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Bryan Lamb
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#650
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To put this letter in perspective, I would like to say first and foremost that I think you have the best program on T. V. I also believe that you are scrupulous in your pursuit of objectivity. Having said this I would like to call into question your policy of having a phone line for democrat, republican and other.

I am a regular viewer and have heard you attacked numerous times for this policy. Many of these critics accuse you of bias. I myself do not believe your motives are based on any political bias. I do believe your policy, even though instituted to try to bring objectivity, does not accomplish this end.

I assume that the policy was instituted because C-Span thought that with your old method you were getting more calls from one point of view than the other. With the old policy of having an east coast line and west coast line I heard you criticized that your lines were being flooded by one side or the other. With your new policy both Democrats & Republicans accuse you of bias toward the other side. I fail to see what you have accomplished with this new policy.

In defense of your old policy a pursuit of objectivity does not have equal access to both sides of view. If 99% of the populous believe that the sky is blue would you also seek to hear from an equal number of people who thought the sky was fuchsia. Therefore, we do not become objective by giving equal time to every point of view that is opposite.

I am sure this argument was considered at the time of your decision to change. I can only speculate that it was rejected because there is a fairly even number of Republicans and Democrats and that because of that pretty much both sides of an issue would be represented equally. Unfortunately neither side is monolithic in its ideas. For example, I know some very liberal Catholic priests who do not subscribe to the liberal idea of a women's right to choose.

It is also necessary to note that it is not only the number of people that think an idea is right but also the fervor with which they are willing to put forth that idea that is important. It is doubtful that the civil rights movement would have been successful if we had only looked at it as a function of how a majority of the population felt. The force of the idea and the fervor with which it was argued won the day, not popular opinion.

While listening to your show each morning it has become clear that your first segment, where you have just one guest, that this guest is usually liberal. Although I am conservative, it never really bothered me much because with your format your guests are not able to hide their bias. They may say that as journalists they are objective, but it does not take long to figure out which side they are on; therefore, being over 21, I can either agree or disagree with them. Earlier this year, a caller brought this seeming bias on the part of C-Span to Bryan's attention. Bryan's response (to paraphrase) was that seeing approximately 60% of the journalists in Washington D. C. Press corp. consider themselves liberal and that over 80% voted for President Clinton, that it would be difficult to fill the spot if the criterion was to strive for equal representation. I have no problem with this explanation. I would take exception to this policy if 60% of your audience disagree with

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these journalists and you by your manipulation of the order in which you take calls indicate that the country or your audience is evenly split.

I hope you understand that I think what you are doing is the greatest thing to happen in American politics since the Lincoln/Douglas debates. Your long form discussion of the issue and your presentation in totality of whatever it is your covering is great. Your determination to let your own personnel bias out of your programming is wonderful. If your journalist friends in the D. C. Press corp. were as equally objective, we would probably not need C-Span. I would not be worried about your job, since it's not likely that they will change in the near future. I realize that by the nature of what they do they cannot offer the objectivity that C-Span does, but I think their lack of objectivity is obvious by the way they defend themselves. "Me thinks the lady protests too much."

I realize that this is not an earth shattering issue, but I wish you would reconsider your current policy.

Sincerely,

