

November, 1952

Vol. 1 No. 4

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

Chief news of the past several weeks has been the attack on the intellectual freedom of the Boston Public Library by the Boston Post. How the library survived the immediate shock tactics employed by the newspaper appears in "Report from Boston" by Laurence J. Kipp of the Harvard College Library in the November 1 issue of the Library Journal. We are enclosing a reprint of this article in part of the mailing of the current newsletter. We shall be glad to supply other copies on request as long as they last.

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The Post began its attack on Communist literature in the Library September 23, the day after it had started to publish Senator Joseph McCarthy's book McCarthyism. The headlines and the space given to the attack grew with every edition until October 3 when the board of trustees of the Boston Public Library voted 3 to 2 to uphold the library's policy of intellectual freedom. Some of the words and the events of this period cannot be given in a short article or in brief comment. But some will bear frequent repeating. For example, the comment of Herbert Philbrick (author of I Led 3 Lives) is given in full in the November 1 Library Journal. We quote here only the first three sentences:

Shocked to hear that the Boston Public Library has under consideration the suppression of vital information exposing the methods, nature and extent of the Soviet conspiracy against the United States. Such suppression would be directly in line with the current policy of the Communist Party in the United States to conceal the true aims of the party to all except its own trusted members. The Boston Public Library should have more, and not less, information available to the American people to aid them in their fight against Communism.....

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Six days after the vote of the Boston Library trustees Luther Evans spoke at the dedication of the new library building at Northeastern University. His words appeared in the Herald and Christian Science Monitor (both had defended Librarian Milton Lord and the library's freedom), in the Traveler and the Daily Globe---but not in the Post. The Librarian of Congress congratulated the Boston community on its recent victory, and commented in part:

The idea that we can take communist propoganda out of our libraries is as fallacious a doctrine as the doctrine of a local chapter of the D.A.R. in some state other than Massachusetts which would get out of the public library all of the writings that

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were derogatory to the founders of this country. Everything was to be taken out of the library which was derogatory to George Washington, to Samuel Adams, to John Adams, to Thomas Jefferson, to Alexander Hamilton, and so on. And when the D.A.R. committee came back the following year the librarian had removed to the cellar or to the attic, I forget which, the complete writings of George Washington, the complete writings of Thomas Jefferson, the complete writings of Alexander Hamilton, and so on and so forth. When asked why, she said, "Because every blasted one of them had something derogatory about one of the founding fathers of this country." Ladies and gentlemen, if you were to get rid of communist propaganda in the Boston Public Library you would have to withdraw from it the Boston Post itself because it quotes what Stalin has said on various occasions....

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Although the vote of the library trustees settled the immediate issue October 3, the Post tapered off its campaign rather slowly. On October 14 it reprinted a long editorial from the Haverhill (Mass.) Gazette. Even "more harmful....than the most skillful deliberate propaganda," so argued the editorial, is the "stuff produced by a Sinclair Lewis or a Theodore Dreisser or an Ernest Hemingway--to mention only three of the more conspicuous novelists of the past 50 years." The good literate people of Boston must palpitate for the day when the Post and its little helpers come out against all reading --- and cut their own throats.

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The news clippings for a month of the Boston controversy (September 23 to October 20) weigh almost a pound. We have enough to make two sets, and we promise that one set will be kept available for loan to such ambitious or enterprising students as may wish to examine the case intensively.

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The Library of Congress has just published Freedom of Information: a Supplementary Survey of Recent Writings by Helen F. Conover. It is an annotated list of material written on the subject since the publication of a selective survey in 1949. It can be purchased from the Library's Card Division for 30 cents.

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The Baltimore Sun carried a brief AP dispatch October 26 noting that the school board of Maryland's Prince Georges County has denied the use of its schools to any outside organizations "for United Nations purposes." To quote further, "The all-Republican board, which several months ago refused to permit United Nations flags to fly over school buildings, reiterated its opposition to the organization 'as it is now operated'."

There is still the "The UN Plus You" sequence of "Captain Video" on TV--or there was the last time we looked.

A committee of prominent residents in Harrison, N.Y., says a November 12 news dispatch, will protest the order of the local board of education that officers of any community organization wishing to use school facilities must sign a loyalty oath before meeting and that guest speakers must do the same **before speaking**. The committee expressed itself as afraid that Harrison may become **"a center of ignorance or an object of ridicule."**

The board of education had voted for the oath, and then, after the vote listened to the town's citizens debate the issue. On this **undemocratic procedure** the New Yorker makes pungent comment on the first page of its **"The Talk of the Town"** (November 22). Even more pungent, in its own way, was the Harrison sequence on Ed Murrow's "See It Now" on TV November 23, and fortunate, indeed, were those who happened to see it.

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In California the State Supreme Court recently ruled that the oath imposed by University of California Regents on its teachers was invalid. Later the Court upheld the Levering Act, requiring an oath of loyalty from all state employees, including University of California professors. Then at the November 4 election Californians voted better than 2 to 1 for an amendment to the state constitution requiring virtually the same oath for the same people as in the Levering Act and for another amendment withholding state jobs and tax exemptions from anyone advocating violent overthrow of the government. An excellent summary of the California situation appears in an AP dispatch in The New York Times for November 16.

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In "Danger Ahead in the Public Schools" in the October McCall's John Bainbridge reviews at length and in detail the attack on the schools in Scarsdale, New York and elsewhere, and the attacks on the UN and UNESCO.

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Stimulated by its Intellectual Freedom Committee, the California Library Association went on record in its October convention in favor of "the teaching of UNESCO in the public schools and opposing the censorship or elimination of books and materials on subjects relating to UNESCO and world understanding from classrooms and libraries of all types." The resolution said also, in part, that persons

who attack UNESCO and the ideals for which it stands are unwittingly suppressing the very freedoms they propose to protect. World friendship and world understanding, in one form or another, have been taught in the public schools since World War I without previously having been thought controversial or subversive. There is real danger that censorship of books and other materials though originating in the classroom may spread rapidly to school and public libraries in violation of our Library Bill of Rights.

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The Committee on Intellectual Freedom is quoted briefly about the professional duty of librarians in a box on page 2 of the October Church and State, a Montly Review.

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Librarians interested in intellectual freedom may wish to contribute items for a heading in the New Yorker called "Department of Higher Education; Let's All Shut Our Eyes Division." You may get an idea from an item which appeared under that heading on page 140 of the October 4 issue.

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Recently at a **state library association meeting in the Middle West** a group of librarians put on a series of scenes about librarian-borrower-public relationships. One depicted an excited colloquy between an American Legionnaire and the chairman of a Public Library Board of Trustees. It developed that the Legionnaire had gone to the library and complained about several books on the shelves. On duty at the circulation desk was a young nonprofessional, who immediately went into a backroom, brought out a copy of the Library Bill of Rights, handed it without more ado to his irate caller, and said, "Here you are. This is our policy about books. It's all there in black and white."

Later, when the Legionnaire has left the library, he reads the LBR, fastens upon section 5 and complains about it to the lawyer chairman of the library board. The chairman, who fundamentally believes in intellectual freedom but hasn't ever got that far in the fine print, is disturbed, and he runs to the head librarian for help and an explanation.

But the payoff comes in the next scene, a library staff meeting, in which it develops that the young desk attendant had already forgotten the incident with the Legionnaire and had no idea that the library was plunging into difficulties.

Moral 1: The Library Bill of Rights is not something to be stuck away in the safe for a rainy day. It's something to be openly discussed and accepted by library trustees and library staff before the deluge comes down.

Moral 2: Defending intellectual freedom is a professional obligation. It is possible for a problem to develop where a staff association has both professional and nonprofessional members. At Boston Public, for instance, in an informal petition of support for the Library Bill of Rights and the Labelling statement, there was some hesitation about signing the document on the part of nonprofessional workers who lacked civil service status and who were insufficiently aware of the library's responsibility for the public interest as over against private interests.

Moral 3: Role playing can be fun--and a valuable exercise. Its greatest value develops if librarians will play the roles of borrower, trustee and man-in-the-street up to the hilt.

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If this is the first issue of the Newsletter you have seen and you would like a free subscription, let us know by postcard.

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Last month we published an item about a request by the Texas State Commissioner of Education that 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 nonsubversive. This month the Alabama State Board of Education has become a copy cat. No author, editor or illustrator of a textbook used in Alabama can have ever been a member of the Communist Party, can be "in sympathy with subversive teachings," can for the past ten years have been a member of an organization on the Attorney General's list, or a member of a Communist front organization registered under the Federal Security Act of 1950. Required to make sure of all this are the textbook publishers, at the request of the State Superintendent of Education!

We have at hand a Birmingham news clipping of last July indicating "patriotic" opposition to school use of the revised textbook The Challenge to Democracy. And we have copies of outspoken editorials "Book Burning Goes On" and "A Call for Courage" in the September Bulletin of the Birmingham Teachers Association.

Real Estate Boards in Alabama and New Jersey have protested passages about home ownership in textbooks even after revision and in one case after a transfer of a book from Harper Brothers to McGraw-Hill. If all this seems a little confused and inconclusive, maybe at this point, we are too.

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Many of us are disturbed these days that other people, particularly those in Asia, may fail to appreciate and understand American institutions. It is heartening, then, to learn that the Hindu, a daily published in Madras and of great influence in India, has reprinted important passages from David Berninghausen's "The Right to Read: American Librarians on Censorship Front," a report on the New York Intellectual Freedom Conference in the July 12 Nation. Publication was obviously approving.

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Ex-librarian Ruth Brown and ex-library trustee Darlene Essary have lost their case against the city government of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. In 1950 the city commissioners named a new library board supplanting the established board and librarian. The Misses Brown and Essary contended that their action was contrary to state statutes, to state interest in library matters and to the "general public welfare." On September 16 the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled against the plaintiffs, holding that "the operation and administration of a city public library is a matter of strictly municipal concern." To those who recall the Bartlesville background, it will seem unfortunate that the law in this instance could not be brought to encompass intellectual freedom or courageous performance.

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Things are slowly going to pot in American public libraries, according to Henry Black in "War Invades the Libraries," November Masses & Mainstream. Librarians are "probably getting a little less than before the war" in real pay, the quality of public library service (including intellectual freedom) has been declining, and movement is almost all in the direction of further restriction, according to Mr. Black. Responsible for this deterioration are the federal government and "the reactionaires" (not otherwise identified). Mr. Black's article may be read to gain a view other than that ordinarily found in library journals, over library desks,

or in the stacks. Not that all he has to say is in error. But the Hero, who never appears from the wings, and the Villain, who never leaves the stage, are stereotypes of our modern "East Lynne." It is clear what is expected of the audience. Anyone more critical of Mr. Black's lines than Corliss Lamont would be, is obviously an old reactionary--or maybe a social democrat.

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LIBRARY JOURNAL

November 1, 1952 Volume 77 Number 19



Report from Boston

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In Boston as elsewhere librarians face the question of giving the American public free access to controversial material

A YEAR hence the Boston Public Library will celebrate its one-hundredth anniversary. This library—the first of the great American municipal public libraries to be supported by public taxation—will chronicle the events and principles that have made it a frequent leader among popular libraries and one of our few rich municipal research libraries. It must also chronicle adversity and attacks. Clearest in memory will be the 1952 attack upon the principle of free inquiry within the library. It is premature to state, but none too early to hope, that this part of the history will record a clear-cut victory for the library.

One need not be a Bostonian to consider the battle of 1952 a significant event in American library circles. The forces, the issues, the tactics, and the irrationality of the fight are not purely nor properly Bostonian. It is apparent that the attack was deliberately conceived as a part of a national trend, and its progress and rebuttal

may well serve as a classic illustration for librarians throughout the country.

The events in Boston followed shortly upon the heels of a transfer in ownership of the *Boston Post*, an ailing but influential newspaper. The *Post* was purchased in May, 1952, by John Fox, a spectacularly successful young financier, whose career was uncharted until *Fortune* devoted two articles to it in June and July of this year. A series of crusades has enlivened the *Post's* front page—and presumably its circulation—since Mr. Fox took charge. Traditionally Democratic, the paper has been non-committal and impartial in covering the 1952 campaigns, except as it has given strong support to Senator Joseph McCarthy's aims and methods.

On September 22 the *Post* began serializing the senator's book, *McCarthyism*. The paper revealed, on September 23, that the Boston Public Library subscribed to the pro-Soviet monthly *World Review*.

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On September 25 the *Post* disclosed that the McCarthy book was not available in the library, though the news story stated that the book had been ordered and would be made available for circulation. With these two local stories, the *Post* launched its campaign to give McCarthyism a chance in Boston.

The issue—once the McCarthy book was in the library and ready for circulation—was clearly one of access to information concerning communism within a research library. The Boston Public Library was not charged with having pro-Soviet materials on open shelves. It was accused by the *Post* of having in the main library, available on request, files of the *New World Review*, *Pravda*, and *Izvestia*, of including in a lobby display of great books a copy of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (this display was arranged by the Great Books Foundation), and of having in its reference collection Vishinsky's *Law of the Soviet State* and "thousands" of other communist publications. The *Post* stated the issue thus: "WE BELIEVE that proSoviet literature should be suppressed in our public libraries . . . WE BELIEVE that we are in a fight to the death . . . WE BELIEVE that to permit proCommunists to circulate their poison among our people is sheer stupidity."

The counter argument was stated by Milton E. Lord, director of the library. "It is essential that information on all aspects of political, international, and other questions be available for information purposes in order that the citizens of Boston may be informed about the friends and enemies of their country." To this the *Boston Herald* added, "The basic question is whether we still have confidence in the average American's ability to separate bad ideas from good by his own unaided effort. When we lose that confidence we shall have lost our faith in democracy itself." The two sides could make no clearer their basic differences.

With the issues clear, each side sought or accepted support. The *Post* claimed that scores of letter-writers approved of its position by two to one and that hundreds of persons approved unanimously by telephone. The paper was supported by statements from two commanders of local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts, and by a number of citizens apparently interviewed on the street. There was

definite support, though in varying tones, from city and library officials. Mayor John B. Hynes suggested the labelling of communist books. Two trustees of the library, Frank J. Donahue, a judge of the superior court, and Patrick F. MacDonald, a steel merchant, expressed strong disapproval of the purchase and availability of such materials, as did the president of the City Council, Gabriel F. Piemonte, and Councillor Francis X. Ahearn. It is interesting to note, if baffling to explain, that both Mr. Piemonte and Mr. Ahearn were elected to the Council last year with the support of the New Boston Committee, a reform group accused then of being intellectual and cosmopolitan. Earlier this year Piemonte drew similar attention by introducing a state bill—he is also a state representative—providing for drastic censorship of all printed materials sold in the state. Anyone watching the national political scene was forced to adjust his sights as a number of Boston Democrats embraced McCarthyism and at least as many Boston Republicans denied it.

The director of the library was immediately and fully supported by three members—a majority—of the trustees of the library: Frank W. Buxton, a retired newspaper editor; the Rt. Rev. Robert H. Lord, a Catholic priest and a former Harvard professor; and Lee M. Friedman, a lawyer and a noted book collector. Staff members report that two-thirds of the professional and sub-professional staff of the library signed a petition to the trustees asking that the principle of free inquiry be defended. The *Herald*, an arch-Republican newspaper, supported the library strongly, and the *Pilot*, a Catholic diocesan paper, and the *Christian Science Monitor* also voiced editorial approval. Twenty-four prominent citizens of Boston signed a statement of support. Herbert A. Philbrick, former FBI anti-Communist agent and author of *I Led Three Lives*, sent a long telegram to the trustees (p. 3) asking the Boston Library to stock more, not less, communist publications. Other individual, organizational, and editorial voices prepared to speak for the library if it might become necessary and effective to do so.

The methods of attack and defense are enlightening. The *Post* waged its crusade in daily front page editorials or stories. The lead sentence in one story, banner-

headlined, began, "Top-level communists and their underlings get the latest 'dope' straight from Moscow at the expense of the Boston taxpayers . . ." An editorial asked, "When do the names of Lenin and Stalin go up on the facade of our library?" But the *Post* could be baffled, as it was at "The surprising disclosure that Director Lord is unaware how many procommunist books are on the library shelves . . ." Two front page editorials signed by John Fox pointed to the disclosures made by Senator McCarthy as evidence that Boston must be awakened. The *Post* failed to include mention of support for the library from any other sources than the *Herald*.

City and library officials who agreed with the *Post's* position first joined in the attack with statements critical of library policy. They then prepared to bring the charges before the trustees and the City Council. The director and trustees of the library were asked to meet with the appropriation and finance committees of the Council to determine why library funds had been used to buy the materials in question. This meeting was scheduled for October 2, a day before the first regular autumn meeting of the library trustees.

The tactics of the defense were imposed by their argument—reason and reasonableness. The classic arguments for free speech and free access to information were voiced by the *Herald*, the *Pilot*, and the *Monitor*. The library staff drew upon the support of the American Library Association by quoting the Library Bill of Rights in its

petition. (Councillor Ahearn, however, voiced the suspicion that the ALA might be only another communist-dominated organization.) The demands of scholarship for current materials was made clear by Monsignor Lord, who translated from an issue of *Pravda* to show its usefulness, while Mr. Friedman showed the historical value of such materials with the parallel illustration of his own great collection on Jewish history, much of it, he pointed out, anti-Semitic.

The tactics of the attack and the defense were on public display at the open meeting of the trustees with four Council members. Trustee McDonald asked for a ban on Red propaganda and commented, "There appear to be a lot of people who are going all-out for Joe Stalin." Councillor Ahearn asked, "Has the board taken official notice of communism as a menace? . . . Has the board recognized that it could be the biggest dupe of all?" These questions and attacks could not, it appeared, be answered to the satisfaction of Mr. McDonald and Mr. Ahearn, but Monsignor Lord, Mr. Friedman, and Mr. Lord stated and illustrated their views.

At the meeting of the trustees on the day following, two resolutions were brought to the floor. The first, adopted by a three-to-two vote, read in part:

"Material presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times, international, national and local, should be available to the public.

"The library authorities have no right to

Shocked to hear that the Boston Public Library has under consideration the suppression of vital information exposing the methods, nature, and extent of the Soviet conspiracy against the United States. Such suppression would be directly in line with the current policy of the Communist Party in the United States to conceal the true aims of the party to all except its own trusted members. The Boston Public Library should have more, and not less, information available to the American people to aid them in their fight against Communism. A great present weakness is that the library does not have current and back copies of the *Daily* and *Sunday Workers* because this hides the facts which prove that the Communist Party, U.S.A., have never departed from the policies of the Soviet Union. Another very necessary document the library should make available is the Cominform Bulletin, "For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy," printed weekly in Bucharest by the top international bosses of the party. Another vital document which should be available is the J. Peters *Manual on Party Organization*, written by a foremost Russian agent for American comrades with a foreword by Jack Stachel. The Communist Party has been diligently seeking out and destroying all existing copies because of the damaging evidence contained therein. I hope that the Boston Public Library will make available for public inspection the maximum amount of material which the Communist Party now circulates and still will continue to circulate among its subversive and underground members.—HERBERT A. PHILBRICK, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and author of *I Led Three Lives*.

exercise censorship that their individual or collective points of view shall prescribe what the public shall read and what shall be banned.

"The public must be afforded an opportunity in a great library to have facilities to learn both sides of any controversial question of importance . . .

"At the same time . . . the trustees propose that the material in the library shall not be misused for wrongful propaganda purposes to the injury of our country.

"We are determined . . . that the facilities of the library shall not be abused for the planned infiltration of communist propaganda. The director has therefore been instructed accordingly to effect arrangements designed to prevent abuse or misuse of any communist propaganda material in our possession."

Judge Donahue presented a substitute resolution incorporating only the final two paragraphs of this statement. This was defeated by a two-to-three vote.

The *Post* took what comfort it could and headlined its front page story "Library

to Weed Out Red Books," although it was made clear by quotations in the story that no such decision had been reached. The *Herald* headed its news story "Library Heads Reject Censorship Role."

Since this action of the trustees, the *Post* has twice credited the library with secretly labelling communist periodicals. These statements seem to stem only from belated discovery by the *Post* of the subject heading "Propaganda, Russian" in the catalog.

As the attacks peter out, the library administration may still face minority opposition within the Board of Trustees and the City Council. Whether such opposition can gather additional strength to threaten library principles or finances will depend upon the longevity of McCarthyism throughout the nation and upon the skill and effectiveness with which its aims and tactics are adapted to the local scene. In any event, the Boston Public Library has won a first round; if the battle continue there is now great strength evident in the community upon which the library may draw.