

## FACT SHEET

Corporate Headquarters	Suite 412 444 North Capitol Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 737-3220
Funding	Private, non-profit cooperative of the cable television industry.
Chairman and CEO	Brian P. Lamb
Programming Executives	Susan Swain, Vice President Terry Murphy, Dir. of Programming
Press Contacts	Gene Grabowski, Press Manager Kristin Wennberg, Press Assistant
TV Listings	Tracey Splaine, Schedule Assistant
Full-time Employees	155

### *The C-SPAN Networks*

In 1979, C-SPAN was created by the cable television industry to provide live gavel-to-gavel coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives. Today, in addition to the live House proceedings, C-SPAN offers a front row seat to other public affairs events from the nation's capital and across the country. On any given day C-SPAN crews cover between five and fifteen events. Each event is aired without commentary or analysis.

The cable industry created C-SPAN II in 1986 to cablecast the live sessions of the U.S. Senate, in their entirety. C-SPAN II's round-the-clock programming complements the original C-SPAN network by offering more viewing alternatives to cable TV audiences interested in public affairs programming.

	<u>C-SPAN</u>	<u>C-SPAN II</u>
Launch Date	March 19, 1979 (3.5 million households at launch)	June 2, 1986 (7.5 million households at launch)
Households (as of 6/89)	46.3 million 50% U.S. TV HH	18 million 21% U.S. TV HH
Affiliates	3,271 CATV Systems	646 CATV Systems
Satellite	Galaxy III, TR 24	Galaxy III, TR 14
Transmission Hours	24 hours a day	24 hours a day

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## REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING

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U.S. House of Representatives	Live, daily (when Congress is in session)
Event of the Day	Weeknights at 8:00 pm ET-- Relevant public policy programming--in its entirety and without commentary.
Congressional Hearings	Daily (when Congress is in session) House and Senate hearings-- in their entirety-- present a close-up view of the political system.
National Press Club	Saturdays at 6:00 pm ET (60 minutes) Newsmakers address the Washington press corps.
Viewer Call-In Programs	Live, weekdays at 8:00 am & 6:30 pm ET (90 minutes each) Viewers question elected legislators, policymakers, and journalists about issues of the day.
"Communications Today"	Saturdays at 11:00 am ET Focus on media trends, technology, and communications law.
"America & the Courts"	Saturdays at 7:00pm ET Interviews, discussions, and speeches on the federal judiciary.
"Booknotes"	Sundays at 8:00pm ET (60 minutes) Interviews with authors of public policy, political and historical books.

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## SPECIAL SERIES

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"Supreme Court Review"	The weeks when the Court hears oral arguments, "America and the Courts" airs interviews examining current activities at the Supreme Court.
"American Profile"	Airs on national holidays. (60 minutes) In-depth interviews with public officials, opinion and business leaders who help shape the nation.
"A Day In The Life"	An occasional series. Behind-the-scenes looks at magazines, newspapers and government operations.

## *National surveys show growing, active audience\**

### **AUDIENCE**

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#### **POTENTIAL AUDIENCE**

C-SPAN homes 44.5 million via 3,262 cable systems  
C-SPAN II homes 17.6 million via 642 cable systems

#### **GROWTH IN VIEWERSHIP**

The C-SPAN audience has grown 184% since 1984:

1988 21.6 million households watch C-SPAN  
1984 7.6 million households watch C-SPAN

#### **VOTING HABITS**

C-SPAN viewers have consistently higher voting patterns than the nation at large:

	C-SPAN viewers	Nation at large
1988 presidential elections	92% voted	49% voted
1986 congressional elections	69% voted	37% voted
1984 presidential elections	93% voted	53% voted

#### **OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES**

More than one quarter (26%) of C-SPAN viewers said the network's election programming *had an impact on their choice of a candidate* to support in the 1988 presidential election.

#### **POLITICAL AFFILIATION**

C-SPAN viewers represent a cross section of the political spectrum:

32% Democratic  
33% Republican  
33% Independent  
2% Other

#### **NEWS CONSUMPTION**

C-SPAN viewers are more interested than the general public in following news events:

	C-SPAN viewers	Nation at large
read daily newspaper	63%	48%
watch TV news everyday	70%	52%

#### **C-SPAN VIEWING HABITS**

	Average viewing hours
C-SPAN	9.9 hrs. per month
C-SPAN II	7.7 hrs. per month

\*Data from University of Maryland Survey Research Center - 1984, 1987 and 1988 national surveys.

## *C-SPAN Marks 10th Anniversary*

### **MILESTONES**

- March 19, 1979 C-SPAN begins cablecasting the U.S. House of Representatives *live* to 3.5 million households.
- October 7, 1980 C-SPAN adds **live viewer call-ins** to program schedule, providing viewers with direct access to public policy makers.
- January 6, 1981 C-SPAN adds gavel-to-gavel coverage of **congressional hearings** to program schedule.
- April 1, 1981 C-SPAN telecasts daily, eight hours a day.
- February 1, 1982 C-SPAN daily programming expands to 16 hours.
- September 13, 1982 C-SPAN begins **24-hour-a-day** programming.
- July 1, 1983 C-SPAN begins occasional coverage of the Canadian House of Commons.
- February 20, 1984 C-SPAN televises an Iowa caucus **live and uninterrupted** for the first time.
- May 10, 1984 House cameras begin "panning" entire chamber during Special Orders.
- August/July, 1984 C-SPAN airs **live, uninterrupted** coverage of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions for the first time.
- June 2, 1986 C-SPAN II airs **live** proceedings of the U.S. Senate during television test period.
- July 29, 1986 Senate votes in favor of permanent televised coverage of its proceedings.
- January 5, 1987 C-SPAN II begins 24-hour cablecasting.
- November 9, 1988 USIA transmits C-SPAN to 90 countries via **WORLDNET**, the first global satellite television network.
- November 22, 1988 C-SPAN inaugurates **international** telecasts with Queen Elizabeth II's speech to the state opening of Parliament.
- April 3, 1989 C-SPAN marks 10th Anniversary

**C-SPAN VIEWERS**

CONGRESS

On the Air

# America's Town Hall

## C-SPAN and the Decade That Brought Government Home

By Tom Shales  
Washington Post Staff Writer

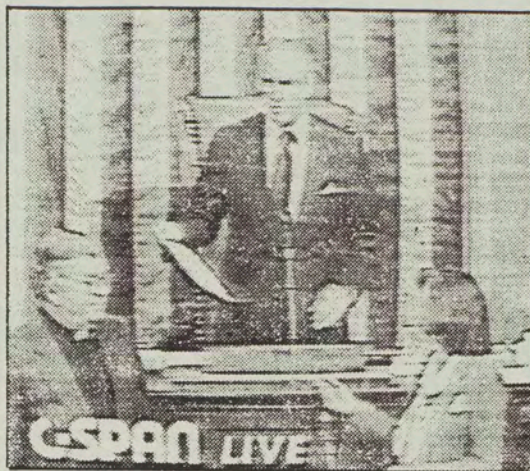
Cable television's blessings have been few, and most of those mixed, but it can claim one great idea: C-SPAN, the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network, which tonight celebrates its 10th anniversary with a three-hour retrospective.

Available to only 3.5 million wired households when it began transmitting the proceedings of the House of Representatives on March 12, 1979, C-SPAN can now be seen in 43 million homes. On June 2, 1986, the Senate finally bit the bullet and turned the cameras on itself, and a second channel, C-SPAN II, was born.

Once a novelty, then a kind of cult item, C-SPAN has become a seemingly indispensable feature of America's electronic landscape.

If C-SPAN's combined regular viewership remains relatively small, it is also passionately loyal. In tonight's program, at 8 on C-SPAN, a Texas teacher recalls how he was compelled to quit his job and run for Congress because what he had seen on C-SPAN inspired him. Or maybe he just deduced that those jokers in Washington were in obvious need of his help.

Bud Harris, a viewer in Cherry Hill, N.J., became outraged in 1982 when his local cable system



Speaker Jim Wright presiding over the House.



C-SPAN PHOTOS

Sen. John Glenn playfully primping for the camera.

(owned by The New York Times) dropped C-SPAN from its roster. The network had switched from sharing space on a satellite with another channel to a bird all its own, and the cable system, perhaps more in confusion than negligence, let it slip away.

Harris founded Friends of C-SPAN and got the channel reinstated. Any cable system of moderate capacity or larger that doesn't include the two C-

See ON THE AIR, D3, Col.1

Washington Post  
April 3, 1989

# C-SPAN's Anniversary

ON THE AIR, From D1

SPAN channels is guilty of civic malfeasance—and poor public relations, since C-SPAN is the best image booster grubby old cable TV has ever had.

It fosters the illusion that cable operators care about something other than making lots and lots of money. Tonight's C-SPAN retrospective is part of its celebration of (try to contain your enthusiasm) National Cable Month.

On some systems, the two C-SPANs are relegated to the outer limits of the spectrum. In Arlington, for instance, where the highest channel number is 55, C-SPAN I and II come in on 52 and 53. The system reserves the better channels for those that produce revenue for the owners.

But C-Spanners locate the channels wherever they are, and do more than watch faithfully. They participate, mainly by opining away on the network's frequent call-in shows. Often these are hosted by Brian Lamb, C-SPAN chairman and chief executive officer and last year's recipient of the Sol Taishoff Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism.

On tonight's program, Lamb recalls how the idea for C-SPAN was set in motion in 1977 with a mere \$25,000 investment from the cable industry. "It's basically talking-head television," Lamb concedes, but there are millions of listening heads out there taking it all in.

Other familiar C-SPAN faces seen reminiscing include political editor Carl Rutan, vice president Susan Swain and producer-director Carrie Collins, who knew C-SPAN had arrived when she noticed that "the vast majority of reporters" covering the 1984 political conventions were watching C-SPAN's gavel-to-gavel service.

If there are downsides to the C-SPAN story, one is that the traditional networks have used its existence, and that of Cable News Network, as excuses to abridge radically their own coverage of conventions and other political rituals. Cable still has less than 60 percent penetration of the country, so the network cutbacks have been at best premature.

But most of the dire consequences predicted by those who opposed House and Senate TV coverage have failed to materialize. Do the members preen and posture before the cameras? No more, apparently, than they did before the cameras were there. They may dress better and have their hair cut more often. This is no threat to democracy.

Some, of course, have taken to television better than others, as clips make clear on tonight's look-back. Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) joshed about makeup and red ties during the first day of televised proceedings; then-Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) had first introduced a resolution permitting cameras five full years earlier, in 1981, and that was two years after the House began telecasts.

In other clips, Rep. Jim Wright (D-Tex.) offers a flamboyant recitation from "Gunga

Din." Rep. Silvio Conte (R-Mass.) makes a certain angry gesture with his arm that has become one of the most replayed C-SPAN moments. In an excerpt from one of its day-long "Day in the Life" features, Rep. Robert Michel (R-Ill.) sings along with the "Hallelujah" chorus on his car radio.

Meanwhile, back on the House floor, the whole body joins in a hearty chorus of "Happy Birthday" for Speaker Tip O'Neill, who was subsequently involved in a big brouhaha about control of the cameras.

Rep. Robert Walker (R-Pa.) had been displeased to learn that while he rattled on during "special orders" at the end of the day, O'Neill had ordered that cameras pan the House chamber, revealing it to be virtually empty. Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) joined in the roasting of the speaker. O'Neill was denounced but the panning continues to this day, a kind of visual memorial.

Members of the raucous right sometimes seem to dominate C-SPAN, whether from the floor or on the talk shows. The TV stardom of Gingrich may have helped boost him into his newly won position as minority whip. Traditional whines about the media being liberally biased can hardly be aimed at C-SPAN; indeed, on tonight's show, sound bites from conservatives seem to outnumber those from the left and near-left.

Ronald Reagan, the President Who Was Television, appeared many times on C-SPAN's "Close Up" series, during which Reagan answered questions from high school students. As a clip shows, Reagan was a viewer, too; he phoned in during a follow-up "Close Up" to clarify a point he'd made in a previous appearance.

Only about half of tonight's special program was available for preview because the other half will be live. Former congressman Lionel Van Deerlin, present at the creation of C-SPAN and active in communications issues during his tenure, will be Lamb's guest during phone-in portions to talk about C-SPAN's first decade.

The anniversary show will be followed by a typically ambitious C-SPAN project. On the eve of a potentially divisive mayoral election in Chicago, C-SPAN's cameras will cover a joint radio show by two Chicago stations—one whose primary audience is black, the other whose primary audience is white—as they open phone lines for listener comment.

Part of what C-SPAN has accomplished is to make national events local and local events national. Its book about itself and its constituency was called "America's Town Hall," and C-SPAN has come closer to earning that title than any other communications entity. It also helps fulfill Marshall McLuhan's prophecy of the planet becoming a "global village" electronically linked.

C-SPAN does an outstanding, exemplary, no-nonsense job, yet seems constantly to be undergoing improvement.

It could also be said that C-SPAN has to some degree redefined citizenship; there's tele-citizenship (telezenship?) now. Government is less remote, less jeerable, more human to those who watch regularly.

Laws that open previously closed doors to public scrutiny are called sunshine laws; in bringing Americans and their government closer together—literally within arm's reach—C-SPAN is ultimate sunshine.



## TELEVISION

# Congress Begins Second Decade Under TV's Watchful Glare

*C-SPAN coverage of floor action began in 1979 amid concerns over political posturing*

To the television-viewing audience, that mid-March week in 1979 differed little from previous weeks. Campy sitcom "Three's Company" led the ratings, followed by the familiar "Laverne & Shirley" and "Mork & Mindy." But buried somewhere in the ratings was a historical footnote. At noon on March 19, 1979 (up against "The Young and the Restless" and "The \$20,000 Pyramid"), the United States House of Representatives made its live television debut.

That appearance of Congress on television 10 years ago was the culmination of years of hard work by proponents of the idea. First proposed in 1947 by then-Sen. Claude Pepper, D-Fla., the movement to open the chambers to the cameras took hold only slowly in a body often resistant to change. Indeed, the Senate has been televised only since June 1986.

Most observers of Congress agree that despite all the attention it has generated, the presence of television cameras in Congress has ushered in few noticeable changes — besides an increase in blue suits and red ties. Larry Sabato, political science professor at the University of Virginia, says, "The horror stories that were supposed to happen didn't happen."

Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo., a leading foe of television in the Senate, concedes, "I was wrong. My predictions have not come true. The abuse has not occurred. The posturing I foresaw has not come into being."

During the heated debates over the issue in the Senate in the early 1980s, opponents expressed their fear that television would detract from the Senate's traditional role as "the saucer where the political passions of the nation are cooled," as Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., put it in 1986. But

*By John Schachter*



On March 19, 1979, Rep. Al Gore, D-Tenn. (now in the Senate), delivered the first speech televised on the floor of the House.

there does not appear to be much evidence that television has altered the Senate's role.

A Library of Congress study conducted during the Senate's test period in 1986 found an increase in the number of "special orders" — the period when members make brief remarks on a variety of subjects after the day's activities have ended — to be the only change clearly due to television.

Members and political scientists now agree that the cameras are a fixture in the chambers. Past foes are not calling for their removal, finally resigned to their presence.

Sen. Al Gore, D-Tenn., led the fight for television in the House, where he served from 1977-85, and in the Senate, where he has been since 1985. "The marriage of this medium and of our open debate have the potential . . . to revitalize representative democracy," said Gore in the first televised speech on March 19, 1979, a one-minute address to the chamber before the regular legislative day began.

"I think their fears have been disproven," Gore now says of the opponents, noting "how easily we've adapted." Danforth explains further,

"I think people probably are less aware of the cameras than I thought they would be."

But if the sky has not fallen with the advent of television in Congress, neither has democracy received the breath of reinvigorating air proponents promised. Says Professor Steve Smith of the University of Minnesota, "I think the impact of television has been more symbolic than substantive."

Defenders of television employ more theoretical arguments in their defense. Rep. Robert S. Walker, R-Pa., states, "I think it's made the country more aware of the internal workings of Congress. . . . I think that makes us a far more accessible body, and it ultimately makes us a far more accountable body." Political scientist Sabato agrees. He notes, "It has actually allowed the public to see and understand the institution as never before."

Walker is a member who has made the most of his time before the cameras. In the mid-1980s, Walker and other members of the Conservative Opportunity Society, a coalition of conservative Republicans, spent considerable amounts of time on the floor of the House, often dominating the time reserved for special orders.

Though Walker has gained a small measure of national attention through television, he says that was not part of an orchestrated plan. "What we consciously set out to do was to use the special-order time to talk about a philosophy and incidental to that was the fact that C-SPAN was there," he says.

### Inside Congress

Television has had an impact within the Congress itself. When Congress is in session it is nearly impossible to find a congressional office without its television tuned to C-SPAN (Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network).

Time is a precious commodity for members of Congress, and the advent of televised proceedings and committee hearings often allows them to gauge their time better during votes and other floor activities. Members follow the proceedings and committee hearings to keep abreast of the latest developments.

Professor Smith: "Members are not quite as reliant on a colleague at

the door telling them whether to vote up or down," since they can use television to keep up with the action.

Both sides of the aisle also note the surprising reach of the televised proceedings. Democrat Gore marvels. "It's amazing how many times a member gives a speech to an empty chamber only to have a number of senators come up to you later and tell you that they saw the speech in their office."

Rep. Walker offers a similar comment from the other side of the political spectrum. "I have had dozens of colleagues over the years come up to me after the special orders and so on and say, 'I was watching you on C-SPAN last night,'" he says.

But the benefits of televised coverage extend beyond the members themselves. Their congressional staffs monitor the activities closely during legislative days — especially during controversial and volatile events such as the recent proposed federal pay raise and the nomination of John Tower to be defense secretary. And media organizations similarly rely on television to keep better tabs on the actions of Congress.

#### A Look Back

But it was only 10 years ago that none of this was possible. Until the early 1970s, television was just a dream to its proponents. But the arrival in Congress of reform-minded members in the wake of Watergate led to a changed atmosphere — one more amenable to openness.

By 1977, the House of Representatives had moved toward bringing in the cameras. Members such as Gore and Lionel Van Deerlin, D-Calif. (1963-81), helped lead Speaker of the House Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., D-Mass., to appoint a panel to formulate a House broadcast policy.

The first resolution allowing for broadcast coverage passed in October, though it took a while to get the specifics ironed out. In June 1978, news organizations began broadcasting House proceedings over radio, and by March 1979, television had arrived.

## Television in Congress

Jan. 8, 1947	Sen. Claude Pepper, D-Fla., proposes first resolution to broadcast the proceedings of Congress.
Oct. 27, 1977	House votes to go ahead with expansion of an experimental closed-circuit television system on Capitol Hill.
March 19, 1979	C-SPAN begins televising the House of Representatives live to 3.5 million households.
Jan. 6, 1981	C-SPAN begins gavel-to-gavel coverage of congressional hearings.
May 10, 1984	House cameras begin "panning" the entire chamber during Special Orders.
July/August 1984	C-SPAN airs live, uninterrupted coverage of the Democratic and Republican national conventions.
June 2, 1986	C-SPAN's second cable channel begins televising proceedings of the Senate during television test period.
July 29, 1986	Senate votes in favor of permanent televised coverage of its proceedings.

Also making its debut during the 1979 television season was a show called "The Dukes of Hazzard." One of its stars was Ben Jones, who played an auto mechanic named "Cooter." Jones is now a first-term Democratic representative from Georgia. Do members notice the television cameras in the chamber? "I do," admits Jones. "I've been around cameras for a living. I feel very comfortable in front of them."

Jones also offered a critique of some of the effects the cameras have created. "There are some members, especially some I've noticed in the other chamber — no names — who should get someone else to do their makeup and hair."

Indeed, the Senate proceeded more slowly in bringing in the cameras. In 1981, Majority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr., R-Tenn. (1967-85), began the effort in earnest, and in February 1986 the Senate passed a resolution to allow television broadcasting. For a month the Senate permitted closed-circuit transmissions into members' offices, followed by six weeks of public broadcasts.

At the conclusion of the six-week

test period, the Senate voted 78-21 to keep the cameras permanently. And, on June 2, 1986, the Senate premiered on a second C-SPAN channel with then-Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., welcoming the cameras with the first speech of the day. "Today we catch up with the 20th century," said Dole.

"The Senate must have felt it was missing something," says Sabato. "They were afraid that House members who might challenge them were getting additional exposure that they themselves were not getting."

But Senate rules then and now remain fairly strict. Cameras are operated by congressional staff and remain fixed on a single speaker. "It's very tightly controlled," says Brian Lamb, founder, chairman and chief executive officer of C-SPAN.

During the initial debate over television, a contingent of House members fought for a television network pool to run the show. They

feared that if the chamber itself ran the broadcasts, the public would feel it was not getting a fair picture of the Congress. Their foes countered that networks would deliberately illuminate the Congress in an unflattering light.

The House finally decided, at the recommendation of O'Neill's panel, to give the Speaker control over the cameras. They would be run by House staff and would focus only on the member speaking.

During special orders and votes, though, the cameras now often slowly pan the room, usually revealing a mostly empty chamber. This procedure saw its genesis during the most controversial incident of television's life in Congress.

#### 'Camscam'

In early May 1984, during special orders, Walker and his colleague Rep. Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., harshly lambasted Democratic members — by name — for their foreign policy views. On May 10, Speaker O'Neill ordered the cameras to pan the barren chamber during a speech by Walker.

Republicans fumed at this attempt

to embarrass them and confronted O'Neill on the floor of the House. On May 15, Gingrich took to the floor and engaged the Speaker in a dialogue that quickly came to a boil. O'Neill fumed at Gingrich, calling his speech "the lowest thing that I have ever seen in my 32 years in Congress."

At the Republicans' insistence, the parliamentarian ruled the Speaker out of order for making a personal attack on a colleague; such attacks are prohibited by House rules. This so-called "Camscam" incident created quite a stir and made the national news. It also led to a change of the rules to permit future panning of the chamber.

Walker laughs at the aftereffects of the incident. "We gave up that tactic about three years ago and people still think we're out there doing it all the time." But he also believes the controversy has been blown out of proportion. "In all honesty," he acknowledges, "I've never had any problem with panning the chamber. I wish they'd pan it all day long."

#### Enter C-SPAN

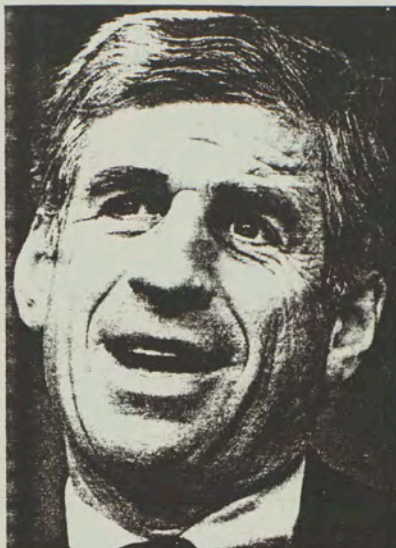
Synonymous with television in Congress is the cable network that broadcasts it — C-SPAN. This private, non-profit cooperative of the cable television industry was launched in 1979 with the express purpose of televising Congress.

Lamb, C-SPAN's chief, has seen his network's budget increase from \$500,000 in 1979 to \$13 million today and its full-time staff grow from four persons to 155 during that same period. Although actual floor coverage of Congress accounts for only 15-20 percent of C-SPAN's programming, according to Lamb, it clearly is "the backbone of these two networks."

Lamb says C-SPAN is keenly aware that it must remain above the political fray. "We are not in business to influence them. We are not in business to change them. We are not in business to perpetuate them. We are here to be a conduit to interested Americans."

Members of Congress almost unanimously applaud the network's coverage — specifically its lack of ideological bias. According to Rep. Walker, "C-SPAN has filled a very, very important niche in the marketplace for people who are kind of information junkies."

In its February 1989 issue, *Washingtonian* magazine added Brian Lamb to its list of Washington's top 50 journalists. Lamb is the first repre-



SUSAN MUNIAK

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**"I was wrong. My predictions have not come true. The abuse has not occurred. The posturing I foresaw has not come into being."**

—Sen. John C. Danforth, R-Mo.

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sentative of the network to make the list, published by the magazine every five years since 1973.

Over the past five years, C-SPAN has commissioned national surveys to gauge the reach of its broadcasts. In 1988, 21.6 million households reported watching C-SPAN. Says Rep. Walker, "I think it is watched mostly by people who are already committed on issues. I don't think you have a lot of people who are swing voters out there sitting watching it."

Many of the viewers identified in C-SPAN's telephone survey are not the "junkies" who watch intently and for long hours. A fall 1987 survey revealed that C-SPAN viewers watch an average of 4.5 hours a month of congressional floor proceedings.

Whatever the makeup of the C-SPAN audience, members of Congress know it is out there, although they may take it for granted nowadays. ■

## C-SPAN: A 'flower we planted out in that vast wasteland'

◆◆◆◆  
By Lisa Stein

*After 10 years, Lamb's brainchild has grown into cable's most notable innovation*

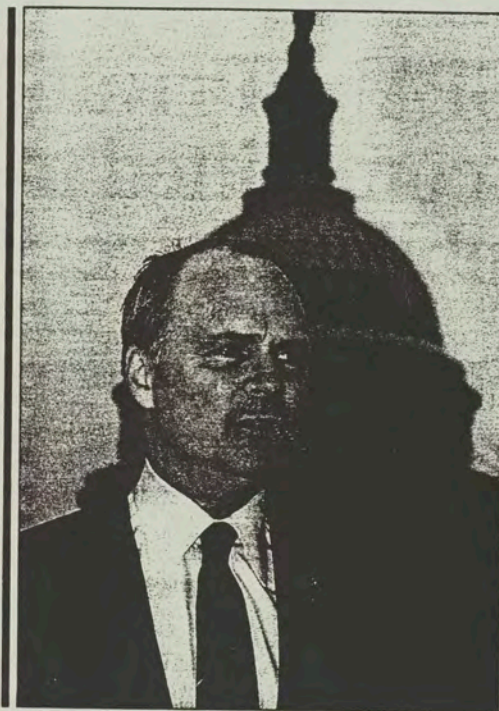
It was 1981, two years after the ceremonious debut of television cameras on the floor of the House of Representatives. The Members were tussling over President Reagan's controversial budget proposal. Tempers were flaring and sparks flying as Republicans and Democrats verbally slugged it out over the hotly contested spending plan. And, thanks to a scrappy young cable network called C-SPAN, TV viewers were able to watch the real-life drama unfold. But, suddenly, just as the heated debate was about to reach a boiling point—ZAP! Television screens tuned to the rancorous row went blank.

"A lot of people in this country thought it was a conspiracy; that because we were taking sides in the issue, we shut off the debate so the American people couldn't see it," muses Brian Lamb, president and founder of the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, who bristles at the thought that the service he labors to keep politically neutral would be perceived as anything but that. "It was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life," admits the seemingly unflappable C-SPAN creator.

In fact, a construction vehicle had knocked

into a transformer near C-SPAN's satellite uplink, knocking the network off the air for four hours. "People were furious. Everybody was mad at us, but there was nothing we could do about it. We had no backup power," says Lamb. (Relax, C-SPAN viewers. The network has backup power now).

When C-SPAN burst on the scene a decade ago, many hailed it as the dawning of a new era. "The marriage of this medium and of our open debate have the potential... to revitalize representative democracy," then-Rep. Al Gore, D-Tenn., now a senator, predicted in a speech welcoming TV cameras to the House floor. Others heralded C-SPAN's arrival as the yawning of a new era, wondering who would engage in an activity that *60 Min-*



utes' own yawner, Andy Rooney, likened to "watching paint dry." And some naysayers warned that cameras and congressmen would make a downright dangerous combination. "Look at them, all dressed up in their three-piece suits. It looks like a giant ad for Brooks Brothers. If it goes anywhere, it is the end of civilization as we know it," a House aide told *The Wall Street Journal* as he watched the maiden congressional TV service. But 10



C-SPAN Chairman/  
CEO Brian Lamb

years later, civilization as we knew it seems to be pretty much intact, Brooks Bros. suits and all.

"I never believed the House would be covered in its entirety. I was skeptical of Brian's plan when I first met him. ...But all the (dire) predictions never happened." former House Speaker Thomas "Tip"



George Bush joins Lamb during a call-in session



O'Neill, D-Mass., said recently when Lamb was awarded the National Press Foundation's Sol Taishoff award for excellence in broadcasting. "I am proud to have been the Speaker when television came to the House. Brian stands right up there in presenting democracy to our great land." Adds Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee: "C-SPAN provides an invaluable service to the American people. It brings the inner workings of the Congress and the administration out in the open for everyone to see. It shows how we do what we do—our frailties and missteps as well as our strengths and successes. C-SPAN is the essence of good, open, responsive government."

C-SPAN has come a long way since it began March 19, 1979, cablecasting live, uncut "gavel-to-gavel" feeds from the floor of the House. When the then-tiny network started up, it operated on a shoestring budget out of spartan accommodations. Back then, C-SPAN was housed in a cluttered, one-room storefront in Arlington, Va., that doubled as a studio and office for the network's four dedicated if not terribly experienced employees. "We would move all the desks in the room at 5:00 and roll two cameras in" to do the call-in show, says Lamb, 47, who had worked in radio and television in his native Indiana. Needless to say, it was not always smooth sailing. Lamb recalls, for example, that kids in the suburban neighborhood often would play kick-

ball in front of the building and their ball constantly would thump against a window behind the set during live call-in shows. "Someone would have to go out and ask them to stop," says an amused Lamb.

"It was chaotic," says Steve Effros, president of the Community Antenna Television Association, who was a volunteer guest host on the call-in show in the early days. "People were repairing equipment as quickly as they could to keep us on the air. ...Brian was running a whole network on the cheap for a price no one would ever think of running a network on." Effros recalls many shows during which producers kneeling at below-desk level would slip notes to him while he was on the air. And then there was that fine day

when he was hosting a call-in program and noticed a weak-kneed tripod—which like all the other equipment had been donated—begin to waiver. "All of a sudden one of the legs crumpled and this light seven feet up starts swinging toward me," says Effros, chuckling at the memory. A technician caught the light before it hit anyone. But, for the rest of the show, Effros and the guest were in the shade of a very well-lighted desk.

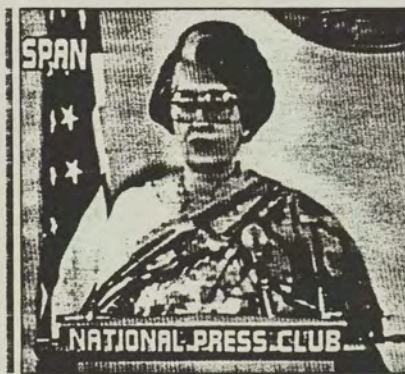
Last year, 75 of the 100 U.S. senators and 220 of the 435 House members appeared on C-SPAN's viewer call-in show, quite an endorsement considering what it was like getting guests when the program began in October 1980. Lamb remembers that one of C-SPAN's "greatest victories" at that time was when the network's first producer, after "a lot of cajoling and begging," convinced then-House Majority Leader Jim Wright, D-Texas, now the House Speaker, to make the drive through rush-hour traffic across the Potomac to C-SPAN's humble suburban studio to appear on the show.

The precocious child of the cable industry has grown up and moved to the Big City—well, the Big District, anyway—into a fashionable, but modest, expanse of offices in the shadow of the Capitol. The network now has "very good equipment," including 17 cameras, 50 tape machines and three portable and one permanent uplinks. Its staff has ballooned from four to 150 and its budget has swelled from a bare-bones \$480,000 to \$13 million annually, which still is peanuts compared to what the Big Three networks spend. "It's what (ABC, NBC and CBS) pay in pocket change for donuts in the morning," says C-

SPAN board member and former chairman Edward Allen, general partner of InterMedia Partners, pointing out that Lamb, a former Navy man, runs a tight ship, always keeping within the lean spending limits set by the 40-member board.

The cable network, the nation's sixth, has dramatically broadened its coverage, going from a sometime service—on only when the House was in session—to round-the-clock programming. In 1986, C-SPAN began a second network, C-SPAN II, to carry live "gavel-to-gavel" action from the Senate floor. In addition to retransmitting the floor feeds, C-SPAN now provides uninterrupted coverage of committee hearings, conferences, political conventions, speeches, panel discussions and the viewer call-in show—a TV format pioneered by C-SPAN—that features journalists, politicians and other Washington types. In keeping with the network's creed, all of the hosts—there are seven including Lamb—are forbidden from ever betraying to the audience how they feel about an issue or guest. "People should tune-in because of the subject matter, not the host," says Lamb, a former Washington bureau chief for *CableVision*. To help keep it that way, none of the hosts, who all have other jobs at the network, have scheduled on-air stints, so that viewers do not know when an individual will appear.

Lamb says C-SPAN is committed to providing viewers with 24 hours of straight-up, unedited programming on both channels free of the usual TV glitz, glib commentary and inane nattering by doll-faced anchors. "C-SPAN is a mirror of the government. ... We are doing nothing more than holding up the mirror" and letting the viewer de-



C-SPAN notables—Rep. Albert Gore (top); Sen. John Glenn (center) and Indira Gandhi (bottom)

cide who's the fairest of them all, says Lamb. As vintage *Dragnet's* Sgt. Joe Friday would say, C-SPAN is "Just the facts, ma'am." Nothing more. Nothing less. There are no commercials. No station breaks. No instant analyses. No star personalities paid megabucks reading news snippets. "It's the best raw data

available on Congress," says Ross Baker, a political science professor at Rutgers University, who uses C-SPAN in a course he's teaching called "The U.S. Congress." Agrees Allen, "It's the world's greatest ongoing civics lesson."

Despite the heaps of praise, Lamb acknowledges that C-SPAN's menu is not for everyone. "If the industry were to judge us based on a popularity contest... we would lose every time to MTV when it comes to percentages," he admits. "But fortunately the leaders of this industry have stuck by this network and not let us be controlled by the indices every other network is judged by."

But deadly dull as it may seem to some, C-SPAN has an eclectic cadre of followers who get as excited about a sexy congressional squabble as cricket fans do about a bowler on a hat trick. "I just love it!" gushes admitted C-SPAN addict William "Bud" Harris, 70, of Cherry Hill, N.J. "It's the best thing on television. There's nothing like it. It's just a shame every home doesn't have it." The retired insurance executive says he's been a dedicated viewer since he accidentally came across the network while flipping through his cable channels nearly a decade ago. He now keeps three television sets in his house tuned to C-SPAN, lest he miss something while doing his chores. He's so devoted, in fact, that he even bought a satellite dish so that he could pick up C-SPAN II, which does not run on his cable system, as well as an experimental C-SPAN audio service. "To me it's become a way of life. It's the way I keep informed," says the avowed C-SPAN junkie.

"I watch it for relaxation," says Baker, the Rutgers political science professor. "C-SPAN has a wonderful sort of continuity to it. The speeches



Complete live coverage of the March on Washington, D.C. was a network highlight in 1983



have a rhythm, kind of like classical music." He says he uses the programming in his classes to illustrate such congressional happenings as the confirmation process. "It makes the information more vivid, causes it to come alive," says Baker, a one-time aide to former Sens. Walter Mondale, D-Minn., and Birch Bayh, D-Ind. He notes, for example, that the "high drama" surrounding the failed nomination of John Tower as defense secretary held the interest of his television-age students far better than would have a mere written explanation of the Senate's confirmation process. The only problem is he has to tape C-SPAN from his home to show in class, since the university, which is in New Brunswick, N.J., is not wired for cable.

Other C-SPAN devotees include Frank Zappa, the iconoclastic rock-n-roller/social commentator of the '60s counterculture movement, and movie director Robert Altman, who told *The New York Times* that he watched "hours and hours" of the Iran-Contra hearings.

The original C-SPAN channel now reaches nearly 43 million households—compared to only 3.5 million when inaugurated—and C-SPAN II now is available in 16.5 million homes. A recent study by the University of Maryland Survey Research Center found that 21.6 million homes actually tune in to the network. C-SPAN's audience abroad also is growing. In an agreement with Sky Channel, a cable network serving 20 European countries, C-SPAN televised portions of the Republican and Democratic conventions to Europe and installed an international phone line for overseas viewers to comment on action, through which C-SPAN received some 700 calls. And since November, C-SPAN has been broadcast via the U.S. Information Agency's Worldnet to more than 120 countries, picking up such viewers as Egypt's Hosni Mubarek.

C-SPAN was formed in 1977 by a consortium of cable leaders as a non-profit cooperative of the industry, which provides 95 percent

of the network's financial nourishment. (Other corporate sponsors provide the remaining 5 percent of C-SPAN's fiscal diet). The network's long-time supporters give the service rave reviews. "C-SPAN is the best investment the cable industry ever made. ...It illustrates why we're a unique industry," says Columbia International Inc. President Bob Rosencrans, C-SPAN's first chairman of the board, whose company put up the initial \$25,000 in seed money for the non-profit public affairs network. "We're very pleased with how C-SPAN turned out. We were being criticized for not having done anything novel, for just putting on more of the same. But C-SPAN all by itself disproves that." Agrees C-SPAN board member John Evans, president of Hauser Communications: "C-SPAN is far more than we ever expected in our wildest dreams." "It's just a heck of a service," sums up C-SPAN board member Gene Schneider, chairman of United Cable TV Corp.

Lamb says his No. 1 goal over the next 10 years will be to get both networks carried on every cable system in the United States, noting that one of his greatest disappointments has been that only 18 percent of the country's cable systems with 1,000 and fewer subscribers carry C-SPAN.

In the future, C-SPAN also plans to expand its coverage of foreign governments (it now televises the Canadian House of Commons and in the fall inaugurated international telecasts in London with Queen Elizabeth's speech to the state opening of Parliament), provide more live programming from around the country and, hopefully, one day provide coverage of oral arguments in the U.S. Supreme Court, which, thus far, has resisted cameras in the

courtroom.

As C-SPAN heads into its second decade, Lamb says he is concerned that cable systems may—as some have in the past—preempt chunks of C-SPAN programming for more lucrative fare as pressure for limited channel space grows. “If we begin to be a part-time service or are dropped in the next 10 years, the values we have developed for the country and the cable operators will diminish very quickly. It will destroy the network,” Lamb warns. But he says he is confident the leaders of the industry, who have stood steadfastly by C-SPAN all these years, will keep that from happening.

“There’s nothing else like C-SPAN in the world anywhere,” says InterMedia Partners’ Allen, denouncing systems that “butcher” C-SPAN programming. “It’s one of those flowers we planted out in that vast wasteland,” he adds, promising that the industry never would let it wilt. “C-SPAN will be around forever!” ■



# Cable's C-SPAN is defying all the odds

## Network going on its 10th year

By Rick Du Brow  
Herald Examiner television editor

Brian Lamb makes a simple but deadly point: "What have we gotten out of the three network evening newscasts? We've got really one big voice saying the same thing."

Right. Toss out two and who'd care?

But losing Lamb's network, C-SPAN — now, that would make a difference. There's nothing like it in the world, as the Washington-based network airs the proceedings of the House of Representatives, the Senate and other government activities 24 hours a day, without ads.

In a few weeks, the upstart cable outlet that flew in the face of ABC, CBS and NBC will mark its 10th anniversary. With cable growing at a rapid pace, C-SPAN now reaches an astounding 41.5 million TV homes and, to many, is perhaps the most valuable network in America.

So great is its impact that the Sunday Times of London published a major article calling for "a C-SPAN of our own."

But while C-SPAN is of obvious interest to politicians, journalists and news junkies, its greatest triumph has been in becoming the nation's "town hall" — a real voice of the people on which viewers can monitor elected officials and phone in immediate comment

on them.

While the paid experts of the Big Three networks were blabbering away after the George Bush-Michael Dukakis presidential debates, the best real gauge of who won came in C-SPAN's phone response, where viewers quickly made clear that Bush was the runaway victor.

Along with CNN, C-SPAN has become the only place viewers can turn for uninterrupted, unedited coverage of such events as Congress' Ollie North hearings, the political conventions and the Senate sessions to confirm William H. Rehnquist as chief justice of the United States.

But when Lamb launched C-SPAN on March 19, 1979, to only 3.5 million TV households, the odds against success were long. True, the channel — whose initials stand for Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network — was funded. As a cooperative of the cable TV industry, it doesn't have to make a profit.

Still, who'd watch? Was it just pie in the sky?

Not to Lamb. "I always thought it would work. I figured I'm an average person from the Midwest. I was born in Lafayette, Indiana, was an average student, went to Purdue, and my instincts were that people just wanted more information. I followed my gut."

Lamb had been Washington bureau chief of Cablevision magazine. He'd also worked for both GOP and Democratic politicians in "observer jobs."

"Living in Washington, I saw the whole event. Going

back home, I found people interested in the rest of the story because what they saw on the evening news was highly limited. That was my best source."

Though most of Lamb's political jobs were for Republicans, C-SPAN has a remarkable reputation for neutrality. About 32 percent of its viewers are Democrats, 33 percent Republicans, 33 percent Independents, and 2 percent have other affiliations.

After starting with House broadcasts in 1979, the network added a warty Senate in 1986 (on a second channel, C-SPAN II) — but still can't persuade the Supreme Court to allow televised proceedings.

"As of now," says Lamb, "the court is firmly against bringing cameras in. The only thing that could change their minds, perhaps, is if it had an impact on education, such as law schools. But they're just not interested in changing the nature of their institution. They're deathly afraid of (clips) being picked up by the evening news and being manipulated."

C-SPAN's clout goes to the heart of government. Most politicians love it because the network lets them talk to the folks back home without editing. And that makes Congress more amenable to lessening controls over cable at the expense of the Big Three networks.

That eases the path for cable growth. And thus cable operators are getting a bargain by paying C-SPAN's annual \$12.5 million budget by charging subscribers 3 cents a month.

C-SPAN viewers are clearly an informed audience. Sixty-three percent read daily newspapers — and callers are sometimes questioned about the content by Lamb and his on-air colleagues. And 92 percent voted in last November's election — almost double the national average.

Besides House and Senate sessions, C-SPAN viewers may watch committee actions, National Press Club meetings, interviews with public figures or, in the notable series "A Day in the Life," behind-the-scenes "looks at magazines, newspapers and government operations."

Says Lamb: "Once people are hooked, they're hooked. We don't have ratings. We don't have to satisfy stockholders. We're going to be around for a long, long time. Our audience is there because they want to be there."

Herald Examiner  
February 21, 1989

# C-SPAN Turns 10—And the House Is Still Standing

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR,  
*Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON — On March 19, 1979, when then-Rep. Al Gore (D-Tenn.) stepped up to the podium to make the House of Representatives' first live televised speech, opponents predicted the practice would lead to disaster. In his speech, Gore countered by saying that television would "revitalize representative democracy."

Ten years later, most analysts and members of Congress agree that neither side was right.

Since that day when the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) started broadcasting live coverage of the House of Representatives via the rapidly expanding cable-TV industry, Washington-area clothiers have joked of a marked rise in the sale of bright-red neckties.

But beyond cosmetic changes and some slight accommodations in House rules, the consensus is that television in the Congress has not had the dramatic effect both sides predicted.

Opponents of a televised Congress once claimed that cameras would reduce the level of debate to "political posturing" for the benefit of the people watching. But a leading foe of congressional television at the time, Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.), conceded recently

that "the playing to the cameras and the galleries that I expected just didn't occur."

At the same time, those leading the fight for C-SPAN said the cameras would force a new level of representation for members of Congress who would suddenly be accountable to the average person in their districts.

But Michael Robinson, a professor of media and politics at Georgetown University, said that because of C-SPAN, "a few more people might show up on the floor, [but] the House is not all that different than it was 15 years ago."

Even Brian Lamb, the widely acclaimed founder and chief executive officer of C-SPAN, now questions whether his network has "changed the world" as some had predicted it would.

"I don't know and I don't worry about it," he said. "I didn't get into the business to change the system. I got into the business to provide people a larger picture, more of the story."

C-SPAN's picture has grown larger over the years. Initially covering only the House proceedings, the network has now added coverage of the Senate, political conventions, congressional hearings, press conferences and call-in talk shows.

"It has been a constant growth," Lamb said. "That was all in the

*Please see C-SPAN, Page 9*

Los Angeles Times  
April 5, 1989

# C-SPAN: Decade Televising House of Representatives

*Continued from Page 1*

plan. We had to show a lot of different people that there was an audience out there for this kind of TV. We evolved a step at a time."

Experts say that while C-SPAN hasn't wrought major changes in Congress, it has had an effect.

For example, analysts say a cluster of House members who call themselves the Conservative Opportunity Society, led by Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), successfully used C-SPAN to help gain public recognition. By taking advantage of a short period at the end of each day's business that allows for speeches on any subject, Gingrich and his colleagues were able to rally public support for their particular interests. The rule allowing such speeches had been there before C-SPAN, but was little used until there were cameras present to broadcast the remarks.

"Newt Gingrich made it clear from Day 1 that they were going to use C-SPAN to tell the people the truth," Robinson said.

In March, Gingrich was elected minority whip, the No. 2 position in the House Republican leadership.

Regardless of partisanship, almost everyone agrees that the camera's presence has shortened speeches on the House floor and has probably made them better.

For Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the presence of the television cameras in the Senate has meant "the debate has been better. The speeches have been better."

"There is greater care taken in making sure that what they say is what they mean," said Michael Sheehan, a media consultant who frequently advises Democrats in Congress on how to take advantage of the television camera. "You don't have the ability to edit the tape before it is beamed up to the satellite."

Ed Blakely, a Washington media consultant who formerly worked for the Republican Party, said C-SPAN "requires members to be articulate and to be able to speak in 30- and 60-second sound bites. Woe be it to those who do not come across in a telegenic manner."

More changes may evolve. Gore, now a U.S. senator, applauds "the marriage of open debate and the television medium" on C-SPAN but adds: "The House and Senate still have some work to do in fully adapting to the needs of democracy by, for example, scheduling important debates for times when most Americans can watch and listen. Eventually that will occur."

He suggested that the Senate

might schedule important debates during prime time "maybe a couple nights a week."

By the network's own count, more than 21 million people tune in at least three times a month to watch the House on C-SPAN I and close to 17 million do the same with the Senate on C-SPAN II. While the numbers remain far below the average viewing audience for commercial networks, they represent substantial growth for the once-fledgling channels.

"There is a part of the population in America that is fascinated by politics and public policy," said Jeff Greenfield, who covers politics and the media for ABC News. "They follow C-SPAN the way a sports junkie would follow [the cable sports channel] ESPN."

C-SPAN's audience spans the socioeconomic spectrum, Lamb said, but he acknowledged that the network appeals most to the politically interested. "Newspaper people, bankers, teachers, politicians—the political infrastructure—watch

this network out of proportion with the others in society," he said.

Some analysts say television's success in the House and Senate foreshadow similar changes in the other branches of government—most notably the Supreme Court.

"As each institution opens up," Sheehan said, "the pressure gets greater to open up the deliberations in the Supreme Court." He added that photo opportunities at the White House might eventually turn into "video opportunities" with C-SPAN broadcasting them live.

For Lamb, however, the primary goal for the next 10 years is "fine-tuning what we've already got," including getting it carried by more cable systems and persuading more teachers to incorporate it in their curricula.

But he said the network would not necessarily be satisfied with broadcasting only American politics. Lamb said he foresees a future where C-SPAN covers the political process in other countries as well.

# The CABLE WATCH

*Ninth in a series of occasional articles on the players in the multibillion-dollar cable-television business.*

## Eye on world of Washington

By Lee Winfrey  
*Inquirer TV Writer*

WASHINGTON — In Washington, almost everyone except the Supreme Court seems to love C-SPAN. But Brian P. Lamb, the cable network's chairman and founder, believes that even the aloof and magisterial justices will accept coverage by his cameras eventually.

C-SPAN's initials stand for Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network, a basic cable service with 43.3 million subscribers nationwide. Specializing for more than a decade in the coverage of Congress, C-SPAN is the closest thing to an all-seeing video eye in the world of American politics.

Lamb tries to keep his service absolutely neutral, so you will hear no off-camera commentary while C-SPAN shows lawmaking in the raw on Capitol Hill. But just by being almost everywhere, around the clock, C-SPAN has hurt some politicians, notably U.S. Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D., Del.), and helped others, especially U.S. Rep. Newt Gingrich (R., Ga.).

"While Congress is in session, it is nearly impossible to find a congressional office without its television tuned to C-SPAN," the Congressional Quarterly reported in its March 11 issue. As the latest reason why, C-SPAN was the only place to turn Tuesday if you wanted to see and hear all  
(See C-SPAN on 8-C)



*Brian P. Lamb interviewing Dan Quayle, then a U.S. senator from Indiana, in 1981.*

The Philadelphia Inquirer  
May 26, 1989

# C-SPAN

**STARTING DATE:** March 19, 1979.

**TYPE:** Basic cable.  
No commercials.

**CONTENT:**

Coverage of Congress, politics, and public affairs.

**SUBSCRIBERS:** 43.3 million.

**WHERE AVAILABLE:**

About three-eighths of all cable companies.

**OWNER:**

A nonprofit cooperative of cable companies.

eight hours of the House ethics committee hearing on accusations against Speaker Jim Wright (D., Texas). Wright, who did not go to the hearing room, watched the proceedings in his office on C-SPAN.

"C-SPAN is the government in action," said William "Bud" Harris, 70, of Cherry Hill, N.J., a retired insurance executive who founded Friends of C-SPAN, a support group among subscribers, in 1982. "If you want to get a picture of how our system works, the only way you can get it is to watch C-SPAN."

C-SPAN opens itself up to viewer participation much more than any other cable network. Each morning at 8 and each evening at 6:30, the network presents *Viewer Call-in*, 90 minutes in each segment. Supported by little more than a pitcher of water and a telephone with nine incoming lines, Lamb sits before the camera, usually accompanied by an officeholder or a journalist, and fields questions about major news events.

*Viewer Call-in* is a significant success: In 1988, it answered 15,019 calls. Seventy-five of the 100 U. S. senators and 220 of the 435 congressmen appeared as guests.

C-SPAN has made a virtue out of necessity here, because it needs shows like *Viewer Call-in* to fill its 24-hour-a-day schedule. Live action on the floor of the House consumes less than 20 percent of C-SPAN's air time. The rest is filled with coverage of committee hearings, speeches and public-affairs events inside and outside Washington. C-SPAN records all of its live programs and makes an effort to repeat them at least twice, either in prime time, the wee hours or on weekends, to give more viewers a chance to catch up.

## Giving credit

In a 100-minute interview in his office here, only four blocks from the Capitol that his network covers so exhaustively, Lamb discussed how C-SPAN began, where it stands, and where it hopes to go.

Lamb, 47, is unfailingly prompt in giving full credit for C-SPAN to the cable-TV industry, which supports it

as a nonprofit cooperative. He said the 3,200 cable companies that carry the service pay C-SPAN an average of 2.7 cents per subscriber per month.

But the truth is broader than that, because C-SPAN is very much Lamb's brainchild, and it may have required someone with his particular combination of broad practical experience and do-good impulses to ever bring it to the little screen.

Born and raised in Lafayette, Ind., where his father was a wholesale beer distributor, Lamb took a bachelor's degree in speech from Purdue University in 1963. After four years in the Navy, he settled down in Washington, where he spent more than a decade in various jobs, roughly evenly divided between politics and journalism.

Lamb worked for the division of United Press International that serviced radio clients with news; then as press secretary to Peter Dominick, a Republican senator from Colorado; then with the Office of Telecommunications Policy during the Nixon administration. From 1975 to 1978, he reported on the cable-TV industry as Washington bureau chief for *Cablevision* magazine.

## The House says yes

Congress considered TV a long time before permitting cameras into its chambers. TV coverage was first proposed on Jan. 8, 1947, in a resolution by Claude Pepper, a Florida Democrat who then was a senator and now is a representative. But more than three decades passed before the House finally approved TV coverage of its daily work by a vote of 342-44 on Oct. 27, 1977.

By that time, the visionary Lamb had already been talking to cable firms and congressmen about such a service, even pricing out the product at a rock-bottom rate. C-SPAN premiered March 19, 1979, with a one-minute speech by Albert Gore Jr., a Tennessee Democrat who then was a representative and now is a senator.

C-SPAN still operates lean, although not mean. It has 155 employees and an annual budget of \$13 million, which Lamb figures would keep a broadcast network news department like those of CBS or ABC in operation for only about three weeks.

Lamb's trim little shop resides in a much different economic neighborhood from the one in which the broadcast networks dwell. For example, C-SPAN has a total of 17 cameras. NBC used more cameras than that (23) just to cover the most recent Super Bowl football game.

But those 17 cameras can cut keenly, as Biden found when he was running for the Democratic presidential nomination two years ago. C-SPAN traveled the 1988 campaign trail extensively and, in Claremont, N.H., on March 21, 1987, caught Biden exaggerating his academic achievements, including a claim that he "ended up in the top half of my class" in law school.

Actually, Biden ranked 76th among 85 graduates of the Syracuse University law school in 1968. After a C-SPAN camera caught his false claim — and

after allegations arose later that he had plagiarized speeches — Biden resigned from the presidential race.

Much happier is the story of Georgia Rep. Newt Gingrich, called "the star of C-SPAN" in a May 1 New Yorker magazine article by the astute Elizabeth Drew. Gingrich went to Congress in the same year that C-SPAN's cameras arrived, and the Republican quickly became adept in their use, specializing in denouncing Democrats at the close of House sessions, when the Democrats had gone home but the cameras had not.

Gingrich's rise topped out when he was elected House minority whip on March 22. Asked whether he could have won that prominent post without C-SPAN, he replied, "Unequivocally, no." So it's certainly understandable why Gingrich believes that "Brian Lamb is one of the great social entrepreneurs of the last 20 years."

For officeholders, viewers of C-SPAN constitute a dream audience of political junkies. According to the University of Maryland Survey Research Center, 92 percent of C-SPAN viewers voted in the 1988 presidential election, compared with 49 percent of the eligible voters nationwide. The C-SPAN audience is remarkably balanced, with 33 percent of viewers identifying themselves as Republicans, 33 percent as independents, 32 percent Democrats, and 2 percent others.

The Senate was much slower than the House of Representatives to permit camera coverage, and today it is paying for that in terms of video prominence. C-SPAN started another cable channel, C-SPAN II, to televise the Senate beginning on June 2, 1986. C-SPAN II is still comparatively small, with its 17.3 million subscribers numbering less than half those taking its parent channel.

Now the most prominent governmental body still out of the reach of C-SPAN's cameras is the Supreme Court. Asked what's happening on that front, Lamb said:

"I've gotten a letter from Chief Justice William Rehnquist; a simple, one-paragraph letter saying, 'We're not going to do anything at this time.' He has had meetings where he has discussed this thing. I think they've actually voted on it twice. I don't know who voted yes or no."

Lamb believes the court's current attitude goes back to the Senate rejection of Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987. "They just didn't like the way Bork was treated. The whole spectacle of the judge being dealt with on television just set the whole thing back ...

"I think it'll happen," Lamb said with reference to C-SPAN covering the court eventually.

Lamb said that if the court ever does agree to be covered by C-SPAN, he might make an exception to his prevailing policy of no commentary, and bring in legal experts to explain the technicalities of decisions.

But Lamb remains dead set against adding any commentary to C-SPAN's congressional coverage, because he believes that some slanting would inevitably creep in. "I hope as long as I'm here," he said, "I'm never forced

to hire somebody to give commentary." For viewers who would like more explanation, he said, "That's why we have three hours a day of call-in shows."

As for the Bidens and the Gingrichs and the other politicians who serve as C-SPAN's cannon fodder, Lamb expresses strict neutrality about whether they fall or rise:

"We are not in business to influence them. We are not in business to change them. We are not in business to perpetuate them. We are here to be a conduit to interested Americans."

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

By David Bianculli

# SPANNING THE POLITICAL GLOBE

**F**or the past 10 years, cable TV's C-SPAN has devoted itself to bringing politics and politicians to the people. Some of those politicians have embraced C-SPAN from the start; others have expressed emotional reactions that have ranged from skeptical to horrified.

The television public, though, was almost universally enthusiastic: In 10 years, viewership has risen to 41.5 million. Put in perspective, while C-SPAN's reach is below that of ESPN and CNN, it rivals that of MTV.

When experimental broadcasts were begun from the House of Representatives on March 19, 1979, then Rep. Al Gore (now a senator) was the first congressman to speak live on C-SPAN. Two weeks later, the House officially welcomed C-SPAN and its gavel-to-gavel coverage. The 10th anniversary of that occasion is being celebrated tomorrow.

The Tennessee Democrat was enthusiastic from the start: according to C-SPAN chairman Brian Lamb, Gore wrote a college thesis on televising government and the presidency.

Others were less enthusiastic. Dan Quayle, now the vice president, took the other side and made his opinion known when the Senate deliberated on following the House's lead allowing television cameras into its chambers. Then Indiana Sen. Quayle voted against TV twice.

Quayle notwithstanding, C-SPAN has been broadcasting live Senate proceedings since 1986, on a sister network called C-SPAN II. The "original" C-SPAN, meanwhile, has been all over the place, broadcasting live or taped coverage from congressional hearings, National Press Club speeches and the newsrooms of regional and national newspapers.

C-SPAN has broadcast proceedings from Canada's House of Commons and, more recently,

has gone to England for a week's visit with British Parliament. It's dug into network news archives and produced lengthy specials replaying NBC coverage of past political conventions and inaugural speeches.

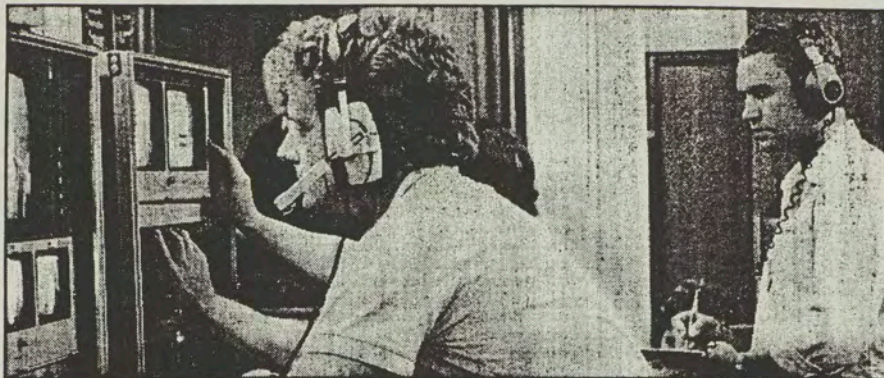
Perhaps most important, it's covered the last two political conventions for both parties, and presented every podium speech without interruption or editorial comment. Its national call-in shows are a daily dose of video democracy, and its political coverage is more complete than any other broadcast outfit.

Other networks may cover the players, and the major news events, but only C-SPAN covers the political process itself. For example, only C-SPAN broadcast live coverage of an Iowa caucus,

displaying (for perhaps the first time on TV) exactly what a caucus is and how it works.

And when C-SPAN follows the

political candidates, it isn't just looking for a 10-second sound bite to throw onto the evening news. It's looking to get as close as pos-



**ON CAMERA:** C-SPAN crew directs a hearing in the field.

sible for as long as possible and to do it, C-SPAN asked the presidential candidates in the 1988 race to wear wireless microphones while out on the stump. (The better to hear them with, my dear.)

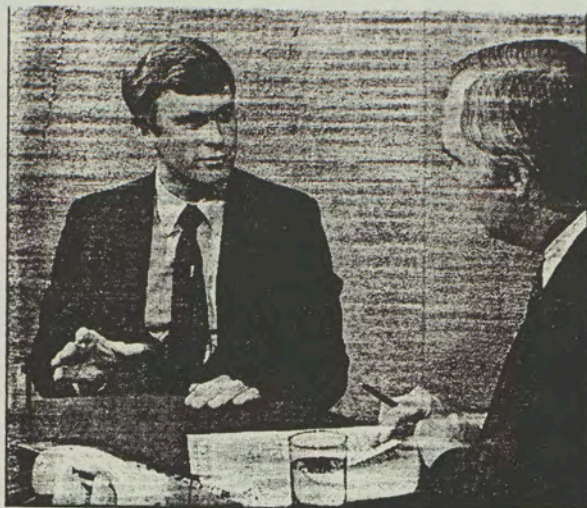
Michael Dukakis wore a C-SPAN wireless microphone more than any other candidate, and went on to get the Democratic nomination for president. George Bush never put one on, and he's president. ("The more successful they become," Lamb says, "the less interested they are in putting wireless mikes on.")

The same might be said, in a sense, about all of C-SPAN. Politicians on the lower tiers of government adore C-SPAN because it gives them invaluable exposure. Conversely, some of the more prominent newsmakers and lawmakers are wary of C-SPAN, because it presents them and their business in an unfiltered, uncontrollable fashion.

C-SPAN has grown enormously in the past decade. It now reaches 41 million households, and its operating costs are offset by local cable companies, which pay 3 cents per month per customer. There is no advertising, no discernible political bias, and, apparently, no reliance at all on the Nielsen ratings. If C-SPAN had a slogan, it would be defiantly low-key; something on the lines of

*Continued on Page 48*

New York Post  
April 2, 1989



**VEEP TO BE:** Then-Sen. Dan Quayle with C-SPAN founder and Chairman Brian Lamb during a viewer call-in program.

## C-SPAN

*Continued from Page 39*

"Dull is beautiful."

"No one's ever standing there with a Nielsen book saying, 'You didn't make it this month.' We're allowed to experiment, and put on things from time to time that may get very small audiences, but are still worth doing," says Lamb, who has guided C-SPAN since its inception.

"You take [ratings] numbers out of your equation in this business," he adds, "and a lot of different things go away."

What remains is a literally timeless approach to political coverage: C-SPAN now deals with the past, present and future of politics. For a network that began dealing only with the present, that's quite a sizable territorial expansion.

According to Lamb, C-SPAN now has a full-time producer working on "archival stuff," and recently began programming a 24-hour audio network (available for cable companies to relay to customers) in which vintage radio broadcasts will play a major part including Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats.

C-SPAN will continue to delve into the past on TV as well. Lamb calls the Inaugural and convention retrospectives "a tremendous success," and with good reason. Watching John Kennedy and Richard Nixon, for example, work their way up the political ranks through the years was an astounding and instructive thing to watch. And there were plenty of other treats and lessons.

"I had never seen the Adlai Stevenson speeches," Lamb acknowledges, "and in the context of today, they weren't nearly as good as the history would suggest. It's also fascinating how much of what the Democrats and Republicans were saying then doesn't track with what their parties say today."

For the present, C-SPAN and C-SPAN II will continue to be as many places as they can, showing as much as they can for as long as it takes. And by covering the present, C-SPAN is peeking into the future.

"Almost everyone oeing mentioned [for the presidency] in '92

or '96," Lamb says, "you're seeing here on a daily basis."

Peeking into C-SPAN's own future, expect more coverage from foreign governments (the network is going to France in July, and back to England in the fall, and would love to go to Japan), but don't expect camera coverage of the Supreme Court anytime soon.

"That's a tough one," Lamb says. "The toughest one of all of them."

One more thing you can expect: Lamb will be there to keep push-

Other networks may cover the players and the major news events, but only C-SPAN covers the political process itself.

ing, keep leading, and keep doing his share of the call-in show hosting chores. Although he has tenure over most top-ranked network executives, he still sees his post as "the best possible job I could have in all the world," and loves the fact that, in one sense, he doesn't know what he's doing.

"I don't know any of this stuff," Lamb says, referring specifically to how foreign governments operate. "I come from a very modest background. My education is solid, but I find this a constant ongoing college course in understanding."

"How can you leave when you're learning something every day?"

Viewers tuned to C-SPAN might say exactly the same thing. Watch tomorrow's three-hour "C-SPAN: The First 10 Years" special (8-11 p.m.), and see for yourself.



# Campaign Substance Was There for the Viewing

By BRIAN LAMB

Before the November election fades into history, it's important to assess charges from political officials and professional analysts that the news media have created "sound-bite" campaigns that mislead American voters.

Armed with statistics like those from a 1988 Harvard University study, which found that the average TV network sound bite from a candidate's speech was a mere nine seconds, some pundits and politicians have argued that the media virtually ignored issues in this campaign.

Newsweek magazine joined in the criticism with an election-issue story headlined: "How the Media Blew It." Former television correspondent Marvin Kalb, who directs Harvard University's center on press, politics and public policy, said in a recent New York Times piece that TV news trivialized election coverage. "It was so preoccupied with photo opportunities and sound bites, so manipulated by media experts, so driven by polls that it lost sight of its journalistic responsibilities," Mr. Kalb wrote.

Even President-elect George Bush, during his final debate with Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis, echoed these sentiments by scolding the media for focusing almost exclusively on polls and personality traits rather than on meaningful issues.

This preoccupation with the length of campaign sound bites suggests that "media" consists of little more than nightly network newscasts. This is simply not the case any longer, and I would argue that if people entered voting booths this year uninformed or misled, or failed to vote because they didn't know enough about the candidates, they have only themselves to blame. Never before in U.S. history has the public had the opportunity for more abundant political information than they have in the past two years. Consider that.

• In addition to campaign reports during their nightly newscasts, ABC, CBS and NBC broadcast hours of candidate debates,

personal profiles and expert political discussion both in prime time and on weekends.

• Over two years, cable TV's CNN devoted more than 700 hours of programming to the campaign and created "Inside Politics," a daily program about the election. On the Public Broadcasting Service, the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour examined campaign issues in-depth almost every evening this year and broadcast a number of the candidates' unedited speeches. Local broadcasters burst upon the scene this year, too, adding regional perspectives to the national political debate.

• Augmenting this TV coverage were newspapers and magazines, which devoted untold thousands of column inches to timely discussions of campaign issues. Public and commercial radio added many hours of substantive programs and special election broadcasts.

Finally, there was the programming offered by the two C-SPAN channels, which attempted to become the "networks of record" for the '88 campaign. Beginning on April 9, 1986, with a speech by Democratic candidate Richard Gephardt at a fundraiser in Milwaukee, to election day, C-SPAN continually televised campaign events, resulting in 1,200 hours of original programming. C-SPAN's answer to nine-second sound-bite coverage was candidate speeches that averaged 23 minutes in length.

Last summer, C-SPAN added its version of live "gavel-to-gavel" coverage of the Democratic and Republican national conventions to the telecasts offered by the broadcast networks and CNN. Throughout the campaign, C-SPAN televised dozens of important forums where strategists and pollsters from both major parties discussed issues, candidate positions and public-opinion polls. Third-party candidates were featured regularly. Topping off our coverage were hundreds of hours of viewer call-in programs that afforded viewers an active role in the election process.

After Labor Day—the traditional start

of the presidential campaign—C-SPAN aired 60 more speeches, rallies and other appearances by the presidential and vice presidential candidates, events shown in their entirety and without analysis.

Collectively, there was a mountain of information about the election available to anyone who was interested. So why all the complaints about the media?

James Gannon, new Washington bureau chief for the Detroit News, has a theory. At a post-election media conference at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, he observed that one reason people believe the media let them down in this election is "the public attention span for anything substantive is growing shorter all the time." Most people, he said, don't really pay attention to a presidential campaign until its final two weeks. By that time, most of what you see is a garble of images and slogans.

Mr. Gannon may be right. But there are people who want more substantive information about presidential candidates and they are willing to make the effort to obtain it. The proof? A 78% growth in C-SPAN viewing (as documented by a University of Maryland survey this fall) during a year dominated by this long-form election coverage.

Calling 1988 a sound-bite campaign is simply not true. America's diverse and sophisticated media made this the most thoroughly covered campaign in history.

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*Mr. Lamb is chairman of C-SPAN.*

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Wall Street Journal  
December 29, 1988

**INTERNATIONAL**

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M E D I A

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# Watching our Parliament — under American rules

WELCOME to P-Span. The rules announced by the Select Committee on Televising Parliament show how heavily the committee was influenced by its encounters with the American C-Span. C-Span, to which I became addicted during February in Washington, is a cable channel giving gavel-to-gavel coverage of the lower house of the United States Congress and some of its committee hearings as well.

C-span's rules are the nun-like restraints which the Select Committee has decided that televisers of the House of Commons should obey. Head-and-shoulders only; of the Member speaking only. No close-ups. No shots ranging across the entire chamber. No picking at the cause of disruption. The television camera must be nothing but a passive, incurious eye.

Tedious! Unilluminating! Misleading! Hypocritical! Cries of rage and ridicule have gone up from the wise and important columnists such as Bernard Levin and George Gale, and the broadcast news executives, John Birt of the BBC and David Nicholas of ITN.

Their protests are justified in one sense: P-Span will be dull. Each nation, James Joyce once said, represents one of the Seven Deadly Sins — Ireland's was Envy; Italy's Greed. To that the United States adds an eighth: Earnestness. C-Span is dull because American political rhetoric is dull.

But dullness has its uses. P-Span may demonstrate the importance of being earnest. Straight head-and-shoulders pictures with a caption giving

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## BRENDA MADDOX on TV in the House

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name, party and constituency, and the question being debated, may well make professional fingers itch, just as parents' fingers do when their child draws a house. It would be so easy to straighten the chimney, and don't you want to put a knob on the door? But there are advantages in letting beginners do it their way.

They can't complain about the result, for a start. Then there will be the benefit of having an unedited archive on film of the whole proceedings. Nobody complains that *Hansard* is dull. It is useful to have all the words and the occasional aside — "(laughter)". And having all the words captured — every one of them — is surely less likely to encourage stunts and fancy dress than more careful preparation and delivery.

This experiment, planned to run from November to July if Parliament approves, is clearly the thin end of the wedge into a shamefully closed door. The restrictions are too absurd to last. The stricture that, in case of grave disruption in the House the camera must return to the Speaker's face and stay there, is tantamount to the famed advice to lie back and think of England.

It could have been worse. Nobody has proposed cutting the sound off. That is the most shocking thing about Parliament — not the drinking, sleeping or empty benches, but the jeers, the hoots, the baying of the pack. Give thanks also that the Speaker is to have no

switch-off button to censor the most uproarious moments. Nor is there to be a ban on "reaction" shots. The camera, while forbidden to search out the face of, say, Edward Heath when the Prime Minister is bad-mouthing Brussels, can show his, or anyone's reaction when their name is mentioned.

Funnily enough, the really subversive decision has gone almost unremarked upon: to allow television cameras into committee hearings. If we can get live on TV the Edwina Currie or Robert Armstrong hearings as the Americans got Ollie North's, few can complain of tedium, and fewer of secret government.

The fascination of the American C-Span is its unedited grittiness and its encyclopaedic quality. Tune in anytime and you find something of interest. Parliament will not match that until it gets a channel of its own. All the same, with daily dollops on BBC2, Channel 4 and TV-am, plus weekend round-ups, we're going to get a look at real Parliament as never before.

The star, of course will be the Prime Minister. She has opposed televising the House, the *cognoscenti* say, because she is not at her best there. The deep-voiced control with which she cows male television inter-viewers — "Please let me finish" — disappears. The voice becomes shrill as the great sea of sound swells: "Order! Order! Hear! Hear! Mr Speaker! Mr Speaker!"

From Washington, C-Span is panting to pick it all up. Televised Parliament may bore them at the BBC and ITN. It's going to wow them in Peoria.

Sunday Telegraph  
May 28, 1989

# America's town hall network brings politics to the people

● JONATHAN MILLER believes Britain would gain from a public affairs television channel modelled on C-Span in the United States

WHEN Bryan Gould, the Labour party's spokesman on trade and industry, turned up for a television interview last week, he blinked in momentary disbelief.

Instead of finding a well-equipped studio, swarming with dozens of busy-looking technicians and young women with clipboards, he found himself in a hastily-converted conference room with modest equipment ranged on a trestle table and an electric kettle boiling away in a corner.

Gould, along with Sir Geoffrey Howe, the foreign secretary, Sir John Wakeham, leader of the House of Commons, Charles Price, the American ambassador, Lord Keith of Kinkel, the law lord, and a sprinkling of members of parliament and journalists, was discovering the joy of public affairs television on the cheap, courtesy of the television network known in the United States as "America's town hall".

The Cable and Satellite Public Affairs Network, C-Span, was in London to provide its viewers back home with a week of British politics and current affairs. But its visit served a secondary purpose, demonstrating the possibilities for economical yet high-quality public service broadcasting in an era of deregulation and intense competition.

From its makeshift studio at the Methodist Central Hall in Westminster, C-Span used a crew of just eight people to originate 20 hours of programmes, 10 of them live. The programmes were beamed to America where the service is available to 41.5m homes via cable.

Set up 10 years ago to provide Americans with a gavel-to-gavel relay of the House of Representatives, C-Span currently uses two transmitting channels on an American satellite to broadcast 48 hours of public affairs programmes every day.

More recently, C-Span be-

gan televising the Senate as well. When Congress is not in session, it broadens its coverage to congressional committees and major speeches, interspersed with "talking head" interview shows, to which viewers are invited to phone in with questions. During the presidential election campaign, C-Span was unique among American television networks in offering comprehensive coverage of the party nominating conventions.

C-Span is not mass market television: it does not attempt to compete with the *Cosby* Show for ratings. Nevertheless, it pulls a significant audience. New research shows it is watched regularly by almost 20% of Americans, and that those who do tune in are likely to vote with greater regularity than those who do not.

Fans of the network include teachers, journalists, politicians and show business figures. Frank Zappa is a regular viewer, so is Ronald Reagan.

One of the striking features of C-Span is its political neutrality. According to the University of Maryland, 14% of C-Span viewers consider it has a liberal bias, 13% a conservative bias, but an overwhelming 73% believe it has no bias at all.

Brian Lamb, the president of the service (he doubles as one of the main presenters of its interview and phone-in shows) is now concentrating on developing an international flavour for C-Span. Proceedings of the Canadian House of Commons are already a regular feature; last month, C-Span broadcast the Queen's speech live from the House of Lords.

When our own House of Commons becomes available on television, probably next year, C-Span plans to carry regular highlights, probably starting with prime minister's questions.

Set up as a non-profit company, C-Span carries no ad-

vertising and is available at no extra charge to American cable viewers. The \$12.5m annual cost of the service is met by a voluntary subscription fee levied on American cable operators of 3 cents per month per customer.

The cable operators are not entirely altruistic in their support of C-Span. For years, American politicians, reliant on terrestrial broadcasters for access to television time, included in a system of regulatory constraints on cable. Today, with cable offering politicians unprecedented opportunities to communicate directly with their constituents, cable has won a string of concessions from Congress, helping to turn the medium from a step-child of broadcasting into its main player. More than half of American homes now get their programmes by wire.

As television in Britain diversifies, C-Span offers a model worth copying. It democratises television by offering access to the airwaves to politicians of all persuasions, and through its phone-in programmes, to thousands of ordinary citizens. The editorial filter that traditional broadcasting has inserted between the voters and the government has been removed: by covering every day and every hour of Congress, viewers everywhere have an unlimited opportunity to tune in on the activity of their elected representatives.

As satellite television prospers in Britain in the years ahead, those who profit from it must follow the example of the American cable operators and find a way to provide the money that's needed for a C-Span of our own.



THE SUNDAY TIMES

4 DECEMBER 1988

# A TV channel for raw politics

NOW that the select committee on televising the Commons has agreed the terms on which broadcasters will be allowed into the House it is time to move on to the next great objective: a dedicated public affairs television channel to give the political nation its own communications medium.

Parliament is the stage on which the party battle is fought, the arguments put, the decisions questioned, part of a four-year election campaign to educate the people. All futile if restricted to a closed debating society. Yet is it strengthened all that much if television coverage is restricted to extracts, summaries and the very occasional full debate?

Parliament needs full-time coverage so people can dip in and out. Current affairs as distinct from public affairs on the four "terrestrial" channels is certain to be weakened as this government makes the commercial imperative dominant and breaks down the regulatory structure which maintains commitments to quality and specialised programming.

Current affairs programmes usually lose up to a half their initial audiences. They are expensive to produce. Companies can be

## Austin Mitchell believes the time has come to broaden the parliamentary stage

compelled to make them by Brownie points, mandating, dependence on the IBA for renewal of contracts, but in a free market they will go for cheaper ways of getting audiences. Once the commercial companies have gone down the road to lowest common denominator television, the BBC will follow by cutting down on commitments to duty, responsibility and public understanding.

Why not, therefore, provide the political world with its own channel to talk to its nation and the nation? The future of television is pluralistic and those interested in following up their enthusiasm for news, arts, entertainment, film or sport on the four basic channels will turn to a dedicated channel on cable or satellite.

A parliamentary television channel could be provided by a British C Span. The most exciting development in American television in the last decade, C Span is a cable co-operative carrying 6,000 hours of original programming on two channels, including the House of Representatives and the Senate, but also the National Party Committee meetings, press conferences, lectures, high school

sessions and phone-ins with major figures, all going via two satellites to 40 million viewers.

It is raw politics served without comment or conclusion for, as its chief executive says: "We try to stay out of the editorial process. We're putting on, in a raw unvarnished state, an important slice of American life where decisions are made every day that affect millions of people."

The aggregate audience of 40 million devotes on average 16 hours a month to watching one of the two channels. It is drawn from the politically active classes, the interested, involved, well-educated news consumers: a political nation uncatered for in this country. A British C Span could carry Parliament full-time in the afternoon and evening and devote the rest of the time to the wider world of politics, and to taped committee sessions.

Cable has not made the same strides here but will develop more rapidly in the near future, and satellite channels are both available and cheap. With the spread of dishes, cable, and low-power local transmissions Britain too will have its multi-channel audience

in a very short time. We need to prepare quickly. In America business provided the cash. Here it may need public finance. Such a channel would be a far better use of public money than a parliamentary broadcasting unit.

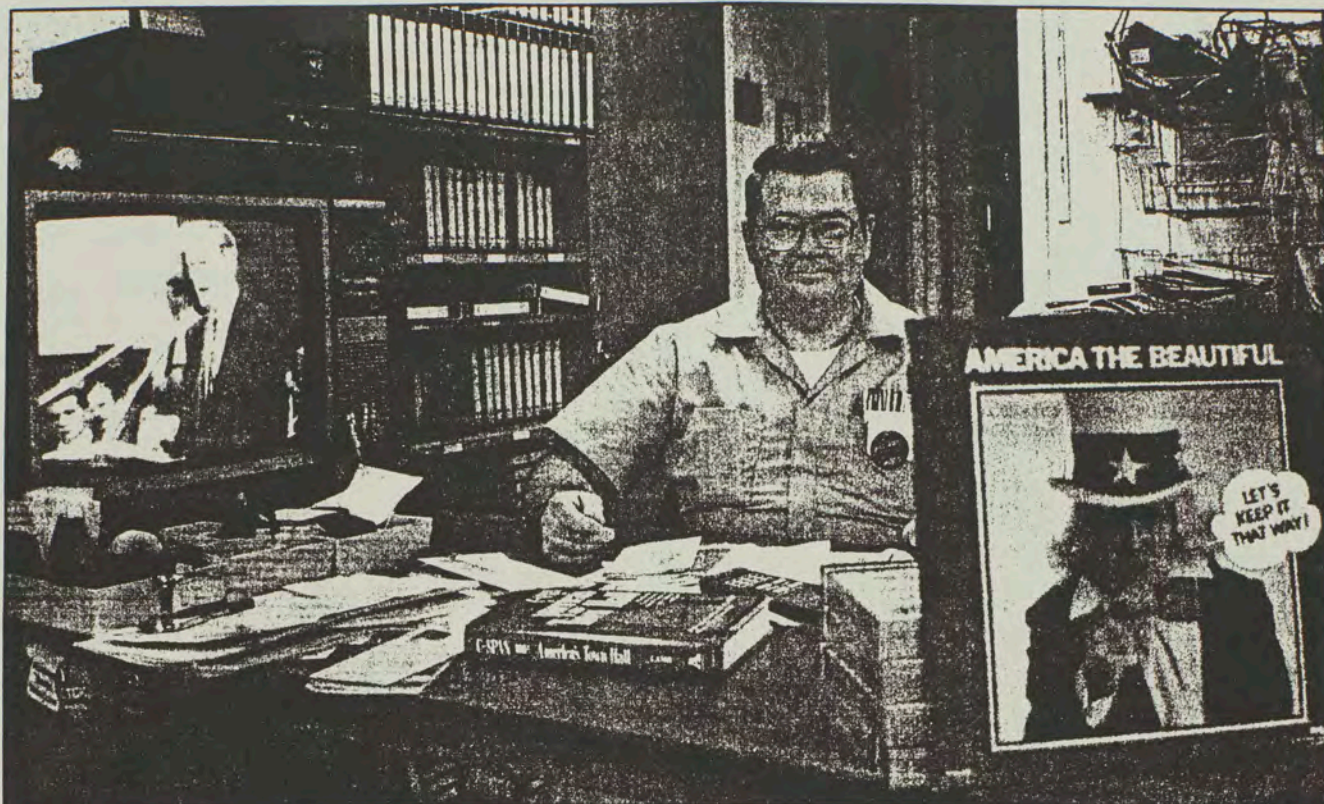
A government concerned to build the educated involved public this country needs would spend the money, but this one may not. In the meantime, why should the television industry, cable, satellite and the existing companies not come together to finance the start-up of what will be a very low-cost service to run? Better still, why cannot the levy be used instead of being drained out of television by a greedy Treasury?

There can be no higher public purpose than educating a nation currently alienated from politics, largely ignorant and open to manipulation, and altogether more likely to succumb to the man or woman on the white horse than to intelligent arguments put convincingly. The parties need to communicate freely with the people. So does Parliament. Politics are a central part of life, not a ghetto of shame.

*Austin Mitchell is Labour MP for Grimsby, secretary of the all-party group for televising Parliament and a presenter on "Target", Sky's political programme.*

Independent  
May 24, 1989

# C-SPAN VIEWERS



The Dallas Morning News: Ira Rosenberg

Avid fan Gene Crockett of Irving says, "There are 1.5 million of us C-SPAN junkies who want to look into a guy's eyes and see what's connected to that brain."

# Keeping An Eye On Capitol Hill

*Politics-watchers enjoy the best seat in the House thanks to C-SPAN*

By Ken Perkins

Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

Gene Crockett is more than just a picture of the American Dream: He actually lives by it. The 60-year-old self-made Irving businessman wears made-in-the-USA cotton shirts, workman's trousers and soft-heeled Hush Puppies. On the wall of his home is a replica of the U.S. Constitution; above his front lawn flies the U.S. flag. Words like "liberty" and "freedom" come frequently to his lips.

## TELEVISION

■ Making sense of the schedule. **3C**

Like most patriots, Mr. Crockett takes his politics seriously. He doesn't like Fort Worth's Jim Wright, never has, says he never will. He thinks that Arkansas Democrat Beryl Anthony is too "wishy-washy," that Illinois Democrat Alan Dixon is a "bumbling idiot" and that Georgia Democrat Ed Jenkins is "namby-pamby."

He should know. Mr. Crockett has spent many hours with these Washington politicians, watching them wheel and deal on Capitol Hill. He knows how their minds work, what their personalities are, whether they've got "fire in the belly." He even knows their hobbies.

But Mr. Crockett is no bosom buddy to Washington's powers that be. Fact is, he's never even met these gentlemen. He is, instead, a loyal viewer of C-SPAN, the cable television network devoted exclusively to live coverage of House and Senate sessions and other public affairs.

Mr. Crockett spends more than 20 hours a week glued to C-SPAN, listening to House and Senate members debate such topics of the day as trucking deregulation, drought. Please see C-SPAN on Page 3C.

## PROFILE OF C-SPAN VIEWERS

### AGE:

- 54 percent are between the ages of 25 and 44
- 14 percent are between 18 and 24
- 9 percent are 65 or older

### INCOME:

- 42 percent have household incomes of \$30,000 or more
- 14 percent have an income of \$50,000 or more
- 10 percent have an income of less than \$10,000

### EDUCATION:

- 82 percent are high school graduates
- 49 percent have some college background
- 11 percent have advanced degrees

### POLITICAL AFFILIATION:

- 33 percent Republican
- 33 percent independent
- 32 percent Democrats
- 2 percent other

### POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT:

- 84 percent were registered to vote
- 78 percent voted in the 1988 national election

### NEWS CONSUMPTION:

- 63 percent read at least one daily newspaper regularly (national average is 48 percent)
- 70 percent watch TV news each day (national average is 52 percent)

SOURCE: University of Maryland Survey Research Center

## A HOME CIVICS LESSON



C-SPAN coverage has included (from left) Ed Meese, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, rocker Dee Snider and Oliver North.

Dallas Morning News  
June 5, 1989

# C-SPAN keeps politics-watchers attuned

Continued from Page 1C.  
relief, tax reform and a diesel-fuel tax for highway maintenance.

And he's not alone.  
"There are 1.5 million of us C-SPAN junkies who want to look into a guy's eyes and see what's connected to that brain," says Mr. Crockett, a former Texas Instruments engineer who is now self-employed.

"Does he — or she — have what it takes? C-SPAN gives you a front-row seat to find out, that's for sure."

Viewers who classify themselves as C-SPAN junkies are hard-core loyalists who savor a good congressional floor fight the way fanatic sports fans pray for sudden-death overtime.

Mr. Crockett often turns on three television sets at once while roaming his home — two in the den, where he can tape a couple of programs on his two VCRs, another in the family room that he's converted into an office.

He stacks recorded C-SPAN programs three deep on 8-foot-high display cabinets, jots notes and quotes on his classroom-size white marker boards and, like a church deacon keeping track with his Bible, makes check marks in his Congressional Directory.

Atypical as Mr. Crockett may be, his intoxication with C-SPAN is far from unique. The Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network has become the perfect aid for politicians, journalists, lobbyists and corporate public affairs officers, to name a few.

Don't worry that it may initially seem confusing and boring — junkies say it can be utterly absorbing.

C-SPAN's numbers back that up. Its audience has grown steadily since it began 10 years ago. Now it beams to 43.3 million cable subscribers, 11 million of them regular viewers.

The network is funded almost entirely by the cable industry (if your cable system carries it, 4 cents of your monthly bill goes to support C-SPAN) as a non-profit cooperative; its 1990 budget will hit \$13 million, which is just enough to keep one of the Big Three networks on the air for about a month.

The Washington-based network makes it by running a lean ship — the workforce is just 155 strong. It covers the political scene with 17 cameras — six fewer than NBC took to the Super Bowl.

In Dallas, Heritage Cablevision brings C-SPAN to more subscribers (100,000-plus) than any other area cable outlet. But others, such as Sammons Communications' Park Cities cable, also carry C-SPAN.

Esther Jacobs of Highland Park, a self-described "political animal," says she got hooked seven years ago, after her husband's death. She says she spends four to five hours daily watching C-SPAN on the three television sets she keeps in her living room, dining room and bedroom.

"I've always been a little interested in the workings of politics and the news, but my husband loved sports. But I feel like I've been reborn or something," says Ms. Jacobs, 67.



The Dallas Morning News: Milton Hinnant

Self-described "political animal" Esther Jacobs of Highland Park spends four to five hours daily watching C-SPAN on three television sets.

What makes C-SPAN so appealing, junkies say, is the up-close-and-personal coverage of the House of Representatives (for 10 years) and the Senate (for three on C-SPAN II) which includes live, uncut, gavel-to-gavel proceedings that may pop up anytime, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

To feed the C-SPAN junkie, the menu also carries call-in and interview talk shows, National Press Club speeches, political caucuses, academic seminars, rallies and conventions, as well as state races and gubernatorial campaigns.

What seems to be C-SPAN's greatest triumph is what it *doesn't* offer: there are no highly paid pretty-face personalities delivering the news. No commercials, no station breaks, no news updates and, most of all, no commentary.

"You don't get news, three minutes of detergent, news, three minutes of corn flakes, news, three minutes of a naked girl selling suntan lotion," says Mark Chase, a 29-year-old computer sales representative.

"What Brian (Lamb, C-SPAN's

founder and chief executive officer) always says, he wants people to think for themselves," Mr. Chase says. "He doesn't need some stuffy anchorman like Dan Rather telling us after a speech what we just heard. Give me a break. Are we mentally crippled or what?"

C-SPAN has been such an influence on Mr. Chase that he's decided to return to school and pick up a law degree. "Then go to Washington," he says. "One thing C-SPAN does is bring these politicians down to earth. By watching it, it makes me feel that if they can do it, I can do it too."

A similar tale comes from Rep. Richard Arme, the former economics professor who left his tenured post in 1983 to run for — and win — a U.S. House seat against incumbent Tom Vandergriff. In a book published this year by C-SPAN, Rep. Arme says watching Congress helped him demystify the workings of Washington. The book pays tribute to its loyal viewers, including celebrities such as Frank Zappa, Robert Dole and Phil Donahue.

And C-SPAN's obscure devotees? According to a survey completed

last year by the University of Maryland's research center, viewers' predominant age ranges from 25 to 44, household income averages \$30,000 or more and they have some college background. They vote more often than the national average and are well-balanced in political affiliations: 33 percent consider themselves Republicans, 33 percent independents and 32 percent Democrats.

C-SPANers also are infomaniacs. They read at least three newspapers daily and watch a minimum of four news shows. *Face The Nation*, *Meet The Press*, *Nightline* and Cable News Network shows are the most common.

The survey also reflects a growth in younger viewers, such as high school senior Aimee Maxfield of Marietta, Ga.

"The Iran-contra hearings were on and I found them interesting. I liked the fact that there wasn't any running commentary, that C-SPAN had it firsthand and untouched," says Ms. Maxfield, 17. "It let me form my own opinion."

Since then Ms. Maxfield, who describes herself as a moderate conservative, has become a student association representative and is trying to form a Young Republicans chapter. Last summer she interned on Capitol Hill. She hopes to attend college in Washington and pursue a career in political journalism or politics.

What happens on C-SPAN is the makings of history — which is why Purdue University recently started collecting a library of C-SPAN tapes for future historians.

C-SPAN junkies have their own libraries, however. As Tuesday's House Ethics Committee hearings came to a close with Jim Wright's resignation, Mr. Crockett put away tape number 1,000-something.

## Making sense of the schedule

If there is anything that irks the C-SPAN viewer, it's trying to find out what will be seen on the cable network, and when. C-SPAN doesn't publish a programming guide, but there is a telephone number (202-628-2205). You can call to get the day's schedule and, after 1 p.m., a tentative schedule for the following day.

A few programs do have regular slots on C-SPAN:

**7 p.m. weekdays — *Event of the Day*:** Interview show; producers select the day's most newsworthy event and round up authorities to discuss it.

**7 a.m. Friday — *Journalists Round Table*:** Interview show;

three or four journalists talk about the day's news.

**11 a.m. Friday — *Communications Today* — Interview show:** looks at issues in the communications and broadcasting industries.

**6 p.m. Saturday — *National Press Club* — Speeches by world leaders and national newsmakers.**

**7 p.m. Sunday — *Book Notes* — Interviews with best-selling authors.**

**National call-in shows —** Three or four open-phone call-in shows are broadcast each day, at 7 and 7:45 a.m. and 6:30 and 7:15 p.m.



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# THE REAL DRAMA OF ALL-NATURAL TV

If C-SPAN is the channel that "dares to be dull," how come so many people watch it?

BY ROBIN WARSHAW

**B**UD HARRIS IS THE PICTURE OF retired suburbanity: powder-blue striped knit shirt, powder-blue pants, squarish glasses, beige Rockport loafers. He is 69 years old, mild-mannered and gracious, and he lives in a lovely home on a lovely street in Cherry Hill.

But Bud Harris has his passion. He loves Barney Frank and Jesse Helms and even Orrin Hatch. He has spent hours and hours with these powerful Washington politicians and seen them in action on Capitol Hill many times. He knows how their minds work, what their personalities are like.

He adores Frank, the liberal congressman from Massachusetts, for his quick sense of humor and sharp wit. "When anybody tries to debate him on the floor, ain't no way they're going to win." The archconservative senators Helms and Hatch he admires for their parliamentary skill and political maneuvering. Of Helms, he says, "I probably disagree with everything he stands for, but I love to watch him."

Bud Harris is no personal friend of these politicians. Nor is he a Capitol Hill lobbyist or hanger-on. What he is, instead, is a viewer of C-SPAN, the cable television network devoted

exclusively to live coverage of House and Senate sessions and other public affairs events, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

But wait a minute, don't touch that dial.

Deadly as it may seem, C-SPAN has an intoxication all its own. It has created, across the country, hundreds of thousands of C-SPAN junkies — hard-core loyalists who savor a good congressional floor fight the way true baseball fans love a pitchers' duel. Bud Harris is one of them. He often turns on all three of his TVs and keeps them set to C-SPAN so he won't miss a thing as he walks through the house. "The more you watch, the more involved you get," he says. "It takes on an added dimension because you get to know the characters."

C-SPAN (THE CABLE-SATELLITE PUBLIC Affairs Network) is still little known in the neighborhoods of Philadelphia that remain unwired, but it is gaining viewers steadily as blocks in the Northeast, Germantown, Roxborough and other areas start cable-izing. About 42,000 city households now receive C-SPAN through their cable systems, while 489,000 homes in the Pennsylvania suburbs, 440,000 in South Jersey and 121,000 in Delaware are plugged in to the channel that some say "dares to be dull." C-SPAN prefers to call itself "America's network."

Actually, both descriptions are correct. C-SPAN is a nonprofit cooperative financed by the cable industry to provide public affairs programming. Its daytime schedule includes live, uncut, "gavel-to-gavel" telecasts of proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives, and last year a second network, C-SPAN II, was added to carry similar programming from the Senate. C-SPAN is committed to the pure transmission of what its cameras see, without glitz or hype. There's no editorializing and no pampered pretty-face personalities delivering the news. The bulk of the viewing time is devoted to conferences, political events, important speeches, panel discussions, conventions and workshops on current issues, as well as viewer call-in shows that feature journalists, Congresspeople and other Washington types. There's no apology for the weight of the programming fare, and there are no artificial inducements — such as catchy titles — to snag less-than-committed viewers. One program, for example, has the peppy moniker "Process and Policy."

Those who are hooked love it. Even among the less-rabid, C-SPAN's popularity is growing. A University of Maryland survey late last year showed that, of the 37 million households with cable access to C-SPAN, nearly 11 million *actually watch it*, a 43 percent increase over the previous three years. (Nationwide, 45 million houses are wired for cable.)

The network's fans include movie director Robert Altman, who told the New York Times that he had watched "hours and hours" of the Iran-contra hearings on C-SPAN and used its unblinking style as a model for his TV movie *Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*. Said Altman, "I tried to put that C-SPAN feeling into it."

While the average C-SPAN viewing household watches 9.5 hours a month, the Maryland survey found that in 1.3 million homes, C-SPAN is on 20 hours or more. Of course, that leaves plenty of people who have remained free of C-SPAN's siren call. Many of them may be getting sucked in during this summer's national political conventions; C-SPAN is the only network to offer complete and uninterrupted coverage. No commercials. No station breaks. No news updates. No commentary.

The convention broadcasts are typical, strict-constructionist C-SPAN: 100 percent American political process, warts and all.

"The presidential campaign without us around — which is the way most people still have it — is a campaign of 45-second sound bites," says C-SPAN chief Brian Lamb. "If you vote on that basis... then you get what you deserve."

C-SPAN began in 1979 by televising the House. It took seven more years of debate before the Senate agreed to admit TV cameras. (They almost had to: the ever-growing appeal of the House broadcasts was making many representatives better-known to the public than the senators.) Aside from the appearance of a few more red ties, TV doesn't seem to have wrought terrible changes in the lawmakers' deliberations, as naysayers had predicted it might. But a few squabbles have occurred. Since each chamber controls its own cameras (C-SPAN merely receives the House and Senate signals and sends them to cable companies), what is shown has sometimes been politically influenced. In 1984, then-House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, a frequent victim of conservative Republican speakers, had the cameras pan a nearly empty House chamber while Rep. Robert Walker (R., Pa.) delivered a passionate harangue. That move broke a five-year tradition of cameras being focused only on the podium and brought howls of outrage from O'Neill's opponents. This year, during a stormy exchange in the House over contra aid, the broadcast microphone of one pro-contra House member was cut off when his time ran out, producing fury on all sides.

But on most days, it is the content of the sessions that holds the most excitement. C-SPAN addicts know all the players, and their moves. As in an elaborately complex game, the suspense builds over hours of deliberations, until a vote is taken. The votes are added slowly, one by one, and appear on screen on a tally board. Long minutes tick away as the numbers build. "We all come from a certain political bias," says Harris, who admits his is mostly liberal. "Naturally, you're hoping the vote will go your way. . . . It's exciting!"

"How can you compare any other kind of television to that kind of real drama?"

**A**LTHOUGH, AFTER nine years of operation, C-SPAN is healthy and strong, Brian Lamb still guards it zealously as its creator and chief executive officer. Like that other Creator, Lamb made C-SPAN in his own image — committed to the idea that TV news should not

be delivered in small, glib nuggets. Consequently, it takes work to watch C-SPAN. Hearings may last for hours or days; bills may be debated ad nauseam. And, unlike the rare times when traditional TV covers such events, there's no commentary afterward explaining what just went on.

Lamb says that's all to the good. He wants viewers to think for themselves. When he talks about his philosophy for the network, you can practically hear the national anthem swelling in the background. "It takes work to have a democracy," he says. "For too long, we have been spoon-fed, and we've gotten used to it. It takes work to read a newspaper. . . . You cannot just read the headlines and go on. It takes time. You've got to be serious about it."

There's no doubt that Brian Lamb is serious. The intensity beams out of his eyes and burns you if you fall in its arc. At 46, he looks like a graying version of actor Ed Harris and could easily have played the John Glenn role in *The Right Stuff*.

Lamb demands a strong commitment from anyone who joins the C-SPAN team. On-air program moderators are forbidden from ever letting the audience know how they feel about an issue or a guest. Their role on the call-in shows is to be nearly invisible — simply, as Lamb says, "to get to the phones and shut up." To prevent viewers from tuning in to watch a particular personality, moderators are rotated. "They [the moderators] don't appear to mind," he says. "But I really don't care whether they mind or not." He often hosts call-in shows himself. The caption occasionally flashed across his chest reads, "Brian Lamb, C-SPAN." Nothing else.

**W**HAT BRIAN LAMB really hates is when someone brings up the subject of wackos. You see, some of the viewers who call the C-SPAN call-in programs (aired here at 8 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. weekdays) reflect views just barely to the left of the Posse Comitatus. A few, regardless of the topic, will bring up doomsday fears about the Trilateral Commission or water fluoridation. Lamb says he doesn't really mind these callers, he just wishes that people would remember the

many more sensible, serious viewers who call as well. "We've got a lot of important people that appear [on the programs], and even if some of the call-in people are wackos, it is an interchange and communication with somebody other than me or anybody that's hired here. Out of that mix comes what I believe to be a fair and balanced discussion," he says.

If the wackos truly ruled the airwaves at C-SPAN, you'd think they'd have been jamming the lines one day this spring when a call-in show featured, in its first half, the director of the federal office of minority health, Dr. Herbert Nickens, discussing the government's decision to mail an AIDS brochure to every American household, and, in its second half, Rep. John Kasich (R., Ohio), a supporter of the Defense Department budget under consideration that day. Of the 21 calls to the AIDS expert (from places like Tacoma, Wash.; Oceanside, Calif.; Durango, Colo., and Old Bridge, N.J.), only one, from Manhattan, could be categorized as nutty: a man who claimed that the government was in collusion with gay activists to hide the "fact" that AIDS is "as catchable as a common virus." The defense half of the program attracted two callers (out of 15) who seemed to have slipped their respective clutches: a Mill Valley, Calif., woman who rambled on about having personally written 2,000 letters to Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, and an addled-sounding woman from Charlotte, N.C., who talked about God, the Senate and day care.

The only screening of calls goes on by a production assistant who asks viewers where they're calling from, what they're calling about and if they've called before in the previous month (the network has a rule that callers may be on the air only once every 30 days). Although the staff tries to learn the voices of troublesome callers and screen them out, some get through.

There was one guy in particular who broke the 30-day rule so outrageously that C-SPAN viewer Jim Stanton, a Bryn Mawr resident, decided to take action. Stanton, 49, whose wife subscribed to cable as a gift for him so he could watch sports, discovered C-SPAN by accident, just flipping the dial. "I've talked

to people who've had cable for years who don't even know it's on," he says.

When Stanton became a fan of C-SPAN's call-in shows, he began to recognize one voice, a far-right-winger, who identified himself as calling from various Western cities. "I finally started to assume that this guy was really nuts," Stanton says. "I really wanted him off the air because he wasn't helping anything." Stanton began taping the shows on his VCR and then transferring the man's calls to an audio cassette. The video vigilante then sent the cassette to C-SPAN, where the staff now listens to it regularly to become familiar with the voice.

A large percentage of the viewer-callers are deeply entrenched in one political viewpoint or another. Perhaps only those who believe most fervently in an issue are willing to incur toll charges to ask a question — regardless of their political persuasion. During the primary election season, for example, lots of calls came from ardent Jesse Jackson supporters, many of them black.

That reflects how politically well-blended C-SPAN's audience is. The University of Maryland study showed that the network's viewers are 38 percent Democrats, 32 percent Republicans, 24 percent Independents and 6 percent other. (The national profile is 31, 30, 31, and 8.) They are also a politically active group: In the 1984 presidential campaign, 93 percent of C-SPAN's audience voted, compared with only 53 percent of the eligible voters nationwide. The network takes such pride in its viewers that this summer it published a book, *C-SPAN: America's Town Hall*, profiling 98 loyal watchers — from Tom Winslow, a U.S. Park Service ranger at Independence Hall, to roguish rock musician Frank Zappa.

C-SPAN's audience has been growing steadily since Lamb first began the network with a \$25,000 donation from a cable executive. Run now on a budget of \$12 million that comes from grants from cable companies (95 percent) and other corporations and organizations (5 percent), C-SPAN employs 150 mostly young workers and is now ranked in the top 10 cable satellite services. Future plans include going international. Says Lamb, "The cynic would be surprised at how successful this is."

# C-Span audience has wide-ranging views, TV host says

by Jonn Voorhees  
Times television columnist

**B**rian Lamb, who has interviewed plenty of authors in his time in his role as host of call-in/talk shows on cable's C-Span network, finds the shoe is on the other foot these days — he's listed as the author of "C-Span: America's Town Hall" (Acropolis Books, \$19.95).

Lamb, who is also the chief executive officer as well as the founder of C-Span, visited Seattle last week to talk about the book and C-Span in general. He was quick to point out that "America's Town Hall" is, like C-Span itself, a collaborative effort, one that involved a great many of C-Span's approximately 150 workers.

C-Span is the cable channel that televises the proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives — and when that august body is not in session, C-Span offers a fascinating array of other programming: news conferences, speeches by everyone from foreign dignitaries to pop-culture figures, hearings, conventions and reports on the judicial system. In short, C-Span mirrors every aspect of the political spectrum. (C-Span II telecasts the U.S. Senate but because this service began later, many cable systems, such as the Seattle area's Viacom and T.C.I., no longer have any channels available for it). C-Span reaches more than 38 million U.S. households.

"People who aren't interested in politics are always asking me: 'But who watches C-Span?' and the book really grew out of that," Lamb said. "During the nine years we've had C-Span on the air, we've learned there is no 'typical' C-Span viewer. We wanted to show that diversity."

The resulting book is almost as odd a book as C-Span is odd TV. In one way, it's a collection of more than 100 endorsements — almost commercials — for what C-Span does. But, like C-Span's live call-in shows, "America's Town Hall" is intriguing in its variety of contributors, ranging from "A" — Roy Allen, a Georgia state legislator — to "Z," rock star Frank Zappa, who considers C-Span "the best television available."

The chapters feature everyone from ordinary citizens to well-known politicians (President Reagan, Howard Baker, Robert Dole, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, former speaker of the House), media stars (Phil Donahue, the Los Angeles Times' Jack Nelson), media critics (former FCC commissioner Nicho-

'During the nine years we've had C-Span on the air, we've learned there is no "typical" C-Span viewer. We wanted to show that diversity' in the book.

**Brian Lamb, author, TV host and interviewer**

las Johnson), and artists (Edward and Nancy Kienholz). There's at least one representative from every state — Washington is represented by Seattle's Shani Taha — and each contributor is also pictured.

But while many of those interviewed watch C-Span for professional reasons and find it useful in their work, it's the comments from regular citizens that can be the most interesting. They have no reason to watch C-Span — or to praise it — other than that it fascinates them as a slice of our collective life.

These viewers get hooked on C-Span, its unedited look at how the U.S. government operates on a day-to-day basis. It can be, by turns, thrilling and exasperating and frustrating and inspiring, they say. And in all of their comments about how C-Span relates to their lives and their work, and how they respond to it, you get a varied portrait of Americans and American politics.

The book also includes some important statistics: Ninety-three percent of C-Span viewers voted in 1984, compared with the national turnout of 53 percent; 76 percent of C-Span viewers read a newspaper every day, compared with 44 percent of the nation at large; 40 percent of the C-Span audience say they changed their minds about an issue because of C-Span programming.

"America's Town Hall" isn't C-Span's only venture into print, however. "C-Span Update" is a weekly newspaper that covers C-Span's programming — a kind of C-Span version of TV Guide that not only shows the C-Span schedule but includes generous excerpts from the channel's call-in programs, comments from both the guests and questioners.

**While Lamb is willing to talk about the book and the newspaper (the latter available by subscription), he'd rather talk about the upcoming political conventions. He readily points out that watching C-Span will be the only**

way interested Americans can watch both the Republican and Democratic conventions in their entirety without interruption or commentary. (The commentary will come at those times when nothing much is happening. Then C-Span will offer its live call-in programs, when average Americans will offer their reactions to the conventions.)

In fact, C-Span will begin its convention coverage before the regular networks, starting with a weeklong "convention preview" that makes its debut tomorrow with two programs — a call-in program with convention planners and political journalists that will be broadcast at 3:30 p.m. tomorrow through Friday, and a daily array of news conferences, media planning sessions and other convention preparation, to be broadcast at 5 p.m. all this week.

A C-Span staff of 50 will produce nearly 60 hours of live convention telecasts and other related programming. Fifty people doesn't seem like very many when Ed Joyce, former chief of CBS News, reported in his recent book that CBS had a crew of 700 involved in its coverage of the 1984 conventions. Lamb says Joyce reported that CBS spent about \$20 million doing its coverage, and that C-Span estimates it will do its total coverage of both conventions this summer for about \$450,000 — "that's salary, lodges, the whole thing." But then C-Span doesn't have any expensive anchors to pay.

Lamb is also excited about an arrangement he recently made with NBC. Before the convention starts C-Span will telecast political speeches from past political conventions, taken from NBC's files and going back to 1948, the year of the first presidential convention covered by TV.

Sounds like fun, but it could be dangerous. Regular C-Span viewers won't be confused — they're among the most politically knowledgeable Americans — but the channel-hoppers might wind up at the voting machines trying to vote for Harry Truman or Gerald Ford.

'Mrs. Rossi goes to Washington'

# C-SPAN bridges gap between Pueblo, nation's capital

By VICKI MICHAELIS  
*The Pueblo Chieftain*

Shirley Rossi's living room couch and armchairs, draped with colorful crochet, are separated by a few thousand miles from the highback chairs that line the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

But that does not stop this 62-year-old Pueblo resident from having a say about what goes on in government.

Mrs. Rossi avidly watches C-SPAN, a cable network that televises governmental proceedings. She takes advantage of C-SPAN's call-in programs to react to what she has seen.

"C-SPAN is more than just watching the program — you get involved with it," she said. "You sit here and talk right back to them."

Her armchair activism has earned Mrs. Rossi a place in a book recently put out by the network, titled "America's Town Hall." The book profiles 104 people who watch C-SPAN and incorporate it into their daily lives.

The book lists Mrs. Rossi among the ranks of such viewers as counterculture '60s rocker Frank Zappa and President Ronald Reagan.

Mrs. Rossi, who retired from Mountain Bell in 1980, suffers from arthritis and spends most of her days at home. She wakes up at 5:30 a.m. to watch C-SPAN and crochet until 5 p.m., when she

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**'To me, the government is all of us . . . the more actively involved in it we are, the better government we're going to have'**

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— Shirley Rossi

switches channels to see the news.

C-SPAN launched its telecasts of House proceedings in 1979. Mrs. Rossi was a fan from the beginning. Last year C-SPAN started a second channel to carry Senate telecasts. Now she must study the program schedule and choose which channel to watch, she said.

Although Mrs. Rossi, a loyal Democrat, always has been interested in politics, C-SPAN inspired her to get involved.

In 1981, when some cable operators dropped C-SPAN, Mrs. Rossi helped form a national group called Friends of C-SPAN. The group wrote hundreds of letters and placed calls to cable companies across the country. C-SPAN was back on the air in six weeks.

In 1982, when the shutdown of CF&I Steel boosted Pueblo's unemployment rate to staggering heights, Mrs. Rossi read a story in *The Pueblo Chieftain* about a group of Puebloans who were banding together to save their homes from mortgage foreclosure. That same morning she saw Rep. Henry Gonzalez, D-Texas, speaking

about massive U.S. home foreclosures on C-SPAN.

She contacted the local group, told them about Gonzalez' speech and explained how they could contact him. Gonzalez appeared on the House floor a few days later with a petition for federal assistance signed by the Pueblo homeowners. An aid bill passed a year later.

"This is just one example of how you can influence the government," she said.

One of Mrs. Rossi's pet issues is education. She believes C-SPAN would be "a grand tool in schools." Watching the inner workings of Washington would make government seem closer and more real for students, she said.

Mrs. Rossi takes her own advice and invites neighborhood children over for cookies, milk and C-SPAN. The children do not understand all that is going on, she said, but they do begin to recognize key politicians and issues.

"To me, the government is all of us," Mrs. Rossi said. "The more actively involved in it we are, the better government we're going to have."