[GB] ITC Publishes 1996 Performance Reviews

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The Broadcasting Act 1990 provides the basis for specific programme and other requirements for the 18 terrestrial TV licences granted by the Independent Television Commission (ITC): the 15 regional ITV licensees (Channel 3), GMTV (breakfast-time licensee), Channel 4 and Public Teletext. The ITC is charged to review annually where licensees have failed to comply with these licence conditions. To meet this obligation, the ITC has now published its 1996 Annual Performance Reviews.

Teletext received a favourable report and GMTV was congratulated on rectifying the complaints highlighted in the previous year's report. ITV and Channel 4 performed satisfactorily, but each were found to have some deficiencies in their services. ITV was criticised for narrowing the range of its programming output. The ITC is concerned about diminishing diversity in the service brought about by increased drama, entertainment and features and, by corresponding reductions in documentaries, arts and children's drama. Network provision of documentaries fell by a third year-on-year, from 1 hour per week in 1995 to 40 minutes in 1996. Arts programming fell from 33 minutes to 31 minutes and children's drama dropped from 1 hour 16 minutes to 1 hour ten minutes during the review period. This led the ITC to conclude: "The strength of ITV's continuing commitment to regular serious documentary and arts coverage, clearly set out in the licence applications, appears now to be in question." The ITC has called on ITV to rectify the situation this year. However, as a network, ITV was praised for significantly reducing the amount of violence in early evening programming; overall violence on ITV declined to less than 1% of programme time. A number of faults were also found in Channel 4's programming. The proportion of repeats increased in peak time and by 1% overall. The ITC believes that a significant reduction in the level of repeats should be priority now that additional funds are available. It also called for an increase in programmes reflecting the regional diversity of Britain. 78% of 1996 programming was commissioned from London-based producers.

1996 Performance Reviews. London: ITC, 22 April 1997

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