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January 13, 1993

Mr. Brian Lamb
C-Span
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Dear Brian:

Congratulations on the program on Oxford University. I am already a devoted fan of C-Span - your Book Notes, for example - but your lengthy program on my university was very well done. I failed to get through on your call-in telephone line, so let me expand on the comments I wanted to make.

1. Many youngsters have socialist leanings at age 22. Wasn't it Churchill who said that if they did not they would have no heart? But it was also said that those who still possessed such illusions at age 32 would have no head.

So I was not surprised by the idealism expressed by your group of Rhodes Scholars. I agree with them that government actions should work for the common good. The problem seems to be that there are enough bad apples in the "public service" business that the good works of some are soured by the schemes of others. Hence the rage in this country directed at our "professional politicians", whether they be elected or appointed.

2. I was surprised that you only found one Oxonian, David Segal, who thought that an Oxford education is over rated. Of course, he's pretty young too so one hopes he will mature. I thought his observation that one had to be thin to be selected for a Rhodes Scholarship was right on!
3. Your interrogation of your guests regarding how many colleges exist was most entertaining. For me, there is only one that counts. Christ Church. All of us seem to have strong loyalties to our colleges. It is one of the realities that the Campaign for Oxford is struggling with as we try to raise funds. We tend not to know how many other colleges exist.

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4. Perhaps the aspect of your show that I enjoyed most was to listen to Oxford talk again. What a brilliant defense of the study of "Greats" was given by Dr. Kenny of Rhodes House. The comments by another leftist don on the subject "political correctness" should be broadcast in U.S. universities which are tainted by the virus. Such places should have their university credentials suspended and be renamed as "Centers for Activist Propaganda". The Oxford don's contempt was well expressed.
5. I am full of hope for Bill Clinton's administration, but I am under no illusions about how difficult his task will be. Perhaps his group of Oxford friends will remember how their tutors criticized their essays and apply the same rigor to their own examinations of proposals that will be brought to the new administration. I am hopeful, but not too optimistic, that idealistic intelligent young men and women will succeed in controlling a legislature and bureaucracy that contains a corps of self-serving, hypocritical, political pros.
6. On several occasions your program invoked the famous debate of the Oxford Union that "this House will not fight for King and Country". I was not a member of the Union and did not go up to Oxford until 1943 but I believe most of the class that voted in the famous debate did fight for King and Country - and many lost their lives. Every man that I knew at Oxford served in the armed forces in World War II. None was drafted or "conscripted" as the British would say. Some of my friends did not survive the war and return to Oxford as I did.
7. One of your guests made the remark that a significant difference between the British approach to a problem and the American approach is that a Brit might say "that's too bad" whereas an American would say "what can we do about it?". Remember that it was the British who left England a few years ago who had enough "can do spirit" to create this country - among others. Although many, like me, are still leaving there are very talented folks left behind - witness the Oxford dons you chatted with - especially the Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Richard Southwood.

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8. Although I am an American citizen now I did not apply for citizenship until Ronald Reagan ran for office. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I regarded myself as a citizen of Exxon long before I felt that this nation was worthy of my allegiance. Exxon, and many great American corporations, maintains standards of performance and ethics that are so far above those of Washington that it is hard to believe that they are both American. I did not vote for George Bush and do not support either political party. I thought President Bush's comments about Oxford were absurd and the efforts of his campaign staff to impugn the University were outrageous.

9. Thank you again for a great show. I wish it could have been longer!

With best regards,

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