



# CAMPAIGN for INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING

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Formerly-National Commercial Radio Movement

The Campaign for the Independent Broadcasting has amended some aspects of the proposals made in July and October 1970, on the establishment of independent commercial radio.

The amendments concern the frequency structure used in broadcasting on a small regional scale. We re-affirm our view partially substantiated by an independent survey \* that the introduction of sufficiently large service areas is essential to the development of widely varying entertainment programmes and their consequent reception and acceptance by the public. Small regional broadcasting, provided that the overlapping of reception areas is encouraged, is the ideal unit to allow generic audience specialisation to develop. Generic (streamed) programming allows each station to build a definable character. Successful commercial broadcasting in many countries has now evolved to this principle. Mixed programming as adopted by B.B.C. local radio works well as public service broadcasting where the audience level can fluctuate widely as differing programmes are transmitted without affecting station revenue. It would be folly to pretend that commercial radio could maintain itself on this basis, except in the densely populated areas. This is the main reason why we are proposing that in order to achieve a healthy commercial radio system it is necessary to give potential operators the option of really local radio in city centres or small regional units in the surrounding countryside.

Our earlier proposals on the structure of regional broadcasting called for a coverage of 50-100 miles using V.H.F. alone by day and night. Further studies, however, reveal that in order to publicise new programming to "wet the public's taste" it is necessary to allow daytime medium wave support to back up the regional V.H.F. transmissions. We are therefore proposing an inner relatively low powered medium wave service area carrying the regional programme and serving an area of around 25-30 miles by day within the overall V.H.F. region of 50-100 miles. This is practical using medium wave transmitters of the order of 2 k.w. There are many medium wave frequencies already allocated to other countries which the Ministry could register with the International Frequency Registration Board for daytime use. (The following is a brief selection of possible frequencies: 189m., 190m., 196m., 197m., 200m., 202m., 203m., 207m., 210m., 212m., 217m., 219m., 215m., - North of England - ) Low powered daytime medium wave support could also be extended to the B.B.C. local, or more correctly termed area stations. We believe that if the B.B.C. can arrange its financial resources to support local radio then it should be allowed to continue in this field.

The V.H.F. Band is the only frequency range that has room for new services by day and night, offering high quality in primary areas and the possibility of stereo. The massive expansion of stereo broadcasting in America has retained radio as a strong medium in the age of television. The high frequency section of the V.H.F. Band which has International allocation for domestic broadcasting

is currently being used by Police and civil services. It is highly desirable to remove these services from the point of security alone. With regard to frequencies, there is room for considerable expansion of services, given the active goodwill of the Ministry, particularly with respect to moving civil services and restoring the V.H.F. Band to its full capability for domestic broadcasting. We suggest that a portion of the fee which companies could pay to the Broadcasting Council for a licenced frequency, should be ear-marked towards clearing the Band of civil services.

It has been suggested that the Government favours a single news organisation to broadcast news bulletins via commercial radio stations. We are opposed to this. Independent stations should be able to select their news from existing sources just as newspapers do. If however, the Government feels it essential to have a central news service, which we would very much regret, it should be a non-broadcasting organisation disseminating news by wire as a news service which can be selectively used by stations editorial staff at will.

We are completely opposed to the policy apparently favoured by the Minister, of placing conditions upon commercial radio to cater for minorities and to serve social needs of the community. B.B.C. "local" radio is successfully doing this job and should be allowed to continue at least within the boundaries of their present "local" structure. Any attempts to replace B.B.C. radio with a system of enforced "public service" commercial radio, would be a failure and a loss to the public. As would public service conditions applied to commercial radio alongside the B.B.C. It is our belief that there is a fundamental difference in the types of programming which can be successfully achieved by commercial and B.B.C. radio, to artificially make the two systems more alike, would in effect very much reduce the potential choice which could be available to the public. We say this from the standpoint of listeners having no vested interests. We are not advocating a "licence to print money", far from it, but rather that radio in general and commercial broadcasting in particular should be allowed to develop within the two guidelines of economic viability and frequency availability.

\* "Sound Broadcasting in Britain and the prospects for Commercial Radio".  
Marketing Economics Limited.

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Campaign for Independent Broadcasting.

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