

How BBC was “nobbled” before our vote to join EEC

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Sir, The President and the Media

Saros Kavina is quite right that a free press and media are important to a free society. But President Trump has shown some discernment in excluding the BBC from his press conference.

What has emerged from the American election is that the media are composed of a collection of interest groups with their own agendas which they promote quite ruthlessly, bending the facts where it suits them.

As a long-serving independence campaigner, I would rate the BBC as amongst the worst offenders. Its part in manipulating public opinion in the Seventies in favour of entering the EEC was fully admitted in a Radio 4 programme “*Letter to the Times*” of 3rd February 2000. Contributors included Sir Edward Heath, Roy Hattersley and the Conservative marketing man, Geoffrey Tucker, who organised the campaign which brought the influential on side. Apart from the *Daily Worker*, every single national newspaper supported the European project.

This is what Tucker said.

*“We decided to pinpoint the “Today” programme on radio and followed right through the news programme during the day... the television programmes “News at Ten”, “24 Hours” and “Panorama” and from radio “World at One “ and “Woman’s Hour”. **Nobbling is the name of the game.** Throughout the period of the campaign, there should be direct day by day communication between the key communicators and our personnel – e.g. Norman Reddaway at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Marshall Stewart of the “Today” programme. And in 1970 the “Today” programme was presented by Jack de Manio, who was terribly anti European. We protested privately about this. Ian Trethowan listened and de*

***Manio was replaced.**" Ian Trethowan, a personal friend of Heath's, was the BBC's Director of Radio."*

So the BBC was under daily direction by the Foreign Office as to what it should say to British people, in the interests of a foreign organisation, the European Economic Community. Norman Reddaway went on to a knighthood and to be ambassador to Poland. BBC policy has remained unchanged ever since.

So, to Saros Kavina's advocacy of the free media, I agree that it would be a good idea.

Yours faithfully

Edward Spalton