



Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

mbh at this stage.

Recd. 11/9
11 September 1989

Dear Secretary of State,
BBC LICENCE FEE EVASION

with 19
I have seen a copy of your minute to the Prime Minister of 1 September recommending that we should not adopt the Home Affairs Committee's recommendation that evasion of BBC licence fees should be decriminalised. I have also seen the minute from the Prime Minister's Private Secretary of 4 September and that from John Belstead's Private Secretary of 6 September.

The change could be expected to lead to widespread evasion of fee payments. It would also give rise to a small loss of revenue from fines. I note the parallels with public utilities but, as you say, this comparison is imperfect because television services cannot be cut off in the same way as gas or electricity. As this sanction is not available, the TV licence might be seen as more akin to vehicle tax where non-payment is also subject to the criminal law. I therefore agree with your conclusion.

I also agree with your proposal to close the present loophole by making it an offence to maintain - as well as to install or use - without a licence, a television set capable of receiving authorised broadcasts.

Clearly, however, as we move away from funding the BBC through the licence fee, we will be able to move away from the use of criminal sanctions.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours sincerely,

PP PETER LILLEY
(approved by the Financial Secretary
and signed in his absence)

Broadcasting

15 May
pt 9

