

Reformed Free Publishing Association
1894 Georgetown Center Drive
Jenison, MI 49428



September 12, 2011

Standard Bearer Editors
Editorial Office
Prof. Russell J. Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming MI 49418

Dear Brethren,

With this letter we address matters that have come to our attention because of email correspondence between [REDACTED], our staff person, and the *Standard Bearer* editor Prof. Dykstra. We hope that our correspondence will bring about a proper and mutual understanding of these matters, so that we have a harmonious relationship flowing from mutual respect for one another and that together we can effectively give a clear witness in this age of apostasy through our *Standard Bearer*.

Prof. Dykstra wrote to [REDACTED] in answer to [REDACTED] request for information about the *SB* for the *Update*:

I am always leery of RFPA reports on the *SB*. I fear that many at the RFPA do not keep straight the relationship between the RFPA and the *SB*. Many consider the *SB* to be an arm of the RFPA. One arm is book publishing. The other arm is the *SB*. That is not correct. The *SB* is an independent magazine controlled by the writers. The RFPA was set up to facilitate that, namely, to take care of the finances and the details necessary to print and mail the *SB*.

We are deeply troubled by this shockingly bold and unprecedented claim that the *Standard Bearer* is "independent" from the RFPA and is "controlled by the writers." We wish to make very clear that we disagree with the viewpoint of Prof. Dykstra, and presumably of the coeditors and managing editor, since all were copied on the emails. We emphatically reject your claim, as it is a farfetched, incorrect, and historically unfounded understanding of the *Standard Bearer* and its relationship to the RFPA.

The *Standard Bearer* magazine was conceived by fifteen laymen who with others organized the RFPA for the purpose of giving a witness to the truth by means of the *Standard Bearer*. The RFPA and the *Standard Bearer* were conceived and born together, and they have been together for eighty-seven years. They cannot be separated. The founding origins of the magazine and of the RFPA are incontrovertible.

The purpose of the RFPA is “to witness to the truth contained in the Word of God and expressed in the Three Forms of Unity...[and] to reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto.” The very next article adds that “to effectuate the purpose...the Association shall...publish and distribute a magazine to be known as the *Standard Bearer*.”

The constitution is clear: the *Standard Bearer* belongs to the RFPA. To claim that the SB is independent from the RFPA, as Prof. Dykstra suggests, is to set aside the RFPA constitution.

In addition, the constitution makes the RFPA a “publisher.” Repeatedly, in correspondences the editors inform the board that its role is a mere perfunctory one of “printing.” This idea belittles the very spiritual purpose of the RFPA rooted in the office of all believers. Not to recognize this and to keep insisting on a mere perfunctory role is to cut the spiritual heart and motivation out of the RFPA.

At the 1945 annual association meeting, Rev. Hoeksema explained the *correct* relationship of the *Standard Bearer* to the RFPA.

The *Standard Bearer*, and the association that sponsors its publication, are not part of the Church as an institute...they function in virtue...of the office of believers...The *Standard Bearer*...[and the society] are free. This freedom implies that we are not hampered by purely institutional bonds, and are not motivated by mere, formal, institutional considerations or prepossessions...

This [freedom] also implies that the *Standard Bearer* is *yours* [the association’s]...It is not the organ of any consistory, classis or synod. *Nor is it under the sovereign control of the editors that fill its pages.* It is *yours*. The *Standard Bearer*...is *your* paper; it is a means through which *you* have the opportunity to sound forth the testimony in behalf of the Reformed truth.....To have such a paper, to be able to let this testimony be heard as much as possible, is *your* privilege. To render this testimony...is *your* responsibility (vol. 22, 128–130; emphasis added).

The RFPA board understands that the editors (writers) have been given the “care” of the contents and the primary responsibility for the effective witness of the *Standard Bearer* in every issue. How do they have this “care” of the contents but not “sovereign control” of the magazine?

Hoeksema explained: “Even as our free Christian Schools are not ultimately controlled by the teachers, but by the parents; so the *Standard Bearer*, though the contents are the *care of the editors*, is *your* [the association’s] paper.” As the schools are not controlled by the teachers, the *Standard Bearer* is not *controlled* by the writers. The teachers have the “care” of the day-to-day content of their instruction, but they must not imagine they have “sovereign control” of the school. They must not operate with the notion that they exercise a sovereign determination of what is taught in the school. The teachers’ work is always subject to the school board (in behalf of the parents). The school board must always judge their work, and the teachers are answerable to this supervision of the board (on behalf of the association). In the event the teachers would become negligent or unfaithful in carrying out their task, they must answer to the board for this neglect of their task. Hoeksema reminded the RFPA that the members are responsible (ultimately) for the *Standard Bearer* and its continuing effective witness to distinctive Protestant Reformed truth. He emphasized that it is paramount for the association (and its board) to remember this. The *Standard Bearer* is their witness as believers. In other words, if the editors were negligent to make a full and effective witness to the truth and the

RFPA board on behalf of the association did not say anything or correct this deficiency, it would be the same as if teachers in the Christian school were negligent in their instruction and the school board did nothing on behalf of the parents to correct this failure of the teachers.

As the board of the RFPA we certainly honor and respect this role of our *Standard Bearer* editors to have the “care of the content” of our *Standard Bearer*. We have no desire to dictate content for any issue. We have never done this. There is no disagreement on that.

Perhaps some of your misconceptions are due to the fact that there is a Constitution and By-Laws of the Editorial Staff of the *Standard Bearer*, which was adopted by a vote of the staff at a meeting in January of 1953. We see the value in the editorial staff’s having some rules and regulations governing its work. However, the adoption of this constitution by the staff emphatically does not mean that this constitution puts the *SB* outside of RFPA’s supervision.

We as the publisher of the *Standard Bearer* have a very solemn moral obligation to uphold the name, purpose, intent, and witness of the magazine. The RFPA has the right and the calling to *judge the content* of the magazine that it remains true to its longstanding purpose and faithful in its witness, specifically the truth of particular sovereign grace and the unconditional covenant. Thankfully, the nature of the *Standard Bearer* has been determined for us by its origin and its longstanding tradition, with its clearly defined and stated purpose and intent as officially set down in the RFPA constitutions. The board, therefore, in understanding its own right of proper stewardship of our *Standard Bearer* will encourage our editors and writers to be faithful to this stated purpose and intent.

We trust that we can move forward together with the above understanding of the relationship of the writers and the RFPA to the *Standard Bearer* magazine and of our respective roles.

Sincerely in Christ,
The Board of the RFPA

Dewey Engelsma, Secretary

cc: Prof. B. Gritters
cc: Rev. K. Koole
cc: Mr. D. Doezema