

The Hickory Stick

Tries

*Reversing a trend
of 35 years, many*

parents and educators

*think a good spanking may get to
the bottom of Johnny's
school problems.*

Photos by Bill Miller



Classroom misbehavior wastes much of the teacher's and pupils' limited time. Is spanking a solution?

THE TEACHER was obviously nervous as she stood before a county court judge in Kentucky recently. She had paddled a 13-year-old pupil after he threatened to hit her, and the boy's mother had brought charges of assault and battery.

The judge, after hearing evidence, could have sentenced the teacher to jail; that also would have meant loss of her job. Instead, he said:

"I'm proud of you. I admire the gumption of a teacher who will enforce her orders. Students these days are too often pampered. They are given too much leeway. You did your job well. The charges are dismissed."

The judge was expressing the sentiment of an increasing number of experts and laymen who believe the hickory stick should be returned to active school duty and applied where it did Grandpa the most good—or as the St. Louis regulations put it, "upon the fleshy part of the back."

Corporal punishment was all but buried in the "sweetness and light" period of American elementary education beginning around 1920. But a new attitude has developed with the increasing concern over rowdy classroom behavior.

In recent polls, corporal punishment was favored by 55 percent of American parents, 76 percent of public-school superintendents, and 77 percent of teachers.

Courts have upheld the teacher's right, under certain circumstances, to administer corporal punishment, and in New Jersey, one of three states banning such discipline, the legislature has been asked by the state bar association to restore the rod to teachers so they can "guard their rights to receive the respect due their profession."

If spanking does stage a comeback, however, it will be against heated opposition. Detroit, for example, recently approved corporal punishment but only after parents attending a debate on the subject threatened to settle their differences with fists.

Opponents argue that corporal punish-



Disrespect and physical defiance led New Jersey lawyers to suggest a law giving teachers right to spank.



Under spanking laws, teachers would be prohibited from using books and rulers or striking pupils viciously.