

# Harper Lee Twits School Board In Virginia for Ban on Her Novel

Special to The New York Times

RICHMOND, Jan. 15—Harper Lee, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning "To Kill a Mockingbird," has joined the controversy that has developed since a county school board near here banned her novel from its school library.

Miss Lee sent \$10 last week to the editor of The Richmond News Leader and suggested that it be used toward enrolling "the Hanover County School Board in any first grade of its choice."

The seven-man board unanimously ordered "Mockingbird" off the school shelves on Jan. 5 after one of the members, W. C. Boshier, complained that he had read a portion of the book and considered it "immoral literature."

His reading was done, he said, after the book was brought home by his son, a junior at Lee-Davis High School.

The County School Board has defended its action by saying that it was following standards set by a library committee of the State Board of Education. In 1960, the committee rejected Miss Lee's novel, giving no reason.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" is the story of a rape trial in Alabama and of a white lawyer's attempt to obtain justice for a Negro client.

James J. Kilpatrick, editor of The News Leader, wrote that the board had "exhibited the kind of small-bore stupidity

that deserves to be roundly condemned."

He wrote also that the paper's Beadle Bumble Fund would send paperback copies of "Mockingbird" to the first 50 Hanover High School students requesting them. The response was prompt; the books have been mailed.

Miss Lee sent her contribution to the Bumble Fund, which was established by Mr. Kilpatrick in 1959 in honor of the Charles Dickens character in "Nicholas Nickelby" who said, "The law is a ass, a idiot."

The fund is "devoted to the alleviation of occasional palpable miscarriages of justice, and to other impudent causes."

Miss Lee, writing from Monroeville, Ala., said:

"Surely it is plain to the simplest intelligence that 'To Kill a Mockingbird' spells out in words of seldom more than two syllables a code of honor and conduct, Christian in its ethic, that is the heritage of all Southerners.

"To hear that the novel is 'immoral' has made me count the years between now and 1984, for I have yet to come across a better example of doublethink."

"I feel that the problem is one of illiteracy. Therefore, I enclose a small contribution to the Beadle Bumble Fund that I hope will be used to enroll the Hanover County School Board in any first grade of its choice."

The New York Times

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## The problem is one of illiteracy, not Marxism

Early-1966, believing its contents to be "immoral," the Hanover County School Board in Virginia decided to remove all copies of Harper Lee's classic novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, from the county's school libraries. As soon as she was alerted, Lee responded perfectly by way of the following letter, written to, and later published in, *The Richmond News Leader*.

Also sent, as mentioned in the letter, was a contribution to the Beadle Bumble Fund — a project set up by the newspaper in 1959 to highlight/compensate for "official stupidities," and which subsequently gave away copies of the banned book to all children who asked.

*(Source: Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird; Image: Harper Lee, via.)*

Monroeville, Alabama  
January, 1966

Editor, *The News Leader*:

Recently I have received echoes down this way of the Hanover County School Board's activities, and what I've heard makes me wonder if any of its members can read.

Surely it is plain to the simplest intelligence that "*To Kill a Mockingbird*" spells out in words of seldom more than two syllables a code of honor and conduct, Christian in its ethic, that is the heritage of all Southerners. To hear that the novel is "immoral" has made me count the years between now and 1984, for I have yet to come across a better example of doublethink.

I feel, however, that the problem is one of illiteracy, not Marxism. Therefore I enclose a small contribution to the Beadle Bumble Fund that I hope will be used to enroll the Hanover County School Board in any first grade of its choice.

Harper Lee