

# Bill Cooper and Libel - Comments by a Reporter

From: [campbell@ufomind.com](mailto:campbell@ufomind.com) (Glenn Campbell, Las Vegas)  
Date: Sat, 1 Feb 1997 19:03:11 -0800  
Subject: Bill Cooper and Libel - Comments by a Reporter

From: [withheld by request]  
Subject: Re: AREA 51: The Law According to Bill Cooper (Made my day)  
Date: Thu, 30 Jan 1997 07:58:45 -0800

Having been a reporter for more than 20 years and worked for newspapers from a 2,000 circulation small town daily to a 500,000 circulation daily, I believe this guy is all wet. I'm not a lawyer and I don't know what state he's in, because the laws of libel and slander do vary from state to state. However, having been sued several times--the newspaper prevailed in all of them--for as much as \$3,000,000--I know that truth is always a defense for libel. Sometimes the plaintiff's attorneys try to get inside your head and try to prove malice, but all you have to say is you had no malice towards the plaintiff and were just reporting the truth. If you don't shoot yourself in the foot, you can usually win such cases. A reporter I supervised once in Fort Worth was sued, along with the newspaper of course, by a psychiatrist who testified at a capital murder trial where the defendant received the death penalty. The psychiatrist sues because Les, one of the reporters on the West Texas desk, where I was West Texas editor, wrote that "Dr. Death" as he was known statewide seemed "unsure" of his testimony. Dr. Death didn't like that so he sued and his attorneys tried to get me and several other reporters from different newspapers to say Les had malice towards his client. Les had no more malice towards Dr. Death than he did any other witness whose testimony seemed a little flaky. Les didn't have anything against Dr. Death, he just personally thought he was nuttier than the defendant he supposedly examined. It was simply based on what he heard in the courtroom, nothing personal, strictly Les' professional opinion.

Secondly, if this guy gave public lectures or addresses to groups or made any kind of public pronouncements, you can't copyright that, its public domain stuff. You can't claim ex post facto copyright damages.

Also if this guy is any kind of "public figure" then the case of New York Times vs Sullivan, decided in the early 1960s, would protect you also. Times vs. Sullivan basically made it open season on any "public figure" and if this guy makes lectures, appears in newspapers or on TV, writes books, etc. then the "public figure" moniker could be applied fairly easilly.

I'm not an attorney, but most journalism students have more training in press law, libel, and slander as an undergraduate, than lawyers do in 3 years of law school. In J-school libel and slander are constantly drilled into you no matter what journalism course you are taking.

Just from reading this guy's rantings and ravings he seems like some kind of nut case and those are the kind that file lawsuits just for the harassment value, whether or not they have any true legal merit.

Keep up the good work, your web site and the UFO mailing list are numero uno on my bookmarks list.

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