

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Secretary of State's Office

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RESTRICTED - POLICY

To Andrew Ramsay cc Patricia Hewitt
From [REDACTED] Andrew McIntosh
Chris Woolard
File Ref [REDACTED] Bill Bush
Date 26 June 2003 [REDACTED]

Meeting with Lord Puttnam, 26 June

The Secretary of State met David Puttnam this morning to take stock of his position on the Communications Bill.

Clause 3 – OFCOM's General Duties

1. The Secretary of State asked why Puttnam had forced a vote on Monday on the General Duties, when he had previously intimated he would accept our proposal to focus a primary citizenship duty on the Content Board.
2. He replied that he had not had enough time with Andrew McIntosh to 'rehearse'. He had left messages with Ed Richards, of OFCOM, and was surprised that these had not been passed on to Andrew. He also said he had been convinced at the last minute by a Lib Dem argument that the Content Board amendment was not adequate because Richard Hooper could not be trusted to put the interests of citizens above those of the main OFCOM Board.
3. He said he would not now move to any compromise position. He feels there is a very broad coalition ranged in his favour. The Secretary of State said we would introduce an amendment along the lines Andrew McIntosh had described in the Lords.

Media Ownership

4. Andrew McIntosh repeated that at Report stage we would signal our concern about plurality in general and our intention to consider Puttnam's plurality test amendment. Puttnam said that would not be enough to satisfy him. He was clear that only the exact text of his amendment (as scrutinised by Lord Grabiner) would work for him. He also circulated a new, additional amendment that would prevent any removal of ownership rules relating to Channel 5 until a plurality test had come into being.

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5. The Secretary of State asked for clarification that if we introduced a plurality test he would withdraw his opposition to our proposals on Channel 5 ownership. He agreed that if we can reach a common position on plurality he will not push the Channel 5 amendment – he would take his name off it and would encourage Lord McNally and Lord Crickhowell to do the same. He will repeat this offer, making clear its conditional nature, at Report.
6. On foreign ownership, he said he would support the Government. He will take his name off the amendment, and will stand up and oppose those who argue for reciprocity.

Other issues

7. Puttnam said he retained concerns about advertising agencies owning broadcasting licences. He also said he would continue to lobby for a 'substantial' rather than a 'suitable' amount of regional programming on ITV. Andrew McIntosh said we would look at both issues.

Handling Labour Peers

8. David Puttnam will write to those Peers who supported him, against the Government, on the General Duties, to put forward a conciliatory message on plurality. Bill is going to assist him with the drafting of this letter.



Private Secretary