody heard it, ten to nine, there was a discussion about London airports. We need a London airport. Heathrow must expand. Okay, two MPs debated. One of them was Louise, and I didn't catch her second name, but I can guess. I'll leave you to fill in the blank. Finished the discussion about the airports, you're a Labour MP, tell me what you think about the antisemitism debate? Oh there's a huge amount of antisemitism in the Labour party apparently. It's not being treated properly. I wish the leadership would get a grip. Thank you, Louise, thank you, that's just what we wanted to hear, end of the interview. No challenge, no other point of view, just that, the knife in yet again, and anybody who's been following this story will know that it has a political function and it's in line with the BBC's politics.

The BBC's political programmes are a joke. Who thinks watching Andrew Neil with that curious haircut is ever going... Is that about politics? About how we live together, about how we teach our children, about how we look after each other when we're ill, how we get work. Is that about politics? Andrew Neil and a few deadbeats from Westminster. Is it hell. It's nothing to do with it. And even if they patronise us and put it in a studio somewhere outside London you'll have the same bunch of deadbeats boring us to death again. That's not about politics. Politics about how we live, it's how we survive, it's how we treat each other.

I'm running out of time. I just want to say a couple of other things really quickly. One thing about the broadcasting industry, there is huge exploitation in it. It's run on people trying to get their CVs and working for nothing. It's run on trainees being forced to do overtime without payment. There's huge exploitation. Any enquiry into broadcasting must take that into account, and the BBC must stop commissioning programmes on budgets that they know will require the people making them to exploit their workforce. That must end. We are terrified that Channel 4 will be privatised. We know 'Spanker' Whittingdale was a privatiser. We know that he's got Channel 4 in his sights. Channel 4 must not be privatised. It has deteriorated terribly. It should be reformed and reset, and maybe

put in the same building, as Phil says, as the BBC. No problem with buildings. What we want is real courage in commissioning and really independent commissioners.

The micromanagement, something else that's never mentioned when they talk about their business. When I began the pyramid of managers and programme makers was like that. There was one or two people at the top and a lot of people making programmes. The pyramid is now like that. So there's lots of people telling other people what to do and the person making it...and we've just done an interview for Sky. The cameraman was the recordist, he was the spark, he was driving the van, he was working the communication on top of the van. The director was holding the mic and was also the sound recordist. That's rubbish. You have to get bad work like that. It's not professional. We need to stop the micromanagement from the top and give proper budgets for people to make proper programmes.

Finally, as I say, there's a huge fear of privatisation, but we have to defend public broadcasting, we have to make it genuinely accountable. It has to be based in the regions with proper budgets, and then those programmes can be broadcast nationally so that we speak to each other. We want competition in ideas, we want no government control, no appointees from the government telling people what they should be organising and making. It happened under all parties, whether it was Alastair Campbell, Bernard Ingham, it's certainly happening now. It must be independent and it must be democratic, but we must defend public service broadcasting, and my god, we've got to make it better.

DP: Thanks, Ken, very much indeed. Last speaker from the platform is Cat Lewis. Cat is the joint creative director and executive producer of Nine Lives Media. Cat.

CL: So my company is in Manchester. I want to start off by asking you a question. Just imagine that the 96 victims of Hillsborough were from London rather than Liverpool. Put your hand up if you think it would have taken less than 27 years to get the correct verdict at inquest. Absolutely. And I agree with you. I watched Hillsborough, the drama, written by Jimmy McGovern go out again on Sunday. That was made 20 years ago. Jimmy wrote it. It was produced by a good friend of mine, Katy Jones, who sadly passed away last year,

and Nicola Shindler who runs RED was the drama producer. Why did it take 20 years after that drama for the truth to come out?

And I've been thinking about that so hard because I remembered it as being brilliant at the time. I was working in the same department. And then when I watched it again I thought maybe it didn't cover everything. But it did. And then I remembered that that same department when they made the Birmingham six programmes they actually made three programmes before the miscarriage of justice was proved. At that time Granada was a campaigning force for good within this country. It was doing what all broadcasters and what all programme makers should do which is to hold the authorities to account. We're the fourth estate. We're the people who question. And that's what their job is. And unfortunately if all the programmes are made in London and all the programmes are made by upper middle class white people that's just not going to happen.

And that's why I run my company in Manchester, creating jobs here, creating work experience. I have two people in every week on work experience, and I don't exploit them. They're in for one week or two if they really want to when I don't pay them, and I pay everybody and we look after everybody, and we don't do overtime, we go home at seven o'clock. I employ a lot of people part time, because I benefited from part time work when I was first coming back into television after having my children, and it was Charles Tremayne who did that for me, and he was the same assistant producer who discovered that you can get the same chemical reaction from the back of new playing cards that you can get from gunpowder, and that's what got the Birmingham six out of prison.

So, I have written something, but I just want to say first and foremost that when I was a reporter for BBC news for three years nobody ever read a script, nobody ever told me what to say. I was writing those scripts, and I was delivering them. None of my programmes, my reports were ever watched, and I was never told to change anything. I firmly believe the BBC is independent. We're one of the main independent suppliers for Panorama, and yes, we work with the editorial team at Panorama, but nobody tells us what to say, we come up with our own investigations. We're one of three independents with an output deal for Channel 4 Dispatches, and that's equally a very, very important programme.

Now, we can't turn the clock back and make ITV the broadcaster it was. Unfortunately those programmes, like the Birmingham six enquiry, like Hillsborough, aren't being made by ITV because they've massively reduced the amount of money they spend on current affairs. Nobody wants to sit around and watch politicians on television talking around a round table. But those are very cheap programmes to make, and they keep the politicians happy, and therefore Granada still make them. ITV, sorry, it's called now. It doesn't surprise me that the figures haven't gone down because that's not the kind of journalism we need more of, to be frank, and that's why we all feel disengaged politically.

But there are two things. We can't turn the clock back because Granada became ITV on the back of the talent of the North West programme makers in my view, and then wanted to go down a commercial line, has done deals with successive governments to be able to do that. We can't change that. Unfortunately the ten year franchise was just reissued to ITV last year. They're not going to change. They're going to carry on doing what they do as a commercial organisation. There are two things we can do, and this is really a call to arms. One is that if the white paper when it's published next week about the BBC does threaten its independence and does reduce the license fee further then we must all protest because it is our BBC. We pay for it, and we have to hold it to account, and we mustn't let the government take control. It's got to still be the programme makers that still make those decisions.

And the second call to arms is the threat that's over Channel 4 at the moment of privatisation. Quite rightly Ken has talked about that, and it's a very real issue. John Whittingdale seems to be enamoured about the idea of privatising Channel 4, and what I really worry about is that what will happen is exactly what has happened with ITV. Peter Kaminsky wrote a brilliant article in the *Guardian* about this. ITV used to have a fantastic tradition of current affairs and investigative programmes and that disappeared when it went down a commercial route. Channel 4 at the moment does make fantastic current affairs programmes. Escape from ISIS, which won the Royal Television Society international journalism award this year is an absolutely extraordinary programme that I'd urge you to watch if you haven't watched it.

There was also a fantastic domestic programme that again won the RTS journalism award for the best domestic current affairs programme, and that was called Kids in Crisis, and it was about the mental health cuts that have resulted in children being kept miles away from their families when they're at their most vulnerable. They're going through terrible crises and yet they're miles away from home, away from the immediate love and support that they could get from their families. Two very important programmes. So I don't believe that Channel 4 has stopped making good programmes. I don't believe that for one minute.

The structure at the moment at Channel 4 is that they have, yes, more commercial programmes like First Dates which appeal to a wide audience, Gogglebox, which represents the country. They haven't got Scottish or Irish contributors in there yet, which they need to do, but essentially it reflects the country in a positive way, and I think that those commercial programmes then help pay for the investigations, the current affairs, the seven o'clock news which I'm sure many of you watch and enjoy. And it's really important that the way Channel 4 works is protected. And we all have a voice. It's so much easier than it was. You can email John Whittingdale, you can tell him what you think. If you believe this you can say that you think that the current situation where we have a not for profit Channel 4 which acts as a very good balance for the BBC, it's a great competitor for the BBC, and that makes the television that we all produce far higher in standard, and you can make your views known, because otherwise it's a few quid that the government are going to make, but then years down the line everything's going to be resting on the BBC in terms of making these programmes that are so important in terms of holding people to account.

DP: Well, you've heard four accounts. I'll just add something. Ken made a very interesting and important point. About 40 years ago I read the best leader I've ever read. It was in *TIME* magazine, and it was written by a man called Rodger Rosenblatt, and it was entitled *What Should We Lead With?* He'd been the editor of *TIME*. He was proposing the fact that the editor of a newspaper, or indeed the editor of a news programme, has to decide, as Ken says, what do I think you should be interested in. A hugely important decision. And once an editor's made that decision he's set the agenda. Other people then follow that agenda. So to a degree Ken's absolutely right, we constantly are being fed what somebody else decides is the things we should know.

And I put it to you it's very lucky for us that we're having this meeting here this evening immediately after the announcements of last week and the verdicts of last week. Let me put this to you. The two moments I actually thought Cameron performed best in parliament, certainly the last session in parliament, were the two apologies. The Hillsborough apology, do you remember? And the Bloody Sunday apology. Now, I live in Ireland, so the Bloody Sunday apology was something very important to me. What I found extraordinary was, I don't know if you remember, they did it here in Liverpool, they did it in Belfast, they cut outside to a crowd waiting to hear what the Prime Minister was going to say, and when he announced, basically it was an apology, the crowd erupted with joy. Just as I think happened here last week. And what that says to me is all people want the truth. Tell us the truth. But why is it made so difficult to get to the truth? That's where I think the central core of Ken's argument is. Why has it become so extraordinarily difficult to get to the truth?

And here's the real worry for me. Huge amount of coverage of Hillsborough at the moment, but that media wagon is going to move on. What we have to do and what I think television has to do is keep asking why. Why did it take so long? What went on? It isn't the event, it's the subterranean influences that make getting to the truth so unbelievably hard, and yet when we do get there there's amazing emotional release from ourselves when we kind of know it. We knew it all along, and now we're hearing that we were right. That to me is what the national conversation is, and that's what I personally believe broadcasters' obligation is. Keep going on until we find out why these things happen. Who colluded with who and why and who benefited. So I would beg you, don't think this is the end of the Hillsborough story. It isn't the end until we find out why that happened and what triggered it, and have we got some very, very unfortunate thing in our own body politic that somehow will brush things under the covers, keep the truth away because we're not ready for it. Effectively being treated like children. So in that sense I'm very sympathetic to what Ken says. Okay, over to you. Who'd like to start? Sir.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. I think probably with the Orgreave debate now becoming apparent with the miners' strike, I think the role of the South Yorkshire police, that will keep Hillsborough in the spotlight as well as what happened with the miners. And also I'd like to ask,

why did it take the BBC up until fairly recently to show or produce evidence that they knew at Hillsborough, they had evidence, not only from people who were reporting there but actual film evidence? It seems to me that, as usual, members of the public have had to sort of fight for all these years when really it should have been done by, as you say, public service broadcaster.

DP: Ken, you did the miners' strike.

KL: Yes. I think you make a very good point, and Orgreave is the next big issue. We know the police copied their accounts of these arrests so that they could convict the miners, and we know that they fell down. We know that they've falsified the evidence, and yet they're not being prosecuted. You're dead right. But even bigger than that you know is the issue of what happened during the strike, because once the government had won the strike, yes, 20 years later, 30 years later they can say oh yeah, oh dear, we did a few bad things there. Never mind, it's history. The point is during the strike, and I don't know if you remember, people here, the story was picket line violence. That was the story night after night after night. Even Kate Adie, the well-respected Kate Adie, time after time, violence on the picket lines.

Now, I did a little film about the time. I stood on the picket lines, and not on the police side, and I saw the police with their five pound notes, ten pound notes in the police vans, taunting the miners with them. I saw them beat the miners up. But of course it wasn't only about police violence, it was about pit closures. That was not discussed during the strike. That was not discussed. So they manipulated the issue. Now with the junior doctors it's damage, harm to patients. What the doctors are talking about, the privatisation of the health service. They're not talking about payments, they're talking about privatisation of the health service. You will not hear that discussed by the broadcasters until it's over, then the critical battle is over, the government has won, yeah, they can talk about it endlessly then because they've won.

Why were the Liverpool dockers, their huge struggle, why was that never broadcast? Why were there no documenters there? Why was there no discussion with the dockers on one side and management on the other, and talking about casualization and losing the security of work? Because that's what that was about. And now look at all the young people now in the grip of agency work,

casualised labour, short term contracts, scrambling from one bit of a job to another. The Liverpool dockers fought on that. The critical time to talk about casualization was then when the dispute was on. When the dispute was lost, yeah, talk about it, doesn't matter, they've won. And that's how they do it.

DP: Thanks, Ken, very much indeed. Phil.

PR: I think all of these issues go back to the same thing which is about where does the media make the decision. What news does the media decide to cover? And that, I have to say, from working in it for so long, is always down to the same decision every business makes, which is where are we going to put our resources. So it's when are they going to pay the expenses for people to more and more travel up from London to stay, to actually spend the time actually getting at the truth. And, as we've talked about here, over the years the resources have been more and more pulled away from current affairs and news so people can't actually spend the time getting at the truth, so what they go for all the time is where's the soundbite and what's the next stage after the soundbite. That's why it takes so long.

With Hillsborough, I remember watching it live on television and you could see what was happening. You could see that all someone needed to do was intervene a lot more quickly. But the overriding agenda of the day was that they just didn't know what was going on. And then from the media's point of view it was up to somebody else to sort out. That's why it's taken a long, long time because of this thing about the way the establishment always conforms to the norm. It takes a long time to break that. It was only actually when Andy Burnham had that reception at Anfield and realised that it wasn't going to go away, and he went back and made them listen and made them set up the enquiry. And actually, to her credit, it was Theresa May who drove it on. But the media weren't. The media were only watching that as a political story because they didn't have the resources and they didn't have the people who actually understood what it was.

And for all those years while it was going on we used to argue with Channel 4 about where the publicity of the programme would be, and they always wanted it to be in *The Sun* because *The Sun* had the best demographic for the Channel 4 audience, and they just never got it. And that phrase which we've all heard about can't you

get over it just kept coming back and back and back, but we never ever, ever moved anywhere away from the fact that we would not take part in anything with *The Sun.* That's really the pragmatic thing.

Then the other thing, it comes back to the point about who writes the news. Before you even get to that stage someone's got to decide what news they actually want to write about, and I still think the BBC is a lot more independent than people will say. But you go back to a point David made about the 1990 Broadcasting Act, and when I said it eviscerated television, what that 1990 Broadcasting Act did was introduce the concept of family viewing, which meant that everything on British television had to be suitable for a family audience. It then started to add in other things like susceptible adults. You couldn't do anything that was imitable behaviour for a susceptible adult. And then for the ITV companies, like Granada, there was also a change, because pre-1990 if you had a difficult subject you could go to the regulator and say we want to do this, we want to do domestic violence, we want to do drugs, we want to do this, this is what we're thinking of doing, and the regulator would say, well, okay, if you do this, you do that, it'll be okay, whatever. After 1990 that was outlawed, and the thing was you transmit and then you take the consequences. And the ultimate sanction for the commercial companies was three per cent of their advertising revenue.

Brookie got two yellow cards, and Channel 4 got really close, and after that, in the middle of the 1990s we were constantly being told that it's now unsuitable for transmission on British television. In 1996 the Jordache saga was the biggest story soap had ever covered. Crews came from America to see that because they couldn't believe that we were handling that story of domestic violence, murder, incest at eight o'clock on prime time television. In 2001, five years later, we wanted to do a retrospective and they told us it was unsuitable for prime time television. That's what the 1990 Broadcasting Act did, it eviscerated it.

So every time you get to a difficult programme, like going back to Hillsborough, like going back to Orgreave, where you're going to take on the establishment, you're going to name names, you're going to get into legal battles, suddenly the room filled with lawyers and suggestions were made, perhaps we shouldn't do it that way, perhaps we should do it this way. Leave it to others. That

is what that 1990 Broadcasting Act did to television, and that's why in the end I decided to get out of it because by 2001, 2002 it had become Mary Poppins television. You could try and get people to take drugs, you could try and get people to have sex live on television, but if you really wanted to cover an issue about why the state wasn't doing more about drugs, why wasn't the state doing more about unemployment, why wasn't the state doing more about our failing education system, very, very difficult.

DP: Cat. Thanks, Phil.

CL: I just want to make one more quick point about Hillsborough. If you think about that drama going out in 1996 exposing the miscarriage of justice very clearly, why did the New Labour government not do anything? And I think when we think of politics we have to think about people like Murdoch. Was it because Tony Blair didn't want to upset his new best friend Rupert Murdoch? Was that the real reason why it took so long, it took up until 2009 for Gordon Brown to then launch the enquiry which has resulted obviously in the inquest being overturned? And I think at the moment what we've got to remember when we read the newspaper is that the BBC has got a lot of enemies. Murdoch hates the BBC, and so does the *Daily Mail* and lots of other newspapers, and so the BBC is under attack on a daily basis in all those newspapers, and that's why I think, it's not a perfect institution, I'm not pretending it is, but we should rally round because it is under threat and it's all about money. They don't want the BBC to give you news because they want to sell you news, and that's what it comes down to, and we have to be really careful about that politics.

DP: Can I just say, the truth is, and I accept many of the criticisms that Ken makes, lord knows we've all had our frustrations with the BBC, but it does come down to us. The big fight post the white paper, and I promise you this is not going to change, will be over the governance of the BBC and it'll be over the right of the government to appoint a new unitary board of the BBC. If you're prepared to live with that, that is what will happen. If you're not, and I believe this could be done, we need actually the largest single march there's ever been in Britain, because it's the one occasion on which all classes for different reasons in this country will gather. Worcester women will gather because they don't want to lose Radio 4. You actually could get a quite extraordinary outpouring.

I still can't get over the fact that 700,000 people turned up for the hunting with hounds demonstration. If we can't get two million out there's something wrong with us, we seriously aren't concerned enough to ensure the independence of the BBC. The independence of the BBC will come from the independence of the board, the independence of the board will come from the way it's selected and appointed. If we're not prepared to fight for that we'll end up with all of Ken's concerns and much worse. So it will come down to us in the end. Yes.

AUDIENCE: Can I ask you, in this competitive market that we now live in, with the advent of broadcasting, can I ask you quite sincerely what is it that you think the BBC are so afraid of? Because at the end of the day we're all in competition. If Leicester City can win the Premiership why are we so afraid to fight in the game and fight for good broadcasting?

DP: I don't know. As I know Ken's got to leave in seven or eight minutes I'll start with him, and I'll get everyone to chip in on that.

KL: I think the BBC are afraid of being cowed by politicians over decades since its inception. They're caught in this bind. On the one hand they've got to attract a mass audience to justify everybody paying for it. If only a few people watch it why should everybody pay for it. It's like the opera. So they have to attract a mass audience. But then, as has been said, the commercial guys say, well, hang on, you're interfering with our competition because you're getting a subsidy and we're having to attract advertising, so it's not fair. So because they're afraid, or the political left, I would say, is afraid to say broadcasting is a service that we should all contribute to, that we should all enjoy, that we should reflect everyone and we should all have a democratic say in it and we should all pay for it fairly. So I think that's what we have to campaign for.

I'm absolutely in support of public broadcasting service. I do have to challenge David on this, it is not independent. What happens is the press will have a story, the BBC editors will recognise ah yes, this fits with what we can do. They will carry it. I mean, the antisemitism row, because it's a complete bubble, is a classic case. And they all knock it backwards and forwards. It's like an elaborate dance. Everybody understands the steps so you don't need to conspire. Everybody understands the steps so they all perform it, and the story goes backwards and forwards and backwards and

forwards because they all have a common enemy. The BBC is not only cowed by politicians, but it has a class bias. It's always had a class bias, it did when I joined in the early '60s. It was patrician, it was urbane, it was generous, it allowed space. Then under Thatcher it got cowed. Remember there is no alternative. It became much more commercial. Its political spaces closed down, so certainly in terms of drama you didn't get those subversive pieces that they hated. And then finally it has become micromanaged, corporate, and diminished. Diminished in its output, diminished in its imagination, diminished in its ambition. We absolutely have to fight for it, but we have to fight to get it back and improve it and make it a people's television, not the television of the establishment.

DP: I should point out that our enquiry from day one has been about the role and the future of public service broadcasting. It's not about the BBC, it's not about Channel 4, it's about public service broadcasting, what its role is and what are the challenges that affect its future, how much do we value it, and that's really important. Ruth.

RF: I've nothing to add.

DP: No. Cat, anything to add to what Ken just had to say? What are we afraid of?

CL: Well, what I feel is very important that hasn't been said yet is that we have quotas at the moment which means that all the public service broadcasters have to commission programmes from out of London, and that's something again that we've all got to fight for. They do occasionally cheat those quotas, they insist upon you editing in London because there's only a particular editor that they want you to use and he happens to be in London, and that makes it very difficult because we then have to employ a programme maker who's based in London, otherwise we have to try and find seven weeks' overnight money for the programme maker who we want to employ from the North West to go down there, and that becomes kind of self-perpetuating because then you end up without a talent pool of what they consider to be network calibre people who are out of London. And I've seen this over the 14 years that I've been working as an executive producer and it's very frustrating, but I shout about it. I make a fuss deliberately. I know that makes me vulnerable, but I don't care because I believe in it. I

believe in making programmes out of London, that everybody should have the opportunity to get their voice heard.

We need a creative meritocracy and we can only have that if people from every different background can work in television. And you go back to the days, I can see Hazel in the audience from John Moores, and she and I were at Granada at a time when Peter Kay came through, fantastic comedian. Where would his career have started had Granada not existed in the way that it existed? Caroline Aherne, Steve Coogan started on a show that I produced. Countless fantastic people. Brilliant script writers like Paul Abbot, Jimmy McGovern, Kay Mellor, all from working class backgrounds, all from the north. And these people need to have somewhere to get their work experience, to get their first job. And yes, people say well, anybody can make television on a mobile phone. Yes, it's true, we can make little videos on a mobile phone, but that isn't the same as sitting alongside other brilliant creatives and coming up with programme ideas and getting those programme ideas broadcast.

The little clip that was shown at the beginning, do you know that happened with Nicola Shindler, who's absolutely brilliant, who runs RED productions in Manchester, that happened with Last Tango in Halifax. Can you believe that? Last Tango in Halifax was rejected, went years and years…and then fortunately somebody at the BBC, that dopy guy on the settee who was suggesting that all turn down to Walthamstow or whatever, somebody like him suddenly remembered that there was this great drama set up in the north, and for some reason they'd suddenly been told they needed more northern things, and fortunately he remembered and suddenly after many years we've all got the multi BAFTA winning Last Tango in Halifax, thank goodness.

DP: Thanks very much, Cat. As Ken leaves I think he'll be interested to know in the 2001, 2002 Communications Act, the biggest single fight we had, and it went on and on, it's all in Hansard, happily, was a debate. These were the words, I've just jotted them down here. The opening of the bill was about the purpose of Ofcom. That's to say the purpose of the regulator who was going to regulate television. And the opening words originally were that it should have regard to the interests of the consumer. And we fought for days and days and days and we got rid of the word consumer and we inserted the word citizen. Now, this is a slightly depressing fact. It is the only time in legislation – Ruth may tell you I'm wrong – it's

the only time in legislation where the word citizen is actually in a bill, because we're not citizens, we're subjects. Our argument was in respect of the provision of information we have to be citizens, we're not consumers. We consume. That's the choices we make about what we consume. But our rights and the obligation to broadcasters to be truthful are obligations to us as citizens. That was a massive fight, and it was won. So it's not all despair. But literally that small one word was fought over for nights and nights and nights. I find it very interesting. Another question.

AUDIENCE: You spoke about us having the largest march over the BBC. Now, whenever there's been protest marches through London in the last 12 months, two years, the BBC hasn't covered them either properly or at all. There was one two weeks ago, the people's assembly march, which wasn't covered, as far as I know, on prime time TV by the BBC or ITV. Also, with regard to broadcasting certain things like sell off over the NHS, and there was another film that was made called Still the Enemy Within over the miners' strike, and within that there's documentation which was released over Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister, and it came out that the South Yorkshire police were the culprits, that they committed violence against the miners, not the other way round. Now, the BBC refuse to put that in their programming. Same with sell off over the NHS, and fracking, Gas Land, which has also been refused by the public broadcasting. So I'd like to know whether you can do something about that or...

DP: If only. I'm going to ask Cat with a very specific question, because we're going to run out of time, how much more difficult or less difficult is it to get commissioned to make a programme...? Exactly the question, the conversation... If you want to make a programme, a really in depth programme about the impact of fracking, how tough would it be to get the commission?

CL: Well, it always depends upon what's been made already. Ironically, because that wonderful Hillsborough programme, which won a BAFTA, had been made, that would have put other broadcasters and other programme makers off making an in depth programme because it had told the story. The story was out there. It was the government that then refused to do anything about it. Now, I don't know who made the Orgreave programme. I do agree that at times the BBC can be on a back foot about these things rather than campaigning.

But I would like to mention a very good programme that was made here in Liverpool and was broadcast on BBC One and has resulted in a change of law, and that's Common. Written by Jimmy McGovern, produced by my friend Colin McEwan who runs LA Productions here in Liverpool, a very brilliant company, and at the end of that programme Charlotte Moore, who's one of the most senior women now in television, doing a fantastic job, in charge of BBC One, BBC Two, the iPlayer, she agreed that they would be able to broadcast one of the mothers of the real victims talking effectively about her campaign. And now the law has changed and the whole business of if you're part of a gang you're going to be just as guilty as the person who wielded the knife, that is now no longer the case, and a lot of those people who were convicted under that law, their cases are going to go back to the court of appeal.

So you've got to think about the BBC, they're not going to cover everything. They do cover as much as they can. Channel 4 do as well. What's really important is that Channel 4 and the BBC are the two broadcasters who enable me to run my company. I make a lot of children's programmes, I make a lot of current affairs. I'm not interested in money, and my team aren't interested in money. We're interested in making the programmes that should be made. We make some commercial programmes in order to support the children's and the current affairs programmes that we make. If Channel 4 and the BBC are under threat, were under threat and that makes it difficult for me to create the jobs that I do up here in the North West for programme makers, and that's because Channel 4 take more seriously the importance of making programmes out of London than other broadcasters, and so does the BBC. The BBC is actually the best at it. They really are committed to 50 per cent of programmes being made out of London, not only by in house BBC departments but also by companies like mine.

DP: Ruth, the question there in a sense was what are you going to do about it? If you could have a magic wand and looking at it from your own perspective as someone who works in the political world, what would you change? Literally. If you could write the remit of public service broadcasting for Channel 4 and the BBC in a way that you believe would begin to deal with this democratic deficit that I insist does exist and make people more aware of their

decisions, their own lives, have more influence over the decisions of their own lives, what would you alter?

RF: In two minutes?

DP: Two minutes. Three.

RF: Three, okay. That's being generous. I'm slightly stumped. Fundamentally I think it goes back to your earlier point about how the public are seen as consumers or citizens, and I think it goes back also to your governance issue thinking about what we as the public, as citizens, what is a priority for us, what serves our democratic needs. And that will be slightly different for different parts of the country. It's different in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and so on. But I would have a fundamental rethink about what in democratic terms the public interest is in terms of broadcasting and how that then needs to be written in, reflected, and required in the legislation. And that would lead, I think, to some quite difficult debates and decisions about allocation of funding for programming and prioritisation of that.

But I suppose what I would want to get away from is this idea that political programming is purely about talking heads sitting round a table discussing issues in Westminster, and if there can be a structure and a process, a governance structure that drives a decision making process within our broadcasters to think differently about us as citizens and about fundamentally their responsibility to the democratic health of the country, that's what I would want to achieve. How I would do that in a practical way as somebody who is not experienced in the way that our other panellists are in television would be quite difficult because I don't have that background. But that's what I would want to see happen.

DP: Phil. Public interest. Thanks.

PR: I think it's quite easy actually, after spending 35 years thinking about this. What you have at the moment is you've got this fantastic platform called BBC iPlayer. The BBC's got access to something like ten transmission channels, and it's got all its radio networks, and a lot of them are underused. So I think what you should say is first of all we need to define what do we really mean by public service broadcasting, and that means service to the public. I think it has to follow the devolution agenda. I think it has

to start thinking about we're going to start putting all our services out to the regions and the areas, and elected mayors, so that everything is controlled by elected representatives. I think the BBC as a public service broadcaster should follow that same model.

I think you can use the iPlayer as the test bed of the innovatory expert lab for anybody and everybody to come along with a programme, the BBC can curate it, they can put it out, if the public like it they can take it on. The same way that Amazon and Netflix are now putting a programme out and saying we're thinking about making this series, shall we carry on or not. Then I think you end up with things like...we'd have BBC Council as well as BBC Parliament. Because the thing about politicians is that they only do stuff if they think they're going to get caught, and I think BBC Parliament is there because the journos can actually look, bring it down, and they can say you said this, you said that. That's a much more effective way than trying to get three of them in a studio with Andrew Neil and his dodgy haircut, as Ken said.

So I think some of those BBC channels could be put towards local politics rather than national politics. They should be the test beds for innovation, so I think the BBC should inform, educate, entertain and innovate. Remember it's the BBC who brought on the Micro, it was the BBC who brought on the iPlayer. And I think this notion of privatising Channel 4 is a red herring because all that Channel 4 is it's got a particular mechanism, it's got another part of the spectrum that it actually transmits on, and it was brought in in the 1980s for a particular reason, to fill gaps that were not being served by the other broadcasters. Those gaps are now being well served by everybody. But it's got a fantastic critical mass, it's got a great production capability. That could be absorbed by the BBC, and that would give us a broadcaster that does cradle to grave. The BBC is tending to do very young and middle aged on. Channel 4 does the bit in the middle. So you put them together you get a broadcaster that can look at everything.

I still think it's fine for Channel 4 to sell advertising revenue because advertising actually is one of the most creative forms we've got in Britain, and a lot of people, as you know from your own early career, have some fantastic ideas, the use of the technology, nuances and things developed, so that should stay in it, and that money can then supplement the BBC license fee. And then I think you do release the commercial organisations.

And I think this idea of competition is looked at from the wrong way. Whether we join David's march or not, the BBC belongs to us. We pay our taxes, we want it to be there. In every poll everybody says the BBC is a good thing, we want to keep it. You've got to remember its social impact. It's not just about whether it does Strictly, it also does DIY SOS, and the BBC roll up and say we're going to do the community centre, it gets done. They're the ones that do great shows for the Olympics, they're the ones who cover Her Majesty and all the rest of it. The BBC has a lot of social impact. Things like the A Team at Radio Merseyside. Brilliant things. Get the community involved. The commercial companies are free there. So the competition is actually we the tax payer want the best public service broadcaster that we can get. We want it to innovate. We want to create Monty Python again, don't we? We want to do shows like that. We want to do edgy drama like Ken used to make and what I used to make. The BBC can be the testbed for that, and if they are then commercial they can be taken up. Top Gear. It's now going to be done by Amazon. There's nothing wrong in that. That's just the ecology of the business.

So the BBC should be the best thing that we want. It should be the best iPlayer, it should be the best used website, and the commercial companies have to compete with that. And if they can't compete with it, well, they shouldn't be in business. And the thing that drives me mad more than anything else is when the local newspapers roll up and say oh the BBC is killing our business. It's not. The internet is what has killed local press. It used to be the place where you sold your bike. Why would you do that? Why would you pay a local newspaper when you can go to Gumtree or you can go on eBay or whatever. That business has been killed by the internet, not the BBC.

So that's the way I'd change it. And to me, after 40 years of going round and round and round this carousel it is a very simple solution. Will it happen? No. Why won't it happen? Because we have to go back again to this thing, who writes the news, who decides what news it is, then you look at recruitment. The BBC and broadcasting in general now is now back where it was when I decided in 1970 I wanted to be part of it, and I ran straight into, boom, the Oxbridge wall. It's back. They're all there. They commission within their own image now. The people who can afford to spend a year not being paid are probably from that kind

of demographic and Oxbridge. Recruitment, access, that's the next big problem. So we need to define what do we mean by public service broadcasting, we need to ask the public are they prepared to keep paying it, and we have to start thinking about who recruits the people in broadcasting, what kind of access can we get.

One final thought I'll leave you with is if you want to go and join David's march one of the things you should think about, do you want to keep paying your license fee, which is the daily equivalent of a copy of *The Sun*, or not?

DP: I'm going to wrap up in a moment with Cat. This business about what the public want to see or are interested in, one of my favourite Liverpudlians by a long way, and I've worked with him for 25 years one way or another, is Sir Ken Robinson. Ken Robinson wrote a book, it was 25 years ago, about what was wrong with education and the role of creativity within education. Not a lot of people really argued with it, but on the other hand it was quite tough to get an audience for it. If you go on Ken Robinson's TED talk today, it's been seen by 38 million people. 38 million people have found that online and watched Ken's talk. Ken still hasn't been offered by any of the British broadcasters a series on which he can actually discuss this thing. Now, I'm devoted to David Attenborough, but the idea that we have on our hands *the* world's critical expert on education and the young and we have never given him a platform in Britain, and his platform is 38 million people on TED, that's the bottom of where I find something very, very strange going on. Why? Because what essentially Ken's doing is challenging the entire educational establishment, and there's a nervousness of even beginning to give that air.

PR: Actually in Liverpool we are giving Ken a platform. Ken's been working with me on the creative commission, and he's also been working on what we should do in education for the next 30 years, so at least we recognise him because he's a scouser. The only problem is he's an Evertonian.

DP: I was trying to get a cheap applause. Last question.

AUDIENCE: I just wanted to ask, given that we're talking about public service broadcasting why isn't it more democratic, so if somebody is getting that viewership online why can't we vote for them to have

air time? A simple question. I really don't see why we can't do that. Because I think...

DP: That's very interesting.

AUDIENCE: ...if we are looking to change things like the BBC from the outside we need to do some innovative stuff, and yes, we can address grassroots things like yourself having people for short term work experience that more people can afford to do. Even if all of those people get employed it's still going to take them decades to get into the position of being decision makers about programmes. So that can't work by itself. Regional programming and regionally based companies I think are going to have a bigger impact because once they're making this sort of quality of work it can't be ignored quite as easily. But beyond that, I think if they're democratic they need to be democratically accountable, or if they're publically based they need to be publically accountable.

DP: Okay. Let me reinterpret that to Cat for a second and say what other forms of access could you create? How could you create a more democratic form of access as opposed to, let's say, the commissioning process that you have become adjusted to working with?

CL: Well, I think there is a wonderful movement happening thanks to the internet because the new *Sun* is probably being born at the moment or has been born in Manchester. *Uni Lad* is a big online magazine effectively, competitor to *The Sun*. *Lad Bible*, and various different versions, because there's *Lass Bible* and *Manc Bible* and all sorts of things. And what's happening with those online newspapers/magazines is that they're being made by very diverse, huge kind of teams of young people, and they are broadcasting internationally, and they are getting a huge amount of advertising revenue. So what started as little university experiments are now genuinely threatening *The Sun* and other newspapers, and that can happen all over the country. Young people can actually broadcast directly online, and television is taking notice. I think we are behind the times and I think we need to sit up and take more notice, and I love your idea of people voting for television programmes to be commissioned. I think that's brilliant. But I do think things are happening online.

DP: What you're really describing is something like that 100,000th signature to make a petition. It would be a version of that wouldn't it? It's a very interesting thought. That's one we'll take back, I promise you. You've made my day actually, tell you the truth. I'm going to finish with Ruth because in a sense she's data driven, she understands these issues, she publishes, in my judgment, the best publication, or certainly one I look forward to most each year, *Audit of Political Engagement*.

RF: I didn't have to pay you very much.

DP: Didn't pay me anything at all for that. Because it does tell us the way in which we in a sense are being used and are using media, and if we begin to understand that then we begin to be real democrats and begin to have an influence. But if we don't understand the degree to which we are able to be manipulated we're not really living in a democracy, and that's why I have a great sympathy in much of what Ken has to say. Ruth, you're going to have the last word.

RF: Just a couple of things. Just going back to some of the earlier discussion about whether or not if, god forbid, a sort of Hillsborough were to happen again, that kind of similar tragedy, where were the broadcasters? One thing I think would be a backstop that's very different today that doesn't fit terribly well with what the broadcasters want to talk about, is that parliament itself would be there, in the sense that our select committees are now a much more powerful instrument of scrutiny than ever they were 20, 30 years ago, and they combined with broadcasters would provide a powerful voice of scrutiny that wasn't there in the past. Imagine the scenario where tragedy happened in a football ground next week, in the last week of the season, and the following week Keith Vaz, chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee, would be in front of a camera announcing a major enquiry and investigation into it. That's no guarantee of what the outcome might be or things being quicker, but I think you'd have a different type of scrutiny and a different approach to it which would combine with the broadcasters.

On that last point, I think that is a really interesting question. I'd written just a note to David earlier about in terms of more political coverage, what we need is more openness about what the audience share is. It's very difficult to find out how many people are

actually watching these programmes and what the demographics are. How and why they pick the issues that they do, and what role the public could play in that. If the public through the petition system can sign up to issues that they care about with a view to trying to get a debate in parliament it doesn't seem unreasonable to me to think that a similar system could be utilised to enable the public to influence the decisions that broadcasters make. Broadcasters would still have the final decision and still have the creative input, but it would at least help to, I think, change the agenda, and particularly at the regional level, so that's certainly something worth taking up and exploring further.

DP: Thanks, Ruth, very much indeed. Can you make it very tight, because otherwise we're all going to get slung out?

AUDIENCE: I just wanted to say as regards to the anniversary of the missing daughter of Kate and Jerry McCann is today, and I feel like... Excuse me, I'm really nervous. That the portrayal in the media has, not been so much of a bias, and please don't condemn me, I'm not giving an opinion on this matter, but they have been viewed differently because they are middle class. Now, I'm working class, I've been to university as a mature student, like Phil has. He's very proud of his roots. That's right isn't it, Phil? But I feel like they have been portrayed differently in the media because they are middle class. That's just my comments on the...because you were talking earlier about... That's all I wanted to say really. I'm not making any comment about whether...I just feel they've been portrayed a little bit differently in the media, because if they were working class they would be a little bit more criticised for how they treated their...they basically sat on the veranda or the patio or whatever and, I mean, they've left them asleep in bed, but I feel like they have been portrayed a little bit differently in the media because they're middle class, whereas somebody from Liverpool or from the North West they would possibly be condemned a little bit more, and they have been interviewed on TV and because she's a GP and she's articulate, and he's a cardiologist, that they have been given a little bit...

DP: I think honestly a lot of this is fashion. Ken said it right at the beginning, it does come down to writers. It's writers grasping issues and giving access...

AUDIENCE: Yeah, that's the point I'm trying to make, because you said some questions are blocked, didn't you, by the...? One of the speakers said that some questions are blocked as to what the media asks to people, is that correct? Can you confirm that or refute it?

CL: Can you just ask again? I'm not quite sure...

DP: There's a terrible echo up here.

CL: It's quite hard to hear you up here.

DP: We're hearing every third word.

AUDIENCE: Sorry. All I wanted to say really was that I feel like it's nothing to do with the anniversary of Madeline McCann's disappearance. The anniversary is today, and I know her parents have gone through a lot of heartache over her disappearance, but I feel that because her mother's a GP and he's a cardiologist, ie they're middle class, that they have been portrayed differently in the media as opposed to somebody that it's happened to in Liverpool or the North West generally.

CL: Well, I think that Ben Needham's case, and I know Ben Needham's family...

AUDIENCE: Thank you for listening to me.

CL: Yeah. And Ben Needham's case was also covered, and has been over many years, but I think Madeline's McCann's parents have run a very effective campaign to keep their daughter's case in the headlines and to ensure that the enquiry carried on. I'm really sorry, I didn't hear Maddy's name and that's why I couldn't kind of follow it. Sorry.

DP: Can I give you an example? There's a very good film indeed, and it's called Chasing the Devil, that was made, a documentary, well worth seeing, about the thalidomide catastrophe, looking back at it, and I had completely forgotten what a disaster it was, the magnitude of the disaster. There's a very interesting fact about this, that when Distillers were nailed, the company that distributed the thalidomide pills, when they were really in the end nailed they offered a settlement, pathetic settlement to all the parents of children that had been affected, and only one guy, because he was

quite wealthy, middle class bloke, refused to accept the settlement. But Distillers had made the argument that unless everyone took the settlement there were going to be no settlements. This particular bloke in the end got vilified by a lot of the other people for not accepting the money because they wanted to have the money, but because he stood out, because he wouldn't give in, they all ended up with a big court case and everyone did get proper recompense in the end.

So I don't have an issue with the idea that in the end there are people who want a quiet life, want to settle and basically in a sense want to forget. And there will always be individuals, and I think Jeremy McCann was one, who will not leave it alone. You saw it during the Leveson enquiry. I can't tell you how many people I know that took money to go away and be quiet, and three or four people just wouldn't. There's that wonderful, is it Thomas Paine's remark, that for evil to triumph it only requires for good people to do nothing. So I come back to the issue that it is about us. It's about our preparedness, our determination, our commitment to the things we believe in, because if we give up, as many people do, if we give up evil will triumph. It just does. It's stronger than us, it's got the market behind it and it will beat us. We've only got each other. I think that's one of the reasons we've been going round the country gathering up views as best we can because in the end our report will only be as good as the voices it represents, and they will not, I promise you, be the voices of the establishment.

Thank you all very much indeed. I'm going to finish actually with a thank you, because it's a rather belated thank you. 35 years ago on Monday I was standing out on Bebington Oval making Chariots of Fire, and we needed 7,500 extras, and we had no way of paying you, as you may remember, so we auctioned a car and a motorbike, one thing or another. And the most frightening moment of my life, everyone was going to be there at nine o'clock, at ten to nine I looked down the road from the Oval and there was half a dozen people had turned up, and I had no plan B. It was the only day we could possibly shoot. And suddenly at five to nine a black line occurred and people were starting to come across the horizon, and 6,800 of you turned up, and I've never been so happy to see people in my life. So here's a 35 year belated thank you very much indeed for saving my arse. Thanks a lot.

SB: Okay, just one final thing, thank you very much for coming, thank you to the panel, to Phil Redmond, to Ruth, to David, to Ken, who's gone, and Cat. Two things, the bar is still open, and it would really help Writing on the Wall if as much of you as possible could fill in an evaluation form. It's this kind of thing, getting evaluation, that helps us to continue festivals year after year. This is our 17th year, and we look forward to seeing you at festival events throughout the month of May. Thank you very much for coming.

End of transcript