• Attacked BBC in three ways: (gave direct influence over BBC)
  • direct attacks on its journalism
  • placement of Conservative-sympathetic chairmen
  • policy changes
• Ban of Irish extremists on ITV and BBC between 1988-1994 – words of Irish political representatives in Republican and Loyalist groups had to be read by actors
• Broadcasting Acts of 1990 & 1996 – deregulatory; ITV upper hand as they satisfied regulatory body for commitment to public service ethos (“cash and competition, not the quality of public provision, had become the decisive factors”) – no budget recommendations therefore quality of journalism slipped
• John Birt
  • produced Weekend World (1972-1988); Head of Current Affairs and London Weekend Television
  • wanted intellectual preparation of journalism – used Brian Walden as presenter to do this (“hard hitting and cerebral”)
  • definition of his philosophy on television journalism: “There is a bias in television journalism, but it is not a bias against any particular party or point of view – it is a bias against understanding.” (Times, 28 February 1975)
  • made Deputy Director General in 1987; Director General 1992 - 2000 – ‘populist’ approach to attract people not normally interested in politics
  • LESS STORIES, MORE PERSEPCTIVE
  • Born (2005:57): “claims that main emphasis of John Birt in coordinating the BBC’s news and current affairs departments from 1987 was ‘the need to give news stories a methodically researched, analytical context in order to provide more journalistic depth and superior understanding’
  • Criticised for a style of reporting which was more centrally managed and overtly informative while trying to fully explain Andrew Marr – “breaking new ground in providing prithy and witty accounts of the day in Westminster with at least as much emphasis on coining an entertaining phrase as providing informational content”
• 2002 – digital television initiative “well orchestrated and well timed move into digital provision”; website launched and very popular
• More channels such as BBC News 24, BBC Online and BBC Worldwide (high level of financial income)
• 2003 – Gilligan Affair – claimed by Hutton that BBC should reconsider its journalistic practises; The Neil Review (2004:6) “listed five traditional principles which should underpin the corporation’s journalism”
  • Truth and accuracy
  • Serving the public interest
  • Impartiality and diversity of opinion
  • Independence
  • Accountability
• Also recommended were warnings on use of anonymous sources, retention of notes pertaining to interviews, and stated BBC journalists should be careful when expressing opinions on current affairs for either newspapers or magazines in case they compromise the BBC’s impartiality
• Channel 4 News 1982