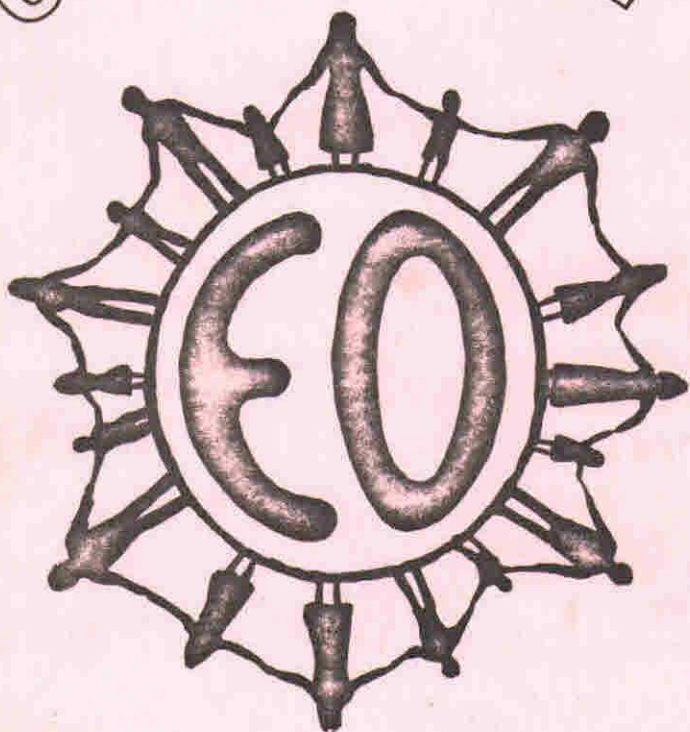


EDUCATION
OTHERWISE



NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 15
SEPT 1980

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EDITORIAL

The last three months have seen the publication of a new edition of "Early Years". This has been edited by Sarah Guthrie who is to be thanked and congratulated for its production. Much of this new edition takes the form of an anthology of first hand accounts of the experience of learning at home. This we think is what members are most interested in sharing. Overarching theories and philosophies have their place but are more likely to be grasped and understood when realised in the day-to-day texture of living.

In reflecting different experiences and viewpoints "Early Years" is a model for EO publications as there is no single philosophy that unites all EO members. We agree that parents should be able to take direct control of their children's education but beyond this everything is a matter for debate. This was reflected in the most recent Core Group meeting (see Minutes), where we were discussing another publication, this time on the Curriculum. We decided eventually that there was no way in which we could publish a curriculum without in some way being seen as recommending it or at the very least approving the idea of having a curriculum. There are many members of EO, however, to whom the very idea of a curriculum is anathema. We resolved the problem by agreeing to prepare a booklet called "The Curriculum Debate" which, while including a curriculum drawn up on conventional lines, would contain many shades of argument for and against, with members speaking with their own voices rather than with the impersonal authority of the professional. It is schools who are in the business of concealing controversial value-judgements beneath the cloak of professional authority. If schools and teachers in their professional role know what is best for our children then education is simply a question of technique and all our moral and political dilemmas are neatly tidied away.

*

The membership of EO and the number of children not attending school continues to grow, though not evenly, across the country. The likelihood of members finding support in their locality is therefore increasing. The list accompanying this Newsletter gives the names of those prepared to offer services to other members. It does not give addresses and should therefore be used in conjunction with the Contact List. This register was compiled from replies to the questionnaire that went out with the last Newsletter. No doubt the list would have been even longer had everyone returned their questionnaire! It is still not too late to do so. If we are to grow into a network of people who can help one another it really is necessary to know details about our members, their needs, attitudes, skills, experience with different LEAs and so on. Thanks of course to the very many who have returned the questionnaires, but to those who haven't returned them it would be nice if you would do so please.

*

All contributions to the Newsletter continue to be welcome but we would especially like to receive first-hand, diary-like accounts of children learning at home and the pleasures and problems that it brings. Particularly

welcome would be pieces written by older children or young adults who have had experience of home education.

*

We hope this reaches you before the gathering at Trent Park advertised again in this Newsletter. This will be a rare opportunity for people from different parts of the country to meet each other. We now know that Allan Ahlberg, author of many children's books and winner, this year, of "The Other Award" for his "Happy Families" series of books, will be coming along. Leila Berg will also be there with a bookstall. We have no way of knowing how many people will be coming along and it would help our plans if those who know they are sent postcards to John Elenor, 18 Eynham Gardens, London W.12; though if you are unable to commit yourself do not be deterred from turning up on the day.

*

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: As part of the delegation of roles to more EO members, John Elenor - our Treasurer - has kindly agreed to receive all correspondence and channel it, where necessary, to the appropriate member for its attention. Correspondence should therefore now be sent to:

18 EYNHAM GARDENS, LONDON W.12.

*

(Details for obtaining copies of the new "Early Years" are included in the Notices at the end of the Newsletter.)

* * * * *

THE HARRISON CASE

There is little to report on the progress of the Harrison family through the courts apart from the law's delays. At present they are waiting for a decision on whether they will be granted legal aid for their Appeal. Meanwhile their four children have not been at school (and the second has now just passed school-age!).

Education THRU' the Press

PRISON ...

'Child Education' "Quote of the Month" is taken from an entry by an eight-year-old child to a Times Educational Supplement (TES) competition. Clearly he is unaware of the legality of EO. This extract may need a second reading, but eventually the meaning is clear:

"I go to school of my own free choice. My parents told me there is a law that little boys must go to school. But I am allowed to choose myself whether I go to school or prison. I have chosen to go to school. Sometimes on a Monday morning, with five long days till next weekend, I sometimes wonder if I went to the wrong place by mistake." (CHILD EDUCATION, August)

MONEY ...

"Since the 1944 Education Act parents have not taken as much interest in (their children's) schooling as ... when they had to pay towards education", says Sir John Grugeon, leader of Conservative-controlled Kent council. He was considering a proposal that all parents should pay an annual £30 per child at State school, regardless of income. (DAILY TELEGRAPH 25 February 1980). Labour's proposals to charge the full cost of university education to children who have been to public schools were "vindictive, vicious, inequitable and just plain darf (sic)" said Mark Carlisle, Education Secretary, (SUNDAY TIMES 22 June) ... Local education authorities were accused of "educational embezzlement" by Labour's Neil Kinnock following a report showing that many councils are spending more on buying independent school places than on books. If returned to power, Labour claims it would scrap the buying of independent school places.(GUARDIAN 30 June)

SCHOOLS ...

A "time bomb" of untrained, unqualified and unemployed young people is growing at the rate of 100,000 a year. Says a professor from Exeter University: "The world is becoming too skilled for them ... society is demanding more." (GUARDIAN 10 July) ... A schools' inspector says that an increasingly large number of children are playing truant (DAILY TELEGRAPH 11 April). Children were being encouraged by their parents to stay at home "for the most trivial of reasons"... There was growing concern about children who were out of school because of a "simplistic" linking of truancy with vandalism ... A teacher was sacked for refusing to take a class she thought was too large (38 pupils) at a school near Nottingham (DAILY MAIL 24 April). The entire fifth form of a girls school was expelled following a free-for-all fight with flour and eggs in a domestic science classroom (GUARDIAN 24 June). They were later allowed to go back. ... "Pregnant schoolgirls should be encouraged to stay in their schools as a warning to their classmates, education social workers were told at their annual conference in Exeter. ... Girls could be deterred from getting pregnant by observing the harsh realities." (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT) ... A "Catch 'Em Young" Seminar was organised by teachers to discuss how to handle children who hate school (TES 30 May)...Head teachers voted in favour of asking local authorities to leave internal discipline to their discretion (GUARDIAN June) But about 12 local authorities are banning corporal punishment in their schools, and one headteacher described the infliction of pain on children as indefensible. ... Black primary school children stoned a man to death during a protest against South Africa's education system (GUARDIAN May

TEACHING ...

Teaching maths to resentful pupils where neither teacher nor pupil has any choice is "mutual torture" writes a teacher in a letter to the GUARDIAN (June). He suggests numerate children be allowed to opt out of maths if they hate it ... Many local authorities "will soon be breaking the law by providing inadequate schooling for children through cuts in spending" said the General Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers (TES 30 May). ... A test to enable school leavers to demonstrate their basic mathematical proficiency was offered to every school in Essex last year. Nearly two-thirds could not divide nine-sixteenths by three or change 0.4 into a percentage. A third could not turn three-quarters into a decimal and less than half could give the area of a square of side 5m. (TES 3 June) ... Another TES article admits "Even busy and working parents usually manage to spend a reasonable amount of regular time with their children. Infant teachers can seldom enjoy the luxury of giving 20 minutes undivided attention daily to each child in their care." (TES 11 July).

FOOD ...

Headmaster of a primary school in Harpenden has banned pupils from drinking milk or orange juice with their packed lunches (DAILY MAIL 24 April). It was, he said, "to avoid them being spilled, damaging clothes and spoiling food" ... A nutritionist, commenting on a Lancashire school's typical menu, said it was not a diet she would offer her worst enemy (EDUCATION GUARDIAN 17 June). There is concern that the growth of cafeteria services to replace school meals will mean fatty and stodgy food for adolescents who particularly need a sensible, balanced diet.

DISEASE ...

Not all parents were fully informed when TB broke out at a school in Salford (DAILY TELEGRAPH 17 March)...A virulent form of meningitis broke out in a primary school in Lincolnshire, where a 6-year-old died and more than 60 children had to be vaccinated. Said a medical consultant: "(It) is highly infectious and outbreaks are particularly likely to occur in closed communities, such as schools."

EO ...

A Glastonbury mother plans to start her own alternative school because she is concerned about the effect a local comprehensive is having on her 13-year-old son (Central Somerset Gazette 29 May). Says her son: "sometimes I feel, when I see how some teachers behave that everyone in authority is mad. I try and work and stay interested, but so often it's because I feel I have to and not because I want to. I will be disapproved of if I don't perform as well as I can and I feel anxious about my future. We are always being told we won't get the jobs we want if we don't work. Some teachers are so rude to us and push us around unnecessarily...The headmaster is always saying things to make us feel we're not quite good enough."

EXAM ...

"A GCE board is searching for a "drunken" examiner alleged to have marked O level papers in full public view on a train after consuming four pints of beer, two whiskies and a bloody mary. A letter to The Guardian signed by Amanda Smith of Stoke-on-Trent claimed that the man boasted of his drinking on the 20.30 Euston to Liverpool train on June 7. Thus fortified, he then proceeded to mark the English papers for the Associated Examining Board." (TES, 3 June).

TALKING ABOUT SCHOOL...

"I don't know that schools as they are now constituted provide a very good education.." (Playwright Edward Bond, BBC TV May 4).

Writer William Trevor said that his lack of formal education was a good thing; it stimulated the curiosity that school might have suppressed. There were large periods when he didn't go to school at all. (BBC Radio 4, June 16)

MICKEY MOUSE HOLDS SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE! ...

The Wonderful World of Cash! A full-page advertisement appeared recently in the SUNDAY TIMES COLOUR SUPPLEMENT for DISNEY'S WONDERFUL WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE (23 volumes). "Let's face it" runs the copy "in this increasingly competitive world, children who don't learn today will fail tomorrow." So a galaxy of Disney characters will teach your child the secrets of man and his environment, with illustrations in bright 'Disney-colour' which unfold the secrets of our universe (with wipe-clean covers). "These super-stars teach your child the way no other teachers can" apparently.

Sarah Guthrie - with contributions this time also received from
Helen Fletcher of Nottingham and Bruce Cox of Leicestershire.

* * * * *

JOHN HOLT ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The chief problem facing young people now - aside from the one we all have, which is that we live in societies that increasingly do not work, make no sense, and seem to be headed towards disasters which we have no idea how to avert - is that they have been cast out of society.

For most of human history, and in most cultures, children grew up in the midst of the adult world, seeing every part of it, and playing a useful role in it as fast as their growing strength and competence would allow. In modern rich countries, and in the rich parts of poor countries, this is no longer true. Children are shut out of adult life, forbidden to play any useful part in adult society.

For much of their waking hours they are herded off into child compounds, where the only adults they see are those who have made a speciality and life work of dealing with children. This would be bad, even if such work attracted the most able, energetic and imaginative adults in society. Since the people it attracts are for the most part very far from being that, the situation is catastrophic.

The people and institutions whose full-time work is supposedly to "help" children turn out, more often than not, to be patronizing, exploiting, and bullying them. Young people are likely to spend much of the rest of their waking hours in what we call peer-groups, which is to say, gangs of people about their own age. Since this sub-culture has no useful work to do, and is cut off from any of the serious concerns and purposes of adult life, it becomes a sub-culture obsessed with consumption, status, show - like a

society of decadent aristocrats.

It tends to produce young people who, with very few exceptions, must be unique in history in their sense of their own - and by extension, everyone else's - worthlessness. These young people are both a great (and needless) tragedy, and a great danger, since they are perfect raw material for any kind of violent, nihilist, neo-Fascist movements.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child does not address this problem at all. Indeed it only makes it worse, since it makes the rich countries' ideal of segregated and tended childhood into a world ideal. It speaks of the right "to learn to be a useful member of society, etc". Why not the right to *be* a useful member of society, which, as I have said, is in more and more parts of the world specifically forbidden to children by law.

Why do young people have to spend 10 or 15 or 20 years of their lives - by implication, in school - "learning" to be useful members of society, when until very recently most children began to be useful as early as the age of six? The answer, of course, is that in all but a few countries, rich or poor, adult unemployment is a serious and apparently insoluble problem. That is the reality behind all this pious and sentimental talk. The UN might do better to talk about the need for societies in which the right to choose to do useful work would not be denied persons of any age, however young or old.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (why not "of Children?") seems to me foolish and misleading for another reason, that it mixes together things which governments can do, or at any rate do something about, with things that governments can do nothing about at all. The rights to "free education, adequate nutrition and medical care, a name and nationality, to special care, etc" are meaningful in that they make more or less clear what governments are obliged to do - build enough schools for everyone, distribute food to the poor, etc.

But what are governments supposed to do about "the right to affection, love, and understanding"? What could they do? As the old saying goes, *nemo dat quod non habet* - no one can give what he has not got. Governments have money, or can get it, and so can presumably provide what money can buy. But how could a government provide affection, love, etc. to a child who did not have it?

When a government says that I have the right to life, it is not saying that it can guarantee my life, but only that it will take some kind of action, usually rather severe, against anyone who takes or tries to take my life away. Is the UN declaration saying that anyone who does not give affection, love, etc. to a child should be considered guilty of a crime and punished?

Of course not; it would be absurd, for love and affection cannot be compelled. Then what does the statement in the declaration mean? It means nothing - or at most, only (in the words of the song), "Wouldn't it be lovely if every child had...". Well, I think it is a mistake to mix such pious statements of distant hope with what are presumably statements about political and legal obligation.

In my book, "Escape from Childhood", I proposed that the rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities of adult citizens be made *available* to any young persons, of whatever age, who wanted to make use of them. These rights would include:

- (1) The right to equal treatment at the hands of the law, ie, in any situation, to be treated no *worse* than an adult would be.

- (2) The right to vote, and to take full part in political affairs.
- (3) The right to be legally responsible for one's own life and acts.
- (4) The right to work, for money.
- (5) The right to privacy.
- (6) The right to financial independence and responsibility, ie the right to own, buy and sell property, to borrow money, establish credit, sign contracts, etc.
- (7) The right to direct and manage one's own education.
- (8) The right to travel, to live away from home, to choose or make one's own home.
- (9) The right to receive from the state whatever minimum income it may guarantee to adult citizens.
- (10) The right to make and enter into, on a basis of mutual consent, quasi-familial relationships outside one's immediate family, ie the right to seek and choose guardians other than one's own parents and to be legally dependent on them.
- (11) The right to do, in general, what any adult may legally do.

Now, one might say that to give, or even propose to give, any of these rights to children is mistaken, unwise, foolish. One might also say, and with good reason, that it is likely to be a very long time before any societies do in fact give any of these rights to children. But at any rate, the meaning of these rights is *clear*, and it is equally clear what any government would have to do to put any of them into effect - for the most part, strike out laws that say that people below a certain age may not do these things.

What I propose, however unwise or unlikely, is a perfectly explicit political and legal *programme*, about which people can say either, Yes we should do such things, or No we should not. The Un declaration, or at least, important parts of it, is not such a programme. It would be a stronger and more useful statement, and more likely to lead to effective action, if it were.

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About John Holt

When asked in the recent questionnaire for the names of writers who had influenced their view of education, far more EO members mentioned John Holt than any other writer. His first writings on children grew out of the time when he was a teacher and they sensitively anatomise the ways in which teachers place conflict at the heart of the teacher-pupil relationship. Teachers manipulate anxiety in their pupils as a way of maintaining control, while the children devise strategies to live with the pressure. More recently John Holt has created "Growing Without Schooling", a movement which is the American equivalent of "Education Otherwise". He edits a bi-monthly magazine also called Growing Without Schooling which is an exchange between people who have taken or would like to take their children out of school. It includes many letters and articles which would be of interest to parents in the UK, as well as legal information which, while admittedly of more value to American readers, provides an interesting comparison of their education system with our own. GWS is available direct from the USA (see below) or from EO (see Notices).

Reprints of useful articles, mainly by Holt, are also available (write direct for list); and he is developing a mail order booklist offering an excellent range of books at 10% discount. The list, which gives a review of each of the books listed (many of which are also available here), is well worth writing for. The address of Growing Without Schooling is:

Holt Associates Inc., 308 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116, USA.

(Cheques to GWS would need to be drawn on US banks, which can be arranged by banks here.)

Books by John Holt (with reviews extracted from the booklist):

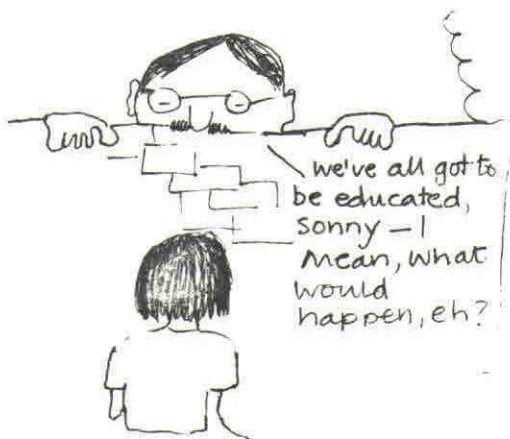
- * "How Children Fail": How even the "brightest" kids in the "best" schools are made stupid, by their fear of humiliation, by school's separation from real life, and by the assumption kids will only learn what they are taught.
 - * "How Children Learn": How young kids figure things out for their own satisfaction with little or no help, before their intelligence and curiosity is crippled by having to learn under orders, for praise and reward.
 - * "The Underachieving School": Many popular myths of education exposed and exploded, including some of Piaget's theories and the idea that poor kids can't learn.
 - "What Do I Do Monday?": Practical tips about better ways to help children learn the three R's, science, art, etc. For serious teachers either in schools or at home.
 - * "Freedom and Beyond": 1) What freedom means in daily life, and some of the tensions it creates; and 2) why more or "better" schooling can't cure poverty, and tends only to make it worse.
 - * "Escape From Childhood": The case for treating children like real people, not pets and slaves, and for making available to them the rights and responsibilities of adults.
 - * "Instead of Education": Why compulsory and competitive education prevents effective teaching and learning; why most schools get worse, despite reformers; and what we could and ought to do instead.
 - "Never Too Late": How, after a non-musical childhood, John Holt came to love music, and began to play the cello at age 50. About music, teaching and learning, and above all, struggling to overcome self-doubt.
- * Available as Pelican paperback (published by Penguin).

* * * * *

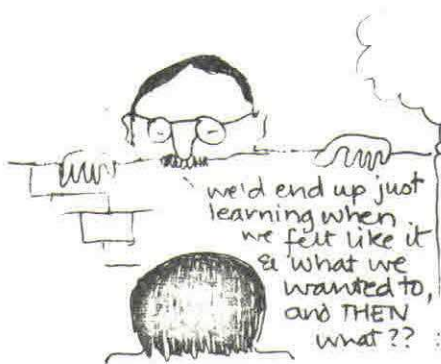
WHO SAID IT?

Readers who have puzzled over the source of Dick's vivid quotation in Newsletter 14 may, or may not, be enlightened to learn that its source was Alexander Herzen (1812-70). Herzen was, apparently, a Russian political exile. The quotation is taken from his "Memoirs".

wot you
mean - you
don't go
to school...



EDUCATING ARCHIE



OVERCOMING PROBLEMS OF ISOLATION: Lorna Trevelyan-Bicicchi

I have two sons, Angelo 3½ years and Samuel 6½ years. We live in a semi-rural village with easy access to London by train, and the open countryside within 3 minutes' walk. Our road is fairly quiet and therefore safe for children over 4 or 5 to play in. Neighbours are of mixed ages but there is a fairly high proportion of retired people.

There is a play centre organized for two weeks in the summer holidays at the school opposite our house. The under-fives are also allowed to go and play in the sandpit (normally used for high jump). During the winter and Easter holidays there is a Bible holiday club run by a local church. It provides fun, games and quizzes etc. with Bible stories thrown in. We are not churchgoers but I think it important that my children come into contact with outside influences and other people's ideas.

Samuel attended a Saturday morning Judo club for a term but has not continued, probably because he was too young. He also attended a term's course of horseriding and made particular friends with another boy there. He gets on well with horses and he could later go for long rides with my husband and a mixed group.

When we moved here 3 years ago the library held a 'story time' for the over-sevens, but I requested one for children between 4 and 7 years, which my children now attend. I am hoping they will also get some follow-up activities.

There is a weekly toddler club from 2 - 4 p.m. to which I used to take both of the children. Other school-age children arrive for the last half hour.

The Adult Education Institute runs Saturday morning craft sessions for all the family, also a family French workshop, but we have not tried these.

One criticism commonly levelled against EO parents is that our children haven't the same chance to play with others freely as do children at school. In fact, the reverse is true. As soon as school finishes one or other of Samuel's friends from the street come calling for him, and at weekends too. They either stay at our house (sometimes eight children) or go to the friend's house. In fine weather they play up and down the pavement and round the block. Because Samuel is not confined to the strict peer grouping of a class, his friends vary in age from six to twelve years, and with the older ones I allow him to go to the park nearby or shopping in our high street. Later on, I am sure they'll go further afield. It appalls me that several children I know have a great deal of homework for evenings and holidays even from the age of seven. But the beauty of EO is that our children are not confined in that way and will always find someone available.

We go out regularly for long, country walks and when this happens at weekends or holiday time one or two children always come along.

Large groups of children assemble at our house, bridging a wide age difference. They had a period of making 'plays' and 'dressing-up' for them. Each child had a say in the productions, no matter what the age.

During the winter I arranged for a Games Club to be held at our house on one evening a week after school, for children aged 3 - 12 years, and I advertised it locally in shop windows. It involved laying out a few bits of matting on the floor and setting out our selection of table games, e.g. Picture Lotto, Snakes & Ladders, chess etc. Visiting children brought their own favourite game, and for 1½ hours had the chance to play with a variety of partners and opponents, and to meet other children. This was very successful.

We go swimming with another family after school hours and Angelo attends a playgroup for one morning per week. I am trying to arrange a Music Workshop for local EO families, and possibly other children but have yet to find a musical adult to lead. Maths and French workshops have been started by another EO family in Sussex, so there is quite a variation on the theme.

Both of my children attend Suzuki lessons, Samuel on the cello and Angelo on the piano. The ideals of Suzuki teaching accord quite well with those of many EO parents. The learning is not competitive, goes at the child's pace and is enjoyable. Suzuki children play together in small groups and also in concerts, the beginners gaining confidence from seeing the more experienced play.

We are very lucky in having two other EO families with whom we meet regularly. We exchange children for a day, or longer.

We also find our older neighbours valuable. Our next door neighbours, in their sixties, are substitute grandparents as ours live so far away.

I have recently started child-minding, and have a girl of 4½ years who fits in superbly. She adds an extra dimension to the family.

In future I hope that we, as a family, can get involved in the new local museum project, join the local history society and the Rambling Club (Samuel is already interested in these).

There is also a junior philatelic society and model railway society, but we'll see how the children's interests develop and make the most of what is available.

*

Editor's Note: Social isolation is often feared as one of the undesirable consequences of practising Education Otherwise, by parents who are contemplating this step. Practitioners of EO however often regard this as not a problem at all, or even as a positive advantage. We would welcome members' views on this.

Information about the SUZUKI method can be obtained by writing to Helen Brunner, who is Director of the London Suzuki Group, 24 Bedford Gdns, London W.8.

ARE ??? YOU ??? COMING ??????

???

???

TO

??

??

ON

??

AT

??

WHERE?????

EO NATIONAL MEETING

Saturday 27th September

Cockfosters, North London.

In the Trent Park site of Middlesex Polytechnic.
(see map for directions).

YOU CAN

- * explore the park in the morning
- * picnic in the college grounds (canteen if wet)
- * enjoy music-making and art-work in the afternoon
- * visit the display of resources
- * meet fellow-members and discuss problems
(helpers available to look after children)

TIMETABLE:

- 12.30-ish assemble in or near Music Block and move off for group picnic by the lake
- 2.00 music-making in the Music Block - with student help; art activities in the Art Block - with student help (this could carry on until 4.30)
- 3.00 parents meet in another room in Music Block to discuss:
 - What should EO do next?
 - Is it being run right?
 - Et cetera
 and to inspect the resources display
- 4.30 tea and snacks available.

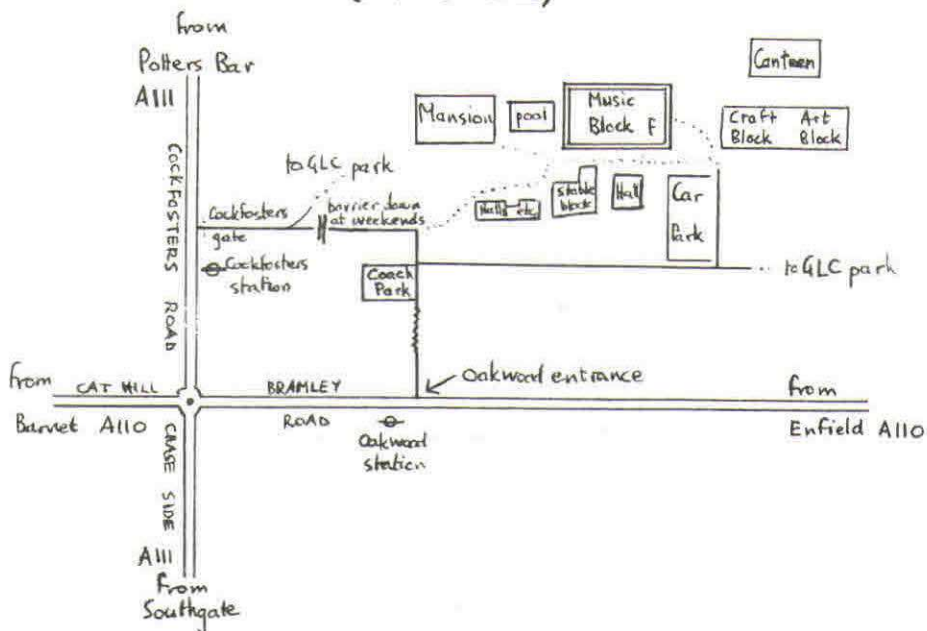
ACCOMODATION OVERNIGHT



Do you live in the London area?		Do you want accomodation?	
Can you offer accomodation?			
YES	NO	YES	NO
	V		V
	Fair enough		Fair enough
V		V	
Give details to:		Please contact:	
John Elenor, 18 Eynham Rd, W12.			
01-749 2199			

TRENT PARK

(NOT TO SCALE)



by car and coach: from all directions use Oakwood entrance on the A110
(Bramley Road) and follow signs to 'Car Parks All Blocks'
NB - coaches must use the Coach Park marked on map.

on foot: from the north - bus 299 to Cockfosters; or
local train to New Barnet and bus 107 to Oakwood
from elsewhere - Piccadilly Line underground } to Oakwood station
or bus 107 }
(NB - at Oakwood use entrance marked 'Middlesex Polytechnic - private'
since the entrance marked 'Trent Park' leads to GLC park only)

JAMES AND JACKIE FEARNLEY - A PROFILE: Dick Kitto

Pretty well every weekend during the summer James and Jackie and their family set forth in their large green van and trailer to attend one of the fairs, shows and other gatherings that enliven rural life in East Anglia. There they set up their stall with its huge array of beautiful brown and cream earthenware pottery, they set up their temporary home in the back of the van, the girls Rose and Lilla explore the site with the assurance of habituées, Felix toddles around with an enormous grin on his face, James puts on his wide-brimmed sunhat and stands solid and relaxed putting the final touches to the display, and reassuring sounds and smells indicate that Jackie is cooking supper. For much of every summer the Fearnleys are nomads, reassuringly familiar figures travelling the length and breadth of East Anglia selling their wares. For the rest of it and for most of the winter they are very much at home in their Suffolk cottage living a style of life that they have evolved together out of their own sense of priorities, that life is a whole, a creative amalgam of the physical, the spiritual, the mental, the moral: that fulfilment lies not in the acquisition of possessions or status, but in the process of living, the creativity of their relationships within the family, within the local community, with their work, with their animals, and even with the possessions they value.

Pretty well everything about James is large and deliberate: his van, the size and variety of his pottery, his hat, his boots, his smile, spreading vastly from his eyes to irradiate his whole face, his vision of how life should and could be lived - but his house is tiny (were the East Anglians a race of dwarfs that their ceilings are so low, their doorways so restricted?) and the adjoining Pottery miniature - how does he produce such a vast output from such a cramped space? And how does he do it with so little sense of haste and fuss as he moves bulkily but deftly in and out of the stable door? If you stay the night you'll discover one contributory factor, for at 5.0 a.m. if you are a light sleeper you'll be woken by light footsteps as James goes out to see to the kiln and to start work. And if you call you'll be entertained in the pottery as James continues to work. If you, or the children or Jackie want attention, James will drop what he is doing and devote all his attention to you or them, but later when the needs are met he will be back at work. No sense of pressure or hassle, but a steady unhurried commitment.

"You see, I've got a bit behindhand this summer" he says. "I spent a lot of time organising this anti-nuclear meeting. It took a lot more time than I'd anticipated".

"I thought you didn't approve of organisations"

Hesitation. A deprecating smile. "I don't exactly disapprove. But I think they tend to consist of the converted speaking to the converted. This wasn't connected with any Organisation, it was just a local meeting for people in the area, to get them thinking, more aware".

"Do you think you converted many?"

Dear Bank Manager
re: My Overdraft
No, of course I don't mind.
We all break down at
times, don't we? Perhaps
you should be thankful you
can let go, at your age
Please keep the
hanky.
Love, James

P.S. The
kettle's
on!



"I didn't try to convert anyone. I just wanted to give people a few ideas to think about. I don't think it's really much good converting people, these things have got to come from inside people themselves".

"But people need help perhaps?"

"Oh yes, I'll help people. But I don't think organisations, organising them, is the right way to do it".

"And E0? Isn't that an organisation?"

"Just because it's called an organisation that doesn't mean it has to organise people. I believe in mutual help, self-help."

"And Children First? (Typists note: this was a local E0 group initiated by the Fearnley's) Why did it fail?"

"I don't think it failed. It lasted as long as people wanted it to".

"Did it achieve its aims, do you think?"

"It didn't really have any aims, just like that, beyond what our members wanted for it. When they ceased to need it, it ceased to exist".

A difficult person to disagree with, James. Not slippery or elusive - on the contrary, too solid, so that every knotty or gritty query is absorbed and embedded into the largeness of his personal vision.

We are called to supper and I talk to Jackie about pesticides, a growing problem in East Anglia. We had both written letters to the Diss Express about it and James and Jackie are involved with a group which opposes their over-use. This is not going with a lot of energy, but quite a few people are interested.

Busy people, the Fearnleys, involved in a planning dispute in their village, ringing up the Ministry of Defence about low-flying aircraft (another East Anglian problem), helping to set up a local smallholders' group, writing about home birth, breast feeding, getting up at 5.0 a.m., living a good simple life, abstemious without being puritanical, hard-working, happy, relaxed, creative is this not how we all, the world, ought to be?

Yes perhaps, but of course it is not for everyone and anyway it is a personal vision, it cannot solve everything.

"The nuclear danger may overtake it. It isn't going to solve that if you just leave people to come to their own vision in their own time", I say.

"What is going to solve it? Not every problem has a solution".

"But we must try to find one if we can".

James is silent. His smile still hovers, but his expression is uncertain. In a sane world perhaps James and Jackie exemplify by their life-style an attitude that is an inspiration- in a world that seems both insane and evil, they are an evocation of what might have been, what still might be, but what increasingly we seem powerless and helpless to work towards.

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION? - A Review: Dianne Cox

The National Extension College has produced a Booklet: "THE SILICON FACTOR: Living with the Microprocessor", the purpose of which is to challenge its reader to consider the possible effects the silicon chip is about to have on our lives, and how we may, or may not, control it. The Booklet contains seven sections: 1 - Microelectronics and the Second Industrial Revolution; 2 - Microelectronics and the Education and Training System; 3 - Education at Home; 4 - Microelectronics in our Homes; 5 - Work; 6 - Our Way of Life; 7 - The Age of Information and Control. Here are some passages I felt would whet the appetite of many EO readers:

From the Preface: "...telescoped into the next few years, many of us now living will go through the birth pangs of a new industrial revolution. How we react to it, and how well we adjust our society and our institutions will determine how we live out the rest of our lives, and more importantly those of our children. Technology has now reached a fearsome level of capability...but whether it enhances or diminishes our lives is to a large extent yet to be determined. That determination can be made by us, if we act in time."

"Education In A Changing World ... our whole concept of what education is about, what we are being trained for, is undergoing a process of change. It is not just that the world in twenty years' time will be different from the world we live, learn and work in today. Even more, the pace of change is increasing. ...both technical developments and the inevitable resulting social adjustments will be coming even thicker and faster. This assumes we remain an advanced industrialised country: it is probably a necessary condition of remaining such a country.

"In the last century, education was very much a set process. Teachers taught their pupils almost exactly the same...as they had themselves been taught... . And once an initial period of formal education was over, the young adult could expect that his acquired knowledge would serve him quite well for the rest of his life. It was not too difficult for him (or her) to keep pace with the relatively slow changes in...the requirements of daily living. That is not true today. ...we all need to be expert in untangling the paraphernalia of daily life... . So the education of the future will be more of a continuing process throughout life, to help us keep up with a changing world. ...the education process must not just educate us in the facts ... it must change our attitudes...must make us flexible and adaptable, so we can continue to meet new situations with confidence... .

"But What's It All For? ...most of us don't use most of the facts we learnt at school... . An important function which our education fulfils is to train us socially in manners and habits - everything from working fixed hours, to eating our meals acceptably. ...This socialisation will be particularly important in a society which may well be full of tension or even close to social breakdown... we need to be careful that we control the changes... . Much of our social training is not formally taught - we identify it from a study of the biases and assumptions in school textbooks... or from our relationships with our teachers and schoolfriends..." (No mention of parents!) "It will always be a matter of concern to educationalists

as to what the effect is of what has been termed 'the hidden curriculum' at school. ...consider what society should, or could, become...consider the social role of education...even the 9 to 4ish school day acts as training for an assumed 9 to 5 working day. In an age where many - perhaps most - people will not have these regular working hours, perhaps the indoctrination of this pattern of expectation has hidden disadvantages. Do we come to expect to be formally occupied between 9 and 4?" (Consider school-children on holiday, or the reactions of many new Mothers to their new job!) "The same is true of our other assumptions...things are assumed in many school readers... . Is our educational identification a step in a pathway which is leading nowhere? ... Perhaps placing the learning process in the environmental context of life rather than school life may provide an answer. One major implication of the use of microelectronics...in education is that the traditional association of 'school' with a fixed physical environment no longer holds. Training for the needs and requirements of daily living is perhaps one area in which our present schooling system is inadequate. ...we might usefully spend more time in teaching (students) to read newspapers rather than Dickens - to fill in an income tax or social security form, not to do algebra; or to drive a car, or even complain effectively at poor goods and services! ... We will need a broad educational background more than ever. What the revolution is going to do is to make everyday life more complex...and we must train people adequately...if they are to cope with the complex, fast-moving, fast-changing world. Perhaps we should consider spending more of our early schooling or 'lifestyle training' and leaving the more 'academic' subjects till later on...in 'sandwiches' of further education throughout our lives? ...we will have more time to spend later in life. ...None of us want to live in a police state, where our leisure activities are monitored. We do need to be kept occupied, though ... areas where activities might be increased are craftsmanship, and neighbourhood co-operation - community associations and self-help schemes? Perhaps, too, if some of the more formal academic subjects were taught later in our school careers, they might prove of deeper and more enduring interest to us? ...aspects of flexible-mindedness, are not well assessed by the current examination procedures.

"What is Education? ...with the advent of microelectronics...students need not necessarily be gathered together into one place... . When we speak of formal education, we tend to mean the carrying out of these processes in a formal setting - a school, college or university building... set study hours, a set curriculum, or set exams and tests. But are any of these essential parts of the definition? Think of an arts student at a modern university ... no fixed study periods, and much of his work at home, at the most unlikely hours. He will choose much of his own material...the basis for education - obtaining facts, understanding, ordering and using them - will soon be available in our homes. ...Everything we use a book, newspaper or telephone for now, for instance, is going to be affected in the long run by the mighty microprocessor and the information technology it will bring in its wake. What is more, our needs for obtaining information are going to be increased as the change in our society becomes more rapid... but this must be supplemented by an expansion in informal learning processes.

"At Home? ... Of course, much of our informal education is not currently carried out at home". (or school, of course!) "We obtain information from places like libraries, museums, citizen's advice bureaux and post offices.

..In the long run, though, the role of most of these is going to be radically altered, perhaps even removed, by the expansion of the network of information systems. ...in the last fifty years, there has already been a big shift towards our getting much of our information...at home." (TV) ..."Studying is, after all, largely a one-person occupation. ...When we do need information, we tend to prefer to obtain it in the quickest and most convenient way - and already the electronic devices of the telephone and television form a major source of information to most of us. Microelectronics is just carrying this process a step further..."

As far as it can, the booklet describes how. The passages I have just selected make specific reference to "education" - and some people may find them useful arguments for difficult LEAs! But they obviously show - as the booklet intends, often with amusing illustrations - that "education" cannot be discussed in isolation from other aspects of our daily lives. Here's a little of the rest:

"In between the obviously good and the obviously bad, there is a very large middle ground, and what we make of this...is very much not only an individual, but a moral choice".

"We don't just have the ability to choose. We have to choose. Individually and collectively, the way our working lives are shaped, and the way we adapt the other aspects of our life to complement them is something we must decide. It's an exhilarating thought but also a frightening one".

"Is work a society-controlled function, rather than a personal one? ...Those working for a major nationalised company certainly see their fate as imposed on them from above, while the self-employed have more of a personal sense of responsibility for it".

"Our formal employment structure is obviously splitting its seams, and one of the brighter hopes for the future lies in small-scale radical employment options: co-operatives, communes and self-sufficient communities, as well as an increase in plain old-fashioned self-employment".

"The Pursuit of Happiness: Of course, it is true to say that all the trappings of a materialistic civilisation don't necessarily make us any happier".

"We've described many ways in which the microprocessor is taking over men's work. In asking if this is a good thing, if this is what we want, we are really asking a much bigger question: what are we here for? If we don't have to work, what is our function in life? ... If machines will in time be able to do virtually everything that man can do, better than we can, what is the point of us being here at all? Perhaps it is the lack of an answer which makes us less than completely happy to greet the new age of microelectronics. ...We've mentioned many times in this course that increased leisure is likely to be a side-effect of the microelectronic revolution. We've tried to avoid, though, assuming that this is necessarily a good thing. ...It's a sad reflection that while some people fill in their 'free time' with sports and intellectual activities, and social activities designed to enhance their community, there are many more who...go in for vandalism... . When we speak of freedom and the dangers of control,

it is worth remembering that this is one manifestation of how we use freedom when we do have it. Is it good? It is tempting to think that if we left the world to them, perhaps the androids would do a little better."

The final paragraph of the booklet: "Let's end on a cheerful (my emphasis) note with a quick look at some of the better things microelectronics might bring about throughout the world. Its control and development power might lead to a prevention of pollution, to better use of water and other scarce natural resources, to accurate predictions of natural disasters, and to the development of crops and livestock adapted to local conditions. We have a long way to go, politically rather than technologically, before we see all this come about. Let's hope we make it!". Cheered?

The 72-page, A4 size high quality produced Booklet is in fact part of a "Discussion Pack", including seven sheets with suggestions for group-discussions, each relating to the seven sections of the Booklet, and each section followed by a comprehensive Booklist for further reading. It is written by Ray Curnow (formerly Senior Fellow at the Science Policy Research Unit, Sussex University) and Susan Curran, and was linked to the BBC tv series "The Silicon Factor". Available from the National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, CB2 2HN, price £1.50 + 30p postage and packing. I was surprised at the low cost.

* * * * *

GLAD TO BE OUT OF IT ALL: Penny Blackie

The following article was extracted from The Times Educational Supplement. When we consulted Penny about printing it she decided to join us. Welcome Penny.

Two years ago, I wrote in the TES about the stress of teaching, and the personal conflicts I found in the job. Last October I left my job because I was having a baby.

Having a baby is a wonderful reason for giving up teaching. I won early approval for saying I wasn't going back afterwards. Men teachers said they envied me, and I understood why.

Last November was the first in over 30 years that I was not in some kind of educational institution. After being a busy, committed Head of Department for several years, I had been anxious that it would take me some time to adjust to not having a set routine, to having to structure my time myself. I needn't have worried.

What I find difficult to understand now is how I found my job so completely absorbing. Much of my time was spent on really mundane, boring tasks - incessant marking, report writing, grind. How could so much of me have been

swept up in it?

I feel now that the pressure of being a Head of English in a large comprehensive school gathers you up with a self-perpetuating momentum that you have little time to assess or question. I am surprised that I have had not one momentary flicker of regret since leaving the school.

This could be put down to the sheer enjoyment and excitement of a new baby - which is considerable. Or to the relief at not having to be in the classroom every day. But there is more to it than that.

For some time the public image of teachers has been under siege. The press is unsympathetic, the "authorities" (whether LEA, DES or government) are critical, and seem to have little confidence in teachers. Parents have not been united with teachers as much as we would have hoped and, unsurprisingly, kids are becoming more hostile to school.

Now an added unpleasantness is the ugly divisiveness in staffrooms - inter-union or union versus non-union - which is destroying some of the solidarity that did exist between teachers.

What worries me is that it all seems to be getting worse. Add to this general atmosphere the actual and potential effect of the cuts (including the implications of the Budget) - the unavoidable and insidious corrosion of standards, the frustration, the lack of rejuvenating experimental and developmental work, and it becomes hard to imagine enjoying being a teacher.

The future is very depressing. Possibilities and potential seem stunted, prospects look bleak. It sounds weak, pessimistic and self-interested to say this, but I am glad I'm out of it.

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* * * * *

THOUGHTS FROM DICK KITTO

Is Your Lawyer Really Necessary?

I am in the process of buying a house, and I decided to do my own conveyancing. So far I am half-way through the process and haven't yet met any insurmountable snags. If all goes well, I shall save myself £2-300, and shall have had the satisfaction of asserting the right and ability of the ordinary citizen to "do-it-yourself" and dispense with the "expert". And, unless any really difficult legal snag crops up, I shall have made a better job of it. The why and how of this is set out in a book called "The Conveyancing Fraud" by Michael Joseph, which is well worth reading - even if you aren't interested in conveyancing itself - for its trenchant

exposé of some aspects of the legal profession.

Recently I've come across the organisation "Families Need Fathers" whose concern is for the rights of children and parents (not just fathers - the title is unfortunate and misleading) in custody and access cases. It's clear that the opinion of many of its members (though not the 'official' policy of the organisation) is that the services of solicitors and barristers is not necessarily beneficial, because of their professional bias towards making every issue a legalistic one and their consequent tendency to de-humanise situations, which often aggravates potential disagreements.

So what about our recommendation that parents who are being threatened by the authorities should always seek legal advice? Although I know of some families who definitely have benefitted from such advice, I hear of several others where the advice given seems to have been uninformed and indeed detrimental, as well of course as being extremely expensive.

I'd be very grateful if anyone who has had experience of seeking legal advice would write to me and send details, particularly on whether or not they feel they have benefitted from it. (Address below)

*

The East Bergholt Fair

East Anglia probably has more fairs, local shows and similar events than any other part of the UK, and many members of the general public attend them. It has always seemed to me that these fairs presented a good opportunity to reach the public in a local area so when I moved to Brightlingsea a few weeks ago and became involved in the Moon Fair at East Bergholt I decided to set up an EO stall there. Because it was a last minute decision it wasn't as good a stall or as well organised as it might have been and the outcome was not record-breaking: we netted one new member and £8.60. We held a meeting which only a few people attended and James Fearnley and I had a struggle to infuse some enthusiasm into our exposition. But afterwards several people came up to me and said they were sorry they had missed it and could we have another meeting later. So perhaps something will get off the ground.

On the second day the Lockingtons from Billericay manned the stall. At the end Geraldine said that they'd enjoyed themselves very much. She thought the stall had been worthwhile, and we wondered whether EO should have a policy of trying to attend this sort of event.

That sounds fine, but I don't think it is worth doing unless it is done well - the stall must look attractive and convincing, there must be plenty of literature and above all the stall must be continuously manned - so it is a question of whether enough people have enough time, energy and interest to do it. On the other hand where there is a local group or an embryonic one, setting up a stall is a good focus for the group to work on together. Incidentally it can be quite a lot of fun too.

If anyone in East Anglia is interested in the idea, perhaps they would like to get in touch with me: 64 SYDNEY STREET, BRIGHTLINGSEA, ESSEX.

GOOD NEWS

Information normally qualifies as "News" because it is bad. This is particularly true of what newspapers, and TV and radio bulletins present to us each day. Trouble is, apparently, what most people like to hear about. Publicity given to EO is therefore often highly selective. We hear about the Taylors in Sheffield or the Harrisons in Worcestershire because they are engaged in struggle with the local bureaucracy. The picture is, of course, very misleading. Most EO families are on good or at least neutral terms with their LEAs. A battle between parents and inspectors or advisors is very much the exception. For this reason we thought it would be worthwhile to include in the Newsletter a regular feature recording some of the positive news, the good news as revealed in a small sample of the letters received by the Enquiries Secretaries. These letters were sent as private communications and have therefore been edited to exclude references which might reveal the identities of the correspondents:

*

"Thank you so much for your letter. Your information sheet has been very helpful and both my husband and I feel so much better now that we know more about EO and the fact that we have help near at hand. I got in contact with one of the ladies in the Contact List who has proved very helpful indeed. We shall now go ahead and teach ourselves".

*

"We are now teaching both of our younger children at home and are delighted with the results. We found the authorities most reasonable and co-operative and would encourage anyone in Gloucestershire to approach them without anxiety.

We have already talked to several couples who would like to teach their children at home. We hope they will take the plunge".

*

"This is just a note to say thanks very much for taking the trouble to reply at such length. We've joined EO and are definitely going to take the girls out of school at the end of this term. The advice in First Steps is very useful and in my case, I think, timely. In the mood I was in I might well have adopted a high-handed tone to the LEA which would clearly have been quite inappropriate. At any rate, now we've taken the decision life seems suddenly full of possibilities. And the children are really looking forward to it".

*

"Thank you ever so much for your prompt reply and helpful letter. I've joined EO and I can't say how delighted I am with it. It seems to be really well organised, very practical and useful and goes well beyond what I had dared hope. Although I've met people who regard the current school system as less than ideal, I hadn't met anyone who shared my own view on education - e.g. why the emphasis on reading and writing as if it's the 'basis of all knowledge', when it only leads to second-hand experience (although of course there is a place for this). Why any rigid curriculum and "teaching information" rather than letting the children learn day-to-day skills from observation and participation? So I'm delighted to find there already seem to be a substantial number of people not just thinking along similar lines, but practising these ideas.

So from being quite terror struck at the thought of doom approaching I'm really bursting with enthusiasm. Strangely, since my joining, four ladies have come up to me and said how interested they are. So the possibilities seem to be there. I know this is only the start and things may not continue to be so rosy. But it's very encouraging".

*

"I must congratulate you on the recent article featured in last week's Guardian. ... Although my eleven years of teaching have been spent within the state system I am totally sympathetic to the aims of such people as obviously form the basis of EO".

* * * * *

Meetings held on Saturday and Sunday 19 and 20 July 1980
at Park Lodge, Tilton Lane, Billesdon Coplow, Leicestershire

THE WEEKEND ... those who came:

Bruce, Di, Eleanor (7), Madeleine (5) and Tom (2) Cox (in residence!);
Helen and James (7) Fletcher from Nottingham;
Paula, Nigel, Vincent (14) and Elizabeth (11) Theobald from Northamptonshire;
John Elenor from London (who arrived - on his motorbike - soaked to the skin!);
David, Jane, Joe (6), Robin (3) and Baby Pairman from Northamptonshire;
Sheila Stocking from London;
Courtenay and Gudrun (5) Young from the Suffolk coast;
Halina, Mick, Emma (6) and Alice (3) McHale from Leamington Spa;
Sally, Seth (6), Esther (4) and Gideon (1) Wilkins from Alresford on the far
border of Leicestershire, with her friend Elaine Fullwood and 4 children;
Hazel and Alan Clawley from Birmingham; and
George, Sandra and Simon (4) Smith from Coventry.

After depressing expectations, with so many members sending apologies, and the bad weather not looking like improving, the weekend turned out very well, with the successful combination of a social gathering surrounding the 'business' one. The first to arrive came Friday afternoon, the last to leave, Sunday evening, and the sun shone for us after all! Adults talked, babies nursed, children played Badminton, rode bikes; 4 little girls disappeared adventurously into the woods, and were very disappointed when it all had to end. Fortunately for the 'hosts' - embedded in the business bit - everybody seemed to manage to help themselves to food and drink, as well as clearing up - thank you. And an additional Thank You to Paula for the delicious supply of raspberries - almost forgotten in the business of Saturday, but very gratefully enjoyed by the workers who stayed on after most had gone.

*

CORE GROUP & PUBLICATIONS GROUP

PUBLICATIONS GROUP MINUTES (11 am - 2 pm Saturday)

PRESENT: Bruce and Di Cox, Helen Fletcher, Sheila Stocking (taking Minutes), Courtenay Young, Halina McHale, John Elenor.

APOLOGIES: Dick Kitto, Dom and Ros Sweetman, James and Jackie Fearnley, Sarah Guthrie, Jane Davies, Joan Hoare, Helen Holland, Stephanie Leland, Heather Young, Georgina Winckley.

LATE APOLOGIES: Iris Harrison. (Iris 'phoned half-way through the meeting to say that she was sorry that she couldn't get to the meeting "tomorrow" - upon hearing that it was Saturday today she explained that she was busy hay-making - a mistake the group envied her being able to make!)

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: Sheila expressed dissatisfaction with the minutes: there had been a discussion of minutes last time and it was decided that more should go into them; this did not seem to have been done. After discussion on impossibility to recording everything and the importance of keeping members in touch by giving as much detail as possible it was decided that minutes should be as full, human, witty and humorous as possible. Di also noted that in the past we had not always followed up matters from meeting to meeting and all agreed that more care should be taken so this doesn't occur. Di asked it to be noted that she had not been involved in the final editing of the interim version of First Steps although in the meeting before last she had agreed to work on a version, which she had done and submitted.
2. NEWSLETTER DIGESTS: Halina has compiled a Digest of 9-12 and will do a draft which Courtenay has offered to get printed. It was suggested that Stephanie might do the art work. Stephanie is doing a reprint of 1-4. Helen with some help will do a Digest of 5-8. It was decided to do them in the same format as the Newsletter. As 1-4 is already underway using old format we will revise it at a later date. Sheila will do a one-page Index when the Digests have been compiled. Courtenay thought that 250 copies of Digests would be the optimum number to get printed, to which we agreed.
3. EARLY YEARS: Sarah had said that it was now ready and would be available in a couple of weeks. (See Notices)
4. RESOURCES: Sheila is just managing to keep up with new members but will need assistance with Questionnaires. She will get them in September and there are several people in London who might be willing to help.
5. QUESTIONNAIRES: Betty Ball of Huntingdon has offered to assist, so Bruce will contact her re. tabulating.
6. LETTER TO LOCAL CO-ORDINATORS: to include information regarding LEAs and a list of local members. Not yet done: decided that Dick, Di and Sarah (as Enquiry Secretaries) should do it if possible. Discussion of

why to include a list of local members: agreed that it would be useful for them to have. A draft will be done and sent to Publications Group members to comment on and after incorporating comments will produce and send it. The telephone numbers of co-ordinators will be enclosed with Newsletter. Role of local co-ordinators to be referred to afternoon Core Group for discussion.

7. CURRICULUM: Jane Davies has produced a curriculum that has been sent to Publications Group members. Lengthy discussion on curriculum - the pro's and con's: it was suggested that rather than just produce one curriculum we produce a booklet incorporating several curricula and people's comments and ideas on the subject; title of the booklet should be The Curriculum Debate.

Jane will be meeting with Bruce and Di and once this date has been set Core and Publications Group will be informed so they can attend - Helen and Halina expressed interest. They will incorporate comments on Jane's curriculum and draft a booklet. Will members please send contributions c/o Bruce and Di, as soon as possible. Hopefully the final draft will be presented to the next meeting.

8. QUESTIONNAIRES: Helen agreed to go through and note change of addresses to send to Dom and Ros (the Membership Secretaries).
9. NEW INTRODUCTORY LETTER: Helen didn't like the continual mention of "families". Sheila and Courtenay agreed that "family" was a value-laden word and the group agreed that when present stocks ran out it would be revised with this in mind.
10. CONTACT LIST: Di brought up the possibility of indicating on Contact List who had children out of school, for the benefit of new members. It was decided that this would be impossible to do since situations change quickly and Sheila and Courtenay felt that this was not desirable. Decided to encourage and help local co-ordinators keep track of people in their area and put a note on the bottom of the list to say that inclusion on the list does not mean that they have children out of school.
11. NEWSLETTER 15: group members would meet tomorrow to discuss it. Dom and Ros could probably provide address labels. Sheila, John and possibly others would be able to collate etc. Courtenay could handle printing end. All seemed under control!

* * (Typist's note: we forgot the typing! - which has caused a slight * *
* * delay because of the difficulties experienced in obtaining an *electric* * *
* * typewriter - necessary to enable printing. DOES ANYONE POSSESS (or * *
* * have access to) ONE - large print because it has to be reduced - * *
* * WHO IS WILLING TO TYPE THE MATERIAL FOR THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER? PLEASE. * *
If so, please let us know, c/o Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road,
Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk, at whose house the next meeting is to be held.)

12. LETTERS: (i) A suggestion had been received for an exchange of resources between EO and another group. Sheila would answer it and explain current position (see 4). (ii) An Education Consultant wanted to

advertise in Newsletter: Di had answered saying that we did not have paid ad's but if she wished to join and write a Newsletter article she could do so. Di was commended for her answer. (iii) Kipper - a magazine produced mainly by children (members of EO) - wanted an announcement in Newsletter: this was agreed. (iv) Di would get in touch with someone interested in setting up a postal library service, for more information.

13. FIRST STEPS: Long term version is needed but no-one is able to take it on at this time.
14. HOW TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS: Continuing discussion: Courtenay proposed that at least 3 people be involved in any document, which should be a consensus of opinions. Publications Group will accept what is produced by a group given a brief, after circulating drafts to members for comments. The Core Group will be consulted if there is violent disagreement.

(Details of Next Meeting: see end of Core Group Minutes)

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CORE GROUP MINUTES (2 - 5 pm Saturday)

PRESENT: Courtenay Young, David Pairman, Helen Fletcher, Halina McHale, Nigel Theobald, Alan and Hazel Clawley, Bruce and Di Cox, John Elenor, Sheila Stocking (taking Minutes).

APOLOGIES: Joan Hoare, Stephanie Leland, Helen Holland, Dick Kitto, Sarah Guthrie, James and Jackie Fearnley, Heather Young, Jane Davies, Iris Harrison, Ros and Dom Sweetman, Roland Meighan, Georgina Winckley; Gina Rannie.

Robina and Alan Pye will no longer be involved in the Core and Publications groups but will continue their involvement on a local level in Scotland - hurrah! We would like to express our appreciation of the work they have put into EO on a national level and are heartened to hear that if and when they return to England they will resume their involvement in Core meetings.

1. MINUTES of last core group meeting (April) were accepted.

(Typist's note: John had been so impressed by Sheila's copious minute-taking of the morning's Publication Group that he now invited her to take on his normal task of Core Group minutes - she accepted, and admirably typed up both sets of Minutes immediately after the meeting, for John to take away and circulate to group members - Congratulations Sheila!)

2. MATTERS ARISING:

2.1 Sheila reported on Publications Group minutes.

2.2 National Meeting at Trent Park, 27 September: Will put an ad. in various magazines: Time Out, New Society, Spare Rib and maybe others.

Activities: Halina could probably get a puppet show; Sheila can arrange face-painting; Allan and Janet Ahlberg (who write children's books) would be invited to come to read and talk to children; Leila Berg, who also writes children's books and runs a bookshop, will be running a book stall. Please contact John Elenor if you want any more information or have suggestions for activities etc.

2.3 Constitution: As EO does not have a legal status, any or all members, if such circumstances arose, could be held liable! So it was suggested that we become a company limited by guarantee. Also the Harrison fund should have a legal status. John agreed to contact a member who can advise us and will bring a draft constitution to the next meeting. Courtenay raised the point that we would have to be careful to avoid a constitution that we would have to adhere to requiring procedures and officers that are not presently part of the EO structure.

3. John, who is a member of Mensa, informed us that they might be interested in supporting EO as they want to become more "outward-looking". This could involve mentioning EO, and the Trent Park event, in the Mensa bulletin: this was agreed to and John will do it.

4. It had been arranged that EO literature should be picked up and displayed at the Festival of Body, Mind and Spirit at Olympia in June: unfortunately no-one picked it up from Ros and Dom. It was felt that we should be more prepared for next year: John will investigate. Di has a list of alternative events and will inform local co-ordinators of events in their area.

5. Dick has asked if he could get expenses for visiting people who need legal advice that can't be given by letter or 'phone. The group agreed that this should be done.

It was noted that efforts should be made to inform and support local co-ordinators so they could do more in this area.

6. ENQUIRIES: Di was having difficulty with the amount - about 15 a week after the articles in the Guardian and Woman's Own. She suggested that some be passed on to local co-ordinators. Robina Pye who will be moving to Scotland soon had volunteered to do Scottish enquiries. We decided at this point to go on to the discussion of the role of local co-ordinators.

Agreed that local groups should be strengthened and that local co-ordinators could receive more information and support from core group and would then be able to play a more active role. People prefer to be in contact with local people so simple enquiries could be sent to them.

Di and Sarah were asked to write to local co-ordinators explaining

this and enclosing all the literature that they might need.

Courtenay will be producing a Handbill with Helen and Bruce which would be available to all members and it was suggested that local co-ordinators could put them up in libraries etc. Hazel Clawley suggested that the crucial point on the Handbill should be that children don't have to go to school: we all agreed that this was so.

It would be useful for local co-ordinators to meet, maybe regionally, and this will be suggested in letter. Di and Sarah will be available at Trent Park to meet and talk to LC's and people interested in becoming LC's.

LC's should have a list of all those in their area who are not on the contact list and also know which members in their area have children out of school. They will also receive information on how to advise people re. LEAs.

7. Bruce had received a letter from someone in Greece who is writing a thesis on alternative education and would like to visit people who are educating their children at home. Bruce sent her all the introductory stuff and will pass on names of people who would be interested in seeing her: those interested please let Bruce know .
8. NORTHERN IRELAND: Di brought it to attention that tho' we refer to education in the UK, we in fact refer to the England & Wales and the Scotland Education Acts, but we know nothing about N.Ireland. John agreed to investigate it.
9. BADGES: Plain card badges will be available at Trent Park for people to put their names etc. on as this will facilitate communication. Di will get them. Courtenay will see if he can get a badge-making machine for people to make their own badges of any kind.

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NEXT MEETING

The next Core and Publications Group meetings will be held at Sarah Guthrie's, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston (Suffolk), Diss, Norfolk, on 25 and 26 October.

Once again we encourage members to attend and become involved if they can. It was encouraging to see some new faces this weekend and we hope this will continue. For more information contact Sarah (037-983-678) or John Elenor, 18 Eynham Rd, London W.12 (01-749-2199) or Sheila Stocking, c/o 69 Leathwaite Road, London S.W.11. Anyone requiring ACCOMMODATION contact Sarah.

If you have any suggestions for Agenda items, please send these c/o Bruce.

BOOKS

A FAIRER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN

Mia Kellmer Pringle : Macmillan : £4.95

Dr. Mia Kellmer Pringle, leading voice on child development and Director of the National Children's Bureau, attacks the women's liberation movement as having seriously devalued Motherhood. She says that an educated girl is made to feel she is wasting her abilities if she is "only a housewife and mother", and is therefore being deprived of a sense of joy, pride and achievement in creating a nurturing and happy environment for her family. She says caring for children is misrepresented as boring and irksome, instead of being seen as an extremely skilled, challenging, demanding, responsible and vital job - more responsible in the long term than professional careers, let alone the routine jobs available to the vast majority of both women and men. She criticises the trade unions as well as the women's liberation movement for rejecting the evidence that costly day care is not a suitable way of caring for our children, and says that to reconcile these differences our society has to recognize that bringing up a family is an important social function. Equality of respect for the role of Motherhood is essential for our children's sake both now and for the benefit of our future society - determined, as it is, by our experiences while young.

Dianne Cox

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IN WHOSE BEST INTERESTS? The Unjust Treatment of Children in the Courts and Institutions

Laurie Taylor, Ron Lacey and Dennis Bracken : Cobden Trust/MIND : £2.50

This is a book which should interest anyone who is concerned about the relationship between state institutions and children. It particularly focuses on "difficult, disturbed and deprived" children. "It provides evidence that injustice, hypocrisy and the denial of human rights occur within every part of the present system". The disastrous effects of the confusion between punishing and helping children, and limited personal attention and care that it is possible for a state bureaucracy to provide, should interest many EO parents.

Bruce Cox

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OUTCOMES OF EDUCATION

Edited by Tyrrell Burgess and Elizabeth Adams : MacMillan Education : £9.95

The first chapter of this book presents a powerful attack on the stultifying effect of the examination system on children. The central chapters contain descriptions of other ways of assessing achievement and the final chapter suggests an alternative scheme of learning and assessment for older students by way of a process in which they become actively involved.

Bruce Cox

LETTERS

From Ann Stringer, The Lodge, Stanley Hall, Pebmarsh, Halstead, Essex.

One aspect of the questionnaire, and something I read into EO literature possibly unjustifiably, that I am concerned about is the presumption that the parents (or adults as guardians) "take their children out of school". It always seems to be phrased that way in the media as well, as if the child/ren had no rights in the matter. I can think of many reasons why I don't like Marc attending school and I'd rejoice in giving him his "freedom" from the oppression, the brain-washing, the assimilation of useless information, the indoctrination, the asocialisation etc, etc, but what have we got to offer him in return? Isolation from his peers, the acquisition of a few manual skills he hasn't shown much interest in to date, the inability due to financial restrictions to be able to travel far in the search for further knowledge and companionship.

Marc had 7 years of conventional primary schooling, in one place; firstly at a progressive, socially aware infant school, then at a more formalised junior school which he found boring. These 7 years were marred by a constant battle against air craft noise, the school being just $\frac{1}{2}$ mile off runway No.1 at Heathrow. During this time I was studying at a teacher training college, having done 2 years of student teaching during Marc's first two years of infant school. He had 5 weeks at a local comprehensive school before we moved from West London to Wiltshire, and he started at a rural comprehensive, which had previously been a secondary school and was fairly formal in method. After 3 weeks he "deschooled" himself, and as I had been disillusioned for some time with the Education system, and as we also had close contact with EO at the time, Marc was deregistered. He went back to school again last September, not without a little apprehension from all of us, and still finds school boring, but enjoys the companionship of his peers (including girls) and the extra curricular activities. He just doesn't want to leave now. I sometimes wonder whether "They" put something in the water at school to get the young addicted!

Of course there's a lot more to Marc's case than I have had time to set down here, and I would probably have to write a thesis to do it justice, but I believe there's only one way of avoiding the mind-crushing system of education in this country and that is never to send your children to school at all. What you don't have you never miss, as my dear mum used to say.

Dianne Cox replies:

Dear Ann,

With reference to the wording of the Questionnaire, this had to be, unfortunately, determined by the space available on the paper! There was insufficient space to say "You'd like to de-register them but...".

I think most of us do believe that children have rights, as indicated in First Steps both on p.3 - "The Rights of Children" - and in the Introduction, when we say "...a decision on otherwise education should, as far as is practicable, be a shared one between parents and children...". I personally feel it is not

"practicable", and would be very unfair, to ask a 5-year-old to make this decision when they have no experience upon which to base it; tho' some would argue that to not give them the opportunity of finding out - you say yourself "What you don't have you never miss" - is precisely to deny them of rights.

However, in the particular matter that you raise, it IS the parents who must do the de-registering - just as you did - because they ARE responsible, by law, for their children's education.

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From John Elenor, 18 Eynham Road, London W.12.

Most of the objections to the idea of home-based education arise from ignorance and prejudice; most of them are easily answered from the experience of almost any member. But one that I frequently encounter in talking to student-teachers is, "When it comes to getting a job, are you not at a disadvantage if you have not attended school regularly?"

I know what my theoretical answer would be, but I have no proof. Do any members have experience of home-educated young people in their search for work? If so, I should be glad to hear from them; perhaps their rewards and frustrations would be worth writing about in the Newsletter.

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From Helen Ford, Hafod Ysphyth, Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, North Wales.

I have four children age 6 to just under a year and we live in a beautiful remote farmhouse in the Snowdonia National Park. I am teaching John at home as there is only a Welsh education available. It is not bilingual, it is unilingual. Also, the main reason I keep him at home is that he was bored at school and afraid of being bullied at break. As a result he was becoming increasingly unmanageable when he got home. I have sent him on and off to school, as the teachers keep promising various improvements, but the results have not been satisfactory and he can now read and do maths much better than the other children in his class, albeit he can only do it in English and they only in Welsh. I have only been able to spare about one hour a day maximum due to all the other work.

I would like very much to have some other mother to stay with her child, or children (no more than 2) for a week (or more if we get along) so that my oldest boy can have the only thing he is missing - the company of his peers. I would prefer a boy, age 5½ upwards, the age of the other child would be immaterial. We have a small farm, there are beautiful beaches within ½ hours drive and any number of interesting places to visit. We can also swim in our own river pools quite safely.

Please write to me. I can meet anyone at Llandudno Junction station if they have no car.

From Frank Vernon, 40 Winnham Drive, Fareham, Hants., PO16 8QG.

It is with very great sadness that I inform EO that my dear wife Ruby died in May this year.

Without morbidity I write to ask if anyone in EO is good at, or interested in, counselling for such family happenings. I take comfort in Louise Eickhoff's and Courtenay Young's items in Newsletter 14.

Ruby joined EO with me in 1978 in respect of our daughter Hilary, then 13. Hilary has benefited by being out of school and I'm pleased to see that the authorities seem to admit that point. We are coping but would like to increase our EO contacts. Can you help please?

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From A.Anderson, 64 Henderson Row, Edinburgh.

I became very seriously involved with alternative education as a result of having to help bring up some children. I have found that young children are very keen to paint, draw, form letters and learn to read. These practices appear to develop at any age from 2 - 7, sometimes even later, particularly with reading. It can be achieved, as far as I can gather, on a non-compulsory basis. I am in favour of allowing children to play at any time with all classes on a voluntary basis. No-one can really learn any skill or advanced knowledge without the personal will to do so, therefore compulsory education as a means of personal development is more or less a myth. I learned something at school but it was only after I left that I began to develop a personal interest in study.

The door to education in this society is virtually always open with Open University, night classes etc. Parents, however, panic at the thought of their children being road sweepers or unemployed, so they and the teachers apply virtually pathological pressure to young people's minds. I have been a road sweeper, a dish washer, an artist, a self-taught Homeopathic practitioner and a teacher and as far as I'm concerned all professions can be seen at times as mechanical and boring. In a free society the individual will hopefully see any job as being of value and will be able to perform it according to their own capacity with the maximum variety being attainable as desired, with all labour being on a voluntary basis. I realise that this form of society cannot exist unless its ideals and practice are accepted by at least 70% of the population.

(Mr Anderson has founded an "as yet limited 'campaign against compulsory education'" and would no doubt welcome any offers of support.)

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NOTICES

1. A WEEKEND ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION at The Church House, Drayton Green, London W12.

Throughout the country it seems that Christians are being increasingly moved to question the values of the State Education system, and many are seeking an alternative. This weekend is for those already committed to the idea of Christian education in practice or principal.

Our main purpose is that people should meet and encourage one another, sharing their experiences and problems, and the programme leaves ample time for discussion.

We propose to make no charge for the weekend, except for meals, which you will be asked to order in advance wherever possible. We also hope that accommodation can be arranged in the houses of local congregations. A collection may however be taken to cover expenses such as postage.

Activities for children will be arranged as necessary, but parent delegates must expect to have to work a rota.

For further details please write to Ian Murray-Watson, 7A Inglis Rd., London W5.

(Ian Murray-Watson contributed an article to the last Newsletter.)

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2. Anyone concerned about animal welfare and abuse is invited to write to Jennifer Mary Brittain, 53 East Towers, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 1TN for information about the ANIMAL WELFARE MOVEMENT.

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3. We wish to give our two children, girls aged 11 and 9 years, an otherwise education, but we are meeting every obstacle from a particularly obstinate, vindictive, in his own words "damned awkward" Area Officer. We now feel the only option left to us is to move. We therefore require property to rent. Can anyone help us, please? We feel it would be an advantage to have the anonymity of a coastal area, e.g. Chester/N.Wales region, but do not rule out other areas where the Authority is more approachable.

Please write to: Mr & Mrs Carter, 27 Meadow Lane, Alfreton, Derbys., DE5 7EZ.

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4. KIPPER :: The Magazine for EO Children

Send in contributions - stories, articles, jokes, cartoons etc to

The Kipper, West Lodge, Craigbarnet, Campsie Glen, Glasgow.

The Kipper costs 25p plus 13½p postage (stamps will do for total)



5. NATIONAL BOOK LEAGUE - mentioned in Newsletter 14 - has a NEW ADDRESS:

Book House, 45 East Hill, Wandsworth, London S.W.18

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6. CAN YOU SELL EO PUBLICATIONS?

If you know of a local 'alternatives' shop of any kind (wholefood shops are ideal) or of local festivals or fairs where EO literature might be in demand, you can obtain stocks of Enquiry Literature, First Steps, Early Years, Newsletters and Digests from the Membership Secretaries: Ros and Dom Sweetman, 69 Leathwaite Road, London S.W.11.

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7. EARLY YEARS: Suggestions about learning at home for the under-12s.

Third Edition : Edited by Sarah Guthrie : Copies can now be obtained from the Membership Secretaries (see previous item) for 50p + 13½p 9x6 s.a.e. (Cheques/POs should be made payable to Education Otherwise please)

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8. TEACHING PRIMARY SCIENCE - Recently a series of eight programmes, designed for primary school teachers, and concerned with the teaching of primary science, were broadcast on Radio 4. Although the programmes are now over the Booklet for use with the series is still available. It includes details of books, courses and other learning resources, information about relevant series and sheets of descriptive check points for observing small beasts and plants. One of its virtues is that it starts from the assumption that primary school teachers are likely to be totally ignorant of science! It is therefore a good confidence-booster for parents who want to teach science. For a copy send a 12 x 10 s.a.e. to:

Teaching Primary Science, 30/CE, BBC, London W1A 1AA

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9. GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING (see article on John Holt) - Subscriptions are available to Newsletters 13 - 18 inclusive - £2.40 (£3.60 to non-members) from Stephanie Leland, 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N.19. (Cheques/POs to EO)

!! Special Offer !!

A limited number of back issues 1 - 10 are also available at the reduced rate of 20p each (inc. postage). As these Newsletters have a similar content to our own, they do not become outdated: they contain many articles useful for gaining new ideas and for building up one's confidence in dealing with LEAs.

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10. MISSING PERSON! - If by any chance you know Marion Knight, late of Redland, Bristol, could you please ask her to let the Membership Secretaries (69 Leathwaite Rd, London SW11) have her new address, as our last communication was returned marked "Gone Away", and hence we cannot send her this Newsletter!

11. ALTERNATIVES TO STATE EDUCATION - I am organizing a day of talks and discussions on alternatives to state education to try to arouse some interest in EO in this area. It is on SATURDAY 4 OCTOBER, 10.30 - 4.00. I am hoping to have four or five speakers who are actually involved in some alternative project, talking about what they are doing and why. Cost for the day is £2.50, including lunch, but this can be reduced for anybody who finds it too much.

On the same day and at the same times we are running a Drama Workshop for children from 7 - 11 years old, called "THE CLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE". Cost £1.50, again flexible.

A final attraction - the folk group Bowzabella will be performing during the evening.

If you wish to come, please let me know in advance if possible -
GEOFF EDWARDS, COMMUNITY EDUCATION DEPT., BOSWORTH COLLEGE, DESFORD, LEICESTER.
Tel.: Desford 2910.

04557

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12.

** LAST BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST **

Does anyone possess, or have access to, an *electric* typewriter with large (pica) typeface, who is willing to type the material for the December Newsletter?

If so, please let us know c/o Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk, at whose house the next meeting is to be held.

Wally Mellis 678
037 983

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PRICE 40p