

Lord Pearson of Rannoch



Gavyn Davies Esq.
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Dear Mr. Davies —

Thank you for your letter of 25th February which alas fulfills the predictions set out in my letter of 3rd February. I have now put some of what follows on the record in the Lords Second Reading debate on the Ofcom Bill on 25th March (Cols 757-760).

There is one chink of unexpected light; you now agree that debate about whether or not we should join the euro should be separate from any debate as to whether or not the UK should stay in the European Union.

We have always accepted that the BBC has conducted debate about the euro, albeit in a way which we can prove is biased in favour of joining. But I would ask you to concentrate on what you repeat about your coverage of the wider European question: *"As far as the BBC's overall coverage of Europe is concerned, as I have said on previous occasions, it is accepted that the euro-sceptic point of view that Britain should withdraw from Europe deserves inclusion in the BBC's coverage, but the fact that none of the main political parties has adopted this position will inevitably influence the prominence with which it is covered"*.

Forgive me, but when have you conducted any serious debate about whether we should stay in or leave the EU? The answer, I fear, is never. If I am wrong about this, can you tell me when you have done so? (and I don't mean allowing Nigel Farage of UKIP on air for a few brief seconds from time to time).

It is also disingenuous, to the point almost of dishonesty, for you to imply that the BBC only gives minimal coverage to issues which are not taken up by one of the main political parties. In my letter of 29th July 2002, I mentioned the ample air time given to the anti-monarchist view in the run-up to last year's Jubilee. You do not appear to have answered this point. You also give plenty of time to those who oppose GM crops and food, and to those who favour the liberalization of cannabis and other drugs, even though none of the main political parties has adopted these positions. There are other examples.