



Steve Morrison
BBC Board Member for Scotland
Portland Place
London
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26 November 2018

Dear Steve,

Organisations with secretive funding arrangements on the BBC

On Thursday 8 November during your appearance before the Culture Committee I asked your colleagues and yourself a number of questions regarding the BBC providing a platform to organisations who advance specific agendas without disclosing the sources of their funding.

In particular, I highlighted the example of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). The IEA is registered as an education charity and portrays itself as an independent think tank. However, undercover investigations have found the group offering corporate interests (with specific allegations in relation to the casino industry) the ability to substantially shape the content of their reports, as well as to buy access through the IEA to UK Government ministers.

These allegations have also led to the IEA being investigated by both the Charity Commission and the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists. The purpose of the *Newsnight* package to which I referred in our exchange was to advocate for the privatisation of the NHS.

There are clear and well-founded concerns that the IEA is simply a pseudo-think-tank for hire, used to launder policies beneficial to corporate interests without those corporate interests being seen to back them.

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You offered to examine this instance and get back to me. I would like to take up that offer. I would be grateful for a specific explanation of your claim that such contributions are made in 'full context' when the full context of the IEA is not available to you or I. Both in general terms and in relation to this specific package, how is 'full context' provided when the organisations platformed do not conform to basic transparency measures.

If you could confirm whether or not the IEA is funded by private healthcare companies for example, who would of course stand to profit significantly from the dismantling of our National Health Service, you would have not just my gratitude but that of many journalists and transparency campaigners who are unable to access this information.

In addition to explaining the circumstances around the IEA being invited onto Newsnight, I would also like to press the broader point about hosting organisations which do not disclose their funding.

As a further example, I raised concerns regarding the so-called 'Tax Payers' Alliance'. While claiming to represent a grassroots movement of taxpayers, their funding is also highly secretive, they have no mechanisms by which taxpayers can join or influence policy and are in fact a small company owned by just two individuals.

It was recently revealed (and not through their own disclosures) that the 'Tax Payers' Alliance' have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding from US-based donors, including a billionaire-founded trust incorporated in the Bahamas. Like the IEA, the TPA is regularly invited onto the BBC and given the appearance of an advocacy group for ordinary tax payers, which they simply are not. As with the IEA, they advocate specific policy positions for which those suspected of funding them could profit considerably. And like the IEA, they do not reveal their donors. The same questions of providing 'full context' I have asked in regards to the IEA apply to the TPA.

Could you therefore please also outline to me what working procedure or guidance the BBC has in place concerning organisations which do not disclose their funding and for whom there are clear and well publicised concerns that they are funded by private interests to promote policies favourable to those interests?

I have copied this letter to Anne Bulford, Deputy Director General and Donalda MacKinnon, Director, BBC Scotland, the other BBC representatives at our recent committee meeting.

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In keeping with my personal commitments to transparency, I will publish this letter and the BBC's response.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ross Greer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ross Greer MSP

CC Donalda MacKinnon, Director BBC Scotland
Anne Bulford, Deputy Director-General

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