

9th March '04

Ms Tana Jowell MP
Dept for Culture, Media & Sport

Public Meeting at Leicester

I was unable to attend today's meeting at Leicester Racecourse.

The views I would like to express regarding the role of the BBC in news reporting is summed up in my letter to our local MP last month.

Hope this helps!

David Page.

David Page

4th February, 2004

The BBC and Pressure Groups

Dear Mr Sawford,

This might be a good time to raise the contentious issue that the BBC seem to go out of their way to seek comment from a whole range of pressure groups and then create news from the views expressed.

Today is an example. On CEEFAX the news is reported that UK container ports e.g. Southampton, are reaching saturation point and a new port will have to be considered. Included in this news item is a report from the little heard-of pressure group Portswatch who say that wild life will be destroyed and that existing facilities should be improved instead. It is obvious that someone in the BBC has gone out of their way to extract a view from Portswatch which was not part of the original news story. Now a million plus viewers have heard of Portswatch – wonderful publicity! I regard this as another example of **lack of editorial control** when news writers show their bias and seek minority views to express so publicly. No viewpoint was expressed as to the benefits of the scheme to the local and national economy.

Why does the BBC appear to be in the pockets of these pressure groups?

Can this issue be raised when the BBC's charter is reviewed?

The public needs to rely on the BBC's reporting to give facts without bias or opinion. There are plenty of opportunities for investigative journalism in their other programmes. There should be no place for this style of journalism being brought into the BBC news without safeguards and guidelines. It is not always easy for the public to see what is fact and what is opinion. At its worst, this method of news reporting imposes minority views on the nation. That's not far short of brainwashing! In a democratic society we need facts first, then opinions expressed from the widest viewpoint – including majority interests. Without such controls, the government will continue to have an unfair share of organised opposition from minority pressure groups as has happened over GM crops and primate research.

Thank you for listening.

David Page