

The BBC is disruptive, anti-Brexit, divisive – and belittles and ignores England

This article was published yesterday on ConservativeHome and I am reproducing it here:

The BBC's decision to encourage and allow a journalist to use illegitimate means to gain an interview with the Princess of Wales was bound to damage her marriage more, and harm the family and monarchy that stood behind it. It was not just wrong in itself, but symptomatic of the BBC as an institution, which wanted to use its special place in our nation to disrupt our constitution.

The untruths encouraged more mistrust between close family members. It was cruel on the children of the marriage with the interview and its questions, and wounding to the monarchists in the wider nation. This is why this dispute about journalistic techniques has such resonance. It sums up a characteristic of BBC journalism in recent years that wants to go beyond acting as a faithful mirror to the varying views within our nation to being a player seeking to make news.

BBC journalists often go beyond their welcome task of reporting accurately and in a balanced way what people are saying, to adopting a tabloid opinionated approach seeking to put words into people's mouths. They attempt to get people to do ill-advised interviews in which they can try and make them say something disruptive, or can create a new division or split where it scarce existed before, or where the plan is to make one worse. All that may make sense for papers and campaigning websites with attitude if done with edge and not with lies – but is not what a public service broadcaster of record should be doing.

The BBC is meant to be a United Kingdom-wide institution. It should help create a sense of common culture and shared democratic conversation for citizens anywhere in our Union who want that. Instead, in recent years the BBC has fanned division. It has helped nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland gain more voice for protest and grievance. It has stood for the continuing submission of our country to government from Brussels against the pro-Brexit majority. It has belittled and ignored England, perhaps with a view to building an English backlash to nationalisms elsewhere in our Union, as the SNP and others want. By highlighting the differences and the better deal Scotland has over funding per head, access to higher education and social care, the BBC has done the SNP's work for them in trying to create English grievance.

The U.K. is a complex country. Many cannot describe the subtle differences between U.K and Great Britain, or explain the relative powers of the UK and Scottish Parliaments, or even remember the different voting system used in devolved elections. There is no adjective to describe U.K-ness. Pro-Union

citizens of the U.K.

in Northern Ireland are happy to be called British even though, technically, our country is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The BBC seems less keen to be called British, using Scottish and Welsh branding in those parts of the Union whilst trying to break up England with regional branding that fails to resonate with most English people. The BBC often seems better disposed towards the EU/Republic of Ireland approach to Northern Ireland than to the view of the majority community in Northern Ireland it is meant to serve.

The BBC's treatment of England is a disgrace. It is as if our country did not exist. We are treated in England to a regular diet of commentary on the words and deeds of the SNP government in Scotland. The BBC gives Scotland its own Scottish news, and then muddles the national newscast with English news, because it cannot bring itself to have an English news to match the Scottish news. We are told much more about rules and decisions in Scotland. By contrast, large English mayoralities and county governments covering as many people as Scotland are largely ignored unless they are seeking to become part of the national opposition on things they do not decide.

The BBC is respectful of Scottish and Welsh culture and identity, but stumbles over UK and English identity. It loves pictures with plenty of Scottish saltires and Welsh dragon flags, but some of its presenters make a joke of the Union flag, and it repress the English flag most of the time. Most national broadcasters would be happy with their flag over their websites and close to their newsreaders, but you could not see the BBC ever wanting to do that.

The BBC website is largely devoid of symbols, colours and familiar favourite history of the UK, and carefully screened to remove anything that could reflect well on England. The choice of topics and references to our history seems keener to reveal the flaws of the past which the UK usually shared with many other nations, rather than the exceptions where England and the UK made unique contributions to the advancement of freedom and prosperity through bold moves and radical movements.

It is a great irony that an institution that is so keen to encourage and help many people to come as migrants to our country can never think of all the good things about the UK which means so many of them want to come.