



File No

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

19 June 1989

D. - [unclear]

BBC NIGHT HOURS

The Prime Minister is grateful for the Home Secretary's minute of 14 June. She would like to add this issue to the agenda for the next meeting of MISC 128 on 21 June.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the members of MISC 128 and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

[Handwritten signature]

Paul Gray

Miss Catherine Bannister,
Home Office.

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PRIME MINISTER

MONITORING THE 25% INITIATIVE

In his minute of 6 April, David Young put forward proposals for monitoring the terms of contracts between the broadcasters and independent producers. The purpose of this was to complement the Home Office's monitoring of the volume of independent production commissions.

2. David indicated that the BBC (though not the IBA) had made it clear that they would not voluntarily supply details of contracts. Following consultation with the Director General of Fair Trading, he proposed that the latter should monitor the volume of independent commissions by using the quarterly returns the broadcasters send to the Home Office; hold quarterly meetings with IASC (Independent Access Steering Committee) to discuss both general and specific cases; and report every six months to the Trade and Industry Secretary.

3. Your Private Secretary's letter of 24 April expressed concern about difficulties in assessing the BBC's progress and the Corporation's unwillingness to provide detailed information voluntarily; and suggested that the Broadcasting Bill should require the BBC each year to satisfy OFT that 25% of programme production was coming from independent producers.

4. Following this, my officials have had discussions with the BBC about the terms on which information might be released. The BBC are prepared to make details of individual

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contracts available on a commercially confidential basis to OFT, accepting this as necessary for them to carry out monitoring of the 25% independent production initiative.

5. In view of this I see no need to legislate. The BBC are co-operating with the Home Office in the supply of information about the volume of independent commissions, and they have confirmed that they are prepared to co-operate with OFT by supplying details of contracts. I would therefore support the arrangements proposed by David Young in his minute of 6 April, with the additional comment that it would also be open to OFT to approach the BBC and IBA for further information about individual cases as necessary to satisfy themselves about the terms of contracts.

A copy of this minute goes to other colleagues on MISC 128 and to Sir Robin Butler.

David Young

19 JUNE 1989

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