



“Intelligent Handling of a Touchy Problem”

Originally published in Harrison's Reports, April 9, 1955

MGM's "Blackboard Jungle," which deals with juvenile delinquency in a big city high school, is proving to be a top box-office attraction in its opening engagements throughout the country. The picture, as most of you no doubt know by this time, has stirred up considerable controversy among educators, newspaper people and others.

Those who are against the picture label it as a distorted and grossly exaggerated depiction of juvenile delinquency in schools, one that reflects unfairly on the ability of teachers to control students and that may very well cause some youngsters to imitate the ruffian-ism and crime shown in the film.

Those who are for the picture, look upon it as forceful entertainment and, as pointed out by the *New York Daily News*, one that "gives the honest, slam-bang lowdown on the junior punks and electric chair candidates who have been permitted to make a shambles of some U.S. high and vocational schools."

Needless to say, this raging pro and con argument has focused attention on the picture and is no doubt of inestimable aid at the box office.

Since many school authorities do not feel too kindly toward the picture, however, its booking may present a problem to some exhibitors. In this regard it is interesting to note how the RKO Theatre in New Brunswick, N.J., handled the problem after the local school authorities expressed concern upon learning that the picture had been booked into the theatre.

To maintain cordial relations with the educators, a meeting was held with them and everybody was happy when it was agreed to run a special trailer at the conclusion of each showing, worded as follows:

"TO OUR PATRONS!

"The school and situations you have just seen are NOT to be found in this area!

"We should all be proud of the facilities provided for OUR youth by the Public Schools of New Brunswick and the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools.

"We *suggest* a visit to any of the fine schools in our city and county!

"Your interest will be cordially welcomed!"

The use of this trailer is a very fine idea, and HARRISON'S REPORTS would suggest to MGM that it provide all exhibitors booking the picture with such a trailer. Since it would be too costly to make special trailers mentioning the names of specific towns, cities and schools, and the wording of the third paragraph could be changed to the following "We should all be proud of the facilities provided for OUR youth by the schools in our community." In that way the trailer will be suitable for all situations.