

The BBC – a not very British Broadcasting Corporation

CIB chairman Edward Spalton considers the ongoing issue of the BBC's extreme partiality on the issue of the EU. He reminds us that the problem goes all the way back to the early Seventies, when the Foreign Office colluded with the BBC and other media to try to increase public support for joining the EEC. Incredibly, these behind-the-scenes dealings were openly admitted to by their Europhile participants in a 2000 BBC radio documentary.

As early as 1996 the *Mail on Sunday* disclosed that the BBC journalist Martin Bashir used forged bank statements as part of his tactics to secure an interview with Diana Princess of Wales – an enormous scoop watched by 20 million people. The forgeries, made by a BBC graphic artist, purported to show payments by a newspaper group to a former member of staff of Earl Spencer, the Princess's brother.

Tony Hall, then BBC director of news, cleared Bashir of wrongdoing. Now Lord Hall, he later became Director General of the BBC. The recent Dyson report says the enquiry was inadequate and the BBC, 'fell short of the high standards of integrity and transparency which are its hallmark.'

Campaigners for independence from the EU will give a hollow laugh to that comment. The Bashir affair came to notice because of the prominence of the people involved. Less exalted people have spent decades complaining in vain about the BBC's lack of integrity and extreme partiality on the issue of Europe.

At CIB we have long been grateful to Eurofacts for their permission to use an article – to which we have referred many

times over the years – summarising a BBC radio documentary from 2000. The programme shows how, in the early Seventies, the contents of major news programmes were supervised daily by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office to support the policy of the Heath government. By 2000, the programme's participants felt themselves secure enough to admit to their *modus operandi*, which included persuading the BBC to sack staff who were insufficiently committed to the European project.

We think this important article bears repetition now, the BBC's midterm charter review approaches. The BBC's dereliction of its charter duty of impartiality, over such a long time, is in our opinion far more serious than the undoubted wrong done by Mr Bashir. The original BBC radio documentary can be listened to on YouTube [here](#).

EUROFACTS

How they swung it in the early '70s

[Date of broadcast: 31 MARCH 2000]

The CIA DID fund the European Movement: and they, the Conservatives and the Foreign Office DID squeeze the BBC.

We print below excerpts from a transcript of the BBC Radio 4 programme, transmitted at 8.00 pm, Thursday 3rd February 2000, entitled 'Document: A Letter to the Times'.

This programme told the story of how opinion was swung in the early '70s in favour of Britain entering the European Economic Community, including how the BBC and ITN news programmes were influenced to support the campaign for Europe. It also reveals that the European Movement and other organisations received substantial hidden funding from the CIA.

Points made included:

- Back at the start of the 1970s, the greatest issue of the day was whether Britain ought to become European... and had you been scanning the correspondence columns of *The Times* you might have noticed a flood of letters in support of our application to join the EEC. A good many of those letters were stage managed on behalf of the then Conservative government.
- Every week as Edward Heath's government inched Britain towards Europe, Geoffrey Tucker, an advertising guru who helped to market the Conservative Party, organised breakfasts for the political shakers and the media movers of the day. Journalists were there and captains of industry, editors too and television people.

Ernest Wistrich's European Movement was the natural organisation to front the public campaign for Europe.

TUCKER: We decided to pinpoint the Today programme on radio and followed right through the news programmes 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 FC0 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.

PRESENTER, CHRISTOPHER COOK: Ian Trethowan was then the Managing Director of BBC Radio and a known friend of Edward Heath's. Another of Geoffrey Tucker's guests was Lord Hattersley, a leading figure in the pro-European faction of the Labour Party.

LORD HATTERSLEY: The one breakfast I went to was a very chummy affair. We were all fighting the European cause to the extent

that some of the protagonists actually drew Ian Trethowan's attention to broadcasters who they thought had been anti-European, and asked him to do something about it.

Now, I was so shocked that I decided I couldn't go again. It sounds terribly prissy but it really did shock me at the time and, frankly, remembering it shocks me still.

SIR EDWARD HEATH (Prime Minister 1970-74): The support in public opinion polls steadily mounted until we got to the point of finally concluding negotiation and had just on 50 percent support, which was very considerable.

PRESENTER: How helpful was the European Movement?

HEATH: Very helpful. They worked very hard and they received funds from supporters which enabled them to publish their own literature as well as ours.

DR RICHARD ALDRICH (political historian) [on being asked what was the documentary evidence for the alleged CIA funding]: I was absolutely astonished to discover that the library (George Town University in Washington) had the entire archive of a CIA front organisation which documents from start to finish funnelling millions of dollars into Europe, into Britain, with correspondence, for example, from British Labour MPs.

The whole accounting structure of the European Movement was designed to hide the fact that CIA money was coming in.

HATTERSLEY [on being asked for his comments]: All those years, all the Europeans would say, 'Let's not risk trying to make fundamental changes by telling the whole truth, let's do it through public relations rather than real proselytising,' and they were always inclined to 'spin' the arguments rather than 'expose' the arguments.

PRESENTER: And that clearly, in your view, was the wrong approach.

HATTERSLEY: Not only was it wrong for us to deal superficially with what Europe involved, but we've paid the price ever since because every time there's a crisis in Europe, people say, with some justification, 'Well, we wouldn't have been part of this if we had really known the implications.'

Joining the European Community did involve significant loss of sovereignty, but by telling the British people that was not involved, I think the rest of the argument was prejudiced for thirty years.

Footnote

Roy Hattersley, at least, grasped the enormity of the breach of trust to the nation by the BBC and did not attend any more meetings of the conspirators. In the broadcast, Sir Edward Heath regretted the fact that parties in opposition tended to become critical of the EU. This was something which independence campaigners noticed – just as they noticed how quickly they became Europhile when in government! Perhaps it was the long period in opposition from 1997 to 2010 which allowed pro-independence sentiment to gain such a strong position in the Conservative party – assisted, of course, by the threat they felt from UKIP breathing down their necks.

BBC Techniques of Put Down

It is useful to know the techniques which the BBC and other pro-EU media developed over the years to belittle and brush off those speaking up for independence. This article from 2018 is a useful reference list, enabling campaigners to recognise the foes of self government and democracy.

Eurofacts may be ordered from:

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