PS2 for 9/22/88#WHO SELECTS PUBLIC SCHOOL BOOKS?

People for the American Way (PAW), an organization known colloquially as People for Norman Lear's Way, has rendered a public service in releasing its latest report on alleged ""censorship'' in U.S. public schools. The report sets forth a long series of complaints made by parents about school curricula during the past year, which PAW labels attempts at censorship.

""Censorship'' has been a trendy media subject ever since PAW started issuing these annual blasts six years ago, but few people realize what kinds of materials are involved in these incidents of alleged ""censorship.'' Since PAW has neatly set them all out in a state-by-state, incident-by-incident listing, it's useful to spotlight exactly what they are.

Here are some specific parents' complaints about textbooks and library books, as quoted in PAW's 1988 booklet on ""censorship.'' Each individual phrase below is from a different incident and is a direct quotation from the PAW booklet. For the convenience of the reader, these quotations are bunched in paragraphs according to subject.

One large category of parents' complaints involved the language used in the school books: ""objectionable language . . . foul language . . . profanity and unsuitable language . . . every swear word there is . . . profanity . . . filth and smut . . . offensive language . . . littered with dirty words . . . full of obscenities . . . repulsive language . . . vulgar language . . . vulgarity . . . dirty, filthy language . . . obscene, trashy gutter language that would gag a maggot.''

Another category involved incest: ""a 14-year-old girl's experience of incest . . . passages on incest.''

Many parents complained about ""graphic sexual scenes . . .

sexually oriented language and content . . . explicit sexual references . . . overly explicit . . . encouraging promiscuity . . . promote extramarital sex and casual sex . . . rape, prostitution and drugs.''

Here is another group of textbook complaints made by parents in various states: ""promoting the occult and the worship of Satan . . . witchcraft and the occult . . . demonic . . . mocking God . . . preoccupation with occult practices, violence and aberrant behavior . . . interest in the occult . . . books on the occult . . . teaching magic and witchcraft . . . overtones of witchcraft, mysticism, and fantasy . . . the religion of the occult . . . advocating satanism, the occult, and witchcraft . . . teaching magic and witchcraft.''

Parents objected to schoolbooks that promote off-beat behavior: ""teach children how to feel comfortable with pornography and feelings of incest . . . promoting prostitution, promiscuity, homosexuality and bestiality . . . replete with scenes of intrusion, oppression, cannibalism, abduction, transformation, incantations, deceptions, threats.''

Another category of parental complaints involved teaching religion in the classroom: ""Hinduism, mind control, and brainwashing . . . yoga exercises . . . mind control techniques . . . promoting Far Eastern religion . . . discussing Eastern religions.''

Some complaints involved teaching attacks on religion: ""teaching values and morals contradictory to Judeo-Christian traditions . . . implying that God is not sovereign . . . secular humanism . . . situation ethics . . . teaching religion and invading students' privacy.''

Some parents complained about anti-parent textbooks: ""discussions that questioned parental authority . . . anti-family . . . ideas that conflict with family values . . . persistent themes of

rebellion against parents and authority figures . . . a negative value system.''

Other parents objected to school books that indoctrinated children with concepts of ""globalism (one-world government) . . . world peace through nuclear disarmament . . . lack of an American perspective.''

Many parents complained that materials were simply inappropriate for school instruction at particular ages: ""negative and frightening illustrations . . . too scary for first-graders . . . depressing . . . sarcasm and humor not comprehensible by children . . . filth and garbage . . . violent acts by children.''

The above are all specific complaints about actual books in current use in public schools, according to the PAW report. The attempt by parents to protect their children from such materials is labelled ""censorship'' by PAW, which asserts the right of the public school to force on children ""a broad spectrum of ideas that may challenge comfortable assumptions or inherited wisdom.''

But how did such books get into the public schools in the first place? Who do the curriculum dictators think they are that they can inflict such books on other people's children? Don't the rest of us have any First Amendment rights NOT to be forced to read such materials?