

Censorship Wave Called An Old Story In U.S.

Americans today are on "an emotional binge of censorship" once again, but it is an old pattern in American history and in the long run the country keeps a pretty even keel.

So declared Dr. Rembert W. Patrick, head of the department of history of the University of Florida and chairman of the State Library Board, at the annual meeting of the Friends of the Library last night at Albertson Public Library.

Harold P. Danforth, president and general manager of WDBO, was elected president of the Friends to succeed Mrs. Violet Dunham. Other officers elected were: Mrs. Lydia Parent, vice-president; Mrs. Frank P. Temple, secretary; and Alan Grant Jr., treasurer.

Dr. Patrick described how the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay prohibited any worship but their own and how "in a swing back to common sense" Peter Zenger, newspaper publisher, was acquitted in an historic attempt to throttle freedom of the press.

In the 1830s Southerners got the "gag rule" passed in Congress, had use of the mails banned to the Abolitionists and kept Harriett Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin out of the South, Dr. Patrick pointed out.

FREEDOM HONORED

"The Alien and Sedition Acts of the early part of the 19th century were perhaps the high point in American censorship up to the present time," he declared.

The noteworthy thing in each of these cases is that the nation has generally honored the side which fought for freedom, he pointed out.

The present "emotional binge," Dr. Patrick said, is due partly to the hangover from the unity and crowd psychology of the recent war, but more to the sharp cleavage in the world today between ideas—the free world of democracy and capitalism versus socialism and dictatorship.

Dr. Patrick described the "re-birth of the investigating committee," pointing out the first great investigating committee in American history was the Joint Committee on Reconstruction just after the Civil War where secret testimony was taken on condi-

tions in the South, statements were published out of context and sensational and misleading things about the South were emphasized.

"The problem of bringing the South back into the Union was made much more difficult by the work done by this committee," he said.

FEAR DANGER CITED

The country needs both liberal and conservative men and women speaking their minds, and investigating committees tend to "limit and throw fear into the liberal," Dr. Patrick continued. "We should have investigating committees but they should be fair in every respect," he added.

A growing tendency for national, state and local agencies and governmental bodies to hold secret sessions was also hit by the speaker.

"A liberal should be a place where American citizens can discover new ideas, read conflicting opinions and make an evaluation for themselves," he said. History has shown that competition between ideas brings something closer to truth.

He called for "diversity and depth" in a library collection; an end to removal and labeling of books; selection of books on the basis of what they contain regardless of the author; and a general love of people and books by librarians.