

Stephen Whittle, Esq.,
Director,
Broadcasting Standards Commission,
7, The Sanctuary (F)
London,
SW1P 3JS 20th January 2000

Dear Mr Whittle,

**National News Coverage by BBC TV, Radio 4 and ITV
of the European Elections from 9th May to 12th June 1999**

Further to recent conversations with your Catherine Martin and Paul Ferguson, we enclose as promised a copy of a letter to us, dated 14th December 1999, from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. We also enclose the following documents:-

1. The Minotaur Report, of 16th July 1999
2. Our letter to Sir Christopher Bland, dated 16th July 1999
3. Our letter to Sir Robin Biggam, dated 16th July 1999
4. Sir Christopher's reply, dated 22nd July 1999
5. Our reply to Sir Christopher, dated 1st October 1999 and enclosure
6. Sir Christopher Bland's reply to us, dated 18th October 1999
7. Our reply to Sir Christopher, dated 20th January 2000 and enclosures
8. Sir Robin Biggam's reply to us, dated 12th January 2000
9. Our reply to Sir Robin, dated 20th January 2000 and enclosures
10. Our letter to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, dated 20th January 2000.

From the above you will see that since last July we have been striving for a meeting of minds with the Chairman and Governors of the BBC and with the Chairman of the ITC.

Having received Sir Robin Biggam's reply of 12th January (to our letter of 16th July), we feel we have exhausted this process and must therefore complain to you. We are most grateful for your agreement to receive complaints on this matter outside your normal time frame, in view of our protracted correspondence with the broadcasters and since all the material complained of has been recorded, transcribed and analysed, and is available for study.

Global Britain, a cross-party organisation, was set up in 1998 to provide independent research into Britain's relationship with the EU, perhaps the most important political and economic issue of the day. We publish a fortnightly newsletter, *eurofacts*, and pamphlets and briefing notes. We undertake and commission research, for example on EU trade, foreign policy, defence, agriculture and currencies. Global Britain would claim to be the leading British thinktank researching those aspects of the Treaty of Rome which go beyond Economic and Monetary Union (the "Single Currency"). Together with Global Britain's director, Ian Milne, and individually, we have published numerous letters in leading national newspapers and we have led and contributed to many debates and Questions in the House of Lords about our relationship with the EU generally. If BBC and ITV newscasters take seriously their obligation to be 'wide-ranging, impartial and fair', we think they should be aware of our position.

Since the UK's relationship with the EU has scarcely featured in any General Election since the UK joined what was then the Common Market in 1972, the recent elections to the European parliament were an important and obvious opportunity to debate that relationship, and not just to concentrate on the narrow issues of EMU and alleged splits in the Conservative Party.

There is a widespread perception that both the BBC and the ITC companies display an institutionalized bias in favour of the EU and against Euro-scepticism in general, but we acknowledge that bias is often in the eye of the beholder. So we commissioned independent research from Minotaur Media Tracking to cover the period of the elections, which confirmed our worst fears.

Global Britain's complaint to you is that the BBC and ITV entirely ignored the wider and longer-term aspects of our relationship with the EU during the European elections campaign, and that they continue to do so. As we have said to Sir Christopher Bland and Sir Robin Biggam, the BBC and ITC companies seem completely unaware that about half the British people now appear to be in favour of leaving the EU altogether, and that there are sound economic and political arguments for the UK to stand alone or to join an expanded NAFTA. (More than 60% in Britain appear to be against abolishing the pound and joining EMU).

The extent of this Euro-sceptic attitude from so many of the British people is understandable, because recent research suggests that only 10% of our economic activity may be involved with the EU (declining and in deficit), with a further 10% being involved with the rest of the world (increasing and in surplus), and the remaining 80% taking place within the UK itself. We enclose a Global Britain summary on this, and would note that Anatole Kaletsky has reached the same conclusion – see *The Times*, 7th September 1999, enclosed).

We also enclose our analysis of opinion polls in this country, which indicates that the proportion of those wishing to leave the EU has not dropped below 41% since 1987. We submit that the broadcasters should be aware of this. We enclose, too, a *Daily Telegraph* article of 31st December, which we know to be accurate, which reports the US International Trade Commission's enquiry into the possible advantages of the UK leaving the EU and joining an expanded NAFTA. We have mentioned these points to Sir Christopher and Sir Robin, and repeat them to you, because they show that Euro-scepticism is very much more widely supported than their output reflects. Euro-scepticism, even to the point of leaving the EU, is not the preserve of fringe fanatics, as BBC and ITV bias suggests it must be. Nor is it "right wing", or anti-European. (Euro-sceptics who believe that peace and prosperity will be better secured by a Europe of separate democracies freely trading together under NATO than in a Europe consisting of a forced conglomeration of disparate nations, may well turn out to be right.)

So we complain about the BBC and ITC companies' complete lack of coverage of these wider issues during the European Election campaign last year, and their studious avoidance of them since, and ask you to require a balanced approach from them in future to the whole question of the UK's relationship with the European Union and the Treaty of Rome (not to be confused with Europe!)

We have made the enclosed documentation available to other parties who we believe have cause to complain to you, and with whom we have been in touch since the elections.

Stoddart of Swindon Harris of High Cross Pearson of Rannoch

(Labour) (Independent) (Conservative)

for Global Britain

