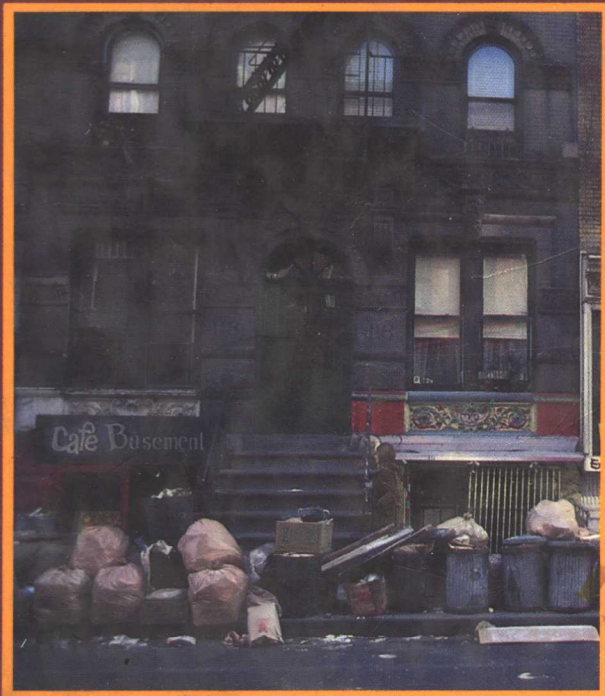


Confronting Social Problems



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**West
Publishing
Company**

*St. Paul
New York
Los Angeles
San Francisco*

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50 West Kellogg Boulevard
P.O. Box 43526
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress
Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Confronting social problems.

Includes index.

1. Social problems—Addresses, essays, lectures.

I. Hardert, Ronald A., 1938—

HN27.C66 1984 361.1 83-21819

ISBN 0-314-78013-0

Copy Editor: Joan M. Torkildson

Cover Photos: Clockwise from upper right: © F. B. Gruenzweig; U.S. Navy; © Geoffrey Cove. All from Photo Researchers, Inc.

Artwork: Editing, Design & Production, Inc.

Compositor: The Clarinda Company

PHOTO CREDITS

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Preface

Economist Robert Heilbroner, writing in *Inquiry into the Human Prospect*, tells us that humanity faces three major challenges to survival. Population growth is the first challenge, having grave environmental and political implications. The threat of nuclear war—the result of nationalism and of unequal distribution of resources around the world—is the second challenge. Finally, we are also faced with devastating environmental deterioration, as a result of inadequate controls on industrial activity.

In order to address the problems we face, we must approach them realistically and with a willingness to alter our behavior. Heilbroner's concern is that adequate responses may not be mounted in time. Capitalism and socialism, the world's major economic systems, have not yet adequately solved our problems. Can democratic societies meet these challenges, or can only totalitarian governments obtain the obedience and rapid reactions to social and political changes that are required for survival? Nationalistic allegiances may replace the understanding that we are all in the global lifeboat together. In times of crisis and personal insecurity, authoritarian leadership is sometimes welcomed. Are we, as a society, moving toward surrendering our democratic rights and freedoms? Can we resolve the

challenges facing us in creative ways that do not abridge human rights?

Social scientists hold different views as to how social problems may be defined, analyzed, and resolved. In the prologue that follows, we present background assumptions and the special perspectives that sociologists bring to the study of social problems. Those who have had an Introductory Sociology course may find it a useful review; those for whom this is a first exposure to viewing the world in sociocultural terms will be formally introduced to sociological concepts which are basic to this approach.

Recognizing that students from very different backgrounds and at different educational levels may be enrolled in any Social Problems course, our text steers a middle course. We have limited our use of sociological "jargon" and have defined all necessary terms briefly when they first appear in the text, and in more detail in the Glossary. Our goals, however, are broad. We focus your attention on a number of social problems, introduced first by a current news item, which shows the relevance of the problem to daily life. Next follows a consistent form of presentation which includes (1) the definition of each problem, (2) how society views the problem, (3) how sociologists analyze the problem, and (4) suggested policies for re-

solving the problem. Each chapter follows this format.

Beyond providing a basic acquaintance with the complexity and diversity of the sociocultural world, we hope to increase comprehension of the conflict, rapid change, and especially of the ambiguities and contradictions that seem to be accelerating. Some of the problems and challenges we face may not be solvable in our time; however, we

advance ideas for reducing their negative effects. Finally, we hope to foster interest in the sociological approach and in sociology as a discipline.

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Mary Riege Laner
Mark Reader
Tempe, Arizona

Acknowledgments

An editor once said (in regard to textbook development): "Good books are not *written*, they *evolve*." If that is true, this text ought to be a winner because its total development and execution spanned a period of about five years.

Special thanks go to everyone in the College Division of West Publishing for their professionalism and for believing in our project. Our editor, Denise Simon, was a constant source of good ideas, encouragement, and inspiration. Our copy editor, Joan Torkildson, did a masterful job ironing out the rough spots and unifying the writing styles of four co-authors. Our production editor Marta Fahrenz showed the patience of Job, especially on days when the ice and snow of St. Paul stood between her and the office. Finally, we want to thank Beth Hinzman for her confidence and creative advertising of the book, and also Tamborah Moore for finding such appropriate and interesting photos.

The following people should receive acknowledgments for helping with various chapters of the book. For research on Chapters 14 and 15, our thanks go to Beth Sand, Raymond Wrabley, and Fran Reader. Paul S. Charnetsky (physical health), Majel Dominguez (elites), Alicia M. Gonzalez (population and food), Lawrence Rosen (suicide), and Con Alan Wilson (Epilogue) also contributed research in the areas indicated. Opal Bla-

lock, Rena Gordon, Professors Dickinson McGaw and Stephan Walker (both of the Political Science Department at Arizona State University), and Nina Mohit (Committee for a Non-Nuclear Future) provided timely references. Linda Hardert helped edit various versions of the manuscript and proofread most of the galleys and page proofs. Sue Alonzo, Peggy Cowan, Bonnie Goforth, Cecelia Obenstine, Diane Popple, Debbie Sult, and Sandra Woodard supported us with speedy and expert typing—usually on very short notice. Thanks also to Fran Reader for preparing the Instructor's Manual, to Tim Danielson for editing it, and to Chris Ptuhl for film research.

A number of professional reviewers read and critiqued the manuscript in various stages. We appreciate very much, and tried to incorporate, contributions of all of our reviewers, especially the following persons:

Diane Mitsch Bush
Colorado State University

D. J. Call
Western Washington University

Colin B. Campbell
University of York—England

Walter Cartwright
Texas Tech University

Don A. Gibbs
Portland Community College

Philip H. Kuhn
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David Graeven
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Joan Huber
University of Illinois

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Arthur S. Wilke
Auburn University

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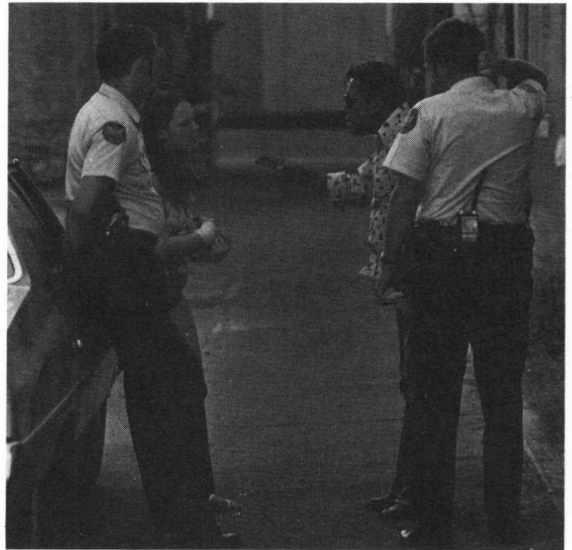
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Teens found willing to take stand on social movements

By George Gallup

PRINCETON, N.J.—American teen-agers are willing to get involved in causes they believe in, according to the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

At least one teen-ager in six already is actively engaged in at least one movement.

Nationwide, a solid majority of teen-agers say they would like to become champions for certain social issues such as efforts to bring world peace, better government, conservation of natural resources, racial harmony and environmental concerns.

The issue with the greatest potential for teen involvement is world peace. In an age when nuclear war is an ever present threat, it is not surprising to find seven in 10 teens willing to rally behind a peace movement. Gallup pollsters found an almost equal proportion of teens, 68 percent, eager to work toward the improvement of government.

Interest in becoming involved in these two issues is highest among boys and girls with an above-average academic standing, those who live in the center cities and teens who attend church regularly. In addition, black youngsters show a greater desire to get involved in these causes than do white teens.

Concern for Earth and Mother Nature is also high on the teens' list of causes worth fighting for. For example, 62 percent said they would like to get involved with the conservation of natural resources, and 52 percent mention environmental issues.

The drive for racial harmony also drew a great deal of interest among all teen-agers. Black teens have greater expectation of participating in a cause that furthers racial equality than their white schoolmates.

Women's rights is the only issue that less than a majority

TEEN INVOLVEMENT

Would like to get involved in:

	<i>Racial Harmony</i>	<i>Environmental Issues</i>	<i>Women's Rights</i>
NATIONAL	58	52	42
Boys	55	52	32
Girls	61	52	52
Whites	57	51	39
Blacks	68	56	58
Protestants	56	50	38
Catholics	59	50	43
East	55	52	46
Midwest	59	49	38
South	59	55	44
West	59	51	41
Churchgoers	60	51	40
Not regular churchgoers	56	53	44
	<i>Peace Efforts</i>	<i>Better Govt.</i>	<i>Conserving Resources</i>
NATIONAL	70	68	62
Boys	68	70	64
Girls	72	67	59
Whites	69	67	63
Blacks	76	79	58
Protestants	70	66	61
Catholics	70	70	61
East	70	69	60
Midwest	69	69	64
South	72	67	60
West	67	69	64
Churchgoers	73	71	65
Not regular churchgoers	67	66	59

of teen-agers, 42 percent, would like to align themselves with. However, among girls, 52 percent are willing to work for women's rights compared with 32 percent of boys. This 20-point spread represents the greatest divergence of opinion found for all the issues tested.

Finally, teen groups showing the highest levels of involvement in at least one social cause are those living in the South, 21 percent; Protestants, 20 percent; blacks, 20 percent; and boys and girls who attend church regularly, 19 percent.

The survey showed 17 percent of the teens in the Midwest are involved in at least one issue; whites, 16 percent; nonregular churchgoers, 14 percent; East, 14 percent; and Catholics, 14 percent.

The question asked was:

"In the past, there have been certain issues which have captured young people's attention, or have served as a rallying point, such as the Vietnam War. Please tell me which of the following issues or causes, if any, you are now actively involved in or would like to be-

come involved in: Efforts to bring peace in the world, the conservation of natural resources, environmental issues, women's rights, racial harmony, getting better government."

The survey findings are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 1,010 boys and girls.

*Source: Gallup Youth Survey.
In Phoenix Gazette, 25 June
1982.*