

Lord Pearson of Rannoch

Gavyn Davies, Esq.,
Chairman,
British Broadcasting
Corporation,
Broadcasting House
Portland Place,
London, W1A 1AA



29th July, 2002

Dear Mr. Davies —

I refer to your letter of 22nd April, in which you said *“As I’ve said on previous occasions we intend to see that all views on the European debate are reflected in BBC programmes, and that our coverage is rigorous and scrupulously neutral.”*

During questions after the presentation of your Annual Report to Parliamentarians on 17th July, I asked you why the BBC still fails in its duty to represent the significant strand of public opinion which favours withdrawal from the European Union. You replied that while none of the main political parties holds this view, the BBC cannot start a debate about it.

Forgive me, but I have been thinking about this answer, and I am afraid it does not stack up. There are other strands of public opinion, held by many less people than those who want to withdraw from the EU, which are not supported by any of the main parties but to which the BBC gives considerable air time. Two such strands are represented for example by those who want to abolish the Monarchy, and those who wish to end experimentation with animals. I am sure there are many more.

It is apparent that the Government doesn’t want a debate on our relationship with the European Union, and, with the shadow of Ofcom in the background, many of us suspect that this may be the real reason why the BBC does not start it. After all, the BBC must be looking for topics to discuss with real people outside the discredited hen-coop of Westminster. Or isn’t it?

Can you set our minds at rest?

Yours sincerely,

Pearson of Rannoch

Lord Pearson of Rannoch

52 Minorities, London EC3N 1JJ
Telephone: 020-7480 6622 Fax: 020-7702 1689