



[REDACTED]
Little Rock, Arkansas 72205
[REDACTED]

Orthopaedic Surgeon
Back Evaluation and Treatment • Spinal Reconstructive Surgery

February 24, 1997

C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol Street N.W.
Suite 650
Washington, DC 20001
ATTN: BRIAN LAMB

Brian

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I'd like to register some thoughts regarding the dividing of your call-in lines by political party.

I have been a regular C-Span viewer for about four years now. (For about an hour every AM while getting ready for my work as an Orthopedic Surgeon).

I generally have a very positive view of the role of C-Span in improving and clarifying the political dialogue in our nation.

My question regards the nature and spirit of the call-ins. They seem to fall into two categories:

- First: A sincere attempt to present a considered viewpoint, a unique insight, or a bit of information not generally known.
- Second: An attempt (perhaps equally as sincere) to disparage someone else's viewpoint by personal attack, imputing of bad motivation, or guilt by association (rather than presenting an effective counter-argument), in short, "Name calling".

I have had the distinct impression that since C-Span's introduction of political call-in lines in mid-'96, the percentage of the "Name-calling" type of call has significantly increased. Do you folks keep track of such things?

Callers, I know have questioned you regarding this policy. As I recall, your answer gave something like "balance", "fairness", and "representativeness" as reasons for the new format. Fair enough!

O.WJ

PAGE TWO

I do believe it is, in fact true that an attitude which readily embraces "Name-calling", "crossfire", and raw politics for the sake of winning alone is (I believe, unfortunately) quite representative of a large segment of our population.

The mainstream media have, of course, been understandably willing to capitalize on this popular trend. But I would question whether politics by "Sound bite" or "Bumper stickers" discourse is truly constructive for our society.

I believe we have, in the past, been moved in a positive direction by fair-minded statesmen more interested in knowledgeable problem-solving than in just slamming the opposition.

It is worrissome to me that, lately, negative (largely unthinking) politics has found increasing success - no doubt in part due to increased "representation" among the voters of those to whom this approach appeals.

My questions, therefore, to you and C-Span, are the following:

- 1) Does the format of politically specific call-in lines encourage "Name calling" political mentality?
- 2) Even if you see answer #1 as "No", (I believe it is "Yes"), is there not a higher calling for C-Span than to just reflect "what's out there"?
- 3) Could not the wallowing in "charge", "counter-charge", "crossfire", etc., be left to the mainstream media, who, after all, need to be popular and profitable (not entirely unworthy goals)?
- 4) Could a way be found for S-Span to stand its ground using a format which sought to encourage factuality, knowledgability, and an analytical approach to our political and societal processes? (an even more worthy goal than those cited in #3!)

To sum up, I believe our society is at a crossroads (Crisis?), whereby the introduction of just a little more uncritical combativeness or "Name calling" politics into our voting populace will drastically reduce our chances of continuing as a free and democratic people.

I hope you, Brian, will consider the key role C-Span could play in helping society successfully negotiate those "crossroads", by adopting a format that will help us all keep our eye on knowledge, good judgment, cause and effect, etc. A non-political call-in scheme might be a step in that direction.

Meanwhile, keep up the good work! I still consider your programming the best on the block. You, Brian, in particular have been a mighty force for political decency and understanding.

Sincerely,

