

The debate about peace education is qualitatively different from the debate about peace studies, for the simple reason that universities are attended by adults while secondary and elementary schools are attended by children. It is in the latter settings that accusations of political indoctrination are taken most seriously. There is undoubtedly a tension between the necessity to apply academic standards and the sometimes idealistic and changing demands of a popular movement. The danger is that academic standards will be diluted in the attempt to promote a particular political viewpoint: while peace educators acknowledge that risk, they argue that it is worth taking. They say that ignoring the threat of nuclear war is inappropriate because young people are asking questions that should be addressed. And they add that providing facts alone is wrong because such facts tend to horrify students, encouraging them to believe that the situation is hopeless.

For those who are unfamiliar with the issues raised by peace education, it must appear ironic that the issues are so contentious. On the surface 'peace' is an innocuous and universal aspiration. When people attempt to turn aspirations into reality, however, disputes often arise. And if peace education is perceived to be part of a political movement which includes the advocacy of disarmament and social change, controversy is inevitable.

Critics like Cox and Scruton would like to see peace education materials removed from schools entirely, and argue that young people do not possess the cognitive ability to understand issues pertaining to peace and security. Their approach fails to address the central issue: nuclear war. As long as the belief persists that nuclear war is imminent, the peace education movement is here to stay. And as long as there is a shortage of teaching aids and resources pertaining to issues of peace and security, teachers will continue to face questions which they feel ill-equipped to answer. Many school boards and most provincial ministries are aware of the problem and are developing policies and approaches to the issue of peace education.<sup>17</sup> Non-governmental organizations, meanwhile, are developing materials and lobbying school officials to authorize their use in the classroom. The approach of the peace education movement may appear too radical to some, but it is possible that public debate will aid in the development of policies and materials that are acceptable both to school officials and to peace education advocates, with the result that students will be encouraged to discuss the issue of nuclear war in the classroom, and teachers will be prepared to facilitate such discussion in an informed and responsible manner.