

## School People, Government, and the Coming Elections

In the months just ahead it can be truly said that our American democracy faces some of the most difficult problems in our nation's history. Some of these problems involve domestic matters,—employment, minimum wages, fair-employment practices, housing for veterans, price and rent control, federal aid to education, and the like. Others involve relationships among the nations of the world,—relief of starving peoples abroad, foreign credits and trade, control of the atomic bomb, and the United Nations.

If these problems are to be solved, American citizens must have a broad and basic understanding of the facts. They must also have the will to participate fully and effectively in government.

Of all our citizens, school people as a group have special responsibilities. They must of course as teachers carry on their main job of educating children and youth in the field of good citizenship. In addition and with the facts in hand, they must aid in helping adults in their own communities to become better informed and more active in dealing with the current social, economic, and political problems which confront their representatives in legislative and administrative bodies.

But if their educational work with pupils, parents, and other residents which their schools serve is to be interesting, vital, and forward-looking, teachers and school administrators must themselves become more vigorous citizens. Through newspapers, magazines, and the radio, they must keep generally informed about forthcoming legislation and about the actions of Congressional representatives on various bills. They must be willing to inform their Congressmen what their opinions are with reference to proposed legislative measures.

School people also must make sure that they themselves vote in both the primary elections and in the regular elections. In order to vote, they of course must make sure that they are registered citizens.

More specifically, they should be sure to vote in the primary elections held in nearly

all states sometime between May 1st and August 31st of this year. They should also plan definitely to vote in the regular elections to be held early in November, 1946. At that time, the American people will elect all members of the House of Representatives and one-third of all members of the Senate. Which representatives are elected to these high offices will in no small part determine the direction of the federal government in 1947 and 1948.

While taking an active part themselves as voting citizens, teachers should also do all they can to stimulate other adult residents of their communities to know the candidates, and to register and to vote in both primary and regular elections. In 1944 when the most recent Presidential election occurred, it should be noted, some 48,000,000 Americans voted out of a potential voting population of 80,000,000. In other words, only six out of ten potential voters actually voted. The percentage of eligible voters participating in primary elections was probably much smaller than 60 percent. That was 60 per cent participation in our democratic government, and that was far short of the 100 per cent participation which our nation needs, wants, and should have.

Toward that objective something must be done by the state and federal governments to abolish undemocratic voting restrictions. In poll-tax states, for example, the percentage of should-be eligible voters actually voting is about half what it is in comparable states which have no poll tax. Also toward that objective, there is an important educational program to be carried on—a program in which school people *can* and *should* assume leadership in helping other citizens to arrive at intelligent decisions with reference to candidates, their voting records, if any, and their platforms.

Further, with reference to the percentage voting in 1944, it should be emphasized that nearly all of our citizens of voting age at that time had completed the sixth grade in

*(Continued on page 396)*

Some of the outstanding contributions are: "What's Ahead In Education For World Service", by Barclay Acheson; "What's Ahead in Community Research", by Julius B. Maller; "What's Ahead in Experimental Education", by J. Wayne Wrightstone; "What's Ahead In Elementary Education", by James S. Tippett; "What's Ahead for Rural Schools", by Effie Bathhurst; and "What's Ahead for Science in General Education", by Morris Meister. Many other areas are discussed, and educators will find the entire collection stimulating.

FOUR AMERICAN TEACHERS toured England, Scotland, and Wales in October, 1945, hoping to secure a cross-section of the life, interests, education, and language of the boys and girls of the United Kingdom. They did so because they were convinced that it is through such understanding that peaceful world relations can be established.

From their experiences came a teaching unit, "Boys and Girls of the United Kingdom", prepared by Muriel Hampton, Einar Jacobsen, Mabel Studebaker, and Beulah Walker. This unit was edited by the NEA Research Division and published by the Department of Classroom Teachers of the National Education Association. It is sold at 15 cents for a single copy, with discounts for quantity purchase.

Included in the unit are: Approaches, with purpose, objectives, and suggestions for introducing the study; a story filled with factual information about the everyday life of boys and girls in the United Kingdom; suggestions for crafts and construction; Activities; and selected references, for teacher and pupil reading.

TOMORROW'S EDUCATION, its goals and its needs, are articulately presented in the readable leaflet, "Looking Toward Tomorrow's Education", published as a cooperative project of the National Education Committee and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The leaflets are available from both organizations. Questions concerning the future of education are proposed for study

and discussion, with references to selected materials. Parent, teacher, or lay groups will find this leaflet a valuable guide in a local study of education.

A NEW BIBLIOGRAPHY of serious books that will help adults understand the problems of democracy and peace has been prepared under the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Entitled "Reading For Democracy IV", this is a list of 39 important books that every American should read. Copies may be secured free from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 203 North Wabash, Chicago 1, Illinois.

The annotation for each book on the list gives the scope of the book, buying information, and usually a one-word evaluation of its effectiveness. Sections of the bibliography include Non-Fiction, Education, Biography, Fiction, Picture Books, and Verse. The books were selected by the Book Committee, of which Mrs. Harold Lochman is chairman.

School people should order this list in quantity and distribute it widely in their communities.

---

## THE LISTENING POST

*(Continued from page 386)*

school, many had graduated from high school, and some had finished their college education. From time to time throughout their schooling or college work, these citizens presumably had studied courses or units in good citizenship which pointed out the responsibility of every adult citizen to register for and to vote in elections. But somehow this formal education did not prove functional in the living of some 32,000,000 Americans—those who did not vote in 1944. And furthermore, among the 48,000,000 who did vote, there were undoubtedly all too many who were not sufficiently informed about candidates or issues. To help get these and all other eligible voters to vote is a challenge to our nation's schools and colleges in 1946—a year of decision.—*ASCD Legislative Committee.*

Copyright © 1946 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.