

Yesterday saw the opening skirmishes over the communications bill: the Lords will vote on it in a few weeks. This vast and baggy bill, packed with important but uncontentious technicalities, contains two momentous threats to the future quality of broadcasting. The key clauses have one sole function - to remove all obstacles to Murdoch seizing Channel 5, overshadowing ITV and, within a short time, providing the main competition to the BBC. The bill abolishes the requirement for owners of TV companies to be British or EU citizens. (Murdoch took US nationality to take over Fox TV: the US bans foreign ownership.)

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