Mr. Lee Erhard,
c/o Tulsa Daily World,
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Dear Mr. Erhard:

Thank you very much for your kind letter of June 19 and your offer to let us give you a statement on the Library Board situation.

I do not believe that there would be anything newsworthy in a statement from us at this time. We have made our position very clear locally through our reports to the Commissioners: I do not see how any useful purpose can be achieved by any further statement at this time and I would really prefer not to make one.

However, because I think that this whole story will be more than ordinarily interesting to you as a member of the Tulsa Library Board, I am anxious that you read the attached copies of our reports to the City Commissioners. This is the best way I know to give you, fairly, the facts for your own information.

For obvious reasons, the comments herein are made to you in confidence and only for background information.

The first intimation the Library Board had of any dissatisfaction came in February of this year when a small group of citizens appeared at a City Commissioner's meeting and made public and sweeping charges of "subversive" literature present in the library. These people were asked by the Mayor to present their charges to the Library Board for investigation. This group then styled themselves as the "Citizen's Committee"; thus, they were self-appointed. As the late Mayor Hudson stated in open meeting, they were not appointed by him as an investigating committee. This came at the time of the Library Board's first report, when a large delegation of citizens were present; many of them stating that the so-called "Citizen's Committee" did not represent their views.

After the original complaint was made to the Commissioners, the Library Board held an open meeting at which time the representatives of the complaining group met with the Board. Their complaints were confined to three magazines; "The Nation", "The New Republic" and "Soviet Russia Today". These complaints were specific as to magazines, but general as to content. We immediately placed our files of these three magazines in locked storage for study and at the same time surveyed our entire subscription list and also made a study of the library's political-sociological section. This is discussed in our report.

As you will see by the reports, we contacted the F.B.I., and the Attorney General of the United States, as well as Miss Lucy Babcock of the Oklahoma Library Commission and others. A member of our Board called on Mr. Gourley of your Library system; I had a number of contacts with him by telephone and
letter, and his assistance and advice to us were invaluable.

At the time we presented our second report to the Commissioners in an open meeting, the "Committee" presented a second complaint to the Commissioners in report form, read by Mrs. G. F. (Henrietta) Vills as Secretary, in which they charged that the magazine about which they had previously complained carried unsuitable advertising with reference to books on homosexual themes, erotic poetry, etc.

Since that time one of our members has been transferred from the city, and our suggestion of a replacement for him has not yet been recognized nor acknowledged by the Commissioners, so that we are functioning with five members.

Last week the Commissioners passed the new ordinance, to become effective July first, establishing a board of six members (none of whom have yet been named), this board to be appointed by the Commissioners and subject to removal at any time; and providing that the appointment of library personnel and the purchases of books and subscriptions be made subject to the approval of the Commissioners. The present Library Board has no wish to be put under either protective custody or surveillance, whichever this is.

The attached reports cover our contacts with the Commissioners and up to this time they have made no answer to us, unless the passing of the ordinance can be so considered. At the moment I do not know where their sympathies lie; whether with us or with the complaining group—nor would I hazard a guess.

These complaints follow a pattern which has been prevalent in other parts of the country. To what extent the attitude of our complainants is influenced by people such as Gerald L. K. Smith and others is only conjecture. Privately, it may be interesting to you to know, however, that some of the same people who appeared as members and supporters of the "Committee" were represented in the group who recently demanded that the YWCA discontinue its segregated meetings for negro teen-age girls in the new "T" building; further, several of these people have expressed objections to national figures of good reputation engaged as Town Hall speakers, and some have been involved in strife and discord in other organizations and churches over racial policies, etc.

The Library Board attitude is still summed up in the opening statements of its second report. We feel that rather liberal inclusion is better than unreasonable censorship.

I am grateful for the opportunity to send you our reports and would be very interested if you cared to make any comment about them.

Sincerely yours,

Russell W. Davis, Chairman,
Board of Directors,
Bartlesville Public Library.