

Home Phone [REDACTED]

January 18, 1999

Mr. Brian Lamb, CEO
C-Span/C-SpanII
400 North Capitol St. N.W., Suite 650
Washington, D.C. 20001

O'wy

Dear Mr. Lamb,

Approximately ten years ago I was introduced to the C-Span program Washington Journal and soon became a fan watching the program as much as possible. I even encouraged friends and acquaintances to watch also, however I did not note much enthusiasm from others. I did not give it much thought over the years. I thought the program was somewhat balanced, but leaned to "inside the Beltway focus" to a higher degree than desirable. Periodically C-Span would do a review of headlines at the newspaper building. This would insure some, but very little, focus from other areas of the country and world. Of course your "phone in" process was intended to reflect different views from other parts of the country with guest(s) discussion. This was all "well and good".

However about a year ago I became disenchanted as I begin to feel that the guest (was two guests, but now most generally one guest) was not balanced and most likely attempting to put an "inside the beltway, pro Democrat spin on the topic. I continued to watch, but became more and more upset with the Washington Journal process and focus. About two months ago I stopped watching this program altogether. I do not feel I miss anything that will serve development of my thoughts. "Brain washing" does not do it for me and I believe Washington Journal has gotten to that point. I do not believe you intended for the program to become this way, but it has for me. Your program with Representative John Kasich, I watched one evening as a rerun and was impressed with the dialog. It scored high on my scale, but this is not what I usually find on C-Span lately. I also watched Book Notes recently when you interviewed the photograph editor regarding his book. Your guest verified my suspicion that journalism is deliberately bias and gives me cause not to have much faith in journalists. Washington Journal also reflects this bias in journalism. When I was exposed to journalism in high school some 45 years ago the non bias focus was mandatory.

Enclosed is a copy of a George Will column that I read at the end of December that sums things pretty well for me in the last paragraph.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

OPINION

Moynihan statement is reason for president to go, not stay

WASHINGTON — There may be sound reasons for not removing President Clinton, but Sen. Pat Moynihan's reason is not among them. Indeed, Moynihan's enunciation of it becomes a reason for removing Clinton. Otherwise, retaining Clinton may seem to ratify Moynihan's reasoning, which is unjust to the nation.

Identifying Moynihan as the Senate's pre-eminent intellectual is akin to identifying Iowa's tallest mountain — faint praise for the finest senator of his generation. When Moynihan leaves the Senate in 2000, public life will lose (in the words of Michael Barone, author of *The Almanac of American Politics*) "the nation's best thinker among politicians since Lincoln and the best politician among thinkers since Jefferson." That encomium is, if anything, too tepid for the 71-year-old legislator whose cherubic face should be the sixth painted on the wall of the Senate reception room, next to portraits of Clay, Calhoun, Webster, La Follette and Taft.

Still, Homer nods and so, occasionally, does Moynihan. He did last week, with brio, when he said the removal of Clinton might "destabilize" the presidency, and that risk is intolerable because America is an "indispensable nation."

That analysis, by a remarkably gifted social scientist, is notably unempirical regarding America's political stability. And linking Clinton's fate to America's world role may not be a kindness to Clinton.

It is odd to assert that the health of the presidential office is served by Clinton's continuation in it. The assertion's unspoken postulate is that the office is so brittle that it might be gravely damaged by severing Clinton from it.

Moynihan is correct about America's indispensability. That is demonstrated, powerfully if negatively, by the collapse of Clinton statecraft, from Iraq to North Korea. Yet Moynihan links his "indispensability" and "instability" points:

"There has to be a commander in chief. You could very readily destabilize the presidency, move to a randomness. That's an institution that has to be stable, not in dispute."

Well, yes, but the commander in chief was removed during the depth of the Cold War, with Soviet power waxing and U.S. forces engaged in Southeast Asia. The result was not randomness but the Ford presidency. Moynihan's argument implies that for the duration of America's indispensability, the Constitution's impeachment clause is a dead letter, too dangerous to act on.

In a television interview last Sunday morning, Moynihan said, "It would be hard to imagine, but stranger things in the world have occurred, where a congressional majority began routinely removing presidents, speakers become president, no one knows who is the commander in chief, who is the chief executive officer, and the whole stability of this nation, on which the sta-



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bility of the world rests, could be seriously and grievously undermined." He also said, "We could so easily" — so easily? or is it "hard to imagine"? — "mutate into a president of the month."

Gracious. Can we please deal with Clinton without indicting the American public? Conservatives denounce the public as strangely anesthetized; Moynihan suggests the public is on the verge of tolerating wild political volatility. A plea to the political class: Keep Clinton or spare him, but spare the rest of us these theories that make the rest of us the problem.

In a sense, instability in the presidency is, by now, old hat and hardly unnerving to this Republic in its maturity. Six of the seven presidencies immediately prior to Clinton's were truncated — by assassination (Kennedy), intra-party strife (Johnson), scandal (Nixon), or disgruntled voters (Ford, Carter, Bush). Then came Clinton, whose sorrows are the result not of "randomness" engulfing the presidential office, but of his lubriciousness making him ridiculous and felonious.

The great datum of the moment — like the purloined letter, it is in plain view and for that reason is unnoticed — is the disconnection between presidential instability

and national stability. A New York Times headline — Page 1, column six, no less — records astonishment: "Politics No Distraction." That is the Times' bulletin about what the headline calls the December "surge of shopping." (Now, there is news.) A Wall Street Journal headline — Page 1, column six — expresses similar

amazement: "Despite Everything, America Still Embraces a Culture of Optimism."

Despite "everything"? No, despite just one thing, the president's pratfalls. And presidents are rarely — very rarely — indispensable. De Gaulle was right. Graveyards (including, since 1970, one at Colombey-les-deux-Eglises) are full of indispensable men.

Political journalists believe that political news, and hence political journalists, are central to the nation's neurological health. That is news to other Americans, or would be if they were paying attention, which they are too wholesomely busy to do.

George Will, Washington Post Writers Group, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.

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