

February 8, 1997

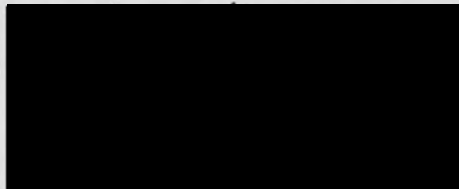
Mr. Frank Rich
New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036-3959

Dear Mr. Rich:

I read your column of 2/5/97 entitled "Lamb to the Slaughter" describing Brian Lamb's frustrations with the cable industry fully carrying C-Span's programming. I also read Elaine Hendrie's letter to the editor of 2/7/97 entitled "Save Smart Television." I enclose my letter of 1/14/97 to Mr. Craig Watson, Vice President and RI State Manager, of Cox Communications which now dominates Rhode Island's cable industry. I also enclose Senator Chafee's response of 1/28/97 to me in which he places his hope for full C-Span coverage in fiber optic technology and digital compression. Your column of 2/5/97 makes me less hopeful that Senator Chafee's technology enablement forecast will overcome the likes of Rupert Murdoch and glitches in the Telecommunications Act.

May I suggest you speak with Ted Turner to solicit his views and potential actions. At his recent National Press Club address, he stated he was motivated to connect CNN to Time-Warner because of his concern for integrity. Maybe Ted's concern for integrity and his role as Vice Chairman of Time-Warner could lead to a helpful voice in fully airing C-Span's programming. Hope to read a column with your interpretation of Ted's slant on the issue.

Sincerely yours,



Providence, RI 02940

cc: Sen. John Chafee
Mr. Brian Lamb

o. cable

JOHN H. CHAFEE
RHODE ISLAND

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

SENATE ARMS CONTROL
OBSERVER GROUP

United States Senate

January 28, 1997

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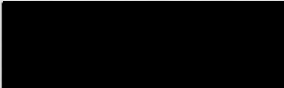
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TOLL FREE NUMBER

IN RHODE ISLAND

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Providence, RI 02940

Dear 

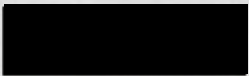
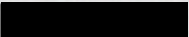
Thank you for writing with regard to your desire to see expanded coverage of U.S. Senate proceedings on *C-SPAN II*. I appreciate hearing from you.

I sympathize with your desire to obtain greater access to coverage of the Senate. I certainly favor cable carriage of entire Senate proceedings for all my constituents, should they so desire.

It is my understanding that Cox's Providence cable system is scheduled for improvements, which entail replacement of the existing lines with fiber optic technology and use of digital compression, allowing for an increase in the system's channel capacity. I have written to Mr. Craig Watson, Cox General Manager, asking that he keep your comments in mind as the company proceeds with modernization of the system, and that he respond to your concerns directly.

Again, thank you for getting in touch. It is my sincere hope that you will be able to view the Senate's proceedings in their entirety in the near future.

Sincerely,


PROVIDENCE RI 02940


January 14, 1997

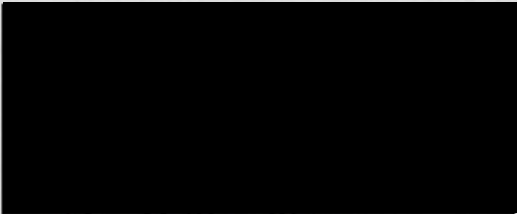
Honorable John Chafee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

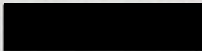
Dear Senator Chafee:

I urge you to urge Mr. Craig Watson, Vice President and RI State Manager of Cox Communications, to make C-Span 2 available twenty-four hours daily to Cox Communications' large subscriber base in Rhode Island. I enclose a copy of my letter to Mr. Watson for your review.

I wish you well in having a highly productive, hopefully moderate, bipartisan session. Thanks for your fine leadership.

Cordially,


cc: Mr. Craig Watson
Mr. Brian Lamb


PROVIDENCE RI 02940


January 14, 1997

Mr. Craig Watson
Vice President and RI State Manager
Cox Communications
9 JP Murphy Highway
West Warwick RI 02893

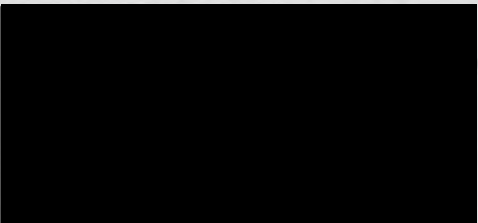
Dear Mr. Watson:

I am in receipt of your letter stating that Cox Communications will replace Continental Cablevision of Pawtucket as my cable provider. I am writing to request that you make C-Span 2 available twenty-four hours daily to your subscribers particularly in Pawtucket and generally throughout Rhode Island.

In 1996, I moved from Providence to Pawtucket, and thus moved from Cox to Continental. Cox in Providence has C-Span 2 available until 8 pm at which time movies are offered. Continental does not provide C-Span 2 at all. In my view, the C-Span network is one of the finest benefits offered by cable television. I believe subscribers should be provided this *whole* public service benefit: C-Span *and* C-Span 2 - both the US House *and* the US Senate (which is broadcast on C-Span 2). Reasons to broadcast C-Span 2 *twenty-four hours daily* are that: (a) the US Senate has responsibilities not found in the US House, e.g. advice & consent and foreign policy, (b) important and interesting US Senate daily activity is rebroadcast in the evening, and (c) the C-Span network's excellent *About Books* program is broadcast on weekend evenings on C-Span 2.

Mr. Watson, your company will now serve a very large segment of the State of Rhode Island's population and draw substantial revenues from this subscriber base for many years into the future. I urge you and your company to exercise good corporate responsibility by providing C-Span and C-Span 2 twenty-four hours a day to your entire subscriber base in Rhode Island. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,


cc: Senator John Chafee
Senator Jack Reed
Mr. Brian Lamb



9 J.P. Murphy Highway
West Warwick, RI 02893
(401) 728-7600

January, 1997

Dear Cable Customer,

Your cable company is going through an exciting change!

Cox Communications has taken the place of your former cable provider, Continental Cablevision of Pawtucket.

For now, the only difference will be our name. You'll still enjoy the same channel line-up, the same rates and packages, and the same customer service center hours and locations. Even the phone numbers are the same!

Starting soon, Cox Communications will begin to introduce some fabulous new services and features guaranteed to put a smile on your face! Take a look:

NEW SERVICE BENEFITS effective February 1, 1997

- **FREE SERVICE AND REPAIR APPOINTMENTS** - We're making the charge for service and repair calls a thing of the past! If your cable service is in need of repair, we'll come out and take care of it at no cost to you—not a penny!
- **ON-TIME SERVICE GUARANTEE** - We are so confident in our Technical Service staff, we back up their punctuality. If we are ever late for a service, repair, or installation appointment at your home, we will gladly credit your account \$20!

MORE SERVICE BENEFITS effective March 1, 1997

- **'ROUND THE CLOCK SERVICE** - Any time you need Cox Communications Customer Service, someone will be there. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we will be available to answer your questions and provide you with the service you need.
- **2-HOUR SERVICE WINDOW** - You'll never spend a whole day waiting for Cox Communications. We will pinpoint the time of your service call within a 2-hour span.
- **FREE ADDITIONAL OUTLETS** - In addition to the cable service on your primary television, Cox Communications will give you FREE programming on any other cable-connected televisions in your home. What a value! We will make this change for you effective March 1. You don't need to do a thing!

Stay tuned—**more important information will be coming your way from Cox Communications** within the next few months. We'll keep you posted every step of the way!

We're proud to be your new cable service provider and wish you and your family a happy and healthy new year!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Craig Watson".

Craig Watson
Cox Communications
Vice President and
Rhode Island State Manager

Journal
FRANK RICH

Lamb To the Slaughter

FEB 5 1997

On the vast spectrum of American culture, Brian Lamb, the éminence grise of C-Span, is to imperturbability what Madonna is to narcissism. In a TV universe of honking pundits, he has staked his entire network on serving up information deadpan, without ever raising his nonpartisan voice. Nothing gets him ticked off.

Or almost nothing. On Jan. 6 there was a rare sighting of an ever-so-slightly testy Mr. Lamb on C-Span. In a speech at the National Press Club in Washington, he pointed out that his network's two-channel, 24-hour menu of public affairs programming had either been cut or eliminated entirely in some nine million homes in the past two or three years. Why? Cable operators will throw off C-Span if they can sell the same precious slot on the dial to a higher bidder. "Rupert Murdoch has dumped more money into Fox News in the last four or five months than C-Span spent in the last 18 years," he said. "He's buying his way on to cable systems." Mr. Lamb added that he was speaking in frustration, not anger, but his words conveyed real heat as he attributed C-Span's travails to the supposedly "fabulous Telecommunications Act" Congress passed last year.

If Brian Lamb, of all non-firebrands, is smoking, there must be fire. And there is. This week marks the first anniversary of President Clinton's signing of that law he (like leaders of both parties) said would spur marketplace competition to give consumers "the benefits of lower prices, better quality and greater choices in their telephone and cable systems." But conglomerates, not competition, now drive TV: prices are higher, choice is less and "better

Media
giants
menace
C-Span.

quality" means more Murdoch and less C-Span.

What makes C-Span's vulnerability a particularly alarming indicator of the perils of our ruthless new media culture is that it, of all quality programming, has theoretically powerful protectors. C-Span is, after all, the prime unfiltered video showcase for Congress. It is also a network created and financed by the cable industry itself, as a gesture of good citizenship and public relations. (C-Span stands for Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network.) But that gesture may have been a fig leaf. As Gene Kimmelman of Consumers Union says, "Now that stock prices are falling, cable companies will do anything to boost earnings."

Public service or even public relations may stand little chance against the imperatives of the bottom line. The merger-enhanced Time Warner-Turner and Tele-Communications Inc. (TCI) now control what roughly half of America's cable subscribers see. You don't find them or other cable companies ejecting sex or shopping or pay-per-view channels to make room for C-Span 2, let alone for outspoken, independent programming that might be produced by some minority voice not owned by themselves, Disney, Fox, Viacom or G.E.

In his speech, Mr. Lamb understandably did not attack the industry that feeds him. It's up to the public and Congress to do so, but will they? "Politicians are terrorized by media moguls and won't take them on except about minor things like the V-chip," says Jeff Chester of the Center for Media Education. Much of the public, though beginning to complain about higher cable rates and to protest C-Span cutbacks (successfully so this month in Seattle), is still in the dark about the vast and troubling implications of the new media conglomerates. As Neil Hickey writes in the Columbia Journalism Review, the 1996 Telecommunications Act was hardly covered by network news and "appeared in the business pages of newspapers (if it appeared at all)."

That's not all that isn't covered. Mr. Hickey wonders how strenuously any TV news organization will investigate human rights abuses in China, given the huge financial interests of their parent corporations in that growing market; NBC even apologized for Bob Costas's criticism of China during the Olympics. Now Brian Lamb tells us that even the most basic of American news — Congressional deliberations — is being silenced in our new TV universe of supposedly infinite choices. We're inured by now to our media giants being greedy, but when a democracy's flow of information is being restricted, something far more important than our monthly cable bill is at stake. □

Save Smart Television

To the Editor: FEB 7 1997

Frank Rich is absolutely right about the gradual elimination of the C-Span networks by cable television operators ("Lamb to the Slaughter," column, Feb. 5). Here on Long Island, our cable provider, Tele-Communications Inc., has dropped C-Span 2 and replaced it with a cartoon network. We cable television viewers are powerless to prevent the downgrading.

A restructuring of the Telecommunications Act passed by Congress is necessary. If anybody in government is serious about better programming, this continuing erosion of intelligent viewing on cable must be addressed.

ELAINE HENDRIE

Bellport, L.I., Feb. 6, 1997

The New York Times