

The most important aspect of the education of children in the immediate future lies in conservation. The spaceship which we call the world carries finite resources necessary for the continued survival of all life.

Until the recent past, education has been seen as the provision of information, enabling children to progress to adulthood being able to communicate, qualify, train and work. The Three 'R's, reading, writing and arithmetic, were given undue emphasis to achieve this end.

Since the end of the Second World War, however, the ever-widening curriculum has enabled children to become more enlightened, more discerning and more able to appreciate their control over their environment and life style.

It is my contention that the time is now ripe to tap this increasing awareness and direct it towards strategy of conservation.

Environmental education should be the main platform of all endeavour, commencing in the primary sector. The natural tendency of primary age children to care for the things around them must be encouraged. At the moment, our worldwide environment is being destroyed because human beings do not recognise that it is in their best interest not to damage it. "Information in all education programmes should provide children with the opportunity to understand the social, political, economic and ecological factors involved in human use of the environment." This is a quote from the U.K. Response to the World Conservation Strategy document published in 1983. I fear that the recommendations in this response will be ignored at our peril. Devon is one of the few counties which has set up a Conservation Forum on which is represented key organisations and agencies. Its meetings are worthwhile and positive. I attend the meetings as a representative of the National Union of Teachers and report back to the Devon County Teachers' Association Council.

Continued conservation can only be assured if education in, about and for the environment is regarded as the most important aspect of work in our schools. To this end, maximum effort is called for from our politicians and administrators.

Today's children and those yet unborn must be given the opportunity and expertise to ensure that their world remains a pleasant and hospitable place in which to live.