

**Jubilee Debt Campaign  
at Newcastle University**

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**NorthEast**

**CALL TO ACTION**

on global poverty & climate change

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Writer & Broadcaster

**Guy Opperman**  
Conservative MP for Hexham

**Lord Rupert Redesdale &  
Lady Helen Redesdale**

**Development Coordinator:**

**David W. Golding CBE PhD DSc DCL**

BBC Complaints,  
Ref's CAS-3433922-5QXHXH & -3449939-2LKXXR

24<sup>th</sup> September, 2015

Dear Ciaran Hanna and Nicola Stewart,

I write as a strong supporter of the BBC and an opponent of those who wish to see its independence curbed and its reach reduced.

Thank you for your letters of 19<sup>th</sup> August and 3<sup>rd</sup> September, respectively. Thank you too for both their courteous tone (which contrasted to the, perhaps, too choleric tone of my remarks!) and for your evident wish to meet me half way. I apologise most sincerely for my delay in acknowledging receipt – there have been good reasons for this, but I will not bore you with the details.

Unhappily, despite your admission of failure, in some respects, on the part of the BBC to maintain high standards in the programme, “What’s the point of...The Met Office”, broadcast on 5<sup>th</sup> August, I do not believe you have adequately faced up to the extent of the failure.

First, the programme was not *just* “an irreverent approach offering alternatives to well-established views” – in this case on the Met Office. It was exploited by Quentin Letts to provide a platform for a whole series of manifestly dogmatic, erroneous – indeed absurd – statements repudiating and ridiculing the fundamentals of climate science. Incidentally, your use of the word “views” is significant in this context. Well established scientific positions are not just ‘views’, like political opinions for example, but are based on evidence.

Second, you express regret only for the omission from the programme of statements clarifying “where the balance of the argument currently lies on climate change”, etc., as if the inclusion of such statements would have provided a reasonable balance. It would not. Would be it be acceptable to broadcast a programme in which a series of contributors are given leave to rubbish the safety and efficacy of the MMR vaccine as long as a perfunctory statement of the established position of medical science is slipped in at the end? I think not.

Cont'd

I really don't know what it is about climate science! No one would consider the situation outlined above with respect to the MMR vaccine to be tolerable, whereas it *is* considered acceptable to give every Tom, Dick and Sally a platform to sound off on climate change, however ill-qualified they are to express an *informed* opinion on the subject.

The response by Mr Justice Burton, when he was asked to rule that a climate sceptical video should be sent to schools to 'balance' the influence of Al Gore's film, 'An Inconvenient Truth', should be taken to heart by every responsible editor. He stated that this would be like giving equal weight to a position that the moon is made of "*green cheese*" (his very words) on one hand, to the current scientific position on the other!

In paragraph 16 of the Judge's ruling, he stated that: "The balanced approach does not involve equality... In other words, a 'balanced' approach is perfectly consistent with having a strong preference for the current scientific position, over and against one which asserts that the moon is made out of green cheese (to take an extreme case). The balanced approach does not involve equality". Just so.

In my submission to the Leveson Inquiry (which was welcomed by the Inquiry team and included in its published evidence), I stated that the potential damage to human welfare of the abuses (one of which related to climate change) to which I was drawing attention is several orders of magnitude greater than that involved in the matters, such as 'phone hacking, which led to the setting up of the Inquiry. Indeed, "billions are likely to perish under conditions of catastrophic global collapse unless we rise to the challenge of climate change. Much of the press is currently complicit in an almighty gamble – a gamble with the welfare of the whole of humanity, which risks bequeathing to our children and grandchildren a veritable hell on earth."

Unhappily, nothing I have learned since that time has led me to change my mind and that is why it matters that the BBC, of all people, should get this right.

I would like to take this matter further and I would be grateful if you would let me know how I can do so. A brief email message will suffice.

Yours sincerely,

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