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14 December 1988

New Gareth

CJ 15/vii

COUNCIL OF EUROPE DRAFT CONVENTION ON BROADCASTING

WITH REQUEST IF REQUIRED

Thank you for your letter of 7 December about the concern expressed to DTI officials by the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers over the provisions in Article 14 of the draft Convention.

Before tabling the formula in Article 14 (which was achieved only after long and difficult negotiations) at Stockholm on 23-24 November, we consulted the relevant British interests about it, including ISBA. The general reaction was that, although they would have preferred a more general and flexible text, they conceded that they could live with the provisions of Article 14 which we had negotiated.

We ourselves would have preferred a more general text if this had been attainable. But we have had to recognise that if agreement on a Convention was to be reached at the Ministerial Conference in Stockholm, as was judged desirable, some flexibility on our part was necessary. We therefore sought to find a compromise which was likely to be acceptable to other countries while not causing undue difficulties for our own broadcasters.

Consequently, given the general acceptance by British interests of the text in Article 14, we tabled it in Stockholm to try at last to resolve the issue of advertising breaks and thereby help towards completion of the draft Convention as a whole. There was in any case no realistic prospect that better terms were to be had. The Conference itself recognised that decisions had to be taken quickly and compromises, where necessary, found.

As you know, the Conference achieved a significant breakthrough on the Convention, which now seems likely to be opened for signature early next year. If, however, difficulties should arise and the provisions in the Convention are re-opened for further negotiation, we shall take into account the points made by ISBA and, as ever, work towards a satisfactory outcome for British interests.

Yours
Catherine

MISS C J BANNISTER