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 grassroots 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? (continued on p. 3)
SPRIL TO GO

by Barbara Bendoritis

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 arrangements 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 near 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 these publications 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 visits 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

Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines

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.

N.O.W.

Help the National Organization for Women to raise money the painless way. The subscription service allows people to subscribe to, or renew, virtually any magazine in the country, and for every subscription, N.O.W. gets a commission.

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National N.O.W. Action Center
425 15th Street, N. W. Suite 1048
Washington, D. C. 20004
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 Krupsack, 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 pulpartform, untd. 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 SERT exhibit table.

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

pulpartform, untd.
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 AEA 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 of Drexel University. The resolution calls upon AEA to donate one dollar for every member of 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.
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 asserted 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 SOCIALALLY USEFUL...activities..." (emphasis added, ed.) IFC/IFC responded by drafting a revision of the LBR which leaves out these fanciful 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 LBR, 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.
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 lies with 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 intellectual freedom committees, the right of anyone to say anything, as long as what is said does not lead directly to physical harm. Council Committees and the election of SRRT members to Council. This is the arena where social responsibility should permeate every aspect 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.

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.
WHOSE PROBLEM?

by William Gargan and Sharon Goodstine

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? To 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 responding VED vote of Dorothy Bendix. A SRRT founder, Dorothy provides incalculable leadership on issues that concern us all. Our apologies, Dorothy.

BOOK REVIEW


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 succinctly and professionally. 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.
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