

Privatise the BBC



In this essential polemic, leading economist Tim Congdon argues that the BBC must be privatised if it is to be a global competitor in the 21st century, and that the licence fee is not just unpopular - its obsolete. Advances in technology - smartphones, streaming video - have destroyed the licence fees original, valid justification. The method of collection is expensive and inefficient. The BBC is out of touch with popular opinion and its news coverage is far from impartial. And even if we accept state-subsidised broadcasting, why should the money be raised by a regressive tax rather than subscriptions? Tim Congdon CBE has written on economics for Standpoint since 2008. In 1989 he founded the economic research company Lombard Street Research and from 1992-1997 he advised the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a member of the Treasury Panel of Independent Forecasters (the so-called wise men). His other books include Money in a Free Society (Encounter, 2011). Tim Congdon offers a big picture version of the debate over the BBC and how to fund it. Looking back 30 years and more on the transforming developments in broadcasting, and looking forward almost as far into the age of content reaching consumers without any broadcaster intervention, he demonstrates that the BBC funding mechanism must be replaced, and its ownership radically re-shaped, if it is to survive as a meaningful player, let alone realise its still immense potential. His angle of attack is unusual: his analysis very hard to refute. David Elstein

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