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THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Broadcasting Bill

N. F. F. F. F.

Temporarily Retained 26th June 1990
27/10/16 B. Walsh

Dear Julian,

Thank you for your call from Conservative Central Office yesterday.

You explained that you had rung in reply to my letter to Woodrow Wyatt, about the proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Bill during its House of Lords committee stage, particularly those to Clause 6 (impartiality).

You told me that the proposers of the amendments were adopting a two-stage strategy: first, to get the amendments adopted as they stand in committee, and second, to build in certain exceptions, such as drama, at Report stage.

Therefore, you asked me not to lobby, publicly or privately, against the amendments as they stood, however limiting or indeed destructive they would be on drama in general, and on my own plays in particular. You expected opposition, you said, but equally you expected I would speak up in public in defence of the amendments when this came.

You assured me I could regard the incorporation of the exemptions at Report stage as a definite promise. You asked me to propose wording for a redrafting of the relevant clause, which I did in broad terms.

As you are aware, my making a public stand over The Falklands Play has had a devastating effect on my career. Were the amendments to be incorporated into the Bill in their present form, there is little doubt they would finish it off.

However, in the light of your categorical assurance, I will do as you ask. So far as the amendments concern news, current affairs, documentary and so on, you already have my unqualified support.

continued ...

I am sending a copy of this letter to Lord Wyatt, on whose behalf you were responding, and to Lord Orr-Ewing and Baroness Cox, the other proposers of the amendments. They will be fully aware of the two-stage strategy you have explained, and that any failure to incorporate the exemptions on Report would very likely finish off the career of the only robustly Conservative playwright in British Television.

Ian Curteis

Dr. Julian Lewis,
Conservative Central Office,
32 Smith Square,
London SW1P 3HH

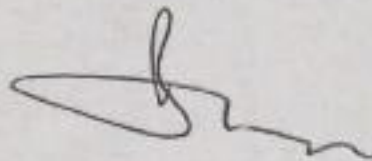
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C / A. Swatby
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Temporarily retained 21st June 1990

27/10/16 B. Walsh

— to Woodrow Wyatt, Ian Orr-Ewing
and Caroline Cox.


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I have been reading your proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Bill during its House of Lords committee stage with great interest.

So far as news, documentary, current affairs and similar programmes are concerned, they are admirable and have long been needed. So far as their effect on drama is concerned, however, I have considerable reservations.

All drama, whether classical or modern, and particularly television drama, expresses the powerfully-held personal opinions of the author. It is often not realised that the copyright in every British television play is owned by the author, and he alone is legally and morally responsible for what it says - not the transmitting company.

The effect of the proposed amendments, if applied to drama, would rob the playwright of what he writes plays for. For example, I am the only robustly Conservative playwright working in British television; but these amendments would effectively stop the expression of such views in drama, and I would be thrown out of work! It would certainly prevent the transmission of such plays as The Falklands Play.

The ITC would also be prevented by these amendments from transmitting most of the world's great plays, which are expressions of strongly-held personal beliefs of their authors.

continued ...

Impartiality and balance have in the past been interpreted as they relate to drama as a rough balance of plays over a period. In practice, of course, this loose method of approach has been ruthlessly abused by the majority of drama television producers with a political axe to grind. The problem is to find some acceptable way of encouraging a real balance of viewpoints.

I do so hope that some method can be devised by which drama can be put into a somewhat separate, if related, category from news, documentaries, current affairs programmes and so on, so far as the proposed amendments are concerned.

With kind regards,

Yours ever,

Ian Curteis

The Lord Orr-Ewing, OBE

also sent to Woodrow Wyatt and Caroline Cox