

May 7, 1993

Mr. Brian Lamb
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Mr. Lamb,

I watch your network, and many other journalists shows routinely. Let me tell you what I am tired of. I am tired of politicians (left & right), journalists(left & right), special interest foundations(left & right), think tanks(left & right), and other political operatives(left & right) saying, "what the American people want, is". They don't know what the American people want, or if they do, they don't care. All they know is what they, and a relatively small group of their associates want, and these people spin the polls to benefit their own viewpoint. I don't blame them, because it is the American way.

The disservice is to the American people. Even tough journalists never really pin down a specific answer or viewpoint, when questioning politicians. I don't blame them either. Journalist careers depend on access to politicians. To alienate a politician, means to loose access to the information that journalists need to do their job. The standard answer to the average voter is, "If you want your views represented, get involved." We both know that isn't really possible in the real world. It is analogous to the supposition that if voters don't like the job done by a politician, all the voters have to do is vote the politician out of office. We both know that this theory is too simplistic, and not practical in the real world.

Let me tell you what I think is the real difference between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans want to keep the advantages for 10% of their closest friends. Democrats want to give everybody's cash to everyone else, so the majority will like them.

Let me tell you what I think most voters want:

- Congressional and Administration salaries and perqs tied to performance, like everyone else;
- less spending, balanced budget, no waste, debt eliminated, line item veto, and term limits if the above are not achieved;
- less economists playing textbook Monopoly with voters futures;
- the government to anticipate problems in education, jobs, housing, healthcare, crime, etc., and to plan ahead;

- the burden on business eased; business held accountable to employees; social programs that meet the needs of the country, but not at the extreme expense of the people that pay the freight, the taxpayer;
- government agency employees tied to results, like everyone else.

It can be done. Government is both, more complex than the voters believe, and less complex than politicians would like the voter to believe.

Let me suggest this. Your network is an excellent conduit to conduct a non-partisan oriented debate, and you would be the most effective moderator. Select one or two "average" voters to question politicians, and political activists of right, left, and centrist philosophy. The questioner selection criteria should be:

- average intelligence;
- average knowledge and interest in political process, and political issues;
- no axe to grind; no special agenda;
- centrist thinking, neither Democrat or Republican;
- reasonably articulate;
- not intimidated by politicians, nor national exposure;
- ability and willingness to take politicians head on, and won't accept non-answers.

Select a group of journalists, both left, right, and centrist, such as Chris Matthews, Sam Donaldson, George Will, Cokie Roberts, Bob Novak, Jim Lerher, Mark Shields, Tim Russert, Al Hunt, Mona Charron, etc. The role of the journalists would be to:

- help prepare the voter/questioner with substantive background and questions on a variety of issues (in addition to the voters' own ideas);
- assist questioner with comparative analysis of each panelists' answers, and assist questioner with followup questions if necessary.

Select a group of politicians, political activists, and maybe expert witnesses from both Parties, and independent action groups to answer questions from the voter/questioner on a variety of issues, including tax policy, foreign affairs, immigration, social programs, campaign financing, trade, government operating budget, healthcare, education, crime, defense, transportation, housing, etc.

Structure the debate like the daylong Healthcare Taskforce meeting. Have three panelists to answer questions on specific topics. The idea is for the voter/questioner to get real answers from each panelist before going on to the next question. The voter gets to set the rules, interrupt partisan speeches, and get specific answers before going on to the next question. One question, or position, may take 5 minutes to be answered, or one hour. C-SPAN could take calls from the viewers, for additional questions during the debate.

Additional rules:

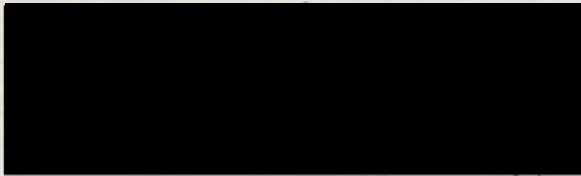
- C-SPAN and journalists get to qualify the voter/questioner as a non-partisan:

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- politicians do not get to pick or sign off on questioner.

I know this is a radical idea, and could prove to be pretty dicey. It would be a landmark process, would permit all viewpoints to be heard, but most importantly, serve the interests of the voters and taxpayers. Those politicians that choose not to participate, would be discredited.

Sincerely,



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Classic Laid



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