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Letter of Recommendation for Norman E. Isaacs as National News Council Member

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Dear Justice Traynor:

I am writing you to strongly suggest that prime consideration be given to inviting Norman E. Isaacs to be executive director of the National News Council.

In my opinion he would be the best available candidate if he would accept—and I have reason to believe that he might. While editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal and Times he became one of the most informed and persistent advocates of a press council. He has served as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors; he has outstanding contacts in the field; he is a "doer" and organizer who can write and speak; he has the moral stature the council needs (while at Louisville he instituted that newspaper's internal ombudsman arrangement); he can talk to both the press and the public, as well as special constituent groups such as the bar (he was a leader in the press-bar committee efforts). He now lives in New York, since becoming editor-in-residence at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism. Some of his writings are enclosed.

To me the principal question is: would he serve? Off the record, for your personal information, he indicated at a recent lunch with me that he might—if the Council is truly independent and not an adjunct of the Twentieth Century Fund. Again off the record, in my opinion this condition is imperative in any event. The political/diplomatic/credibility problems the Council would have were it regarded as a creature of the Fund or Murray Rossant would so outweigh the advantages (mainly economic) that might accrue that I hope the working committee will "bite the bullet" should an affiliated or under-roof arrangement with the Fund be suggested.

William B. Arthur, former editor of Look, also is an outstanding candidate whose reported "blackball" by one committee member, I hope, will not remain on the committee's records. But Norman Isaacs would be the prize "catch" who, with you, could make the Council go. I hope he will receive your prompt personal and independent consideration.

Cordially,

Alfred Balk

Enc.