

THEY SPEAK

These are children speaking. All of the following statements are the words of children except those which are in italics

Ways of Working *Pupils give us their opinions about cooperative class planning, "activity" periods, and student government; their statements are a challenge to us to put more meaning into the school program*

Students show a lively interest in work of the school and express a sincere desire to participate in planning programs and solving problems. Are we giving them the opportunities which they want and need for happy school living and for growth as capable, responsible adults? The students themselves don't always think that we are.

STUDENTS should have as much responsibility as they are capable of accepting. They should be called in on long-range planning for courses and school activities.

- Students should be allowed to plan with the teacher all the work they do so they will get practice in planning.
- A child reaching the age of 13 or 14 has matured enough to determine the field where his greatest interest lies. This maturity should not be ignored. He should be given the opportunity to choose the general field for his elective work.
- Children should, to some extent, be allowed a part in planning their own program with a strong guidance of a

teacher and parents. The junior and senior classes could be allowed to plan a greater part of their program than freshmen and sophomores because they are more serious and have begun to realize the importance of getting an education. It should all be gradual, with more and more responsibility placed on the individual student. (*From discussions by high school students.*)

¶ *An embarrassing experiment teaches a lesson in group responsibility.*

- Because of a continued failure of the class to take part in discussions, our teacher decided upon a plan to change this situation. One Thursday, she called aside several students who usually carry on class discussion and gave us her plan.

Her idea was as follows: the reason, she told us, for lack of participation in the class was inattentiveness and just plain "mental laziness." It was her theory that in a group like this a few wide-awake people could control the entire group procedure.

On Friday the class began as usual. This was the day we were to see the

deadly danger in the failure of the individual to take an active part in a democracy. Today we were to discuss the article, "Foundations of the Peace" by Henry A. Wallace.

The class president started the discussion by making the statement, "Wallace said the United States and Great Britain should control world trade and limit German commerce." This was the exact opposite of what the article actually said. This lead was followed by another equally ridiculous contribution which got the discussion, being carried on by the several confederates, off on a rampage of wild and silly statements that were completely false and erroneous. When the class president asked if there were any criticisms or disagreements, there wasn't a single rebuttal.

The farce continued and the statement was made, "The United States should annex Canada as payment of the British debt to us." Again challenges were called for and again there were no criticisms or disagreements from the class.

A halt was finally called and the teacher explained to the class just what it had sanctioned and not challenged. This met with much surprise and embarrassment in the class.

The sad part of this experiment is that the same thing can, does, and has been happening in governments where the results are totalitarianism, complete enslavement, and darkness.

Here are fifth grade youngsters' enthusiastic reports on planning their own schedule of work.

- Time just flies by when you are working on your own ideas.
- This week we learned to plan for a

whole week's schedule of work. Makes me feel real grown-up.

- I never realized how much a teacher had to think in order that we get our work in each day.
- This schedule helps me see a week's work. I can figure out better how to use my time and use it more wisely.
- Some thought it was fun because it just took up time so we wouldn't have to work—but I didn't.
- I like having a choice but we don't always get it unless we do right.
- We set up our own guides and if we break one of these we are the losers.
- We used to argue an awful lot—especially in physical education groups—but some of our privileges were taken away and now we either agree to follow our game schedule or work out some compromise.
- We have a part in rating ourselves when we have a conference with our teacher. I keep a reading record and folder of some of my work.
- We are left on our own a lot now. At the first of the year the teacher couldn't leave without something happening. We have learned it's harmful to ourselves and not anyone else like the teacher; so we go on about getting our jobs done.

Youth discusses discipline and self-control for democratic living.

- Democracy in its best form should develop within one self-discipline; yet I still don't feel that I have complete control over myself. I wonder if this would be developed by a little more discipline from the outside—maybe not. Self-discipline leads to a higher moral standard.
- There is one thing that I feel I have

lost out on, and that's self-discipline. I believe I can hold myself to blame for this as much as the school, though, for the school can only give you what you make yourself get out of it. That is the only thing I feel I need for adult development that I haven't received.

- All schools should have better discipline. When our fathers and mothers went to school, they didn't sit around talking, painting, or reading when they should have been studying.

¶ *High school boys and girls ask for student government and tell us why they want it.*

- Of the many things that work together to make up our schools, student participation seems to be the most important. I seriously believe that the students should have their own form of government, wherein they can express their own opinions, as I believe the Student Council is now doing here in our school.

I believe that this group could be changed every two months or so to get new ideas and to develop leadership in more people. Not only should students participate in school government but also in the school activities of various kinds, thus giving valuable training for later life and also broadening the interests and experiences of the student.

- Since the main purpose of school is to make good citizens, student government is important as a part of our education. Although student government is not actually practiced in this high school, I feel sure that the practice in leadership that it could afford would be very valuable.

If the students could make their own rules, the force of public opinion would

keep unruly students in check. I believe that if the many could be trusted to rule the few instead of the few the many, we would have a better school—and also a better national government.

- The thing we are most interested in is student government. We believe that if the students were granted the right to choose their own leaders, there would be less conflict in the classes.

We think that this is really important. A good example of student government is the way our core classes are run. Core classes have the right to elect their own officers and to choose the type of work in which they are interested. Students would be more interested in school if they had more to say about what they do.

¶ *Junior high school pupils describe the job their Student Council is doing.*

- As a student, I feel responsible for the way our halls look and I help with this and get others to help.

- It's a big job to run a school and I'm glad our principal let's us help.

- We call our council the "improvement" council and some of the things I have helped do are: 1) work out seating arrangement in the auditorium, helping make floor plan for classes and acting as an usher until classes learn their places; 2) help make a schedule which gave each class member some responsibilities such as hall duty before and after school, planning schedules for physical education, and taking care of equipment.

We have a committee which is working on a guide or a constitution for our council. This will have in it some of the ways of doing things which we have found bring the best results.

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