

Broadcasting and censorship

From Mr Woodrow Wyatt

Sir, How far should the Independent Broadcasting Authority be allowed to censor outside contributors? On Tuesday night (November 13) an Anglia Television film about Communists and militants in the unions, with the devising of which I was associated, was shown on the commercial network.

Before the Independent Broadcasting Authority would allow it to be shown they demanded the deletion of a number of things that I had said, including the whole of my conclusion. In that I had remarked

"So long as Britain stays a democracy, the Communists can never win a parliamentary election. But let them capture the unions, by foul means or fair, and they capture the Labour party. It's OK to be a Communist and support Communist policies if you know what you are doing. The safest way to stop it happening by accident in the unions is by having a postal vote which is sent to everybody's home and returned to a body like the Electoral Reform Society to count. Once union officials count their own votes, there's always a danger of a fiddle. It's so important to the country that the leaders of unions should be properly elected by the broad mass of their members that the Government should pay for these postal votes and make them compulsory."

I cannot understand by what criterion I was not allowed to say this or any part of it. It was essential to the democratic reasoning of the programme. Nor do I understand why I was not allowed to say "Every sensible person knows that Communist and extremist leaders of a union don't represent what ordinary members feel about life and politics". Other pieces of censorship were equally baffling.

Yet every day commentators on the BBC and commercial broadcasting air far more controversial views even though many are members of the staff and not outside contributors. Was what I wanted to say thought unacceptable to the ultra-Left "new communicators", and their willing or reluctant allies, who seem to control so much of broadcasting today?

Yours faithfully,
WOODROW WYATT,
19 Cavendish Avenue, NW8.
November 13.

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