

deserve our highest praise.

Those who do not, who avoid books that might cause them hassles, allowing onto their shelves only “safe” books unlikely to raise controversy, must be prepared for the eventuality that there will be few books on those shelves for children to choose from. (*Red is best* will not be there because someone might find the disobedient protagonist objectionable, for example. Someone else might object to the negative mother, or the faceless father, in *Big or little? Right?*)

Since the teacher-librarian’s job is above all to open up the world of books to children, those who deny kids access to a book they know in their hearts has value for them, because “somebody” *might* object to it, are quite simply, failing to do their job.

Kathy Stinson, author of twelve books, is best known for her picture books, among them *Red is best* (Annick 1982), *Mom and dad don’t live together any more* (Annick 1984), and *Who is sleeping in Aunty’s bed?* (Oxford 1991). Her first young adult novel, *Fish House secrets*, was published by Thistle-down Press in 1992. Oxford University Press will publish *The ball book*, an entertaining and informative work of non-fiction, in 1993.

From John Batt

When my daughter Eleanora was born, stories began to appear in my head. I wrote them down, and then I began to tell them at libraries and festivals. They were a hit with the kids and the adults: “A mixture of fun and emotions with a liberal sprinkling of good morals” was the way one person described my performance.

Unfortunately, I encountered censorship. One story which incorporated three common childhood beliefs caused me to be banned from Essex County Public Schools. This tale has a sick child taking a ride on a Unicorn’s back through space and time to be healed. First stop...Santa...second stop...a manger. Her faith in each is appropriately rewarded.

Santa Claus is an international institution; Christmas is a national holiday;



the babe in the manger represents spiritual movements. Spiritual and mythical materials are dominant themes in all societies. My own cultural background happens to be Christian based, so I drew on it. One parent who was not there when I told the story complained that it had religious overtones.

The Ontario Ministry has made it clear that indoctrination is the issue, not the total ban of all "religious" references. Yet many schools now avoid religion in stories. It seems that no-one is comfortable with the Ministry ruling so it is easier to censor "religious" material. Yet this does not appear to be the case for Native stories which contain what in essence is their religion. In fact, these stories are encouraged.

My stories are positive and promote good morals. My stories show downswings which touch experiences we all share: grief, loss, fear, disappointment and anger. Then the characters rise through experience and they bring listeners back to equilibrium and laughter. My bathroom humour tales also teach lessons as they romp through life's funnier side.

"Big Bully Billy Blundell," for instance, has the audience joining the actions as the bully goes to school. The kids complain and then see a way to resist. Billy cannot take it. He becomes totally dejected and has the audience's empathy for a champion fallen. Finally, he rises anew to become the school hero.

Censorship hurt me. I was not offered my day in court. I feel I have been found guilty without a trial.

John Batt is Canada's only licensed "Monster Hunter." He also writes and tells his own stories to children of all ages. Variation in styles has earned him the reputation of a one-man variety show.

From Welwyn Wilton Katz

Obviously I know from first hand what it is to encounter people determined to censor. Sometimes people won't let themselves call it censorship, but when an entire school board, such as the Catholic School Boards of London and Middlesex County, refuses to allow *Whalesinger* to be purchased for its schools because Marty and Nick used a condom (I was told this was the main reason; the actual sexual episode didn't seem to bother them nearly as much), it seems to me that the word "censorship" applies very well. There are other examples. *False face* was not censored, but certain native groups would have liked it to be, because they said I had appropriated a native voice. I hadn't, of course. I had merely invented an individual, a boy with his own unique background that was both white and native, and I spoke with that *individual's* voice. *Witchery Hill* has given me considerable difficulties over the years, because of the witchcraft. If the would-be censors read the book they would realize that I'm not exactly good