At the beginning of the New Year a number of newspapers carried headlines such as: ‘Pupils to learn how to think’ (Guardian) and ‘Teach children to think, schools told’ (Times). David Blunkett was quoted as saying, ‘I want children to be able to think creatively and problem solve to address the issues of tomorrow – not just about work, but contributing to the debate about genetic engineering, the future of the planet and issues of global citizenship.’ Hooray! Isn’t this what we in the development, peace, and human rights education networks have been trying to do for all these years? We should be encouraged and be ready to seize the opportunities created by this proposal and those within the international dimension of citizenship education.

However, I wonder if Mr Blunkett is aware of the profound implications of his plans? Our various ‘educations’ are, to a large extent, about giving people the skills and tools to analyse the world in which they live in order that they can take greater control of their lives and work for change. This will have to come about within a particular political, cultural and economic context and not in a vacuum. Well-informed, critical citizens will eventually make decisions that challenge the status quo. This may not always be comfortable for governments.

We enter the third millennium with a need for real ‘joined-up’ and integrated thinking on the part of our Government and our own networks in an effort to promote positive change for the good through education. It is therefore encouraging that peace education, in the words of Rob Unwin and Isaac Osei in this journal, is ‘being given a chance’. Along with Paul Rogers, as he reflects on the history of Peace Studies at Bradford, they helpfully remind us of some of the ways in which peace education and peace studies came under attack and were marginalised during the 1980s. This situation seemed to have arisen out of a perception that peace education was linked closely to the disarmament agenda and political activism, a real hot potato of the ’80s. This was part but not all of the picture. Unwin and Osei refer to Stefanie Duczek’s wider definition of peace education (1981) which includes the need for an awareness of unpeaceful relationships among people; causes of conflict and violence and a search for alternative, nonviolent solutions. The political shifts of 1989 ended the Cold War and offered the possibility of peace dividends. They brought hopes that the end to the East-West stand-off might allow the international community to work on improving North-South relations. Tragically, these were never realised. Instead, new ‘enemies’ and conflict flash-points emerged, more lives than ever were damaged by war, and the inequalities and injustices between peoples and nations continued.

Against this backdrop, the push to look more seriously at peace education has come from a variety of experiences and networks at local and international levels. In the main, the concerns relate to the changing nature of militarism and
conflict over the past decade which calls for a better understanding of issues of war and violence, and how they impact on sustainable development and human rights.

**Calls for peace education**

UNICEF, in their 1995 *State of the World’s Children*, reminded us that wars of the ’90s had resulted in the death of two million children and the internal displacement of another 12 million. They expressed concern about the long-term consequences of conflict for the development of peoples and nations asking,

> What kind of adults will they be, these millions of children who have been traumatised by mass violence, who have been denied the opportunity to develop normally in mind and body, who have been deprived of homes and parents, of family and community, of identity and security, of schooling and stability? What scars will they carry forward into their own adult lives, and what kind of contribution will they be making to their societies in 15 or 20 years from now?

These questions were further developed when Graca Machel produced the report, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (UN 1996) containing ten key recommendations. These range from the need to look at gender-based violence to the issues of children’s rights to security and education and the drama of child soldiers. Closer to home, the Department for International Development, in collaboration with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, hosted a symposium in June 1998 on this issue and have since produced two policy statements (DFID 1999), both of which recognise that conflict and violence are perhaps the most disruptive influences against sustained development and the maintenance of human rights. Again, I wonder how DIFID understands the implications of its policies in relation to the aims and policies of other departments such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence? Sometimes they seem quite at odds with one another.

Perhaps more significantly, the impetus or push for education that will not only help us understand violence and conflict but work to transform it is coming from below – from those who have for too long been on the receiving end of violence or injustice but who refuse to let violence have the last word. A number of such experiences are shared in this Journal. Philip Glendenning and Olga Havnen describe the work of ANTaR, which sets out a strategy by which legal recognition and respect for Aboriginal people might be achieved through development education, international networking and lobbying. Similarly, it was the needs of victims of violence in South Africa, testifying at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which motivated the reconciliation education work described by Brandon Hamber and Traggy Maepa. Jo Broadwood takes us to Morpeth School, Tower Hamlets, in the 1990s, where violence and conflict had damaged the morale and achievements within the school. LEAP Confronting Conflict were invited to work on a whole school approach, running core skills workshops on confronting conflict, listening, affirmation work and decision making. These projects offer examples of good practice in education for peace and reconciliation and affirm the notion that through empowerment, people can take charge of their own destiny.

The 1999-2000 Year for the Culture of Peace and the 2001-2010 Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence are the United Nation’s response to the Appeal by the Nobel Peace Laureates, aware of the scale of global violence and its impact on children, on behalf of the world’s children. The UN defines a culture of peace as:

> all the values, attitudes and forms of behaviour that reflect respect for life, for human dignity and for all human rights, the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding between people and has called on every country to

ensure that children, from an early age, benefit from education to enable them to resolve any dispute peacefully and in a spirit of respect for human dignity and of tolerance.

The problem with UN Years and Decades is that they come and go and remain unknown to the majority of people. For the most part, it is left to the NGO world to ‘run’ with the ideas and openings which such Years create. To date, our own Government has shown little interest in the Year for a Culture of Peace.

**The Peace Education Network**

One body which has taken up the challenge is the Peace Education Network of the National Peace Council. In November 1999 they launched *Towards a Culture of Peace: a Curriculum Proposal for Peace Education*, which set out the following as some of the aims of peace education:

- to understand the nature and origins of violence and its effects on both victim and perpetrator
- to create frameworks for achieving peaceful, creative societies
- to sharpen awareness about the existence of unpeaceful relationships between people and within and between nations
- to investigate the causes of conflicts and violence embedded within perceptions, values and attitudes of individuals as well as within social and political structures of society
- to encourage the search for alternative or possible nonviolent skills; to equip children and adults with personal conflict resolution skills.

This Network, established in 1994, includes NGOs such as Pax Christi, Peace Pledge Union, Council for Education in World Citizenship, Quaker Peace and Service, the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship together with the Brighton Peace and
economics of war and oppression. Whatever goes on in the
industry could lead to questions about local employment.
Dependent areas where discussion about the ethics of an
group into the military industry, for example, could pose
exploration of the resources, research and development that
our specific context they can raise very critical concerns. An
mention them here as it is such that could really test the
education to be perceived as political. I feel it important to
There are, however, some areas of the content of peace
enlightened to be perceived as political. I feel it important to
those involved and with the realisation that we share a
desire to promote common learning experiences, skills and
values. This may be the strongest area of connection between
our different ‘educations’. Partnership in learning and
learning across local and national boundaries are, for
example, key features of projects described in this Journal.
Unwin and Osei outline the peer mediation project in
Sheffield and its link to a programme in Northern Ghana
through which teachers there shared their work on mediation
and peace-building in post-conflict situations with teachers
in Sheffield. Regan and Sinclair tell of the Let’s Talk project
which explores peace and reconciliation processes with
young people from Ireland, Britain, Rwanda and the Middle
East. Here we read of a cross-fertilisation of ideas and
approaches to peer mediation and development of
communications skills – the language of political education
in particular being shared in Britain, Ireland, Australia,
Rwanda and beyond. All of these are set in contexts where
violence or conflict is a reality and where there is a strong
desire to engage people in peacemaking and change.
Similarly, they recognise that there is a strong need to
respect diversity in the way in which we work to challenge
violence and injustice. We would be failing to build a real
‘culture of peace’ if we tried to do otherwise.

Challenges to peace education
There are, however, some areas of the content of peace
education which are distinctive and which may cause peace
education to be perceived as political. I feel it important to
mention them here as it is such that could really test the
integrity of David Blunkett’s statement about having critical
thinking global citizens.

Towards a Culture of Peace suggests a number of content
areas, including the ethics of science and technology; the
economics of war and oppression and notions of citizenship.
In themselves they may appear neutral but when applied to
our specific context they can raise very critical concerns. An
exploration of the resources, research and development that
go into the military industry, for example, could pose
difficulties for teachers working in heavily defence-
dependent areas where discussion about the ethics of an
industry could lead to questions about local employment.
Similar difficulties could be experienced when looking at the
economics of war and oppression. Whatever goes on in the
school will be influenced by the family, community and a
variety of other external factors.

Increasingly, school and community projects fall prey to
the influence of those with money and power who may
attempt to change the culture and ethos of a school. British
Aerospace, McDonalds and British American Tobacco are
just three companies that offer ‘partnerships’ with schools.
The negative impact of these particular companies on the
environment, on human rights and on health is all too clear,
and it represents a direct challenge to those involved in
education. What happens when a teacher looks at the impact
of the arms trade on development and human rights in, say,
Indonesia or the Middle East, if BAe are promoting their
work in the school? What happens when children work on
OXFAM, Christian Aid or Save the Children Fund projects
and programmes that explore child labour and worker rights
if the school receives funding from a multinational with a
dubious overseas record?

Notions of citizenship will often become identified with
notions of nationalism and conformity; and the idea of a
‘good’ citizen could be a politically loaded concept. The
issue of militarism and citizenship touches many schools,
with the armed forces having easy access to schools and
youth culture for recruitment and training. In February 1999,
the Army launched a new and costly advertising campaign
targeted at the 12–16 age range. What happens when a
teacher introduces the topic of nonviolent alternatives to
conflict, conscientious objection or attempts to explore the
plight of child soldiers around the world? Are these ‘no go’
areas or can they be treated by teachers with confidence and
integrity?

I give these examples to link back to my opening
paragraph: development, peace and human rights educations
will inevitably challenge the status quo; we should not be
afraid of this because what we seek to achieve is too
precious, too important to be squashed or undermined. What
this Journal illustrates is that there is more to unite than
separate us. We seek a common security for all, breaking the
continual cycles of oppression and violence wherever they
are present in our world and we seek to achieve this by
offering models and approaches to education and change
based on justice and nonviolence.

- Pat Gaffney is General Secretary of British Pax
Christi, an International Catholic Movement for Peace
and was, for nine years, the Schools Development
Education Officer for CAFOD.

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