

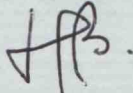
COMMUNITY RADIO

H COMMITTEE THURSDAY, 26 JUNE

To the Home Secretary's displeasure, his proposal to continue with the community radio experiment for a further 2 years was rejected. Douglas Hurd said the scheme to support worthy community-based local radio initiatives should continue to have local authority finance; and the Lord Chancellor supported him, saying that the principle of free speech demanded that we help the Home Office plan.

We would switch off this radio. Lord Young, Nicholas Edwards, Norman Tebbit, the Lord Privy Seal, John MacGregor, Geoffrey Pattie, Norman Fowler, Nicholas Ridley and Malcolm Rifkind all listed the dangers of the experiment. Community radio was not a financially viable business, and consequently it needed subsidy and support from organisations that had a vested interest in putting out propoganda, such as local authorities, trade unions and pressure groups. We would be accused of stopping political advertising by local authorities with one hand, and permitting political broadcasting by local authorities on community radios with the other. Community radio was not a matter of normal free speech.

We support the conclusion that further consideration can be given to the whole issue of community radio in the context of the Peacock Report, even though this will be controversial.


HARTLEY BOOTH