
INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

DEMOCRACY AS AN EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLE.

Detroit, Mich.

Our Ford Republic, situated in Farmington township, Mich., about an hour's ride on the interurban cars from the Detroit City Hall, is a truly democratic institution.

The Republic occupies an 80-acre farm with about \$35,000 worth of improvements on it. Its citizenship consists of about 60 boys, ranging in age from eight years to sixteen years, and on an average about thirteen years old. All the boy citizens are Juvenile Court boys, committed here (though it is not a municipal or State institution, but supported by private subscription) for varying periods, usually for only from three to five months. Some few boys have been with us three or four years. The other citizens are the Superintendent, the Matron, a cook, a farmer, two school teachers and a helper. The Republic is two years old.

Not a law or rule is made on the place that is not made by the citizens. All officers of Republic are elected by the Australian ballot system, after nominations and primaries. The only non-democratic office is that of Supreme Court Judge, who is the Superintendent, appointed by the Board of Trustees. He tries only State officers, and cases where State property is involved. All other cases are tried in the Citizens' Court, which is presided over at present by a twelve-year-old Judge. The officers are: Judge of Citizens' Court, Sheriff, President of Republic, State Banker, Public Works Commissioner, and Health Commissioner. These offices are all filled by the boys. There is no jail, nor are there any guards. Any boy can run away if he chooses.

No one in the Republic has to work, but he will find it to his advantage to work. All citizens look for work. Why? They have to pay their own way. Their board costs \$2.50 per week in Ford Republic money. They must buy their clothing, pay for their washing, pay their taxes, and pay their dues to the athletic association if they would play ball, etc. They are paid for all work at so much per hour—even going to school and keeping their school work up. Our own coinage is good for this, and U. S. money is not. The reason is that fond parents come out and want to help the boys out. We want them to earn their way.

The Judge disposes of as many as fifty cases in an evening's session of court sometimes, and there being no lawyers in the Republic to befog and obscure issues, justice, tempered with mercy in deserving cases, is administered in a very creditable manner. There is no jury, all citizens being present. Frequently they are asked to help decide in difficult cases. Appeal can be taken to the Supreme Court which sits immediately after Citizens' Court, or a referendum can be had, or they can appeal to the City of Detroit Juvenile Judge. Recall in form of impeachment is made use of occasionally. No citizen can punish another citizen (though there are punching contests occasionally between the boys when

some things have to be fought out) without going into court. Even the Superintendent or a school-teacher or the matron or the farmer, if they have a complaint against a boy for negligence or violation of law, must sign and file a written complaint in the Citizens' or in the Supreme Court. The case is disposed of in court, and there only. In the same way the boys can file complaints against the adults, who must then stand trial. If fines are imposed they must be paid in cash—the cash of the Republic. If a boy has no money because he is lazy or indifferent or has been fined a good deal, he becomes a charge on the State and must be supported by the State's tax receipts. This comes directly out of the citizens' pockets; so, of course, they see that the laws are obeyed and that all work as they should. The laws are the same for all citizens, adult or young; so adults are forced to set a good example and be on the square.

Citizens come into court, however, for good acts as well as bad, and, instead of being fined, are rewarded. Emphasis all through is placed on good citizenship, rather than on bad. This plan has stood the test of two years, and we are more than pleased with the way it is working out.

The place is a happy one. Work begins in the morning with "Assembly," when all citizens meet in the school-room, and several go through stunts of one kind or another for the amusement of all. This starts the day out well. The latter idea was borrowed from the Vineland (N. J.) Home for Feeble-minded, and it is a good one.

The average time spent at the Republic is short, for an institution cannot take the place of the family, even though, as here, the institutionalism of the system is minimized. The boys on their return home are formed into an alumni Association, and our Superintendent, Mr. Lane, visits them regularly at their homes. The principles of self-control and self-respect learned at the farm are thus not lost sight of in the city. The real test of any plan for the treatment of juvenile delinquency is really to work out their salvation in the environment they are to live in. And we are firmly of the belief that we are making good citizens out of what was apparently unpromising material.

The plan of the Ford Republic is, I believe, original with Homer T. Lane, the Superintendent, and it differs in many essential particulars from the George Junior, and other Republics—(1) in the age and class of boys we deal with; (2) in the law-making and law-enforcing machinery, there being no jail and no lawyers, as there are at the George Junior Republic.

We aim to conduct an uplifting experiment on truly democratic lines.

R. H. STEVENS.

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THAT DEBT FACTORY.*

Duluth, May 15.

The "important but simple fact" stated in the letter by Mr. Wm. W. Clay on page 439 of your current issue of *The Public*, is a fallacy. The loan of \$1,000 of bank notes does not create a debt of \$1,050; it creates a debt of \$1,000. One thousand dollars will liquidate that loan, if it is paid the same

*See *The Public*, current volume, page 439.