

EDITORIALS

17 Volumes of Welfare Rules.

"Go wheel in the Iowa manual," quipped someone at a recent welfare conference in Minnesota.

It was no joke. The Iowa board and department of social welfare has currently in force for the demands of state and county welfare employees no less than:

- 6 Manuals
4 County Handbooks
7 State Handbooks

They are jam-packed with rules that have accumulated over the years, full of confusing cross-references, hard to find things in despite the index. They are loose-leaf, with typewriter-size paper, and nine of the volumes standing side-by-side on a shelf measure 15 inches thick.

A great deal of very careful thinking and compiling have gone into them—but 17 volumes are just too many. Old employees have a time keeping track of all those rules, or finding them when they want them.

and new employees are just staggered by the mass they are expected to assimilate. No other state has anything like that quantity.

Some simplifications have been made recently, and board members and department employees already are planning a wholesale revision and trimming down to size as part of the streamlining with this represented question. She did not refuse to answer; she did not evade. She answered softly, but the positive tone of sincerity made her reply as emphatic as if she had shouted:

"Never!"
"Are you now or have you ever been a Communist sympathizer?"
"Never!"

But the rules should be less repetitions, easier to use, better indexed—and very much shorter than they are now.

In Praise of Books for Children.

People frequently get all worked up about the quantity of murder and sadism on television, in comic books and strips, in movies and radio dramas that children take in. This is fair criticism, though we feel the violence reflects the writers' poverty of imagination and conservatism rather than any gruesome intent at commercial exploitation of childhood.

There's nothing new about it except the form. Take the dime novel of a couple generations ago. Take the fairy tales and nursery rhymes of the last three or four centuries. Take the classics of literature—take life itself! Violence is all about us.

The remedy is not censorship, but suppression (except in the most extreme instances where prosecution under existing criminal law makes sense). The remedy is rather in the attitude toward violence, and in the creation of new and better plays.

Children like action. What is action in its most extreme form? Physical violence and death. The lazy writer, copying earlier successes, turns naturally to these. The conservative producer or publisher, preferring a sure thing, wants the writer to stick to these old forms: the Western, the Mystery, the Adventure, the Slapstick, and so on—all dominated by violence.

But this cycle need not go on forever. We have only to open our eyes, and the scales fall off.

One of the most successful children's stories of all time, and one of the most wholesome, was written some 40 years ago in Philadelphia. Its authorship has only recently been established: Mrs. Frances M. Ford

of Philadelphia, now 99 years old, dashed it off in a personal letter she wrote as parents' adviser for a publisher of children's books. The Little Engine That Could quickly became a classic, with its slow, puffing "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can" as the locomotive struggled up the hill, and its triumphantly rapid "I-thought-I-could-I-thought-I-could-I-thought-I-could" as it whirred down the other side.

Mrs. Ford never published it, but it was preached from the pulpit, it was written down into story form and published by others.

It helped a little boy learn to eat his breakfast, it encouraged a university student to pass his exams, a World War II sailor torpedoed in the South Pacific said he owed his life to the engine's slogan. It rang a bell that is still joyously clanging.

Stories of this type abound in life. Some examples may be found all through literature, and they are becoming more frequent now in children's books.

Anybody brought up on fairy tales and the classics, or dime novels, or murder mysteries is in for a big surprise if he examines a batch of the newer books for children in store or library. It's a different world.

Television, radio, movies and comics are bound to discover this new world. There's money in it, as well as good.

Concerned parents can do a lot to hasten the day by keeping an eye on the most wholesome, and praising them. One of the best is a good one already, even on TV or in a comic book.

S.U.I. Helps to Add Life to Years.

Only one other state (New Hampshire) has a greater percentage of persons over 65 than Iowa. It is of particular significance, therefore, that the State University of Iowa should be bringing its resources to bear on the growing problem of an aging population.

The second conference on gerontology (the study of aging), which met in Iowa City last week, commenced a year of intensive research and planning by S.U.I. staff members in a number of fields, such as medicine, physical education, sociology, and economics. The first, resulted in the establishment on the university campus of an Institute of Gerontology, which serves as a research station and service center to promote scientific studies of how Iowa's senior citizens can add "life to years."

Even though America is still "young" as nations go, its population, due to the increased life span, grows older each year. At the time of the 1950 census, there were some 12 1/2 million people in the U. S. who were 65 and over, a figure that sociologists have estimated has swollen

considerably during the past three years.

What are the fundamental problems of an aging population? Clark Tibbitts, of the U. S. department of health, education, and welfare, told the S.U.I. conference that older people are most concerned about "Dependency, the fear of uselessness, and loneliness, and of long, incapacitating sickness." As senior citizens, they want—and deserve—"opportunities for keeping useful, maintaining normal social contacts, and preserving their physical and mental health."

To aid the Institute of Gerontology in its work and to help Iowa deal more effectively with the problems of aging, the university has appointed a citizen's advisory committee of representative Iowans who will consult with Institute officials on formulating a statewide service to coordinate and stimulate active interest in their senior citizens.

Just as the university pioneered in the study of the development of the normal child many years ago, so it is now leading the way in helping the aged. In Iowa, understanding the problems faced at the opposite end of life's scale.

How to Determine Needs of Courts.

How many courts, how many judges are enough?

The federal government has that under continuous survey through its administrative office in the United States courts—which is now calling for more judges to meet the heavy load in certain districts.

The Iowa Bar association in cooperation with the Iowa supreme court and the legislature's budget and financial control (interim) committee has a committee doing a long overdue survey of the facts in the state's system of district courts.

The Iowa justice of the peace system has a crude but effective automatic regulator in the fee system by which most Iowa justices get paid. Since there isn't much demand for their services, only about one-fifth the number authorized by law bother to run for office and qualify by posting bond.

The number of municipal judges is regulated semi-automatically by the Iowa law. Having them at all is optional, and for cities that do have them the number is set according to population, up to a maximum of four. Thus Des Moines has four, but is not permitted by law to have one more or one less, according to need.

A good many authorities think the work loads and performances of ALL types of judges ought to be under continuous survey by the highest court in the set-up, or by an administrative office of the courts (in either case subject to legislative budgetary control).

Iowans have a good chance to judge the merits of this argument now by comparing what happens in these different methods of matching judges to judicial work to be done, all under way at the same time within Iowa's borders.

Teacher's Victory Against Claims She Was a "Red"

(By Harry A. Fodick, secretary, California Teachers' Association ethics commission, in the Journal of the National Education Association.)

In a courtroom packed with hushed listeners, California teacher Fern Bruner took the witness stand to testify in her suit against a radio commentator, the station, and its manager.

"Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?"

It was Gardner Johnson, her own attorney, who left off the examination with this represented question. She did not refuse to answer; she did not evade. She answered softly, but the positive tone of sincerity made her reply as emphatic as if she had shouted:

"Never!"
"Are you now or have you ever been a Communist sympathizer?"
"Never!"

Accusation Made In Radio Broadcast.

In a series of broadcasts over San Francisco station KYA starting on Sept. 2, 1950, Magazine Publisher James J. Tarantino had referred to Miss Bruner as having been "repeated many times to be a Communist or Communist sympathizer." He asked "Mayor of San Lorenzo" (San Lorenzo is not an incorporated city and has no mayor) to "check her Commie background, . . . and if my information is correct, and I think it is, Fern Bruner should be fired."

It took four weeks and 2100 pages of testimony after Miss Bruner's opening denial before counsel for the defense admitted in their closing argument that they had not proved that Miss Bruner was a Communist or that the United Federal Government was only active on which the charge was based, was substantive.

Teacher Awarded Damages of \$55,125.

Tarantino, radio station KYA, and station manager H. G. Fernhead were ordered to pay Miss Bruner \$55,125 in general and positive damages, a high price for the luxury of impugning the loyalty of an American classroom teacher.

The thumping Aug. 6 verdict offers historic precedents in the courts of California and of the nation.

This was the first case in California in which a slanderous radio broadcast of a Communist reached a jury; probably the first in the nation in which a public school teacher, whose name with Communist sympathies, struck back through the courts; the first that we know of in which a slander judgment has been awarded on the basis of radio broadcast charges of Red activities.

Judge's Instructions To the Jury.

What this case means toward liberation of all teachers from the current hazard of being falsely accused of Communism was pointed up in Superior Court Judge Albert C. Wollenberg's instructions to the jury: "To impute that a particular certified California public school teacher is a Communist or a Communist sympathizer would tend to directly injure her in respect to her profession."

"The statements as broadcast impute on her face that the plaintiff, a public high school teacher, is a Communist or a Communist sympathizer, and are defamatory on their face without further qualification, explanation, or identification."

"A defamatory statement is not one that is couched or stated in the form of an interview with another person or because it seeks to avoid its otherwise obvious character as a slander by the statement that it is reported or believed to be true."

Burden Placed On the Defendant.

In short, the burden is placed directly on the defendant in any such action to prove the validity of the charges or reimburse the teacher for all resultant damage.

From 1947 to 1950 Miss Bruner was a social studies teacher in Benicia, a small town near San Francisco. During her first year, students wanted to form a student unit of the United World Federalists and asked Miss Bruner to serve as adviser. Permission was granted by the principal and the school board. The chapter functioned for several months.

The board backed the teacher but requested that the group not meet in school buildings or as a school organization. By their own decision, the students disbanded rather than cause a community uproar.

Miss Bruner stayed another year at Benicia. Not one complaint was received by the school board or administration until June 1951, when a Mrs. O'Grady presented a petition seeking Miss Bruner's dismissal. Nothing came of this.

Position Accepted In Another School.

She returned to the case was closed, Miss Bruner then accepted a position at San Lorenzo, near Oakland. Four days before the test ended, a meeting, Tarantino made the first of his broadcasts. District Superintendent O. B. Paulsen began receiving tele-

phone calls, many of them asking only, "Has that new Communist teacher been fired?" Joining Miss Bruner and the administration asked the California Teachers' Association ethics commission to investigate the charges.

Did you ever get the silent treatment? Here's how Fern Bruner described it on the witness stand.

"I found myself surrounded by a wall of silence that was erected wherever I approached. In a new community, a new school, I had no way of clearing this up. My students didn't know me, and wouldn't come to me—or even accept me—until I had earned their confidence. I had no opportunity to dispel their suspicions. After all, they had heard it on the radio. I was in a state of nervous exhaustion, trying to clear my name and my loyalty to my teaching. Until the CTA report was issued, I could do nothing."

The CTA made a thorough investigation and published its report in a booklet entitled, "Spotlight Reversed." The report completely cleared Miss Bruner of all charges, declared that the commission found her to be an outstanding teacher of exceptionally high moral character and unqualified loyalty to her country. The commission recommended that the CTA finance any legal service necessary.

Attack Included Teachers' Association.

Two more broadcasts then branded the report as "slandered and biased." Tarantino broadened his attack, blasting the California Teachers' Association for its "whitewash" of Miss Bruner.

With no retractions forthcoming, the California Teachers' Association directed Gardner Johnson, chief of the law firm which serves as the CTA's legal counsel, to file suit in Miss Bruner's behalf.

Tense drama in the packed courtroom in suspense throughout the trial. Much of this was provided by Attorney Johnson, whose persistent and probing questions kept defense witnesses squirming before his hammering cross examination.

Attorneys Rebuttal To the Jurors.

In his rifling final rebuttal, Johnson told the jury, "You have the right to give your voice and the strong right arm of every decent person in this community—to strike an effective blow square on the face of Tarantino and anyone like him. . . ."

"The strength of evidence, the maliciousness of this offense, justify a verdict for punitive damages so that the bludgeoning and illiterate character assassin, the radio station which made it possible for him to go on the air, and all who dare traffic in baseless slander might know they can and will be called to account in an American courtroom."

The jury found for the plaintiff. Repetition of those sneers without any effort to verify the CTA report was deemed an expression of malice toward the teacher.

Station and Manager Also Assessed.

On that basis, Tarantino was ordered to pay Miss Bruner \$25,000 in punitive damages and \$125 in general and specific damages. Even more important, the jury found KYA equally culpable and Manager Fernhead guilty of the same. Each case due care in clearing the Tarantino scripts. The station was assessed \$25,000 and Fernhead \$1,000. Tarantino was assessed a station expense; he paid full rates for radio time to advertise and supplement his magazine.

"I'm so happy that the jury labeled the station and the defendant as slanderers. The act against Tarantino and the station instead of reimbursement for my personal humiliation," Miss Bruner told the press.

"I feel strongly that this verdict was for the whole teaching profession. It indicates that this kind of slander can't be carried on with impunity."

In commenting editorially on the verdict, the San Francisco Chronicle pointed out that "this case presented one uncommon and welcome aspect. . . . The accused woman found willing and competent defenders. The California Teachers' Association, having investigated and approved the charges against Miss Bruner, came to her defense. The association is to be commended for its intelligent and courageous conduct. . . ."

A Service To Her Profession.

CTA leaders are equally quick to point out that Fern Bruner has earned the gratitude of the whole profession. Despite long delays and frustrating developments which would have caused even slightly timid souls to withdraw from the fight, Miss Bruner never wavered.

All those who have participated in the case are confident that the moves of the defense to have the test ended, to seek a new trial, or appeal to a higher court will fail. Miss Bruner has indeed rendered a service to the profession.

A Fall Evening in Northeast Iowa



This time of year, drive south from Lansing, along the gravel road that follows the Mississippi river toward Harpers Ferry. It is dusk down where you drive and the air is crisp and chilly, with that undefinable autumn scent to it. The farm houses have their lights on, and bluish white smoke curls from the chimneys. In contrast, high above, the sun still shines and the horses and cattle graze on the slanting meadows. All this, tied together by the colors of fall foliage, presents views and scenery unparalleled anywhere in the world.—Frank Miller.

Discipline for Delinquency

(By F. D. Simpson in the Atlantic News-Telegraph)

The juvenile delinquency problem, ever present, but a bit more aggravated just now than in normal times, calls for drastic steps toward checking it.

One suggestion we would make. Punish the first offenders rather severely instead of letting them off. In our experience as a teacher, we learned that discipline is best maintained when the punishment is sure and firm against the first offenders. Juvenile delinquents know they are breaking laws and to let them get by with little or no punishment on their first attempt at crime only encourages them to repeat their lawlessness. True, there may be exceptions to this, youngsters who have slipped for some reason and who will not repeat their criminal efforts if they are let off with a warning.

But for the most part, a warning or a talking to simply invites a continuation of the law violations. Sure, swift and just punishment, we believe, would do a far more toward checking juvenile crime than the methods now being used in many cases.

One Job for Each

(Leah Jane Smith in Rock Rapids Reporter)

How fine it is that most people in this country are intent on doing the best they can at their particular jobs! Only one man could carry the message to Garcia; only one man can be president; only one musician can be Jose Turbi. But each one of us has it within his power to do one particular thing well. And that is what we all find satisfaction in doing and what makes our country the greatest one it is today.



Strictly Personal

America Still Likes Underdogs

By Sydney J. Harris.

CHICAGO, ILL. — When we talk about a country, as when we talk about a person, we tend to pick out the simple and obvious traits, and to ignore the complex ones. Every country, for instance, has a dual tradition: There is the humane, Germany of Goethe and the grim Germany of Bismarck. There is the warm, Russia of affection and hospitality, and the cold Russia of despotism and deceit.



Dual Traditions In America.

Our own nation has its own dual tradition, and those intellectual critics who prefer to see only the crass materialistic aspects of American society are doing a disservice to their countrymen.

Oddly enough (or, perhaps, not so oddly) it was attack with this thought during the World Series. Most people I ran across were rooting for Brooklyn to win, not because of any special loyalty to the Dodgers, but because "those Yankees need to be taken down a peg or two."

The Yankees represented monopoly in this World Series. They seemed to be arrogant and overconfident. Something basic in their attitude went against the deep grain of the American people. Baseball fans grudgingly admit the skill of the Yankees, but nevertheless thought it was time for their pride to fall.

Attitude Forgotten By Many Cities.

This part of our tradition has been forgotten by many of our critics, who are so overwhelmed by the evidence of materialism that they confuse the symptoms with the disease.

Some of our symptoms are alarming; but there is much health in our national temperament. There is humor, balance, and a sense of fair play, which are noticeably absent in some European cultures.

It is good for us to be self-critical, but it is important at the same time to realize that as long as we continue to root for the underdog, we have not lost our essential charity and cleanliness of purpose.

(Copyright, 1953.) (Strictly Personal, by Sydney J. Harris, is also printed throughout the week on the editorial page of The Des Moines Register.)