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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

24 April 1989

Dear Secretary of State

BROADCASTING IN THE 1990s

Thank you for your letter of 17 April recording your views on schools', children's and educational broadcasting. As you say, a number of responses to the Broadcasting White Paper have commented on these aspects, and I quite understand their relevance to your own concerns.

On schools' programming we have as you recognise, proposed that the Independent Television Commission should have a duty to plan for adequate provision of such programming by the independent television sector. The White Paper also proposes that Channel 4 should be required to devote a suitable proportion of its air-time to educational programming in a broad sense. MISC 128 is to consider today the future constitution and funding of Channel 4 and will, I am sure, bear in mind that your interests lead you to prefer Option 2 in the White Paper.

An earlier meeting of MISC 128 on 20 October 1988 decided that the White Paper should not propose a separate safeguard for children's programmes on Channels 3 and 5. The Group took the view then that in an environment where channels and choice were multiplying the programming obligations on the independent terrestrial channels need not be as extensive as at present.

Among other things the Group will need to consider outstanding issues, in the light of the consultative process, on competitive tender and the quality threshold. Any requirement to provide children's programming would need to form part of the quality threshold and your proposal will thus fall naturally with that part of our discussion.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of MISC 128, Tom King, Malcolm Rifkind and Peter Walker, and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Bannister

(Approved by the Home Secretary and signed in his absence)

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker, MP
Department of Education and Science

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Broadcasting Policy.