

OKLAHOMA CITY LIBRARIES

CARNEGIE LIBRARY

Third and Robinson

Oklahoma City 2, Oklahoma

Office of the Director

February 28, 1950

Mr. Russell Davis, Chairman
Bartlesville Library Board
Box 370
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Davis:

Our mutual friend, Don Sheridan, called me yesterday and told me something of your problems, and transmitted your request that I write you a letter relative to our policies governing the handling of the one or two periodical publications of the Soviet Union and other "radical" publications.

If I would answer you simply and briefly, I would merely say we have no "policy," and I think you would understand, but of course there are always some professional or amateur do-gooders who haven't enough to occupy their time and must spend it attempting to enforce virtue and righteousness. I am reminded of the incident in this city a few years ago, quite some time before my arrival on the scene, when a group of women voiced a loud protest over certain books which they found on the shelves of our Children's Room. The titles, they said, were too "suggestive" for young and pure minds. I quote a few of those titles:

Everything You Want to Know About the Presidents.
Peeps at George Washington.
The Boy Who Had No Birthday.
Girls Who Did.
What Daddys Do.

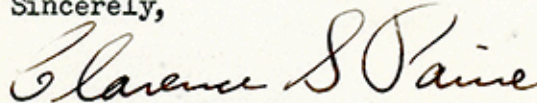
I think no further comment is necessary. As for communism, it should be obvious to any informed person that the one thing that communism and the Soviet Union cannot withstand is the light of day, freedom to read, to think, and to express oneself. To use censorship of publications by or about communism or the Soviet Union is to admit that our own way of life will not stand up when compared with communism, and that in fear and desperation we must stoop to the very weapons of communism, such as censorship, lest the American public become convinced that our way of life has failed. Personally, I have more respect for the American public than to believe that, given the facts and a chance to compare, they would make such a ridiculous decision as that. Personally, I have much more fear of the socialistic publications of our own government and the public statements of many of its officials which are so obviously socialistic and yet are daily being issued to the American public under the label of democracy and free enterprise.

If in the Oklahoma City Libraries demands were made upon us to remove the publications to which you have made reference from our shelves, there would be no way under the sun that we could logically refuse the demands of other minorities that we remove from our shelves the publications of other groups within our own society, of minority political parties (and as a Republican in Oklahoma I am very sensitive to this possibility), of church groups with which first this person and then that person might choose to take issue. But all of this is obvious to you and I fear will not be of much help in meeting your present situation. And frankly, I don't know how to convince people so uninformed as to be unable to realize that the very act of censorship in itself not only constitutes a threat to the very foundations upon which this nation was built, but inevitably only serves to glamorize the object of the censorship. It is a well known fact that almost every book that the city of Boston has censored has become a bestseller over night—not because of any intrinsic merit in the book itself but merely because it had been declared indecent or immoral. To ban supposedly communistic propaganda from the shelves of a public library can serve no constructive end. The patrons of the public library are, or at least ought to be, the best informed people in the community, and such people cannot be swayed by communist diatribe. Moreover, the Soviet Union or the Communist Party or any Communist front organization by whatever name will be most happy to send their publications to anyone through the U. S. mails.

I fear that I have not been of much help but assure you that I stand ready to do anything that I can.

With all good wishes for your success, I am,

Sincerely,



CLARENCE S. PAINE

Director

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