

[REDACTED]
Winston-Salem, N.C.
27105
March 19, 1994

C-Span
400 N. Capitol St, NW #6
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Sirs:

During a recent "Journalists Roundtable" which featured a Ms. Page and Messrs. Birnbaum and Clymer an exchange between a caller from Omaha and the journalists made it clear that journalism has no standards. It is convenient in the extreme for reporters to diffuse criticism of the "fourth estate" by pretending to explain (to a presumed ignorance existing in the public) the difference between editorial comment and reporting. Never mentioned is the editorial function "to direct the policies of a newspaper and decide what shall be printed in it." While we have, on occasion, been advised of discipline administered to educators and attorneys for unethical or unprofessional conduct, doctors and journalists seem to be immune from criticism from their peers.

To a large degree, professions feature initial self regulation. This assure the fullest measure of freedom. Responsibility should follow suit. If the AMA, for example, exposed incompetency in an effective and aggressively public manner, it would have no need for the "tort reform" it seeks and malpractice insurance rates would plummet. It is entirely

probable that, unless journalists find standards for, not only the discovery of fact, presentation as well there will be a rapid erosion of the protection of decisions in the area of libel and a return to the standard which existed prior to *New York Times v. Sullivan*.

For some strange reason, I do not believe that reporters, columnists, and editors exist in a sterile environment which insures objective purity. It would be helpful if C-Span would, on occasion, inquire as to whether or not they would recuse themselves from doing a story on environment protection if they held stocks in an oil company or a company which specialized in clean-up.

I hope that these comments may prove helpful. After all, if we are encouraged to view Supreme Court Justices as having non-objective leanings, why should we accept the complete objectivity of journalists as a given?

Very truly yours,

