

Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom

Published by the Committee on Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association and Prepared by Paul Bixler, Secretary

We begin this Newsletter where we left off the last one. The final item in that issue concerned a new attack on Consumer Reports, publication of Consumers Union. Scarcely had the Newsletter appeared when The Freeman (July 28) published "Consumers Union: a Red Front" by Larston D. Farrar. The foundation of this article is if guilt by association, and much of its superstructure is a misrepresentation of the time when events occurred. Dates are often lacking, but by using the present tense (for example, on Ben Gold and Lewis Weinstock, whose slight connection with Consumers Union occurred more than ten years ago) the impression is given that most of the material in the article is current or up-to-date. Banning Consumer Reports from Dayton (Ohio) high schools libraries in June, 1951 is mentioned, but not the fact that the ban was lifted three months later. A writer on the Cincinnati Enquirer is quoted on the supposition that CU is a "front," but not the Cincinnati Post, which took the opposite view. A careful report on Consumer Reports by a special committee of the Detroit public schools is ignored entirely. Our dossier on the subject was not designed to answer Farrar's charges (how could they be foretold?), but we hope it is detailed enough to support librarians with the courage to keep Consumer Reports on library shelves. (Clearly, most of them do have that courage.)

This issue of the Newsletter, like the last, has been distributed to a considerable number of public libraries in addition to a smaller list of particularly interested librarians. We cannot keep up the present stiff pace. The Intellectual Freedom Committee, however, has authorized that a year's subscription to the Newsletter be sent free to all individuals or libraries that request it. (Multiple copies will also be supplied on request but at a small price.)

* * *

Do librarians like to clip newspapers? Or don't they read anything but library newspapers which aren't supposed to be cut up? We should appreciate clippings of items about censorship (of films as well as reading materials), about academic freedom, about the right to make up one's own mind, in fact about anything in or out of libraries which pertains to this intellectual freedom on which democracy depends. In the course of a day's work we can check no more than one or two newspapers beyond local territory. Aside from New York City, Cleveland and Los Angeles this now means no coverage except when something hits one of the wire services. This is a plea - in case anyone has misunderstood our meaning.

* * *

In the movie "Deadline: USA" (starring Humphrey Bogart and Ethel Barrymore) there is a strong speech supporting the right of the people to know. The theme of the picture is the integrity of a daily newspaper, and the whole thing is pretty stirring stuff.

As some newspapermen have been the first to point out, the right of the people to know is a larger, more inclusive affair than freedom of the press, important as

that freedom is. And under this larger right of public knowledge comes the freedom of libraries to offer information on all sides of a question.

* * *

One of the best statements we've seen on academic freedom is that adopted unanimously by the Oberlin College faculty last February. It is a single-page manifesto--an inclusive, calm, plain, brief statement which becomes the academic world. It is the kind of a statement which occurs when professional men realize that the chips are down and when the appointed committee remembers to keep its collective vocabulary clear and forthright.

* * *

The current (September) issue of The Christian Register publishes (pp. 22-23) a series of brief comments under the heading "Shall Our Public Libraries Be Kept Free?" First is a note concerning excerpts of a manual designed for public librarians and issued by the Christophers; these excerpts were published in The Christian Register (August, 1951). Second are quotations from "The Librarian's Role in the Restoration of the World" by R. Paul Bartolini, head librarian of Kansas State Teachers College (Catholic Library World, December, 1951). And third is a memorandum from the Committee on Intellectual Freedom on the subject. We commend this brief "discussion" to your attention. If there is demand we shall ask to have it reprinted.

* * *

In the July issue of Everywoman's appeared an article on the public library by Jack Harrison Pollack called "You Pay For It--Use It." One of the closing paragraphs reads:

Library-wise, there's one terribly important don't: don't let the witch-hunters behead your local library. As Librarian of Congress Luther H. Evans puts it, "No group in America has steadily, quietly and successfully resisted all pressures of bigotry and censorship more than the library profession." But today many of the same forces which are trying to chop down our public schools would do likewise to our libraries, by censoring their holdings and throwing terror into timid librarians. Some of these evil attempts have already succeeded. But others, thankfully, have been blocked by responsible citizens, notably in Los Angeles, California, and Scarsdale, New York.

* * *

Re: news items we'd like to have more background on. From a story in the September 19 New York Times, with a Hollywood dateline:

Miss Mary Pickford had reported on Monday morning at the Columbia Studio, headquarters of the Kramer Company, to begin rehearsals with Irving Reis, the director. Late Tuesday it became known, she informed Mr. Kramer of her desire not to go through with the agreement they had first announced last November in New York. At the time the proposed picture dealing with the Communist problem as it affects youth carried the title of "The Library."

Rumor has it that Miss Pickford's replacement will be Barbara Stanwyck.

* * *

One of the articles in the General Appropriations Act passed by the Texas legislature in 1951 requires a "non-subversive oath" of all employees receiving money under the act. The State Commissioner of Education recently requested that, so long as this oath is required of public school employees, all publishers submitting textbooks for adoption should "indicate whether or not each of the authors, illustrators, and editors of the books submitted can qualify as under the terms of the Non-Subversive Oath." Although the Commissioner openly admitted the doubtful legality of making such "recommendations" as part of the contractual documents between the publishers and the state without specific authority from the Legislature, he urged them upon the State Board of Education and the recommendation were passed unanimously.

* * *

We've been asked whether we know anything about Human Events "a weekly analysis for the American citizen" published from Washington? Post-convention issues reveal political opposition not only to the Truman administration but to Eisenhower; a recent issue takes up the cudgels for the Senate minority (Democrats as well as Republicans included) who oppose "spending" and other current fiscal policies. Editors are Frank Chodorov and Frank Hanighen.

Chodorov in the late '30's was director of the Henry George School in New York, hardly as liberal as the name might lead one to suppose. A year ago he published an editorial in the Saturday Evening Post attacking "progressive" education in the Pasadena schools at the time the superintendent was dismissed, and he is the author of two pamphlets put out by Alfred Zoll's National Council for American Education.

Frank Hanighen collaborated in the '30's with H. C. Engelbrecht to write a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, Merchants of Death. He's been a foreign correspondent, and author of numerous articles in general and reputable magazines. Periodical indexes show that since about 1942, however, he's had nothing in indexed magazines except Nation's Business.

We note these facts because the "weekly analysis" of Human Events is heavily political and because the periodical has turned up as a gift in business libraries. The donor was the National Foundation for Education in American Citizenship.

* * *

At the end of August the Los Angeles Board of Education banned a handbook "The E in UNESCO" from its schools, and decided that UNESCO should be treated as a "controversial" subject. But in Pasadena, according to news dispatches, a Citizens Survey Committee looking into the "progressive" school program instituted there under Superintendent Willard E. Goslin, who was dismissed, has come up with the conclusion that Pasadena educational activities weren't so bad after all. The inquiry cost \$50,000, took 18 months, and is 2,000 pages long. It indicts no one, vindicates no one, and offers no recommendations for the school system that could be called radical or even vital--so reports the New York Times.

Will the Pasadena committee report be amicably accepted? When the inquiry began, a number of writers on educational matters strongly criticized conditions in Pasadena leading up to the inquiry and the dismissal of Superintendent Goslin. On last August 14 the California State Senate Committee on Education released a statement accusing these writers of "prejudiced and unjustifiable attacks" and a "wholesale attempt to smear the people of Pasadena."

One of the writers so accused was David K. Berninghausen, former chairman and secretary of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, for remarks in his article in the American Scholar of January, 1950. Perhaps the California committee was thinking of his Harvard Educational Review article (Summer, 1951), for the Scholar piece doesn't mention Pasadena. Another recent (but friendly) reference to Mr. Berninghausen out of California gave his first name as Daniel. He will address the History Roundtable of AIA at the Chicago Midwinter meeting on the origin and history of the Intellectual Freedom Committee. We suggest that he be introduced as Daniel-in-the-Lion's-Den Berninghausen.

* * *

Publishers' Weekly of September 13 (p. 1005) prints a round-up item on resolutions passed at recent conventions of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars affecting books. The Legion attacked indecent literature. The VFW attacked the United States National Commission for UNESCO for making a study of history books used in the public schools "with the intent to revise these books, deleting all terms and references which would instill patriotism and love of country in the minds and hearts of our children."

* * *

There are now available for distribution from this office as long as copies last the following publications:

"Selective Bibliography of Literary Censorship in the United States" (11 mimeo. pages), prepared for the AIA Committee on Intellectual Freedom by Aaron Fessler of Cooper Union Library. (Not previously announced.)

Reprint (mimeo, 17p.) from the Harvard Educational Review (Summer, 1951), including "The Public School and the American Heritage, a Policy Written by the NEA' National Commission to Defend Democracy Through Education" and David K. Berninghauser "A Policy to Preserve Free Public Education." This was previously out-of-print; Mr. Berninghausen also now has copies for distribution from Cooper Union.

"Libraries Are the Vessels in Which the Seed Corn for the Future Is Stored" by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. (One page, printed.)

"What to Do About 'Dangerous' Textbooks," by Edward N. Saveth, reprint from Commentary, February, 1952. (8 pages, printed.)

"Material On Consumers Union and Consumer Reports" (6 dittoed pages). Noted in the first item in this Newsletter and announced in the last issue.

"Self-Rating Sheet - Check Your Library on Pressure, Propaganda and Policy" (One page, mimeo.)

And of course, we have and will continue to have copies of the Library Bill of Rights and the Statement on Labelling.

* * *

Donald Klopfer, of the American Book Publishers Council, who spoke at our June Conference on Intellectual Freedom, has urged that book publishers draw up for

themselves a statement similar to the Library Bill of Rights. And now a group of editors and librarians interested in work with children have recommended to the Childrens Library Association that a statement similar to the Library Bill of Rights be prepared to cover children's books. "It was pointed out during discussion," says the recommendation, "that censorship of children's books cannot always be answered with the same arguments used to refute censorship of adult books."

* * *

Many of the opinions of Robert M. Hutchins, former Chancellor of the University of Chicago and now Associate Director of the Ford Foundation, have been called "controversial" by other educators. We wonder, however, if anyone in sophisticated educational circles would disagree with the following excerpt of a speech he made before the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce and Civic Organization:

Am I saying that the public should not control the educational system? Certainly not. I am saying that the public should understand education. And it would do no harm if teachers and professors understood it, too. Indoctrination and propaganda have no place in it. The private opinions of teachers are not to be pumped or pounded into young people any more than the majority opinion is. But in my observation, which covers a very long period, there is not much danger to our youth from the improprieties of their instructors or the radical views that they may entertain. A far greater danger is that the majority will exert pressure on the educational system for indoctrination in and compulsory adoption of the majority opinion. The rule of the majority without free discussion and criticism is tyranny.

* * *

Censorship of newsreel and other films has been established more firmly in Ohio than in almost any other state in the country. It's stood for more than 35 years. The decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of "The Miracle," however, has prompted some second thoughts in legal circles. We quote from a news story of September 10 (date line Toledo), recounting the first chapter in a test case:

Ohio laws providing for censorship of newsreel films were ruled unconstitutional today by Municipal Judge Frank W. Wiley. The judge also held that the imposition of minimum censorship fees on newsreel films amounts to a tax and is a "form of prior restraint which violates the Constitutional guaranties of freedom of speech and press."...

Judge Wiley said that, with regard to newsreels, Ohio's present censorship law is a greater evil than the possibility of evil against which the statute was designed to protect.

Self-censorship in the movie industry, he said, has removed much of the possibility of evil that may have existed in earlier years.

The \$3 charge of censoring a newsreel, the judge also held, violates the "equal protection" clauses of the state and federal constitutions because it singles out one method of disseminating information against all others.

In another case owners of the movie "Native Son" have appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court the film's rejection by the state censorship board.

Another feature film, "The Miracle," also was rejected, but so far its owners have taken no steps against the decision.

Paul Bixler
(from Antioch College
Yellow Springs, Ohio)