An Editorial From the China Post
Concerning K. H. Sun's Suggestion to
Free China's Yang Ming Shan Conference

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"There Is No Substitute For Action"

Mr. Sun K'ued-han, one of the Chinese scholars who have returned from the United States to attend the Second Yangmingshan Forum on education, culture, and the press, spoke for many of his countrymen when he said in a written statement submitted to the Forum the other day that he hoped the authorities would select a few major recommendations made by his fellow conference to be put into practice right away. He urged that those few items should be carried out in real earnest and with the full backing of everybody concerned. If, he said, any mistake should occur in the process of execution, it should be immediately corrected and the work should then continue without interruption. There is no substitute for action, he emphasized.

Mr. Sun's suggestion is significant in two respects. First, his insistence on the need for immediate action on a few important matters and for whole-hearted devotion to the task is different from the way in which things are generally done in this country. Secondly, the written statement in which this suggestion was embodied is noted for its brevity. As reported in the press, it contains only 288 words. This is contrary to the usual Chinese practice which permits writers of memorandums and public speakers to bore the reader and the audience with long-winded essays and speeches.
We do not suppose that the Government has called the Yangmingshan Forums, of which the one on education, culture, and the press was the second of its kind, merely for the sake of giving the participants a chance to air their views and, therefore, to let off steam. We believe that the Government is sincerely desirous of inviting suggestions on important questions of the moment and also of carrying out some, if not all, of them for the good of the country. If our belief is not mistaken, Mr. Sun's call for immediate action in a few chosen fields fits in well with the Government's original intention and is what most people would expect of the Yangmingshan Forums.

In this connection, let us remind ourselves of the homely adage, "Action speaks louder than words." One of our eminent philosophers has long ago told us that "To administer the affairs of State, you do not need much talking; it all depends on how earnestly you do and act." Mr. Sun has done a significant service to the country by calling attention to these important truths. It is hoped that in the future our officials will talk less and do more and that, above all, they will not allow empty talk to take the place of action.

Equally significant is the brevity of his written statement. We as a people, who have cultivated the habit of writing meaningless and repetitious compositions, have yet to learn the art of being brief and to the point. Two classic examples of brevity in American literature are Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, which every Chinese student of English has read, and President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech. Both documents are noted for their richness of ideas and the forceful way in which those ideas are expressed. We wish that those of our compatriots who are in a position to issue public statements would read those two historic American State papers carefully and learn how to be brief and forceful.

If Mr. Sun's suggestion is acted upon, he will not have made his trip back home in vain to take part in the Yangmingshan Forum and even the Forum itself will have borne some fruit. Otherwise, he might have spared himself the whole trouble of coming back all the way from the other side of the globe and the Forum might just as well have not been held at all.