

american library association

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June 4, 1979

Dear Zena,

It has been clear for a long time that there are many problems inherent in selecting "THE BEST BOOK" of the year for either an artistic or literary award. That this book should then be deified in a program like the one we parade through annually at the ALA Newbery Caldecott banquet seems to me to perpetuate the drawbacks in our award system. Somehow the doubts and hesitations and political aspects of one committee's late-night decision are forgotten in the throes of this Conference worship service, so that it seems God has chosen the winners.

A clean, simple press conference and reception would serve more accurately and less expensively to draw attention to children's books too good to miss--which is ostensibly the whole point of such efforts. Previous attempts to change ALA's ALSC award system have not met with substantial success. I hope your idea to do away with the Newbery/Caldecott banquet does. Otherwise it may fade into a butt of jokes before its honorable demise; in a time when children's books and people are struggling financially for survival, the cost factor alone antiquates a vast N/C ceremonial dinner that is far removed from feeding either body or mind.

Sincerely,



Betsy Hearne

Editor, Children's Books

P.S. Hi!