

# In My Opinion

## The Chips Are Down

This column in the last few years has pointed out that national policy has and will continue to have striking effects on the operation of the educational enterprise, and this will not exclude those of us in science education. The warnings now are becoming realities.

The national policy requires that our publicly supported educational efforts be directed at the whole spectrum of education's clientele. Thus, education is for students from low ability to high ability, the old to the very young, the unmotivated to highly motivated, terminal to college bound, foreign students and American students, and the low socio-economic group to the high.

The implications for science educators are enormously important. We have done really very little for one end of these spectra. And we are now on notice that we must do something relevant. In our biology niche of the larger science education picture, we have had more experience than the rest of our brethren. But our efforts are still not good enough. In our emphasis on biochemistry we may have lost the relevancy to our world today and tomorrow which we must have in our teaching. We cannot afford to be in our teaching the most removed from world problems.

National policy, and reflected clearly in local and state policies throughout the country, demands more efficiency in our educational enterprise. The ideal and utopian one-to-one ratio of teacher and student must be looked at realistically in terms of numbers and dollars. Science education is the most vulnerable to attack for its costs per student are probably the highest.

Science for occupational orientation has not been given its fair shake in our curriculum efforts.

The answers to all this will not be easy to propose, will not be readily acceptable, nor even easy to accomplish. But tackle the problem we must.

Indeed if science education is to be "relevant" to our students' present view of the world as well as what the world will be like in the future, then we must look around us, be aware of what the "future planners" are up to, and then reflect this in our teaching.

We must point out the occupational relevance of our teaching. The student who whines or sincerely asks, "What do we have to know this stuff for," has a good question. Can we answer him?

What this means for curricula, courses of study, teacher education, teaching methods, etc., must be studied and assessed.

All of this is becoming a mandate for which we had better be prepared.

Editor

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