

# PROPOSED BOOK TAX

FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT in the 1981 Federal Budget that the Government proposed to levy a 2½ percent sales tax on books, the International Book Committee of UNESCO sent the following cable to Mr Fraser:

*The Committee noted that your Government intends to introduce a sales tax on books. At the same time the Committee was greatly impressed by the assistance your Government already affords to literature by grants to writers, subsidies to publishers, protection to copyright owners and generous support of the arts in general. The Committee further noted your personal appreciation of the book as expressed in your widely quoted speech at the opening of the IBF congress in Melbourne in March 1981. The Committee therefore views with great concern that economic considerations have obscured ideals which we know your Government holds for the role and function of the book in society. The committee respectfully appeals to your Government to exempt books from the proposed sales tax.*

'The free exchange of ideas and knowledge' was called for in 1950 in the UNESCO Florence Agreement; this is a principle which has been followed throughout Australia's history, apart from a brief period in the early thirties, when a tax on books was introduced but quickly removed following a public outcry.

Like the LAA, many groups and organisations have been active in the condemnation of the proposed tax on books. The Printing and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU) organised a petition, which the New South Wales delegation presented to Senator Bruce Childs.

The Senator, a former PKIU Secretary, took up the question of the book tax in his maiden speech. He said that the first time he had spoken at a public meeting – in 1951, as a young apprentice – he had condemned the budget of the Menzies government, which had increased sales tax, income tax and restricted credit for home builders and small businesses.

## Twelve of the best!

FOR THE TWELFTH successive year, the National Book League in London has selected the very best of recently published children's books for a special display.

During 1981, more than 3000 children's books were published in Britain, and just over 300 of these have been chosen for the display.

There are books for children of all ages, from babies through to teenagers, and they include picture books, fiction, myths and legends, hobbies and sports, art and technology.

This year's exhibition places special emphasis on multi-cultural events, storytelling sessions and illustrator visits. There are also many kinds of competitions to suit all tastes!

The Children's Books of the Year exhibition will be at the National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 from 2 August to 14 August, and after that it will continue as a touring exhibition, with Scotland its first stop.

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August 22-26, '82.

And now in his first speech as a senator, his task was once more to protest strongly about a budget. Senator Childs said:

*... I want to illustrate what this new sales tax threatens in the printing industry. In spite of our 'ocker image', Australia is a nation of readers. Australians, with an annual book expenditure of \$530 million, are second only to New Zealanders as book buyers... for an Australian government to put a sales tax on books, magazines and newspapers... is in effect, a tax on knowledge.*

*It is likely that the retail price of books will rise by 10 percent and the impact of this on struggling publishers will be a burden they cannot stand... I am concerned about the social, sporting and community publications as well as local papers, newsletters and club magazines, all of which are the very heart of our democracy. They are an essential part of the printing industry. They make our democracy strong.*

*This Government has the thin end of the wedge with this tax, because there is no stopping any of these increases, except by defeating the Government itself.*

*The cost of learning... will rise, our culture will suffer and students will have to pay more for their books. It is typical of how out of touch this Government is with young people and their problems.*

Meanwhile the debate continues; the matter is not yet settled and has now been carried over to the next sitting of Parliament.

# REAGANOMICS

THE EFFECTS OF Reaganomics are reaching into many aspects of life in the USA. The National Archives and Records Service in Washington, already forced by substantial cutbacks to reduce their staff numbers, now report that to meet their new budget goals, 181 full-time positions must be eliminated by February 1982.

This dramatic reduction in staff has forced them to discontinue the interlibrary loan of National Archives microfilm from Fort Worth, and they are exploring ways to resume the service on a fee basis by a private sector firm.

The service began in 1971, since when more than one and a half million rolls of film have been loaned.

## Days gone by

THE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE of the National Trust have just published a facsimile edition of *Adventures in Appleshire* by Ethel Anderson.

Ethel Anderson (1883-1958) was a fifth-generation Australian who spent much of her life in Sydney. A talented painter and writer, Ethel Anderson's delightful essays in this book tell of rural England in Worcestershire in the early years of this century.

The book is available at the National Trust outlets at \$5.75 or by mail from The National Trust Women's Committee, PO Box 53, Edgecliff 2027 at \$6.75 including postage and packing.

# SPEAKERS AT LAA 22

Dr Frederick Ratcliffe and Warwick Dunstan will combine to present papers at a parallel session on Wednesday, 25 August on *Library design for the new technologies*, an area in which both have special expertise.

Dr Ratcliffe is a librarian with an innovative approach. This is evident in the planning of extensions which more than doubled the size of the University of Manchester Library during his fifteen years as University Librarian. Linked by escalators, the whole is designed so that at times of low use sections can be closed progressively.

Dr Frederick Ratcliffe was instrumental also in the major coup of a University library in recent decades, by securing the merger of the University of Manchester and the John Rylands Libraries to become the John Rylands University Library. The John Rylands Library brought to the merger a treasury of priceless rare books and medieval incunabula.

Appointed in 1980 to Cambridge University Library, one of the most prestigious and influential of British university libraries, Dr Ratcliffe has published numerous articles on aspects of academic librarianship.

Dr Ratcliffe's co-speaker Warwick Dunstan was responsible for the transformation in the sixties of the Elizabeth Salisbury Public Library (in South Australia) from a single shopfront to a central library with five branches. From there he moved to Hobart as Deputy State Librarian of Tasmania, headquarters of six regions with a complex of branches, depots, bookmobiles, governmental and legislative library services. A Master of Town Planning of the University of Adelaide, Warwick is the author of an impressive sequence of articles on public library development, location and services.



**Dr Frederick Ratcliffe, who will be speaking at two sessions of LAA 22.**

In another parallel session on the preceding day, Tuesday 24 August, Dr Ratcliffe – this time alone – will discuss *Collection building in a time of economic restraint*. Likely to be of particular interest to acquisitions, reference and research librarians, there may also be some controversial recommendations from Dr Ratcliffe for library management!

*Sheena Grant*