

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON (or: From the Round Table's Chair's Desk)

The Intellectual Freedom Round Table will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 1983. As Bruce Shuman, my predecessor, pointed out at our Philadelphia conference meeting, we have had a sharp increase in our membership largely because of the dramatic increase in the number of attacks on our intellectual freedom from all parts of the political, religious, social, and economic spectrum. The First Amendment gives these would-be censors the right to voice their opinions, but following that same First Amendment, "The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas" and "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view...Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval!" (from the Library Bill of Rights, copies of which, along with the recently approved interpretive statements, are available from the Office for Intellectual Freedom, ALA, 50 East Huron, Chicago 60611).

We need to carry the message of free expression and free access to ideas to all those we serve. The IFRT has members from almost every type of library in virtually every state. We run the whole show in one-person public and special libraries, serve on the front line in reference, public service, and circulation positions, work in technical services, acquisitions, databases, administer libraries and systems of libraries, educate librarians--you name it, we do it! And we all are potential targets of the censor.

Affiliates' Program: Although our bylaws provide for such a program, we have not yet promoted a cooperative network. I hope the Executive Committee will adopt a concrete plan for developing affiliates, because they can increase our "grass roots" effectiveness in many ways: They can be nuclei for coalitions with teachers, authors, booksellers, publishers, and others concerned with freedom of expression; they can serve as speakers' bureaus to carry the message to service, business, and professional clubs; they can testify before legislative bodies (including boards of library trustees); and they can help us increase our own awareness of the concerns and problems of others. We shall provide more information on the affiliates' program by the annual conference.

ALA Annual Conference Program (The conference takes place in Los Angeles, June 26-July 1, 1983): Our program will be devoted to intellectual freedom issues which affect technical services and special and academic librarians. It will include open discussion groups so that participants can share problems and solutions. Anyone with suggestions for case studies or with the names of good discussion leaders for this program should write me. In addition, the IFRT program will provide a forum for the members of state intellectual freedom committees to discuss problems, programs, triumphs and tribulations. Although the "Roll Call of the States" generated much interest and publicity in Philadelphia, it was essentially a medium for one-way communication, and I hope that participants in next year's program will take advantage of the expanded opportunities for the exchange of ideas. To encourage this process, state IFC chairs with successful programs will be on hand to share their experiences.

IFRT State Intellectual Freedom Committee Award: This new award will honor innovative programs and/or courageous campaigns conducted by state IFCs. Larry Miller proposed the award, and, with Judith Sessions and Karen Tallman, developed the criteria for it. The IFRT Executive Committee approved it in Philadelphia, and we anticipate

ALA Awards Committee approval at ALA Midwinter (San Antonio, Jan. 8-13). We hope to present the first award at the 1984 annual conference in Dallas. It will consist of a cash grant to the appropriate ALA state chapter and a plaque honoring the chosen IFC. Details of the award will be made known after Midwinter.

Membership Questionnaire: A very important strategy session involving the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee, the Office for Intellectual Freedom, the IFRT, and other activists has been planned for the days just prior to Midwinter. To help the Round Table representatives provide effective input--and to help the Executive Committee with our own planning--please take time to complete the enclosed questionnaire. You may also be faced with other questionnaires on the subject of intellectual freedom, but we would very much appreciate your answering this one for the sake of our IFRT concerns. Please send it to me by December 15.

With your help and support, this will be a creative and productive year for the Intellectual Freedom Round Table. Please write me or any of the other members of the Executive Committee if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Sue Kamm
Chair, IFRT

JOHN PHILLIP IMMROTH AWARD: KNOW ANY HEROES?

The IFRT is seeking nominations for its John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award for Intellectual Freedom. Established in 1976, the annual award honors intellectual freedom fighters in and outside the library profession who have made notable contributions to intellectual freedom and have demonstrated remarkable personal courage (both true of Immroth himself, author, educator, and a founder of the IFRT). The award consists of \$500 and a citation. Individuals, groups of individuals, and organizations are all eligible to receive the award. The 1982 winner was Steve Pico, the young man who carried the fight against the censorship actions of his local school board all the way to the Supreme Court, as the lead plaintiff in Pico v. Board of Education, Island Trees Union School District. He received his award at our Philadelphia program from then-chair of the Awards Committee, Pamela Bonnell.

Nominations for the award should be submitted by December 1, 1982 to Anne Martel, Chair, John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award Committee, 4 Villard Ct., Champaign, IL 61720. Nomination forms are available from the same address. If the timing of this newsletter makes it difficult to meet that deadline, submit anyway--we need to know about our heroes!

COALITION BUILDING RESOURCE BOOK

This is the title of a valuable new resource available from the Office for Intellectual Freedom for \$10. Edited by Susan Heath, chair of the ALA/IFC Task Force on Coalitions, this publication was compiled "to benefit the many librarians and other educators who have expressed an interest in starting coalitions concerning First Amendment rights!" Its 106 pages include a Directory of Coalitions, a valuable bibliography, sample bylaws and brochures, programming ideas, important ALA IF documents, and much helpful guidance. To order, make checks payable to the Office for Intellectual Freedom (again, that's ALA, 50 Huron St., Chicago 60611).

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM DATELINE

May 14, 1982: The so-called "Blitz Amendment" (P.L. 97-92), which barred from federal job training programs anyone who has "advocated the violent overthrow of the government in the last five years," was declared unconstitutional by U.S. District Judge Barrington Parker. This occurred just six months after the amendment had been quietly passed as a rider to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). It was originally aimed at Dori Blitz, a member of the Communist Workers Party who enrolled in a CETA training program. Mrs. Blitz challenged the law after she had been denied readmittance to her brick-laying class following the birth of her child, because she refused to sign a pledge that she did not advocate the violent overthrow of the government. In arguing the case, government attorneys admitted that the wording of the amendment was in violation of the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969) that mere advocacy of violence is indeed protected speech, but they asserted that because Labor Secretary Donovan understood this and interpreted the amendment in this spirit, the act was constitutional. Strongly rejecting this argument, Judge Parker declared that "The First Amendment clearly bars the government from penalizing mere advocacy of any idea, including violent revolution!" The Justice Department is appealing, and Rep. Daniel (R-VA), introducer of the Blitz amendment in the first place, intends to reintroduce similar legislation.

June 25, 1982: The United States Supreme Court rendered its decision in what is popularly known as Island Trees (officially, Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26, et al. v. Pico, et al.), widely regarded as one of the most significant First Amendment cases of recent years and the most important such case affecting school libraries. The case began after the above school board ordered the removal (in 1976) of nine titles from the high school library (among them Slaughterhouse Five, The Naked Ape, Go Ask Alice, The Fixer...), and high school student Steve Pico and friends took them to court. Many courts later, we First Amendment fans are able to take at least qualified comfort in the plurality decision that "Local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books and seek by their removal to prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion." The problem is that the decision, though 5-4, is badly fragmented (7 opinions, including strong minority statements), and fails to prescribe guidelines to school boards on the limits of their power. Among many other accounts of this case, see the September and November NEWSLETTER ON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, the July OIF MEMORANDUM, and the Spring-Summer FREEDOM TO READ FOUNDATION NEWS.

July 2, 1982: A week after Island Trees, the Supreme Court rendered a much less ambiguous decision in People v. Ferber. In a 9-0 shutout it upheld the constitutionality of a New York law prohibiting the distribution of nonobscene material showing children engaged in certain sexual activities. Although the Court recognized that "like obscenity statutes, such laws directed at the dissemination of child pornography run the risk of suppressing protected expression," it chose, in effect, to add another category of speech to those excluded from First Amendment protection, which include obscenity, defamation, incitement, and "fighting words." The chill caused by this sweeping decision is evidenced in the recent St. Martin's Press decision to withdraw the controversial and popular sex education book Show Me from its trade list in order "not only to protect St. Martin's, but to protect all those bookstores out there that could find themselves liable under the law!" After this announcement, the Freedom to Read Foundation and other organizations filed an

amicus curiae brief in a test of the New York State "child pornography" law because of the demonstrated effect of Ferber on free speech. Oral arguments were heard October 13.

September 13: U.S. District Court Judge Robert McNichols dismissed the case of Grove v. Mead School District, in which the Moral Majority of Washington (now known as the Bill of Rights Foundation!) sued the Mead School District to remove Gordon Park's The Learning Tree from sophomore English class reading lists. The plaintiffs claimed that the presence of the book in the curriculum made it impossible for them to plan to send their children to public schools in the district because it was offensive to Christian values. MM of Washington Director Michael Farris charged that The Learning Tree included "swearing, obscene language, ... lewd behavior, specific blasphemies against Jesus Christ and excessive violence and murder" and that the schools were promoting "the anti-God religion of secular humanism!" In announcing his dismissal, Judge McNichols stated that "it is not the function of the federal courts to interfere with the curriculum established by local school officials unless constitutional values are directly and sharply implicated. Such is not the case here." Farris intends to appeal this month.

(Note: The above cases were culled from various OIF publications by the editor; the most extensive of these is the NEWSLETTER ON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, which Nat Hentoff and others have called the best source of news on the subject that is published. It is edited by OIF Director Judith Krug, is available from the OIF, is ten bucks a year, is about to be fifteen a year as of Jan. 1, and at that price is still one of the best bargains going.)

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