

1 CC: S. Trahern

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MANASSAS, VA 22111-3750

Dear Sir:

Christmas card
12-20-90

December 12, 1990

I feel that C-SPAN is guilty of false and misleading advertising. Your slogan, AVAILABLE TO ALL does not apply to myself and the other federal workers who do most of the work of keeping the government operating while the members of Congress take a long, long holiday recess. Since we are not allowed access to C-SPAN, our views do not reach the American public.

I have made several attempts to get booked on one of your talk shows. I have written several letters, but they all apparently wind up in the wastebasket. I have also come to your studios, but all I get is the run-around from the receptionist at the front desk.

C-SPAN gave extensive coverage to the debates in Congress during the "budget crisis", but you virtually ignored what effect the furlough program would have on myself and the other federal workers. You also ignored the fact that the gasoline tax and the other new taxes will have a DEVASTATING effect on me and my fellow workers, since we earn about 30% less than our counterparts in the private sector.

I feel that President Bush and the members of Congress have entered into a conspiracy to try and ignore the Pay Comparability Act. This is a law that is supposed to give the federal workers the same rate of pay as given to workers in the private sector. C-SPAN has become a part of this conspiracy by not covering this issue, and by denying me access to your talk shows, where I can bring this matter to public attention.

I make no claim to being a lawyer, but I feel that giving the members of Congress, federal judges, cabinet-level officials and other government executives a pay raise of 30% or more, while giving me and my fellow workers a measly 5.5% raise is grossly unfair. Simple justice demands that all federal workers should get the 30% raise to help meet the high cost of living and working in the Washington DC region.

There was a time, when the pay gap could have been closed by giving the federal workers a 10% raise in addition to the yearly cost of living raises. This would allow the federal wages to be brought up to the salary levels in private industry over a period of three or four years. This opportunity has been lost, so that most federal workers NEED the 30% raise as a matter of simple survival.

If possible, this 30% raise should be made retroactive to the start of the current fiscal year. The policy of starting a pay raise in January is an accounting trick that is designed to steal money from the federal workers.

Last year, and the year before, the cost of living raises were wiped out by cost increases for most health plans, so most federal workers wound up with a net pay cut, or less money in their paychecks.

I feel President Reagan left behind a time-bomb that will explode all over the newspapers and TV screens about the time George Bush is nominated for his second term as President. This will be picked up and used as a campaign issue, and there is a very good chance that President Bush will wind up as a one-term President, and he will go into the history books as another Herbert Hoover.

Most of the federal workers who were hired when President Kennedy was in office will become eligible to retire in 1992. This mass exodus of federal workers will force most agencies to shut down, or cut back sharply on services to the public. It will require an expensive crash program to hire and train the next generation of federal workers.

Most young workers do not consider a career in the federal service as a realistic option. If they take a government job, this is to get training and work experience. Just when the individual becomes a productive worker, they quit to take a job at much higher pay in the private sector. In effect, most agencies have become little more than training schools for the Beltway Bandits.

Also, most senior workers have left the federal service, since they can no longer support their families on government pay. There was a time, when a federal worker could buy a house, a car, support a spouse and raise several children, all on a SINGLE paycheck. Today, in order to maintain a comparable lifestyle, BOTH parents must work at full-time jobs.

This creates real hardship for widows, widowers, divorced persons, persons who choose not to marry, and others who live alone by choice or circumstance. If my wife were still alive, she would be required to work outside the home to help the family finances.

I have no hard evidence of this, but I suspect that more than a few federal workers are trying to moonlight by selling illegal drugs, running numbers, or engaging in prostitution. How else can you explain a murder rate of 400-plus this year alone? This sets a bad example for young kids, since the lure of easy money from selling illegal drugs cannot compete with the prospect of spending 20 or 30 years working on government pay.

Most of the homeless people you see on the street are present and former federal workers who were evicted when they fell behind in rent payments, or when their apartment building was sold for condo conversion. The 30% pay raise would allow many families to make a security deposit on an apartment or a down-payment on a house. This would also allow me, and many others living on the edge of poverty to stay in our homes and not wind up freezing to death during the current winter season.

The home-builders and real-estate agents are crying the blues, because they got stuck with houses they cannot sell. This is because most federal workers are priced out of the housing market. For example, the median (middle) house price in Montgomery County is approximately \$217,191, so the buyer must have a yearly income of \$74,900 to qualify for a mortgage. The median house price in Prince George's County is \$123,300 which requires an annual income of \$42,200 to buy. In Northern Virginia, the median house price is around \$178,104 which requires an income of \$60,981 to buy the house. (Prince William JOURNAL, April 18/19, 1990).

The newspaper ran a survey which showed that 34% of the respondents had been "negatively affected" by the housing crunch, 67% would like to buy a house, but cannot afford to do so, and 35% said they would like to move up to a larger house, but cannot afford it.

Of those renters polled who would like to buy a house but cannot: 71% do not have the money for down payment, 39% cannot afford to pay the closing costs, 39% cannot afford the mortgage payments, and 34% cannot qualify for a mortgage loan.

Of those respondents who would like to move up but cannot: 39% do not have the money for a down payment. 26% cannot qualify for a mortgage loan. 26% do not have the money for closing costs. 45% cannot afford the mortgage payments.

The newspaper calls the housing crisis a "Sword of Damocles cutting across class lines from Olney to Upper Marboro to Old Town, Alexandria VA." (Prince William Journal, April 18/19, 1990)

The retail merchants are experiencing a slow Christmas season and a sharp drop in last-quarter profits. This started in the fall, when the furloughs became a real threat. Most federal workers started cutting back on non-essential expenses in order to get through the unpaid days off, and they have continued this policy, because money is needed to meet the high gas prices and to buy heating oil for the winter. There is simply less money available for Christmas gifts and other discretionary spending.

I consider it a national disgrace that federal workers GS-5 and below can now qualify for food stamps and other welfare payments. If present trends are continued for much longer, most federal workers would be better off to quit thier job and live off welfare payments.

The pay reform bill does NOTHING for me and for most of my fellow workers, since the locality pay and other benefits do not take effect until 1994 or later, when most of my generation has gone into retirement.

A large part of the budget deficit can be traced back to the fact that the IRS cannot hire enough revenue agents and auditors and pay them what they are worth. As a result, the tax cheaters know full well that the Internal Revenue Service does not have the resources and personell to handle any but the most flagrant violations of the tax laws, where property can be siezed and sold to pay the tax bill. The money that is saved on personell salaries is being lost in the form of uncollected taxes.

Most of the problems with the Space Shuttle and the other NASA programs can be traced back to the fact that most of the top scientists and engineers have left the government service, frequently citing the lousy pay and the lack of prestige given to government workers.

You can go into any federal agency and find a host of problems that are the result of a shortage of qualified personell and a very low morale factor among the workers still on the job. Since a federal worker cannot expect much in the way of pay raises or promotions, the will to do a good job and give full value for every dollar of taxpayer's money is gone.

This is starting to affect the delivery of services to the public. The Smithsonian museums have cut back on operating hours because there are not enough people willing to work long hours at low pay as museum guards or other staff positions.

When the government was shut down over the Colombus Day holiday, the press had a field day photographing the CLOSED sign on the Washington Monument and in interviewing tourists who had vacation plans ruined. The Crisis of 1992 will be more severe and longer-lasting, and will affect all government operations, because there will not be enough qualified people left to do the work.

When the fiscal year ended, and President Bush had the power to invoke the GRH sequester and the furlough program, the press reported that the Weather Bureau would have to close down most of the field stations and cut back on non-essential work at the regional centers. This forced the airline companies to scream bloody murder, since a plane cannot take off without accurate and timely weather information for the departure point and the destination. It did not take long for the weather bureau workers to be reclassified as "essential workers" who would be exempt from the furlough.

Also, the air-traffic controllers were reclassified as "essential workers", again as a result of pressure from the airlines and the business travellers.

The same process of reasoning could be used to reclassify every federal employee as an "essential worker", since our work affects every citizen, voter and taxpayer in some way. Who do you think was first on the scene when a construction accident left a big hole in the middle of Washington DC? It did not take very long for the investigators from the FAA to arrive at the airport where two aircraft collided on the runway.

Not only must we pay the gasoline tax, but we also are charged with the responsibility of translating the new law into specific actions that will affect every motorist. For example, the tax on diesel fuel has just about doubled my cost for commuting to and from Washington DC, but it will also hit the heavy truckers. They can pass this cost on to the consumer in the form of higher prices in the stores, whereas I must absorb the cost increase from my pocket.

Sincerely,

