

September 21, 1992

Brian Lamb
C-Span
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I am a frequent viewer of your interview programs and must commend you on your evenhandedness and, generally, on the selection of interviewees. But....

I just finished watching the performance by John Lambro of the Washington Times and would urge that you analyze his lack of response to questions asked and his parroting of partisan sound bites. Discussion of issues seemed beyond his intellectual skills.

For example:

1. A viewer asked a question directly relating to the competence of Washington journalists which used the events generally referred to as "Iran-contra" to ask why those events had not been reported on at the time of their occurrence rather than years later. Mr. Lambro disregarded the import of the question relative to journalistic competence and, instead, launched into a Reaganite defense of the events. If he is so biased that he can't hear the question--or so lacking in integrity that he simply scorned the caller's question--he hardly merits a repeat appearance.

2. Asked what President Bush, Dan Quayle, et al will do about restoring traditional family values in the country, Mr. Lambro attacked Hollywood productions, various forms of modern music and television performances. It is not at all clear to me how that reply is related to the question about the President, Vice President, etc. Mr. Lambro may or may not be right about the alleged decline in traditional values and I might even agree with his views, but that is irrelevant: If he wants to preach his ideology rather than answer viewers' questions, he should appear elsewhere than on your program.

3. Twice Mr. Lambro referred to the question which Bernard Shaw of CNN asked Gov. Dukakis during the 1988 debates, citing that question as an exemplar of good journalism. I have been a journalist for 40 years and I still have difficulty trying to figure out what that question has to do with the American Presidency. If Mr. Lambro ever casts shadows in your studio again, I would appreciate having him provide the relevant journalistic context for his judgment. I suspect what pleased

him about it was that it put a black journalist in the implicit position of justifying the racist Willie Horton attack ads and thus served partisan political purposes, not public understanding of any issue. Or has President Bush, since his election, changed Federal parole policy to prohibit dangerous Federal felons from being paroled to resume their felonious ways? If so, I haven't heard of it--and if he hasn't, I ask again: "What was the issue to which this allegedly great question was addressed?" (Being memorable is not at all the same as being commendable; Richard Speck, Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin all are memorable, but were they commendable? Ask Mr. Lambro.)

4. And, finally, Mr. Lambro expressed great concern about Gov. Clinton's honesty because of what he termed the Governor's "evasiveness." If I were to apply that standard to Mr. Lambro's responses to several questions (two of which are cited in 1. and 2., above), I would of logical necessity be forced to question Mr. Lambro's honesty. I generally try to avoid such shoddy reasoning by analogy, however. Therefore, I am forced to conclude that Mr. Lambro is either ignorant as to the meaning of common English words and, therefore, didn't understand the questions being asked; lacks sufficient respect for the intelligence of your viewers to believe it necessary to be responsive to their honest queries; or is simply a cynical authoritarian sophist who "knows" what's right and wants to be sure that everyone else gets his "received truths." Whichever--I don't believe he meets the standards normally met by your interviewees.

The foregoing, of course, is all in the context of the particular show on which I watched him. An interview with him relative to his book and its arguments or even on his opinions would be legit and perhaps even enlightening. But enlightenment on political issues does not eventuate from a repetition of partisan soundbites that are irrelevant to the questions asked. Such behavior not only is boorishly insensitive to your viewers, but we get more than enough of it from acknowledged political partisans without being subjected to it from alleged "political correspondents" who are little more than partisan spokesmen hiding behind their press passes.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Bowie, MD 20716

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