

## ● From the Executive Secretary

### INNOVATION AND RESPONSIBILITY<sup>1</sup>

A SIGNIFICANT confrontation is very much in evidence these days: it is the unfortunate schism developing between those who seek a revolutionary change and those who seek change as an evolutionary process. This confrontation inherits the struggle between the so-called new and old establishments; between those promoting organization and systems, and those who consider education as a personal enterprise and a humane art. It is between the mobile populations, professions and business interests, and the land-based school systems. It is an unwanted conflict that ASCD can help to mediate.

One evidence of the issue is the attitude toward innovation. There seems now to be a frantic sense of desperation, of seeking action *per se*; omitted is a clear purpose, a value base, or a substantive confrontation with reality. "Innovation" often seems to reflect McLuhan's phrase, "The medium is the message," in which the optimistic hope prevails that the new media, the new technology or the organizational scheme will itself produce a balanced or relevant message. This is the use of a raw cutting edge, a thrust without a program, and a striking out at practices and tradition because they exist.

Intellectual leapfrogging to escape the rut or the inertia-encrusted pace of institutions in social change can be responsible. With clear goals and a regard for consequences, alterations can and should be made in the allocation of resources, the use of media and the imaginative shifting of program and process. More attempts are needed which modify substance, which penetrate to the essence of ideas and personal involvement, which enrich the experience of the learner as he learns.

The dramatic social and political imperatives tend to dominate as the only significant context, as the only arena within which the schools must operate.

<sup>1</sup> From "Concerns in Education," Kentucky ASCD, November 3, 1966.

The oft-times strident challenge to the schools to change and innovate too seldom considers a balanced treatment between the need and the technology to innovate and the responsibility and means of the school as a social and political institution to do so. The question of the required speed and revolutionary or evolutionary change must be made in a larger context.

### **Responsible Alternatives**

It is our responsibility to consider creative alternatives, to research tenable possibilities, to refashion, and rethink, and rebuild, if necessary, the physical, social and intellectual structure of the school and of education generally. It is also our responsibility to do this within the framework of a value base, a consideration of both long and short range consequences, an imaginative, flexible and humane environment.

A basic flaw in many of the current models of change is the inability to incorporate the frivolous, the impetuous, the human. There is a significant difference in communication theory, in change theory, or in actual curriculum change, the latter requiring not only new information, but also a change in the behaviors of people. Government through law, or industry by directive, are in most cases able to make changes within their structure and their responsibility.

This is not as true in schools, where faculty members assume professional prerogatives in regard to direction and speed, where the school has relatively limited contact with the students, under the present conditions, and where there is a great concern about the morality of manipulation. Education as an institution has continuing and significant responsibility to the learners who "pass this way but once," to the patrons of the school, to the profession of teaching, and to education as a continuing function of our society.

A review of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's program for the year will reveal a commitment to improvement, to a consideration of alternatives; it will also indicate a frame of reference. For example, the research seminars deal with "Developing Evaluation Skills," one conference is on "The New Elementary School" including new content, organizational patterns and curriculum design. The Commission on Current Curriculum Developments is sponsoring a conference on "Curriculum Designing for the Future—An Interdisciplinary Approach." The ASCD Annual Conference, meeting in Dallas this year, will feature innovations and promising practices, along with the possibilities for confrontation and for dialogue about these.

Cooperation is continuing to mature with media producers, with the business and industrial community and with government. Such a process is more professional than exhortation, challenge without alternative, or promotion without program. We are determined to reinforce relevant and responsible improvement. This we will do in the context of our Dallas theme, "Humanizing Education: The Person in the Process."

—LESLIE J. BISHOP, *Executive Secretary*

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