

## Clash

Three years ago ACONDA (and later, ANACONDA) began to review current organizational objectives in order to establish new directions for the American Library Association. The interim has produced much professional soul-searching, and several high-priority programs were recommended: intellectual freedom, recruitment of ethnic minorities, improved membership communications, and a study of the current structure of ALA. Regrettably, there has been little visible progress in implementing any recommendation. Such inaction has prompted some members to propose censuring COPEs and the Executive Board.

But lashing out at COPEs or the Executive Board will not produce the needed changes, because neither body is the real culprit. The structure of ALA is the culprit. For we are members of an organization which is structured as a monolith, but we the members embrace a broad spectrum of professional interests and activities. To succeed, the structure must respond to the diversity. Academic librarians, for example, place great stress on status; children's librarians are interested in the Newbery-Caldecott Award. What significance has the Newbery-Caldecott Award for academic librarianship? Nevertheless, our organization is expected to accommodate both interests.

While members can agree on ACONDA's broad principles of intellectual freedom or minorities' recruitment, we frequently bog down over specific priorities. It is unreal to suggest that each division of ALA be permitted to pursue its pet priorities: limited dollar resources prohibit such an ideal. Divisions do share resources (e.g., staff working for more than one division or on more than one program) but multiple responsibilities dilute the effectiveness of all activities. Result: almost no one is satisfied. Result: we are experiencing an almost irreconcilable clash of organizational objectives. Conclusion: can our highly structured organization respond to the diversity of its divisions and still remain a viable organization? Probably not.

The splintering of the structure is already quite visible. At the 1972 Midwinter Meeting, ALTA presented a request to the Executive Board to permit it to retain part of its own dues, and to act independently of ALA in matters on which the division was not in agreement with official ALA policy and pronouncements. Acceptance of ALTA's request would be tantamount to granting the division federated status.

Further, two additional round tables were authorized. The growing

interest in round tables reflects the desire for greater freedom of action. And since round tables can retain their own money and control their own budgets, it is easier for these units to establish their own priorities and to bypass the usual ALA constraints. The possibilities are open: special-purpose round tables could even replace divisions. A *de facto* federated association would thereby exist.

The conclusion is inescapable: we must find a way to release the divisions from their organizational straitjackets so that they can pursue their own goals. Otherwise, the clash of objectives will only intensify the stridency of separatism.

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