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January 25, 1991

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-SPAN Networks
400 North Capitol St. Suite 650
Washington, DC 20001

cc: S. Trahern ✓

FEB 7 1991

Dear Brian:

Here's another letter from criticism-land, complete with detailed examples. Unlike my last letter, which dealt with confusing reality-checks with a lack of objectivity, this has to do with "helping" your guests to respond to callers' comments and questions as stated. I doubt that guests fail in this deliberately, but whether it's deliberate or not it would be nice to see you (and the other hosts) correct them. So far, as infrequently as it happens (except when you have people like Mohammed al-Mashat on, of course), it is still very annoying that I have not seen any of the hosts even once make a correction. And, unfortunately, that includes you.

Two very blatant examples, both from today's Roundtable program:

1. The caller asked about the possibility of Iraqi and other "have-not" masses rising up and fighting with the Iraqi soldiers against the American and Allied forces (presumably in a coming ground war) to, as the caller put it, "kick our butts."

Walter Friedenberg replied that he didn't think it was likely that there would be any significant resistance to help the American and Allied forces, which is practically the exact OPPOSITE of what the caller had asked. And you didn't catch it.

2. The caller asked the appropriateness of protests in which various acts of greater or lesser violence occurred - blocking of buildings and streets, burning of cars, etc.

Walter Friedenberg (again!) replied that there was nothing wrong with non-violent assembly. Again, that was not the question. Again, it was practically the exact OPPOSITE of what the caller had asked. And, again, you didn't catch it.

I want to re-emphasize that I don't often see cases where the guest(s) on a call-in show fail to correct address a question or comment. But when it does happen, so far I have not seen any time where the host brought the failure to the guest's attention. He might not be your ideal comparison, but Larry King does quite well at bringing guests back to the subject/question at hand if they accidentally (or deliberately) misunderstand and go off in another direction.

By the way, when people perceive - rightly or wrongly - that guests are wandering off into what might be seen as their own agendas based on missing a caller's point, it could be seen as your allowing a bias on your programs. That is not what you say you want, so it seems to me that it is especially important for you that you keep the guests on the subject and that they address callers' comments and questions AS STATED.

Sincerely,

P.S. You may or may not want to address it on any of your shows, but even just on a personal level, now that he's left the U.S., do you happen to know any bookies taking odd on the likelihood of seeing again (alive, that is) Mr. al-Mashat? I'd be willing to gamble, given what is sure to have been seen as a poor performance on his part, that we won't be seeing him again any time soon. At least, based on Saddam's past record, not in one piece.

[REDACTED]