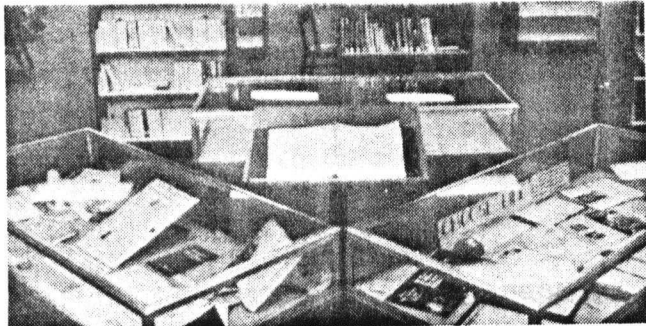


Good Times 2-9-89
Libraries - 1980-1989 p 5

Pro-Life Display Provokes Policy Debate

DAVID ALEXANDER

THE material was nothing unusual as far as anti-abortion groups go: Abortion is Genocide. Physicians who perform abortions are comparable to Nazi doctors. The 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision legalizing abortion is akin to the 1857 Dred Scott decision justifying slavery.



The library hosts "the most controversial issue in the nation."

abortion debate to be played out.

"A library is a place for an exchange of ideas," Mathews said.

Edith Manchester, a Christian Action Council member and an outspoken anti-abortion activist, said she knew there would be "vehement opposition" to the display. But after noticing sex education materials from Planned Parenthood in a display last year that she felt were "misleading, gross and inappropriate," Manchester decided the Christian Action Council should utilize the library's cases as well.

But the stage for these emotional statements was unlikely: For three days last week, the Santa Cruz City Library was the unwitting forum for the Christian Action Council's anti-abortion views when an opposing display case from pro-choice Reproductive Rights Network was installed late.

Consequently, the one-sided presentation had some library patrons wondering.

"It's a powerful display for what it's trying to say. I just don't agree with it's opinions or that it's here," Santa Cruz resident Holly Hoods told GOOD TIMES.

"My first reaction was horror — I was offended by this being there all by itself. It was the central case; the other two cases were blank," remarked Karen O'Connell.

"It looked to be that the library was endorsing this particular political stand. I would hope that people would, especially in the library, be led to a more calm, rational consideration of issues rather than this shock-value material."

The majority of patrons commenting in a book put out by the library expressed similar outrage, although a few patrons were supportive, one characterizing it as "wonderful."

And library policy dictates that display cases are available to most all community groups that sign up for them, said director of City-County Library Services Anne Turner.

"Our general policy is that we give free access to any community group for the use of our display cases. We

endeavor that over the course of time we represent all sides of all issues if we can," Turner said.

"We try to use the cases as an information forum for issues that are interesting. On this display, since this group was clearly anti-abortion, we made sure that there was going to be a pro-choice display."

As to the somewhat sensationalist methods of the anti-abortion display, such as pins resembling the feet of a 10-week-old fetus and the comparison of abortion, the so-called "war on the unborn," to other American war casualties, Turner said people must form their own opinions on the subject.

"We rely upon the intelligence of the public to interpret which is provided by other people."

Turner added that given the volume of information that comes through the library, they are unable to sort through everything for factuality, and she would not even like to speculate on the "misinformation" in books and other informational materials that make their way into the library.

Cynthia Mathews, the member of the Reproductive Rights Network who was responsible for installing the pro-choice case, said she was unable to put it in right on Feb. 1 because she was out of town. Furthermore, she said she wanted to wait and see it to decide if the nature of the anti-abortion display warranted a response.

While Mathews feels the anti-abortion material "is not accurate or is a distortion of fact," she does feel the library is an appropriate place for the

materials from Planned Parenthood in a display last year that she felt were "misleading, gross and inappropriate," Manchester decided the Christian Action Council should utilize the library's cases as well.

The materials in the anti-abortion case are all "rational, factual statements," Manchester said. She explained that the comparison of abortionists to Nazi doctors comes from William Brennan's book, "The American Holocaust," and that abortion is a war on the unborn because "it's an attack on their lives on a huge scale. The unborn has no chance to defend itself."

The comparisons between the Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott decision and the 1973 Roe vs. Wade "are fairly obvious," said Manchester, because in both cases the Supreme Court ruled that blacks and fetuses were non-persons who were the property of others.

Manchester feels the library is one spot to highlight the abortion debate, because "it is the most controversial issue in the nation right now."

But Turner does not expect the library will host it after this month's display ends, because the waiting list for the display cases is a long one.

"We have too many other groups. It would certainly be a year before it would be their turn again. There are hundreds — literally hundreds — of community groups that want display cases. So I would say this is their shot for the year," she said.

— Rose Dean