

Letter from Gavyn Davies, Chairman, BBC, 1st October 2002



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From the Chairman

1 October 2002

Lord Pearson of Rannoch
House of Lords
LONDON
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Dear Lord Pearson

Thank you for your further letter of 13 September, previously acknowledged.

You are right to point out that the fact that none of the main political parties holds the view that Britain should withdraw from the EU is a factor in determining prominence, not one for saying that this point of view should never be aired on television or radio, but it is not true to say that it is never aired at all. Take *Question Time*, for example. In the last series, panellists included Simon Heffer, Peter Hitchens, Patrick Moore (a member of UKIP), and Teresa Gorman of the Freedom Association. Plans for the current series are not fully formed, but amongst the panellists the programme hopes to have on are Nigel Farage MEP, Zac Goldsmith and Conrad Black.

I understand, however, that in the production team's experience, the Euro sceptics do often advocate withdrawal in pre-programme discussions, but on air they tend to couch their arguments in terms of treaty negotiations and are more comfortable with specific debate on the Euro.

UKIP of course does have a policy of withdrawal from the EU, and although party spokespeople do appear more at election times, the party recently featured on Radio 4's *Westminster Hour* and Nigel Farage, as an elected MEP, appears on a number of different programmes.

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You ask whether the BBC is looking for political topics to discuss with real people outside Westminster. As you know, the BBC has recently concluded a review of its political coverage with a view to doing just that. There have already been a number of successful initiatives in regional and network news programmes to engage in political issues from the grassroots. Two examples are *Your Politics* on the *Six O'Clock News*, and *The Reynolds Report* on *Look East*, which have encouraged viewers to suggest issues they would like to have investigated.

You may also have seen this week's interactive edition of *Panorama*, which invited viewers to raise questions directly on air about the Iraq crisis.

Yours sincerely



Gavyn Davies



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