

# **TOWARD GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING AND CITIZENSHIP**

By

Robert B. Anthony

The next time you read a daily newspaper, circle all the articles that deal with the world. You may be surprised by the number of circles covering your paper. Or when viewing a nightly television network news program, time the number of minutes devoted to international news. Again you may be surprised by the amount of international coverage.

Closer to home, reflect on the cultural and geographic origins of your ethnic heritage, the legal system you live by, your language and religion, and many of the products you buy and consume. Global origins are obvious, upon reflection.

Educators have a high moral purpose and a major responsibility to assist students in knowing and understanding how the world is in the United States. Why? For two basic reasons: the phenomenon exists; and secondly, the lives of students will be significantly influenced by global events.

The first obligation of a teacher is to foster understanding about the existence of anything important. To do the opposite is to ignore, which is the root-word of ignorance.

Secondly, students will be affected by global events throughout their lives. What a terrible loss to them if they lack basic understanding about these events.

Four arenas exist where these events and phenomena occur: the economy, the environment, culture, and government.

In the economic arena, American's daily use products of the following multinational corporation (MNC's) (their national head-

quarters are in parentheses): Magnavox and Norelco (Holland), Carnation and Nestle (Switzerland), Lifebuoy and Lipton (England), and Bayer (West Germany).

MNC's are immense organizations. General Motors Corp. has 700,000 employees world-wide. Four hundred MNC's produce 15% of everything in the world. Many MNC's sales exceed the GNP of Nations. General Motors is larger than approximately 130 nations.

Because of the great economic power of MNC's three problems result: 1) conflicts of interest between the MNC and the host country: 2) third world countries often view themselves as being exploited by MNC's; and 3) trade deficits.

Since students consume the products of MNC's now and may someday be employed by MNC's, how do we effectively teach about MNC's?

How do we teach about this global economic event: the U.S. stock market collapsed on October 19, 1987. One cause was that Japan's central bank sold large amounts of U.S. Treasury bonds around this time. Bond prices declined sharply, which caused a big increase in long-term interest rates to over 10%. In the U.S., billions of dollars flowed-out of stocks and into bonds to take advantage of high U.S. interest rates. Stock and bond markets are still haunted by this event.

Teaching this global economic event requires dealing with the concepts of stocks, bonds, markets, monetary and fiscal policy, inflation, and exchange rates.

Environmental pollution knows no borders. Visualize beautiful lakes and streams dying from dense algae, and lush timber forests turning an ugly brown. This is happening in Canada from acid rains, which originates from U.S. coal-fired power plants.

The greenhouse effect is a by-product of an industrial way-of-life, now practiced globally. Air pollution is now so dense in the upper atmosphere, that it is acting to dangerously warm great expanses of the planet. Will the industrial revolution, now about three-hundred years old, turn out to be an experiment that cannot endure?



In the arena of culture, we live amid three levels of cultural works: serious, popular, and junk. Global education provides an opportunity to focus on the serious cultural works of other lands -- the literature, music, art, history, science, and philosophy which ennoble us with timeless truths, ideals, and values. Some artists and scholars that readily come to mind are Confucious, Lao-Tzu, Beethoven, Thucydides, Aristotle, Newton, Shakespeare, Joyce, Michelangelo, and Picasso.

By teaching about these great creators of serious culture, students deepen their cultural understanding and appreciation and learn that serious culture is a global phenomenon.

The government arena is crucial to students since it is not adequate to be informed only about domestic problems and issues. The U.S. is so intertwined with other nations politically and economically, that most serious U.S. problems have a global dimension. Citizens to be informed voters thus need substantial knowledge about international issues.

Which nations come to mind when listing the following U.S. problems: trade, drugs, nuclear war, third-world debt, pollution, and petroleum shortages? What foreign policies should the U.S. develop to reduce these problems and still maintain good relations with these nations?

Think of the possible ramifications of M. Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika on America's economy. Is lower defense spending and more U.S.-Soviet trade likely?

Perhaps Global Education's greatest challenge is for Americans to become global citizens in addition to being U.S. citizens. What precisely does "global citizen" mean as we enter the last decade of the 20th century? Can we truly fashion an education that will result in global citizenship? Can other nations do the same with their education? And what a wonderful idea for a curriculum project: design a Global Citizen curriculum with committee members drawn from all over the world.

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*Robert B. Anthony is a consultant for Grant Wood Education Agency in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.*