

6/7/93

C-SPAN

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Washington, D.C. 20001

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Dear C-SPAN Producers,

As a committed C-SPAN watcher for the past year or so, I feel compelled now to make a few suggestions and pass ideas to your Programs Department.

As I watched your "Road to the White House" segment yesterday, I was somewhat surprised that now, just 4 months into the new Administration, the vultures are already circling to pick apart what is still a viable and fully vigorous Presidency. What surprised me even more is the extended coverage you are giving to this unseemly, undignified process. In all fairness, I was not watching 4 years ago, so I do not know if this is a matter of long-standing policy for C-SPAN.

Still, to highlight Representative Dornan, who must surely be an embarrassment to his constituents as well as the Republican Party, falls far

short of your high journalistic standards, I believe. Whereas I do agree that he has a right to speak and present his viewpoint, his style is cheap, scurrilous, inflammatory to an extent that is truly unbecoming any member of Congress. Did you give David Duke (not that I am a fan of his, either) even half the access you have given to this door-knob, I mean, Dornan? You might as well bring in the National Enquirer and the Star to your perusal of headlines in your Journalists' Roundtable discussions, as to give Dornan, who must be living in some permanent post-Vietnam flashback horror, as much access to the national media as you have! Even the First Amendment has limitations, do you not agree? Should we reduce our national conversation to Bob Dornan's level, and hear every nasty innuendo, every unsubstantiated accusation, every mean-spirited, snarling, personal attack and dogfight?...

Watching debates in Congress is bad enough, ladies and gentlemen. At least, watching those debates, keeping the cameras on that crowd is necessary and justifiable because we must know what they're saying and doing. I can even stand to hear Dole or Gramm, though I think they're wrong, but at least they play along the rules of decent, reasonable rhetoric and dialogue.

In the end, perhaps it will all turn out ok. I cannot imagine the Republicans to suffer ~~their~~ most Savage fools gladly for long. (Knowing how much Pat Buchanan's Speech hurt their party, they will soon reel Dornan in, just as Democrats can silence their most vocal and offensive voices.)

At any rate, I offer the above as food for thought for all of you in the decision-making process. I know you have to make judgement calls every day, for even decisions on what to show or not show on C-SPAN are editorial decisions. On the whole, I think you are doing well, and I Congratulate you.

Now on to my next point. Your telephone lines, when you open them to the public, are an extremely frustrating bottleneck, as often voiced by the callers once they do get on the air. Is there any way possible that you can improve telephone access for your call-ins? Given the interest in C-SPAN and politics in general, you are leaving <sup>many, many</sup> many viewers frustrated and helpless to contribute to the conversations.

Perhaps one solution may be to create viewer forums on a larger, town-meeting style scale, at least until interactive television is a household reality. Certainly, I would much rather watch real people voicing their concerns to a moderator than to see 3 days of really boring hearings on the airlines, for example. Official hearings have their place, to be sure,

but we, as a nation, are moving increasingly toward a participatory democracy, and C-SPAN should move in that direction as well. If you don't do it, you can be sure that some Ted Turner type will.

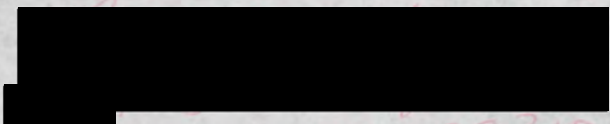
~~Close~~ Programs such as Close Up, involving ordinary citizens, are better than nothing, but they should be expanded, including larger citizen forums. You may even have to create C-SPAN3, but that's great, the more the merrier! Lobby the FCC if you must, but do move toward more inclusion. I would be more than happy to put the punditocrats out of business — nobody's opinion is worth a six-figure salary!

In fact, I'll gladly give my opinion for nothing, as will millions... Even Mother Theresa, or Albert Einstein would, and did.

Thanks again for your coverage. By and large, it's the best thing on TV. I would be more than gratified if you gave some consideration to my input.

Good Work, and  
Keep it Up!

Yours most sincerely,

  
Alexandria, VA 22310