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Sent: Monday, 6 August 2001 11:35 AM
To: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au
Subject: ABC enquiry

I am a dedicated ABC watcher, VERY rarely also watching SBS. However, I no longer have any confidence whatsoever in the the present Board and MD of the ABC. They should resign or be dismissed immediately.

I call on this Senate Inquiry to recommend that the Parliament introduce a system which ensures members of the ABC Board are appointed on the basis of MERIT and commitment to independent and comprehensive national public broadcasting, not allegiance to the government of the day. This seems to be the current situation for some bizarre reason.

Mr McDonald publicly promoted Prime Minister Howard prior to the last election. THIS WAS ENTIRELY INNAPPROPRIATE for the head of a major institution, meant to be independent of government. It is even more astounding, given the Government cut the ABC's budget by 12%.

This ABC Board has rarely protested at the government's ferocious cuts to the ABC, nor challenged the Government's regular attacks on the broadcaster's integrity and independence.

The ABC Board has overseen: loss of talented staff, decline in quality local production, increased 'repeats', the news and current affairs budget cut and loss of important programs such as Quantum and Media Watch and television's only dedicated book program.

The ABC's focus has been diverted from producing quality programs to raising funds from outside commercial sources in ways which risk the ABC's independence. There are even plans for user-pay services."

I would endorse all of that, as I think would most on this list. How can the ABC we've all grown up with maintain its traditional independence and standard of professional excellence when it is obvious that a majority of members of the board is philosophically opposed to the whole philosophy of public broadcasting.

If this enquiry is really going to do anything and not just submit a report that will be shelved, then some radical action needs to happen to restore the ABC to some truly independant public status that we can all feel proud of again.

Olwen Steel