

Wednesday, September 11, 1996

Brian Lamb, C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol St NW #650
Washington DC 20001

Brian:

C-SPAN continues to avoid(evade) giving any real rationale for the "separate lines" phone policy and when the moderators introduce the 'open lines' each morning they appear uncomfortable and--sometimes--even defensive .

The best that they can do is to say the policy gives 'balance' and 'fairness'. But what is balance and fairness if the calls do not reflect reality? If the calls run five-to-one in favor of one view, is it balanced or fair to distort this reality? Their 'explanation' is a tautology that says 'we have equal lines so that we can have equal lines'-nothing more!

This morning(11 September), Ms Swain, in response to a caller,said that the 'open' calls before didn't represent the audience--well, do you believe that they do now?

And if you believe that the phones,under this policy, are not being manipulated, just listen to the calls by both sides who call in and say that they were a Democrat or Republican and are now going to vote the other way! You know well that this is going on, so you haven't cured a thing in this regard!

You have taken, I'm afraid, a significant, and serious, first step towards 'managing the news' and distorting the truth(reality). And that's very bad for C-SPAN. The mission statement on goals, in part, says: "To provide the audience, through the call-in program, direct access to elected officials, other decision makers and journalists on a frequent and open basis"

Who, or what pressures, have forced you to this 'affirmative-action/quota policy'? Someone at C-SPAN--and I sincerely hope that it is not you--has apparently placed a heavy hand on any further open discussion of the topic. Your moderators speak very guardedly when they do try to explain it.

I suggest that at your next staff meeting that you re-open this issue and get the real and candid views of your staff--and let them know that you want their views and that they will not be judged badly for so doing.

Please, please, please--go back to the unvarnished reality--you know that you should.

Sincerely,

cc: As shown on reverse

O.W.R.

cc:

*Connie Brod
Bruce Collins
Lew Ketcham
Hope Landy
Paul Orgel
Steven Scully
Susan Swain*