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Voice & FAX Phone : [REDACTED]

April 3, 1995

Newer

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol Street, Suite 650
Washington DC 20001

Re : Booknotes

Dear Mr. Lamb :

This is going to be a critical letter. To keep the criticism in perspective, however, I should say at the outset that I consider your operation to be an outstanding public service and one that all by itself justifies the monthly cable charge. Your service often gives me hope that the television wasteland is not an unredeemable disaster for our culture. This is true even when you give a forum to those clowns on Capitol Hill for their demagogic posturing.

That having been said, I must express my disenchantment with the way you run Booknotes. I tune it in because you usually pick intelligent books that might not otherwise come to my attention. But I'm getting ready to tune it out because your performance is steadily getting worse. Half the time you give the impression that you haven't even read the book or at best have skimmed it lightly. Your questions thus become more stupid with every passing week. More than half of them are completely peripheral to the subject of the book, and these sound like they belong on one of the morning talkshows that the conventional networks put on. I cite here as an example of this tendency last night's interview with Gertrude Himmelfarb. Do you really think it adds to the intellectual content of your program to press Dr. Himmelfarb about her relationship to Irving and William Kristol ? This was totally unrelated to the subject of her highly interesting and important book.

Last night's program was so bad that I viewed it twice just to take notes on your absolutely dumb questions. Among the most egregious :

Who was Florence Nightingale ?
Who was Leon Trotsky ?
Who was Disraeli ?
Who was Metternich ?

Who was Beatrice Webb ?
Who was George Eliot ?
Who were the Fabians ?
And for the crowning blow :
Who was Karl Marx ?

Give us a break, Mr. Lamb. Do you really believe that there is a living soul among your audience who isn't insulted by these moronic questions ? Perhaps you believe that Booknotes attracts the same audience of cretinous booboisie that pollutes your call-in shows to spew the venom they heard from Rush Limbaugh the previous day. Let me assure you that it does not and that there some of us who appreciate intelligent adult discourse on matters of importance.

I can only conclude that you have a big job as head of an important operation and that, as such, you really don't have time to think about what you're doing with Booknotes. If this analysis is valid, perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea to turn this program over to one of your many bright associates who can give it the attention it deserves. I just hate to see a person as intelligent as you are making a fool of himself every week.

With best wishes,

