

News as propaganda

One of the reasons many people now do not listen to mainstream media news and commentary is the way that factual reporting coupled with expert and insightful balanced analysis has been replaced by a kind of campaign based activity. The BBC in particular has two regular campaigns running. One is to explain why the Remain campaign was really right and should not have lost. The other is to stress the need to cut back on carbon dioxide to avoid serious problems in the future.

I have no problems with political parties, individuals, company shareholders, research institutes and others running campaigns about things they feel strongly about. I do not think this is in any way the task of an independent broadcaster paid for by taxation of all tv users in the country whether they watch the BBC or not, operating under a Charter to observe impartiality and to set high standards of journalism. It also makes for very tedious programmes.

In the case of Brexit I have lost count of how many times we have had the same old stories recycled as if they were news. They are not factual reporting. They are commentaries on various people's forecasts and opinions. We get recycled opinions that we will be short of food, planes won't fly, short of medicines, that supply chains will be disrupted etc. All it needs is one quote from a Remain oriented think tank or business lobby group and we go round the same old scare story again. Rebuttals never attract the same attention. There is then the perpetual reuse of the Treasury 15 year forecast of a bit less growth on different scenarios, with no proper debunking of their base or of the whole idea of a 15 year forecast!

Where is the factual reporting of what airlines, pharmaceutical exporters from the continent, farmers in France and others are actually going to do on March 30th? Where are the balancing experts to offset the Remain "experts". I have never been invited on and introduced as someone who correctly predicted the damage the ERM would do, or as someone who has written extensively on the Euro project explaining its dangers and predicting the various Euro crises, nor as someone who has in the past led UK based international businesses with complex supply chains. If I had voted Remain and held the opposite view I bet they would have mentioned that all the time.

We now see reported dozens of rumours about what deal might or might not be on offer, whilst it looks as if there is still no agreement on the Irish border issues or the wider issues of customs and goods inspections. The media that reports these things ignores the much bigger issue of why should we agree to pay them so much money anyway? What linkage would there be between the Future Partnership Agreement and the Withdrawal Agreement, given that such linkage was thought to be fundamental to the UK negotiating position as defined by Mrs May in her Manifesto. If the EU in a couple of years time has in mind the UK should sign an Association Agreement along the lines of Turkey or Ukraine that would be the final denial of Brexit. Sensible MPs will not vote for the draft Withdrawal Agreement as it is a big payment for more

talks, which would simply prolong futile negotiations and leave the UK in a weak position.

No wonder many are turning off and being turned off by this approach. Let's go back to news gathering, to reliable sources, to genuine experts or to clashes of experts where they disagree. We could also do with fewer reported briefings of sell out agreements when there is still no firm date for a November meeting to resolve the impasse, nor any leaked text of what might be agreed in such an event.