

Why is the Today programme losing its listeners?

"Today" is losing listeners (minus more than 800,000 last year) in part because its endless Brexit coverage is one sided and tedious. It strives to make most things as being about Brexit, when most things are nothing to do with Brexit. Yesterday morning a Minister was trying to talk about exports. She was regularly interrupted by an interviewer who just wanted to shout Remain propaganda at her, claiming that a No Deal Brexit would be a disaster without providing a shred of evidence. This is all too common. Where were the good questions about the UK's capacity to export, about the changing nature of our markets and the growth areas of our products and services? There was no single question to challenge the Minister or to draw out some new material on the UK as a trading nation. How will the UK fare as the digital revolution advances? Will the big build up of technology businesses in the UK stand us in good stead? Have all the EU trade agreements been novated to us as well as to the residual EU? Apparently they will, we almost learned.

Most economic news items like currencies, jobs or balance of payments have the same explanations as before the vote. Interest rates go up and down thanks to actions of the Bank of England. Shares and currencies go up and down related to world economic changes and government economic policies. Most of us have no wish to hear recycled the same old Project Fear stories about how trade will be affected after we leave, as explained by the so called experts who wrongly told us to expect a recession in the winter of 2016-17 after the vote along with big job losses, rising unemployment, plunging house prices and a collapsing stock market.

For years we have had to put up with a Today programme which has eschewed serious criticism or commentary on the EU project of economic, social, currency and political union, and to put up with a refusal to properly balance the endless pro EU speakers with enough interviews of serious minded and well informed participants who have forecast the outcomes of the Euro , the ERM and the moves to political union accurately. Any party or movement anywhere in Europe that wins elections by challenging some part of the EU scheme is seen as "extreme right" or "populist" and unhelpful. Now they are taking the Today programme further away from being a sensible and well informed 3 hour consideration of the news by introducing quizzes, poor coverage of cultural matters , long commemorations of popular artists when they sadly die and genuflections to magazine lifestyle issues.

People used to tune in to Today to get a serious if not always balanced debate and commentary on the business of the nation and the business of business. That's now hard to come by on a programme which often caricatures itself.