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January 20, 1990

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Charlottesville VA 22901

Public Relations
C-SPAN
444 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 412
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RE: ADELPHIA CABLE COMPANY SLASHING SERVICE & SCRAMBLING AIRWAVES
IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.

NOTE:: The Following Letter is being sent to Virginia Senators Robb & Warner, Representative Slaughter, State Senator Michie, State Representatives Van Yahres & Allen, to John Rigis of Adelphia, and to local newspapers:

Dear Senator Robb:

Within the last month and a half, Adelphia Cable -- a cable company "servicing" Charlottesville, but based in Coudersport, PA -- has retreated further in their basic service offerings in order to greatly increase their revenues. This basic service has been stingy from the beginning. It mainly allows people to watch network and public TV programs that were available and viewable for 40 years *prior* to the insinuation of cable companies as middlemen between broadcasters and the American public. We might go so far as to say that cable companies are usurers -- "lending" the airwaves at exorbitant interest rates.

In our town, as you may know, the most basic Adelphia cable TV service once gave us NBC, CBS, ABC, PBS, plus Fox (Channel 5). To our great delight, when we got a new "cable-ready" TV two years ago after my father's stroke, we found that we could also get C-SPAN, which is surely the greatest (greater than PBS) medium for sharing news and public affairs.

In all, I believe we got Channels 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 23, 25, 28 (?), and 32..

Adelphia Cable has now decided that their basic service will include nothing above 13, which means Pap, Pop & P--p, leavened (or alieviated) by PBS. This is service? This is "basic" like white bread, designer water and one raisin a day is basic.

I called Adelphia yesterday, thinking perhaps something was wrong with our television set. A representative told me that Adelphia had the right to decide what channels were included on their basic service, and that channel by channel they were scrambling the previously-viewable channels to prevent reception by people who only paid \$14.75 a month. Apparently

this is with no public input, review or hearings. I was at first speechless, then angered, then absolutely appalled. And I have questions:

To whom do the cable companies answer?

To what standard do they toe the line?

How is it that they have acquired the very profitable right to become the only means by which people can watch TV at all -- *any* TV, including the national networks which we've watched for decades?

How "public" is public TV if we have to pay a cable company to be able to watch it?

What service do cable companies perform?

Is unscrambling a service? Is it not a form of protection racket? -- "Pay us and as long as you do we won't mess up your airwaves, Chump." Is this not in effect a tax on airwaves? (Airwaves, by the way, which pass through so-called free or at least jointly-owned and breathed air; airwaves which pass unimpeded over the American people's individual property, effectually a free "right of way" redounding to the sole benefit of the cable companies, without the exaction of rent or toll).

I am still furious. I was thinking this morning about Black Entertainment TV (BET), which was on Channel 16, and which offered public affairs programming as well as vintage movies starring black actors. I'm sure this station has offered a great deal of pleasure to many, not the least of whom, for example, are homebound elderly black people in this area -- at least those who had cable service to begin with. The public affairs discussion programs on that channel were of benefit to all who watched them. Now, for an additional \$6.00 a month I was told, we can buy back the right to see BET, C-SPAN (all public service), and -- get this -- MTV -- a totally commercial *visual* radio rock station. (And, yes, I like rock.)

I want to know what I can do about this. I want to know what persons or oversight committees of Federal & State Congress, both in the Senate and the House, have any authority over or interest in the subject of the privateering of television. (Can you imagine what would happen if radio went the same way?) I have read of communities rising up and regaining some control over programming or what is offered as "basic service" by their local cable companies. I want to know what I can do about it besides writing the cable company, and writing the newspapers. In NYC, where I lived until late 1987, for a basic fee of \$16.95 we get about 30+ channels, including all manner of public, educational and cultural channels, a weather channel, two C-SPAN channels, a CNN channel, etc. The only thing you pay extra for is HBO, Cinemax and sports (ESPN).

Here in Charlottesville, the basic service is so skeletal and stingy as to be laughable, and costs \$14.75. For an additional \$6.00 (!) I can go up "one tier" and get, as stated above, C-SPAN, BET and MTV. For an additional fee (I'm not interested), I could add HBO and sports. I don't know at what elevated tier such terrific channels as A&E, USA and LIF become available -- if at all.

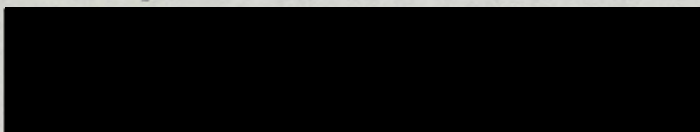
Senator Robb, this subject is probably not your personal bailiwick,

and possibly not among your top interests, but you are able, I'm sure, to understand the extreme importance of C-SPAN to honest, responsive and lively government -- or at least the involvement in it by ordinary citizens.

I say again, HOW DARE A CABLE COMPANY SCRAMBLE BROADCASTS FROM THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT? Without that government doing something swift and just about it?

I am confident that there is some State Congressional involvement in what cable companies are allowed to do, and rely on you to help me find the right person or persons to contact.

Sincerely,



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