

Media interviews on Brexit

It is commonplace for tv programmes on the BBC and even on some independent channels to interview far more Remain than Brexit sympathisers, and to give them more uninterrupted airtime. Doing some interviews again this week I was reminded how bizarre it sometimes is.

There is first the test they sometimes apply to you. They ask if you would be willing to come on. When you say you will they then interview you for the task to see if they think your views are the ones they wish you to have for the sake of their programme. Sometimes they drop you, presumably because your views are not stupid or extreme.

Then there is the barrage of interruptions when you are on, if you dare to say sensible and moderate things. They are constantly putting words in your mouth that you have never uttered or thought, and you have to spend the interview denying their words are or ever have been your views. They are particularly hostile to new points or points they have not heard before.

If you look as if you are going to answer a question they think should floor you, they interrupt with another one in the hope that you will not have an answer to that.

I cant remember on Brexit when I was last asked an original or different question. The whole debate is repetitious, going over the same old lines we rehearsed on both sides endlessly for the referendum campaign. Every day is Groundhog day. We have debated at length the issue of membership of the Customs Union and single market, and the Commons has twice decisively voted against remaining in either. Now Labour wants to do it all over again as some Labour MPs have apparently changed their mind and wish to ditch their Manifesto on this matter. So the media then goes through it all over again. There is little likelihood of another Commons vote before Easter on this.

It is easy for the media to know what I am likely to say, because my views are all set out on every issue they raise on this topic on this website. Most of them interviewing me seem to be briefed by researchers that have never read my actual views, yet nonetheless reckon they know them better than I do.

Some in the media still have not grasped that the Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland border is already a complex border with a different currency, different Excise taxes, VAT and Income taxes either side which need sorting out as goods move across. This does not need a man or woman in a kiosk on the border doing the sums whilst vans and lorries wait. It is all done electronically. So why can't the new arrangements be done similarly? Have these interviewers ever heard of TIR, Authorised Economic Operators, and electronic manifests? If not, it is difficult for them to ask sensible questions of those who think all this means watch towers and Customs officers holding everyone up which no-one wants and we do not need.