

Many Issues Involved In Bartlesville Library Case?

Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in the Bartlesville Record and was enclosed in the letter.

By BOB SNAIR

Round number one of the Ruth Brown-Darlene Essary suit against Bartlesville has been won by the city commissioners. District Judge Jess Miracle of Okemah said in fact a municipality does have the right to hire and fire librarians and the library board as well as determine what periodicals shall appear on the shelves.

Litigation is far from finished. An appeal has already been filed by the losers to air the case in the state supreme court—a case in which the true cause of action is obscured by charges of communism, witch-hunting, insubordination and racial segregation.

Plaintiffs in the suit and those who supported the action in the name of the co-plaintiffs admit there is no unanimity of thought or ideals within their group.

Some are interested only as friends of Ruth Brown, the discharged librarian who had served the city for over 20 years. They believe sincerely she was wronged when her long tenure as city librarian was forgotten by city commissioners who fired her for insubordination.

Others believe the commissioners infringed on a civil liberty. Libraries should be run by an autonomous board, they say, not by politicians. Our libraries should be like our education system in this respect, they reason.

Another clique believes city commissioners let themselves be swept emotionally into a witch-hunting spree. Miss Brown may have been fired for insubordination but remind the city dads, that many may brand her a communist because of unfavorable publicity. The notoriety to which they refer, arose after a citizen's committee appointed to supersede the old library board, tossed out three periodicals classified as un-American.

Racial segregation also enters the picture. Some of those supporting Miss Brown and Darlene Essary deny this vehemently. A few will frankly admit some in their midst may be indirectly trying to further the case of racial equalization. Miss Brown has been accused of it and so have others, the honest ones agree.

City commissioners were frankly puzzled by the suit. Some believed the plaintiffs were actually motivated by so-called communistic influence.

What if Ruth Brown and Darlene Essary were to win?—it would be a simple matter for the city to find another method in which both Miss Brown and the library board could be discharged, they assert.

Judge Miracle also supported their belief, they continue.

And does the end in this case justify the means, commissioners argue. If these plaintiffs felt the strong sense of civic pride, they claim, they would not have split the community by bringing such a large amount of unfavorable publicity upon Bartlesville, city dads state.

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