

PRIME MINISTER

4 May 1988

BROADCASTING: HOME OFFICE VERSUS DTI

There is a strong hidden agenda underlying tomorrow's papers for MISC 128. The Home Office wish to conclude the debate soon while the DTI are keen to demonstrate their prowess in all things commercial.

The complexity of the issues on tomorrow's agenda as well as the future of the levy regime for independent television companies, provide ample evidence that the major task of Government in this whole sector over the next decade is to manage change from a highly regulated to a competitive industry - subject of course to maintaining certain standards of taste and decency.

Against this background, David Young is surely right in suggesting that the commercial side of broadcasting is better located alongside the allocation of the radio spectrum at the DTI, rather than at the Home Office, which is more equipped to deal with matters of standards and decency.

While MISC 128 is not the appropriate place to discuss this matter, it would seem desirable that the issue should be resolved, otherwise there will almost certainly be speculation in the press of a growing disagreement between Douglas Hurd and David Young.

Incidentally the most recent suggestion from David Young is that in exchange for the commercial side of broadcasting, it might be possible for certain areas of consumer protection legislation to move from DTI to the Home Office!

I'm not
sure the
logic
of this
has been
thought
through.

Conclusion

pkc.

My own personal view is that the sooner this issue is resolved the better and that it would be worth taking some initiative soon.

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