

Black Eyes And Bartlesville

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent by Mr. Bob Snair, '50, now working on the Bartlesville Record, as a comment on a reprint editorial which appeared in the Dec. 11 issue of the Daily Kansan. The editorial, entitled "Miss Brown of Bartlesville," first appeared in the St. Louis Star-Times. The editor's answer to this letter will appear in Tuesday's Daily Kansan.

I'm writing this letter at the request of a Bartlesville mother whose daughter is now attending K.U.—and like myself, this mother is tired of seeing her home town receive an editorial black eye.

I'm referring to U.D.K. reprint on Dec. 11 of a St. Louis Star-Times editorial, entitled "Miss Brown of Bartlesville." It concerns the controversial law suit in which Ruth Brown, discharged city librarian, sued the city for her old job back after she was fired. What the editorial doesn't tell is that Miss Brown was fired for insubordination, and had it not been for her insubordination, the chances are she would still be city librarian.

Prompted by citizen's complaints, Mayor E. S. Dunaway appointed a committee to investigate so-called subversive literature appearing on the shelves of our city library. Three periodicals, Nation, New Republic and Soviet Russia Today, were removed from the library over protests of Miss Brown.

She and a group of her friends asked for a hearing which was granted to them by the commissioners. Tempers were short that night because of the unfavorable publicity heaped upon Bartlesville through many of the state's leading dailies. Their information had been supplied by Miss Brown or her friends.

I tried to interview Miss Brown at the same time a feature writer from the Tulsa World had an appointment with her. He was admitted. I wasn't because Bartlesville papers hadn't printed the material exactly as Miss Brown and friends had supplied it. I was given a later interview while her lawyer was present.

Fortified by her friends, who heckled the commissioners during the meeting, Miss Brown appeared at the meeting displaying but little courtesy for her bosses and no tact. If the matter weren't dropped without further city-probings, she threatened her bosses, there were several more newspapers interested in the inside story of Ruth Brown, who lost her job after 20 years of faithful service.

The commissioners did what you or I would have done. They fired her on the spot! She didn't reason or explain. She chose to threaten her bosses.

Miss Brown was interested and active in improving relations between the Whites and Negroes in Bartlesville. As a private citizen, that was her privilege but as city librarian through the city library against the wishes of the commissioners and regular patrons of the library, well—that's mootable.

Round number one fought in the district court upheld the action of the city. Next the case will be aired in the state supreme court, probably in January.

Miss Brown, through solicitations from friends, is ably defended by the state supreme court's former chief justice, Thurman Hurst, and Darlene Essary, brilliant O.U. law graduate now on the Phillips Petroleum Company's legal staff. Alton Rowland, regular city attorney, represented Bartlesville.

Enclosed is a clipping from the Bartlesville Record in which I tried, without showing bias, to give the true story. That I succeeded or failed, I don't know but perhaps it will help get a clearer picture of the controversial suit, Ruth Brown vs. The City of Bartlesville.

Robert D. Snair,
A K.U. "J" Grad of '50