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Room 211  
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2<sup>nd</sup> December 2008

Dear Fran —

This is to thank you and Penny Young for giving David Keighley, Andrew Jubb and me so much of your time last Wednesday. It was indeed generous. David is now looking at the feasibility of picking one cherry and putting it through the system. He hopes to discuss the result with you soon.

As I mentioned in our meeting, we have been told in the past that a single biased programme does not really matter; that the Charter and guidelines only require balance over “a series”. That is why we have been commissioning surveys over the months running up to EU summits. Even this wasn't good enough for the ESC when it dismissed our recent complaint. It accepted *Today's* defence that Mediawatch had only looked at one 3-month period and the result would have been different if we had looked at another period of similar length. There seems no way round this sort of reaction, unless the BBC's entire output was monitored.

I have also been ruminating what Penny said about “bias by omission” requiring a higher bar than more obvious bias. This may be so for simple cases, such as putting 3 similar views on a programme with no counterbalance, but Lord Wilson's committee found there was a real problem on the wider front, which does not appear to have been addressed. The omissions referred to in my letter of 16<sup>th</sup> October to Sir Michael underline the Wilson findings, and I fear they do amount to a breach of the BBC's duty to inform and educate (which it could also make entertaining).

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The BBC really should start with the big idea which gave birth to the EU: that the nation states had been responsible for the carnage of two world wars and the long history of conflict in Europe; those nation states therefore had to be emasculated and diluted into a new form of supra-national Government, run by technocrats. This genesis is clearly set out in Christopher Booker and Richard North's "The Great Deception" (Continuum), but I wonder how many people in the BBC have read it. It is from that big idea that all the rest flows – the unelected Commission's monopoly to propose legislation, the secretive process by which it is enacted, and the powerlessness of our Parliament to resist it. That's why our MPs can't do anything about Post Office closures, waste disposal, home information packs and so on, which I mentioned in my letter to Sir Michael. Given that our political class would rather not talk about all this, surely the BBC has a duty to do so?

And I have to say that it has not been easy to get the BBC to change course, even when it admits it should. I enclose an exchange of correspondence with Mark Damazer in 2004, when he said that programme editors would not in future "take as uncontentious" the key sound-bite: "3 million jobs depend on Europe". This is perhaps the central economic claim for the case to stay in the EU, and it has gone unchallenged for years. As far as I know, it was only queried on a BBC programme once, soon after Mark Damazer's letter, but never again. The Prime Minister remains particularly fond of it.

I will try to go through all this again with David Jordan and the other executives you suggested as soon as possible, and trust we may stay in touch as the European elections approach.

Yours sincerely,

*I with good wishes —*



Lord Pearson of Rannoch

Copy to Sir Michael Lyons