# It Can Be Done!

As told by MARGARET E. WAESPE, teacher, Grade VI

*In a preceding article a case has been made for the development of worldwide understanding within the elementary school. The following articles from the Weaver School, Springfield, Mo. illustrate how we can provide elementary students with experiences which can result in better social and economic comprehension.*

THE WEAVER SIXTH GRADE Cooperative Toggery Shop is a continuation of a project that had its beginning last year in a current-event discussion period. Children had been commenting on the various items that were difficult to buy because of the scarcities during the war. Someone remarked that he had noticed in an advertisement of our leading piece-goods store that only two dress lengths would be sold to each customer. In the discussion that followed, one child remarked that she had several print dresses that were "perfectly good", but that would be too small for her by spring. Another jokingly asked if they would fit her. From this idea our toggery exchange grew—with its unexpected host of learning opportunities.

From the beginning our aim has been to render a community service of keeping materials made scarce during, or because, of the war in circulation. The children formed something resembling a corporation, in which they all eagerly bought stock at ten cents a share. They brought their outgrown clothing and set their own prices on them. Other children, mothers, fathers and even persons who have no children in our school, patronize our toggery shop; not only to buy articles, but to bring others for us to sell.

We have had many problems to solve. Overhead troubled us for a while, until we decided to become a cooperative and charge 10 per cent for selling articles to those who were not shareholders in the cooperative. A very exact system of bookkeeping was obviously necessary, and before this problem was solved, we had to enlist the aid of the second year bookkeeping class at Senior High to help us set up the proper bookkeeping procedures. Since we were handling other people's valuable property, we decided we should have some sort of insurance to cover any possible loss or damage. A committee investigated this, and found itself going beyond the immediate practical problem as it delved into the origin, uses, and management of insurance.

As our business grew, we began to wonder if it was necessary to have a retailer's license. If we needed a license, we should probably also be collecting sales tax. A committee of five children was chosen to go to the Court House and find the answers to as many of our questions as possible while there. These are the questions that we wanted to know:

1. Do we need to collect sales tax for our shop?
2. How many different kinds of taxes do we pay in Springfield?
3. What is the sales tax used for?
4. Have we always had sales tax?
5. How did we get it?
6. Did they pay taxes a long time ago?
7. Who started income tax?
8. What is it used for?
9. How are taxes collected?

10. What happens to people who don't pay their taxes?
11. What is the difference in a tax and a bond?
12. What do we use automobile taxes for?
13. Do all states have sales tax?
14. Does Canada have sales tax?
15. Is the money from taxes and licenses used in different ways?
16. Do we need a license for our shop?
17. How many different kinds of licenses are required in Springfield?
18. Why does anyone have a right to tell you that you have to pay income tax on money that you have made yourself?
19. Is ignorance of whether or not we have to pay, an excuse?
20. Would it make any difference in whether or not we have to have a license if we decide to sell soap?

The committee brought back good information and material. Children who had been paying out pennies for sales taxes over a long period and who had taken this as a matter of course, now were interested in the nature of taxes and the collection and uses of tax moneys.

As more and more goods came into our shop, we felt the need of advertising to acquaint the public with the size and kind of articles that we had for sale. A committee investigated the various ways in which stores in our community advertise to determine which means of advertising were most effective and which would be possible to us. This gave us an interesting comparison of the cost and advantages of advertising in our local newspapers, over the radio, in the movies, and in magazines.

The scarcity of soap had now caught our interest and we decided we would like to make some soap from the used kitchen fats that we were saving and sell the soap in our shop. First we decided that we should write to Donald Nelson and ask his permission to use fats intended for ammunition, for soap. We received his permission and a committee learned how to make soap and proceeded to make it.

About the time that our soap was well underway, we heard of a hundred or more print feed sacks, washed and ironed, that we could buy for 25 cents each. We decided to invest the money that we had from our sale of stocks in these sacks, and sell them at a slight profit; at the same time we would be supplying prints that were definitely hard to find. We did not have enough stock money to cover the cost of sacks, so we had to borrow what we lacked at 6 per cent interest. Our sacks always sell in record time. There are usually from 2 to 5 sacks of a kind, and of a surprisingly good pattern and quality. In the 2 years our shop has been operating, we have sold around 7 or 8 hundred of these sacks. This year we had to pay 30 cents each for them, and consequently have had to charge more ourselves. Experiences like these have been an incentive to note the cost and price of things, and to make concrete observations of supply and demand.

Our librarian brought us three large books on the origin, organization and workings of cooperatives. They were definitely intended for adult reading, but spurred by the problems arising from our own venture, some of the children made a study of cooperatives and reported their findings to the group. One of the children read an article in the *Readers' Digest* about a cooperative in Elma, Washington. She wrote and asked them details of their organization, to see how an adult working cooperative compared with ours.

A nice writeup and picture of our

shop appeared on the front page of our local paper. The Cooperative Association in Kansas City saw this account and wrote to us congratulating us on our venture and asking that we write an account of our organization and operation to be published in their journal. A committee of four was appointed to write this account. Since then, the Cooperative Association has been kind enough to send us their journal every month. They also sent us some material on cooperatives that they thought might prove interesting to us.

We read in this material, that cooperatives really had their beginnings in the "grass root democracy" of our country with the log rollings and house raisings of the pioneers. Another statement that challenged our interest was that cooperatives would be able to do away with the two basic causes of war —the strivings for economic gains and for prestige or superiority. This caused us to think back over all the wars in our country's history to check and see. We decided that we would like to in some way show graphically how the cooperative spirit has prevailed down through America's history—making possible our present progress—and our great promise for the future. Before the discussion period was over, we had a sketchy outline of the high spots as we remembered them.

Quickly each decided the period upon which he would prefer to work. The balance was very good. Thus we found ourselves digging into history, along with economics, business administration, civics, political science, and other subjects which, if taught in isolation as formal subjects, would have had little meaning and have aroused little interest.

Our shop also led us into the field of crafts. Some of our sacks had been torn where they were stitched. We had not wanted to sell damaged goods, so now we had the problem of disposing of these sacks so as not to be obliged to list them as a total loss. We have a loom here at school and most of our children are experienced weavers. Some one hit upon the happy thought of tearing the damaged sacks and sewing them in our leisure time, and then weaving them into rugs to sell through our shop.

One evening Dr. Sherwood Eddy spoke at the Negro school here on the racial problem. One of the children attended the meeting with her parents. Dr. Eddy described the Negro-white cooperative in the South that had been started through his efforts. After the meeting the child talked with Dr. Eddy and asked him the address of the cooperative in the South. She wrote and obtained information as to their organization and operation. We have been concerned with the interracial problem from the beginning, and this gave an added interest to this contact.

Last year when we closed our shop for the summer and declared dividends on the stock involved—we discovered to our surprise that our investment had paid exactly 100 per cent! A child who had bought a 5 dollar block of stock found himself with 10 dollars for the use of his money and efforts for the year. The children were all firmly convinced of the value of cooperatives and sound investments in general! This year bids fair to be as successful as last.

Our current interest in connection with the cooperative is concerned with the world food crisis. From newspaper articles, *Life Magazine* and the Chicago Round Table pamphlet we have read and discussed the seriousness of the sit-

uation. One child noted that the Secretary of Agriculture said that we had only 120 days to do anything about the problem. Our plans are as yet in an embryonic stage, but we are considering mimeographing a set of easy lessons in gardening and distributing them through the shop as we sell seeds, pepper and tomato plants, and the like.

We believe that this project has furnished and will continue to furnish countless opportunities for linking the academic content of the curriculum with things that are vital and practical.

**As told by LUCILLE WHITAKER, teacher, Grade VI**

A SHORT TIME AGO, Springfield was involved in a three-day telephone strike. The first morning after the service had been discontinued, our discussion group was buzzing with the inconveniences that it had caused. One child had a father who was a coal dealer—another had a mother who operated a beauty shop. Both businesses were definitely curtailed and hampered by the strike. One little girl's mother depended on a taxi to take her to work and had forgotten that she would be unable to call one that morning and consequently had been late to work. Just then we heard our school phone ring, and were surprised for a moment till someone remembered that we had an interbuilding exchange that would continue to operate regardless of the strike.

Thus we found ourselves in the midst of a discussion of all the things that happened because of the lack of telephones —and from there we turned to supposition. "Suppose you needed a doctor?" "That's an emergency—you could get a doctor," answered another. "My mother said she would call me and tell me to stay for lunch if she had to go to town this noon. I guess she forgot about the strike." Then we decided to find out just how important the telephone really was to our daily way of living. We set up these two problems to investigate before the next day.

1. How important is the telephone in our homes, our school, in Springfield, and in our country?
2. How are messages sent by telephone?

Our discussion of the importance and necessity of the telephone to our way of life was tremendously interesting—but the part that electricity played in our lives—what grew out of our reading on how messages were sent—was even more intriguing. We started listing the things that would happen if we didn't have electricity for one week. Four groups worked on this—one listing the things that would happen in our homes, another, the things that would happen here at school, a third listing the effects the lack of electricity would have on our city, and a fourth being concerned with the effects on the country at large.

All the lists were interesting—but somehow the committee who had worked on the effects on the city, had either done a better job or just had a more spectacular field in the first place —for this list was by far the most interesting. Trains stopped—buses stopped—no traffic signals—factories shut down—no telegraphs—no newspapers—no telephones—dentists, barbers, hairdressers—all handicapped—no burglar alarms—no fire alarms—hospitals unable to function properly, and on and on went this amazing list.

Now we were concerned with how our city actually obtained its electricity. Some thought it came from Bagnell Dam, but they were not sure. So now we began working on these questions:

1. Where does Springfield get its electricity?
2. In an emergency where would we get extra power?
3. What is the name of the company which sells electricity to Springfield?

The general manager of our Gas and Electric Company, seemed the logical person to answer these questions, so a committee was chosen to write to him. When we received our letter, we noticed that the printed heading on the letter and the envelope which had read Springfield Gas and Electric Company, had been stamped out and the heading City Utilities of Springfield, Mo., substituted. (Springfield has only recently acquired ownership of the gas and electric company, and several attempts have been made to acquire the water company.) Someone wondered why the name had been changed—and in trying to explain this, we became involved in municipal ownership.

1. What is meant by municipal ownership of utilities?
2. What are the benefits of municipal ownership?
3. How does a city go about getting control of utilities?

After talking about electricity for several days, we began to wonder just what it was anyway, so now we had these things that we wanted to know:

1. What is electricity anyway? (In clarifying this we saw a moving picture on water power.)
2. How was electricity discovered? (This led to individual reports on Morse, Edison, Bell, and Marconi.)
3. How has it changed our way of living? (Here one group branched off on an interesting comparison of the ways in which things now done by electricity were done long ago before its discovery.)
4. What makes neon lights? Are they used for anything except signs?
5. How does electricity get in a battery? (We had several excellent scientific experiments here.)

In answering our letter, the manager had explained to us that our electricity passed through a meter, which is built like a small motor and registers the amount of electricity which is used in the building. Now we wondered:

1. How do we know how much our electric light bills should be?
2. Can we learn to read the meter ourselves?
3. What good does a fuse do?

While we were experimenting with dry cell batteries, we had made a telegraph-sending key from a diagram we found in a book. This got us interested in the way messages were sent.

1. What is the difference in a telegram and a cablegram?
2. What kind of messages did they send before we had electricity?
3. What is the Morse code? How is it used?
4. What is a teletype? How is it used today?

A committee visited the Western Union office to help us with these questions. They brought back sample telegrams and cablegrams as well as some messages that had come on the teletype machine.

One group had become interested in pictures sent by wire, and made an interesting exhibit of these pictures. Another group had made a collection of light bulbs and radio tubes of various kinds. We had one light bulb which was forty-

three years old. This caused us to wonder how long homes had been lighted by electricity, and to compare the earlier ways of lighting before its discovery.

As told by ANNA MCMILLEN, teacher, Grade V

FOR THE PAST several weeks our fifth grade has been very interested in dairying. There are perhaps two reasons for this interest. We had been discussing the work of the different fathers in the room, and the different occupations in the community, with the idea of choosing the work that seemed most important to the greatest number in Weaver, for our future study. Our room has charge of the money and reports for our school-lunch program. We became interested in the fact that the number of bottles of milk that were used each day was constantly increasing as more children developed a liking for milk.

We knew that the Hiland Dairy supplied our milk for the school lunches. Someone wondered if the milk the dairy used came from around here. Someone else wondered how many dairies there were in Springfield. So we decided to find the answers to these questions:

1. How do the Springfield dairies get their milk—is it brought in by truck or refrigerator cars or just by farmers?
2. How many dairies are there in Springfield?
3. Do all the schools in the city get their milk from the Hiland Dairy?
4. What is the difference in raw milk and pasteurized milk?

In investigating the process and meaning of pasteurization, we discovered that there were many different ways in which milk was processed. One group made a chart listing and explaining the various kinds of milk, such as raw, pasteurized, powdered, condensed, evaporated, buttermilk, and homogenized.

While we were in the midst of this study, our Sunday paper published a full-page feature study of a cheese processing plant that is located at Nixa, a little town about fifteen miles from Springfield. This cheese plant is the largest in the United States. We learned that not only cheese was a byproduct of milk, but that both alcohol and vinegar were made from the whey. During the war this factory produced exclusively for government use, the purest alcohol obtainable—98 per cent proof.

During our reading, one group became interested in the importance of milk as a food. They followed this study and reported their findings to the group. After reading of the many uses of milk, we also wondered if this region had to import milk or if the farms in our vicinity had enough milk for our needs. One committee discovered that we sold many milk products to other parts of the country—butter, cheese, vinegar, ice cream, and whey for use in feeding. They also compared the modern way of transporting milk and milk products with the uses of milk and its products years ago.

We knew that our milk was double-capped for our protection, but we did not know the exact meaning of the Grade A on the bottles. In trying to understand this, we learned more about modern practices in handling milk. We studied bacteria in milk and the need for laws governing the handling and sale of milk. A committee was chosen to go to the City Health Department, and in learning what they had to do to protect our milk supply from contamination,

they also learned the other services that the health department gives the people.

We still wanted to know more about the ways in which our milk supply was kept pure and uncontaminated.

1. What do the city and government inspectors do?
2. Who pays these officials?
3. How often do they inspect the milk?
4. How do people learn about their findings?
5. Can anybody sell milk? What does a farmer need before he can sell milk to a dairy?
6. How does a community trace the source of milk-borne diseases?

After this group of questions was answered to our satisfaction, we appreciated more fully the contributions of the city and state health departments to our general welfare.

Three groups made very interesting charts in connection with their reports. One chart dealt with the uses the United States makes of its milk supply—cheese, fluid milk, ice cream, powdered milk, and evaporated milk. This group also made a map of the dairying regions in the United States and the world. A second chart graphically portrayed the increase in dairy cattle from 4,837,000 in 1840, to 25,334,000 in 1940. The third chart showed the cost of milk per quart in terms of work-minutes in the different countries. The fact that in the United States the cost was 4 work-minutes, and in Italy the cost was 24 work-minutes led us to an understanding of how standards of living, natural resources and mass production influence the lives and work of a country.

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ALL ASCD MEMBERS should know about the work of the Committee of Twelve. It is the committee which assumes major responsibility for keeping the national organization aware of curriculum and supervisory problems in various parts of the country. Through activities such as exchange of information, work with state representatives, and working conferences in which there is an opportunity for face-to-face relationships, these committee members help in the effort to keep close to the educational front line—the individual school or classroom where every effort is being made to provide better programs of learning for children and youth. In addition, members of this committee help to organize and carry out plans for increasing membership as well as activities. Members of this committee for 1946-47 are:

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