

MR ADDISON

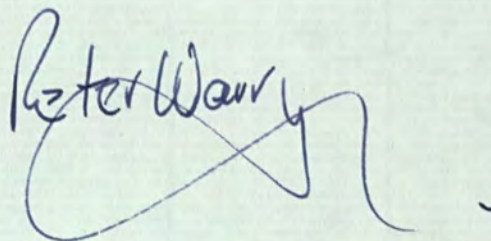
2 August 1985

DIRECT BROADCASTING BY SATELLITE

The Statement on DBS has now been made by written answer in the House of Lords (attached). The way has therefore been opened up for a contractor - such as Robert Maxwell or Rupert Murdoch - to provide a DBS service direct to potential viewers, but under the auspices of the IBA.

The argument about whether it must be a British satellite is not wholly resolved. Leon Brittan, (note of 26 July), properly concedes that it would be wrong to give an overseas supplier access on prices that amounted to dumping. But Norman Tebbit, (letter of 31 July), harks back to his earlier letter, which was essentially endeavouring to limit the opportunity to just British satellites.

It is probably best to let the matter rest here and hope that the ambiguity in the two Departmental positions does not deter prospective bidders, (even if they are foreign), from coming forward.



PETER WARRY

[LORD PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE.]
should like very much to join with him in wishing noble Lords in all parts of the House a happy and restful holiday. I am sure that is something to which we have all been looking forward for some considerable period now.

I should also like to join with him in extending from this side of the House thanks to all the staff who have looked after us so well: the attendants, the security staff, the restaurant staff and those who work in the bars round the House. We have all appreciated very much their ministrations to us at late hours of the night.

Of course this is a time of year when members of the staff are retiring on reaching retirement age, and I should like to extend a particular vote of thanks and good wishes to those members of the staff who are retiring at this time.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: My Lords, I can assure the noble Lord, the Chief Whip that when we return on 14th October—one week before another place, dare I say?—we shall be fighting strongly to see that the Transport Bill is transformed during that first week; and that he should be prepared, I regret to say, for another long and hard-fought Session. With those remarks, I wish all your Lordships a restful and happy Recess.

Lord Tordoff: My Lords, this is the first occasion on which I have had the opportunity to join in this little ceremony, and I am very grateful to do so. I personally have been thrown in at the deep end in a year in which there has been so much activity. I am grateful, therefore, for the support of both my leader and the former Chief Whip, who are beside me at the moment, and for the help that they have given me at this time.

It was suggested by one of them—and I shall not say which; your Lordships may be able to guess—that this is probably the only Motion that the noble Lord the Chief Whip has moved this year with a reasonable chance of success. I think that we are grateful to him for, among other things, introducing so many new faces into this House.

I certainly join with the remarks which have been made so far as the staff are concerned. We have had a very busy time. It has been hard work. It has been very trying. But certainly for the staff it has been even more hard work. We have asked them to do many things beyond the call of duty; and we are extremely grateful to them. Perhaps I may mention, as a symbol of that, our new Black Rod, who has moved into position extremely smoothly. We are all grateful to him for both his own efforts and those of his staff.

Like the noble Lord, Lord Ponsonby, we look forward to the battles to come on the Transport Bill which we certainly have not yet finished with. Perhaps noble Lords on the other side had better return from their holidays sooner than they normally do!

Let us not finish on an acrimonious note. It has been an interesting—and I think important—Session for your Lordships' House. It has been the first year with television. I think that the House has acquitted itself well there. The public outside certainly has an

enhanced opinion of what goes on in this place. I think that that is to the credit of all noble Lords; and indeed all the staff. Let me join in the good wishes for a calm, restful and rejuvenating Summer Recess.

Lord Denham: My Lords, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

Insolvency Bill [H.L.]

Bill ordered to be printed as amended by the Commons.

House adjourned for the Summer Recess at eleven minutes past three o'clock until Monday, 14th October next.

Written Answers

DIRECT BROADCASTING BY SATELLITE

Lord Morris asked Her Majesty's Government:

What action they intend to pursue in the light of the reported abandonment of the DBS joint venture project.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Glenarthur): In bringing forward the provisions in the Cable and Broadcasting Bill last year for direct broadcasting by satellite, we explained that the Government's role was to provide the necessary legislative framework and an opportunity but that, since no public money would be involved, it would be for the potential participants to decide whether or not to proceed.

The shadow Satellite Broadcasting Board, under Lord Thomson's chairmanship, has now reported to my right honourable friend the Home Secretary the outcome of the various feasibility studies undertaken by and on behalf of the proposed joint venture consortium. The consortium believes, in the light of these studies, that direct broadcasting by satellite would not provide a viable business for them at present and it has accordingly decided not to pursue the matter further.

We are grateful to Lord Thomson and his colleagues for their work on the shadow board but since there is now no early prospect of bringing into force section 42 of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, and related provisions, we are asking them to bring that work to an end.

It is, in our view, right that no public money should be put into the launch of DBS and we remain convinced that DBS should proceed only if it is judged commercially viable without public subsidy. However, the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 contains the necessary statutory provisions not only for joint venture DBS, under section 42, but also for DBS to be mounted by a contractor appointed by the IBA. The Government believe it right that other enterprises should now be given an opportunity to

consider mounting DBS. Accordingly we have asked the IBA to carry out a review of the prospects for launching a viable DBS project under those provisions and of the degree of current commercial interest in providing such a service. In the light of that review, and of our consideration of other ways by which satellite broadcasting might be developed, we shall decide whether to bring the relevant provisions into force.

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION: REGIONAL CHARACTER

Lord Graham of Edmonton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, in any reorganisation of the financial structure of British broadcasting as a result of the Peacock inquiry into financing the BBC and the Treasury's current re-examination of the ITV Exchequer Levy, they will insist on maintaining the distinctive regional character of independent television.

Lord Glenarthur: Under the Broadcasting Act 1981, it is for the Independent Broadcasting Authority to determine the number and extent of television contract areas. I believe that the resulting regional structure has generally been regarded as valuable. It is too early to say what, if any, changes in broadcasting arrangements might follow reports by the Committee on financing the BBC and the working group of officials which recently reviewed the structure of the levy.

CONVEYANCING STANDING COMMITTEE

Lord Campbell of Alloway asked Her Majesty's Government:

What action they intend to take in respect of the primary recommendation of the Second Report of the Conveyancing Committee.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone): The Government accepts the recommendation of the Committee chaired by Professor Farrand that a Conveyancing Standing Committee should be established by the Law Commission to examine suggestions for the reform of conveyancing practice and law.

I have invited the Law Commission to appoint such a Committee in the immediate future to consider matters relating to conveyancing practice and procedure, to advise the Law Commission on reform of conveyancing law, and to promote changes in practice and procedure necessary to create and maintain a cheap, simple and effective conveyancing system from the point of view of buyers and sellers of land. The Committee's first objective will be to bring about within two years improvements which will be apparent to ordinary housebuyers and sellers.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT: MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Lord Melchett asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will place in the Library a copy of the report on the Financial Guidelines for Management Agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, commissioned from the consultants Laurence Gould.

Lord Skelmersdale: we have not yet received the consultants' final report, but I shall consider whether it would be appropriate to place a copy in the Library of the House when I have had an opportunity to study it.

WILD BIRDS' HABITATS

Lord Melchett asked Her Majesty's Government:

What means are available to protect the habitats of wild bird species listed in Schedule 1 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, where these species occur at a low density over a wide area; and whether they will state whether a site comprising upland moorland and grassland with water bodies has been accorded by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) a threshold breeding bird community index which if exceeded requires the NCC to notify such land as a site of special scientific interest.

Lord Skelmersdale: Bird habitats generally may be protected either under the arrangements set out in section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, or through notification or renotification as sites of special scientific interest under the provisions of section 28 of the Act. My answer of 15th January (*Official Report*, col. 959) summarised the criteria adopted for notification under Section 28.

No specific index has been adopted for sites comprising upland moorland and grassland with water bodies.

"RUSWROE" SEWER RENOVATION SYSTEM

Lord Winstanley asked Her Majesty's Government:

What lessons have been learnt from the experimental renovation of a sewer in Rochdale in 1982 and the Counters Creek sewer in Acton in 1984 by the "Ruswroe" process; and what opportunities are being provided for further study of this new method of relining old sewers.

Lord Skelmersdale: Appraisal of the "Ruswroe" and other sewer renovation systems is co-ordinated by the Water Research Centre. Details are not held centrally. I understand that, following an initial trial in Rochdale in 1982, a successful demonstration of the "Ruswroe" system was completed last year on the Counters Creek sewer. The WRC now consider that the "Ruswroe" system should be subjected to a monitored trial on a selected site and this is expected to commence later this year.