



Congressman Eric Cantor

Seventh District of Virginia



October 22, 2003

Leslie Moonves
President, CBS Television
524 W. 57th Street
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Moonves:

Based on initial media reports, I have serious concerns about “The Reagans,” the two-part mini-series you are currently producing about the lives of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. I want to be assured that it is not, as the New York Times reported yesterday, a “deconstruction of [Reagan’s] presidency shot through a liberal lens, exaggerating his foibles and giving short shrift to his accomplishments.”

One cannot help but note the liberal politics of those directly involved with the creation of this mini-series, including producers Neil Meron and Craig Zadan and actors James Brolin and Judy Davis. I am also concerned that past political associations and ideology of CBS executives and actors have seeped into the production, creating a work that portrays Reagan inaccurately. As you know, authorized Reagan biographer, Edmund Morris, has also commented on his misgivings about the mini-series, given the political leanings of the producers and actors.

CBS, as one of the most watched and respected American television networks, has a duty to its audience, sponsors and history to create an accurate and fair biography of the Reagans.

Most troubling to me is a reported conversation in your mini-series that accuses the Reagans of being unconcerned about the then widely misunderstood AIDS crisis during the 1980’s. This portrayal of the Reagans as insensitive is clearly unfounded and manufactured. Elizabeth Egloff, the playwright who wrote the script for the mini-series, has acknowledged there was no evidence such a conversation ever took place. In addition, Lou Cannon, author of several biographies about President Reagan, told the New York Times, ‘Reagan is not intolerant.’

Defending the liberal bias of the mini-series in the New York Times, actor Judy Davis, who portrays Nancy Reagan, observed that post September 11th America is now a “closed society” suffering from a “sort of ugly specter of patriotism.” I disagree with her that all Americans must have a monolithic philosophy. Her comments denigrate the vast array of American perspectives and fail to address the value we all share: fairness.

As the President and CEO, you are responsible for the message promoted by CBS through the programs it airs. I hope that in the final cut, "The Reagans" is an accurate and fair portrayal of an immensely popular and important presidency. I look forward to your response on this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Eric Cantor
Member of Congress