

Library Board Makes Its Report To Commissioners

TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA:

In accordance with the request of the Board of Commissioners, made at the meeting of the Board of Commissioners with the Board of Directors of the Bartlesville Public Library on March 6, 1950, that an appraisal of the contents of the City Library and a report on the general operation of the Library, be made by the Library Board, the following report is submitted:

The premise upon which the Board's appraisal of the Library's contents proceeded may be summarized in the language of a portion of the Library Bill of Rights, adopted by the Council of the American Library Association on June 18, 1948:

"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 book be excluded because of the 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."

It should be clearly understood that the Board's determination that any publication is suitable for inclusion in the City Library does not imply approval or advocacy of the views expressed in the book or periodical in question, either by the Board, or by its individual members. The Board believes that a policy of selection which would confine the Library's contents to material consonant with the opinions of the Board or any of its members, or of any other citizen or group of citizens in the community, would be subversive of the basic principles which differentiate the constitutional government of the United States from the governments of authoritarian states.

Statements have been made to the Library Board by interested citizens to the effect that the Department of Justice or the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or both, maintain lists of communistic and suspect periodicals. Appended hereto is a photostatic copy of letter dated March 23, 1950, from Mr. James M. McInerney, Assistant Attorney General of the United States, in response to the Board's request for such list, or information concerning it, in which Mr. McInerney states that the Department of Justice has promulgated no lists of periodicals, and that the Department has not in any other way attempted to make any declaration as to whether any periodicals circulating freely in the United States and through the United States mails are considered by it to be subversive. The Library Board has made several requests by letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both at its Oklahoma City and Washington offices, for information concerning a list allegedly compiled by that agency, but has received no written reply to its inquiries. On Thursday, April 20, 1950, Mr. Earl Cullon, FBI agent, with headquarters at Oklahoma City, called on the President of this Board at his office in Bartlesville in this connection, and stated to the President that there is no FBI list of communistic or subversive periodicals. At the President's request, this statement was repeated by Mr. Cullon to the Bartlesville City Manager. The Board has in its files a letter from Mrs. Lucy Ann Babcock of the Oklahoma Library Commission, in which she states that in a telephone con-

versation with her on March 9, 1950, a representative of the FBI at its Oklahoma City office stated to her that the FBI maintains no list of communist or subversive periodicals. The Library Board has secured from the Superintendent of Documents of the United States, a copy of a publication issued December 18, 1948, by the Committee on Un-American Activities of the United States House of Representatives, under the chairmanship of J. Parnell Thomas, entitled "Citations by Official Government Agencies and Organizations of Publications Found to be Communist or Communist Front", listing publications found by various state and national legislative and investigating committees to be subversive, and it may be that this list is the one to which reference has been made in the statements to the Board.

It is the Library Board's opinion, based upon its careful appraisal of the periodicals currently received at the City Library, that the Periodical Section reflects a balanced list of reputable publications, and that it contains no periodicals which may properly be termed subversive. There are appended hereto excerpts from the eighth edition of "Periodicals for Small and Medium Sized Libraries", published by the American Library Association, consisting of that organization's evaluation of each of the periodicals now received at the Library.

Specific complaint has been made to the Board with respect to three publications: "The Nation", "The New Republic", and "Soviet Russia Today". All three of these periodicals are contained in the Tulsa and Oklahoma City libraries. Appended hereto are photostatic copies of letter dated March 9, 1950, from Mr. James E. Gourley, Librarian of the Tulsa Public Library, and letter dated April 21, 1950, from Mr. Clarence S. Paine, Director of the Oklahoma City Public Libraries, so stating.

It is the Board's judgment that "The Nation" and "The New Republic" should be retained on the Bartlesville Library's subscription list. Their retention, with other publications on the current list, is essential to effect that balance of differing viewpoints on controversial subjects which should characterize a good library. Both publications are contained in the public libraries of other cities in this area. It may be noted that neither publication is cited in the list released by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the only "suspect" list which the Board has been able to locate.

The magazine "Soviet Russia Today" is sent without charge through the United States mails to public and school libraries, and has never appeared on the City Library's subscription list. The Board's examination of this publication indicates that it is of little value from the standpoints of interest and information, and that its retention cannot therefore be justified in view of the space limitations under which the library is operating.

The City Library contains some 25,000 volumes. It has therefore not been possible, since March 6, 1950, for the Board to evaluate all books on the shelves. The Board has, however, appraised the contents of the Political, Economic and Social sections of the Library's catalog. It is the Board's opinion, based upon such appraisal, that the volumes contained in these sections reflect selection on the basis of interest, information and enlightenment, and effect to the fullest practicable extent balance as between conflicting viewpoints.

The Board's investigation of the general operation of the City Library discloses that its facilities are available to all

citizens of the community. "Story hours" are held for both white and Negro children, which are now, and have always been, conducted on a segregated basis. Neither the City Librarian, nor any member of her staff, encourages the reading of any particular publication or type of publication through suggestions to the Library patrons, the advisory services of the staff being limited to assistance requested. The staff enforces, to the fullest extent possible, the Library rule which forbids the marking or annotating of any publication which is the property of the Library, either by patrons or by members of the staff.

The City Library's effectiveness is limited both by inadequate funds and inadequate space. For the fiscal year 1949-1950, the total sum of \$8,665.00 was allocated for the operation of the Library, which total is budgeted as follows: salaries, \$5,890.00; audit, \$50.00; telephone and office supplies, \$125.00; book repairs and supplies, \$200.00; books, periodicals and newspapers, \$1,800.00; janitor services, \$600.00. Additional space for stacks and storage is urgently required, and the Board hereby renews its request for allocation of such space as may be or become available in the Civic Center building.

The suggestion has been made to the Board that an adult research section be established in the City Library. After careful consideration, the Board has concluded that this proposal should not be adopted. It is most doubtful that any criteria could be established for the inclusion of reading matter in such a section that would be either satisfactory, or capable of administration. The existence of such a section might well invite constant pressures for the inclusion therein of an ever-increasing number of books and periodicals which discuss, from any point of view, controversial topics pertaining to politics, sociology, religion, race relations, or morals. Restrictions of this nature would, in the opinion of the Board, tend to exaggerate in the minds of young persons the attractiveness of unorthodox viewpoints.

The Board believes that an explanation should be made to the Board of Commissioners concerning an incident which has occurred since the last meeting of the Board with the Commissioners. At the close of the March 6 meeting, the Board directed that the Library's files of the three periodicals which had been specifically placed in locked storage until such time as a careful appraisal complained of be segregated and thereof could be made by the Board. Access to the locked storage place in which these files were placed was gained without the knowledge or consent of the Board or the Library staff, and a picture was made of these files and of two books which were segregated at the direction of the Board and which the Board has since been unable to locate. This picture was published in the March 9 edition of the Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise, and in the March 10 edition of the Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman. The Board regrets the incident, and disclaims responsibility therefor.

The Board wishes to reiterate its desire to receive the suggestions and advice of the citizens of the community concerning the administration of the City Library, which will be received and carefully considered when presented at regular meetings of the Board. Lists of books and publications currently acquired for the Library will continue to be furnished to the local newspapers for publication, and will be kept on file at the Library for the convenience of patrons. In the interest of providing a forum for comments with respect to the Library's contents, the Board has established at the City Library a bulletin board upon which signed comments and criticisms of books and periodicals on the Library's shelves will be posted.

Respectfully submitted,
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF

BARTLESVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
RUSSELL W. DAVIS, President
OLGA A. BEECHER, Member
GEORGE N. CADE, Member
DARLENE ANDERSON ES-SARY, Member
EFFIE H. FREIBURGER, Member
RICHARD KANE, Member

Tulsa Public Library

Tulsa, Okla.

Office of the Librarian

March 9th, 1950

Mr. R. W. Davis

P.O. Box 370

Bartlesville, Okl.

Dear Mr. Davis:

Mrs. Freiburger of your library board was in yesterday and asked that I write you. She wished me to specifically state that we have not made any attempt at censorship by removing "Soviet Republic Today," "The Nation," nor the "New Republic."

These publications are on our shelves and will remain there as long as I am in charge. It is true that we do not keep a permanent file of "Soviet Republic Today."

I had hoped to be able to send you a copy of the "Library Bill of Rights," but have been unable to locate one without having it copied. I believe your librarian could find a copy in library literature.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

JAMES E. GOURLEY,
Librarian

Department of Justice

Washington, D.C.

March 23, 1950

Mr. Russell W. Davis

1542 S. Dewey

Bartlesville, Okla.

Dear Mr. Davis:

This will acknowledge your letter of March 15th, 1950, to former Attorney General Clark, regarding certain periodicals which it has been alleged have been placed on some sort of a suspected list.

The only lists promulgated by this Department consist of those organizations which have been designated by the Attorney General pursuant to Executive Order No. 9835 relating to the loyalty of government employees. No periodicals appear on these lists nor has this Department in any other way attempted to make any declaration as to whether any periodicals circulating freely in the United States and through the United States mails are considered by it to be subversive.

Respectfully,

For the Attorney General
JAMES M. MCINERNEY
Assistant Attorney General

Wright Branch
2101 Exchange Avenue
Dunbar Branch
613 N.E. 4th St
Oklahoma City Libraries
Carnegie Library
Third and Robinson
Oklahoma City 2, Oklahoma
Office of the Director

April 21st 1954

Mr. Russell W. Davis, Chairman

Board of Directors
Bartlesville Public Library
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Davis:

In reply to your request of this date, as do most public college, and university libraries in the country, we do receive and preserve the files of the following magazines, and have done so since dates indicated:

The Nation since July, 1905.

The New Republic since November, 1915.

Sincerely,

CLARENCE S. PAINE
Director

RUTH W. BROWN ARCHIVE: 5