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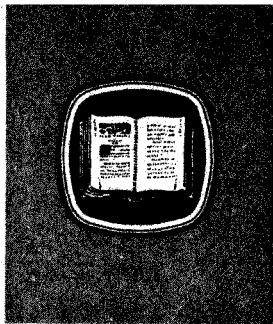
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A CASE STUDY OF THE FAIRFAX
COUNTY, VIRGINIA, CENSORSHIP CONTROVERSY,
1963

by

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INTRODUCTION

The public library occupies a peculiar position among the agencies of government. Political theorists frequently ignore the library as a non-political entity. Librarians as well often avoid politics, and contend that libraries should be above political considerations. Both sides ignore the not uncommon and often heated political disputes involving public libraries throughout the county.

Presently the public library is undergoing a period of transition. This is true of its role in the community as its purposes and goals develop differently from those of the public library endowed by Andrew Carnegie early in this century. In any change, uncertainties appear which may cloud and confuse the issues involved. One of the greatest uncertainties facing the modern library today is the lack of a clear and acceptable definition of the proper relationship between the library and the community which it serves. The enduring myth that public libraries should be apolitical contributes to this confusion.

Libraries can and do become embroiled in heated political disputes. The Fairfax County, Virginia, Library offers a classic case of a political struggle over differing concepts of library censorship and freedom. It was the center of a dispute that animated the county for several weeks. The controversy spread to the courts and onto the floor of Congress. It received widespread publicity and involved a great diversity of interested groups. It included a variety of questions: evolution, segregation, obscenity and communism.

Not only political scientists, but also librarians themselves contribute to the enduring myth that libraries should be apolitical. As a profession, public librarians are the most politically inept and naive of all professional public servants. Though this fact has been recognized by the more knowledgeable experts in library science, little action has been taken to rectify this weakness. For instance, only one graduate school of library science in the United States requires its master's degree candidates to take a course in public administration.

Over 90 percent of all public libraries are governed by some type of board of trustees. The original purpose for establishing these boards was supported by turn-of-the-century muckraking beliefs that government services should be removed from the control of politicians. Boards were intended to act as buffers between the librarian and local politicians. It seems that the concept that "politics is dirty" remains prevalent among many trustees today.

Literature on library politics written by librarians frequently minimizes the complexities of the modern American political process, reflects an obsession with the need for better public relations and abounds in vague generalizations.¹

The case of the Fairfax County Library vividly illustrates the need for an intellectual and sophisticated approach to politics by librarians, as well as the necessity for more research on the library in the political process.

EVENTS IN THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CENSORSHIP CONTROVERSY

The spring of 1963 began somewhat uneventfully in the Fairfax County Library. Such problems as did arise were those typical to a growing library system. Much administrative attention was given to absorbing the newer branch libraries into the system. All in all, there was nothing to indicate that trouble lay over the horizon. The library received the usual publicity from local newspapers announcing the time, location, and title of a film to be shown or the back page of the newspaper may have carried a short paragraph on books for the partially sighted or a brief announcement of the hiring of a new librarian. No unusual interest in the library was evidenced in the press or in the contacts library personnel had with the public. The library was answering the information needs of Fairfax County in a manner traditionally assigned to the public library--uncontroversially and quietly. This was particularly true of the evening film series. As the week of April 21st through the 27th approached, a little more publicity than usual appeared in connection with National Library Week.

The "Wonderful World of Films" program planned to show during National Library Week such innocuous documentaries as "The Library Story," a pantomime by Marcel Marceau entitled "In the Park," and a film entitled "Japan." "Japan" was produced by Julien Bryan, who is a very well known and respected figure in the educational and documentary film business. In fact, just the week before, the Fairfax Library had shown one of his films on South America.

Librarian Mary McCulloch was surprised one day when a telephone caller alleged that Julien Bryan was a known Communist and that the Fairfax Library was showing Communist propaganda.² The caller was the late George O'Sullivan, then commander of American Legion Post 177. Since O'Sullivan was the first of six callers, it seemed apparent that he had discussed his action with other individuals. The apparent source of his information was the Legion publication Firing Line, which is available only to post commanders.

Julien Bryan and the Films

From this unexpected beginning, the fracas rapidly multiplied, with other organizations and individuals entering the picture on both sides of the controversy. Initially, most of the argument centered around the alleged Communist background of Bryan. Julien Bryan is a somewhat shadowy figure and any facts about his life are hard to document. However, he is a recognized leader in the production of educational and documentary films. He was the executive director of the International Film Foundation,³ an organization which receives much of its support from philanthropic foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation. Bryan has produced a number of films on countries throughout the world, one of the best known of his films, entitled "Siege," being concerned with the bombardment and siege of Warsaw. In 1930, he obtained permission to travel in Russia, where he photographed life in the Soviet Union. This film remained for a long time as the only non-Russian documentary on Russia under communism. This trip in itself aroused suspicion in some individuals; further, his friendship with the Communist composer Hans Eisler resulted in mention of his name before the Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives.

On that occasion, it was alleged by Walter Steele, first vice-president of the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, that Bryan was a one-time member of the National Committee of the Communist Friends of the Soviet Union, an organization which had been placed on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations.⁴ Bryan never denied this. The chairman of the House Committee at the time of the hearings, the late J. Parnell Thomas (Rep., N. J.) is reported to have stated: "I just want to state for the record that we have not got anything in our files to prove Julien Bryan is a Communist."⁵ The evidence supporting the allegations is skimpy at best; however, to many of the participants in the Fairfax Library fracas, such evidence was convincing, and this group included a congressman. It is ironic, too, that Bryan had been a charter member of the American Legion for eight years before O'Sullivan was born. It is also ironic that the Pentagon is one of the largest customers for Bryan's films.

It is typical of the methods of rightist organizations that the attack was first directed at the producer and not at the content of the films themselves. O'Sullivan and his supporters had not seen the films involved, but were contending that if the man was tainted then anything which he touched was tainted. Once the films were shown the conservatives were convinced that their fears had been justified.

The three films specifically under attack were "Japan," "Picture in Your Mind," and "Brotherhood of Man." "Japan" is a documentary on post-war Japan which stresses the upheaval in Japanese life since the Second World War. It pictures the phenomenal industrial growth of the country since 1945 and the values of economic ties with the United States, of free enterprise, of the family unit, and of allegiance to the United Nations and the Free World. The conservatives attacked the film as subtle socialistic propaganda. They received encouragement when a missionary, then recently returned from Japan, viewed the film and expressed his belief that it distorted post-war Japan. The missionary, Dale Crowley, Jr., felt that the film overemphasized economics and ignored moral values. This he interpreted as a "pitch for Marxism."⁶ According to the Washington, D.C., Evening News, "he added that reference to the atom bombing of Japanese cities is always brought up in any material on Japan to gain sympathy for the Japanese," and that this technique is a "tool of the Communists."⁶

The film "Picture in Your Mind" is an animated cartoon depicting the evolution of man from simplistic sea organisms to amphibians to land creatures to mammals and then to the human species. The primary message is that man developed from a common origin, but that as time passed, he separated into different groups with different ways. Once thus separated, man began to regard his neighbors with suspicion and distrust. Animosity, fighting, and hating began. "Picture in Your Mind" ends with an appeal that man should remember his beginnings and return to peaceful living, not by conforming or becoming uniform, but instead by trying to understand and help those who may be somewhat different. The cartoons are vivid, impressionistic drawings and the music is strikingly modern. To the average unsuspecting audience, "Picture in Your Mind" is intriguing.

The third of the controversial films is entitled "Brotherhood of Man" and is a pleasant cartoon about a small Negro child. As may be inferred from the title, the main theme is a plea for racial and world harmony and peace. The idea came from a book co-authored by Gene Weltfish, who has been mentioned by, and summoned before, the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Produced in 1946 by the United Automobile Workers of America, it was originally shown to our occupation troops as an antidote to any lingering Nazi propaganda.⁷ The film has been shown throughout the world by the United States Information Agency. No governmental agency has expressed doubts about the film's patriotic value. It certainly is innocuous to the average viewer.

The Initial Surprise and Reaction

The Fairfax County Library was caught completely unprepared for the attack that developed. After the original astonishment gave way, Mrs. McCulloch's most immediate concern was to defend the library, and to do this she needed time. So she delayed the showing of "Japan" until more information on the film and the producer could be gathered. This action caused the conservatives to take heart and some of the liberals to criticize Mrs. McCulloch. Joseph Runey, Administrative Librarian, uncovered as much information on Bryan as he could, and the decision was thereupon made to show the film as soon as possible. It is at this point that one can discern Mrs. McCulloch's

firmness and the library's determination to stand for what it thought was right. A less courageous individual or one more susceptible to public pressure would have cancelled the film and thereby avoided a potentially nasty situation. The decision to show the film was the first indication that the library would fight.

Before the films were to be shown on the regularly scheduled film nights, the library agreed to present a special showing of the three films to their critics at the American Legion hall on a Sunday evening. Runey handled the equipment and later stated that it was a very unpleasant situation characterized by boos and catcalls and other remarks of a less than complimentary nature. In fact, he thought himself to be in some physical danger at the time.⁸ Legion officials hotly deny this, stating that Runey exercised poor judgement by beginning the presentation with scornful criticism of their efforts to censor the library. In any case feelings were aroused and most of the Legion members present were convinced that the films were not worthy of showing in Fairfax County.

At this point several other individuals entered the controversy. It is a curious feature of this dispute that people tended to enter the fracas quickly and to fade from the picture as others took up the cause. As each individual joined the fight, he seemed to take a slightly different line of attack. With different individuals attacking in different directions at different times, things soon became confused. There is no known reason, for example, for O'Sullivan's reluctance to continue except perhaps that as some persons familiar with the situation have suggested, the American Legion national headquarters may have requested that things be toned down. There is, however, no way of verifying this possibility. Other possible reasons would seem to be that his actions resulted in several members of his post resigning in protest in order to join other posts in the area, or that the sudden wave of adverse publicity may have made him reluctant to continue. In any event, he was soon no longer prominently identified with the issue.

Glenn Burklund

As Commander O'Sullivan faded out of the picture, other Legion officials pressured local officials into action. Glenn Burklund, one of the first individuals so alerted, was invited to the special showing of the films involved. Not a member of the American Legion at the time, he has subsequently joined it.⁹ Burklund is a man with a quick smile and an uncanny mechanical ability. He never graduated from college, but a technical background in the Navy has enabled him to develop and sell his own research laboratory. He owns the rights to five patents, mostly in textiles, and has ten patent applications pending. He is very proud of, and quite willing to talk about, his accomplishments. Presently he is employed by an electronics firm. He is a self-taught gunsmith and is preparing for a pilot's and aircraft mechanic's license. The latter are needed if he is to fly the biplane which he is building in his basement. In 1963 he was the first Republican to represent his district in the Virginia House of Delegates. A conversation with Burklund frequently turns to the values of honesty and integrity which he learned in a small town in Illinois. It is also evident that he believes deeply in a fundamentalist God.⁹

It was Burklund's religious views which brought him into the library controversy. After viewing the three films, he became angered at the film "Picture in Your Mind." He saw nothing objectionable in "Japan." Burklund's primary objection was that evolution is a controversial subject and that any film purchased by tax money should show both sides of a controversy. He felt that the entire "Picture in Your Mind" film was strongly biased and that some effort should be made to inform the audience that this was only one side of the story. He referred to the "ridiculous part in the film where Man comes out of the ooze."⁹ As a result of his views, Burklund asked the Virginia Attorney General whether some legal action could be taken to prevent the film from being shown by the library. The Attorney General informed him that no legal action could be taken. Burklund then turned to the State Library Board, where he claimed that he encountered sympathetic support from the member representing Northern Virginia. Finally, accompanied by Dr. Dale Crowley, he obtained an appointment with the governor, with whom the situation was discussed in some detail. In all three instances, Burklund claimed that the public officials interviewed expressed sympathetic support but that their hands were tied by state laws.

As the fight continued, Burklund gradually withdrew because of what he called "emotionalism."⁹ His withdrawal, it is apparent, did not mean that he regretted his action. On the contrary, he feels very strongly that the libraries need some sort of political control and that although he does not favor censorship, he does favor a revised system of book or material selection.⁹

Burklund's public stand resulted in strong editorial criticism in the press. His reaction to comments that the Fairfax County issue resembled the Scopes trial, which convicted a man for teaching evolution, was to laugh and say that there is no connection. When pressed to explain the difference, he declined to comment. He did not deny that there is an impressive amount of scientific evidence supporting evolution but he still believes in the special and divine creation of man.

The adverse publicity, according to Burklund, did not bother him, although he felt that the newspapers greatly exaggerated the entire controversy. He received over two dozen telephone calls in support of his position and only two calls opposing his stand. The two critical calls were both from Unitarians whom he described as belonging to "a Sunday school club because they don't have any other place to go on Sunday."⁹

In general, Burklund's role was to inject the evolution element into the controversy, to bring the issue to the attention of state officials, and to add an element of official support to the conservative attack on the films and the library policy.

Evolution and Communism

The third major participant first appeared at the original showing of "Picture in Your Mind." The Rev. Dale Crowley, Sr., is an old-time fundamentalist minister who preaches fire and brimstone, damnation and salvation,

and the value of the virtues of honesty, integrity, and self-reliance. A graduate of a small Bible school, the Rev. Mr. Crowley is a Doctor by courtesy who has a daily radio program broadcast over station WFAX in Fairfax County. In a conversation with Dr. Crowley one is impressed with the obvious sincerity of his beliefs and by the firmness with which he defends them. In fact, Dr. Crowley exhibits intellectual rigidity and cannot see the other side of most questions. A favorite trick of his is to vehemently attack opposing beliefs as un-Christian or Communistic. He states that it is no coincidence that Marx and Engels formulated their theories in the same country and at the same time Darwin was teaching the theory of evolution.¹⁰ He does not think that all evolutionists are Communists, but he does think that Communists exploit Darwin's theories because Darwin supports communism's doctrine of no God. He feels that Communists actively encourage any belief which destroys an individual's Christian faith. He vigorously attacks any attempt to spread anti-Christian teachings, whether it be by purchasing evolutionist films or books by the public library or by the teaching in public schools.

Dr. Crowley first became interested in the Fairfax situation when his son, Dale Crowley, Jr., attended the aforementioned showing of "Japan." The son suggested that he view "Picture in Your Mind." After seeing the film, Dr. Crowley publicly addressed Runey: "May I make a comment? What we saw here tonight was not just a 3-D film. It was a 6-D film--it was demoralizing, degenerate, deplorable, despicable, diabolical, and damnable."¹¹

This statement brought an immediate verbal reaction from the crowd, plus clapping and catcalls. Dr. Crowley continued by calling the film "an insult to God."¹¹ A policeman stationed at the rear of the room moved forward as the bedlam continued. From among the many voices, that of one person was distinguished shouting, "Have you ever heard of the Scopes case in Tennessee? Do you want Virginia to be another Tennessee?" As he sat down, Dr. Crowley shot back, "What are you, a Communist or something?"¹² Runey began the second film at full volume to quiet the audience.

Dr. Crowley's role closely paralleled that of Burklund as they often acted together. They both faded out of the picture together. Dr. Crowley's appearance added a degree of emotionalism to an already heated dispute.

The Controversy Spreads

The public showing of the films did much to spread the controversy as a variety of interested individuals formed their own opinions. Typical was the "hearing" of the films by the then Mayor of Fairfax, John C. Wood. Mayor Wood was blind, and an aide explained the scenes. He heard nothing wrong in "Japan," but he did think that "Picture in Your Mind" was of questionable merit. His description of the film was, "It starts out with a lot of weird scenes of rocks, and the beginning of the world, and a lot of weird music."¹²

His objection was that the cartoon was "propaganda." "But I don't think the taxpayers should pay for different lines of philosophy."¹³ Mayor Wood added two proposals which he felt would alleviate any future disputes. First, he suggested that the films to be shown should be selected by a committee composed of three members of the Library Board of Trustees rather than by a staff librarian. Second, he called for representation for Fairfax City on the library board. The independent city of Fairfax pays a per capita fee for use of the library. Neither proposal had much effect on the dispute. The call for representation on the board is revived periodically, but there seems to be little support for such a measure. Selection of the films remains the prerogative of the professional staff.

At this point the newspapers began wholesale coverage of the dispute. For fourteen straight days the Washington area newspapers carried one or more articles or editorials on the Fairfax Library. The Washington News, The Evening Star, and The Washington Post all carried editorial page cartoons. Front page coverage was not uncommon.

Enter the Ultra-Conservatives

As a one-time rural Southern county, it is not surprising that Fairfax County retains a very conservative outlook among some of its older inhabitants. The suburbanites often prefer a more moderate type of conservatism. The difference between the two is frequently a matter of degree, although the suburbanites tend to be conservative nationally and liberal locally, in the sense that they push for better schools and improved local services. The rural conservative often is concerned with the spreading power of the national and local governments. Much of Fairfax County's recent history is an account of the clashes between these two influences. Greatly outnumbered, the rural conservatives have almost always been defeated. As a result, many of these people have either drifted away or become resigned to the inundation of suburbanites. The elements of rural Southern conservatism that do remain active locally often resort to near extremism. Their most bitter defeat was the fight against integration in the 1950's, and as a result of continual setbacks they are often bitter and convinced that the Communists are responsible for the recent trends. But to this day a small hard core remains active in local affairs, frequently acting as a nuisance to local officials. Ann Wilkins stated that when she was on the Board of Supervisors in recent years, the board made a careful estimate of the number of such people and came up with a figure of approximately 3,000 or one percent of the total population of the county.¹⁴ Many of these people are affiliated with an organization called the Taxpayer's Alliance.

The Taxpayer's Alliance is a somewhat shadowy organization whose members are often reluctant to divulge any details of its operations. This may well be the result of adverse publicity. It first became an active organization during the integration clashes of the 1950's. Today it actively opposes any attempt to increase Fairfax's taxbill, with special attention shown to school budgets and bond issues. In the 1963 budget hearings, its representative proposed that "thousands of dollars would be saved" if the Recreation Department were to increase the price of cloth used by children to make potholders

and if it increased from a penny to two cents the price it charged children for a length of gimp used to make lanyards.¹⁵ The Taxpayer's Alliance never actively entered the library fracas except to oppose in the budget hearings any funds appropriated for continuation of the film program. Most of its objectives were stated by its one-time member Burklund and by one of its officers, Margaret Plattner. The Alliance is important in Fairfax County because it is the only organization which ultra-conservatives support, and because it becomes embroiled in any local struggle either directly or indirectly.

Margaret Plattner

One person who remained in the library dispute till it quietly dwindled away was Margaret Plattner. If any one person succumbed to emotionalism over the issue, it was she, and it was her action which resulted in political repercussions. Mrs. Plattner is a middle-aged, divorced real estate saleswoman. The most forceful impression gained from speaking with her is her blithe way of making serious allegations without seeming fully to realize the import of what she has said. She repeatedly offered to show "definite proof of a conspiracy in the library," but evidence she gave when pressed was often irrelevant, meaningless, or unsubstantiated.¹⁶ An activist in local affairs, she is a staunch, if not extreme, conservative.

Mrs. Plattner first entered the library fight dramatically by saying, "The library should be closed for further investigation." She went on to suggest that objectionable books and films should be removed from the shelves and a committee established to judge each work. She next planned a major attack on the library at its May 14 budget hearing in 1963. This proposal was immediately supported by the Taxpayer's Alliance. However, the only manifestation of this major attack was the suggestion that films did not belong in a library. At this hearing Mrs. Plattner distributed a mimeographed sheet containing passages she considered obscene, scoured from books available at the library, with the suggestion that the County Board of Supervisors distribute it to parents.¹⁵ Another of her efforts was the statement, "I don't believe in censorship at all. But we appropriate money for good books. The taxpayers should see how their money is spent. Good libraries should choose good books."¹⁷ She then urged that all county funds to the library system be stopped "until this is cleared up."¹² She got into print in the Washington Evening Star with the call for a county grand jury investigation of the library system.¹² At this same time, she became the first person to urge investigation of the book collection and in particular of the novel Catcher in the Rye. These statements are typical of Mrs. Plattner's line of attack. Her efforts were totally unsuccessful.

The Primaries

The year 1963 was an election year for local and state offices. Late April and early May found local candidates warming up for the approaching

primary elections in June. The library dispute was a natural issue for some of the candidates, but for those candidates who attacked the library it became a disaster. Mrs. Plattner was a candidate for the Democratic nomination as Justice of the Peace. Her comments brought a sharp reaction from the local Democratic Party. Fred Babson, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the County Board of Supervisors from Mrs. Plattner's home district, said:

I reject Mrs. Plattner's support of my candidacy for the Board of Supervisors, and I shall work for her defeat in her candidacy for Justice of the Peace from my district. The position she has taken on the films and the books and the county library department shows that Mrs. Plattner is totally irresponsible and unqualified to hold any public office in Fairfax County. I am calling a special meeting of the Democratic Committee in Falls Church district for the purpose of discussing this matter and censuring Mrs. Plattner. I am sure that all members of the committee will support my position.¹⁸

A meeting called for May 2, 1963, began with a showing of "Japan" and "Picture in Your Mind." Mrs. Plattner then read a three-page statement, from which these excerpts are taken: "When Mr. O'Sullivan took his stand against this movie as American Legion Post Commander of Post 177 and against Julien Bryan, I immediately offered him my support and assistance...."¹⁹ She went on to state that a movie produced by Bryan and entitled "Russia" was purchased by the Pentagon and shown to the three armed services:

"Its acquisition and use illustrates unfortunately but most graphically the general unfamiliarity of officials with the techniques of distortion in films to subtly communicate Communistic propoganda."

"If Communistic propoganda is being supported in Fairfax County by my tax dollars and yours, a grand jury should be convened and let the chips fall where they may...."¹⁹

Babson then spoke, stating that any attempts to censure Mrs. Plattner would be committing the same offense of which she was accused. Instead, by a unanimous vote the committee decided to disassociate itself from any member of the committee who supported efforts to censor books or films used in the library.¹⁹ This was Mrs. Plattner's political death sentence, and she was soundly defeated in the primary election.

Burklund also suddenly found himself without party support as the primary approached. Although the library was not the central issue, it certainly did not help his chances. Because he was the first Republican elected to the state legislature from his district, it must have been difficult for his party to denounce his candidacy, but this was done. The apparent reason for this disenchantment was that prior to his election Burklund was an unknown. As a delegate he supported issues and causes contrary to Republican principles. His stand on the library issue was a smaller but typical incident in his political life.

On the Floor of Congress

Throughout April the conservatives received little official support other than Delegate Burklund's comments and inquiries. The conflict was

local, involving local people. However, on May 1, all this suddenly and drastically changed with the direct intervention of Congressman Joel T. Broyhill, a Republican who represents Fairfax County and other parts of Northern Virginia in Congress.

Congressman Broyhill entered the library dispute after it was brought to his attention by Karl Speiss, who has been described as a "constant lobbyist for ultra-conservative causes."¹⁴ Congressman Broyhill's initial action was to write letters to the Department of State, the United States Information Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to determine whether they had any jurisdiction over the films. Because the concerns of these Federal agencies are rather remote from questions of local library policy, Broyhill's action might appear to have been a gesture intended primarily to assuage heated Legion officials.

As a "moderate conservative" and a Republican with party registration outnumbered by ten to one in his area, Broyhill's political life depends on his ability to woo conservative Democrats and independents. To do this, he is very conscious of any conservative movement in his district, whether it be of national or strictly local interest. It behooves him to take an active role in any such conflict and to engender a strong sense of indebtedness in conservatives. This accounts for his participation in a minor conflict which his office described as "a tempest in a teapot which quickly petered out."²⁰ The letters he wrote might have been enough to satisfy most conservatives, but Broyhill decided to go deeper into the conflict.

As a result, Broyhill's staff searched the House Un-American Activities Committee records for any references to Julien Bryan or Gene Weltfish (co-author of "Brotherhood of Man"). On Law Day, Congressman Broyhill inserted most of this information into the Congressional Record. This in itself was not an objectionable action. If the Congressman had left out the last sentence of his insertion, the action would not have infuriated as many people as it did. His insertion reads:

Mr. Speaker, public attention has been strongly drawn in recent days to several films obtained for public showing by the Fairfax County Public Library. The local American Legion organization has vigorously opposed use of these films because the authors or producers were believed to be Communists or Communist sympathizers.

The films entitled "Picture in Your Mind" and "Japan" were produced by Julien Bryan.

The film "The Brotherhood of Man" was coproduced by Gene Weltfish.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert at this point as furnished me from the files of the House Committee on Un-American Activities....

There follow four columns of print listing Weltfish's allegedly subversive activities. Most of the data consist of quotes from the Daily Worker. Among the questionable activities in which she is said to have participated are: president of the Congress of American Women, sponsor of American Committee for Protection of the Foreign Born, sponsor of American Peace Crusade,

speaker at the 1946 Civil Rights Congress, member of the Continental Committee for U.S. Participation in the American Continental Congress, member of American Council for a Democratic Greece, speaker for Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and sponsor of the National Committee to Secure Justice for the Rosenbergs. When called to testify before the Committee on Un-American Activities, she took the Fifth Amendment.

Bryan's record is not quite so massive. It states that his photographs appeared in the Daily Worker and in Soviet Life Today, and that he lectured for New Masses, which is on the Attorney General's subversive list, and that he was a member of the National Committee of the Communistic Friends of the Soviet Union in 1933.

Congressman Broyhill's insertion in the Congressional Record then continued:

"Mr. Speaker, I have presented this material as a service of the American Legion and all citizens who have taken an interest in the public controversy in order that they might have full information to guide their future actions."

"I am compelled to add that the long record of Communist activities on the part of these film producers makes it impossible for me to believe other than the films were made as Communist propaganda vehicles."²¹

Although some may question the validity of much of the evidence, such as the assumption that one is a Communist if his photographs appear in the Daily Worker, the insertion is a factual account of the background of the two individuals as reported by the Committee on Un-American Activities. The mere number of groups with which Dr. Weltfish was connected does not necessarily label her as a real Communist, but there can be little doubt that during this period her sympathies lay with the far left. Bryan's leftist record is much less impressive, with only one actual membership in an organization listed as subversive. Bryan was never summoned by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and his actions may have been sincerely regretted later as he is quick to admit.²² None of Broyhill's information was directly connected with the films themselves except through the tenuous assumption that a tainted man taints all that he touches.

Congressman Broyhill's action may be termed hasty and ill-advised if only because his last sentence was so far from the truth. No one on Broyhill's staff has ever seen the films, so far as is known. His staff members expressed some amazement when they learned that two of the films were shown by the United States Information Agency throughout the world and that one of the films was used extensively by the Pentagon to show to the Armed Forces. Further evidence of the hastiness of the action is the false identification of Dr. Weltfish as a co-producer when in reality she was a co-author of the book upon which the film was based. Broyhill's staff candidly admitted that labeling the films as Communist propaganda may have been a mistake, but they attached no importance or significance to the entire episode. One staff member said: "We never get the liberal vote anyway; so if it offended them we didn't lose anything. This was a controversy between extremes, both liberal and conservative, and we became involved because of the Congressman's strong support from the Legion."²⁰

To Congressman Broyhill and his staff, this was a relatively minor issue which they soon forgot. However his brief appearance in the struggle solidified the conservatives' position and placed Fairfax County's problem in a national arena.

Some National Interest Develops

The mere fact that the controversy reached the floor of the House of Representatives guaranteed that national pressure groups would soon notice it. Both professional library organizations and conservative organizations expressed some interest in the Fairfax situation. Mrs. McCulloch was pleasantly surprised at the support she received from the library profession, both from organizations and from individuals such as the President of the American Library Association. The American Library Association's Committee on Intellectual Freedom followed affairs in the Fairfax situation closely and reported events to the whole organization through its newsletter. Other professional groups expressing support for the Fairfax Library included the District of Columbia Library Association and the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, a part of the AFL-CIO.

Broyhill's entry encouraged conservative groups to follow the situation. The American Legion's magazine quite naturally took note, although, possibly in accordance with a desire by Legion headquarters to avoid extreme disputes, such notice consisted only of a small and inconspicuous paragraph. The biggest national publicity push for the conservatives came from a radio program called "Lifeline," which is a non-profit, educational, ultra-conservative program sponsored and supported by the Texas reputed billionaire H. L. Hunt. "Lifeline" is broadcast from over a hundred radio stations throughout the country and has a large rural audience. The text of the broadcast read:

"Recently it was disclosed that a county library had purchased with tax money, certain films which are available on a loan basis for showing to youth groups. Many organizations and individuals have vigorously protested the use of these films because the authors or producers were believed to be communists or communist sympathizers. The films are "Picture in Your Mind," "Japan," and "The Brotherhood of Man."

"On May 1 the United States Congressman from the district concerned rose on the floor of the House and inserted into the Congressional Record factual records of the two persons producing these films, records furnished to him from the files of the House Committee on Un-American Activities."

"Their long records of alleged communist activities and affiliations made it impossible to believe other than the films were made as communist vehicles. And the American taxpayer is being placed in the position of underwriting the accomplishment of mistaken goals of subverting American youth."²³

The library was lucky in escaping the full force of the national conservative movement. Mrs. McCulloch expressed a belief that outside or national interests were playing a role in attacking the library. If this is

so, it is very well concealed. The only two national conservative organizations involved were the American Legion and the "Lifeline" program, and neither exerted its full potential force. It is not uncommon for national organizations to become deeply involved in similar struggles. The John Birch Society, for example, is quite adept at exerting strong pressures in library censorship fights. A summary in Publishers' Weekly of panel discussion at the 1962 annual meeting of the Textbook Publishers' Institute cited this phenomenon: "Underscoring the need for continued preparedness, Jack Kough of Science Research Associates pointed out that a censorship drive which is local one day can be national the next, because of the well-organized nature of the major censorship groups and the speed of communications."²⁴

The Library Fights Back

Within the space of two weeks, the Fairfax County Library had come under attack from the American Legion, a candidate for local office, a state legislator, and a Congressman. In two weeks, the library had emerged from relative obscurity and had reached the center of attention of a number of communications media. In two weeks the library had gone from a sense of quiet satisfaction over its outstanding achievements to a sense of anger and frustration over what it felt was unjustified criticism. Never in its history had the Fairfax Library encountered or expected such an outburst as it then was experiencing. As the crisis continued, the library began to fight back.

The initial shock and surprise caught the library staff unprepared. The first few days after O'Sullivan's charges found the library quiet and a little uncertain of how it should react. When it did react, it was in such a manner as is approved by the American Library Association. Those backing the library recognized two important and almost contradictory points which should direct it in its fight. First, the library's primary goal in the fracas should be a quick return to normal and quiet public service without an infringement of professional standards. Second, while the conservatives raged, the library should obtain as much favorable publicity as possible. The desire for both publicity and quiet appears to work against itself. However, the most effective means of counteracting an attack by a small but loud minority is to make as much noise as they do. Ultra-conservatives are most successful in situations in which they do not irritate the majority of the population. Their frequently wild and irrational attacks, when publicized, are easily recognized by most people as a real threat to the community's freedom. As one writer describes this continuing problem "Where the censors scored best, they operated in a vacuum. They escaped comprehensive coverage by the press and they met little organized opposition."²⁵

A more detailed examination of the role of censors and how they operate will follow later in this paper, but at this point it is germane to point out that Mrs. McCulloch's approach was the best means of discouraging potential censors. As the favorable publicity generated pressure opposing the conservatives, it is significant to note the quick manner in which individuals became involved and withdrew. Burklund attributed his withdrawal

to "emotionalism," and in the next sentence he assailed the newspapers as being basically responsible for the eruption of this emotionalism.⁹ The only two individuals who remained in the conflict after the public coverage by communications media reached a peak were both unsuccessful candidates and both have been described as "unusual" or "odd" or "cantankerous." They were Mrs. Plattner and Paul Peachy.

Local newspaper coverage of the incidents was probably more responsible for the intensity of the dispute than anything else. Both sides, and also the author's opinion, concur in the belief that the newspapers and television magnified the controversy well beyond true proportion. For a period of three weeks almost all the regional newspapers carried articles, and the radio and television news broadcasts reported almost daily on the fight. Ninety-seven different articles, editorials, cartoons, and letters on the issue were published by regional newspapers in this period.

It is not difficult to determine exactly why the newspapers became so interested in the Fairfax situation. First of all as publishers and conveyors of thought, they are very sensitive to any attempts at censorship. Newspapers must exercise some selection process in deciding what ideas they are to communicate, but they jealously guard their own privilege of making that selection. They feel that freedom of the press is a vital means of protecting the public, and they eagerly enter any fight to curtail that freedom. Second, the Fairfax County fight did make good news. The individuals and their statements concerning communism, evolution, and obscenity are not dull. Third, there was little local competition. Local news at this time was sparse except for the typical announcements, automobile accidents, and wedding notices.

The avalanche of publicity was welcomed by Mrs. McCulloch, who found herself in the unusual position of not having to seek actively for favorable publicity. The mass of material was well received by the public. The public's response to this publicity was quite amazing, gratifying and strengthening to the library staff. They were deluged with telephone calls to the extent that Mrs. McCulloch was grateful her home phone number recently had been changed.⁷ Over a hundred telephone calls were noted by the library staff with a ratio exceeding 10 to 1 in favor of the library's position. Well over a hundred letters were received and answered, with only a sprinkling of them critical of the library. William Mitchell, a member of the Library's Board of Trustees, received only one critical telephone call.²⁶ The North-ern Virginia Sun was swamped with letters to the editor favorable to the library, and in order to present both sides the paper issued an appeal to the conservatives to send in letters which it could publish. However, it should be noted that both Burklund and Mrs. Plattner claimed support in about the same ratio, although they never claimed the volume of expressions of support that the library did. An objective observer cannot help but be impressed with the one-sidedness of the response.

A partial explanation for this response could well have been Mrs. McCulloch's position that these critical people were attacking the library itself and not the individual works. By concentrating on a defense of the freedom to know rather than defending the films, Mrs. McCulloch was successful in placing the conservatives in the position of being censors or anti-

library. The conservatives soon found themselves defending instead of attacking, with the library and its supporters retaining a degree of initiative so important in any fight.

Another manifestation of public interest was the soaring demand by library patrons for the films and books under attack. The books were reserved for months ahead, and the requests for special showings of the movies mushroomed. One person requested to see "all the obscene books in the library." A large part of this response could well be due to an inherent curiosity about things controversial or spicy, but there is also no doubt that the controversy stirred interest in other books and the library system as a whole.

Mrs. McCulloch and others backing the library realized that nothing could be gained by prolonging the dispute and that the interests of the community could best be served by the library when conditions returned to normal. Every effort was made to contain the dispute. One of the best means of containing the action is to limit the number of participants. This the library did by bearing the brunt of the attack without seeking assistance. The Library's Board of Trustees limited its actions to statements of strong support for Mrs. McCulloch and throughout the fight the Board of Trustees did not take an active or important public part.²⁹ The County Board of Supervisors kept clear, although the entire board supported the library. Mrs. Wilkins stated that the supervisors desired only a termination of the controversy and that if they took a position of support, things would be stirred up further.¹⁴ Mrs. Wilkins also stated that under the circumstances the library appeared to be making an admirable defense and that if the library had needed their assistance, the Board of Supervisors would have acted. This policy is primarily responsible for the relatively short duration of the squabble.

From Movies to Books

In most disputes involving public libraries, it is not long before the issue of book selection or book collections appears. A favorite weapon of library opponents is to complain about certain books which they feel are obscene or Communistic or undesirable for some reason or another. A very similar means of attacking the library is to complain of bias in the selection of books and that the librarians are not purchasing those books which a large portion of the population desires. These efforts at censorship take a variety of shapes, ranging from stealing the offending books to private but polite complaints to library officials. As a depository of knowledge any library will contain materials offensive to someone. Therefore it is not surprising that the Fairfax Library soon found that the controversy shifted from movies to books.

Enter Paul Peachy

Mrs. Plattner was the first to bring up the issue of books, but her

statements never really caught the attention of those observing the struggle. The real impetus which put the issue of books in the spotlight came from an Alexandria attorney named Paul Peachy. Peachy has been described by both conservatives and liberals as an unusual man bordering on the "crackpot." However, the author found Peachy to be an intelligent, helpful, friendly individual, and if anything can explain his unusual actions or maverick reputation it is his willingness to fight for his principles.

An example of Peachy's unorthodox way of fighting for these principles concerns Mrs. Wilkins and the election of county supervisors. Mrs. Wilkins had been on the Board of Supervisors for eleven years and was up for re-election in 1963. For some reason, about which neither Peachy nor Mrs. Wilkins are clear, Peachy became convinced that Mrs. Wilkins was after him politically. Mrs. Wilkins expresses complete mystification about the reasons behind his assumption.¹⁴ Peachy stated that Mrs. Wilkins was the leader of a coalition of liberals who were detrimental to the county.¹⁴ His dislike was directed at Mrs. Wilkins, so he decided to break this coalition by running as an independent candidate. Since Mrs. Wilkins and he lived in different electoral districts, he could not run against her. However, his campaign was largely based on attacks on Mrs. Wilkins, not on his own opponents. He received a resounding defeat, but Mrs. Wilkins was also defeated. Mrs. McCulloch suggested that there might be some connection between Peachy's dislike of Mrs. Wilkins, who was pro-library, and his entrance into the library fracas. The author found no such connection.

Peachy became involved in the controversy when he suddenly and without warning filed a suit in County Circuit Court seeking a temporary injunction prohibiting the Fairfax County Library from circulating four books. The four books were Without Magnolias, by Bucklin Moon; A Month Soon Goes, by Storm Jameson, Colorblind, by Margaret Halsey, and The Big Sky, by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Peachy's suit "avers that the persons named...are engaged in the authorship, publication or sale and commercial distribution in the public libraries...of shameful, filthy, morbid and obscene publications."⁷ The temporary restraining order sought was the first step in removing the books permanently from circulation. It is curious that the only similarity among these books is that they contain descriptions of inter-racial love affairs. The language used or scenes portrayed are not necessarily so vivid or graphic or indecent as those found in many other books. The reason these four books were selected by Peachy is unclear. He would state only that a friend told him "that a fourteen-year-old girl was able to check these books out."²⁸ Newspaper articles at the time linked Mrs. Plattner with Peachy, but Mrs. Plattner denied any connection with Peachy's suit.²⁷ Therefore the reason these particular books were singled out remains a mystery.

The day after the suit was filed, Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Albert V. Brown, Jr., refused to issue the restraining order sought. The state law, he noted, expressly exempted public libraries from any legal action concerning obscenity. Peachy immediately amended his suit to declare Jameson's and Guthrie's books and J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye obscene, thereby prohibiting commercial distribution of the books. Peachy then hoped public pressure would force the library to remove the books from its shelves.

The Virginia law concerning obscenity is relatively new and, ironically,

it has been singled out as one of the best on this subject. The law is favored by publishers, authors, and librarians for two important features.

First, it requires that the publication be judged "as a whole." This protects works of real literary value such as Lady Chatterly's Lover from banishment because of certain objectionable passages, while at the same time a reasonable interpretation of the law would brand as obscene those books usually found in newsstands whose primary purpose is an appeal to prurient interests. It is a state law which closely follows the Supreme Court's recent rulings on obscenity.

The second feature of the Virginia law is that the law is directed solely against commercial distribution of obscene materials. In rem proceedings are those legal actions affecting a thing as opposed to a person. Under Virginia statute, in rem proceedings are initiated against the publication under attack. A person, whether he be the publisher or the distributor, can be arrested only for continuing commercial distribution after a particular publication has been declared obscene. Libraries, schools, and museums are expressly exempt.

Thus, the express exemption granted libraries accounts for the quick rejection of Peachy's first suit. The second suit was unsuccessful because there was no commercial distribution of the books written by Jameson and Guthrie, which had long been out of print, and because Catcher in the Rye was recognized by experts as a legitimate piece of literature.

Peachy's legal defeats did not daunt him from further action. As was said earlier, Peachy firmly believes in defending his principles, and he strongly objected to making allegedly obscene materials available to minors. His next step was to spend \$500 of his own money for a full page ad in the Alexandria Gazette. Half of the ad was a letter to the editor and to the citizens of Fairfax County containing a somewhat emotional plea for the local officials to take positive action to prevent the corruption of the morals of minors. The second half announced a contest open to high school students in Fairfax County.²⁹ Contestants were to write essays concerning six points on the general issue of obscenity and local government. First prize was announced as \$500. Peachy was thus willing to spend \$1,000 simply to defend an intangible principle. The full page ad is further evidence of the ties between Peachy and Mrs. Plattner, which both curiously deny, as her name is mentioned in the advertisement.

It is interesting to note that one day after Peachy's suit was filed, all the books listed were checked out of the library and reserved for a period of months. Somehow Mrs. Plattner was able to check the books out; she then announced her intention never to return them. To this day she retains the books. The library's policy is to send two notices informing the individual of the fine involved and the local law. If this is insufficient to persuade the offender to return the books, his library privileges are revoked, and if the books are available they are usually replaced. No effort is made to enforce the statutory punishment.

The Fracas Fizzles Out

Peachy's advertisement was the last noteworthy manifestation of the entire controversy. Although feelings were high, the entire issue quickly drifted away. The conservatives withdrew because they saw little to gain and because their support was fading. The library returned to normal activity. This does not mean that the dispute was forgotten. Just prior to the November election in 1963, eleven candidates for the state legislature were polled as to their opinions on the state obscenity law with a specific reference to the Fairfax Library controversy.³⁰ Only one Republican and an independent advocated a change in the law to include libraries and schools in its provisions. Neither was elected.

Bitter feelings can spring up in an instant, but it takes time for them to disappear. Both sides in the controversy still experience bitterness. Both sides still eye each other warily.

Today it is difficult to point to a visible manifestation of the controversy. Those scars which still exist are well hidden. Mrs. McCulloch was apprehensive about an upcoming library bond issue, but this could be expected. She also was apprehensive about the author questioning the conservatives for fear it might revive their thinking on the issue. There is little evidence that the conservatives are interested in renewing the struggle. All of them, with the exception of Mrs. Plattner, expressed a desire to avoid the issue. If anything, they realize the futility of their efforts, and by their inaction concede victory to the library. The Fairfax County Library continues to grow with the hearty support of the Board of Supervisors. It is still one of the best libraries in Virginia.

Conclusion

Political pressure is the would-be censor's most potent weapon today. Censorship advocates in Fairfax County exerted considerable pressure for removal of offending films and books, but Mrs. McCulloch's firmness, the public response, and the desire of the Board of Supervisors to stay out of the fracas effectively defeated the censors. Victory in Fairfax County belonged to the library, and a number of points in its case should prove interesting to students of political science and library science.

Public acceptance of the library as an integral part of the local government, and public rejection of attempts to dictate what can and what cannot be read demonstrated in Fairfax County the public's general, but usually latent, support of the library. Such support is infrequently mobilized, and the only real means of mobilization is through vigorous coverage by the news media.

Although the press and radio probably exaggerated the seriousness of the situation in Fairfax County, it is a safe conclusion that they were as much the means of the censors' defeat as any other factor.

The latent public support for a library's position in a censorship fight points to a need for further study of what the public expects from the library. No one has studied the reasons behind the wide response usually encountered in publicized censorship fights.

In its political position, the Fairfax County Library is typical, with its Board of Trustees who technically are supposed to serve as buffers between the librarian and the County Board of Supervisors. However, Mrs. McCulloch finds it easy to deal directly with the Board of Supervisors because of her ex officio position as secretary to the Board of Trustees. The only action undertaken by the Fairfax trustees in the censorship fight was to affirm their support for Mrs. McCulloch. In no way did they shield her or the library from political problems. This inaction was probably traceable to a complete lack of political power--power which the trustee needs to fight effectively against political attacks.

Effectiveness of trustees depends on the personal influence of each individual trustee in the community. Thus, typically, the trustees have inadequate means of doing their intended job. Serious thought should be given to the library's position in local government and to the role of boards of trustees.

The Fairfax case confirms the belief of informed political scientists and librarians that the public library is to some indefinable yet noticeable extent an active political institution. The leading participants sought government action, and in several cases, were political candidates who used the library as a campaign issue. The controversy involved a clash of political values in which a small minority sought to impose its values upon the majority of the community. In the ensuing ideological struggle, compromise was difficult (and not really sought) and feelings were intense. The high degree of emotionalism with which each side defended its ideology is in itself sufficient to justify further research into the political nature of the public library.

VITA

Peter Randolph Hamlin was born in 1941 in Boston, Mass. He received his B.A. degree cum laude in history from the University of Cincinnati in 1963. His paper on the Fairfax County, Virginia, Library censorship controversy is adapted from part of his thesis for the degree of M.A. in government, which he received from George Washington University in 1966.

Among his working experiences during his college years was a six-month period with the firm of the German book dealer Otto Horassowetz in Wiesbaden. Hamlin entered the armed services after completing his thesis, and is presently serving as a Second Lieutenant with the 82nd Airborne Division, U. S. Army, in Vietnam.

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