

"Welcome, Earthman!"

HAVE you made reservations for New Year's Eve? No, not 1962 or 1963 but for 2000 A.D.!

This may seem a silly question to place before adult readers today. Although many of us hope to be around on December 31, 1999, we will not be making reservations for any active celebration. The question has real pertinence for us, nonetheless, because the children who are in our schools today *will* be making reservations to usher in the next century. The children of today are going to be the grown-ups of the 21st century.

If you are a teacher, take a new look at the boys and girls in your classroom. Look at them and picture them as the citizens of the next century, not as the young charges for whom you are responsible this year. If you are a parent, look at your sons and daughters and try to see them as grown-ups coping with adult matters in the next century. They will be our age then, trying to run a world as we are now—if they and the world remain.

Looking at boys and girls of today as the men and women of 2000 A.D. may be a startling experience if done seriously. All sorts of questions come to mind that

would never appear if we see them only as boys and girls of the present.

Parents may muse over the kind of world in store for their children. Teachers should do more than muse. They should ask, "How does our work in 1962 prepare children for life in another century?" "What kind of education does a citizen of the next century need?" These are hard questions, for no clear-cut answers are available for specific curricula or methods. But the basic principles through which the answers can emerge must be pondered on, developed and then lived. What are these principles?

This article is supposed to deal with the general topic of achieving public support for science in the school program. It is the opinion of this author that public support for science or any other curriculum area can best be gained when the sights are raised and perspective broadened. This is why the next century serves as a better goal than this present one. Parents raise children while they themselves are young, but they know that the children will live their adult lives in quite a different world than the ones their parents knew.

Decisions based on the demands of the moment are always necessary, but those which look ahead to the future are apt to be wiser. Science has been blown into the schools on the smoke of

Children of today will be making reservations to usher in the next century. Science Exhibit, Glencoe, Illinois.

missiles and rockets, but smoke clears away when the cool clean wind blows again. This is the fifth year of the Space Age, but the Age of Science is now hundreds of years old. Public support comes easily in the drama of satellites, planet probes and men heading toward the depths of space.

Support for What?

The Space Age has become a space race with all the urgency which comes in times of contest. But is this science? Is this what we want when we ask for public support? There are billions of dollars at work on the space race and millions have spilled over into schools in support of science and mathematics. The general public urged it, welcomed it and supported it. Science appeared in schools where it had been a stranger, often before a place had been prepared for it.

Is this what we want to support? Is this science? Science is the process of rational inquiry used by man in his search for truth. To some of us the world today is like Pilate, who once asked, "and what is truth?" but would not stay to learn.

Some of us were pleading the cause of science for decades before Sputnik arched across the sky. It was a bit discouraging suddenly to get support for the wrong reasons, even though the support itself was welcomed. But now we need to clarify just what it is for which we seek support. Is it a space race which now justifies what was previously crawling so slowly? This author had long predicted that man would reach for space in the 20th Century, but the realization has somehow brought dismay

instead of exaltation. He had hoped that "Earthmen," representatives of a planet, would begin the age of Space Exploring with motives of pure science. Instead it seems we may degrade the celestial dignity of the cosmos by men of nations contesting with one another as they extend manifestations of their lowest nature out onto the stage of the universe.

The men and women of earth and space who will populate the next century need an education of science. But it must be science as a process of human reason probing at the mysteries of creation, not a shallow technology no matter how complex and complicated it may seem. It will need to be a science which is clear and simple as basic truths have always been, a science which enables men to seek solution for *all* their problems by rational means, not just science problems. It must be a science which frees the mind to do what it was meant to do—to think.

How shall we seek public support for this kind of science? It may be easier than we think. Already men and women in all walks of life are realizing the threat to mankind in the wrong kind of science. Already many are asking whether the schools are placing science and mathematics on a throne while placing other basic educational values in the corner. With the wisdom of the common man, fathers and mothers are expressing concern about a kind of science which breeds arrogance instead of humility. Fathers and mothers often feel confused in the presence of their children when scientific terms are bandied about. Teachers, too, feel that modern children seem to know more science than they do. The terms the children use somehow lack the feeling of fundamental values



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Demonstrating a modern science class to parents.

to give them meaning. Such terms are often superficial jargon, facts without substance picked up hither and yon and with no clear relation to the larger values we seek for the younger generation. True science teaches humility, for the real scientist knows that he has only discovered truth, not created it.

We will gain the gratitude of parents and of the world if we succeed in defining science properly and in giving it true purpose and place in the total education of boys and girls. They will support such science education, not just in times of crisis, but in all times, for such an approach can hold the hope that crises may someday cease to be. Science which makes men rational will lead them from the irrational behavior that leads to crises.

A modern science curriculum will be

in balance with all other curriculum areas and receive its purpose from basic values common to all. It will be a dynamic source, fully in tune with the present and the future, using the past to give it firm foundation. It will provide the learner with facts through discovery and in a setting which gives them fuller meaning. It will begin in kindergarten and extend through all the school years in systematic, orderly fashion. Its results will be evaluated in the total behavior of learners, not in the science class alone.

Achieving Support

Support for such an educational program will come as a matter of course, because it will be in harmony with the purposes which parents have in provid-

ing an education for their children. *Communication* is the means for achieving such support.

1. First of all, parents must have a share in the planning of such programs so that home and school have common aims and goals. This means parents must have contact with schools in a wide variety of ways. Any school which ignores continuous communication with parents risks loss of support when its programs come under question. When school and community understand each other and have common purposes there is little cause for controversy.

2. Modern communication must be dramatic! Public attention is wooed by ingenious devices and techniques in all the modern media. Educators should be as up-to-date as any other group with a message. Communicate creatively.

3. Use the P.T.A. Instead of dull speakers, why not do a demonstration with children showing science as it is taught in a modern school? Cleverly planned productions using children intelligently draw audiences and hold their attention.

4. Use the local press. Organize a team of parent reporters. Have them produce a continuous flow of well written stories of science activities, with pictures. Every community has journalistic talent in its parent body. Seek it out. Focus stories on the real purposes of schools, not just on sports events.

5. Use the service clubs and other organizations. Have your science teachers made available as speakers. These clubs are composed of the basic elements in your community. Convince them with sincere presentations designed to interpret current events in the scientific world as they are handled in the school. Your science staff no doubt has specialists who

can develop public lectures on science topics in a completely adult presentation. This develops respect for the quality of instructors as well as for programs.

6. Help children interpret what they are doing in school. How do your children respond to the dinner table question, "What did you do in school today?" How do you want them to respond? Talk about what was learned in science class today and help children interpret their experiences. It is good evaluation for school, as well as home, purposes.

7. Use exhibits. The public can be impressed with a well planned exhibit which visually presents the science program of the schools. Such exhibits should avoid the Science Fair competition in which attention is drawn to contests rather than interpretation of a total program. Such fairs may have a place but not for this purpose.

8. Have someone who cares about science in your school system. Someone who deeply believes that the right kind of science education can produce better human beings will offer continuous leadership. Such a person will become a symbol of science education for school and community.

But above all else, it is this author's conviction that basic purposes and values must be thought through by the entire school staff. These purposes must be directed toward the basic needs of human beings which remain the same no matter what outward appearance the world may have. With such values the boys and girls of today may make the next century a better one than this. With such values the first man to land on another planet may deserve the greeting, "Welcome, Earthman," rather than "Earthman, go home!"

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