

BBC – There is a problem with political bias

This piece was first published on my Blog in June 2014 – It's about 690 words.

There were a few nice graphics, but they didn't survive the extinction of the old blog.

On the 22nd June (2014), The People's Assembly managed to get 50,000 into central London for a demo against austerity. Who the People's Assembly are and why Russell Brand was there are in many ways irrelevant, they had an attendance of 50,000 yet the BBC ignored it.

On the Sunday and after a lot of complaints and a huge amount of coverage on social media, the BBC grudgingly put up a few images of the event, but with no commentary. Shoddy and some might say petulant journalism.

To make it worse the BBC gave Farage and UKIP a write up on their website, because he had a few policy ideas for the 2015 general election. Good for him, but that isn't news, 50,000 turning up to a demo is.

The problem started almost immediately the Tories became the government in 2010. The licence fee was frozen, the charter was coming up for review and Cameron spoke of 'delicious' cuts to the BBC.

He declared war and the BBC responded by putting up the white flag, or rather the blue flag and surrendering completely. Cameron has admitted talking to the BBC about his aims to transform Britain and his wish to get the corporation 'onside' with those ideas.

He made it sound such a reasonable thing to do. It isn't of course, that would mean the BBC becoming little more than a mouthpiece for Tory propaganda.

About that time John Humphrys presented the criminally inaccurate 'Future of the Welfare State,' which the BBC has now admitted was biased. Strangely enough Humphrys is still employed by them and never seemed to suffer any punishment for the outrage.

Various groups have started petitions, often with thousands of signatures. Several were started over the ridiculous amount of coverage the BBC gave UKIP during the local and European elections. As far as I know the BBC neither apologised nor even acknowledged it had a problem.

Mind you this is the same organisation that turned a deaf ear to Newsnight's Jimmy Saville piece in case it wrecked their Christmas schedules! The BBC is still a government department funded by taxation and they know they will get the licence fee no matter how many petitions are started.

I'm not going to even get into the whole Nick Robinson argument. Yes he was a Tory activist, but there are also a lot of left wing commentators at the BBC and usually personal political alignments tend to balance themselves out.

For every rant Humphrys makes there will be an anti Cameron comment on Mock the Week. The problem is when the bias is systemic and that is what seems to be happening at the BBC. There was no mention of Cameron upsetting the judge in the Coulson trial, until other parts of the media began making a fuss about it. Often a mildly anti Tory piece on the BBC website at 9am is relegated to the website annex by mid-day. The congestion charge increase was one piece that was a major story at 9am, but then vanished.

My own view is that out of self-interest the BBC is no longer an unbiased reporter of news. They've been scared into become an organisation that is happy to criticise and ignore the left, while self-editing anything that might be thought negative about its paymasters..... the government. We shouldn't be surprised. Can any organisation that gets over 4 billion pounds a year from taxation ever be independent of the government of the day? It's rather like expecting the Treasury or the DWP to give unbiased reports.

Petitions aren't the solution, they'll ignore those. Personally I'd like to see the licence fee abolished and the BBC funded by subscription services. I know that sounds perilously like privatisation, but it would cut the umbilical cord to central government and could give us a genuinely unbiased Auntie Beeb

© Ed Cowling ~ June 2014