

# The Environment

Alex Molnar

"Nuclear disarmament may be only a dramatic example of a quieter, more profound concern: the nature of the relationship between human beings and the planet they inhabit."

This issue of *Educational Leadership* introduces "Contemporary Issues and the Schools," a new feature that will appear about three times each year. In part a response to the resolution on critical contemporary issues adopted by the ASCD Board of Directors March 22, 1982, "Contemporary Issues and the Schools" has five purposes:

- To provide ASCD members with expert opinions on significant social issues
- To explore the connections, actual and possible, among social issues and school programs, instructional practices, and curriculum

- To establish a forum for expert/practitioner dialogue on social issues
- To inform ASCD members about resources and events pertinent to featured social issues
- To encourage ASCD members to consider and express their positions on social issues as part of their professional responsibility.

"Social Issues and the Schools" will have no editorial "party line." We welcome a variety of views and encourage readers to submit comments, suggest new issues, and nominate potential contributors. We also would be pleased to receive information about resources and events related to our featured social issues.

Every effort will be made to identify and publicize topics well in advance of publication dates so that interested readers may submit manuscripts for review. Unsolicited manuscripts describing school programs, curricula, or instructional practices relevant to a featured social issue will generally be given first consideration. Manuscripts submitted for publication should be from three to five pages, typed double-spaced. For more detailed information potential contributors should refer to the editorial guidelines for manuscripts submitted to *Educational Leadership*. These guidelines appear on the last page of the journal.

This month's "Social Issues and the Schools" features a report to the membership on the results of the social issues survey published in October 1982. Also featured are three articles examining environmental concerns.

As you review the survey results, you will no doubt be struck more by their similarities than their differences. One cannot help but wonder whether this outcome is due primarily to the homogeneity of the respondents' attitudes or whether it reflects a generally imprecise knowledge about social issues and their potential significance for school curriculum. Regardless, there is no question

## ASCD Resolution on Critical Contemporary Issues

Issues such as nuclear disarmament, environmental protection, population growth, world hunger, and human rights concern every inhabitant of our planet. Each of us is responsible individually for expressing concern and for being active in ensuring that our global future is desirable. ASCD also has a responsibility as an organization to express the beliefs and concerns of the membership and to support members' rights to this expression.

ASCD should address itself to determining and expressing the views of its members on critical contemporary issues. These views should be publicized and used as a basis for ASCD activities that address these issues.

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that respondents were concerned about social issues. This hardly seems surprising at a time when adolescent boys responding to a *Read* magazine survey report that they fear nuclear war more than the death of a parent. What is curious, in light of the apparent perceived significance of social issues, is that our profession has no widely accepted explicit framework for addressing them either as subject matter or as a referent for curriculum decision making. Perhaps the most important contribution this feature could make would be to encourage the development of such a framework.

Among social issues, nuclear disarmament seems to be at the top of most people's lists. It's hard to love the bomb. It is easier to love your car, dishwasher, color TV and other artifacts of contemporary U.S. culture. However, nuclear disarmament may be only a dramatic example of a quieter, more profound concern, and that is the nature of the relationship between human beings and the planet they inhabit. Phillip Johnson explores this issue from the perspective of a humanist scientist who worries that the assumption that human beings are somehow a special case in the scheme of things on planet earth may result in our self-destruction. Herbert I. London, on the other hand, appears to have little

doubt that human interests are distinct and separate. His primary concern is that repeated dire warnings of environmental catastrophe paralyze our ability to formulate effective public policy and thus become self-fulfilling prophecies. Miriam S. Wetzel writes from the perspective of a teacher and principal who loves the outdoors. Her purpose is to illustrate for other practitioners the nuts and bolts of organizing and conducting outdoor experiences for children. Taken together these articles illustrate the problems and possibilities that confront educators as they consider the place of environmental concerns in school programs. □

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