THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS: KANAWHA COUNTY
Franklin Parker

Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation
FRANKLIN PARKER

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THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS:
KANAWHA COUNTY

By Franklin Parker

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CHARLES PBY'S READING AREA
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES CENTER
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
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1: WHAT HAPPENED?

No Peace in the Valley

A traveler in West Virginia in the warm season sees green hills and trees watered by rain and rushing streams. "Welcome to Wild, Wonderful West Virginia," say car bumper stickers, and it is true. This is a green state, the only one completely within the Appalachian mountain rib of eastern America.

The capital, Charleston, in Kanawha County, in the state's south-central part, has parks, chemical industries, food processing plants, freeways, and a busy little airport. Fourth largest of the state's 55 counties, Kanawha County is named for its main waterway, the Kanawha River, which in turn is named for the Kanawha Indians. This is Daniel Boone country. He lived on the Kanawha River and represented the area in the Virginia Assembly in 1791. Now the most populous and prosperous county, it is one of four growth centers in a state that has steadily lost population.

Of the 229,515 people who live in Kanawha County's 907 square miles, two-thirds are mainly recently urban and affluent. The one-third who are rural and poorer live scattered on hillsides, in hollows, and along creeks. These hard scrabble descendants of mountaineers are often still called hillbillies and creekers. Many are coal miners who have known more tragedy, poverty, black lung disease, and early death than most. Many are religious fundamentalists. Most are set in their ways, wary of change.

Times are good now, but historically these were exploited people, subject to frequent boom-and-bust economic cycles. A
few big firms own or control two-thirds of West Virginia’s privately held land. Over 25 percent of Kanawha County’s 584,563 acres are owned by six outside companies. In a sense, this state is America’s last colony. Appalachia still lags behind the rest of the nation. Its young and its ablest workers still leave for Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Akron. Many who remain are underpaid, underemployed, undereducated, undermotivated to change.

The basic stock is Scotch-Irish plus others from Britain and Europe. Few are black. Many are descendants of indentured servants who stayed because the back-country hills and valleys were like their homeland. Then, as now, the ablest left for the West. What the mountaineer who remained gained in independence, he paid for in isolation, clannishness, superstition, backwardness. America advanced but this region fell behind in population, roads, schools, political sophistication.

Exploitation came first from outside timber companies who paid the mountaineer a pittance to fell his own trees. He was a barter not a money man, and at first he thought his small wage a windfall. Later he realized he had been cheated. When America industrialized and coal became king, outsiders offered him contracts he often could not read whose fine points he did not understand. Many sold their minerals and their land for little. They became coal company men, living in company houses, injured in company mines, eating company credit food, in debt to company stores, arrested by company police, sentenced by company judges, buried in company cemeteries.

Many of those who survived, shaped by harsh mountain conditions, earned their living in the earth’s dark bowels, not knowing how America was changing, not aware of how Appalachia was affected, not understanding the materialism and permissiveness of newcomers making big money in the chemical, food-processing, and other new Charleston industries. “They,” the cocktail-drinking outsiders, were the new exploiters who swung their weight and ran things. It was seldom said aloud, but was resented by the simpler folk of eastern Kanawha County, the hillbillies, creakers, coal miners. These people clung to their own firm foundations: God through the holy book, justice through strikes and the union, close identity with the harsh hills and valleys of their birth, fierce loyalty to family and clan, true-blue
American patriotism, and willingness to die and give their sons in war.

Now, times seemed good. America was in an energy crisis. Coal was king again. Frustrations and fissures were papered over. The hard put-upon old tolerated the brashly domineering new. Then, with the 1974-75 school year, public school textbooks, a normally benign matter, set off an explosion, a battle that brought Kanawha County, West Virginia, unfavorable national and world attention.

There was no peace in the Kanawha River Valley.

Straw in the Wind?

Was the storm foreshadowed in the May 14, 1974, Kanawha County school board election?

Seats on the five-member school board were won by incumbent board president Matthew Kinsolving, barely re-elected to his third six-year term; and top vote-getter F. Douglas Stump, 39, Charleston office machine company president, due to join the board in January, 1975. Incumbent Kinsolving had backed county school Supt. Kenneth E. Underwood’s administration, except to criticize in executive session the frequency of closed board meetings. Stump won big by criticizing the school board and administration for being inaccessible to parents and teachers. He opposed closing neighborhood elementary schools for the sake of consolidation. He said his victory reflected growing public dissatisfaction with the school administration. Kinsolving agreed.

The day after the school board election the Charleston Daily Mail (hereafter the Mail) frankly charged that the school board was unresponsive and indifferent to its constituents, that it neither heard nor heeded complaints, that it was more the prisoner of the school administration than its supervisor. The administration was called a cumbersome bureaucracy, top heavy with personnel who dealt heavy-handedly with staff and teachers. The Mail said the curriculum neglected fundamentals for frills and substituted secularism for traditional sanctions of moral order.

Six days later the Mail repeated these concerns and wondered about a possible power struggle:

We are worried about the input of the public into the educational program. In the last analysis, who is going to control and
operate the schools? Whose input is decisive, the teachers’ or the school patron’s? This confrontation is becoming more common. When it degenerates into a power struggle it is also more and more common just to suspend the educational program while the issues are kicked around.

Textbook Selection

Before Kenneth Underwood’s superintendency began in 1971, a citizens’ advisory committee aided textbook selection. Since then, teacher committees had worked alone. Seemingly ignored, parents and the public showed little interest in the textbooks until the books’ allegedly “dirty, anti-Christian, anti-American” content was brought dramatically to their attention. Later, after the issue exploded and the harm was done, the textbook selection procedure was publicized.

Officially designated to recommend books were a five-teacher Kanawha County textbook committee (one elementary, two junior high, two high school teachers), a 12-teacher secondary school textbook subcommittee (six junior and six senior high teachers), and an eight-teacher elementary school textbook subcommittee. After receiving state-approved textbook lists, the textbook committee and the secondary subcommittee began examining books from the lists in November 1973; the elementary subcommittee began in January 1974. Evaluation forms for each text series were filed with the school board. The six books recommended for elementary schools were a companion set to the Holt Reading Series already in use. Twenty-four books were recommended for the secondary language and literature classes. The county’s diverse students and school programs were factors in text selection. High schools needed a large number of supplementary texts to meet both the multicultural and multi-ethnic mandate of the 1970 state law and students’ varied reading and learning needs.

The textbook committee finished its work February 28, 1974, and sent its recommendations and rationale to the school board’s March 12 meeting. (Board member Alice Moore, who later led the assault on the texts, missed this meeting.) The 325 recommended texts and supplementary books were placed in the public library and in the school board’s reading room for public review. Few people went to see the books.
Gathering Storm

On April 11, school board members voted unanimously to adopt the texts but to delay purchase until they could be studied more thoroughly. This move was prompted by Mrs. Alice Moore's feeling that the board should have stronger control over selection.

By one account—it may not be true—the Rev. Moore, who accompanied Mrs. Moore to the meeting, went through the books in the board reading room. He did not like what he saw and later brought the matter to her attention. This exposure led her later to go beyond the board to bring the allegedly bad content of the books to fundamentalist church groups' attention.

Asked to appear before a special school board meeting on May 16, the textbook committee explained how the recommended texts would advance the language arts program. Mrs. Moore interrupted, challenging the philosophy of the language arts program and the content of some books. The meeting closed with no action taken. The understanding was that the books would not be purchased until the board reached consensus on questions Mrs. Moore had raised.

Early Campaign

Mrs. Moore's vigorous antitextbook campaign among fundamentalist church groups began to split the community. On June 2 she said that the supplemental books lacked taste, served no real purpose, and denounced traditional institutions. Protesters attended the June 14 school board meeting, but a quorum was lacking.

The dispute was heightening. On June 19 the executive board of the Kanawha County Council of Parents and Teachers attacked some of the books, labeling them anti-American, antireligious, and discriminatory. That day the vice-president of the Charleston National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) reported that he had read the books and did not find them offensive. On June 23 Mrs. Moore criticized the texts at the First Baptist Church in Dunbar, W. Va. Excerpts were distributed and petitions were circulated asking the board not to adopt the books.

On June 24 ten ministers gave support to the books; on June 26 twenty-seven opposing ministers called the books immoral and
indecent. During that time a representative of the publisher of some of the controversial texts stated that the books were used elsewhere in the United States with few complaints. On June 26 the West Virginia Human Rights Commission endorsed the books. Forces were drawn for a confrontation.

Stormy Meeting
About a thousand people jammed the June 27 school board meeting. In hallways the overflow audience heard three hours of pro and con testimony over loudspeakers and closed circuit television monitors. The board removed eight supplementary books considered most objectionable, including Sigmund Freud's *Character and AnalEroticism*, voted three to two to adopt the rest of the recommended books. The three voting for adoption were Harry A. Stansbury (57), director of Comprehensive Health Planning, a state agency, Yale University doctorate, 14 years on the school board; Russell Isaacs (41), president of Heck’s, Inc., West Virginia University graduate, less than one year on the school board; and Albert Anson, Jr. (63), assistant to the manager of the FMC Corporation, Wayne State University graduate, 22 years on the school board. The two voting against adoption were Mrs. Alice Moore (34), St. Albans housewife, mother of four, wife of a Church of Christ minister, graduate of Hatley High School in Mississippi, three years on the school board, first elected because she opposed a pilot sex education program, main opponent of the textbooks; and Matthew M. Kinsolving (56) of Cedar Grove, postmaster at Belle, Morris Harvey College graduate, 12-year member and board president, barely re-elected on May 14.

Tense Summer
Antitext sentiment mounted as the books were displayed in churches and allegedly offensive passages were circulated. Private school alternatives to the public schools were discussed. On July 6 the Rev. Charles Quigley of Cathedral of Prayer Baptist Church told of 100 parents willing to send their children to his proposed private school. On July 13 board members declined to discuss rumors that in executive session Supt. Underwood was told to seek another job. On August 2, the antitext Christian
American Parents group picketed Heck’s Stores to show anger at Heck’s president Russell Isaacs, one of three board members who voted for the books. Meeting on August 27 in fundamentalist and mountaineer strongholds around St. Albans and Campbells Creek, the antitext Concerned Citizens group voted to boycott the public schools on opening day and until the books were removed.

Schools Open; Mines and Industries Close

September brought rapid developments. School opened September 3 amid sign-carrying, picketing parents; 20 percent of the county’s 45,000 students were absent (8 percent absence is normal). That day 2,000 attended an antitext rally at Campbells Creek.

The school boycott might have sputtered out but, by one account, a few antitext women with placards appeared outside some coal mines. The next day 3,500 miners walked off their jobs in wildcat strikes which spread to nearby counties. Over the next few weeks, picket lines spread from the mines to major businesses and plants in Kanawha and adjacent counties. The textbook boycott and accompanying industrial strike, so sudden and ferocious, almost defied instant analysis. Some antitext picketers were miners’ wives or friends, and the children involved included miners’ children. Antitext sympathy and a tradition of striker solidarity in part explained the miner strike. But the mine shutdown until October 11 had more to do with a United Mine Worker contract due in November than with textbooks. Depleted coal stocks would result in better contract terms for miners. Also, the miners were heady with recent victory. They had just organized the Brookside mine in eastern Kentucky. During the Arab oil boycott they made Gov. Arch A. Moore, Jr., back down on limiting gasoline, saying that they needed gas to drive to work in the mines. (Later, they forced Gov. Moore to cancel a ban on studded snow tires.)

Unsatisfactory Compromise

By September 8 school attendance was down from the normal 92 percent to 77 percent. Mrs. Moore, denying involvement in the boycott, asked for Underwood’s resignation. By September 10 protesters had stopped Charleston’s city buses, leaving 11,000 people without rides. The next day the Mail’s front-page editorial urged,
“Make Texts Concession. . . . The ordinary trade and commerce upon which all of us depend must not be impeded.” The texts were “not worth the fight that is being made over them.”

That day, September 11, the school board compromised. It voted to remove the texts for 30 days for further citizen review. By one account, Mrs. Moore took the decision to 12 antitext leaders in the school board building while supporters outside sang gospel songs. The leaders accepted, but one, the Rev. Marvin Horan, said he doubted that the crowd would go along with the compromise. When Mrs. Moore read the agreement to those outside, she was booed. The crowd agreed with a woman among them who shouted, “We want more. We want those filthy books out, period. Burn them.” Hours later at an emotion-packed rally of 1,000 people, Horan said he had made a mistake in accepting the withdraw-and-review compromise, and he offered to resign as antitext spokesman. The crowd would not accept his resignation, and he continued to lead hard-core protesters.

Class War?

Why the crowd was determined to ban the books immediately and absolutely, why they were out for total victory also defied analysis.

Protesters made no pretense of being anything but poorly educated working people. “I drive a truck for a living and I preach the gospel because the Lord called me,” Horan reportedly told Supt. Underwood. “The common man don’t know what to do except what he’s done, and that’s to go home and sit down,” he said. “It’s his strong back that keeps the system going, and when he don’t like something he just goes on home and sits down.”

One boycotter said that what the crowd was trying to do was to “get this government down to where they’ll listen to us little old hillbillies.” A protesting sign read, “Even Hillbillies Have Constitutional Rights.”

Had class war emerged in the textbook controversy?

Violence

Withdrawal of the textbooks began on September 12. The five board members plus member-elect F. Douglas Stump agreed to
name three members each to a Citizens Review Committee. During September 13-16, after Underwood closed the county’s 121 schools to protect the children, violence flared. Two men were shot, a third severely beaten, car windows were smashed, a CBS-TV crew roughed up, schools were closed by pickets in nearby Boone and Fayette Counties (neither used the disputed texts). On September 12 coal companies estimated $2 million loss; on September 27 school officials estimated $300,000 damage to schools.

Politics

Sheriff G. Kemp Melton and his 40-member department could not deal with mounting infractions. The sheriff and others called for Gov. Moore to intervene with state police. The governor, a Republican, asked all parties to arbitrate; meanwhile, he waited. He let it be known through the state police head (there was a history of hard feelings between state police officials and the sheriff’s office) that Sheriff Melton, a Democrat, would have to declare a state of anarchy before state troopers could intercede. Critics faulted the governor for playing politics, for not acting until the situation had sufficiently embarrassed the Democratic sheriff. The violent turn, however, forced the governor’s hand. State police appeared September 18, after major damage had been done.

Arrests

On September 18, 11 protesters—including three antitext ministers—were arrested for violating the court injunction against more than five persons picketing school property. Jailed briefly and released on bail were ministers Charles Quigley (35), head of the Cathedral of Prayer Baptist Church and later an unsuccessful write-in candidate for county judge; Ezra H. Graley (45) of Nitro, pastor of Summit Ridge Church of God in Lincoln County, a roofer by trade, jailed twice for protest activities; and Avis Hill (31) of St. Albans, owner of Hill Plumbing Co., pastor of Freedom Gospel Mission, twice found guilty of contempt of court. The Rev. Quigley told a Mail reporter on September 28 that he had been “praying that God will strike three members of the Kanawha County Board of Education dead,” referring to
pro-text members Russell Isaacs, Harry Stansbury, and Albert Anson. The community, including most pro-text ministers, was shocked. On September 30, qualifying his death wish, Quigley said he was not praying for God to kill the men; God and Mrs. Moore would stop the controversy.

Circuit Court Judge John H. Goad, appointed September 12, was quoted as saying, "I’m going to do everything I can to stop this [textbook protesting]." His severity in dealing with the protesters was blamed for his loss of the judgeship in the November 5, 1974, elections. In that election, by one account, candidates endorsed by antitext groups did not fare well, possibly indicating that county voters did not support the protest movement.

Citizens Review Committee
The school board decision to remove the texts for review after their adoption was probably illegal, a point made on October 3 by State School Supt. Daniel Taylor and also raised by the Citizens Review Committee. That committee proved so divergent that, on October 9, six dissenting antitext members broke away as a splinter group from the other 12 members, thus forming two separate review committees, neither able to be effective. Meanwhile, on October 10, school board member Albert Anson resigned, three months before his term ended, saying he could not accept the removal of what he believed to be good textbooks. Member-elect Stump was sworn in to complete Anson’s term.

More Violence
Violence continued as opponents met frequently to demand ouster of pro-text school board members and Underwood (he said on October 11 that he was looking for another job). Eighteen protesters were arrested in St. Albans October 7 for blocking the school bus garage to keep children from going to school. Vandals struck three elementary schools on October 9, injuries occurred, and cars were burned. Shots were fired at a moving empty bus on October 18, a school was dynamited on October 22, but no one was injured. On October 28, the Citizens Review Committee endorsed four books and the splinter group review committee re-
jected most of the books. Two days later the board of education building was dynamited, causing damage but no injuries. School attendance reached a low of 73 percent on October 22.

More Compromise

In a November 7 televised meeting, the school board voted four to one (Mrs. Moore dissenting) to place the disputed texts in school libraries with student access based on parental permission. The compromise did not satisfy antitext advocates, angry because the books were back after 40 days. Underwood said he would enforce compulsory attendance laws. Mrs. Moore countered, "Parents may now be forced to educate their children in their homes," a sentiment also voiced by the Rev. Avis Hill at an antitext rally on November 9: "We'll set up our own school system."

More acceptable was school board action on November 21, which modified and accepted Mrs. Moore's text adoption guidelines (ignored when she presented them at the November 7 meeting). The guidelines bar texts that pry into a child's home life, teach racial hatred, undermine religious, ethnic or racial groups, encourage sedition, insult patriotism, teach that an alien form of government is superior, use the name of God in vain, use offensive language. Plans were made to apply the guidelines to the April 1975 selection of textbooks in social studies, music, business education, and home economics. Four screening committees were planned (five teachers plus 15 parents per committee).

What Protesters Found Offensive

On November 14 a leading antitext group took out a full-page advertisement in the Charleston Gazette listing out of context offensive excerpts from disputed texts. A sampling follows:

"... and you feel like swearing and goddamning worse and worse."
"Listen, you yellow bastard, what the hell's the idea . . ."
"Is there such a thing as a black human brain?"
"Oh, damn your mother's cups."
"Two deaths for a goddam nigger."

The following, taken from "Jump Rope Jingles and Other Useful Rhymes," a supplementary book for poor readers, was called objectionable because it allegedly ridicules the law:
I Was Standing On The Corner,
Not Doing Any Harm.
Along Came A Policeman
And Took Me By The Arm.
He Took Me Around The Corner,
And He Rang A Little Bell.
Along Came A Police Car
And Took Me To My Cell.

Elsewhere, objection was taken to the story of “Androcles and the Lion” (the lion saves Androcles because Androcles had earlier removed a thorn from his paw). Pupils are asked to discuss similarities between the “Androcles and the Lion” fable and the story of Daniel in the lion’s den. Mrs. Moore objected: “That’s putting the Bible right on the level of fables. Several things imply that God is make-believe and that prayer is a pretend thing.”

Another objection was to “situation ethics” in which children are asked if they have ever felt that stealing is justifiable. A teacher’s manual asks students to debate the pros and cons of stealing: “Tell when it is. Tell why you think it is right.”

Critics objected to an audiotape accompanying a text which describes “exactly how to smoke marijuana to get the full effect” because, in their view, it gave outright encouragement to smoking marijuana and to legalizing the drug.

Thirty-one fundamentalist churches had another full-page advertisement of material they found offensive in the December 14 Gazette which read, in part:

We as Christian protesters have been accused by some of taking the language to which we are opposed out of context. We maintain to use the name of God in vain, whether it be in context or out of context, remains the same. To connect the words “God” and “damn”... can convey only one meaning, and this is profane.

The so-called four letter words which we find objectionable have the same filthy meaning in any society, whether these words be in or out of context.

There was objection to teaching how ghetto blacks speak:

Jus’ tell me how one wife fir do one man? (Just tell me how one wife can be enough for a man?)
How man go fit stay all time for him house, (What can make a man stay home all the time?)

16
For when bele done kommotu? (When is his wife pregnant as she can be?)

How many pickin, self, one woman fir born? (After all, how many children can one woman bear?)

Widely circulated as objectionable was a reminiscence in a biography section of a high school senior supplementary text by poet Allen Ginsberg, taken from a New Yorker profile of him:

A tall, red-headed chick. She had been mainly a whore, actually, with very expensive Johns, who would pay her a hundred dollars a shot. And she was a very lively chick, who took a lot of pot. Really a remarkable, beautiful, goodhearted, tender girl. I had a special regard for her from years before, because she had really put herself out to straighten me out and here she was like a big, expensive whore.

The critics disapproved of e. e. cummings’ poem, “I Like My Body,” which refers to pubic hair as “electric fuzz.” Black writers attacked as anti-Christians and antiwhite included Gwendolyn Brooks, Dick Gregory, Eldridge Cleaver, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, and Malcolm X.

The following suggestive selection by British writer Roger McGough was circulated as objectionable:

At Lunchtime, A Story of Love

When the bus stopped suddenly to avoid damaging a mother and child in the road, the young lady in the green hat sitting opposite was thrown across me, and not being one to miss an opportunity I started to make love with all my body.

At first she resisted saying that it was too early in the morning and too soon after breakfast and that anyway she found me repulsive. But when I explained that this being a nuclear age the world was going to end at lunchtime, she took off her green hat, put her bus ticket in her pocket and joined in the exercise.

The buspeople, and there were many of them, were shocked-and-surprised and amused-and-annoyed, but when the word got around that the world was coming to an end at lunchtime they put their pride in their pockets with their bus tickets and made love one with another. And even the bus conductor, being over, climbed into the cab and struck up some sort of relationship with the driver.

That night on the bus coming home we were all a little embarrased, especially me and the young lady in the green hat, and we started to say in different ways how hasty and foolish we had been. But then, always having been a bit-of-a-lad, I stood up and said it was a pity that the world didn’t nearly end every lunchtime and that we could always pretend. And then it happened. . . .
Quick as a crash we all changed partners and soon the bus aquiver with white mothball-bodies doing naughty things.
And the next day
and everyday
in everybus
in everystreet
in everytown
in every country
people pretended that the world was coming to an end at lunch-time. It still hasn’t. Although in a way it has: 

Roger McGough

Bell Enters the Fray

"U.S. Official Backs Parents on Textbooks," read the headline, referring to U.S. Commissioner of Education Terrel H. Bell, whose speech on December 2 to a national textbook publishers’ conference (an aide read the speech) sparked controversy. Print "materials that do not insult the values of most parents," Bell said, urging the publishers to concentrate on "good literature that will appeal to children without relying too much on blood and guts and street language for their own sake." Bell charged that some current school literature "appears to emphasize violence and obscenity and moral judgments that run counter to tradition, all in the name of keeping up with the real world." Bell felt "strongly that those who write textbooks and the teacher who chooses the books must have the approval and support of most parents." Urging moderation, he concluded:

The children’s book publishing industry and the schools need to chart a middle course between the scholar’s legitimate claim to academic freedom in presenting new knowledge and social commentary on the one hand, and the legitimate expectations of parents that schools will respect their moral and ethical values on the other.

Reaction came quickly from Executive Director Paul B. Salmon, American Association of School Administrators. Accusing Bell of "fanning the flames of . . . school textbook controversies . . . around the nation," he said, "It is frightening that the leading education official in the nation would . . . suggest [influencing] the content of classroom materials . . . . This smacks of 'Big Brother'."

Also opposing Bell, the National Education Association urged
its teachers to insist in contracts that they select textbooks and that school boards have the final say.

In Kanawha County Mrs. Alice Moore was both "delighted" and suspicious of Bell's remarks. She said she sent Bell a telegram suggesting:

Immediate cutoff of all federal funds to teacher training and promotional programs for new educational concepts until guidelines can be established to protect citizens' rights. . . . For years, HEW has been pouring funds into promotional programs that undermine basic American traditions and insult values of most parents.

Besieged with inquiries, Bell's office pointed out that his speech was not a policy statement and that the U.S. Office of Education did not make public school policy.

"Bell made some sense to me," President Craig Senft of Litton Educational Publishing Company said. He continued:

Parents should have some say in what their children get to read. But a few parents cannot be allowed to speak for all. In Kanawha County, for instance, alternative books were provided in the schools for children whose parents objected to certain books. . . . But . . . the fundamentalists didn't want the books they didn't like even to remain in the building. . . . What perturbs me is . . . people going around stirring up this sort of trouble.

**School Board Fisticuffs**

As a televised and much heckled school board meeting ended on December 12, it turned into a brawl. Protesters converged on the main table, racial slurs were heard, and a man jumped on board member F. Douglas Stump. When Underwood stepped in to separate the men, he was punched. He barely averted an oncoming woman, later arrested and fined, who tried to mace him. Slightly injured were Assistant School Supt. Robert Kittle and board member Matthew Kinsolving. Police used TV film identification to make arrests. Ironically, the board at that meeting had compromised further by approving the first private school to be managed by protesting fundamentalists.
II: WHY IT HAPPENED

NEA Inquiry

Public resentment of school authorities had been spurred by school consolidation, schedule changes, and sex education (Mrs. Moore was elected on an anti sex-education platform), said Pres. Roscoe Keeney, Kanawha County Association of Classroom Teachers. He asked for an National Education Association (NEA) inquiry on October 14. The ten-member inquiry panel, representing the NEA, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Council for the Social Studies, American Library Association, and the National Council of Churches, took evidence December 9-11 in Charleston.

"If the climate between the board, the superintendent, and the public had been healthy and open, this would not have happened or it would have been short-lived," Keeney said. A citizens' school advisory committee had "ceased to function before the current textbook controversy. Whether by design or accident, I don't know."

The panel asked Underwood how such a controversy might be avoided in the future. He had no ready answer:

We're still in the middle of this dispute. We have not had the . . . time to sit down and try to assess this situation. . . . It might take a decade before we can understand what happened.

Text selection committee members complained at having to defend the books "over catcalls and threats" during public meetings. One teacher said the controversy "cannot be solved by emotion," pointing to the heckling then being done by protest leader the Rev. Ezra Graley.
Methodist Bishop Frederick D. Wertz called the text crisis a "trumpet for powerless people. . . . In the years ahead, it would be a mistake to exclude parents from the textbook selection process. The law does not provide that they must take part, but neither does it prohibit their participation."

Agreeing with the bishop, Mail Editor Jack D. Maurice said that "the school must . . . assure parents that not only are their judgments sought but seriously entertained." He added, "If this does not help to close the gap, maybe we should consider the decentralization of the school system. We may have just gotten too big." Referring to parents, he said, "The issue is who shall control the education of their children? . . . Many believe no one has really paid any attention to the nature of their grievance." (Maurice won a 1975 Pulitzer prize for his editorials on the controversy.)

Antitext Baptist minister Henry Thaxton of the Christian American Parents said his organization would "work as long as is necessary . . . to see that the decision to reinstall the books in the schools is overturned." The controversy, he said, was "the key to exposing the entire system of arrogance and pseudo-intellectualism—an attitude that would otherwise be difficult to expose."

A pro-text English professor at West Virginia State College said that West Virginia has been "used" in an attempt to destroy intellectual freedom. "West Virginia is a place to recognize students have rights, too." Students have a right to intellectual freedom, which includes their right to have materials which are interesting, relevant, and stimulating, she said.

State School Supt. Daniel B. Taylor, who questioned NEA's decision to hold the hearings under conditions then prevailing, wrote in his statement, "Both sides may . . . use these hearings as a forum to prove the correctness of their positions, to reargue the appropriateness of the books and to refight the battles of the past months." Dr. Taylor agreed that, "In addition to the professional educator, whose role is indispensable, there is room for lay citizen assistance in textbook adoption."

PTA Council Pres. L. W. Seaman called the school board's failure to listen to opposing views a major factor in the controversy. The battle was not between the affluent and the non-
affluent, he said, pointing to people in the affluent section where he lived who also opposed the books. He proposed separate schools for those who want their children to use the books and other schools for those opposed to the books.

School board Pres. Kinsolving gave as reasons for the controversy a lack of parental input and a lack of policy guidelines on text selection.

Book protestor David M. Staton said, "Thousands . . . in this valley are tired of experiments and want to go back to basic education . . . reading, writing, and arithmetic," with some chemistry and physics at higher levels.

Teacher morale had suffered, said school principals, who found "unmanageable and unreasonable" the scheduling of classes in libraries where the school board had placed the disputed books for use by students having their parents' permission. One principal complained that although the school year was half over, language arts instruction had hardly begun. Another complained that most elementary schools had not yet had books returned to their libraries from storage.

A principal said, "I believe the good Christian people of Kanawha County have been used by far right groups for propaganda purposes. They have used the emotional turmoil of the issue as a cover to recruit."

A specialist on right-wing groups agreed. He told the NEA panel that the organizations sending representatives to Kanawha County had the same ideology as the John Birch Society.

**NEA Findings**

The NEA findings, released February 6, 1975, said that the controversy would not have been so prolonged and intense "had it not been infiltrated by representatives of highly sophisticated, well-organized right-wing extremist groups." The 87-page report listed the John Birch Society, Citizens for Decency Through Law, the Heritage Foundation, the National Parents League, and the Ku Klux Klan.

The report cautiously approved the school board's plan for alternative schools; that is, having some elementary schools focus on the three Rs without using the controversial books. "The separation of students for these purposes might increase factional-
ism,” it warned, pointing out that alternative schools “would tend to isolate further the mountain people of the county.”

The NEA panel also recommended that:
—Principals and school staffs in rural areas mount an aggressive human relations effort;
—The school board meet in different parts of the county for residents to ask questions and express views;
—A public information program be started through the media.

On text selection, the report said; “Parents should be consulted and . . . involved in the election process . . . as advisors and not as censors.” The panel asked that no state legislation be passed that would limit teachers’ rights and responsibilities to select educational materials.

The report listed these cultural differences that prompted the controversy:
—A community long divided along class lines, with differing urban and rural life styles, religious beliefs, and cultural values;
—A school system that, in its liberal educational philosophy and “apparent domination by the higher status groups within the city,” had grown remote from and alien to its conservative rural communities;
—“A failure on the part of the board and central administration to communicate effectively with their rural constituency;
—“The board had failed to anticipate an adverse reaction to the texts, failed to prepare in advance for the possibility of a protest, and failed to respond promptly and effectively to the first challenge against the books.”

The report found that the protest was in part “a reaction to the black presence in America.” To counteract racism, it was essential that

Public education . . . treat students honestly—to inform them honestly of the history of this nation and other nations and to provide them with a vast diversity of literature, classical and contemporary, according to their level of maturity, in order that they may understand and appreciate the many cultures, races and ethnic groups that comprise our society.

Mrs. Moore Objects

Mrs. Moore, who declined to attend the NEA hearings, said
on December 5, "The NEA is here to decide if there is a well-financed conspiracy to take over the schools. I can save them the trouble." She charged the NEA with conspiring to take control of schools away from parents. She went on, "When they can put $4 million into electing their own candidates to Congress, you better believe it is well-financed." She asked, "Who gave the NEA the right to come into Kanawha County to judge the mentality and intelligence of Kanawha County parents, especially with regard to moral and spiritual values?"

Mrs. Moore responded on February 7, 1975, to the NEA findings. On teachers and school administrators taking mandatory human relations courses, she said, "Human relations courses, the kind they're talking about teaching, are secular humanistic approaches to education. . . . I think it's time we got off this ethnic kick," she continued, "It's ridiculous to point to children and tell them they're from a particular ethnic group. They're Americans and that's all that matters."

On the report's charge that objections to black writings indicated a reaction to the black presence in America, she said: "Multi-ethnic, multicultural textbooks had nothing to do with it [the protest]. We've had that kind of content in books for years," she said. "We've never had any problem like that and trying to create one is scraping the bottom of the barrel."

On outside extremists she said, "Whatever role any right-wing group has played has been small. . . . What brought this national attention," she explained, "was when several thousand coal miners walked off their jobs." Only after the boycott was under way, she said, did John Birch Society representatives show up and much later the Ku Klux Klan came.

Analysis in the Press

Insights into the controversy came from Charleston Episcopal minister James Lewis, admired for his moderate views. "This county is experiencing a religious crusade as fierce as any out of the Middle Ages," he said. "Our children are being sacrificed because of the fanatical zeal of our fundamentalist brothers who claim to be hearing the deep, resonant voice of God." Elsewhere he wrote that the antitext people were confused and angry about everything from marijuana to Watergate. Feeling helpless
and left out, they were looking for a scapegoat, eager to exorcise all that is evil and foul, cleanse or burn all that is strange and foreign. "In this religious war," he wrote, "spiced with overtones of race and class, the books are an accessible target."

One writer grouped together book banners, those opposed to sex education and sensitivity training, basic education and reading phonics advocates, disciplinarians, and antibusers as part of a comprehensive assault on the public schools. They want to recapture schools from a secular humanism, offensive to their beliefs, he wrote. He saw "a kinship with the community control advocates of the late 1960s in New York and elsewhere who wanted to rescue their schools and their curriculum from the imposed values of the white majority." The book banners are winning, he concluded. A vacillating school board has favored citizen selection which "may exclude all but the most bland and noncontroversial materials."

NEA Executive Secretary Terry Herndon preferred to see the school as an agent of change. "In most places, the traditional values have included racism, sexism, white-male dominance, Protestantism," he wrote. "Some of these values should not be preserved. . . . A good school system," he concluded, "will expose children to both traditional and alternative values and let the children decide."

Writing from the mountaineer point of view, a Kanawha County librarian referred to the dominance among the contested books of those with special appeal for ghetto blacks and other minority groups. "Are the deep-felt religious needs of Appalachians of less importance?" She quoted a mountaineer woman, "I have every right to say that my children not be taught disrespect to law officers, parents and most of all to God." The librarian agreed and wrote, "As minors, children do not have the right to intellectual or academic freedom if their parents veto it." The librarian also chided some intellectuals for polarizing the issue by lending their prestige to the books without reading them or understanding the community. She pointed out that the eastern part of Kanawha County is served inadequately by bookmobiles and that "the only book many of these people use is the Bible."

Another sympathetic writer, a news editor and Davis Creek
resident, held that working parents had grounds for complaint. The books, whose values were not theirs, played up urban intellectual alienations and university protest anger of the 1960s. Some "selections were unpatriotic, sacriligious and pro-minorities," and would disrupt and change their children. The Kanawha County people, he wrote, did just what New York City black people did in the 1960s by grabbing control of their schools from unsympathetic professional educators. On religion, he wrote, "It's not that they want religion in the schools as much as that they don't want antireligion to replace it." On racism he wrote, "It wasn't so much that people couldn't stomach militant black writers, as that they couldn't abide them alone." The bad books, he felt, were a substitute for bad conditions: inflation, drugs, abortion, permissiveness, pornography, TV violence, biased media, death of God, antiwar protests, black militants, communist subversion, Watergate. "The books had a little of everything that a lot of people didn't like: people felt they could do something about the books."

A recently resigned Kanawha County school official gave as one reason for the controversy some protesters' own bad school experiences. At school the mountaineers were sometimes ridiculed, forced to drop out, and denied other avenues to gain needed skills. "Even today," he wrote, "25 percent of the students . . . drop out before graduation. Now the adult public is striking out, because of current and past frustrations." He concluded, "Local schools get blamed and attacked for developments over which they have no control."

Another former county school leader recalled local objection in the 1950s during Sen. Joseph McCarthy's anticomunist drive to a civics book containing a picture of Joseph Stalin. The objectors then, he said, were the educated and affluent in the suburbs whose equivalents are now text supporters. When an investigating committee learned that the civics book's author was a Republican on the far right with no desire to communize youth, they dropped the matter. He did not think "the current textbooks were worth the divisiveness, the uproar, the violence," and suggested that the school board get back closer to the people.

A New York Times writer familiar with Appalachian problems
listed these reasons for the textbook controversy: antagonism to such disrupting changes as short skirts, long hair, civil rights, nudity, dirty movies, and racism. To these he added: have vs. have-not class tensions, prudery, contempt for school authority that had lost touch with its constituents, corporate exploitation, and absentee-owner colonialism.

Supt. Underwood (succeeded by John F. Santrock on February 1, 1975) said, “I think a confrontation had to happen” over textbooks or a multitude of things. “The stage was set . . . five years ago with sex education,” he said, “and it has grown deeper. It goes back to the differences in educational philosophy. . . . This county is extremely diverse,” he went on, “and sooner or later the groups had to meet in a confrontation.”

The best explanation for changes in textbooks in recent years was given by a publishing company editor. “Until the late 1950s,” he wrote, “schoolbooks were homogenized and largely without individual voice and point of view. Suddenly,” he pointed out, “the television generation grew up, and with the 1960s came Vietnam, the generation gap, race consciousness, women’s liberation, student activism and many other issues. . . . Individualism and sensitivity to diversity were in,” he continued. “The industry hustled to catch up, ‘recycling’ old series and creating new ones.”

He explained, “There are now two sets of pressure groups—the old one on the Right and the new one on the Left. Textbook publishers are struggling to catch up with the second without leaving the first too far behind. . . . Where is the parent in all of this?” he asked. “Theoretically, parents, through their school teachers, administrations and boards of education, have ultimate control of textbook content. Yet their complaint that the ordinary taxpayer has had no real voice is justified,” he believed. “Now, however, parents are gaining influence at the local level, both by law and by sheer vocal power. Lay screening committees are springing up.”

The publishing executive went on, “Such committees often reveal that the argument is less with the publisher than with opposing elements within the community. The offending textbook,” he wrote, “becomes merely a catalyst that reveals deep community divisions. In Kanawha County, for instance,” he explained, “one advocate of the offending literature series holds a doctorate
from Yale, while the leading opponent is the wife of a self-ordained Church of Christ minister.”

Racism

Racism was charged but denied as central to the textbook dispute. Mrs. Alice Moore, speaking of the textbooks’ racial content, said: “I know that state law says our books must reflect multiracial, multi-ethnic, and multicultural viewpoints, but that’s no excuse for teaching or even legitimizing nonstandard English.” She continued, “They imply that if you’re black you have no chance for success in this country—that the only solution is to go get your gun and join the revolution.”

A thread of racial feeling runs throughout the year’s happenings. Court testimony given in mid-October charged a white demonstrator as shouting over a bullhorn at a black teacher, “You black nigger.” White women protesters at a rally also shouted their objection to the textbooks’ black material.

The Charleston NAACP president declared that race was involved in the controversy. He told of signs painted on rocks on the outskirts of Kanawha County saying, “Get the Negro literature out of the schools.” White protesters had told him that “references to people like Eldridge Cleaver are a disgrace and they don’t want people reading about accomplishments of this kind of person. . . . In the eastern end of the county,” he said, “it has been freely stated to us that there is heavy opposition to blacks being represented [in textbooks] and the quotes of blacks being used.” NAACP, he asserted, would seek legal means to require the school board “to employ more black administrators, teaching and support personnel” and to require all teachers to take courses in human relations.

A black woman wrote in a letter headlined “Prejudices Surfacing” in the Mail that one white person told her, “I should be against the textbooks because they degrade blacks. After I wouldn’t sign a petition against the books, another person said hatefully, ‘I don’t want my kids speaking that filthy ghetto talk your people use.’” She wrote that when she crossed a picket line to take her sister to school, “the word ‘nigger’ rang out from the mouth of one of these so-called Christians.”

The possibility for an ugly racial incident occurred when 100
whites, some armed, assembled Sunday night, November 10, 1974, after an antitext rally. A rumor had swept Campbells Creek, spread by word of mouth and by citizens’ band radios, that carloads of blacks were heading there “supposedly to raise hell.” Police patrolled the area, called the rumor unfounded, and dispersed the whites gathered for possible confrontation.

In January 1975 Ku Klux Klan leaders came to Charleston. A Charleston NAACP representative said that the KKK needed members and was trying to use the textbook issue to set up a beachhead in West Virginia. One KKK visitor from Ohio, a minister dressed in KKK’s red theological garb, warned an antitext crowd about intermarriage and “niggers that rape our daughters, flood our jails and burn our cities.” Derogatory remarks were also made about Jews. At an NAACP news conference, the KKK was scored as trying to “interject the poison of racial bigotry and hatred among the people of Kanawha County to such a magnitude that has not been seen in years.”

Klan leaders offered legal aid to the Rev. Marvin Horan, an antitext leader. Indicted with others on January 17, 1975, for plotting the bombing of Midway Elementary School, he was found guilty and sentenced on May 19, 1975. His sentencing marked a probable end of the bitter textbook controversy that had rocked Kanawha County. But scars remain.

Placard Slogans

Feelings generated by the controversy were expressed in these representative signs carried at rallies and on picket lines.

Pro-textbook:  —No Books No School
—Books In! People In!
—We Have the Right to an Education With the Books

Antitextbook:   —I Belong to God
                Please Take Out Those Books
                I do not want my mind
                Corrupted [sic]
—I HAVE A BIBLE
—I DON’T NEED THOSE
DIRTY BOOKS
—No Peaceful Coexistence with Satanic Communism
—Trash is for Burning
—Wish We Had More People Like Sweet Alice [Alice Moore]
—NEA, Con Artist for Control
—Jesus Yes, Textbooks Nyet
—Even Hillbillies Have Constitutional Rights
III: LESSONS

What lessons can be drawn from Kanawha County to avoid or resolve similar controversies?

It remains true that the American people ultimately control education, that the U.S. Constitution reserves to the states and local communities control of schools. But with schools forced to be agents of social change, more community groups now attempt to use the schools for their own ends.

American education has always reflected national social, economic, and political movements. School and society have always been interrelated, one serving, affecting, and being affected by the other. But the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court school desegregation decision made schools instruments of national social policy. Along with school desegregation has come a drive to recognize cultural diversity. Ethnic pride has modified the melting pot theory. A new determination has grown to preserve minority values and perspectives. Consequently, administering local school systems has become more difficult.

When all or most of the people are not involved, as happened in Kanawha County, educational professionals tend to monopolize school control. If reaction sets in, as it did in Kanawha County, quiescent people become vocal. Benign issues like textbook selection become explosive. Confrontation occurs. Then, hasty decisions must be made, and policies that appease one group antagonize another. To do nothing is also dangerous. School leaders, suddenly and vigorously challenged, grope to find
ways to contain and manage conflict, to negotiate and win compromise.

School leaders need legal sophistication, not only to help them through the maze of federal and state rulings, but because power groups use the courts to force their own ends.

How can school leaders anticipate and prepare for contingencies, as they perhaps could not do in Kanawha County? They need to be informed of the interests of all segments of the community. Such awareness can provide precious lead time. A school leader obviously benefits from an early warning system. It pays to have antennae to detect distant rumblings before they build feelings. He needs contacts throughout the community whom he can call or who will call him about important developments. Such a network, an informal “school board,” can usefully extend the school leader’s own eyes and ears. He is in contact with such major community groups as business and commercial interests, women’s and church groups, but perhaps not with minority groups and movements. These may be elusive or restrictive. But if such groups are identifiable, the school leader’s perspicacity in making contact with them will stand him in good stead.

Similarly, exposure of the school leader’s views and concerns and regular exchange of ideas and issues through any medium, organization, or platform, is helpful. He can try to anticipate and formulate contingency plans, try to construct guidelines covering such possibilities as riots, boycotts, demonstrations, fire bombings, explosions. These guidelines can be discussed and might even be improved through conferences with law enforcement, media, and other community leaders. One would hope that, by having and sharing guidelines on possible catastrophes, the media, for example, would be prepared to report but not sensationalize, would analyze in depth, and would help citizens achieve mature understanding, as indeed the Kanawha County media tried to do.

School board members, who formerly represented major community concerns, now often represent special interest groups. A school leader’s challenge is to work with such board members, try to broaden their horizons as they try to broaden his, to acquaint them with educational problems, as they try to acquaint
him with their group's special interests. The school leader's job, now more than ever before, is to work out compromise among group interests and school interests. As much as he administers the school system, he now also works to "orchestrate" special pressure groups, to harmonize them with the schools' best interests.

As for citizen involvement in textbook selection, heart of the Kanawha County controversy, bills have been introduced to amend the West Virginia state law to assure such involvement. In Kanawha County, where citizen input had been removed, its reinstatement under heavy fire led to a swing of the pendulum toward dangerous citizen censorship. A fair balance is necessary between citizen input and the professional direction of teachers who work closest with the books. Student input is also desirable at upper school levels since they learn from the experience and also can perhaps explain more effectively to parents what the books and the schools intend to accomplish. The role of the school board members and of the superintendent and his staff is crucial in having soundly rationalized textbook selection guidelines, in examining the books, and in monitoring the entire selection procedure to assure that good judgment and careful selection preclude the impulse for censorship.

Kanawha County provides insight into our time—that people feel helpless, voiceless, and afraid of rapid change. They are put off balance by the concentrated troubles of our times. Kanawha County parents struck back at the schools through textbooks in the same way the English Luddites sabotaged the spinning jenny and French peasants once threw wooden shoes to disrupt textile machinery. As the Bible is accepted as the perfect guide, so having McGuffey and similar safe textbooks was comforting and secure.

People see the school as a last bastion of community control and the textbook as its ultimate symbol. The angry ones cannot burn Washington, but they can attack what is theirs, their own schools. Textbooks, which in every age mirror the morality, social relations, and political consensus of the time, reflect these same things now. But the status quo in America is not peace and plenty but wrenching change and the frustration of unfinished challenges.
The battle of the books is a battle for man's destiny. The control of schools is a legally shared responsibility that gives all the people a chance to help shape that destiny.

What of tomorrow? Hopefully, Kanawha County's winter of discontent is past. And with spring has come growth, change, and wisdom. It is time again for peace in the valley.
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