

EXHAUSTING INDEX
of
nos. 1-6

by Lauren Ban
Foon

librarians *for* SOCIAL change

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WORKER POWER AND LIBRARIES.

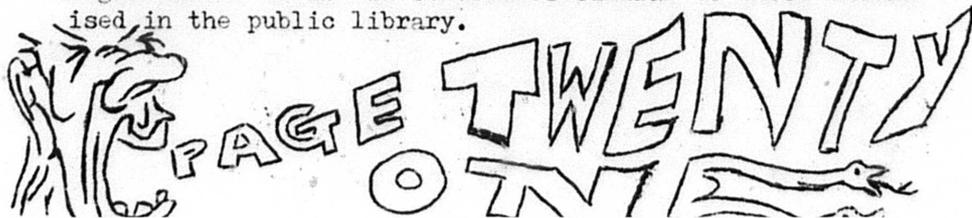
The morning session was devoted to the ideas of what worker control in libraries might be. Discussion was loose, & may appear at times to flow away from the core issue. Martyn Everett & myself saw worker control as being over the total library environment. Therefore it was suggested that some sort of public participation ought to be encouraged. Fears that this would only represent the present narrow band of library users or organised pressure groups were expressed. It was hoped that the worker element would counter this.

The ? of librarianship students & the manner in which they can be led to see their function as CONTROL- as much of people as of books, was raised by John McKay. "Library management" courses especially project this kind of role. If workers' control is going to mean anything this hierarchical picture must be resisted.

Martyn Everett said that the present pattern of library education is a prop to the existing structure. In studying for an exam leading to A.L.A. (even without considering the "qualifications" needed to do this) students contribute to a professional mystique, which supports this structure. Given the demise of A.L.A. Martyn would like to see NALGO running a non-assessed course in librarianship leading to proficiency- not a qualification. He agreed that some detachment from library work for full time education is valid for acquisition of library techniques & ethics beyond the limitations of a single library. He also favoured freer movement not only between libraries, but also other jobs to broaden one's experience.

This lead into a wider discussion on trades unions (TU). Just as the Library Association (LA) maintains an elitist mysticism in the profession, so does NALGO, with its "white collar" membership. Criticism of NALGO led to suggestions of joining ASPMS (even greater professional mystics, whose militancy can only be regarded in cash terms) or NUPE. The idea of one TU for local authority workers was suggested. It was generally agreed that the profession (taboo word) doesn't particularly relate to TU's, but that it should be up to unionised librarians to change this, perhaps by setting up a librarians group in NALGO, or turning the LA into a librarian TU, or setting up a new body. The 1st option was probably the most favoured.

The relationship between the library & the local authority was also considered. Academic libraries were not seen to be a different situation from public libraries, & as they already involve their community through Library or learning resources committees, they might be studied for possible guidelines for the future. Industrial libraries posed a problem, & I suggested that small libraries would have to relate themselves to their particular situation, within the worker establishment of that industry. Larger industrial libraries might evolve their own structures similar to those visualised in the public library.



In the afternoon session it was hoped to build on this discussion, invariably some was repeated, if only because many new people contributed. The ?'s were chiefly related to worker councils (wc) and local authorities and TU's. The favoured structure for wc's was that a council be set up in each unit of the local authority (eg:- the library) involving all of the workers in that unit irrespective of role. Wider issues like pay might be dealt with through a federated structure of these councils within an authority. "Professional issues might be met through another federated structure, perhaps taking inspiration from a reformed LA.

The ? of whether representation on wc's should be through TU's or workers continued. One thing which perhaps didn't become clear was that at unit level all workers would be involved in the council. This led to a lengthy dialogue Martyn Everett, aided by John McKay & myself on one side, & Roy McColvin on the other. Roy McColvin questioned whether the wc would take on worker grievances or the wider spectrum of library management. Part of this argument was that existing TU structures are sufficient for worker grievances, & although it later became clear that wider issues were at stake, this led to a digression on the successes & failures of TU's in acting as a forum for this.

Colin Darch, commenting on his experience in Ethiopian libraries, feared that the TU might find itself at variance with the wc. The experience in Ethiopia had been that, after the workers had elected a council (Commission) to run the library, they expected in to continue to act like a TU, rather than as a democratic management system. Later an attempt was made to resolve this problem by electing another council to represent junior staff over conditions of service, in conflict with the Commission. The experiment in Ethiopia continues. Widespread worker control in Britain would mean a major change in the TU Movement, it was hoped by some that it would adapt itself to this new role, others said that it has grown into a retrogressive force in society.

A prevalent feeling was that the library should evolve away from its ivory tower- the team system in Leicestershire was mentioned in this context. Roy McColvin was assured that posts similar to his would still exist under a worker control situation, but might not carry their present hierarchical status.

Practical courses of action suggested included the organisation & unionisation of library workers, the need for greater participation is evident & the establishment of library union groups on a regional or national basis was suggested. Regarding a NALGO Librarian's Group, a meeting of all library representatives in an area could be called, perhaps using LfSC as a coordinator. Individuals might also write to NALGO expressing their opinions on worker control. As Roy McColvin said, it is ultimately up to you to effect the decisions which shape your life.

S.G.Rayment

THIS IS PAGE NUMBER
TWENTY-TWO

John
line
OK

LONDON AREA

Richard Alexander
18 Byegrove Road
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01- 542-0028

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John McKay
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92 Blackheath Hill
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142 Elgin Ave
London W9 2NS

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Barge Swinburne
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184a Coldharbour Lane SE 5

Morden Library
Morden Road
Morden
01- 540-1701

Centreprise
136-8 Kingsland High Street
E8
01=254-9632

North London Poly. student

Middlesex Poly
Queensway
Enfield
084 8131 ext. 11

Ealing Public Library, Acton branch
High St.
W 3
992-6991

Croydon Library
Ext. 25

ROSPA
Purley, Surrey
IS THIS AN
ACCIDENT?

Birmingham Poly. student

Hi Di!

MIND

Camden Library

Lambeth Amenity Services

Richard Wallace-Tarry
19 Old Ford Rd. E2

John Lindsay
19 Old Ford Rd. E2

Sean O'Reilly
55 Bushey Ley
Welwyn Garden City, Herts.

Lesley Reid
4 Lingards Rd. SE13

Anne Clarke
3 Hamilton Park
Highbury, N5

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Stewart G. Rayment
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Frank Black
84 Galloway Rd.
Shepherds Bush, W12

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Roy Mc Colvin
Lambeth Amenity Services

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Terry Spencer
3 Wellington Rd.
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29 Lynn Bank Rd.
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Fran Steinberg
7 Jepson St.
Heaviley, Stockport, Cheshire

Hilary Brown
Manchester Business School Library
Manchester 15

Jeannette Daley
Lancaster University Library
Ballrigg, Lancaster

SOUTHERN AREA

Mary Hayward
25 Middleton Close
Fareham, Hants.

Islington Libraries

South Hackney Comprehensive
School

Central Library
Southgate
Stevenage, Herts.

Eaglesfield School
Red Lion Lane, Woolwich

School of Librarianship
North London Poly.

Brighton Poly.
Lewes Rd., Moulsecomb, Brighton

Ealing School of Librarianship

Ealing School of Librarianship

N. London Poly staff

Salford Public Library

Liverpool City Libraries
William Brown St.
Liverpool

Bollington Library
Palmerston Street
Bollington, Macclesfield, Ches.
Bollington 73058

23
OR 24 IF
YOU PREFER

Claire Jeffery
Dorset County Library
Dorchester.

Angela Needham
Library, University of Bath

AAL Conference:
anyone interested
in having some fun
at the Conf.
contact Fran Stein-
berg

MIDLANDS AND WALES

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1a Holywell Road
Abergavenny, Gwent.

Andrew Coburn
27 Victoria Road,
Harborne, Birmingham 17

Birmingham Poly.

Ray Billington
161 Brays Road,
Birmingham B26 2
021 743 4870

Sandwell Public Library

Jaqueline Kiddie
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Leicester LE2 1TL

St. Barnabas Library
French Road,
Leicester
0533 767130

Sheila Smith
Bushbury Library,
Probert Road,
Wolverhampton.

HI! I'M
PAGE
25!

EAST ANGLIA

Bill Rhodes
1 George Hill,
Old Catton, Norwich.

University of East Anglia Library

Angela Jacob
University of East Anglia
Library,

Judith Crabtree
213 Earlham Road,
Norwich

OH MOMMA CAN THIS REALLY BE
THE END - TO BE STUCK INSIDE OF
NORWICH WITH THE UEA BLUES
AGAIN?

FREDIAN SLIP
page twenty set

WORKSHOP ON LIBRARIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

LfSC could be doomed. It has failed to establish a sense of direction, a failure which reflects precisely the situation in which libraries find themselves. So what we're interested in is how to get that sense of direction by making explicit the relationship of libraries (and LfSC) to social change. Are libraries, librarians, members of the LfSC group initiators or resisters of social change?

Libraries, and public libraries par excellence, have not initiated social change; on the contrary, they have more often acted as agents of resistance. Local authority libraries, sharing or promoting the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of local 'managers', (elected Councillors and senior paid officials) are by virtue of their position conservative institutions preserving the status quo. This can be seen most obviously in the way services are geared to certain interests (e.g. commercial & business library services).

We suggest LfSC should consider strategies for the selection and provision of material, and for services to be offered, which go some way towards realising a positive and discriminating role for libraries in social change... for example, by the positive seeking-out of interest groups in the community, such as Trades Councils, Claimants' Unions, Poverty Action Groups, political groups etc., making connections with them no more or less biased than traditional junketings with Rotary Clubs and Women's Institutes; making service to these interests a normal part of library activities, or, for example, by 'packaging' information... dissemination of basic information, such as Shelter did in How to use the Census, or Street Research Bulletin on How to research Company Information, is precisely what public reference librarians ought to be doing.

Society must be changed. LfSC as a group could well be involved in promoting that change - by coordinating the initiatives of all library workers anxious to see radical social change, and by sharing (living through? risking?) the experience of the oppressed.

EAST ANGLIA Continued

Deb Jones
29 Hurd Road,
Eaton Hall, Norwich.

Norfolk County Library.

Martyn Everett
11 Gibson Gardens,
Saffron Walden, Essex

Essex County Library, Saffron Walden
Branch

PAGE TWENTY^{SEVEN} SEVEN

SOME OF THE LETTERS SENT IN RESPONSE
TO PUBLICITY FOR THE CONFERENCE.....

Dear Mrs Van Loon,

With deliciously trembling hands and swivelling eyeballs I hungrily digested your letter in the LAR. Belching rudely I laughed hysterically into my curry - they exist yet. Librarians for Social Change are still there. Bravo!... Burp!

I give you stamps and an old elastic band - who could abuse such high ideals? Give me if you please information about LfSC and a free flow of ideas and people.

apres toi la deluge,

David Futter

Dear Borin,

Many thanks for the details of the conference. I am really sorry I can't come but look forward to seeing any write-up.

May I suggest that the LfSC cut down on the use of the word shit? I appreciate that to many people it is just a strong word for rubbish but to those of us whose experiences include dirty nappies, untrained puppies and poultry to be cleared out, the word represents an all too vivid reality that we would rather not meet unnecessarily.

Sincerely, Beryl

Dear Borin,

Something tells me I will not be welcome at your conference, but if possible I would like to at least make a brief contribution to the proceedings. At present I am working for my Part 2 exams to be taken next month. I've read LfSC with mixed emotions. Really, it could be a lot better. But, you will say, I should contribute. I will one day; before entering librarianship 3 years ago I was an unemployed u/g mag editor (on a small scale in Devon) and politico-social activist and OZ and IT reader, and have met several of the well-knowns - John Carding, The White Panthers, Syd Rawl, Pete Blake, Farren etc. and gradually became disillusioned with the whole scene and got a job. It would be interesting to see what we are about - without living in the past. There is no alternative, let's see "what is to be done".

Name and address withheld at conference.

As this is being typed the decision has been made for any body around at the time to meet on the first Wednesday in March at 7.30 in the evening at the entrance of the LA Headquarters.

Please come and have a good time....(if LA closed we'll find another venue nearby)

Racism and Libraries Workshop

The discussion raised two important points. The first was how racism permeates the whole fabric of our society and how libraries as institutions and librarians by their attitudes reflect it.

In Britain there are some areas with large immigrant populations. These communities have specific needs, from linguistic needs to the need for specific information to combat society's indifference and hostility. In general libraries make very little attempt to cater for these requirements and many librarians deny the necessity to do so. Even where a foreign language collection or a West Indian newspaper is provided the image of the library as white and middle-class effectively keeps away those who could be using the services. Librarians' attitudes are sometimes condescending and paternalistic and even occasionally hostile.

The second point made was of the inherent racism in much of our literature, from the exclusion of black faces in children's picture books to the distortion of African, Caribbean and Indian history. Even the language is of a derogatory nature (see Chris Searles: *The Forsaken Lover*). Imperialist and colonialist attitudes still remain and in so doing destroy the black person's access to knowledge which is important for his self-awareness and historical identity.

There are many things that librarians need to do, for example we should actively seek involvement with immigrant groups, and find out the best ways of serving them; we should make a conscious effort to examine literature for racist attitudes and search for publishers who produce positive material.

Our discussion only touched on these points but we feel that further workshops are needed.

We suggest that people who are concerned should read the following:

Franz Fanon *Black Skins White Masks*

Chris Searles *The Forsaken Lover* Penguin

Ann Dummett *Portrait of English Racism* Penguin

The workshop leaders will give further information to anybody who wants it. Write to:

Ann Clark^e
3 Hamilton Park
Highbury N.5

Lesley Reid
4 Lingards Road
Lewisham S.E.13

Our central co-ordinating address and for information about the journal and Smoothie publications is:

John Noyce, Flat 2, 87 Montpelier Road, BRIGHTON, BN1 3BD.

Issue 9 will be edited by the Feminist Group. John Noyce will forward copy for this issue to the Editpeople.