

January 25, 1994

Mr. Brian Lamb, CEO
C-SPAN Network
400 N. Capitol St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I watch C-SPAN a great deal---not as often as I would like because I work and have other responsibilities, but as often as I can---and I do want to compliment you on two things you do: 1) showing news conferences, etc. in their entirety so I can get the whole context, not just a 30-second sound bite; and 2) showing events without comment or "analysis" during the event. Also, I would like to say that I learned a lot from watching the training seminars for people planning to work in political campaigns (last year) and to lobby (this year). To me, these "courses" made fascinating viewing.

There is one thing, however, that I dislike about C-SPAN, and that is the reporters you bring on for these round-table discussions. I was especially disappointed when C-SPAN allowed that Brock-person who wrote the awful book about Anita Hill to air his prejudiced---and unsubstantiated---views about our President without an opposing viewpoint. That was C-SPAN at its lowest, which is still a considerable cut above everyone else, but nevertheless disappointing.

I would like to make a suggestion which I think would solve this problem although it might be too expensive. The essence of this suggestion is to select guests with expertise in economics or government who are not reporters.

I am a federal employee, for Social Security Administration in the Kansas City Region. Therefore, I watched the coverage of "reinventing" (now "reengineering") government with great interest. And one thing I noticed was how little reporters and interviewers understood about how government works.

I noticed it in the questions asked of Al Gore. People do not understand at all how the bureaucracy is organized. One major area of misunderstanding is the difference between career employees (like myself) and political appointees (like Janet Reno). I believe that people cannot possibly understand what Al Gore is doing to reinvent/reengineer government if they do not understand government. Reporters will not be able to accurately report it---and your staff will not be able to ask the significant questions---if there is no understanding of what is being changed, and how.

This lack of understanding is not surprising. I have a Master's Degree in Sociology, with a background in organizational theory (from Max Weber to the present), but I had no idea of the size and complexity of the government, nor the dynamics of bureaucratic structures, until I became a part of it.

Therefore, I believe it would be a great service to the American public to present a series educating them on how their government actually works. And I have a suggestion for a good person to tap for this. **Herb Doggett** who used to be Head of SSA Operations in Central Office at Woodlawn before his retirement (I forget his exact title at the time because we have gone through several "reorganizations" since then) would be an excellent resource. He now has a PhD and teaches Public Administration at a college somewhere in the Baltimore-DC area. Therefore, he has both academic and practical experience in how government agencies function. I am certain he would probably know of others you could tap for this project.

I'm sorry I don't have a better address, but I am certain that Lou Enhoff, in the Commissioner's Office, could assist you in locating him.

When Vice-President Gore announced that he was going to do a government-wide performance review, reporters asked him about government programs, such as Head Start. This showed me that the reporters at that news conference did not know enough about the subject to ask appropriate questions. They did not know the difference between the career-employee-bureaucracy, and the programs administered by that bureaucracy. They did not know that most government employees work to make government work (that is, we do training, payroll, personnel functions, clean up the trash, feed other employees, etc.). Very few government employees actually administer government programs. Many of these are the excess staff and management positions Al Gore wishes to prune. These are also the people that will have to implement the Vice-President's proposals. Who in their right mind will eliminate their own job?

The kinds of questions that needed to be raised were:

- How do you change a top-down command-and-control management system to a bottom-up employee-input management system (i.e., TQM)?
- Especially, how do you get those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo to change?
- Especially, when the people who responsibility it is to implement the change may well be losing their jobs?
- How do you build accountability into a system which currently works to avoid accountability for anything by anyone?
- How do you change a system where promotions are dependent upon not rocking the boat to a system where

promotions are dependent upon innovative creativity leading to improved beneficiary (in the case of SSA) service?

- How do you change a system organized on an industrial factory model to a system of informational exchange needed today?
- How do you insure that federal employees are adequately trained to meet the needs of taxpayers and clients?
- How do you instill accountability into a system that by its nature does not respond to profit and loss?
- How do you change a system where power is based upon the size and costliness (measured as one's segment of the budget) of one's empire to a system where power is based upon low-cost efficiency?
- The system between and within agencies is more like a confederacy than a dictatorship. Given this, how can you change each power base's job descriptions and promotion processes so that they are equivalent within and between agencies?

I could probably think of more questions if I thought longer. These are the ones that come to mind as I sit here writing this letter. I heard none of these questions at any news conference I have seen. I believe it is because the questioners did not know enough about the subject to know to ask them. Or else, the questioners are looking for easy headlines rather than information needed by the American people.

Please consider my idea. You may want to talk with someone you know in Public Administration, or who works in government, to see ~~if~~ what they think. Personally, I think it would be good to talk to people like me---there are hundreds of thousands of us in DC and its environs---but I don't know if it is legally possible. Herb Doggett is a good person because he is no longer currently employed by government.

I truly believe that it would be a public service to dispel the myths and misconceptions about government bureaucracy, to inform the public, so that the public cannot be hoodwinked into thinking changes have been made which have not in reality occurred, and so that the public understands what is really going on, and what are the stakes involved in the changes envisioned.

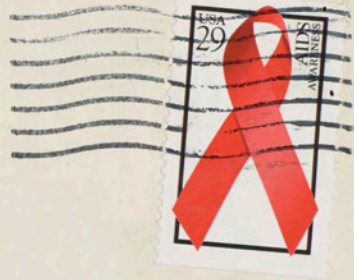
People should keep in mind that government employees also spend the money they earn. If government is cut back too quickly, and that demand is removed from the market without its being replaced, and if unemployed-former-government employees end up on the dole (but there are no longer employees to administer the increased program)---well, you get the picture, I am sure. The

I suppose the bottom line for me is this. Government is part of our society, and government employees are human beings who are part of this society and happen to work for the government. Like any other business, etc., we have some employees who are incompetent and some who are lazy, and if they are cunning enough they get by and keep their jobs. A couple of years ago I taught a Sociology course in which one of my students who worked for Sprint wrote a paper about the politics at Sprint. I wrote on the margin that I thought this kind of thing only happened in government.

Thank you for your consideration of my idea. And for C-SPAN. I just wish we could get C-SPAN II.

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