



Prime Minister 2.

Chancellor is being a bit pedantic on this. The fact surely is that Ministers obliged to take a reasonably generous attitude on the matter.

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

01-233 3000

24 September 1980

An unwise letter MB

The Rt. Hon. William Whitelaw, CH., MC., MP.,
Secretary of State for the Home Department

MA 24/ix

Dear Home Secretary,

WELSH LANGUAGE TV

I was naturally pleased that your announcement on Welsh language TV was generally so well received. But I was disappointed that your letter to Lord Cledwyn does not seem to have taken full account of the points I made in mine of 17 September. You will recall that in my letter I said that I thought that the trial period should be of limited duration, and that some means should be found of testing Welsh opinion at the end of that period to establish whether the majority would prefer to revert to the 2-channel system we had proposed earlier.

Perhaps the absence of any indication of a limit on the trial period in your letter to Lord Cledwyn need not bother us too much. You made it clear in Cabinet that you have in mind a period of 3 years and, whilst this is rather longer than I would have wished for a potentially expensive commitment, I recognise the need for a fair trial and accept the period you propose. But I think that the public at large should be aware of what we have in mind and no doubt this can be announced during the debate on this aspect of the Broadcasting Bill.

The criterion by which reversion should be judged is, however, a rather more difficult issue. As I think my letter made clear, I had in mind that the test should be whether the majority of people in Wales wished to continue with single channel Welsh broadcasting or would prefer the wider programme choice which would be available to them under the 2-channel proposal. Your letter to Lord Cledwyn, however, adopts a significantly different criterion: whether there is widespread feeling in Wales that the 2-channel system would be in the best interests of the Welsh language. It seems to me quite likely that many people in Wales might take the view that single channel broadcasting would be in the best interests of the Welsh language, seen in isolation, but that they would still on balance prefer the wider benefits of the 2-channel system.

/It remains



It remains my view that it is the broader interests of the Welsh people which ought to prevail. I realise that it is no longer possible to make this the primary consideration, but I hope that you will feel able in the amendments to the Broadcasting Bill and your statement to the House to give it equal status with the interests of the Welsh language.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister and to Nicholas Edwards.

Yours sincerely

P.S. Jenkins

GEOFFREY HOWE

Approved by the Chancellor and signed in his absence.