Human beings are a funny lot. For some four and one half billion years, we have been evolving and changing along a path that has made us the most sophisticated species on earth. We have come from primitive levels of grubbing for roots and berries to developing agricultural technology by which we can feed millions; we have come from enduring disease and pestilence to eradicating disease and pestilence through sanitation and medical technology; we have come from enduring hostile, even life threatening, environments to building complex structures that render such environments a mere nuisance at most. Distance no longer constrains our behavior — we have come from confinement to a "limited" environment in which the strength of our legs dictated our range of freedom to a world in which travel over incredible spans takes place in a wink of an eye. And we have come from the simple custodial care of our young to the development of educational technologies by which we instruct our children to know more by the age of five than our ancestors could ever hope to understand in their entire life.

Yet, with the development of these and other wonderfully altruistic technological advances, we have simultaneously developed technologies that have forced us to face our own destruction — yours, mine, our children and parents, old Fido, Puff the cat — everybody. As Jonathan Schell (1982) states in his book, The Fate of the Earth...

"The machinery of destruction is complete, poised on a hair trigger, waiting for the "button" to be pushed by some misguided or deranged human being or some faulty computer chip to send out the instruction to fire. That so much could be balanced on so fine a point — that the fruit of four and a half billion years can be undone in a careless moment is a fact against which belief rebels." (p. 182).

The words cannot be more appropriate. But in order to survive, we must rebel against our own inability to fathom the great likelihood of such an occurrence. In order to survive we must search through our own experience to find a solution to the nuclear peril.

And we do search our collective history for a solution to this great problem that besets us. There are those concerned individuals amongst us who have earnestly worked on political and diplomatic solutions to this problem while others have focused more on an economic perspective. Physics, chemistry, earth sciences, medicine and other disciplines such as philosophy and theology have provided a framework within which concerned individuals have sought answers. To be sure, to ignore these orientations is to ignore some very important issues. But neither in isolation nor together do they yield a master plan. At the most fundamental level we are behaving creatures, we behave politically, economically, philosophically and, far too often, aggressively. To live is to behave, and nuclear war is therefore most fundamentally meaningful at the behavioral level. After all, it is the verbal behavior of the leader's command to "FIRE", and the motor behavior of the soldier to "PUSH A BUTTON" that begins the horrible chain of events that could lead to no behavior by anybody at all.

Given these observations it is time to seriously consider what behavior analysts as professionals and Behavior Analysis as a discipline can offer the world community in terms of potential solutions to the threat of nuclear war. To this end, it would seem that both group and individual behavior are important ingredients to include in our recipe. While it is not my intent to lay out any specific strategies, I hope to provide some discriminative stimuli in order to occasion the class of behaviors we might call "peaceful" behavior that might ultimately influence the trend of current world events.

One way to have some impact of course, is to engage in group behavior. For some four or five years Behaviorists for Social Action (BFSA) and Behavior Analysts Against Nuclear War (BANWAR) have functioned as separate and independent groups, despite some overlap in membership. With this editorial, we would like to announce a more formal coalition between these groups with the expectation that over time the merger will become more complete. A larger and more broadly based group is likely to attract new members, and there is always strength in numbers. In addition, a coalition group might establish more credibility and exert more influence when presenting relevant issues for consideration.
by an even larger constituency to consider, i.e., the general membership of the Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA). While many professional organizations have made public statements regarding a plethora of the world's ills (e.g., the APA call for a freeze on nuclear weapons), ABA has avoided such statements. While such silence is perhaps understandable from many different levels of analysis, as an international organization, ABA nevertheless could have a strong impact by publicly denouncing nuclear weapons. The BFSA/BAN WAR coalition could help in the development of such statements by providing objective guidance and information to the "powers that be."

In a similar vein, it would seem that the group effort might also focus on establishing itself as a more international effort. Radical Behaviorism has attracted adherents from around the world. While the principles of behavior are universal, intercultural differences do exist, and in order to survive the threat of nuclear war an international perspective must be maintained. This can be realized of course only through the proper exchange of ideas across cultures. The more diverse the contributions the greater the probability of identifying useful analyses and suggestions. An important function of this broader coalition then is to facilitate such international cooperation among all behavior analysts and as such, we invite our colleagues from around the world to participate in the endeavor.

For a large group to have impact, there must be an effective means of communication within the group. Up until this time, the primary vehicle of information dissemination regarding the role of behavior analysis in the prevention of nuclear war was the BAN WAR Newsletter. Through the commitment of the contributors, who sent in articles and those who contributed financially, the newsletter stayed afloat for quite some time. I'm not so sure whether or not change is a sign of progress, but it does make a great deal of sense (to many people) that the time has come to recognize that a more appropriate forum is available, and that of course is BASA. The advantages are many.

With this issue, BASA is establishing a new, regular section devoted to "Peace Issues." As far as potential authors are concerned it is important to realize that any contributions published in BASA will certainly be viewed as more "scholarly" relative to the old newsletter. BASA utilizes the peer review process and is abstracted in Psychological Abstracts; the newsletter did not and was not. We expect a wide variety of topics to be covered in our pages through diverse formats including theoretical papers, papers presenting empirical relationships, action oriented manuscripts, and book reviews. David Glenwick's paper which follows is an excellent example of this latter category. The function of these manuscripts of course is to exchange ideas among behavior analysts who in turn transform those ideas into some form of effective public action.1

As far as the readers of this journal are concerned, the advantages are twofold. First, the economy factor comes into play in that your money is purchasing a broader and more scholarly publication. Second, and probably most important, the reader will be able to put the nuclear issue into the context of other social problems since the journal is committed to address a wide range of social ills. What potential impact does terrorism have on propagating conventional and/or nuclear war? How can cultural design contribute to peaceful coexistence? Does the quest for dominance over third world countries lead to inter-national conflict? There are many important questions behavior analysts can ask about the nuclear peril when they put it into the context of world problems that we all must face. As a forum for discussing these non-nuclear and nuclear issues, it is possible that this journal may guide us to "put it all together", so to speak, in terms of making some sense out of all the injustice that surround us.

The International Physicians for Social Responsibility recently won the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. As important as the prize is, we must remember that it is merely a secondary reinforcer. The ultimate primary reinforcer of course is the realization of a nuclear-free world. But practically speaking, that realization is far off into the future, and the question arises as to what to do in the meantime? My answer is simply that we continue to engage in peaceful behavior and enjoy all the positive consequences of that behavior. In other words, we collect as many smaller reinforcers as we can along the way: we praise each other for our efforts and jobs well done; we model peaceful action and enjoy the imitation these actions engender; we work with those we like to be around, those whose company we just plain enjoy; we sing together; we allow ourselves that wonderful feeling of making a positive contribution to something worthwhile; we act in ways in which we set ourselves up to collect each reward, one by one. Those behavior principles which we hold in such high esteem must be applied to our own quest for peace as a necessary prerequisite in order to maintain that quest. In short, we must behave "peacefully" in order to secure our penultimate reinforcer — peace.

Reference

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1 If you are interested in submitting an article appropriate for the "Peace Issues" section of Behavior Analysis and Social Action, please forward them to A.J.M. Marcattilio, Associate Editor, BASA, Department of Psychology, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN 56301.