

li K. Joseph
MP



KJ/MEM

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I understand that the B.B.C. has invited Galbraith to give no fewer than 13 talks on economics early next year.

Galbraith, as you know, carries much weight among journalists and communicators as a popularising economist. His books have had and still have great influence on the thinking of students. They are half-baked and dependent upon bold and inaccurate over-simplifications.

Recently Galbraith has written to the Times and articles in other papers supporting Harold Wilson's policies: saying that prices and incomes policies should be permanent, saying that Wilson is leading the world in his economic approach. He is an open advocate of socialism in general and Wilson in particular. While his talks will allegedly be historic, they will certainly carry damaging overtones and may well culminate in expressions of an opinion about our current economic needs.

Before I had heard of this B.B.C. venture, I had already identified, from my many university visits, that Galbraith is about the most dangerous intellectual opponent that we have on the economic front. The little Centre for Policy Studies did, therefore, approach the one man who in my view is capable of demolishing Galbraith. This man is Frank McFadzean, now leaving the chairmanship of Shell to become the Chairman of British Airways. Frank, whom you probably know, is also a Visiting Professor at Strathclyde University. In about 1967 he delivered and then published three annihilating lectures on Galbraith.

The Centre, therefore, asked him whether he would write a book demolishing Galbraith. He replied that a book would be too much for him to tackle but he has undertaken to bring up-to-date his three lectures and to let the Centre publish them. So far, so good. It was McFadzean who told me about the 13 proposed lectures. He is horrified at the idea that they should be delivered in so authoritative a form. He tells me that a B.B.C. man compared them to Bronowski's "The Ascent of Man"! They are, of course, entirely different since they may be a vehicle for polemical and party-political opinions.

...../ Frank McFadzean



Frank McFadzean himself proposed to the B.B.C. that someone who disagreed with Galbraith and could answer him should be invited to appear in parallel with him. But it is questionable whether a point by point answer would surface if the talks follow Galbraith's familiar lines.

The series could be immensely damaging to the country and to us - and I do therefore suggest that we need to discuss what, if anything, we should do.

We could either warn the B.B.C. that we have heard of their intentions and would like to inquire what plans they have, in the light of Galbraith's recent letters and articles - of which I attach copies - to ensure that an equally authoritative but opposing point of view is put in as weighty a form. That would be one suggestion. The B.B.C. are bound to say that they commissioned the talks, as I understand they did, about two years ago, before Galbraith's article and letter. But at least it would put them on warning and would, I hope, lead them perhaps to inviting someone like McFadzean to give an equivalent series.

The alternative would be to wait until Galbraith's talks have begun and then to weigh in with strong protest.

Or we could do nothing.

I am copying this letter to Margaret and to Geoffrey.

Geoffrey replied to the Observer piece in a very effective article.

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