Report On City Library Is Made By Citizens Group

To: The Members of the Bartlesville City Commission

The members of the citizens committee appointed in February for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not there should be a library in the Bartlesville Public Library, wish to make a further report to the Mayor and the City Commission on the subject of subversive literature.

The members of this committee have pointed out to the Library Board, certain magazines present in the racks of the public library, against which official citations have been made. In order to learn whether or not the Bartlesville library was on a par with other libraries in neighboring cities, the members of this committee have visited libraries in these cities, namely, Coffeyville and Independence, Kansas; Ponca City, Sapulpa, Tulsa and Dewey, Oklahoma.

This report will cover the handling of subversive literature, and the general manner of editorial comment in the city visited by the citizens' committee members.

The Bartlesville City Library furnished this committee with lists of periodicals now in the library, and of the books purchased during 1949. Since the book list was without the names of the authors, the committee, have not as yet had time for making any appraisal of the book list. This periodical list has been studied, and compared with the lists of periodicals in other libraries. Several periodicals, however, in the Bartlesville library, believe are subversive in character and are aimed at the destruction of the American form of life and government. The purpose of these periodicals is to replace the present republican form of government with one of radical socialism. We shall discuss these periodicals specifically as follows:

1. SOVIET RUSSIA TODAY
   This is an official publication of the United States House of Representatives. It has placed three official citations against this magazine.

2. NEGR0 DIGEST
   There is an official citation against the Negro Digest by the American activities committee. There are four citations by the American activities committee. The committee has issued a report (Nov. 19, 1949) on p. 495 titled "Advertises Representing Communist activities in the Negro Digest" as follows: "Whether you like it or not, Socialism is here to stay. It is fast becoming the way of life for nearly half the population of the earth. That will spread further is as sure as..."
tomorrow's sunrise... Without an understanding of socialism, the 20th century is incomprehensible. To help achieve that understanding is the purpose of the Monthly Review. With the subscription for the socialist periodical is the offer of a free book selected by the Book Find Club. There is an official citation against the Book Find Club from the Committee on Un-American Activities, U.S. House of Representatives, pp. 22: "Book Find Club. I. Cited as a Communist Front. (California Committee on Un-American Activities, Report, 1948, p. 392.)"

Again in the Nov. 19, 1949 issue of the Nation we find this advertisement, p. 498: "Books of all kinds from the U.S.S.R., just arrived.... 1950 subscriptions open for all Soviet newspapers and magazines. Four Continental Book Corp.

1. Cited as a Communist front whose president and editor is George Seidels. (Special Committee on Un-American Acts, Report, March 29, 1944, p. 48.)


3. Cited as a Communist front, (Pennsylvania Commonwealth Council before the reviewing board of the Philadelphia County Board of Assistance January 1942.)

Further evidence of the character of the New Republic is found in the issue of March 27, p. 23. "Debate Sensation! Is Russia a Socialist Community?" Yes! "Earl Brower, former general secretary of the Communist party." "No!" Max Shachtman, Chairman, Independent Socialist League.

The above citations we believe are sufficient to warrant the removal of Soviet Russia Today, Negro Digest, The Nation and the New Republic from the list of literature censored to the public in Bartlesville. This is no invasion upon the right of any individual citizen or group of citizens to subscribe to and read these publications.

The members of the citizens' committee found that none of the six libraries visited had Soviet Russia Today or The Negro Digest. Two of them had The Nation and three of them had the New Republic.

Thus it is within the province of the library board to decide whether this brand of literature shall continue to be financed and distributed to the public at the expense of the Bartlesville taxpayers. There are available citations, which the members of the citizens' committee found in other libraries, for the guidance of librarians in discussing adverse trends in literature. It is the suggestion of the citizens' committee that the librarians and the members of the library board should adopt these guidelines.

After visiting six other libraries, the members of the citizens' committee were worried that in order to conduct the functions of the library the library board should meet at least once a month.

These citizens are of the opinion that the presentation of contrasting points of view on controversial subjects does not require the surrender of our libraries to fifth column invasion. The freedom of the press has never been interpreted to tolerate the printing of counterfeit money. Counterfeit literature, designed to defame and destroy the heritage of American freedom, should be exposed instead of tolerated.

Citizens committee
M. Warren, chairman
Henryetta B. Wills, Secretary
Library Board Makes Its Report To Commissioners

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

In accordance with the requirement 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 23, 1950, the Director of the Library, Mr. J. M. McChesney, reports that the contents of the Library have been received and evaluated. The evaluation of each of the publications received by the Board has been made by the librarian, Mr. J. M. McChesney.

The report submitted to the Board contains the following:

The Board has received several requests by letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both of the Oklahoma City and Washington offices, for information concerning a list allegedly compiled by the agency, but has not received any reply to its inquiries. On Thursday, April 2, 1950, Mr. Dean Cullen, FBI agent, stated that the Oklahoma City, called on the President of this Board at his office in Bartlesville in connection, and stated that there is no FBI list of communistic or subversive publications. At the President's request, the statement was repeated by Mr. Cullen 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 conversation with her on March 9, 1950, a representative of the FBI at its Oklahoma City office stated that the FBI maintains no list of communist or subversive publications. 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 agencies and organizations 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 publications currently received by the City Library, that the Periodical Section reflects a balanced list of reputable publications, and that it would be undesirable to make any special efforts to see that these publications are not represented among the subscriptions of the library.

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 Periodical Section and it appears to the Board that the library is operating within the limits of the applicable statutes. The Board discloses that it has no plans to make any additional purchases of library materials.
conducted on a segregated basis. Neither the City Librarian, nor any member of the Board of Directors, feels that the reading of any particular publication or type of publication through suggestions to the Library patrons is being well covered by the staff. The marking or annotating of any publication which is the property of the Library, either by patrons or by members of the staff, is not permitted.

The City Library's effectiveness is limited by inadequate funds and inadequate space. For the fiscal year 1949-1950, the total sum of $5,685.00 was allocated for the operation of the Library, which total is distributed as follows: salaries, $3,689.00; telephone and office supplies, $125.00; book repairs and supplies, $40.00; periodicals and newspapers, $1,800.00; janitorial, $600.00. Additional space for stacks and storage is urgently required, and the Board has remitted its request for allocation of such space as may be 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 must be doubted 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 will invite constant pressures for the inclusion therein of an ever-increasing number of books and periodicals which do not come 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 exasperate 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 the incident which has occurred since the last meeting of the Board with the Commissioners. At the close of the March 9th meeting, the Board executed that the Library's files of the three periodicals which had been specifically placed in locked storage until such time as a careful appraisal revealed that they could be made available 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 not segregated at the direction of the Board and which the Board has 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 Daily Oklahoman. The Board regrets the incident, and disclaims responsibility for any consequences thereof.

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 periodicals 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 regard 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

WRIGHT BRANCH
2101 Exchange Avenue

DUNBAR BRANCH
613 N.E. 4th St.

OKLAHOMA CITY LIBRARIES
Carnegie Library
Thirteenth and Robinson

TULSA PUBLIC LIBRARY
Oklahoma City 2, Oklahoma

Office of the Director

BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA
April 21st, 1950

Mr. Russell W. Davis, Chairman of the 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:

1. The Nation, since July, 1915
2. The New Republic, since November, 1915

Sincerely,

CLARENCE S. PAINE
Director


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