



Head of Programme Complaints
BBC Broadcasting House
London W1A 1AA

London Feb 10 2004

To whom it may concern,

Today I have read the following extract in the BBC website:

BBC Governors today (Wednesday 4 February 2004) publish the latest findings of their Programme Complaints Committee for the period 1 October to 31 December 2003.

Further, at the very end of the same report my attention was drawn on this particular paragraph:

The Unit's target is to deal with most complaints within 20 working days of receiving them. A target of 35 days applies to a minority of cases (8.5% in this quarter) which require longer or more complex investigation. During the period 1 October–31 December 2003, 29% of replies were sent within their target time.

To be frank the aforesaid is insulting. The reasons for my utter discontent are various. Firstly the report deals with the complaints received by the Programme Complaints Unit between Oct 1 2003 and Dec 31 2003. In that period of time the BBC broadcast on two occasions a film by the name of "Chavez: inside the coup, the revolution will not be televised." The first instance was Oct 16 2003 at 11.30 PM on BBC2 and the second instance was Nov 18 2003 at 11 PM when BBC4 Storyville's feature presentation was again the same film. Worth noting that this was indeed the second time that Storyville had presented said film.

On Oct 17 2003 I made use of the PCU interface in the BBC website for the first time. As director of an international NGO [Incorporation No 4706973] I know that very many of the members of said organisation did the same, hence the amount of complaints was in my views substantial. On Oct 24 2003 I sent an email to Dawn Varney, Assistant to Head of Programme Complaints raising the issue of my discontent vis-à-vis the propagandistic nature of the said film. She replied with a letter on Oct 30 2003 explaining that the PCU was "...looking into the subject of my complaint. We should in a position to give you a response by 27 November 2003 unless we encounter any unexpected delays."

On Nov 27 2003 I received yet another letter from Fraser Steel, Head of Programme Complaints but signed by Ms Varney, in which he stated:



"I am afraid that due to staff sickness and pressure of work, it has taken longer than anticipated to look into your complaint. However, I hope our investigation will be complete in the near future, and I will write to you as soon as I have reached a conclusion."

This letter prompted me to send another email on Nov 27 2003 expressing the following:

"Further to your letter of 24 November 2003, I want to inform you in clear terms that excusing your lack of an appropriate response regarding the transmission of "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" owing to "staff sickness and pressure of work" will not satisfy my utter discontent. I demand my right to reply to be respected and enforced and I also request a prompt and adequate response to this issue. May I remind you that the BBC is an incredibly large corporation with plenty of resources. I should be most grateful if you do not insult my intelligence with such pathetic arguments."

On Dec 11 2003 I forwarded again the same email to Ms Varney, requesting a reply to my original complaint of Oct 17 2003. Between Dec 11 and today I have utilised the PCU interface no less than three times and I have called the PCU at least five times. Each time I have left a message due to the impossibility of speaking to PCU's staff. Last week I spoke to Mr Phillip Abraham of the PCU, asking for an explanation to the absurd delay in dealing accordingly with my complaint. He acknowledged the situation stating that he was aware of the investigations conducted by a colleague of him with respect to the programme in question. Further he assured me that he would have someone from the PCU write and send me an explanatory letter about the situation by the end of last week. I did not receive anything. In view of his lack of performance I rang him today and left yet another message in his voicemail asking him to call me back alas he did not reply.

Why is that the PCU, not only has failed to deal with our genuine demands according to their own guidelines, furthermore it has completely ignored our requests? Why is it that nobody at the PCU has taken the time to investigate these repetitive complaints? Can we assume that the emails and voicemail messages got mysteriously lost?

There are many cases, cited in the BBC Governors' report, that do not constitute such a grave and serious affront to a given group of people. There is precedent, in our view, as to what could happen to reporters or presenters that make use of defamatory language when referring to certain individuals [Kilroy & the Arabs]. There is also precedent in cases where the use of "loose language" has caused great damage and consternation to those talked about [Gilligan & Kelly]. In light of these, it is sound to recognize that a large group of individuals have been unjustly branded by comments made and presented by BBC staff. Exemplary case



Storyville's presenter Nick Fraser referring to the democratic opposition groups of Venezuela as *"...the Versace wearing classes, rich from many decades of oil revenues..."*

Unfortunately that is not the only damage done to us, as a member of those classes that oppose Hugo Chavez I can assure you that I can not afford to wear Versace and therefore that libellous comment offends me. What is even graver is the repercussions that the programme's content has had worldwide. To many the opposition groups in Venezuela are nothing but a lot of oligarchs, fascist, coup-mongers and ruthless people. The carefully edited programme fails to show matters of incredible importance, such as the resignation of Hugo Chavez announced by the then army general commander which was broadcast live in Venezuela's national television or the fact that the tanks depicted in the video were receiving orders from directly from Chavez [the commentator conveniently affirms that those tanks were part of the rebellion and were on their way to the presidential palace]. So much has this film disgusted Venezuelans that a minute analysis of it was made by film-makers and TV engineers to uncover the gross fabrications and tampering portrayed in the film [evidence of this is available upon request] and people depicted in the film are considering to start legal proceedings against the BBC.

The BBC has just come out of a major fiasco and allegedly is quite intent in regaining the tainted credibility. Ergo it is fitting for the PCU to start performing according to the rules and regulations of the company; it is necessary to resolve issues such as this, and lastly it is of utmost importance that the corporation abandons once and for all political stances that have nothing to do with the provision of information or entertainment.

Fiction films ought to be presented as such and not as documentaries if they can not stand deep scrutiny. The BBC must give the chance to those of us who oppose rabidly the authoritarian regime of Hugo Chavez the right to reply for in any story there are always two or more sides and the British and international audience of the BBC have learned about only one thus far.

I should be most grateful if you take the time to read this letter and take appropriate action about it.

Yours faithfully,

Aleksander Boyd
Director of Proveo
9, Cleveland Court
Cleveland Street
London W1T6NH

