

September 7, 1990

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-Span
400 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

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Dear Mr. Lamb:

I believe you are the best interviewer on TV today. Your quick intelligence and your amazing ability to transpose a silly question or comment into something relevant simply amazes me. Keep up the good work!

First comment: if TV can be a teaching medium, and I think we all agree it can be, it would behoove TV to adopt a serious program to educate the American people about the Arabs. Two factors have converged to black out information about the Middle East and the Arabs (I use the term loosely to indicate Muslim and Arabic speaking people). First, the Crusades of the Middle Ages built in a prejudice against this "enemy" that Christianity has fostered with diligence. The second factor is our unrelenting support of Israel in modern times without any attempt to consider that there are two sides to any disagreement.

I am a Christian WASP American but I had the good fortune to live in Spain for eight years. During this time I became curious enough about the Arabic rule of Spain to inform myself. I found so many aspects of Spain that clearly reflected Arab rule six hundred years after their departure. I was fortunate enough to obtain a copy of "History of the Arabs" by Philip K. Hitti. This is a text developed by graduate course in Arabic studies developed by Hitti during his tenures at Columbia University, The American University in Beirut, and at Princeton.

The history is astounding and virtually unknown in this country. It is plain that Arabic rule in Spain and Southern France brought civilization to Europe and the European continent. The facts are astounding: Arab rule brought music as we know it today, surgery that was operating on the eye and delivering babies by Caesarian. It brought Arabic numerals, the use of the zero in math. It brought philosophy, cartology, astounding agriculture, the hygienic custom of Bathing....I wont bore you. But the information astounded me and forced me to realize how lacking our education and how deprived we are of knowledge.

Today our lack of understanding is proving to be a serious detriment as we face the future. TV can foster information. For instance, on MacNeil-Lehrer on Wed. Sept. 5th, Charlayne Hunter Gault interviewed a Jordanian journalist who gave the most precise, organized and understandable exposition of the Arabic position that I have heard. It is difficult because so many of the Arabic speakers do not speak English well enough to be intelligible to us who are so unfamiliar with accents. I feel that we are going to need information on the Arab position in a desperate way as we face the future of Arabic ownership of the major oil reserves. We simply MUST understand. TV can help.

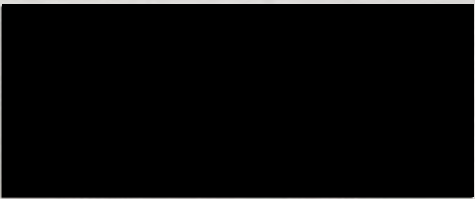
It seems clear to me that in the future Israel's position will become less and less important to American foreign policy no matter how the Jewish Lobby feels about the issue. We no longer need Israel as a bulwark again the USSR, Israel has no oil, and out continued support of Israel on an unequivacle basis will be an embarrassment and a hinderance as we are forced to deal with the Arabs. Mas~~y~~be all of this will allow more information on the Arabs[†] Come to light. I want a better understanding with the Arabs not because of oil but because I understand that a Middle East War would be a hideous experience for Americans and because I believe it would destabilize almost every country in the world because of the reach of the Muslim religion.

So that's what I want to say about this current mess.

I have a criticism of day-time call-in shows, or may~~b~~e not a criticism but a comment. The majority of our people are busy at work in the daytime. The callers are apt to be the unemployed, housewives, and the elderly. It seems that very little main stream opinion is expressed. I am a serious critic of this nation's foreign policy but even I find no comfort in the thoughtless, ill-informed comments and questions that spew forth on the daytime call-in shows. I am amazed at how well you handle it!

Anyway, thank you for what you are doing. I hope you not planning any moves in the future. C-Span is a wonder and a blessing, but because things like this dont last long generally, I have my fingers crossed.

Good luck!



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