Britain needs strong TV industry

Comedy writer Armando Iannucci has called for an industry-wide defence of the BBC and British programme-makers. *"The Thick of It"* creator made his remarks in the annual MacTaggart Lecture at the Edinburgh TV Festival.

"It's more important than ever that we have more strong, popular channels... that act as beacons, drawing audiences to the best content," he said. Speaking earlier, Culture Secretary John Whittingdale rejected suggestions that he wanted to dismantle the BBC.

'Champion supporters'

Iannucci co-wrote *"I'm Alan Partridge"*, wrote the movie *"In the Loop"* and created and wrote the hit *"HBO"* and *"Sky Atlantic show Veep"*. He delivered the 40th annual MacTaggart Lecture, which has previously been given by Oscar winner Kevin Spacey, former BBC director general Greg Dyke, Jeremy Paxman and Rupert Murdoch. Iannucci said: "Faced with a global audience, British television needs its champion supporters."

He continued his praise for British programming by saying the global success of American TV shows had come about because they were emulating British television. "The best US shows are modelling themselves on what used to make British TV so world-beating," he said. "US prime-time schedules are now littered with those quirky formats from the UK - the *"Who Do You Think You Are"* and the variants on *"Strictly Come Dancing"* - as well as the single-camera non-audience sitcom, which we brought into the mainstream first. We have changed international viewing for the better."

With the renewal of the BBC's royal charter approaching, Iannucci also praised the corporation. He said: "If public service broadcasting - one of the best things we've ever done creatively as a country - if it was a car industry, our ministers would be out championing it overseas, trying to win contracts, boasting of the British jobs that would bring." In July, the government issued a green paper setting out issues that will be explored during negotiations over the future of the BBC, including the broadcaster's size, its funding and governance.

Primarily Mr Whittingdale wanted to appoint a panel of five people, but finally he invited two more people to advise on the channel renewal, namely former Channel 4 boss Dawn Airey and journalism professor Stewart Purvis, a former editor-in-chief of ITN. Iannucci bemoaned the lack of "creatives" involved in the discussions.

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"When the media, communications and information industries make up nearly 8% our GDP, larger than the car and oil and gas industries put together, we need to be heard, as those industries are heard. But when I see the panel of experts who've been asked by the culture secretary to take a root and branch look at the BBC, I don't see anyone who is a part of that cast and crew list. I see executives, media owners, industry gurus, all talented people - but not a single person who's made a classic and enduring television show."

'Don't be modest'

Iannucci suggested one way of easing the strain on the licence fee was "by pushing ourselves more commercially abroad".

"Use the BBC's name, one of the most recognized brands in the world," he said. "And use the reputation of British television across all networks, to capitalize financially oversees. Be more aggressive in selling our shows, through advertising, through proper international subscription channels, freeing up BBC Worldwide to be fully commercial, whatever it takes.

"Frankly, don't be icky and modest about making money, let's monetize the Jesus, Mary and Joseph(greatly) out of our programmes abroad so that money can come back, take some pressure off the licence fee at home and be invested in even more ambitious quality shows, that can only add to our value."

Mr Whittingdale, who was interviewed by ITV News' Alastair Stewart at the festival, said he wanted an open debate about whether the corporation should do everything it has done in the past. He said he had a slight sense that people who rushed to defend the BBC were "trying to have an argument that's never been started".

"Whatever my view is, I don't determine what programmes the BBC should show," he added. "That's the job of the BBC." Mr Whittingdale said any speculation that the Conservative Party had always wanted to change the BBC due to issues such as its editorial line was "absolute nonsense".

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Questions 27-31

Do the following statements agree with the information in the IELTS reading text?

In boxes **27–31** on your answer sheet, write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

27. Armando Iannucci expressed a need of having more popular channels.

28. John Whittingdale wanted to dismantle the BBC.

29. Iannucci delivered the 30th annual MacTaggart Lecture.

30. Ianucci believes that British television has contributed to the success of American TV-shows.

31. There have been negotiations over the future of the BBC in July.

Questions 32–35

Choose the correct letter, **A, B, C** or **D.**

Write the correct letter in boxes **32-35** on your answer sheet.

32. Ianucci praised everything EXCEPT

- **A** US shows
- **B** British shows
- **C** Corporation
- **D** British programming

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33. To advise on the charter renewal Mr Whittingdale appointed a panel of

- **A** five people
- **B** two people
- **C** seven people
- **D** four people

34. Who of these people was NOT invited to the discussion concerning BBC renewal?

- **A** Armando Iannucci
- **B** Dawn Airey
- **C** John Whittingdale
- **D** Stewart Purvis

35. There panel of experts lacks:

- **A** media owners
- **B** people who make enduring TV-shows
- **C** gurus of Television industry
- **D** top executives

Questions 36–40

Complete the summary below.

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Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes **37–40** on your answer sheet.

Easing the strain on the licence fees

Iannucci recommended increasing BBC's profit by pushing ourselves more **36.** _____ . He suggests being more aggressive in selling British shows, through advertising and proper international **37.** _____ . Also, he invokes producers to stop being **38.** _____ and modest about making money and invest into even **39.** _____ quality shows. However, Mr.Whittingdale denied any **40.** _____ that the Conservative Party had always wanted to change the BBC because of its editorial line.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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