

Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association

Prepared by Paul Bixler, Secretary

Vol. IV, No. 1

September, 1955

BOOK SELECTION WORK CONFERENCE. 230 librarians attended the conference on book selection sponsored by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Public Libraries Division in Philadelphia July 2-3. They heard Herbert Brucker, editor of the Hartford (Conn.) Courant on "Intellectual Freedom--1955"; Paul Bixler concerning the impact of the recent intellectual climate on libraries; Miriam Putnam on library objectives in the community; and Eleanor Phinney on book selection policy. Breaking up into groups the librarians discussed the problems of book selection policy among themselves. At a final session moderated by Mrs. Grace Stevenson conference members considered a nine-point summary of conclusions, digested from their own reports. It was the expressed majority opinion that a public library should have a written policy of book selection based upon the Library Bill of Rights and/or the Freedom to Read statement--a policy not to be laid away in mothballs but to be reconsidered and rediscussed at appropriate intervals.

Mrs. Dorothy Smith of the ALA Public Libraries Division is editing the total proceedings. They will be published this fall in the PLD Reporter at a moderate price.

\* \* \* \*

\$5,000 AWARD FOR LIBRARY'S COURAGE. The Fund for the Republic has awarded the William Jeanes Memorial Library in Plymouth Meeting, Pa., \$5,000 for refusing to discharge its librarian (N. Y. Times, June 23). Mrs. Mary Knowles, the librarian, had invoked the Fifth Amendment in 1953 to avoid answering questions by the Jenner Committee about her employment in 1945-47, by the Samuel Adams School in Boston, and she recently refused to take a loyalty oath in Pennsylvania. She has been a professional librarian since 1928.

Mrs. Knowles was discharged as librarian in Norwood, Mass., following her refusal to testify in 1953. She was unable to get another job until the library in Plymouth Meeting, run by the Friends, employed her on a temporary basis in October, 1953. According to the Times, the library committee, having satisfied itself that Mrs. Knowles was a loyal citizen and had not been connected with any subversive group since 1947, made her position permanent last September. Local patriotic groups demanded her dismissal, the local school board forbade teachers to take children to the library, and several local contributions in support of the library were withdrawn. The committee refused to alter its decision.

In a copyrighted story in the N. Y. Herald Tribune (Aug. 21), Herbert A. Philbrick, who has written and testified about the Samuel Adama School,

takes issue with the appropriateness of the award and with some of the "facts" presumed to be behind it. He comments that the Quaker Meeting has thus far refused to accept the sum and that the action to be taken concerning it will be decided in September.

The Times quotes the Fund as giving the award "for courageous and effective defense of democratic principles."

\* \* \* \*

FREEDOM TO PUBLISH. The Beacon Press, supported in court by the American Book Publishers Council, won the suit brought against it by the Krebiozen Research Corporation and others who sought to prevent publication of Krebiozen: the Great Cancer Mystery. Author George D. Stoddard was dismissed two years ago as president of the University of Illinois following his decision against conducting further research on krebiozen at the university. Plaintiffs contended that the work, being distributed in galley form, maligned the professional standing of those doing krebiozen research. The attempt to stop publication was called "censorship in its most insidious form" by defense counsel (N. Y. Times, June 19). On July 7 Judge Joseph Hurley of Massachusetts denied the plaintiffs' plea for a preliminary injunction against publication and dissolved the restraining order which he had issued against the book April 6. Beacon Press re-established the publication date, delayed since spring, for August 15....

After being confiscated by California prison authorities, a manuscript by condemned murderer Caryl Chessman was recently returned to him and later forwarded to a New York publisher. The author's agent and publisher had protested the confiscation as unconstitutional. Author Chessman, condemned to die in a gas chamber, was author of the autobiographical Cell 2455 Death Row last year. According to the Columbus (O.) Dispatch (June 11), his new manuscript discussed legal and judicial developments in the case and gave Chessman's "reactions to his condemned status." The Dispatch hailed defeat of the attempt of a "brazen and arbitrary censorship" as a "badly needed" bolstering of the tradition of freedom.

\* \* \* \*

COMMENT AND CRITICISM CONCERNING IFC. In its July 2 issue the Saturday Review published a section called "Censors and the Library: a Report from Five Cities" (Brooksville, Fla.; Galion, Ohio; San Antonio, Texas; Mt. Lebanon, Pa.; and Boston, Mass.), and an article "The Library in '55" by Janice Kee. The section was keyed to the theme of the book selection conference and was a point of reference for conference members....

In his syndicated newspaper column of July 4 (in some papers it appeared a day or two later) Raymond Moley criticized this Newsletter and the interests of the Intellectual Freedom Committee. Began Mr. Moley: "I have never known a more devoted group of public servants than the people who operate our libraries." But the contents of the June Newsletter "disturbed" him a bit and the committee seemed to him "a bit confused about the matters in which the librarians have a legitimate concern and, indeed, the real meaning of intellectual freedom." His specific reference was to the "item about the action of the Georgia Board of Education in rejecting the recommendation of three textbooks made by a 'professional textbook committee'" (see Newsletter III:4, p. 1). What, Mr. Moley asked, "will the Committee on

Intellectual Freedom do when it disagrees with the school administrators?" It was his further opinion that President Eisenhower had been badly informed when he made his informal speech about "book burning" at Dartmouth College in 1953....

In the June 9 issue of Human Events appeared "Book Burning--How the Librarians Do It" by Victor Lasky. "The real issue," according to Mr. Lasky, "is whether librarians should be permitted to purchase books solely on the basis of their personal opinions." To support his notion that librarians "burn" books, he gave two examples.

In the July 17 N. Y. Times Book Review, Harvey Breit devoted several paragraphs of his weekly "In and Out of Books" to disagreement with Mr. Lasky. Libraries, he commented, "are guided by all sorts of influences." And he referred to the Book Selection Work Conference of two weeks before.

Should libraries, as Mr. Lasky (and others) suggest, "give the public what it wants" in book selection? Just what is "public demand"? These questions were widely discussed at the conference and will be covered in the proceedings to be published in the PLD Reporter.

\* \* \* \*

NEWARK TEACHERS DISMISSED. Three teachers were dismissed by the Newark (N.J.) Board of Education by a vote of 5 to 4 June 23 on charges that they lacked the fitness to teach. Charges were based on their refusal to answer questions, via the Fifth Amendment, put to them by the House Un-American Activities Committee in May. The committee had used testimony taken from Bella Dodd linking them with Communism. Jacob Fox, who presented the misconduct charges, said that the issue was not Communism nor the validity of using the Fifth Amendment but whether teachers could refuse to cooperate with an authorized investigating committee and continue to teach. Two of the teachers offered to say whether they had been members of the Communist Party during the past year if no further questions were asked, and the third teacher made the offer unconditionally, but the board voted down the proposal unanimously. Through the eight hours of the board hearing, the teachers gave no testimony, according to the Newark News (June 22).

Previous to the decision a number of New Jersey organizations joined in a public statement asking that the teachers not be dismissed solely on the grounds of using the Fifth Amendment and urging that they be given a fair hearing. In August the AFL American Federation of Teachers voted \$1500 from its defense fund to contest the Newark teachers dismissal (Fort Wayne, Ind. Aug. 19, AP). But the commitment required that the Federation's executive council approve the choice of a defense attorney and the submission by any person to be defended of a signed affidavit that such person "does not now and never has been a member of an organization with totalitarian leanings."

\* \* \* \*

BAR ASSOCIATION FAVORS STUDY OF COMMUNISM. By unanimous vote the American Bar Association passed a resolution urging Congress to adopt the Flood bill which would set up an 11-member commission to make available information and prepare suggested study materials for the nation's schools "as to the basic differences between the theories and practices of the American way of life and theory and practices of atheistic communism"

(AP dispatch, Aug. 23). A year ago the ABA rejected a similar proposal. Walter M. Bastian, chairman of the association's American Citizenship Committee, said that "at a time when Russia is smiling at us it is a good time to take a look at their system."

\* \* \* \*

NEA PLATFORM. Delegates to the meeting of the National Education Association adopted as part of a new platform a section calling for "freedom of speech, worship, press, assembly and thought subject only to such controls as those of other responsible citizens" (Chicago, July 8, UP). Another section reaffirmed the NEA position "that schools should teach about communism and other forms of totalitarianism but that Communist teachers should not be employed in schools." According to the news dispatch, it condemned the use of words like "Red" and "Communist" to attack teachers and others "who are not Communists but who merely have views different from those of their accusers."

Another resolution was defeated by the margin of a few votes when delegates from New York pointed out that it might strengthen Communist-dominated organizations, whose methods are unethical (N. Y. World Telegram and Sun, July 11). The resolution read: "The association commends all groups which have resisted the intimidating efforts of persons and organizations to force cancellation of speakers." Objection was to "all groups."

\* \* \* \*

TWO CHALLENGING BOOKS. In The Private Diary of a Public Servant (Macmillan) Martin Merson tells the "inside" story of the International Information Administration during the five months through July, 1953 in which he served the agency and Senator McCarthy, aided by Roy Cohn and David Schine, was attacking the policy and morale of the I.I.A. Much of the book deals with the 1953 difficulties over book selection in United States' Overseas Libraries.

Samuel Stouffer's Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties (Doubleday) tells of an extended survey of American public attitudes toward Communism and civil liberties. Librarians will be especially interested in the attitudes of public library trustees (see Chapter Two).

\* \* \* \*

FtR. In an article in the Sacramento (Calif.) Bee of June 4, John S. Knight, editor of the Detroit Free Press, linked the dangers to libraries with those to newspapers and quoted paragraphs from the Freedom to Read statement. "Public libraries," he contended, "are the institutions most vital to the preservation of free speech and freedom of thought in the community. Without disparaging in any way the role of the library and its impact upon American culture, I respectfully contend that newspapers are likewise entitled to be listed in the 'most vital' category as stout defenders of individual liberty."

\* \* \* \*

CENSORSHIP OF NEWS. Complaints of news coverups in Washington have come

recently from a number of sources: J. R. Wiggins, managing editor of the Washington Post and Times Herald, has protested the tightening up on the release of military information, particularly in the technical field; John C. O'Brien, Washington correspondent of the Philadelphia Enquirer, has charged that failure of newspapers to give all the news lies with "government officials who seem to regard the public business as strictly their own business"; Senator Hubert Humphrey has criticized the "shroud of silence" which has descended on many of Washington's executive agencies. It was this aspect of censorship which was particularly singled out for comment by Herbert Brucker, editor of the Hartford (Conn.) Courant, in his speech before librarians at the Book Selection Work Conference in Philadelphia.

In August a House of Representative subcommittee asked government departments and agencies whether they were withholding information concerning their activities that the public had a right to know about (N. Y. Times, Aug. 10). The committee posed 80 questions to executive agencies and gave September 15 as deadline "for frank answers."

\* \* \* \*

COMIC BOOKS. The "book swap" (see each of the last four issues of the Newsletter) continues to be the most popular method of attempting to stem the flood of "objectionable" comic books, though legislation (see last Newsletter) runs it a close second. What appear to be the most successful of recent swap operations took place in New Bedford (Mass.) and South Bend (Ind.); in both cities the public library took a leading part in "swap" management. In Springfield (Ill.) the American Legion Auxiliary reported, according to the local State Register (June 5), that none of the comics brought in for swap were objectionable. But the National Organization for Decent Literature, after dropping all comics from its monthly list of Publications Disapproved since last October, has announced its dissatisfaction with the performance of the Comics Code Authority under Comics Czar Murphy and will resume its "objectionable" listing in another three months.

\* \* \* \*

MOVIE CENSORSHIP. In Massachusetts the strict motion picture censorship statute, part of a 300-year-old Sunday law, has been declared unconstitutional by the state Supreme Judicial Court (N. Y. Times, July 6). In Kansas a recent law abolishing the state movie censor board has been declared unconstitutional by the state supreme court (Salina Journal, June 20); but the censor board will probably not be revived. In Ohio the state's board of censorship has been out of business since last January, but observers say there is no certainty that some form of censorship will not be reimposed. These events and others indicate that the condition of pre-censorship of motion pictures relatively stable for a generation, may be described today as extremely "fluid."

In his column in the N. Y. Times theatre section (July 17), Bosley Crowther discusses the "anomaly of a movie production code," which refuses the seal of approval to such films as "The Moon is Blue" and "I Am a Camera" and by that refusal creates greater attraction to the films than their quality warrants. Such films--Crowther says "I Am a Camera" is not defensible on moral grounds whereas "The Moon is Blue" was--tend to give fuel to the drive for state censorship.

Elsewhere in the same theatre section Charles A. Mosher, chairman of the Education Committee in the Ohio Senate, tells how a "tremendous effort to enact a new 'more constitutional' censorship law has just failed in the Ohio Senate." It failed, says Senator Mosher, not on the merits of free expression but on a freak parliamentary test, on the question of "relieving" his committee of the bill before opposition testimony was completed. And he is not optimistic for the future. The basic group demanding movie censorship today is 50,000 "salt-of-the-earth Ohioans," who, "with the best intentions" believe that "state censorship of the movies is necessary to protect the morals of our children."

Children are the community's first responsibility in film control, in the opinion of Hugh M. Flick, former head of the New York State Censor Board, but according to the Weekly Bulletin of the American Civil Liberties Union (June 13), he suggests that present and recent forms of censorship be replaced by a classification system of judging films. If conditional licenses could be given out, "tagging films on a black and white basis would be unnecessary." The New York board, composed of four men and three women, is selected on the basis of competitive civil service examinations.

Dr. Flick pointed out that legal censorship now exists in six states, but that heavier police and community pressure on exhibitors and distributors is often exerted in other areas. His own group, he added, "did very little censoring but mainly hit fly-by-night pornographic and objectionable films."

Dr. Flick develops some of his ideas further in "Censorship, Logic and the Law" in the theatre section of the N. Y. Times (Aug. 28).

\* \* \* \*

"WASH OUT THE AIR" CAMPAIGN. A "Wash Out the Air" Committee of the Juvenile Delinquency and Crime Commission of Houston, Texas, maintaining a check through what it calls "listening posts," has campaigned against the use of lewd or suggestive recordings over local radio stations (Albert T. Collins in the N. Y. Times theatre section, Aug. 21). Some of the radio stations have cooperated by setting up their own panels to screen records received from recording companies.

The movement to clean the air began when "members of the Negro community objected to a program being broadcast by a Houston station. It featured a female singer who burlesqued the singing style of the Southern Negro, and in doing so, the complainants said, sang suggestive songs."

Dr. H. A. Bulloch, Professor of Sociology at Texas Southern University, the State Negro University in Houston, posed the problem for discussion on a radio panel show he was conducting, and later expanded the subject to include all lewd or suggestive music. The Commission's "Wash Out the Air" Committee, now under the chairmanship of Dr. Bulloch, records considerable response to its campaign from over the nation as well as in Houston.

\* \* \* \*

SCHOOL BOOK "CONTROL" BILL DEFEATED IN CALIFORNIA. A bill to make governing boards of local school districts responsible for the selection and review of books in California school libraries was defeated June 8. The bill, already once rejected, was revived, passed the California Senate

28 to 0, but was stopped in the State Assembly on June 8, final day of the legislature.

\* \* \* \*

REPORT FROM ILLINOIS. A bill to establish public committees to screen school textbooks for material "incompatible with the American constitutional form of government" failed of passage in the Illinois legislature. But the Broyles bill requiring all state employees and all school teachers to sign a loyalty oath in order to keep their jobs passed the legislature and was signed into law by Governor Stratton. The law is a watered-down version of legal restrictions which Senator Broyles had unsuccessfully sponsored in four previous attempts. One faculty member of Southern Illinois University has already refused to take the oath required by the law (Carbondale, Ill., Aug. 19, UP); lecturer Robert Harris, in philosophy, said he considered the oath "an invasion of individual rights and an insult to the administration which hired me."

\* \* \* \*

ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN GEORGIA. The Georgia State Board of Education took back two resolutions on segregation it passed early in August (Atlanta Constitution, Aug. 16). One resolution proposed to "revoke forever" licenses of teachers who hold membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People after September 15. The second ordered revocation of the license of any teacher who approved of or agreed to teach racially mixed classes.

In place of these resolutions the State Board tossed the matter of teachers' attitudes toward segregation to local authorities and called attention to a state code requiring teachers to take "a solemn oath to uphold, support and defend the constitution and laws of this state...and to refrain from directly or indirectly subscribing to or teaching any theory of government or economics or social relations which is inconsistent with the fundamental principles of patriotism and high ideals of Americanism."

According to an INS dispatch (Aug. 15), state Attorney General Eugene Cook commented further: "The state-created conditional right to an education at state public expense is predicated upon the assumption that adequate provision will be made to maintain the separation of the white and Negro races in public schools."

\* \* \* \*

SCHOOL LBR. Do you have your copy of the School Library Bill of Rights? We have a few copies still available in mimeographed form.

\* \* \* \*

NEWS SHORTS. In Atlanta, Ga., censorship of "The Blackboard Jungle" was, at least temporarily prevented, when Loew's, Inc., as licensor of the film, brought action against the city. The Atlanta censor authority is the Library Board....

In Dundee(Ill.) when a 17-year old high school senior criticized "excessive patriotism," urged world federalism, and called the U. S. monetary system "unstable" in a valedictory address, his words were called un-American

and the speech led to a special meeting of the Dundee school board, according to the Decatur (Ill.) Herald (June 16). The board upheld his freedom of speech and said the faculty was under no duty "to censor a student's address."...

A study of the law and practice governing employment of college teachers will be undertaken by Columbia University under a \$10,000 grant from the Fund for the Republic (N. Y. Times, June 27)....

A teacher running a recreation program for children at a Levittown (Long Island) school was first fired, then temporarily suspended for teaching the kids a song whose chorus ran: "Davy, Davy Crackpot, bane of the wild frontier." Murray Kempton (N. Y. Post, Aug. 5) says Crockett was really a subversive, anyhow....

Number 7 (summer, 1955) of the series Aspects of Librarianship, issued by the Department of Library Science, Kent State University, is "Intellectual Freedom" by John M. Goudeau, Associate Professor of Library Science at the university....

A bill to prohibit the teaching of communism, socialism, world government, "planned economy," or anything not compatible with business died in the Florida assembly after passage in the state Senate (Miami Herald, June 4)....

Controversies over academic freedom at the University of Nevada and at North Dakota Agriculture College (see last Newsletter, "Editorial" and News Shorts") continue unabated (N. Y. Times, June 5). But both are surpassed in bitterness by the dissension concerning the administration of the College of William and Mary which has boiled over into mass student demonstrations, appeals to state officials for an investigation, faculty letters to newspapers, and charges that President Alvin D. Chandler has attempted "thought control." William and Mary is the nation's second oldest institution of higher learning....

According to Business Week, the freedom to read is one of the demands of Los Angeles burlesque queens. The girls have threatened a "cover-up" strike unless they get higher wages, hiring limited to those who have served an apprenticeship in "the art of exotic dancing," and larger dressing rooms providing a "suitable place to read good books between shows."...

School of Law at Stanford University, under a \$25,000 grant from the Fund for the Republic, will initiate an analytical study of leading witnesses on Communism (Washington, Aug. 22, UP)....

Federal Customs and Post Office officials say new handling procedures will remove barriers from delivery of materials from behind the Iron Curtain to libraries and research institutions (N. Y. Times, Aug. 20). Concerning complaints of delay, see Newsletter III:4, p. 3.

\* \* \* \*

Paul Bixler

(from Antioch College  
Yellow Springs, Ohio)