

MIAMI, FLORIDA 33130

June 23, 1997

Mr. Brian Lamb  
CSPAN  
400 N. Capitol Street NW  
Washington, D. C. 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I am writing regarding the issue of good taste. I watch CSPAN several hours each day and am a big fan<sup>1</sup>. On top of the cumulative thousands of hours I have watched CSPAN, I was fortunate enough to get through and make a comment on the air, a Saturday morning, my first and only time calling.<sup>2</sup> [I mention this since callers seem to comment a lot about their difficulty getting their call on the air.]

CSPAN's self-proclaimed mission is to bring us, live and unfiltered, the machinations of our government. My opinion is that the CSPAN product successfully reflects your good faith effort to achieve this mission. At the same time, there is need for good taste. No doubt you are concerned that some callers' comments 'go over the line'. I am willing to leave it to CSPAN to set these boundaries, but ask that you permit me to throw in my two cents once in a while (as I am doing with this letter).

I am writing about a Sunday morning broadcast, several months ago, during which Steve was taking phone calls. A caller began to discuss President Reagan. The caller was commenting that he believes President Reagan was showing signs of Alzheimer's Disease during his second term. Steve immediately had a look of disgust, cut off the caller, and said (I am paraphrasing) 'Now, we won't have that. There is no indication that is the case.'

I was disappointed by Steve's reaction. During the time President Reagan was actually serving as President, I had heard many people express concern that the President was 'out of it.' Many commentators and associates of the President, during the time of his

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I am a CSPAN junkie. My wife tolerates my CSPAN habits, and on occasion watches alongside me. She watched the entire testimony of Anita Hill (we watched while on vacation at her parents' house), she watched all of Attorney General Reno's testimony regarding Waco (we were stuck at home that day during a hurricane watch), and she especially enjoyed the Whitewater hearings (maybe television was all reruns those few months, or maybe it was Mr. Ben-Veniste's smile).

<sup>2</sup>Did that use up any of my 15 minutes of fame?



administration and to this day, said President Reagan was a hands off President-- some said more, that he was not engaged.<sup>3</sup>

During the Reagan era and the Dole campaign, many pretended age is not an issue. To me and many others, clearly it is a legitimate issue. The connection between age and health is indisputable. Fearful someone might be insulted by the suggestion that age is an issue, the media continues to do a lot of hand wringing and, in this past Presidential election, simply put the issue aside. My 93 year old grandmother will tell you that common sense says that age is important. She has been saying this for many, many years.

I can understand that a person's health is a sensitive subject. The suggestion that President Reagan suffered from Alzheimer's during his second term can be interpreted as a mean-spirited slap at the former President. I understood Steve's gut reaction to the caller.

I never voted for President Reagan, I disagreed with him on many issues, I did not like his style--but I respected him as our President, and still do, because I respect our democracy. If you respect the process, you should respect the result. The Presidency is definitely the world's toughest job. The Presidency demands everything of the person serving in the office. It imposes the greatest responsibilities of any job in the world. If we can't give the President our respect, then our democracy will suffer.

However, I believe that Steve's reaction is inconsistent with CSPAN's usual response to such matters. It is that inconsistency that I believe helps best make the case for urging you to do a more forceful job of imposing good taste where callers get out of line. I can cite numerous examples of on-the-air caller statements that may also deserve similar treatment. Should CSPAN no longer allow callers to babble on about these subjects?

That Vincent Foster was murdered at Mrs. Clinton's direction, and his body dragged to that park.

That Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Foster were involved in an affair.

That, during his governorship, President Clinton was involved with drug trafficking at some remote Arkansas airport.

That, again during his governorship, President Clinton directed the murder of two Arkansas boys.

CSPAN repeatedly has allowed callers to promote that ridiculous video tape being marketed by Reverend Falwell. CSPAN has allowed callers to repeat the 800 number on the air to which you can call to buy this tape.

I have heard you, Mr. Lamb, question these people, even challenge them (thank goodness for sanity), but I have never heard you cut them off. These callers accuse the President of being a murderer. Are not these people going beyond good taste?

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<sup>3</sup>This was the explanation many of the President's supporters gave for Iran-Contra--an operation by a rogue unit located in the basement of the White House, made possible because some took advantage of the President's style. Many of those who testified and those put on trial said the opposite; they said the President authorized Iran-Contra to some degree or another.



How about all those callers that allege that President Clinton has a sexually transmitted disease (the reason some proclaim is the real reason the President is shy about releasing his raw medical records)?

And the latest favorite, Paula Jones's allegation that the President, when governor, exposed his penis while soliciting Ms. Jones for sex—including references to that 'distinguishing mark' of which Ms. Jones has alleged in her lawsuit. I am a lawyer, and as every lawyer knows, you don't believe allegations, you prove them.<sup>4</sup>

This crazy stuff that gets repeated about President Clinton has been discussed by CSPAN callers for years. So what prompts me to write this letter now?

The Reagans informed the world that the former President has Alzheimer's, and now it is not unusual to hear people speculate as to how long Mr. Reagan has been suffering from the disease--maybe it is only asked privately, and not in the press, but believe me, it is asked quite frequently. But this 'talk' has not really made its way into the mainstream media...until now. The following occurred during a recent interview on National Public Radio, an interview with Lawrence Walsh, the Iran-Contra Special Prosecutor. Mr. Walsh was describing his own investigative examination of President Reagan, held at the White House during the President's second term, when Mr. Walsh asked Mr. Reagan his recollection of discussions with top advisors about Iran-Contra. Mr. Walsh told NPR (and likely states this in his new book, but I have not read it yet) that it is his conclusion that the President was suffering from Alzheimer's while still President.

Mr. Walsh stated that the President simply could not recall even the most basic aspects of discussions he had with his own aides (and actually had no recollection of many very significant discussions). Worse yet, the President was unable to discuss with Mr. Walsh policy decisions he had made--President Reagan told Mr. Walsh that he simply could not recall these matters. Mr. Walsh stated that he is convinced the President was sincere and truthful, and that the memory lapses were genuine. I repeat, Mr. Walsh attributed this to the early onset of Alzheimer's<sup>5</sup>.

I would appreciate your bringing Mr. Walsh's comments to Steve's attention so maybe he will not be so quick to cut off a caller who wants to discuss President Reagan's health problems in the context of the Reagan Presidency. Maybe better yet, CSPAN can put an end to the ridiculous statements by those that hate President Clinton--some of us have the same kind of gut reaction to the crazy allegations made about President Clinton that Steve had to the comments regarding President Reagan's Alzheimer's.

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<sup>4</sup>That is why I am very much against a settlement. The nation deserves a trial on Ms. Jones's claims because Ms. Jones should be cross examined on this allegation. We need to be able to judge her veracity. But I also believe that Ms. Jones' personal interest in being compensated for her alleged damages should wait, not because the Constitution requires it, but because we have over 250 million American's whose interests should come first. When is someone going to ask Ms. Jones why she doesn't care enough about her country to wait?

<sup>5</sup>Maybe the alternative is worse, that President Reagan lied to Mr. Walsh, but Mr. Walsh did not say that and does not believe that.



Before I close, I want to comment on two of my favorite moments on CSPAN. Both involved you, Mr. Lamb.

The first was when you were on the air, alone without guests, and you were taking phone calls. A woman called to complain about CSPAN biases in favor of the major carriers in the airline industry. You looked genuinely concerned as she started to talk. However, you began to frown when she connected it up with "CSPAN's ties with Continental Airlines." She began referring to your on-the-air promos for Continental in exchange for the support they give CSPAN. You were quicker than me. You cut her off and explained that the promo was for Continental Cablevision, not Continental Airlines. I couldn't stop laughing.

The second moment worth my recalling took place about two years ago. You and your guests were taking calls. The next caller wanted to discuss the OJ case. You actually lost your temper. You were then (and are today) the voice for all who are sane, so you did the right thing--you cut off the caller and made it clear that CSPAN was not going to be overtaken by the OJ case. I cheered. The cheering ended when I noticed after that minor flare up, that your other hosts would often let callers go on and on and on about the OJ case, day after day after day.

Someday, when you put together a highlight video, you should try to include those two pieces. I would pay for that 'conspiracy' video.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Again, I am a big CSPAN fan. I hope my comments contribute to making CSPAN even better.

Very truly yours

