DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 979 CS 205 329

AUTHOR Farrell, Edmund J.
TITLE The Conditions of Childhood in the Year of the Child.
PUB DATE Mar 79
NOTE 21p.: Paper presented at the combined Annual Meeting of the Conference on English Education and the Secondary School English Conference (Pittsburgh, PA, March 15-18, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Advocacy: *Childhood Attitudes: *Children: Child Responsibility: *Child Role: Child Welfare: *Educational Responsibility: Language Arts: Literature: Social Problems: Social Responsibility: *World Problems

ABSTRACT

This compilation of statistics, opinions, and projections focuses on the state of children in contemporary society. A review of statistical data on the conditions of childhood includes data on child mortality rates, illiteracy, malnutrition, energy resources available to children, and childhood suicide. Teenage pregnancies, alcoholism and drug abuse, delinquency, promiscuity, and crime: parental child abuse cases: and lack of confidence in the future are also discussed as they relate to childhood contentment and sense of self-worth. Recommendations offered for improving the conditions of childhood include helping children become deeply conscious of the world in which they live and teaching them to be humanely responsive to all human life through studying selected literature. Also suggested is involving children in worthy community activities that would demonstrate that contentment is found in aiding others. (AEA)

The Conditions of Childhood in the Year of the Child

Edmund J. Farrell

I speak today primarily of the young rather than of the old, less of futures than of presents, ore of nows than of thens. I do so for two reasons: first, in the International Year of the Child I believe it appropriate to examine, albeit briefly, the current global conditions of childhood; second, just as the child is father to the man, the present sires the future by providing the choices which will give it shape and direction, choices always limited in range and quality by the circumstances of a given time and by the knowledge and wisdom of those deciding among options.

Ultimately it is children who live with the long-range consequences of their elders' choices, who bridge present and future; who in time will make choices circumscribed by choices made before their time, who furnish the continuity by which human society perpetuates itself.

Anyone who has monitored for the past year the publications of the Population Reference Bureau knows that for over 80 percent of the children of the earth, some 1.2 billion boys and girls under age 15, life is bleak.* Those are children who live in what the United Nations rates as "less developed" regions, where they represent 40 percent of the population and

*For statistical data on the conditions of childhood, I am heavily indebted to the following 1979 publications of the Population Reference Bureau, 1337 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036: World of Children by Magda Cordell McHale and John McHale, with Guy F. Streatfeild; World Children's Data Sheet, prepared by Magda Cordell McHale and John McHale, with Guy F. Streatfeild and Thomas T. Kane; 1979 World Population Data Sheet, prepared by Thomas T. Kane, with Douglas W. Heisler; and Intercom: The International Population News Magazine. I am also indebted to World Atlas of the Child, prepared by the World Bank, 1818 H Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20433, in recognition of the International Year of the Child.

where the death rate for infants under age one is five times that of the developed world. Children born into these regions--most countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America--can expect at birth to live 56 years, as compared to 71 years for those born in the more developed countries of North America, Europe, Russia, Japan, and Oceania (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea, Samoa [Western], Solomon Islands). In Africa, where one infant in seven dies in the first year of life, life expectancy at birth is only 46 years, a full 10 years less than that for infants born into other poor countries and 25 years less than that for infants born into affluent nations.

About half the world's 50 million deaths each year occur to children under 5, with one quarter of them occurring to infants under one year of age. Most of these children are in the earth's poorer regions. Annually 5 million children under age 15 in less developed regions die from diptheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles, and tuberculosis, diseases which have been eliminated or attenuated in developed countries. While the average American daily consumes 134 percent of the calories that the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization believes necessary to maintain "moderate activity," about 25 percent of all young children in the world suffer from malnutrition, which ultimately kills some and leaves others physically and mentally impaired for life. The effects of poor nutrition are exacerbated by the effects of unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and drainage and unsound hygienic practices, which, in combination, encourage the proliferation of flies, insects, and other disease-bearing agents.

About two-thirds of the world's population live in rural areas, areas which in 1975 contained 2 billion of the poor nations' 3.1 billion

citizens. In these areas, millions of rural children have no opportunity to attend school. Where they do attend, dropout rates are high because of distance from home to school, pressures from the family to assist in its survival, and little faith that education will ameliorate the conditions of one's life. For rural girls, the chances of receiving an education are sharply less than they are for boys. In Latin America 51 percent of them never attend school; in Africa and Asia, 61 percent never do. For Third World countries as a whole, only 53 percent of girls aged 6-11 are enrolled in school as compared to 70 percent of boys. At the secondary level (ages 12-17) the figures decline to 28 percent for girls and 42 percent for boys. In the more developed world, 94 percent of both girls and boys aged 6-11 attend school, and more girls than boys are enrolled in high school--85 percent versus 84 percent. (In the U.S., comparable figures are higher: 96 percent of girls and 95 percent of boys attend secondary school.)

Although the percentage of illiterate adults in the world declined from 44 percent in 1950 to 32 percent in 1975, rapid growth of population over that same quarter century had increased the absolute number of illiterates by 100 million. UNESCO estimates that in 1975 the number of the earth's illiterate adults totaled 800 million, two thirds of them women. In 1976, in an address on the 11th International Literacy Day, Amadon-Mahtar M'Bow, Director General of UNESCO, observed:

> ...[T]he... map of illiteracy coincides almost exactly with that o poverty and...in the 25 least developed countries the proportion of illiterates still exceeds 80 percent. Despite the prodigious efforts made by so many countries of the Third World in the field of education, it is forecast that in 1980 there will still be 240 million children in the world between the ages

of 5 and 14 not attending school, and, in all, 820 million illiterates, 20 million more than at present.

Although most of the world's poor live in rural areas, population growth, inarable land, and the attraction of possible work have led tens of millions to abandon their traditional homesites in favor of cities. In 1975, 27 percent of the population of less developed regions lived in urban areas, a figure expected to rise to 41 percent by 2000, by which time cities will be absorbing 70 percent of all population increase. Mexico City, with a current population over 12 million, is expected to have a population of 25 million by 2000. Close to half (47 percent) of Mexico's population, a population expected to double over the next 21 years, is under 15 years of age. Hundreds of thousands of these young people are among the estimated 156 million children who live in Third World slums and shantytowns, where up to 10 persons may share a room and where less than 50 percent of the population has access to clean water. These shanty owns, now growing at the rate of over 3 percent a year, presently account for 30 to 40 percent of the urban concentration of population in developing countries. Because of the extreme poverty of their occupants and the absence of traditional family support, they also account for millions of children--an estimated 2 million in Brazil alone--being abandoned on the streets to fare for themselves.

In 1850, after tens of thousands of years on earth, the human species reached a population of 1 billion. By 1975 there were about 4 billion people in the world, the average age of whom was 30. The more developed areas--North America, Japan, the Soviet Union, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand--provided 27 percent of this population. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2000, there will be 6 to 6.8 billion

people on earth--an increase of at least 600 percent in 150 years--with 80 percent of them living in the world's poorer nations. Their average age will be 23, while the average age in the United States will approach 35. According to 1979 assessments of the United Nations, the growth rate of the world is projected to decline from 1.7 percent annually to about 1.5 percent annually by 2000. Despite the projected decline, however, the absolute number of people added to the population each year will continue to rise, from 73 million additional persons in 1978 to 95 million additional persons two decades from now. This increase, a consequence of a continually expanding population base and the exponential growth of population, is occurring in a world in which more than 400 million people already suffer from malnutrition.

Assaying the effects of projected growth of population, Ambassador Marshall Green, first Coordinator of Population Affairs for the U. S. State Department, wrote in the April 1979 issue of Intercom:

> ...Again and again, I am asked to speak on "food and population," never on population in relationship to other critical issues such as environment, habitat, employment, human rights, or political stability.... Vital as it is, the food issue is not likely to be the most politically explosive aspect of high population growth in the immediate years ahead.
>
> What I see emerging as the most politically explosive aspect of high population growth rates is the chain of events set in motion by overpopulated rural areas generating the mass movement of people into already overcrowded cities where unemployment and underemployment are rife and in whose rapidly expanding, fetid slums a major source of tomorrow's turbulence is festering.

This turbulence will affect all nations, ours included. (pg. 13)

Yet, in spite of statistics denoting a bleak present and a dire future for the world's poor, we need to be aware that much has been accomplished in the past 50 years to improve their lot, and that much more can be done in the years ahead. The anonymous authors of a UNICEF review titled 30 Years of Progress in Child Health wrote in 1976:

> As recently as 1935-39 life expectancy at birth in the less developed regions was estimated to be 32 years.... [Today] ...the average baby's life expectancy is 50 years....In the year 1900, out of every 1,000 children born alive, in the least developed countries nearly 265 died before completing their first year, and about 75 died in more advanced countries. By 1953, infant deaths in the least developed had been reduced to 160 per 1,000 live births and in advanced...to 25. (pg. 1-2)

Those figures have been further reduced. According to the Population Bureau's World's Children Data Sheet, infant mortality by the mid-1970s had been reduced to an estimated 113 per 1,000 live births in less developed regions as a whole and to 22 in the more developed world; for those born into poorer nations, life expectancy had increased from 32 years in 1935-39 to 56 years in 1979.

Magda Cordell McHale and John McHale, authors of World of Children, maintain that there are sufficient resources and capacities available to guarantee to the world's poor, within a relatively short time, minimal and basic rights to enough food, housing, education, jobs, and health services.

> The obstacles to do so are not material but human. They are mainly those of our conventional economic, political and institutional arrangements, which, on the whole, perpetuate

> poverty, inequity and injustices while squandering a major part of the world's wealth on armaments and other forms of national aggrandizement. (pg. 31)

More than 400 billion dollars per year is now being spent on military budgets. Since 1945, the U.S. alone has expended 2 trillion dollars on defense, and the Carter Administration projects an additional 1.5 trillion of military expenditures over the next decade, including 135 billion in FY 1980. Each year, twice as much money is spent on new weapons as is being spent for the health and education of three-quarters of the earth's population. In a lengthy discussion of arms control that appeared in November 1978 issue of Current Focus, published by the League of Women Voters Education Fund, Michael Shower wrote:

> Those debating arms control must, finally, ask the question, How can we be most secure? At one level, this translates to, How much is enough? If the United States and the Soviet Union can each destroy the other 100 times, do we need to make it 200 times? If we agree that 100 is enough, wouldn't 50 do?
>
> ...Now, more surely than before, our security in an inter-dependent world is predicated on the security of others. This being so, the question becomes, Can we be secure when most of the world's people are so insecure that they cannot even be sure of the basic necessities of life? (pg. 6)

By the year 2000, as many as 100 nations will know how to acquire nuclear weapons. India has already taught us that even a poor nation can be a nuclear power, one capable of posing a military threat to affluent nations. And OPEC, in case we had not already realized, has dramatically made us conscious of how dependent we are upon other nations for our energy,

our productivity, our affluence. As a people, we have been paid well; have been fed, clothed, and housed well; and have had at our disposal more bathtubs, automobiles, telephones, radios, refrigerators, freezers, television sets, and canned, packaged and bottled goods--in short, more creature comforts--than any other peoples on earth. But our comforts too often have come at the expense of wasted resources and skewed priorities: more money spent on air conditioning than on proper care of the aged; more money spent on cosmetics, toiletries, and fragrances than on subsidized low-cost housing; more money spent on paper towels than on urban mass transportation; more money spent on bubble gum than on textbooks.

Annually we have spewed into the environment billions of throw-away soft-drink and beer cans, and millions of cars, tires, and tons of paper. From World War II to 1974, we doubled our consumption of electrical power every ten years. By 1972, our per capita consumption of energy was 11.6 metric tons of coal equivalent, compared with 5.4 tons for the affluent and industrialized West Germans. By 1973, when OPEC imposed its oil embargo, we had become the wastrels of the Western world.

The days of cheap, secure, and clean energy are clearly over. With their passing should have come a sharpened awareness of the interdependency of nations and the finiteness of the globe. We live in a time of instantaneous communications, a time when the fall of an Iranian leader can result in gas lines in cities across the nation and in shortages of heat for its schools; a time when the shakeup of the President's cabinet can overnight send the dollar down and gold up in the world's money markets; a time when spy satellites can monitor the military, industrial, and agricultural affairs of any country; a time when pictures can be transmitted

to the earth from the atmosphere of Saturn, some 960 million miles away; a time when the rich can no longer hide their wealth from the poor.

In World of Children, Magda Cordell McHale and John McHale maintain that in a world so interdependent, developed nations can continue to be affluent only if they are willing to share some of their wealth with have-not nations:

> In the past few years, the harsh realities of a fragile global interdependence, affecting food, fuel, materials, and jobs, have forced even the advanced nations to reconsider their own developmental directions. It is suddenly borne in upon even the more fortunate that we are all in the same leaky boat. The affluent cannot stay that way unless the poor get a bit richer. Spreading the wealth around means eventually that everybody gets more, not less. It has taken over half a century to realize this simple truth.... (pg. 31)

Later in the same publication, the authors argue that the breech between more developed and less developed countries will widen unless conditions for children of the poor are soon improved:

> The deepening sense of polarity between the rich and the poor worlds will become much more intensified unless the basic needs of the latter's young and growing population are met more adequately within the next decade or so. The social, economic and political pressures arising from this will further unbalance the world economy and bear more directly upon the presently industrialized world.
>
> Current Third World demands for a New International Economic Order--for resource transfers, commodity agreements, industrial

parity, and greater equity--are only the leading edge of this potentially explosive situation. (p. 42)

As targets for industrialized nations working collaboratively with the Third World during the next decade, the authors recommend the elimination in developing countries of severe child malnutrition and the reduction of general malnutrition through food supplement programs; a reduction in infant mortality from 113 per 1,000 live births to 50 or less; an increase in life expectancy from 56 years to 65 years; immunization of all children against the common diseases of childhood; access to a clean and convenient supply of water and adequate sanitation for all children and their families; and an increase in minimally decent shelter for families.

Though the targets appear modest enough, they are attainable only if we are determined to meet them. Not to do so over the next ten years would signify a massive failure of American willpower and imagination. It should be apparent to the least imaginative among us that our children are going to inherit an earth far more interdependent and finite than the world into which we were born, a world which, because of modern means of transportation and communications, has been conceptually shrinking for several generations, a world which they are going to have to cohabit, either in peace or in carnage, with children of the poor.

When we turn from the Third World to this nation, we discover little evidence that our children are more happy than children born into impoverished lands. Better fed, yes. Better clothed, yes. Better housed and better educated, yes. Happier, not necessarily.

In 1978, approximately 5,000 children aged 10 to 18 committed suicide in the United States. (Suicides of children under 10 are automatically classified as accidents.) In the past decade, the rate of childhood

suicide has risen more than 100 percent. Now the third leading cause of death among children under 18, suicide ranks below only accidents and murder as slayer of the young. Dr. Calvin Frederick of the National Institute of Mental Health believes that suicide attempts among young people outnumber actual suicides by fifty to one; if his estimate is correct, over 250,000 children tried to commit suicide last year.

Also on the rise statistically are teenage pregnancies, teenage alcoholism and drug abuse, teenage delinquency, teenage promiscuity, and cases of parental child abuse.

Nearly 300,000 abortions are performed annually on girls aged 10 through 19, and some 600,000 babies are born each year to mothers in this same age group, girls 10 through 14 bearing approximately 12,000 of them. Teenagers are more likely to abandon or abuse babies born to them, teenage mothers attempt suicide at seven times the rate for all women in their age group, and teenage marriages are twice as likely to end in divorce as marriages in the general population. A study, commissioned by the Population Resource Center and conducted by Stanford Research Institute (SRI International) this year concluded that teenage pregnancies are costing American taxpayers about $8.3 billion a year in welfare and related outlays. The total sum, which would be $1.5 billion higher if abortions were to become illegal or if state financing of abortions for teenagers were to cease, is higher than the budgets of many nations, including New Zealand, Portugal, and several Latin American countries.

A survey funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and conducted in 1976 by Melvin Zelnick, John Kantner, and Young Kim of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health found that 63.3 percent or about two-thirds of U.S. females had had sexual intercourse

by age 19, almost all of it premarital. A similar survey conducted by the same researchers in 1971 concluded that about 55 percent of American girls had had sexual intercourse by age 19. The largest increase in early sexual intercourse was found among white teenagers, whose average rose nearly ten percentage points over the five-year span, reaching 60 percent in 1976. The figure for black girls was approximately 83 percent. Professors Zelnick, Kantner, and Kim report that 1 in 10 U. S. women becomes pregnant before age 17 and 1 in 4 before age 19. Eight in 10 of these pregnancies are premarital.

A nationwide survey commissioned by the National Institutes of Mental Health recently found that each year some 4 percent of all children under age 17, or nearly 2 million, are subject to parental abuse. Parents in the sample who were under age 30 were 62 percent more likely to beat children than were parents between ages 31 and 50.

In 1970, the Uniform Crime Reports for the United States showed 435,000 arrests of males under age 18 and 99,000 arrests of females under age 18 for serious crime. By 1976 the figures had risen to 544,000 arrests of males under age 18 and 125,000 arrests of females. Categorized as serious crime were murder, manslaughter by negligence, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary (breaking or entering), larceny and motor vehicle theft. Not included as serious were the 105,000 arrests of those under age 18 for violation of liquor laws, an increase of 38,000 from the 67,000 arrests in 1970, or the 110,000 arrests of the young for violation of the narcotic drug laws, an increase of 41,000 from the 69,000 arrests in 1970.

Any number of reasons can and have been proffered for the discontent and antisocial behavior of American youth: working mothers,

rising divorce rates, single parent households, loss of faith in societal institutions, lack of confidence in the future.

In the United States 44 percent of the mothers of children under the age of 6 are working, only 24 percent of existing families are traditional nuclear families, and in nearly 50 percent of all two-parent families, both partners are in the work force. If the current divorce rate, which has risen from 2 per 1,000 persons in 1940 to 5.1 per 1,000 in 1978, continues, close to 40 percent of all marriages will end in divorce. Last year 19 percent of families with children under age 18--about 30.4 million families--were headed by one parent, in all but 2 percent by the mother. In the New York Times Magazine of June 17, 1979, Henry Biller, professor of psychology at the University of Rhode Island and a pioneer researcher on father-children relationships, summarized the importance of fathers to the lives of their offspring:

> The presence and availability of fathers to kids is critical to their knowledge of social reality, their ability to relate to male figures, to their self-concepts, their acceptance of their own sexuality, their feelings of security. Fathers are important in the first years of life, and important throughout a child's development.

Poll after poll in recent years has revealed Americans' waning faith in the ability of either government or education to improve the society through welfare, legislated, or court-ordered programs. Nor do citizens have much faith in the ability of either government or industry to curb inflation. Five years ago polls showed that 62 percent of Americans thought inflation could be controlled. By 1978 only 12 percent did. And

a Gallup poll in August, 1979, found three times as many Americans expect inflation to get worse as expect it to get better.

Confidence in the future is inextricably related to confidence in the economy, to monetary goals, including retirement, which individuals project during their working lives. At present, young people have understandable difficulty in projecting their economic futures: last June the Social Security Administration announced that a 20-year-old just starting to work can anticipate receiving from Social Security $64,000 a year when he or she reaches 65 in the year 2025. The average wage in that year is expected to be $162,000, and Social Security taxes will be levied on all earnings up to $378,000 a year. The figures assume that the economy will follow a steady course, with wages rising 5.75 percent annually and inflation dropping to 4 percent annually over the long run--assumptions that to date appear Pollyannish.

Rather than attributing the malaise of the young to the dissolution of the family, the loss of faith in institutions, and the instability of the economy, Scott Spencer, a novelist, holds responsible the narcissistic self-indulgence of older citizens who defeat tax levies for the schools in order to preserve a high standard of living for themselves; who regard children as surplus competitors for limited resources, human beings who cannot be afforded; who offer the young no purpose in being alive and no hope for the future. In a scathing article titled "Childhood's End" (Harper's, May 1979), Mr. Spencer writes:

> In the past few years, more and more school districts across the United States have voted to close public schools--pleading financial crisis. Those who have until now accepted the burden of taxation have decided it is more important to protect their

standard of living than it is for the schools to remain open. In Ohio, for example, of the thirty operating levies placed on ballots since 1970, only two have passed....

The closing of public schools in the most prosperous of nations is a bizarre and shameful phenomenon. And it is somberly suggestive of the American mood. Parents who two decades ago were willing to suffer genuine material hardships in order to have and raise children are now judiciously balancing the needs of yet another generation against their own desire for a country house, a larger air conditioner, a microwave oven--or a retirement reasonably safe from the ravages of inflation. (pp. 16-17)

Mr. Spencer believes the state of childhood, an idea barely 400 years old, to be in full decline. Freed from the enforced premature adulthood of the Middle Ages and from the economic exploitation of the Industrial Revolution, children had been placed in a special state of "grace, dependence, and promise," wherein they could be nurtured, protected, and educated. But the state has been dissolved, says Mr. Spencer:

> ...Having narrowly missed the fete with which America culminated the Golden Age of childhood in the 1960s, the young today are ignored in society and greet this collective neglect with a harrowing and pervasive lack of self-regard. The only popular identity they possess takes the rubric of Punk, which has as its motto "We Are the Future: No Future." The names of the younger rock'n roll bands repeat the suicidal nuance: Suicide, the Erasers, the Destroyers, the Voidoids, the Dead

Boys. (p. 17)

The desire of the young to be valued, to find purpose in their lives, to transcend the lonely confines of their minds and bodies through identification with a cause, a movement, a community more significant than the solitary self, accounts, I believe, for wholesale enlistment of young persons in such religious or pseudo-religious groups as the Unification Church, the Hari Krishnas, the Church of Scientology, and the Christian Charismatic movement. It may also account for the large numbers of young persons participating in ecological concerns, for attempts to preserve the environment can themselves take on religious overtones, offering participants--through protest marches, break-ins, and sit-ins--constant opportunities for self-sacrifice, suffering, and conceivable redemption. The desire to find selfhood through loss of self in a cause may also account for the unfortunate enlistment of young persons in such undemocratic groups as the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party.

As a youngster, I was given numerous opportunities to transcend the narrowness of self by contributing to others, opportunities that provided me with lasting values and an incipient sense of worth. Through work after school and in summers, I was modestly able to help my family financially during most of the Depression. When a neighbor became ill, I was deputed by my parents to cut lawns and trim hedges until health and strength were restored. Attending a Catholic elementary school, I was continuously made mindful of the need to donate cherished pennies and nickels to the work of missions located among the poor in India, China, and Africa, countries in which poverty and illness were made dramatically real through anecdotes told me by Maryknoll missionaries during periodic visits to the school.

I believe that teachers of English, through literature, can make real to students the lives of the poor, of persons living not only in the less developed regions of the earth, but in this land. If we truly wish to help the young of this nation, we must first make them deeply conscious of the world in which they live, and we must give them opportunities, particularly at local levels, to improve that world. Literature is a vehicle into the inner recesses of individuals' thoughts and feelings as well as into the assumptions and values that undergird cultures. Through its penetrative powers into persons and societies, literature can evoke in students empathic responses, profound realizations that persons different from themselves in geographic origin, in degree of affluence, and in acculturation are nonetheless as fully human as they, as deserving to be valued for their humanity as they. Literature, in short, can help teach the young to be humanely responsive to all human life. But to accommodate the translated literatures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, along with literatures of the oppressed in the United States, we will need to broaden our programs by foregoing in the future what has been almost sole emphasis on a Judaic-Graeco-Roman literary tradition, a tradition which usually culminates in the school curriculum with the exclusive teaching of white Anglo-American literature.

To help free youth from the prison house of the solipsistic self, we need in our dual capacity as teachers and as citizens to involve them in worthy community activities, activities which, through engaging them in the lives of others, can convince them--as it did Goethe's Faust--that contentment is not to be found in sensual pleasures, in material acquisitions, in knowledge for its own sake, but rather in aiding others. In "On Families and Schools: A Conversation with Urie Bronfenbrenner"

(Educational Leadership, April 1979), Mr. Bronfenbrenner, who compared child-rearing practices in the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in Two Worlds of Childhood (Russell Sage Foundation, 1970) comments on the schools' need to help young people become involved members of their communities:

> Schools could make a tremendous contribution if they had a "curriculum for caring." A regular part of the curriculum beginning in the early elementary grades should be learning about caring by actually giving care under adult supervision.
>
> ...In our country, children should go out of the school to serve the old and lonely, and older kids should care for younger ones. They should get to know them, play with them on the playground and walk them home from school. If they did that they would meet their parents, see the kinds of places [in which] other people live. (pg. 461)

Mr. Bronfenbrenner points out that it is possible for a young person to graduate from high school without ever having cared for a child or older person, without ever having acquired the skills and sensitivity needed for that kind of activitiy. And he argues strongly against the isolation of the school from the community, maintaining that such isolation leaves members of the community ignorant about what the school is doing and breeds in the young feelings of alienation and aggression. School people, he insists, must build bridges to the community and to the parents: "They must create situations in which more of the community is in the lives of kids in school, and the kids are more a part of the community." (pg. 463)

In "Guestview: Reinventing Childhood," (Saturday Review, July 21, 1979), Jonathan Kozol describes schools in the Boston area that are promoting the kind of community involvement Mr. Bronfenbrenner recommends for all

schools:

> Students at one secondary school in Boston study Early Childhood development in the morning, then work, for pay, in the afternoon. Another group of Boston high-school pupils tutors elementary-level students in basic math and reading skills--improving their own competence while helping those 10 years their junior to make dramatic strides through one-to-one attention.
>
> A third group of ingenious high-school kids in Boston now operates a retail store out of an embellished pushcart at Boston's fashionable and historic Quincy Market.
>
> ...[T]he work of these young people is authentic and useful; in every instance, the student comes to see himself as a full-scale member and participant of the real political and economic life of his society. (pg. 15)

Most young people have consistently demonstrated a desire to be contributory members of their communities and their societies. They have researched, written, and edited Foxfire-like publications, walked miles on weekends for one cause or another, even engaged in Read-A-Thons to raise money for those with multiple sclerosis. We must tap this youthful idealism and channel it to good use before it turns, as it now so often does, to anger, cynicism, and despair. From local to international levels, there is God's plenty to do to improve the planet. As teachers and citizens, let us pledge to enlist the help of our nation's young in its doing. We could accord them no higher respect, no greater honor, not only in this International Year of the Child, but in all the years that follow.