

IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

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The traditional role of the academic scholar has been one of quiet contemplation in a scholarly fashion of the problems of society, science, economics, or whatever. The *ideal* professors profess their scholarly findings in the classroom without propagandizing and take restrained attitudes in public pronouncements. On most issues this tradition has served us well.

I contend, however, that there is now an issue which is of such overriding importance that we (and by we I mean all us from whatever field of study) should put aside our reticence. We must speak out in the classroom or wherever else we can get an audience. We can no longer sit back and take a detached view of the nuclear arms race. We must all get involved and attempt to get our students involved in first, understanding the problem of nuclear arms and second, doing something about it.

We must become activists in the arms race issue because as John Kenneth Galbraith says:

“If we fail in the control of the nuclear arms race, all of the other matters we debate in these days will be without

meaning. There will be no question of civil rights, for there will be no one to enjoy them. There will be no problem of urban decay, for our cities will be gone. So let us disagree, I trust with good humor, on other issues...but let us agree that we will tell our countrymen, all of our allies, all human beings, that we will work to have an end to this nuclear horror that now hovers over all mankind. (*A life in our Times*, New York, 1982, p. 537).

At one time the so-called anti-nuclear activists were considered to be on the “fringe.” This attitude is no longer valid. There are now too many reputable observers saying we must stop the nuclear arms race. As early as 1957 General Omar Bradley said that what worried him most was not the “magnitude of the problem, but...our colossal indifference to it.” More recently, Admiral Hyman Rickover, one of the early advocates of our nuclear enterprise, has stated, “The most important thing we could do is start

by having an international meeting where we first outlaw nuclear weapons, and then we outlaw nuclear reactors, too." Admiral Gene LaRoque, USN (Ret.) now leads an organization devoted to stopping the arms race. He states:

For years I made plans to use weapons against enemy forces. During my seven-year stint in strategic planning in the Pentagon, I became aware that nuclear weapons had created a whole new ball game. They are a quantum jump. They changed all the old rules of warfare. The concept of military superiority has become meaningless. (Personal communication.)

In spite of the number of reputable people involved in the issue, President Reagan dismisses European and American expressions of concern by saying they come from "increasingly vocal groups carrying a message of pacifism and neutrality." The president's top assistant, Ed Meese, said of the British and West German demonstrations, "We feel this will not impact our policies."

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The first thing we academics

must do is to inform ourselves of the facts and issues involved in the arms race. There is now a plethora of books on the subject. (A few of these are listed in the bibliography.) I believe one of the most important of these is the one by Jonathan Schell. Schell's thesis is that any use of nuclear weapons by a major power will bring an escalation of such extent that essentially all human, and most lower forms of animals and plants, will be eliminated from the face of the earth. He calls this "second death" or extinction. Whether we agree with him or not (I do), there certainly is no question that life and civilization as we know it will be gone. There will be no such thing as a winner in such a war.

I do not share Rickover's pessimism when he says, "I think we will probably destroy ourselves, so what difference will it make? Some new species will come up that might be wiser." However, I do believe that we must work to make Rickover's prediction turn out to be wrong.

After informing ourselves concerning the facts and issues of the arms race, we all must *take action*. A few months ago, when I made this suggestion to some of my colleagues, I received two responses with which I disagree. One was to the effect that "we will muddle through just as the British always seem to do when they have overwhelming problems." If this is correct, then the implication is that we can sit back and do nothing and everything will turn out alright. I can only feel as Seneca writes, "He

who does not forbid sin when he can, encourages it.”

The other response made by one of my colleagues was to the effect that many times in the past people have thought that they now had a weapon which would destroy the world and these new weapons are just extensions of the ones we've used in the past. I completely disagree with this. There is no question, from the point of view of weapons effects, that only a fraction (probably less than one-tenth) of the weapons in today's stockpiles are capable of destroying the world as we, and as most living organisms, know it. The statement that these are “just an extension of other weapons systems” can only be made by someone in complete ignorance of the situation.

In addition to speaking out on the problem, there is another step we can take. It deals with the whole nuclear infrastructure. The arms race cannot continue if people refuse to be employed in the arms industry. We can point this out to students who ask us for advice about future employment. We can actively assist our students to seek out positions as far removed from the nuclear industry as possible.

So I urge my colleagues in academia to come down from the ivory tower on this issue, to become familiar with the facts on weapons effects and then at every opportunity be willing to discuss, encourage, and stimulate everyone within hearing to put aside other activities and join in the effort to cleanse the earth of nuclear weapons.

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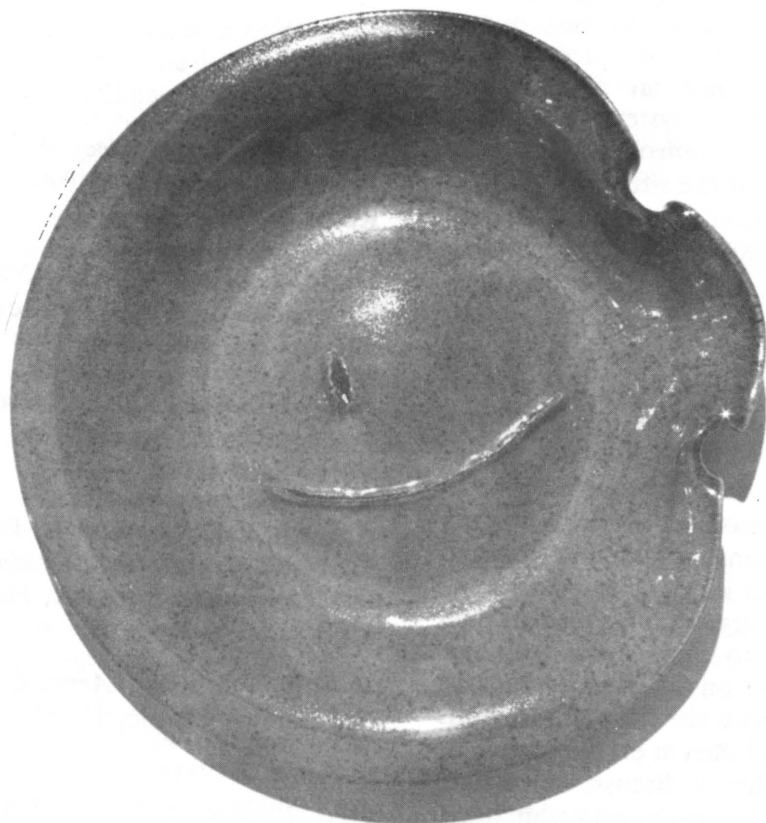
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