



BROADCASTING STANDARDS COUNCIL

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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14 January 1991

Dear Mr. Webb

Thank you for your letter of 4 January.

The 'Daily Mail' article was an unsatisfactory mixture of editorial views and my own. I did not use the term "secret army", and there is no question of the Council's monitors or the Council itself acting as censors. Decisions on what to broadcast and when remain ones for the broadcasters themselves.

I am enclosing an extract from our Annual Report for 1989-90 which sets out a little more clearly the experimental arrangements for monitoring.

Yours sincerely

REES-MOGG

RECEIVED 16 JAN 1991

Monitoring

The Council has established two separate experimental panels for monitoring the content of programmes, both of which are recruited and organised by an independent market research company, Network Research.

The first panel consists of 1,100 viewers and listeners, recruited to match the profile of the general population. The Council intends to turn to this panel for a perspective on particularly controversial programmes. Two separate samples are drawn from this panel. The first is telephoned several nights before a programme is broadcast and asked to watch it at the time of transmission. The second sample is not invited to view the programme in advance; instead, Network Research contacts panel members after the broadcast until they have achieved a demographically balanced sample of people who *chose* to watch the programme. Respondents in both samples answer a detailed questionnaire and the results are tabulated and sent to the Council. Two experimental projects using this panel have already been initiated by the Council. This method will be used to amplify the information which emerges from complaints about programmes.

The panel in the second experiment consists of 26 people from around Britain. This group was chosen to reflect a range of political and cultural opinion and trained to look at the context of an item in a programme and to examine the material without pre-judging its suitability. On 15 February, Network Research invited the panel members to a one-day training session in London, followed by several months of experimental reports and discussion with the monitors until Network was satisfied that the system was working. It was emphasised to each monitor that their task was to reflect accurately their own views of a programme, rather

than to think of themselves as representatives of other viewers.

Each monitor watches programmes for twelve hours a week. After every programme the panel-member fills in a detailed questionnaire which is sent to Network Research at the end of each week. Moreover, every Friday the monitors write a report on their attitudes to the week's programmes. These questionnaires are tabulated and the results are sent to the Council.