

RUTH W. BROWN ARCHIVE  
P1  
Keep if  
you  
like  
cl 20

THE BARTLESVILLE LIBRARIAN

copied from The Tulsa  
Tribune, 9-14-50

Richard Lloyd Jones

Because Miss Ruth W. Brown, Bartlesville librarian, refused to remove publications, which a group of citizens had decided were subversive, she had been ousted from the post which she has held for 35 years. Tuesday she and her supporters went into district court asking that she be reinstated on the grounds that the new library ordinance, approved July 24, the day before she was fired, is in conflict with state laws.

We can't pass on the legal technicalities, but it does appear that from a common sense point-of-view the Bartlesville vigilantes have gotten pretty far out of line. We hesitate to use the phrase "witch hunt". That used to be a good term until Washington apologists grabbed it in an effort to ridicule investigations into real witches, like Brother Alger Hiss, to whom Dean Acheson has yet to turn his back.

The Bartlesville committee insisted that Miss Brown remove from the library copies of three magazines: The Nation, The New Republic, and Soviet Russia Today. Her refusal cost her the job.

Now, The Nation and The New Republic are left-wing magazines. It can be said, fairly, that they lean heavily toward socialism. But they are not Communist publications. In the fuzzy old days during the war, when Franklin and Joe were jolly good fellows, both magazines were great apologists for the noble Russians, but each has since undergone some of the disillusionment that has affected self-advertised "liberals" who have a little admiration for human freedom.

There is a difference between radicalism and revolution. A man has a right to be a radical, so long as he doesn't plot the violent overthrow of a popularly-elected government. The New Republic and The Nation are radical. But however screwy their socialist theories may be (and we think they're pretty screwy) their articles are often stimulating and brilliantly-written.

Every public library should subscribe to and file them. The Tulsa public library does. The University of Tulsa library does. Why shouldn't Bartlesville?

Soviet Russia Today is in a different category. It is a propaganda magazine, issued, subsidized, and distributed free to libraries by a Communist-front organization in New York. You can guess where the money comes from. The purpose of the magazine is to demonstrate by type and pictures that life is Heaven under Communist dictatorship.

It's really not very artful propaganda. The Tribune editor has read a number of issues with profit to learn with what dead-pan seriousness Red writers can make the most palpable misstatements of fact. Few Americans with a reading discernment above fourth grade are likely to be taken in.

Still, as paid Soviet government propaganda such a publication should not be mixed with sincere periodicals. Both the Tulsa public library and the University of Tulsa library get Soviet Russia Today. Both file it. The Tulsa library does not put it

on its periodical display rack, although any Citizen can have access to its copies, and the TU librarian deposits it in a special rack devoted to the propaganda effusions of all governments. Both solutions seem sensible. Bartlesville ought to try one.

If a library is to be worthy of the name it must include some publications that do not reflect the general opinion of the community. Every library should have a copy of the Koran, although few Oklahomans believe that Mohammed is God's only true prophet. Cotton Mather believed in witchcraft, Nietzsche in the Hitlerian concept of the Superman, Bartram Russell in free love--none of which is in line with the majority thinking in Bartlesville or any other American city. Yet all have contributed literature worthy of library space.

Every educated American should read Karl Marx and some of the writings of Lenin. To read these men is not to believe them, but to read them is to understand more clearly the strained, neurotic ideology that has thrust Back reaction upon one-third of the world.

Let's hope that Bartlesville keeps a library that is not limited to books and periodicals "approved" by patriotic groups, however sincere they may be. After all, if a library that contained all points of view tended to make Communists there'd be at least one such library behind the Iron Curtain. The fact that one of the first things Red Leaders do when they seize power is purge the library shelves of all non-Communist writings is eloquent testimony to the wonderful truth that under a condition of free inquiry and free discussion fairy stories are pretty hard to sell.