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PRIME MINISTER

B.B.C. CHARTER AND LICENCE AND AGREEMENT

We have discussed the new B.B.C. Charter and Licence and Agreement, and I thought you would like to see in advance the attached copy of a memorandum which I propose to circulate to H Committee, for discussion at the meeting on 25th February.

The main changes are these. First, as I have already mentioned to you, I am bringing the B.B.C.'s programme obligations from their present relative obscurity (in Ministerial prescriptions under the Licence and Agreement and in the 1964 Normanbrook letter) into the Licence and Agreement. The B.B.C. was at first most reluctant to agree to any changes of this kind, but they have now accepted my insistence that they are essential.

Secondly, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I think the time has come to establish a Broadcasting Council for Northern Ireland and on the same basis as the Broadcasting Councils for Scotland and Wales. However, the relevant provisions of the Charter have been amended with a view to securing a proper balance of representation on each Council. This amendment is designed primarily for Northern Ireland, but applies to all three Broadcasting Councils.

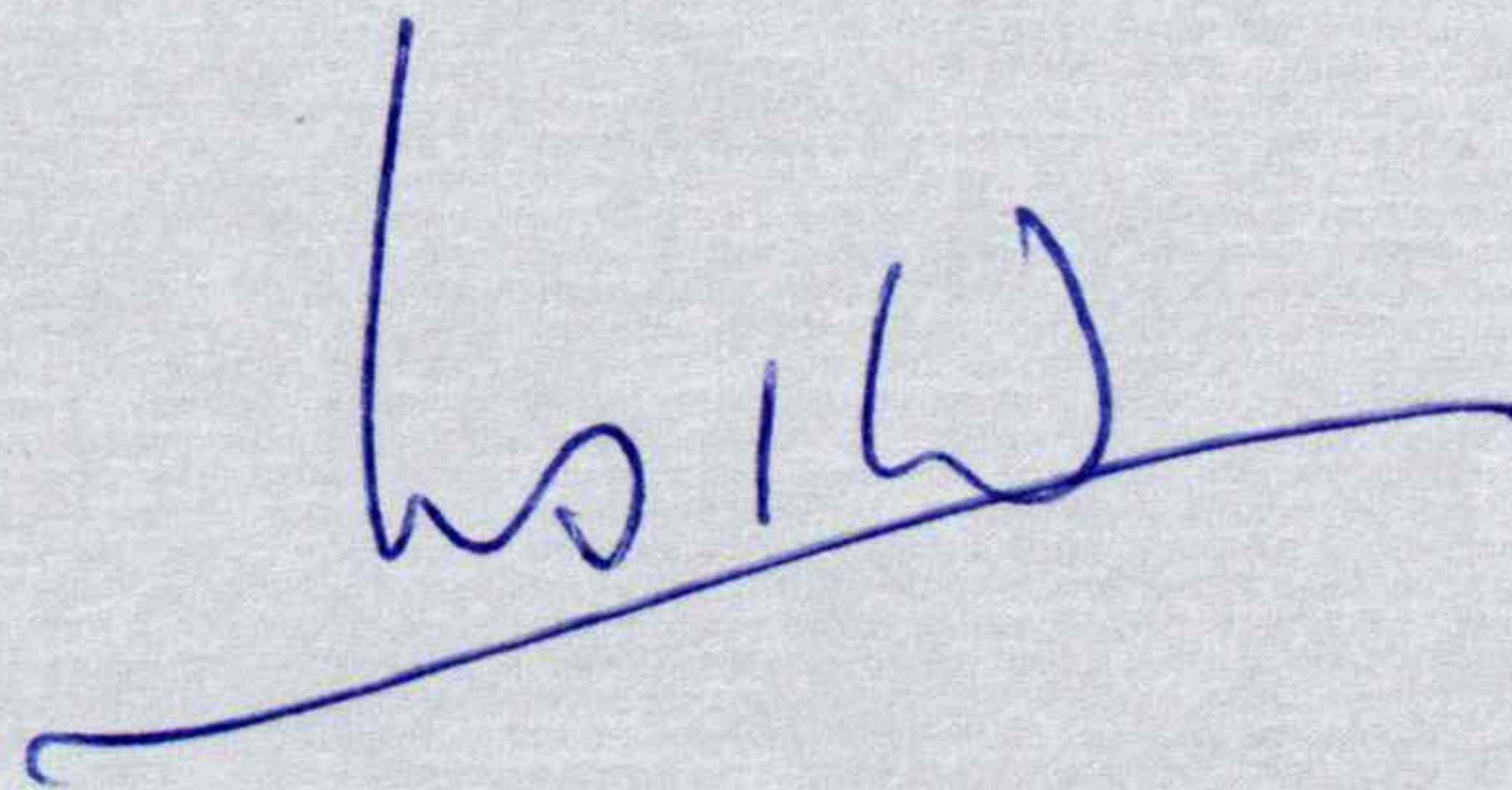
Thirdly, the draft Charter and Licence and Agreement cater for the possibility, subject to my consent and to such conditions as I might impose, of the B.B.C. using new technology, in particular providing satellite broadcasting services, and other services which are on the fringe of traditional broadcasting and the new information technology.

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These changes and a number of less important changes are explained in greater detail in Annex A to the draft H memorandum.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to Sir Robert Armstrong.



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