

October 30, 1996

Washington Journal
400 N. Capitol St., NW #650
Washington, D. C. 20001

Dear Sir:

Your program is very much appreciated and C-SPAN has been commendable for it's coverage of important political and social issues and especially the 1996 political election.

I am one of America's frustrated and down-hearted citizens because of the difficulty required to become adequately and honestly informed. I quit newspapers in the 70's and turned to books - a daunting task when one must maintain employment, family, etc.

Already cynical of the morass called politics, after the shenanigans of the 104th congress in Dec. '95 and early 1996, I vowed I would never vote for any politician again. Wondering "what" I would write in on the ballot (I couldn't imagine a "who") I was struggling between the word choice of HONESTY or INTELLIGENCE, when quite by accident I saw the Libertarian party's convention over the July 4th weekend. I was thrilled! Thereafter, I stayed glued to C-Span for more input and was pleased to learn about the other third party candidates, most of which I have taped so that I can listen and learn. The quality of content is so refreshing.

There is one criticism I have however of your morning program. That is that you promote the "boxed-in" concept of either/or with the stipulation of Democrat/Republican/Other. One morning it was so painfully obvious when you presented a male, anglo-American, republican and a female, afro-American, democrat that I almost quit Washington Journal as I had with the newspapers in the '70's. If it weren't for the "call-ins," I probably would have. As we near the election day, it seems even worse. Do you really think that there are no other political groups on college campuses? I have a friend whose daughter is very active with the Natural Law party at Oberlin. Yet Washington Journal presents only the Young Republicans and the Young Democrats. Aren't these other parties in the area, such that a representative or two from the Green party, the Libertarian party, or the U. S. Taxpayer's Party could sit with you at the morning round table? Is the morning round table, like the two major presidential candidates, afraid of the confrontation with substance?

Along with this, many statements from the people you do invite to the table are frequently pathetic. Unless a caller happens to get through with an appropriate response, these messages presented to the audience can be presented as if they are authentic, accurate or valid.

O.WJ

I am a recent viewer of C-Span. Because I heard John Sullivan and Stephen Frantzich reviewing their book, The C-Span Revolution, I realized that you are a very noble experiment in process. Rather than give up on you as "the same ol', same ol'" perhaps you would consider transforming this "boxed-in" concept of "democrat/republican/other."

In challenging my mind to come up with a better idea, I can only offer this so far: Consider the variety we have in this country, whether it be breakfast cereal, laundry soap or movie genres. Perhaps your invitations to callers could reflect this amazing variety. This might just lead to the elimination of party names and lead us into, for example, a category of ideas. Callers could call in according to the topics or ideas arranged. (Constitution/Law/Labor/Education/Taxes/Economics/Finance/Other/ (Initiatives/Amendments/Policies/Organizations/"Add your Own") Let the callers join in with this development. Perhaps there could be variations on different days. When the political parties are listed perhaps all of them can be listed if we must stay with this format. I for one would not miss what I have come to call the "bogus, bureaucratic blathering" which so many of the "call-in" participants from the two dominant parties have so obviously adopted by listening to it.

Because C Span is so dynamically potent perhaps you must learn from others with this energy. For example, Intel learned early on that even though they had produced "a winner," they knew that by the time it hit the market it would be obsolete and they immediately started producing the next "winner". C-Span has this same challenge and in particular Washington Journal. I hope that you will take the need for constant transformation seriously.

In closing, let me say I very much appreciate C-Span. Brian Lamb is wonderful and I love Booknotes. It is my sincere hope that the Washington Journal will continue to be worth watching.

Sincerely,

Millwood, Va. 22646

P. S. I have been trying to get this written and sent for weeks. Now, this very morning, you presented three of the third party presidential candidates. Thank you.

Nov. 7, 1996

A Footnote: I couldn't resist sending the following quotes from an article in Wired magazine (Sept. '96) by John Perry Barlow. I didn't want to break any rules by copying the whole article and sending it to you. I strongly recommend that you get a copy of this; perhaps WIRED will send you a copy, (info.wired.com). The article by John Perry Barlow is entitled: Netizen: The Powers That Were.

"The U.S. is no longer a democracy, but Government by Hallucinating Mob, driven mad by television. Little wonder then that this year's election feels like a choice between cancers."

"In a democratic society, it's dangerous for elected officials to ignore the body politic. But what if it has been driven mad by television. What if the duties of citizenry have been abandoned by those of us who are still sane?"

"Take heart, because by the time we can elect enough of our own to make a difference, the Net will have changed society so much that the U.S. Senate will seem about as relevant as the House of lords."

(This input comes from one who does not have a p.c.!!)

This material is especially sent to BRIAN LAMB.
I think he can do something with it.