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August 7, 2005

Mr. Brian Lamb
Chairman and CEO
C-SPAN
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Lamb:

Having just finished watching the first broadcast of your Q&A interview with David McCullough, what struck me about the interview was not any point Mr. McCullough made about the American Revolution, or any reference he made about his latest book or about history in general – but instead, it was his comments about the state of American education and the quality of America's teachers that sparked my interest. I'm a sophomore history major at Union College in Schenectady, New York and indeed have always had a keen interest in history and have enjoyed Mr. McCullough's books. I am also a frequent C-SPAN viewer, so naturally your interview with Mr. McCullough was of great interest.

I have been fortunate enough to have some superb history teachers. However, the difference between myself and many other college-aged history buffs (small in number though we are) is that I am a product of private schools and that the best history teachers I studied under were not certified to teach the subject in a public school. Yet they were extraordinarily effective teachers. Though they were not "certified", they were, as Mr. McCullough suggested all teachers should be, equipped with an undergraduate degree in their field of study (not education majors) and possessed a strong interest in, and command of, their subject area. They taught not with inadequate textbooks, but with classes marked by intense lecture and discussion, and homework assignments that included reading original sources.

Earlier this summer I watched your interview with two teachers – one from a private school and one from a public school. I gleaned from your handling of that interview and from your interview with Mr. McCullough that you are either not aware of or need further evidence about the true nature of crisis in American education (a crisis resulting from the abundance of poorly educated teachers who place an emphasis on vague politically correct concepts such as "diversity" and "justice" instead of academic standards and excellence).

Accordingly, I have a suggestion for you. Just as you interviewed a private school teacher and a public school teacher on your Q&A program, I suggest interviewing one college student who attended public school and one who attended public schools. I happily submit my own name as someone able to represent graduates of private schools. I attended a small, independent day school from kindergarten to eighth grade and a high school conducted by a Roman Catholic order of religious brothers, the DeLaSalle Brothers of the Christian Schools.

I hope you will take my suggestion seriously. I feel such a discussion would shed light on what students actually get out of their classes – especially their history classes – rather than what teachers think students should gain from those classes.

Mr. McCullough is correct in saying that teachers fill the most important role in American society – or in any society. It's time for C-SPAN to talk to the students – the fruit of their labors – to assess their opinion and observation about society's most important laborers. I assure you it would be a most informative session.

Sincerely,

