


cc: j. reichenbach

NO. 594 DEC 18 92


NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

70118

Mr. Brian Lamb
President/CEO
C-Span Networks
Washington, D.C. 20510

December 13, 1992

Dear Mr. Lamb,


My family and I wish to thank you profusely for founding the C-Span Networks. We find them very informative and we enjoy them so much that they have co-opted most of our TV viewing time.

Beginning this month our local cable company Cox Cable New Orleans (2120 Canal Street, 70112) discontinued full time broadcasting of C-Span II in favor of the SCI-FI network. We are very angry about this and are fighting to get it back. We solicit any kind of help you can give us.

Attached is a copy of our letter to Cox Cable New Orleans. Similar letters were sent to our Congressman and Senators and to the City Council as well as to our newspaper's Letters to the Editor department. Also attached is a copy of a newspaper column by Mr. Mark Lorando that appeared in last Monday's newspaper. We certainly hope that we can get C-Span II back on the air full time. We will not give up until we do.

Once again many thanks for your outstanding work.

Sincerely,


Attachments: Cox Letter
TP/SI Article

cc: Cox Director of Programming
Cox Director of Public Relations
President/CEO Cox Cable N.O.



Mark Lorando

C-SPAN II fans talk back to Cox

As far as Cox was concerned, it was the channel of least importance.

As far as Nancy Hawkins, Vicki Thorp and [redacted] were concerned, C-SPAN II was something else entirely, what Hawkins calls "the hottest thing on cable."

Now it's just the hardest thing to find on cable. Cox Orleans last week gave channel 45 to The Sci-Fi Channel, moving U.S. Senate coverage on C-SPAN II to government access channel 8, where an abbreviated lineup airs from midnight to 8 a.m. (It remains full-time on channel 48 in Jefferson.)

That has infuriated at least three of the channel's biggest fans, which may be three more than Cox thought C-SPAN II had.

As ordinary viewers who regularly watched the Senate proceedings, Hawkins (a 51-year-old

homemaker), Thorp (a 22-year-old economics student at Tulane) and [redacted] (a 56-year-old registered nurse) would be regarded by Cox as novelties.

The company's customer surveys have suggested only a miniscule following for C-SPAN II, spokesmen say; most viewers apparently prefer to see their elected officials in sound-bite-size spots on the news.

Though the three women are not acquainted, they have at least one thing in common:

'I'm just very depressed and demoralized that they would make this kind of judgment based on the tastes of the lowest common denominator.'

The Times-Picayune

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They say they've never been asked to participate in any of the customer surveys that Cox cites when justifying programming decisions.

"Who asked me?" Hawkins said.

"I'm just very depressed and demoralized," [redacted] said, "that they would make this kind of judgment based on the tastes of the lowest common denominator."

There was more to it than that, a Cox Orleans spokesman said. Unlike the original C-SPAN, which originates from the House of Representatives, C-SPAN II offers little or nothing in the way of special programming.

Whereas C-SPAN fills in the governmental gaps with early-morning and nighttime call-in shows, for instance, C-SPAN II repeats and re-repeats Senate activity. "Whatever duplicated part of it there was before is not duplicated anymore," the spokesman said.

As for the lateness of the broadcast, "If anyone really wanted to watch it, they could tape it at night and not miss a thing."

Since most tapes run only six hours on extended play, even that's not much of an option. What really bothers these three fans is that a service that has so much intrinsic civic and educational value would be so quickly cast aside.

"It's an enormously informative way to learn about government," said Hawkins, who typically had her TV tuned to C-SPAN II during the day. "You get to see all these people come to life who you've read about in the newspaper."

To Thorp, this year's presidential election proved that people need to see more of their elected officials on the tube, not less.

TV

From C-1

"We saw the candidates using talk shows more," she said. "We saw Ross Perot holding satellite television conferences. We saw Clinton on a bus trying to get closer to the people. We as citizens need to get more involved, and the politicians need to get more in touch with us, and C-SPAN II was one of the main outlets for doing that."

Thorp also found C-SPAN II to be a necessary antidote to media bias. "It's just live coverage — no reporters or commentators," she said, "a very unfiltered view and the whole view."

These three women do not pretend to represent the majority of Cox's subscribers. But they do believe that Cox's lineup is large enough to accommodate diverse interests, that a cable system with room for two HBOs and two Viewers Choice pay-per-view channels ought to have room for two C-SPANs.

"I know there are a lot of markets that don't have C-SPAN II on cable," Hawkins said. "But they're trying to get it added. Cox

is going in the other direction — they had room for it and then took it away.

"When you deny people informational access, you're getting closer to not being a democracy."

P.S. to Cox from Hawkins, [redacted] and Thorp:

Put that in your survey.

See TV, C-5

[REDACTED]
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Director of Public Relations
Cox Cable New Orleans
2120 Canal Street
New Orleans, La.70112

December 13, 1992

Dear Director,

In the beginning of this month your company abruptly terminated full time broadcasting of the C-Span II Network. This decision was made without any announcement to the public, without a public hearing and even without any input from viewers of that particular station. If there was a general survey there was no public discussion of the results. Anyway, a general survey is not the issue. If only a small minority of the people want to be well informed citizens your public responsibility is to provide access.

My family and I are seriously concerned and very upset about the lack of full time broadcasting of C-Span II in our community and we are appalled about the cavalier and arbitrary manner in which you handled this decision. Your company has a monopoly on the cable service to the citizens of this area. This monopoly was given to you in contract with the City Council in exchange for rendering public service to the citizens. There is no greater service you can render in our democracy than to enable us to have full time access to both houses of the Congress. Ours is the first generation in history to have the technical capability to accomplish this. We are firmly convinced that full public access to what is going on in our government at every level but especially at the higher levels is the only way that we are going to keep government working for the people in this modern era of instant communications. It appears to us that you are unpatriotic and anti-democratic not to provide twenty-four hour access to the Senate of the United States. You apparently value the almighty dollar more than you value this great country.

By this letter we are putting you on notice that we will fight with every little bit of power and skill that we have to force you to live up to this trust. We intend to put our congressional delegation on notice about your actions and ask their assistance by negotiation, legislation or in whatever way is necessary. We will also deal with our City Council and urge them to include this issue in your contract. And we will use the print media to raise this issue in the public consciousness and to keep pressure on your company to do what is right.

Sincerely,

Attachment: TP/SI Article
cc: Director of Programming
President/CEO Cox Cable N.O.

[REDACTED]