

Editors Plan to Study News Media Code Idea

NEW YORK, Sept. 28 (UPI) Miles H. Wolff, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, said today that the Warren Commission's suggestion of a code of professional conduct for all news media deserves "serious consideration."

Wolff was one of several news executives who commented on the suggestion and the Commission's criticism of news media for "general disorder" and lack of "self-discipline" in covering the assassination of President Kennedy and subsequent events.

Wolff, executive editor of the Greensboro, N.C., News, said the ASNE Committee on News Access, headed by Alfred Friendly, managing editor of The Washington Post, would make public a preliminary report Oct. 1 on its own study of press standards. The study was begun last April.

"Notwithstanding this," Wolff said, "I am asking Friendly to meet with repre-

sentatives of other media at the earliest possible time to consider the Warren report recommendation.

"I have suggested that the group include representatives of Sigma Delta Chi journalistic fraternity, the Radio-Television News Directors Association, and the National Association of Broadcasters, together with any press groups that would want to join in the deliberations."

In Washington, Friendly said: ["I shall, of course, act as soon as possible to carry out the suggestion of Mr. Wolff. What the Commission had to say on the matter of press conduct and responsibility must, obviously, be weighed thoughtfully by everyone concerned with the function of news presentation in a democratic society.

"An ASNE committee of which I am chairman has just made a preliminary report to the Society proposing the device of pooling of newsmen in certain circumstances where the presence of unlimited numbers of reporters and

photographers could prove disturbing, and of seeking agreement on this policy with representatives of other news media. It suggests also that if there is such general agreement, the fact be made known to those participating in and organizing events of major news importance that the press is usually willing to operate on a pool basis, if the situation requires it."]

Members of the ASNE committee, in addition to Friendly, are Creed Black of the Chicago Daily News, Herbert Brucker of the Hartford Courant and Felix McKnight of the Dallas Times Herald. Wolff said their report would appear in the ASNE bulletin on Oct. 1.

Gene Robb, president of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, in commenting on the Warren Commission suggestion, said the primary job of newspapers is to get and print the news.

Robb, publisher of the Albany, N.Y., Times-Union and the Knickerbocker News, said, "Newspapers and their organi-

zations already are discussing improved criminal case procedures with bar and law enforcement groups."

A spokesman for the Columbia Broadcasting System said the network would have no immediate comment. However, he referred to a speech last May 5 in which CBS President Frank Stanton announced that CBS had asked the Brookings Institution to make a study of the problem.

The National Broadcasting Co. and the American Broadcasting Co. had no comment.

Earl J. Johnson, editor and vice president of the United Press International, said:

"It was not the number of reporters present which permitted Ruby to shoot Oswald in Dallas. It was the fact that the police permitted Ruby to be present.

"... Speaking only for our own service, we did not distribute any unchecked information about the assassination of the President or the killing of Oswald two days later."

Wes Gallagher, general manager of the Associated Press, said:

"Undoubtedly there is much to be done in curbing the excesses of mass reporting. Exploring means to accomplish this would be useful; however, to try to apply the ordinary criteria of what should or should not be reported in a criminal case to the assassination of the President of the United States would not only be futile but basically wrong."