MIDWINTER 1981, D.C.

schedule of SRRT meetings

Friday, Jan. 30
Coretta Scott King Award Dinner
  Washington Hilton, Holmer Rm
  8-10 pm
Saturday, Jan. 31
Union Task Force, Sheraton, Ohio Rm,
  11:30-12:30 pm
Feminist TF, Sheraton, Dover Rm,
  11:30-12:30 pm
Sunday, Feb. 1
Peace Information Exchange,
  Sheraton, Rm 27, Hall C,
  8-9 am
Alternatives in Print, Sheraton, Rm 27,
  Hall C, 9:30-12:30 pm
Action Council, Shoreham, Club Rm B,
  2-4 pm
Clearinghouse, Shoreham, Council Rm,
  4:30-5:30 pm
Ethnic Materials, Sheraton, Rockville
  Rm, 4:30-5:30 pm
By-Laws Committee, Shoreham, Press
  Rm, 8-10 pm
Monday, Feb. 2
Council I, 9-11 am
Ethnic Materials, Sheraton, Rm 33,
  Hall C, 2-4 pm
Monday, cont'd
Gay Liberation, Sheraton, Congressional
  Rm, 2-4 pm
Action Council, Sheraton, Richmond Rm, 
  4:30-5:30 pm
Tuesday, Feb. 3
LAMA Racism & Sexism Awareness Discussion
  Group, 9:30-11 am
Council II, 9-11 am
Action Council, Sheraton, Baltimore Rm,
  11:30-12:30 pm
Feminist TF, Sheraton, Dover Rm,
  2-4 pm
Tools, Consciousness-Raising, Sheraton,
  Rm 17, Hall C, 2-4 pm
Wednesday, Feb. 4
Union TF, Sheraton, Woodley Rm,
  9:30-11 am
Council III, 2-5:30 pm

INSIDE:

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Whitewashing White Racism, p. 2
Re: Sources, p. 6
and more.............
News media are reporting more and more incidents of Ku Klux Klan terrorism and murder, raising Klan membership, frequent Klan rallies and demonstrations, increasing verbal, written and physical attacks on Blacks, Jews, Catholics, gays, other organizations and others it deemed unacceptable. Nor will they learn that the Klan’s ideology of white supremacy has been—and continues to be—a direct threat for those who do not meet the Klan’s “standards.” Note, too, how the Klan’s activities are described in the past tense—so if crosses are not still being burned in attempts to intimidate Black people (isn’t the author of the piece been reading the newspaper lately?); And why does the text say only that the Klan wanted to “burn” Black families—bad enough in itself, certainly, but plain far from the whole story. Children need to learn that in its 100-plus years of existence the Klan has been responsible for the death, torture, mutilation and lynching of countless Black people, not to mention the desecration of Jewish houses of worship, violence against labor organizations and the terrorization of numerous other groups.

The article’s attitude toward the Klan becomes clearer in its description of a recent Klan rally. As if to emphasize that the Klan’s rather temperate behavior is a thing of the past, the Klansmen—like many other groups—sara a deceptive picture of the KKK.

The kindest interpretation of the article is that the KKK’s editorial board wanted to present a “balanced” picture of the Klan, through a few students who appear to have little knowledge of the activities and history of the Klan, plus some speculation on “why” some young people (often, we think ourselves) are ignoring certain facts and misinterpreting others. The article gives a deceptive picture of the KKK.

What could children learn from the article? Given that most of the sixth to eighth graders at whom JS is aimed (the youngest people in the sample) do not know much about the Klan, they could easily take the article as a description of that organization at face value. The KKK is a secretive organization that preaches the superiority of white people over all other races. The burning cross is part of their secret ritual. In the past (emphasis added) such crosses have been burned on the lawns (sic) of black families to warn them that the Klan would strike their homes. For years, the Klan used (emphasis added) its robes and ritual to terrorize people.

The paragraph quoted above—like the rest of the article—is misleading it and does not represent historical facts. The article fails to tell the whole story. Young readers who don’t know about all these new revelations of the Klan’s terrorist attacks, its racist demagoguery or its virulent hatred of Blacks, Jews, Catholics, gays, other organizations and others it deemed unacceptable. Nor will they learn that the Klan’s ideology of white supremacy has been—and continues to be—a direct threat for those who do not meet the Klan’s “standards.” Note, too, how the Klan’s activities are described in the past tense—so if crosses are not still being burned in attempts to intimidate Black people (isn’t the author of the piece been reading the newspaper lately?); And why does the text say only that the Klan wanted to “burn” Black families—bad enough in itself, certainly, but plain far from the whole story. Children need to learn that in its 100-plus years of existence the Klan has been responsible for the death, torture, mutilation and lynching of countless Black people, not to mention the desecration of Jewish houses of worship, violence against labor organizations and the terrorization of numerous other groups.

What does this mean? Are the weapons of the Klan—such as its robes and its use of the cross to terrorize, it is criminal to describe any such scene as “peaceful.” (The Klan’s use of Christian symbols and its version of Christian doctrine are nowhere discussed.)

The article continuously misrepresents the Klan’s role, making it seem as if the Klan is a harmless group. It presents an interview with Aaron Morrison, an eighteen-year-old “Grand Dragon” and a Youth Corps leader. Such a nice boy, Aaron joined the Klan “because he saw too many of his fellow students talking drugs and wasting their lives.” As if that wouldn’t induce more, the Klan, says Aaron, “talks about the threat of communism. They also talk about the need for tightly-knit families—that’s what keeps kids from going astray.” Here’s the Klan as defenders of the moral life. Are readers to assume that to be anti-Klan is to be pro-drugs, pro-loselybs—limit—or, even worse, pro-unrevealed families!

Only in the last paragraph of the interview with Aaron does the issue of violence come up, and even then it’s not clearly dealt with. Aaron denies that the Klan would use violence. But JS does not want to know. Aaron was being sought by police for questioning. Two shots had been fired into the home of a black family across the street. A police search of Aaron’s home discovered unlicensed rifles, pipes, tear gas knucks, and bayonets hidden in the attic.

Coordinator's Report

To the SRRT Membership:

It is a pleasure to serve as your coordinator for the coming years. A strong leadership functions best through a strong and active membership. Those of us on Action Council need and seek more communication from you on a regular basis. It is especially necessary in this time of changing political philosophy that we speak out strongly and clearly on the importance of our social responsibilities as librarians. The leadership of Action Council asks to hear from you about what you feel are the main issues you feel we should be addressing. In addition, there are several in-house concerns to be approached this year:

1) membership. We want to encourage those people who have become passive to renew their participation in an active way. We also want to find new people and invite them to join us and our Task Forces.
2) the SRRT Newsletter. Our highest visibility is provided through our newsletter; this is our most important tool in telling people who we are and what we are doing. We have had few people during the last several years willing to put in the kind of work required to publish on a regular basis. Please consider running for election to Clearinghouse and make a much-needed contribution. Those who are already working on the newsletter need your support.
3) elections for Action Council and Clearinghouse are approaching. The deadline for nominations is Feb. 15, 1981; please have your paper-work in to me by that date. If you do not have the regular forms available from ALA headquarters, provide the following information by letter: name, work and home phones and addresses, educational background, work experience, current job title, and a 150 word statement of professional concerns. It should be understood that election to Action Council or Clearinghouse is a commitment on your part to attend meetings on a regular basis and accept a share of the responsibility for the work involved.
4) Action Council hopes to place recommendations for the revision of our by-laws before the membership in San Francisco next June for your discussion and approval. A by-laws revision committee has been established and will meet during Midwinter. I hope to report back to you on their discussion in the next newsletter. Please let me know of any suggestions you may have.

I look forward to hearing from you and wish the best to you during the coming year.

Barbara Pruett
2708 Porter Street, Nw
Washington, DC 20008

Fight Resurgent Racism

An upsurge in the activities of the Ku Klux Klan and various Nazi groups has been reported throughout the country. We are particularly interested in the influence and effect that these groups are having on libraries, on schools, and on young people in general. Do you know of any such relevant activities in your community? (Bookstores in Freeport, Maine, for example, report that KKK and Nazi literature has been surreptitiously inserted in their books.)

We are also interested in learning what actions librarians, teachers and others are taking to counter the Klan and Nazi groups and activities. Please write to SRRT and/or to the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1741 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10018 if you have such information.

The National Anti-Klan Network is a loose grouping of organizations that have come together because of their common concern about the resurgence of the KKK and other racist groups in America. If you are interested in learning more about this new network, contact Akinshiju Ola at 348 Convent Avenue, NY NY 10031, (212) 926-5757. Or attend the meetings in Washington D.C. on January 31 and February 1, 1981.

SRRT members are urged to consider running for elective office in ALA. Council, Action Council and Clearinghouse seats will be available, and SRRT is pledged to assist its members in their campaigns. Don't forget to bring your petition of signatures to Action Council meetings in Washington, D.C. at Midwinter, 1981 so that SRRT members can sign them. A list of candidates from SRRT's ranks will be published in the next, pre-election issue. ALA Council needs you and other SRRT members to fill the seats of retiring Councilors.
June 29, 2-4 p.m. -- The meeting began with a discussion culminating in an unanimous condemnation of the "Survey of the Priorities of Members of ALA". Betty Turock said she had been hearing a lot about ALA being better off if there were less diversity of opinion within the membership. Herb Biblo felt the survey findings had been tilted so it would appear that ALA members were growing less concerned with the issues of social responsibility. Jackie Eubanks observed that this was an insult to the ALA membership who had created SRRT in the first place. Jim Dwyer suggested that the seemingly low priority assigned by members responding to issues of social responsibility in the survey resulted from an erroneous classification of what does and does not constitute "social responsibility". Herb asked, "What determined what social responsibility is?". Jackie further commented that the result of the survey findings, if accepted as valid, would subvert democratic processes within ALA. Michael Diodati suggested that an ALA resolution be drawn up criticizing the survey findings, and Mary Biblo proposed that a questionnaire be distributed at an ALA membership meeting asking for interpretations of "social responsibility". An Ad Hoc Committee consisting of Betty Turock, Jim Dwyer, and Brad Chambers was then set up to prepare an analysis of the survey and survey findings and to develop an implementing strategy. (See SRRT Newsletter #57 for that analysis).

The next issue discussed was ALA conference streamlining and new schedules. A number of objections to the streamlining plan were raised, and the consensus was that the plan would be self-defeating. How to keep SRRT's flexibility in the face of this plan was a special concern. Brad Chambers commented that the streamlining proposal and the Survey of Priorities were part of the same manipulative package, of a right-wing tightening up of process within ALA to give more control to headquarters.

Jim Dwyer presented the text of the SRRT brochure that had been assigned to him, Betty, in revealing a balance in the SRRT treasury of over $10,000, suggested that SRRT could afford a professional layout and printing job for the brochure.

The proposal for a promotional campaign to increase SRRT membership is to be presented at the coming combined SRRT Action Council and membership meeting June 30, and members will be asked for suggestions on implementing it.

June 30 -- The meeting combined Action Council and membership meetings to take advantage of the three-hour time allotment. New members had a considerable number of questions about SRRT, and old members wanted to express gristles, so that the first part of the meeting was devoted to discussing these questions. Paramount concerns were 1) need to keep the SRRT membership list properly updated, so that members will receive the SRRT Newsletter on time.

On the agenda was the question of how to expand SRRT's membership. One suggestion was that SRRT take advantage of the free page advertising available to ALA component groups. Another was that a special introductory issue of the SRRT Newsletter be prepared and sent to the entire ALA membership. Another suggestion was that a special Newsletter be sent to the students at all schools of library science and that particular pains be taken to reach student associations. There was also a suggestion that machinery be set up to establish new chapters of SRRT, similar to the state branches of IFPC.

Brad Chambers proposed that SRRT prepare a letter criticizing an article on the Ku Klux Klan in the May issue of Junior Scholastics magazine. The article attempts to be a "balanced" view of the Klan and results in a grossly distorted picture of the Klan. Copies of the article were distributed, and a vote to send a letter of criticism to the publishers, Scholastic Book Services, was unanimous. The content of the letter was discussed and the points made, approved, Brad, Elizabeth Dworkin and Larry. Elliot were commissioned to write the letter. (See copy of letter sent to Elliot of this issue).

Elliot Shore presented an analysis of the alternatives in print Task Force. New members considered the report extremely useful in showing them how SRRT task forces operate and their potential for accomplishment. Elliot also introduced Harriett Greiser who is to be AIP's new coordinator. Elliot next introduced Jackie Eubanks. Jackie made a presentation for monies to support a new project, an Alternative Distributors Guide, which is to be incorporated in AIP and also separately issued through the ERIC network. For this project, Jackie presented a budget of $1,000 for typing, postage and printing. She pointed out the AIP has not requested funds from SRRT for the past ten years. The budget request was approved.

July 2, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. -- The following officers were elected: Betty Turock to continue as Treasurer; Barbara Pruett as Coordinator; Michael Diodati as Secretary; Richard Higginbotham as Task Force Coordinator.

Task Force budgets for 1980-81 were approved as follows: Coretta Scott King Task Force, $100; Conflict Materials, $250; Ethnic Materials, $250; Newsletter, $3,500; Coretta Scott King Task Force, $100; The budget for the Feminist Task Force (formerly the Task Force on Women) remains unchanged from last year.

The request from the AIP for a loan of $1,100 (in addition to the $1,600 budgeted for the new Alternative Distributors Guide) to be paid back from royalties was considered apart from the other task force budgets. AIP is to prepare an itemized budget for mail submission to Action Council membership.

For refreshments at the joint SRRT and IFRT program on the Racism and Sexism Awareness Resolution, $60 was authorized to add to the previously authorized $200.

A resolution submitted by Michael Diodati to form an organization of all "ethnics" within ALA for submission to ALA membership was rejected.

A resolution calling for voting rights for residents of the District of Columbia was approved.

On the agenda was the question of how to expand SRRT's membership. One suggestion was that SRRT take advantage of the free page advertising available to ALA component groups. Another was that a special introductory issue of the SRRT Newsletter be prepared and sent to the entire ALA membership. Another suggestion was that a special Newsletter be sent to the students at all schools of library science and that particular pains be taken to reach student associations. There was also a suggestion that machinery be set up to establish new chapters of SRRT, similar to the state branches of IFPC.
The Speaker: controversy resurfaces
by Steve Greenfield

Last November 8, a showing of the controversial film, "The Speaker," drew a strong response from a gathering of about fifty people at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. Most of the group had come to attend a three-day workshop, sponsored by the Academic Freedom Group (AFG), a grouping of ten educational organizations which, according to AFG's literature, are "united to deal with the current threats to academic freedom." The film was shown on the last day, which included other activities designed to encourage attendees to return to their respective states to form AFG chapters.

"The Speaker," which was made by the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, has generated sharp opposition both inside and outside the ALA mainly because of its questionable representation of First Amendment issues and its racist stereotypes.

At the conclusion of "The Speaker," a Black woman said "I can't believe what I have just seen," and that the movie had literally "made me sick." A Black man rose to complain about the racial stereotyping. He said he was "disgusted," that the Black characters in the film were either "grossly caricatured nationalists" or "super hip hoodlums."

A white woman from the audience countered the film's message that anti-racist blacks constitute the threat to First Amendment rights. She said that the major threat to the First Amendment "comes from the Right." She called for a new commitment to human rights.

Of the nine people who spoke during the discussion, all were opposed to the film. After the ninth speaker, AFG leaders abruptly closed the session amid calls of "censorship" from the audience. "The Speaker" was shown despite the fact that one AFG member, the National Education Association, had rescinded its original approval of the film.

The November meeting in Washington, D.C., was the sixth of a series of eight planned regional AFG workshops around the nation. The two areas not yet covered by AFG are the plain states and northwestern areas of the U.S.

It has been learned that the major administrative work of the AFG is being conducted by the staff of the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

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SRRT WRITES

To the Editors of Scholastic Magazines:

We are shocked by the Junior Scholastic article. It ignores and therefore reinforces institutional racism (a) by sympathetically presenting the young people who join the Klan; (b) by the use of the past tense to describe the Klan's acts of violence; and (c) by ignoring the continuation of terrorist activities in the present, as witnessed recently in North Carolina.

As librarians, we depend on accurate media reporting to provide information to our users. The JS article is destructively inadequate in this respect.

As library workers, we commend the coverage of the same topic in Southern Exposure magazine's summer 1980 issue in "Just Like the Scouts: The Klan Youth Corps" (the issue, which contains a special section on the Klan, is available for $3 from P.O. Box 531, Durham, N.C.).

-Social Responsibility Round Table, American Library Association

The Junior Scholaric article is but one of several recent media treatments that have misrepresented the Klan or presented its members in a favorable light. Earlier this year on March 10, The New York Times ran two pieces sympathetic to Klan members on its Op Ed page. (In one piece, a woman wrote of the "fine, gentle, humane" men in her family who had been Klan members; the other writer felt guilty for hating a Klansman she met.) The March issue of Esquire ran "Ain't Nothin' You Can Do But Join the Klan," in which readers were invited to "meet the men of the KKK through sympathetic portraits of Klan members."
Re: Sources

Given the current Klan emphasis on recruiting teenagers, it is particularly important that young people get an accurate picture of the Klan. There are, unhappily, only two books about the Klan for young people -- Hoods: The Story of the Ku Klux Klan by Robert P. Ingalls (Thornhill, 1975) and The Ku Klux Klan: America's Recurring Nightmare by Fred J. Cook (Kessinger, 1980). Unfortunately, like most materials for adults, both books depict the Klan as an aberration—a group of "headhunners" exploiting people's fears, rather than making it clear that the Klan is but one aspect of a racist society.

Hoods begins with a good chapter on Reconstruction that stresses the Klan's role in the main-tenance of white supremacy. Unfortunately, although a little alarm-raising would be valid and valuable topics for classroom discussion.

Instead of an historical perspective, the JS article gives young readers a version of a racist terror organization. What has spurred the persistence of the Klan and the resurgence of Klan activity? An excellent article in Freedomways, Vol. 20, No. 1, entitled "The Ku Klux Klan, Mentality of Fear—A Threat in the 1980's," provides the perspective the JS article lacks! The fact that the Klan has been a constant presence in U.S. history for over 100 years—and not an aberration or the refuge of a few extremists as it is usually presented—has been discussed in the JS article. What has spurred Klan activities in the past and why the Klan is reviving now are also ignored. Surely these concepts would be valid and valuable topics for classroom discussion.

Today's RKK units are also trying to recruit children. In more than a dozen cities throughout the country, Klan sympathizers have distributed leaflets to high school students asking: "Are you 'fed up to here' with black,, chicano and Yang [Asian] criminals who break into lockers and steal your clothes and wallets?" The solution, according to the leader, is to join the Young KKK. At a RKK summer camp in Jefferson County, Ala., mixed campaign teach girls and boys ages ten to eighteen the fundamentals of race supremacy and how to use "gun power". It shouldn't have been easy to discuss the Klan without mentioning racism, but the JS article does it—and that's undoubtedly its worst flaw. Nowhere does the article discuss the Klan within the context of a racist society. It ignores the pervasive racism that feeds the recent resurgence of the Klan, that kept the Klan going and that sti- ll threatens white dominance. The JS article a brief history of the Klan, a teacher's guide and questions for stu-dents—also ignores the realities of the Klan's history as well as racism. The strangely political nature of the Klan's activities—beginning with its successful efforts to disenfranchise Black voters during Reconstruction—is also ignored.

The Klan has the last word in the JS article. The piece concludes with a statement from a Klan Youth Corps leader, "Whatever has the youth has the future. And that will be the history book."

Ruth Charnes

from some Klan manual of 1870. Instead of providing an accurate picture of the progressive legislation and opportunities that Reconstruction offered, the book gives young readers the now-discredited view that Reconstruction was a period of drunken legislators and marauding freed Blacks. (And what is it to say of book that trumpets, "The blacks on the southern plantations had been traditionally a docile people"?) The rise of the Klan is essentially blamed on its victims. There is no mention of the estimated 3,000 Blacks and whites who were killed by the Klan during Reconstruction, nor the countless others who were flogged or beaten during that time. The flaws of the first chapters are overwhelming. The JS article is one of the worst pieces of this type; it's an explanation that's partially true. However, it's irresponsible—and totally inaccurate—to suggest that such factors are the only or even the main reasons that children join the Klan. It also ignores the fact that many parents guide their children right into the KKK.

To focus on psychological factors obvi­ously obscures the role that institutional racism plays in our so-ciety; that the Klan enjoys considerable power and support in many areas, that racism is part and parcel of our U.S. heritage, it should be noted that the material accompanying the JS article is a brief history of the Klan, a teacher's guide and questions for stu-dents—also ignores the realities of the Klan's history as well as racism. The strongly political nature of the Klan's activities—beginning with its successful efforts to disenfranchise Black voters during Reconstruction—is also ignored.
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