

Vonnegut Censorship Threatens Academic Freedom

Reacting to recent censorship of books in schools in three states, the president of the National Education Association has declared that these "unreasonable attacks on academic freedom and accompanying harassment of teachers are a direct threat to the most basic freedoms of our democratic system of government."

Dr. Helen D. Wise asked rhetorically, "How can we teach our children about democracy and free speech when we burn the books we do not like and have teachers arrested for assigning unpopular material?" She reiterated NFA's commitment to "defend the right of all students and

teachers to engage in free inquiry."

Dr. Wise's response was prompted specifically by recent book banning and burning incidents in Drake, N.D.; McBee, S.C.; and Ridgefield, Conn.

The Drake school board had copies of Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse Five" burned, is investigating other books, and reportedly has told the teacher who had assigned the Vonnegut book to a sophomore class that he will

not have a job there next year. Now under scrutiny are James Dickey's "Deliverance" and an anthology of "Short Story Masterpieces" that includes works by Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and William Faulkner. Parents objected to what they termed "obscene language" in the books.

The Vonnegut book was also at issue in South Carolina, where a McBee teacher was arrested after a citizen charged him with dis-

tribution of obscene materials to minors. Charges were dropped after the book was removed from the school library. The antiwar novel, which the teacher had assigned to his class, is about a New York optometrist who is thrown back in time to endure the World War II bombing of Dresden, Germany, by Americans.

In Connecticut, a three-year series of censorship efforts by various segments of the Ridgefield community involved the writings

of authors ranging from Thomas Jefferson to Eldridge Cleaver—as well as entire courses of study—and resulted in an in-depth analysis by a special panel of the NEA's state affiliate, the Connecticut Education Association. According to the CEA report, the most recent dispute included disruption of school board meetings by members of community groups attacking the methods of individual teachers, reports of anonymous threats against at least

two teachers, and the firing of the superintendent for refusing to take what he called "punitive and improper" actions against some teachers.

"The NEA is not endorsing particular books or courses of study," Dr. Wise stressed. "The point is that we cannot, and will not, allow the teaching-learning process to be warped into a showcase for promoting any single viewpoint. Schools must be free to present and discuss all viewpoints and to

foster creative thought and a change of ideas."

"Despite lip service to this concept by many," she continued, "schools have been perhaps the most frequent target of those who would 'protect' our young people from learning, comparing, and coming to their own conclusions. And teachers, dedicated to opening the horizons of their students, are too often the first victims of the hysteria that surrounds most censorship moves."

Students Apply For SCONA Delegates

Students may now apply for 30 delegate positions to the 19th Student Conference on National Affairs.

SCONA XIX will consider "Re-ordering American Priorities" during the Feb. 13-16 event involving top college and university students from throughout the U. S. and Mexico.

Applications of prospective TAMU delegates will be taken until Monday. Interviews will be conducted Dec. 10-14.

Application forms are available at the Memorial Student Center director's office, the YM-CA office of Vice President for Student Services Dr. John Koldus and the commandant's office.

Applicants must have a minimum 2.0 grade point ratio, Dr. Koldus noted. Appointments for interview times must be made when applications are turned in.

A&M delegates will receive excused class absences to attend plenary sessions and participate in roundtable discussion.

The SCONA XIX topic, "Re-ordering American Priorities," will present delegates opportunity to delve in depth into U. S. policy formation in political, economic and environmental areas, commented Chairman Steve Kosub.

It neither tries to form solutions nor create consensus of thought, he added. SCONA's primary goal is to provide the leaders of tomorrow's America more information, insights and viewpoints into the topic.

Featured speakers of the early spring semester conference are William P. Clements Jr., deputy secretary of defense; William D. Ruckelshaus, former deputy attorney general, and Dr. Hans J. Morgenthau, prominent political scientist, among others.

OPA Sponsor Benefit Tree

Student organizations at TAMU are decorating a Christmas tree to benefit mental health and elder citizens.

The tree is located on the first floor of the Memorial Student Center and is a project of Omega Phi Alpha, national service sorority.

Any organization or individual can make or buy an ornament to hang on the tree for a \$2 contribution each, said Linda Austin, OPA vice president for projects. The ornaments can be any shape or size and creativity is encouraged.

All ornaments and money should be left in the OPA cubicle in the Student Government Office in the MSC.

Letters have been mailed to student organizations acquainting them with the tree project.

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