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1628-80

Cambridge, MA 02139

Friday, April 20

C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol St.
Suite 650
Washington DC 20021

NEW ON FILE

Dear C-SPAN,

I am sending you the enclosed draft proposal as I believe you and your organization might be interested in the establishment of a national environmental, scientific and technical cable channel. Such a channel would allow the general public to share high quality information as it is generated by professional scientists and technologists and broaden the base of knowledge for the whole country on topics of increasing daily importance.

This project is only beginning. If you or your organization is interested, a letter of support would be very helpful. With enough letters of support, I will then start communicating with the cable television industry and seriously examining the financial necessities of such a project. If you and your organization are not interested but know of someone or some other group that is, I would appreciate it if you would pass this draft proposal on to them.

Thanks for your time and effort. I can only hope that I've piqued your interest.

Yours sincerely,

P.S.: If you have any information that you could send me about how you set up your operation, the costs and the equipment and the technical support needed, I would be much appreciative. I believe that there is a real need for this kind of programming and a large enough audience to make it possible. If you can offer any kind of advice to make it easier, it would be a real gift.

NCTA:(202) 775-3550

1724 Mass Av NW

W D C- 20036

NEST: A National Environmental, Science and Technology Cable Channel

This document presents the reasons for establishing a public access network which spotlights a broad range of science and technology issues.

"Quite clearly, our task is predominantly metaphysical, for it is how to get all of humanity to educate itself swiftly enough to generate spontaneous social behaviors that will avoid extinction,"
R. Buckminster Fuller.

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The National Environmental, Science, and Technology Cable Channel

The Problem

1. Each day brings us new data which confirm that the general level of technological and scientific knowledge in this country is not adequate to the challenges being placed before us.
2. We are also being bombarded by new data which show our environment to be in increasing danger, that our children and grandchildren may not have clean oceans, ozone protection or the rainforests.
3. Some are declaring the Nineties to be the Environmental Decade.

Background

As a local public access producer in Cambridge, MA, I've had the opportunity to explore what interests me—and environmental issues have been high on my agenda. I've documented John Todd's biological waste treatment systems, the annual gathering of the New Alchemy Institute, a Boston Computer Society meeting discussing satellite imaging for habitat inventory and much more. I've found that there is a wealth of material in the Boston area alone and that there is interest in these subjects on the part of the viewing public, based on informal surveys done with the 18,000 subscribing households.

Most of the material captured and broadcast was ignored by most, if not all, of the mass media. Just as CSPAN (the Congressional and Senate Public Access Network) discovered new audiences of those interested in gavel-to-gavel coverage of our democratic process, NEST would tap into those rapidly increasing numbers of people interested in the environment and the scientific theories which help us understand the world around us.

The Solution

Establishment of a national environmental, science, and Technology cable channel would increase technological and scientific awareness and help us focus on the environment, what is going well, what needs improvement. We will get information which will help us in the workplace, in the home and in the community.

Some of the materials available for broadcast on NEST, in addition to those mentioned above, include:

- a seminar on water conservation by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
- an EPA awards ceremony
- an informal discussion between William Reilly, head of the EPA and New England environmentalists
- lectures sponsored by the Boston Area Urban Energy Association
- a symposium on "sustainable architecture" convened by Architects for Social Responsibility
- a symposium on "the new imagination" implied by ecological and biological discoveries including a presentation by biologist Lynn Margulies

- a lecture by Philip Morrison expanding on his "Ring of Truth" ideas
- and more.

By capturing the full range of our scientific exploration and disseminating this knowledge to the public (a la CSPAN), we can help resolve our technological illiteracy as a nation and build a larger constituency which understands and contributes to the environmental concerns we all share. NEST would be part of basic cable subscriptions and would cablecast 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Other features with which to augment the programming could be:

- classes taught by the best teachers in the country, high school as well as college, on the basic principles and concepts of physics, biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, and the scientific method itself.
- adult literacy classes
- adult innumeracy classes

By presenting some of the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic and science in a non-intrusive, private manner, we can go far towards increasing the abilities of our workforce to help us compete in today's rapidly changing world.

Benefits

NEST will use television to the optimum of its abilities, providing a high level of information and instruction to an audience that can use such information in their own lives, for the preservation of their communities from environmental degradation or to help them advance in their own careers. NEST is the kind of television which will not talk down to people but will share with them the best minds available on subjects of vital interest.

If we are worried about a lack of scientific competence in this country, here is a channel that will be ready to raise that level of competence for anyone who wants to take the time to watch and listen. Science, certainly environmental science and technology, can no longer be subjects available only to the elite or those lucky enough to live close to universities. A national cable channel focussing on environmental, scientific and technological issues will provide a medium by which everyone can learn what every citizen now needs to know.

Next Steps

This brief outline is intended to spark discussion of this important idea, to catalyze similarly concerned parties into action. For further information and discussion, please call
Cambridge, MA 02139.