

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 473

IR 052 321

TITLE Censorship: A Lengthy History, a Continuing Battle  
[and] Resource List of Censorship-Related  
Materials.

INSTITUTION American Society of Journalists and Authors, Inc.,  
New York, NY.

PUB DATE Mar 87

NOTE 8p.

PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Viewpoints (120) --  
Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Advocacy; \*Censorship; \*Civil Liberties;  
\*Constitutional Law; Disclosure; \*Freedom of  
Information; \*Freedom of Speech; Information  
Dissemination; Information Sources; \*Intellectual  
Freedom; Privacy

ABSTRACT

The first of two parts of this document presents a statement from the American Society of Journalists and Authors which briefly traces the history of censorship from the fourth century B.C. to the present. The second part is a list of resources on censorship and censorship-related materials that are available from the following First Amendment advocacy organizations: (1) the American Civil Liberties Union; (2) American Library Association; (3) Americans for Constitutional Freedom; (4) National Coalition against Censorship; (5) Ohio Educational Library/Media Association; (6) Penthouse/Omni; and (7) People for the American Way. Brief descriptions are provided of the materials available from each of these organizations as well as ordering information. (Author/CGD)

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# AMERICAN SOCIETY OF JOURNALISTS AND AUTHORS, INC.

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## CENSORSHIP: A LENGTHY HISTORY, A CONTINUING BATTLE

Book-banning and other forms of censorship do not constitute a new phenomenon in the 1980s. Since at least the fourth century B.C., there have been individuals who have encouraged the banning or outright destruction of objectionable reading material, either in the name of "morality" or for frankly political reasons.

In 387 B.C., Plato suggested that Homer's Odyssey be expurgated for immature readers; the Roman emperor Caligula later had the same book burned. About 250 B.C., Confucius' writings were consigned to the flames by Emperor Shih Hwang-ti, who had unified China and was determined to destroy all traces of the nation's feudal past. In 1244 A.D., the Talmud was burned on charges of blasphemy and immorality. Some 400 years later, Martin Luther's translation of the Bible suffered the same fate in Germany, by papal fiat. In Germany in 1933, a massive bonfire destroyed the collected works of the country's most distinguished Jewish authors; some 25,000 books went up in flames, as Hitler's followers cheered and sang.

The conviction of one group that it is in sole possession of universal truth--and that "the" truth is somehow threatened by the existence in print of other notions--seems to underlie many censorship efforts. "Burn the libraries," ordered Omar I at the capture of Alexandria in 642 A.D., "for their value is in this one book, the Koran."

Whatever the century or the country, censors and book-burners often appear to be under the impression that what is printed on the burned page will cease to exist, that ideas will expire with paper and ink.

Anatole France urged his countrymen, in 1919, to "Burn, burn all the books which teach hatred!" in the supposition that peace and brotherly love would thereafter prevail. Emperor Shih evidently thought he could expunge history--as did Joseph Goebbels, who declared at the 1933 Nazi conflagration, "The past is lying in flames. The future will rise from the flames within our hearts." Some of today's would-be censors are perhaps under a similar impression--that "dirty words," for instance, will be lost from the language if books containing them are removed from a library, or that particular lifestyles will vanish if their description or depiction is prohibited.

Such efforts are doomed to fail. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in 1941, on the eighth anniversary of the Nazi book-burning: "We all know that books burn--yet we have the greater knowledge that books cannot be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. . . . No man and no force can put thought in a concentration camp forever."

### Censorship and Americans

The very idea of censorship is repugnant to most Americans. Most Americans asked if they would approve the concept of someone's pre-examining th

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materials they read, see, and hear--and determining what is permitted, and what is objectionable and forbidden--would respond with a resounding "No!"

Indeed, two clauses in the U.S. Constitution reinforce the American insistence on the free exchange of information. "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; . . ." declares the First Amendment. And the Fourteenth Amendment says, "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States . . ."; the United States Supreme Court affirmed more than fifty years ago that freedom of speech and press are among those inviolable rights.

With the First Amendment, our nation's founders established what the Supreme Court has called "the matrix, the indispensable condition, of nearly every other form of freedom." Still, it seems that someone is always ready to assume the censor's cloak, and the battle must be fought and re-fought as long as there are those who would tell others what they may see, hear, and read.

And that can happen anywhere. Americans viewed with horror the book-burnings in Nazi Germany. We welcomed authors who fled the Soviet Union, unable to publish there because they would not parrot a party line. We shuddered to learn of the draconian measures taken by South African censors styling themselves, with Orwellian irony, an "information" agency. Surely nothing like this could take place in our own country.

Yet, while not on a national scale (yet), such things have happened here, and they are happening now. Across our nation, local authorities have capitulated to the demands of small bands of zealots who wish to silence certain authors or ideas. Books and periodicals have been removed from public libraries, banned from high-school reading lists, swept from newsstands, and even literally burned, because they offended the opinions or the sensibilities of one or another religious, political, ethnic, or self-styled "moral" group. These people, although they do not employ the word themselves, are self-appointed censors.

Such attempts to subvert the letter and spirit of the Constitution must be vigorously challenged. As Justice William O. Douglas warned: "Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that could most easily defeat us."

The 18th century French philosopher Claude Adrien Helvetius observed that, "To limit the press is to insult a nation; to prohibit reading of certain books is to declare the inhabitants to be either fools or slaves." Those who would insult our nation and its citizens by limiting our freedom in the name of a higher "morality" are in fact imperiling the truly moral foundation of America.

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## RESOURCE LIST OF CENSORSHIP-RELATED MATERIALS

The following is a partial list of sources for information relating to censorship and First Amendment issues. In each case, the name of the organization is given first, followed by a list of publications or other materials issued by that organization. Ordering information is given at the end of each section.

### American Civil Liberties Union

CIVIL LIBERTIES (Quarterly membership newsletter, subscription by membership, \$20 and up). Reports on the ACLU's litigation, legislative lobbying, and public education efforts in defense of Constitutional rights.

CIVIL LIBERTIES ALERT. The ACLU's legislative newsletter (5 times a year) published by the ACLU's Washington Office (ACLU Washington Office, 122 Maryland Avenue, NE, Washington DC 20002). Informs readers about important legislation concerning civil liberties. Available on request to all those who actively participate in legislative lobbying.

POLLUTING THE CENSORSHIP DEBATE (Public Policy Report, \$5). A summary and critique of the final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

RUSHING TO CENSORSHIP (2/86, photocopy, \$1). An interim report on the methods of evidence gathering and evaluation by the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

CENSORSHIP IN THE SOUTH (11/85, \$2). A report of four states, 1970-1985.

ACLU publications may be ordered through:

Jean Grove, Literature Clerk  
American Civil Liberties Union  
132 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036

All orders must include \$1.00 for the first publication and .50 for each additional publication for postage and handling. A complete ACLU publications list is available from the ACLU New York office (same address).

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American Library Association

**INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM MANUAL** (\$15). Second edition of 1974 handbook. Demonstrates application of principles of intellectual freedom for librarians. Also presents ALA's official documents, such as the Library Bill of Rights, with procedures and strategies for avoiding intellectual freedom conflicts in libraries.

**NEWSLETTER ON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM** (bimonthly, \$25/year). Covers battle to defend and extend First Amendment rights; describes censorship incidents; gives summaries of recent court rulings; provides bibliography on intellectual freedom.

**RESOURCE BOOK for Banned Books Week** (\$10, issued annually). Provides list of books challenged within past year by would-be censors; larger, annotated list of books and materials challenged through the ages. Focuses on different theme each year--1986 theme: scientific and technological censorship.

ALA books may be ordered through:

Office for Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association  
50 East Huron Street  
Chicago, IL 60611

The ALA has a list of additional, shorter papers and pamphlets that it publishes on censorship topics. The list, with prices and ordering information, can be obtained through the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

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Americans for Constitutional Freedom

**PRESERVING THE FIRST AMENDMENT**. 9-minute video-cassette presenting the case against censorship by journalists, publishers and academics. The tape is being loaned or donated outright, depending on the size and needs of the group requesting it.

Contact:

Americans for Constitutional Freedom  
425 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

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National Coalition Against Censorship

- CENSORSHIP NEWS (Quarterly Newsletter, subscription available by becoming a Friend of the Coalition, \$25). Reports on censorship efforts throughout the country, including school book bannings and government restrictions on access to information.
- MEESE COMMISSION EXPOSED (1986, \$3 individuals, \$6 institutions). In this 52-page booklet, well-known writers, feminists, actors, psychologists and lawyers, including Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Betty Friedan and Colleen Dewhurst, address the biases and abuses of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.
- BOOKS ON TRIAL (updated annually, \$5). A comprehensive, up-to-date source of information on litigation involving censorship in U.S. public schools, with a listing of books, magazines and films involved.
- COURT OF APPEALS DECISION - INDIANAPOLIS ORDINANCE (8/85, \$1). The court decision which declared that the ordinance which viewed pornography as a violation of women's civil rights was unconstitutional.
- FARRIS' OPPOSITION TO RIDERS ON THE EARTH (6/84, \$1). Riders on the Earth is one of the books in the elementary reading series published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston which is charged with teaching witchcraft, situation ethics, evolution, and "the religion of Secular Humanism." Attorney Michael Farris provides excellent insight into this religious fundamentalist attack.
- MAKING SENSE OF RESEARCH ON PORNOGRAPHY (1985, \$1). Thelma McCormack's article reviews the pro-censorship argument that pornography causes harm. Reprinted from Woman Against Censorship, V. Burstyn, ed. (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985).
- CENSORSHIP: AN ELITIST WEAPON (1985, \$1). From newsletter of SIECUS, Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. Overview of the radical right's demands for censorship in the public schools. By Koz Udow.
- INFORMATION PACKET ON CREATIONISM AND EVOLUTION (6/82, \$3). Includes a report on a speech by Stephen Jay Gould at the NCAC, selected newspaper and magazine articles on the issue, and a brief bibliography.
- EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL SELECTION PACKET (Up-to-date, \$3). NCAC's comprehensive collection of information designed to prevent censorship controversies from erupting and to deal with them effectively when they do. Includes background information and sample policies for selection of educational materials for use in public schools.
- FEMINIST ANTI-CENSORSHIP TASKFORCE PACKET (Up-to-date, \$4). Press releases and articles by this important group (FACT), which focuses on the political implications of censorship for women. Includes an analysis of the Meese Commission Report.

"COMMONSENSE AND CENSORSHIP: A REPORT FROM THE FRONT" (7/35, Free).

A speech by Col. Gaines Hawkins (who was testifying for CBS when Westmoreland settled his libel case) to NCAC, showing how one person defeated an anti-pornography campaign in Clay County, Mississippi.

HATCH AMENDMENT PACKET (1985, Free). Includes: a letter from the U.S.

Department of Education stating that the Hatch Amendment is not "an appropriate vehicle for local censorship of curricula...;"

Censorship: An Elitist Weapon, by Roz Ulow; and Censoring Ideas in Schools by Dorothy Massie, Human Rights Specialist at the National Education Association.

DISSENTING COMMISSIONERS REPORT (6/86, Free). Attorney General's Commission on Pornography commissioners Judith Becker and Ellen Levine's dissenting statement.

NCAC publications may be ordered from:

National Coalition Against Censorship  
132 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036

Be sure to include your name and address and a check made out to NCAC in the correct amount for the publications being ordered.

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Ohio Educational Library/Media Association

OHIO MEDIA SPECTRUM — INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM: AN UPDATE (Fall 1986).

An overview of the censorship and anti-censorship situation in America today. Book reviews, news articles, statements and features by people and organizations active in the endeavor to protect intellectual freedom.

The first printing sold out, but it is available in 150 colleges in the U.S. and has been microfilmed by University Microfilms. For back-ordering information, contact:

Ohio Educational Library/Media Association  
40 South Third Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

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Penthouse/Omni

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VS. SEX: How the Meese Commission Lied About Pornography by Philip Nobile and Eric Madler (Minotaur Press, Ltd., New York, \$3.95). Two editors of Forum followed the Meese Commission around the nation to report on its theory and practice. A "Shadow Commission" composed of William F. Buckley, Jr., Betty Friedan, John Irving, William Kennedy and John Updike provides commentary.

United States of America Vs. Sex may be ordered from:

Minotaur Press Ltd.  
200 N. 12th Street  
Newark, NJ 07107

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People for the American Way

**A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO BIOLOGY TEXTBOOKS 1985** (\$7.95). The book focuses on critical reviews of titles submitted in Texas in April 1984. State administrative rules governing textbook adoption--intended to guide textbook selection committees where statewide adoption is practiced--have become vehicles for special interest groups attempting to control what children read. Providing information that will lead to wise textbook selection and assisting state textbook officials to address the issue of how special interest groups have contributed to the decline of textbook quality is the purpose of the guide.

**ATTACKS ON THE FREEDOM TO LEARN: 50-State Censorship Report 1984-5; 1985-6** (\$5.95). A sampling of censorship activities that were reported and subsequently documented by People for the American Way. Most of the incidents concern objections to books in classrooms and libraries.

**LOOKING AT HISTORY: A Review of Major U.S. History Textbooks** (\$8.95). People for the American Way approached the issue of quality of textbooks to protect the integrity of the educational process from those who would impose censorship on schools. A panel of educators present reviews of textbooks published for junior high school history courses. They found that religion is not treated as significant in American life. "Publishers fear pressure from both militant atheists and militant fundamentalists."

**PROTECTING THE FREEDOM TO LEARN: A Citizen's Guide** (\$11.50). Presents an overview of recent censorship activity in American schools; outlines ways to organize to prevent censorship; lists names and addresses of organizations "that work to protect the freedom to learn." Also lists groups that try to impose censorship with descriptions of their beliefs and activities.

**THE TALE OF TELL CITY** (\$3.50); **SCOPES REVISITED** (\$3.50); **THE WITCH HUNT AGAINST "SECULAR HUMANISM"** (\$3.50). Discussion papers which present specific censorship incidents and problems with suggestions for thinking about and discussing them.

PFAW publications may be ordered through:

Lucinda Bennett  
People for the American Way  
1424 16th Street, Suite 601  
Washington DC 20036

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