ASCSD, according to this author, must really meet the challenge of reversing the negative aspects of privatism and the restoring of credibility and a sense of mission to the field of curriculum. Otherwise, schools will continue to be blown in one educational direction one moment and in an entirely different direction the next.

Early in 1977, Harry S. Broudy, in an article on the need for a “voice that can speak for public schools,” cites three reasons why that voice must be found soon: loss of consensus, loss of mission, and loss of credibility.1 Several months later, William Van Til, writing about the need for effective communication, states, “In the latter 1970s, there is a dearth of communication by educators with the general public. When did you last see an outstanding spokesman for better schools on your TV set?”2 These insightful words of Broudy and Van Til reinforce the belief that there is a trend by many educators toward “noninvolvement” in anything beyond that which can be immediately controlled or that which happens in the only place they may possibly have an effect. The term used to describe this movement toward noninvolvement and inward turning is privatism. The word “privatism” is not mine, but rather has been coined by others. It is, however, a term that describes a phenomenon currently affecting curriculum development within the American public schools.

Evidence of this movement in our everyday social, political, and economic life is easily seen. People overwhelmed by runaway inflation, senseless violence, increasing crime rates, lack of political morality at the highest levels, a growing bureaucracy, arguments over food additives, the energy crisis, environmental dangers, and so on have become distressed and bewildered. As a result, millions of Americans have come to resent much of what is happening, but at the same time they feel unable to cope with it and helpless to change it and, thus, have become virtually despairing of changing the world for the better. They tend to turn off the outside world, retreat to personal safety, become noninvolved, and assume the philosophical view that “if something needs to be altered in my immediate environment, family life, personal life, or work situation, that is something I will take action on, but beyond that—forget it!” This is privatism.

For an individual, privatism is not a totally negative attitude because it may lead to self-fulfillment, self-improvement, self-development, and the like—some very strong, positive factors of self, environment, and family. However, the movement of privatism from the personal to the professional life of many educators harms the


growth and development of curriculum in public education. Without involvement, cooperative action, and a sharing in the decision-making process by various segments of the profession and the public, curriculum stagnation, faddism, and traditionalism are the most likely outcomes.

Privatism has always existed in our society. And, without question, there have always been educators who were deliberately noninvolved in their profession. However, in recent years there has been an insidious, yet significant, increase among educators at all levels of teaching, supervising, and administering toward noninvolvement—toward what might be described as figuratively resigning from their professional obligations.

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A Strong Curriculum Voice Is Needed

Since the mid-1950s, the schools have been called upon about every five years to radically change the direction of their curriculum. Schools and their curriculums have been under constant criticism and attack both for "doing" and for "not doing." The so-called "Curriculum Reform Movement" of the 1950s, which has carried over into the 1960s and 1970s, has done little substantively except to continue and to intensify the already existing problems of a lack of agreement about curriculum organization and/or structure, and the classifying or labeling of the referents in the field of curriculum. Many of these referents mean different things to different people. Under such conditions, meaningful communication about any subject is virtually impossible and curriculum development certainly is no exception. Currently, if there is any point of agreement concerning curriculum development, it is that confusion reigns supreme within the field. No wonder that after more than 20 years of frustration, teachers, administrators, and supervisors are confused and retreating to a position of privatism.
How can those individuals concerned about the continuing improvement of curriculum in the public schools turn back the negative aspects of privatism and cope with the seemingly endless series of curriculum changes that often present contradictory functions and/or outcomes?

The times cry out for a strong voice in curriculum leadership that can speak with credibility and authority. The times cry out for curriculum leadership that contributes to solid theory development and the establishment of a conceptual framework and, at the same time, translates theory into practice by updating and/or creating the machinery necessary for translation and appraisal. Order must be brought to our current, confused state of curriculum so that a way of thinking and behaving about curriculum that leads to rational curriculum development becomes an integral part of the way public school education functions. Without this, there will continue to be an erosion of the public consensus necessary for the operation of the public schools.

Who will be this strong voice in curriculum leadership? Who will provide a meaningful taxonomy and referents for the field of curriculum, develop explicit role descriptions and conceptualizations of functions for supervisor and other curriculum workers, develop a usable set of procedures and criteria for systematizing curriculum development, and so on? Who can speak with a voice that the public and school people alike can believe?

That voice has to be the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The challenge of reversing the negative aspects of privatism and the restoring of credibility and a sense of mission to the field of curriculum is one that will either be met by ASCD, really met, or curriculum development will continue to be a haphazard process as schools continue to be blown in one educational direction one moment and in an entirely different direction the next. If the latter process continues, then, the learner and society will continue to pay the penalty: a penalty that even now leads to the spread of pessimism among students, society, and the profession itself. Concentration by the Association on its mission as an association for supervision and curriculum development as well as on its credibility as an authoritative body is essential.

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The loss of public confidence in schools and their programs, the movement by educators toward privatism, and the increasing tendency for decisions regarding curriculum to be made by persons and groups outside the field of education cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged by this Association. A substantial amount of the energies of ASCD must be turned toward more effective communication regarding the problems of education with the American citizenry for the purpose of developing public understanding.