

TWO YEARS TOWARD INVOLVEMENT

*an ASTD report on
its involvement with
social issues*

The training and development profession as well as ASTD emerged to fill a need in society – the pressing need for increased manpower forces during World War II. During the past two years, ASTD, in turn, has been striving to serve the needs of society – to become more relevant and more action-oriented in social issues.

The effort began with the past president's call for a "year of relevancy" within ASTD. In setting the Society's objectives for 1969, Gordon L. Lippitt felt that keeping ASTD alert to professional and social needs in the field of training and development was a primary objective. In this area, he worked toward two goals: utilizing the annual National Conference to keep people informed about new trends and developments and making the Society and members aware of professional concerns. He established a National Conference Program Design Committee composed of key ASTD members and a Committee on Public and Professional Concerns.

PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC CONCERNS

The creation of the Committee on Professional and Public Concerns, later renamed the Social Issues Committee in 1970, actually began ASTD's focus on social issues. Its purpose was to keep the Society informed on those issues and public matters relevant to the training and development field and to determine ways in which the Society could make a contribution to solving the social and professional problems facing our society.

One of the committee's first projects was to assist Youth Organizations United (YOU) in establishing a management and administration training institute. This institute would have sought to train members of ghetto gang groups in principles of business so they could make a greater contribution to society. Though ASTD agreed to commit its training resources, funding to be obtained by YOU never materialized; the project had to be dropped.

JAMES PEARSON
Executive Vice President
ASTD

Also in 1969, the committee initiated a program for greater minority group involvement in ASTD. With the stimulus of a Black Caucus at the 1969 National Conference, a continuing dialogue was developed between minority groups and ASTD. From much work and discussion evolved the ASTD Action Plan for Minority Group Involvement. This plan includes the Training Opportunities Projects (TOPS), a workshop program providing professional development opportunities for blacks and other minority group trainers, a plan to recruit ASTD members among minority groups and the recruitment of minority group members into the training and development profession.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

The Community Development Division was born in 1969. This division was formed to meet the specialized needs of persons involved in community development and community action programs, to make ASTD more relevant to the needs of the entire training profession and to serve as a forum for sharing training resources, experience and expertise.

Headed by Robert L. Moore, director of the Camden County Council, OEO, in Camden, N.J., a steering committee has provided leadership for the division. Since June, 1969, the division has initiated a special division dues structure to attract lower-income individuals into the Division and the Society and has sponsored three sessions at the ASTD National Conference – Racism and Training, Parts I and II and Community Development Training. Currently, the group is planning community development workshops to be presented on a regional basis.

Action became the key concept when Forrest R. Belcher assumed the Society's presidency in January, 1970. Outlining his goals for ASTD in the March issue of the *Journal*, he emphasized that ASTD will close the "performance gap" in 1970.

ASTD did move toward narrowing this

gap in the Minority Action Plan. Since it was developed late in 1969, the new year brought efforts to implement the program.

As the fund-raising project for the Minority Action Plan and the scholarship program, TOPS got underway with brochures and letters explaining the program and seeking donations. By September 1, contributions to TOPS reached \$2,465. Yet this is not enough to fully implement the plan and more fund-raising are necessary.

More assistance will find its way to the TOPS till as Louis H. Seiberlich, Jr., chairman of the 1971 National Conference Steering Committee, and Region 2 Vice President John F. Connors travel to chapters. The two men will make presentations on various topics in exchange for a \$50 minimum contribution to TOPS. During the remainder of 1970, each man will be speaking at six chapter meetings.

Trainers new to the training and development profession will be able to upgrade their skills and enhance their professional development through the TOPS scholarship concept. A trainer qualifying for a scholarship can attend a national ASTD program at minimal personal cost. ASTD will cover his registration fees and up to \$200 in travel and living costs while he attends the program.

To qualify for a scholarship, a person must have held a full-time training position for less than two years, his annual gross income must not exceed \$8,000, his organization must not be able to provide funds for his attendance and the trainer must be a national ASTD member. Chapters are also being encouraged to identify persons eligible for these scholarships and to help defray their costs for attending ASTD programs. As the TOPS fund grows, more scholarships will be available.

Registration fees were also waived, for para-professionals wishing to participate in the 1970 National Conference. Eight minority group members attended under this plan.

PROGRAMS REFLECT INTEREST

The 1969 and 1970 National Conferences reflected the growing concern with social issues within ASTD. With the theme "New Dimensions — New Designs," the Miami Conference focused on the revolutions of our time, developing underused manpower resources, the impact of technological change, youth and current legislation affecting training, to name a few topics.

The 1970 National Conference included sessions on women in the work force, the environment, community development training, youth, racism and training, Spanish-speaking Americans, training the disadvantaged and new careers.

The special problems and techniques of training, retaining and advancing the disadvantaged were explored in two 1969 ASTD seminars — Training and Developing the Disadvantaged and The Next Step: Retaining and Advancing the Disadvantaged. Though two programs were also planned for 1970, several problems forced their cancellation.

Since January, 1968, the *Journal* has been publishing an increasing number of articles dealing with social issues. In addition to the many articles on hiring and training the disadvantaged, articles have appeared concerning community development, the relevancy of ASTD, the older worker, future trends affecting the training and development profession and "Revolutions of Our Time" by Theodore Sorenson. However, the number of social issues articles included in the *Journal* directly depends upon the number of quality articles submitted to the editor. Members are always encouraged to submit their writings.

To give minority group members stronger voices and leadership roles within ASTD, minority members were asked to join national committees and the Board of Directors. The addition of three adjunct members — representing blacks, women and community development — brought a greater diversity to the Board. Chapters, too, have been asked to include minority group mem-

bers in the leadership of their organizations.

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

The Committee on Professional Public Concerns still lives, but with a new name. Under the guidance of Shirley D. McCune, associate director of the American Association of University Women, the Social Issues Committee is trying to create awareness of social issues and their relevancy to training and development. This special issue of the *Journal* is one of the committee's major efforts to communicate with the Society membership. The group also plans to prepare position papers on ASTD's stance in social issues, such as "The ASTD Action Statement on Black and Other Minority Group Involvement" written by the 1969 committee.

THE FUTURE

With a new year just two months away, thoughts are turning to the future. During 1971, ASTD hopes to expand its scholarship concept to include more beginning trainers in educational programs. Sponsoring a black trainers' institute or identifying existing ASTD programs which would be helpful to minority group trainers is another 1971 project. Next year, too, more minority group members will be identified as resource persons for committees, conferences and institutes.

"We have made some positive steps forward," said Executive Vice President James W. Pearson, "but we haven't moved as fast as we had originally hoped. One of the factors holding ASTD back is the availability of funding which could give us the resources to increase our programs and activities in this area. We need to seek funding from business organizations, funding organizations such as foundations and chapters."

Much, too, depends on the membership. Only the continued and increasing interest of chapters, members, officers and committee chairmen can make ASTD and the training and development profession relevant to social issues and responsive to social change.