

# 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?



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.

# a Comeback

by Jack Ryan

ment is an invasion of human rights that merely covers up evils in our system which cause children to get into trouble in the first place.

A survey by the National Education Association shows that teachers think Johnny is less to blame for the misbehavior than are lax parents, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate recreational programs. Spanking won't get to the root of Johnny's problem, they say; instead, it may make him even more resentful of school.

Opponents fear, too, that corporal punishment will find its greatest advocates in the ineffectual or temperamental teacher who uses it to compensate for his own shortcomings in handling children.

In a survey by an educational publication, *The Nation's Schools*, a Maryland superintendent reported, "Our school board does not prohibit corporal punishment but thinks the best teachers do not need to use it." And Dr. Percival M. Symonds, president of the American Educational Research Association, who has studied corporal punishment's effects, says that spanking often is used by a teacher to satisfy his own needs, not the pupil's, and may actually inhibit a youngster's ability to learn.

THE PRO side of the debate recognizes that spanking doesn't correct underlying causes of misbehavior such as poor home training and inadequate schools. But they feel that the hickory stick induces mischievous youngsters to accept authority rather than rebel against it.

The idea was summed up by Britain's Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who defended "caning" by saying, "A good beating with a cane can have a remarkable sense of awakening on the mind and conscience of a boy."

Advocates of corporal punishment agree that spanking is not the best means of discipline, but they maintain it is the most expedient under today's conditions. The crowded classes and teacher shortages which contribute to misbehavior, they say, also prevent schools from devoting precious time and money to the few troublemakers and winning them over with "sweetness and light" psychology.

An example of the changing attitude of educators occurred in Ventura, Calif., when the board of education considered hiring a psychiatrist at \$1,104 a month for "problem pupils." The board asked the county supervisor for his opinion, and he

replied, "It would be a lot cheaper to hire switches for the teachers." The board dropped the subject.

Teachers in metropolitan areas have more than twice the number of "problem pupils" reported in smaller urban and rural communities. Yet only one urban teacher in 20 has the right to administer corporal punishment; in non-metropolitan areas 56 percent have this authority and in rural areas 66 percent.

It's debatable whether small-town teachers have better-behaved classes because they can spank, but nearly half the big-city teachers feel they'd have less trouble if they could march Johnny to the woodshed occasionally.

COURTS uphold the teacher's right to paddle—up to a point. In one case a boy, slapped by a teacher, was bruised on his head and neck. Charged with assault and battery, the teacher proved the youth had been a constant troublemaker and had disrupted a school assembly with foul language. The court found the teacher's actions justified.

On the other hand, an Arkansas teacher was found guilty of the same charge for twice whipping a 15-year-old boy for a minor offense. The punishment was excessive, the court held.

Pro-spanking teachers want restrictions on corporal punishment to prevent such abuses. They believe a definite code should be followed to protect the pupil against too-frequent spankings, maltreatment, and intemperate teachers.

Cincinnati has a set of regulations which shows how such a code might work. When Johnny constantly misbehaves, his teacher reports him to the principal, who decides on spanking only as "a last resort."

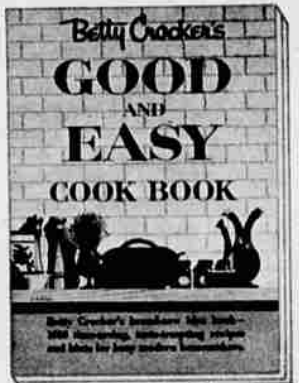
The principal or an aide administers the spanking only "with the palm of his hand or a broad paddle." A witness must be present, and the principal must report the action to the administrative department.

The regulations warn against malice and unreasonable force; spanking is prohibited "at a time when the person administering it is angered or impassioned."

Such limits on corporal punishment, advocates say, prevent a spanking from leaving the student with any aftereffects other than the impression he would be better off cooperating with his elders.

That's a lesson that should be taught at Father's knee, both teachers and superintendents agree. Usually it is. But when it isn't, most of them believe the rod should be added to education's "three r's."

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