

ALA - Washington Office - Testimony (ALA) Wash. Office
in files

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

VERTICAL FILE

STATEMENT BY GERMAINE KRETTEK
DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON OFFICE, AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
ON H.R.4970
BEFORE THE GENERAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION OF THE
HOUSE EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 1961

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION SEP 30 1962
OFFICIAL FILE

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Germaine Krettek. I am Director of the Washington Office of the American Library Association, a nonprofit, professional association of more than 25,000 members, consisting of librarians, trustees, and laymen interested in the development, extension, and improvement of libraries as essential factors in the educational program of the Nation.

The American Library Association is in favor of legislation, such as H.R.4970, which authorizes "a three-year program of Federal financial assistance for public elementary and secondary schools." We support the legislation because recent comprehensive surveys have shown great gaps in school construction and woeful inadequacies in teachers' salaries. These studies have brought out not only what lags exist today, but what they will be in the next five years or ten years unless immediate measures are taken to counteract them. Although the States and localities must bear the main burden of the increases necessary to meet the essential goals, in the public interest the Federal government should contribute toward narrowing the gaps and deficiencies.

This position on Federal aid to education without Federal control is in accord with the American Library Association's Legislative Policy which was approved by the ALA Council, our governing body, on January 29, 1959. This statement reads:

"Federal aid to public education is needed to assist the States and their local subdivisions in establishing and maintaining adequate educational services and facilities and in equalizing educational opportunity..."

Although the American Library Association is concerned with the whole educational program of the Nation, it is specifically interested in the development of school libraries as essential factors in the instructional process.

The role of the school library in helping the school achieve its objectives is set forth effectively by Dr. Benjamin C. Willis, Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools, in an article which appeared in the American Library Association Bulletin. Dr. Willis writes: "The school's major obligation is to meet the needs of all the children of all the people, and these children are all different in interests, needs, and ability...!These goals! can never be accomplished through the use of a single textbook. A wide variety of educational materials of all kinds, on all subjects, and representing all degrees of reading difficulty are needed. The library as the coordinating agency provides these materials and the librarian works with teachers and pupils in utilizing both materials and experiences for the maximum educational growth of each individual...The Librarian, teacher and pupils forge a chain which strengthens and binds together the total learning experience." Thus, there is a close tie between the needs of the schools and the provision of better school libraries.

Serious deficiencies exist, however, in school library service to elementary and secondary schools. Many schools have inadequate, crowded, and poorly equipped libraries, whereas many schools have no library quarters. A statistical survey (conducted in the Library Services Branch of the U.S. Office of Education) of school libraries in the United States, 1958-59, in public school districts enrolling 150 or more pupils showed, among other things, the following acute deficiencies: (1) only 34% of the elementary schools surveyed had school libraries while over 10 million pupils were enrolled in elementary schools without school libraries, (2) of the schools included in the survey, only 42.4% were served by school libraries with the greatest deficiency being in the elementary field.

Looking specifically at some of the points in H.R.4970 the American Library Association approves the provision of Section 109 for Special Educational Projects because such pilot studies, demonstrations, and experiments should yield significant results for educational methods and techniques. School libraries, if adequately financed and efficiently operated, could make significant contributions to whatever projects are undertaken.

As Dr. James Bryant Conant, former President of Harvard University, stated in recent recommendations for junior high schools: "I have become impressed more than ever with the important place of the library in the operation of the schools I have seen...Principals, teachers, and librarians should work at incorporating the use of the library into regular class activities..."

The American Library Association is pleased that H.R.4970 under Definitions, Sec. 113 (8) provides not only for classrooms but also for related facilities. Under the latter, we assume that the intent of the bill is to include quarters for school libraries, their construction, alteration, etc. If not, then we urge that the bill be so amended or the report on it clarify this question.

We note further that this same section, Sec. 113 (8), provides for "instructional materials other than textbooks." We assume that this phrase means books, periodicals, and equipment for school libraries and audio-visual materials and equipment. If not, we urge that this point be clarified either in the bill or in the report on it.

In Sec. 113 (10), the legislation states that the term "teacher" means any member of the instructional staff of a public school as defined by the State education department. In this connection it is important to note that the U.S. Office of Education Bulletin, 1958, No. 12, states that "certification requirements for school librarians reflect a general interpretation by State departments of education that school librarians are teachers, as well as librarians." The American Library Association is of the opinion also that school librarians are teachers. If this is not the intent of the legislation, the American Library Association urges that the bill or the report clarify this point.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity you have given me to present the views of the American Library Association. We support the proposed legislation and urge the Committee to act on it favorably. We hope, too, that the House will pass promptly the "School Assistance Act of 1961."