IN times of crises and tensions, almost anything in the school curriculum can become a controversial issue. Not only what is taught but how it is taught and who teaches it are likely to come under the eye of critics of the public schools. These critics may be either enemies who wish to destroy public education or defenders who feel that the schools have not quite measured up to their obligation to the community and the youth whom they serve.

Attacks upon the school come from many quarters and cannot be lumped together and answered with a shrug of the shoulder or the flippant reply that what is taught and how is the business of educators, not laymen. Some of the attacks are vicious and come from subversive groups who wish to destroy democracy and the chief agency of democracy, the public schools. These subversive groups range from leftist parties who know that public education is the most important bulwark against communism to “super-patriotic” groups who likewise deny democracy and oppose democratic teaching in the schools.

Of the two, the latter groups are more difficult to combat, for they are better organized and better financed, they hide under aliases designed to confuse the public and even unsophisticated teachers and they appeal to the discontented in the community: the anti-tax groups, religious and racial fanatics, chauvinists and reactionaries who clamor for a school program confined to “the 3 R’s” and the enforcement of rigid discipline. These groups do not present evidence to prove their statements but use half-truths and repetition to convince the public that the schools are not teaching the fundamentals, that they are neglecting moral and spiritual education, usurping the prerogatives of the Christian home when they teach family life education, encouraging delinquency with progressive educational methods, and teaching communistic doctrines. So well organized are they and so skilled in propaganda techniques that already they have helped defeat bond issues for badly needed school buildings and expanded educational facilities, and instigated grand jury and legislative investigation of alleged un-American activities in the schools. While these inquisitions have failed to turn up evidence of subversive teaching, they have had the effect of creating suspicion, dividing the public into opposite camps, and producing tension and timidity among school personnel which can result only in poorer teaching and lowered morale.

Arnold Forster in A Measure of Freedom (Doubleday & Co., 1950, $2.50) states that various individuals have been spreading hate and fostering prejudice and discrimination against large segments of the American people. He tells how these men and their organizations procure financial and political support and describes the techniques they use to spread their poison and corrupt the minds of loyal citizens. In six pages he exposes the background and objectives of Alien Zoll and of his “National Council for American Edu-
cation,” the announced purpose of which was “to eradicate from our schools Marxism, Socialism, Communism and all other forces that seek to destroy the liberty of the American people.” At first, Forster reports, Zoll obtained support from a number of influential citizens. Most of these supporters promptly resigned, however, when the New York World Telegram on August 25, 1948 published a detailed report of Zoll’s activities, revealing that he had been indicted for attempted extortion in 1939. According to Forster, Zoll was “a Fascist propagandist and supporter of Father Coughlin.” Educators who wish to know more about one source of the organized attacks upon the schools and to be informed on the background of one of the sponsors of such questionable pamphlets as “Progressive Education Increases Delinquency,” “They Want Your Child,” and “How Red is the Federal Council of Churches?” cannot afford to miss reading Arnold Forster’s A Measure of Freedom.

Current Problems Courses in Schools

In a democracy, where the people decide what shall be done, all important questions are controversial. People do not immediately agree upon the best course of action to take. They must have experience in making decisions and forming judgments in the light of evidence if wise conclusions are to be reached on crucial civic problems. The school must provide youth with many such experiences in problem solving, if they are to develop the wisdom needed for responsible citizenship.

Because of the attacks upon public schools today, many teachers and some school systems are trying to play it safe by retreating from any discussion of contemporary topics. It is therefore encouraging to find that one large metropolitan school district has come out courageously for the teaching of controversial issues and the use of the problems approach. C.S.I. and You (Philadelphia: Secondary Schools, Dist. 3, 1950), a statement both practical and challenging, will give teachers and supervisors courage to continue to use free discussion in their classrooms and to guide youth in searching for truth and reaching sound conclusions on the basis of those facts.

Manson Van Buren Jennings, in The Development of the Modern Problems Course in the Senior High School (Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia Univ., N.Y.C., 1950), points out that “the modern problems course should place its primary emphasis on understanding current problems and learning how to arrive at conclusions concerning them,” and also that “A thorough study of relatively few problems is far preferable to the rapid coverage of many.” Mr. Jennings has made a thorough study of the history of problems courses in the high school curriculum from the time such a course was proposed by the National Committee on the Social Studies in 1916 down to the present. His conclusions and predictions, however, are the most interesting section of his study. Successful problems courses of the future, he believes,

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are likely: to focus more on personal problems of youth; to be uninhibited by conventional subject-matter boundaries; to utilize the problems approach extensively; to include controversial issues; and to operate democratically so that students can learn to work and live together in a democratic way. Mr. Jennings warns that the teacher is the key to a successful problems course and that the new trend in organization and content demands a teacher with an unusually rich background in the social sciences and one thoroughly trained and experienced in critical thinking, use of the scientific method, and critical use of sources. The democratized classroom increases and makes more exacting the teacher's responsibilities.

Curriculum Organization

That there is controversy as to methods of instruction is brought out by Wanda Robertson's study, An Evaluation of the Culture Unit Method for Social Education (Bur. of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia Univ., 1950, $2.50). This study fails to prove to the reviewer the ineffectiveness of the cultural unit in developing social understanding in children. Granted that the approach may not achieve all that its proponents claim, merely citing statements of those who disagree does not prove the fallacy of the method. Objective research evidence is needed on the changes in children's behavior and social understanding which take place when a particular approach is used before one can condemn or accept that method.

Miss Robertson organizes her arguments around a few basic issues: Do children of elementary school age learn the realities of the social world about them through the developmental study?
of foreign culture? What is the role of firsthand versus vicarious experience in shaping and coloring children's social concepts, attitudes and ways of behaving? Does learning proceed from the simple to the complex: must cultures ranging from those which employ simple tools and patterns of organization up to those which are modern and industrialized be studied in order to understand the complexity of life today? Do children of elementary school age possess the maturity to understand modern life through study of foreign culture? To what extent does the cultural unit method meet the child's interests, needs and purposes? In turn, Miss Robertson finds the cultural unit failing on every count.

Some of the errors the reviewer noted in the author's arguments were the tendency to think: all cultural units were foreign; all were studies of the past and not present cultures; children could not have many firsthand experiences in the development of a cultural unit; participation in social groups was not part of the unit method; generalizations were given to children, not arrived at as a result of their experiences; children were too immature to understand cultures far removed in time and space but mature enough to fathom the complexities of today's world. Many of the evils the author found in the cultural unit method are the evils to be found in poor teaching regardless of method used. The use of one type of unit to the exclusion of all others would undoubtedly result in a one-sided curriculum.

The modern elementary program provides for the study of the community, the home and the agencies of mass communication and transportation as well as the study of past and present cultures, selected in terms of the learner's
maturity and his ability to understand and appreciate them.

Use of Current Materials

The importance of using current materials to motivate students and produce better learning is brought out in two recent publications: Lucien Kinney and Katherine Dresden, Better Learning Through Current Materials (Stanford Univ. Press, 1949, $5) and Ruth Mary Weeks, Using Periodicals (National Council of Teachers of English, S.60). The former reports a three-year study on the effects of the use of current materials in the classroom. This study was carried on by the School of Education at Stanford University with the financial and material assistance of Time, Inc. As a result of two workshops and a year of experimentation with materials and procedures, a permanent California Council on Improvement of Instruction was formed, open to anyone with an interest in improvement of instruction. Teachers were free to develop their own procedures; no plan was imposed from outside. Consultants assisted in planning and evaluation, offered encouragement and suggestions, but each school developed its own point of view and emphasis. Each chapter reports actual happenings in the classroom; concrete examples of what teachers and students can accomplish are organized around such problems as: developing classrooms in which current materials are used as enrichment or as basic resources; encouraging classroom discussions; developing pupil leadership; displaying of current materials; assisting administration; and organizing evaluation. Throughout the stories and the glimpses into classrooms one finds pupils highly motivated, interested, learning more, using adult materials intelligently, covering the established curriculum as much as or more than the classes that spent time on text materials, participating democratically in discussions, and developing initiative, resourcefulness and responsibility.

The Committee on the Use of Magazines and Newspapers in the Classroom of the National Council of Teachers of English, in Using Periodicals, points out the responsibility of the schools in helping youth in critical and selective choice and use of magazines and newspapers, since these periodicals have more effect on how people think and act than "all books published and all the lectures delivered." The committee reports a questionnaire survey of periodical use by public and private grade and high schools in city and rural areas in every state in the union. Some 209 separate periodicals, in addition to the local newspapers, were listed as read and studied. The committee nevertheless was disturbed by the heavy emphasis on current topics and news, and on information tests as a study technique; by the replacement of "time-tested literature" by ephemeral material; by the over-emphasis on the contemporary scene without any adequate frame of reference with which to compare it; and by the fact that so many schools reported the use of a single magazine. The report makes many specific suggestions of how teachers can use current materials so that students will learn to evaluate magazines and newspapers, read discriminatingly, be wary of pressure, and think for themselves.

Teachers who believe current topical and controversial issues have a place in the curriculum will want to use audiovisual materials to supplement magazines, newspapers and other periodicals. The 1950 edition of the Educator's Guide to Free Films, edited and compiled by Mary Foley Horkheimer and John W. Diffor (Randolph, Wisconsin, Educational Leadership
Educators Progress Service), is a gold mine of material. Nearly 2,000 films are listed, classified by subject and topic, and briefly annotated as to content, running time and kind. A subject and title index and an alphabetical list of organizations from which films may be obtained are included.

The Association for Childhood Education International has performed a most useful service to teachers who want new material on topics of interest to children in its 1950 edition of a Bibliography of Books for Children (Washington, D. C.: The Association, $1). Teachers who are trying to find material which will help children understand peoples of other nations and cultures and be sensitive to family, community, school and world relationships will find this bulletin of great value.

Free and Inexpensive Learning Materials (Nashville, Tenn.: Div. of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1950, $.50) also will be a valuable reference tool to the busy teacher in locating material on controversial issues. The booklet contains 2,000 entries which have been examined and evaluated by the publisher. Over half of them are new entries and cost fifty cents or less. The annotations are necessarily brief but the editors claim that the entries were selected on the basis of accuracy of subject matter, timeliness, method of presentation, ease of reading, unbiased subject matter, and educational value.

Personal Problems of Youth

Inclusion of personal problems in the school curriculum is still a moot question in many school systems in spite of all the research which has been done on student needs. Three new pamphlets in the Life Adjustment Booklets (Science Research Associates, Chicago 4, Ill., $.40 ea., 3 for $1) will be welcomed by teachers who believe education is concerned with development of well adjusted individuals and who include the problems of youth in their curriculum. Where Are Your Manners?, by Barbara Valentine Herz, gives adolescents do's and don'ts needed to avoid embarrassing moments at home, at school, at parties, on dates, in public places and on the job. Illustrated with clever drawings, the booklet should appeal to all high school students. Getting Along With Brothers and Sisters, by Frances Ullman, will help adolescents with one of their most aggravating problems and will be wanted by teachers who need practical, down-to-earth material for units on family life. The booklet deals with causes of friction between siblings, advantages and disadvantages of different positions in the family, and what can be done to improve brother-sister relationships. Helping Youth Choose Careers, by J. Anthony Humphreys, might well be used as the basis for a unit on vocational orientation. It contains not only valuable information about jobs but also suggestions to students as to how to find out about job opportunities, how to assess their own assets and limitations, how to match themselves to jobs, and how to keep a notebook on career information.

The Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. and the Boy Scouts of America have published a new pamphlet, Your Ticket to Popularity—Good Manners (secured from either organization for $.10), which likewise gives young adolescents valuable tips on the making and acceptance of introductions; on table manners; on etiquette in public, on dates, at teas and dances, as house guests and in camp; and on formal and informal invitations. Informally written, the pamphlet describes through the eyes of
two teen-agers, Sam and Sally, typical situations which high school students encounter.

The Democratic Way of Life

Democracy and freedom are seldom thought of as controversial issues. Nevertheless, the public schools throughout their history have considered it their function to indoctrinate for democracy and a free society. However, civil liberty, intercultural relations, international relations, human rights, city planning, and federal aid to education are only a few of the aspects of a democratic philosophy on which people are likely to disagree. Loyalty oaths and irresponsible accusations against the schools are likely to “frighten into silence” any discussions of democracy in the schools which will make youngsters believe in democracy as a dynamic way of life which must be defended at all cost. You and Democracy, by Dorothy Gordon (Dutton and Co., 1951, $2), will help upper elementary and junior high school children understand life in a democracy in contrast to life in a totalitarian state. By means of drawings, illustrations and simple and clear explanations, children learn that “democracy is one form of government that keeps on changing as the years go by”; that in a democracy people are free to choose their religion, the kind of schools their children will attend, the kind of work they do, what they will read, what they say, where they will go, what they will buy and where they will live; that “laws are rules of the game agreed upon by men and women”; that “democracy is continuously improving the conditions under which people live”; that “freedom also means responsibility”; and that “democracy belongs to everybody, to all people who recognize that every person should be respected as a human being.”

Educational Leadership
Teachers who want well written, accurate, interesting material on civil liberties, responsibilities of American citizens, the foundation of American democracy, and the meaning of democracy as a way of life in contrast to totalitarianism, will find nothing better than the *Your America* series prepared for the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, by Building America (New York: Americana Corporation, 1949). Ten units have been published: *Democracy and Totalitarianism; Roots of American Loyalty; Foundation of American Democracy; Structure of Our Democracy; Government by Ballot; Democracy in Everyday Life; Privileges of American Citizenship; Responsibilities of American Citizenship in Peacetime; Responsibilities of American Citizenship in Wartime; and The Place of the Armed Forces in Our Democracy*. Supervisors and teachers will be glad to know that the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has published this new series with the same attractive format and with equal attention to accuracy, illustration and style as characterized the *Building America* series. Each issue is carefully documented and contains an excellent list of suggested readings.

Attention should be called also to the monumental study on the characteristics of the *Authoritarian Personality*, by T. W. Adorno and Others (Harper and Bros., 1950, $7.50), and the implications which this study should have for school people. This volume is one in a series of Studies on Prejudice undertaken by the Department of Scientific Research of the American Jewish Committee. Two thousand and ninety-nine persons, representing a cross-section of society, were interviewed and tested in an attempt to test the hypothesis "that the political, economic and social convictions of an individual form a broad and coherent pattern." One major finding of the study was that potentially fascist individuals have a great deal in common and exhibit numerous characteristics that go together to form a syndrome.

The authoritarian personality is at the same time enlightened and superstitious, proud to be an individualist and in constant fear of not being like all the others, jealous of his independence and inclined to submit blindly to power and authority. He is above all a conformist; he cannot run the risk of being different and cannot tolerate difference in anyone else. He achieves his own social adjustment only by taking pleasure in obedience and subordination. His ambivalence is evidenced by his blind acceptance of authority and his readiness to attack those who are deemed weak and to reject everything that is "down." The ingroup-outgroup type of thinking causes him to exalt his own group and reject anyone who differs. Rigidity and lack of imagination cause him to think in stereotypes which tend to become absolute and vindictive. Since personality is the product of past experiences and inter-personal relationships, the researchers delved into the past of those who scored high in authoritarian tendencies. As children, these individuals were given little affection and subjected to harsh discipline. Parents and other figures of authority were regarded as strict, domineering, austere and punitive. Dominated and cowed in childhood, these children became domineering individuals as adults. Teachers and parents will find in these research findings many implications for them as they strive to help children develop into independent and resourceful adults.—Lavone A. Hanna, San Francisco State College.