

LIBRARIANS

SOCIAL CHANGE

FOR

NO. 3
ONLY
FIFTEEN PEE

FAROUT MAN-BUT WHAT
TH'FUCK IS ALL THIS TO
DO WITH LIBRARIANSHIP?...
AND WHO CENSORED MY PUFF


BORIS VAN LOON 1973

SMOOTHIE

HED LIBRARY



ending
-right?

by John Dunne


p87

The public lending right debate reached a climax in April last year with the publication of the Government working party report. As was to be expected the Library Association dug its heels in and rejected any proposals to charge public libraries for books borrowed. Although the gut reaction from the L.A. was predictable, in many ways they were justified in rejecting the report. But recently I heard a convincing argument in favour of authors being paid for books borrowed in libraries which has made me change my view on this issue and I now think authors should be compensated.

This argument for P.L.R. took the form of a comparison between public libraries and BBC's Radio One. Like Radio One, public libraries play and make the hits - in other words books borrowed make authors famous and benefits the trade generally - but unlike Radio One royalties for books borrowed are not paid. Since the BBC pays its royalties through public funds, there is no reason why authors cannot be paid in a similar manner.

One of the proposals put forward by the working party has it that rate-payers, either directly through a charge-over-the-counter system or indirectly through rates, pays for books borrowed through a system where public libraries contribute to a central fund and the money in that fund is channeled out to deserving authors.

This is fine from the authors' point of view, but libraries argue that it would mean either

- a) books stocks will have to be cut,
- b) borrowers would have to be charged for books borrowed,

or c) local authorities would have to increase the libraries' budget which would result in higher rates. It doesn't take a genius to work out that any of these alternatives would hit the public purse through the rates, weaken the library and adversely affect the book trade which is dependant on library sales.

Not only are these alternatives disadvantageous, but they are also silly and unnecessary when one considers that a perfectly good compromise exists whereby the public can pay deserving authors through public taxes - just as it does with pop stars.

The Government could establish a central agency which, instead of screwing money from public libraries, could be given a grant of up to £4,000,000 from the state. As long as the central body has money to distribute amongst authors, it makes little difference where that money comes from. The man in the street is still going to foot the bill and suffer no matter what system is used whether it be from a reduction in services, an increase in rates or taxes or public library charges across the counter.

If this compromise, which as far as can be seen treads on nobody's toes (except those at the Treasury), was accepted by the Government it would be right and proper to expect public libraries to supply the necessary statistical data to ensure the right money was going to the right authors.

Finally, I would like to say that this system is by no means perfect, but as far as I can see it appears to be a damn sight better than the alternatives put forward by the L.A. who 'represent our interests' so well.

John Dunne

John Noyce comments:

I must say this argument is very persuasive and has caused me to rethink my attitude to P.L.R. My only comment at this stage is that John has only mentioned public libraries. I see no great difficulties in applying the system to college and university libraries, but would it work in special libraries? Also are we only stopping at books, or do we include periodicals, 'ephemeral materials' (pamphlets, etc), non-book materials, film strips, records, etc,?

LfSC no.3 pp86-89

ARE CATALOGUES REALLY NECESSARY?

John L. Noyce

Do we really need catalogues in our libraries? Millions of hours of patient effort have gone into preparing and maintaining catalogues, and now we devote similar expenditure in staff time and money on computerization, using MARC et al. But why not just a simple finding list?

To my mind Dr. Urquhart's outstanding contribution to librarianship has been to run a major library service without any elaborate cataloguing apparatus. Don't let us kid ourselves. If the National Lending Library had been manned by librarians from the beginning there would be a million entry card catalogue duly computerized in the late sixties, with MARC feasibility studies and working parties galore. Instead a revolutionary new procedure was adopted - alphabetical order by title. Result: no large catalogues with delays in processing, etc, instead reliance on published bibliographies and abstracting services, supplemented by the N.L.L.'s own finding lists for 'difficult' classes of materials (theses, Russian language works, etc). The pessimists were amazed to see the resulting system working efficiently and satisfying its primary aim - texts to users with the shortest time lag.

Its time we stopped regarding the National Lending Library as unique, and instead did some serious thinking as to how its methods can be used in other libraries

PERHAPS CATALOGUES ARE NECESSARY (for those who've read overleaf)

John, you really should read your Foskett. The NLL works OK 'cos it's closed access. Alphabetical arrangement does for smallish collections but there are advantages in having some form of catalogue. I seem to remember them as

- 1). They cater for the subject approach.
- 2) They theoretically enable you to trace everyting a library has on a particular subject. Imagine searching 50,000 titles for every thing you've got on Austrian Folklore, especially if they're all on loan.
- 3) It's quick to find stuff once you know the scheme, e.g. I'd rather go to 598.2 for Birds than have to wade through numerous copies of BNB or BBIP then check a finding list.
- 4) It's easier to browse in a classified library than an alphabetical one. Mustn't forget the serendipity factor.

No doubt there are many others, for those who've read their Foskett properly.

LfSC no.3 pp. 1876/7

MH.

'The number of persons involved in the various categories of mental handicap is larger than many appreciate. There have been various estimates as a result of survey work but the total is uncertain. A significant group with relatively minor degrees of handicap remain unknown even to the local authorities. Nevertheless, it may be noted as an example that the DHSS paper (Cmd 4683) Better services for the mentally handicapped (1971) commenced by stating "there are probably about 120,000 people in England and Wales who are severely handicapped, of whom 50,000 are children. Many more are mildly mentally handicapped". (from the Editorial, The Book Trolley v.3, no.5, March 1972, p.3).

Since April 1971, the mentally handicapped child has come under the wing of education rather than health; 'Junior training centres' have become 'Schools', and thus, in theory at least, have become closer still to public libraries. But have they?

In his article entitled "Do mentally handicapped people need books?" (The Book Trolley v.3, no.5, March 1972, pp.11-13) David Boorer states 'The situation is one of almost total neglect. The number of public libraries which offer any service to these people can, literally, be counted on the fingers of one hand.'

Because of the interest of the teachers at our local school, who approached me to see if we could co-operate, a service to mentally handicapped children has begun in Welwyn Garden City. I visit the school one afternoon every fortnight, read about 3 or 4 stories to a group of 10-12 year-olds and join in with activities at the school (even as far as helping at a PT display!)

The other weeks, the class visits the library for a storytelling session and to choose some books to take back to school with them. As this has been happening for about 2½ years, we have got to know each other reasonably well now, and we all get a tremendous amount out of the visits.

More recently a group of older people (15-16 years) has also started visiting the library regularly for stories, and, although there are greater problems involved in selecting suitable material (publishers, please note!) this too seems to be working well. I hope to continue meeting this group for storytelling sessions when they move on to the adult training centre later this year.

All this is backed up by the School library service which provides a collection of books in the school and which welcomes the pupils and teachers at the divisional centre to select their own stock.

Although there is still a lot of work to be done, at least a start has been made - this would not have been possible but for the enthusiasm and friendliness of the pupils and staff.

Yet in many areas, no services are provided by the public library for the mentally handicapped (or, indeed, for other disadvantaged members of society) Perhaps every library authority could set up a social work/welfare to undertake this type of service; in the meantime, it is up to local librarians to contact schools and training centres for the mentally handicapped in their area and to ensure that these members of society receive their full share of the library service.

BOOK TROLLEY is the journal of the Hospital Libraries & Handicapped Readers Group of the Library Association, and is published quarterly. The Hon.Editor is Miss Antonia J.Bunch, 4/4 Dean Path, Edinburgh EH4 3BA

This is the first part of a series of articles examining important left wing libraries based in the London area. It is to be hoped this series will show those libraries which are open to the interested user and radical librarian.

MARX MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Founded in 1933 on the 50th anniversary of the death of Marx, the library contains the most important collection of Marxist literature in Britain - if not the world. Founded as a research centre, the library organises classes, discussions, lectures, seminars and exhibitions. According to a library handout "the sole and exclusive object [of the library] shall be the advancement of education, learning and knowledge by the provision and maintenance of a library of books, periodicals and manuscripts relating to all aspects of the science of Marxism and of the history of socialism and the working class movement". This statement sums up the aims of the library in a nutshell. Although Marxist in complexion, the library also caters for all forms of socialist thought.

Much of the library's stock has been received in the form of bequests from veteran Labour leaders, thus giving the stock great historical importance and value. Besides books, the library also houses journals, pamphlets, posters and leaflets as well as a reference section of over 1,000 works including reports, youth and student magazines and a collection of socialist song books. For those interested in the actual size of stock, the library contains 15,000 books in the lending section and 18,000 pamphlets. Use of the library is promoted by the publication of bibliographies, reports and catalogues - to date eight sections of the catalogue have been published by the library at 18p per part post paid. The library also publishes an extremely useful guide, information from which has formed the basis of this article.

The library is governed by a Committee elected at an A.G.M. There is also an Advisory Council of prominent members of the trade union movement and academic world. The library is affiliated to the International Association of Labour History Institutions and maintains friendly relations with many other socialist institutions.

Membership of the library is by subscription, and the library is open to all persons and institutions. This membership entitles one to use all the services outlined in this article and in the library guide mentioned above. Books may be borrowed but fines are charged for overdue. Cheap associate membership is possible, although such members suffer a deterioration of services. At present the library has over 700 individual members and almost 60 affiliated organisations including trade unions, universities and colleges. During 1973, the library's 40th anniversary, the librarian hopes to increase the membership which should be good news for anyone interested in this library.

This is one of the libraries in this series where one does not have to swear any political allegiance or be part of any organisation in order to be a member. This is often a surprising relief to some Americans who think that membership of a communist party is required before being allowed into the library. To be fair, this notion is not held solely by Americans.

Opening hours are always worth noting. Weekdays the library is open from 4.00 to 9.00 pm, and from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm on Saturday. Visitors are requested to attend between 3.00 and 4.00 pm during the work and between 10.00 and 11.00 am on Saturday. Although not stipulated by the librarian, it is good manners to give some advance warning of a visit.

It is possible to discuss this library in far greater detail, but this article is only designed to give a brief sketch of the services available. For further information one should contact John Williamson, the Librarian at the Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. He will be glad to send any relevant details and literature.

John Dunne

W. Earth

Keith Paton, one of the founders of the Keele Whole Earth Library & Switchboard, has put his views on the running of the library in print in Movement no.10 (that's the SCM one). Well worth reading - 10p + 3p postage, from SCM, Annandale, North End Rd, London NW11.

frame

FRAME's Journal of Abstracts on Alternatives To Laboratory Animals has just been started. 2 issues a yr. Sub: £20. One for libraries only one feels. Still good to see its been started. FRAME, 312a Worple Rd, London SW20

Drugs

Information on the non-medical use of drugs is available from the library of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence. A suggested basic stock list is being prepared. They welcome readers' requests and inquiries. Open: 9.30-5.30 Mon-Fri. Information Centre, Institute for Study of Drug Dependence, Kingsbury House, 3 Blackburn Rd, London NW6 (the librarian/info officer is Mrs Penny Biggs). Don't forget though that Release has a library too.

?

NOVA, well known women's glossy wrote to us recently. Appears they do a column on radical professional groups called FEEDBACK. We sent a copy of no.2 off. Apparently we're being mentioned in the August issue. We'll make Playboy yet!

racial

Sowing the Dragon's Teeth is a pamphlet inuing project on racial bias in books schools. Well worth a read for anyone; right essential for the school library price mentioned on our copy, maybe free Liverpool Community Relations Council, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3.

Shallow (very

That well-known bore 'Robert Shallow' (I gather) was a bit short of copy in his Library World July column. First a long piece on how TV adverts in the old days so good as compared to today's product surprise, surprise, a scathing comment 'It is difficult to imagine that a more sively semi-literate and silly periodical be produced'. Charming! Our front cover is taken the wrong way, he object's to (that was our deliberate mistake Mr. Sh observant of you to spot it), quotes the Whole Earth article out of context initials suggested: LSD (Librarians for different). Destructive criticism is a Mr. Shallow, how about being constructive Clive Bingley would print it, he's broad-minded you know. Otherwise just

Reds * expos

VIEWPOINT is a 'right-wing' periodical (ition) produced by Ronald King of London (librarian I gather) who in no.28 special page in commenting on LfSC and the new Librarians Group. According to Mr. King magazine is a 'well produced duplicate (ta)' somewhat Trotskyite in tone'. Now mind LfSC being put down (that's quite but let's get the labels right. 'Anarch libertarian' if you insist, but I prefer

racial

Sowing the Dragon's Teeth is a pamphlet and continuing project on racial bias in books used in schools. Well worth a read for anyone; down right essential for the school librarian. No price mentioned on our copy, maybe free(?). Liverpool Community Relations Council, 64 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3.

Shallow (very)

That well-known bore 'Robert Shallow' (a pseud. I gather) was a bit short of copy in his New Library World July column. First a long boring piece on how TV adverts in the old days were so good as compared to today's products. Then, surprise, surprise, a scathing comment on LfSC. 'It is difficult to imagine that a more aggressively semi-literate and silly periodical could be produced'. Charming! Our front cover on no.2 is taken the wrong way, he object's to 'sodds' (that was our deliberate mistake Mr. Shallow, how observant of you to spot it), quotes taken from the Whole Earth article out of context, trendy initials suggested: LSD (Librarians for something different). Destructive criticism is so easy Mr. Shallow, how about being constructive? I'm sure Clive Bingley would print it, he's very broad-minded you know. Otherwise just FUCK OFF.

Reds exposed!

VIEWPOINT is a 'right-wing' periodical (my definition) produced by Ronald King of London (a librarian I gather) who in no.28 spends a page in commenting on LfSC and the new Gay Librarians Group. According to Mr. King, the magazine is a 'well produced duplicated journal' (ta) 'somewhat Trotskyite in tone'. Now I don't mind LfSC being put down (that's quite common) but let's get the labels right. 'Anarcho-libertarian' if you insist, but I prefer 'radical librarian'.

LfSC groups

GAY - being formed in association with the CHE organisation. Convenor: Bob Elbert, 33 Pembroke Rd, Clifton, Bristol 8

ANARCHIST - Richard Alexander, 35 Hardy Rd, London SW19

CHILDREN - John Vincent, 7 Dellcott Close, Welwyn Garden City, Herts.

FEMINIST - Anne Colwell, 35 Hardy Rd, London SW19.

BRIGHTON - John Noyce, 67 Vere Rd, Btn

LONDON - vacant, c/o Richard & Anne, 35 Hardy Rd, SW19 until they can someone into taking over!

MANCHESTER - being formed, c/o Alain Kahan, Flat 5, 361 Wilbraham Rd, M/c16.

National coordination(!): John Noyce, 67 Vere Rd, Brighton.

SUBS...

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| libraries(direct) " | 80p |
| libraries(via agent) | £1.00 |

all orders and sub.renewals to John Noyce, 67 Vere Rd, Brighton, as soon as possible please so we know how much we can spend on printing no.4. Thanks...

*If you want a receipt please send an S.A.E.

The Women's Liberation Literature Collective has been working on children's books now for well over a year, in the form of a newsletter, which appears about four times a year. Its aim is to find books for children which do not reinforce the stereotyped male/female, boy/girl characters found in almost any book one might pick up. The main type of book we are looking for is the one which features a highly positive heroine who, besides rebelling against the female role (as understood by our society) also questions some of the values sanctioned by parents and/or society -eg. competitiveness. From there the books we feel we can recommend, in decreasing order of desirability, and in increasing order of availability, range from those which feature the positive heroine who rebels against the traditional feminine roles within the accepted framework of society (and who is usually deemed eccentric, 'returning to the fold' in the end) to books which simply feature heroines rather than heroes.

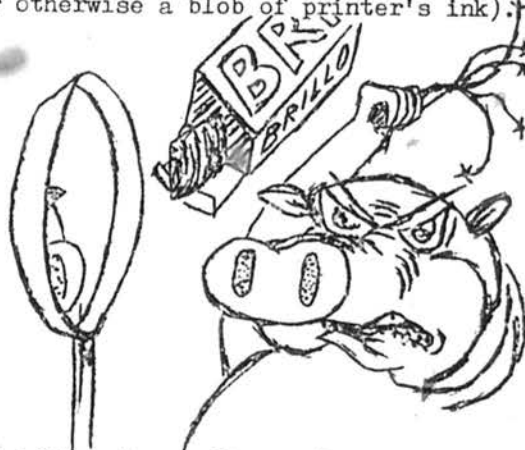
In a recent newspaper article (Sunday Times 11.2.73) Brian Jackson examined the degree of colour/race representation in children's comics. He found that out of 3,384 drawings and photographs of men, women and children, 3,370 were white, three were definitely black, and a few were possibly black, (or otherwise a blob of printer's ink). He said: "All societies transmit secret messages. To many of these children, the hidden message of the comic is: you don't exist". Now, if one looks at 500 children's books, it will be seen that less than 10% of them feature heroines at all, let alone positive ones. You will find that most of the books are along the lines of either 'brave resourceful brother and younger sister who clings to him, who learns even the most simple things from him', or, and this category is by no means small, no girls at all, the female representation, if any, being limited to well-meaning aunts, and mothers baking cakes, shopping, and generally making things comfortable. You will also find a great preponderance of middle class families, with gardens and 'liberal attitudes'. So the message the children's reading matter transmits to girls is, you barely exist at all, except, when admissible, as foils to the male. Is it too much to expect that girls should see that they too are valid human beings, independent of the male sex, capable, positive, adventurous, wicked, active or what you will?

Since most children, no matter how privileged or deprived, will read or look at pictures of comics, it is necessary to examine these to recognise, and then rectify, our socialisation and conditioning in one of its prime sources. If girls cannot identify with a positive heroine (because they are so few and far between) they will identify with the hero, who 'does things', 'has adventures', and therefore assume that men do such things, not women, (in an interview in Cosmopolitan Bianca Jagger said: 'I'd love to be a boy - they have such an interesting time...'). And they will, naturally, identify with their own sex, and therefore play their part in the continuation of the traditional 'female' 'virtues' of compliance, dependence, submissiveness, and of course, housewifeliness. Consider, too, the fact that in so many cases if a girl (whether in a book, or in real life) likes best to do those things which are conventional boys' pastimes, she is deemed 'tomboy' who, invariably, 'will grow out of it'. Likewise the boy who keeps some attachment for, say, dolls, beyond the prescribed time, is a 'sissy' who is encouraged to leave those 'girls' things behind him for more 'masculine' interests such as cars and football. The great tragedy is that so many woman writers do not seem to feel or see anything amiss in all this; in our first newsletter a student children's librarian wrote: "80% of writers of children's books are female but they use the accepted sex role stereotype for their girl heroines or even ignore their own sex to place the male sex on a pedestal."

But this subtle conditioning, which gradually erodes any confidence girls may have had in themselves as individuals, is not limited to fiction; so far we have received reports on textbooks, sex-education books, careers and hobbies books for girls, or for both sexes.

A study of primary science textbooks begins with the following paragraph: "In studying a comprehensive collection of Primary Science textbooks, we felt that in the books which provide a child figure for the pupil, the fact that boys predominated numerically, that girls when they were shown tended to take a subsidiary role, and that adult roles were traditionally showing men at work and women in the home, might have contributed to the

IfSC unnumbered page in issue no.3



fact that the number of passes for science GCE, other than biology, obtained by boys, so remarkably exceeded those obtained by girls."

Science has long been considered a subject more suited to the male temperament, and in spite of the changing attitudes which are beginning to accept that girls can do chemistry and woodwork, and enjoy it, and boys (although not so willingly admitted) enjoy and can do needlework and domestic science, we still find that 'women hold the lower paid jobs in scientific and technical fields and that in industry women rarely get training or achieve promotion'. So while it is conceded that women may be interested in science and technology it would appear that only a very few women are good enough to take their place 'among the men'.

Which leads me to the subject of careers books. While most of these books are slanted towards boys, they can be applied to girls, too, insofar that they give details of how to go about getting the right qualifications etc. But they do not prepare girls for the prejudice which they will come up against, they do not tell of how a woman has, usually, to be twice as good at a particular job as a man to 'make it' in a given career. How she will have to cultivate in herself those 'masculine' vices and virtues (aggressiveness, independence, single-mindedness etc etc etc) in fact, become the masculine career woman stereotype of so much 'adult culture'. Books about hobbies, too, are fewer in number for girls than for boys and, astoundingly, none are for both sexes! Which reinforces the idea that boys and girls have no common ground.

We have learnt by experience that up until now books written for boys vastly outnumber those written for girls. That girls, from the earliest age will more often have to experience things second-hand identifying with a male character in their books. That girls will discover that boys are more resourceful, braver, more adventurous and more knowledgeable than girls (unless it's cake-baking, housework, etc); and since this situation is reinforced all the way up the reading/learning scale it is no wonder at all that they will come to believe, subconsciously as well as consciously, that this is the way things have always been, always will be. Until or unless they can read books, see pictures and illustrations which question this assumption that they will grow up believing their subordination to the male to be an immutable biological fact of life.

All this is not to say that the traditional roles of the male/female stereotypes should be reversed: that would achieve little, except the replacement of one kind of sexism by another, equally sterile. Boys must have a wider, freer choice of life-style, too; but at the moment it is the girls who sadly lack the encouragement to be independent human beings-people.

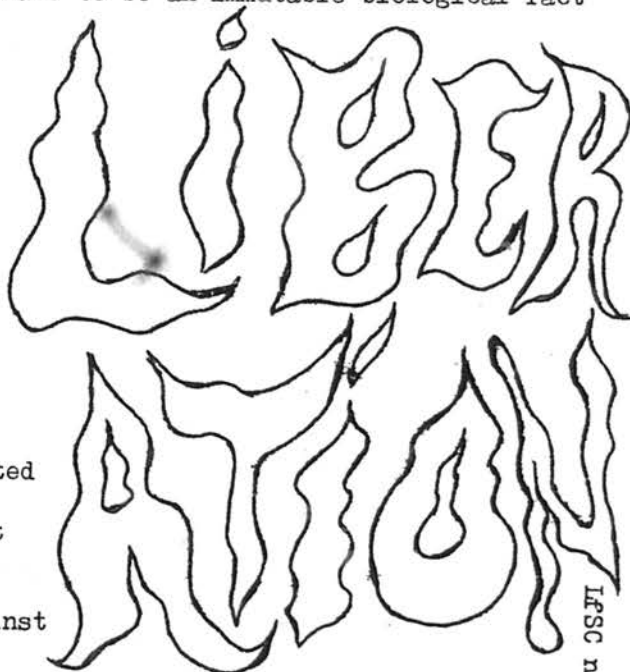
I have shaped this article mainly from contributions to the newsletters, and have concentrated on our findings related to sexism in children's books. However, this is not to say that we are not aware of, or concerned about, the particular class attitudes propagated by most of the children's books today. The superiority of the male is an inseparable part of the glorification of middle-class values and privilege, and our efforts to combat the former are not divorced from the struggle against the latter.

Anyone wishing to read the articles or book reviews in full, should send a large S.A.E. to Sue Turner, 7 Kelso Gardens, Leeds 2, plus P.O.

Science and Girls - 12p

Books for the under-fives - 14p

Newsletters - 3p each (to date 5 newsletters and an index)



MALEBAG ... (in this issue no femalebags)

LfSC no.3 p.6

Dear John,

Many thanks for the letter and the copy of the magazine. Was astonished by how many radical librarians there are and glad that things seem to be pulling together. I think very few people understand the possible outcome of the radical librarian movement which is something I must talk to you about some other time.

Let me tell you a bit about our library while I remember. The basis of the library will be the books and magazines that we obtain for review purposes for the Catalogue. Consequently this means that our best information at present centres around the subjects contained in the first volume. This is only a basis though. We have two filing systems - one for the Catalogue and a separate newsfile which covers a wide range of news material and cuttings from straight and alternative media. We are collecting old encyclopedias and magazines mainly culled from the junk stalls of Portobello Road. Recently we got fifty Illustrated London News ranging from 1947 to 1955, an extremely useful week by week photographic record. Certain magazines we keep uncut. This includes all the English underground press and European, some American, plus New Scientist, Time, Newsweek, Fortune, Esquire, Ecologist, Mother Earth News and odd issues of a whole host of other magazines. We are just starting and desperately need someone full time working on cataloguing, so that we can keep up with the flow of information. Already we have a mass of material and we're three months into the start of a 3 year information assembly project. Anyone who you think would be good for the job please let me know as soon as possible.

Keep on keeping on,

John May,

11 Blenheim Crescent, London, W.11.

Dear Mr. Noyce,

The RSIS(SE) group of the Library Association has on three occasions run reasonably successful, and cheap, one-day conferences on matters recognisably relevant to social change. The first, in 1968, criticised London's information services. The second attempted to explore the personality of the librarian (1971); while the last, March 1973, discussed 'ephemeral' documentation.

The committee is seeking ideas for a further theme, and Alternative Information and Advisory Centres has been

suggested. Apart from the theme, the committee is interested in exploring fresh conference approaches, and Sarah William's plea for circular seating arrangement (LfSC No.2) is an example that could be considered. There must be many more.

If this thought is intriguing enough for any readers to generate further ideas, please pass them to me.

Yours sincerely,

Ralph D. Gee, FLA.

19 Raleigh Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW9

2DU.

Dear Editor,

Your article on Book Non-Selection in West Sussex County Library interested me because it raised so many questions. Will it advance social change? Is it authoritative? Whose authority? Has it any contribution to make to your readers?

This article is unsigned and I question its motive. If it is just a knock at a particular library or its book-selection team, it is pointless. If it is intended to achieve different policies in West Sussex, its information is unbalanced: book-selection is too complicated a subject to be discussed when the only evidence consists of a few rejected titles with brief notes.

In the West Riding County Library all but two of these titles are in stock, one is still on order and the other was not bought by some oversight and nobody has asked for it. This is simply because there is a population and large enough book-fund to justify this comprehensive buying. The article says absolutely nothing of the West Sussex background.

If your periodical is serious in the implications of its title, it must be prepared to print such critical articles over a signature and must present enough information on their topics to give them validity. Your own comment after the West Sussex article was thwarted by the lack of this adequate information.

I have never had close contacts with West Sussex County Library and know little of its book-selection policy and practice. Your article did not help.

Yours truly,

W.J. Murison, FLA

FLAI, County Librarian, West Riding County Library, Balne Lane, Wakefield, WF2 0DQ.

cont.p94

l.a.g.

The Librarian's Action Group was formed last autumn as a result of total dissatisfaction with the Library Association's complacency towards the profession and the profession's image in the public's eye. The Group now has over 50 members, some of them senior members of the profession. It is not a Group of the Library Association, and, because of its political nature, cannot be one.

The idea of an Action Group arose because of my position as a special librarian. Through my work I have met many people who, although they had information needs which could easily be satisfied by a library, were set against using a library service simply because of the long propagated 'bum and spectacles' and 'keeper of books' images of librarians. In fact many of these people feel that public libraries are an unnecessary drain on public money. As librarians, we all support the library role, but our public do not. If we want to maintain and improve our position in society, we must sell ourselves and our services, or we will become unnecessary, as better salesman will take over our role in society. Librarians are already being left behind in the information field, by the use of computers; yet librarians were responsible for the basic information theories around which today's computer systems have evolved. We should have been the arbiters of change, not the shabby followers on. We must snatch the lead while we can, before we become mere storekeepers.

We still have an important role to fill in the community, be it social or business, but it can hardly be fulfilled if our

Veronica M. Manning

prospective users do not accept that we are information technologists, available to help their information problems. We have only ourselves to blame for this situation.

The Librarians Action Group hopes to rectify this situation by shaking life into our profession and making the Library Association accept responsibility for the future of its members. To do this, the Group needs to have a say in Library Association policy decisions. (We have chosen L.A. because it is the largest and richest professional body.) We cannot afford to have ourselves decided by people still obsessed with the past. Youth must protect its future. Members of the Group are standing for election onto Council this autumn. Once onto Council we hope to persuade the Library Association to accept some (if not all) of our policies. We support three main themes:-

- 1) Publicity of our services and public relations for our image.
- 2) Unification of our profession
- 3) Better value for money from the Library Association subscription.

We have suggested in our manifesto methods of achieving these ends*. Do not sit in your ivory tower too long, it's always later than you think. Support or, better still, join us now.

* To obtain copies of this document, please write to me at: 62 Blythe Hill Lane, Catford, I

J.N. writes:

Whilst not entirely agreeing with Veronica, I do agree with the reformation of the L.A. into not a formally constituted group- if you read the journal you are a member- but the active members agree that the L.A. is the main point of attack. Hence member(s) of LfSC will be standing for election. If we stand, don't be apathetic -

Veronica M. Manning

prospective users do not accept that we are information technologists, available to help them solve their information problems. We have only ourselves to blame for this situation.

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- 1) Publicity of our services and public relations for our image.
- 2) Unification of our profession
- 3) Better value for money from the Library Association subscription.

We have suggested in our manifesto methods of achieving these ends* Do not sit in your ivory tower too long, it's always later than you think, support or, better still, join us now.

* To obtain copies of this document, please write to me at: 62 Blythe Hill Lane, Catford, London, SE6.

J.N. writes:

Whilst not entirely agreeing with Veronica's ideas, I do agree with the reformation of the L.A. IfSC is not a formally constituted group- if you read the journal you are a member- but the active members agree that the L.A. is the main point of attack. Hence member(s) of IfSC will be standing for Council election. If we stand, don't be apathetic - VOTE!

Cover comment

Borin Van Loon writes:

I think I got just about everything into the cover that concerns us in our struggle through the tangled undergrowth of modern existence (sic): sex, sadism, drugs, degenerate and decadent youth, censorship, a four (well, three and a half really) letter word... all human life is there ... yes.

Mick Hoey writes:

I'm not happy about the cover because:

- a) being a prude, I'm bored with sexploitation
- b) librarianship's a small profession; there's no point in needlessly alienating a large proportion of it when many are potentially sympathetic.
- c) knowing how petty librarians are, they'll just talk about the cover and not the contents, which are improving.

Freaking out librarians may be fun but it doesn't necessarily advance the course of social change. Surely Britain's liveliest library could do better.

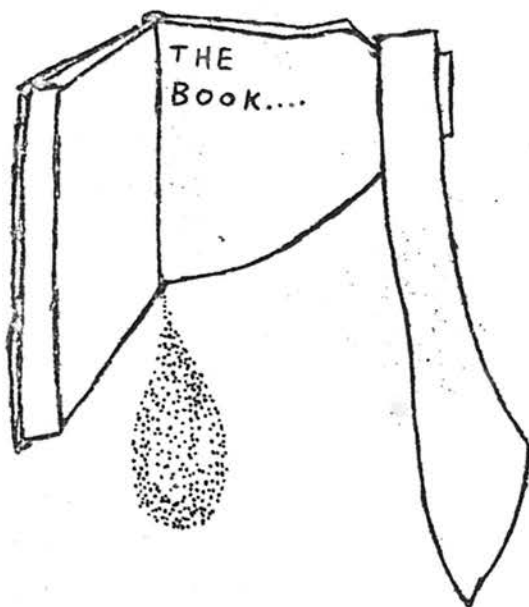
John Noyce writes:

- 1) It's good for a laugh
- 2) No one else drew a cover (hint)
- 3) I like it anyway.

Ps. I did not print the cover (it was done by a grotty, but cheap, commercial printer.

Uncle Tom Cobley writes : cont.p84

Many librarians will by now be aware of the fact that we are living in the middle of the "eco-crisis". The long-term continuance of "civilised" life as we know it is threatened by a long list of discomfiting probabilities - among them the exhaustion of non-renewable resources, water and air pollution, overpopulation, famine and soil deterioration, urban stress and diminished physical resistance to disease due to the consumption of processed, "refined" and chemicalised foods. On present trends



it is difficult to see any way out of this mess. The popular response of politicians (including most of the revolutionary left) has been in the good old British tradition of ignoring the problem in the hope that it'll go away, whilst acknowledging its utility for the odd weekend speech. Occasionally this ignorance is carried a stage further, as in Grocer Heath's recent inane assertion that economic growth is the only way of paying for pollution control!

So far there has been no sign of librarians at any level of the profession considering the broader ecological implications of their work. Thus the "information explosion" is accepted as an irreversible fact of life and we are offered a plethora of computerised catalogues and issue systems, mechanised retrieval services and remote-access data bases to deal with it. Yet all these gadgets can be seriously questioned. Their application involves the thoughtless and possibly harmful consumption of yet more energy, metals,

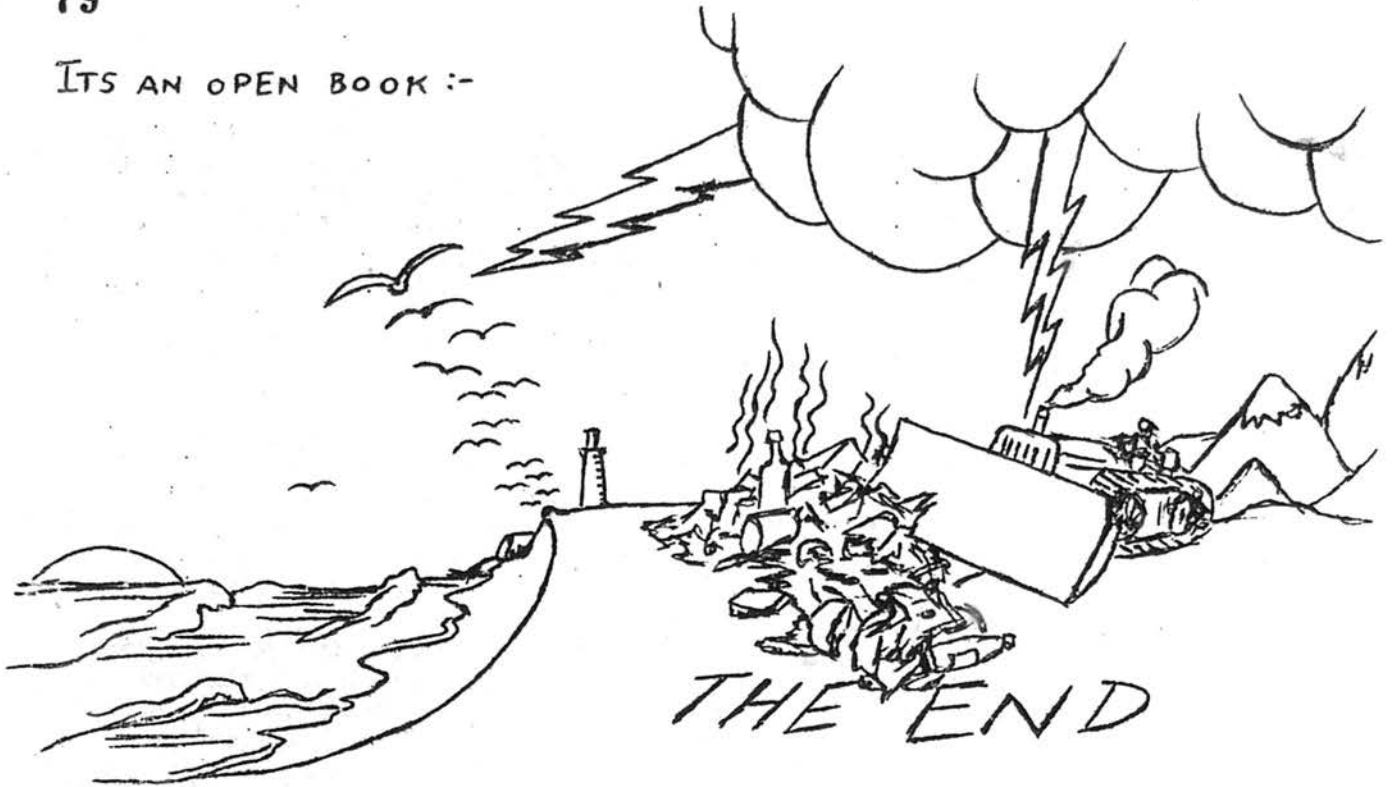
plastic, wood etc.; none of this can be sustained if the present rates of "explosion" continue and, taking a world view of the situation, it is already impracticable. Implicit in the use of these techniques is the social dominance of technocratic "experts", ever inclined to neglect the vital needs of people in their calculations.

In any case nobody asks whether the proliferation of information for information's sake is really making anyone any happier - space inhibits a full discussion here but much of the data for which the latest systems are designed is of highly dubious value to mankind, to put it mildly. (Admittedly there is also the possibility of using these systems to subvert the status quo and develop people-oriented alternatives in production, transport, architecture and so on, but that's another matter).

What, then, will be the role of libraries in an ecologically sound world? That depends on your view of the kind of restructuring society needs to undergo, though if you still doubt it will be necessary I urge you to read the 'Blueprint for Survival' (just published by Penguin), 'Can Britain Survive?' (ed. Goldsmith, Sphere 1971), some of Commoner and Ehrlich or any other eco-freak you can get your hands on. (Warning: some of this material is based on nasty right-wing political assumptions but you'll recognize them when you come to them). Whatever the solution it is clear that library practice will be radically affected, both in the physical routines involved and the place of librarians in society. Most who have seriously considered the problems would at least agree on the necessity of a revision of current notions of progress accompanied by population checks, the socializing of large-scale industry to ensure responsible production methods, radically improved public transport and education and the general scaling down of the economy into human sized units which are as ecologically integrated as possible. Life may become less hurried, structured and neurotic than the present status-driven treadmill and for this we will need to develop a people-oriented "community science". (The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science's journal 'Science for People' makes excellent reading in this context; libraries should subscribe to it.)

Hopefully this will all leave a lot more time for such fun pursuits as music, sex, rock climbing, home brewing, meditation, psychic research, arts and crafts, loving thy neighbour - and reading. When the "leisure problem" becomes a reality libraries will certainly enjoy an enhanced reputation, for they embody the principle of conserving resources through communalisation. You've probably read about the

ITS AN OPEN BOOK :-



number of trees that need to be chopped down to bring you your Sunday papers - well, the same goes for books. And just as the consumer economy deliberately produces cars and washing machines designed to outdate and fall to pieces in a few years so it is coming to depend on the ever-accelerating production of "new ideas" in the form of trendily packaged paperbacks, most of which are only read once. Not only could libraries help cope with the increase of leisure in a sensibly planned society, they could facilitate the wisest use of valuable natural resources and may need to do so without any over-sophisticated techniques. (This is not to deny that there will always be new areas of information dissemination to explore - switchboards, telepathy, you name it.)

Now I know this begs a lot of questions about political structures and social attitudes which cover vast areas outside of librarianship. Nobody can pretend such a transition will be easy but then acceptance of blinkered consumerism as at present is considerably less "realistic". Libraries will ultimately have to be viewed in the context of a way of life which is not afraid of a lower "standard of living" (in its present narrow definition) or of the abolition of the mystique of professionalism by as wide a distribution of socially useful skills as possible. In these circumstances it is unlikely that the the existing career structure would find any place. Mercifully there might be other goals to strive for than those currently earned by deference, a suit and short hair.

What does anyone else think?



It is now recognised that many children are damaged from birth by, for example, violence, poverty of environment, physical/mental handicaps, poor teaching, perhaps even the family situation. A large number of people have become involved in working with children outside the 'normal' situations of home, school and the usual supportive services; this article outlines some of their work.

National Groups

Whilst not the first group, the most widely publicised was undoubtedly the CHILDREN'S RIGHTS organisation. Their magazine, Children's Rights, was first published in January 1972, and contained excellent articles by Bernard Coard and Michael Duane, a piece on free schools, and a particularly moving account of a first teaching practice. The next three issues tended to confirm the middle-class outlook of the organisation at that time, but issue 5 broke new ground with the feature, 'Getting out of trouble: the children's bust book', which raised hell in the straight press and divided the editorial advisors.

Issue 6 saw a change of title to Kids, and issue 7 proved to be the last; the parent company, Children's Rights Publications, is being wound up. This failure was due to a number of pressures, but the main reasons were the absence of a professional editorial team, lack of suitable premises, and, finally, poor sales.

Happily, their work has not been in vain, for, 'since February 1973, there has grown up the CHILDREN'S RIGHTS WORKSHOP which 'exists to reaffirm the fundamental fact that children are people...When the mass of the people look to a new "alternative" society, the children are the catalysts as well as the inheritors of it. The ideas behind children's rights are on the one hand eloquently expressed in the work and living example of Kozol, Holt, Dennison, Leila Berg, Illich, Duane and Neill among others, but on the other they can be seen to be working in the community/free school, playgroup, playground and the de-schooling movements. And more importantly, these ideas are implicit in the countless experiences, dimly remembered or passionately felt, mostly unrecorded, of children suffering from loneliness and separation from each other, adult indifference or patronization, parental, school and state repression and violence, liberal and not-so-liberal manipulation and confusions'. (From the Workshop handout, May 1973).

Another group was the LIBERTARIAN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION whose magazine, LIBERTARIAN TEACHER (now Libertarian Education) reflects their aims, linked as they are to the Anarchist Federation of G.B. Although the magazine contained some brilliant pieces, ideas seem to be lacking, and their real aims were confused. The LTA has now wound up, and the magazine is in danger of folding through lack of support.

The NATIONAL UNION OF SCHOOL STUDENTS and the SCHOOLS ACTION UNION have been in existence for some while, but viewed from the outside they seem to be divided over their political alliances and split by petty squabbles. The NUSS are presently compiling a book on repression, but it remains to be seen whether this will ever be published.

The CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUPS aim to help children by acting as a pressure group for social reforms and by providing information on such matters as welfare rights and other benefits. Although supported by a central office, the local groups seem a trifle haphazard, and ours was sadly unaware of other organisations in the area (such as a Hungerbread group) and of the services already provided by other agencies (eg the availability of Citizens advice notes in libraries). Nevertheless, their provision of information in popular places is a valuable aid to the community.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES has produced a series of leaflets on children's rights (their description of the appalling conditions under which some handicapped children live should be shown to every complacent member of society), but their campaign has recently lost momentum - this is tragic, as, at a time when civil liberties are in danger, children should not be forgotten.

Local groups

Thankfully, these have proliferated during the last few years; playgroups, adventure playgrounds and free/community schools are just some examples where local needs have been met.



Children's Groups and the Librarian

Most librarians working with young people seem totally unaware of the problems facing children - or worse, they don't care.

In a public library situation, they must be in contact with schools, yet they rarely seem critical; if they work in a school library, or a service financed by the l.e.a., perhaps they are frightened of being critical.

"Why bother? It doesn't concern you as a librarian!" How often have I heard that! Yet, surely, everything that happens in the society we purport to serve is our concern. For example, whilst even the most progressive schools admit the necessity of exams and the accompanying bits of paper, oughtn't the library to be one place where a young person can escape the rat race of schooling and the violent materialistic scramble of the outside world?

I feel the children's librarian should care enough for his friends (and I use the word 'friends' rather than 'customers' or 'clients') to be prepared to fight on their behalf; to work with local free schools and community groups, even to question parents' motives. As a part of this change of attitude, librarians must have a wide knowledge of 'acceptable' and 'alternative' groups working with children, and be prepared to work with them towards a more acceptable solution.

--oOo--

Further information can be obtained from:

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS WORKSHOP - 73 Balfour St, London SE17 (01 703 7217)

LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION GROUP - 180 Melbourne Rd, Leicester (0533 50272)

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP - 1 Macklin St, London WC2B 5NH

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES - 152 Camden High St, London NW1 ONN

Anyone interested in forming a Children's group within LfSC, please contact John Vincent, 7 Dellcott Close, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 7BB.

In continuing this series of articles on censorship in certain public libraries, we hope to draw attention to the amount of control wielded by authorities in deciding just what people are allowed to read. It is a problem which on the whole attracts little notice, and which is dismissed by many librarians as trivial (because they've always done it?) - yet it is just one more inroad into the basic assumption that freedom of speech is a fundamental right for everyone.

As a library authority, Southwark may not be as restrictive as some - but it is far from faultless. As usual, it is those books concerned with sex that come up for the "restricted issue", and it is on fiction that the rubber stamp saying "available on application only" comes down hardest. It is no new practice; De Sade's "Justine" has never been on open access. Henry Miller's work is also censored (as in most libraries even today), but strangely enough only his "Quiet Days in Clichy" - both the Tropics sit on the open shelves. In actual fact what is restricted can be very much up to the discretion of the individual branch librarian; but needless to say they do receive directives from above, compliance being in this instance a virtue, although it leads to a great deal of inconsistency within the libraries.

A book which tested the attitudes of all authorities recently was "Last Exit to Brooklyn". Southwark decided it could not be included in the libraries' stock; some of the librarians felt this conflicted with the principles of librarianship, so

they clubbed together, bought a copy, and donated it to the people of Southwark.

This action was not a precedent for more liberal thinking, however, and since then even more books have been placed under a restriction. Among these are: John Updike's "Rabbit Redux"; David Pinner's "With my body"; Pollini's "Pretty maids all in a row"; Gurney's "The conjurers"; Philip Callow's "Going to the moon"; and Russcol and Banai's "Philharmonic". The most recently purchased novel to be so treated is Leslie Thomas' "Arthur McCann and all his women". But sometimes they're not sure which way to turn. With Behn's "The Shadow Boxer", for example, at least fifty people had read a copy before it was suggested that only those adult enough to ask for it could actually read it!

Non-fiction (at least that which is bought) was generally free from unreasoned prejudice until recently until the Chief Librarian happened to come across a copy of "Fundamentals of Sex" by Philip Cauthery and Doctor Martin Cole. This is illustrated by some very useful and informative photographs of people doing just what comes naturally. But this caused grave offence in the eye of that particular beholder,** and in consequence not only that book was hurried off the shelves but all other sex books too! As a feminist, I would say "well done" as most of them are rubbish, but as a librarian I deplore the compulsory infliction of personal principles onto others.

And some power in Southwark also objects to Women's Lib. - hence only one copy of Greer's "Female Eunuch" was purchased for a population of 290,000 to share. The waiting list can be imagined. The book is of course relegated to the Special Collection. Also in this heading comes Ruth Dickson's "Now that you've got me here, what are we going to do?" The powers not only did not want to purchase it, even though it was requested, but also refused to give a reason. Perhaps because it was serialised in the Sun?

In the light of the above revelations, doesn't it seem strange that Southwark should be a prime mover in organising a petition against public lending right, because they feel it will restrict the freedoms of the library!

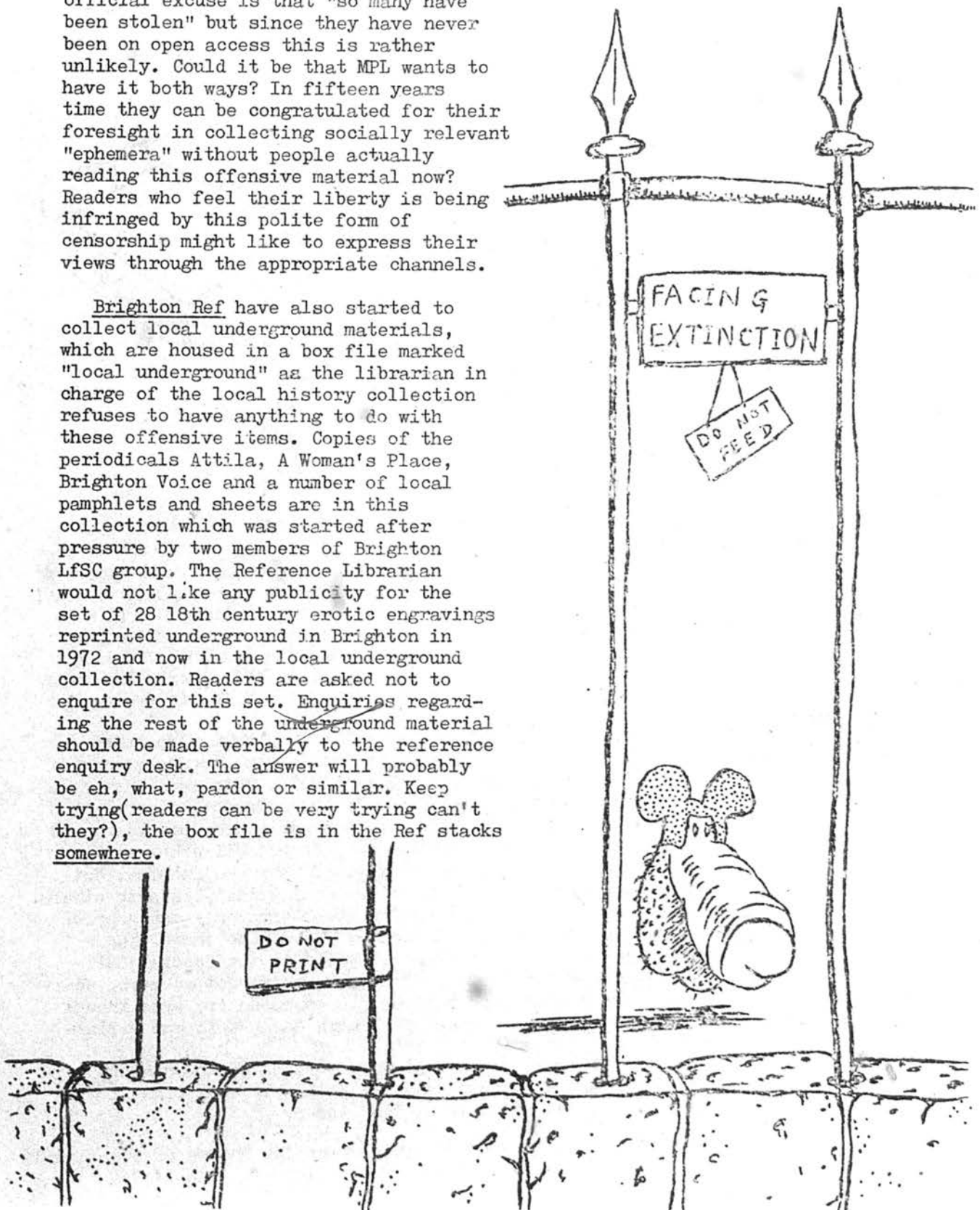
** Contrast this with Farson's "Jack the Ripper" which contains photos of the grossly mutilated victims. Yet this was on the shelf for any child to see. Morality?

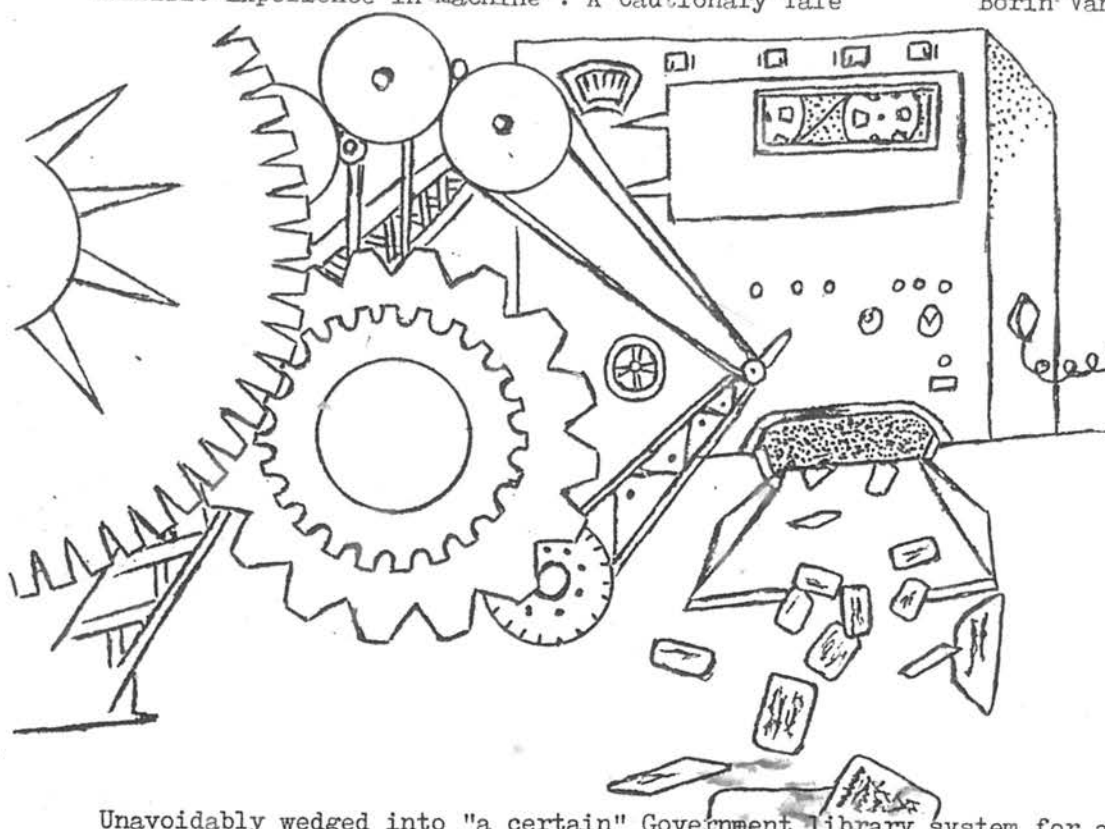


LFSC no. 3 p. 1920. (Alternative p. no. 1894)

On the subject of censorship it has come to LfSC's notice that a number of the alternative media taken by Manchester Central Ref (It, Oz, Mole Express, Gay News etc.) are now classified as "rare books". This means they can only be consulted after completion of a lengthy form; permission is granted by postal notification (which takes a week!) The official excuse is that "so many have been stolen" but since they have never been on open access this is rather unlikely. Could it be that MPL wants to have it both ways? In fifteen years time they can be congratulated for their foresight in collecting socially relevant "ephemera" without people actually reading this offensive material now? Readers who feel their liberty is being infringed by this polite form of censorship might like to express their views through the appropriate channels.

Brighton Ref have also started to collect local underground materials, which are housed in a box file marked "local underground" as the librarian in charge of the local history collection refuses to have anything to do with these offensive items. Copies of the periodicals Attila, A Woman's Place, Brighton Voice and a number of local pamphlets and sheets are in this collection which was started after pressure by two members of Brighton LfSC group. The Reference Librarian would not like any publicity for the set of 28 18th century erotic engravings reprinted underground in Brighton in 1972 and now in the local underground collection. Readers are asked not to enquire for this set. Enquiries regarding the rest of the underground material should be made verbally to the reference enquiry desk. The answer will probably be eh, what, pardon or similar. Keep trying (readers can be very trying can't they?), the box file is in the Ref stacks somewhere.





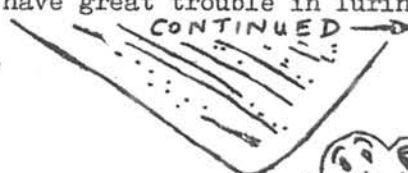
LfSC no. 3 p. 1984

Unavoidably wedged into "a certain" Government library system for an enforced period of 10½ months, I now approach the termination of my sentence with certain disturbing doubts and disenchantments. This period of penal servitude in London and in this library has, for reasons not relevant here, been^{un}avoidable despite a desperate struggle with my college to get a training year with the Tate gallery library, this being such stuff as dreams are made on. So, I was posted and left to rot.

Four months in cataloguing and the remainder in reader services would have rendered me a snivelling wreck were it not for an avowal at an early stage to give as little as possible of myself (nothing- if I could help it) to the job. My salvation was to cram my life outside (and even inside) the library with things which really matter to me. Having two large projects to do through the year as well there is very little time for sleep. Appropriately enough I am writing this short dissertation under the subterfuge of handling inter-library loans, prompted by my first experience of stimulation at the thought of librarianship in many moons, after reading LfSC.

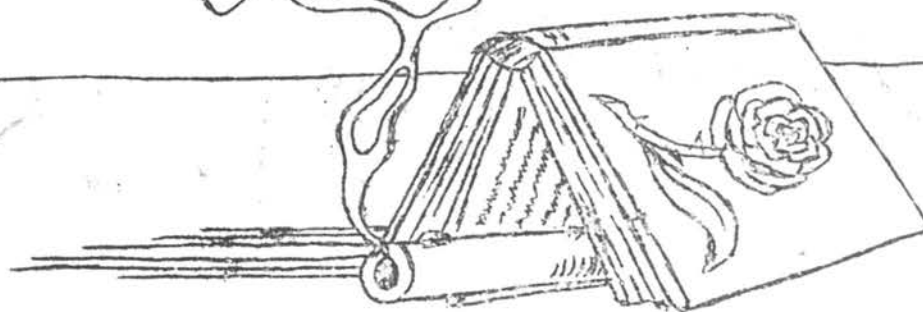
Before anyone says I'm a lazy sod and ought to be horsewhipped, I would point out that before I came to this, or any other post, I was naive enough to spurn the thought of myself skiving and wringing all I could from a job. But I soon found myself bitterly resenting every second I was in the place and doing my tiny bit in the rebellion line, ie. wasting the time they paid me for and actively disrupting the library service in a tiny way to make life less boring.

To stave off the brain-rot in cataloguing I took to reading novels whilst pretending to catalogue books, phoning the GLAS dial-a-poem service each week (01-836 2872/3 - try it at work and look as if you're waiting for a line), and confiding in a couple of kindred souls, who at my encouragement have now left. (The staff turnover here is remarkable and they have great trouble in luring new people in.)



So what I'm wondering is, where's the payoff? The socially-rewarding job at the end of my four-year CNA degree course. It is interesting that several of my friends on the course have, following this year, said that they will probably look elsewhere when they've finally got that all-important degree. One girl wants to be an air hostess, I want to paint. Is librarianship really this bad, is it true, as one of my lecturers put it: "you'll find out that a great deal of library work is necessarily boring and routine drudgery?"

I refuse to become one of the deadened specimens with whom I am surrounded here:- conditioned to accept tedium and be grateful for the monthly money; working in the library-like skivvies only as a means to promotion that only comes when somebody else leaves or dies; approaching each "TLS" day with its new batch of job adverts with childlike anticipation. I hate this system that calls for "commitment" from the people here and later by giving a little "responsibility" (someone breathing down their necks) makes sure that they breathe down somebody else's to extract "commitment". God knows what it's like amongst the real working classes. Incidentally they spend an inordinate amount of time here discouraging and redirecting requests from the public, making the Civil Service an even more exclusive and powerful machine. We all have^{had} to sign the official secrets act and now carry security passes. Even when the CPSA were on strike I could not join in as I was not in the union (one of four in the Civil Service) and all the clerical officers including the union rep in the library were too righteously rightist to strike. Above all this I hate the rate-race and refuse to be drawn in.



You see what this experience has done to a peace-loving bloke like me? All bitter and twisted. The question of whether this is a good practical experience for the potential librarian (ie to warn him off) or not cannot be discussed here. Indeed whether it is me that just does not fit, whether the personality of each librarian can find a job to suit, to bring enjoyment and stimulate interest - or more generally whether librarianship is one of a great many unpleasant jobs that somebody's got to do, are questions on which I can only speculate. I am sure other types of library must be different but for the moment the indelicate words of the chief librarian here ring in my ears:-

"well that's government libraries for you, and there's a great deal to be said for getting out of it as soon as possible..." Enough said.

However the knowledge that people like John are active and have actually heard of IT, OZ and Zigzag, let alone indexing them, and want to bring library censorship out into the open from within the profession might even prevent me abandoning librarianship completely.

The Editor speaks:

Borin seems to have encountered much the same frustrations as I did in ^{the} public library field. A number of other professions suffer from much the same problems, eg planning. Filing cards for 9 months after college, followed by writing data input forms for a computerised cataloguing system had a lot to do with the starting of this journal. The appearance of the first issue had a lot to do with my resignation. It was a gamble leaving, but for me it has paid off. I strongly urge anyone else who finds themselves in a similar predicament to take a gamble and leave a well-paid but boring job. By the way Borin is now working in train enquiries at Waterloo Station. It could be said that this is far more socially relevant than a government library...

In April a meeting of readers of LfSC was called. Several topics were discussed, but none more heatedly than the subject of dress and appearance of staff in libraries. ROGER D. TAYLOR takes up the story...

"That with matters of dress and general 'appearance' passions run high was amply demonstrated by that meeting. Statistically a self-styled Robert Mackenzie-style talkometer would have registered a high rating: since he or it - thankfully- wasn't present, not did the BBC choose to film the proceedings, take the writers word for it. Take his word also, and perhaps surprisingly, that while it might be thought a consummately feminist controversy, excellent grist for Women's Lib mill, it is apparently of no less interest to mere male chauvinists, expressed more discreetly perhaps, but necessarily with less concern. While perhaps cases of banned trouser-suits might be common knowledge amongst feminine library staff, five doughty could were shocked and dismayed by the tragedy of a certain doughty (and male) sixth who, when employed by a certain S.E. county system 'forget' one day to equip himself with tie, was told by ^{his} superior(sic) to return home forthwith and so equip himself, thus to enable him effectively and efficiently to stamp the day's million issues. Let it be known that our doughty if bedraggled Mr. X, considering the cost of the return fare home, took a cheaper option in buying a new tie.

We often comment that libraries' images must rise phoenix-like from the ashes of tawdriness ("we" in the collectively professional sense), yet what hope is there so long as staff appear before their customers looking compulsorily as tired and bedraggled as so often the stock they peddle? The writer forsores a critic's imagination fired with visions of issue decks and stacks bedecked with the wildest Carnaby Street extravaganzas, feathers and all- maybe he had heard those rumours emerging from the Camden area of young nubile assistants attired bra-less in see-through blouses (can it really be true?)...

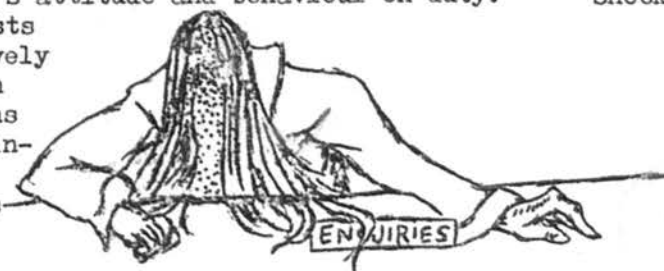
Such an imagination may be quickly extinguished with surely needless reminders of obvious considerations over functionalism and applicability: not even the most ultra-modern lipstick & greasepaint-style library assistant chick will bedeck herself in her most grotesque creations only to have to soil herself on sepulchral reserve stock shelves harbouring dust of ages past. (Are reserve stocks always disgustingly dirty, or has the

writer been manifestly unfortunate in his dust-laden experiences?). This consideration may well be used by those authorities that deign their library staff to sport obligatory overalls, thereby invoking an almost clinical appearance and inevitably creating a unpleasantly formal atmosphere: the faithful are shepherded by the chosen priests and priestesses into the hallowed temples of knowledge... Formality has its place, some would say, but libraries, the writer dares to suggest, are not (correction: should not) be numbered as such.

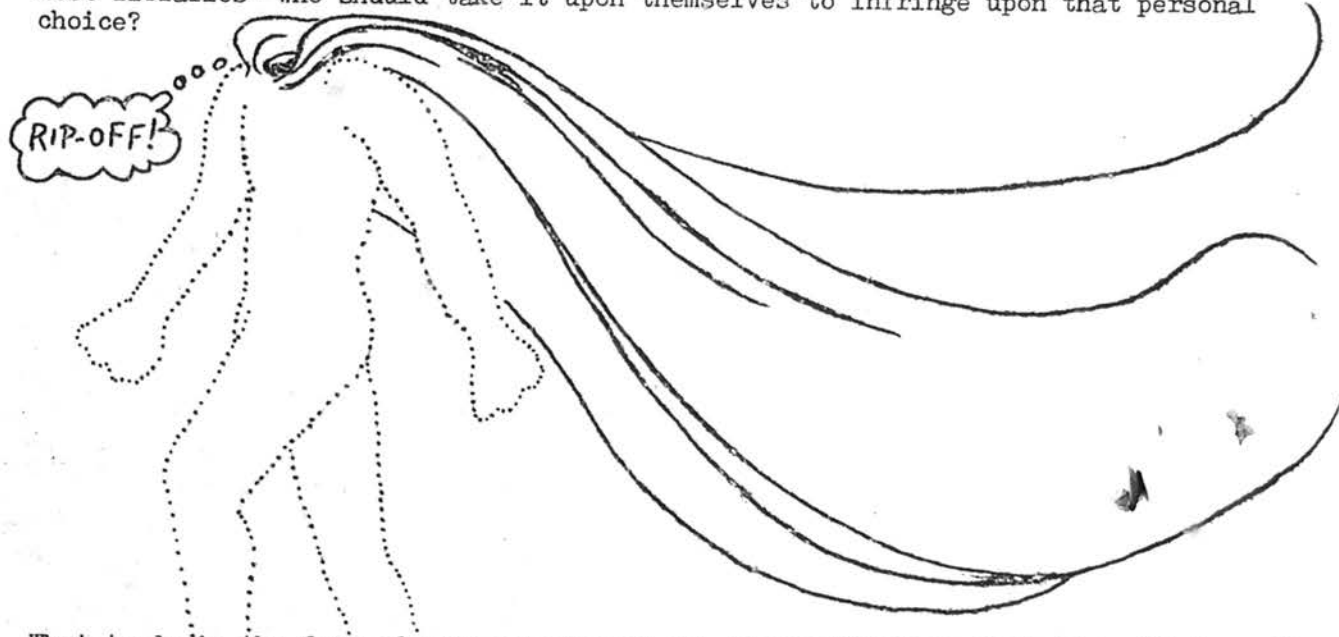
A reader's impression of his library is formulated naturally by such factors as its stock, services, layout, but perhaps most immediately and impressionably by its staff, and if that staff, whether of senior or junior level, is not fully at ease, given their professional capability, then its service to its readers, whether qualitative or mechanical, will not achieve its potential. And is it not true that one's peace-of-mind in public places presupposes a choice of dress and appearance entirely one's own, a choice so wholly and utterly subjective? To suffer the infliction, indeed an insult, of an enforced or conversely prohibited mode of dress, can only marr to some extent one's sensibilities and consequently affect one's attitude and behaviour on duty. Shock

reports filter through from distant outposts of some authorities discouraging 'excessively long' hair (of both women and men) and even prohibiting beards and other facial growths as though a piratonical appearance would invoke terror into elderly female patrons. What, perhaps, is still more disturbing, is the degree of sway exercised by the local

LfSC p.1801



librarian, entirely at his or her own invariably crusty whim. Given a provisional assessment of current 'conventional' female fashions as long-, midi- and mini-dresses, trouser-suits and various outfits involving jeans and other trouser-type garments, there should be no licence of discretion withdrawn from a library staff member as to what she should or should ^{not} wear. Male 'fashions', while less varied, still offer numerous quite acceptable alternatives to the perennial collar-and-tie syndrome of the old school guard. Applicability is a fair yardstick, as mentioned already, and a librarian of 'advanced years' should not fear, for example, a new graduate pre-training school assistant turning up one morning in a snazzy two-piece bearskin, however much it might match his apparent animal origins or appearance. Female staff's trousers and minis (so admired by male staff) are sometimes found to be far more functional than the traditional-length skirt so often required. All in all, a mode of dress is such a matter of intensely personal choice that, except where professional safety requirements dictate otherwise-conditions the writer ventures to suggest not often encountered in most libraries- who should take it upon themselves to infringe upon that personal choice?



What to do in the face of grim adversary? And especially where isolation all too often is a factor: even within systems the policy of one branch library may both be unknown to and differ from that of another. A policy as such may not even be admitted: it may equate the likes and dislikes of presiding authority, no less arbitrarily - if God dislikes trouser-suits, the the minions don't wear them. Should a policy (what a pathetic term ⁱⁿ such matters!) not be known, then at least discover it: informalize and variate, until something is 'said'. Make authority show its red light, don't merely accept its conjectural probability. Maybe there really is no 'policy', or perhaps a tradition passed on and preserved by ingrown inhibition. Yes? - all to the good. Otherwise joint action: old-fashioned solidarity can work, even in as mundane a field as this. If female staff, for example, are restricted over choice of dress, then make some token gesture of protest together, lest your protest individually only be accused of pettiness. Failing all else, the ultimate and terrible weapon feared by all in egoistic authority: publicity. And where better than in the pages of this august journal?

By way of summary, may we agree that the question of dress and appearance of library staff of whatever grade is fundamentally an accommodation of self-satisfaction with an appropriateness in the sense of functionality? Some will inevitably consider it petty and small-minded to fill space with such miserable complaints. But the onus of pettiness and small-mindedness is on those authorities which perpetuate an infringement of a personal freedom so ordinary, basic and mundane as one's mode of dress.

Editorial note

We would like to hear of specific cases of authoritarian dictates over clothing and appearance (and news of your protests!). Also any views, etc, you may have.

EDITORIAL

And so we come to issue no.3. With this issue we break new ground in format for a library journal, and we also add to our list of 'firsts' with Mick's article on libraries and ecology. John Dunne puts forward a new argument for P.L.R. Anne Colwell continues our censorship-at-the-grass-roots series. All in all another fair issue. From no.4 the editorial of the journal is changing. No.4 will probably be produced by 'a group based somewhere north of Brighton'. No.5 is earmarked for the Feminist Group, who have been wanting to do an issue for some time. No.6 will probably be back in Brighton. Please note that the editorial address still remains c/o myself. I'll forward articles to the relevant people. Also all subscriptions please to me. This will ensure we keep the finance on an even keel. We hope to get no.4 printed, so please renew your subscriptions as soon as possible so we know how many to print. The increase in the subs, by the way, is in expectation of the rise in postal rates currently being discussed in the national press.

The groups forming around the magazine continue to grow, new ones being the gay, childrens, and Manchester groups. Details elsewhere in this issue. We hope to see more forming in the next few months. The London group needs a new convenor(s) as Richard and Anne are involved in many other things besides LfSC.

LfSC has come in for a lot of criticism recently, much of it of the negative variety. 'Semi-literate' we may be, but 'Trotskyite' we're most certainly not! I've been asked for articles on trade unionism in libraries amongst other subjects. Please note that until someone writes an article we can't print it. Elementary? Not to some of our critics apparently.

We hope to have more LfSC meetings in the next 12 months, but this does mean the London group getting itself organised. How about groups being formed elsewhere in the country? All it needs is one person to write a few letters and make a few phone calls. There's a list of subscribers in no.2; if you drop me a line I can provide an up to date list from the correspondence files.

We are not affiliated to any wealthy groups(!) so the journal tends to be run on a shoestring with any deficit coming out of my bank account. As I'm now a humble student on a grant this has to cease forthwith. So, at the risk of boring you all to tears, please subscribe! NOW!

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EDITORIAL

Librarians for Social Change

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