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Dear David

Alan W P

Douglas Hurd copied me his minute of ~~17~~ October to the Prime Minister on Gaelic broadcasting. I have also seen Nigel Lawson's comments on the subject in his minute of 25 October.

I must say I share much of Nigel's scepticism. I am particularly concerned that the proposal weakens the market-led approach to broadcasting that our legislation is intended to encourage. It seems to me that it is one thing for the Scottish Office to promote Gaelic culture, even to the extent of giving it financial support, but quite another to impose that culture on a population, 98% of whom cannot speak the language, by establishing a minimum quota of broadcasting hours. I acknowledge that this happens in Wales but the proportion of Welsh speakers is much higher (18%) and our present policy there results from particular circumstances in the past.

In particular I could see nothing in official's report to justify an increase in Gaelic programming from 100 to 300 hours a year, particularly as such an increase, by the report's own admission is likely to lead to a reduction in audience for the two Scottish franchise holders affected and make it more difficult for them to be commercially successful.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of MISC 128 and to Sir Robin Butler.

John
Butler



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BROADCASTING: POLYMER PTA

