

## JIM VANLINT

31 January 2004

Dear sir

Please no more over zealous supervision of the non-religious.

Please let the non-religious be represented on BBC's Thought for the Day; redress the long inflicted wrong.

Please let us have non-religious programs for the non-religious with non-religious presenters, absolutely, without the religious minders.

Please no more of what seems to be cosy little agreements with religious organizations that enable them to have favoured spots unless, there is equivalent secular output, equally favoured.

Please don't present any more thinly veiled religious programs, let's be up front, honest, open and obviously religious.

Please if the BBC continues its present policy of where any program has a non-religious person, in it or on it, there seems to be a ratio of at least three religious people to one non-religious, would it be possible for the sake of balance, to then have a similar event with three non-religious people to one religious person.

Please bare in mind that all I would like to see or hear, is an equality of the amount of expression of ideas proportionate to the 30to40% of the non-religious people there are in this country at the moment, I am sure this percentage would also apply to the amount of licence payers.

On your BBC radio 4, during the Today program there is a Thought for the Day spot where, as I am told by your info department, (This is an area in a mainly secular news program, where current affairs are viewed from a faith perspective and as so, it would be inappropriate

to have the non-religious represented here) This I think that you the BBC consider this to be an answer, I can only see this as a statement of your policy in this area. No matter how I frame my question, in the hope of getting an answer, the question is, why this is your policy? please don't convey the stated policy to me any more, I have got it.

The fact that the BBC refuse to have a non-religious person on the Thought for the Day spot, is extremely offensive to me, as it must be to the body of non-religious people. I think the BBC Must be aware of the offence given, as by omitting the non-religious it implies that we do not have moral, ethical and philosophical views, or are not able to hold these views, because we are not religious, then again if some one has a faith of any kind, then this as if by magic, it opens all of the moral, ethical and philosophical world exclusively to them, how arrogant. The percentage of non-religious in this country is 30to40% of the population this a larger percentage than all the minority religions put together yet another reason to include us on Thought for the Day also there is a new law that describes Religion and Belief as equal I would like to see it obeyed both in the spirit and to the letter, which it surely it must be even by the BBC.

If things do change and our voice is heard I would particularly like it if the title of Thought for the Day was not changed, because of the offence given over the years to us by this what looks like a comfortable little favoured arrangement, engineered by the religious, changing the name of this spot would be a face saver for them, that they do not deserve.

Other than the more straight forward religious programs like Songs of Praise there always seems to me to be some kind of sub plot involved. ( Please don't put me amongst the nutty conspiracy theory lot, although like every one else I have to be nutty at times, just to be normal, whatever normal is.) For example the Heaven and Earth Show if for some reason you were to see this show and had not seen the title, what a puzzle, all extremely nice people, straining at the leash to show how ordinary they are, explaining various ordinary problems and how they deal with them in such a nice, caring, thoughtful way, yuk! It's not until beyond at least half way into the show, the participants hint and nibble around the edges of the faith perspective, but never mention the G word. I can't see where there is a problem about it being an openly religious show, in fact I can't see any reason it shouldn't be and why try to disguise it in this way?

As you can see I am not at all happy with the general lack of approach towards the non-religious by the BBC. It's as though there is a default setting at the BBC that is set in favour of religion, just so many small pinpricks in between the more openly favoured events that you have on the BBC, I can only see this as bias.

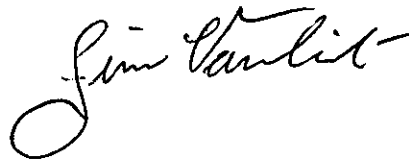
As a point of interest, I am sure that the BBC would know about this, however I would like to draw your attention to, article 3 of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination on the basis of Religion or Belief. Which specifically states ( descrimination between human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms. ) some of the way, in fact quite a bit of the way the religious/non-religious output that is conveyed by the BBC in my oppinion falls foul of article 3 as above.

Even in Europe the Churches and religious associations are trying to gain a favoured place with EEC, a privileged undemocratic representation at the EEC. Admitidly on a smaller scale with the BBC it seems like a similar story which I see as unfair, unequal, undemocratic and more than a coincidence, they are using the same game plan. I have heard that Jonathan Miller is making a program about the history of athism I just hope the fundamentalists at the BBC don't find a way of messing it up, like perhaps a comentry giving an overview, that they might sugest, gives religious ballance, please don't let them mess it up as there would be plenty of religious ballance by virtue of all the other religious output on the BBC.

I am not anti-religious just non-religious I have no wish to shut them out of anything in fact I would take pride in protecting their freedoms, should any one try to censor them. I am not in league with the devil, I do care about my fellow man/person and would like to think that when I have to leave this world, I may have left it a better place than it was before I entered. As you can see these are my views on a very faulty approach to us nons by the BBC as I see it, all I would require where religion is concerned is equality no more no less, generally I find the BBC fair minded, mostly, but certainly not where religion is concerned. I wish you well with this charter review, hope my letter is not to much of a pain.

Kindest regards

Jim Vanlint.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Vanlint". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.