

A.L.A. CELEBRATES ITS SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

(A Statement by Dr. Ralph E. Ellsworth, Chairman of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Committee of the American Library Association.)

This coming year the American Library Association will celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary. Organizations, like individuals, who have lived as long as seventy-five years, prefer to celebrate their past by looking toward their future, perhaps with uneasy glances over their shoulders now and then.

Thus during the coming year, A.L.A. will concentrate its effort on the one task that, if accomplished successfully, might make an immediate and important contribution to the general welfare of books and ideas and readers in this time of world wide crisis.

Because it is a time of crisis and uncertainty, it is normal to see worried citizens grasping at line of hope, and to find selfish pressure groups exploiting the general state of confusion for their own ends. In such a time, intellectual and professional groups are expected to exert a steadying influence.

Today the super-patriotic and chauvinistic organizations are campaigning vigorously to sell the idea that if we will only study our history and our heritage, we will find it possible to answer the questions that worry us, but when one looks behind their words, one finds that many of their leaders and spokesmen have a selfish motive and a damaging reactionary message to sell, which is not representative of the rank and file. Chauvinistic attitudes show themselves among all kinds of groups in American society. To a large extent they are a result of misunderstanding rather than bad

intent. It is the obligation of men of good will, men of character, and honest men, as leaders, to eliminate insofar as that is possible the misunderstandings that exist in the minds of such people.

But the educational, professional and learned societies are not stepping forward with the kind of reinterpretation of the American heritage that would give the citizen real, honest and helpful facts or judgments. And this is what the A.L.A. will attempt to do.

The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Committee has been given a grant from Gardner Cowles, Editor of Look Magazine, to finance a series of projects all aimed at helping the librarian do an increasingly effective job of aiding citizens who wish to read and study.

First, Gerald W. Johnson is writing a book which will show how an honest re-examination of the American heritage can help a citizen understand the nature and implications of a half dozen of the big, inescapable problems he faces. This book will be published by Harpers in October and will be distributed widely. Look Magazine will run an excerpt from it in July. The American Library Association hopes to persuade many national organizations, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs, to interest their members in studying the ideas Johnson will discuss.

Second, Dr. Henry Steele Commager of Columbia University will edit a large "source" book which will include the basic statements that

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a group or individual will need to follow up the ideas Johnson presents. This too, will be published by Harpers and will be ready in the Fall.

Third, the A.L.A. will announce a contest-with-prizes for librarians for outstanding statements of illustrations of the power of books to influence the lives of men and women.

Fourth, at its convention to be held in Chicago, July 8-14, the A. L. A. will bring six important speakers who will emphasize the significance of the problems that will be explored in the Johnson and Commager books.

Fifth, the officers of A.L.A. hope to use the impetus gained from this celebration as the beginning of a long-range program to help librarians make the reading of books a normal part of the daily lives of an increasingly larger proportion of our people.

(Reprinted from that very fine publication **Stechert - Hafner Book News**, 31 E. 10th St., New York, Feb., 1951.)

PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN

Time magazine gave space in the January 8th issue to laud librarian, John C. Settlemyer, for adapting progressive methods of modern merchandising to the operation of the Atlanta Public Library. The patrons, admitted by the electric-eye controlled door are enchanted by the beauty of the canary yellow and lime green, soothed by the soft recorded music, and jackets on the books which can be quickly checked

out by Recordak. All these factors have been the reason for the increased circulation and popular acceptance by the public. All libraries can be modern and beautiful; Is yours? Canary yellow and lime green cost no more than institutional yellow and barracks green. It just takes a progressive librarian.

(Reprinted from **Show-Me Libraries**, February, 1951. Published by the staff of Missouri State Library.)