

[REDACTED]

October 11, 1992

Evans Pierre, Produces
CSPAN
400 North Capitol Street, Suite 650
Washington, D.C. 20001-1511

Dear Mr. Pierre:

I would like to bring the following observations to your attention and believe they might be the basis for a very interesting and informative program regarding the role of the communication media in political campaigns in the United States.

Today, I watched the first televised debate on NBC among the three contenders for office of President of the United States. Immediately following the debates, Tom Brokow and John Chancellor made several negative comments about Mr. Perot. Next, Jim Baker was interviewed and questioned somewhat critically about Mr. Bush; nevertheless, he was given an opportunity to speak favorably for the President. Then, Albert Gore was "interviewed," but essentially was given free rein to speak favorably of Mr. Clinton's candidacy. There was no equivalent interview with anyone from Mr. Perot's camp.

As a social scientist and researcher in the field of communication, I was once again reminded of the power of the media and their relentless efforts to try to influence public opinion in matters of fundamental importance to our democracy. The facts I've outlined above illustrate NBC's essentially hostile attitude toward Mr. Perot, less negative and perhaps neutral attitude toward Mr. Bush, followed by a favorable inclination toward Mr. Clinton. Mr. Brokow and Mr. Chancellor, under the guise of reporting the news, were in fact making an undisguised attempt to shape public opinion.

The United States cannot function as a democracy unless the general public is well informed. The communication media bear the burden to inform the public in a balanced way. However, all too often, as my example illustrates, the media seem to have their own political agenda and, unfortunately, hold enormous concentrated power and use it to influence public opinion.

[REDACTED] * Monterey, CA 93940 * [REDACTED]

I think this roughly 15-minute segment of NBC news coverage immediately following the first debate could be used in a CSPAN program to educate the public about the subtle and sometimes blatantly obvious methods employed by the media to assert control over public opinion. The segment can be shown intact, with pauses to permit identification of the frequencies of positive and negative comments made toward the various candidates. Furthermore, the interviews with Mr. Baker and Mr. Gore can be analyzed to show the extent of accepting versus hostile techniques employed towards representatives of the various candidates.

A more generous program might contain parallel analyses of programs aired by CBS and ABC immediately following the same debate. I would be happy ~~to~~ discuss this idea in greater detail with you and hope you will find it a suitable and timely issue for the audiences of CSPAN.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]