

July 13, 1992

Mr. Brian Lamb, President
C-SPAN
400 North Capitol Street, N. W. - 650
Washington, D. C. 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb:

A basic tenet of democracy is not just a free press, but an *impartial* one. This country is in serious trouble, and we know the litany all too well. Way ahead of drugs, crime, jobs, education, economic, or tax fairness issues, however, is the loss of integrity and objectivity of our print and broadcast media, C-SPAN being the lone exception. It was with a bit of irony, then, that I listened to you say, in exasperated response to someone disagreeing with you on the fairness of having Mr. Greenberg on, "I've always been fascinated by people who get upset by people who don't agree with them." And when the utterly composed and detached Brian Lamb actually engaged a caller in debate, saying, "We'll continue to do this until the campaign is over, and to have strong people both for and against for all three candidates. It's not gonna stop!", I was stunned to realize that you seemed to be missing the point.

I do *not* object to hearing negative comments, Mr. Lamb, and agree with you that all views should be heard. I would be offended if C-SPAN attempted to blow sunshine up my skirt, airing only loving, glowing, adulatory* comments about my candidate. I *want* to hear opposing views, if for no other reason than to know what the opposition thinks, but I want to hear them in something resembling a fair forum, where the facts and opinions of one perspective are balanced by those of the other. Such a format, I believe, would generate calls from people eager to engage the *guests* rather than the *process*.

Like you, Mr. Lamb, I am not given to emotional excess; yet, I cried myself to sleep the night C-SPAN aired the Sheffield North interview. I felt raped, betrayed, having believed so unwaveringly in C-SPAN and its ethics and integrity. Like many in your audience, I feel passionately about the courage, character, and integrity of Bill Clinton, and about the genuine belief that he's been savaged and treated unfairly by the media, who appear to have been motivated by nothing so idealistic as a *conspiracy*, but rather by something so simple as unadulterated, unapologetic *greed*. The rage, Mr. Lamb, isn't about Bill Clinton but, rather, the ever-present perception of unfairness. It is irresponsible, and calls into question not only issues of fairness and balance, but those of intent as well, to have someone on like a Sheffield North *without providing someone with a counter view to air with him*. And frankly, Mr. Lamb, your contention that it is justified to allow an attack of this nature to go unanswered because Mr. Clinton has had 10 years to get *his* message out is inconsistent with your standards, as well as C-SPAN's, as I have come to know them.

Still, one would expect that observers of the Sheffield North interview would recognize that this was Mr. Clinton's opponent in a bitterly contested gubernatorial race and weigh his opinions and statements accordingly. The Paul Greenberg interview, however, aired nearly 15 minutes before your first caller, familiar with him and his consistently anti-Clinton views, brought to the attention of your audience Mr. Greenberg's blatant and historically documentable bias. Differing opinions are essential in a democracy and sometimes, as you said, "that's the only way you learn anything." But real learning occurs only when we have all the facts, when it is made clear at the outset that what we are hearing is, in large part, one person's *opinions*. One of your callers put it far more adroitly (and succinctly) than I seem able to when he replied to Mr. Greenberg's charge that Mr. Clinton was "disingenuous" by stating, "[T]he idea that people might . . . present themselves as somewhat informed and objective persons about the candidate because they're from their state *and not reveal their own inclinations toward that candidate in an open way . . . [that]* is disingenuous."

The service C-SPAN provides is critical during a time when so many, from one end of the political spectrum to the other, believe that the mainstream press has sold out, that the same money that has bought and paid for our politicians and our courts now has a stranglehold on the truth. Regardless of political affiliation or divergent beliefs, nearly all of us mistrust journalists. If for no *other* reason, print and broadcast journalists have an enormous responsibility to inform with as much fact, care, and objectivity as humanly possible. As viewers (and readers), we are so vulnerable, having to give credence and weight to the data imparted to us by them since they are our only source of information. Therefore, when journalists have abdicated all objectivity in favor of voicing their *opinions*, as Paul Greenberg clearly has done, then the least they (and C-SPAN) should do is have the integrity and ethics to make that obvious from the onset.

I am deeply ashamed and angry that I allowed myself to be duped into voting for Mr. Bush in 1988. As I investigated other candidates, I was struck by how Mr. Bush was never made to endure the scathing tone that interviewers seem to reserve for Mr. Clinton, amazed at how they literally tiptoe around Ross Perot, backing down at the first indication that they may have raised his ire. (Like sharks at a drop of blood, though, I expect them to move in for the kill the moment dropping poll numbers signal his vulnerability.) By way of example, *Good Morning America* interviewed Mr. Clinton with five network-selected Ph.D.'s firing questions at him; Mr. Bush was allowed to be interviewed in the Rose Garden by a group of startled, hand-picked tourists. C-SPAN, Mr. Lamb, is the only game in town where the tables aren't rigged. So I found myself wondering, as I watched the Greenberg flack unfold, whether C-SPAN will air, at 5:30 p.m. on the eve of the Republican National Convention, an interview with a journalist as consistently, adamantly, and articulately opposed to Mr. Bush as Paul Greenberg is to Mr. Clinton.

Sadly, in the final analysis, we are all slaves to our perceptions and opinions -- journalists, commentators, all of us. The fact that, rightly or wrongly, most viewers believe the media should be held to a higher accountability is all but irrelevant. All any of us can do is strive to avoid bias and prejudice in every way possible, and in that area, as in so many others, C-SPAN has succeeded like none other. Please continue your work and the critical service it provides, and know that when callers assault you or question C-SPAN's programming, it is because we hold you in a class unto yourselves and demand from you, therefore, standards we have long since despaired of eliciting from any of your peers.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]

*I derived petty satisfaction during your interview when I heard Mr. Greenberg mispronounce this word as "uh-**dool**-atory." He can, no doubt, *spell* it . . .

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