

May 20, 1997

[REDACTED]
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Phone: [REDACTED]

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-SPAN
400 N. Capital Street NW #650
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Washington Journal

Dear Mr. Lamb:

In the past I have written to you about Steve Scully and his too obvious biases. I am sure his personal politics have not changed, but he does seem to be somewhat more evenhanded, so I will pass on this subject. Instead I will attempt to deal with the broader issue of impartiality, and then go on to some suggestions (I hope the former will not prejudice you about the latter).

On Friday, May 16, 1997, on your Newspaper Roundtable, you had Geneva Overholzer, the Washington Post ombudsman (ombudswoman or ombudsperson?), and Brent Bozell, chairman of Media Research Center. As she herself expressed she did not understand why she was there. She thought she was there to talk about the media, while Mr. Bozell spun everything into political attacks on Democrats, and President Clinton in particular. I know how hard you try to represent both points of view, and I respect you for that. But programming doesn't quite get the message. They go all the way from moderate left of center to the extreme right. Overholzer and Bozell are just one example. You never go to the extreme left, but you often go to the extreme right. Yes, I know, you do have David Corn or some of the other Nation writers, and Ruth Conniff from the Progressive, but these are not bomb throwers like Bozell and other extremists from the right.

Then the next day you had Kevin Davis, from the office of Sen. Jack Reed, matched with Horace Cooper, from the office of House Leader Dick Armey. This is another example of a moderate matched with an extremist right ideologue. I know that everyone believes that the scales are tilted against them, so I really try to be objective. But Davis made every effort to come down the middle, while Cooper, constantly interrupting, made no such effort.

Mr. Brian Lamb
May 20, 1997
Page Two

This last example occurred on JJ's watch. He is a very nice young man, but perhaps not yet ready for prime time. I believe you think so as well, because he is always given third level guests-usually very young staff members to Congressmen, or staff on some obscure agency. I support your effort to bring along new hosts, and especially minorities (I think he is the only one I have seen), but he should have more interviewing experience before assuming this position.

Now for the suggestions, and there are two:

1. You should red out the area on a state map in a number of instances:

a. You used to have Congressmen interviewed for breaks between segments of Washington Journal. Their district should be outlined in red on a state map.

b. The same should be done for your guests, where appropriate (if they represent, or come from a district or area).

c. The same should apply to journalist guests. The area covered by their paper, or the place from where the magazine emanates, should be outlined.

d. The last one I can think of now is just before Washington Journal you have a representative of a cable company. Show their coverage on a map of the state.

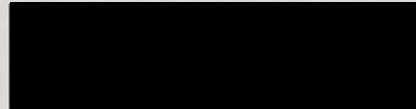
2. Next I turn to your division in calls between Democrats, Republicans and others. I support that division, but too many do not. Even with this breakdown, the calls are generally 75% to 80% or more to the right. There are times when I hear four or five callers in a row from that side. First I would make it clear that it is not sufficient to say, "I have been a Democrat all my life.", and then lambast (is that a dirivative of your name?) President Clinton and his administration. If they are attacking Democrats, call on one of the other two lines. If they persist in doing it anyway, cut them off politely. And

Mr. Brian Lamb
May 20, 1997
Page Three

finally, indicate to viewers what line the caller is on, so we can gauge their compliance as well. If callers call on one line but attack that party, the rest of their comments are suspect as well. It is like in court, where if a witness lies about one subject, the rest of their testimony is also suspect.

I hope you took the time to read the entire letter, and if you did I appreciate it and thank you.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.