

5-9-1974

# The National News Council Grievance Committee Meeting

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## Recommended Citation

The National News Council, Inc., *The National News Council Grievance Committee Meeting* (1974).  
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NATIONAL NEWS COUNCIL, INC.

Grievance Committee Meeting

A meeting of the Grievance Committee of the National News Council was held at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 9, 1974, in the conference room of Children's Television Workshop at One Lincoln Plaza, New York City.

The following members of the Committee were present:

Stanley H. Fuld (serving as Chairman)  
Molly Ivins  
Sylvia Roberts  
William A. Rusher

Advisers present:

Roger J. Traynor

Staff members present:

William B. Arthur  
Ned Schnurman  
Cheryl Bostwick  
Mary Sue Johnson

Irving Dilliard and Peter Straus, Freedom of the Press Committee members, were also present for the meeting.

The Chairman, Judge Stanley Fuld, called the meeting to order.

Ned Schnurman, Associate Director, representing the Council staff, was asked to present grievance correspondence received by the Council since its previous meetings on March 24 and 25 in New York City.

The first discussion concerned Complaint #4 (T. G. Cote v. Tom Braden). Mr. Schnurman informed the Committee that Mr. Braden had indicated that he would not appear before the Committee. The Committee, therefore, must make a determination in this case.

Mr. Rusher reminded the Committee of its commitment to respect the confidentiality of sources.

Section 11 of the Grievance Committee's Rules of Procedure Relating to Public Complaints was read as clarification to this point.

The Committee then moved to adopt a statement drafted by Mr. Rusher dismissing the complaint.\*

Mr. Schnurman introduced the next complaint for discussion -- Complaint #12 (Robert Edwards v. Mutual Broadcasting System). Mr. Schnurman discussed recent correspondence with Chevrolet Division of General Motors and advised the Committee that the complaint should go to a hearing at the next meeting. The Committee so moved.

Complaint #18 (Kenneth Rossman v. NBC) was then brought to the attention of the Committee.

Mr. Schnurman noted that the staff investigation of the complaint had upheld Mr. Rossman's charge that February 18 was a Federal holiday, and Federal workers did not work that day.

\*All statements issued as decisions in complaints are appropriately filed.

Mr. Arthur recounted his conversation with Richard Wald of NBC, noting that NBC had been informed of the error by a viewer, but had not yet found a suitable occasion to correct it on air.

Mr. Schnurman then read a draft statement by Mr. Arthur upholding the complaint and noting that NBC, though informed of the error, had not issued an on-air correction.

After some discussion of the emphasis and tone of the statement, the Committee moved to adopt the statement, upholding Mr. Rossman's complaint against NBC News.

Mr. Schnurman next introduced Complaint #21 (Accuracy in Media v. New York Times News Service) for discussion. Mr. Schnurman reviewed recent correspondence concerning the complaint, as well as a study of the complaint compiled by John Wicklein (an outside consultant).

Mr. Schnurman noted the staff position that the Times had discharged its journalistic responsibility in this case, but had perhaps erred in not printing a more thorough news report when the National Academy of Sciences study was released to the public. He also noted that the Times did not publish Dr. Anton Lang's letter to the Editor of the Times.

The Committee then discussed in detail the various conclusions reached by Mr. Wicklein in his

report. Many points were revised and the Committee then moved to direct the staff to draft a final statement for consideration at the next Grievance Committee and Council meeting.

Complaint #24 (John Behr v. NBC) was reviewed by Mr. Schnurman. Mr. Arthur noted to the Committee his conversation with Richard Wald of NBC, who informed him that NBC stood by its telecast.

On the staff recommendation, the Committee voted to dismiss the complaint on the grounds that the complaint was handled with appropriate editorial judgment as NBC aired Secretary of State Kissinger's denial of the reported statement.

Complaint #25 (Mobil Oil Corporation v. ABC News) was deferred until the following morning when the Committee would view a videotape of the documentary in question.

Complaint #26 concerning U. S. Ambassador Graham Martin was still tentative, as no response had as yet been received from the Ambassador on the Council's request for his participation in bringing the complaint to the Council.

Mr. Schnurman then introduced new complaints which had been received by the staff since the last Committee meeting.

Mr. Schnurman first discussed Complaint #27 (Walter DeVault v. Copley News Service) which had been

successfully concluded through staff correspondence with Copley News Service and Mr. DeVault.

Complaint #28 (John Carter v. Wall Street Journal) was then reviewed by Mr. Schnurman. The Committee moved to accept the staff recommendation to dismiss the complaint on the grounds that the matter had been properly handled by the Wall Street Journal.

Complaint #29 concerned a complaint by Mr. Roy Traband against CBS for its coverage (or non-coverage) of gun control issues during the past 20 years.

The Committee moved to ask Mr. Traband to limit his complaint to recent specific charges. The Committee would not act further on his complaint until such charges were made.

Complaint #30 concerned a charge by Dr. Hettie Hughes Fisher against the Associated Press for its news report on a Harris poll. The charge centered on the Associated Press's labelling of "fair to poor" as one category, which Dr. Fisher believed distorted the findings of the poll.

The Committee voted to request from the Associated Press the original material on which they based their news report. Also the staff was to ask the Louis Harris organization for a copy of the original poll.

A determination would be made by the Committee at its next meeting if the requested material had been received.

Complaint #31 (Lawrence Cott v. TIME Magazine) was introduced to the Committee. Mr. Cott's complaint centered on the failure of TIME Magazine to cite its sources in regards to reporting of alleged atrocities by the Chilean government.

The Committee moved to request Mr. Cott to be more specific in his complaint, as his original complaint was very general in its charges.

The Committee's business being concluded, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.