

Please reply to: "Walker House" Bond Street Wakefield
West Yorkshire WF1 2QP
Tele. No. (01924) 379443 Fax No. (01924) 290289

Our ref: RMW/AGM

14 August 1997

The Rt Hon Chris Smith MP
Department of Culture, Media & Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
LONDON
SW1Y 5DH

**CONSULTATION ON EVENTS LISTED UNDER PART IV OF THE
BROADCASTING ACT 1996**

Thank you for your recent correspondence inviting my views as Chairman of the RFL on the above matter. You will know, I am sure, that in my capacity as the then Chairman of the GB Sports Council I conceived the notion of the Code of Conduct for major spectator sports and broadcasts which was supported both in the House of Commons and the House of Lords and led, in due course, to the setting up of a Monitoring Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Alexander. The whole area of the control of broadcasting and sport is extremely complex and as a Chairman of a major spectator sport who benefits from having a contract with B Sky B, we would inevitably react badly to any attempt to limit our rights to negotiate the best deal for our sport. You will understand, I am sure, that once an event is proscribed it limits the sports ability to negotiate the full market value for the broadcasting rights. In those circumstances we are, in principle, against the extension of the list of events which must be retained exclusively for terrestrial television.

Under the Code of Conduct, I secured agreement with the major spectator sports that, in return for having the unfettered rights to negotiate the best deal for themselves with a

/broadcaster

- 2 -

14 August 1997

The Rt Hon Chris Smith MP

broadcaster, a levy from the fee received should be directed into the grassroots of their particular sport and it is this that Lord Alexander's Committee is to monitor. We shall see in the next few years Channel 5 and Cable Television becoming more active in seeking to obtain exclusive rights to major sporting events. We will see the inevitable growth of "pay per view" together with the threat from some Sports Governing Bodies to move off-shore if their rights are to be restricted.

To conclude, therefore, I believe the list of events under the 1996 Broadcasting Act should not be extended but further encouragement should be given to the holders of exclusive broadcasting rights to agree (at a fair commercial rate) to make pictures available either as a delayed transmission or a highlights package to other broadcasters.



SIR RODNEY WALKER
CHAIRMAN