

Blog: Too reasonable for television?

Posted on Monday 7th March 2011

By: [Catherine Staite \(/staff/profiles/government-society/staite-catherine.aspx\)](#) (Director of Organisational Development)

Imagine my excitement when INLOGOV was approached by researchers for a television programme about selling public assets. The format was to be a panel debate.

The researcher asked me a number of questions. Was I in favour of selling off the NEC, the motorway system, Chequers, Stonehenge? The answer to each questions was - inevitably - 'it depends'. It depends on the return on each asset, its part in our heritage, its sale-ability and the consequences of sale, both intended and unintended. My guiding principle is 'how can you maximise pubic value?' Public value cannot always be measured in money.

Would I be available on Monday night? Yes. Could I get to the studios? Yes. Had I been on television before? Yes. So far so good. I got quite excited! Suddenly I was thinking did I have time to get my hair done? What should I wear to project the right balance of academic rigour and personal style? I've seen some very ill-advised outfits on television recently and didn't want to distract viewers from my powerful arguments by wearing an unsuitable frock. Having settled these major issues I began to toy with the idea of adding 'broadcaster' to my CV. I practiced an air of bored indifference. 'Those television people on the phone again - how tiresome'.

I needn't have worried. The nice researcher rang back on Sunday to say that they wouldn't be using me. She'd really enjoyed talking to me and had put my name forward as a potential panelist for the debate but I was rejected for being too reasonable. I suspect I'm also too polite but she was too kind to say so. Too reasonable - talk about being damned by faint praise. Should I perhaps cultivate rudeness and narrow mindedness and thereby secure myself a lucrative future as a broadcaster? Perhaps not.

But then I reflected that it was perhaps a compliment. Before qualifying for the 'too reasonable' label one must get into the habit of applying the intellect to complex and conflicting ideas before finding the right answer or even that there isn't a single right answer. A little of that would go a long way in political discourse. How refreshing if every ministerial statement was subjected to a 'reasonableness test' before publication. Perhaps that would be dull but I don't think so. I think being subjected to a constant barrage unreasonableness is more dull - especially when the bluster is a cloak for untruths like 'frontline services can be protected from cuts if only local authorities would share services, cut senior pay and streamline the back office'. That's neither true nor reasonable.

If at any time the demand for reasonableness in public debate happens to rise, I can proffer my credentials. I'll keep my hair tidy and a suitable outfit at the ready. I'll check with my fifteen year old daughter that I wouldn't be an embarrassment to all who know me. She understands these things. Hang on! She's not in the least bit reasonable - perhaps she has a future in television?

Comment and read more of INLOGOVs blog posts at: [inlogov.blogspot.com \(http://inlogov.blogspot.com/\)](http://inlogov.blogspot.com)

[Privacy](#) | [Legal](#) | [Cookies and cookie policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Site map](#) | [Website feedback](#) | [Charitable information](#)

© University of Birmingham 2015

