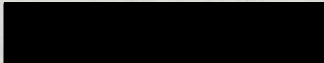


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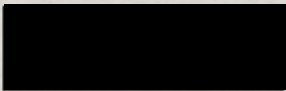
24 September 1991

C-SPAN Update
Viewer Mail
400 N. Capitol St. N.W., Suite 650
Washington, D.C. 20001

To the Editor:

I have watched C-SPAN for many years, and think that your presentations are the greatest source of information ever provided to the public. The unbiased approach displayed by your interviewers on controversial subjects is noted and deserves high praise. Their handling of seemingly uninformed views of callers is especially noteworthy.

In watching Congress in operation, I have become quite disturbed by the way daily operation is conducted. Even though the congressional staff operates the cameras and control what is seen, I feel that the constitutional requirement to have a quorum present when doing business is being violated. I am enclosing a letter which expresses my views on the subject. It may well be controversial and open a "can of worms" but I hope you will print it.

Sincerely,


Enclosure: letter

EMPTY HOUSE IN CONGRESS?
IT'S THE NORM

The photo of the "Empty Hall" (C-SPAN, 18 Aug.) was obviously taken during a Special Session of the House, at which, attendance is not compelled by House rules. In this instance it would not show disrespect for our elected officials. As a regular watcher of Congress in operation on S-SPAN, I do not believe that a photo taken during any given regular session of the House would show much better attendance by our representatives. This, to me, represents contempt by the representatives for the people they purport to serve.

The framers of our Constitution were smart cookies, and understanding that in order to make a good judgment one must be well informed, would not meet unless a quorum was present to do business. This reasoning was therefore incorporated into our Constitution. The cameras are controlled and operated by congressional staff. However, it is obvious to C-SPAN viewers that the House leadership ignores the quorum requirement more often than not. For example:

- * When attempting to adopt legislation by voice vote, there is little or no response to the Chair's request for the Yeas and Nays. On these occasions, points of order are often raised by the minority that a quorum is not present, at which time a head count verifies that point. This is normally followed by the request for a roll call or a recorded vote. To get the members into the chamber to vote usually takes longer than the allotted 15 minutes, which clearly indicates that House members were not in the chamber during the conduct of business. Those coming in to vote have not had the benefit of the debate on the issue at hand, nor had the time to read a transcript. Some have publicly acknowledged that they don't know what they are voting on when they arrive.

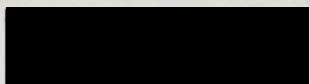
- * Even those present during debate may not be aware of the full contents of any bill or amendment because reading is normally waived and is identified only by title.

- * Use of "the Rule", used to expedite legislation, which requires only 100 members to be present, does not meet the quorum mandate of the Constitution. i.e. 218 members to be present while doing business. A point should be made that the framers of the Constitution obviously did not intend that the only time a quorum is required when it comes time to vote on legislation.

There are other actions that are initiated or condoned by the House leadership in order to enact legislation favorable to their political agenda, but space may not permit listing at this time.

Solution to the problem may be that the public demand C-SPAN control of the cameras, and that conscientious legislators use the point-of-order when a quorum is not present when business is being conducted.

P.S. Congratulations C-SPAN for great programming. You are providing a great service to the viewing audience. Your care to avoid bias in reporting and interviews is greatly appreciated and should serve as an example to the major networks.


Huntsville, Alabama

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