

PRIME MINISTER

27 October 1989

CHANNEL 4

Yesterday I had a meeting with Douglas Hurd and Tim Renton regarding the structure of Channel 4. Both argued that if the Government were to appoint a majority of the trustees of Channel 4, they could well face (a) the resignation of the Chairman (Attenborough) (b) a hostile reception from the broadcasting establishment, just at a time when they were coming to terms with most of the Bill and (c) a possible defeat in the Lords. The lobbying is clearly intense. They did not dispute, however, or counter the arguments which you put forward, and indeed were generous in recognising their merit.

Douglas Hurd said that he would do his best to come forward with a revised proposal in which, eg the Government appointed three trustees, others put forward another three and the ITC appointed one which could be presented as having a casting vote.

The choice is either to accept such a compromise or to have all appointments approved by Government, which will almost certainly create a noisy public row.

My instinct would be to wait for the Home Secretary's proposal, but be prepared to accept if it moves some way towards your own position.

BG

BRIAN GRIFFITHS