

WJZ-TV 13

TELEVISION HILL BALTIMORE MARYLAND 21211 (301) 664-7600



WBZ • WBZ-TV BOSTON
WINS NEW YORK
KYW • KYW-TV PHILADELPHIA
WJZ-TV BALTIMORE
KDKA • KDKA-TV PITTSBURGH
WOWO FT WAYNE
WIND CHICAGO
KPIX SAN FRANCISCO
KFWB LOS ANGELES

WESTINGHOUSE BROADCASTING COMPANY INC MD

HERBERT B. CAHAN
Area Vice President

January 18, 1972

Mr. William B. Ray, Chief
Complaints and Compliance Division
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D. C. 20554

Subject: Complaint of Harold Weisberg against WJZ-TV
(FCC references: 8330-FlA, C9-668, C10-1048,
C10-1277, C12-488, C12-844)

Dear Mr. Ray:

This is in response to your letter of December 23, 1971 concerning the above matter.

Your letter attaches a copy of Mr. Weisberg's letter to WJZ-TV dated October 23, 1971 in which Mr. Weisberg, author of "FRAME-UP: the Martin Luther King-James Earl Ray Case," sought an appearance on WJZ-TV's Arnold Zenker show to discuss the subject matter of his book. Mr. Weisberg notes that he made that request in the late winter of 1970-71. While he states WJZ-TV declined to air him on one side of "this controversial issue," he does not refer to any other WJZ-TV broadcast at or around that time relating to the subject.

Mr. Weisberg does refer to two appearances by Jim Bishop on the David Frost Show which is aired over WJZ-TV. Mr. Bishop is the author of "The Day Martin Luther King Was Shot," and he appeared on the David Frost Show twice in the Fall of 1971. During the first appearance, Mr. Bishop expressed his reasons for the opinion that James Earl Ray was hired to assassinate Martin Luther King. This portion of the program lasted less than 10 minutes. During the second appearance the subject of James Earl Ray was not discussed. Mr. Bishop did discuss Martin Luther King

Mr. William B. Ray
January 18, 1972
Page 2

and characterized him as an "intellectual coward" by which he apparently meant that Dr. King did not take all of the risks of physical punishment, death, and jail which he could have and which Mr. Bishop apparently thinks would have been appropriate. Barbara Walters, another guest on the show, disagreed vehemently as did Mr. Frost and the subject certainly received adequate coverage of these contrasting views.

From Mr. Weisberg's letter it is not clear what he contends were the controversial issues of public importance as to which WJZ-TV has failed to air a reasonable scope of viewpoints. He mentions "the avoidance of a trial for James Earl Ray" but that subject was not discussed on the David Frost show segments to which he refers. He also mentions "The King Assassination." That event, which occurred in 1968, was discussed on the Fall 1971 David Frost Shows to a limited extent indicated above, but in the judgment of the station the discussion did not, at the time of broadcast in the Fall of 1971, constitute the discussion of a "controversial issue of public importance" within the meaning of the Fairness Doctrine. It may be that James Earl Ray did not kill Dr. King or, if he did kill him, it may be that he was not hired to do so. It is difficult to have 100% certainty as to these matters and there may well be people who disagree with Mr. Bishop. However, not every subject as to which there are some differences of opinion constitute "controversial issues of public importance" even when they relate to some aspect of the life of an important personage. In the station's judgment the subject discussed by Mr. Bishop did not concern such issues except as he discussed the character of Dr. King. As for that, Mr. Frost and Barbara Walters more than adequately presented a contrasting viewpoint.

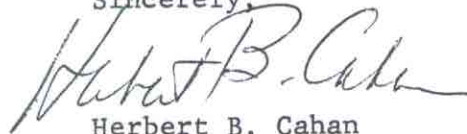
Except to the extent indicated above, WJZ-TV has not found any record of any broadcast by it during 1971 relating to the assassination of Dr. King.

Mr. William B. Ray
January 18, 1972
Page 3

Mr. Weisberg's letter of December 14 to the Commission also refers to a program in the Merv Griffin series over CBS. WJZ-TV, an ABC Affiliate, does not carry that program.

We understand Mr. Weisberg's disappointment in not being selected to discuss his book or his viewpoints in the David Frost show or over WJZ-TV. However, both the Frost show and this station are forced to choose among a plethora of subjects and personages and some disappointment is inevitable. We shall keep Mr. Weisberg and his book in mind should future developments lead us to conclude that the role of James Earl Ray in the Dr. King tragedy should be reexplored.

Sincerely,



Herbert B. Cahan
Area Vice President
WJZ-TV

HBCahan:le

→cc: Mr. Harold Weisberg