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8/11/90

CC: Lew Ketchum

Dear Sir,

First, I'd like to say that C-span makes it possible to understand what is going on in government better than any other source I can think of. (Unless of course you have personal experience)

You invited the viewers to give you ideas in topics that they'd like to learn more about. So here goes.

What is going on in the courtroom? For example, what is the role of the jury? Does the jury play a larger or smaller role than it did 50 yrs. ago?

The reasons that come to mind that ~~make~~ motivated these questions are:

- (1) If we are guaranteed trial by our peers ^(jury) and sentencing is part of the trial does mandatory sentencing diminish the role of the jury.
- (2) Cases seem to be thrown out before the jury can judge it by a technicality. Has it always been out of the hands of the jury to determine if a persons rights are violated.
- (3) Since attorneys will always employ a form of the advisory method, should we restrict the jury to a narrow list of questions to say yes or no or should we just give them guidelines and let them run the trial.
- (4) Has it always been that a persons innocence has been neutral until proven guilty or innocent. Reference Mayor Barry and local case. The jury after a couple of days here voted 11 to 1 for not guilty, the judge declared hung jury and the state is going to try this guy again.
- (5) After 10 years my parents who spend considerable money time and effort to prove that what happened to my sister was not in line with the official Medical Examiner view were told at the time of trial by opposing counsel that the trial had nothing to do with what

happened to my sister. Technically, by the legal standard (I follow the reasoning, although I think it's in left field) they were correct. Shouldn't these questions be left to the jury, i.e. what do they think that the trial is about or should be about?

Instead this jury after some hours asked what time frame did the ME have to consider. i.e. new info inside the window irrelevant. These folks were confused by the technicalities.

In conclusion, I believe that the jury is the check and balance in the court system. In hindsight they may be biased one way or the other but going in its fair. So what I'd really like to get from C-span is a discussion by people who know about the evolution of the jury system. ~~May its not changing~~ ~~I really don't know~~ Are we taking power from the jury by throwing out cases before it gets to them or through mandatory sentencing etc. or by giving them a narrow set of questions instead of guidelines, etc.

Thank You

Pullman, WA 99163

P.S. If you do take me up on this or decide to cover some other part of the courtroom inspired by this letter please let me know.

Please forgive my spelling. It feels like 100° out there and I don't have the energy to reach for the dictionary.

One last thing. When you take the jury out of it I think that someday you'll get a life sentence for stealing a transistor radio or life for jay-walking on 35 consecutive counts of manslaughter for the bus that swerved to miss you. (At least these long sentences hypothetical sentences ~~and~~ would come from a fair process, it was the jury that controlled the court)