

March 12, 1995

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-SPAN
444 North Capitol St. NW
Ste 650
Washington, D. C. 20001

viewer

Dear Mr. Lamb,

As an avid two-newspapers-a-day reader, C-SPAN watcher and lifelong student of politics, I would like to call to your attention the fact that news reporting today is too repetitive. And I think that the media has become the bearer of propaganda as a result of repetition - recalling James Carville's famous phrases, repeated nightly on network news in the 1992 presidential campaign, "It's the economy stupid....the people want change....character doesn't matter..."

As an example, let me cite the issue of the free school lunch program that is being reported DAILY!

All that I would know, reading or hearing the mainstream news coming out of Washington, D. C., is that the Democrats say REPEATEDLY that the Republicans will take away free lunches from poor, starving children. And the Republicans, like voices crying in the wilderness, say, in other media outlets, that it isn't true.

Who is lying?

What bothers me is that there is no further debate....the statement is made and the subject is dropped.... exactly like there was no debate allowed in the mainstream press when the Roe v. Wade decision was handed down by the Supreme Court. Then, the advocates of "choice," along with the national media, silenced any opposition to abortion. It was as if the pro-life advocates had no "choice" or opinion in the matter.

Are there not two sides to a national debate anymore?

On the issue of school lunches, it would be easy enough to find out by continuing the debate.....and the story could become very enlightening with good investigative reporting.

For instance, some enterprising reporter could visit a few public schools and ask questions like "Who gets free lunches? How does a child qualify for a free lunch? Is it a hungry child? Does he/she eat the lunch or is the tray left half-full? Exactly how much food is wasted? At what cost? If the present law is changed, will the child

still be fed?" Who will feed the children? That, alone, could settle the matter quickly.

To further enlighten the public (which I once believed was the purpose of the news media) one important question could explain the Democrats' determination to keep the federal program intact, i.e., "How much influence does the federal program have over the public school curriculum as a result of its tie to the free lunch program?"

And then the biggest question of all. Is the loss of its power base in Washington, D. C., the driving force behind the Democrats' opposition to any change in federal programs?

If only the Washington press corps would do its job. Only those of us who pay close attention know about block grants to the states, etc. The tragedy of it all is that many people believe only what they hear on network news - quick and repetitive - that the Republicans will starve hungry children.

Would it be easy to ask your media guests, on the morning program, if anyone in their organization has ever checked with the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA, to find out how many poor children actually develop rickets or malnutrition in any given year? In light of the present debate - if you can call it that - this would be news, wouldn't it? Or would the question be considered a "hard" question?

I've discovered, after listening to C-SPAN these many years, that when a hard question is posed by the moderator, the guest reporter or politician usually replies, "I'm not familiar with the story..." if they want the subject dropped.

I am disappointed in the national press. And continually amused at their answer to criticism when accused of liberal bias. Their repetitive reply is that some people think they're too conservative. It happens every time! But, people like me listen to the adjectives used in conversation and can tell in a minute whose side they're on.

Please ask hard questions that cannot be dodged. It should bring some refreshing new life into the conversation.

When you were accused of being liberal this morning, I believe the faxer was referring to your response to a caller who scolded you for showing only liberal headlines, and you replied, with tongue-in-cheek, "Yep, that's what we do."

You and other sources beyond the reach of mainstream news outlets are doing a great service for this country. Keep up the good work!

Cordially,

Houston, TX 77039