

July 10, 1993

Mr. Brian Lamb,
C-SPAN,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Lamb,

In spite of the frustration of not being able to answer back frequently, because one can't get in...or if one lucked out the moment for reply would necessarily have passed, I do thoroughly enjoy C-SPAN and listen as much as I can.

A recurrent argument comes up about your choice of panelists or even individuals, to be interviewed. I find exceptionally exasperating the idea that "diversity" must be based on race, gender, or ethnicity. Certainly it is practical and realistic, and essential in a wholesome democracy, that an elected representative represents diverse constituents, not merely those of his racial background. I would argue that the person who wins the election is no longer "a minority" if he chances to be black, for instance. If he got the most votes clearly he represents a majority.

Similarly I find many men can speak well in behalf of women, and vice versa. I realize that you cater to this arbitrary perception of "representation" when you include female or black or other than white males on your panels. Certainly diversssity is desirable, but I think it should be sought in different terms. For instance on some subjects especially the diversity should consist in young, middle aged and old; in another case, the eastern states, the middle states, the far west; in still others, labor, management, academia. Further, when you have this sort of diversity, what is more important than exploring how they disagree (though that of course matters), is seeking views they hold in common. What it seems to me is really significant is the case in which you present. three, or several, people who though coming from different experience, education, background and so on, can find points of agreement. Then you have discovered something important. Whether it is an international issue, a national problem, a local dispute or a family disagreement you have beforee you, discovering agreement not exacerbating disagreement ought to win you the maximum applause.

Before TV eclipsed radio I had some experience organizing public affairs discussions on behalf of the Schenectady Adult Education department for presentation on WGY radio. Sometimes the people at the station asked, for publicity purposes, who of my proposed panel was for and who against the proposition. They couldn't believe me when I said I didn't know; but I had diversity...and good discussions, and especially so when we found these points of agreement among those approaching the issue from different real starting points. I think this approach might answer some of the complainers, and especially the opinionated woman who is gives those quarterly reports. Needed to make democracy viable is more search for inclusive consensus rather than the elevation of contentiousness.

Yours truly

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