

[REDACTED]

Homer, NY 13077

October 16, 1996

Mr. Brian Lamb, President
CSPAN
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Lamb:

As long-time viewers of CSPAN we have admired what you and your colleagues have established - an important institution in America. Further, we have admired your desire to be even-handed in providing a forum for a wide spectrum of political views. In fact, we have bragged about your fairness to our non-viewing friends, encouraging them to become viewers.

We believe, however, that your decision to change the assignment of your incoming phone lines to political party orientation rather than to geographical location, is an example of "even-handedness run amuck". We know that raising this issue makes you angry. We see how you and your colleagues respond to callers who object to your decisions and ask for a return to the geographical designations. We hear your claim that this new arrangement is fairer by providing more opportunity for all sides to be heard.

We believe you are sincere in your effort to be fair, but we believe that the rationale for your decision is flawed on three counts:

First, the premise for your decision has to be that political opinion, orientation, and belief are equally divided among Democrats, Republicans, and others (or among Clinton/Gore, Dole/Kemp, and others) and that you are just providing equal opportunity for that equal distribution of opinion to be expressed. You of course, know that this equal distribution does not exist.

Second, a presumption in your decision seems to be that the geographical designation of your phone lines precluded equal opportunity for access to your programs by representatives of Democrats, Republicans, and others. You know, of course, that you did have equal opportunity for all parties to have access to your program. The outcome of that opportunity may not have been equal - but

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what is wrong with that? Why is it fairer to contrive equal outcome than it is to provide equal opportunity? We are surprised that you seem to believe that it is.

Third, your decision assumes that callers will honestly identify their political orientations. We have noted that many callers declare orientation to one party but then say they will vote for the other party's candidate and follow with the pertinent party's current mantra. Your political designation of incoming lines rewards dishonest behavior.

We earnestly hope that you will change back to geographical designations of your phone lines before the upcoming elections. If you decide not to change back now, we hope you will do so after the election and restore the fairness for which you have been known.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

