



June 1, 1979

Ms. Zena Sutherland
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Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Dear Zena,

This is a sticky wicket and I really have to do some soul searching. I'll respond to the four points and ad lib on the side.

1. COST OF THE BANQUET: Trying to see this in the framework of what is spent for the entire conference. I'd ask:

Of 1700 tickets sold, how many are paid for by institutional or company check?

Are many librarians, whose conference costs are all or partially funded by their libraries, funded for the dinner? If so, \$5.00 up or down may not be critical.

How many tables of tickets are sold to publishers who, in turn, invite librarians as their guests? How many of us are there "for free"? If we're not getting heavy flack from publishers I'd hesitate to jeopardize a lovely evening.

Re our younger members: I attended my first ALA and N.C. 12 years ago and wouldn't have dreamed of not budgeting for the N.C. ticket. It was a high point. Just starting out none of us is overwhelmed with invitations; that evening had a lot of meaning.

This year the cost is \$17.50. If you figure cocktails, dinner, tax, and tip, you'd probably be lucky to get out of any good restaurant in Dallas for that price.

It seems if you really want something you'll find a way; your sense of values motivates you. I may be way off base, but I don't think cost is one of the most serious elements here.

2. AMOUNT OF OFFICE TIME: We have a real question here of cost effectiveness. The Task Force did go over everything with MJA and the problem I see is unwillingness to delegate. Both Sheila and her predecessor could handle a lot more of the administration. If MJA had a part time library school assis-



tant much of this could be delegated as a work project.

A stumbling block is "who assigns who to what table?". I sensed MJA would say this is a priority task with only herself having the people-knowledge to do it. It's going to take someone with a strong constitution to change that, if, in fact, it should be changed.

3. AMOUNT OF ALSC MEMBERS TIME: I'd need to know more specifically, "how much time spread out over what time period?". In regard to the entire ALA conference, how much staff time and volunteer time are librarians at Dallas Public giving?

I'm kind of asking, "If it wasn't the dinner, would it be another conference activity?"

Is the question "If the banquet is worth it, then the time is worth it"? If not, got a problem.

If we look at a presentation program for 2,000-2,500, what kind of membership time and effort is involved?

Getting down to the nitty gritty re the second sentence in question 3. It says "time perhaps be better spent on projects..." I'd need clarification. If the time ALSC members are now giving is staff time paid by their employers, then we have a legitimate "contrast" question. However, if the ALSC member's time is given on a volunteer basis, then I don't believe it's fair to presume that this volunteer time would or wouldn't be spent on child related projects.

I'm a good example of this; I've spent volunteer time on a conference, yet it's not likely I'd have been out storytellin' in the park instead!

A key element is who's providing the time. If it's their employers, and their employeers are willing, I don't see it as a major problem.

4. BANQUET SPACE AVAILABLE: This is a good area for consideration; it's also tricky since price, or lack of price, comes into the whole psychology of making choices.

For example, let's say you and I had a very intense four hour Board session, followed by monitoring Council for a few hours. That evening N.C. would be presented in a large hall seating 2,500. You know what I just might do? Go to bed.

Sure, it's heresy, but if I don't have a reservation and minimal money would be lost, maybe the significance slipped a bit too. Our society, like it or not, is money oriented. These "prestigious awards have a prestigious price tag so it's prestigious to be there." How many people think that way?

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SUMMARY. Haven't made the sticky wicket any less sticky for you. I'm probably expressing a minority viewpoint and I do want to be realistic, practical, and cost effective; but I also want to be extremely cautious in scrapping the traditional dinner.

When arguments are raised I think we have to be careful to argue apples and apples. If changes are made the predictions for what lies ahead are just as critical.

Sincerely yours,



(Mrs. Lee J. Wilson)
Director

cc: Lillian N. Gerhardt
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