



2018-46: Ayles vs Globe and Mail

September 14 2018 – *for immediate release*

The NNC has mediated a complaint about an August 3 2018 Globe and Mail column, "The conservative case for a guaranteed income."

The NNC received five similar complaints about the column, and selected complainant Gabrielle Ayles as representative of all five. She said the opinion writer endorsed the writings of Charles Murray in his book *The Bell Curve* by calling it "one of the most prophetic (and wrongly maligned) books of our time."

The complainant acknowledged the columnist is entitled to her opinion, but argued that Murray's book has been debunked and the columnist is not entitled to uncritically spread "white supremacist talking points."

The complainant argued that allowing an opinion column supporting white supremacist "science" to stand unquestioned will legitimize racism as being judged worth serious consideration and debate. She stated that in keeping with a journalistic code of ethics, a newspaper has a responsibility to at least caution readers that such ideas are not merely "controversial" but actually "conclusively wrong."

The Globe and Mail responded by stating that the column in question was about the partisan case for a guaranteed income, and that the writer referred to others, including Charles Murray, who have made a similar argument. It pointed out that the article included links to Murray's recent articles and podcast on guaranteed income.

The news media organization acknowledged that Murray is best known for his older and "very controversial" book, *The Bell Curve*. Noting the column writer described the book as "prophetic" and "wrongly maligned," the news outlet also noted the opinion writer did not specify what arguments or statements in the book she felt were prophetic or maligned.

Given that lack of detail or explanation, the news outlet argued that in the absence of a contested fact there was no basis for a complaint of factual error.

The NNC upholds the prerogative of an opinion writer to express unpopular and provocative points of view. It is the role of a columnist to be a catalyst for discussion, even on uncomfortable issues.

In light of the above, the NNC dismisses the complaint.