

00

copy



the department for Enterprise

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

The Rt Hon David Waddington QC MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

Department of
Trade and Industry

1-19 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Enquiries
01-215 5000

Telex 8811074/5 DTHQ G
Fax 01-222 2629

Note
No comment to
Paving Unit. NBPA
when Mrs. Dyck.

Direct line 215 5622
Our ref NP1APQ
Your ref
Date 9 March 1990

REC
13/1

Dear David

DIRECT BROADCASTING BY SATELLITE: ADDITIONAL CHANNELS

In 1988, MISC 128 decided in principle that the UK should seek international agreement for our use of additional channels for direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS). Action to implement this was deferred for a number of reasons. These reasons no longer hold, and it would now be desirable if a bid could be made to the relevant international body as soon as possible. If you and other colleagues agree, officials will submit the bid without delay.

The decision in 1988 to defer making the international bid for additional channels was largely because it was thought unlikely that the UK could start to make use of the extra frequencies within five years of applying for them (ie by end 1993), as was then required by the international rules. However that period has now been extended to eight years, and the prospects of the channels being used by early 1998 are therefore very much better.

The delay has entailed some risk that our bid would be pre-empted by other countries, as bids that are published by the International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB) take precedence over later bids. To date no such bids have been published, so little has so far been lost. But not all bids received since the World Administrative Radio Conference in October 1988 should be published by the IFRB on 16 March. It is clearly desirable to submit our application in time for publication then, as this will help to preserve the option of having additional DBS channels available for allocation later in the decade (though this still depends on successfully negotiating suitable use of the frequencies with the large number of other countries affected by our bid).



Recycled Paper



the department for Enterprise

CONFIDENTIAL

I understand that British Satellite Broadcasting Ltd (BSB) would prefer that the bid should be delayed until they have completed their present negotiations over further financing, for fear that a bid for additional channels would create confusion and uncertainty in the minds of the financial institutions involved. This would probably entail postponing the bid until early May, and while I would not wish to jeopardise the BSB operation in any way, I think that such a delay would entail too great a risk of being pre-empted, and missing the objective that we have previously set ourselves.

Turning to the substance of the bid, I propose that we should seek further channels assigned to a satellite located at longitude 31 W. This is the position of our existing five national DBS channels (on the BSB satellite - the Sky Television transmissions coming from Luxembourg's Astra satellite at 19 E). This has the advantage that, in principle at least, the new services might be receivable on BSB type aerials - thus reducing any further proliferation of satellite dishes.

At first sight bidding for additional DBS channels might be seen as posing greater competition for British Satellite Broadcasting. However I gather that BSB welcome the eventual prospect of an expanding market in equipment aimed at 31 W, (even if the company do not secure any of the additional channels themselves). Those using the Astra satellite will have similar opportunities of expansion when the second Astra satellite is launched (later this year).

Informal soundings of the IBA indicate that they support the bid to secure additional DBS channels - the only proviso being that efforts are made to find further spectrum for ancillary services for programme makers, and for the outside broadcast links that would be displaced from the 12 GHz band. This is something that we have on the agenda in any case.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, members of MISC 128 and Sir Robin Butler.

James
Andrew



Recycled Paper

