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May 4, 1979

Zena Bailey Sutherland
1418 East 57 Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Dear Mrs. Sutherland,

Concerning the Newbery-Caldecott Awards Dinner, it is too elaborate, too expensive and a mite stodgy. I suggest that it be discontinued and replaced with something less formal and more book oriented. Perhaps a reception - wine and cheese, sherry and biscuits, cash bar?? - would suffice; it would certainly be less expensive, which would allow more people to attend, and it would give people a chance to mingle - an activity which, during the dinners, seems to happen only in the restroom.

As for the acceptance speech, I wonder if they could be given after the reception. Or, perhaps a time for ceremonies could be set aside during the reception, so that the socializing could continue when the speeches were over.

It seems to me that the Newbery-Caldecott awards could and should provide an opportunity for a more intelligent public discussion of books than now takes place. Perhaps before each winner speaks, a panel could discuss the books of the year, indicating significant trends, giving a sort of critical wrap-up. I do mean critical, too - not merely someone's pointing out that raising cocker spaniels was all the rage. The N/C awards too often have a negative impact on writing for children because the non-critical atmosphere in which they are announced and disseminated encourages writers and publishers to produce more of the same and librarians to look for more of the same. In other words, the awards have a tendency to discourage experimentation and literary chance-taking. I'm not sure that a revamped awards celebration can do a lot about this, but it's a possibility worth considering.

I hope that these suggestions aren't too far afield and that they help your committee in its discussions.

Sincerely,

Linda Silver
Assistant Coordinator
Children's Services

LS:MS