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## SCARING CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

While traveling through Ohio recently, a mother handed me a letter she found in her 4th grade child's bedroom. In an envelope addressed to President Reagan, here is the letter, complete with misspellings and bad grammar.

"Dear Mr. Regan. I don't know if I'm stupid or not. Are we going to have world war III? My Mom says that she hopes not. My teacher at school says that she is certain that we are. Well persanally I don't want it neither but I know we are."

How sad it is that this child was scared at school into believing that we are "certain" to have World War III. How sad that the school led the child to believe that her Mom is wrong.

The ABC docu-drama about teenage suicide called "Surviving" dramatized the tragic effect that such pseudo-education can have. The last words which the two teenagers said to each other before they committed suicide were, "It doesn't matter what we do. The whole world's going to blow up soon anyway."

It was clear from the docu-drama that those pathetic teenagers did not get that notion from their parents (whatever their other faults). However, the teenagers could easily have gotten that notion from any of the several nuclear war curricula or other depressing materials so widely used in public schools today.

Those last words of ABC's fictional suicidal teenagers sound almost exactly like the words written in a "journal" by real students who took a nuclear course called "Cross-roads," produced by a Boston outfit called "Jobs With Peace." The author was so proud of the psychological effect the course had on the students that he published these excerpts from two students' journals:

"These days, I just try not to think about my future, because I have a hard time seeing one. There aren't any jobs and there isn't any money for me to go to college. I want to do something with my life, but who cares about me? Besides, we're all going to

get blown up anyway." "I am very scared, very, very scared. Because with a nuclear war you don't have a chance to survive."

Why were the high school officials in Jamestown, Pennsylvania, surprised a few weeks ago when a psychological experiment they pulled on juniors in an American Cultures class backfired? Anyone who is aware of how schoolchildren are being manipulated and deceived about war and peace could have predicted the result.

This Pennsylvania school incident hit the wire services only after parents complained at a school board meeting. But it is a typical example of the nuclear war lessons and games widely used in schools to frighten children about nuclear war.

In this case, school officials announced over the loudspeaker that the Soviets had bombed an American ship in the Baltic Sea and that school would be dismissed early to hear an address to Congress by President Reagan. The kids were described as "panic stricken." They immediately thought we had escalated into nuclear war. The principal admitted that they had "very strong reactions" and were "very frightened."

The school's explanation of this experiment was that it was an exercise in "analytical thinking" and "logic," but it failed. It seems that the people who need a course in those things are the school administrators who experimented on their pupils like guinea pigs.

This type of experimental psychiatry is the reason why the U.S. Department of Education last November issued strong regulations to implement the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment. Schools are supposed to get prior parental consent before subjecting pupils in elementary and secondary schools to psychological testing or treatment.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development recently released a survey which shows that the average 4th grade classroom spends about a quarter of the school day on "extra-instructional activities." This conclusion was based on a survey of 1,500 randomly selected elementary schools.

According to this survey, school principals said that time constraints are the most serious block to improving the quality of education in public schools. They say they suffer from a lack of time to cover both the basics and social concerns.

Not enough time in the school day for the basics?

Well, well.