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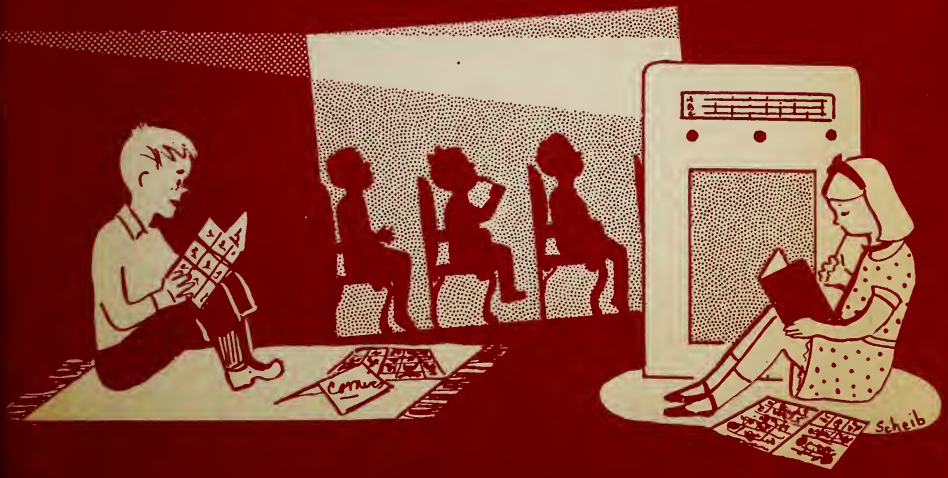
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PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 148

COMICS, RADIO, MOVIES — AND CHILDREN

BY JOSETTE FRANK



Some appraisals of
COMICS, RADIO, MOVIES—AND CHILDREN
by members of the distinguished panel of 30 critics who
assisted in the preparation of this Public Affairs Pamphlet:

S. HARCOURT PEPPARD, M.D., Director, Essex County Juvenile Clinic, Newark, New Jersey. (Formerly Acting Director, Bureau of Child Guidance)

"The general tone of this statement is the best that it has ever been my privilege to read. I am particularly impressed by the success achieved in giving both sides of the story and thus presenting a very constructive and objective point of view."

ERNEST OSBORNE, Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

"It seems to me that it deals with all the important problems in a very judicious way and does not take an extreme position on either side. I am sure it will be useful to parents."

LAURETTA BENDER, M.D., Senior Psychiatrist, New York University—Bellevue Medical Center.

"I am glad to report that I found the general tone meeting with my approval."

JUDGE ANNA M. KROSS, Consultant, Youth Conservation Committee, General Federation of Women's Clubs.

"This pamphlet is a comprehensive yet simple and readable analysis of the most controversial of the new media for reaching the masses. Its sane and impartial evaluation of the good and bad uses of radio, movies, and comics should commend it to all. I would recommend it particularly to parents, teachers, and civic leaders."

HARVEY ZORBAUGH, Professor of Education, School of Education, New York University.

"... excellent job, objective and constructive; will be reassuring to parents who have been made very jittery by newspaper stories and magazine articles."

MRS. SAMUEL A. LEWISOHN, Chairman Board of Trustees, Public Education Association, New York, N. Y.

"... will be extremely helpful to parents, teachers, and other citizens interested in the welfare of children."

GOODWIN WATSON, Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

"There have been piecemeal attacks before on this problem that has bothered a lot of people, but this is the first comprehensive and valid treatment of the problem."

EDWIN J. LUCAS, Executive Director, Society for the Prevention of Crime.

"On the whole, I think it is an admirably done job and should prove to be both readable and provocative."

JEAN SCHICK GROSSMAN, Director of Parent Education, Play Schools Association, New York, New York.

"... extremely valuable to parents, particularly now, in view of all the conflicting opinions that have added to their anxieties. This is a fine clarification of how these media can be used wisely in the life of a family."

LYMAN BRYSON, Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Counsellor on Public Affairs of Columbia Broadcasting System.

"It strikes down the middle of the road in advising parents on how to meet the problems that these mass media create. If anything, I would say it is somewhat too kind in its statement of the damage that these things can do. The pamphlet will be a very useful publication."

COMICS, RADIO, MOVIES —AND CHILDREN

By JOSETTE FRANK

COMICS, radio, movies, and television—these are a part of our children's world today. They are among the ways by which words and ideas, our culture and our thinking, are being passed along to our children. Yet many view these new developments with misgivings, and yearn for the good old days when a child could sit down with a book without being distracted by the voice of the radio and the ever-present lure of a comics magazine.

This wish might astonish parents of not so many generations ago who looked upon books themselves as breeders of idleness and daydreaming. When the invention of printing made books available to everyone, pleasure reading was first forbidden, then restricted. Not so many years ago *Gulliver's Travels* and *Huckleberry Finn* were forbidden reading for the young. Today we not only accept books, we hope and sometimes insist that our children read them. Indeed, many parents now resist comics, radio, and movies on the ground that they take time which might otherwise be spent with "a good book." Sooner or later, however, we shall probably accept these new developments, too, and learn to use them as we have learned to use books.

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Some of the Questions Parents Ask

Toward that end we need to know more about these "lively arts." What are they doing to our children, and for our children? What are their values? Their dangers? How can we make them serve our boys and girls better than they do now? How shall we manage our children's radio listening, movie going, and comics reading? As members of the community, what can we do to safeguard not only our own children but all children against the abuses to which all three forms have been subject? How can we help develop these forms as creative instruments for children's pleasure and profit?

This pamphlet is an attempt to answer some of these questions.

THE COMICS

LET'S look at the comics first. What are these comics, anyway? What's in them? Why do children—almost all children—love them so? Why do some adults condemn them? What effect do they have on young readers? Shall we forbid them? Shall we ignore them? Can we "improve" them?

Some Facts About the Comics

To begin with, the "comics" are badly misnamed. The name is a carry-over from the early days when comic strips in the newspapers were supposed to make people laugh. Many of today's comics are not funny, and do not pretend to be, though people still refer to the comics magazines as "joke books" or "funnies." Some of the strips are still humorous, however—a few with deep and subtle humor, but most of the slapstick and nonsensical variety. Some comics magazines are sprinkled with jokes and funny shorts in between other content.

Today's comics trace their origin back to the hilarious and sadistic picture strips of Max and Moritz, created by the German artist Wilhelm Busch almost a hundred years ago. Direct descendants of these two bad boys are, of course, *The Katzenjammer Kids* and *The Captain and the Kids*, two strips that appear both in newspapers and in comics magazines and have been high favorites with many generations of children. But actually the art of telling stories in picture strips is older than history. Examples of such art have been left by the early Egyptians and the cave dwellers.

In American newspapers, comics were introduced at the turn of the century. These were intended for adult newspaper readers, but the children loved them, so it was natural that others should soon appear, addressed directly to the young audience. It remained for our age of mass production to gather the comic strips into magazine form to be sold on newsstands, and make them Big Business.



The figures are staggering: Today fifty million comics magazines are sold on newsstands every month. It is estimated that of the seventy million purchasers of such magazines annually, about 40 per cent are children between the ages of eight and eighteen. Of course, each book has many more readers, since children circulate them by "swapping" or resale as long as the pages hold together. Surveys point to the likelihood that 98 per cent of all children between the ages of eight and twelve read comics. These readers come from all types of homes and cultural backgrounds, rich and poor, city and country, well-educated and uneducated. Intelligence quotients seem to make no difference, for comics are read by bright and dull children alike, although the bright children are likely to outgrow them earlier.

What's in the Comics?

What is in these magazines? The greater portion of them still fall, roughly, into about the same groups that children's reading always has: adventure, fantasy and magic, crime and detective, westerns, humor and nonsense, humanized animals, adolescent jitterbug capers, stories about real people, and history and current events.

Along with these, however, are an increasing number of highly unsavory crime and horror stories, many of them sadistic and full of sex excitement, whose covers scream with lurid pictures, often promising more murder or more sex interest than their inside pages offer. At present, there is no way to distinguish—without reading them—the comics that are suitable for children

from these unsavory ones. In general, the latter are not among the high favorites with younger readers, but are more apt to attract adolescents and adults.

In quality the comics differ widely. At the top are some really fine artists whose drawing is superb comic art and whose strips are justly famous: *Terry and the Pirates*, originally created and until recently drawn by Milt Caniff; Soglow's *Little King*; and Bud Fisher's original funny men, *Mutt and Jeff*. Some of the art in comics is mediocre, and some of it is outrageously bad. The same is true of the story material. In terms of its own kind, some of it is imaginative, spritely, and funny; some is commonplace or lacking in taste. Editorial policy ranges from care for details of background and information, and high standards of drawing and editing, to the most slovenly neglect of grammar and spelling.

Naturally, too, the social views of editors and publishers find their way into the comics, just as they do in newspapers. (Twenty per cent of comics magazines consist of reprints from newspaper strips.) Sometimes the cartoonist expresses his own social viewpoint. *Little Orphan Annie* has sometimes appeared as the protagonist of management against labor. *Li'l Abner* satirizes Big Business. *Terry and the Pirates* fights for social justice. *Superman* strikes at the roots of juvenile delinquency, and so on.

A few of the leading publishers of comics magazines maintain advisory boards of educators and psychiatrists who pass upon their material from the point of view of its suitability for children and who have set up standards for guidance in this respect.

Why Do Children Love Comics?

What is the fascination of the comics? Probably the greatest common ingredient is *action*. Children like things to happen, and in the comics they do, fast and furiously. The very first page, even the cover, offers a sort of preview of things to come. And from the very outset there is never a dull moment. Even the gentler types of comics never let the reader down, but maintain a swift pace from beginning to end.

The action is easy to follow; the relation of cause and effect clear and immediate. As one child put it: "You know by the pictures what the people are doing, and you know by the balloons which person is saying what." You also know by the pictures which are the "good" people and which the "bad," and you know more or less what to expect of them. The young reader

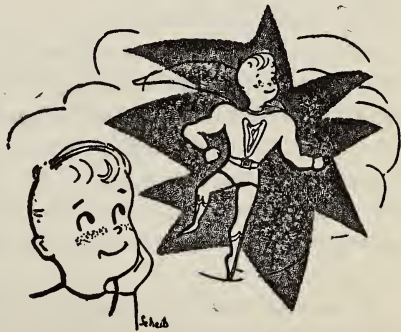
gets a lot for his money—and with very little effort. Since reading is, for most children, a difficult skill to master to the point of enjoyment, this is no small factor in the popularity of the comics.

The fact that all the action is of the biff bang variety, with everybody and everything being battered about, is especially pleasing to youngsters to whom physical encounters are always fascinating and forbidden. They can hardly take all this very seriously since they take it quite for granted that the battered victims will get up in the very next picture and go into action again, just as, in their own games, the “dead” soldiers or cops or robbers are expected to pick themselves up after the fight and join the play.

Very satisfying to the youngsters, too, is the pattern of the comics. To many of us they seem stereotyped, with endless repetition of theme and character. But for children this offers a certain security: They can count on everything turning out as they would have it, for it always does. There is reassurance in knowing that the “good guys” will defeat the “bad guys,” no matter what the odds. Just as in the classic fairy tale, the hero will be in danger many times, almost outdone, but always triumphant, thus satisfying children’s need for a “moral ending.”

For many children the comics provide a reflection of their own fantasies. Identifying themselves with the hero or the villain, they are in there punching.

They fancy themselves strong and invincible, able to overcome the limitations of time and space, defending the weak and routing evil. Or they are clever and wicked, but authority steps in (in the form of the law) and their guilt feelings are resolved by punishment of the villain. Perhaps they find in



these fancied roles some escape from the frustrations that go with being “small fry” in a world full of people bigger and stronger than they are. Here, too, as in the classic folk tales, children may find release for pent-up feelings of hate, anger, fear, and aggression. Civilized living demands that they speak softly and behave nicely. But along with the fabulous characters in the comics

they can fight their enemies, rescue their friends, rough-handle the people who stand between them and their goals, and generally break through the painful restrictions that go with learning to be civilized.

What Is Their Effect?

So much controversy has raged about the comics that it is hard to separate the facts from the feelings that run so high. The emotional atmosphere that seems to surround this whole question will not help solve the very real problems that are raised, not so much by the comics as such, as by their quantity, their availability, and the abuses to which they have been subject. Many of the recent attacks on the comics have made parents anxious as a result of the scare headlines. This is unfortunate, because anxious parents may do more damage to their children than comics reading! The critics are apt to point to the "horrible examples," without reassuring parents that comics are not all like this and children are not all like this. It is deplorable that sordid and vulgar picture magazines, of any kind, by any name, should be displayed and sold to children. But it should be possible to eliminate these abuses without depriving millions of children of their pleasure in *Donald Duck*, and without terrifying parents into battling with their children over comics reading.

Crime and the Comics

Nor is there any basis in fact for the current news headlines which blame comics for children's delinquent acts, or for reckless claims that they have caused a rise in juvenile crime. Certainly we cannot accept at its face value the plea of a frightened child, hoping to please the judge by his "reasons," that he committed his crime because he "saw it in the comics" or "in the movies." Yet such confessions have been quoted as "proof" of the damage wrought by comics.

In an article in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Dr. Frederick Wertham attempts to trace crime to comics: "A twenty-year-old youth in New York City has just killed a policeman. Is that so astonishing when he can see anywhere a typical comic-book cover showing a man and a woman shooting it out with the police?" This brings us no closer to understanding the deep troubles of this youth. And the anxiety it creates in parents brings them no closer to understanding their children's needs.

The causes of crime are not so simple! Children have always done dangerous things, damaging themselves and others. They do not know why they are driven to behave as they do. We shall not cure the causes of this juvenile behavior by blaming it on their reading, or on the radio, or the movies. It lies much deeper, in our society's failure to meet the basic needs of these children.

In response to an inquiry, Edwin J. Lukas, Director of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, writes: "I am un-



aware of the existence of any scientifically established causal relationship between the reading of comic books and delinquency. It is my feeling that efforts to link the two are an extension of the archaic impulse by which, through the ages, witchcraft, evil spirits, and other superstitious beliefs have in turn been blamed for anti-social behavior."

On this question, Dr. Mandel Sherman, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Chicago, states from his experience: "In studying the causes of behavior problems of children for many years, I have never seen one instance of a child whose behavior disturbance originated in the reading of comic books, nor even a case of a delinquent whose behavior was exaggerated by such readings. A child may ascribe his behavior to a comic he has read or a movie he has seen. But such explanations cannot be considered scientific evidence of causation."

The fact that a large number of comic books deal in crime, or at least in violence of one kind or another, reflects the desire of a large number of people, including children, to read about crime and violence. This is nothing new. The greatest literature of all time—Shakespeare, Homer, even the classic fairy tales—abounds in violent deeds. These, in their own time, reflected the deep inner needs of people. They still do.

The question whether reading about violence provides safe release for children's aggressive impulses or may, in some instances, stimulate them to aggressive behavior, cannot be answered readily except in terms of the individual child's reactions. Psychiatrists point out that many children find deep satisfaction

in sharing the daring deeds of their heroes, that those few children who are driven to experiment with danger would be as likely to respond to any other stimuli. Anything they see or hear may suggest the pattern if the drive is there. There is no substitute for parental vigilance!

Do Comics Create Fears?

In the spring of 1948 *Child Study* asked a number of leading psychiatrists whether they have found that comics, movies, and radio create fears in children. All of those interviewed were agreed that radio programs, movies, and comics do not in themselves create fears, but may—for certain children and under certain conditions—precipitate or stimulate anxieties that lie beneath the surface, ready to be awakened. There were wide differences of opinion, however, as to the harmfulness or helpfulness of this material. Dr. Augusta Alpert held that while some children appear to be more immune than others, “comics of the thriller variety make aggression too easy and colorful and in that way threaten the eruption of the child’s own aggressive impulses.” Dr. Lauretta Bender, on the other hand, saw positive values in comics reading: “Much of what they find in the comics deals with their own unconscious fantasies. . . . Comics constitute experience with activity, motility, movement. Their heroes overcome time and space. This gives children a sense of release rather than fear.”

All of those interviewed stressed the need for moderation, and the importance of knowing each child’s vulnerability and “tolerance point” for this kind of excitement. Many children, they pointed out, seem almost to enjoy testing their own capacity to be frightened. For some children, however, horror stories, whether in comics or elsewhere, may be too threatening. Fearful children often protect themselves by avoiding this type of reading. When they do not, we may have to safeguard them.

All children, even the hardest, should be protected from the type of comics magazines whose pages drip with horror and blood. No good can be served by pictures or stories which exploit the appetites of a horror-loving public. While crime stories seem to hold a fascination for many children, as they do for many adults, the point at which this enjoyment becomes unwholesome for the young reader is one which must be carefully watched. A child too preoccupied with crime or horror is showing us plainly

that he needs help. *Excessive* comics reading, too, may be a symptom of disturbance. Dr. Edith Weigert, in the survey already cited, pointed out that "a yearning for anything in excess is a symptom of some disturbance. The child who is excessively absorbed in thrillers, whether in comics, radio, or movies, should be helped to find more creative interests." The problem then is not so much to control or limit this reading, but to help the child find better ways of coping with his difficulties. This can sometimes be done by channeling his interest into other activities; sometimes by helping him talk out his problems. Sometimes more direct psychiatric help is called for.

Comics and Books

Can't children find in books the same pleasures they look for in the comics? They can, and many do. The output of children's books, well-written and beautifully illustrated and printed, has increased greatly. Many young readers devour them and beg for more. For the not-too-skilful reader, however, many of these books, including some of the classics, are simply too difficult or too long. Many such children would read nothing at all if they didn't have the comics.

Librarians know, too, that many very good readers of very good books also read comics. Between these two extremes of non-readers and good readers there are probably many comics readers who will go on to other reading if books are made available and attractive to them—not necessarily "classics," but contemporary, fast-moving, easy-to-read stories. This introduction to books does not happen by itself. It calls for help and guidance from parents, teachers, and librarians. There is no need for an "either-or" attitude—books *or* comics. Children can read both.

Whether comics reading is a strain on children's eyes is a question to which more study should be given. In 1942 a study of "Legibility in Comic Books" was reported by Lukiesch and Moss in the *Sight-Saving Review*, citing wide differences among these magazines in respect to size and readability of the lettering used. The report concluded that "most comic books represent a great step backward in the matter of safeguarding the eyesight of children." It offered specific suggestions for improved readability of captions and balloons. Some comics magazines have since made efforts to conform with these excellent and very

simple suggestions, but a great many of them are still far below standard in this respect.

Parents and Comics Reading

Perhaps the most frequent complaint about comics magazines is that they are so many, so available, and so persistent. Even the parent who raises objections to them on any or all of the counts



mentioned would tolerate an occasional comic book. But hordes of them! Not only does a child amass them for rereading, but he clings to his hoard, guarding it against housecleaning mothers and borrowing playmates. Not only at home, but everywhere he goes there are comics. One cannot shut them out for they are every-

where. Forbidding is worse than useless—even if it were desirable—for it only drives their reading underground.

A child reading a comic is lost to all else. He hears not, neither does he see. This can be pretty irritating in a household when chores and routines have to be done. And in the classroom, how can arithmetic or grammar compete with the surreptitious comics magazine?

The answer to many of these problems seems to lie in the same kind of wise and understanding management we use in all our relationships with our children. There is a time for reading and a time for other things. There are limits beyond which anything may be harmful. These limits cannot be fixed for all children and all times, but are governed rather by the needs of the moment and the needs of the child. We cannot count on rules and dictums: one comics magazine a week, one comic for every "good" book read, one old one discarded for every new one bought. Such devices are meaningless and arbitrary and lead to endless bargaining and bickering. On the other hand, a child can, if he feels his parent is sympathetic, accept the reasonableness of a suggestion to postpone the comics until after his homework is done, or his practicing, or the dishwashing. He can understand

why he should not bring comics to school where more urgent matters demand his attention. Such suggestions or directives, however unwelcome, are reasonable and understandable—and most children will respond to them, especially if they are free at other times to read as they choose.

The guidance we give to his selection will depend upon our understanding of the particular child's needs and interests. His choices will often give us clues to the needs he is trying to meet through his reading. Does he prefer the less exciting Disney animals or the sheer lunacy of Popeye? Does he like true stories and real heroes, or prefer fantasy and magic? Dr. Katherine Wolf, has found that usually children progress from one of these interests to another, as they grow through various stages in their own development. Young children prefer the gentler animal fables and cartoons. At seven or eight or nine they turn to the more fantastic and magical, and thence to the more realistic "could be possible" tales.

Within each of these categories there are good and bad comics among which we may help children select those which are better edited, better printed, and better drawn. We need to know what is in these magazines and what are the differences among them. We can help children arrive at standards of their own for selecting the best and recognizing the unsuitable. As with everything else within the child's reach—his play, his sports, even his food—he needs parental guidance, and he will accept it if it is based on parental understanding that he also has reasons for his choices, and tastes of his own. These will change and develop and grow as his interests and experiences expand.

Can We Improve the Comics?

We can help to raise the standards of publishing in this, as we have in other fields, by asking for really good story material and good art work. To succeed, however, we shall have to define "good" in terms that appeal to children. The children have some reason to suspect adult recommendations of "a good book"—they expect it to be dull, or at least difficult. They will not permit us to take the heart out of their comics. Neither can we safely resort to censorship laws to determine what is and what is not suitable reading for our children. Standards must be based on

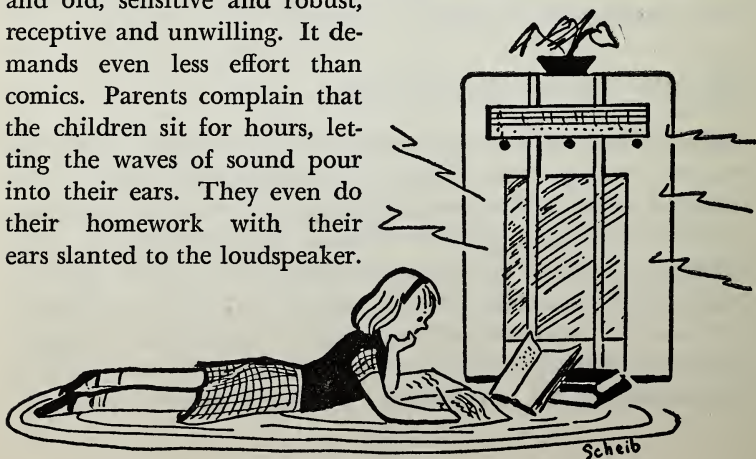
a sensitive understanding of many kinds of young readers as well as of the comics themselves.

Picture strips offer great possibilities for education as well as for pleasure. They are one of the most effective means yet found to tell a story. They convey ideas to many who find reading difficult. It will be a pity if our impatience with some comics magazines blinds us to the virtues of others and shuts off further experimentation with them. Comics can be inspired and imaginative, interesting and funny, informative and meaningful. There is no reason not to make more of them so.

RADIO COMES IN

RADIO attracts children for many of the same reasons as do the comics. And it raises most of the same objections from parents and teachers: that radio listening interferes with other activities, wastes time which might better be spent in reading, athletics, outdoor fun, or creative activity; that what the children hear dulls their tastes; that listening to crime programs may inspire them to crime; and, above all, that the horror and mystery programs induce nightmares.

Radio listening is in certain respects more difficult for parents to manage than the comics reading. It cannot be confined to a particular listener—it reaches everyone within earshot, young and old, sensitive and robust, receptive and unwilling. It demands even less effort than comics. Parents complain that the children sit for hours, letting the waves of sound pour into their ears. They even do their homework with their ears slanted to the loudspeaker.



“Ear-massage,” one mother calls it. Yet children can do more than listen. They can and often do participate. For radio is, in a very true sense, a people’s art.

It is a young art, however—younger than the movies, younger than comic strips. Programs for children began almost with the beginning of popular broadcasting. The earliest juvenile programs were fresh and creative, some of them more so than anything that has appeared since. Some years ago, the Columbia Broadcasting System introduced its Saturday morning half-hour of *Let’s Pretend* in which the traditional folk and fairy tales are dramatized with a light touch and performed by talented youngsters, professionally trained. Throughout the years this program has remained a classic favorite with many children—and their parents, too. Older children, however, were soon attracted to serialized adventure-drama. The *Lone Ranger* has ridden the western plains three or more nights a week these fifteen years, to the exciting strains of the William Tell Overture—known to many of the younger generation only as “the Lone Ranger music.”

What Is There to Hear?

In the short span of years since their beginning, children’s radio programs have developed in many directions, both for better and for worse. Improved skills and techniques have generally raised the level of performance. Today, children can turn the dials to a wide variety of programs keyed especially to their interests. These include songs and storytelling, dramatized adventures (some based on comics characters), hobbies, variety shows with child participants, children’s quiz shows and forums, historical and biographical sketches, science and nature programs, stories from the classics and the Bible, and music. In the past few years there has been a considerable development of programs especially designed for teen-agers: comedy sketches, discussion forums, book reviews, fashion notes, disc jockeys, and variety programs, some of the latter featuring name bands, others inviting audience participation. A few of these are on major networks, but the greater number and variety are carried on local stations.

The fact that a network program can draw upon more money, more talent, and more technical skill in its presentation, often gives it more pulling power than a local program on the same hour; but this is not always the case. A local program may be just as acceptable to the young listener as one originating on a

network, provided it is also just as good. To be successful, the local program must be resourceful in using community interest, talents, facilities, and local appeal.



In radio listening, just as in comics, movies, and other interests, children's tastes differ. Some boys and girls avoid the thrillers, preferring the milder entertainment of music or comedy, or the more thoughtful quiz or forum discussions. There can be no doubt, however, that the largest audience is attracted to the blood-and-thunder adventure serials.

These are the programs which are the time-clock for great numbers of school-age children. A recent offer of an "atomic ring" on one adventure serial recently—in return, of course, for the usual box-top—brought three and a half million responses.

While these adventure serials seem to follow a formula or pattern, they are not really "all alike," as casual listeners think, but differ widely, not only in their content and characters, but also in the skill and care of their script writing and production. Some of them are hackneyed, lacking integrity in plot and background. Others are imaginative and sincere, with honest characterization and carefully authenticated background. Some stress attitudes on social problems—*Terry and the Pirates* (based upon the comic strip) builds ties of sympathy and understanding with the people of the Orient; *Superman* champions the cause of minorities in our own country; during the war *Hop Harrigan* provided authentic information about planes and flying for air-minded youngsters; the *Lone Ranger* has for many years highlighted traditions of American frontier life in our Great West. Thus, some of these programs serve our children, much as books do, offering entertainment, information, and background. Some of them offer little beyond suspense and excitement, though the children seem to enjoy them nevertheless.

It is these programs which have drawn the greatest criticism from parents, who complain that they are full of violence, suspenseful, and over-stimulating. Almost always the program that is most heartily disapproved of in any poll of parental opinion

turns out to be the one enjoying the highest rating with the young audience. The children, on the other hand, often reject parentally "approved" programs as dull and unexciting, no matter how desirable they may be from other points of view. One committee of parents which issued a carefully selected list of "recommended" juvenile programs, rechecked a year later and discovered that all but one of the "approved" programs had disappeared from the air, though most of the programs not so listed were kept on the air, presumably by audience demand.

Chills and Thrills

What are they finding in this listening that keeps them coming back daily for more? Like the comics, adventure programs provide for many children escape from the humdrum of ordinary living. Where in their daily routines will most of our children today find opportunities for adventure? Certainly not on city or even suburban streets, in communities hedged around with restrictions. Not in our shrinking homes, crowded and ill-planned for childhood. Not even in the routines of school and the supervised playground. Small wonder that so many children search for it in radio listening, movies, and comics. Along with their favorite hero they can fly through the air, travel to remote corners of the earth in search of buried treasure, or zoom by airplane to the deepest jungles. They can live dangerously yet remain within the reassuring safety of home.

Great numbers of children seem to take in their stride an amazing amount of blood and thunder and remain seemingly undamaged by it. Their hero's perpetual state of jeopardy they take quite casually, having long since discovered that the hero always survives these threats—else the program could not continue tomorrow. They seem to prefer programs with plenty of action, sound effects, suspense, and violent happenings. Do we have to give them what they want? The answer again seems to be that we need to determine for each child how much is enough, how much is too much.

Whether or not such programs are over-stimulating or frightening will depend on the particular child who listens, and somewhat, too, on the quantity of such listening. This has already been discussed in relation to comics. That these programs sometimes provide the stuff from which nightmares are made is not

surprising since everything in the child's experience is grist to the mill of his fantasies. The fact that a particular experience—whether radio program, comics, or movies—gives form to his dreams does not necessarily make it harmful. It may possibly be helpful in providing a pattern for working out problems of his own. We do not know, with certainty, how far such experiences provide release or how far they increase tension. Psychiatrists suggest, however, that where a child seems to be unduly disturbed by radio, movies, or comics, he may need to be protected from such experiences. But beyond that, parents will want to examine other factors which may be contributing to his fears. Talking over his fears with him may give us the key to his problems—and only by understanding these can we really protect him from experiences which may be too much for him. Just prohibiting a particular program won't solve the problem. And general prohibitions against listening will, in the long run, not work. We want to enrich the child's life, rather than restrict it, by providing attractive activities, new interests, real adventures that may supply those things which he lacks and for which he is seeking.

Responding to pressure from parents, the networks and some producers of children's adventure serials have made efforts to tone down the excitement in their programs, and especially the suspense of the "cliff-hanger" by which they hope to carry over the child's listening interest from one day to the next. A number of the serial programs have been converted to half-hour complete episodes. Some parents complain that the programs are still too exciting. Children complain that they are not exciting enough!

Children and Adult Programs

One disconcerting result of some of the efforts to "reform" children's programs has been to divert young listeners to adult programs which are not subject to censorship as "juvenile" entertainment. Certainly we cannot insist that all programs on the air be geared to children's needs. Yet more children listen to such programs as *The Shadow* and *The Inner Sanctum* than to any so-called "juvenile" program. It is not hard to see why. Even the most daring juvenile adventure serial would be hard put to it to compete with the violence, the pace, and the grueling suspense of these adult crime and mystery programs. Evidently children like it rough, and when they don't get what they want in their own programs, they take it where they find it.

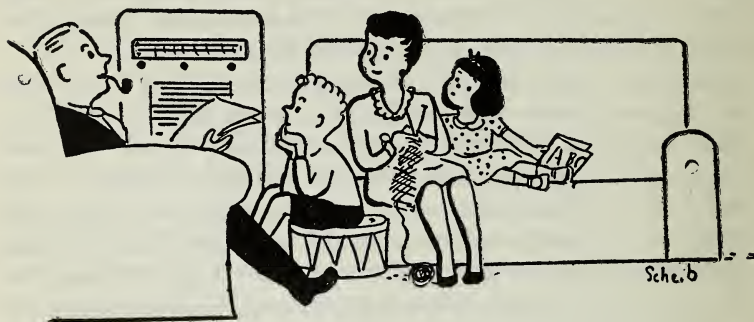
One network (which has no "juveniles" in the late afternoon) has attempted to handle this problem by announcing that it now schedules no crime or mystery programs before 9 p.m., E.S.T., thus making them unavailable for young listeners in one time zone. If this plan were generally followed by all networks and stations (including rebroadcasts in different time-belts) it might meet part of the problem. It would safeguard young children from programs not geared to their capacities. Further, it would relieve the so-called juvenile programs from pressure to compete with more and better murders on the adult shows. It would not, however, solve the question of providing these particular young listeners with the thrills they seem to be looking for. Experience warns us that they will turn elsewhere for excitement.

A surprising number of children, girls more than boys, listen to daytime dramas—the so-called "soap operas." Parents are often amazed to find their youngsters listening breathlessly to a medley of intrigue, romance, divorce, jealousy, blackmail, love, and hate in melodramatic scenes never intended for young ears. Much of this would seem to be far out of range of their childish understanding and experience. Why do they listen? Perhaps for the very reason that such emotional matters in adult affairs are usually carefully veiled from our children. Yet they have already sensed that more goes on in the adult world than meets the eye—or ear—and they want to know. Unfortunately, the distorted pictures they get from these heart-throb dramas will hardly clarify these dark matters for them. At six or seven or eight (they listen as young as that!) they will get only the emotional overtones and a sense of satisfaction from just being included. But the nine- or ten- or eleven-year-old may find the soap opera's standard of human relationship mystifying or even disturbing. Here again it is not by forbidding such listening but by listening with them and then by talking over and interpreting what we hear together that we can best help our children. Many a good family discussion has been inspired by a bad radio program!

Learning to Discriminate

Along with all the sound and fury—adventure, crime, and mystery—the young people are also listening to quiz programs, educational and informational discussion, dramas, comedy, music, sports, and news. Some of it is first-rate radio; some of it is pure corn. Such programs as *The Aldrich Family* and *A Date With*

Judy have a large teen-age listenership. *The Great Gildersleeve*, *Charlie McCarthy*, and *Baby Snooks* draw children of all ages. Some boys and girls are highly selective in their listening; some listen indiscriminately. This sampling, of movies and comics as well as radio, is one of the ways in which children learn not only what there is in the world to choose from, but also what they like and what they don't. It is one of the ways of learning to discriminate. Our job is to keep them in touch with a variety of things that are being offered, to offer them a balanced diet, and to help them arrive at their own standards of selection.



Listening Together

Our wisest course is to listen with the children to the programs they most enjoy, not with a view to criticizing their choices or ridiculing their tastes, but rather to keeping informed about what they are hearing and being prepared to discuss the programs with them. Listening together is a sharing of experience which can replace the fast disappearing practice of family reading together.

If we are patient and tolerant, we can watch the evolution of our children's tastes and interests, watch them discard one program and go on to others, as they grow in discrimination and judgment. We can invite them to listen with us to the programs we enjoy, and find a common ground of fun and interest in comedy, drama, music, or sports. We need not expect them to desert their childish delights and to accept ours overnight. But in homes where the adults habitually listen to good programs ("good" in its widest sense, covering many interests) the children will grow eventually in appreciation and discernment. In families, taste is contagious.

Time for Listening

When radio listening cuts too heavily into a child's time-schedule, parents can help him budget his time to include the things that must be done: a time for homework, music practice, outdoor play, household chores, etc. Usually these "musts" can be fitted in with due regard for certain favorite program hours. Talking it over with the child will determine in a friendly way which programs may have to be dropped, and which can, perhaps, accompany some of the chores. Doing homework to the accompaniment of radio seems to be almost universal, and parents as well as teachers are concerned about this. Where a



child's school marks show plainly that the homework is suffering, this should be a convincing argument even to him. He should be willing to experiment for a while with homework unaccompanied by radio, and if his marks improve, he may concede that homework and radio do not mix happily, at least for him. Teachers report, however, that many students combine radio with their homework with no apparent damage to their marks. They seem to have developed a technique for listening with one ear!

Books and Radio

Since listening is so much easier than reading, will today's children never become acquainted with books, especially the classics? Facing this question, several juvenile programs have brought books to children via radio. One program, *Adventure Parade*, offered excellent serialized reading of a wide range of classic stories from Dickens to *The Arabian Nights*, with the accent on adventure. This program was deservedly praised by parents, teachers, and librarians and had an audience of all ages. Its wide acceptance seemed to suggest that children's thirst for adventure can be met wholly through tried and trusted classics. Such a thesis leaves out the important fact that children live in a contemporary world. They welcome the superb adventure in these

classic stories. But a listening diet, however good, which comes no closer to jet-propulsion and atomic energy than Jules Verne's fantasies can hardly hope to satisfy boys and girls born in this atomic age. Although they enjoy these great stories, they are entitled also to stories about today. Adults who think nostalgically that "classics" are safer may be interested to learn that many of these beloved stories had spots so horrendous or brutal that they had to be revised greatly to make them acceptable for broadcast by the same network that unblinkingly presents *The Shadow*.

Contemporary books, too, have been adapted for radio both by Columbia's *School of the Air* and on recordings by the Junior Leagues of America. These recordings, heard through local stations under the title *Books Bring Adventure*, have been noteworthy for the way in which they have created community cooperation, enlisting the efforts of local libraries, schools, Parent-Teacher Associations, and bookstores, first in publicizing the program to young listeners, and then in making available the books that have been dramatized on the radio—a valuable tie-up of these two media which suggests possibilities for wider use. Radio and books have much in common; yet each has values distinctly its own. Radio can undoubtedly be used to stimulate good reading. We must, however, guard against evaluating radio programs by whether they will lead to the reading of books. Radio is an art in its own right.

Radio in the Classroom

There has been far too little development of programs geared directly for in-school listening. The Columbia Broadcasting System's *School of the Air* was a pioneer in this field. For many years it broadcast directly to classrooms daily programs of science, history, literature, current events, and music. This program was later shifted to the late afternoon hours for after-school listening and was recorded for school use in local rebroadcasts. Unable to obtain sufficient cooperation from the schools, CBS finally was forced to discontinue the program altogether. Part of the difficulty arose from the impossibility of network broadcasts fitting into the school schedules in all of the different time zones.

Although some cities and a few states have developed excellent teaching programs for the schools, educators and school administrators in most places have been slow to recognize radio as a tool for teaching. The number of schools in the United States

equipped for such use is still small. In a recent address, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission Wayne Coye said: "We are faced with the chilling fact that this tool is largely unused by the nation's educators. . . . Every schoolroom in America should be equipped with its own radio set. It should be freely integrated with classroom work as a major educational tool. As soon as television becomes available in a community, every schoolroom should be equipped with a television screen—the electronic blackboard of the future."

The Box-Top Appeal

Many people criticize radio for its high-pressure salesmanship—the commercial that interrupts the story and leaves its climax hanging in mid-air. If we accept the idea of commercial sponsorship we shall have to admit that a sponsor has a right to advertise his product on children's programs as on others. We have a right, however, to ask that such advertising be handled with greater artistry than it is at present. Children, like other people, resent the interruption of their stories "just at the most exciting part." They do, however, enjoy the business of writing in for something. Putting their names on bits of cardboard and addressing them trustingly to their radio hero gives them a feeling of prestige, of belonging to that big outside world. There is even a chance that their names may be read on the air—a reward often more coveted than the prize in a contest.

It is a form of participation that can be, and occasionally has been, used to excellent purpose. When the Superman program offered prizes for the best interpretation of the sentence: "All men are created equal," over a million boys and girls were led to think and write about these meaningful words.

All too often, however, children are exploited by the commercials carried by juvenile programs. The worst abuses of this kind have been stopped. Children are no longer exhorted to save the life of the hero's mother, or the mortgage on the heroine's farm by purchasing the advertised product. Nevertheless, boys and girls still listen to exaggerated statements about the miracles of health and growth to be expected from certain foods or beverages. They are often disappointed, too, by the flimsy premium that comes in the mail after days of waiting and listening to a build-up by a smooth-voiced announcer. When, however, the ring or compass or badge is all it was expected to be, the young

recipient—now a full-fledged member of his hero's special club—is filled with pride and pleasure out of all proportion to the dime invested. This universal desire of children to “write in,” to belong, is sound. It should be encouraged but not exploited.

Children participate in radio in other ways besides “writing in”—and are sometimes exploited in other ways, too. Where the participation is on a professional basis, it often offers real opportunity and training for talented youngsters. A program which simply exploits “smart” children to provide laughter for adults fails to serve the children themselves.

Spontaneous appearances on quiz or forum programs are fun for the children and may help to build self-confidence.

Whose Responsibility?

Radio is an art, and it is also an industry. But radio is also a public trust. Unlike comics and movies, radio, because of its use of the air waves, has certain obligations to the public, a portion of whom are children. To be sure, children are a minority of radio's listening public, and thus the question of what proportion of “public service” time and effort should be given to them may be proper subject for debate. We have a right to expect radio to take children seriously.

As to whether radio has discharged this responsibility, there are wide differences of opinion. Parents and educators say “no.” The industry says “yes,” and points to its public service features. The facts are probably somewhere in between these two contentions. Some stations and some networks have given children's programs considerable time, thought, and money—but not nearly enough. Some have all but ignored children. To some extent the failures of radio in respect to children may be laid at the door of commercialism. The juvenile audience doesn't pay off as well as adult programs. There can be no doubt that this has been the yardstick for measuring time-allotments. Perhaps children's programs could be made to pay. But in our complex set-up of packaging programs, with the initiative and control divided between producing agencies, advertisers, and networks, it is nobody's job to find out how. And the networks have encountered so many problems in connection with these programs that they have tended to give up on them. Writers and producers of children's programs must please two audiences at once—child-

dren and parents—which are often poles apart in their tastes and interests. Unable to satisfy adult critics and still hold the young audience, many of them have found it easier, and just as profitable, to turn their talents to adult programs.

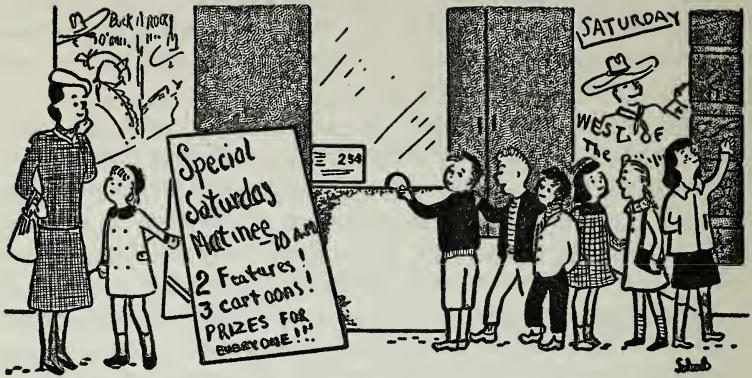
To some extent, however, the fault lies also with the public. It has offered little constructive guidance. Parents and educators have been critical, demanding, belligerent—but not helpful. They might be both. Most of us have been so absorbed in the storm of controversy about what is on the air for children, that we have neglected the far larger consideration of what is *not* on the air for them. We have at our service this highly effective medium for reaching millions of children—non-readers as well as good readers, boys and girls of all ages and all degrees of intelligence and background, at work and at play—and we have not learned to use it.

For example, there is very little on the air today (nothing at all on the four major networks) for children of pre-school age. Yet there are great numbers of home-bound children who, with their parents, would profit by programs beamed to kindergarten and nursery level. We need programs which will give our school-age and teen-age boys and girls realistic reflections of the world they live in and the country of which they are a part, of their own place in the world's work, their own dignity and worth, their responsibility to their community or to their nation. For the information and inspiration of our young people toward socially useful ends, radio has fallen short of its possibilities.

Whose responsibility is this? The radio industry? Educators? Parents? All three, perhaps. Together we might achieve what none of us has achieved so far: a well-rounded, inspired, and inspiring use of radio for children.

GOING TO THE MOVIES

NONE of the movies shown in motion-picture houses in this country are made especially for children. This is despite the fact that children are heavy movie-goers. Even the shorts and animated cartoons, which children have taken unto themselves, are designed to interest the whole movie audience. Many of these are amusing and childlike, but some are sophisticated, vulgar,



or frightening, and highly unsuitable for children. Serials and westerns, usually offered as Saturday afternoon children's specials, certainly have a strong appeal for the young audience, though these are also aimed at adults. Feature pictures from Dickens to Disney, are primarily intended for adults. Many are excellent for children, or for the whole family to see together; others range from the merely unsuitable to the downright undesirable.

The motion picture industry contends that motion pictures for children would be unprofitable, since this would automatically limit their audience. This is probably so. It says, too, that youngsters prefer adult entertainment.

Too Young for Movies

For young children, movie going is much more manageable than radio listening. They can be kept away from the movies. There is little in the motion picture theater that is at all suitable for children under six. Furthermore, just sitting still and keeping quiet for the duration of a full-length movie is more than should be expected of children of this age. Some of the best efforts of parents to organize special matinee movies for children have been hampered by the attendance of large numbers of two-, three-, and four-year-olds who are not yet ready for movie going of any kind. The Motion Picture Association suggests eight as a minimum age, and even then the child's first movie going should be in the company of an adult, preferably a parent, for the impact of this experience, alone and in the dark, may be devastating or, at the least, confusing.

Planned Programs for Children

For school-age children, however, special children's programs are offered by some public-spirited exhibitors, with or without community sponsorship. It is estimated that approximately 2,500 motion picture houses over the country now put on special week-end programs for children. How far this falls short of the need is indicated by the estimate that 9,000,000 children go to the movies every Saturday afternoon!

These Saturday Special Programs are designed to satisfy the perfectly natural desire of the eight-to-twelve-year-olds to "go to the movies." How suitable and how satisfying these offerings are depends, of course, upon how wisely they are selected. It is no easy task to satisfy children of this adventurous age with material we consider "good" for them. Here, as with radio and comics, the problem of guidance in selection calls for both skill and insight into children's needs and interests.

As they approach the teens, boys and girls grow more restive and impatient of restraints and directives, and "going to the movies" takes on a more social meaning. They go with one another, and their choices are apt to be based on "what everybody's seeing." They take the good with the bad. Along with much that is trivial, or laden with crime and horror, they are also seeing some excellent drama, from moderns to Shakespeare, musical plays, historical pageants, and fine documentaries such as *Louisiana Story*. Here again, as with radio, sampling is a way of learning to discriminate. Teen-agers still welcome, however, suggestions from parents of good films to see, and the informed parent can still offer helpful guidance.

Guides to Selection

The Motion Picture Association of America has organized a Children's Film Library consisting of films of other years rated as suitable for children by the Children's Film Library Committee. This committee, a voluntary group of educators, parents, and youth agencies, then checks its selections for interest before an audience of children. These films are offered to exhibitors at reduced rates for week-end showing to children, who also pay reduced rates. Lists of these films are sent to any community agency requesting them, together with suggestions for enlisting the cooperation of local exhibitors in starting a special week-end schedule. To meet the demand of the young audience for a

double feature, a selected list of current films suitable to accompany these pictures is also supplied to exhibitors. This list is compiled with the help of national organizations and community groups who evaluate each film from the standpoint of its moral and social implications.

The library contains such classics as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Penrod and Sam*.

Many of these classics are readily accepted by parents although they contain adult material which might be objected to in lesser known works of literature or new films. This has always been true. Certainly it was true of the fairy tales we read. We must remember that the classic of tomorrow will be derived from the artistic productions of today.

Aids to selection are provided by various community agencies such as the Schools Motion Picture Committee which prepares reviews and selected lists of movies, graded as to age and interest. This committee's lists are published regularly in newspapers and magazines, notably *The New York Times* and *Cue*. *Parents' Magazine* also publishes such a guide list. The United Parents Associations of New York City, Inc. have helped parents to formulate a set of eighteen standards as a guide for producers and users in evaluating films for children.

Parental Responsibility

It is not enough, however, for parents to select or to help their children select good movies. The double feature, the shorts, even the news, make it practically certain that the young moviegoer will be exposed to a lot of things besides the one picture so carefully chosen. A boy or girl who goes to see a fine historical film about Lincoln or a Mark Twain classic remains to watch a second feature which may be a murder mystery, a gangster thriller, or a sensational drama of broken marriage and illicit love. The conscientious parent who tries to whisk his child out of the theater before that second feature may find that the results are not worth the struggle.

Parents should know what their children are seeing and be ready and willing to interpret for them the conflicting standards of behavior they find on today's screen. Talking over with chil-

dren the many ideas presented, helping them to discuss their reactions and clear up their confusions about what they see and hear, is our best safeguard against the danger that they will get "false ideas" from the movies. Whether movies incite young people to crime raises the same questions which have already been discussed earlier in the pamphlet in connection with comics and radio.

As has already been said, too, in connection with comics and radio, some children, more sensitive than others, may need to be protected from over-exciting or frightening screen showings. Sensitive children are apt to know their own limitations and will cooperate with sympathetic and reasonable parental guidance. We do not always know, however, what to protect them from. Several psychiatrists have expressed the belief that children may be more disturbed by child-like film stories, such as *Snow White*, *Dumbo*, and *Bambi*, which come close to the child's own fantasies than by the more remote adult dramas. Yet the former are the very films parents feel are most suitable for children, and many boys and girls do enjoy them seemingly without harmful effects.

Excessive movie going, like excessive radio listening or comics reading, suggests that something is amiss in the child's life. Too great reliance on this escape into a world of unreality, or too little else to do, or will to do it, are equally signals of distress.

Films for Education

Psychiatrists agree that the movies—because they provide visual experiences—are likely to have a greater and more lasting impact on children than comics or radio. It would seem important, therefore, that all children, and especially those already under tension, should be safeguarded in their movie going. By the same token it would also seem that motion pictures have high potential value for education and instruction. Yet the school use of motion pictures, like the use of the radio, has lagged far behind their commercial development. Despite the growing interest in, and perfection of, the 16 mm. films as learning aids in many fields, the number of schools in this country equipped to use such aids is woefully small.

The growth of film libraries makes films on educational subjects increasingly available for school use. The various industries have many excellent films available for such use. Teaching Films Custodians, Inc. has transferred a large number of commercial

"short subjects" to 16 mm. film. New York University Film Library has a large and varied list of films available to schools on a rental basis.

An excellent development, too, which need not remain unique to motion pictures, has been the growth of high-school courses in photoplay appreciation, first initiated by the National Council of English Teachers. It is estimated that approximately 6,000 high schools over the country now include such courses in their English programs. Thus the photoplay takes its rightful place as a part of our culture, along with other forms of literature and art, to be evaluated and understood. This approach—teaching appreciation and therefore discrimination—might well be extended to radio programs and comics.

Perhaps the development of television, merging as it does the techniques of comics, radio, and movies, may bring a more intelligent appraisal of the over-all impact of the mass media on our children and spur the use of all three of these powerful aids to supplement the formal education provided by our schools.

AND NOW — TELEVISION

TELEVISION is no longer "just around the corner." It is here—not yet in the homes of tens of millions, as radio is, but available nevertheless in enough homes, shops, and public places to be reaching a very sizable audience, including, of course, children. Whoever installs a television set finds his home immediately inundated by youngsters, especially in the late afternoon hours. Recently, in Hoboken, New Jersey, the police found it necessary to clamp down on some big-hearted saloon-keepers who were clearing out their regular patrons from the bar each afternoon from five to six "to let the kids come in and see the television."

So far, television's "kiddie shows" have shown a marked departure from radio's juvenile programs. Adapting movie and vaudeville techniques, they have offered animated cartoons, puppet shows, children's parties, contests, and amateur hours with audience participation. To date there is a notable absence of box-top appeal, a lack which parents value more than children do. For the most part, these programs have been kept on a childish level, replete with slapstick, nonsense, and hubbub. Even the titles label them as designed for the kindergarten set: "Howdy Doody,"

“Scrap Book,” “Small Fry Club,” “Junior Frolics,” etc. Irene Wicker’s enchanting nursery stories and songs, which have long since disappeared from the air, have been revived for the young television audience. “Howdy Doody,” a lively busybody of a puppet, has sprung to instant fame and fortune with a devoted audience of young folks and old.

Like radio, however, television cannot select its audience, and children are not easily pried from their seats after the “kiddie show” is over. Revivals of the old-time western thrillers, intended for adults, are lapped up by the same young audience that has loved the radio adventure serials. But there is a difference: in television the action is much more graphic. Shooting frays and cafe brawls are vivid, with victims “biting the dust,” “dead” riders falling from their horses, guns “pouring lead,” murdered corpses being tossed about and frisked—all in the day’s work for a ranger. There is nothing new about this type of entertainment, or about the fact that children love it. What is new is that it now becomes available to any three- or four- or five-year-old who happens to be within range.

The problems television raises for parents are, or soon will be, twice as compelling. Young children will have to have their television sessions time-scheduled, with other activities to take them away from the screen when their show is over. School-age children who have developed a technique for listening to radio along with other activities—homework, for example, or washing dishes—will find that they cannot similarly watch television “out of one eye.” Yet essentially the parent’s job will be the same, calling for sympathy with children’s interests, wise management of time, and sane guidance in selection.

For older children and young people, television offers really thrilling fare: *sports*—they can actually watch the World Series, play-by-play, in some distant city; *news*—they can meet face-to-face the personalities who are making world history; *politics*—they can sit in on party conventions and actually watch the wheels go round; *travel*—they can see the native life, as it is lived day by day, in India, China, Mexico, and Palestine; *drama*—they can see the best plays, modern and classical, adapted and beautifully presented with talented acting. What opportunities for expanding young people’s experiences and range of vision!

If we are wise, we shall make this fascinating new medium serve our children more fully than radio has. Visual images, it

has been said, make deeper and more lasting impressions than auditory ones. Now is the time, while it is still in its early stage, for educators and parents to explore television's possibilities. Instead of blaming bar-keepers for letting the children in, we might better see to it that somewhere in the community the children have a chance to see television in suitable places. Instead of berating the showmen of television, as we have in radio and movies, intelligent parents will do better to work with them *now*, developing ways for making the most of this challenging new resource. With intelligence and forethought we can help determine whether television is to be an asset or a nuisance. Skilfully used, at home and at school, television can widen cultural and educational horizons for our children to an extent never before attained by textbooks, movies, or radio.

WHAT TO DO?

IN evaluating these different media, we must take into account not only what each has to offer but the combined impact of all of them upon the children. While we have no way to measure the effects of any one program or movie or comics magazine, yet we must consider the sum total of this barrage of sound and fury to which all our children are subjected from all sides. Our task is to find a balance.

What Can Parents Do?

1. *Try to understand the basic needs of children—and of your own children in particular.*

2. *Know what your children are reading, seeing, hearing.* Listen with them to their preferred programs, or go with them to movies of their own choosing. Introduce them (not too insistently) to other reading, other programs, other movies which you think they will enjoy. Invite them to listen with you to certain of your favorite programs, or go with you to a movie of your choice.

3. *Discuss their favorite programs, comics, movies, with them.* Such discussions (if they are without censure or condescension) often help break down barriers and create mutual understanding.

4. *Respect their rights and feelings—don't throw away their comics without their consent, don't shut off their radio or inter-*

rupt their programs needlessly, don't drag them out of a movie in the middle.

5. *Help them develop critical standards by pointing out values;* good drawing or good content in a comics magazine, good production or good writing in movies or radio programs. Help them to recognize these differences.

6. *Help them budget their time,* for homework, music practice, outdoor play, necessary chores, allowing for their favorite radio programs, some comics and other reading, and occasional movies.

7. *If you find that certain programs or movies upset them, suggest that they skip these for a while.* If they are really disturbed they will probably be glad to cooperate in this. But if they still seem to want these disturbing programs or movies, you may find that just sitting with them while they are listening or watching will be reassuring. If radio listening or movie going absorbs the children to the exclusion of other interests and activities, talk this over with them, too. Together you may arrive at a sensible plan for cutting down or selecting more wisely.

8. *See that they have plenty of enjoyable things to do, places to go, wholesome friendships, varied experiences, and real adventures.* Encourage their hobbies and help them get the needed "makings." (Puppet making has been greatly stimulated by television.) Include them, too, in your own fun and interests.

What Can Teachers Do?

1. *Recognize that comics, movies, and radio are prevalent interests and common experiences—don't ignore them.*

2. *Be familiar with some of the favorite comics and radio programs,* at least enough to discuss them with the children and help them grow in their ability to discriminate.

3. *Occasionally invite class discussion on these subjects.* Encourage the children to expand these interests into more creative activities, using their comics or radio characters as a basis for written stories, dramatizations, puppet shows, drawing, modelling, or painting. They provide a familiar theme on which all the children can contribute.

4. *Direct their attention to radio programs or movies they might not know about—not as "required listening," however, but for their fun and interest.*

5. *Introduce the children to an ever-widening range of interests.* As their reading ability grows, help them find books that

are inviting, fast-moving, easy-to-read, so that reading books too will grow as a pleasurable experience.

6. *Suggest that comics magazines be deposited in a safe place—to be reclaimed at the end of the day—if they prove too distracting in class.*

7. *Make full use of the school radio and movie projector—or work toward getting these if there are none in your school. Utilize whatever school broadcasts are available in your community, tying them in with classroom discussion and study.*

What Can the Community Do?

1. *Stimulate and promote research by competent specialists to determine more definitely than we know now the effects of various kinds of reading and entertainment on children of various ages. Work out ways for guiding parents and teachers on the basis of these findings.*

2. *Look over the recreational and cultural activities your neighborhood offers its children. See to it that there is plenty of opportunity for boys and girls of all ages to have fun, creative interests, and satisfying activities.*

3. *Know what is available to children—on the newsstands, on the air, at the movies—and make your knowledge more than cover-deep.*

4. *In parent-teacher groups, radio councils, or motion-picture councils, study and discuss the needs of children in these fields and evaluate what is being offered in relation to these needs. (The children might well have a voice in these discussions, since they are the ultimate consumers.)*

5. *Support with your approval programs, motion pictures, and comics magazines which you believe are maintaining good standards for children's entertainment or education.*

6. *Express your protest, too, by writing to those responsible for programs, movies, or comics you believe to be harmful or unworthy. Informed, thoughtful criticism is more effective than hysteria.*

7. *Enlist the cooperation of local radio stations and motion-picture exhibitors in offering programs of special interest and value to children and young people—especially radio programs in which the young people can participate.*

middle.

Instead, parents are urged to get to know what their children are reading, seeing, hearing--to listen with them to their preferred program to read their favorite comics, and to discuss them together.

Parents are told to watch their children's reactions to exciting programs or movies. If they appear to be too upsetting, parents can suggest to their youngsters that they skip them for a while. Just sitting with the children while they are listening or watching, however, may be sufficiently reassuring.

"A child too preoccupied with crime or horror," the pamphlet declares, "is showing us plainly that he needs help. Excessive comics reading, too, may be a symptom of disturbance."

Finally, the pamphlet suggests that parents see that their children have plenty of enjoyable things to do, places to go, varied experiences, and real adventures, so that radio listening or movie going does not

(MORE)

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What Can the Community Do?

1. *Stimulate and promote research by competent specialists to determine more definitely than we know now the effects of various kinds of reading and entertainment on children of various ages. Work out ways for guiding parents and teachers on the basis of these findings.*

2. *Look over the recreational and cultural activities your neighborhood offers its children. See to it that there is plenty of opportunity for boys and girls of all ages to have fun, creative interests, and satisfying activities.*

3. *Know what is available to children—on the newsstands, on the air, at the movies—and make your knowledge more than cover-deep.*

4. *In parent-teacher groups, radio councils, or motion-picture councils, study and discuss the needs of children in these fields and evaluate what is being offered in relation to these needs. (The children might well have a voice in these discussions, since they are the ultimate consumers.)*

5. *Support with your approval programs, motion pictures, and comics magazines which you believe are maintaining good standards for children's entertainment or education.*

6. *Express your protest, too, by writing to those responsible for programs, movies, or comics you believe to be harmful or unworthy. Informed, thoughtful criticism is more effective than hysteria.*

7. *Enlist the cooperation of local radio stations and motion-picture exhibitors in offering programs of special interest and value to children and young people—especially radio programs in which the young people can participate.*

For Release--Monday, March 7

PARENTS URGED TO STUDY
COMICS, NOT TO BAN THEM

Parents are warned against banning the comics reading, radio listening, or movie going of their children in a new, twenty-cent pamphlet, COMICS, RADIO, MOVIES--AND CHILDREN by Josette Frank, issued today by the Public Affairs Committee, Inc. of New York,

Miss Frank advises parents to respect their children's rights and feelings. Don't throw away their comics. Don't shut off their favorite radio programs needlessly. Don't drag them out of the movies in the middle.

Instead, parents are urged to get to know what their children are reading, seeing, hearing--to listen with them to their preferred program to read their favorite comics, and to discuss them together.

Parents are told to watch their children's reactions to exciting programs or movies. If they appear to be too upsetting, parents can suggest to their youngsters that they skip them for a while. Just sitting with the children while they are listening or watching, however, may be sufficiently reassuring.

"A child too preoccupied with crime or horror," the pamphlet declares, "is showing us plainly that he needs help. Excessive comics reading, too, may be a symptom of disturbance."

Finally, the pamphlet suggests that parents see that their children have plenty of enjoyable things to do, places to go, varied experiences, and real adventures, so that radio listening or movie going does not

(MORE)

PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, Inc.
22 East 38th Street
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or comics. It is also possible for them to enlist the cooperation of local radio stations and motion-picture exhibitors in offering programs of special interest and value to children.

The pamphlet recommends that research by competent specialists be stimulated and promoted to determine more exactly the effects of various kinds of reading and entertainment on children of various ages.

COMICS, RADIO, MOVIES--AND CHILDREN, by Josette Frank, is Pamphlet No. 148 in the series of brief, factual, twenty-cent pamphlets issued by the Public Affairs Committee, Inc., a nonprofit, educational organization at 22 East 38th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

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(SPECIAL NOTE TO EDITORS: As a convenience to us and a service to your readers, the Public Affairs Committee would appreciate it if you would include reference to the Committee's address and the price in your story based on this release.)

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absorb them to the exclusion of other interests and activities.

Miss Frank reassures the anxious parent that there is "no basis in fact for the current news headlines which blame comics for children's delinquent acts, or for reckless claims that they have caused a rise in juvenile crime....The causes of crime are not so simple! They lie much deeper, in our society's failure to meet the basic needs of these children."

In suggesting ways by which the community at large may help solve the problems raised by comics, radio, and movies, the author declares that the community must see that there is plenty of opportunity for boys and girls of all ages to have fun, creative interests, and satisfying activities.

Parent-teacher groups, local radio or motion-picture councils, and other citizen organizations are urged to study what is actually available to their children on the newsstands, on the air, and at the movies. Such groups, it is suggested, should express their approval or disapproval in writing to those responsible for good or bad programs, movie or comics. It is also possible for them to enlist the cooperation of local radio stations and motion-picture exhibitors in offering programs of special interest and value to children.

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