

Gavyn Davies

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Sent: 04 July 2003 21:09  
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Subject: RE: Governors' Meeting on Sunday night

On Gavyn's first point, I do think we need to be clear by what we mean about the "accuracy" of "the Gilligan story". Gilligan reported a source as having claimed that the dossier was sexed up. We do not need to judge the accuracy of the source's claim and we appear to have assurances from the Head of News that the source, though uncorroborated, was considered to be both reliable and in a position to know such that it was right to rely on it. So far, so good.

What however does not seem to me to be a matter of factual accuracy, but of interpretation, proportionality and good judgement i.e. good journalism, is the issue of the relative prominence given by the corporation to this story as compared with the denials coming from other sources, including ones that should have commanded respect viz the known position of the Head of the Joint Intelligence Committee. It is much harder for Campbell to accuse the BBC of lying- either directly, or by omission of other evidence- if we can demonstrate that we gave the denials due prominence. What, please, is the evidence concerning this aspect of editorial guidelines? In my view, this is a matter for the Governors since it is typically just the sort of thing that the Governors' Complaints Committee is called upon to adjudicate.

On the question of systemic bias on war coverage, I do not think it will do us good to appear to give a kneejerk reaction. I do not suggest we back away from previous verdicts, but I do think we should say that, while having no reason to vary our previous judgement on the basis of the evidence available to us, in view of the seriousness of the allegations being made, we, the Govs have asked the DG to conduct a full review with the help of one or two external experts to enable him and ourselves to verify our previous judgement. We will need to say that we are prepared to publish the conclusions. Timing for the early Autumn. If we do this, we will, Not disavow management,

Get past the accusation that the BBC never admits error- we are having a second look  
By including some outsiders get over the accusation of whitewash  
Hold the situation past the Launch of the Annual report and the DCMS Committee which will otherwise be virtually impossible to control  
Give us some validated material to deal back to the Government and/or

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