
**CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL
BRITISH COLUMBIA REGIONAL COUNCIL**

DECISION CONCERNING
THE CHAN-TV (VANCOUVER) NEWS REPORT OF JANUARY 28, 1992
91/92-0109

July 31, 1992

FACTS OF THE CASE

On January 28, 1992, CHAN-TV broadcast a news story on a British Columbia public figure's views on AIDS and other public issues.

The CRTC received a complaint dated February 14, 1992, about the above news report, and referred the complaint to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. In her letter, the complainant indicated that the news report was "misleading", in that it broadcast "in-depth" coverage of the public figure's pro-life activism and led viewers "to believe that the pro-life movement supports his views on AIDS". Moreover, the complainant felt that the report was "grossly unfair" because "the two issues are completely unconnected."

The CBSC Secretariat forwarded the complaint to the broadcaster for reply.

CHAN-TV responded to the complainant by pointing out that the news report was produced under a "time restraint". The broadcaster further indicated that the public figure in question held "newsworthy" views "because they don't represent the mainstream of thinking on AIDS education" and because those views made up his "moral stance".

The complainant was unsatisfied with this response and wrote to the CBSC to request that her complaint be referred to a Regional Council. On July 16, 1992, the CBSC's British Columbia Regional Council considered the complaint.

CODE AT ISSUE

The CBSC Secretariat determined that the complaint could be considered under the CAB Code of Ethics, clause 6 -- News, which reads:

It shall be the responsibility of member stations to ensure that news shall be represented with accuracy and without bias. The member station shall satisfy

itself that the arrangements made for obtaining news ensure this result. It shall also ensure that news broadcasts are not editorial. News shall not be selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of any controversial public issue, nor shall it be designed by the beliefs or opinions or desires of the station management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation or delivery. The fundamental purpose of news dissemination in a democracy is to enable people to know what is happening, and to understand events so that they may form their own conclusions.

Therefore, nothing in the foregoing shall be understood as preventing news broadcasters from analyzing and elucidating news so long as such analysis or comment is clearly labelled as such and kept distinct from regular news presentations. Member stations will, insofar as practical, endeavour to provide editorial opinion which shall be clearly labelled as such and kept entirely distinct from regular broadcasts of news or analysis and opinion.

It is recognized that the full, fair and proper presentation of news opinion, comment and editorial is the prime and fundamental responsibility of the broadcast publisher.

CBSC DECISION

The Council analyzed the content of the news report and the specific issues raised by the complainant as they might relate to this code. The Council decided that the news report did not unfairly link two unrelated news items. It was therefore not biased or editorial, and the news items were "not selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of any controversial public issue". Thus, the Council concluded that the broadcaster had not contravened this code.

Because the British Columbia Regional Council found the broadcaster had not contravened the Code of Ethics, the broadcaster has the option of airing the decision. The decision will be released to the regional media.