

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Dear Jay and Bill:

We hope you understand why we interrupted The Tonight Show taping on Tuesday. It was not a decision taken lightly. We had no idea who was going to be on the show that day, and it wasn't a protest against either of you. Our beef was with NBC / MSNBC and their agenda-driven censorship.

Our words—"Let Dennis debate"; "GE, NBC, Put impeachment on TV"--should make it clear that we were protesting MSNBC's barring Presidential candidate Rep. Dennis Kucinich from the Democratic debate in Las Vegas that evening, and we were also demanding that the media stop censoring calls for the impeachment of Bush and Cheney. (As you probably know, Kucinich has proposed a resolution to impeach Cheney: HR#799; and impeachment is part of his campaign). The four of us who were there included a combination of L.A. National Impeachment Center members, and Kucinich supporters, acting completely independently from his official campaign--and certainly we were not connected with the WGA at all; it never even occurred to us that anyone would think that.

We believe that rather than exercising 1st Amendment principles, MSNBC was actively suppressing speech in the interests of its parent company, GE. Kucinich had met MSNBC's criteria for inclusion in the Jan. 15th debate and a judge had even ordered them to include him. But his views seem to differ from GE's so much that MSNBC fought all the way to the State Supreme Court to keep him off the air. That's a lot of trouble for a news corporation to go to in order to NOT cover someone.

On the same day, the day of your show, House Judiciary Committee member Rep. Robert Wexler (D-FL, 19th) was arguing in Congress for impeachment hearings for Cheney re. HR#799. (HR#799 has 25 co-sponsors, and Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), also on the Judiciary Committee, back Wexler's call.) Wexler has over 203,130 signatures in a petition for hearings and presented them to the House. Yet Wexler's courageous act was met with a wall of silence in the corporate media just as any serious attention to impeachment has been.

We made the decision soberly, with much thought, to break through that silence. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "A time comes when silence is betrayal."

We were only 4 people in The Tonight Show audience, but we are part of a much larger group of hundreds of thousands, millions even, of deeply concerned Americans who have spent almost this entire decade trying to curb the criminality of the Bush Administration and to convince the Democratic Party to do their constitutional duty and stop it.

Throughout this time we have used tactics that society sanctions: meeting with our elected representatives, protesting in the streets, writing to Congress and the media, filing suits, working on electoral campaigns, making films, singing songs, and on and on. And look where it has gotten us. Nothing has changed. Not only are we still in Iraq; we may attack Iran.

When we asked you for help, to "save our democracy", we meant it. In this historic moment the last of our rights is being stripped from us. If we do not stand up now we will have nothing left to stand up for. Jay and Bill, you are in a position to do a lot of good. We ask you for your help. We also ask all Americans to help by acting NOW. We are all in this together.

The time that Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about, when silence is betrayal, is upon us. We feel that silence is a betrayal of the 3,900 American troops who have died in Iraq because of Bush and Cheney's lies, the 1,400-4,000 people who did not survive Katrina because Bush failed in his duty to send federal resources, the 3,000 Americans who died on 9/11 despite the many warnings received by the Bush Administration, and untold others who have suffered and died in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere because of the unchecked criminality of the President and Vice-President. This criminality only continues because corporate-owned media allows it.

NBC's censorship of Kucinich's voice epitomizes the extreme peril our democracy faces, when even our bedrock democratic freedom to hear legitimate presidential candidates speak to voters is trumped by corporate power. We know that we disrupted the normal way The Tonight Show runs, but these are not normal times.

Sincerely,

Carol Barbieri
Jennifer Epps
Eva James
Mark Lipman

ADDENDUM:

POPULAR SUPPORT FOR IMPEACHMENT:

*70% of American voters in an ARG poll think Cheney has abused his powers

*64% of American voters in an ARG poll think Bush has abused his powers

<http://americanresearchgroup.com/impeach/> (Nov. 13, 2007)

*52% of American voters in a Zogby poll were in favor of Congress considering the impeachment of Bush if he wiretapped American citizens without a judge's approval; only 43% were opposed

(The poll was conducted by Zogby International, the highly-regarded non-partisan polling company. The poll interviewed 1,216 U.S. adults.)

<http://www.democrats.com/bush-impeachment-poll-2> (Jan. 9-12, 2006)

***203,139 people have signed Rep. Robert Wexler's petition for Cheney impeachment hearings (www.wexlerwantshearings.com)**

*** 25 congresspeople have co-sponsored Kucinich's H.R.799 to impeach Cheney**

*** Rep. Robert Wexler (D-FL), Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) on the House Judiciary Committee called for hearings on H.Res.799 (www.wexlerwantshearings.com)**

* Rep. Mike Michaud (D-ME) wrote Committee Chair John Conyers, requesting hearings

* the *Vermont State legislature* passed a resolution for impeachment

* 88_city/municipal councils passed resolutions for impeachment

* 53 local political groups or jurisdictions passed resolutions for impeachment

* 17 state legislative districts passed resolutions for impeachment

* 11 other states saw state legislators attempt to bring impeachment resolutions

* in 14 states, Democratic Party groups passed impeachment resolutions

* *National Lawyers Guild* passed a resolution for impeachment

* *ACLU of SoCal.* passed a resolution for impeachment

* *ACLU of Florida* passed a resolution for impeachment

* *United Teachers Los Angeles* passed a resolution for impeachment

* *Greater Seattle Local, American Postal Workers Union* passed such a resolution

* *AFSCME Local 2083, Seattle Public Library Union* passed such a resolution

* *the Green Party of the United States* passed such a resolution

* *the California Green Party* passed such a resolution

* *the Vermont Progressive Party* passed such a resolution

* *Veterans for Peace* passed such a resolution

* *United for Peace & Justice National Steering Committee* passed such a resolution

ADDENDUM:

G.E./MSNBC'S CONFLICTS OF INTEREST--

REASONS FOR KUCINICH'S EXCLUSION?

There may be several reasons why G.E. did not want Kucinich's voice heard:

- 1.) GE is the nation's third-largest weapons-manufacturer, and so stands to gain from the Bush Administration's war-making. Kucinich is the only candidate who voted against the war on Iraq, led others to vote against it, and has continued to vote against it.
- 2.) GE also has been maneuvering for some time to store its nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, a move staunchly resisted by environmentalists. Kucinich is the only Presidential candidate to have voted against allowing a repository at the proposed site.
- 3.) GE has a division called GE Healthcare Financial Services – and Kucinich is the only candidate for universal, single-payer health care.
- 4.) Finally, Kucinich is the only candidate who has proposed a resolution, HR799, to impeach Vice-President Cheney, and who has spoken out at past TV debates for impeaching President Bush NOW.

Whether one or all of the above reasons were a factor, it is clear that in the conflict of interest between GE's business and NBC/MSNBC's duty to objective journalism, GE won and keeps winning. The entire country thereby loses.