

Pro-EU bias at Ireland's state broadcaster

*We publish below an open letter by **Prof Anthony Coughlan** of Trinity College Dublin addressed to Marian Finucane, a radio presenter on Ireland's RTÉ Radio 1. RTÉ is Ireland's state broadcaster, i.e. the Irish equivalent of the BBC. Readers may notice some familiar issues when it comes to the supposed obligation of state broadcasters to provide balanced coverage and a range of viewpoints...*

TO: Ms Marian Finucane
RTÉ
Dublin 4

Dear Marian,

My wife and I were listening to your Sunday morning programme today when your panel was discussing Brexit, the EU and the Irish backstop.

We were struck by the fact that all your panel participants were wholly at one with one another on these topics, and there was no one who was even mildly critical or dissenting.

RTÉ, as you know, is supposed to ensure balance and consideration of different viewpoints when it comes to programme coverage of issues of public controversy and debate.

Might it not be a good idea to invite someone like Dr Ray Bassett, Bruce Arnold, Eoghan Harris, Professor Ray Kinsella, Frank Keoghan of the People's Movement or even my good self, on to your programme sometime when you are considering these EU-related matters?

That would surely help make for more interesting listening and be more informative for your listeners.

At present supporters of Irish Government policy contend that Taoiseach Leo Varadkar's stand on the Northern backstop protects the Good Friday Agreement. Yet David Trimble – who got the Nobel Prize for his role in negotiating it – John Taylor (Lord Kilclooney), Lord Bew, Ray Basset and others contend that Irish Government policy puts the Good Friday Agreement in peril.

But one would get no inkling of that from listening to your programme today.

On the same programme former Irish diplomat Bobby McDonagh was scathing about those in Britain who have compared the EU to the former Soviet Union.

That comparison is certainly over the top. At the same time I wonder did it ever occur to Mr McDonagh that when the USSR existed it never insisted that its client states in Eastern Europe's COMECON should adopt the rouble as their currency, whereas all Member States joining the EU are legally required to abolish their national currencies and adopt the euro, thereby giving up any control of either interest rates or the exchange rate?

The only exceptions to this are the UK and Denmark, which negotiated legal opt-outs from this EU obligation at the time of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty.

May I suggest that your always interesting programme might be even better if listeners got a chance to hear points like this made when issues like Brexit, the Northern backstop or the EU generally come up.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Coughlan

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