



cc Paul
Bennett

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FROM: THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY
THE RIGHT HON. KENNETH BAKER MP

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DOUGLAS HURD, M.P.

BROADCASTING BILL: REQUIREMENT FOR POLITICAL MESSAGES

Follow up

You copied me your minute of 28th July to the Prime Minister about the requirements for political messages you propose to include in your Broadcasting Bill. I would like to make a number of points:

2. The position on Ministerial broadcasts is quite clear but you make no reference to any right of reply from the Opposition.

3. I assume from your reference to Party Election Broadcasts that this relates to both General Elections and European Elections, but I would be grateful if you could confirm whether this would also extend to local Government Elections? From your paragraph five, I see that the number and timing of Election Broadcasts would be left to informal agreement. I presume that any agreement the parties come to will be with all of the franchisees? As you will be aware, there is a long history of disagreement, although in the past it has been possible to accommodate everyone. Do you envisage that different licencees could have different broadcasting times? Could they switch the order that they came in? Or differ as to the amount for the minority Parties? Would you also expect the balance about a particular constituency to continue?

4. If there is no obligation to show Party Political Broadcasts, but a statutory provision for the other messages, it is highly likely that PPBs would disappear. For example, if Yorkshire Television decided not to take PPBs, then others would be likely to follow. This therefore raises the real possibility of PPBs disappearing from the screen. Is this a good thing? I also have my doubts about any negotiations which are conducted on an entirely voluntary basis reaching agreement. There could be difficulties, particularly with the Greens, who have not historically been party to any negotiations.

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5. Clearly, there is an advantage for us to have Party Political Broadcasts, though less so when we are in Government, but I feel that unless there is a statutory obligation, they will disappear.

6. I also have grave reservations about your point in paragraph four of your minute on maintaining a balance across a range of similar programmes. In many cases the balance cannot be redressed within an acceptable timeframe, i.e. Neil Kinnock on Wogan immediately before the European Elections. I really do believe that we should seek balance within individual programmes.

7. I am copying this minute, as yours, to the Prime Minister, Members of MISC 128, Geoffery Howe and David Waddington.

K.G.

3, August, 1989

Broadcasting : Policy Pt 9 .