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Marshall W. Krause

Roger J. Traynor
*The National News Council, Inc.*

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February 11, 1974

Marshall W. Krause, Esq.
P. O. Box 52
Fairfax, California 94930

Dear Marshall:

Thank you for your letter of 7 February.

The press coverage of arrests by the police is one of several subjects we have on our list of possible subjects for research and investigation. Meanwhile, we shall be on the alert for such coverage as the one you mention.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,

Roger J. Traynor
February 7, 1974

Honorable Roger Traynor
Hastings Law School
San Francisco, California

Dear Justice Traynor:

This letter concerns the Press Commission and is written to point out a specific instance of a more general problem, press coverage of arrests by the police. The problem is created because most of the press report an arrest from the point of view of the arresting officers, generally interviewing them and reading the police report to obtain its information. The information is then reported as a fact, rather than the claim of the police. The stories of the defendants or independent witnesses are seldom reported. If they are reported it is several days later when the interest in the story has died down. The public retains the impression that what happened is the story told by the police.

The specific illustration comes from the arrest about two weeks ago of several persons described as Black Muslims after a shooting incident with the police in Berkeley, California. Today's San Francisco Chronicle, page 3, reports further developments in the matter. I first heard the story reported over KCBS news which stated that three black men in a car had "attacked" Berkeley policemen with guns and had been subdued and arrested. There was no attempt to get any other side of the story except that of the police, and the "attack" was treated as a fact for the rest of the day. I believe that when the story was printed in the newspapers the same type of explanation was given.

The assumption that the police are always correct is inaccura
reporting and creates resentment in large numbers of persons. It also makes gag rules issued by courts seem grossly unfair, since the prosecution side of the story has already been widely publicized.

I hope the Commission is interested in this matter and can devote some staff time to research to confirm or negate my impression that the reporting of police activities is biased.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely,

Marshall W. Krause