

PRESS RELEASE

IMC SETTLES TWO COMPLAINTS

September 21st 2005

Mr. Francis Gabbidon against the Exclusive Newspaper

The first from the Ombudsman, Mr. Francis Gabbidon was against the Exclusive newspaper in respect of a front page article captioned “Gabbidon Dragged to ACC”.

The hearing of this matter last for hours during which the complainant and the defendant were cross-examined by the Complaints Committee of the IMC on Wednesday 21st September 2005. Despite the length of time given the Reporter, Mr. Foday Fofanah who was representing the Managing Editor to produce evidence by way of documents or reports to substantiate his story, he could not come up with any. Neither could he affirm or authenticate the allegations made in his report. He apologise to the members of the Committee and to Mr. Gabbidon and promised to do a retraction and a letter of apology to him.

Members reminded that editor that as much as the Constitution of Sierra Leone places high premium on freedom of the press and free expression, such freedom should not be abused to the detriment of citizens since the rights of the individual are equally important.

The Editor was asked to carry a retraction in his newspaper and forward an apology to the IMC for onward transmission to the complainant. The Editor, on his part thanked members of the Committee “for judiciously deliberating on the complaint” and agreed to publish a retraction and send a letter of apology to the Commission.

CCF against Standard Times Newspaper

The second complaint was that sent to the Commission by the National Director, CCF Mr. Daniel Kaindaneh against the Editor, Standard Times Mr. Phillip Neville.

Giving a detail account of the complaint Mrs. Fatmata Babawo who was representing the National Director, informed members that one Mr. Pessima who was working for the Federation that is affiliated with CCF claimed to be staff of CCF and was interviewed at Koinadugu by one of Standard Times Reporter giving a death rate of 116 Children had died of Malaria, Measles and Diarrhea.

Members asked Mrs. Babawo what exactly she was about, she told members that it was the figure mentioned in the article that has created problem between the Ministry of Health and CCF and that the Reporter should have cross check with CCF before publishing such article.

On his part, Mr. Neville produced a tape recorder were the voice of Mr. Pessima was recorder , this tape was played for members to hear the interview and to proof who the burden lies on.

After members had listened to the taped they realised that the burden of proof was on Mr. Pessima and that the CCF should hold him responsible. The Chairman Babawo that Mr. Neville had nothing wrong in this case.

Members advised Mrs. Babawo to put out a press release that journalist list should not interview any person on or behalf of CCF.

After admonitions from members it was agreed that Mrs. Babawo should go and brief her National Director, Mr. Kaindaneh of the outcome of the matter.

Commissioner Bernadette P. Cole	-	Chairperson
Commissioner Ade P. Bell	-	Member
Commissioner Anthony Brewah	-	Member
Commissioner Cassandra Davies	-	Member
Commissioner Francis L. Davies	-	Member
Commissioner Christo Johnson	-	Member
Commissioner Dr. Abu Bakarr Kargbo	-	Member
Commissioner Patricia Macauley	-	Member
Commissioner Sam J.E Metzger	-	Member