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50 Follen Street, #415
Cambridge, MA 02138
October 3, 1986

CAMBRIDGE MA.

Customer Service
American Cablesystems of Cambridge
88 Sherman Street
Cambridge, MA 02140

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a new and dissatisfied American Cablesystems customer. Is there a problem with service? No. The quality of service is fine and I am willing to pay for it.

Why am I unhappy? Because before cable I had a cable ready TV set with a remote control. I also had a cable ready VCR with remote control. Now that I have cable, my TV remote control is essentially useless and I have limited recording capability with my VCR.

Your representatives tell me that for an additional \$8 per month (\$3 to rent a remote control and \$5 to obtain a second converter box), I can have what I had before cable was installed. I do not mind paying for a service that adds to my pleasure, but I resent having to pay almost \$100 a year to have what I had prior to cable. In addition, who wants not one, but two, ugly cable converter boxes in their living room?

This all comes about because your "modern" system scrambles many non-scrambled channels so that the cable signal must go through the cable box rather than directly to the TV set. Your representatives mentioned that this system prevents piracy. This may have been true under old cable systems, but not under new ones. Your system has direct control over the signal to each unit so that even if an individual had an "illegal" box, it would be useless unless the signal was turned on by your central office.

So why have such a system? The answer is obvious: it greatly increases revenues. It is the cable company equivalent of "low-balling" - offer what seems to be reasonable monthly rates; once people have cable they will almost always spend the extra money necessary to have the options that they had prior to cable.

In summary, I am willing to pay for service -- but I deeply resent, and consider unconscionable, a situation where I am forced to pay for benefits I previously had (and already paid for in buying a TV and VCR with the capabilities I mentioned). I truly wonder if the City of Cambridge was fully aware of the implications of your pricing system when your company was granted its license.

Very truly yours,


Marcia Lamel

cc: Cambridge City Council
Robert Healy, City Manager
Cambridge Chronicle
The Tab

Comm. from Marcia Lamel, 50 Follen St.
expressing dissatisfaction with the effect,
of the American Cablesystems system on
her t.v. & VCR remote controls.

In City Council,

October 20, 1986

*Referred to the City
manager*