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Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association

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Thank You. Dollar returns from our announcement that subscriptions to the Newsletter were no longer free allow us to continue a limited distribution through next June. We plan at least three issues, will increase the number if further response allows them. Subscriptions at \$1 apiece are still being received by Paul Bixler, Antioch College Library, Yellow Springs, O.

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A.L.A. STATEMENT IS CENSORED. In July the Belfast Telegraph noted that three of the 27 panels in Columbia University's traveling exhibit on "Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof" were withdrawn shortly before the exhibit opened at Trinity College in Dublin. The Telegraph requoted from other press reports the statement by the U.S. Information Service officer in charge of the exhibit that the decision had been taken "in order that no offense should be given to any authority in Ireland, where censorship, such as the panels criticize, is, of course, in force."

One censored panel included the words of Walter Lippmann: "No official born on this earth is wise enough to separate good ideas from bad ideas, good beliefs from bad beliefs."

Another panel was deemed offensive for including the words of President A. Whitney Griswold of Yale University: "Books won't stay banned. They won't burn. Ideas won't go to jail. In the long run of history, the censor and the inquisitor have always lost. The only sure weapon against bad ideas is better ideas."

The third withdrawn panel featured a quotation from the second section of the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights: "... books or other reading material of sound factual authority should not be proscribed or removed from library shelves because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

The Telegraph found it "hard to understand why these sayings ...were suddenly put in 'the deep freeze'.... It cannot be contended that these words are not relevant to the times in which we live, and their suppression on the grounds of giving offense appears to be a contradiction of the free use of knowledge and the traffic of ideas.

"Because this decision is in direct conflict with the whole American tradition, which is opposed to authoritarianism, we hope that Columbia University, Mr. Lippmann, the President of Yale University and the American Library Association will be made aware of the fact that it has not passed unnoticed by many of America's friends...."

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PLEASE, MORE NEWS CLIPPINGS. Censorship hasn't exactly slipped out of the news recently. But it does seem that fewer news stories concerned with intellectual freedom are now being picked up by the news services and published outside their immediate area. We can not afford a news clipping service at present. Thus it would greatly help if you would clip news items which touch upon censorship (especially where libraries are concerned) and send them to us.

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FREEDOM FILM. The Center for Mass Communication of Columbia University Press has issued a 16mm., 15-minute discussion film called "Freedom to Read" on the subject, "How can the library best serve our freedom?" on a grant from the Fund for the Republic. The scene is a public library and chief characters are the librarian and a local citizen who believes books on Communism should be removed from the shelves-- both quite outspoken in their opinions. It is set up as a discussion film, but clearly needs a discussion guide and other materials to go with it. The American Heritage Project is working on a discussion guide but how soon it will be available we have no information. Cost of the film is \$50.

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THE COMICS. Somewhat after the manner of professional baseball and of motion pictures, the comics are now to have an official "censor" to purge their industry of objectionable material. On October 1 Magistrate Charles F. Murphy of New York City became "czar" of the comics in a program of industry self-regulation "based on a strong and effective code of ethics and a competent staff of reviewers." Magistrate Murphy said he took the job, for which he has a two-year contract, in a desire to help children of the country on "a preventive scale." But he was quoted as commenting that in his nine years on the bench he had never had a case of juvenile delinquency which he or any official of his court could attribute to the reading of comic books.

Magistrate Murphy's appointment followed months of disturbance over the nation concerning the excesses of comics. Perhaps the most interesting event of this time, "Operation Book Swap," took place in Canton, Ohio at the Stark County Fair. There the children's department of the Canton Public Library in cooperation with the Parent Teachers Association and the Federated Women's Club offered children and teenagers an illustrated book of their choice in exchange for ten crime and horror comics. The first supply of 2,000 books (including copies of Jets of the World, Prince and the Pauper, Black Beauty, Robin Hood, Tom Sawyer, and The Squeely Bug) was rapidly exhausted. In planning the swap, the name of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Obscene Literature was changed to the Mayor's Committee for the Promotion of Good Reading Habits.

Other "comics" events of a less positive nature were recorded elsewhere in Ohio, Oklahoma, California, Texas, Rhode Island, New York, Chicago, Washington, and Richmond, Virginia. An excellent four-page summary appears in "Censorship Developments," bulletin of the American Book Publishers Council (2 W. 46th Street, New York City) dated September 23.

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HAS YOUR LIBRARY ADOPTED THE LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS OR THE FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT? American Book Publishers Council reports that 370 libraries ordered copies of the Freedom to Read statement. But no one knows how many libraries adopted the Library Bill of Rights. (We have recorded perhaps a half-dozen adoptions which came to our notice in these columns.) If your library has adopted either one, won't you let us know, and if you will, tell us how the adoption came about and what the effect has been on library public relations concerning intellectual freedom.

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BOOK "DE-SELECTED" IN NEW HYDE PARK, LONG ISLAND. Months ago Mrs. Willdigg, a housewife and mother, borrowed a copy of Russia by Vernon Ives from the library of the Hillside Grade School, New Hyde Park, Long Island, refused to return it, and demanded that other copies of the book be withdrawn from the library, pending an investigation of how the books got on the shelves. The New Hyde Park school board voted

4 to 3 to retain the book in the library, later (in September) voted to bill Mrs. Willdigg for the price of the book and reaffirmed its decision to keep the book on the shelves.

The book was published in 1943 and, in the words of its author, "was intended to be a brief, objective survey of one of our wartime allies. It was so regarded by standard school and library evaluating media. In the light of today's changed attitudes, some of the statements may seem dated but scarcely subversive."

Because the local dispute over the book showed no signs of abating, the school board asked a decision on the book's acceptability from the State Department of Education in Albany and from the commission appointed by the New York State Board of Regents. The school board received no immediate reply except from Dr. Frederick J. Moffat, assistant commissioner, who recommended unofficially "in view of the controversy that has arisen in New Hyde Park, that the book should be removed from the school library." The book was then removed.

Author Ives, who is also president of Holiday House, pointed out that "more is at stake in this controversy than the merits of any one book. The real issue is whether the judgment of trained teachers and librarians, backed by professional approved lists, is to be arbitrarily set aside by self-appointed censors."

Early in September Mrs. Willdigg, supported by the local American Legion Post, asked that an outside committee of "veterans, clergy, and parents be immediately formed by the school board to investigate" library holdings for possible subversive material. According to a news story in the N.Y. Post, there is likelihood that such a committee will be selected by the school board--not immediately--"but some time later, when the tumult dies."

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BOOK PURGE FAILS IN CALIFORNIA. Fifteen high school library books, denounced as subversive or obscene, were retained by the board of trustees of Tamalpais Union High School district of Marin County, California in mid-September. Two of the books were ordered put on reserve for use only under faculty supervision. Three others were put on similar reserve pending further study although the trustees said they did not believe the books obscene. An editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle praised the trustees for going "to the root of the matter by reading the books in question."

Leader in the movement to purge the books was a woman who had taken part in the unsuccessful fight a year ago to delete all references to UNESCO from UN materials used in the county's classrooms. Her widely circulated letter which contained selected quotations from the books led a committee of the grand jury to investigate and conclude that some of the books "were definitely placed in our school library to plant seeds of communism in the minds of our children." The chief original charge against the books had been that they were "obscene and profane." But the committee denounced them on the grounds of subversion. The committee also blamed the State Board of Education for recommending the books--a responsibility and authority denied by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Confusion was resolved only when the board of trustees, given an opportunity to act, retained the books.

This public dispute wracked the county for more than ten days, and produced many local news stories. It is impossible here to recount many of the details but it seems worth noting that much of the emphasis fell on book selection policy. On September 9 a panel discussion over a local radio station on the subject "What Procedures Should Be Followed in Selecting Books for Our Public High School Libraries?" brought so many questions from the listening audience that for the first time in the history

of the program, listeners were requested to refrain from phoning any more into the studio. In this broadcast the superintendent of the school district made plain that the school librarians and faculty members interested in books relating to their specific fields were best qualified to select library material. As criteria set up by the board, he listed such paraphrased points as follows: Is the author honest and sincere in his presentation? Does it honestly cover the material? Is there a worthwhile theme or message? Does it specifically relate to the student's educational background?

A strong competing method--supported, so its author said, by schoolmen and school librarians in a neighboring city--would have been to appoint a "representative citizens committee of parent groups, church leaders, scout leaders, teachers and librarians" to "establish the standard of selection, to set up a procedure of reviewing books; and establish a program of reading guidance in the school libraries."

To this suggestion the board of trustees replied by recommending that the district Educational Council submit to them a panel of persons "to act in an advisory capacity only in an overall study of the aims and purposes which should be followed in the educational program of this district."

The experience in Marin County would suggest that an explicit book selection policy may be of assistance in early clarification of censorship issues.

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CONCLUSION IN ALABAMA. The Alabama book labelling law (see Newsletter Vol. II, No. 3, June, 1954) was ruled unconstitutional by the Circuit Court of Montgomery, Alabama.

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BILL TO DENY MAILING PRIVILEGES TO "SUBVERSIVE" MATERIALS. Representative Katherine St. George introduced into the session of the House of Representatives just past a bill prohibiting "transmission through the mails at less than cost of publications, books, other printed matter, and films containing material **contrary** to the best interests of the United States." The bill would deny second- and third-class mailing privileges, and special rates for mailing books and films to materials published or produced by organizations listed in the House "Guide to Subversive Organizations and Publications," listed as subversive by the Attorney General, or registered or required to be registered in the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950. The bill would at the least deprive libraries of certain materials needed for research, and if administered at its worst under the general term "contrary to the best interests of the United States" would destroy free communication by publication. Referred to the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, the bill did not come out of committee. But we quote from the "Survey and Study of Post Office Operations...Third Intermediate Report" dated August 4: "Public hearings were scheduled to consider this bill..., but were postponed at the request of certain publishers who demanded further time to prepare arguments. It is the view of the subcommittee that steps should be taken by the Congress at an early date to exclude from the mails those publications which seek to undermine our government. The subcommittee will continue its investigation and development of legislation in this important field of postal service."

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FEAR OF CONTROVERSY. Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom of the National Education Association, after questioning 522 school superintendents, has reported that in many communities free discussion of controversial issues has been inhibited. Teachers are afraid, the report stated, to encourage classroom discussion of religious

education, sex education, race relations, communism, labor-industry relations, UNESCO. "The American teacher," the report concluded, "has voluntarily censored herself."

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FTR ON TELEVISION. From the July Film World we learn that "Freedom to Read" has been the principal theme of a television series being broadcast locally by the University of Illinois Library and Library School. The series is produced in cooperation with the university's Television-Motion Picture Unit and has appeared weekly from Station WCAI in Champaign. The series of 15-minute programs is designed to promote interest in library services over the state, and stresses library participation in establishing freedom of thought and expression.

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KAUFFMAN AND BOCCACCIO NOT FOR BURNING. In July an English judge gave a summation on Stanley Kauffman's novel The Philanderer which some have hailed as the most significant judicial utterance on the subject of obscenity in England in almost a hundred years. Mr. Justice Stable charged the jury to consider not whether the book was obscene but whether its tendency is to deprave the susceptible. "The charge," he said, "is not that the tendency of the book is either to shock or to disgust. That is not a criminal offense. The charge is that the tendency of the book is to corrupt and deprave. Then you say: 'Well, corrupt or deprave whom?', and again the test: those whose minds are open to such immoral influence and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall." Mr. Justice Stable further questioned whether we should take as our literary standards something suitable "for the decently brought up young female aged 14" or "the sort of books that one reads as a child in the nursery."

The jury brought in a verdict of not guilty. However, the decision was followed by a number of prosecutions of other "obscene" books. In one, using earlier criteria, Boccaccio's Decameron was condemned, but the condemnation was reversed on appeal.

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FOUNDATIONS. Not only is the House Special Committee to Investigate Tax-Exempt Foundations, chaired by Congressman B. Carroll Reece, expected to report this fall, but so also is a subcommittee established in mid-July by the House Committee on Education and Labor, and headed by Representative Ralph W. Gwinn of New York. The Gwinn subcommittee will investigate the government's role in education, and it will also give attention to "what influence, if any, by various non-governmental groups and associations, is reflected in the policies of the U. S. Office of Education." That the inquiry may go into much the same area of educational organizations and foundations as the Reece committee was noted by the Washington Star for July 11, which reported that Mr. Gwinn had consulted with members of the Reece committee staff on how to approach the new investigation.

From a note in the Civil Liberties Bulletin of the National Civil Liberties Clearing House in Washington, written by Dr. Richard Kenman of the NEA's Defense Commission, we learn also that an amendment was put into the Tax Reform bill denying tax exemption to certain nonprofit foundations and organizations if such groups "participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office." Rejected was another amendment denying tax exemptions to any foundation or other such organization which contributed to "subversive" organizations or individuals. It was successfully opposed on the ground that it was too vague for foundations to administer.

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RESOLUTION TO TEACH FACTS ABOUT COMMUNISM TABLED. The House of Delegates of the American Bar Association voted to table a resolution advocating the teaching of facts about Communism in the public schools August 16. The proposal that the teaching be accomplished "in appropriate forms at all levels" had been approved after a year of study by the Bar Association's Standing Committee on American Citizenship. A detailed report on a proposed code of Congressional committee investigating procedure was approved at the same meeting.

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ETHICS OF CONTROVERSY. The American Committee for Cultural Freedom has issued the following statement on ethical standards of controversy:

1. Nothing and no one is immune from criticism.
2. Everyone involved in a controversy has an intellectual responsibility to inform himself of the available facts.
3. Criticism should be directed first to policies, and against persons only when they are responsible for policies, and against their motives or purposes only when there is some independent evidence of their character.
4. Because certain words are legally permissible, they are not therefore morally permissible.
5. Before impugning an opponent's motives, even when they legitimately may be impugned, answer his arguments.
6. Do not treat an opponent of a policy as if he were therefore a personal enemy, or an enemy of the country, or a concealed enemy of democracy.
7. Since a good cause may be defended by bad arguments, after answering the bad arguments for another's position, present positive evidence for your own.
8. Do not hesitate to admit lack of knowledge or to suspend judgment if evidence is not decisive either way.
9. Because something is logically possible, it is not therefore probable. "It is not impossible," is a preface to an irrelevant statement about human affairs. The question is always one of the balance of probabilities.
10. The cardinal sin, when we are looking for truth of fact or wisdom of policy, is refusal to discuss, or action which blocks discussion.

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