

12-1-1972

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### Recommended Citation

David K. Shipler, *Council Is Planned to Monitor the Press* (1972).

Available at: <http://repository.uchastings.edu/publicity/61>

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# Council Is Planned to Monitor the Press

By DAVID K. SHIPLER

The Twentieth Century Fund announced plans yesterday to create a 15-member press council to monitor the performance of the national news media and investigate complaints by the public.

The council would have no coercive power, but with its membership drawn both from the journalism profession and the public at large, its proponents hope it can speak with authority in two major areas: the question of fairness and accuracy in the media, and the "infringements, real and potential, on the right to report the news," according to a proposal written for the fund.

M. J. Rossant, the fund's director, said at a news conference here that the council would begin operations early in 1973. It will be headed by Roger Traynor, former chief justice of the California Supreme Court, and its other members are to be named by a special committee of newsmen and others now being selected by the fund.

The proposal for the council was formulated by a 14-member task force, nine of whose members were newsmen. Despite this representation of the news media, however, the idea has generated enormous controversy and extensive opposition among editors and publishers across the country.

A recent questionnaire sent to 700 members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors produced a 3-to-1 vote against such a council, according to William B. Dickinson, executive editor of The Philadelphia Bulletin and chairman of the society's ethics committee.

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, president and publisher of The

New York Times, has also spoken against the idea of a press council. Last May 19, in a commencement address at Montclair (N. J.) State College, Mr. Sulzberger warned against the dangers of government regulation of the press, adding that press councils "would simply be regulation in another form."

Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor of The Washington Post, remarked, "It'll be an interesting experiment and I don't think it'll work."

But those journalists who appeared yesterday at the Twentieth Century Fund's headquarters, 41 East 70th Street, strongly supported the creation of a council.

"There hasn't been enough examination of what we do," said Richard Salant, president of C.B.S. News. "Take it out of the hands of the people who have an ax to grind—put it into the hands of systematic, independent investigators."

"We look upon this as a source of unbiased criticism," said Robert Chandler, editor of The Bulletin of Bend, Ore.

The task force report envisions a council with a full-time staff and an annual budget of \$400,000. Mr. Rossant said the fund was seeking finances from "a consortium of foundations," including the Ford Foundation. Most of the foundation boards are meeting during December to decide whether or not to provide the funds, Mr. Rossant explained.

The plan is to operate the council on an experimental basis for three to five years.

The panel would receive, screen and investigate complaints and then make public its findings only on news stories — not editorials — carried by "the national suppliers of

news," according to the task force.

This means wire services, such as The Associated Press and United Press International; television and radio networks; national newspapers (The Wall Street Journal and The Christian Science Monitor) and wire services affiliated with newspapers, such as services provided by The New York Times and The Washington Post-Los Angeles Times.

Lucy Wilson Bensos, co-chairman of the task force and national president of the League of Women Voters, said she hoped the national council would stimulate the creation of regional and local press councils such as the one now operating in Minnesota.

Following is a list of the task force members, who — acting as individuals — unanimously supported the formation of a press council:

Barry Bingham Sr., chairman of the board, Louisville Courier Journal.

Lucy Wilson Benson, president, League of Women Voters.

Stimson Bullitt, president, King Broadcasting Company, Seattle.

Hodding Carter 3d, editor, The Delta Democrat Times, Greenville, Miss.

Robert Chandler, editor, The Bulletin, Bend, Ore.

Ithiel de Sola Pool, professor of political science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Hartford N. Gunn Jr., president, Public Broadcasting System.

Richard Harwood, assistant managing editor, The Washington Post.

Louis Martin, editor, Chicago Defender.

John B. Oakes, editorial page editor, The New York Times.

C. Donald Peterson, justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Paul Reardon, associate justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.

Richard Salant, president, C.B.S. News.

Jesse Unruh, former California State Assemblyman.