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NUMBER 18



education  
otherwise

NEWSLETTER



# EDITORIAL COMPLEX

## Strines, Upper Hulme, Leek.

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# deadline

*All copy for the September issue must be received by August 13th.*

# EDITORIAL

David Bethell

Most people in this country do not know that home education is legally possible: everyone thinks that school is compulsory. Even EO members tend to think of it as a fluke, an accidental legal loophole, and the whole of our attitude to the State is coloured by this feeling. The LEAs have to tolerate us because they must, but tomorrow, who knows ... the loophole might close, an interpretation might change, and the bars clang to again.

This is all nonsense. Educating our own children is as much our natural right as freedom of movement or of conscience. The State may legislate one way one day and another the other but it cannot take away our rights, it can at most repress them. But because we are used to acquiescing, and we are used to the law and its administration being reasonable and level-headed, in our hearts we believe in the law rather than in our rights.

That is why we need EO. We gather together for a little reassurance. That is why so many of us are paranoid, worrying about that loophole, writing it all out on little pieces of paper to reassure ourselves that we are all right. That is why we are half-deferent to the LEAs and the teachers and the civil servants. We know that the system is rotten, we know that the product is rubbish, but we put on an intelligent expression and the argument is always about our children, the only ones that are free. We talk it all out with smiles on our lips, as though we might persuade the machine to come over to our side - which is about as likely as the MPs abolishing Parliament or the Inland Revenue campaigning against taxation. If we really believed in our rights we would tell them all where to go.

Instead of arguing with the professional educators, our resources should be directed at proselytizing the middle classes. The electronic revolution, which will soon bring advanced TV/computer teaching courses into the grasp of most middle-class homes, will at the same time release from employment (i.e. put out of work) the myriads of middle-class mothers who, in order not to become cabbages, have dumped their children in creches, kindergartens, playgroups and schools and given their lives over to paper-pushing in banks and insurance offices. The growth of leisure, the increase in size of the middle classes, and their rising affluence combine to open up an opportunity for home education on such a scale that formal schooling will survive only as a burden of the working class.



# EDUCATING ARCHIE



~ they get  
beefburgers  
for school  
dinners now,  
Mum!



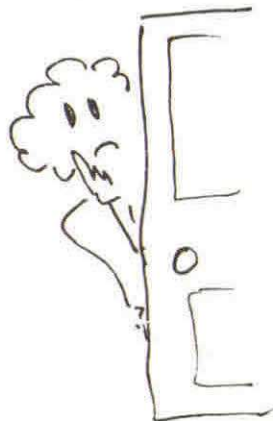
~ and PIES,  
and CRISPS ...  
It's all much  
better than it  
used to be —



~ MICROCHIPS  
in every  
classroom...



~ I bet the  
pies  
are  
pretty  
small,  
too



by SEG

# EDUCATION THROUGH



## LEARNING BEGINS AT HOME

As a result of getting parents to teach reading to children, in schools in the UK and elsewhere, it is being recognised that parents are good teachers. SUNDAY TIMES 29 Mar 1981. Specifically, "parents from all social classes can be more effective teachers of their own children than professionals". Continues the SUNDAY TIMES: "Since compulsory education was introduced last century the idea has steadily gained ground that educating children should be left to the experts. Quite simply, the ... experiments challenge that notion. The parent is the new hero." Involvement of parents in the classroom is seen as a reaction to the failure of schooling. Eric Midwinter, chairman of ACE (Advisory Centre for Education) pointed out, "Parents have already done the really difficult job of teaching them (the children) to talk - after that, teaching them to read ought to be a doddle." The article suggests that giving parents direct responsibility for the child's learning can transform their attitudes. So far, experiments have concentrated on teaching reading, but the SUNDAY TIMES asks whether there are other areas where home learning "can be dovetailed into the curriculum". And in the USA, some educators believe that parental potential is "almost limitless"! Such experiments have revealed that most of a child's learning takes place at home, anyway.

✧ A 13-year-old schoolboy has meticulously rewired his 5-bedroomed family home, to the praise of the electricity board. Said his father: "The strange thing is that he has now lost interest in electrical matters and turned his attention to plumbing." DAILY TELEGRAPH 11 Feb 1981 ✧ A teacher has launched his own school in protest at the way backward pupils were ignored at the comprehensive where he taught: DAILY TELEGRAPH 2 Feb 1981 ✧ In the US, a government-funded telephone service has been set up to help children with their homework: DAILY MAIL 5 Feb 1981 The service is open to parents, too. Teachers were selected for their telephone manner. "Many teachers turned out to be absolutely hopeless on the 'phone," said the service's director, "They say things like, 'I could explain if I had a chalk board with me'." SUNDAY TIMES 8 Feb 1981 ✧ The Harrison family's appeal to Hereford and Worcester Crown Court (see p. 27) was covered by several national papers, including the GUARDIAN, DAILY MAIL and DAILY TELEGRAPH (15 May). They are appealing against conviction for failing to comply with school attendance orders, and the court will give its decision in two to three weeks' time (from 15 May) ✧ A local Hampshire paper carried a feature about EO member Roy Dunster and his two sons, who are learning at home together with a friend. They hope to take GCEs next year ✧

## SCHOOLING

The Government recommended a 'core' curriculum in March which should improve educational standards: DAILY TELEGRAPH 26 Mar 1981. According to the Education Secretary, Mark Carlisle, many school leavers could barely read, write or calculate. A representative of a teacher's union commented: "Mr. Carlisle's recipe for a balanced school curriculum is a combination of the blindly obvious and the obviously blind." ✧ 40,000 teachers face redundancy in the next 12 months because of apparent government miscalculations: DAILY TELEGRAPH 20 Apr 1981 ✧ A Schools Inspectorate report published in March recommends first-hand experience of industry and commerce to help pupils get more out of their studies: TIMES 1 Apr 1981 ✧ some children are now leaving school before taking exam's, in order to

qualify for dole: DAILY TELEGRAPH 25 Feb 1981 ☆ Teachers can no longer assure pupils that hard work at school will pay dividends later, claims a report for the NUT: DAILY TELEGRAPH 21 Feb 1981 ☆ A letter signed by 31 eminent academics called for better teaching in secondary schools and less absorption with the written word: DAILY TELEGRAPH 28 Jan 1981 - "Many schools today are too rushed, too stressed, too impersonal and too exclusively dedicated to academic goals to provide the essential background of personal growth," it says ☆ The Archbishop of York said that schools should teach responsibility about human relationships ... and teaching should not be just "on the latest crackpot ideology": DAILY TELEGRAPH 19 Mar 1981 ☆ A father is keeping his daughter at home until an English novel he feels lowers moral standards is dropped from the syllabus: DAILY TELEGRAPH 6 Feb 1981 ☆ The Government is to help every school to have a computer: SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 22 Mar 1981 ☆ The Chairman of the Schools Council announced that GCE O-levels and CSEs would be scrapped within the next ten years: DAILY TELEGRAPH 1 Apr 1981. He said they would be replaced by 'pupil profiles' because they have been "an enormous confidence trick for a long time". The following day the DAILY TELEGRAPH reported that the Government denied scrapping GCEs, but intended to use both systems. Asked to comment, the Chairman explained that he had done no more than "speculate ... on the evolution of existing tendencies". ☆ Lead pollution is likely to be over the recommended safety level in 90% of London's schools, according to a survey done by the GLC for ILEA: WHERE MAY 1981 ☆

#### SCHOOL AND THE LAW

Groups of parents are considering legal action against their education authorities because of government cuts in spending: GUARDIAN 10 Feb 1981 ☆ under the Education Act (1980) local education authorities will be obliged, from September 1982, to allow parents their choice of school 'wherever possible': DAILY TELEGRAPH 9 Mar 1981 ☆

#### TRUANCY

A school in Nottinghamshire has beaten its truancy problem by awarding ice cream to classes with the best attendance: DAILY TELEGRAPH 7 Feb 1981 ☆ About 300,000 regularly 'condone' their children's absence from school, according to the DAILY TELEGRAPH 30 Mar 1981. Prosecutions by education authorities have increased by 12% Said the education welfare officer for Slough, "Parents have a moral and legal responsibility to send their children to school. The absences simply reflect the casual and sloppy attitude in society today." ☆ Berkshire authority is also prepared to prosecute in cases of persistent lateness. Lateness, commented an educational social worker, was as much child abuse as violence or child-battering ☆



#### CRUISIN'

Berkshire county education chairman and five officials, plus their wives, had free cabins on an educational Mediterranean cruise: DAILY TELEGRAPH 26 Feb 1981. They returned to face an enquiry. Said the Chairman, "... suggestions that we were enjoying ourselves with cocktails by the swimming pool are laughable ..." ☆

#### D.I.Y.

To keep a small Lancashire school going, parents have offered to teach some subjects themselves: GUARDIAN 27 Feb 1981 ☆ A d.i.y. kit in basic English has been produced for unqualified school-leavers: DAILY TELEGRAPH 21 Apr 1981 ☆ An analysis of *curricula vitae* reveals that many business executives have no formal qualifications: DAILY TELEGRAPH 6 Apr 1981: but "experience gained through time and hard work" ☆

## VIOLENCE

STOPP (The Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment) has written to Mark Carlisle about Litherland High School in Liverpool: DAILY TELEGRAPH 16 Mar 1981. Vandalism there was a result of institutionalized violence, claims STOPP, a violence which took the form of 1800 beatings in 10 months (of 1000 pupils). In an article in the DAILY TELEGRAPH (20 Mar 1981) the headmaster "stood defiantly in his study ... and insisted ... 'I've reduced the number of slippings a lot since last year and they are still being reduced'." In a report to his teachers, the headmaster later said that he would replace the slipper - with the cane: DAILY TELEGRAPH 2 Apr 1981 ✧ STOPP has also protested about an advertisement which appeared in THE TEACHER, the NUT journal. It was for canes and "other sordid wares". The owner of the cane firm also published a magazine called FAMILY VIEW "for parents who care". Commenting on the protest, the owner said, "I will not be coerced in this terrible way" ✧ A 13-year-old boy brought a dagger to his comprehensive school in Berkshire, saying he would stab his teacher if she told him off "more than nine times". He did stab her, and was placed in care: DAILY TELEGRAPH 10 Apr 1981 ✧ A headmaster said he would never again use the cane after magistrates had found "no case to answer" on a charge of causing actual bodily harm to a 12-year-old pupil: DAILY TELEGRAPH 14 Mar 1981 ✧ In August, Lothian Council will become the first Scottish LEA to abolish the tawse. Meanwhile, Glasgow beats on regardless. Labour M.P. Dennis Canavan attacked Tory M.P.s who voted out an attempt to outlaw corporal punishment of the handicapped. "In the International Year of Disabled People, that is their cynical contribution to the needs of youngsters you suffer from physical or mental handicap or both. They vote - to a man - to make it lawful to hit disabled children.": WHERE May 1981 ✧

## ROYAL TOUCH

The Duke of Edinburgh, speaking at a conference on Human Values, said that unless young people could be given a positive motive to behave with tolerance ... academic education was a waste of time: TIMES 1 Apr 1981.

## LAST WORD?

A letter to the SUNDAY TELEGRAPH (8 Feb 1981) said, "Why are we so keen to shove our children out of the nest so soon? ... Let's ... stop trying to make provision in our schools for younger and younger children ... we could raise the school starting age to six ..."

*CONTRIBUTED BY: Sarah Guthrie, Janice Owen, Lorna Biciochi and others.*  
*We would like to extend the coverage of items in the press, and also (for On the Air) on radio and television. All readers are invited to snip out any press cuttings that might be of interest, and to jot down details of any memorable quotes heard on the mass media, together with date, and name of newspaper/magazine/programme. Please send to: Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk.*

# Talking about School

"I was removed from woodwork at school at the age of 12, before the master and I came to blows ... he could not be convinced I was trying. Fortunately, my father was chairman of the Governors and I was put in charge of the school magazine"  
RHODES BOYSON, *Daily Telegraph* 16 June 1981.

"... in 1949 the idea of boys reading or writing poetry was regarded as a clear example of effeminacy. Now it is regarded as a normal, perhaps rather crazy, activity - one of many. Some people are interested in cricket, some in poetry; some are foolish enough to be interested in religion ..." JOHN THORN headmaster of Winchester College, *Sunday Telegraph* 1 February 1981.

"You've got to take a lot of care (about choosing a school) ... as much care as you would take about choosing a new model car or a refrigerator" Headmaster JOHN HALE, *talking on BBC's Education Shop*, mid-March.

## HERESY AND WORSE

See page 27 for news of the Harrisons' brave fight against persecution. Herein, find news of their persecutor. Hereford & Worcester County Council's Education Department has been making its own news.

In February a local parent took a High Court action against H & W, claiming it had no right to start charging for music lessons. He won, despite dire warnings that such a result could mean LEAs stopping such extras altogether.

Then the Advisory Centre for Education announced that H & W was one of four areas where parent groups were considering legal action against LEAs because cuts had reduced educational standards below the level required by law.

Last month, the *Sunday Times* published a league table of how much LEAs had cut their spending on books and equipment in secondary schools in the last seven years. Top of the list - the LEA with the biggest axe? Good old Hereford & Worcester, at 55 per cent cut. That means it is spending less than half what it was, per head (corrected for inflation). The *ST* article spoke of local schools with O- and A-level classes stranded with nobody to teach them woodwork, or music, or economics.

Perhaps an economics teacher could have explained to pupils why an LEA that obviously feels it can barely afford to discharge its statutory obligations to them nevertheless spends thousands trying to drag the Harrison children into its schools.

After all that, I think we can be excused for finding the news (*Daily Telegraph* 15 April 1981) that Hereford & Worcester are experimenting with lessons in computer technique for 5-year-olds something less than exciting.

Brian Guthrie

Bluebell Bog-Angel Riding  
her Bull, by Melandra  
Bethell (7)



## "When I go to school..."

Dianne Cox

I wrote a letter recently to someone I've been corresponding with, in response to the question "What did I do when my children began talking about school, before 5, with the assumption that they would be going - like the other children at playgroup?" I thought some other parents of under-5s might like to read what I said. Some things are obviously potentially controversial, and I think it would be good if other members wrote for the Newsletter saying how they handled the question. The parent who wrote to me said people were always asking her daughter if she was at school yet (though she was only 3). She said "it seems to be the commonest 'polite question' for strangers to ask!" Here is my letter, with a few omissions and additions:-

Yes, you're right about the 'commonest polite question': We now get "Oh, why aren't you at school, then?" (in shops, launderette &c). But increasingly, it seems, for every astonished silence that they 'don't go', is the response, "Oh, aren't you lucky!", which is, thankfully, causing the children to have added faith in us! Plus the number of children who are extremely envious.

What did I do? I've thought about this a lot - and tried hard to remember. My eldest, Eleanor, also went to playgroup - for 2 terms (2 mornings) - before that Mums & Tods. The main reason I stopped taking her, when it progressed to 3 mornings, was the domination it was having on our lives organizationally - largely because I got very involved with it too, which I thought was the right thing to do. But I had other things to do with my life, and a one-year-old too (Madeleine). All the things I'd previously done with the children now ceased in favour of playgroup. It didn't seem right.

Yes, I considered very hard what I would say when conversation arose about school. I said things like, "Well, children don't have to go to school, you know, and we probably won't send you." But I felt that was not enough, for why did most children go then? While I didn't like to appear to criticize other mothers, because I wanted the children to grow up to be tolerant of other people's opinions, I felt it somewhat unavoidable, in the face of fact! True, most mothers don't know their rights - but then they don't question them either. So, feeling somewhat uneasy, I said things like "Many mothers don't want their children around all day, so they send them to school to be looked after. I enjoy being with you, so I don't want to give you to someone else for most of the day." As far as I'm concerned, 'looking after' is what schools do for most of the time. Anyway, I needn't have felt guilty about saying that, as many mothers I meet now admit, "Oh, I send mine to get them out of the way." What's more, they say so in front of the children. I'd enquired of several teachers what infant schools did during the day, and there was nothing we didn't do already. So if what the schools did was called 'education', then that's what we were doing too.

I explained to Eleanor that most of the things that were said to young children about how nice school was were purely coercive; that after being there for a year or two children began to see that it wasn't all roses! That teachers and parents had to persuade the

children they were going to enjoy it so that they wouldn't feel uneasy about going (which is the truth of the matter, following the Plowden Report - though they do try generally, nowadays, to make it pleasant during infant years - i.e. the coercion!)

I believe children have an innate predisposition to have faith in what their parents say (who else have they) until they're old enough to judge from their own experience. This is why the coercion works, and is why many parent-child relationships begin to turn sour when children come to dislike school - who other than their parents can they blame for the fact that they're there? But it needs understanding parents to realize the cause of the problem. I think it's sad that schools should create this hostility within so many families who might otherwise have had closer relationships. Is this a good social background for the stability of rising generations? I think not. And I think youth culture today shows evidence. Though they may not all be conscious of the reasons, teenagers are angry at the way their young lives have been directed. And some people would have us punish them for what we have done to them. The period of adolescence, with its many developmental changes, is no time to be confined in an institution - let alone directing one's energies into examinations. (Why not even let them get on with having their babies - when Nature dictates - and offer opportunities for study when they're grannies - around 30! - when it would be so much more meaningful in the light of experience; as Open University students who also went through conventional higher education have discovered.) End of digression.

As Eleanor got older I noticed her observing children as we passed playgrounds - playtime, lunchtime, coming out. "How do I deal with this?" I thought, because the children looked happy! Eventually I realized - "They're being allowed to play for a bit," I volunteered; "They're happy because they're being let out at last"! Which is all, of course, the perfect truth. But, because of the predomination of my worry that she might feel 'kept from it', it took me ages to see the reality of the situation! I also added some things about the restrictions when they were 'inside'!

By the time this phase had passed we were beginning to know children who disliked school! - E then being about 7. From there things got easier. Though I should add that she never expressed any desire to go to school, even when it was suggested. But I felt reassured.

Yes, I expect it was easier because we were rural. But that is something we chose partly for that reason - when E was 4 we moved out of the city. And then, in order to provide social contact, we took her to gymnastics and swimming courses. This was mainly because the early edition of First Steps said that authorities would want to see evidence of facilities for physical activities and that they would certainly be alarmed if they felt there was not enough social contact. Although these activities thrive to this day, I've often questioned such involvement in toing and froing. It's OK if you've got only one child, or possibly two, but by the time you've got three it's murder - especially because all these things take place in the evening. And if it causes one to be ratty, one asks "Is it worth it?" That's what I used to feel seeing frustrated mothers going to and from school when

we lived in the city. In fact these activities weren't very social really, but once begun are difficult to stop. As Tom's no longer a baby (but 3½) it isn't so difficult to organize now, though very time-consuming in preparation and travel, not to mention the expense.

No, I agree with you entirely, second and subsequent children don't need playgroups &c like first children do. One reason I wanted three was so that they would have each other. And they get on very well together. I think schools - by segregating children into age-groups - encourage hostility among siblings. Don't you find it tiresome when people say, "Do they get on together?", &c. I used to cringe and try to change the subject, for I'm convinced that posing anything like that to children is to suggest it as a possible means of behaviour. From my observations of my own children (and others), children behave as they feel they are expected to behave - another innate factor. E.g., say to a child, "You'll spill that," and s/he most likely will. I wonder how it came to be said like that. Possibly because to say, "Would you ... .., please, so that you don't spill it" is just more time-consuming - especially if they've got to be at school in 5 minutes!

Another example: "You'll fall ... there, what did I tell you?" (Precisely!) My second daughter asked me a little while ago, "What does 'allow' mean?" when a friend had asked her, "Are you allowed to do that?" I'd never said, "You're not allowed to ...," but quite simply explained why they oughtn't to do whatever. Sadly, the phrase has caught on, and she now asks me frequently, "Are we allowed to ...?" But it's not only when we're children that we unconsciously imitate; the more I hear them, the more I find myself coming out with the stereotype remarks that prior to having the children I'd forgotten existed - e.g., "You're not allowed to ..." !

## One of Those ...

Jackie Hall

A couple of months ago I went to a meeting sponsored by a local society on *The Ideals and Reality of Comprehensive Education* by the headmaster of our 12-month-old comprehensive system. I went because two of my children are 9 and 10 and would be able to attend this school before too long. As they have been deregistered, we are not anxious to send them back into a narrow schooling system. So my prime reason was to see how my children could manage if necessary and how flexible the new system is.

The headmaster opened by quoting from several books about the roles, morals, &c., of education. I cannot remember the titles or authors, but they must be recognized by some people in education. Quotes: "children need resources of education that they will enjoy, make solitude pleasant and life dignified". "To gather resources needed in life", "their gifts recognized and acknowledged". "Children do want to be valued as people". "Hungry minds will always become educated".

After giving these and other similar quotes, he then showed us some slides, the first being of an approx. 50-foot-long path under water, as it always is after rain, not clearing quickly. This path is where all children arriving by 'bus (perhaps 50% of about 1200 in the school arrive this way, being a rural area) have to (no choice) walk through this water to enter the school. He complained that it made floors muddy, and wet shoes hang about, but nothing about the discomfort for the children. I also know that there are several other ways to enter

the school, not leaving the grounds, but obviously no allowances were to be made. Not that it would affect my own children, as they would walk, living nearby, and therefore use a different path.

He then went on to describe the difficulties that having to reorganize and extend an old secondary school for greater numbers was causing. These were mainly noise, dirt, and classrooms moving around as rebuilding progresses - which are understandable and should disappear in time. But the lack of time in lessons, and distance and time in which to travel between classes will not; and, due to Government's lack of money, it's hard to say whether his resource problems will disappear either.

He then said that there were 1200 children, 73 teachers, and 30 other staff. That means 16.4 children per teacher. The 'other staff' seemed to be tied up with administration. But the head said that there was always a small percentage of staff away, which meant classes were having to be shunted around; not to mention teachers who are 'Head of the Year'. They have to act as 'Headmaster' for their particular year and deal with all problems concerning that year.

Next he described timetable difficulties. Not only are there academic subjects, games, art and craft, but such things as road safety, health, sex, how bank accounts work, wageslips, and music, to mention a few. That meant that, to quote, "less than 3 hours of maths for 30 weeks per child, that is 7 minutes individual attention per week per child in maths" was provided. Less in other subjects. He said that at the moment they were too busy filling children's heads with knowledge which there was not enough time to learn. He didn't know whether the present system had the right answers or not. He felt that the present system could stifle, especially curiosity; and that perhaps they should turn out hungry minds instead. Although he didn't see them being able to do this in the foreseeable future.

The Head has recently met local employers and had stressed the fact that too much emphasis is put on O- and A-level exams. He also stated that the O-level syllabus for maths was totally irrelevant to the needs of employers. Exams, he said, should be treated for what they are, not the be-all and end-all. He thought the problem of children getting bored and not really being interested in everything around them was the teachers' fault. Firstly in dismissing children's queries and not following along interesting off-shoots brought up in lesson time because there was barely enough time to cover the syllabus, never mind any extras.

Having thought, at the start of his lecture, that he would perhaps care about individuals and have time to listen, I realized that those ideals were only ideals and not the reality. On my being introduced to the Head, he found out that I teach my own children. He instantly dismissed me as 'one of those'. I asked him what 'one of those' meant. He then proceeded to tell someone else about 'one of those' who was about to be prosecuted. I said that I am not in trouble with my LEA, who know about us. The Head did not listen to this reply, and left the room! I then felt that my children would be equally ignored, and could therefore not trust him to help them in his school, especially with any problems.

# Kirkdale School

Heather Young

As a practising EO parent for two years now lapsed into the ranks of someone sending three children to school, I am writing to sing the praises of Kirkdale, a school in south-east London. It's an old rambling house where 30 kids share their day with 4 teachers and numerous parents.

Our kids go when they want to, and stay at home when they need to. The lessons are voluntary, although most kids participate for a lot of the time. They are free to do whatever they want to, as long as they don't disturb the others. Sometimes the kids play for days on end outside making camps in the trees and playing in the sand. The atmosphere is one of friendliness and loving care, with a strong conviction in the adults that children can regulate their own lives.

It is as near to home education, or at least my brand of it, as anything I can conceive of. I personally spend a lot of time there, and our kids have the added bonus of making close relationships with other kids and adults with all the ups and downs, the tears and joy, that these bring. It's not a state school - it is a co-operative run by staff and parents alike - and it costs money, unfortunately. This does have a bonus side to it, though. Because the school is running on a shoestring, there is a lot of positive energy from the parents, who come together in the common cause of keeping Kirkdale going. We repair the building ourselves, clear up the garden, organize jumble-sales and fêtes, and meet in our own homes, where we share views (this can get quite heated!) over cups of tea or cans of beer.

When Justin, my nine-year-old son, spent two years out of school and stayed back with his younger brother and sister, the warmth and closeness between us was terrific. But I began to feel that his need to be at home all the time had lived itself out; I began to feel the situation was 'unreal' and artificial, not only for him, but also for my six-year-old daughter. I felt that they were being deprived of the joy and excitement of going out into the world and taking risks in other situations; of sharing their feelings with others and caring for people who are not family; of measuring themselves up against other people. I also felt in the end that they were being deprived of stimuli - not the imposed stimuli of formal teaching, but the stimuli of other people's abilities and interests and pleasure in work. They get this at Kirkdale. I would love to live with other people in a way that could encompass all these aspects of life naturally, but I don't. Kirkdale is a compromise, but one that I am happy with.

# Lillah and School

Jackie Fearnley

For quite a long time Lillah, our middle child, who is approaching 5, has been asking if she could go to school. Rose (nearly 8) has always been 'taught' at home, and strongly resisted any suggestion of school.

Lillah is very independent, with ideas of her own, so I thought we should at least consider this one. I talked to her quite a lot about what it would be like - bad things as well as good things - and pointed out to her at what times she would be leaving and coming home, also reminding her that she would be away when various friends came during the week, or on the occasion when it was such a good day we would suddenly decide to go to the sea.

When she persisted in the face of these arguments, I fixed up for us to go to see the headmaster of a school about three miles away which is a small friendly village school that involves the parents in various social occasions, workshops on subjects the children do, and so on.

Lillah spent about half an hour in the infants' class, the teacher of which she had already met as we usually go to Christmas and Easter plays, Harvest Festival and so on. The headmaster was as understanding as we could expect, although I know he cannot really understand why we keep the children at home. He said they were honoured that we should consider Lillah coming there (not said in a sarcastic manner). He said if she did come we would have to try to get her to come each day in order to give it a fair trial, and realize what the routine entailed. But he understood that there were times when days off for trips and so on were more valuable than those in school.

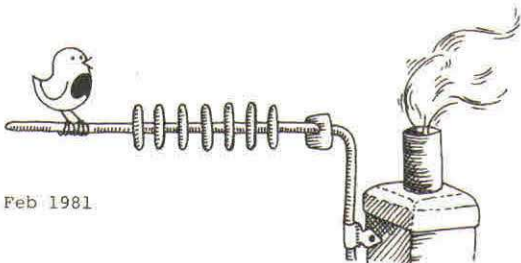
And yet - when we all got home I think we all felt, including Lillah, that it was not the right thing to do. Lillah very sensibly said she thought she might like it when she got to know the people. My predominant feeling after the visit was that there just didn't seem to be any point to it. It seemed a highly unnatural situation. Secondly, I felt that Lillah was still much too young to fend for herself all day amongst a group of people she didn't know. Even after half an hour she looked paler and smaller - rather cowed and confused.

James would, I think, rather have not got ourselves into this situation, but was happy to see it through if necessary. So I decided that we still could not let her take the decision herself, because how could she know what was involved? The main result that I could foresee would be that after a term's trial she would not be the same person as she was before she went to the school.

In fact, instead of saying, "Right, you can give it a try", I said "Well, I think you're a bit young yet, and we'll leave it for a while. There was no strong resistance - she just agreed and said, "I think it might be better to wait until I'm six or seven." She has not referred to it at all since to say she wished she were going. I think even the half-hour that she spent there helped her to imagine what it would really be like.

The immediate problem also seemed to disappear. Almost the same day a new friend for them turned up in the village, the weather got better so that we could all get outside, and she now joins in sometimes when Rose is doing some writing. Things so often work out if you can be patient, often in ways that you could not foresee. Perhaps one day I'll stop being surprised.

## On the Air



BBC RADIO WALES BROADCAST 27 Feb 1981

Denis, Mary and Paul Evans

The studio at the BBC TV & Radio Station in Cardiff was a hive of activity when we arrived to take part in a programme about Education Otherwise. Neither Denis nor myself had ever been interviewed for the media before, but we were soon put at our ease by the staff and enjoyed a tour of both the TV and radio studios. Our son, Paul, enjoyed this too.

In the broadcast Denis answered questions regarding the size of EO, plus the necessity for parents to convince the LEA that they had the interests of the child fully in mind. The usual question as to whether a home-educated child missed out socially was asked and, naturally, we answered quite definitely that we felt that the social side of a school was unnatural and overrated as our son has more friends of all ages rather than less, as in a class of just eight-year-olds and one teacher.

I was asked whether it was a difficult decision to teach Paul at home. I replied no, as in his case he was already reading, writing, doing simple maths and a little French at five, so it was simply a question of continuing rather than starting his education at school age.

Naturally, there was limited time for this broadcast. There were other points we would have liked to have covered. One of these will interest fellow-members of EO - both our children could read well before five. Ruth, now 19 (who is now studying at the Guildhall School of Music) was of average intelligence, but musically talented. When she started school at five the fact that she could read and write wasn't appreciated or encouraged and she dragged her feet for the first couple of years.

Paul, now aged 8, has the advantage of being extremely intelligent, but his greatest gift, we feel, is his capacity for hard work. He has learned to study alone with the aid of the Oxford Children's Dictionary plus encyclopaedias at hand. Denis teaches him maths, I teach him English &c, with the aid of the many workbooks available in good bookshops, some, of course, recommended by EO. He has private tutors for French, German and 'cello lessons. We feel that our efforts with Paul are the most rewarding we have ever experienced. He studies two foreign languages, plays the 'cello in two orchestras, spends two weeks annually in a German primary school, and is the happiest, most sociable child we and our friends have ever encountered.

We get extremely tired sometimes, as teaching at home is a 365-day operation; but we are glad that, despite the work involved, more parents are again taking on this responsibility themselves rather than leaving it to the State. We hope that EO membership will continue to increase as it was a lifeline for us when we took this happy decision in 1977.

## EDUCATION SHOP

Dianne Cox

The BBC TV series Education Shop began the first of its eight programmes with the statement that "the Law requires parents to send their children to school"! I wrote pointing out the unforgivable error, with the suggestion of an announcement to inform people correctly of their rights and responsibilities. The reply included information that a later programme contained interviews with two 'otherwise' parents. Did anyone see it? If so, what was it like? Any idea who the families were?

## OPEN UNIVERSITY

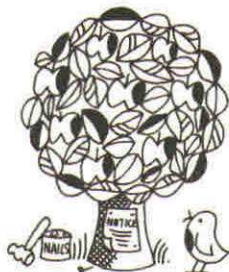
The Open University course E200 Contemporary Issues in Education included a programme on EO that was broadcast at the end of March. The makers of the programme would like to have comments on it from our members; the person to write to is Peter Barnes, Faculty of Educational Studies, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

If any member is asked to take part in a broadcast on EO, please let us know about it; and ask for a copy of the tape that is made, so that we can build up a library of broadcasts for the benefit of new members. And when you are interviewed don't forget to mention the address of EO (18 Eynham Road, London SW12) together with a plea for an A4-size stamped addressed envelope if people want any of our literature.



The World: by Felix Bethell (4)

## NOTICES



### GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

(The nearest American equivalent to the EO Newsletter, edited by John Holt; full of personal experiences from parents involved in home education, words of wisdom from John Holt, and lots of book reviews)

Subscriptions for Nos.19-24 are available at £3 (for members) and £3.60 (non-members). Please write, with the money, to Stephanie Leland, 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N19

### LEGAL PROTECTION SCHEME

The response to the article in Newsletter 17 was so poor that we are unable at present to offer any corporate membership. However, individual membership at £12.50 p.a. is always available, from G.V.Owen & Co., 22 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XA. Other sources of help with legal or similar problems are:

- your nearest Citizens' Advice Bureau
- \* Justice for Children, 35 Wellington St., London WC2
- \* National Council for Civil Liberties, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC2

\*EO is affiliated to both these organizations

It is always helpful to hear of solicitors who are prepared to accept education work (most of them won't); if you can recommend anyone, please write to us at the usual address.

### EO PUBLICATIONS

The following are currently available:

<u>School is Not Compulsory</u>	75p
<u>Early Years</u>	50p
<u>Newsletters 13,14,15,16</u>	40p (20p to members)
<u>Digest of Newsletters 1-4</u>	50p (30p to members)

post-free from Ros Sweetman, 69 Leathwaite Road, London SW11

Book List by Jane Davies 17p

send A4-size s.a.e. to Geraldine Lockington, 3 Meade Close, Billericay, Essex

### WOLVERHAMPTON LIBRARY SERVICE

is now stocking some EO publications; it would be a good publicity exercise if local members went into the library and asked the librarians about them. For that matter, why doesn't every member, when visiting their library, ask about EO publications? - if enough apparent demand is created, any library will stock any item. This is as good publicity as any.

### THE NEXT CORE GROUP MEETING

will again be held chez Geoff and Iris Harrison, The Burntlands, Tenbury Wells, Hereford & Worcester; the date is Saturday 18th July at 2 p.m. Any member is welcome to attend and find out how the machinery of EO works (it is really very friendly). If you are coming, please 'phone them on Newnham Bridge (058 479) 341; if you need any help with travelling expenses, contact the Treasurer at the usual address.

### THE NATIONAL TRENT PARK MEETING

is now to be an annual event, on the last Saturday in September (the 26th this year). It will take the same form as last year, though hopefully with a more coherent time-table - book the date now, and look out for further details in the next newsletter.

# WEGHEG

Lesley Downie

WEGHEG is the West End of Glasgow Home Education Group - four families opting out of school. This is an extract from their latest newsletter:

As I look at the Wegheg diary for last year, I am reminded of the wealth of experiences and activities the children had. The parents all had different things to offer.

The children spent a lot of time discussing things with each other and with the adults; everything from dinosaurs and electricity to how the body works, what to have for lunch, and whether we should all share in tidying up. They also spent a lot of time in cooperating in very involved imaginative games, reading, being read to, and looking at books together; constructing things with wood, junk, plaster, clay &c.; experimenting with baking, growing crystals, burning metals, making sounds, electrical things, magnets, weighing and measuring, working with wood and tools; finding out about shapes and sizes, life in ponds, following directions, weather &c.; working together in planning, buying and making lunches, in having meetings, in clearing up, and going on outings together.

The main comment of the Primary Advisers when they came was that the children seemed very happy.

I am sad to say that the group is now disbanded (though we still get together from time to time) and the children this year are in state schools. Although our little boy Ewan has a very pleasant teacher, is able to do the work, and has made some friends, we are unhappy about the effects of school on him, and their interaction with the rest of us. The insidious effect of the 'hidden curriculum' (the pressure, competition, monotony, powerlessness, continual verbal testing and continuous control) and the experience of unsupervised, gang-ridden playgrounds, where violence is tacitly accepted, produce tensions, fears, aggressive and emotional outbursts, lack of initiative, and a less responsible and less rational child.

Daffodil Bog-Angel's Friend Daisy,  
by Arnetetia Bethell (5)





WOULD ANYONE BE PREPARED TO ACCOMMODATE OLDER CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN DEREGISTERED - particularly those who were unhappy at school?

Obviously discussion between families would be necessary beforehand. It might be for a few days or a few weeks. This need has arisen recently with a 14-year-old boy, and I would be grateful if anyone prepared to offer help would contact me:

Dianne Cox,  
098-682-315

Grey Row, St.Margaret S.Elmham, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0PL

HELP NEEDED: WE SHALL SOON BE WITHOUT A MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY!

Any volunteers to fill the gap? (preferably in West or North London) The work mostly entails receiving applications from new members, filing their details, sending them copies of publications, and keeping lists of all paid-up members. It would also be useful to have a co-ordinator for the entire London region, chiefly to organize local events.  
Applications to:

EO, 18 Eynham Road, London W12

SIGRUN MACGILCHRIST WOULD LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH AGAIN with a family she met at Trent Park last year. She writes:

I don't really know the size of the family. There were at least two girls, because they both looked quite similar with their dark, straight hair and brown eyes. The younger one was about seven or nine years old. The older one was in a wheelchair and severely retarded. She looked almost as pretty as her younger sister, when she was relaxed. But she didn't even seem able to feed herself.

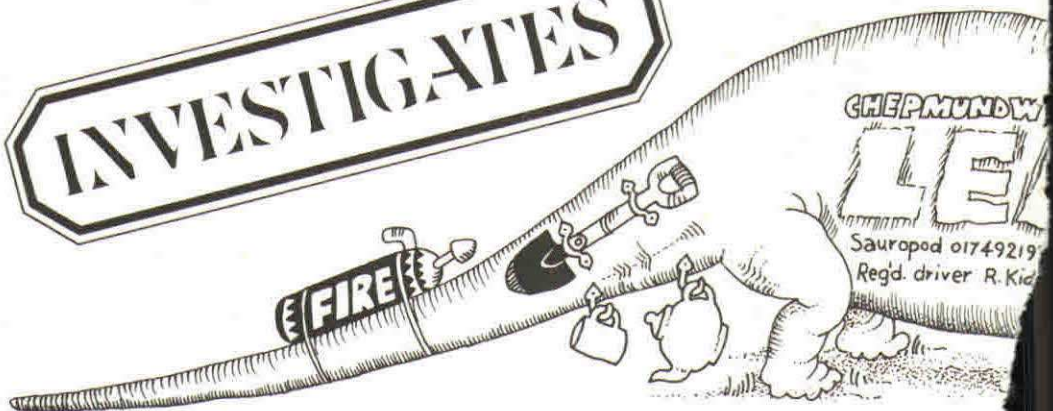
Her mother may remember me, because I said to her that the retarded girl looked quite happy when left alone, even humming to herself.

I may be able to help her. If she thinks that she could do with some help - other than professional - she could write to me at 35 Mayfield Avenue, Stranraer

ARE THERE ANY PARENTS FOLLOWING A "STEINER" APPROACH TO EDUCATION?  
If there are, would you like to write to me?

Mrs P.Wiggs, Western Lodge, Plovers Meadow, Blackboys, nr.Uckfield,  
East Sussex

# INSPECTOR KIDD



Walter Shakespeare

The story opens one fine day in Room 48D of Chepmundwick Town Hall. Monday: Inspector Kidd's busy day. Ten cups of tea by 10.15, and fourteen more by 11.35, the heaviest workload of the week. Inspector Kidd lay meditatively sprawled in his chair, his feet on the filing cabinet to increase the supply of blood to his brain - fully relaxed, since it was in this position that his meditative powers functioned best. Soft light filtered through the stacks of empty cups, playing delicately on his heaving torso; his moustache twitched rhythmically to his stertorous breathing. Suddenly his warm meditations on his job-security, ample pay and inflation-proofed pension were rudely broken by the shrill note of the telephone. His arm broke through a pyramid of teacups, and, still half-asleep, he jerked the receiver to his ear.

"Miss Fitzelper here, Social Services Institute Co-ordinating Committee Urban Poverty Study Group Project Organization Secretary and Situation Advisement Officer."

"Ullo, Maisie. What can we do for you?"

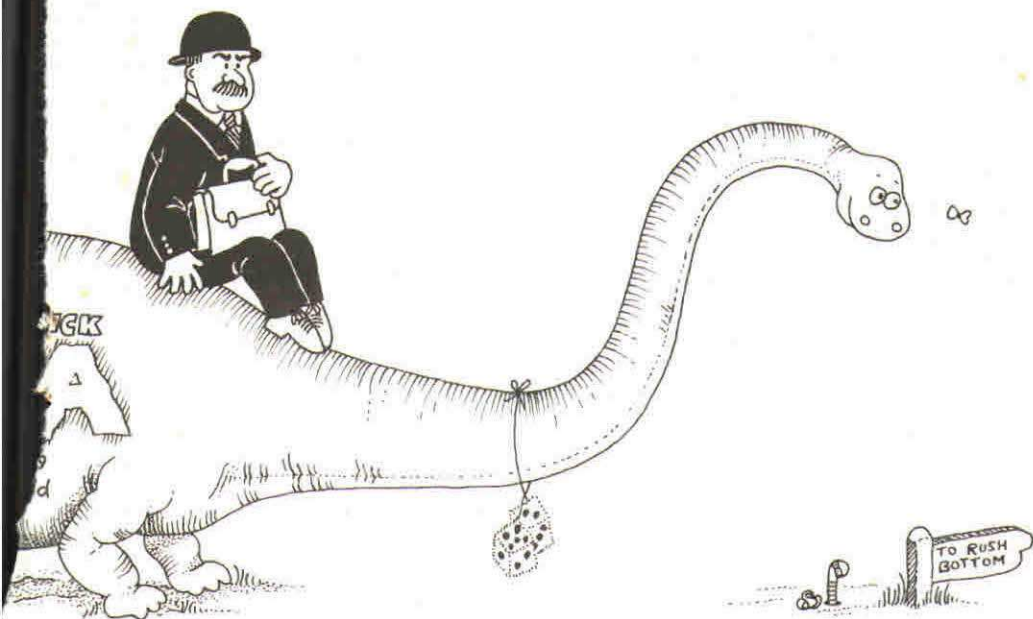
"Well, I've been going through a pile of confidential questionnaires thrown out by the Local Resources Deprivation and Aesthetic Amenity Department, and do you know, them 'ippies up at Rush Bottom Farm, you wouldn't believe what they get up to, and I've been on to my sister and she says, and this is where you come in, she says ..."

"What, Maisie?"

"that her milkman says old Harry was telling him how the postmistress had remarked about their two kids (at Rush Bottom, that is) ... well, they're learning them at home!"

"Learning them at home? Oh, well, we'll see about that. In my patch! Learning them at home indeed."

Inspector Kidd glanced at his watch. 10 to 12. Time for decisive action. He strode to the door and set off purposefully for the canteen.



He spent most of that afternoon writing a long and minatory letter of indignation to the inhabitants of Rush Bottom. He stopped frequently to glance furtively at a small leather-bound volume embossed with a picture of Blackpool Tower, but in which he was unable to locate the word 'compulsory', which accordingly appeared in his letter as 'compuslory'. He invented an extremely long reference number with enough digits to encompass the entire Chinese nation. After the completed masterpiece had been sent to the typing pool, then to the Administrative Regulation Office, been cross-checked by the Educational Standards Officer (who altered 'compuslory' to 'compuslery') and then inadvertently sent to the Cemeteries sub-division of the Rural Leisure Department, it returned ready to receive Inspector Kidd's biroed scrawl; was then sent on to the Mailing Department and through the Weights & Measures census point to the Onward Delivery Office, finally emerging, butterfly-like, into the national postal system; only to be misdirected, owing to an error in the postcode, to a bewildered statistician in Peking.

By late September it became clear that the radicals of Rush Bottom were digging their heels in, and had probably already fenced off a small enclave of territory and declared an Autonomous Republic. Another case for Inspector Kidd. Like a stroke of lightning he mounted his trusty steed, and sped on his way to Rush Bottom, taking with him Civilisation, Education, Quite Good Spelling, Clean Teeth, Tea Cups, Logic, Forms, Stewed Cabbage, Discipline, Playground Railings, Civic Dignity, Uniforms, Team Spirit, Country Dancing, Textural Variety, Sweaty Gyms, Violin Lessons, Bullying, Queuing in the Rain, Steaming Radiators, Free Milk, and all the other things that have made Great Britain what it is today.

We live in a remote part of North Norfolk, surrounded by coast lines of outstanding natural beauty with large accessible nature reserves.

We have a large garden and outbuildings with ample tenting space, and would be happy to assist any EO family that might be interested in moving in this location.

Property prices here are reasonable, certainly if you are moving from the Southeast, and there is great potential for such things as crafts outfits or small workshop co-operatives. East Anglia is already quite a stronghold for EO and closer contacts can make life much easier for those putting it into practice - given all this, there is ample opportunity for like-minded EO families to form a strong working nucleus which could be both mutually stimulating and rewarding - any takers!

Cherity and Farid Laniado and family, Hubbards Barn, South Creake, near Fakenham, Norfolk

We used to have a schools adviser who was very helpful and sympathetic. He has now (unfortunately for us) moved to Yorkshire. But he rang me the other day and mentioned that he would like to hear from anyone in his area teaching their children at home and that I could put his 'phone number and address in our newsletter. He is

Christopher Savile  
Education Department  
Alexandra Buildings  
King Edward Street  
Halifax

Telephone: Halifax 883610

He still works for the Education Authority but I don't think this was a novel way of discovering people not already on their records! He is very interested in the area of home education and would probably be helpful over questions of money from charities, procedure for taking exam's, deregistering, &c. He takes the view that teachers could learn a lot from parents who are teaching their own children.

Has any EO member had experience of the organization called Alternative Education & Co.Ltd.? If so, please send details to the Core Group c/o 18 Eynham Road, London W12. **01 749 2199**

Members interested in a meeting for teenagers in conjunction with a visit from some Danish teenagers are also invited to contact the Core Group as above.

# Minutes

## PUBLICATIONS GROUP

10.30 a.m. 25 Apr 1981, at The Burntlands, Tenbury Wells.

Members present (in clockwise order): Dick Kitto, Sarah Guthrie, Dianne and Bruce Cox, Stephanie Leland, John Elenor, Jane Davies. Bruce took the chair, and John the minutes.

1. APOLOGIES were received from: the Fearnleys, the Sweetmans, Lorna Biccichi, Geraldine Lockington, Sandy Cottee, Helen Holland.

2. THE MINUTES of the previous meeting, having been read, were approved.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Dick reported that, after investigation, 'Hassle-free' was suspected of being unsuitable for distributing our publications to bookshops; but PDC had been put on a more efficient footing, and he proposed to let them have 230 copies of School is not compulsory (100 to Southern, 100 to Northern & 30 to Scottish). Their percentage cut is 52½.

3.2 Bruce reported that the Curriculum Debate is almost ready to circulate to the subcommittee. It would help him if interested members could read the draft and meet in twos or threes around a tape-recorder to record a discussion of it, which he could then edit into an appendix. The question of whether to include anything about public exams was deferred to the Core Group meeting.

3.3 Stephanie reported that sticky labels (for re-using envelopes) cost 1p for a sheet of four. She agreed at our request to produce these, with a simple message along the lines of 'School is not compulsory; labels & info from EO (& address)'

3.4 Stephanie reported that the basic design for the poster had been done, needing just a slight revision; she would then get them printed, at a cost of approx. £75.

4.1 LOGO Various new suggestions were submitted, all of them attractive but none having the simplicity and obvious symbolism we feel is necessary. It was agreed to stick with the existing logo until agreement is reached on a new one.

4.2 NL COVER Although the cover of NL17 was greatly admired, we felt we didn't want to adopt it permanently; for the next NL we will use a design from the Downies, but also incorporate a small version of the old logo.

### 5. NL18

5.1 Agreed to ask the Bethells (who had agreed to type it) if they will also edit; if not, John will do it again. It was suggested that the editor should be named in each newsletter.

5.2 Hardly anyone was in favour of standardized colours for the four issues of NL per year; it was agreed to make each one a different colour, but avoid the colours used for School is not compulsory and Early Years.

5.3 Agreed that the NL should adopt a standard format which would help the reader and make the editing task easier. Among the regular items should be:-

- \* a list of publications (including booklist) on offer, with the number of copies available
- \* an annual index
- \* an annual list of local co-ordinators, with updating information each issue
- \* additions to the skills/resources list (stating clearly 'Pullout Supplement')
- \* a 'Help Needed' section.

5.4 Dick agreed to do the annual index (see 5.3) and digest of NL5-12, which would be duplicated rather than printed.

6. GWS It was felt that it might be useful to print snippets of items from GWS in our newsletter, to keep members in touch, or even persuade them to take out a subscription; Jane agreed to take charge of this.

7. LOCAL CO-ORDINATORS PACK It was announced that all the items for this were with Dom (apart from the stationery, which John will deliver), and should be sent out fairly soon.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING was deferred to Core Group (vide infra)

9. CHAIRMAN FOR NEXT MEETING John; MINUTING SECRETARY Jane.

### 10. AOB

10.1 Early Years: Agreed to leave the revision until next year.

- 10.2 Hulton Educational Press wanted to advertise in the newsletter. We agreed that we did not want adverts, but that we should write to them offering to review their publications if they would send us a review copy. Similarly we should write to other educational publishers. Bruce agreed to undertake this.
- 10.3 The Wolverhampton Library Service has written asking for copies of our publications. It was suggested that members in the area should follow this up by asking the library for further information &c (in order to spread the word).
- 10.4 We should appeal for more personal experience from members to be written up in NL.
- 10.5 Dick is thinking of editing a book on Alternative Education in the UK, and asked for names of likely contributors.
- 10.6 When members are involved in broadcasts on EO, they should a) inform Publications Group of the details, and b) ask for a copy of the tape/videotape that is made which they would keep, from which could be made a copy for our own central library of broadcasts.

#### CORE GROUP

2 p.m. 25 Apr 1981, at The Burntlands, Tenbury Wells.

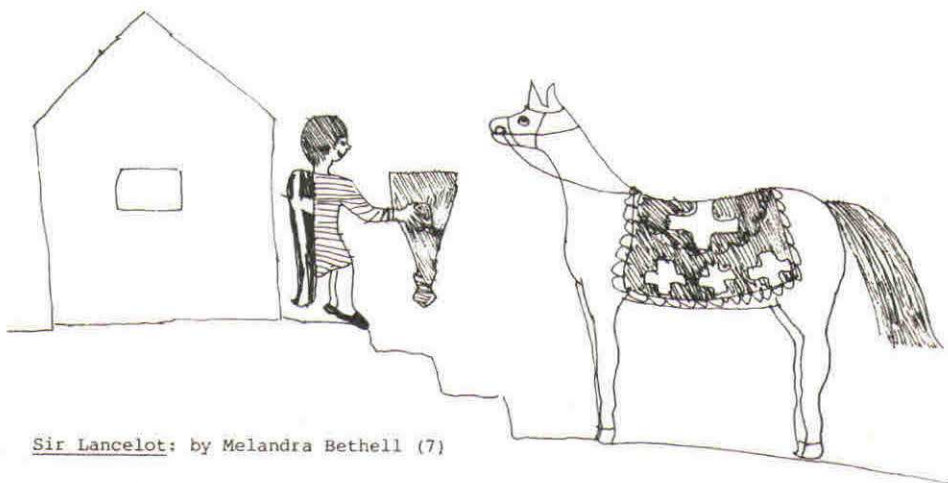
Members present (eventually): Jane Davies, Sarah Guthrie, Stephanie & David Leland, Dick Kitto, Dianne and Bruce Cox, Iris and Geoff Harrison, Roland Meighan, John Elenor, Alan and Sandra Smith. Bruce and John again did their double act with chair & minutes.

1. APOLOGIES were received from: the Fearnleys, the Sweetmans, Lorna Biciocchi, Geraldine Lockington, Sandy Cottee, Helen Holland.
2. THE MINUTES of the previous meeting, having been read, were approved.
3. MATTERS ARISING
  - 3.1 Dick reported that entitlement to family allowance for children educated at home over the age of 16 was at the discretion of the local authority.
  - 3.2 Only 31 replies had been received regarding the legal protection scheme. It was felt that although this was too small a response to justify the original scheme, we should approach the company to see if they were prepared to negotiate a trial scheme on the basis of a small number. The newsletter should contain an announcement that, since the response was so poor, the scheme at present can only be available on an individual basis. Dick agreed to contact a legal member in Manchester and also Justice for Children for their views on the scheme.
  - 3.3 Discussion of the Support Fund was deferred to the next meeting, with a recommendation that the name Education Otherwise be officially registered.
  - 3.4 The East Anglia meeting will be on 13/14 June; beyond this no details are available.
4. 'ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION' A group has been set up as a limited company under this name, offering considerable services to members at considerable cost; they seem to be heavily curriculum-orientated. After some discussion it was agreed to ask in the newsletter whether our members had any experience of it that they could pass on.
5. SERVICES TO MEMBERS There was some discussion on whether we could offer members the sort of services that GWS offers. It was felt that most of them would be too time-consuming, but two ideas emerged concretely:-
  - 5.1 A meeting for teenagers at which their particular problems could be discussed; this might be in conjunction with a visit from some Danish teenagers with whom Iris was in contact. It should be suggested in the newsletter.
  - 5.2 Local co-ordinators should be encouraged to produce a monthly duplicated broadsheet.
6. PATRONAGE Some people felt that well-known patrons who were genuinely interested in EO might be valuable; others felt that these names might be equally off-putting to members of different political/philosophical convictions. It was agreed to compile a list of well-known people who might be invited to become members, rather than patrons; everyone is to bring three suggested names to the next meeting.

7. **OU PROGRAMME** Some members felt that the Core Group should have been consulted over the making of the programme. Dick and Roland explained that it had to be planned in a hurry, leaving no time for consultation. They apologized for not passing on the information until the programme was already in the can.
8. **QUESTIONNAIRES** It was reiterated that our policy is to keep questionnaires totally confidential, and that any data drawn from them is done anonymously.
9. **DATE and PLACE of NEXT MEETING** Iris, after consulting her family, again offered us hospitality for Saturday 18th July (usual times). The offer was accepted with alacrity.
10. **CHAIRMAN FOR NEXT MEETING** Dick: **MINUTING SECRETARY** John.
11. **AOB**
- 11.1 **RESOURCES LIST** There was some discussion as to whether this was necessary; it was eventually agreed that although the demand is not great as yet, the need is implicit. Jane made the point that the list must be seen to be valuable if any member is to be persuaded to keep the list up-to-date; she agreed, as an interim measure, to produce a shortlist of names and addresses of organizations which offer resources that might be useful to members. We also need a special booklet or package for teenagers who want to withdraw from school because they are unhappy.
- 11.2 A hearty vote of thanks was passed to the Harrison family for their delightful hospitality, especially to AJ who had done all the catering.
- 11.3 The Smiths have considerable knowledge of mental handicap and will deal with any enquiries that involve this.
- 11.4 The Trent Park meeting will be held again at the end of September; it was suggested that the format should be similar to last time, but that specific times for events should be advertised in the Newsletter
- 11.5 It was agreed to continue our subscription to Where, the copy to go first to Sarah (for the Education Through the Press column) and then to Dick.
- 11.6 Sarah suggested that EO should have a stall at as many East Anglian fairs as possible; she agreed to co-ordinate the organization.

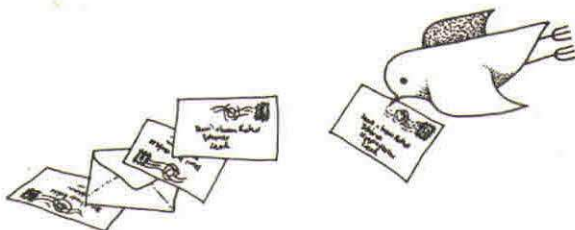
Meeting closed 4.45 p.m.

Agenda items for the next meeting should be sent to: John Elenor, 18 Eynham Road, London W12; to arrive no later than Wednesday July 1st.



Sir Lancelot: by Melandra Bethell (7)

# Letters



A member has written in to say that the DHSS has reduced her benefit since her elder daughter (age 16) returned to live with her. She continues:

One of the issues which could be brought up sometime (with regard to LEA grants &c) is not only that people on DHSS 'benefits' fork out of their meagre allowances for home meals (when they would be entitled to free school meals), but also the matter of the necessity of paying for milk, when, if at school, free milk (I may be wrong here) is given to children for their first few years at school.

Not, of course, to mention the considerable sums one spends on paper, books, and other equipment, outings, &c. But I can only imagine the LEA commenting that if one cannot (or finds it difficult) to manage financially all these aspects at home, then the obvious alternative is to send the child to school.

Since my first contact with the LEA (before Diane was due to start school, even though she was just 5 years, and due to start the following term), to beg them to come to assess her, as I would like to have their written confirmation that she was being 'adequately' educated at home (as when I first 'phoned' them, I was told to write a letter myself to the court 'access hearing' - her father was trying to gain access, after two years, on the grounds that Diane wasn't going to be going to school - informing the court that the LEA was satisfied with the position, prior to visiting at a 'later date'), they sent a very nice woman around, at my request, who examined Diane's reading ability and written work, and appeared very helpful and understanding, subsequently writing out a good 'report' on her progress, saying that the LEA were satisfied with the situation.

I must admit that I did say that, since all my other four children had attended Summerhill School, and I was not yet in the financial position to send Diane there too, I chose to keep her at home until it may become possible for her also to attend, if ever. So on the report she wrote that the LEA were quite happy for her to be educated at home 'until such time as she attends boarding school' - which, luckily, is so vague as to be non-existent.

I did 'phone them about six months later to inquire about reading books (Diane didn't learn by any 'method' - just library books and her own) en masse - possibly from some such source as a college or somewhere where they may be able to lend in abundance, as Diane had exhausted the local library's supply - and was assured that they would look into the matter and phone me next day, even though they didn't think they knew of any source of supply. No subsequent 'phone call, nor any other contact whatsoever, leading me to believe that they just can't be bothered. Much better than being hassled, or asked for time-tables (which I never had been, even initially), even though I was slightly disappointed at no help over the books, since the visitor had told me that I mustn't forget to contact them if I needed help in any way.

Anyway - as I said, infinitely better than being harassed!

Yours Sincerely,

(name and address supplied)



Dear Editor,

The main disadvantage for the Harrison children is that they are all slow readers. No wonder that they turn to work for an outlet of energy. But before a person learns to work s/he has to learn to make up her mind (learn to think). There are only 2 ways of learning to think and you need them both: reading and discussions. And to acquire a critical and positive attitude of mind you need to give the body plenty of sunshine and laziness to let all these powerful ideas turn over because learning to think takes a lot of time.

I don't agree with Janice Owen's definition of work and play (v. Newsletter 17). I'd rather stick to the old-fashioned definitions found in dictionaries. Thinking is work, too,

Yours truly,  
Sigrun Macgilchrist



35 Mayfield Avenue  
Stranraer

Dear Editor,

I felt prompted to write this letter having read Chris Stoke's contribution on part-time schooling. My eldest daughter Cara, now 8, attended school from the age of 4½ years to 6½ years. I was determined when she started that she went only if she wished. The headmistress at the school was extremely helpful, and we settled on a compromise of afternoons only. I had no dealings with the Education Office at all as the headmistress assured me it was her responsibility but I was assured that the County Solicitor had advised on the matter, that as long as Cara's attendance was 'regular' then we were not outside the law. During these two school years we moved and continued afternoons only at her new school.

Cara's only reason for attendance was a social one, but we found it didn't really work very well, as other children were, I think, jealous of Cara's freedom from full-time schooling. Also the teachers were worried about not being able to assess Cara, as her limited presence in school didn't give her time to complete her books.

Now we have two children of school age at home. The LEA haven't been at all harassing. I don't think they actually approve, but the situation is tolerated. We're not badgered for providing a curriculum, and we don't follow a formal schedulr. An Adviser has visited us twice. Both times he has been quite friendly, talking with the children and being shown by them the things they have made &c.

Our dealings have all been with the Buckinghamshire LEA, both now our children are educated at home, and the entire time when my eldest daughter was in part-time schooling.

As regards science education, we find Judith Hann's book The Family Scientist is great fun. She combines explanation of basic scientific principles with simple experiments to demonstrate them, though not all the experiments work as well as claimed. A section on how to equip a home laboratory is included.

On the history side, The Children's Book of World History (Dark Ages to 1914, and Early Man to the Fall of Rome) are presented in a pictorial and informative way, stimulating further interest.

Yours Sincerely,

Jo West



North Lodge  
Stockgrove Park School  
Leighton Buzzard  
Bedfordshire

Dear Education Otherwise,

Many thanks for publishing my previous communication. As a supporter of non-compulsory education and founder of a local campaign against compulsory education I will be taking part sometime in 1981, with others, in an open discussion on alternative education at Hillside School, Belford Church, Douglas Gardens, Edinburgh's most progressive school. Though not entirely non-compulsory it encourages a healthy independent attitude and there is a considerable degree of choice, with children not having to attend all classes by any means. Taking the step to an entirely non-compulsory method is not an easy one. I failed to do this myself on occasions when teaching a five-year-old. I now realise that I need never have used any compulsion because nearly every day there is always a point at which most young children will respond to the offer to do some work. There are plenty of reading and writing schemes available and each child reaches various formative stages sooner or later.

With regard to more complex subject matter students with an interest can soon learn the basic framework. Hugo's simplified system of languages in three months may seem an absurdity. How could anyone learn a language in three months? Obviously very few could learn to speak fluently in such a short period. However, having tried to do this with German, I discovered that in a relatively short period it is possible to grasp a lot of basic material. Where there is genuine interest a student will even surmount obstacles in order to learn.

What A.S. Neill discovered at Summerhill was that children, like kittens, love to play, and that to obstruct the natural playful process is to create repressed people. He also stated that social responsibility and enthusiasm for learning come with maturity, and the timing of these developments vary from one individual to another. But we live in a world of considerable repression, and it is very difficult to promote freedom for children.

I will end this short communication with a quotation concerning Tolstoy's school:

Our school evolved freely from the principles brought into it by the teachers and pupils. In spite of the predominant influence of the teacher, the pupil always had the right not to go to school, and even when in school not to listen to the teacher. The teacher had the right not to admit a pupil ...

Submitting naturally only to laws derived from their own nature, children revolt and rebel when subjected to your premature interference. They do not believe in the validity of your bells and time-tables and rules.

Quotation from Count L.N.Tolstoy, His Life and Work, by Charles Sarolea.

A Anderson

66 Henderson Row  
Edinburgh

Contact for Campaign Against Compulsory Education: Campaign for the Recognition of Alternative Medicine: Homoeopathic Advisory Service.

## The Harrison Court Case

Jane Davies

Geoff and Iris Harrison's court case was heard on May 14th and 15th at Worcester Crown Court. They were appealing against a conviction, with unconditional discharge, in January 1980. All the evidence on both sides was heard, but the Judge has deferred a verdict until the first week in June.

Lord Gifford conducted a brilliant case on behalf of the Harrisons, stressing the particular relevance of the autonomous approach for their dyslexic children. Mr.Tracey, for the opposition, concentrated his attack on the lack of 'guidance' and 'structure' in the autonomous approach, and on the inability of Grant and Newall to read and write competently.

Many thanks for the very supportive evidence given by all the witnesses for the Harrisons, especially Roland Meighan, an EO member.

Dick Kitto sat in the Press bench throughout the hearing, and will be writing a report for the Times Educational Supplement. Sympathetic press coverage was given by the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Mail, the Times, the Guardian, and the Express. ATV and the BBC also covered the case.

A full report of the case will be given in the next Newsletter, when the verdict will be known.

### MAN ALIVE

BBC TV is in process of filming a Man Alive feature on the Harrisons. We do not yet know the precise date of screening, but readers are advised to watch the Radio Times for details.

### EAST ANGLIAN PICNIC GATHERING

*Sunday 14th June*

Unfortunately - because of the need for somewhere with cover, because of our 'summer'! - we still haven't found a venue. But we are determined that it will take place somewhere as many people have said they want to come. So, will you please ring BRUCE COX at 098-682-315, who will convey details - hopefully to be known by the time you read this.



## BOOKS

TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY  
by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner

Reviewer: John Elenor

Subversive? What a suggestion! Teaching is a very respectable activity. Really? What makes it respectable? Well ... it's handing on the accumulated wisdom of past generations, keeping us in touch with the thinking of our ancestors. And what if this accumulated wisdom is out-of-date, or irrelevant to the needs of modern society? It can't be out-of-dtae - it possesses a timeless quality. Really? So what does this timeless wisdom have to say about nuclear energy? or the multi-racial society? or pollution? But those are political questions - nothing to do with teaching.

And there you have the nub of it - does 'teaching' mean the passing on of an accepted body of facts? or does it mean asking questions, discarding glib answers, criticizing the status quo - in a word, being subversive? The authors of this enthralling, exciting and concept-shattering book, without recourse to hysteria or special pleading, make an utterly convincing case for the 'subversive' nature of teaching. They mean, of course, classroom teaching since their concern is for all children in their struggle to come to terms with the modern world, and they are not so unrealistic as to suppose that institutionalized teaching is going to vanish in the foreseeable future; the revolution, when it comes, will happen inside school. But since any EO parent is ipso facto a teacher, this book has a lot to say to them.

The authors' basic thesis is that 'change - constant, accelerating, ubiquitous - is the most striking characteristic of the world we live in and that our educational system has not yet recognized this fact'. Unlike many radical writers on education, they show throughout a profound conviction that the educational system can be revolutionized to cope with change, and significantly their inspiration is drawn as often as not from writers who are not usually thought of as 'educators'. It is this widening of focus that seems to me the principal merit of the book.

Change, of course, is not new, which is why most teachers think that their methods will cope as well in the future as they have in the past. But what they neglect is that the rate of change is changing; the graph of change is exponential and we have now reached a position where the speed of change is becoming increasingly obvious - and to those who can't cope with it, increasingly alarming; the growth of electronic means of communication, and the increasing ease and speed of travel are the most obvious examples. And the most alarming thing for teachers - if they think about it - is that the present rate of change is less than a generation; in other words, by the time a generation of pupils has passed through school, what they were taught (in terms of a 'body of knowledge') will already be out of date. What can be done about it?

The first thing the authors offer, following a lead from Ernest Hemingway, is a course in 'crap-detecting'. (If you don't like vulgarity, call it an 'anti-entropic feedback system'). By which is meant the ability to question assumptions, to be sensitive to problems caused by change, and to have the courage to sound an alarm when accepted ideas and organization have outlived their usefulness. The subversiveness of such a course of action is immediately obvious, even to those who

are not aware of the arguments of a book like this. Three particular problems are outlined to point up the necessity of 'subversiveness' - the communications revolution, where mass communication is all one way; the change revolution (mentioned above); and the 'burgeoning bureaucracy', which may be inevitable, but can also be controlled by "providing the young with a What-is-it-good-for? perspective on its own society".

After a chapter pointing out the extent to which the environment controls the perceptions of those who participate (in particular the classroom environment, which is geared to the authoritarian dissemination of information), we are presented with the book's first concrete proposal - 'the inquiry method'. Let not the trained teacher equate this with 'question-and-answer technique' so beloved of the more trendy colleges and departments of education - that is instantly dismissed as the 'Guess-what-I'm-thinking-now Game' or the Seductive Method of learning. No, the inquiry method (without capital letters to ossify it into a technique) is a truly subversive method, for it has no syllabus, no content to cover, and no specific goals: "the older school environments stressed that learning is being told what happened, the inquiry environment stresses that learning is a happening in itself". (The authors are even brave - or indiscreet - enough to remind us what happened to Socrates who originated the inquiry environment; as they say "All authorities get nervous when learning is conducted without a syllabus".)

The inquiry method is simply a matter of asking the right questions, which are those that emphatically don't have a Right Answer (another fetish of traditional teaching). Once you start on it, of course, it is not at all simple, which is why the authors offer a chapter on it. "What questions are worth asking?" Their standard for judging the worth of a question is that it should help a student to re-order and quantify what he already knows. It will also help to break down subject barriers since a 'subject' is defined by the learner, and does not exist of itself; 'subject disciplines' are merely categories that previous scholars have invented to help them understand their perceptions, and are not necessarily helpful to modern students with different perceptions, since (in the words of Alan Watts) "the universe is wiggly". The history of science, for instance, is studded with inventions that traditional thinking had proved were impossible.

The study of 'meaning' is perhaps the most difficult part of the book to grasp and also the most vital, since the inquiry method is based on the thesis that it is the pupil who must make the meaning for himself, with guidance but not domination from the teacher. The structure of language fights against this concept since it favours fixed categories and treats the observer as unrelated to what is observed; whereas what is 'out there' only has the meaning that the observer puts on it. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and Einstein's Theories of Relativity are two explications of this idea; a third is provided by the experiments of Adelbert Ames jr., which figure importantly, together with a brief biography, in chapter 6. (And I'm not going to reduce them to a few scintillating sentences, because a) I can't, and b) I think you ought to read the whole book.) The implication of this for teaching is that schools should be 'making meanings' since this is the only metaphor that treats the maker (i.e. pupil) as an individual entity, not an identical receiver; if subject-matter exists only in the mind of the perceiver, no-one can determine what is to be learned.

If learning cannot be determined, how can it be evaluated? Chapter 3 gives a few hints, in its description of good learners who amongst other things:

- \* have confidence in their ability to learn
- \* enjoy solving problems
- \* prefer to rely on their own judgment
- \* are not fearful of being wrong
- \* do not need to have the answer

By the same token, a good teacher:

- \* rarely tells, largely questions
- \* does not accept a single statement as the answer
- \* rarely summarizes
- \* poses a problem each lesson
- \* measures success in terms of behavioural changes

Thus most attributes of traditional teachers are inimical to inquiry methods. (The authors have some innocent fun at these teachers' expense, categorizing them as The Lamplighter, who illuminates his pupils' minds; The Gardener, who fertilizes them; The Personnel Manager, who keeps them busy; and The Bucket Filler, who fills them up.)

The remainder of the book gives various strategies for reforming schools along the lines suggested - in some cases needing a literal re-forming since it is the form of the school that produces the most commonly perceived problems. Training colleges will also have a vital role when they put students in the position of having to invent viable new teaching strategies. Education, they declare, must increase the survival prospects of the group. In a stable society it can promote the old traditions; in times of change it must understand that change, learn which old concepts are valid and unlearn those that are not.

"The revolution will begin to be visible when we can eliminate:-

- \* all conventional tests and testing
- \* all courses and requirements
- \* all full-time administration
- \* all restrictions that confine learners to sitting in boxes inside boxes

Sounds like a recipe for Otherwise education!

#### THE MAP THAT CAME TO LIFE

by H.J.Deverson; Oxford University Press.

Suitable for primary-age children, this book explains all the Ordnance Survey map symbols during the course of a country walk taken by two children. Each page has a picture of the landscape and the map drawn from it. My 9 and 11-year-olds enjoyed it.

#### THE TRAVELS of COLUMBUS

THE TRAVELS of MARCO POLO

THE TRAVELS of LIVINGSTONE

THE TRAVELS of CAPTAIN COOK

by G.P.Ceserani; Kestrel Books. £2.95 each.

This series has clear maps on the end-papers, and pictures full of tiny figures which my children find very appealing. The author quietly points out the frequently bad consequences of exploration to the native peoples, but without idealizing their ways of life.

## SHARING NATURE WITH CHILDREN

by Joseph Cornell: Inter-Action Imprint, 15 Wilkin St., London NW5; £2.95 paperback.

Sharing Nature with Children was first launched in America, where it was instantly hailed as something quite new in the field of nature education. The author was so obviously not just concerned with the facts about wildlife. Joseph Cornell was passionately concerned that children grew up with a sensitivity towards nature, and a humility, an awe, at the wonders around them.

The books was obviously also just good fun. Instead of simply lecturing children, Joseph Cornell developed the children's interest through games and play. In no time at all the book was being used and adopted as a handbook by Scouts and conservation groups.

The British edition, now being published, adapts everything Joseph Cornell has said to our needs here in Britain, and its publication has been greeted with tremendous enthusiasm by groups like the YHA, the Scouts, the Friends of the Earth and the City Farm Movement, and by personalities like Sir Peter Scott, Phil Drabble and Johnny Morris. "I wish there had been such a super book on nature education when I was at school," was one comment by Tom Burke of Friends of the Earth. There are 41 games in the book, and they are divided into sections, each of which highlights a particular aspect of nature exploration. By blindfolding children, Joseph Cornell develops their other senses. By playing at hunter and hunted, he shows the intricacies of camouflage. By going on a 'micro hike' for a few feet at ground level, he explores the miniature world of insects. "The emphasis throughout," he says "is learning directly from nature. Children are bored by the facts about nature; but they become deeply absorbed and enthusiastic when they are led into direct personal experience. It is not half so important to know as to feel."

The author makes three basic assumptions about nature education: it must be simple; it must involve direct experiences; and it should teach values as well as facts. So the games don't require elaborate or sophisticated techniques and equipment. And perhaps particularly important in the crowded cities of Britain, some of them can be played indoors and many others can be played in back gardens, school grounds and city parks.

(The above is an extract from the publishers' news-sheet)

## NOW AVAILABLE:

## THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATING

by EO member Roland Meighan: Holt Reinhart £3.95.

Includes a chapter on EO, and will be reviewed in the next Newsletter.

## METHUEN CHATTERBOOKS

by Leila Berg and Helen Piers: Methuen £1.25

A new series of books for very young children - bright, attractive and just the right size. Chatterbooks also have just the right content: simple stories about the everyday happenings in a small child's life. But above all, Chatterbooks have been written and designed with great care so that the books form a basis for an adult and child to talk together (and not just talk, as readers of A Tickle will discover!)

(The above is an extract from the publishers' news-sheet)

## EO in Literature

Janice Owen

To gain time, their father would teach the two eldest children to read and write, so that, if approached by the School Attendance Officer, their mother could say they were leaving the hamlet shortly and, in the meantime, were being taught at home.

So their father brought home two copies of Mavor's First Reader and taught them the alphabet; but just as Laura was beginning on words of one syllable, he was sent away to work on a distant job, only coming home at week-ends. Laura, left at the "C-a-t s-i-t-s on the m-a-t" stage, had then to carry her book round after her mother as she went about her housework, asking: "Please, Mother, what does h-o-u-s-e spell?" or "W-a-l-k, Mother, what is that?" Often, when her mother was too busy or too irritated to attend to her, she would sit and gaze on a page that might as well have been printed in Hebrew for all she could make of it, frowning and poring over the print as though she would wring out the meaning by force of concentration.

After weeks of this, there came a day when, quite suddenly, as it seemed to her, the printed characters took on a meaning. There were still many words, even in the first pages of that simple primer, she could not decipher; but she could skip those and yet make sense of the whole. "I'm reading!" she cried aloud. "Oh Mother! Oh Edmund! I'm reading!"

As she was seldom seen without an open book in her hand, it was not long before the neighbours knew she could read. They did not approve of this at all. None of their children had learned to read before they went to school, and then only under compulsion, and they thought that Laura, by doing so, had stolen a march on them. So they attacked her mother about it, her father conveniently being away. "He'd no business to teach the child himself," they said. "Schools be the places for teaching, and you'll likely get wrong for him doing it when governess finds out." Others, more kindly disposed, said Laura was trying her eyes and begged her mother to put an end to her studies; but, as fast as one book was hidden away from her, she found another, for anything in print drew her eyes as a magnet draws steel.

Edmund did not learn to read quite so early; but when he did, he learned more thoroughly. No skipping unknown words for him and guessing what they meant by the context; he mastered every page before he turned over, and his mother was more patient with his inquiries, for Edmund was her darling.

If the two children could have gone on as they were doing, and have had access to suitable books as they advanced, they would probably have learnt more than they did during their brief schooldays. But that happy time of discovery did not last. A woman, the frequent absences from school of whose child had brought the dreaded Attendance Officer to her door, informed him of the end house scandal, and he went there and threatened Laura's mother with all manner of penalties if Laura was not in school at nine o'clock the next Monday morning.

From Lark Rise to Candleford by Flora Thompson: an account of her Oxfordshire childhood in the 1880s.

## Curricul...umm

"The curriculum needs to be related to what happens outside schools"  
(quote from The School Curriculum)

Q: Discuss, with close reference to the text, the latest paper issued by the Department of Education and Science (Welsh Office) about the School Curriculum.

A: *There's a gently encouraging tone about this booklet that makes schools appear as places that merely want a bit of tidying up, a firm nod in the right direction, to become all things to all children. Rather as if the changing-room was due for a jolly good clean-out, and then the match could be won.*

*For EU parents, it's a fascinating read, and contains many bits of useful information that might need to be passed on to the local education department. For instance: "Neither the Government nor the local authorities should specify in detail what the schools should teach." Parents who have been asked to set out their aims for home education should know that the Secretaries of State suggest here that schools should analyse their aims, set them out in writing, and then assess how far these aims are measured up to. The sort of aims they set out (they call it a checklist) include:*

- \* helping pupils to develop lively, enquiring minds ... and being able to apply themselves to tasks and physical skills*
- \* helping pupils "to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast-changing world"*
- \* "to help pupils to understand the world in which they live ..."*

*Further on, guidance for primary and secondary curricula becomes even more obvious. It is suggested that the imagination and interest of each pupil needs to be captured if their school life "particularly during the last years of compulsory education" is to have meaning. It may even help with the problem of truancy, they think. Well, well - who would have thought it?*

*As far as basic skills are concerned, apparently even HMI's admit that these develop better in a varied context rather than within a narrow curriculum. And further up the school there is a need to "equip young people fully for adult and working life in a world which is changing very rapidly indeed ..."*

*Finally, a useful snippet for those parents who are asked to provide a timetable: "The Secretaries of State do not suggest minimum times which should be devoted to these subjects (English, Maths, Science and modern languages). Any suggested minima might too easily become norms, or be interpreted too rigidly ..."*

*On the whole, an implicit argument for education outside school. But at £8.00 for 20 pages, it's unlikely to reach a wide audience.*

Sarah Guthrie

We have been trying not to mould our children into our own image, but to offer them real choice, and to allow their behaviour to come from within themselves, not from outside compulsion. They are becoming less self-regulated by the day, and we have thought for a long time that this sort of freedom is very difficult to provide in the small nuclear family.

We hope to find other families feeling the same as we do. What a relief it would be to be living together with a few more people with a vision of the free child!

Please get in touch,

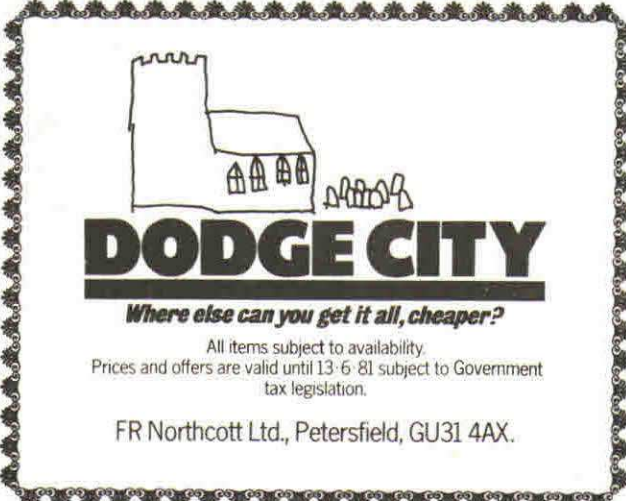

Auriel and Tom Hill  
15 Champion Grove, London SE5  
01 274 5349

Is anyone interested in reviewing the following for the next Newsletter?

*The Myth of the Hyperactive Child*

*Other Means of Child Control*

Contact: Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss.

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Embellishment to an Advertisement, by Arnetetia Bethell (5)

## I CHANGED FOR A NEW LIFE

At School, I never imagined that there was anything else. I didn't know that you didn't really have to go to school as long as you were still taught at home. I was born and bred in society and it was difficult to escape from it. School was too competitive and there was no escaping from a lesson (except to the toilet!) once it had begun. Some of the lessons I liked, of course, but some I despised, such as needlework. It was very sexist at my school. The girls did needlework and cookery so they would grow up into nice little housewives, the boys did woodwork and metalwork so they could marry and have some skills to earn enough money for the family. Few complained. The mindless existence of society had bred 'housewife' into girls and they were happy with that, and 'breadwinner' into the boys who were proud of it. But I was not satisfied with that. So now I am taught at home. There are great advantages in this. For instance - we only work from 9.00 a.m. to 12 noon. We don't have to do anything that we don't want to do and we can make a lesson however long or short we want it to be. I enjoy all of my lessons now. I make lots of things too, now that Christmas is nearly here. There is not much else to write about except that I cannot say how much I enjoy working and living at Holme Place. I wish everyone who reads this biography a very Merry Christmas

*Mandy Freeman (13)*

*(from EO in N.Devon Newsletter 7, last December)*

### A Song, by Melandra Bethell (7)

*The wind on the sea is marvellous,  
I've heard it lots of times;  
It goes woo ooh wooooh  
Lots of times.  
It wooshes and rumples sails at sea,  
It whistles and sings in everyone's ears,  
It feels as if it had twenty spears,  
The wind on the sea is marvellous.*

## No Introduction

The material for this issue was assembled and collated by John Elenor, to whom all congratulatory telegrams may be addressed. However, the final typing and presentation was given over (by a process of pass-the-parcel) about three minutes before the deadline to the new editors, David and Irene Bethell.

David and Irene who? David Bethell was born in Macclesfield Workhouse in 1947 son of a church organist and a wellknown raconteuse. He was educated at Wilmslow Nursery Lane, Over Alderley, Henbury and Broken Cross primary schools, and at the King's School in Macclesfield, from which he gained an open scholarship to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. David was successively a Scholar, Senior Scholar and Denis Teichman Scholar, and was awarded a First Class Honours degree in mediaeval history.

This urbane, handsome, witty, soft-spoken and immoderately modest egomaniac then set sail into the World of Commerce, founding a genealogical agency called Melandra, and becoming one of the leading experts on family history. He is a Registered Genealogist, and a Member of the Board of Professional Advisers, and Chief Consultant on British Research to the International Genealogy Consumer Organization.

His published works include Portrait of Cheshire (Robert Hale, London, 1979 £4.95), Portrait of Chester (Robert Hale, London, 1980 £6.75), and English Ancestry (Accelerated Indexing Systems, Salt Lake City, 1981 \$35.00); he is the editor of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historian. David is currently working on an encyclopaedic guide to Derbyshire Archives, to be published in August; Steps in the Dark (a guide to solving historical problems) and the English edition of English Ancestry. His hobbies include eating, resting and sleep.

Irene (Margaret Barron), the girl-next-door whom David snatched from obscurity in 1969, is an ex-schoolgirl, trained at Prestbury C.P., Park Royal Sec.Mod. and Macclesfield High School for Girls. She qualified as a graphic designer with an HND at Stockport College and, having removed to the fleshpots of Cambridge, worked as a designer for the University of London Press, Samuel Bagster's and Business Books. She later trained as a record agent, becoming a registered genealogist, and was until this year the chief research<sup>er</sup> for Debretts Ancestry Research in the northwest of England.

Their three unschooled, uneducated and ineducable children are Melandra (wild and free) aged 7, Arnetetia (red and fiery) aged 5, and Felix Lupus (big and beautiful) aged 4 (see sketch opposite).

The family maintains a tenuous existence in a half-ruined stone farmhouse clinging tenaciously to the side of a large hill in the Peak District: see sketch inside front cover. Strines dates from the 17th century and stands at 1330 feet O.D., overlooking a 50-mile vista of Staffordshire and Shropshire. The buildings are in an advanced state of decay and are surrounded by a network of mounds and ditches, the precise origins of which can only be guessed at. The location is famous for Weather, is snowbound for most of the year, and best avoided by those of a nervous disposition.

Upon receiving physical possession of the bag of old Letraset, the much-used Jiffy bag and the pile of dog-eared papers which are the hereditary symbols of office of the Editor-in-Chief, the Bethells immediately assumed dictatorial powers, promoted themselves to Field-Marschals, and sent out orders for the summary execution of the Publications Group. The PG Committee were surprised in their traditional posture of Feeling the Members, and scuttled away into their burrows.

The new editors' major contribution to this issue has been to act as adjudicators in the ceaseless struggle between the home-educators and the inexorable forces of grammar, spelling and logic. For the next issue we have rejected a 5000-page article on Education and the Inner Meaning of Life, subtitled Is It All Futile?, and also put several pages of febrile handwringing from the Hackney Sub-Committee of Paranoids through the shredder.

Instead, we are going to have a Super Special Feature on EO in East Anglia; not that these benighted flatlands have been neglected in previous issues (rather the contrary), but now that we are all so at home with the doings of this hotbed further news will be lapped up like another edition of Crossroads. Actually, this is a rude way of framing a sincere appeal for contributions from this area for the September issue; in particular, biographical notes, experiences with the LEAs, plans for the future, pen-portraits and actual drawings of personalities and their homes, even photographs. Suggestions are also invited for a region to attack in a similar fashion in the December issue, assuming that the new editors have survived the Byzantine machinations of the PG & CG into so late a period.

Without treading on Kipper's toes we also want to pepper future issues with drawings, short stories or other items from EO children. We are not the LEA; we don't want to judge standards or award prizes - don't send us the best stuff or make a special effort, just things which might look good in the odd corner of the Newsletter and help to enliven it.



26 Sept. Green Park

Page 40p.  
Donohé  
How Town  
Thornhill  
Stirling

12.0 p.m.  
20.00

# education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organization whose principal aim is to provide a support and information network for families whose children are being educated out of school, for those who are contemplating such a step, and for those who wish to support the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of children.

Our principal aims are as follows

- ✧ To encourage the provision of alternative learning situations outside the school system for those children who are not benefitting from school.
- ✧ To re-affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school.
- ✧ To establish the primary right of children that full consideration, with due allowance for their age and understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.

For further information send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to:

JOHN ELENOR  
18 Eynham Road, London W.12