

Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association

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### THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS CENSOR

The issues: Government, by its very name and the very fact of its existence, whether democratic or totalitarian, contains within itself elements of restrictiveness and hence, whether by implication or application, elements of censorship, however broadly conceived and executed. Through Customs, the U. S. Government passes on the admissibility of material objects, books included, and thus regulates their entry into this land; through the executive branch and the numerous government agencies, the U. S. Government regulates the flow of information regarding its diverse activities for both foreign and domestic consumption; through the State Department, the U. S. Government regulates the flow of information (directly and indirectly) between this country and abroad. In each of these areas, according to many observers, recent developments constitute a threat to the tradition of full, free, and unrestricted information.

Imports and exports: Late last Fall, the Government seized a collection of photographs, paintings, and books destined for use in research at the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University, labelling them "pornographic" (Garden City, N. Y., Newsday, Nov. 19).

Also late last Fall, the Government, through USIA, refused to include several of James T. Farrell's books in a program guaranteeing profits from books sold in foreign countries, objecting to their titles and labelling them "detrimental to the interests of the U. S. abroad" (N. Y. Post, Nov. 30).

A Southern Illinois University professor, seeking to subscribe to the Soviet Moscow News for use in a class in government, was advised by Four Continent Book Corporation: "Because the U. S. Post Office refuses in many cases to deliver to subscribers newspapers and magazines from the USSR of a political nature, we cannot be held responsible for [your] failure to receive such issues." Moreover, the Corporation supplied a form letter for him to send Customs wherein he would promise "to use this periodical for my own information. . . and not to distribute or transmit any copies to any other persons" - a statement which, as any teacher knows, is a

manifest impossibility. Observes the professor: "Such a letter as . . . suggested. . . would certainly involve promises that would seriously endanger the freedom to read as well as to teach." (Information provided by Asst. Prof. Julius Paul, May 15)

Seizure by Customs in San Francisco of the second printing (520 copies) of the paperbound Howl and Other Poems by Allen Ginsburg imported from London touched off a court battle, led by ACLU and the importer, City Lights Books. (First edition passed Customs last October and was promptly sold out.) Reason for seizure, in the words of Customs Collector MacPhee (Publishers' Weekly, April 29): "The words and the sense. . . are obscene. You wouldn't want your children to read it."

Federal news secrecy: President Eisenhower's order giving 17 executive departments power to classify as "confidential" any information within their jurisdiction as well as his warning to the Pentagon that statements must be cleared with the Operations Coordinating Board provoked wide press protest and sparked further legislative measures (drafted by Reps. Moss, Dawson, and Fassell, along with Sen. Hennings) "to pry loose more federal information for Congress and the public" (Indianapolis News, April 24). Typical editorial comment: "Until the President can see his way clear to end the bureaucratic censorship, he will find his anger at loose-tongued Pentagonians balanced by public indignation at the tight-lipped civilian agencies" (Buffalo, N. Y., News, April 5). The Associated Press Managing Editors Association opposed the order because "it is being invoked increasingly to withhold information to which. . . the public is entitled" (Mobile, Ala., Press, April 5).

Limited access to news sources abroad: State Department Secretary Dulles and the press continued their imbroglio over barring newsmen from Communist China, despite Dulles' proposal that a "pool" of newsmen be permitted a one-shot visit to that country. Dulles, however, heaped fuel on the fire he was seeking to quench by adding (N. Y. Times, April 25): "The question is whether we can have a passport policy which will permit responsible newsgathering and at the same time not permit a general influx of Americans," whereupon veteran newsman Arthur Krock of the Times dryly observed that the question had been answered innumerable times - by the State Department itself (as in the Mideast), by local and state governments (when cards are issued permitting reporters to cross police lines while the public cannot), by the White House and other government agencies (in issuing passes to reporters for news conferences not open to the public). Concluded Krock:

Access to news sources both here and abroad is not a "privilege" granted through government favor or caprice. . . It is the only orderly means by which people of the Republic can be assured of their right to know in peacetime all that is happening around them.

#### A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SPEAKS OUT

In a notably clear and reasoned speech before Franklin and Marshall College students on May 7, Supreme Court Justice Douglas summarized the guarantees of free speech: freedom to edit and publish, freedom to search for knowledge, freedom to write.

Justice Douglas on the freedom to edit and publish (Washington Post and Times Herald, May 8): "Editors must have no sense of someone looking over their shoulder. There must be no reprisals."

Stressing the right of colleges and universities "to search for knowledge unhampered," Justice Douglas added that the right of teaching, even for Communist leaders teaching the "overthrow theory," is protected under the First Amendment.

Justice Douglas on the freedom to write: "There is no freedom of expression unless all the facets of life are included, no matter how repulsive they may seem to some. Lurid sex accounts may trigger a psychopath to action, but they may give another person mature knowledge of life."

Commenting on another aspect of free expression, Justice Douglas observed that the U. S. Government has "indulged in orgies of censorship more consistent with totalitarianism than with democracy."

The North lectures, containing the full text of the Justice's remarks, will be published this Fall under the title The Right of the People.

## STATE SCOREBOARD

In the wake of the flood of crime comics, exposé magazines, borderline pornography, and other allegedly improper materials hitting the newsstands came a flood of proposed legislation, largely from well-intentioned groups and individuals who, concerned over the admittedly undesirable aspects of some publications, nevertheless failed to see the even more undesirable effects that could result from such legislative control. The urge to protect extended to further proposals affecting films and even school texts and library books. Many lawmakers, librarians, editors, publishers, and other citizens seeking to preserve the individual's right to read and freedom from coercion joined in opposing the proposed legislation which was, almost without exception, vague, broad, impossible to enforce, and of doubtful constitutionality.

Comics: Despite Governor Knight's veto of a comics bill in 1955, practically the same bill was introduced again this session in California, but failed to clear the Assembly Judiciary Committee. The bill would make it a misdemeanor to sell or give any minor a comic book displaying "acts of arson, burglary, kidnapping, mayhem, murder, rape, robbery, theft, train-wrecking, manslaughter or assault with a deadly weapon," including these same acts when committed "by animals, or any non-human, part human, or imaginary beings." Opponents pointed out that the adoption of such a bill would make Peter Rabbit, Donald Duck, and "the rich realm of classical mythology" illicit reading, and librarian Henry Madden, CLA president, observed that it would make "any standard treatise on criminology. . . a 'crime comic'. . . and its circulation to a 17-year old a misdemeanor." (San Francisco Examiner, March 13)

In Wisconsin, supporters of a bill banning crime comics revived it after it had supposedly been killed the week before (Madison Capital Times, May 29).

Obscenity: Pennsylvania, with at least 4 bills pending to set up another movie board of censors (whose powers would, in one bill, extend to books and magazines) and

5 bills dealing with obscene literature (Reading Times, March 28), plus at least one other bill (Philadelphia Inquirer, April 6), seems to have hit the jackpot in current censorship proposals. The Allegheny County Grand Jury has urged the proposal of even more legislation (Trenton Valley News, April 1).

Oklahoma's Legislature dumped its dirty literature into the same hamper with comics by voting a 3-man commission to investigate and ban "so-called comic books. . . not uplifting or beneficial to the education, welfare and character-building of the children of Oklahoma," and also "obscene literature," i. e. , "any literature offensive to chastity, or modesty, expressing or presenting to the mind or view something that purity and decency forbids to be exposed." (Okla. City Oklahoman, April 23)

In the closing days of its session, Michigan's Legislature, after much wrangling between House and Senate, passed a new law replacing the one ruled unconstitutional by the U. S. Supreme Court last February (Detroit Times, May 27). In Vermont, a "controversial anti-obscenity bill" was signed into law by the Governor (Montpelier Argus, April 13). In Minnesota, out of 3 bills, the only one adopted was a bill prohibiting the practice of "tie-ins" (St. Paul Pioneer Press, April 3). Other states with anti-obscenity bills at various legislative stages were Florida (1 bill), New York (2 bills), North Carolina (3 bills), and New Jersey (4 bills).

Missouri took the opposite tack and was expected to reduce the penalty for publishing or distributing obscene materials from a felony to a misdemeanor, hoping to make convictions easier to obtain (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, March 27).

New Mexico, Connecticut, and Tennessee rejected new anti-pornography legislation.

School texts and library books: Passing the California Senate but dying in the Assembly Education Committee was a proposal to add two requirements to the Education Code: (1) that the district school board adopt a procedure for selecting textbooks and books for the school library and (2) that the school boards prohibit acquisition or retention of materials "that teach, sponsor, or otherwise tend to propagate ideas or principles. . . of idleness, profanity, and falsehood" or seem at variance with "the principles of morality, truth, justice, and patriotism." Opponents foresaw possible barring of Mein Kampf and Das Kapital, even as reference works, under such a measure - along with Treasure Island, "peopled by an immoral set of pirates," and warned that under the "idleness, profanity, falsehood" clause, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn could go. "Bad legislation," said the Long Beach Press-Telegram (April 18), observing that "the selection of library books [should be left] to trained, responsible librarians."

In Illinois, a bill providing for the evaluation of textbooks suspected of an "anti-American" bias was turned down by the Senate Education Committee. Asked the Decatur Herald (May 17): "What is 'un-American'?" To some, Social Security, unemployment compensation, or even the farm price support is."

Films: In Ohio, after pigeon-holing legislation which would have restored prior censorship, a senate committee recommended a substitute "due process" bill which would provide for investigation by the Attorney General of any allegedly obscene films, followed by jury trial, where warranted (Cleveland Press, May 8). Kansas

retained its censorship board, despite efforts to kill it; in other states, such as Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, and New Mexico, motion pictures were a part of an omnibus censorship bill.

#### LIBRARIANS ACTIVE IN ANTI-CENSORSHIP MOVES

Involved directly in moves to combat censorship on numerous fronts, librarians from Michigan and Minnesota to Oklahoma and California appeared before legislative hearings, reported impending legislation and other matters of censorship to the Newsletter, participated in public panels and in statewide citizen councils on freedom to read.

Librarians spoke out freely, often quotably. Said Frederick H. Wagman (University of Michigan Libraries), appearing with other librarians before Michigan's Senate Judiciary Committee: "Obscenity is not a matter of fact, but of taste" (Saginaw News, May 1). Said Leroy Merritt (University of California Library School), appearing with other California librarians before the Assembly Judiciary Committee: "Removing crime comics from the hands of those under 18 in a world where crime is nightly dramatized on radio and television, and where real crime is the daily diet of even the most casual readers of our newspapers, is to erect a thin tent in a gale" (Oakland Tribune, March 12).

#### THREE MORE BEFORE THE U. S. SUPREME COURT

Last Winter, the U. S. Supreme Court's decision on the Butler case, voiding a 118-year old Michigan anti-obscenity statute, made history (March 1957 Newsletter).

Presently under its study are three more cases which (Washington Post and Times Herald, April 21) "seem likely to yield the first clearcut constitutional test of State and Federal anti-obscenity laws which have never been squarely interpreted by the Court." On a day in late April, the justices, after listening for three hours to arguments, took under advisement three cases involving: the Federal ban on mailing obscene material (Roth vs. U. S.), a 1941 New York statute allowing civil injunctions to halt continued distribution of allegedly obscene material (Kingsley Books vs. Brown), and a California law prohibiting even the advertising of an allegedly indecent book (Alberts vs. California). (Washington News, April 23, and Post and Times Herald, April 21)

#### DETROIT BAN ON TEN NORTH FREDERICK VOIDED

In ruling that police officials have no legal power to declare a book obscene and ban its sale without a court determination as to the book's legality, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Weideman ended the ban imposed by policeman Piggins on O'Hara's Ten North Frederick, which was reported in the March 1957 Newsletter. The judge's decision said in part: "... defendants Piggins and Bullach [Police Censor Bureau head] have circumvented the judicial process and have affected such ban on the book. . . Nor can [they] successfully argue that their conduct did not constitute a banning of the book. The fact remains that after these defendants made their announcement. . . booksellers in Detroit stopped selling the book. To say that such stoppage of sale. . . was a voluntary act on the part of the booksellers is to fly in the face of realism." After a flurry of statements, Commissioner Piggins finally complied.

Principals in the case (Publishers Cerf and Dystel and their lawyers) hailed the decision as a "significant and resounding blow for the protection of all publishers," while ABPC's Dan Lacy pronounced it a deterrent to "those who try to circumvent the courts and substitute coercion for the legal process." (Publishers' Weekly, April 8, pp. 32-33 and May 13, p. 28)

## ACLU AND NODL

The NODL, long a thorn in publishers' flesh (see issues of their Censorship Bulletin), drew a soberly stated protest from the ACLU for its methods of blacklist, boycott, and issuance of 'certificates of compliance'. While defending NODL's right to express its own views for the communicants of the Roman Catholic Church, ACLU observed, "From many towns and cities come reports of extended NODL action which constitutes nothing less than censorship of what the American people as such may read," and noted the abuse (or at least misuse) of the list by police, military commanders on Army posts, and prosecuting attorneys.

Signing the 2500-word "Statement on Censorship Activity by Private Organizations and the National Organization for Decent Literature" were 162 leading editors, publishers, critics, professors, museum officials, authors, composers, and playwrights.

Press reaction throughout the country was prompt - and mixed: "a pretty good swift kickback" (against overmuch censorship), wrote Harvey Breit (N. Y. Times, May 19); "bubble-headed reasoning" (Charleston, S. C., News and Courier, May 7); "NODL, ACLU Feud, Kids Lose" (headline in Chicago News, May 7); "the whole controversy. . . re-emphasizes the danger. . . of censorship efforts. . . designed to reach a certain group" (Winston-Salem, N. C., Journal, May 12).

## RADIO REJECTS AND TV TABCOOS

Acting like censors: In the last few months: (1) NBC cancelled a play called The Vigil because it asked the viewer to decide for himself whether or not Christ had actually risen from the dead (the presentation twice in Canada had raised no question by government-owned CBC); (2) WGN-TV cancelled the showing of Martin Luther (March 1957 Newsletter); (3) CBS cancelled John Secondari's play The Commentator, dealing with a network commentator's right to editorialize (this play has now been bought, paid for, and rejected, by both CBS and NBC); (4) CBS radio cancelled a scheduled talk on inter-denominational frictions by the Catholic weekly America's editor; (5) NBC cancelled a talk on the relationship between cigarettes and lung cancer.

Such happenings prompted columnist Jay Nelson Tuck (N. Y. Post, May 1) to dub television a "timid giant," while Jack Gould, writing in the N. Y. Times (March 31) under the heading "Busy Big Brother," was moved to observe caustically: "By the fireside one can be a happy cabbage who is expected only to think positively about nothing."

ACLU demands investigation: Concerned at the implications of such actions, ACLU called for a Congressional inquiry into the handling of controversial topics on radio and television in order to make clear to the public, the Government, and the industry itself the obligation of TV and radio "to perform in the public interest, by

presenting controversy and discussion of important public issues" (N. Y. Times, April 29).

Footnote on "Luther" controversy: Following cancellation by WGN-TV, the film Martin Luther was premiered on TV in Milwaukee in mid-March and offered to the Chicagoland audience over WKBK-TV in late April. Shown at a late evening hour in both cities, it drew a phenomenally high number of viewers (55% in Chicago and 56% in Milwaukee) and with far more sets on than usual at that hour, according to the American Research Bureau (Christian Science Monitor, March 15 and May 2).

## CENSORS AND THE CINEMA

The cinema, though lacking last winter's Baby Doll and the furore she kicked up, was not barren of incident during recent months.

Film boards, commissioners, policemen, mayors, and various volunteer groups continued to preview, ban, and delete. As Bosley Crowther, well-known film critic for the N. Y. Times, observed (March 3):

The utter confusion and illogic of the whole practice of film censorship are such that one ponders gravely upon the intent or reason of legislators in this land. Five years ago, the Supreme Court held in the Miracle case that motion pictures are fully entitled to the constitutional guarantees of free speech.

That is to say, they are entitled to go to the public without prior restraint on their content or circulation. Whether they violate laws after their release is something else again.

Steps involving such illegal "prior restraint," resulting either in a complete ban of the film or the even less acceptable pastepot-and-scissors treatment, were taken against such films as Island in the Sun, Monkey on My Back, and the foreign films Game of Love and Bed of Grass.

Island in the Sun and Monkey on My Back attracted most attention. Even before its release, the former, with its overtones of miscegenation, was the subject of hot editorials in the Southern press, sparked moves in South Carolina towards state movie censorship (Columbia Record, May 13), and prompted one zealous Southern group to petition Defense Secretary Wilson to bar it from all Defense Department installations (N. Y. Post, April 9). The latter, true life story of Barney Ross, famous boxer and one-time drug addict, ran afoul of the Production Code, which demands that a scene showing the actual injection of the needle into the addict's arm be eliminated (N. Y. Times, April 15), despite the protests by the producer and by Ross himself that the scene is essential to audience understanding. Said Ross: "It would be like a fighter pulling the punch to leave it out" (N. Y. Post, April 18).

Among foreign films, the police-imposed Chicago ban on Game of Love was upheld by the U. S. Court of Appeals which found it "super-charged with a current of lewdness," as reported in the Tribune (May 23), while New York State censors denied a license to the Greek-made Bed of Grass (N. Y. Times, April 15).

## BAUM BOMB

The appearance of a new book on Oz's Wizard and his creator L. Frank Baum from the Michigan State University Press, along with some remarks attributed to Mr. Ulveling of the Detroit Public Library anent the intentional non-presence of the Oz books in Detroit's collection, have provided the ingredients for a tempestuous, if teapot-ish, tornado of controversy up and down the land. Result: fairly widespread (and not too sympathetic) observations from editors and columnists on such matters as the intrinsic worth of Baum's Wizard, the place and purpose of children's books - and indeed the place and purpose of librarians themselves - with a few added comments on various assorted (and presumably associated) topics. . . More on this in the September issue.

## ON AND OFF THE CAMPUS

Gates unbarred: In March, New York's five municipal colleges were faced with a decision. Should John Gates, editor of the Communist Daily Worker and convicted Smith Act violater, be permitted to speak on their campuses? (Gates had been invited by Queens College students to speak at their Academic Freedom Week program.) Queens College said "No." City College students invited him. City College said "No." Heads of all five New York municipal colleges met - and said "No." Whereupon, Columbia University students lined up three speaking engagements for Gates. Columbia authorities said nothing. Gates appeared and spoke. Editorial opinion was divided. Said the N. Y. World-Telegram and Sun (March 15): "We remain unable to see any good reason for giving any Communist a forum anywhere." Said the N. Y. Times (March 21): "The result of Columbia's sensible attitude is there for everyone to see. . . Academic freedom won a triumph, as it always will." The Des Moines Register (March 26) commented: "A free university, if it is to deserve the appellation, must be a free market place for ideas, where those we consider fools or knaves can offer their wares along with the wise men and saints."

Oppenheimer at Harvard: Following Harvard's appointment of J. Robert Oppenheimer as William James Lecturer in Philosophy for 1957, eight Harvard alumni calling themselves the Harvard Veritas Committee (headed by Colonel Archibald Roosevelt), launched a vigorous but unsuccessful campaign against the appointment on the grounds of Oppenheimer's "highly questionable moral background." Veritas' action, the Worcester Telegram (March 27) commented, "must be rather discouraging to Harvard. Most colleges and universities like to think that higher education imparts some breadth of vision, some charity of spirit, some emotional restraint. Yet here are eight products. . . upon whom its benefits have fallen lightly, if at all."

At Oppenheimer's first appearance in the 8-lecture series, the hall seating 1200 was filled, with several hundred more listening over a public address system outside. Harvard President Pusey, in introducing the famous physicist, called him "a distinguished son of Harvard" and added: "The security of the country depends largely on a few such highly educated people." (Christian Science Monitor, April 11)

"Crucible" controversy: At the University of Pennsylvania, dramatic productions director Kathleen Quinn ruled against The Crucible and all other Arthur Miller plays because "he and all he writes are controversial." Following student protests

and a closed production before the advisory board of the Pennsylvania Players, Miss Quinn was overruled and The Crucible's public production was set for March 16. (N. Y. Post, March 6)

Campus press troubles: At Brooklyn College, three student editors of Kingsman, campus newspaper, were suspended from their posts for failing to show a forthcoming editorial to the faculty advisor. "Contrary to the conditions under which the press operates in a free society," cried Kingsman's staff. Staff, in turn, was charged by Brooklyn President Gideonse with: (1) deliberate repression of letters to the editors, (2) exclusion of journalistic talent "if they happen to differ with the inner circle," and (3) disregard of the multiple editorial rule pertaining to controversial issues. Others, in turn, claimed administrative censorship had been applied in previous instances on Brooklyn's campus. (N. Y. Post, April 25 and May 8, 13)

At District of Columbia Teachers College, officials confiscated 600 copies of the student magazine because of a poem and a short story. The story, said Dean Paul O. Carr, was "a rather low type of story not representative of the student body." The poem printed the name "Jesus Christ" in lower case type. Said he: "I don't like the words 'Jesus Christ' in small letters." (Washington News, May 29)

## THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Houston hotbed: Houston schools' trouble and unrest is long-standing, born of disputes between "conservative" and "liberal" factions on such matters as school board elections, textbook selections, so-called "controversial" speakers, and even the political and social activities of teachers (Newsletter, March 1955).

Latest upheaval came March 22, when newly-elected school board member Mrs. Earl Maughmer Jr. objected to two proposed 10th grade geography texts - Macmillan's Geography of the World and Rand McNally's Geography and World Affairs - because they taught "one-worldism" and contained "U. N. propaganda." Approved by the state, the textbooks had been chosen by the selection committee for a new political geography course in the social studies department. (Sample Maughmerism: "That's the thing about social studies; it gives you a chance to include all this propaganda." Houston Post, March 23) Target of Mrs. Maughmer's next attack: a newly chosen 12th grade economics book - Applied Economics, published by Southwestern - because it "implies federal control has become necessary."

At controversy's end, several weeks later, Houston was to retain its old economics text and the selection committee was to search for a geography text which had to be purchased out of local funds, since no agreement was reached on any of the free state-approved texts.

Meanwhile, Superintendent Moreland had resigned. Concluding that "Moreland's monumental patience came to an end," Time (April 22, p. 54) quoted from the Houston Press: "A black day for Houston. . . In our opinion Dr. Moreland was just about the last brake that has kept the Houston school system from plunging into a mad whirlpool of uncontrolled extremism. . . We predict: after Moreland, the deluge."

Communism study urged: Communism must be taught in secondary schools, a Yale conference on teaching social studies was told by Professor Emeritus George S.

Counts of Columbia. Failure to do so would "convict the older generation of either stupidity or violation of trust." (N. Y. Times, March 30)

Incredible -- but true: The Nebraska DAR adopted a resolution asking ALL state educational institutions to stop using educational materials published by UNESCO. (N. Y. Times, March 14)

#### ALONG FREEDOM'S FRONT

Liberty and Justice Book Awards: Winners of the first ALA \$5000 Liberty and Justice Book Awards (under a grant from the Fund for the Republic) were:

James Thurber, for his Further Fables for Our Time, which demonstrates "Mark Twain's belief that in the cause of humanity one of the most effective weapons is humor" (this and following quotations from the citations accompanying the awards).

William H. Whyte Jr., for his The Organization Man, which in the struggle of Liberty and Justice against "the soft seductions of conformity. . . dissects and lays bare the easy descent into the grey flannel suit and the resulting grey flannel mind."

Alpheus Mason, for his Harlan Stone, Pillar of the Law, which "celebrates a Pillar of the Law who devoted his life to teaching and expounding the Constitution and to sustaining the liberties of men and the freedom of mind."

Award scrolls were presented to Simon and Schuster as publisher of the Whyte and Thurber books and to Viking as publisher of the Mason book.

Authors receiving honorable mention were Margaret Mead, the late Zachariah Chafee, Walter Gellhorn, James Morton Smith, Borden Deal, David Karp, Shirley E. Pfoutz, Reginald Rose, and Elizabeth Spencer.

Award ceremonies took place before an audience of editors, publishers, and librarians at the Donnell Library Center, New York City, on Thursday, April 25. Presiding was Robert B. Downs, Chairman of the Committee on Intellectual Freedom, which, through its secretary, Leslie W. Dunlap, administered the grant and selected the jurors in each category (details in the December 1956 and March 1957 Newsletter).

The Fund grant provides for similar awards to authors of 1957 books in "imaginative literature," "history and biography," and "contemporary problems and affairs."

Alexander Meiklejohn Award established: Honoring the nationally known 85-year old educator, the American Association of University Professors on May 10 announced the establishment of an annual award "for an outstanding contribution to the promotion of academic freedom in the U. S." First award will be made in February 1958.

The public's "right to know": In Vermont "right to know" legislation passed by the State Assembly reinforces in law the principle that "all meetings of legislative bodies, or state and local agencies, including town officials, shall be open and public" (Rutland Herald, April 20). In North Dakota, the Legislature passed two bills guaranteeing public access to public records and meetings (Minot News, March 12). In New Jersey, the State Supreme Court upheld the right of a grand

jury to make public its comments, by overruling a judge who had suppressed two such comments. In a comprehensive opinion, Justice Wackenfled stated: "The discretionary judicial right of suppression should be sparingly exercised and exerted only where the matters returned are clearly and unquestionably contrary to the public good" (Newark News, May 23).

AND ALSO. . .

Divergent Catholic views on censorship: At a session preceding the Catholic Library Association's annual conference in Louisville (Ky.), two Catholic leaders voiced opposing views on censorship (Courier Journal, April 23).

Father Burke (head librarian of DePaul University): "For Catholics, censorship is a noble function. For them, control neither negates nor abridges intellectual freedom."

Layman Bourke (professor at St. Louis University), stressing "persuasion not coercion" to raise moral standards: "Let us not suggest to our fellow citizens that we will have censorship for its own sake. Censorship is not an act of positive perfection, but a mark of moral and intellectual failure in some elements of society."

Protestants fight 'obscenity': Protestant churchmen meeting in Washington organized a Churchmen's Committee for Decent Publications "to carry on a nationwide fight against obscenity in magazines and in other media" (Christian Science Monitor, April 29). Among generalizations offered at the conference: Obscene literature is definitely connected with prostitution, liquor, and dope; much of it is directed to young people; it is responsible for much of the increase in juvenile delinquency and crime.

Writers fight censorship: Mystery Writers of America, Inc., has formed a nationwide anti-censorship committee to "conduct a counter-offensive against local pressure groups and individuals," with Anthony Boucher, N. Y. Times Book Review mystery editor as chairman (Publishers' Weekly, April 1).

Authors League of America applauded Howard Lindsay's statement "Freedom to Write," which noted an "authoritarian drift towards censorship" with "the impetus . . . coming mainly from groups who above all should hold totalitarianism in abhorrence" (N. Y. Times, May 8). Statement will be submitted to membership (3500) for mail vote.

YOU MIGHT LIKE TO READ. . .

Richard McKeon, Robert K. Merton, and Walter Gellhorn: The Freedom to Read. N. Y., Bowker, 1957. (\$2.50, cloth; \$1.25, paper)

A humanist, a sociologist, and a lawyer take a close look at the "why's and wherefore's" of censorship and come up with some sound, common-sense, pithily stated and highly quotable observations. The index reveals an astonishing range: "Public Library Inquiry" follows "Protagoras," "obscenity" is next to "Ovid," and "National Office (sic) for Decent Literature" is snuggled next to "Old Testament." Last index entry is (appropriately enough) Worlds in Collision.

American Civil Liberties Union: Liberty Is Always Unfinished Business. N. Y., ACLU, 1957. (50¢, paper)

This, the 36th annual report of ACLU, constitutes a valuable source-book in censorship, enumerating (and documenting) important happenings on the whole civil liberties front from July 1, 1955 to June 30, 1956. Of specific interest to librarians is the opening section: "Freedom of Belief, Speech, and Association." Available from ACLU Headquarters, 170 5th Ave., N. Y. 10, N. Y.

\_\_\_\_\_ : "Statement on Censorship Activities by Private Organizations and the National Organization for Decent Literature." Gratis from ACLU Headquarters

Paul Bixler: "The Librarian and the Public's Right to Know." In The Nature and Development of the Library Collection (Illinois Library School Allerton Park Institute series, no. 3). 1957. Distributed by the Illini Union Bookstore, Champaign, Ill. (\$1.75, paper)

A highly readable paper by a seasoned observer and former Newsletter editor.

WHAT NEXT?

H-m-m-m-m: Hard at work on matters of obscenity, a committee of Pennsylvania's district attorneys, according to the Easton Express (April 13), issued "a preliminary report of recommendations for strengthening the sale of obscene literature."

Little late: Following the rack 'n ruin wrought by teen-agers at the New York showing of Don't Knock the Rock, the Inland Empire Association of Evangelicals went on record as "unalterably opposed" to scheduling and showing the film in Spokane. P. S. - The film had already been shown in Spokane and had quietly gone its way. (Spokane Spokesman Review, Feb. 27)

Definition, please: "Most public libraries formerly had certain books on a 'restricted list' which could be issued only to adults of good reputation and only for scientific or educational purposes" (discussion at the Ohio Valley Regional Group of Catalogers as reported in the Cincinnati Enquirer, April 28).

No "Bullfight" in Maine: In Portland, showing of Bullfight, Spanish documentary, was cancelled at the "suggestion" of County Attorney Chapman and Agent Woodbury of the Maine Society for the Protection of Animals. Commented the Portland Express (April 2): "Just what Mr. Woodbury expected to do is not clear, since no live bulls were present in the theatre, tortured or otherwise."

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INFORMATION, PLEASE:

Has anyone seen a review of, or had occasion to use, Felix Wittmer's Conquest of the American Mind (Boston, Meador, 1956)? One librarian writes: "We are curious to know. . . any repercussions from the book. Are librarians in small communities reading the book? Are they upset by the misrepresentations? . . . I think he (the author) is pretty much of a crackpot, but our curiosity is aroused about the reactions of others."