

Looking at Controversial Issues

The problem of *how we shall teach* must be coupled with one fully as important—*what we shall teach*—if today's schools are to discharge their full responsibility to the children and youth under their guidance. It is possible, indeed, that we have stated these dual problems incorrectly. Actually, our points of departure must be—and are—in the minds of all good teachers: "How do children learn?" "What are they learning?"

It is for this reason that we believe the November, 1948, issue of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* deals with one of the most important areas in which those who today call themselves educational leaders must do constructive and realistic thinking. But thinking is not enough for, as the following articles point out, action is also required—action in guiding learners in thinking straight about the way of life which we call "American," in being informed, thoughtful, and responsible citizens.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has on various occasions taken a clear stand on the freedom of what shall be learned. In its platform it states, "We believe that modern schools can do their jobs *only if youngsters have a chance to think and talk about our social structure and decide how it may be improved.*" On February 18, 1948, ASCD members at the annual meeting in Cincinnati adopted the following statement of belief: "We are convinced that ASCD must take a clear stand for the right of the individual to exercise his intelligence as a citizen as the result of his examination of data; we ask that as a first step, the ASCD state publicly that it disapproves of the activity of any groups that are trying to prevent the examination of controversial issues in our schools."

To every member of the Association belongs a part of the responsibility for making that mandate meaningful. This issue of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*, as the official organ of ASCD, further carries out that mandate and provides to members specific suggestions for carrying through individual responsibilities in whatever spot action must be taken.

We are fortunate in having contributors who deal with varied and critical aspects of this important problem. The social, economic, and political questions of the day are ably presented in the first part of the magazine. Neither do the authors fail to point directly to the related responsibilities of those planning school programs. Specific suggestions for improved and more realistic teaching of current problems to children in our elementary schools and youth in high schools and colleges are included in several of the articles. The last two articles in the magazine are possibly the most discouraging in terms of the realities of the present scene. The story of what has happened to the use of many books and magazines in our schools is not a pretty one. But it is a story which we must know and on which we are obliged to act.

As your editors, we present November's *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* to you with the conviction that what it says is important. We hope you will read it carefully and send us your reactions.—*GAH and EW.*

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