



Ogdensburg, NY 13669

Nov. 25, 1996

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-SPAN Networks
400 N. Capital St., N.W. #650
Washington, D.C. 20001
Dear Mr. Lamb,

O.W.
Spelix

I've recently been listening to the increase of debate over the three C-SPAN phone line choices. I have written to C-SPAN on the issue previously, but I have to again comment, especially in light of your comments this morning.

The format of television cameras on two or three people answering phones does give an advantage to the unidentified caller, but one could easily balance that against the very great power of the guests, journalists, politicians, and other very influential and powerful people. I believe that all comes out well in the end. ~~For~~ Attempting to place an identity on the caller does not achieve any "balance"

or "fairness", but simply categorizes. Callers into groups of a minority participatory population, but, in a way, eliminates all others. Since typically only fifty percent or so of eligible voters actually vote, your categorized phones protect the establishment, and rejects non-voters who are disenfranchised or indifferent to it. You are, then, in fact, curtailing a free flow of speech in my opinion.

You did say, you are trying very hard to achieve "balance" and "fairness" at your roundtable. No network in the world has achieved a better forum for a free-flow of information and ideas. It has worked well, but yet we still are experiencing an increase of voter drop-out. One must certainly ask why?

I cannot help but believe you would be much further ahead to remain open with your phones, and reject the impossible effort to achieve

• For an abstract idea of "fairness" or "balance".
Fairness to whom, and balance of what
are my questions?

One can never achieve "balance" by
manipulating the flow of ideas. Only
a free unimpaired flow can achieve
freedom of speech for all. If you were
truly dedicated to achieving balance
at your roundtable you would have
to have three guests, Republican,
Democrat, and Other. You do not do
so. Therefore, it is unfair to have
three such labelled phone lines.
There is no one at your Table to
speak for "other".

I must tell you as a former voter
drop-out, it is "other" that brought
me back into the process. It was
not C-SPAN, although I do enjoy
C-SPAN and glean a great deal of in-
formation from it.

Naturally, it is not your duty
to promote democracy, or work to
encourage participation in it. Yet,
I feel you would continue to do a great

service by doing whatever you can.
to move information in an unfettered
freeflowing manner. Free speech
must be free... totally. That means
we must put up with bad speech
as well as "evil" or "good" speech.
Furthermore you do have a button to
flip. All we have as viewers ~~is~~ an
ON or OFF switch on the television.

I think what I am trying to say
is that the papers, TV, Radio, jour-
nalists, our elected officials, and yes,
C-SPAN all have the ability to con-
trol. The people of America outside
the ruling class do not. Therefore,
if a journalist or a Congressman
refuses to sit in the hot seat, he or
she is not open to any criticism un-
less one eats humble pie first. At
least that is the impression.

It takes an amount of bravery
to face the public one professes to
serve. If you can't take the heat,
however, then get out of the kitchen!

3. I have written many letters to many C-SPAN guests. Nearly one and all who respond mention the many letters their appearance generated. Some are vitriolic some are not. I ~~find~~^{found} the same random on the phones before you changed them.

The phone change seems to have increased the old left/right warfare and stifled alternatives rather than promote any impossible idea of "fairness" or "balance".

One must ask what is more important to democracy? Fairness, balance, or a free flow of ideas?

I enjoy C-SPAN, and I certainly admire and respect you as a very caring American. Yet, I do fear you are a bit steeped in the establishment protection which is truly often unconscious. Is it class difference? Perhaps. Is it arrogance? To some it seems so, to others it is a recognizable difference on views of life. The view from the

lower and underclasses often cannot even be imagined by you or any of those in Washington who hold even a semblance of influence and power.

The gap is very wide indeed, and C-SPAN appears to be choosing sides. Moving toward the group-thought of the ruling elite, and sidestepping and even rejecting the legitimate complaints of the abused and downtrodden.

Not all voices have the ability to articulate eloquently or even with your idea of civility. No one likes to listen to spewing venom, or indecent name calling, but if we are to have free speech we must allow everyone to speak. Very simple isn't it?

Sincerely,

