

September 14, 1992

Mr. John D. Evans, Chairman
C-SPAN Board of Directors
400 North Capitol St. NW
Washington DC 20001

Dear Mr. Evans:

Like so many other TV viewers, I love C-SPAN and hold in high esteem the originator(s) of this wonderful idea that only the TV cable industry could make a reality.

This said, I'd like to register my disagreement with S-SPAN putting on the air broadcasters whose professionalism doesn't come up to scratch.

Watch, for instance, several tapes of Mr. Eric Lamb's *Booknotes*: do you really think they are the best interviews you can get from the authors appearing? Mr. Lamb's lackluster performance drives to tears viewers used to a whole constellation of TV interviewers, from Ed Murrow on. Comparisons may be odious but just weigh Mr. Lamb vis à vis Charlie Rose, Larry King, Jim Lehrer, Barbara Walters, Rather, Brokaw. Or that wonderful guy who did book author interviews for the "Christian Science Monitor" channel.

After watching a show with two very interesting authors, a friend of mine commented: "This Eric Lamb must own the station. Otherwise how could you explain C-SPAN having on camera a guy who looks half-asleep, asks silly superficial questions, probably always the same, in the most insipid and frozen codfish voice without the slightest spark of emotion, be it joy, disgust, agreement, disagreement, admiration?"

I told her that Mr. Lamb occasionally changes his questions but he always held the book being discussed exactly in the same position, and that his manner and tone were just displays of C-SPAN's neutrality. Or, as Mencken would have said: "I am not for or against, very much to the contrary!" I added that the tone and the blah questions Mr. Lamb usually asks are obviously his interpretation of what constitutes neutrality. "Mr. Lamb," I told her, "makes a brave effort to do his job well but it seems that neither Melpomene nor Thalia bestow their blessings on him. Once, when he got away from 'interviewing' authors and attempted *reportage* [when East Germany came apart] the result was even more disastrous."

Of course, I have no idea of the terms of Mr. Lamb's contract and of your budget for the position, but couldn't you look into the possibility of interviewing a few younger, more literary inclined, and livelier person? Pretty please?

Otherwise, several friends and I will have to resort to a cumbersome and time-consuming procedure: when the author is one we really want to see and listen to we tape and edit *Booknotes* before we watch it. I can assure you it's much less aggravating.

Sincerely,

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