

## Scotland's Journalists and Criticising the BBC: Still a no-go area?



Since my first experience of flak from BBC Scotland in January 2014, after my research questioning their proudly asserted, but unsubstantiated and little-maintained, claims of impartiality, I have struggled to publish my findings and my views of the essentially propagandised nature of the BBC's output.

The first of the empirical research studies, *Fairness in the First Year*, revealing the bias, is at:

[http://issuu.com/creative\\_futur/docs/robertson2014fairnessinthefirstyear](http://issuu.com/creative_futur/docs/robertson2014fairnessinthefirstyear)

This report attracted virtually no mainstream media attention but was viewed online more than 1 million times. The televised record and the official written report on my appearance before the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee and on the appearance, after me, of four senior BBC Scotland managers are still at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8cZ04MeEAW&app=desktop>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmuoZVJTc-Y>

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9013&mode=pdf>

The BBC Scotland management were not required to attend but did so, it is has been suggested, because BBC London instructed them to do so.

A second smaller study, *Fairness in February*, explored the possible impact of the above negative publicity for BBC Scotland, in the four weeks after their reluctant appearance before Parliament. Notably, in that month, coverage was, temporarily, much more balanced and fair. The report is at:

[http://issuu.com/creative\\_futur/docs/robertson2014fairnessfebruary](http://issuu.com/creative_futur/docs/robertson2014fairnessfebruary)

Then, in April, 2015 a more focused study of Radio Scotland's political flagship 'Good morning Scotland' revealed more intensive and repetitious propagandising than had been found on the shorter TV news broadcasts. *Good Morning Scotland? Fairness in Reporting the Scottish Referendum Debate in April 2014* is at:

[http://issuu.com/creative\\_futur/docs/robertson2014goodmorningscotland/1](http://issuu.com/creative_futur/docs/robertson2014goodmorningscotland/1)

Finally, to complete this background a YouTube video record of the key points in the above work was produced, attracted more than 100 000 views and is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ajd4R-9BEIw>

Now, to get to the point of this, Chomsky's notion of media elites (owners, editors, senior reporters) interlocking with other elites (in industry, education, politics, business) to manufacture consent in a 'democratic' or more accurately 'corporatist' society explains the bias exposed by empirical research. No conspiracy is required as the members of elites become such because, mostly, they already think the same way. They think the same way because, commonly, they come from similar class backgrounds, go to similar elite schools and universities, socialise in the same groups and work in the same places.

In the Scottish context, the bias shown by BBC Scotland against the Yes campaign, against the Scottish National Party and latterly against the Scottish Government is a matter of wide public agreement, outside of the mainstream media, amongst millions of citizens using social media.

Throughout the last year and more, I have copied my research and letters to the mainstream media in the UK, TV News stations, the 'national' and the Scottish press. Nothing is ever published, even in the apparently pro-Scottish independence newspapers, the Sunday Herald and the National. I raised this recently in an email and in a paper letter,

with prominent pro-independence journalist, Iain McWhirter of the Herald and Sunday Herald. In response to a piece where he condemned the continuing bias against independence in the Scottish press but where he made no mention of TV News, I wrote:

To Iain McWhirter, Sunday Herald: 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2015

Dear Iain

I posted the comment below, in the discussion under your article today (10<sup>th</sup> May). My comments tend to be moderated out. My letter and other contributions to the Herald and the National, ignored. Is BBC Reporting Scotland a no-go area for both these joint-edited newspapers despite their support for independence?

I feel, reading your writing, that you are a man of principles around, especially, democracy. Your editor and I have disagreed before on my (Chomskyan) explanation of how propaganda emerges.

Nevertheless, I feel suppressed by this experience. My many readers online seem to share my view. I know they are not an objective source.

Here is the comment. I await moderation.

'As nearly always, I agree with 99% of what Iain writes. There's a wee omission in paragraph 14. He's correct that half of Scotland has: 'simply stopped believing anything they read in the papers.' I'd add that the same is true of BBC Reporting Scotland. The extended run of scares on the SNHS, the police, the local authorities and their commissioning of research into immigration throughout February to early April, presented in the language of 'crises', 'hit squads' and so on was clearly propaganda aimed at undermining the Scottish government/SNP. That STV mostly ignored these 'crises' and adopted the more reasonable language of 'support teams' and 'problems' is in itself persuasive evidence of the imbalance at the BBC. The election results suggest that many of the Scottish people have stopped believing the BBC too.'

I've had no reply. I really like Iain's writing and his television appearances on BBC Scotland. I guess, he likes appearing on BBC Scotland too.

My recent piece reviewing BBC Scotland's 'special' on Fracking is quite critical of the BBC Scotland Environment correspondent, the likeable David Miller, whom I had shared highly important evidence with in the months before the broadcast. The failure to use this evidence from the UK government's own advisers and from health researchers in New York allowed the programme to present a balanced and persuasive account but one which was neglectful of the proven health risks in order not to overwhelm the business case. In an attempt to remain business-friendly, the programme effectively lies about the true situation. I conclude in my report:

'Remember this? 'Could fracking follow thalidomide, tobacco and asbestos among innovations that turned sour?' UK HM Chief Scientific Advisor's Annual Report. Consider all the evidence from the USA, still growing and then think back to the BBC Scotland report. They treated the issue as if it were worthy of balance because both sides seemed honest when, in fact, the industry is utterly corrupt in its behaviour, lying openly about the evidence from the USA. This is not the people vs computer games or vs chocolate where there are legitimate arguments on either side; this is, according to HM Chief Scientific Adviser, the contemporary version of the people vs tobacco or thalidomide or asbestos. To balance and to select out damaging evidence, in the interests of 'business', is to distort reality as media did for decades with tobacco. Try again, BBC Scotland. '

<https://thoughtcontrolscotland.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/i-feel-the-earth-move-under-my-feet.pdf>

My report has, again, been widely ignored other than in social media.

