

OPEN EYE ON SOCIETY

Note of a discussion on Friday 27 June 1986

PRESENT: G.S.
H.Tel.S.
H.Tel.Features
The Secretary and H.Inf.S.
Brian Barr

The idea had been David Martin's : a series of programmes making the public aware of private truths, secret practices, which affected their lives. He put the proposition to Duncan Campbell, who later agreed that he could help prepare the programmes. C.BBC-2 accepted the idea "with alacrity" at the Offers stage. Each programme was planned to be of 30 minutes duration with a 9.30pm Friday transmission.

Not relevant
Not relevant



continued .../...

Released by the BBC under
the Freedom of Information Act 2000

6 The Spy in the sky

Brian Barr said this dealt with a sensitive issue - Britain's first signals intelligence satellite. The Government had been asked a Parliamentary question about this satellite and had lied about its nature (although immediately obvious to the USSR). There was nothing about it on the record and it had not been referred to the Parliamentary Accounts Committee. (CS noted that British Aerospace was suing the BBC for £52m following the collapse of DBS).

Any project costing more than £100m had to go before this Committee. Since this satellite cost £400m, there was no doubt it should have been referred. CS said great care - and caution - had to be exercised. They should ensure a proper representation of all points of view in the programme. The programme had to be "cleaner than clean", since Duncan Campbell was perceived as being left-wing. The production team should be exceptionally sure-footed. Everything should be checked and double-checked with continuous referral. At some later stage, the way the programme was prepared might have to be placed on the public record.

H.Tel.S. noted that authority focussed on the incumbent government. An anti-authority stance could be seen as anti-government. David Martin agreed that right-wing attitudes be included in the programmes to balance those of Duncan Campbell.

CS stressed that the production team should diligently seek to ensure fairness throughout.

CS reiterated that the logging of calls and noting of conversations be done carefully for every programme. It had to be demonstrated that at every stage, the procedures were satisfactory. Brian Barr said that each letter was written in the knowledge that it could be made public.

David Martin asked if a precis log on selected items would be acceptable.

CS understood the difficulties created by such detailed recording of discussions. Judgement had to be exercised but, if in doubt, they should err on the side of verbosity. The log should be signed and typed each day. It should, however, not impede the programme making process.