

THE ABC's OF THE BATTLE OVER THE THREE R's

By JOHN HAVERSTICK

THIS month three million six-year-olds are gathering for the first time in the country's public and private school buildings. Here, in the classrooms, they are becoming the beneficiaries—or the butts, depending on how one looks at it—of modern methods of teaching the three R's. As the children study, the nation's press is arguing one of the most fundamental issues in American education today: Are the three R's being taught as well as they were in their parents' days? There are those who say that they are and those who say that they are not, but there is one confusion common to these writings: few, if any, explain the facts over which the fight is being waged—that is, the concrete methods which are now being followed by the country's schoolteachers. On this and the following pages *The Saturday Review* presents an objective report on the battle—on the principle and, for the first time in any popular magazine, on the methods used by today's teachers—so that its readers may understand and make up their own minds about The Battle of the Three R's.

Who Is Doing the Fighting?

THE CHILDREN who go to school today are trying to learn the fundamental skills—popularly known as the three R's—in the midst of one of the most heated battles in the history of American education. And the battle is by no means simple. One phase of the battle is being fought over the methods used by teachers in the classroom; another phase of the battle is being fought over the principles underlying those methods. Each of these phases is vitally important.

There are, generally speaking, two camps in the battle. It is a telling commentary on the bitterness that prevails in public education today that few persons who write or talk about the subject do not tend to identify themselves with one or the other of these camps partially if not completely. Even to give the camps names is a dangerous business because in the angry discussions once-respected words have become terms of opprobrium. The Traditionalists (if you will pardon the word) like to think of themselves as simply commonsense middle-of-the-roaders, while the Progressives (again begging pardon) consider themselves simply modern educators.

By some of the Progressives, the

Traditionalists are charged with an unthinking nostalgia for the past, with a desire to return to the hickory stick, with a lack of contact with a fourth R, reality. The Traditionalists, on the other hand, charge that the Progressives have taken up fads and frills and thereby neglected the fundamentals. They charge that the Progressives have not adequately prepared school children for business or for college. Some college presidents and businessmen among them decry a lack of ability to read, to write, and to spell on the part of today's high-school graduates. But, most important of all, the Traditionalists criticize the very foundations of the philosophy on which the teaching methods used today in many public schools is based, a philosophy to which the Progressives have given what some Traditionalists say is a name smacking of gobbledygook—Dynamic Functional Learning.

Dynamic Functional Learning, which is also known by a half-dozen other names ranging from Life Adjustment Theory to Core Curriculum, is the philosophy based on the tenet that the primary task of education is to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic within a pattern of teaching which stresses not proficiency in these ele-

mentary skills, but instead the adjustment of the individual to the group in which he lives. Using it as a philosophy and a method, the Progressives aim to help the child respond satisfactorily to the stresses and the strains of living and working with other people in the world today. By using this philosophy, the Progressives say that they are trying to educate the *whole* child to *live*, and this is why they emphasize group activity in all their methods of teaching. Some of their number, it is true, have even gone so far as to say that the three R's should not be taught to every child. One of them, A. H. Lauchner, author of an article called "How Can the Junior High School Curriculum Be Improved?" has written in the *Bulletin of National Association of Secondary School Principals*: "Through the years we've built a sort of halo around reading, writing, and arithmetic. We've said they were for everybody. . . . When we come to the realization that not every child has to read, figure, write, and spell, . . . that many of them either cannot or will not master these chores . . . then we shall be on the road to improving the junior-high curriculum."

TO this philosophy, the Traditionalists reply with their own conception of education. They say that education's aim should be to produce an intelligent *individual* in the hope that

he will in turn become the better citizen. They argue that there should be more emphasis on the individual's development toward his own potentialities through the liberal arts, whose basis, they argue, is the three R's. They point out that in some schools today report cards are being abandoned and students who fail to meet the requirements of their grade are being passed ahead into the next regardless. This, the Traditionalists say, gives no recognition to the bright student and relegates him to the group. Worst of all, they say, it makes meaningless the former distinction of a high-school diploma.

Naturally, the battle has had its misunderstandings. Actually nobody, not even the Traditionalists, advocates a return to the drill and discipline which characterized the three R's in the old days. They claim that they have been misunderstood on this point. But the Progressives insist that the Traditionalists are disciplinarians who force a child to learn against his will. The Traditionalists retort that the Progressives are too pragmatic, too functional, and that they go to excess in trying to relate education to the experience of the child. As one of the most vociferous of them, Mortimer Smith, has said in a forthcoming book "The Diminished Mind," "We ought to reject the notion that truth is only something that 'works' and that problems are not solved by reference to principles but by pragmatic testing to determine, not what is right, but what is expedient." Extremists like Smith point out that the extremists on the opposite side have begun to teach such ridiculous Dynamic Functional Learning courses as "How to Make a Date" and that a group in one school spends too much of its time making a serious study of "The Cost of Cor-sages" before they go to a dance.

Another charge of the Traditionalists is that the country's entire school system has been infected with the Progressives' conception of education because (they say) Teachers College of Columbia University has a virtually monopolistic grip on all present-day teachers who (they say) are almost all either its own graduates or graduates of teaching colleges whose faculties are composed of Columbia graduates. To this the Progressives reply that philosophies and methods of teaching as taught at Columbia are derived from the teachings of John Dewey, whose eminence as a philosopher is recognized throughout the world. To give the Traditionalists the last word, at least for the moment, they believe that Columbia corrupted much that Dewey thought, and it is these corrupted concepts which have become the bases of the newer methods for teaching the three R's.

HOW THE R'S ARE TAUGHT TODAY

The First R: Reading

OF ALL the angry engagements which have characterized the battle of the three R's, none has been more loudly noted than the struggle over the teaching of reading, the basic R of the three. This phase of the battle has received more newspaper headlines and more magazine lineage, has caused more angry talk at parent-teacher meetings, than have the other two R's combined. Perhaps this uproar has been justified. For there is nothing more troublesome to parents who have sent their child trustfully off to school than to discover, upon his return, that he does not seem to be learning to read. And when the parents inquire into the new methods by which their child is being taught this subject, they are very likely to find that many changes have taken place since the days when they went to school themselves.

The advocates of the new methods of teaching reading believe that children must first muddle through and feel out words before they can learn to read them. They also believe that it is more important for children to get the idea of a sentence than it is for them to be able to recognize isolated words, and they believe that it is more important to recognize a word than just its isolated letters. When it comes to the use of individual letters of the alphabet, they become very functional indeed and consider the use to which the child needs to put them, not the alphabet itself. The alphabet is not taught to a child until he needs it, and that, under modern methods, usually comes when he and his classmates are arranging a filing system of their stories so that they themselves recognize their need for such order.

There have been other changes. Most adults think of a grade—say the fourth grade—as one which is made up entirely of children who read a fourth-grade reader on a fourth-grade level. But this is no longer the rule. The nine- and ten-year-olds who make up a typical fourth grade may be reading on as many as eight different

levels, from the first grade through the eighth grade, all in the same room.

While this system has both the advantages and the disadvantages of the old one-room schoolhouse, the educators feel today that there are obvious injustices if the teacher tries to teach all the children from the same book at the same time. Today many teachers are advocating a completely individualized reading program so that every child may read for himself at his own pace, and, thereby, be ready to tackle the other R's, of which reading is the basis.

THERE are, generally speaking, only two basic methods for reading today: One of these is called the Experience Method, the other is the Basal Reader Method. In some schools the Experience Method predominates, and in others the Basal Reader Method. But in many schools the two go side by side, for they have much in common: Both try to get the child to relate reading to his own experience so that his interest will be aroused and he will go on from there himself.

Here is how the Experience Method works:

On one of the first days of schools, which is the time when children begin to read, the teacher makes sure that the class as a whole has a common exciting adventure. For example, they may all go to a dairy, and so begins the first reading lesson. If all goes well, one of the children might announce, on returning to the classroom, that it was fun. "We saw the cows," another child says, and the others are encouraged by the teacher to tell what they have seen.

At this point the modern teacher says, "I hope I can remember that story and write it down to keep a record of our trip. Perhaps you can help me. What shall we call our story?" And, in every good classroom, then, there are several suggestions for titles and finally, when one is chosen, the teacher writes this winner on the





—From "All the Children."

"... the intelligent reader must be able to understand what he has read."

blackboard. She then declares a recess.

By the time the children return, they find much of the story in their own words on the blackboard, the teacher having been careful to repeat as many simple words like "the" and "and" and "cow" as many times as possible so that the repetition cannot be missed by the children when they all begin to "read" it together.

The next morning they again "read" the story. Then they are encouraged to choose parts of it to illustrate. They paste these illustrations on large sheets of paper next to appropriate lines from the story. Pretty soon the sheets are fastened together and there is a big class picture book for them to "read" and discuss together. By the time they have received mimeographed copies of this "book" the children are, in the best classrooms, really reading—for there is a catch here. The mimeographed copies have no illustrations, so the children must learn to recognize the words. The proof that they have done so comes when they are able to draw their own illustrations to interpret the words. And the proof that they have indeed mastered their lesson well comes when, with guidance, they are encouraged to roam through a school library well stocked with the type of books which will meet the demands of their curiosity.

THE difference between the Experience Method and the Basal Reader Method is mainly one of organization, for in the dozens of books and pamphlets that go to make up a good Basal Reader series, there are carefully planned enticements to read. In the

Basal Readers, however, word lists, which are intended to increase the child's reading vocabulary step by step in a planned way, are the most important part of the book. These words, incorporated into stories, are introduced by a host of basal reading books which yesterday's schoolchildren would never have dreamed of. There are pre-reading books, readiness books, supplementary readers, unit readers, charts, tests, and workbooks, all geared to tie in with each other and to develop their students' abilities. These range from pure picture books—the pre-readers—which are calculated to entice a child forward, to books for every grade—the readiness books—which build up a common background of experience or "readiness" to read for a group of children by giving them similar situations in which to write, color, match pictures, and piece together the cut-outs which the books provide. One Basal Reader series, for example, centers around the activities of a family group. Each little story is a new chapter in the lives of children whose experiences may or may not be of special interest to those who read about them. Books of this sort have a limited vocabulary, with new words added at a specified rate, depending upon the age level for which the book is intended. Frequently a school authorizes the use of all the books in a series, and children move from book to book in the designated sequence.

The first Basal Readers were the idea of Dr. Arthur L. Gates of Teachers College, Columbia University, who, in the 1920s, assembled a list of words which every child at certain

periods of reading ability should know. These lists are known as controlled vocabularies. In the days of teacher shortages, when some teachers are not up to what they should be, the Basal Reader Method is some insurance that the lessons to be learned from them are daily outlined for the teacher. But there has been some criticism of late about the slow revision of some basal reading books. The word *wheelbarrows* is on the list, but *television* and *helicopter* are not. Much of this lag is due to the fact that the publishers of these books, whose manufacturing costs are high, must, in order to meet these costs, sell the same series for five to ten years without the expense of revisions.

NEVERTHELESS, these lists have resulted today in the seventy-five books and aids—which carry the child through the eighth grade—known as *The Macmillan Readers*; in the more than forty books known as the *Betts Basic Readers*, published by the American Book Co.; in the seventy-two books and pamphlets known as the *Ginn Basic Readers*; in the hundred or so known as *The Scott-Foresman Curriculum Foundation Series*, which take a child right up to college level; and in the 120 books, pamphlets, film strips, picture-and-word cards published by Row, Peterson & Co. and called the *New Alice and Jerry Series*. This series does exactly what its name implies by following the doings of two youngsters right up to and through the sixth grade without a break.

Learning to read is a complicated business. The reader must develop skills in recognizing familiar words, in working out the relation of letters to sounds and finally to meaning, and all this he must be able to do quickly and accurately. But these skills are only a part of reading. The intelligent reader must be able to understand what he has read, to get the subtle implications that words and sentences can give him. He must be able to draw conclusions from the printed page and make his own deductions. Frequently a person acquires certain reading skills but never understands what he has read. Many a child can read a selection aloud without a hitch, but he gets only a distorted notion of what he is reading about.

In their attempts to build such complete reading skills, some reading teachers have been accused of slighting the important lessons in reading for comprehension and general understanding. And those who have emphasized reading for comprehension and for the joy of reading are accused of failing to give children the necessary skills in attacking new words—and in this battle, both Progressives and Traditionalists have their sides.

The Second R: 'Riting

ALTHOUGH to the readers of the popular magazines and faithful attenders of parent-teachers meetings, the battle of the three R's has centered on the first of the three, the teaching of reading, there has been just as much experiment and innovation in the second R, the teaching of writing. There was a time when the study of writing was divided into four parts: spelling, composition, grammar, and penmanship. But that was a long time ago. Now, abiding by their principle that all subjects should be as integrated as it is possible to make them—and the word "integrated" is a favorite with present-day teachers—these four studies are being lumped together by educators. They call them the Language Arts, and through it they feel that they can give the child a more practical education that he would have received once upon a time—a feeling with which the Traditionalists are likely to disagree.

For, in lumping these studies together, the educators have also done away with many of the old standbys. The spelling bee has disappeared because the new-style teacher feels that it helps only the brighter spellers while the children spelled down only sit and wait. In fact, there is oftentimes no special period for the teaching of spelling or of composition or of grammar. The copy book has, in many cases, disappeared too; and a good deal of grammar and the old forms of penmanship have largely given way to a new form, a system of hand printing.

It is true, of course, that many schools continue to use the old systems of teaching the second R, though even in these cases there have been innovations, notably in the brightening of textbooks and in giving more encouragement to the children. But, generally, such methods are the old ones which every parent remembers.

The new methods go far beyond the mere brightening of books. Getting the child to want to write is the new-style teacher's first objective, and the first step toward that is to encourage him to see how words can serve him. Here is an example of how it is done:

First, the teacher encourages the child to use crayons, clay-modeling, and even to throw balls in order to develop his muscular control for writing. Then, with his muscles ready,

he is ready for blackboard work. Chalk in hand, he is shown how to print. This has its advantages: the simple, straight strokes of printing are considered easier for him to master and it also resembles more nearly the printing in the books he is reading, thereby avoiding a certain confusion between the printed and the handwritten word.

What is it that the child writes? He does not begin with separate letters. As in the teaching of reading, the idea is that he should learn from the beginning to connect letters into words so that the words will take precedence in his mind over their individual letters. And the words should come from his own experience. Thus, when the child first goes to the blackboard, he writes words which have to do with himself or his classroom activities—such words as *teacher* and *chalk* and *blackboard*—and he watches the teacher and imitates her in writing the day of the week and the month and the temperature. Some children, of course, are more eager to write nothing at first but their own names; this, too, is encouraged. Any enticement is used to encourage the child to write.

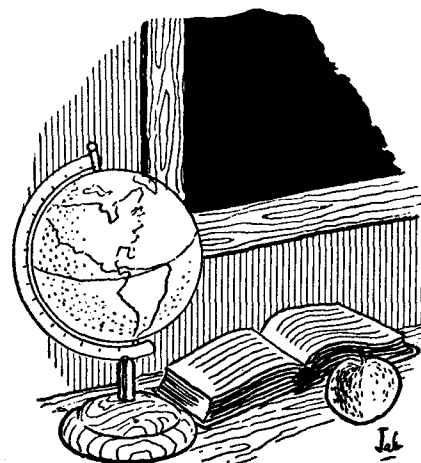
ONE of the greatest shortcomings that the Traditionalists find in modern teaching methods is in the contention of modern advocates that by writing in this way and building up his own thoughts, the child learns sufficiently well how to spell, to punctuate, and to write. Modern teachers feel that the time spent in learning how to conjugate a verb or to parse a sentence is better spent in learning how to use the language effectively. As one teacher has said, "It is far better to say *something* in a not very polished way than to say *nothing* in a polished way." To this the Traditionalists are apt to reply that the two are not mutually exclusive.

Yet at times it seems that they are mutually exclusive to the same modern-style teachers. In today's schools there are two kinds of composition writing, known as practical composition writing and creative composition. They result, oftentimes, in two entirely different modes of expression. In practical compositions, the children write letters, reports, and announcements. Since the purpose in this instance is to communicate with somebody else, the teacher sets high

standards of spelling, punctuation, and correct usage. But in the kind of composition which is known as creative writing, the teacher does not set such standards. Thus it is perfectly possible for Johnny to come home from school with a composition marked "Excellent" and in which in reality there are a dozen mistakes of spelling and grammar. The educators claim that the purpose of creative writing is to help Johnny express himself, his own fears and joys, without feeling inhibited, and so they do not insist upon correct spelling or grammar in such writing.

Some schools have even experimented with typewriters as a help in teaching The Language Arts. They claim that they find some advantages in them as an instructional device. Others, perhaps missing the excitement of the spelling bee, have invented a new game. It is called Relay Race Spelling, and in it two captains choose sides and distribute cards, each of which bears a letter of the alphabet on it. When the teacher calls a word, the children from each rival team run to form it, and the side that forms it first wins.

Traditionalists are apt to take a dim view of such games as the Relay Race when they are used to excess, because the game relies on the abilities of the group instead of the ability of the individual speller. They are less likely, however, to criticize one of the chief tenets of The Language Arts. This is that the children should be taught to use all five senses in their linguistic efforts. There has been a great deal of emphasis on teaching the child to describe all that he not only sees, but also what he hears, smells, tastes, and feels. In one group, for example, the children were told to write down all the sounds of a circus. They came out with a list of thirty-three sounds, ranging from the sounds of chewing gum to the explosion of a performer's cannon—a range of sounds which would please even the most extreme Traditionalist.



The Third R: 'Rithmetic

ONCE upon a time, according to the advocates of the new teaching methods, children did not properly understand the meaning of that third R, arithmetic. They memorized the fact that two and two make four, carefully avoided counting out any sum on their fingers for fear the teacher was looking, and memorized in all its glory the Pythagorean theory—all of which the new-style teachers say was silly. The children then had no idea of what they were doing because they did not learn from the beginning that numbers are symbols for real objects—even fingers—and that the sum two and two makes four really means that two ones and two ones equal four ones in exactly the same way that four ones equal four ones.

This truth, say the new-style teachers, is more easily understood when the child is encouraged to see that this sum is true of everything he knows in his own experience, be it classmates or jet planes. It is for this reason that arithmetic has, along with the other two R's, taken a turn toward the functional and practical experiences of the child. Though there are, as in the cases of reading and writing, still many schools which cling to older methods—with a few brighter textbooks and a little more understanding of the child to make learning more palatable—it is these functional methods which differ from the old methods under which the children's parents learned.

Today's child may not care about the Pythagorean theory in so many words, but he has probably used it hundreds of times by constructing gables for the roof of the school-room's model house or by measuring out distances on a model airstrip or by working with his classmates to find an area of space in their classroom for a new project. Today's arithmetic student is likely to ask more functional questions: What are the dimensions of his father's house? How was the roof put on? What are the lengths of the rafters?

All this has its beginnings in the first days of school. In these days the child learns to count, not in vague numbers, but in terms of reality. He counts the boys and girls first at his own table, then at other tables, and gradually works up until he can count the number of children in the entire class. From these sums,

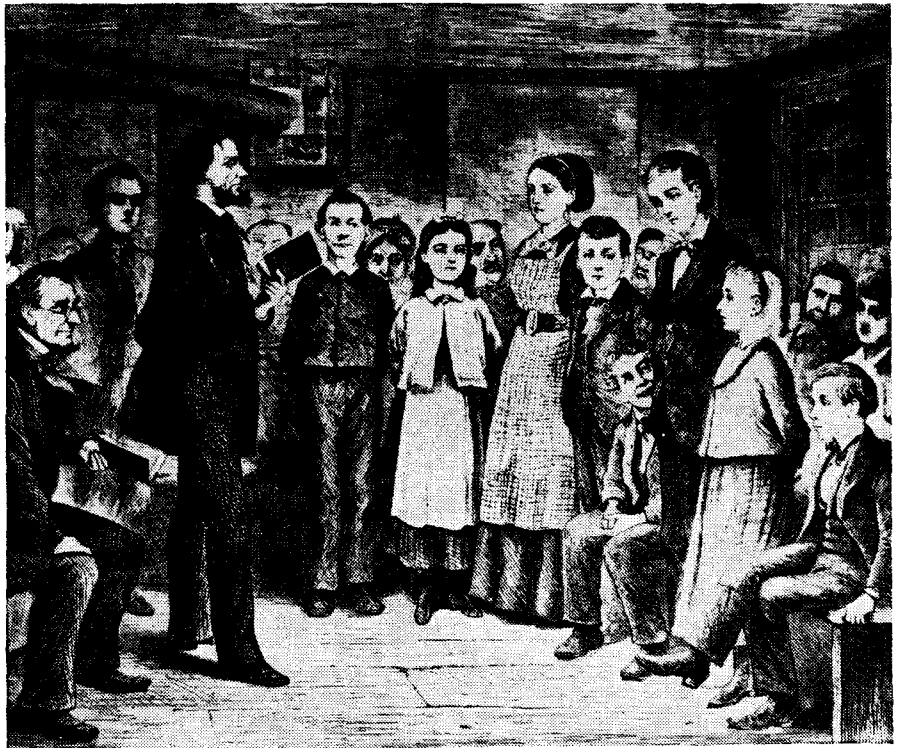
he goes on to counting the number of books needed by one or another group. And finally he enters into the complication of counting and measuring the number of quarts of water and pints of lemon juice needed for making any number of quantities of lemonade for himself and his classmates to drink.

In one school, the first-graders learned that Indians and shepherds, both, long ago kept count of their ponies and sheep by placing a stick or a pebble on the ground for each animal as it returned home at night. Intrigued by this example, these first-graders kept similar records of their class attendance, using in this case pegs instead of pebbles. If all the pegs were used, the children came to the obvious conclusion that every child had turned up for school. If some were not used, the children knew that somebody was absent. They then checked the number of pegs left with the number of empty chairs and with the marks in the teacher's attendance book, thereby learning the rudiments of simple bookkeeping.

THESE methods, the teachers say, encourage the children to see a myr-

riad of mathematical possibilities to which their parents were blind. And to help them see these possibilities, the teachers use a host of paraphernalia. They use splints and toothpicks to help the children see decimal relations; they divide party recipes into halves and thirds to help them with their fractions; and they are never told by teachers that they are using a wrong way to find an answer. One child may perfectly well arrive at the right solution by actually measuring a line from end to end; another may measure only part of it and multiply; another may figure it all out in his head.

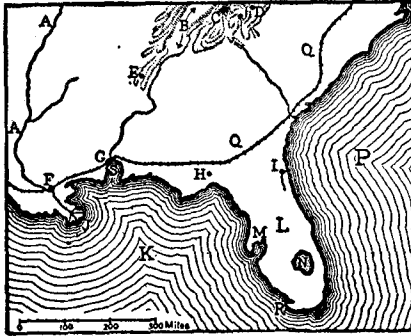
The teachers try to stress the idea of the child's development with practical problems over individual grades and honors. As with reading and the language arts, these trends tend to lead the children to mammoth group activities. A group of fourth-graders, for example, recently learned that sound travels through the air at the rate of 1,100 feet in a second. Comparing this distance with the number of feet in a mile, they found it to be about one-fifth of a mile. With this information, they then figured out that it would take approximately five seconds for sound to travel through the air and, during the next thunderstorm, the entire class put their new knowledge to practice, counting the number of seconds between the flash of lightning and the clap of thunder and then estimating their own approximate distance from the source of lightning.



—Bettmann Archive.

American Common School (1872)—"Indians and shepherds used pebbles."

Which Is Better—the Old or the New?



Directions. In the parentheses after each question put the number of the *one* correct answer.

12. Which letter on the map at the left shows where there is a railroad? 1 A 2 Q 3 B 4 H() 12
13. Which city is on the railroad? 1 E 2 I 3 F 4 D() 13
14. Which letter on the map shows where there is a lake? 1 P 2 N 3 E 4 G.....() 14
15. Which letter shows where there is a river? 1 K 2 L 3 A 4 D() 15
16. In which direction is city H from city I? 1 west 2 east 3 northeast 4 southwest.....() 16
17. Which letter shows where there is a cape? 1 K 2 M 3 C 4 R() 17
18. Which letter shows where there is a bay? 1 E 2 S 3 F 4 I() 18
19. Which letter shows where there is a delta? 1 F 2 J 3 I 4 E() 19

After each question there are four answers, of which only *one* is correct. Put the number of the correct answer in the parentheses after each question.

Which city has the largest population?

1 New York 2 Chicago 3 Philadelphia 4 Illinois.....()

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HOW do today's children actually compare with their parents and grandparents in their abilities to read and write? To answer this question teachers and educators have through the years given their pupils the same tests which their elders took when they were in school. In the results, both sides, by publishing one or another test—with the help of many popular magazines—have claimed a victory. This is too bad, for, as the results of the following tests show, neither side can be sure it is right.

• • The first and one of the most famous tests was given in 1845 to pupils in the eighth grade of the Boston schools and was repeated in 1919 in a nationwide sampling of schools. Then the results were compared. In 1845 the Boston pupils were asked to define twenty-eight words selected from their own school readers. These words

included such stumbling blocks as *panegyric*, *viceregent*, *preternatural*, *thanatopsis*, *pothor*, and *zoonomia*, and, since these and others were considered uncommon in 1919, they were omitted from the latter test. In the end, only five words from the 1845 test were used in the 1919 test. These were *monotony*, *dormant*, *infatuated*, *misnomer*, and *connoisseur*. When the 1919 scores were compared with the 1845 results, it was found that for these five words the 1919 group gave a far lower percentage of correct definitions than did their grandparents as children. For the Boston pupils of 1845, the average percentage correct was 31.2; for the nationwide pupils of 1919, it was only 15.7.

• • In 1947, Cleveland, Ohio, gave the same test to its eighth-grade pupils that it had given in 1848. The pupils of 1848 scored only 924 correct an-

swers or 38.5 per cent; the pupils of 1947 scored 955 (or 39.8 per cent) correct answers.

• • In 1938, two tests, one in reading and one in arithmetic, were compared in St. Louis with two tests which had been given in that city in 1916. The 1938 pupils showed conspicuously lower scores than did the 1916 pupils, but this discrepancy was thought to be explained by the fact that more pupils were attending school in 1938, that these pupils would in 1916 have dropped out before they reached the grade in which this test was given, and that the 1938 pupils were being taught more "total efficiency" in reading instead of highly selective skills like "oral reading" and "silent reading."

• • In June 1946, the Chicago schools gave an arithmetic test to approximately 16,000 sixth-graders that had been given to approximately the same number of sixth-graders in June 1923. And a spelling test of twenty-five words, which had been given to approximately 9,000 pupils in the grades Two-B through Seven-A in 1926, was again given to the same number of children in the same grade ranges in 1946. The results of both the spelling and arithmetic tests were lower in 1946 than they were in the earlier years. It was agreed that there was less emphasis on drill in 1946 than there had been in the 1920s.

• • In 1952, a study was conducted in the public schools of Dearborn, Michigan, in order to make a comparison with an earlier era. It compared tests given in 1926 to approximately 1,750 children in the fourth to eighth grades in reading, arithmetic, language usage, and spelling with the results from the same tests when they were given to children in the fourth to sixth grades in the same schools in 1951. Reading and arithmetic improved, spelling worsened.

• • Last year Wendell C. Lanton of Evanston, Illinois, tested the achievement in reading, arithmetic, and spelling of 1,290 pupils in the middle grades with the same examinations which had been used in the same grades in Evanston in 1934. Making sure that the students had the same mean I.Q.'s in both periods, Lanton found the scores in two out of three grades higher for the 1953 pupils.

Disagreeing in results with each other as these and other similar tests do, it would seem that parents and educators seeking to satisfy themselves as to the effectiveness of present-day teaching will have to use other criteria in their evaluation.

Rx for Juvenile Delinquency

By **BERTRAM M. BECK**, *director, Special Juvenile Delinquency Project associated with the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.*

IT HAS been a bad summer for juvenile delinquency, as anyone within reach of a newspaper knows only too well—especially anyone in or around the Greater New York area, which has been shaken to its core this past fortnight by each day's ever more soul-sickening accounts of the series of "unmotivated" murders and tortures recently committed by the "Thrill Killers" of Brooklyn, four "respectably raised" high-school boys ranging in age from fifteen to eighteen.

But the cumulative disasters of the present summer are only part of an infinitely larger, blacker picture. Young people today are responsible for an appalling share of the crimes committed in these United States, and the curve is steadily on the up. In 1953, more delinquent children came before our juvenile courts than in any previous year for which we have statistics. The increase in juvenile crime between 1948 and 1952 was 29 per cent; by the end of 1953, it had climbed still another 13 per cent. These increases are far out of proportion to anything we might normally expect because of growth in the total juvenile population; and by 1960, the affected part of our population—i. e., boys and girls in the delinquency age group—will be 40 per cent larger than it is at this moment. To be sure, there is a measure of comfort in the fact that less than 2 per cent of the current juvenile population ever "goes delinquent"; yet only a measure, for we know that present types of delinquency, and the places in which they appear, are dangerously like unto cancerous cells in the social organism.

Delinquency is no longer merely a slum problem or even a "big-city" problem: it is spreading to what are commonly called the "better" sections of the community—the semi-suburbs and the suburbs—and also out into still less densely populated areas. The new thing we have here is the form of the problem behavior, rather than the mere existence of problem behavior. Heretofore, the social institutions of suburbia—home, school, church—supplied sufficient social

pressure to restrain problem-children from displaying their problems in some form of delinquency. There were some exceptions, of course, but on the whole the suburban or rural problem-child took it out more on himself than on the community. Now, delinquency is beginning to cut at random through all social and economic strata; and those who are willing to add two and two together will recognize this as an ominous sign of social decay, a revelation of the fact that even the solidest of our social institutions are losing their capacity to transfer a sense of social values from one generation to the next.

Consider the essential nature of the delinquent act: it has as its basic characteristic the wish, or need, to hate, to destroy, to injure. Those who indulge in such acts direct them at a community of which they do not deem themselves a part. This is easy enough to understand in terms of slum delinquents, for the slum-dwell-

ers of our giant cities are not truly a part of the community; they are exiles within the community. Now we must begin to realize that the same equation applies outside the slums.

The graph charting the ups and downs of delinquency makes it plain that there is a pronounced correlation between peak periods of strife and aggression in the great world and peak periods of aggression in the ranks of youth. Today, we as a nation live in the knowledge that there exists for us always the threat of totalitarian aggression somewhere in the world, that out of this threat may come global war and, not impossibly, the annihilation of civilization. Yet as a nation, we have not so far been able or willing to face up to this grim reality, nor to close ranks in coming to grips with it—anything but. It is this lack of unity, of faith, of sense of purpose—this lack of a feeling of *we-ness*—which lies, I believe, at the root of our whole problem.

EVEN in the best of times, that child who is reared in a family-community atmosphere of corruption, materialism, mechanization—and of utter confusion of fundamental moral-ethical values—will have little enough to sus-

(Continued on page 61)



"... and he used to be the nicest kid on the block!"