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The American Library Association and Intellectual Freedom.

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In considering the relation of the American Library Association to intellectual freedom it is well to remember that such influence as the association wields is not due to any kind of official status. It must be attributed rather to the varied activities through which librarians the country over have been knit into a professional group. The point is important when librarians meet opposition. A lone librarian may yield before strong and vocal forces demanding action which he feels is incompatible with his role as the recorder and interpreter of ideas; but if he is backed by other librarians and by an organization standing for the things he upholds, he may fight for his convictions.

Libraries in the United States have traditionally supported freedom of inquiry and freedom of ideas. They are not against guidance, but they dislike censorship. Predominantly, they feel that matter on all sides of an issue must be available--not necessarily in one library, for many a library cannot afford such extensive coverage, but certainly within one geographic region.

Not all librarians agree on this matter of making all types of materials available to all sorts of readers. It is safe to say, however, that the vast majority believe in the reader's right to be informed about all sides of an issue if he is interested. Thus, when a librarian talks about intellectual freedom, he generally refers to the reader's right to such freedom. Only in a secondary way does he refer to the librarian's right to help the reader.

This point of view conflicts with that of a great many individuals and groups who feel that only "good," or "patriotic," or "moral," or "religious," or "pro-this," or "anti-that" literature should be available to others. Groups taking such a position often do not agree among themselves as to what is "good" literature, but they are united in the thought that they are better judges than the professionals of what "the public" should read. We have, thus, a conflict which is quite natural in times of stress. It has always existed to some extent, but as far as the American Library Association is concerned it has become acute only since 1939.

Before 1939, librarians worried chiefly about such matters as finances, the role of state library agencies, tax support, retirement plans, improving service to the public, and standards of education for librarianship. They believed in freedom of information, just as they do today, but the problems raised by it hardly came up in their literature. Perhaps the principle was

taken for granted. In 1939, however, the picture changed, for in June of that year the Library Bill of Rights was adopted by the ALA Council. Ever since then a steady stream of writing on the public's right to information has followed.

This declaration was recommended by the ALA Council to governing boards of individual libraries for adoption. Like all other recommendations and statements of the ALA, it could not force the individual librarian and library board to undertake any specific action, but enabled them, if they wished, to accept and live by it on the local level. Once this was accomplished they could defend their own actions whenever necessary on the basis of the local declaration, backed by the national statement. One of the advantages of the Library Bill of Rights was its adoption on a national scale when distinguishing between principle and expediency was still fairly easy.

The Bill was the subject of a good deal of debate in library circles, with the result that on October 14, 1944, the ALA Council strengthened it by means of an amendment.(1) Four years later, on June 18, 1948, the same body approved the following broader version of the Library Bill of Rights, which is still in force:

"1. As a responsibility of library service, books and other reading matter selected should be chosen for values of interest, information and enlightenment of all the people of the community. In no case should any material be excluded because of race or nationality, or the political or religious views of the writer.

2. There should be the fullest practicable provision of material presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times, international, national, and local; and books or other reading matter of sound factual authority should not be proscribed or removed from library shelves because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

3. Censorship of books, urged or practiced by volunteer arbiters of morals or political opinion or by organizations that would establish a coercive concept of Americanism, must be challenged by libraries in maintenance of their responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment through the printed word.

4. Libraries should enlist the cooperation of allied groups in the fields of science, of education, and of book publishing in resisting all abridgment of the free access to ideas and full freedom of expression that are the tradition and heritage of Americans.

5. As an institution of education for democratic living, the library should welcome the use of its meeting rooms for socially useful and cultural activities and discussion of current public questions. Such meeting places should be available on equal terms to all groups in the community regardless of the beliefs and affiliations of their members."(2)

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While the Library Bill of Rights has undergone no subsequent alteration in text, it has been subject to one change in interpretation. On February 3, 1951, at the instance of the Committee on Intellectual Freedom, and with the endorsement of the Audio-Visual Board, the Council adopted unanimously the statement that "the Library Bill of Rights shall be interpreted as applying to all materials and media of communication used or collected by libraries."(3) As it stands now, therefore, the Bill refers to all types of material in all kinds of libraries, in addition to recognizing the library as only one of many institutions which should by their very nature resist efforts at censorship.

Any Bill of Rights, however, is no more effective than its application. This was recognized early, and on May 27, 1940, Forrest B. Spaulding, Chairman of the Special Committee on Censorship, which had been formed for the purpose of investigating censorship attempts and had drafted the first version of the Bill as its chief official act, recommended to the ALA Council appointment of a standing committee, to be known as a Committee on Intellectual Freedom to Safeguard the Rights of Library Users to Freedom of Inquiry.(4)

The Council created such a committee in May 1940 (the name of which was shortened later to Committee on Intellectual Freedom) and made its function "To recommend such steps as may be necessary to safeguard the rights of library users in accordance with the Bill of Rights of the United States and the Library's Bill of Rights as adopted by the Council."(5) In actuality this responsibility was interpreted somewhat liberally, for the group not only recommended steps but in a good many cases helped to carry them out. Not that the committee has overstepped its authority; but that, being the body most familiar with current developments in civil rights as affecting library users, it logically has practiced what it preached. For example, when the decision had been made that one possible means of defense against censorship attempts was the widest possible publicity, it was natural for the committee members, as individuals and as a unit, to assist in providing that publicity. One rule which delimits the committee's activities, however, and to which it always has strictly adhered, is its "standing polity . . . to enter local controversies only upon the invitation of local people."(6)

Ever since 1940, the CIF has been the ALA's main guardian of the rights of the library user. It must be emphasized again that its action is not legally binding upon anyone, that its pronouncements cannot be enforced, and that it makes no attempt to require or to permit any library to buy, or not to buy, any material. For, apart from the lack of legal authorization for such steps, it has always been AIA policy that "Selection of library materials should be made locally to fit local needs."(7)

Although the committee thus is mainly advisory, it is a relatively strong moral force which tries (a) to define the library's function with regard to civil liberties, (b) to propagandize for intellectual freedom, and especially in favor of its practical application, (c) to publicize the fact that by its very commitment to provide information on all sides of a question, a library cannot approve all the ideas it contains, and (d) to aid individual librarians when their attempts at impartiality meet opposition.

Up to 1949, the committee was hampered by a budget that was only nominal, consisting of from \$50 to \$200 annually.(8) In 1950 and 1951, however, the ALA Executive Board assigned \$2,500 per year to it, and for 1951 to 1953 the committee received \$15,000 from the Field Foundation. These additional funds were apparently in recognition of increased activity and effectiveness. They were used for payment of a part-time secretary, for the 1952 New York Conference on Intellectual Freedom, and for similar undertakings.

The committee spent the first few years of its existence gathering evidence, before offering definite principles of guidance. From the very beginning, however, it gave advice to local organizations when asked. Its 1941 report stated that, in the first year of its existence, it had undertaken the following:

- (a) Answering requests for information on "how best to curb the activities of individuals and minority groups advocating censorship of library shelves or the suppression of particular books."(9)
- (b) Collecting information and materials for later use, in anticipation of other censorship attempts.
- (c) Holding consultations with civic leaders, educators, FBI men, and group officers.

The report added that "in some instances . . . the weight of an A.L.A. committee's recommendation has been of definite aid to local library administrations."(9)

The committee continued the above activities, which were largely of a stop-gap nature, during the succeeding years, but was also responsible for several measures designed to have a long-range effect, as follows: a new publicity program, beginning in 1944; a Freedom of the Press Week, in 1944; an ALA recommendation on labeling, in 1951; ALA resolutions on loyalty pledges, in 1948, 1949, and 1950; an Intellectual Freedom Institute, in 1952, followed by a second in 1953; a continuous attempt to induce state library associations to form intellectual freedom committees, followed by a series of suggestions to such committees; a continuous attempt to work with other professional organizations of like interests.

A discussion of the above will show the development of the CIF, and thus of the ALA's official attitude toward censorship. Early in 1944, when the second version of the Library Bill of Rights was adopted, a new program of publicity was begun. The hope was that both measures would influence public opinion, which "in the last analysis, is [the librarian's] best, not to say only, guarantee against being pushed around."(10) Whereas heretofore librarians had been merely asked to inform the committee of censorship attempts, the new plan suggested that they also publicize their situations, presumably locally. Individual reports would then be compiled by the committee and advertised widely each year by ALA. In retrospect, the idea of an annual campaign seems less promising than continuous effort, but in practice the committee did usually try to make censorship attempts known at the earliest possible moment.

In general this policy has been followed, and there have been a good

many cases where it helped check such attempts. However, while generally gratifying, the publicity has been not as widespread as the committee may have hoped, since it has depended largely on the willingness of various media to carry it. The committee's stand was supported by a few newspapers, but opposed by some and ignored by most.

Such a program of publicity hinges also, of course, on the news of incidents sent in by local librarians. In this connection the 1945 report of the CIF, like that of 1941, mentioned that very few incidents had been notified, either because they did not arise--perhaps because librarians were so cautious in selecting books that they did not give incidents a chance to occur--or because of reluctance to call attention to them.(11)

The avoidance of censorship by selecting only neutral matter, which offends no potential or actual taboos, has been suspected occasionally by writers on the subject. It is an expedient undoubtedly practiced far more often than supposed, especially since chronically small book-budgets provide a ready-made excuse for omitting purchases. It cannot be measured, for few librarians will admit to submitting to potential censorship. But when it appears, it is a denial of the library's traditional role as an impartial institution.

One of the CIF's early activities was promotion of the Freedom of the Press Week for Libraries, proclaimed by the ALA Executive Board for the period of November 19 to 25, 1944. The explanation of this was that libraries consider themselves included in the Freedom of the Press clause of the National Bill of Rights. As Carl Vitz, president of ALA at that time, explained in a letter, "Libraries have a double responsibility for creating an informed public opinion about threats to freedom of the press. It is always a primary duty of libraries to stimulate thought on important issues. More than that, the issue involved here is one which affects the very existence of libraries as we conceive them today."(12)

Freedom of the Press Week was duly celebrated by many libraries throughout the country and received wide acclaim in newspapers. It seems astonishing that the only contribution of the ALA Bulletin, the association's official organ, was one article, "Censorship in Wartime."(13)

While the CIF had been charged in 1940 with the duty of protecting the rights of library users it began, in 1948, to be concerned also over the intellectual freedom of librarians, especially as regards the loyalty oaths which were being demanded with increasing frequency from educators and public employees. Thus arose a jurisdictional question within the ALA, since loyalty oaths were considered an infringement of intellectual freedom and, therefore, of concern to the CIF, as well as a personnel matter within the realm of the Board on Personnel Administration.

The first resolution on loyalty oaths, in 1948, was sponsored by the CIF. The second, in 1950, was sponsored by it and also by the Board on Personnel Administration, and was assigned to the latter for whatever action was required.

The main purpose of loyalty pledges seems to be to assure that disloyal employees will either not sign such a pledge or, if they do, will be found out and duly prosecuted for giving false evidence. On the other hand opponents of the measure hold that, apart from its ineffectiveness, the very demand for loyalty pledges implies distrust of all employees regardless of their loyalty, and that it is an intrusion upon their private beliefs and incompatible with the Bill of Rights. The ALA was interested in this question because loyalty investigations could be used by private organizations and by officials to control library holdings and activities. It feared that, if undertaken automatically and without due cause, they might threaten the librarian's "special responsibility to provide information on all sides of controversial issues," and that they "tend to limit intellectual freedom."⁽¹⁴⁾ The actual form in which the feeling was to be expressed, however, was subject to considerable debate and controversy.

On June 18, 1948, the ALA Council adopted its first resolution against loyalty investigations, based on a draft by David K. Berninghausen, Chairman of the CIF, and on suggestions from the membership. This resolution recorded the ALA's "unqualified condemnation of the use of loyalty investigations in libraries, in the firm belief that the security of the state can best be maintained by defending, against all attacks, the basic freedoms which are our nation's most treasured heritage."⁽¹⁵⁾ This resolution was adopted only after considerable discussion, and over the protest of several members who wanted the resolution to be against the abuse of loyalty investigations rather than against loyalty oaths in themselves.⁽¹⁶⁾

These, and similar objections, continued to be debated, so that at the Midwinter Conference in Chicago in January 1949, the ALA Council completely reversed the association's previous stand and voted to amend the resolution by substituting the word abuse for the word use. Such action overruled the CIF and the Board on Personnel Administration, both of which had recommended that no change be made in the wording.

The new form also displeased many members for, as the 1948-49 report of the committee points out, "This term abuse makes the resolution meaningless, for who can define abuse? Any group who wants to intimidate educators by forcing them to sign unnecessary loyalty oaths or submit to loyalty investigations will certainly never admit that their investigation is an abuse."⁽¹⁷⁾ Therefore, on July 21, 1950, the ALA Council adopted the following entirely new "Resolution on Loyalty Programs":

"WHEREAS, A democracy must preserve freedom of thought and expression if it is to survive; and

WHEREAS, Loyalty investigations of library employees may create an atmosphere of suspicion and fear and tend to limit intellectual freedom by rendering it hazardous to hold or express other than popular or orthodox views; and

WHEREAS, Librarians have a special responsibility to provide information on all sides of controversial issues, but cannot do so if intellectual conformity becomes a factor affecting their employment or tenure; and

WHEREAS, The American Library Association has received evidence that loyalty tests may easily lead to the violation of the constitutional rights of library employees, and in some cases already have done so; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That we, the Council of the American Library Association, strongly protest loyalty programs which inquire into a library employee's thoughts, reading matter, associates, or membership in organizations, unless a particular person's definite actions warrant such investigation. We approve the affirmation of allegiance to our Government. We condemn loyalty oaths and investigations which permit the discharge of an individual without a fair hearing. We hold that in a fair hearing the accused is furnished a statement of the charges against him, is allowed to see the evidence against him, is given an opportunity to prepare and to present his defense and to question his accusers with the aid of legal counsel, is presumed innocent until proved guilty, and is given the opportunity, if adjudged guilty, of judicial review."(14)

This third version of the loyalty resolution seems to clarify the ALA's stand sufficiently to indicate that, while not retreating from its demand for intellectual freedom for librarians, the association recognizes that there may be occasions when loyalty investigations are warranted.

The problem of labeling is related to that of loyalty investigations. For while the latter tries to check and label the librarian, the former tries to do the same with the librarian's materials. Briefly, labeling consists of an attempt by government officials, or more often by self-appointed guardians of morals or of government, to have the librarian or some official or private organization check all material in a library and label all items which he considers immoral, subversive, or offensive in any other way. "The practicability and financial problems of such a project [is] not necessarily relevant to its decision, which should be made on the basis of the principle involved."(18)

As usual in the ALA's reactions to censorship attempts, its recommendation against labeling was not an offensive action, but a defense against several local labeling efforts, e.g., that of the Montclair, New Jersey, Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. In 1950 this body tried to force "libraries in New Jersey to put a prominent label or inscription on 'publications which advocate or favor Communism, or which are issued or distributed by any Communist organization or any other organization formally designated by any authorized government official or agency as Communistic or subversive. . . .'" Furthermore, it urged that "such publications ' . . . should not be freely available in libraries to readers or in schools to pupils, but should be obtainable only by signing suitable applications.'"(18) The committee found that similar proposals were fairly common, often coming from religious groups and "so-called 'patriotic' organizations."(18)

In April 1951 the members of the committee had studied the background of the matter fully, and nine out of eleven voted on it, all nine being against the idea of labeling as proposed by the Sons of the American Revolution.

However, since the CIF felt that its unanimity might stem from its sensitivity to the subject, and since most members represented libraries which are large and hence least apt to have to face the problem, twenty-four other men and women representing a wide section of the country and all types and sizes of libraries were queried. Of these twenty-four, twenty replied and, without exception, opposed labeling. The CIF accordingly made the following recommendations, which were unanimously adopted by the ALA Council on July 13, 1951:

"Librarians should not use the technique of labeling as a means of predisposing readers against library materials for the following reasons:

1. Although totalitarian states find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging publications as 'subversive,' injustice and ignorance rather than justice and enlightenment result from such practices, and the American Library Association has a responsibility to take a stand against the establishment of such criteria in a democratic state.

2. Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections. The presence of a magazine or book in a library does not indicate an endorsement of its contents by the library.

3. No one person should take the responsibility of labeling publications. No sizable group of persons would be likely to agree either on the types of material which should be labeled or the sources of information which should be regarded with suspicion. As a practical consideration, a librarian who labeled a book or magazine pro-communist might be sued for libel.

4. Labeling is an attempt to prejudice the reader, and as such, it is a censor's tool.

5. Labeling violates the spirit of the Library Bill of Rights.

6. Although we are all agreed that communism is a threat to the free world, if materials are labeled to pacify one group, there is no excuse for refusing to label any item in the library's collection. Because communism, fascism, or other authoritarianisms tend to suppress ideas and attempt to coerce individuals to conform to a specific ideology, American librarians must be opposed to such 'isms.' We are, then, anti-communist, but we are also opposed to any other group which aims at closing any path to knowledge."(18)

The adoption of these recommendations did not end the problem of labeling, however. To mention just one example, on January 30, 1952, Congressman Velde, of Illinois, introduced a bill in the United States House of Representatives "to provide that the Librarian of Congress shall mark all subversive matter in the Library of Congress and compile a list thereof for the guidance of other librarians in the United States."(6)

The ALA's most recent resolution was a declaration on The Freedom to Read, issued jointly by the ALA and the American Book Publishers Council. It was signed by the leaders of the two organizations, by Luther H. Evans, Librarian of Congress and head of Unesco, and by educators, lawyers, judges, and business executives, and was endorsed by the ALA Council on June 25, 1953.(19) It grew out of an off-the-record Conference on the Freedom to Read held on May 2 and 3, 1953, at Rye, New York, under the sponsorship of the ALA's CIF and the American Book Publishers Council.(19)

The chief points of the declaration on The Freedom to Read appear in the following excerpts from it:

"The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label 'controversial' books, to distribute lists of 'objectionable' books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid. . . . We, as citizens devoted to the use of books . . . , wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda, and to reject obscenity. . . . We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

. . . suppression is never more dangerous than in . . . a time of social tension. . . .

. . . free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority. . . .

2. Publishers and librarians do not need to endorse every idea or presentation contained in the books they make available. . . .

3. . . . A book should be judged as a book. No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. . . .

4. The present laws dealing with obscenity should be vigorously enforced. Beyond that, there is no place in our society for extra-legal efforts to coerce the taste of others. . . .

5. It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept with any book the prejudgment of a label characterizing

the book or author as subversive or dangerous. . . . Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom. . . . no group has the right . . . to impose its own concepts of politics of morality upon other members of a democratic society.

7. . . . What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. . . ."(20)

Turning to the United States Information Service libraries overseas, the declaration criticized "the confused and fearful response of the State Department to recent attacks upon this program"(20) which resulted in the temporary banning of several hundred titles. Pleading that "The libraries must express in themselves and in their services the ideas of freedom for which they speak"(20) the declaration urged that books be selected solely on the basis of their usefulness to the USIS libraries.

This statement may have done its share to cause the subsequent policy directive(21) by the State Department that substantially agreed with every idea previously advocated by ALA. We must realize, however, that the main impetus came undoubtedly from President Eisenhower's subsequently mentioned vigorous endorsement of policies for which the ALA had stood for many years.

One of the CIF's most ambitious activities was a conference, held on June 28 and 29, 1952, immediately preceding the New York ALA meeting, to provide a forum for exploring the various concepts of intellectual freedom and their application in library practice. The conference was held at the quarters of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, and was made possible largely through the grant from the Field Foundation, already mentioned. It was open to all librarians, and was attended also by representatives of such groups as newspapermen, book publishers, and educators, as well as by leaders in sociology, public opinion, and law. The conference consisted of symposiums on the following four subjects: (a) the fundamental nature of the library in a democracy; (b) present problems of book selection; (c) analysis of the sources of current attacks on free communication and methods of meeting them; (d) problems common to newspapermen, book publishers, and educators especially concerned with intellectual freedom.

In a summary of the discussions Alan Barth, editorial writer for the Washington Post and author of The Loyalty of Free Men, stated that the conference showed very large areas of general agreement, as below:

(a) ". . . the enjoyment of freedom is indistinguishably linked with a responsibility to use that freedom in the public interest. . . ."

(b) ". . . freedom of communication is one of the essential elements of a free society. . . . And . . . libraries are an essential element in the system of free communication which is an element of a free society."

(c) ". . . freedom is not a right of the librarian any more than it is a

right of the newspaper editor or of the author so much as it is a right of the reader, a right of the public to have access to information, a right of the public to know."

(d) ". . . censorship is of itself a corrupting influence. There is indeed no such thing as good censorship, there is no such thing as wise censorship."

(e) ". . . the American adherence to the traditions which we are likely to think of as special, is not peculiarly American."(22)

The report went on to list a minority view which held that the Library Bill of Rights must be interpreted with some regard for administrative feasibility, that the public library is not independent of its environment, that it is an integral part of local government and cannot get too far from, or go too far in advance of, local opinion.

These attitudes are not as incompatible as might seem at first glance. The statement that a public library cannot get too far from, or go too far in advance of, local opinion seems reasonable and does not necessarily negate the principle of freedom of information for a free society. It implies that the library can be an effective channel of communication only so long as people use it. And if the library tries to hasten its long-range program of education for tolerance too greatly, then people will not attend to it.

Another point which this difference of opinion points up is that there are two kinds of censorship--that of the minority, where one minor group tries to prevent others from airing their views, and that of the majority, where the bulk of the people do not tolerate any but official views. The latter type seems to be more current at present. It is an interesting speculation whether the public library, as part of local government, is more intimately bound to its traditional principle of free access to all views, or to the principle that as part of the local government it must go along with the majority.

The 1952 ALA Conference on Intellectual Freedom was successful enough to justify a second one at Whittier College, California, on June 20-21, 1953, just before the 72nd annual meeting of the ALA in Los Angeles. Its theme was "Book Selection in the Defense of Liberty." Speakers represented various fields, and the principal ideas voiced at the conference may be summarized as follows:

(a) Much attempted, and also successful, censorship is due to pressure groups (religious, racial, national, labor, business, occupational, professional) which "resent criticism of any kind."(23)

(b) The two main fields of present censorship attempts are morals and politics.

(c) Most of these attacks stem from fear.

(d) This fear is largely unfounded. As one speaker expressed it, "If we are so weak that we can't tolerate hostile ideas . . . it is not the idea but our own weakness which precipitates our downfall."(23)

(e) This fear will be overcome only by the widest possible education, by a sharing of our cultural heritage.

(f) It can also be overcome through Professor Lasswell's suggested

"positive 'programs of self-knowledge,'" and "by setting up 'committees on national security studies' in civic groups, bar associations, trade associations, trade unions, and institutions of learning" which will show "through experience what the reasons are for the American legal and moral principle of respecting the freedom of the mind."(24)

(g) Freedom of the mind is in itself good. But it carries responsibility along with it. We must not abuse it, nor use it frivolously.

(h) We must not let our own preference limit our degree of tolerance, nor try to foist our own tastes upon everyone else. For freedom is indivisible. In the words of one participant, "You cannot retreat to a previously prepared position and say, 'Freedom for everybody, with one exception.' . . . Toleration is meaningless that does not include the detestable."(25)

Throughout its history the CIF has realized that censorship attempts can be counteracted most effectively on the local and regional level. Organizations there are primarily concerned with such endeavors, they are the first to be involved, they are more apt to know the facts, and thus are better able to judge each case on its own merit. The role of the national organization is, after all, mainly a coordinating and policy-suggesting one.

Accordingly early in the history of the committee, on April 1, 1942, letters were mailed to state library association presidents, urging the appointment of state committees on intellectual freedom. By the summer of 1949 such committees had been formed in twenty-five states.(26) In addition, the ALA Council passed the following four suggestions, separately, on February 1, 1948:

"1. All state library associations appoint a committee on intellectual freedom to act promptly on local censorship problems and report current restrictions on intellectual freedom to the chairman of the A.L.A. Committee on Intellectual Freedom.

2. Librarians become familiar with the literature on this subject from the Bill of Rights down to the latest Cornell University study, to read and ponder, and then see what it means in their day-by-day practice.

3. Librarians feature civil rights as one of the 'great issues' in their individual libraries and at A.L.A. conferences.

4. Library and educational periodicals be urged to devote one issue to the question of civil liberties."(27)

Among the state and regional library associations which followed the ALA's suggestions was the Mountain Plains Library Association, which endorsed the ALA Loyalty Resolution and the Library Bill of Rights in 1950, urging its adoption by local libraries in the region; and the Southwestern Library Association, which adopted a similar resolution in 1949.

All of the above steps were undertaken as long-range measures. The ALA is interested, however, not only in the theory of freedom of information but

also in its practical application. Whatever principles it decides upon are the result of actual cases. In order to develop logical tenets which meet actual circumstances, and at the same time to give advice and help to those libraries that request it, the ALA must investigate local situations. Throughout its existence the CIF has studied local cases and new legislation, although it has not always actively entered the picture.

Among the immediate matters which the committee has examined are:

(a) The course in 1947 of United States HR 263, "A bill . . . to declare certain papers, pamphlets, books, pictures, and writings non-mailable." (The bill died in committee.)

(b) From 1948 on, the banning of the Nation from the New York City public school libraries, imposed because of Paul Blanshard's articles describing and criticizing the official position of the Catholic Church in certain secular matters. The officers of the ALA wrote several letters of protest over this, and were represented at a hearing on July 13, 1948, in the office of the superintendent of schools; and in November of 1948 the ALA Executive Board voted to sign the "Appeal to Reason and Conscience" and to support the "Ad Hoc Committee to Lift the Ban on the Nation From the New York City Schools.

(c) In 1948 the contemplated nationwide textbook inquiry of the Un-American Activities Committee of the House of Representatives, which had been initiated by the Sons of the American Revolution and was backed by the California legislature. (This proposal met with opposition from a number of groups since it was viewed as a threat to academic freedom, and the demand for inquiry died down.)

(d) In 1948-49 the Smith Act, which makes it "unlawful for any person with the intent to cause the overthrow of any government in the United States, to print, publish, edit, issue, circulate, sell, distribute, or publicly display any written or printed matter advocating (the overthrow of) any government in the United States by force."

(e) The attempt of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, prodded by the Sons of the American Revolution, to establish a committee to censor all books placed on branch library shelves by the county librarian. (As a result of opposition from a number of national and regional organizations, including the League of Women Voters, and chiefly because the County Free Library Law gives the Board of Supervisors no authority to delegate the librarian's power, the Board reversed its position.)

(f) The attempts in 1950 to ban the Consumers' Union Reports. The CIF recommended in 1951 that librarians "continue to make Consumers' Union Reports available until evidence is produced to show that it is genuinely and seriously subversive."(7)

(g) The Maryland Subversive Activities Act (Ober Law), which decrees that in the event reasonable doubt exists in a person's loyalty he shall not be appointed or employed. On July 21, 1950, the ALA Council passed a resolution against the Ober Law, supporting the Maryland Library Association in efforts to have it repealed.

(h) The Peoria, Illinois, film case. At the request of the local librarian, however, the CIF took no action. This case, which incidentally helped cause in 1951 the decision that the Library Bill of Rights was to apply to all types of materials handled by libraries, began when the Americanism Committee of the Peoria American Legion protested the circulation of three public library films. It caused considerable heat in local newspapers, the Peoria Ministerial Association came to the aid of the library, and finally the compromise was reached that all films could circulate without restriction, but that any group might preview films, then file its comments with the library, to be available to anyone upon request.(6)

The above are only a few of the cases that were watched, by the CIF, of which a few were acted upon. They furnish evidence of the variety of problems encountered, however, and of the committee's conscientiousness.

Lest it be thought that the ALA was unduly jealous of the rights of the library user to impartial information, and that it stood alone in its feeling that intellectual freedom cannot be achieved by censorship, a brief and selective indication of similar activities by other organizations is in order. The following examples may be cited:

(a) Early in 1949 "The Second National Citizens Conference on Civil Liberties, attended by delegates from more than sixty national organizations meeting in Washington . . . recommended that 'Organizations should join the American Library Association in enlisting the cooperation of allied groups in the fields of science, of education, and of book publishing to resist all abridgment of the free access to ideas and full freedom of expression that are the traditions and the heritage of America.'"(28) It also recommended that academic freedom should be extended to all professions allied to education, such as librarians and social workers.

(b) In the same year, on February 16, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development of the National Education Association condemned the banning of the Nation by the New York City Board of Education "and similar acts of suppression," as the ALA had done.(29)

(c) In 1950 the chairman of the CIF could report that Phi Beta Kappa, the American Association of University Professors, the National Education Association, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science also had issued policy statements in regard to loyalty oaths and investigations.(30)

(d) "On December 13 [1950] the Executive Board of the International Union, UAW-CIO, passed a resolution endorsing the ALA Library Bill of Rights 'as it would apply to films, as well as books and other informational material.'"(31) (This was, incidentally, two months before the ALA Council decided that the Bill should apply to all materials in libraries.)

The National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education of the National Education Association drafted a statement entitled "The Public School and the American Heritage," which had been patterned after the ALA Library Bill of Rights and underlined the necessity for freedom of ideas and freedom of access to information.(3) Incidentally the ALA Council

unanimously endorsed this in 1951, upon recommendation of the CIF.

The ALA's strongest, and most recent endorsement in the field of intellectual freedom came from President Eisenhower. In an address at Dartmouth College, on June 14, 1953, the President had spoken out against the current hysteria on books and authors, stating, "Don't join the book burners. Don't think you are going to conceal facts by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book as long as it does not offend your own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship."(32)

On the following day, Robert B. Downs, president of ALA, thanked President Eisenhower in a letter for his presentation of the freedoms to which the work of librarians is dedicated and stated that the Los Angeles conference would concentrate on ways librarians could maintain these freedoms.(33) The President replied in a widely publicized letter which fully endorsed the ALA's position. Read to the conference on June 26, 1953, President Eisenhower's letter included the statement that

"Full, unfettered knowledge of its own heritage, of freedom's enemies, of the whole world of men and ideas . . . is a free people's surest strength. . . . A democracy disdainful of new ideas would be a sick democracy. A democracy fearful of new ideas would be a dying democracy. . . .

We must . . . be intelligently alert not only to the fanatic cunning of Communist conspiracy but also to the grave dangers in meeting fanaticism with ignorance. . . . Any who act as if freedom's defenses are to be found in suppression and fear confess a doctrine that is alien to America. . . .

Our citizens . . . must ever be able to turn to our libraries with clear confidence that there they can freely seek the whole truth, unwarped by fashion and uncompromised by expediency. For in such whole and healthy knowledge alone are to be found and understood those majestic truths of man's nature and destiny that prove, to each succeeding generation, the validity of freedom."(33)

Activities such as those described above cannot be abandoned in a free society as long as the underlying condition which calls for them continues to exist. This condition, involving fear and distrust, is bound to result in demands by individuals and organizations that only "approved" employees and "approved" materials be used, lest those who make use of either be misled into deviating from the accepted norm. And it is equally certain that as long as the society in which circumstances have implanted this fear and distrust remains free there will be other individuals and other organizations which believe, like the ALA, that people can make up their own minds, provided they are given the pertinent facts and the education to interpret them.

To some the approach of the ALA to intellectual freedom may seem largely defensive rather than offensive, and this very defensiveness an element of weakness. However, if the actions of the ALA are examined closely, there

appears not only response to attack, but a good deal of foresighted planning in the attempt to forestall future infringements on the right of the users of libraries to impartial information.

The following parts of the program seem "offensive" rather than "defensive," and indicate that the whole problem was looked at from the beginning as a long-range educational venture:

(a) The position that the Library Bill of Rights should be adopted by local libraries and library boards at a time when no local censorship was under discussion, so that it could be used as a guide and policy statement whenever necessary in the future.

(b) The practice of studying proposed legislation and explaining the association's point of view to legislators, whenever necessary.

(c) The custom of collecting material on local issues before the national organization was called in, so that the CIF had at least a modicum of background information in all instances.

(d) The policy of publicizing the stand of librarians.

The effectiveness of these various factors has varied, depending on the particular cases, on the skill with which they have been applied, on the strength of the advocates of the censorship attempts, on the stand taken by other organizations, and on other, sometimes entirely unrelated, variables. But always the ALA actions have clarified the traditional stand of libraries; they have called attention to the fact that the library user--as a member of a democracy and as a beneficiary of the United States Bill of Rights--is entitled to make up his own mind; and they have helped in a good number of cases to prevent or lessen censorship attempts.

Organizations like the ALA, which oppose censorship, ipso facto, can defend their own stand much better once certain policies and courses have been decided upon. It is for this reason that the force of resolutions like the one on loyalty investigations, the one on labeling, and particularly the Library Bill of Rights, should not be underestimated. The practical application of their principles rests, however, with the individual librarian on the local level and with his ability to educate his board, and his patrons, into tolerating other people's opinions.

FOOTNOTES

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4. ALA Bulletin, 34:P-37, August 1940.
5. ALA Bulletin, 41:H-33, Dec. 15, 1947.
6. ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom: Report to the Council, July 4, 1952.
7. ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom: Consumer Union Reports. ALA Bulletin, 45:311-312, Oct. 1951.

8. Personal communication from ALA Headquarters Staff, Chicago, Ill.
9. ALA Bulletin, 35:622, Oct. 15, 1941.
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19. ALA Press Release, June 25, 1953.
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24. Christian Science Monitor, June 30, 1953.
25. ALA Press Release, June 20, 1953.
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27. ALA Bulletin, 42:134-135, March 1948.
28. Cory, J. M.: Memo to Members. ALA Bulletin, 43:(132-133), April 1949.
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30. Berninghausen, D. K.: Loyalty by Choice or Coercion. ALA Bulletin, 44:16-17, Jan. 1950.
31. Union Resolution. ALA Bulletin, 45:36, Jan. 1951.
32. Full text in New York Times, June 15, 1953, sec. 1, p. 10; and Christian Science Monitor, June 15, 1953, p. 10. Excerpts in The Freedom to Read (cf. ref. 20 above).
33. Full text in ALA Press Release, June 26, 1953; and New York Times, June 27, 1953, sec. 1, p. 16. Excerpts in Christian Science Monitor, June 27, 1953.