

File - Communications Bill 15/11/03
Tate

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 April 2003 13:29
To: [REDACTED]
BILL: [REDACTED] BUSH
Cc: [REDACTED] RAMSAY ANDREW; [REDACTED]
Sarah Hunter (E-mail) [REDACTED]
Subject: Communications Bill meeting

All

The main points from today's meeting:

Channel 5 ownership

Lord Puttnam has support from an estimated 63 Labour, Conservative and cross-bench Peers, plus the Lib Dems.

If the Conservative front bench support us we will win any vote.

Tessa Blackstone will talk to Puttnam and try to persuade him not to press a vote in Committee [Action: David McLaren]

Tessa Jowell will see him a couple of times between now and Report. [Me]

There are possible compromises involving an early OFCOM review of the 20% rule, but we will not look at these unless we absolutely have to.

In the meantime, we should use Lords Committee to make positive noises about firm regulation on cross-promotion and bundling of rights [REDACTED]

ITN ownership

A submission is with Kim Howells on its way to Tessa Jowell [REDACTED] has Kim seen this yet?
A concession could be that

(a) the different aspects of the NNP system (the auction arrangement, the ownership rules and the regulation of quality/funding) should be separated out so that they can be repealed/kept independently.
(b) the ownership limits should be the focus of an early OFCOM review

Tessa Jowell discussed these ideas with OFCOM yesterday and is broadly supportive.

No Government amendment will be made in Committee. Instead, we will listen to the debate and signal we are prepared to look at the opposition's arguments.

Press regulation

1. There will be pressure from the industry to remove OFCOM from the newspaper merger regime entirely. We will resist. There shouldn't be a problem with this in the Lords.
2. The PCC will be an issue. The Select Committee may want to publish their report on this at a difficult point for the Bill [I will find out when]. Baroness Jay has said she will put down a 'Clive Soley'

amendment and there will be considerable support for it.

Tessa Jowell thinks that a vote on the PCC would send a useful signal to the industry that they need to reform. If we were to lose in the Lords, we will stand firm in the Commons, but may have to negotiate a reform settlement with the PCC.

RSA

Sky continue to lobby. No one else is much interested and a defeat is unlikely. In any case, the concessions that Sky are asking for are not disastrous.

Tessa Jowell and Tessa Blackstone asked for a briefing note [REDACTED]

BBC and NAO

We have an escape route. The BBC have promised to write soon and Ministers would like further advice at that point [REDACTED]

Religious ownership

Lord McIntosh is to meet the Bishop of Manchester to explain our position.

Access for those with sensory impairments

There is scope for action outside the specific provisions on the Bill. David Currie yesterday agreed that OFCOM should take a leading role.

Localness of local radio (clause 307)

A submission is on its way to Ministers [REDACTED]

The CRCA will have an amendment put down at Committee that may be close to a solution.
As with ITN, we should give assurances to consider the arguments.

Next meeting

Unless there is an urgent need for an earlier meeting, the next meeting will be between Committee and Report stages. The time I have booked is 12 June (at 11.30), which looks about right. Could the Bill team please let me know if we need to change this.