

President's Message

Vision, Risk Taking and Personal Commitment... *Is there a connection?*

...John M. Barry, Ph.D.

“It's been a tough year. We're just coming out of a recession, people are getting tired of new taxes, and debt service retirement is eating us up. We'll just have to find an alternate form of revenue or cut some programs.”

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Most of us have been hearing this for years with not a lot of expectation that things will get much better.

Economic and political stresses are dictating that we become more proactive and change our methods of operation to balance environment with growth. These same stresses also dictate that we clearly examine our vision for the future, and define what risks we are willing to take without compromising our principles. But all is not lost! With changes come opportunities.

The perception is that government often supports those who make the best case that they are dealing with the greatest need. While this may be true in some instances, most projects brought to government for funding are not responding to a broad need at all. They are responding to specific individuals who have expressed that need. *Why not become one of those who expresses a need? Why not market your profession?*

Each of us has the responsibility to set his or her own goals, be able to recognize opportunities when they present themselves and have the commitment and conviction to take advantage of these opportunities. *Why not extend your personal commitment to the work place? America's health and environment should be a priority now more than ever.*

We speak freely about the poverty/sustainable growth dynamic that is present on a global scale, but we only reluctantly acknowledge that this same dynamic is present within the inner city as well as in rural areas of America. The baby-boomer generation in America is here now, and our children are the ones who will be the guiding forces of the future. Our vision, therefore, must be to provide a microenviron-

ment where good health and an adequate quality of life is available.

The environmental health professional and NEHA are uniquely positioned, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the profession, to become educational leaders in identifying, effectively communicating and acting upon many problems implicit in health, environment, poverty and sustainable development. *Why not look at this as an opportunity? Why not approach this concern by restructuring the traditional role of the environmental health professional in America? Why not have the goal of educating public policy makers, private business concerns, media, schools and community groups? Through comprehensive approaches involving one-on-one education and training, we can achieve aware-*

ness and understanding of environmental health problems. This will then lead to altered behaviors and practices that will form the basis for improving environmental conditions, and thus improve ecological systems and human health.

Yes, there is a relationship among vision, risk taking and commitment — all three are attributes which are applicable to the individual and to the profession. Get involved with NEHA, *your professional association*. Reach out and grasp the psychological income which you can find from participating in NEHA technical sections. Remember, taking calculated risks is much easier when there is safety in numbers. *The numbers are within NEHA — all you have to do is make the commitment.*

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