temptuously in our textbooks. But is this really the situation? And, if so, how is it to be met?

Mr. Saveth admits that efforts to ban textbooks are not infrequent on the American scene. They are, he says, initiated by persistent pressure groups (the most vocal of which are the watchdogs of 100 percent Americanism), certain racial and religious groups, and some business organizations. All are amazingly sensitive to what is said in a textbook about them, and they are trigger-quick in demanding a ban of books they disapprove of.

Today's assault upon the books comes from both the "right" and the "left," according to the author. He points to the National Council for American Education and the Conference of American Small Business Organizations as the two most active "right" groups in alerting conservative or reactionary opinion to "dangerous" books. He outlines the backgrounds of Allen A. Zoll, leader of the NCAE, and Lucille Cardin Crain, editor of the Educational Reviewer which is published by the CASBO. He analyzes the criteria upon which the reviews in the latter publication are based.

These developments present a real problem, Mr. Saveth declares. No one would, or could, deny to Mrs. Crain or Mr. Zoll the right to criticize textbooks; nor would anyone in his senses deny that our textbooks need criticizing. At the same time, however, the criticism of the above two groups has about it an air of lynch law.

The kind of censorship that Mr. Zoll and Mrs. Crain--on the political "right"--attempt to impose upon textbooks is paralleled on the political "left" by the Teachers Union's report on Bias and Prejudice in Textbooks in Use in New York City Schools. Insisting that it is opposed to censorship, the report demands that books which it considers biased be scrapped or corrected. Indeed, the author charges, insofar as doctrinaire liberals and "leftists" have had the power, they have moved against textbooks with a sledge-hammer approach, even making a public demonstration against an offending paragraph. He gives examples of this type of approach.

In all this fuss about textbooks, two quite distinct questions are involved: How bad are the textbooks? If they are bad, what is the best way of seeing that they become better? It is true, Mr. Saveth believes, that some textbooks reflect the expert opinion of 10 or 20 years ago. No view is immune to criticism simply by virtue of having found the refuge of a textbook. Admittedly, the more criticism we have the better. But what should be the process of this criticism? How can a community act so as really to improve textbooks without wrecking its school system?

To answer this question, it is instructive to consider how our textbooks have been improved in the past. The principal method has been that of professional criticism--by educators and scholars within the field, themselves disturbed at the divergence between the most authoritative findings of research and the views presented in textbooks. It is true that there may be times when recognized scholars will profess opinions that are open to criticism by an alert and perceptive citizenry. There may be times when it will be up to those concerned with the public good to air a situation which the profession itself is too slow to improve. But, even so, the aim should be to discover and spread truth, not to deploy the greatest concentration of power and issue a ban.

Banning books may soothe outraged feelings, Mr. Saveth continues, but only discussion, education, and criticism can get genuinely better books written. Criticism and discussion not only promise more real improvement than pressure tactics; they rule out of court the undemocratic and un-American textbook ban. In the meantime, however, it is clear that we shall have to deal directly with the offensive of the book-burners.

The author discusses the reasons why publishers and authors have not fought back as might be expected. He says that teachers have been more willing to defend textbooks, but they can go only so far and they are beginning to be intimidated by pressure groups. The NEA report, The Freedom of the Public-school Teacher looks to community action to support teachers. To invite community participation involves the risk of inflaming tempers and encouraging pressure by special-interest groups, and it will be necessary to remain alert against such developments.

Qualified criticism, not pressure tactics, is the appropriate means of making one's views felt insofar as the writing and revision of textbooks are concerned, concludes Mr. Saveth. To the extent that the NEA intends to seek community support in defending this thesis against irresponsible and demagogic agitation, it is engaged in a task which every citizen should ardently support.

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RELEASED TIME. Nation 174: 128-32; February 9, 1952.

For

RELEASED TIME: THE PARENT'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE. Edward S. Greenbaum (lawyer).

The New York State law which authorizes schools to release children for music and dancing lessons and for religious observances also permits absence to receive religious instruction, Mr. Greenbaum declares. He points out that excusing children for such instruction is nothing new. Released-time programs have been in operation in New York and other states for several decades. Their constitutionality has been attacked more than once, but courts and state legislatures have supported them.

Mr. Greenbaum refers to a survey made by the Public Education Association in New York City which reported that there was no evidence that the released-time program makes for group disrespect. He emphasizes the PEA's recommendation that the pressure be taken off the school system so that the best possible program may be worked out.

Mr. Greenbaum feels that released-time programs do not violate the First Amendment, for they do not establish a religion or prohibit "the free exercise thereof." On the contrary, he says, they encourage such free exercise. Forbidding released time would prevent parents from fully exercising their rights to give their children religious instruction in the faith of their choosing.

Legal questions are not the only ones involved in this fight, the author continues. The released-time program is law in New York, and it is up to the parents to decide for themselves whether or not they want to avail themselves of its provisions. They should not be swayed by the opinions of others. Mr. Greenbaum believes that experience has failed to show that the program, if properly administered, will ever constitute a threat to the doctrine of separation of church and state. But experience has shown, he says, that those who want the program resent the action of those who seek to deprive them of the right the state has given them to bring up their children as they think proper.

Against

RELEASED TIME: A CRUTCH FOR CHURCHES. V. T. Thayer (visiting professor, University of Virginia).

Mr. Thayer thinks there is a significant difference between the occasional excuse of children from school for music and dancing lessons or religious holidays and releasing them each week for religious instruction. The latter plan, he says, requires the school system to organize its program so that the children who are released--no matter how few--will not miss any vital school work. Those pupils remaining at school cannot be given any advanced work, but the substitute activity cannot be of too much interest or value since this would constitute "unfair competition" with the released-time program.

The author reminds his readers that the strict confinement of the public schools to secular instruction is the direct application to education of the principle of separation of church and state which was established by the First Amendment. That a religious minority demands released time for religious instruction has confused some people who identify the wishes of a minority with the rights of an individual. These people seem to think that a parent's right to rear and educate his children is annulled unless the public school cooperates in a religious education program. This is straining a point, Mr. Thayer asserts, because there is ample opportunity for religious education under family and church auspices outside school hours. Moreover, we should distinguish between the parent's right to use the school for his own ends and the right of the child, who is entitled to an education in the public school free from the divisiveness which an emphasis upon religious differences may cause.

Mr. Thayer points to the sections of the Public Education Association survey (referred to in Mr. Greenbaum's article) which reveal an increase in truancy under the released-time program, which cite instances where teachers have exercised pressure upon the children to enrol in religious classes, and which show the waste of teachers' and pupils' time during the absence of the released-timers. It is true that the survey found little evidence that the program makes for disrespect of religious differences, the writer admits, but he thinks it is significant that this conclusion could be stated only negatively.

Finally, Mr. Thayer charges that the released-time program encourages the school and church to neglect their unique functions in character education. Both are charged with this task, but their opportunities and contributions are not identical, he explains. The churches weaken their educational programs when they resort to the schools as to a crutch. Were they now providing vigorous and vital religious education, they would not need to call upon the schools to act as recruiting agents.

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