LIBRARY RED PROBE SLATED

Stormy Bartlesville Meet Ends as Mayor Orders Book Inquiry

BARTLESVILLE, Mar. 7—Bartlesville city commissioners Monday night at a public hearing ordered the city library board to probe literature in the city library and make a detailed report of its operations.

The action arose out of charges by a citizen's committee that subversive literature was being made available through the library.

The citizen's committee was appointed by Mayor R. H. Hudson two weeks ago to study the library book list for instances of subversive literature after several complaints had been made to the city commission.

GROUP CHALLENGED

The citizens committee had requested authority to make recommendations according to the University of Oklahoma school of library science.

Charges and counter-charges flew thick and fast during Monday night's meeting. One citizen, who said his name was Robert Manuel, demanded the floor and charged that the citizen's committee was "unqualified" to make such a study.

Mayor Hudson, presiding at the meeting, gave Manuel a scathing denunciation and ruled him out of order. Hudson said, "I won't listen another minute to such a discussion. Who are you," the mayor demanded, "that you have a right to challenge this group of respected citizens?"

PROPAGANDA BARED

The citizens committee includes Mrs. Charles Warren, chairman, Mrs. George Willis, Mrs. Besse Smith, Mrs. J. M. Ellings, Mrs. M. J. Kirwan, Mrs. Frank Sisson and W. D. McGee.

Mayor Hudson, though attorney and judge in Oklahoma since territorial days, had to rule another spectator out of order in addition to Manuel before the stormy meeting was adjourned.

The citizens committee had charged that a book, "Russia Today," which is published by the Russian public information service, was a "red" propaganda sheet and had asked Librarian Ruth Brown to remove it from the city library. Mrs. Willis, of the citizens committee, said Miss Brown had refused to ban the book.
WEBSTER'S Collegiate Dictionary, which is quite succinct and positive about such things, defines the word "subversive" as "that which undermines the moral, allegiance, or faith of...or corrupts." It is a word which is being used rather frequently these days to describe acts or statements which tend to impair allegiance to and faith in things American, or to discredit them by propaganda designed to uphold various ideologies. It is a word widely used by committees of congress charged with certain investigations.

It is a word which has been heard hereabouts recently. And its employment has brought a request from the city commission to the city library board to investigate literature in, and operation of, the city library.

The library board will report in April to the city commissioner its findings in regard to charges that subversive literature is being distributed at the city library, and finding its way into the hands of the immature.

When charges of this kind are lodged an inquiry is in order for the best interests of everyone concerned—the community, the library, officials of the library and city authorities. And before you reach any firm conclusion on the entire matter, you might wait until the findings are made public.

If there is no foundation for the charges, the community will know it at that time. If they are substantiated, then there will be time to decide upon the next step.

Is censorship being suggested? America bristles at mention of the word—and properly. And there is no suggestion here that propaganda should be suppressed or hidden from the adult mind. There is suggestion that the immature mind should not be exposed to propaganda—to subversive propaganda. And again, properly.

The immature mind, the impressionable mind of formative years, soaks up information—or misinformation or propaganda—like a blotter, without discrimination. Why shouldn't it? What basis of judgment exists for the youngster that would enable him to evaluate, to choose, to weigh, to reject?

We have not hesitated to demand selection in the matter of comic books presented for the consumption of the immature, nor has that demand aroused any extensive protest. Can there be protest when far more subtle, more dangerous material may be involved?

There is no widespread suggestion that matches be banned—there is widespread insistence that children should not play with them, and a parent would properly resent having anyone present junior with a supply of them for striking purposes.

Not all parents, of course. There was a case not long ago of a mother who, upon finding a toddler waving a double-edged safety razor blade, declined to take it away from him on the ground that when he had cut himself, he would learn to leave it alone. But that is an exceptional case.

...and by the way, this is not to insist that junior is being given razor blades or matches to play with; but to suggest that if he is, it should be known. And a decision made on the basis of the knowledge.