

## **DEGENNARO CALLS S.A. BOYCOTT "MICKEY MOUSE"**

Part of library education at Rutgers University is a colloquium where students are exposed to the thoughts and ideas of leaders in the library and information field. The idea of these colloquia is to participate in a dialogue with the people who grapple, day to day, with the conflicts and difficult issues we are introduced to in the classroom.

In one such colloquium Richard DeGennaro, the director of the New York Public Library, and as of June 1 the new administrator of Harvard University's 67 Arts and Sciences Libraries, was invited to speak about "Libraries and Technology: Management Challenges." The afternoon was actually spent talking about a wide range of current topics and only touched briefly on the scheduled agenda.

I had recently become aware of New York Public Library's interlibrary loan activities with South Africa. This practice had been taking place despite ALA's position in upholding the culture and economic boycott of South Africa imposed by the African National Congress and international community, including the United Nations. I was curious to see what Mr. DeGennaro had to say about the boycott and NYPL's lack of participation in it. The questions of intellectual freedom and social responsibility would surely spark a lively debate, or so I thought.

After combating some nervousness I raised my hand. I asked if NYPL was under the jurisdiction of New York City, specifically concerning the cultural and economic boycott of South Africa and the ILL activities taking place. DeGennaro explained that the NYPL Research Library was independent and answered to no one. He then went on to say that the question I posed had been raised recently, and he would tell me the same thing he expressed earlier - NYPL would never decline a request for information no matter what the identity of the requester. If "the devil himself" requested information "we would give it to him." These phrases, I am sad to say, are direct quotes from Mr. DeGennaro. He proceeded to remark that NYPL "does not get involved with Mickey Mouse politics." At this point I was rather stunned and had no articulate reply at hand. DeGennaro kept his answer short, and to the point, and was sure to make no room for argument. Another student asked if any similar situations had come up in the past. The answer was pretty vague, and the subject was promptly dropped.

After the colloquium ended a few students gathered to express our disbelief at Mr. DeGennaro's attitude and manner in addressing the question of South Africa. We were especially surprised at his use of the term "Mickey Mouse politics." This is a person who is considered one of the intellectual leaders in librarianship today. Does the majority of the library profession suffer from a major lack of social consciousness like Mr. DeGennaro? I seriously doubt it.

Reported by Salwa M. Shamy

## **INTERLIBRARY LOAN OFFICES VIOLATE BOYCOTT NYPL, LC, Cornell and Harvard Send Material to State Library in Pretoria**

It has come to the attention of PLG that several major research libraries have been filling interlibrary loan requests from the South African State Library in Pretoria. At New York Public Library, PLG member Peter McDonald wrote a librarywide memo to the library's director Paul Fasana and others about NYPL's ILL policy of filling requests for South African government agencies. He asked that the library's ILL policy be reviewed. At the same time, Tebogo Mafole, United Nations representative for the African National Congress here in the U.S., wrote Mr. Fasana in concern over NYPL's business-as-usual stand on South Africa. This was followed by another letter to the Director from Peter McDonald reiterating that both national and city-wide ordinances put into serious doubt the legality of NYPL's interaction with Pretoria.

To date (three months later), the United Nations representative of the ANC has still to receive even a word from Fasana on the matter. As for librarian McDonald, the only response he has received to the whole matter has been a two-line memo warning him never to speak on behalf of NYPL. A substantive response has never been offered.

The rationale for this wall of silence, according to a spokesperson, is that NYPL adheres to ALA's Bill of Rights, as if invoking this, in and of itself, is sufficient to preclude any further discourse on the matter.

In the May 1990 issue of *American Libraries*, Christopher Wright of the Library of Congress writes that "last year the Library of Congress supplied 48 book loans, 70 article photocopies, and 69 location referrals for South African libraries through the State Library in Pretoria." Wright explains that LC has "always supported the free flow of information" and so feels no qualms about sending material to racist institutions within South Africa. LC also sends material to Cuba, Wright informs us, the implication being that LC, like NYPL, would send photocopies to the devil himself. However, the people of Cuba, unlike the majority of people in South Africa, have not asked the international community to impose sanctions on their government. We think that should make a difference and so do most supporters of the anti-apartheid movement.

PLG has also learned that Harvard and Cornell universities regularly send interlibrary loans to Pretoria. Cornell filled 88 requests this past year. All this is being done in violation of ALA's policy on dealings with South Africa.

Reported by Elaine Harger and Peter McDonald