

To Brian Lamb
~~FAX~~

August 18 - Monday

Dear Brian -- once again I feel impelled to write to you after watching and listening to Tocqueville this A.M. and the various reactions and points made. It got to be almost comical, mentally I could identify with almost every caller from the one who said it was "boring" to those who exuded enthusiasm about the programs as enhancing travel.

Could I just insert one quick request in case you don't bother to read all this? When you insert radio talk shows into programming (I love that!) could you feature some talk shows from the TalkAmerica stations? Particularly Pat Choate (who is on 5-7 every weekday evening) and I just found out that one of their new hosts, Stan Emert, hosts the Mike Siegel radio talk show on Friday and Monday evenings 9p.m.-midnight and Stan is a member of the REFORM PARTY! Unique!

Also, I don't believe (even during the primaries) you've ever had Dan Peirce of WGIR 610, Manchester NH on. He too is unique because EVERYONE stops to get on Dan's show and he is next thing to C-Span in being welcoming and balanced to all views. From minor candidates to people like Al Gore and Newt, he has them on. And as you know from your Road to the White House the woods are already full of wannabes up here! I love it.

As to callers this A.M. I agree to some extent with all of them!!

Not boring, and I think that young man did not mean precisely that, nor the one who started "Tocqueville Schokeville" because both callers sounded too bright and intelligent to be bored. I think they meant, frustrated and impatient and so caught up with thinking about PRESENT political situation that they can't sit still for this l-o-o-ng backward perspective.

My opinion? Well, I'm a politically ACTIVE part of the third force in American politics that gets virtually no media attention, crumbs of information, in this Niagara Falls deluge of attention to a long-dead critic. Can't help thinking -- what about featuring PRESENT DAY CRITICS from outside both of the two parties whose activities and press conferences dominate so much of C-Span's present time?

There's so much -- more and more and more -- of your format with two people representing both parties and repeating their arguments and views like mantras. First it was the democrats (I'm convinced Dick Morris had them in for special training to persist, talk over other person, and repeat the same few arguments over and over) and now the republicans are copying that style. Sometimes I think Susan MUST be frustrated, like a tennis match with no end -- isn't there a myth from the Greeks about that being Hades?

And that's where you COULD have people from various think tanks to at least set the facts straight, and people from Green, Libertarian, U.S. Taxpayers and Reform to challenge BOTH parties once in a while.

And I wish you'd reconsider your scheduling come fall, because I feel that Dick Morris has sort of trained the White House HOW to take up every spare minute C-Span has. Your only legal commitment is the Congress, gavel to gavel. I see no reason to give the two parties all that time for press

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conferences -- which are PR events pure and simple. I see no reason to shift to the White House for every little bit of activity when we KNOW (from reading his book) that this was one of Morris' contribution to keeping in the public eye -- lots of trivia for the soccer moms. Major legislation? Fine, but serve notice that they don't get time for trivia -- and skip Al Gore's stuff altogether!

The first bored caller suggested issues programs in preparation from when Congress gets back. That is a great idea! There are momentous issues coming up that neither party want much light shed on. This is the time to do it! Heavenly three weeks with Bill Clinton on vacation! If you cover even one minute of that -- I will begin to wonder what has happened to C-span! But then I suppose he'll call a press conference to announce some bit of nonsense and you'll feel you have to interrupt the schedule to do it.

I hear from internet that there is going to be some attempt at free TV time for political candidates with Norman Orenstein involved. THAT would be a good topic. Clinton is determined to once again get "fast track" authority and expand NAFTA to the Caribbean. Very complicated constitutional subject that your audience desperately needs education about.

NAFTA/GATT have innumerable sub-topics that would raise Cain if they got out into public debate -- monster trucks that Canada and Mexico (and UPS!) are lobbying to have "snuck" thru in some transportation bill, the patent bill we-all out here helped to get drastically amended by Marcy Kaptur is back again with Sen. Hatch trying to slip it through unamended in the Senate, etc., etc., etc.

If my friends in the Reform Party who concentrate on other issues, ^{as I do on trade} were asked, they would find many more major pieces of legislation in the works for fall about which the public knows little or nothing.

But bored? Never. I leave Toqueville on. It's almost impossible for me to be bored with anything on C-Span. I try to discipline myself NOT to get involved or curious about new issues (like Pakistan yesterday) because there's not enough time in the day for the politics and issues I MUST cover to keep up with my activities with the Reform Party.

I do believe that your Toqueville treatment IS A BIT repetitious in that you seem to attempt to bring the audience up to speed with each new segment. Do I remember incorrectly that when you did the Lincoln-Douglas debates you ASSUMED people achieved a certain level of knowledge of the series as you went along? Maybe that's the source of the "repetitious" accusations.

But it fits very well into your over-all editorial guidelines, I have no quarrel with that.

I'm a history fan, and also edit Traveler's Reading Guide (I sent you a copy a year or two ago) the philosophy of which is precisely what one of your goals are for Tocqueville -- history and background reading as providing texture for the travel experience, or to quote my own book "turns tourists into perceptive travelers."

Do you know when your series started, I immediately went to TRG and found to my horror that there was NO Tocqueville in my list of background reading for the U.S.A.! I couldn't believe it. I thought I must've just left it out of the index. I knew of Tocqueville. We read him in high school over 50 years ago. It's precisely the kind of book I WOULD include.

But NO, I goofed! And evidently my editor at Facts on File didn't pick it up either. I DID get down my hundreds of 3 x 5 cards from storage and found I had a couple of Tocqueville cards to add to the U.S.A. Just an egregious omission from my manuscript. To make it even worse, under the sub-head "Travelers and Travel Writing of the Past" I included nine books ranging from Isabella Bird to Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. The only saving grace is that I also included a couple of anthologies that I am certain included excerpts of Toqueville. Nevertheless it was a shock!

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P.S. As I type this President Ford is on. Now HE'S BORING!! Turning him off right now to listen to Dan Pierce, until 12 and then shift back to that roundtable that includes Russ Verney.

Thanks for all you do!