

Newer

[REDACTED]
Stamford, CT. 06905

Feb. 24, 1995

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-SPAN
400 North Capitol St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I'm writing to make you aware of the actions of my local cable company in interfering with reception of C-SPAN programming on a daily basis. With ever increasing frequency, Cablevision of Norwalk (Connecticut) is blocking reception of C-SPAN to air 30 and 60-minute "infomercials" for local dentists, plastic surgeons, and stores during the evening hours. This is always done without any prior notice, and often, they will literally interrupt a C-SPAN program in progress (for example, Book Notes on Sunday evenings) to air these paid commercials. My telephone calls to them are met with arrogance ("we have the right to change programming whenever we want"), and a very polite and courteous letter to the Programming Director (Ms. Maryce Cunningham) has gone unanswered.

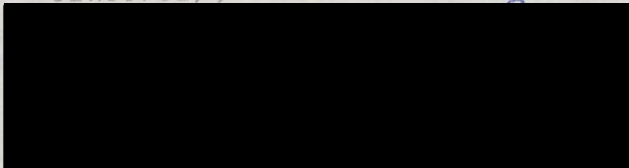
I must confess to being a C-SPAN "junkie". I'm a Registered Nurse with 18 years experience in working the Emergency Room. My wife and I are both very avid readers and we're both very interested in American history and politics. In addition to visiting many historical sites within a 7 or 8 hr. drive from home (Monticello, Mt. Vernon, Philadelphia's Independence Park, Gettysburg, etc.), we travel to Washington, DC each fall for several days to satisfy our cravings for history - the monuments, Capitol, White House, and Smithsonian buildings never cease to fill me with feelings of awe and beauty. (plus, along the way we've discovered some great restaurants and places to shop!!)

I've enclosed a copy of a letter I wrote about the local cable company and C-SPAN which is in today's issue of the Connecticut Post newspaper. (a daily paper covering the Bridgeport area. I believe it has the largest daily circulation of any newspaper in the state). Since writing it, the cable company has aired infomercials during last week's Book Notes and during evening rebroadcasts of the Iwo Jima ceremonies and other "events of the day". Your one-on-one interview with President Clinton last Monday night (President's Day) was interrupted literally in mid-sentence as Cablevision ran a 30-minute commercial for a local dentist.

I'm not sure what can be done. I'm writing next to Congressman Christopher Shays to ask his help in this matter. I wanted to bring this matter to your attention as well. Isn't there anything we can do to stop this, Mr. Lamb? How dare the local cable company substitute an infommercial for such superb C-SPAN programming? My blood pressure triples when they interrupt Book Notes - the most informative and best done interview program in all of television, in my opinion.

Thank you for your time and attention on this matter. C-SPAN exhibits true excellence in broadcasting. You will have my continued loyalty and support.

Sincerely,



(enclosure)

LETTERS

Protests C-SPAN preemption

I'm writing to openly protest a great disservice that our local cable television company, Cablevision of Norwalk, is subjecting its subscribers to with ever increasing frequency. I am referring to Cablevision's constant overriding of C-SPAN's programming during the evening hours to air 30-minute commercials ("info-mercials") from local businesses. C-SPAN, along with CNN, are the real gems of the cable TV network, in my opinion. In addition to covering the activities of the U.S. House of Representatives, C-SPAN also provides us with a wealth of objective, accurate, and timely programs. These range from interviews with political leaders, historians and authors to the airing of live video from space during Space Shuttle missions.

Last evening, for instance, C-SPAN was providing live coverage of a dinner honoring former President Ronald Reagan in celebration of his 84th birthday. Distinguished guests from around the world, including former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, were in attendance. Days before, C-SPAN announced it was carrying this historic event live from Washington, D.C. The day of the dinner I read two different newspaper articles about the event, and both indicated that C-SPAN was providing coverage. In eager anticipation of the event, I tuned to C-SPAN at 9 p.m. Instead of finding the dinner coverage, I found that this was a time that Cablevision chose, once again, to override C-SPAN programming and air a 30-minute commercial for a fabric store from Larchmont, N.Y. I was outraged.

It seems to me that this constitutes consumer fraud. I am paying Cablevision each month to provide me with the ability to watch C-SPAN.

When they air these 30-minute commercials, I'm prohibited from watching that channel. I cannot view the programs I want to see (that I'm paying Cablevision to provide me). I cannot watch the shows listed in TV Guide, Total magazine, or in a newspaper. This is done without my consent and knowledge, it is very unfair and destroys whatever trust I may have had in Cablevision to provide me with good service.

The rest of the country got to watch a historic dinner and tribute that night; those of us living in Cablevision's Fairfield County domain saw a 30-minute commercial for a fabric store. If Cablevision did this during an episode of "Home Improvement," "Seinfeld," or "Murphy Brown," there would be screams of protest and upheaval. But Cablevision continues to do this during C-SPAN's educational programming.

The airing of these 30-minute commercials (for dentists, plastic surgeons and fabric stores) must provide a great deal of revenue for Cablevision. It's a shame that educational, historical and inspirational programming must be compromised for those of us who pay our Cablevision bill each month. We should be entitled to watch the C-SPAN programs listed in our weekly programming guides. This seems to me to be a fundamental rule of fee-for-service business. Obviously, the management at Cablevision disagrees. I find their continual actions in this respect to be an insult to their subscribers, and in this case, an insult to former President Reagan.

