Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)



# An end to zombie politics 6: Broadcasting [1]

Written by **Miles Saltiel** [2] | Friday 17 May 2013

The government needs revenues and holds too many assets on its books. In future blogs, I will return to its holdings in finance and healthcare. For the time being, let?s look at its involvement in media, specifically broadcasting.

Is it so very wrong to confess that the BBC has been getting on my nerves since the era of the ?Boat that Rocked?? Indeed, contrary to Richard Curtis? fairy-tale, it was no bewhiskered Tory, but the sainted Beeb which connived with the Musician?s Union and that old crook Harold Wilson to suppress the pirate radio stations, replacing them with the anodyne Radio 1.

The rationale for the BBC arose when spectrum was scarce?or more accurately monopolised by the military. But this hasn?t been the case for a generation. The public service obligation is unnecessary now that bandwidth is de facto unlimited ? after all, the UK doesn?t have it for the press (despite the impact of Leveson). So why carry on with a poll tax on every household for a frankly undistinguished broadcasting service? Admittedly it keeps the chattering classes quiet-ish but at the price of giving them a platform and exposing the rest of us to decades of second-rate programming. Meanwhile its news values distort national debate, though to be fair the tendency of a profession to look at things from its own perspective means journalists are bound to (and should) be inclined to have at the powers-that-be, which today could engender a left-ish perspective.

Regardless, the BBC can readily be broken up into its constituent parts: entertainment, catalogue and commercial, content generation, news, radio, minorities, regional and so on. My figures show [3] it would raise some £5.4bn, if sold in the market, or (where there is no market value) disposed of to other bodies like charities, universities and other NGOs, as well as local authorities. I estimate that Channel Four is worth another £1.6bn for a total of £7bn. Better than a kick in the teeth, and letting the public off the cost of the TV licence, so liberating the estimated 4,500 civil servants concerned for more gainful employment.

blog comments powered by Disqus [5]

**Source URL:** http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/media-culture/an-end-to-zombie-politics-6-broadcasting

**Links:**
[1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/media-culture/an-end-to-zombie-politics-6-broadcasting
[2] http://www.adamsmith.org/authors/miles-saltiel
[3] http://i.imgur.com/m340UOD.png
[4] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[5] http://disqus.com