PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Dear Friend:

"I dream about the bomb falling and my parents dying...and being alone forever."

"I dream of a huge cannonball the size of the earth. And I just see black and it would smush everything and there would be no salvation. I had the nightmare many, many times."

"I had pictures I was going to die and the world was nothing. . . Everything going up in the air and then everybody was laying down dead, and when I be walking through the house I would be thinking about it and the tears wanted to rush down my eyes and I try to hold it in so my mother don't know nothing's wrong. I think about it every day now and I try to get it out of my head. . . but it just couldn't go away."

These are the frightened voices of 11 and 12 year old children. They could be any of our kids. Their dreams are filled with visions of a nuclear hell. Grim images of nuclear destruction cloud their thinking. Many of them fear they will never have a chance to grow up.

Last year President Reagan expressed concern about the effect "nuclear fear is having on our people." He was particularly disturbed with the letters from school children "often filled with terror" telling their fears of a nuclear holocaust.

We too share Mr. Reagan's concern. As physicians we are pledged to preserve mental as well as physical health. We have studied the psychological impact of the arms race for more than two decades. We have watched with alarm the parallel growth of nuclear anxiety among our children.

According to the Wall Street Journal (September 14, 1983), President Reagan receives more than a hundred letters a day from frightened school children in an outpouring of fear, helplessness and anger. The Administration has stated that "nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." But for children as with skeptical adults, actions speak far louder than words.

Despite his occasionally soothing words, the President is still wholly committed to a massive buildup of new weapons systems--the MX, Pershing II and Cruise--that in time of crisis may tempt either side to strike first. His abandonment of a policy of balanced deterrence for one of nuclear superiority, puts us on a collision course with the Soviets. He claims to be receptive to "any equitable, verifiable agreement that stabilizes (nuclear) forces at lower levels," but he continues to reject a nuclear freeze which would be the simplest and most logical step in that direction. Arms control agreement requires more than a change of tone. It requires a change of policy.

Children don't have the technical expertise to understand such things as destabilizing weapons. But they understand the consequences of nuclear confrontation and herein lies their wisdom. For the past four years, Physicians for Social Responsibility has presented the grim message that nuclear war cannot be survived in any meaningful sense. We have asserted that this "malady" is incurable; that there is no treatment for nuclear war--except prevention. And we have inspired a citizens movement to work for a nuclear freeze and an end to the arms race.