PS for 10/11/90

Banned Books Week

Of all the "weeks" that are proclaimed by government or private organizations, the silliest is "Banned Book Week" announced each fall by the American Library Association (ALA). All over the country last week, conspiracy-minded librarians used taxpayers' money to set up displays to propagate the myth that "book burners" are trying to ban the classics such as Shakespeare.

These non-events followed hard on the heels of People for the American Way's (PAW) annual hysterical outburst called "Attacks on the Freedom to Read." This is a sort of one-two punch to persuade gullible people that some "extremists" or "right-wingers" or "fundamentalists" are a threat to everyone's right to read.

However, these news releases are just like the thief who cried "stop, thief" in order to distract attention from his own thievery. The groups really doing the banning are usually the libraries and the schools which regularly refuse to buy the books whose ideology they don't like.

The reader has a hard time trying to find modern books that espouse values contrary to the ALA/PAW/ACLU orthodoxy on such topics as conservatism vs. liberalism, family vs. feminism, and peace vs. war.

The hottest controversies about textbooks during the past year concern the reading series called **Impressions** for grades Kindergarten through 6th grades, published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Parents in dozens of school districts are objecting to **Impressions** because of its heavy use of stories that deal with violence, negativism, despair, bizarre acts such as dismemberment of people and animals, witchcraft, magic, and New Age.

When parents object to their little children being required to read and discuss such material in class, the liberals retaliate by labeling parents "censors." But investigation of the controversy shows that the schools and the publishers are the ones really doing the censoring.

Impressions takes a favorite novel enjoyed by generations of girls called **Anne of Green Gables** and has the colossal gall not only to censor out a passage and substitute a newly written one, but to substitute a horror passage for a happy one.

The original **Anne of Green Gables** has a cheerful passage in which Anne says it makes her "glad to be alive" because there are so many interesting things to ask about, such as why "those red roads" are red. The **Impressions** version has Anne speculating that the red roads are the result of "tragic destiny… a bloodstained family tree… an evil spell… vicious strife… family feuds… drenching local soil with gore."

Impressions also rewrites the classic fairy tale **Beauty and the Beast**. In the new version, the prince is "cut into a thousand pieces by a pit lined with "sharp knives and razors."

The biggest outrage is the censorship of phonies readers out of first grade classrooms. Although all research studies prove the superiority of the phonics method for teaching reading, the public school establishment blacklists phonics readers and lesson from the first grade and compels the use of look-say or whole-language books.

The liberals promoting "Banned Books Week" are forever complaining that "religious fundamentalists" are trying to ban the teaching of evolution in schools. But in Alabama in January this year, People for the American Way's chief spokesman, John Buchanan, came down hard on the side of banning a book called **Of Pandas and People** because it presents **several** secular theories about the origins of life instead of just evolution.

Another liberal organization usually on the attack against parents and others who hold traditional values, Planned Parenthood, is doing its own censorship. It is attempting to censor out of the schools any use of abstinence-based sex education curricula such as **Sex Respect** published in Golf, Illinois and **Teen Aid** published in Spokane, Washington.

The savage attack on Western Culture in universities and public schools is another example of book banning practiced by those who falsely cry "censorship." The liberals are trying to expurgate all DWEMs (Dead White European Males) from history, civilization, and literature classes.

It was the liberals, not right-wing fundamentalists, who danced a conga line across Stanford University campus chanting "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture's got to go." At the University of Texas in Austin, the English Department is trying to censor out readings traditionally used in a mandatory freshman English course and replace them with what some professors call "Oppression Studies."

There is, indeed, a problem of book banning. But it is the intolerant liberals who are doing the banning.