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Interracial Books

FOR CHILDREN

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

VOLUME THREE, NOS. 2 & 3

Published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children

WINTER - SPRING 1971

**ATTENTION ALL FOUNDATIONS, LABOR UNIONS,
CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS, TEACHER, LIBRARIAN
AND PARENT ASSOCIATIONS—AND PUBLISHERS**

**THE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL AND TRANSCRIPT OF A SIGNIFICANT
PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY, THE BOOK
TRADE JOURNAL, MARCH 15, 1971, BRING ATTENTION TO THE
URGENT NEED FOR MINORITY PUBLISHING. WE INVITE YOU TO
READ THEM AND TO ACT NOW. SUPPORT MINORITY PUBLISHERS
AND HELP BRING RELEVANCE AND VALIDITY TO THE NEW
WORLD OF BOOKS.**

THE PROPOSAL

We call for the initiation of a Development and Insurance Fund to provide minority-owned bookstores, compositors, printers and publishers with low-interest loans and equity capital on a supplemental basis. The Fund, which is to be an independent corporation, is to be capitalized through the sale of non-voting shares to corporate and institutional investors. Its goal for initial funding is to be \$5,000,000, and of this amount 65 per cent would be eligible for use as either equity capital investment or low-interest loans to operating minority-owned bookstores, compositors, printers and publishers. The remaining 35 per cent of the Fund would constitute a permanent reserve against a reasonable percentage of business failures and defaults on loan remittance. This reserve would be invested in short-term notes and growth stock.

The Minority Book Industry Development and Insurance Fund will be administered by a small professional staff. Its board of directors will be comprised of non-contributing, non-recipient minority leaders from business, civic and industrial life. The management of the investment portfolio would be handled by a non-salaried investment advisory committee, reporting directly to the board of directors. A non-salaried publishing operations advisory committee would also report directly to the board of directors. The publishing operations advisory committee would also assist the Fund administration in its evaluation

and advisement of applicants and recipients. Among the primary functions of this committee and the administration will be the provision of technical assistance to recipients for the strengthening of their business operations.

We invite the participation of foundations, members of the book publishing industry, churches, unions, insurance companies, and teacher, librarian and parent associations in the capitalizing of the Fund.

In view of the publishing industry's default on its earlier commitment we call on members of the Association of American Publishers to contribute individually to the Fund. Each publisher is asked that minimal investment reflect the volume of profits the publisher has already enjoyed from the publication of works by and about minority group members. Printers, binders and paper manufacturers, whether investing in the Fund or not, are encouraged to give reasonable credit to minority publishers. Publishers are also asked to avoid, through consulting with the Fund, foreclosure on outstanding credit from minority-owned bookstores.

For further details, please write the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 9 East 40th Street, New York, New York 10016.

The press conference of March 15 was held in the editorial offices of *Publishers' Weekly*, the international trade publication of the book publishing industry. Executive Editor Roger Smith opened the conference.

ROGER SMITH: We're happy to provide the facilities for this press conference, and I'd like to say that we're proud of the series of articles we are running on the role of minorities in publishing. The first article, "Book Publishing: A Racist Club?" came out February 1. The second article, out today, profiles a surprising number of new publishing houses started within the past couple of years by members of ethnic minorities. This second article in the series is titled "Why Minority Publishing? New Voices Are Heard."

Having said that, I would like to turn the meeting over to my associates, who represent the Council on Interracial Books for Children—Alfred Prettyman, president of Emerson Hall Publishing Company, and Brad Chambers, chairman of the Council.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Thanks. We'd like especially to note our appreciation to Roger Smith and to *Publishers' Weekly*, not simply for the facilities here today, but for the kind of interest and courage which it took to launch this series of articles. It is not an easy thing to do. I know of some of the kinds of discomforts that can be brought to bear when publishing such a series, especially when you have prominent, vocal people who don't care to become involved.

I am sure it will come as a great surprise to many people to learn from the current issue of *Publishers' Weekly* that there are fifteen Black, Chicano and American Indian book publishers now in existence in this country. The article was not intended to be exhaustive, and there may be as many as thirty. We hope to be able to give all of them coverage in the expanded pamphlet reproduction of this article.

I would like to make note of the profound impression made on us by the minority publishers we visited in gathering the material for these profiles. The quality of their commitment to their work and the unassuming economic self-sacrifice, by which they undergird this commitment is remarkable.

To begin, I know that there are some persons here who have to leave early, and I want to make a particular point of calling your attention to the presence of both Ron Hobbs and Charles Harris. These are two men who played a fairly singular role a couple of years ago in getting this whole debate started within the publishing community, and especially within the Council . . . I mean the Association of American Publishers—the book trade organization that changes its name so often that I can never remember which

name it goes by at any particular moment. If Charles and Ron are still present when the formal part of these proceedings is over, we would like to ask them to say a few things. Now, I'd like to introduce Brad

BRAD CHAMBERS: The statement I have is short, since the articles in *Publishers' Weekly* speak for themselves. I would like to express relief that the series will continue, despite some of the rough things that are coming out of them. Some of us have been apprehensive that we might have to cut the series short, for one reason or other.

ROGER SMITH: We are not stopping now. The series will continue.

BRAD CHAMBERS: There is little for me to add, except as generalizations of the specifics contained in the articles. These are that book publishing is a narrow-minded, racist, sexist world, dominated by an exclusive club of white middle class elitist males. These white males have built up an image that casts them in the role of leaders of thought and of possessing a social conscience. This image is false, as the articles reveal.

The Council on Interracial Books for Children was formed six years ago by a handful of authors, editors and illustrators committed to the idea of bringing about profound changes in children's literature. We believe that the minds of children are severely endangered by the standard reading fare provided by American book publishers. Now it has become necessary for us to seek solutions in the broader world of publishing, of which children's books are just a part. Since we are concerned with fighting racism in our own backyard, we have set our sights on two objectives: one is to expose the corruption of racism in publishing; and the second is to extend positive support to a development that we find extremely encouraging to the future of publishing—the emergence within the past two and three years of the new minority publishers whose motivating interest is in change. A basic hurdle to this development is that money normally provided by banks and other money institutions to new white publishers is being denied to new minority publishers. We call for an extraordinary fund to overcome this hurdle and to make minority publishing a reality.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: I know that many of you have noticed the kinds of response we got to the first article. Particularly the letter from Mr. Booher, which is an interestingly intemperate letter from a man like him, and the letter from Mr. Follett, which can only be described as pernicious.* I think that these two responses give you some indication of the psychological problems that people have to deal with when confronting charges of racism. The

charges make people uncomfortable, and if they have been engaged at any time with anything at all that has to do with minorities, they believe that the charges are unfair, and believe the proper response is, "Now, now, boys, give us time and all things will be changed." You know, if you have any sense of history, that that kind of response is not calculated to bring about change. It is the response of the person who, although he may be making efforts to bring about change, is also a person who has a heavy investment in the status quo. There are too many things which would be upset by any other kind of response from that person, so we can only assume that such persons have a schedule of priorities not in keeping with the schedule of priorities of persons who want to effect substantive change.

I don't think that is surprising. It is understandable that the major publishers have priorities more pressing than concern for the development of minority publishing companies. But at the same time, simply because their priorities are so overwhelmingly one-sided, there is no reason why ours should not be pressed with similar energy and persistence, and it is abundantly clear that the only way that's going to be done is to do it ourselves.

There are several persons here today who have played a major role in the encouragement of Black publishing and of Black and other minority writers. The person who probably has had the greatest influence on the development of Black literary talent in this generation—I think he's aptly described by Don L. Lee of Third World Press as the person who today is doing for Black culture what W.E.B. DuBois did for Black culture in the *Crisis Magazine* some years ago—and that is Hoyt Fuller, who is the editor of *Black World*, a magazine of the Johnson Publishing Company. We greatly appreciate his presence here this morning. He came on short notice, and I would like you to meet him now, so that he might give us some of his reflections on the nature of minority publishing.

HOYT FULLER: Thank you. I feel a bit outnumbered here. You look through the article we are talking about in *Publishers' Weekly*, and you'll find that most of the Black publishers profiled are located in other parts of the country. I think that there are very basic reasons for that, but we won't get into that now.

When Mr. Prettyman called and asked me if I could come to this conference, I thought it was important to come in line with what we have been doing at Johnson Publishing Company, with *Negro Digest*

and *Black World Magazine*—and that is fighting the battle for the control of the Black image in America. For many years now—since it became possible and popular to publish works by and about Black people at the beginning of the so-called revolution—the publishing industry has gone out and commissioned sociologists and leaders of various other disciplines to throw together books about Black people. Most of the people who have been engaged in doing this have been white people, the so-called authors or experts on Black life, on Black history, on Black culture. We consider that dangerous to the Black image. We have been trying for the last ten years to combat that, even though the resources which we have been able to bring to bear were pale compared to the power of the New York publishers. So this morning I wrote a statement, which I think you all have, and which I am now going to read. It gives my perspective on the whole question of Black publishing.

The first thing I would like to make clear is that I am not present at this "Racism in Book Publishing" press conference either to plead for financial support from establishment publishers for Black publishing firms nor to bemoan the prevailing racism among establishment publishers which serves to discourage—if not to throttle—the efforts of Black publishing firms.

I agree with the Chicago book publisher who wrote *Publishers' Weekly*, in response to Bradford Chambers' initial article in *Publishers' Weekly* on racism in publishing, that it is simply ridiculous to expect established publishers to underwrite their own competition. That is like asking the United States to finance Russia's exploration of the moon. Whatever the myths of book publishing in America, the fact is that book publishing is a capitalistic competitive endeavor, organized to make money for entrepreneurs, managers and investors. Book publishers—like other businessmen—are concerned about problems of minorities only when those problems, in some way, overflow the ethnic enclaves and threaten the accepted order of things.

Nor do I waste my time or anybody else's chiding established publishers about their racist attitudes and practices. America is a racist society. Racist attitudes and practices are the norm. I know of no reason why book publishers should be expected to be less racist than, say, a razor blade manufacturer or the United States State Department.

I am here because I am a Black man who is deeply engaged in the

struggle to seize control of the Black image from those who have never respected it and to place that image in the hands of Black people, where it belongs. For far too many centuries now, the Black image has been imprisoned and manipulated by white men. And, of course, a key instrument of that imprisonment and exploitation has been the publishing industry. The Black image has been systematically defamed; Black History has been distorted; Black Literature has been crippled and maimed by being forced in a form designed for other races, cultures and colors; and the Black Experience has been degraded so that its degraders would not have to deal with the monstrosity and guilt of the White Experience.

I am here to take advantage of the opportunity of a press conference staged by the most influential organ of the American book publishing industry to say that Black people will no longer meekly submit to the benevolent paternalism and sly opportunism inherent in the recently inaugurated practice of employing a token or two Black editorial staffers as proof of absence of racism. Black people are not deceived. As one of the Black book publishers has pointed out, Black people are at the very least 22 million strong in this country, constituting a nation far greater and infinitely more able than many formal nations in the world.

In more than a half dozen of the major cities in America, Black people make up more than half the total population; and in even more cities, the percentage of Black children in the schools exceeds that of any other ethnic group. In those cities where Black children are in the majority, it is fair to say that the days of Dick and Jane are numbered as the subjects of stories in textbooks. Black children in Detroit and Atlanta and Harlem are going to read about Little Leroy and Edna Mae, stories written by Black authors, illustrated by Black artists, in books published by Black firms. Black people are going to control their own image.

Now, in stating the above, I want it known that I am fully aware of the practical considerations involved in transferring the power of image from white to Black hands. I know that I am talking about snatching millions of dollars out of the pockets of white people and transferring that money to Black people, and I know very well that white people do not take lightly to the prospect of losing money—particularly to Black people. I know full well that the struggle to effect this transformation will be long, arduous and dangerous, and that even some influential Black people will be enlisted against Black forces in the struggle. That is the way it goes. But, as a Black man, engaged in the struggle for Black autonomy and survival, I know that there is no alternative.

*The letters from Edward H. Booher, chairman of McGraw-Hill, and Robert J.R. Follett, president of Follett Publishing Co., were the first written responses to the February 1 article in *Publishers' Weekly*, titled, "Book Publishing: A Racist Club?" The Booher letter appeared in the February 22 issue, the Follett letter in the March 1 issue. According to *Publishers' Weekly*, they were the only written responses to criticize the article. Incoming letters have heavily supported the article.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Thank you. I would like to make a slight point here. Mr. Fuller and I are not in disagreement on that letter from the white publisher in Chicago [i.e., the Robert W. Follett letter, *Publishers' Weekly*, March 1.] The perniciousness which I found in that letter was in drawing the analogy between putting people on welfare and supporting Black publishing.

Among the Black publishers who have been somewhat successful in bending the ears of certain persons with access to capital is Joseph Okpaku, who started the Third Press in 1968, as a book publishing arm of his *Journal of African Literature and the Arts*. The Third Press has published two books, the first of which was *Verdict*, about the Chicago trials; and the second, *Why Robert Kennedy Was Killed*, will be out next week. I would like to introduce Joseph Okpaku of the Third Press.

JOSEPH OKPAKU: It is understandable that some white publishers might resent having to deal on an equal level with Black publishers. It is the nature of a confused white liberalism to see Black enterprises as poverty neighborhood operations. As long as this is so they do not have to deal with the possibility of having to compete with, and perhaps lose to, a Black publisher. The American public needs the broadest perspective of information possible. Without this a healthy dialogue is impossible, and unnecessary hostilities can not be averted. It is for this reason that the Third Press believes strongly that as many minority publishers as possible should be launched.

The American reading public and the book industry desperately need Black publishers. Of course, we also need lots more Black editors. But we can have 5,000 Black editors in white houses, and it will not make the crucial difference. The Black editors in white houses fight hard to make a dent. In fact, but for them there would be little to talk about today. And there have been a few white editors, too, with insight, especially some of the younger ones. But editors, even the most influential, are not publishers. An editor has no final say on what gets published and how, and it is in these aspects that publishing dominates the minds of the reading public.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: I think it is important to bear in mind that the majority of Black publishers are operating out of their own pockets, and that they actually see themselves continuing to do this. The pedurable core of minority publishing consists of those persons who will refuse, whether for lack of capital from foundations, banks or other money resources, to permit themselves to be squeezed out of this publishing industry simply because of the greater resources of larger minority publishers. And I think that in view

of the movement in this country, on several levels, for paying more and more attention not just to ethnic concerns but to regional concerns—I think that this is a ground-swell which you really have to pay attention to because this is where your real change is going to come from.

I never believed that the Association of American Publishers would keep its commitment to help capitalize minority publishers. I never believed they were sincere. I myself never asked them for money. And in a way, I find it an interesting and sophisticated affront to promise funds to a minority publisher contingent upon those monies being matched by another publisher. And I think that's something we ought to bear in mind.

We can't let today pass without noticing at some point the passing of Whitney Young, another of our leaders. It might be well for us to remember what he said in one portion of his last article, which appeared in the Saturday edition of the *New York Times*. He calls attention to a problem of American people when dealing with minorities, which is a problem that American businessmen find the most reprehensible of habits among others. It's the matter of not having staying power. Young said, in brief, "Hard-headed businessmen are reflecting the same qualities that they find so reprehensible in others: lack of staying power and dilettantism." Young was speaking about pledges of investment in the ghettos. But I think this is something that is pervasive in American business society, and in American life in general. It seems to be an enormous drain to be concerned about minorities, about the poor. It seems to be one of the things you can only be concerned about in spurts, because it wears you out, or it is just too depressing, and there are other things that you'd like to get on with; and since they are so readily at hand and since your life revolves around so many other things aside from being concerned with minorities and the poor, it's very easy to switch off. I think this is going to continue to be the case. America will switch us on and off. And I don't think that you can solve any of the most pressing problems of this society living at the will of that kind of switch.

The speakers who have appeared are the only scheduled pontificators we have. I would like to ask several people who are here for their thoughts on some of the things that we have and have not covered. And since he's closest, I'd like to ask Ron Hobbs to say a few words. Ron Hobbs some years ago established the first Black-owned-and-operated literary agency.

RON HOBBS: Thank you. I'd like to express my vote of confidence to yourself, to Joe Okpaku, as well as to Hoyt Fuller and to the other new

publishers not present, in addition to Mr. Smith, and of course, to the Council on Interracial Books for Children for airing this whole question of minority publishing, which I think is terribly integral to a new way of American life, and I would like to go on record as a participant and supporter of the position of the articles.

I would also like to bring to the attention of those present, who might be unfamiliar with the history of the events that happened several years ago and that ultimately led to this conference we're having this morning, Carter Smith. He is to an extent responsible for those events. I think that perhaps Carter might even illuminate the policy within the context of the Association of American Publishers, since he did serve on the subcommittee that made the commitment to help the minority publishing and then withdrew support. Thank you.

CARTER SMITH: I am in no way a spokesman for the Association of American Publishers. I was, however, a member of the subcommittee that was responsible for the Association's commitment to the concept of minority publishing. I think you are all to be congratulated—this media here, the Council on Interracial Books for Children, and *Publishers' Weekly*—for taking up the cudgels where the book trade association copped out—or whatever the term is that will describe the publishers' default. If the Association of American Publishers were going to take the step which it did—whether it was for its own self-interest via public relations, or motivated by real sincerity—and I would contend that there were members of the Committee and members of the Board of Directors who were sincere, perhaps naive, but sincere, in wanting to lend a hand—then I think the AAP is more to be pitied than blamed. What I am embarrassed about is the naivete of sticking one's trade association neck out as far as it did and then dropping out. I don't want to say that we—and I mean we, the subcommittee and its parent, the Association of American Publishers, should not have taken this "excursion." People like Ron have indicated why it was worth a go. It was a calculated risk, and we blew it. And I say we deserve exactly what you're giving us today.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Thanks, Carter. I'd like to ask an old friend of mine, Charles Harris, if he would say something.

CHARLES HARRIS: Well, first of all I think I should say that this series of articles is doing a fantastic job in giving focus to the problems faced by minorities in publishing. I think I've been around publishing long enough to know the kinds of pressures that aspiring minority publishers face. I would hope that this kind of conference would lead to an action program. I think that the American publishing industry has

said what it is going to do about the problem, and I think this should be a signal to minority publishers to seek other ways of raising capital, because I think that is where the battle is going to take place. It's not just a problem of producing titles. A bigger problem is distribution.

There is also a problem at the printing level. Until we control what LeRoi Jones calls *the* printing press—and by that I mean the one that prints the money—to a certain extent you're going to have problems even if you get a bestseller. You're going to have to keep going back to somebody who's going to belabor you and so forth and so on, which in turn is going to affect your distribution and advertising and all that sort of thing. But I would hope that if I can be, that I will be of some help. I also hope that this group will not leave the conference without developing some plan to get to the sources of capital to make minority publishing a reality.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Charles Harris, in case you don't know, is with John Williams, the initiator of the *Amistad* series. *Amistad I* was published last spring. Now *Amistad II* is out. Buy it! It's as good as *Amistad I*. Charles has also been very, very instrumental in establishing other publishers' programs oriented toward the children's book market, especially for Blacks. I refer to the Doubleday Zenith series and to the Wiley Spring Board Books.

We should also not ignore the fact that aside from publishers and editors, there are others of us in parts of this publishing industry with similar, if not more fascinating, difficulties. I think one of the things that we have become even more aware of is the imaginativeness of people for *messing* around with our minds. And I have several things in my head when I say that. This leads me to introduce a person of very great importance to me. And he is of very great importance, I think, to the development of minority publishing in this country—Don Holder of Afro-Arts—who, among many other things, is printing my books, bless him. Don, would you say something?

DON HOLDER: Some people believe that it is not in the best interests of this country to support minority publishers. It depends upon the way you look at it. I believe these people are wrong. Who are the ones that are going to stop the Molotov cocktails? Who are the ones that are going to stop the riots? Who are the ones that are going to educate Black and white children? This is not just a matter of Black publishers educating Black children. It is a matter of Black publishers telling white children the truth so that they themselves can learn to respect their fellows.

For a long time now white publishers in this country *have not* educated white children. So the Black publishers have to educate white children. And with that in mind, it is in the better interests of this country, because the big publishers won't be there if their buildings are burnt down. We talk about polarization. How can polarization be stopped? Education will have to do it. Now, if white educators have not succeeded in educating this country, then who is it left to? Who knows the subject best? The minority publishers. They're there. They're where it's at. They haven't been sitting up in an office for the last 25 or 30 years, so detached from things that they cannot see what is relevant and what is not relevant.

Believe me, I'd like to be able to print every book that comes from a minority publisher—and I've gone way out on a limb to print as many of those books as I can—so much that there is a possibility that I may lose my back. You talk about staying power. For 22 years I've sweated and labored to create a printing factory the size of Afro-Arts. A number of establishment publishers have promised to give my company support. In the course of hearing about these promises, I've gone to a lot of meetings on a lot of different levels. I've heard a lot of talk, a whole lot of talk. Now there's a whole lot of disenchantment.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Thanks, Don. I suppose it would be most appropriate now to ask members of the press to ask questions they may have.

EVELYN GELLER, editor of *School Library Journal*: I would like to know which of the minority publishers here have children's books on their lists.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: I know that Third World Press in Chicago has some children's books in the works. But, Joe, do you want to tell us about yours?

JOSEPH OKPAKU: We at Third Press plan to do two or three children's books a year. Actually, we have one coming out in September, 1971. It's titled "Children's Voices from the Third World."

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Several children's books are coming out of Chicago and Detroit. Dudley Randall of Broadside Press has done a remarkable children's book called "Frank," and Don L. Lee of Third World Press has published an interesting children's book called "Frankie." Third World will be doing other children's books. As a matter of fact, Third World will soon publish the first children's book by Pulitzer poet Gwendolyn Brooks—and, incidentally, Broadside Press will soon publish Gwendolyn Brooks' autobiography.

Emerson Hall has two children's books under contract. I have no idea how many we'll be doing a year. We'll be publishing the good ones that we get, in accordance with our resources.

JOHN BARRY, editor of *Library Journal*: Do you plan to organize as a national organization of Black publishers?

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: I think that there are several informal ways of communicating with each other that either are or have been established. However, I see at this point no structure welling itself up into what could be called the American Association of Black Publishers.

JOSEPH OKPAKU: I am a little suspicious of organizations if only because of the time and effort necessary to run them. One must understand the difference between a publisher as the editorial head of a multi-million dollar organization with a staff of 50 to 500 people, who of course do all the work, and a publisher who is procurement editor, content editor, business manager, production man and public relations director. Every time he leaves the office, four-fifths of the "staff" leave with him. I think Black publishers will have no choice but to refuse to be drawn away from their work by the demands of that kind of organization. For me I think Black publishers are united in the very fact of being Black publishers.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Excuse me for interrupting. I have not yet introduced Phil Petri. I went around the room so fast. Phil Petri is editor at William Morrow. He's published most recently a volume of poetry by Nikki Giovanni. He has other interesting projects in the works. Phil, would you say something?

PHIL PETRI: You know, we didn't publish Nikki Giovanni first. The poems of hers we did, had already been published by Dudley Randall at Broadside Press and by Don Holder at Afro-Arts. So I am embarrassed whenever this comes up.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: You should be.

PHIL PETRI: I feel the Black publisher has to create a market among Black people and also an outlet for distributing that is outside the normal distribution chain. I feel that way because most of the published writings about Black people, whether by white or Black writers, tend to deal, and I put this in quotes, "with the pathology of the Negro people," and not with their humanity. The words most often used in book titles dealing with Black people are crisis, poverty, rebellion, struggle, revolution, rage, challenge, riot. These are not the words that define the "soul of Black folk." I think

that this is one of the functions of Black publishers, and I don't think it can be done by the usual means. The market for Black publishing is there, but it must be developed.

ROGER SMITH: When we at *Publishers' Weekly* got into the subject of minority publishing some months ago—actually late last summer when we did an editorial about the Council on Interracial Books for Children—we mentioned some of the new minority companies by name as exemplars of this movement. We got quite a lot of mail saying, "I never heard of these companies." Asking, "Where are they?" Requesting their catalogs and asking about the books they publish. It was a pretty good response from the market place. There is at least an interest there. And I think there is a real market there. We supplied the people who wrote us with the information as best we could. But I think perhaps this new article in the March 15 issue of *Publishers' Weekly* is going to bring more response than that. I hope the response all goes directly to you this time. That's why we put the addresses of your companies in the article. Incidentally, the inquiries that came to us ran about two to one from librarians.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: No matter what the ideological input for the creation of a publishing company, the only way to survive—and the ideological commitment is worthless if you can't do that—is to get to the market. The market has a great many segments, as we know, so that multiple systems of access must be devised for reaching it. We certainly want to devise systems for reaching the churches, the supermarkets, the lodges, and other places. At the same time, I think it would be a kind of self-indulgent exercise to deny yourself access to any market where your product will sell. If you're about building Black institutions, economic institutions, then we must master the economic market place. The so-called Black market—which people use with an interesting kind of whimsical lilt—is a significant part of it. A primary interest of minority publishers is in Black people, in Chicanos, in American Indians. But this doesn't mean that that's the only market for our books, whether it's written for them or not. Also, it doesn't necessarily mean that books that speak to Blacks, to Chicanos, and to American Indians are the only kind of books we ought to do. If a book comes in which is not written by a minority writer, but speaks to a problem very, very incisively and someone wants to make a commitment to a minority publishing house, then I think it's an act of naive management not to do such a book. Now, there's no denying the fact that there may come problems about one's sense of balance as to where commitment lies—I personally don't think I'm going to have any

of those problems—but I think we have to be sufficiently open-minded about our brothers and allies in this struggle. What I'm saying is that we don't want to deny white writers any kind of alternative way of doing their thing if that thing somehow helps all of us. I believe Gerald Fraser of the *Times* has a question.

GERALD FRASER, *New York Times* reporter: What is the situation in Black publishing with respect to copyrights?

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: Since the rape of the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public Library by certain academic and communications entrepreneurs, limited efforts have been made to inform minority authors of how they must establish and protect copyright on their material. By now nearly everything worth reprinting has been reprinted, sometimes by more than one publisher and at different high prices. I would recommend that all authors or their decedents whose works have been reprinted without permission—whether in copyright or not—challenge the publisher to make some on-going fee or royalty reparation. Most responsible publishers have set up escrow funds for payment of fees and royalties to authors who could not be located. Don't let them tell you they can't afford it. They can if they want to—especially those who have been made wealthy and who continue to be made wealthy by spurious assertions of their right to visual and written materials by and about minorities.

JOSEPH OKPAKU: As a result of their history, many Black people have not had a chance to learn how to protect their creative endeavors. Copyrights is one such ally. Many of the Black-authored books that are now being sold by white publishers, and that earn compensation for white families, would not have been so published had the authors been aware of their copyright powers and privileges. The same holds true of book contracts. I understand that some Black writers have been tied up to so many books under one contract that there is very little hope that they will ever be free to write for Black publishers. My feeling is that publishing as a profession should function like the legal or medical professions. The publisher-author relationship should rest purely on the ground of mutual compatibility. I think the option clause on an author's next book should be abolished by the voluntary action of all publishers. After all, if the Folletts are going to talk about competition, then first let's talk about establishing fair rules of the game.

PAT SCHUMAN, associate editor, *School Library Journal*: What are you going to do about getting your books competently reviewed or getting them into journals where librarians can see them?

ROGER SMITH: It's not hard for us to get minority books forecasted in *Publishers' Weekly*. The big problem is that the minority publishers have not been sending their material in, or they've been sending it in late. We review about two months in advance, and that's the reason these books are not appearing in our forecasts. Now, we're sending the minority publishers letters that give the procedure we have to operate with. It's no problem for us if we can get the material in on time.

JOSEPH OKPAKU: No, no. I would like to talk about the competence of those who do the reviewing. The woman's question suggests that there might be a problem for the reader in determining the accuracy or validity of a given book on Black people. I personally think that in the absence of reviewers who are universally competent, it is not a bad idea to seek out persons for each book who are most competent to evaluate opinions on the subject. Of course, you have to deal with the sometimes large egos of critics. I am one of them, I know!

ROGER SMITH: We'll accept any nominations.

RON HOBBS: I would like to echo the remarks of Charles Harris. I think that, notwithstanding the validity of the discussion about marketing and editorial theories, the emphasis at this conference might be on capital investments, since it seems to me that what you're saying collectively here is that you need capitalization.

GERALD FRASER: Isn't money available through the Small Business Administration?

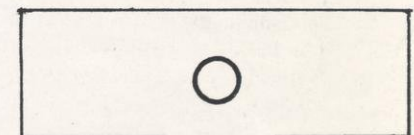
CARTER SMITH: There are restrictions on SBA's start-up loans, and there's a political aspect to this. For any business that is kind of an idea business, like a radio station, a newspaper, a magazine, or book publishing, the SBA gets nervous. A chicken stand, they'll go for; an idea business is another matter.

ALFRED PRETTYMAN: I knew this about SBA, but I went to them to see what the response would be. The man told me: "We don't fund liquor stores and publishing." Then he said: "When we give you guys money to publish, what you do in a couple of years is publish Communist propaganda." I almost fell off my chair with laughter. He wasn't kidding, though. He was dead serious. He didn't smile the least bit.

The publishers profiled in the *Publishers' Weekly* article have not fed this into my ear—but my appraisal is that venture capital is what is needed. I also think that loans—unless they are long-term, low interest loans—are potentially constricting to the development of minority publishers. I think a minority

publisher is ill-advised to get his company going by accepting the normal kind of business loan because he'll find himself so tied up in knots he won't be able to operate. The kinds of money that minority publishers need are venture capital and long-term, low interest loans. I think these are the only two kinds of money resources which can really be meaningful to us. I think persons interested in becoming involved through venture capital must expect that they are not going to get the same kind of return in the same kind of time they would by putting their money elsewhere. This is the fundamental thing wrong with the entire government and most of the corporate concern about so-called Black capitalism. There isn't anything exceptional about their interest because their conditions for investment or support are the same as if one were investing in General Motors. If you have those same kinds of terms, you're not really doing anything for Black enterprise, for Chicano enterprise, for American Indian enterprise. You are just using another investment for a good—if disingenuous—public relations function. So you need the kind of venture capital that is interested in a commitment that will only pay off in the long-run. And you need low interest, long-term loans.

The Council will soon be making a new proposal toward this end to publishers, foundations, churches, labor unions, insurance companies and other organizations. It will call for the establishment of a Development & Insurance Fund for minority entrepreneurs in the book publishing industry—this will include bookstore, publishers and printers. Contributors will be able to choose between making equity or loan investments in the fund. All investments would be spread in such a way as to pose no threat to minority ownership and administration by single or aggregate investors. And, of course, the Fund would be administered and directed by independent, non-salaried professionals, not by the investors. We'll have more details on this once the proposal is in the hands of those to whom we shall be making an appeal.



Please show this proposal and transcript to your organization and request that they support the Minority Publishing Development and Insurance Fund.

Additional copies of this proposal and transcript are obtainable free of charge from the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 9 East 40th Street, New York, New York 10016.

