

Toward the Third Year

This issue marks the completion of the second year of *The Responsive Community*, the only communitarian quarterly. As we reflect on these past two years and consider the future of *The Responsive Community*, it seems appropriate that we pause to acknowledge the considerable accomplishments thus far achieved. The achievements we are celebrating are not merely the result of the hard work of the editors, writers, and staff, but also the product of a joint project with many in the community. It truly is *our* two years.

Two years ago, *The Responsive Community* was a gleam in my eyes; the communitarian movement—not even a remote possibility. Indeed, several members of the small group that launched *The Responsive Community* had grave doubts that we could publish a quarterly at all. We started in the depth of a recession; other publications were collapsing left and right. We wondered whether the \$30,000 we had raised would suffice. By comparison, another journal also just starting to roll off the presses, had over a million dollars to its name.

As the countdown to our first issue continued, there was another sound that seemed to drown out what we were trying to say: the countdown to the Gulf war. Our first issue appeared on January 10, 1991; President Bush had given Saddam Hussein an ultimatum to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991, or face war. The public mind was focused on events 8,000 miles away.

And yet our communitarian ideals and ideas gained a surprising hearing. First *Business Week*, then *The Washington Post*, soon *Time* and *National Public Radio* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, followed by many others, found the new communitarian message compelling. Several columnists and editorial writers—John Leo, Joe Klein, E.J. Dionne, Jr., Donald Kimelman, and David Boldt—quite openly pointed

out that they shared our belief that the time has come to shore up the family, promote moral education in schools, restore neighborhoods, and re-instill a sense of responsibility to the community and to the society at large.

Soon foundations chipped in; we were able to increase our printing. By the fifth issue we had articulated the communitarian philosophy in a 12-page platform, which more than 70 leading Americans endorsed. Letters poured in, 1,100 by our last count. Community leaders, ministers and rabbis, organizers, and many other fellow citizens wrote in support of communitarian values and approaches.

Politicians, of both parties, followed. Two Democrat and two Republican senators joined our first Teach-In. We received letters of support from Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ) and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp. The communitarian perspective was picked up during the 1992 election campaign, whether or not the movement was acknowledged. While none of the 1992 presidential candidates explicitly endorsed The Communitarian Platform, all of them sounded communitarian themes. We are working towards convincing the next president, Congress, and local community leaders to advance communitarian approaches much further. The first steps, though, have been taken.

Meanwhile, the communitarian movement is benefitting from grassroots participation. Readers keep renewing their subscriptions and telling others about us, at a most gratifying rate. As much as our ideas have reached a national audience, the heart of our movement still lies with our readers. We still have no funds for mass mailings; we rely on word-of-mouth; that is, on your generosity in passing the message to others, to expand the communitarian community. We still depend on you to extend the communitarian dialogue, to keep these renewals and referrals going.

All this progress (we are entitled to a short moment of being pleased on this second birthday) will not go to our head. We are only at the beginning of a movement aimed at shoring up our moral, social, and political environment. We are at about the same stage as the “other” environmental movement, the one aimed at shoring up Nature, was shortly after the publication of Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring*, before

the first Earth Day.

We seek to restore commitments to values we share, and to raise our moral voices that encourage people to act ethically and civilly, without relying on coercion. Progress will require changes in the habits of the heart, mind-sets, and public policies.

To advance communitarian ideals takes more than a quarterly; it takes a social movement. Hence, the next step is to forge a network of people and organizations who seek to work together to shore up the moral, social, and political environment. Members of The Communitarian Network will exchange position papers and suggestions. The day is short; much needs to be done.

A.E.

If you wish to join The Communitarian Network, write to: Gelman Library, 2130 H Street NW, Suite 714-J, Washington, DC 20052. Or call (202) 994-7997.

A Communitarian Campaign

No one should complain that the 1992 presidential election campaign has been devoid of real issues. Indeed, many of the issues that are being raised are communitarian. Heading the list is the focus on family values. It was no accident that the first article in the first issue of this communitarian quarterly stated the liberal case for the two-parent family, or that we run a pro-family article in every issue. Shoring up the family is a major plank in our November 1991 Communitarian Platform, precisely because communitarians fully recognize the central importance of the family for the moral and civil foundations of society.

There are those who argue that family values are a personal, private, social matter about which the government can and should say nothing, and are not a legitimate subject for a presidential campaign. This uninformed approach ignores the fact that the presidency in our society