

Jackson School Pupils Run Own Court; Learn Democratic Methods

By Richard D. Jewett
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The voice of the solemn-faced magistrate sounded with authority in the small, packed chamber as he asked, "Foreman of the jury, what is the verdict?"

"Guilty, your honor," was the reply.

The judge turned to the youth who stood before him.

"The jury has found you guilty of swearing and tearing another boy's shirt," he said. "You have broken a school rule. Your punishment will be suspension from the guard for two weeks. In addition, you will stay in Mr. Davis' room for 15 minutes each night after school for one week."

"Case dismissed," the judge concluded.

In School Court

That scene was in no ordinary courtroom. Officers of the tribunal were not adults. They were school companions of the guilty youth, students at Medford's Jackson grade school.

Since last fall similar scenes have been enacted almost weekly at the school. By participating in the enforcement of their school's rules and regulations, Jackson youngsters are getting basic preparation for their years as adults.

They are learning better the reasons for rules of conduct; they are gaining regard for law and order; they are acquiring respect for fellow students and their views and feelings. The youngsters are learning a basic requisite of society—the ability to live in harmony with one another. They are discovering the virtues of democracy by democracy in action.

Held Each Friday

Court at Jackson school convenes on Friday afternoons. The press was permitted to sit in on a recent session. The trial docket was average. Seven cases were heard by Judge Ernest Tyler, a fifth grader sitting on the bench for the first time.

Judge Tyler kept strict order in his court in character with a true magistrate. He reprimanded the court audience for disturbances and at one point ordered two larger boys from the courtroom. They went. There was seriousness about the entire proceeding.

One of the cases was that of the youth accused of tearing the shirt. A second lad was also suspended from the guard (school-boy patrol) for two weeks and assigned to 19 minutes in Faculty Member Don Davis' room each night for a week. He was found guilty of using bad language. Later this same boy was assigned to Davis' room for an additional five minutes nightly for allegedly riding his bicycle on the school grounds.

First Offense Warning

A girl, charged with riding a bicycle on the school grounds and not signaling for a turn, pleaded guilty and was warned. It was her first offense.

The jury found a third youth not guilty of an accusation that he failed to signal for a turn while riding his bicycle. His case was a month old. Original records had been lost and Defense Attorney Steven Wisely put up considerable argument that the case should be thrown out because of the passage of time.

Still another boy was suspended from activities for fighting on the school grounds. In the seventh case the defendant was charged with running up and skipping stairs. Found guilty, he was sentenced to stay in Davis' room for 10 minutes one day.

History Outlined

During an interview with Davis, court advisor, and H. W. Gustin, school principal, following the court's dismissal, the organization and history of the court was outlined. It was instituted last fall by the two men. Attorneys Manville Heisel and Stanley C. Jones Jr., gave the youngsters instruction in court procedure.

There have been three sets of court officials so far this year. Davis said that it is planned now to have new officers every six weeks. They are picked from fifth and sixth graders who are school-boy patrolmen. Current officers are all fifth graders. In addition to Tyler and Wisely, they are Prosecuting Attorney James Boyd, Bailiff Jack Lilly and Court Recorder Keith Branson.

In addition to the instruction from lawyers, weekly observation of the court in action gave the youths knowledge for their jobs. Schoolboy and bicycle patrolmen, the school police, form

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WITNESS TAKES STAND—One of Recorder Keith Branson's tasks in the Jackson grade school student court is to swear in witnesses. Procedure is altered in the case pictured above as Prosecuting Attorney James Boyd administers the oath to Branson, a witness for the trial. From the left are Branson, Judge Ernest Tyler, Boyd and Defense Attorney Steven Wisely. Court sessions are held almost every Friday and provide student participation in enforcement of school rules and regulations.

Boy—Girl Jury

Two boys and two girls each from the fourth, fifth and sixth grades form the jury. A new jury is chosen for each session of court.

Jackson student court has jurisdiction over student conduct on the school grounds and in the building and over bicycle operation including routes to and from school.

It has authority to exercise justice for misdemeanors or rowdiness endangering safety in play; disorderliness at sports contests; rowdiness or loafing in the building; disfiguring or throwing paper and trash on grounds or floors; and roughness, loud talk or scuffling in lines of march.

Bicycle jurisdiction includes enforcement of riding regulations and safe riding rules and

laws regarding storage, treatment and borrowing.

Complaints made by patrolmen or other students are handed to the judge who prepares the trial docket with assistance of the court recorder and the supervision of Advisor Davis.

Determine Punishment

It is Davis' purpose to see that punishments determined are neither too easy nor too severe. Although possible penalties are talked over by Davis and the student jurist, the sentence to be imposed is determined by the judge. Davis reported that he has never had to countermand the judgement of the court.

The court avoids corporal retribution, although at least one boy has been sentenced to his father to inflict punishment. While some penalties require labor, work is not the emphasis. Stress rather is on the time taken up by punishment—time in which a youngster might be enjoying some other activity.

Effort is made in the court to explain to children why they are punished. A severe penalty for a patrolman is suspension from his police duties. Davis brought out that this sentence is handed

down when a youth's actions indicate that he is not capable of looking after himself and, therefore, is not capable of looking after others. A suspended patrolman will be reinstated if he keeps out of trouble and maintains his schoolwork. If not he may be dropped permanently from the patrol.

Don't Play Favorites

Davis stated that, when the court was first functioning, there was a tendency among those in charge to play favorites. That tendency has been overcome. Thus a lesson in fairness, squareness and equality has been driven home. A community rather than clique spirit has been fostered. Those convicted in the court are made to realize that not individuals but the group is trying them.

The Jackson school program has proved effective. Children have shown more interest through their opportunity for self-discipline. Discipline has improved. There has been a reduction in the number of violations. Principal Gustin reported. Youngsters take the program seriously.

Teachers Responsible

Teachers are still responsible for discipline in their rooms and to an extent in the halls. However, Gustin stated that the student court has lessened the efforts of teachers.

So far there have been only two cases of parental objection. Both cases were straightened out when the facts were explained and the fathers learned that their youngsters were not being "picked on."

Gustin and Davis began the program in connection with the safety of the children. It was then enlarged to cover enforcement of other rules and regulations. Gustin said that plans are being formulated to expand the program for next year.

Relief Fund Sent to Canadian Townsfolk

Employees of Kogap Lumber Industries and associated companies this week raised a fund of \$100 during a lunch hour for relief of residents in the Quebec town of Rimouski, which was largely destroyed by fire.

A reply to a wire informing the city of this action was received Thursday from Dr. Marcel Catellier, mayor of Trois Pistoles, a nearby community, who said he would extend the sympathies of the Kogap group to the people of Rimouski.

On May 11, the night shift at the Kogap mills decided to add their contributions to those made by day shift members, and an additional \$38.20 was collected by Forest Martin of the planing mill. The total of \$138.20 was forwarded Friday by wire to Mayor Victor LePage of Rimouski.

Cape Agulhas, not the Cape of Good Hope, is Africa's southernmost land tip.



HANDCUFFED TO ANOTHER PRISONER, Eugene Dennis (right), Communist Party Secretary-General, walks from U. S. District Court in Washington to begin one-year prison sentence for contempt of Congress in refusing to testify. (International Soundphoto)

Bids on New School To Be Opened Monday

Central Point, May 13—Bids on \$500,000 worth of bonds for construction of new high school facilities at Central Point will be opened at 8 p.m. Monday, May 15, at the high school here. Final plans and specifications were approved recently for the building and June 6 was set as the date for receiving bids on construction.

School board members have announced that a hearing on the budget for consolidated school district No. 6 will be held also on June 6. The outlay approved by the budget committee is \$363,117. Despite added amounts for principal and interest on the new bond issue, the levy will be about two mills less than last year in the consolidated district and four less than in the former Central Point district.

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