



# SPANKING WINS —HANDS DOWN!



Asked whether teachers should paddle unruly pupils, FAMILY WEEKLY readers voted yes by an overwhelming majority **By LESTER DAVID**

**T**O FIND OUT where its readers stand on the red-hot issue of corporal punishment in the schools, FAMILY WEEKLY recently ran a "spanking poll."

The ballot asked: should teachers be allowed to spank unruly students? The readers' overwhelming answer: yes!

It was almost a three-to-one victory. Out of 5,277 ballots cast in the poll, 3,812 or 72 percent were in favor of spanking by teachers. Disapproval was expressed by 1,381 or 28 percent.

Many persons on both sides took the trouble to write long and thoughtful letters explaining their views. "Yes" voters argued that (1) spanking gets the point across swiftly and efficiently; (2) it causes no permanent harm or resentment but rather generates a new respect for the teacher; (3) it stops the wild ones from getting wilder; (4) it keeps in line the unruly ones whose conduct can cause an entire class to suffer; and (5) it often is the only way of handling chronic offenders.

Teachers themselves reported that spanking works wonders. Gerald McMullen of Tyler, Tex., declared: "In 12 years of teaching, I have not seen a student who was not helped by spanking. I have taught in schools that did not use spanking, and the morale of the students was terrible. In Tyler, we have a very fine school system—and we spank!"

Many teachers reported that spanking, often just once, brought about dramatic improvement. Mrs. Isabella M. Coffee of Baldwin, Ga., told about a fourth-grade girl who was "an unholy terror." One day, Mrs. Coffee had enough. She marched the offender into a cloakroom and spanked hard. For five months thereafter, the youngster was a model child; and on the last day of school, she whispered shyly: "Mrs. Coffee, I just want to tell you that you're the best teacher I ever had."

A number of parents who themselves were spanked in school stoutly maintained that the experience was a good one. Betty Jane Tuttle of

Pasco, Wash., asserted: "The stick, ruler, and razor strap were no strangers when I was growing up. They were used by parents and teacher. I feel they did me more good than harm."

And an Ashland, Ore., youth wrote: "I have gotten better grades since the principal at our school gave me a couple of good whacks for getting out of hand."

A sizable percentage of pro-spankers believes there is a clear link between the abandonment of the paddle in schools and the upsurge in juvenile crime. County Attorney James L. Sontag of Nowata, Okla., expressed deep concern. He wrote: "I am faced each day with juveniles and adults who have not been taught respect or discipline in the home or school. The teachers in both places failed to use the 'instrument' designed to teach these basic subjects."

Over and over, parents as well as teachers stressed that positive appeals should be tried first and spanking used only as a last resort. Nevertheless, many agreed that the time can come when swift and sharp whacks are the only means left. Mrs. Charlotte Webb of Largo, Fla., declared: "After 35 years as a teacher, I am convinced that it is the only effective method with a child who is a habitual class disturber."

**T**HESE PROBLEM ONES, readers wrote, can cause infinite harm. As Mrs. Ruby Mink of Pittsfield, Ill., said: "If they are allowed to get away repeatedly with misbehavior, the whole class loses its respect for the teacher." J. L. McNeal of New Ellenton, S.C., agreed and added that classroom unruliness can spread like a raging epidemic, and then nobody learns anything.

In vigorous disagreement were many parents, teachers, public officials, and students who denounced corporal punishment in schools. They argued that (1) spanking simply does not do the job it's supposed to do; (2) it can and does cause more problems than it solves; (3) it is a parental responsibility that must not be abdicated to the schools; and (4) good teachers can find other ways of handling unruly students.

The uselessness of spanking was stressed re-

peatedly. Mrs. Vincent Reale of Margate, N.J., a mother of six, contended: "It has been my experience both in childhood and adult life that those youngsters who were most severely punished did not become more respectful or less destructive—they just became more adept at not getting caught!"

Many readers were convinced that spanking can cause real harm. As Mrs. Robert M. Edwards of Marion, Ohio., put it: "I cannot conceive of a student learning very much from a teacher whom he fears and resents."

More than a few adult readers wrote of their own unhappy experiences. City Judge Virgil W. Burgess of Champaign, Ill., said he was "spanked, slapped, and struck with rulers" as a boy. "I have forgiven but not forgotten the humiliation and resentment that still linger," he said.

**Y**OUNGSTERS by the score echoed this statement from a 13-year-old student in Fayetteville, N.C.: "Spanking does not help a thing. It only makes things worse. I know, I'm scared to death of my teachers. You should feel friendly and secure in school, not scared."

Repeatedly, "no" voters hammered at the theme that if strong measures are needed with a youngster, parents must do the job. Marine Sgt. George J. Marshall of Santa Ana, Calif., said: "Lack of discipline in the home is the worst form of child neglect.... It is not the job of the teachers and principals to try to correct the mistakes and failures of the parents."

Spanking opponents listed these alternatives to the rod: isolation, extra homework, sending an offender home, special classes presided over by disciplinarians, expulsion in extreme cases.

Mrs. Robert T. Kerr of Claremont, Calif., summed up the feeling of the "don't spank" voters this way: "It cannot work. A child who sits quietly in a classroom because he fears a spanking learns nothing. His education is meaningless. The problems which caused his unruly behavior are ignored and will only become manifest in some other area. An unruly child needs guidance, not a beating."