



Social Responsibilities Round Table Newsletter ALA

NEWSLETTER #53

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BATTLE CRY

1. The ERA is three shy of the 38 states needed to achieve ratification by June 30, 1982.
2. The 1980 midwinter conference will be held in Chicago.
3. Illinois is a non-ratified state.

Across the country, people are mobilizing to beat the deadline on equality. One such grass-roots effort in the New York City area recently brought together a number of concerned librarians. The group met in order to turn the ALA's membership vote (to meet in Chicago) into positive action that would facilitate ERA ratification.

Did the vote reflect an anti-ERA sentiment, as some believe? Or were voters convinced that a convention held away from Chicago would needlessly sap money that could be spent in ways more effective in the ERA pursuit?

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SPRIL TO GO

by Barbara Benderitis

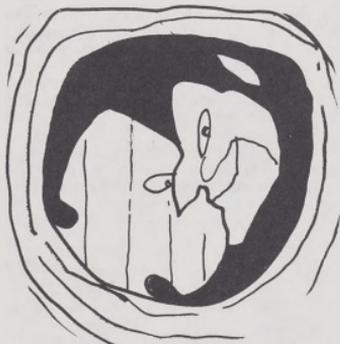
SPRIL (Small Press Racks in Public Libraries) is a program which, in acting as a liaison between small press publishing and northeastern libraries in ten states, has been providing elusive materials to the public and needed exposure to small presses. Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, SPRIL exists for the promotion of good writers and writing, and for helping keep lesser known literature alive and well.

The thrust of SPRIL's program is to deliver personally, at no cost, small press literature to libraries; each library displays the titles in a specific location designated for that purpose.

In the year since book trips began last June, SPRIL (which has asked for a second year of support from the Endowment) has reached over 400 of the planned 500 libraries in the northeastern region. SPRIL asks librarians in visited libraries to assist the program - and the publishers it embraces - by setting up a special display area or rack; bookplates and display posters are SPRIL-provided. "Book-kits," which can vary from "all-literature packages" to assortments containing items such as slick periodicals, cookbooks, and do-it-yourself manuals, are assembled and delivered to participating libraries. In one year, over 800 separate titles have been distributed. Of the 432 libraries visited as of this spring, only 27 have refused to participate in the project; racks of small press literature have been set up in the others.

Although the main emphasis in "book-kit" distribution has been municipal and town libraries, approximately 40 college and university libraries have also received such kits, with a hoped-for goal of 100 such libraries in the next 3 months or so. The colleges chosen have been mainly those with strong writing programs; an effort will be made to deduce if and how the magazines have been used by English or creative writing departments.

Alexander Harvey, director of SPRIL and executive director of the Hollow Spring Artists and Writers Guild, reports in the SPRIL Newsletter (Spring 1979, p. 1) that the idea on which SPRIL is based grew from his own difficulties in attempting to increase sales and exposure of his small press poetry magazine, Hollow Spring Review of Poetry. In that attempt, he discovered that samples sent to libraries on "special lists" brought no subscriptions; only personal trips to the library produced results. Thus, SPRIL's material distribution technique has been based on the personal visit concept.



Harvey is optimistic that with "continued assistance and persistence," small presses and little literary magazines will soon be an important part of every library's collection. He emphasizes that SPRIL's goal is not to give books and magazines away; rather to lend support and offer an audience to small press literary publications. The hope is that socially responsible librarians, having seen what is available from small presses, will feel the obligation - to history and to American culture - to purchase a select number of these publications, thus furthering the cause of contemporary letters.

A complete listing of libraries visited and books placed there will be available soon; small press publishers should send Harvey a card if they wish to know where their donated publications are. Anyone wishing a copy of the complete library listing should send \$1.00 (for copying and mailing costs) to:

Alexander Harvey
c/o SPRIL
Box 76
Berkshire, MA 01224

lit mags

The Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines has issued its Catalog of Literary Magazines for 1978-79 to assist librarians in decisions to subscribe to such publications. The catalog contains a listing of publications by region of special interest magazines, and of distributors and distribution cooperatives. It may be obtained from CCLM at 80 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.



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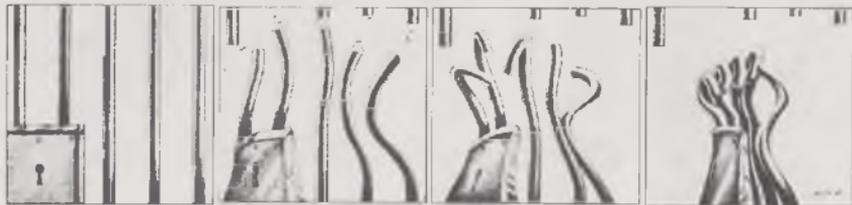
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OUTSPOKEN INMATES



Jerome Washington, inmate editor of The Auburn Collective, prison newspaper at Auburn Correctional Facility (New York), was transferred abruptly to Attica Prison on October 3, 1978. The newspaper and its editor had won praise from such government officials as Lieutenant Governor Kruppsack, and Senators Javits and Moynahan, as well as a number of awards from the American Penal Press; it is the first New York state prison newspaper to have won such awards.

Washington, who was a professional copywriter and editor before his imprisonment, trained fellow inmates on-the-job, and wrote many articles and editorials himself.

The Department of Correctional Services in Albany offered the official explanation that Washington was transferred because he "was utilizing position to advance his personal criticisms of this Department, its employees, and policies..." (Fortune News, April 1979). The explanation continued with comments on "...animosity and concern on the part of the staff, as well as within the citizenry of Auburn..."

Washington is presently unable to exercise his talents. The Auburn Collective, although still publishing, is feared by P. E. N. (which defends the freedom of expression of prisoners in American and foreign prisons) not to have its earlier quality and incisiveness.

For further information, contact:

Kathrin Perutz or John Morrone
P. E. N. American Center
47 5th Ave.
New York, NY
(212)255-1977

Profiles, inevitabilities, changes and roots. These realities are celebrated through poems, conversations and stories in a new anthology of writings by prisoners. Born Into a Felony developed from a creative writing workshop at the Auburn (New York) Prison. Thanks to the tenacity and cooperation of a great many people, along with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, it is available from pulpform, unlt'd. It is a window of experience on that part of society which is prison. It delights and disturbs. As editor Stewart Brisby writes, the worst prisons are those created within ourselves. Born Into a Felony turns these prisons inside-out, liberating both writer and reader.

Access to the society within is as difficult to achieve as access to the buyer's market. Public and school librarians are denied knowledge of, and access to, this volume, since limited funds prohibit the publishers from advertising through standard channels. The book deserves readership, and readers deserve the book. Born Into a Felony will be on display and available for purchase at Dallas. Look for it at the SRRI exhibit table.

For more information on this title, write editors Walt Sheppard or Stewart Brisby at:

pulpform, unlt'd.
Box 6392
Teall Station
Syracuse, New York 13217

(continued from p. 1)

An opinion poll was not conducted at the time of the ballot. Whether or not the ALA does intend to remain true to its word and fight for equal rights will be shown when the council votes on a resolution drafted by students Drexel University. The resolution calls upon ALA to donate one dollar for every member an organization working towards ratification. The drafters suggest that ERAmerica receive the donation, as theirs is a national, dedicated effort.

The group in New York was unable to resolve differences over the necessity of boycotting Chicago. A compromise was reached when it was decided to circulate petitions in Dallas. The petitions will be designed to present the boycott option to individuals, and estimate the strength of support for this tactic.

THE UNRATIFIED



A HOUSE DIVIDED

by Paul Miller

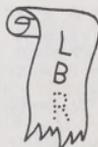
In July 1976, ALA Council adopted the "Resolution on Racism and Sexism Awareness" (see excerpts elsewhere in this newsletter). At the following Midwinter meeting in Jan/Feb 1977, the Intellectual Freedom Committee and Board of the Children's Services Division (CSD, now called the Association for Library Service to Children) asked ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (ALA/IFC) to review the resolution. CSD believed that implementation of the resolution would necessarily lead to "expurgation, labeling and removal of materials for content." ALA/IFC apparently agreed, for they promptly and in prearranged fashion asked the Executive Board to rescind the entire resolution.

ALA/IFC's fears were based in part on the conviction that Brad Chambers, who was instrumental in obtaining passage of the resolution, advocated removal of racist and sexist materials from library collections and intended that the Resolution provide ALA-sponsored justification for such action. Moreover, there had been instances of such removals for years and IFC had even felt compelled to obtain Council adoption in February 1973 of the statement: "Sexism, Racism and other -isms in Library Materials: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" which explicitly states ALA's opposition to such removals. ALA/IFC took specific offence at the suggestion in Step 3 of the Resolution that ALA units develop programs to "raise the awareness of library users" to the problems of racism and sexism in our society. This, they claimed, advocated censorship by removal of library materials.



Within a short time, this fragile argument was demolished in the library press and was consequently modified. The new argument declared that since the Resolution recommended advocacy of specific values by libraries, it was in conflict with the Library Bill of Rights (LBR) which, the library world was now informed, admonished libraries to remain neutral toward all values not only in their collection policies but in their programming as well.

Pro-Resolution members answered that the LBR itself called upon libraries to promote social values. Section VI, for example, states: "As an INSTITUTION OF EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC LIVING, the library should welcome the use of its meeting rooms for SOCIALLY USEFUL...activities..." (emphasis added, -ed.) ALA/IFC responded by drafting a revision of the LBR which leaves out these fan-fanful phrases. (The IFC, by the way, is holding public hearings on this expurgated version at Dallas.)



Most SRRT members have asserted that there is no conflict between the LBR--which promotes non-biased collections, and the Resolution on Racism and Sexism Awareness--which promotes programming to bring public attention to the problems of racism and sexism. Since libraries are constantly devising programs, displays and other activities which bring social problems and other matters of interest and importance to the attention of the public, and since it is absurd to claim that promotion of any value (education? knowledge?) is proscribed by the LER, the Resolution is hardly threatening. IFC's machinations, on the other hand, seem ultimately suspect.

At any rate, the dispute continues and broadens. At the IFC hearings held last summer on the presumed LBR vs. Resolution conflict, SRRT members and assorted fellow travelers mobbed the meetings and demanded that the IFC take up the cause of victims of racism and sexism. Richard Buck (see letter below) has tired of such entreaties and suggests that the SRRTIES look elsewhere for an ALA section that will speak for them. Pat Schuman provides a response in this, our first, Point-Counterpoint column.



RESOLUTION ON RACISM AND SEXISM AWARENESS*

WHEREAS, during the last 200 years the United States failed to equalize the status of racial minorities and of women, and
 WHEREAS, the American Library Association has professed belief in the principle of equality yet has failed to aggressively address the racism and sexism within its own professional province;
 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the American Library Association actively commit its prestige and resources to a coordinated action program that will combat racism and sexism in the library profession and in library service by taking the following steps:

*
*
*

STEP 3

The Public Library Association, the American Association of School Librarians, the Children's Services Division, the Young Adult Services Division, the Reference and Adult Services Division, and the Association of College and Research Libraries will be urged to develop a program to raise the awareness of library users to the pressing problems of racism and sexism.

...

* as adopted by Council, July 1976.

POINT - COUNTERPOINT

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM-- IS THERE AN INTERFACE?

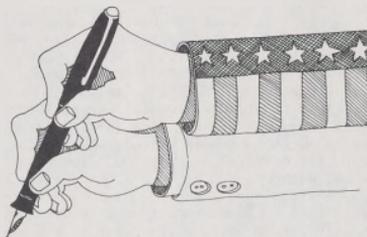
During the past two years a situation has developed within the American Library Association that needs some exploration and perhaps some suggestions. Many manifestations of frustration have arisen from a very vocal group of people within the Association concerning the problem of the protection of Fourteenth Amendment rights of groups and individuals. Some people have evidently felt that these matters should come under the charge of the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Association, although the charge clearly limits the committee to matters regarding the First Amendment and the Library Bill of Rights. When that charge was re-examined recently, and IFC recommended that its charge remain unchanged, Council accepted the recommendation.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, there remains the powerful undercurrent of feeling that there is no policy-formulating group within the structure of ALA that can suggest action to Council on Fourteenth Amendment policy matters. In short, we have a Social Responsibilities Round Table, but no Social Responsibilities Committee.

As an active and vocal member of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, I have been firm on First Amendment rights, defending the production of THE SPEAKER and speaking strongly for the IFC and FRTF stand on fighting censorship of all kinds through the courts. I also understand the arguments of those who see the need for a policy-advising group to speak on minority rights, youth rights, the rights of the underprivileged, and other social rights; especially those under the "privileges and immunities" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The members of IFC have been accused, collectively and separately, of being cold and inhuman as regards such rights. I have answered such accusations by stating that as members of IFC we must--when the First and Fourteenth Amendments interface--stand on the First. In some ways, the IFC might be called the ACLU of ALA. A strong, committed IFC must always stand for the right of anyone to say anything, as long as what is said does not lead directly to physical harm.

On the other hand, there probably should be a policy formulating body within ALA to speak on social issues. I suggest that a dialogue should begin, possibly at the IPRT-SRRT level, on how this might be accomplished. Some of the possibilities that might be explored are: reorient and expand the charge of the Committee for Library Service to the Disadvantaged; ask the Committee on Organization to study the matter through a subcommittee or an ad hoc committee; suggest establishment of a Social Responsibilities Committee of Council; ask Council to expand the charge of IFC to cover Fourteenth Amendment issues. The main question is this: What is to be done, at the policy level, when First and Fourteenth Amendment issues interface or conflict? At present, ALA does not seem to be handling the problem as well as it should. Can any way be found to do it better?

Richard M. Buck
Councillor-at-Large
Member, IFC, IPRT, &
FRTF



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM-- BUT IS THERE A CONFLICT?

Mr. Buck's letter is difficult to respond to because, while well-intentioned, the underlying basis of it is both muddled and inaccurate. The "situation" he refers to dates back much farther than two years. In fact, it was not long after the founding of SRRT in 1970 that David Berninghausen, then Chair of IFC, and Judith Krug began raising the smokescreen--the false dichotomy of Intellectual Freedom vs. Social Responsibility.

The myth that these are mutually exclusive has reared its ugly head on various occasions ever since. In fact, Intellectual Freedom, the First Amendment, the Library Bill of Rights--all are social responsibility concerns. SRRT was an early supporter of the OIF. SRRT members organized the National Freedom Fund for Librarians, which later developed into the Leroy Merritt Humanitarian Fund. The IPRT developed out of a SRRT Task Force. What many SRRT members have disagreed with the OIF and FRTF about is tactics, not principles.

Mr. Buck's suggestion is not new. In 1970 ACONDA suggested an Office of Social Responsibility, which SRRT members vocally objected to. We felt that social responsibility was not a segment of piece of professional activity that could be separated out in a small (or large) corner. Rather social responsibility should permeate every activity, be it cataloging, reader services, or the defense of freedom of speech.

What is at issue is much broader than the Fourteenth Amendment. The concept of social responsibility cannot be slotted quite so easily; it goes far beyond a single amendment to the constitution. We have a present a policy-making body within ALA which speaks on social issues--the ALA Council, which is the only body allowed to make policy decisions. Recommendations regarding social issues come to Council from a variety of committees, including IFC, the Committee on the Status of Women, the Committee on Legislation, etc. While Council is not always as responsive as we would like, during the past few years we have seen the appointment of SRRT members to Council Committees and the election of SRRT people to Council. This is the arena where social policy is debated and acted upon.

I am not against dialogue with IFC or anyone else. But, dialogue cannot even begin until it is clear that those ALA members fighting censorship and those working for human rights are not at odds unless they think they are.

Fat Schuman



WHOSE PROBLEM?

by William Gargan and Sharon Goodstine

BOOK REVIEW

For the People: Fighting for Public Libraries.
by Whitney North Seymour and Elizabeth N. Layne.
New York: Doubleday, 1979. \$8.95.

How well the public library in America will survive rampant inflation and the conservative mood of the taxpayer is a worrisome question. When budgets are trimmed, community dollars spent for the services libraries provide are among the first examined for the axe. Library users recognize the problem; solutions are less visible.

For the People, a citizen's manual for libraries, could not have been published at a more appropriate time. Citizens will be meeting in November to decide policy and define the future of national library services. As a guide to what libraries are and what they do, For the People speaks to the need and responsibility of the institution in a democratic society. Philosophy, history, and practice are brought together sans professional jargon. The reader learns not only about ways a library can serve the community, but also how the community can support the library. For the People is good reading for anyone who cares about books to, and for, the people.

Editor's Note: Recent coverage in the library press (including SRRT NEWSLETTER, Sept. '78 and Jan. '79) has raised the issue of what is to be done about the so-called "problem patron." The following article contains a viewpoint - from the other side of the reference desk - and provides food for thought as to what the library can mean to a user.

What is a "problem patron" - a patron with mental or emotional problems, or someone who poses problems for librarians? In what ways are libraries equipped to aid patrons with emotional difficulties? In order to attempt to answer these questions, we interviewed a chronic mental patient who spends much of his time in the public library.

Mr. N. is 38 years old. He is 6'1" and weighs about 200 pounds. If not for his infectious grin and child-like demeanor, he might seem threatening. In fact, he claims that he once was a sparring partner for Floyd Patterson. This seems unlikely, however, since he has spent most of his adult life in and out of mental institutions. He was admitted to Willowbrook (New York) at age 16, where he was declared "Not mentally defective." He was then transferred to a state psychiatric hospital. Since then, he has become part of a "revolving door" policy between hospital and community. Mr. N. finds it difficult to manage his money, spending it without thought for tomorrow. He says of himself, "I'm nothing but a big baby." Mr. N. needs constant attention and reassurance.

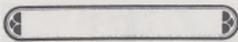
He is on the "outside" now, residing at Booth House II, a halfway settlement on the Bowery. He has a bare room just large enough for a cot and he receives three meals a day. There is a cafeteria, a T. V. room, social services and medical care. For him, this is "making it." When the atmosphere of his room depresses him or when he has nothing else to do, he spends his day at the public library.

When asked why he liked the library, Mr. N. laughed. He became animated as he talked about how nice it was in the library -- how quiet. He said he liked to look at books and sometimes just sleep in the chair until closing time.

Mr. N. said the librarians were very nice to him and helped him find books on sports and athletes, especially Babe Ruth.

For Mr. N., the library is a refuge -- a retreat from the noise and chaos that may characterize mental wards and halfway houses.

Does he sound familiar? How many others are there like him? Is he a problem? If so, whose problem is he?



oops!

Our last issue included a roll call of the SRRT/ Council members and how they voted on the "Return to Chicago/ERA" question in Washington. By some socially irresponsible oversight, we neglected to list the resounding YES vote of Dorothy Bendix. A SRRT founder, Dorothy provides incalculable leadership on issues that concern us all. Our apologies, Dorothy.



missing you

During our last mailing, we noticed a number of names unaccountably missing from the usual list. Have you had a problem with your subscription? Please let us know!

LBR rev.

ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee has drafted a revision of its Library Bill of Rights and will hold public hearings on the draft at Dallas. In response, the SRRT Action Council has passed the following motion to be submitted first to the IFC during its hearings and then to Council for adoption.

RESOLVED, to submit to relevant ALA units and groups for their endorsement the following additions to Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights:

1. In order to carry out effective affirmative action (redressing the long-standing imbalance in library collections) it is essential for libraries and library systems to collaborate actively with those racial and cultural groups which have been traditionally excluded from the channels of communication.
2. In accord with every child's right to be unhampered by publicly supported social bias or abuse (and in compliance with many state regulations prohibiting racism and/or sexism in instructional materials) non-racist and non-sexist selection criteria should be among the policy guidelines for children's libraries.

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SRRT NEWSLETTER STAFF

Co-Editors

Bob Baer

Barbara Bendoritis

Julie McCartney

Paul Miller

Contributing Editor

Steve Seward

SRRT CLEARINGHOUSE

Bonnie Isman

Paul Miller

Michael O'Brien

Steve Seward

SRRT ACTION COUNCIL OFFICERS

Marjorie Joramo, Coordinator, Brooklyn Center Library, 5601 Brooklyn Blvd.,
B Center MN 55429

Bradford Chambers, Secretary, Council on Interracial Books for Children,
1841 Broadway, New York NY 10023

Janette Neal, Treasurer, EPR Dept., Free Library of Philadelphia, Logan Square,
Philadelphia PA 19103

Marlene England, Conference Arrangements, Catalog Division, Chicago Public Library,
425 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago IL 60611

Margaret Collins, Task Forces, Consultant for Library Development, Illinois State
Library, Centennial Building, Springfield IL 62756

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