



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

25 October 1988

*MBM
RACB
20/10*

Dear Kenneth,

BROADCASTING WHITE PAPER

o Hatched
Thank you for your letter of 24 October with some clarification on points in the White Paper as they touch on educational matters.

I believe that what the BBC does to help the Open College is done as a matter of agreement between them and the College. Similarly, I think the BBC's relationship with the Open University is also governed by an agreement and I see that that is the expression used in your letter. If that is right, I think it would be a new departure for the White Paper to say, as you suggest, that we would require the BBC to continue to give assistance on the same scale as they do now. The point would be met if we were to add a sentence to this effect:

"The BBC also makes a major contribution to the operation of the Open University and the Open College and the Government does not envisage that the proposals in this Chapter [Chapter III] should lead to any diminution of this".

You suggest that there should be a requirement on operators of Channels 3, 4 and 5 to ensure that time is allowed for children's programmes and for general educational broadcasts. The ability of Channel 4 to make a contribution in both these areas should not be affected since, as you know, we are anxious to preserve its existing remit. It is true that it has recently decided to withdraw from children's programming on the basis that this is being done adequately by others. But presumably that decision could be reversed as and when it became clear that the television system as a whole was not fulfilling this need. To impose this requirement on Channels 3 and 5 would constitute a major departure in the White Paper and it would of course conflict with the conclusion reached by MISC 128 last week and recorded in the minutes.

MISC 128 did agree, however, that there should be continued provision for schools programmes by the independent television sector. The White Paper accordingly now includes this passage:

"In addition, the Government considers that schools' broadcasts should not be provided by the BBC alone. It proposes that the ITC should have a duty to plan for adequate provision of such programming by the independent television sector, and should be able to include the necessary requirements in the licences of whichever of its UHF licensees it considers appropriate."

I hope you will agree that this adequately safeguards the position of schools' programmes.

I am copying this letter to Geoffrey Howe, members of MISC 128 and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours,

Douglas,

Can we have a word about this?

