

Being in the media and being powerful are not the same thing

Some people write in to this site complaining that I am not on the national media enough. Some seem to think publishing things here is some kind of secret society, a way of me keeping things hushed up instead of putting them out there on the BBC. This is a silly way of looking at it. When I publish here anyone can read it. If I said something unpleasant or wrong it would soon be taken up by the better known media. Many in the media read this site without going on to quote it. It nonetheless gives them useful background. Some do quote it or use it.

It is a mistake to confuse being in the media a lot and being powerful. It is true powerful people with important roles will be in the media a lot. Any Prime Minister will be news, because the office confers great power which they will exercise. Lots of people who run departments, quangos and big companies are never in the media though their decisions affect many. It is also true people with important offices who in practice exercise little or no power will also be in the media. The media rarely probes why someone in office writes, speaks or acts as they do, though many people in such roles are but actors and actresses reading out other people's lines. The media rarely probes this situation. There are then many people who get into the media a lot because they say controversial or difficult things, though they may have absolutely no influence over government and events at all.

It is popular with the media to report splits and disagreements within parties. They will both condemn a party for being split, and at other times complain it is brain dead if it does not have enough arguments about the best way forward. The media both says it wants more open debate, and tries to make that impossible by declaring anyone of us who holds a different view from our leadership to be disloyal. There are times when the media does more than report splits. They often seek to create them. It will invite two people from the same party who are not in disagreement to create a disagreement in a studio to illustrate some thesis they have of what is going on.

There are of course factions and splits within major parties and sometimes these matter and should be reported. Again there needs to be some assessment of numbers and influence. Today Anna Soubry is a much quoted and much interviewed MP, because the media expect her to be critical of the PM and of the Brexit policy of the government. She may be good box office, but it is difficult to believe she is influential given the difference between her views and those of most of the party.

I do not usually complain about the media. Some of it is just a freak show, seeking the extreme, the bizarre and the unimportant for greater drama. If I manage to stay off that it is probably good news. Over the last week I have produced at their request articles for the FT, Guardian and Sun. I have also been on several radio and tv shows. Some of these try to make it as difficult as possible for their guests to put forward an informed and sensible case.

There seems to be a hatred of new arguments and facts at the BBC , and a wish to endlessly repeat the old, stale and often simply wrong.