PRIME MINISTER

I attended the Media Backbench Committee meeting on Tuesday night, which was addressed by Duke Hussey. There were some twenty Members present and four Peers.

Duke Hussey came under attack on a number of topics from eight out of the nine people who asked questions. The topics were:

- the BBC's obsession with South Africa
- the screening of unsuitable material at 6.30pm when children watch television
- the bias of the regional services as well as the national ones.
- the use of licence payers' money to defend libel actions
- the bias, not only against South Africa, but also Ronald Reagan and the Israelis
- the very marked difference between the headline news on televison compared with that of the newspapers
- the gratuitous insults against senior Tory politicians slotted into drama and comedy plays
- the violence on the 6.00pm news in Israel which can be watched by children

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- the lack of control over television journalists
- stimulatory violence
- the fact that the BBC's solution to any problem is to spend more public money.

Hussey defended himself well, but did not satisfy many of his interrogators, who included Norman Tebbit in abrasive form.

The significant point which he made was that, during his time in Fleet Street, he found that Editors had much greater control over the output of their journalists than any Director-General of the BBC, or, he suspected, ITV, had over programme producers. He is clearly trying to change this.

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