

How Do We Get That Way?

IVAH GREEN

AT TIMES IT SEEMS to us as we drop our working harness, slip into our housecoats, and let down our hair, that we elementary-grade supervisors are the most ineffective and most disliked of mortals. We are told by experienced teachers that they "shake in their boots" when we walk into their classrooms. Student-teachers practically faint away when we appear. It is doubtful if we have any friends. We never marry. (Who could love a supervisor?) We are the world's greatest flaw-pickers and we go about seeking whom we may painfully pester.

How do we get this way? Well, I'll tell you. For one thing, it's the teachers. You've heard about the college professor who said he'd love to teach, if it weren't for the students. We know just how he felt. We'd love to supervise if it weren't for the teachers. And especially the student-teachers.

The student-teachers do such queer things. And they don't listen. We tell 'em and tell 'em. And they look at us with their big blue eyes and say, "Why, yes, Miss Bangs, of course." They smile and show their dimples, and their cheeks get pink. And when we come back to visit them, things are just as they were before. **THEY NEVER EVEN HEARD WHAT WE SAID.**

We Advocate Realism

Student-teachers feel books are sacred, especially textbooks. Skip a chapter? Never. Leave out a story? The State Course of Study forbid! We start out for a visit, say, on a

heavenly October day. Indian Summer is at its lushest; cobwebs are sailing through the blandest of breezes. Humming a line from "October's Bright Blue Weather," we enter a classroom to find a fourth-grade reading class deep in a story of January snowdrifts.

"How do you happen," we query the teacher later, "to be reading about January snowdrifts on a day like this, this DAY OF ALL DAYS?"

"Why," says Blue Eyes, in the tone one uses to explain to a petulant child, "that story came next in the reader."

To have pupils singing at the tops of their voices, "Cheerio, Lady April, now we know spring is here," with a February blizzard blasting the windows so hard you can hardly distinguish the words above the roar of the storm apparently seems incongruous to no one but supervisors. Don't we expect our teachers to teach two-part songs? Well, "Lady April" is such a one. Only an old meanie would spoil things by suggesting that perhaps a song about spring could wait until Lady April got herself dug out of a snow-bank.

At times student-teachers' efforts at teaching result in such unusual concepts on the part of their charges that we wonder what goes on in their classes. Science classes provide us with the most reasons to wonder, especially when we read answers like these on a "quiz."

Pasteurizing is testing milk to get diseases out. Our bodies are 100 per cent water. Snowflakes are alike in that they are all different.

Water in the form of heat cannot be seen. Cold causes water to turn to water.

We admit to being persnickety and hard to please. We can always find something to crab about—too cold classrooms, too hot classrooms, cold lunches, untidy cloakrooms, dirty, unused library books. We plead for a hot dish at noon for all pupils and are cheerfully told parents are not interested—so why bother? We make ourselves almost obnoxious in insisting upon rest periods for small

Ordinarily we stay out of the "confessions" field. But when a supervisor can look—and laugh—at herself and her kind in so delightful a way as this author, there emerges a story at once provocative and entertaining and of real significance to school people. Ivah Green "learned about" student-teachers in her position as rural supervisor at State Teachers College, St. Cloud, Minn. She has recently joined the staff of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction in Des Moines.

children in the face of parents' objections that they send their boys and girls to school "to learn, not to sleep." We suffer through periods of off-key singing led by student-teachers who volunteer the information that they hardly know one tune from another and they never "had" singing when they went to school. Furthermore, they don't expect to "have to teach it" when they get into their own schools.

We Try Hard to Understand

Periodically we are asked to "rate" our willing, but found-wanting apprentices. Sometimes the injunction "always find something good to say" becomes a major supervisory problem. We recall the superintendent, who, when asked to fill out a written recommendation for one of his teachers, and not wishing to damn her completely, compromised with, "During the year that Miss Blank taught in our county she did the best she could." Supervisors sometimes believe that many student-teachers are not even doing the best they can. But then, perhaps we have never been young, and kindness is not in us.

Much of the time we are fools. We give a student-teacher a passing grade when her complete preoccupation with being in love for the first time makes any attention to her teaching impossible. "But these are not normal times," we feebly rationalize, "and a love affair may be as important even as student-teaching." We concern ourselves unduly with many things not really our business. We lose sleep while wondering how we can induce Hubert to continue in school even if he is nearly 16 and not yet through eighth grade. We plan how we shall approach Dickie's mother in the hope that we can make her see that his staying up late every night is ruining both his health and his school work. We needlessly draw imprecations on ourselves by calling on parents to discuss matters requiring their cooperation and being told, "Kids ain't your business—only teachers is your business."

There Must Be Easier Ways to Earn a Living

Why, then, do we continue at our jobs? Why don't we do what we so often threaten—get a good, easy-going job as sellers-of-stockings, or washers-of-dishes? Well, the truth is we've found out that there are often

days when things really don't look half bad. We live for those days. It may be that we happen in on a young student-teacher who (wonder of wonders) remembers and uses what she learned. She is so engrossed in what she is doing that she is even unaware (or unmindful) of us. She and her pupils become so drawn into the actuality of learning happily that we are fascinated. We don't go elsewhere to visit. We just sit, with our tired bones relaxed, and soak it all in. We jot down meticulously all the good things she is doing and hand the sheet to her. Then we go away in a dreamy, half-maudlin condition. She was wonderful. She has the "spark." She is *our* student-teacher. And we tear up the letter in which we replied to the want ad asking for a saleslady.

Another reason we stick at our jobs in the face of discouragement, dislike, and disapproval, is that we crave the opportunity to try out some of our "crackpot" ideas when we think we have found a teacher who has a leaning toward the original and the unorthodox. Then we really get stirred up. We outline a plan, we suggest procedures; we promise assistance, we visualize results. We talk of "adventuring" and "challenge." And when our words kindle a fire in our young teacher's mind, we feel that no other job than supervising could possibly result in such a glow of satisfaction.

Perhaps It Gets in Our Blood

Again we find ourselves, during one of these glowing moments, going on to a promising young teacher about "drawing out children's latent powers," and "encouraging creative abilities." The expressions are not original with us, but we like to harp on them to all who will listen. And with those who know what we mean, and who proceed to carry out this program of nurturing latent talents, we get a foolish pleasure out of discovering we in turn are "drawing out" the creative powers of those teachers. We feel inordinately set up when one brings us an article, or a plan, or poem "to criticize." We had not known for sure she had the soul of a poet, but we used that wonderful gift of intuition given only to women (yes, even to supervisors) and found it did the trick. A common love of poetry between a supervisor and a teacher under her direction can work wonders.

Still another angle of supervision holds us to our often discouraging work. We have talked theory so much that we feel we must prove that those theories actually work. Else we only make liars of ourselves and doubters of our students. So we occasionally ask for the privilege of teaching a class, just to prove to ourselves that our ideas do work, and also that we do not say "all right" with every other breath, as most of our teachers do, a circumstance we complain about from morning to night, but which never changes one jot.

We are probably pathetic in our appreciation of children and their liking to have us visit them. We are pleased when small ones want to read to us, and lean against us, and finger our "pretty buttons." We treasure their pasty valentines and crooked Christmas greetings. And we are forever collecting things to take to them that will make them happier.

A final consideration keeps us in our thankless positions, probably the most unfounded reason of all. It is that we get a tremendous rush of pride in learning of the exploits of men now in service who once have taught under our supervision. We read that Jimmy, only three years ago a student-teacher in a one-room school and now a captain in the Marines, has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Cited for "displaying cool courage and expert skill, braving fierce and determined fire, made repeated

flights over hostile territory and daringly attacked Jap troop concentrations in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire."

What has that to do with us supervisors? Well, really, nothing—but we take his achievements to our hearts regardless. Didn't we have him as a student-teacher? Don't we vividly recall the day we slipped in to observe his first teaching, and found him sitting on a kindergarten chair teaching a first-grade reading lesson and he being just as thrilled over it as his pupils were? We knew then that he "had something." Who shall say we didn't do something for him? Who can prove that we may not rightfully take a modicum of pride in his valorous actions? If we admit our blame for the failures of our student-teachers, then we assert our right to claim a share in their successes!

So without apology, we take some credit for the honorable records of persons whom we have at one time prodded, pummeled, or praised. We shall probably grow smug over the medals they have won, the scholarships they merit, the positions of importance they achieve. Yes, we are garrulous and we talk shop too much. We make equally large mountains out of both our occasional successes and our almost habitual ineffectiveness. And we shall never have the will to break away from this supervising business. How do we get this way? Well, I'll tell you. It's the teachers—especially the student-teachers—



New Representatives to DSCD Board

TWO NEW STATE REPRESENTATIVES have recently been appointed to the Board of Directors of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development. They are Hannah Lindahl, supervisor of elementary education in Mishawaka, representing Indiana, and Isabel Lumsden, supervisor, Stephens County Schools, Toccoa, representing Georgia. The names of other state representatives to the Board may be found on the inside back cover of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*.

Copyright © 1946 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.