

GCBG



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
01-270 3000

26 March 1987

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Office

NBAN.

Stan

BROADCASTING BILL: INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS

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I have seen your Private Secretary's letter of 18 March, and David Mellor's letter of 17 March to Lord Thomson of Monifieth.

I am disturbed that both the BBC and the IBA have offered only around 500 hours each, less than 5 per cent of their total broadcast airtime, for independent productions. If we are to keep to the four year time table for our 25 per cent target, the broadcasting authorities must be made to realise this. Given Mr Checkland's recent statements to the press, in which he said a 25 per cent target was "impractical", and the vested interests the BBC in particular has in maintaining its own in-house productions, I suspect that the BBC and IBA will almost certainly have to be obliged to deliver an adequate proportion of independent programmes.

The real problem with Clement Freud's amendment is that it is incomplete in not covering the BBC, and in not defining "independently produced programmes". I accept your judgement that it would be unproductive at this stage; but it is important that the BBC and IBA do not get the impression that because the Government is opposing this particular amendment, there is any lack of determination to legislate should they not willingly agree to fill 25 per cent of their airtime with independent productions.

I am copying this letter to members of MISC 128.

[Handwritten signature]

NIGEL LAWSON

BROADCASTING legislation

