

**From: Nigel Farage, MEP**

**Member for South East England**

Stephen Wittle, Esq.,

Director, Broadcasting Standards Commission,

7, The Sanctuary (F),

London, SW1P 3JS.

Dear Mr Wittle,

**The Minotaur Report on BBC and ITV national news coverage of the European election – 9<sup>th</sup> May 1999 – 12<sup>th</sup> June 1999**

We refer to the letter and enclosures sent to you by Global Britain on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2000 and wish to complain about the unfair treatment we were clearly given by the BBC and ITC companies during last year's European election campaign. We complain also about their continuing disdain for our position.

A good example of this occurred in a BBC **On the Record** programme, about which the chairman of the BBC, Sir Christopher Bland, wrote as follows to Global Britain on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1999.

*"In addition to the items mentioned in the report, the programme also made a film about the minor parties which portrayed UKIP as well organised and running a good campaign, and examined some of the weaknesses of the pro-European Conservatives."*

The Minotaur authors were able to refute this entirely, and we attach the transcript and their comment about what actually happened on the programme in question.

The UK Independence Party platform is clearly that the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. Despite the fact that we went on to win 7% of the votes (693,000) and three seats, we were afforded no serious opportunity to debate our position and the reasons for it. The broadcasters preferred to concentrate on the narrow issue of Economic and Monetary Union and splits in the Conservative Party. They thus gave far more time and prominence to the Pro-Euro Conservative Party (consisting of two former Conservative MEPs, which went on to win 1.2% of the votes and no seats) than they did to us.

In his correspondence with Global Britain, Sir Christopher shows no sign of requiring the BBC to give us unbiased treatment in future, nor have they done so since the elections.

We note that in his reply of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2000 to Global Britain's letter of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1999, the Chairman of the ITC, Sir Robin Biggam, writes as follows:

*"What is a matter of more concern to the ITC, however, is the comparatively low level of coverage afforded to a number of small parties with significant political platforms – for example, the UKIP and the Greens."*

So far, so good, one might think. But then Sir Robin goes on to say:

*"We are making this point – with a view to coverage at future elections – to the broadcasters. It mirrors the stated wishes of viewers, according to ITC research after the last General Election".*

We submit that this is simply not good enough. Why did the ITC's licensees not act upon that research in these European elections? Furthermore, the next elections of any kind are some way off, and in the meantime the ITC seems content to allow their licensees to continue their grossly biased and ignorant treatment of our Party and our position.

In the current year, under the Portuguese and then French presidencies of the European Council, further vast strides towards a full federal European superstate are on the agenda in Brussels. Tax 'harmonisation' (British taxes up by 20%), the proposed EU army (undermining NATO), 'Corpus Juris' (or the proposed fledgling EU legal system); these and other proposals risk removing the last vestiges of our national sovereignty. UKIP is the only party seriously devoted to exposing and preventing this further drift to total domination by the EU. We are sure and can show that the UK will have to leave the EU in order to survive as an independent nation. We can prove that the country would be better off out of the EU. (The Conservative Party is largely neutered on this subject because it led the country into the quicksand of the Treaty of Rome in which we find ourselves). Is our position to go on being ignored by our broadcasters? Is this being *"impartial, wide-ranging and fair"* as required by the broadcasting Acts and codes?

We are most grateful that you have agreed to accept this complaint outside your normal time limits. We understand that this is because Global Britain has been trying since July to reach agreement with the broadcasters, and because the programmes in question are available for inspection with Minotaur.

We very much hope that you will be able to secure balanced, objective, wide-ranging, impartial and fair coverage from our terrestrial broadcasters at this vital moment on this most important issue of our time.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Farage, MEP

Attachment: point 9 in the Minotaur response to Sir Christopher Bland's response of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1999.