



**WHERE HAVE ALL THE PUBLISHERS GONE?**

The rape of the American publishing industry during the past 30 years by a combination of huge corporations and massive 'media' enterprises represents the greatest single threat to serious writers and their work in this country's history. A quick glance at publishing houses based in New York will give the reader a fair indication of the havoc in current U.S. publishing: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, once a proudly independent book publisher, has now been swallowed up by MCA, the multi-billion dollar 'entertainment' conglomerate best known for packing 'sitcoms' for TV; Bobbs-Merrill is now controlled by ITT, best known in the past for the second most powerful telecommunications industry in the world, Sheraton Hotels, the manufacture of pesticides and space systems. Worse than these -- and they are merely the tip of the iceberg toward which American freedom of expression is heading, in print -- is the acquisition of the nation's most respected and powerful publications about book publishing by Xerox Corp. Not content with ripping off American writers and their publishers to the tune of millions of dollars each year through disregard for copyright, Xerox now controls Publishers' Weekly, Library Journal, School Library Journal, Books in Print, Ginn Textbooks and the Weekly Reader Family Books.

For anyone who has not been paying attention to the systematic destruction of independent commercial publishing in America, this concise, well-edited pamphlet is indispensable. **WHERE HAVE ALL THE PUBLISHERS GONE?** by Celeste West is one of the briefest and best pieces of research yet done on the subject. Ms. West is highly qualified for the work she has done. She is the publisher of Booklegger Press, and the co-author, with Valerie Wheat, of **THE PASSIONATE PERILS OF PUBLISHING**, an often humorous, highly effective volume about alternative publishing.

In this pamphlet, Ms. West raises a number of red flags and outlines significant danger zones along the way: The number of publishing mergers is steadily growing (from 58 in '76 to 65 in '78); the rate of failure for small publishers is inexorably growing; with the growth of 'big' corporate controls, reputable (or formerly reputable) publishing houses 'lose interest' in the publication of serious fiction, poetry and good criticism, since these volumes will sell less than the thousands needed to 'justify' their publication.

So, there you have it. The profit-makers are in control, more and more. And that means publishers (and editors) must care less and less about what is being put in print.

Considerable interest in the takeover of publishing by non-related industries has been expressed in The Congress: Rep. Morris Udall (D-AZ) and Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) have led the fight on the subject and effectively forced the hand of the Justice Department.

Any reader who prizes the First Amendment will want copies of Ms. West's article and her valuable handbook on publishing. This is writing which must not only be read, but should be passed along in quantity, to others. You may order the pamphlet at \$1. per copy (1-4 copies) or in bulk rate for less. **THE PASSIONATE PERILS** is \$6. Both from Booklegger Press, 555 29th St SF, CA 94131.

**Please note**—Another inexpensive and well-researched article on this general situation, with emphasis on the small press role, is **THE SURVIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE** by Bob Fox, and is available for \$1.00 from Carpenter Press, Rt. 4, Pomeroy, Ohio, 45769.

Leonard Randolph is former director of the Literature Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, and has himself been following carefully the changes in the American publishing industry over the last several decades. He grew up in small towns in Missouri and Iowa, and lives now in Washington, D.C.

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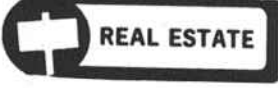
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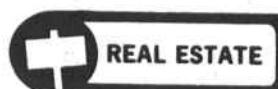
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