



Broadcast on ITV: ITV Sport (main picture) *The Bill* (left), *News at Ten* and (below) *The Alan Titchmarsh Show*.

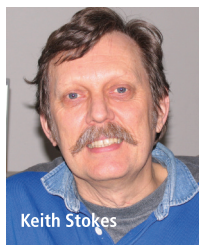
nothing but "repeats from the archives and importing material from America".

ITV wants more freedom to make money from product placement and the removal of the content rights renewal mechanism which controls ITV's negotiations with advertisers in time for the 2010 airtime sales negotiations in November. This mechanism was put in place to protect advertisers in exchange for allowing the ITV companies to merge.

ITV was fined £220,000 by Ofcom for failing to meet its out of London programme production quota for ITV1 in 2006 and 2007. Ofcom said that while the ITV1 network met the 50% volume quota it failed on expenditure. The proportion of spend on productions sourced outside London, set by Ofcom at a minimum of 50%, was 45.6% in 2006 and 44.3% in 2007.

ITV said there were "very real difficulties in complying with the quota because of the lack of available production talent, facilities and producers outside London" – particularly for drama and entertainment programmes. Considering what ITV has done to its regional production base, it is staggering that they dared use that as an excuse.

So the picture, from the viewpoint of the weary staff and freelancers who have survived with their jobs so far, looks grim, and there is widespread disgust at how ITV has been brought to this low point.



Keith Stokes

Martin Clarke points out that in 2002 ITV staff were given share options for 1500 shares at the supposedly preferential rate of £2.10. "The idea was that the stock market would like the merger of the ITV companies so much that the share price would rise above this and people would make a profit. The ITV share price this morning was 26.5p."

#### LOST ITS WAY

It's clear to many that ITV appears to have lost its way. "They wanted to be a player in the global marketplace and in doing so they threw away their unique selling point – their regional base," says Clarke. "In terms of pounds of programme budget per viewer, regional programmes worked out better than network programmes."

"Delusions of grandeur – the notion that by combining your resources you'll get a better return for your business – has on the whole been a fallacy. In trying to get a bigger slice of the international marketplace they've thrown away their regional marketplace."

Keith Stokes of Anglia

Television who is BECTU's new chair of the Independent Broadcasting Division, taking over from Martin Clarke, agrees: "Whatever spin they put on it, it cannot be anything other than a diminished service for the viewers, and unfortunately they are the last people to be considered by both Ofcom and ITV. With the BBC under so much pressure as well, who's going to cater for those regional viewers?"

"The fact is that on any given night the size of the audience for *Anglia News* is greater than the entire audience for Sky News."

"ITV don't know who they're catering for anymore. Its regionality was the absolute strength of ITV. If you throw it away it will be very difficult to get it back."

BECTU's independent broadcasting supervisory official David Beevers added: "Grade is only interested in delivering profit to his shareholders rather than quality television to an audience which has been loyal to ITV over many years."

"If Grade does not want to run ITV as a PSB then he should sell the business to someone who does and sell it quickly before any more damage is done under his stewardship." ●

