Downs School head defends use of cane

22-1-76

CORPORAL punishment in schools was defended by Mr. Philip Bowden, headmaster of Downs School, Compton, yesterday. He acted as spokesman for the National Association of Headmasters when interviewed on television on Saturday.

courtesy of Newbury News Ltd

The NAH was being pressed by its 18,500 members and the media, to clarify its position regarding corporal punishment, after two cases occurring in schools in the north-east of England, made national headlines.

Mr. Bowden was asked to issue the statement because he was a member of an NAH special committee and corporal punishment was among the topics considered.

Speaking at Downs School yesterday, Mr. Bowden said, "The association felt that the publicity given to two cases of physical punishment in north-eastern schools last week, was to say the least excessive. The TV interview was aimed at trying to clarify out the situation for everyone concerned."

"I stated that the NAH firmly believe in the right of the head teacher to authorise corporal punishment. There was a strong feeling that physical punishment could be used to suppress badly behaved children for the good of the well-behaved children in our schools."

It was stressed in the statement, that it was inadvisable for men to administer corporal punishment to girls. In those cases where girls were to receive physical punishment, as occurred in Newcastle recently, those at the age of puberty were only to be caned on the hand.

The headmaster added "There is the feeling among headmasters that corporal punishment in this country is on the wane anyway and may disappear soon of its own volition." Corporal punishment is such a small aspect of school life compared with everything else but nevertheless, one which cannot be ignored. This is why I was asked to make the statement on the NAH's behalf."

There have already been moves to abolish corporal punishment, but a motion to ban the cane in all schools was rejected by a 61-vote majority in the Commons on Tuesday.