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Letter to Roger J. Traynor and Murray J. Rossant Regarding The Ford Foundation's Decision Not to Support the National News Council

Fred W. Friendly
The Ford Foundation

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December 11, 1972

Dear Judge Traynor:

This is intended for you as much as it is for Murray. I think you know the depth of involvement and conscience with which it is written and I know we will have ample time to discuss it in the future.

Under separate cover I am sending you a copy of Walter Lippmann's book, *Public Opinion*. It was written 50 years ago as a great lesson for old and young journalists.

Every good wish.

Cordially,

Fred W. Friendly

The Honorable Roger Traynor
California 94704

encl.
December 11, 1972

Dear Murray:

We have now consulted our Board and we have concluded that it is not possible for the Ford Foundation to respond positively at this time to the Twentieth Century Fund's request for support for a National News Council.

This decision is made reluctantly but after careful and thoughtful consideration by our communications staff and our National Affairs Division as well. As we both know, the issue of press accountability and responsibility is an extremely important and sensitive problem that faces all elements of American society. The staff and the Board feel quite strongly that we must learn to crawl before we can walk in so vital and sensitive an area, particularly one of the magnitude and scope of the National Press Council.

However, the Board also felt that this area is important enough that they approved the Foundation's moving forward slowly to study a number of projects involving journalism as it relates to the law, advanced education and accountability.

As we indicated, the decision was not an easy one and we have had extensive debate on the questions I raised in my letters of September 5, 18 and October 19, and which were the subject of the recent discussion between Judge Traynor, you and me. Rather than go into those reservations again in this letter, could I suggest that we visit with you and share our continuing concern about the substantive problems we do not feel have yet been satisfactorily resolved.

Murray, we want to thank you for asking us to help with the Council. For us here, it has been educational in the broadest sense, and it has provided us with a new awareness of the magnitude of the problems facing the Fourth Estate in our Republic. Finally, your proposal provided the impetus to what will hopefully emerge as efforts that may conceivably complement and be supportive of the Council's activities.

We hope that the relationship established among you and your colleagues and us can continue, and we remain available for any consultation you and Judge Traynor may consider useful.
December 11, 1972

Regarding your letter of December 7 in which you raise the question of some kind of negative effect resulting from our non-participation, you have my personal assurance that the Ford Foundation has no intent to permit our present position to hinder or slow down your plans and course of action. This letter will not be published by us or released to others.

Warmest personal regards.

Cordially,

Fred W. Friendly

Mr. M. J. Rossant
Director
The Twentieth Century Fund
41 East 70 Street
New York, New York 10021