



**BBC Information**

Cllr E Goodman  
23 Budgen Drive  
Redhill  
RH1 2QB

Our Ref 3943579

12 December 2000

Dear Cllr Goodman

Thank you for your letters of the 25 and 26 November. I will address both your concerns about *Any Questions* and *Question Time* and about censorship on the BBC.

Both of these programmes invite a range of guests to contribute and they will vary according to the topics being discussed. I disagree that only ten politicians appear on these programmes as a wide range of MPs will contribute over a period of time. However, it is true that cabinet and shadow cabinet ministers appear much more frequently, as in the case of Clare Short and Anne Widdecombe. Often there will also be a Liberal Democrat spokesperson in order to ensure a balanced discussion. Cabinet and shadow cabinet ministers are at the heart of policy making. We feel listeners are interested in their justifications and explanations as key figures within their parties.

Turning to your complaint about censorship, the BBC has guidelines on what can and cannot be included within our programmes. The following quote is taken from our Producers' Guidelines:

"Deep offence will also be caused by profane references or disrespect, whether verbal or visual, directed at deities, scriptures, holy days and rituals which are at the heart of various religions - for example, the Crucifixion, the Gospels, the Koran and the Jewish Sabbath."

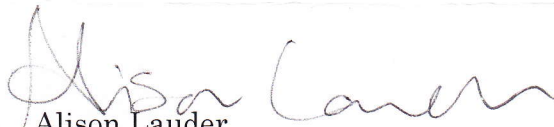
Following a sketch on *Goodness Gracious Me*, the Programme Complaints Unit received a number of complaints. Having watched a recording of the programme the Head of the PCU agreed that the sketch involving the Eucharist went beyond acceptable limits, but also defended the intentions of the programme-makers. Where comedy is breaking new ground there will be a risk of unwittingly crossing the boundaries of acceptability, and this is obviously what happened here. The immediate reaction to the programme made clear that a significant section of the audience did not take the sketch in the way the programme-makers had intended, and they responded by removing it from repeats.

Cont.....

We do not agree, that as a public service broadcaster, we are free to express views without consideration of our audience. Whilst you may not personally find scenes that make fun of religious practice offensive, many viewers do and for this reason we will always have limits on what we can contain within our programmes. For example we would not allow programmes to promote racism solely in the interests of freedom of expression. However, we do have personal view programmes that allow potentially offensive views to be aired but they are separate from our other programmes and are clearly marked as such.

Thank you again for contacting the BBC. I hope this has helped to address your concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alison Lauder".

Alison Lauder  
Editorial & Investigation Team  
BBC Information