

To Secure the Blessings of Liberty

John Henry Faulk

I would like to make it very clear that we shouldn't have to wait until a lawsuit can be filed. My whole thesis is that apathy and ignorance are a deadly enemy of the American people. The First Amendment Congress to which I belong took a poll last year. Mr. Gallup conducted it and found out that 85% of a cross section of this country could not identify the First Amendment. They didn't know whether the law was passed last year by Congress, whether it was part of our basic law, or what. This is what we must address ourselves to because this can't be done by litigation. This can only be done in the hearts of the American people in the conviction that it is what we have to give to the world. Remember we became a beacon light of freedom to the rest of the world.



Some of you people sitting here don't even know where your great grandmas and grandpas came from. I don't know where all of mine came from certainly. I care very much what their great grandson does, and I feel he is very responsible for his actions, but my point is that

we are an amalgam of the earth's population. This is terribly important to understand. We are not a country like France or England or Germany or Italy with hundreds and hundreds of years of common culture, common language, common institutions. We are a people bound together as Americans by one thing only and that is the principals and ideals upon which this society was founded. We are the only society on earth in which man coming here five years ago can become a full fledged citizen without any questions being asked about his national origins, and become an American, and call himself an American, and become a participating American on an equal footing with folks whose people came here three hundred years ago. In France you will always be an American in France. You will never be a Frenchman. In England you would never be described as an Englishman. You would be described as an American, a foreigner in England. In this country you are an American when you adhere, and I suggest that the only test of patriotism really, is when you adhere to those principles and ideals that were laid down and by which we have existed these last two hundred years. And so it's an understanding of those that is really our only protection.

It is another thing to insist that action be taken against a library, a book be removed from a library. This is a dreadful, dreadful, breach of our American heritage and never treat it as anything else. The content of the book is not the thing at issue, and you must understand that. This is terribly important to understand about our societies. The attack on the book and the method of removing it is what is important. The Founding Fathers didn't say, well Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of press except when the press lies or the press fails, or the press distorts. Congress shall make no law under any circumstances abridging freedom of press. Only the people can correct that, just as only the people maintain their religious institutions, or can train those that come after us in matters of conscience. The state can invoke no power to remove a book, or challenge those in our schools or libraries who are charged with the responsibility of selecting books. They can only dismantle the library association and take it over themselves, and that would be of course a dreadful day.

What I am trying to say is that these are absolutes, and every time in history and crises that we have meddled with them and allowed them to be distorted, we found out that we were fleeing from ghosts. There is not a crisis in our whole history that once we calm down and return to sanity we didn't say well great heavens, that wasn't necessary at all. Just reflect. People have been sent to jail for what they believed in this country. They were jailed during the McCarthy period. We now realize that that was a terrible period, and there are those elements in the country today. You have to understand that the Founding Fathers believed we were capable of governing ourselves,

that free people with complete access to all varieties of information on every subject could govern themselves best.

People who insist on censorship really don't trust their own judgment. They want to be told what to do. They want to tell others what to do. They think that they honor the flag by compelling their neighbor to salute it, whether it meets his conscience or not. And this, of course, is a fallacy. In this society what everyone believes remains a matter between him and his Maker, him and his conscience. This apathy and ignorance in our society allows the Moral Majority people to get a big hold in some sections of our society and to assert themselves. They are perfectly sincere people. Remember that. They just happen to be barking up the wrong tree in this land. This is what sets us apart from a totalitarian society. In a totalitarian society, there is no freedom of speech, there is no freedom of the press. It can't be tolerated. In a free self-governing democratic society, we can't exist without those basic freedoms. To say that we must curb those freedoms, to say that we must abandon those freedoms in order to preserve our republic is like saying that we must cut a man's heart out to lower his blood pressure.



Social Issues Resources Services, Inc., president Elliot Goldstein is pictured with Amanda Bible and Gene Lanier. Goldstein sponsored the NCLA Intellectual Freedom Award. Bible is the first recipient.