

FYI

[REDACTED]  
Brier, Washington 98036-8355  
July 21, 1993

Eric S. Kronen  
Sr. Vice President, Regional Manager  
VIACOM Cable  
900 - 132nd Street S.W.  
Everett, WA 98204

Dear Mr. Kronen,

I am writing to you because I am very angry about your decision to cut large periods of time from C-SPAN and to insert in its place Black Entertainment Television.

For several years while we lived in Seattle, my husband and I paid for his mother to have the cable (Viacom). We could not afford to subscribe for ourselves and for her, too. When we moved with along with her into a single dwelling here in Brier, we were a last able to see C-SPAN at any hour of the day or night that we might chose. However, we have usually watched C-SPAN between 5:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. in the morning and from 8 or 9 p.m. evening until 12:00 a.m. in the early morning.

It is totally ludicrous that you have chosen block out extended periods of C-SPAN replacing these with Black Entertainment Television. Further it is absolutely infuriating that you have chosen to block it at these particular hours. The morning is the time during which some of the most important hearings are broadcast and in the evening you are now chopping the "Event of the Day" is routinely in half!

There are other channels available on your cable lineup that would far more logically share time with this genre of proگرامing. For example Channel 35 "Comedy Central" and Channel 18 "MTV".

On the other hand C-SPAN, according to its own description, provides the following things (It is the only channel which does--or even purports to do this!):

It provides ". . .access to the live gavel-to-gavel proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate and to other forums where public policy is discussed, debated and decided--all without editing, commentary or analysis and with a balanced presentation of points of view."

It provides ". . .elected and appointed officials and others who would influence public policy a direct conduit to the audience without filtering or otherwise distorting their points of view."

Also, they ". . . provide the audience, through the call-in programs, direct access to elected officials, other decision makers, and journalists on a frequent and open basis."

Finally, they ". . . employ production values that accurately convey the business of government rather than distract from it." And they ". . . conduct all other aspects of its operations consistent with these principles."

At first it seemed reasonable to believe that you had chosen to do this because C-SPAN carries coverage of the Congress and it was the Congress that passed the *Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992*. So that you it appeared that you were coincidentally giving them a political *tit for tat*.

However, in my research, it has become clearer what may actually have motivated this decision. As the saying goes, "Follow the money!"

You are carrying Black Entertainment Television programming to satisfy Sec. 9. LEASED COMMERCIAL ACCESS (C) ACCESS FOR QUALITY MINORITY PROGRAMMING SOURCES AND QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING SOURCES. (2) of the *Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992*. This section says, "For purposes of this subsection, the term 'qualified minority programming source' means a programming source which devotes substantially all of its programming to coverage of minority viewpoints, or programming directed at members of minority groups, and which is over 50 percent minority-owned, as the term 'minority' is defined in section 309(i)(3)(C)(ii).", p.106 STAT. 1485.

The title of this section implies that Black Entertainment Television is according to Sec. 9. LEASED COMMERCIAL ACCESS (b) COMMISSION RULES ON MAXIMUM REASONABLE RATES AND OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS. (2)(i) is probably paying ". . . the maximum reasonable rates that a cable operator may establish pursuant to paragraph (1) for commercial use of designated channel capacity . . ."

On the other hand the C-SPAN "1993 U.S. Congress Handbook on p. viii under the heading of *Who Owns and Funds C-SPAN?* states, "C-SPAN obtains its operating funds from the cable systems that offer the network to their customers."

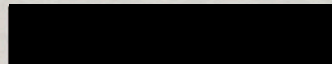
What has become quite clear is that you carry Black Entertainment Television and get *paid* for it. If you carry C-Span in its entirety *you have to pay* for that. Somewhere, as your paramount criteria for this choice, the "the bottom line" appears--not concern for good service to the community or even fairness, just raw greed--or greater "profits" if you like!

However, you do try to promote the impression that you have a paramount concern for your subscribers. In your previous letter regarding the 1992 Cable Act you say things like, "At Viacom, we are working to ensure compliance with the least amount of disruption to your viewing. . . Decisions about changing the line up were not easy. We regret that compliance may result in discontinuing programming you may enjoy. As we continue to work with local television stations, some of the decisions noted below may change again."

The only change you actually note is the one inserting Black Entertainment Television into the midst of the programming from C-SPAN. The programming from C-SPAN, which you have characterized as some we "may enjoy", is in reality the most crucial programming you carry. Because your cable system constitutes a monopoly, I am not able to turn to another cable service for redress of this clear disservice!

Your most recent letter to Viacom customers wherein you discuss "retransmission consent". Your statement affords a clear illustration of how you are already positioning yourself with Viacom customers visa a visa the four local stations, should they deny you *free* "retransmission consent." So much for your concern for your customers! It appears obvious that the surmise about your "paramount criteria" is confirmed by your own words!

Sincerely,



cc: Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Rep. 1st Dist.

C-SPAN

Attorney General, Washington State