

LISTENER

23 OCT (Andrew Sinclair)

LISTENER

30 OCT. 1980

A CHANGE OF SEX  
BBC TV.

case clearly. The need of the living for new organs may trespass on the rights of the dead to revive.

The three-part documentary 'A Change of Sex' combined all of last week's obsession with doctors, surgery, provocation and situation. Last week, George Roberts, a married father of two children, decided he wanted to become a woman in front of the cameras. He pulled them in to watch



Julia Grant in 'A Change of Sex'

him dressing up in drag and being dressed down by his Health Service psychiatrist. It was not enough. The exhibitionist in him made him think that the nation might care about his breast transplants and the metamorphosis of his nether parts. In their wisdom, the producers of the programmes decided to subsidise this private obsession and inflict nearly three hours of spurious banality on us.

Yes, George was shown as boring and ordinary as the man or woman next door. Changing his sex seemed as exciting as changing his address. His trip with his Middle Eastern boyfriend to Brighton was as thrilling as a wet Sunday on a pebble beach with the neighbours. And nobody could have been more hypocritically magisterial than the unseen psychiatrist, thundering from behind the camera, 'You cannot buy my opinion!' Of course not, if he was being recorded. After three episodes of A Change of Sex, I remembered George Sanders's remark in All About Eve, 'You make the minutes fly like hours.'

If the love-in for Elton John was Best of

'A Change of Sex'

SIR: I am greatly relieved that Mr Andrew Sinclair found the saga of Julia Grant tediously commonplace (Television review, THE LISTENER, 23 October). Of that miscellaneous

category loosely labelled 'transsexual', those of us who are—to use his own words—'as boring and ordinary as the man or woman next door', and proud of being so, might have been forgiven for fearing that A Change of Sex would seem just a little garish, what with its gay disco, drag act, theatrical costumerie, etc.

Indeed, my own criticism of the trilogy would have been precisely what it was of the original 'trailer' last year, namely, that it was ill-conceived as a documentary, badly edited and over-reliant on tricks of 'paraphrasing' like the nauseous drag act which kept coming up like a badly digested meal.

Presumably the intention behind the whole exercise was not, in the first instance at least, to entertain—though that is scarcely an excuse for being tedious—but to replace an image of monstrosity in the public mind, which undoubtedly exists, by a factual image of mere humanness, and thus help to make transsexuals' day-to-day dealings with the rest of humanity a little more tolerable for both. To the extent that it succeeded in that objective it would surely have served a useful purpose in the eyes of all but those determined to hang on to their prejudices, come what may. I am amazed at the conceit of Mr Sinclair in thinking that such a modest objective might be beneath his attention. But his insistence on the male gender throughout the review makes it clear enough where his own prejudices lie.

I would agree with him, however, to the extent that the programmes failed in their own objective by being bad documentaries of their kind. I think the whole trilogy would have made possibly one good programme with editing. It certainly needed some dispassionate discussion at the beginning or the end.

I cannot but agree with Mr Sinclair also in one other particular—his deft characterisation of the psychiatrist. But then one hardly needs to gild the lily. The point was self-evident, thank God! The programmes did a service to transsexuals, in that respect at least.

Judith Pinnington  
London SW12

JULIA GRANT TV  
REVIEW

from

PRESS MAT

Public Relations Agency  
FOR TRANS-SEXUALS

I'D LIKE TO MAKE ONE OR TWO FINAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAMMES & OUR RESPONSE TO THEM WHICH APPEARED IN GAY NEWS, THAT LETTER ENDED UP BEING THE WORK OF TWO OF US, ALTHOUGH I DID TRY TO INVOLVE THE REST OF TAG. IN RETROSPECT I REGRET THAT IT DIDN'T APPEAR AS A GROUP LETTER, AS I FEEL IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FAIRER TO US ALL IF IT HAD BEEN PURELY A PERSONAL VIEW-POINT. AS REGARDS THE CONTENT OF THE LETTER I HAVE NO REGRETS AS IT WAS AIMED TO BE MILD & INOFFENSIVE & CONSTRUCTIVELY CRITICAL OF THE PROGRAMME RATHER THAN OF THE PERSON, AND I FEEL IT WAS FAIR COMMENT. IT IS POINTLESS TO CRITICISE THE PERSON FOR BEING HERSELF, BUT AT THE SAME TIME SHE SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR HER BRAVERY AND HONESTY, HOWEVER MISGUIDED HER QUEST FOR SENSATIONALISM MAY APPEAR. ALL PUBLICITY IS NOT NECESSARILY GOOD PUBLICITY AND GETTING THE RIGHT KIND OF PUBLICITY IS EXACTLY WHAT TAG HAS BEEN SET UP TO ACHIEVE. LET'S HOPE WE CAN AGREE TO DIFFER WITHOUT WASTING ENERGY ON MORE POINTLESS IN-FIGHTING. LET'S MOVE ON.

T.A.G. — Hazel.  
NEWSLETTER