

10600-90

MAR 05 REC'D

ORANGE, NEW JERSEY 07050

March 3, 1990

MAR 28 ANSD

Mr. Brian Lamb
President, C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Nature of viewer call-ins

Dear Mr. Lamb:

First, a few words of well-deserved praise.

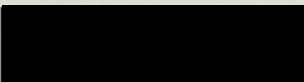
With C-SPAN's coverage of symposia, seminars, and political events, and program offerings such as Book-Notes and Journalists' Roundtable, I feel that I'm in graduate school taking courses in Contemporaneous American Thought or Political Science 404.

Additionally, I'm enormously impressed with your knowledgability, articulateness, obvious intelligence, quiet good humor, and general all-around abilities as either moderator or interviewer. And while I'm at it, may I add that it's almost sinful that Susan Swain have such an abundance of charm, intelligence, talent and attractiveness. I don't know what C-SPAN is paying her, but I'd recommend doubling it before you lose her.

And now for dropping the other shoe.

I have become increasingly aware of late that hardly a day goes by - or at least so it seems - that the viewer call-in segments have served as a forum not only for a disproportionate amount of Israel-bashing (even when the topic under discussion isn't even remotely connected with Israel), but for out-right expressions of anti-Semitism. As an example - and what particularly inspired this letter - was yesterday's Journalists' Roundtable program. Apropos of nothing at all, one caller began with observations on Wall Street junk-bond dealers (Jewish names), soon followed by the up-dated canard - with the newly minted language of junk bonds - of Jewish bankers in post World War I Germany victimizing millions of poor Germans, and thus being responsible for Hitler's rise to power. The paranoia - or hatred - of these bigots knows no bounds: either a Jewish bankers' conspiracy or a Jewish communist conspiracy or a Jewish media conspiracy - and sometimes all three at the same time!

I realize that the point of call-ins is to solicit or elicit diverse opinions - and from a broad cross-section of the country. And I realize further your concern to avoid either the reality or the perception of censorship. However, this concern - justifiable and understandable though it be - need not result in paralysis. Judgments


ORANGE, NEW JERSEY 07050


are constantly made by the moderator of the program - and perhaps even more importantly by the initial screener of the call-in - as to the appropriateness of the remarks being made, or likely to be made.

I fully appreciate the fact that there is often a fine line between so-called "legitimate" criticism and outright bigotry. But let us recognize that such a line does indeed exist, and that judgments must be exercised in making that distinction. Regrettably, it has been my experience that C-SPAN is finding it increasingly difficult to make that distinction, and has been too willing to allow virtually any commentary under the aegis of "free speech" - preferring to err on the side of the angels, as it were, rather than be accused of "censorship!".

It should be noted, however, that Justice Holmes' oft quoted precept of arriving at the truth through competition in the market-place of ideas never was intended as a rationale for requiring a medium of communication to lend its resources as a means of disseminating expressions of racial or religious bigotry.

I would urge, therefore, that a policy review be undertaken to consider more aggressive steps to weed out the bigoted calls, or to terminate them immediately when they go beyond acceptable discourse. In conclusion, I would submit that C-SPAN has a positive duty to protect itself - and the public - from those who would exploit it as a free source of hate-mongering propaganda.

With my apologies for this (overly) lengthy letter, and again with my thanks for your generally excellent work, I am

Sincerely


P.S.

For purposes of credentials, and perhaps credibility, I am a graduate of the Rutgers University Law School (Class of '52, and Editor-in-Chief of the Law Review), and presently a Supervising Judge in the Workers' Compensation Courts of New Jersey.