



National Education Association

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George D. Fischer, President

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November 4, 1969

MEMORANDUM TO: State Education Editors

FROM: Rozanne Weissman, Staff Correspondent
Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations

For your information and for possible story leads for spring issues of state education publications: A nationwide moratorium day protesting the pollution problem is now being planned for sometime next spring. Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, a number of student leaders, and Sam Brown, former aide to Sen. Eugene McCarthy and organizer of the Oct. 15 Vietnam Moratorium Day, are currently planning the pollution protest. At this point, a one-day suspension of all college classes, and possibly high school classes as well, is being considered, with plans to devote that day to studying the threat of all types of pollution--air, water, soil--to this country and to the world.

To aid your teacher-readers who may be in need of good, current information on the subject for classroom discussion, you may want to consider doing articles at the state level from various aspects: what the problems in your state are or possibly will be if things continue in this manner; what your state and localities are doing and are planning on doing about the pollution problem (including interviews with the appropriate state people); what, if anything, schools in your state are doing about environmental education; and what the possibilities for education in this area are, according to leading educators and other appropriate sources in your state. Although the pollution problem is worse in certain areas of the eastern and western parts of our country, it is a growing problem which is no longer confined to major population centers or industrial areas. Just the other week, for example, people in Denver, Colo., were complaining of respiratory illnesses from the smog in that mile-high city--a smog situation sufficient to be termed a "second stage smog alert" had it occurred in Los Angeles (meaning all industry would cease any polluting operations).

There is a growing concern expressed by legislators and by candidates for office about the pollution problem. Note attached articles which appeared in the Oct. 28 Washington Post.

There is a concern on the part of our young people about the growing pollution problem--a problem which they consider hand-in-hand with the destruction of other natural resources without thought of replenishment. A desire to "return to nature" and to "natural" things is apparent in much of the hippy movement (flower children), in the emphasis of the young and of some of their music, and even in some of their popular reading material (the rebirth of interest in works of Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau and the emphasis on nature by the poet of the young generation, Rod McKuen). However, many of the students I have talked to are angry at what they



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see happening to our "natural" resources--polluted rivers and lakes where fish are dying and polluted air which will probably be scientifically proven to have a physically harmful effect on man much greater than cigarette smoking. Many of the students, who are rejecting the excessive emphasis by their elders on the profit motive, also see that motive as playing a big part in the pollution problem--the big car manufacturers conspiring to keep anti-pollution devices off the market and other industries also lobbying against legislation at any level which would cost them money and force them to change their methods, even when such continued refusal will probably have a detrimental and more costly effect on society as a whole.

A number of students I have talked to regarding a relevant curriculum repeatedly brought up the need for courses which are useful for living in our changing world. Environmental education courses were among the ideas for new courses cited by students.

Because this subject was not one which was requested by you in the survey or in letters or discussion, an article will not be done from here. We just wanted to inform you of the planned moratorium so that if you would like to tie in a timely and relevant article at the state level, you will have enough planning time and notice to line up your sources and articles. In the future when things occur which we think you might find interesting or worthwhile for story possibilities, we will pass them on to you so that you can handle them--or not handle them--from the state level as you see fit.

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