

DT017 - BBC Director General as a corporation

The Warden of Merton says the question of appointing John Birt's company to the office of Director-General of the BBC is a 'non-issue'. The reality is that because of this cosy arrangement the BBC did not have a flesh-and-blood person as the head of its staff, but a legal fiction with limited liability. I do not consider this a non-issue.

It could have been worse. The original BBC charter, granted in 1926, specified that the staff should be headed by a flesh-and-blood person called 'the Director-General'. Disobedience to this would have been a dire matter. However when the charter was entirely reissued in 1963 this requirement was dropped: I wonder why. Incidentally, it took me several hours scrabbling in the basement of the Radcliffe Camera to unearth this information. Next time, can we have the BBC constitution laid down by Act of Parliament, as with ITV?