The ALA Constitution and Bylaws Committee is recommending a bylaw change that will require 5% of the voting membership to sign a petition nominating persons to run for Council (see Article III, Sec. 3 (b)). The present bylaw requirement states that any 100 members may petition for the nomination of a candidate. This means that with the five members of the official committee can place any names they select on the ballot, it will take close to 1500 Association members to do the same thing.

This proposed bylaw change is retrogressive, less democratic and creates an impossible stumbling block—especially in sparsely populated regions—tw members who wish to add names to the election ballot. It is completely contrary to the recommendations to be submitted by the New Directions Committee (ACONE).

In an Association which prides itself on its democratic and liberal reputation, it is surprising to see a trend to establish difficult procedures for membership action and participation. It is also interesting to note that this bylaw recommendation was submitted at the very time members exercised their right of petition to Council for the first time in the history of the Association.

Consider, if you will, the plight of the librarian far removed from an urban area. His or her ability to gather signatures for a petition is already taxed to the fullest by the present Constitutional requirement that 100 or 200 names of personal members be attached. To ask these librarians to gather some 1400 names [5% of 29,000] is impossible.

Similarly, a group within ALA such as the Black Caucus might well encounter difficulties in gathering this large group of signatures, yet their vote is one that ALA cannot and must not cut off.

Two lawyers on the Committee advised that 5% of the electorate is the usual law. This is not true. In fact, the Election Law Guidebook, 1970, shows that in states that use 3% as a base (only 31 do), the people included are not the number eligible to vote, but rather the number that voted in the last election. In addition, the figure most used is 15% of the number that voted in the last election. If this were used for ALA (9300 members voted in 1970) then only 9 members would be required to sign a petition to add a name to a ballot. This is substantially what our present Bylaws require (100 signatures are required). This demonstrates that pressure for instant action clean up by the committee is based on false advice and lack of research.

The Bylaws Committee is responsible to the Executive Board and to the Council. At the O convention meeting of JKMT on Sunday, a member of the Executive Board did not "recommen" whether the Board action was a recommendation to Council or merely referred to Council with no comment.

The direction of the Chairman of the Bylaws Committee in questioning ho said that the reason for the 5% was that it was a reaction to Atlantic City, not 31.8.

Is he not in fact responsible to Executive Board direction? Is Executive Board the reactionary group, or is the committee?

We urge YOU TO work against the approval of this bylaw change. It will be presented to the Council if it is not withdrawn by the Executive Committee. If it passes Council, we urge you to vote NO on 5% at the Membership meeting.