

March 23, 1993

Mr. Evans Pierre
C-SPAN
400 North Capitol Street NW
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Pierre:

Thank you for your note of a month ago acknowledging my appearance on C-SPAN. I enjoyed myself thoroughly and hope you will have me back again.

Let me take this opportunity to pitch an idea that has been going through my head for some time. Simply put, I think C-SPAN should consider doing a weekly news round up with people other than journalists. Brian Lamb's round up with semi-regular journalists is just fine as far as it goes, much more thoughtful than the shouting and posturing on "The McLaughlin Group" or "The Capital Gang." But the perspective is still that of journalists, who have a sense of history going back--perhaps--as far as Jimmy Carter, and an epistemology that highlights insider rumors as the highest form of knowledge.

Despite its reputation as an intellectual wasteland, Washington is filled with men and women who could provide different and perhaps even more interesting frames of reference--historians, sociologists, economists, and free floating intellectuals. Although we are less likely than journalists to pontificate confidently about everything, we are equally opinionated and considerably more diverse in our views. For example, in addition to many standard issue academics like myself, there are libertarian scholars at George Mason (e. g., Walter Williams and Leonard Liggio) and astute leftist social critics at the Institute for Policy Studies (e. g., Gar Alperovitz and Kai Bird).

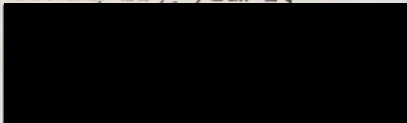
What would such people provide to a C-SPAN viewing audience? The more ideologically committed commentators could offer a perspective almost totally absent from television--that of critics from outside the standard center who are nonetheless thoughtful and lucid instead of bombastic and bizarre. But even conventional academics could open up debate. For instance, discussion of Clinton's economic stimulus package focuses on whether the federal government should spend \$15 billion or \$30 billion, with virtually everyone agreeing that unemployment will remain well above 6% in either case. The debate could be improved beyond the conventional wisdom by recognizing that as recently as the mid-1970s 4% unemployment was considered high normal. What happened?

I doubt that a show with academics and ideologues debating what happened would win great ratings, but who knows? There may be

many news junkies out there as sick of the usual song and dance as I am. And such a show probably wouldn't do worse than the Irish parliament (though I like your broadcasts of the Irish parliament).

In any event, thanks for your time and I hope you will keep me in mind when you need an expert on the presidency or the so-called culture wars.

Sincerely yours,



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