

*CCPM*

The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley MP  
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

*W*

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Our ref

Your ref

Date

17 August 1990

*Dear Sara*

**BROADCASTING BILL: QUALITY THRESHOLD**

*at least*

Thank you for copying us your letter of 2 August to Barry Potter about the Government's reverse in the House of Lords on the Channel 3 quality threshold.

My Secretary of State fully supports the Home Secretary's proposal to reverse the amendment requiring the listed programme types to be shown at appropriate times. This would inevitably bring the ITC into scheduling, something which Ministers have all along been keen to avoid.

The Home Secretary's other proposal does cause my Secretary of State some concern. Albeit for good Parliamentary reasons, the Government was forced earlier this year to make a number of concessions on the quality threshold, in particular by spelling out the "exceptional circumstances" provision and adding childrens and religious programmes to the requirement for news, current affairs and regional programmes. At the time the Home Secretary said that he did not think that such concessions would weaken the Government's ability to hold out against demands for a more extensive "shopping list".



Your letter reports that the Home Secretary is proposing to put forward a more general form of words in place of the specific requirements contained in the amendment, but that those words would retain the essential comments of the extended list. Mr Lilley is concerned that this could not be done without returning more or less to the requirement in the present Broadcasting Act of a service "for disseminating information, education and entertainment", the very concept that Ministers found so unsatisfactory at the beginning of this debate.

We do, however, have some time before any amendment needs to be tabled. Mr Lilley would like to suggest that officials should discuss his concerns on the basis of a draft from Parliamentary Counsel with a view to returning the question to Ministers next month. I hope this can be arranged.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours  
Rosalind Cole

ROSALIND COLE  
PRIVATE SECRETARY

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