

Lord Pearson of Rannoch



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

3rd February, 2003

Dear Mr. Davies -

BBC Euro-phile Bias: The Minotaur Reports

I refer to previous correspondence and to our interesting discussion at the Parliamentary BBC Group on 3rd December. Since then there has been quite a bit of public comment on the BBC's attitude to the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, especially Damian Thompson's article in the Daily Telegraph of 27th December, and Elizabeth Day's article in yesterday's Sunday Telegraph, picked up in today's Guardian.

One of the most interesting points to emerge from Damian Thompson's article was his statement that "*So far, the BBC has found it easy to shrug off the Minotaur reports. It points out that they have been commissioned by the arch-Eurosceptic Lord Pearson of Rannoch, and are therefore not quite as independent as they might seem.*" As far as I can see, that is the only defence you have offered publicly against the highly detailed and professional analysis contained in the first seven reports, (unless we count Rod Liddle's revelation in yesterday's Sunday Telegraph that one of your senior executives goes round saying that I am "mad").

The good news is that we have now received two further reports from Minotaur, on your Today Programme's coverage from September 2nd to November 2nd 2002 of the second Irish referendum on the Treaty of Nice, and its coverage of the EU's 'Enlargement' summit in October 2002.

Minotaur's general conclusions seem to be that there was a continuing reduction of interest in and coverage of EU matters; a strong bias towards Euro-phile speakers and views; at least one clear breach of the BBC's Producer Guidelines; considerable bias by omission; and consistent reference to the Treaty of Nice as "the treaty of enlargement". One of the most disturbing findings is that the only politician allowed to put the case against the Treaty was Gerry Adams ("balanced" by Taoiseach Bertie Ahern).