

THE BBC is to screen three shock TV programmes showing how a man of 26 was turned into a busty woman.

Cameras followed step by step as divorced father of two George Roberts had breast implants, then a full sex-change operation.

He emerged as Julla Grant, now a writer and entertainer.

Julia revealed yesterday that a £2,000 fee from the BBC paid for the surgery at a private clinic.

Daily Mirror

ALAN COREN:

# Bob's Your Auntie

Um.

And can you blame me? This is not a subject into which the hebdomadal hack can plunge, willy-nilly. This is not a subject content merely to implore the passing tribute of a chortle. This is a subject around which one must first take a cautious feline stroll, sniffing, cocking an ear, squinting from the corner of the eye, dabbing with a tentative paw. This is a subject, in short, which has all the distinguishing marks of a can of worms.

For even as I write, the tinny echelons of Whitelaw's 17th/21st Panzer are trundling their plain vans into the byways of the realm, while their Gruppenfuhrer, the Big Willie, honks from his Home Office bunker the chilling information that "unlicensed television receivers may now be detected from up to fifty yards away." Even as the iniquitous dodgers roll cackling on the Axminster, twinly convulsed by both Peter Woods and their own cleverness in watching him for free, wiry figures in black balaclavas are shinning up their drainpipes, spitting the pins from their stun grenades upon the trim patios below.

Psychologically not the best moment, I think you will agree, for the BBC to let slip that it has spent two grand on gumming a bust onto father-of-two George Roberts. For, of course, it was not the BBC that underwrote this mercy dash to poor George's disordered psyche, it was, at £34 a time, some sixty licence-payers, and I am not at all convinced that it should have been undertaken without prior consultation.

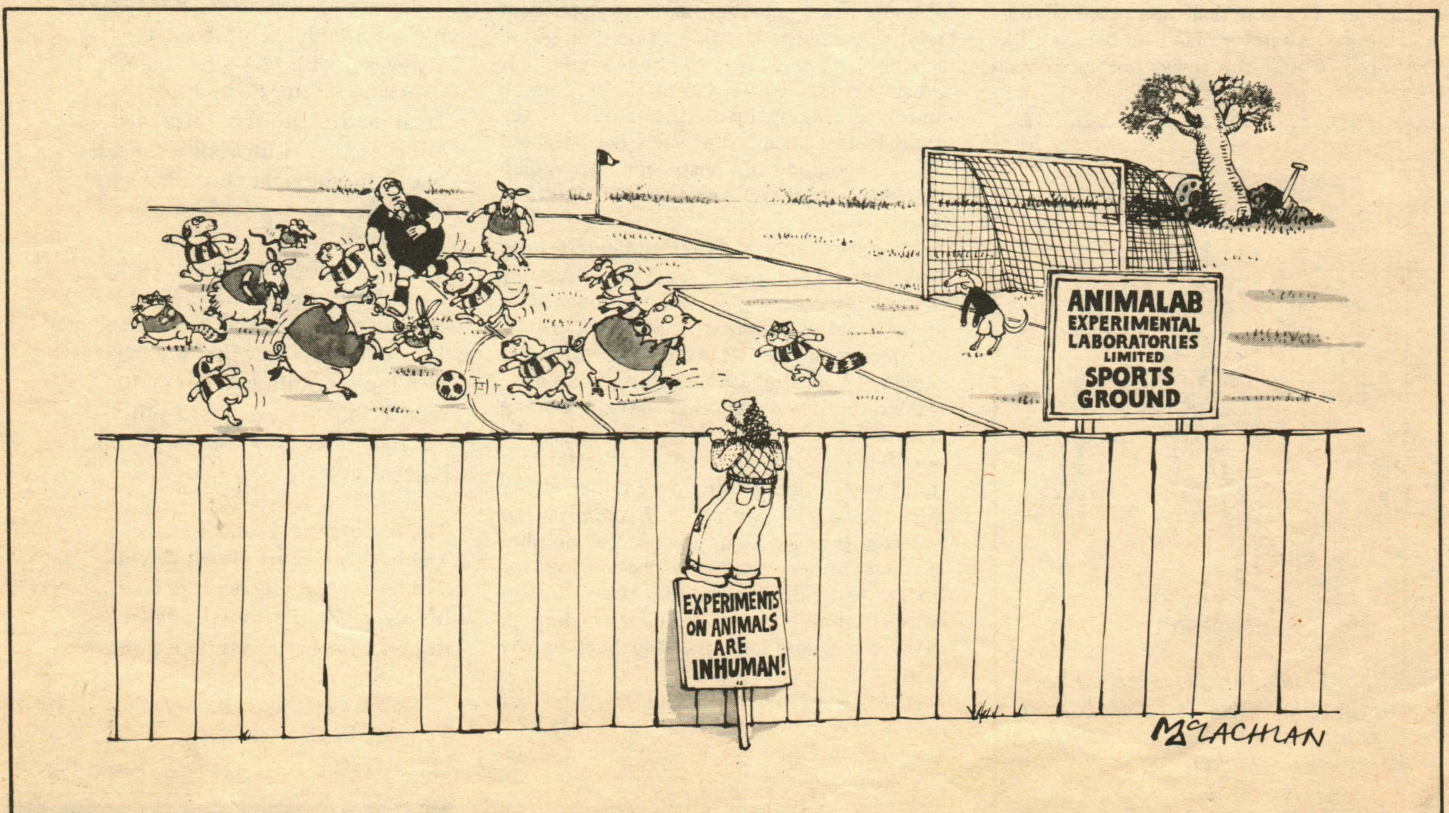
Please understand me (I warned you this was a dicey one), I do not believe that the BBC should generally be accountable to us, its paymasters, for its programme policy. If it were, it is quite possible that wonderful

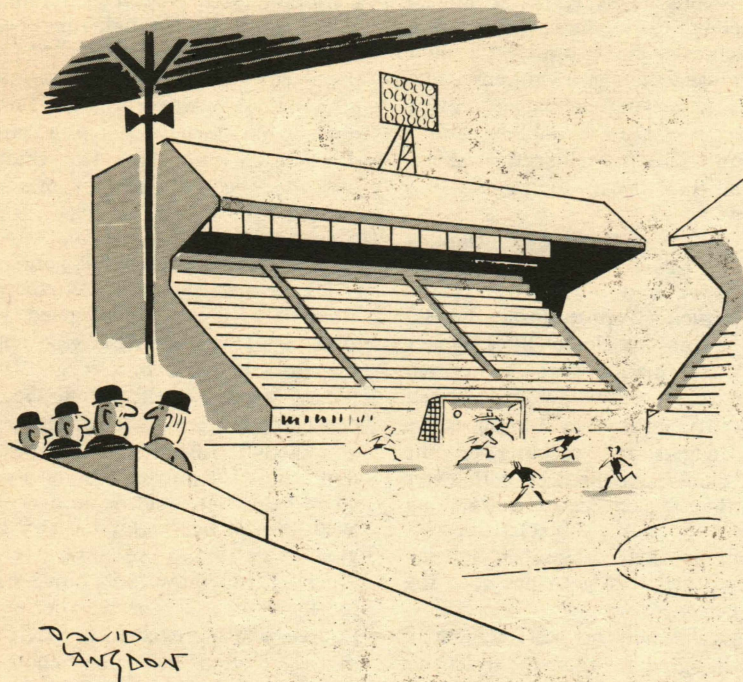
contests in which giant rubber mice from Berchtesgarden played their thrilling joker by wrestling in simulated fox-widdle with giant polystyrene bowler hats from Runcorn would never see the light of tube. Or (on reflection) worse, given the dreadful popularity of this ongoing miasma, that is all we should ever see. No, the Corporation must be left alone to meet with triumph and disaster, treating those two chart-toppers both the same; but when it comes to forking out for clinical rearrangement, that, if the former George Roberts will forgive the expression, is a different ball game.

I have a telephone at my elbow, but no stomach to delve; why, indeed, should I? Whether it was the BBC who approached Mr Roberts ("Hallo, George? How's the family? Great, great, listen, George, you don't know me but we've had this really, you know, terrific idea in Features, I mean I don't think I'm putting too fine a point on it when I say you could be an overnight star! Well, almost overnight, George, ha-ha-ha, you can't make an omelette without breaking, you know, look, how are you fixed for lunch on...") or whether it was Mr Roberts who approached the BBC ("Hallo, is that Bill Cotton, well I don't know if I'm on to the right department, Bill, but what I have in mind is, well, I suppose you could call it a co-production, really, and...") seems to me to be, again if the present Miss Julia Grant will forgive the expression, neither here nor there. The important thing is that at some point in the doubtless fascinating proceedings, a BBC Cortina took George Roberts to an unnamed clinic, waited for a bit, and drove Julia Grant home.

We, the licence-holders, have had a woman built.

I don't know how the rest of the





"I think you ought to know that our original offer of a million for him was based on gate and bar receipts."

shareholders feel about this, but I personally feel extremely uneasy. Even Frankenstein, for all his undeniable shortcomings, had the good grace to knock up people on his own petty cash and accept responsibility for their subsequent behaviour, without involving millions of his fellow-Swiss in an extremely unsavoury business deal about which they had no say whatever. Had he behaved like the BBC, would the Swiss not have been

entitled to feel outraged? They might, after all, have wanted him to build a giant cuckoo, or a big bar of intelligent Toblerone.

I am appalled that I have had to learn about my latest acquisition through the *Daily Mirror*; I have a wife and two kids already, not to mention assorted dependent relatives, and the last thing I need on top of school bills and having to phone my mother every Friday is Julia Grant running amok and Igor ringing up in the middle of the night to inform me that she's been sighted off Heligoland in possession of stolen luncheon vouchers, and what do I intend doing about it?

I see she is now a writer and entertainer. Sod that, Trethowan, what this country needs is plumbers. Had you approached us at the start of this fearful business, which, as your employers, we were fully entitled to expect of you, the last thing we should have wanted built was another bloody woman entertainer. I shall not even raise the horrifying issue (yes, I shall) of what you think you're doing bringing another writer into the world, with the *Evening News* popping its clogs, an unprecedented number of poor hungry bastards clamouring for Booker and Nobel prizes, and those of us in between these cultural poles struggling to pay the rent and keep the Wartburg on the road.

If you need more entertainers, why not simply buy better material for Little and Large? You could get it for about a fiver. Or, if it diverts your bizarre corporate mentality to monkey about with people's

genders in the hope of finding fresh cathode talent, there are far cheaper ways of doing it, especially if, and I do stress this, you first consult with us who foot the bill. Personally, I am convinced you could get something to pop in Angela Rippon's tea for under a pony. I myself have drunk BBC tea, and know whereof I speak when I say under a pony: there is no way in which she would be able to taste anything untoward, were it to be slid into the beaker by an adroit studio manager. Some kind of hormone, perhaps, since that seems to be your fancy, whereby she could gradually change sex, nightly, before our very eyes, her voice gradually deepening as news filtered in from the Gulf, or curls sprouting entertainingly along the fingers shuffling the late football results.

Not that I, or my fellow shareholders, would object too much to the whole two thousand being blown, provided the sex of an established entertainer could be suddenly and surgically changed: we have scant interest in either George Roberts or his busy imago, and are likely to glean minimal entertainment from the switch, but suddenly to turn on the box and discover Freda Parkinson struggling to chat up Angie Dickinson, or the Onedin luggers a-shriek with mincing bosuns, or Nurse Who about to have her intergalactic ashes hauled by a priaptic Dalek, that might well persuade us to cough up our thirty-four quid in quailless confidence.

The ball, Trethowan, is in your court.

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"We must not be frightened if they leave."—Mr Tony Benn, on threatened Right-wing defections from the Labour Party.

## PARTING EMBRACE

We mustn't be frightened if they leave,  
We mustn't blubber if they go;  
My heart's with Mrs What's-a-name,  
I bleed for Doctor So-and-so.  
Their motives are above reproach,  
Although they swim against the tide:  
They have the right of turning left,  
Or else committing suicide.

We said goodbye to Reg and Dick,  
We bade farewell to George and Ray,  
Who no doubt think, if they'd remained  
They'd not be where they are today.  
There may be others in our midst  
Who feel the same desire to quit,  
But though we may lose one or two,  
It doesn't constitute a split.

The rest of us will soldier on,  
The battle-lines are clearly drawn,  
The birds are flying home to roost,  
It's always dark before the dawn.  
But once the battle has been won,  
At least, as far as I can gauge,  
A week or two should be enough  
To usher in a golden age.

Roger Woddis



"For God's sake, George, do be careful today—you left your Kidney Donor card in your gardening jacket."