from Phyllis Schlafly

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Wolf! Wolf! Censorship! Censorship!

Censorship is one of those buzz words that starts the adrenalin flowing. Like sex, it’s a word that arouses strong emotions, knee-jerk reactions, and animosities.

Last week, Boris Yeltsin shut down the Communist propaganda sheet called Pravda, and the liberal press in the United States went into a frenzy about this “undemocratic” act. These liberals are the same self-appointed guardians of free speech who never raised a peep about the fraud of Pravda calling itself a newspaper during the 77 years when it was just a house-organ for the Soviet Communist Party.

Last week, a spokesman for Norman Lear's People for the American Way (PAW) held a news conference in Washington to complain about the terrible problem of censorship in the United States. PAW's president Arthur Kropp issued the organization's annual 125-page report called “Attacks on the Freedom to Learn.”

This charade is basically a fundraising gimmick to convince recipients of desperate fundraising letters that the danger of books being tossed on a bonfire is so great that they should send their widow's mite from a social security check. PAW's material is always embellished with emotional graphics; this year's report shows nine books padlocked under a heavy chain.

Tear-jerking fundraising letters have filled the coffers of PAW and built a donor base of 300,000 people. That donor base enabled PAW to buy expensive newspaper scare ads to defeat the nomination of Judge Robert Bork to the Supreme Court, and now is available to run a similar ad campaign to try to defeat Clarence Thomas.

PAW can't produce any examples of a U.S. governmental authority preventing or forbidding the publication or distribution of a book or newspaper or article. So PAW's entire 9th annual report is an attempt to justify PAW's peculiar use of the word censorship to excoriate parents who try to protect their children in public schools from being required to participate in classroom activities which parents believe violate their parental rights.

More than two-thirds of the 229 “incidents” involved classroom materials which public schools were requiring children to read (i.e., they were not just library books). Parents were often not even allowed to opt out their children and secure alternative reading assignments.

The target of the most number of challenges from parents last year, according to PAW, was the controversial series of readers called Impressions. Parents object to these readers used in grades 1-6 because they are trashy stories filled with monsters, witches, and gruesome acts that give litt1e children nightmares; they have pseudo- religious imagery and innuendoes, particularly New Age and the occult; and they use word-guessing instead of phonics to teach reading.

The second largest number of challenges from parents, according to PAW, targets the controversial drug education course called Quest. Quest is typical of a large number of psychological curricula to which parents object, because they are “non-directive” (i.e., they tell the child that he alone can decide for himself whether participating in drugs and sex is ok) and they are anti-parent (i.e., they reject parental authority for children's behavior).

The whole idea that the public schools should be allowed to thrust such materials onto minor children over the opposition of the parents is unacceptable in a free society. That's exactly the kind of totalitarian mind control against which the Russians are rebelling today.

The PAW news release tries to spread the myth that the “classics” are under attack by narrow-minded parents who don't want their children to learn. But the only acknowledged classic in the entire list is Huckleberry Finn, to which the so-called “fundamentalist” parents do not object.

So desperate is PAW to claim that “classics” are imperiled by the “censors” that it lists Little Red Riding Hood as a “classic.” Actually, the objection to this fairy tale was to an off-beat version in which Little Red Riding Hood brings a bottle of wine to a red-nosed grandmother, which the principal felt was out of harmony with the school's anti-drug program.

At the PAW news conference in Washington last week, PAW employees blocked the door so that observers from parents, organizations could not hear what Arthur Kropp said. PAW apparently wants to censor those who disagree with their own strange definition of censorship.