GAZA AND JONATHAN ROSS

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Category: Observations

I've always been a great fan of the BBC. Their public service ethos and guaranteed funding mean that they can produce great TV and even greater radio. Anyone who has had to listen to the interminable adverts interspersed by music or speech that is American radio would instantly appreciate the quality of the BBC national radio.Â Whether you want half an hour of uninterupted football, political commentaries or oldies chosen by some bloke in Ipswich, the BBC can provide it.

But, if you own a TV in Britain you are obliged by law to pay the TV licence (which is what funds the BBC). That means, I have to pay for the things I dislike as much as well as the things I like. The contradictions in this were highlighted for me this morning on the Radio4 Today programme (something I am very happy to pay for). One news item was about the return of Jonathan Ross to the BBC after a suspension for obscene comments on the radio. For those who don't know him, Jonathan Ross is a chat show host who makes his living by saying things that a smutty fifteen year old boy would find funny, but which are mildly embarassing in the case of a man who is older than the President of the US. But Ross doesn't just make a living, he makes a very good living, trousering something like six million pounds from the BBC - which comes from licence payers such as myself.

Also on this morning's Today programme was an executive from the corporation defending their decision not to broadcast the Disaster's Emergency Committee's appeal for Gaza. Apparently, the most important thing that the BBC can do is to maintain their impartiality and maintain the trust of the audience. Broadcasting the phone number or web address of where you can donate to the suffering in Gaza would undermine the BBC's reputation! From where I'm sitting, the BBC has lost a large slice of my trust and looks far from impartial at least on this issue. Even the government who are generally wary of criticising a media outlet of the size and power of the BBC are weighing in on this one.

From my point of view, as a guy who pays for the BBC, I don't want my money going to Jonathan Ross, but I am more than happy to pay forÂ humanitarian appeals. I don't suppose that anyone at the BBC reads this blog or will take any notice, however. Also, I don't want to risk the impartiality of this blog, but if you do feel moved to contribute to the emergency appeal for Gaza, you can do so here.

For more on the BBC and Gaza, see Phil Groom's Blog.