

C-Span
Suite 155
400 N. Capitol St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

I watch C-Span because it has given me a wonderful new window to American society -- American "society" rather than American "government" because in its scope and breadth, C-Span covers far more than official Washington. For the first time, with millions of other Americans, I can observe first-hand and undiluted the events, issues and personalities that focus on our Capital. It is in fact a procession of our national life, given us free of charge, free of commercial interruption, free of editorial bias and the distortions that come from the limits of television time and newspaper space. For us the only obligation is to accept C-Span's challenge: to listen, to watch and to make our own independent judgment. C-Span brings us as close to pure democracy as anything we have known.

For me C-Span began as a mildly interesting opportunity to hear the speeches from the well of the House of Representatives, and I became an occasional, rather dutiful observer of a small fragment of our government. But as I tuned in at other times, late and early, I discovered the glint of a brilliant idea at work: it turned out that there^{were} to be House (and Senate) hearings, by the hour if need be, conferences, seminars, national conventions -- that C-Span was providing a full inventory of the whole of American society -- the special interests, unlimited; special advocates, left right and bizarre; a range of ideas and attitudes given such attention no where else. And, finally, there were the call-in interviews, introducing me to a host of new faces and voices -- and in this election

year I find C-Span doing what has become natural: providing the thoughtful, leisurely rumination of issues and background, giving us always the essential, time-consuming detailed information we need but that is conventionally denied us.

In all of these forums, we ^{are} the beneficiaries of the special C-Span style, the implied respect, the assumption that we are the reporters, free to find our own way through the arguments, free to measure the merits of contesting points of view.

Well, it is a good and I hope long-running show and its conductors are an essential element of its success. C-Span's reporters and interviewers faithfully reflect the overall quality: the very model of fairness, balance, courteous disinterestedness. There is no breathless drama here, just quiet, honest competence.

When the British began to yield to the drive for democracy, they said, "Now we must educate our masters." Our democracy is older and I believe stronger, but there can be no end to the enlightenment of our people. I watch C-Span because it is making such a contribution beyond value and I will continue to watch because I want to be present at the creation of something so fundamentally important to our people.

[redacted]
Champaign, Ill. 61821

telephone:
[redacted]