

Aquarius: Cooperation

Glaring defiantly, hands on hips and unruly hair flying in the wind, Art harangued the students crowded around him on the high-school steps. Unknown to him, Mr. Hodges, the principal, listened at his office window.

"We've got rules for this and rules for that," Art ranted. "Pretty soon we'll need permission to breathe. I say if they can do away with rules at colleges, they can do away with rules here."

At that moment the bell rang, the students began shuffling toward the door, and Art said, "See, the minute the bell rings you all file in meekly like a bunch of sheep. I say do away with bells — we don't need them."

After his next class, Art was summoned to Mr. Hodges' office. "Sit down, Art," said the principal. "I understand you don't think much of our rules here. Which ones don't you like?"

"All of them," mumbled Art.

"Well, name one and tell me what you don't like about it," prodded Mr. Hodges.

"I don't like having to stop what I'm doing every time that bell blasts off and do something else. I don't like it that we can't have radios with earphones in study hall. I don't like waiting to be called on in class if I want to say something. I don't like it that we can't cut class without a note from home — it's like we're in kindergarten."

Art seemed ready to go on indefinitely, but Mr. Hodges stopped him. "All right, Art. I can see you're really uptight about this. What you're trying to say is that you believe that the students do not have the

freedom of movement and of action to which they're entitled. Is that right?"

"Yes," said Art shortly.

"Very well," Mr. Hodges continued. "Believe it or not, I do sympathize with your resentment of restraints. It is quite common to young people, and I once suffered from the same reaction myself. Our rules, however, were made by the faculty working — as you well know — with members of the Student Council, because we all believed that they are necessary if the school is to serve its intended purpose. Now, I'm going to give you an assignment to do during the next few days, and I am counting on you to be completely honest — with yourself and with me. I want you to take each of these rules to which you object, think over as objectively as you can why the people who made them must have thought them necessary, and write down those reasons. Then you may state why you think they are not necessary, and what you *honestly* think would be the result if they were not enforced. Remember, I am trusting you to be objective and fair, and I will try to be equally objective and fair when I read your point of view."

Ordinarily, Art would immediately have said that there could not possibly be any valid reasons for any of the rules but, resentfully and quite in spite of himself, he felt Mr. Hodges' appeal for honesty and objectivity working on his conscience. He pondered the matter at intervals for several days, and it was not until a week later that he returned to Mr. Hodges' office, paper in hand. Mr. Hodges studied it carefully, then looked up. "It wasn't easy for you to write this, was it, Art?" he asked kindly.

Art shuffled his feet uncomfortably. "No, Sir," he said softly.

"But you *were* honest and objective, and you put

your own strong emotions aside, and I admire you for that. If I may sum up all your excellent points here in one sentence, it would be that you have concluded that all the rules are necessary — not in order to be arbitrary, but because it is unreasonable to expect that *all* the students, at *all* times, would behave responsibly without them. Do you agree?"

"Yes, Sir," said Art.

"Well, then, Art, what do you think the students' attitude toward the rules should be?"

"Well — I think before they have an attitude, it should be explained why the rules were made. I mean — there *could* be rules that aren't really necessary —" Art's voice trailed off and he looked uncertainly at the principal.

"There certainly could, Art," agreed Mr. Hodges. "I wouldn't argue that with you at all. Go on."

"Then I guess they ought to cooperate and follow the rules. Even if they think they could do just as well without rules, the school won't run right if everybody doesn't cooperate, and some people need more rules than others so it's only fair for everyone to obey them if they have to be put in at all."

"Well put, Art. You used a particularly important word twice. Remember what it was?" Mr. Hodges asked.

"Uh — cooperate?"

"Yes. If we're going to learn to live together peacefully we all have to cooperate with each other." Mr. Hodges regarded Art thoughtfully, then continued. "Would you consider participating in a student assembly on the general question of rules and cooperation or," he smiled, "do you think that might tarnish your image too much?"

Art laughed. "Maybe it's time I made a new image for myself," he said.