

C-SPAN -

I attach a copy of a letter I
am sending to Chm. R. Brown
of the DNC - Since it contains
references to you, I thought
it appropriate to send you
a copy

Mrs. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Schenectady, NY 12308

Chm. Ron Brown
Democratic National Committee
430 South Capitol St. SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

Apr 11 1992

Dear Mr. Brown,

I am a lifelong Democrat, now over 80, and have never failed to vote in a general election since I became of age. I hope to be able to vote for a winning Democrat in November and am affirmative and optimistic about the prospects for Gov. Clinton.

My complaint is NOT about the party candidates in general. I think I could have been happy with Tsongas, Kerrey or Harkin as each presented ideas worth considering and incorporating into the party platform and the policy of a Democratic administration.

What I am upset about is the diversion of attention from the real issues like health (I like Kerrey's approach), the economy, education, the environment and poverty and the allied social ills which plague us, as well as international relations. To a degree I blame bickering within our party as well as maneuvering on the part of the opposition for these diversions. But to a greater extent I blame the manipulation by media personalities (sometimes I suspect due to ignorance and lack of understanding) who seem to revel in goading candidates into displaying their worst sides instead of encouraging informative, substantive debate. In fact, I don't think most of these media people, including some very distinguished ones, know what a debate is. They regard it as a display of rivalry like an athletic event, as shown by their own first subsequent question, "Who won?". The aim should be a sober presentation and examination of differing points-of-view, with recognition that there may be much truth in each of several alternative positions, rather than a "victory". I can make my feeling clear better by pointing to a few good examples of political coverage I have heard (chiefly on C-SPAN)*. One was the elegant two-hour "debate" which PBS offered, chaired expertly by MacNeil and Lehrer, when five candidates were participating, and which C-SPAN subsequently rebroadcast. One was Clinton's excellent address to the Foreign Policy Association, and a similar statement on foreign policy which he had presented at Georgetown several weeks previously. One was the recent dialogue (with Donahue sitting silent for 45 golden minutes) while Clinton and Brown exchanged ideas on public policy, civilly and intelligently.

I hope that as the campaign progresses you can encourage more of such constructive discussion. TV has great potential for enlightenment; but when used carelessly it is a two-edged sword which can do great harm. Pundits and commentators often berate the public for lack of knowledge about the issues, but they and their colleagues are largely to blame. Much information has been offered if the public will participate by listening instead of viewing the election as a competitive sporting event.

I am hopeful that our party at least will be able to throw weight in the direction of substantial presentations in the course of the campaign both for the sake of our party and the sake of the country. Though I am not in a position to contribute important "money" and have already made one small contribution, I am sending an additional check as evidence of my real concern.

Yours sincerely

* I do cite C-SPAN as well as Jerry Brown's innovative use of the 800 number as memorable and significant contributions of technology to better functioning of democracy