

SEPTEMBER 1981
NUMBER 19



education
otherwise

NEWSLETTER



EDITORIAL COMPLEX

Strines, Upper Hulme, Leek.

CONTENTS:

Education Through the Press	Sarah Guthrie	3
Talking about School	Brian Guthrie	5
The Harrison Case	Dick Ritto	6
Judgement		11
Notes on the Judgement	Iris Harrison	15
EO in Derbyshire	Mary Carter	16
School Phobia		21
Dissertation	Jane Fairman	23
Part-time Schooling	Mary Evans	24
	Lorna Bicchichi	25
	Olive Manton	26
Benny Rotten and Peter Claver		29
Shirley Neighan		30
Intellect and Intuition	Joan Hoare	30
Inspector Kidd Investigates	D.H. Shakespeare	34
Co-operation by the LEA	Roy Dunster	36
In Confidence	Janet Everdell	38
EO IN EAST ANGLIA		39
Educating Archie	Sarah Guthrie	40
Through the Press and News	Sarah Guthrie and Bruce Cox	42
EO in East Anglia	Jackie Fearnley	43
Bruce and Elaine Cox		45
Jenny and Jackie Fearnley	Jackie Fearnley	49
School	Elaine Gosling	50
The Guthries	Sarah Guthrie	51
William	Jane Mansfield	52
Notices		52
Minutes		55
Pooks	Piers Landmann, Gabrielle Howard	58
	Jackie Fearnley	
Growing Without Schooling	Jane Davies	62
EO in Literature	Janice Owen	63
News	Reg Mutter and G.E.E. Taylor	64
Name and Address Supplied		65
No Introduction		68

EDITORIAL

David Bethell

Puritanism is very attractive to the unwary, and has proved marvellously adaptable to modern conditions. Today we no longer believe that over-indulgence will lead us to Hell; but are happy to see it as the root of cancer, rotten teeth, obesity, vandalism, hypertension, poverty.

Conversely, we believe that the path of righteousness is paved with thorns. Don't put sugar in your coffee; preferably don't drink coffee; you need more exercise; a fast would do you good; don't eat meat; smoking is bad for you; stop hanging about; get up early; get a job; cut your hair; don't use a new envelope; wear jeans. Ecofreaks are just as good at it as Plymouth Brethren.

So we expect good things to be nasty. Going to the dentist is the modern penance and absolution. Young men would hate National Service, but older men think how good it would be for them. If a judge or a magistrate or a headmaster is kind and considerate, his lenience is immediately thought of as weakness, even if lenience is a more effective way of dealing with the situation.

In our regular features *Education Through the Press* and *Talking about School* we have accumulated abundant evidence of just how appallingly nasty state schools can be and often are; but to many people this is like complaining that going to the dentist is unpleasant. Surprisingly many people relish the shock that going to school for the first time visits on their infant relatives. Many people assume that any educational reform which makes school nicer for the pupils automatically lowers educational standards.

Puritanism is even well entrenched in the ranks of EO. How many of us have helped our children break out of school, only to erect an educational concentration camp for them in our own back garden? What good is it frog-marching a child through differential equations if you extinguish for ever any enthusiasm for maths? Knowledge is too precious to be fouled by intimidation.



attention!

ALL MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY CO-ORDINATORS, PLEASE NOTE:

THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES, DOM AND ROS SWEETMAN, HAVE MOVED TO:
OLD HALL, EAST BERGHOLT, COLCHESTER CO7 6TQ

It is important for co-ordinators to make sure that the address at the top of the Membership Form (the yellow sheet of the introductory letter) is ALTERED accordingly.

NOT EDUCATING ARCHIE

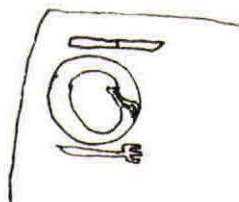
by
M.A.B.



awful
Mum you look



BUT MUM IDONT LIKE
BACON



EDUCATION THROUGH



SCHOOLING

The needs of West Indian children are not being met in schools, according to an interim report: GUARDIAN 18 Jun. Racialism in the classroom is seen as a major factor

★ Two out of three children get no benefit out of going to school, claims a French paediatrician: MIRROR 8 Jul. "Some are literally destroyed by school", he said, and added that Western schooling was geared to teachers instead of pupils. ★ More than 50,000 teaching jobs may go over the next three years: DAILY TELEGRAPH 1 Aug. ★ If more teaching jobs are cut, pupils could end up working a four-day week: GUARDIAN 15 Jul. ★ Public school numbers are falling because of fee increases: DAILY TELEGRAPH 24 Jul. ★ The new left-wing ILEA wants to abolish streaming, among other plans: TIMES 3 Jun. Said Bryn Davies, the new leader, "We do not intend to run the authority as a dictatorship" ★ A 'gifted pupil unit' in Nottinghamshire will now be scrapped by its Labour council because it segregates bright children from the mainstream: DAILY TELEGRAPH 1 Jun. ★ Unemployed teenagers in London can now claim dole while attending school or college three days a week: DAILY TELEGRAPH 24 Aug ★

ALTERNATIVES

A Cheshire head has converted a double-decker bus into a classroom in order to bring nursery education to children in rural areas: DAILY TELEGRAPH 9 Jun. ★ A teacher has bought her own village school in Cornwall and opened with six pupils, all of nursery school age: DAILY TELEGRAPH 2 Jun. ★ A Norfolk parent was fined £100 for failing to send her children to school: DISS EXPRESS 22 May. ★ Over fifty handicapped children had lessons in a church hall supervised by their parents when their school closed through a teaching dispute: DAILY TELEGRAPH 24 Jun. ★ *Parents Anonymous* is a national group set up to help those who cannot cope with their children: DAILY TELEGRAPH 27 Jun ★

VIOLENCE

The Lords has rejected a ban on the caning of handicapped children: DAILY TELEGRAPH 18 Jul. ★ Elmbridge School, Surrey, surpassed the caning record of Litherland High School, Lancashire, with an average of three canings per year per child. Pupils have now been transferred to a new school, whose head "has a totally different approach to corporal punishment": DAILY TELEGRAPH 24 Jun. ★ Pupils at a public school in Oundle paid £150 to see their house master covered with a dustbinful of custard. The money went to funds for the International Year of the Disabled: DAILY TELEGRAPH 24 Jun. ★ Derby is the only authority outside London to abolish the cane: DAILY TELEGRAPH 16 Jul. ★ Two teenagers were accused of poisoning their schoolmates with chemicals stolen from the school laboratory: DAILY TELEGRAPH 2 Jul. ★ A teenage girl killed herself after studying too hard: GUARDIAN. ★ A teacher was found dead after being teased by his pupils: DAILY MAIL 10 Jul ★

THE LAW

The Education Secretary dismissed parents' allegations that Northamptonshire County Council was breaking the law by allowing educational provision to fall below minimum standards: *GUARDIAN* 2 May. The parents' action is seen as a test case against the Government's education spending cuts, and is backed by the *Advisory Centre for Education*. ☆ The Home Office plans to produce a learning pack on Law and Order for secondary schools: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 16 Jun. The project would cover theft, vandalism, drinking and drugs. ☆ The Education Secretary blames the failure in moral education by teachers and by parents for the current wave of rioting and vandalism: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 18 Jun ☆

HEALTH

Subsidising school milk encourages children to consume unnecessary amounts of animal fats, warn nutrition experts: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 18 Jul. ☆ A primary school's central heating has been blamed for outbreaks of headaches and vomiting in children and staff: *GUARDIAN* 30 Jun. ☆ A campaign is to be launched to "encourage schoolchildren to avoid pregnancy": *DAILY EXPRESS* 27 May ☆

LEARNING

Gamblers Anonymous has produced a pack for schools to discourage children from betting on 'space invader' machines: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 11 May. ☆ A Liberal peer approved of the use of space invaders as a way of understanding new technology: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 11 Jul. ☆ A Swedish psychologist claims that dyslectics can overcome their problem by reading upside down, and thus from right to left: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 5 Jun. ☆ Teenagers interested in becoming doctors can now work in hospital while taking A-levels: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 30 Aug. ☆ At an educational conference, the director of Leeds Polytechnic said that the tyranny of the degree had become absolute; at a separate meeting, a don from London University said that teachers were undereducated and likely to remain so: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 16 Jul. ☆ A public school head accused universities of over-specialisation; "We fail to educate in the true sense of the word", he said. ☆ Britain holds the worst record in Europe for 16-year-olds pursuing further education: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 2 Jul. ☆ Thousands of unemployed adults could be sent back to school to improve their educational standards or be taught how to spend their leisure time better, the Government has decided: *DAILY TELEGRAPH* 9 Jul ☆

LAST WORD

The Head of the National Association of Head Teachers, speaking at a conference, said; "Parents must not be allowed to abdicate their responsibilities. They are increasingly leaving the upbringing of their children to society, and in particular to schools": *DAILY EXPRESS* 28 May ☆

EDITED by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Janice Owen, Heather Mitchell, Mary Carter, Joan Evans, and others. Please send items to Sarah (Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk), indicating newspaper source and date.

Talking about School

"We've had mixed ability, we've gone community, and now it's bloody multi-cultural" A TEACHER commenting on a report criticizing racialism in schools, *Daily Telegraph* 18 June 1981.

"It is an unwise politician who dares to threaten the British parent" HEAD of Clifton College, on Labour's plans to scrap some public school funds, *Daily Telegraph* 8 June 1981.

"At boarding school I had walking walked right out of me with all those cold crocodiles. Horrible memories." PENELOPE KEITH, *Sunday Times* July 1981.

"He also managed to get thrown out of all the private schools he went to" talking about the playwright EDWARD ALBEE, *Guardian* June 1981.

"Teachers admit that ... within a year (of entering secondary school) the children often become listless, apathetic and alienated ... The predictable pattern of routine lessons ... which is pursued regardless of the child's basic inclinations, does not stimulate or encourage. I am afraid there are some teachers to whom monotony, rigidity and sameness are not only acceptable but even desirable" a letter to the *Sunday Telegraph* 30 July 1981, from an OXFORD RESEARCH STUDENT

AND A TRAILER for next time:

"I cannot imagine how people can remember their schooldays as 'the best days of their life'. What a terribly boring life they must have led before and after those years of incarceration" BARBARA WOODHOUSE, *Vogue* July 1981.

"She (my daughter) can read and write and is very bright - but most of us are illiterate. It doesn't worry me. I'm not really sure education is a good thing" JASPER SMITH, Surrey gypsy leader, *Sunday Times* 15 August 1981.

The Harrison Case

Dick Kitto

The Harrisons continue to grab the headlines in the national press. Their epic struggle with Hereford and Worcester Education Authority has surpassed that of Joy Baker with Norfolk in the fifties. It is not yet over, and so it is not possible at this stage to make a final assessment of the implications of the case for EO. But we can, I think, allow ourselves a feeling of optimism with some degree of confidence.

To recap on the present state of play: Geoff and Iris Harrison have four children - Wanda now aged 18, Andrea (AJ) now 17, Grant 15, and Newall 11. Wanda went to primary school for short periods when she was 5, and later for two years to Kilquhanity House, a progressive boarding school modelled on the ideas of A.S.Neill. AJ also went to this school for one year. Grant attended a primary school for half a day, and Newall has never been to school at all. Wanda at the age of 5 was assessed by the authority's educational psychologist as educationally subnormal (ESN) and the LEA (at that time Gloucestershire) proposed to send her to a school for ESN children. All four children were later seen by an independent educational psychologist and assessed as seriously dyslexic in varying degrees. Geoff is also dyslexic and left school unable to read or write.

After many skirmishes with the authorities, the LEA (now Hereford and Worcester) issued attendance orders for Andrea, Grant and Newall in September 1979, and when these were not complied with issued a summons under Section 37 of the 1944 Education Act against the parents, which was heard at the Magistrates Court in January 1980. The Harrisons were found guilty but unconditionally discharged. They appealed to the Crown Court and their case was heard in May 1981 and a reserved judgement was given in June 1981 by Judge Roy Ward to the effect that the appeal was allowed in the case of Andrea but not in respect of Grant and Newall. The Harrisons are now appealing to the High Court over the judgement on Grant and New 11 and this is likely to be heard later this year or early next year. The case of AJ is now over, with the acquittal of the parents, and this judgement cannot be reversed.

It is, I think, convenient to consider the case of AJ apart from that of Grant and Newall. AJ's education has been 'autonomous'. I can't say that I like that word very much - it smacks of automatic and automation, whereas its meaning is exactly the opposite. But it has the *imprimatur* of the EEC and so I suppose we are stuck with it (what a lot the EEC has to answer for!) What it means is that education derives from the interests and motivation of the child and is not imposed from above in the shape of a structured curriculum, timetables, &c. Most EO families will, I think, be conversant with the conflict of views between the autonomous and transmissive approaches to education. The Harrison family carried the autonomous system to its extreme. Although obviously their influence was indirectly very strong, they intervened as little as possible in the children's learning activities - as Roland Meighan

put it during his evidence, "I was searching for nuggets, but when I met the Harrisons I found a gold-mine." To have established in the Courts that this system complies with the statutory requirement of 'efficiency' and 'suitability' is certainly a breakthrough. We will trace briefly how this judgement was arrived at.

The judge "construed the word 'education' as meaning 'the development of mental powers and character and the acquisition of knowledge through the imparting of skills and learning by systematic instruction'". This definition would not qualify for universal acceptance and on the face of it it does not seem to support autonomous education. However, in spite of this the judgement recognized that the children had not simply been left to their own devices, but had been engaged in 'concentrated and creative activity or study', and 'are receiving education which can properly be described as systematic'.

Secondly, was the Harrison education 'efficient'? Again the judge came up with a questionable definition: "A system in my judgement (and so I direct the Court) is 'efficient' if it achieves that which it sets out to achieve." This seems to define 100% efficiency, and if applied rigorously would call into question every school in the country. However, the judgement found that "for *these* children, their manner of education has proved efficient ... It has proved and is proving a marked success".

The third question is whether the education is "suitable to age, ability and aptitude". Here the judgement pronounced that "this requirement is fulfilled if, *and only if*, the education is (1) such as to prepare the children for life in modern civilized society, and (2) to enable them to achieve their full potential." In the case of Andrea, the judgement was "satisfied that her education did equip her with the fundamental rudiments of literacy, and that her education was, on a balance of probabilities, suitable for her."

The judgement on Andrea raised another important issue - without entirely clarifying it. The Harrisons would not allow the LEA to carry out assessments on their children's work. Their reason was that they considered the sort of assessment proposed - that is intelligence and other tests carried out in a teachers centre or other institution - was inappropriate and alien to the whole spirit of their education. The judgement felt that the Harrisons were being hypersensitive and unreasonable, and that in particular Iris Harrison was showing a 'degree of intransigence'. But I don't think it fully took into account the underlying reasons for their attitude, and this was that the authority's assessment of Wanda at the age of 5, which recommended an ESN school, instilled in them a justifiable fear and suspicion of such tests - a suspicion vindicated by the fact that at 18 Wanda, after 11 years of home education, is an exceptionally accomplished and balanced young person. But the LEA has a statutory duty to satisfy itself that the education provided is efficient and suitable - how can they discharge this duty if they are not allowed to carry out an assessment? On what basis did the Judge approve AJ's education, thus effectively overriding the Authority's claim that the Harrisons were in the wrong to deny them access to the children? Mainly on the grounds of AJ's accomplishment - first of all her evident literacy.

And although she has obviously not studied many of the normal school subjects, such as History, Geography, Physics, and French, she is obviously talented both academically, musically and practically.

So what this judgement seems to have established is as follows:

Autonomous education satisfies the statutory requirements set out in Sections 36, 37, &c, of the 1944 Education Act.

You do not necessarily have to provide a structure or a planned timetable of anything that corresponds to normal schooling, even if the LEA is of the opinion that you should do so.

You don't have to teach normal school subjects, nor conform to any system of education favoured by the LEA.

You don't necessarily have to allow the LEA to monitor your children's work.

Your children don't have to work for, or achieve, success in public examinations.

BUT you do have to demonstrate, either by independent assessment, or by evidence of their accomplishments, that your children are benefiting or have benefited from what you have provided - in particular that they are numerate and literate.

This looks a pretty good deal for EO and so I think it is, but there are still some anomalies. For example, no school is awarded recognition on its results. Schools are assessed upon what educational provision they offer, not upon whether their pupils benefit from the offering. This emphasis on providing evidence of accomplishment could put EO families under pressure to produce instant success, especially as approval usually has to be given early on and not retrospectively. Still, there are some great gains in this judgement - but before you start celebrating, read to the end of this article, where I have added some cautionary remarks.

So what about Grant and Newall? Here the Bench (and the judgement, written by Judge Roy Ward, makes it clear that the Judge and his two magistrates were in agreement here) were not satisfied that the boys' education had been suitable because of their inability to read and write fluently. Here again, the criterion is the dangerous one of success, but this is an issue that cannot be divorced from the question of the boys' dyslexia, how it should be treated, and what are the chances of overcoming it. It was clear that there was wide disagreement between the County Psychologist, who favoured a structured approach with planned incremental steps, &c., which he claimed had a 75% success rate in curing dyslexia, and James Hemming, who quoted recent research to support the view that autonomous education has a better chance of success. Quite why the Bench favoured the former, who admitted that he was no expert on the subject, rather than James, who made no such admission, is not clear. However, I don't think it is profitable to try to disentangle the judgement at this stage while it is still subject to a future decision by a higher court. The Crown Court judgement, although it clarified some of the issues, left others confused and unresolved. Whatever one's view of it, no one can feel that the last word has been said, or that the appeal will not involve some modification of the legal position taken by Judge Roy Ward.

Here it may be helpful to say a word about court procedure. The appeal to the Crown Court was on the basis of facts. It involved a re-presentation of the evidence, and effectively a complete retrial. It was heard by a Circuit Judge, whose responsibility it was to interpret the law to the Bench, and two magistrates. A Crown Court judgement does not create a firm legal precedent, though obviously in the absence of other precedents it does establish guidelines which Magistrates Courts are likely to follow. No further appeal on evidence is allowed, and the appeal to the High Court is on the legal interpretation of the evidence. No further evidence or witnesses will be called, and the case will be argued by the legal representatives of both sides. This will take place in London in the Queens Bench Divisional Court, it will be judged by three Queens Bench Judges, of whom the chairperson is likely to be the Lord Chief Justice. This is normally the final court of appeal and it will establish legal precedents to be followed in future cases. However, if there is felt to be a point of law of general public interest, a further appeal can be made to the House of Lords, but this can only take place with leave from the Divisional Court or from the Appeals Committee of the House of Lords. A House of Lords judgement will, of course, overrule any decision in the lower courts.

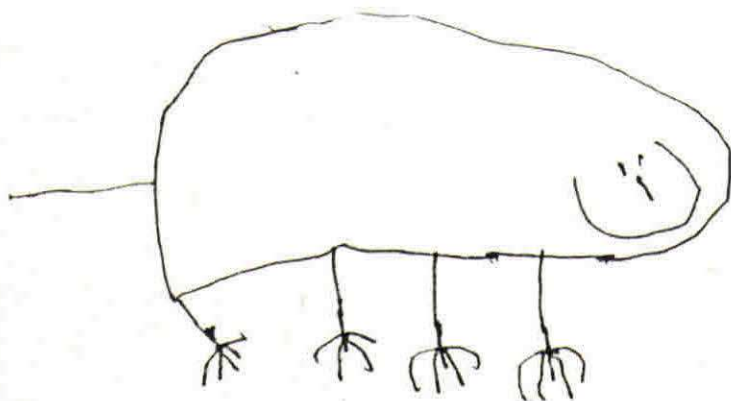
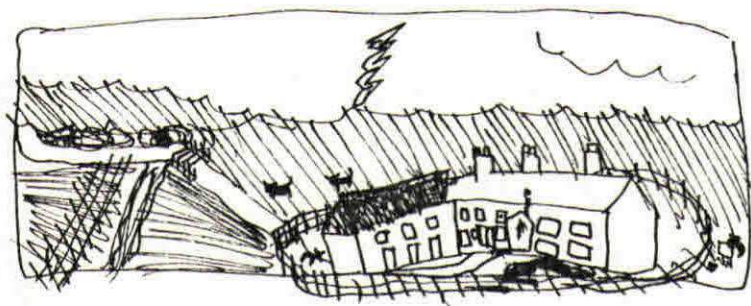
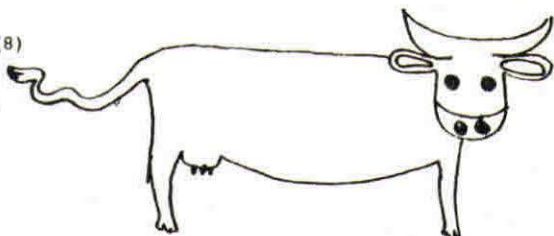
Although the Divisional Court will not be concerned with the case of Andrea, and cannot reverse the Crown Court judgement of Not Guilty in her case, it can in considering the cases of Grant and Newall overrule some of the considerations that led to AJ's verdict. I think it is almost certain that in the process of tidying up the Crown Court judgement it will do so, and there is no guarantee that these will all be to EO's advantage. So although we can be reasonably optimistic we cannot jump to conclusions. In view of this, although the case of Andrea should certainly be quoted to LEAs who show signs of becoming stropky, I feel we should not allow ourselves to adopt too cocksure an attitude or we may find ourselves eating our words in twelve months' time.

Another warning: It is pretty certain that Hereford and Worcester are ruining the day they embarked on a legal battle that has cost them so much time, anxiety, loss of face, and expense. I hope that other LEAs are taking note, and have several second thoughts before they embark likewise. But the pressures on the Harrison family have also been very great, and even in spite of Legal Aid, they have suffered considerable financial loss. Certainly anyone who thinks they may be faced with a legal battle, and who is not entitled to Legal Aid, would be advised to join some such legal insurance scheme as was proposed in the March Newsletter.

I wrote about the Harrison case at some length in the Times Educational Supplement of 10 July. If anyone would like a copy of that article, would they send me 30p to cover cost of photocopying, and a 9" x 6" stamped addressed envelope: Dick Kitto, 27a Sydney Street, Brightlingsea, Essex.

September Rain, by Melandra Bethell (8)

The rain is gushing down the gutters,
It's pouring down the drains
On a late September evening
What late rain.



A Dinosaur, by
Robin Pairman (4)



Picnic, by
Arnemelia Bethell (6)

Judgement

APPEAL TO CROWN COURT AT WORCESTER

Geoffrey George Harrison and Iris Harrison v. Stevenson

These are Appeals by Geoffrey George Harrison and his wife Iris Harrison against convictions by the Hundred House Magistrates on the 16th January 1980 for failure to comply with school attendance orders made in respect of three of their children, namely ANDREA JANE born on the 26th March 1964 and now aged 17 years; GRAHAM born on the 19th June 1965 and aged almost 16; and NEWALL born on the 12th December 1969 and aged 11½.

The Appellants admit that they are the parents of children who at the material time were of school age; that the appropriate Notices have been served; the Orders made and served; and that they have not complied with the requirements of the Orders. It follows that they were guilty of the offences with which they were charged *unless* they prove that they were at the material time causing the children to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, otherwise than in school. The burden of proof is on a balance of probabilities only.

At the very outset, we would distinguish the Appellants' case from the common situation of those parents indifferent to education, who allow their children to play truant on the specious excuse that they will learn as much at home as at school. The Appellants are in our judgment responsible and caring parents who are trying, by their own lights, to give their children a proper upbringing on lines which they deem appropriate to fit them for adult life. The mother, in particular, impresses us as an intelligent and dedicated woman of formidable resolution. We note that the Magistrates thought proper to grant absolute discharges in each case.

It is, in my view, for me to construe the Act; not for us to accept evidence of others as to its meaning. I propose to construe the word EDUCATION as meaning "The development of mental powers and character and the acquisition of knowledge through the imparting of skills and learning by systematic instruction".

We are told that educationalists recognize two broad approaches to education:- (1) the 'transmissive' (which I should describe as didactic) and (2) the 'autonomous' method or self-directed study, in which a child is permitted to pursue its own interests. Be that as it may, in our judgement 'Education' demands at least an element of supervision; merely to allow a child to follow its own devices in the hope that it will acquire knowledge by imitation, experiment, or experience in its own way and in its own good time is neither systematic nor instructive. We adopt the view of Mrs. Bromley that such a course would be not education but, at best, child-minding.

The Appellants' children are, and have been, allowed to follow their own interests and to investigate subjects largely of their own choice without restriction. They have not, however - so we think - been simply left to their own devices. The overwhelming impression left by the evidence is that the children are always engaged in concentrated and creative activity or study, and that idleness or ineffectiveness would simply not be tolerated. On the evidence, we conclude that, despite the lack of formulation or structure, these children have received and are receiving education capable of informed description as the

autonomous method, which can properly be described as systematic and which is certainly 'full-time'.

Is that system of education 'efficient'? A system in my judgement (and so I direct the Court) is 'efficient' if it achieves that which it sets out to achieve. By that test, the evidence that the education of these children is 'efficient' is all one way.

The issue between the Local Authority and the Appellants does not seem to turn on whether these children should be educated at home or be sent to a school. The officials concerned have essentially two grounds of criticism of the Appellants' regime.

First, the education authority would have wished to vet the education, assessing the children's potential and progress in order to ensure that they were indeed receiving an efficient education. We are not surprised; that, it seems to us, is their duty. They cannot wait until the children are past school age in order to see whether the finished product justifies what has passed for education; it is then too late.

The Appellants have not permitted any such assessment. Mrs. Harrison says that any assessment would have put such pressure on the children as to undermine their confidence and set back their development. That may have been one of her reasons; for myself, I suspect that she believes - as she told Mr. Jellis - that it is degrading for one human being to assess another; a view which I think hypersensitive, which I cannot share, and which I find to be unreasonable.

We accept that an assessment in the nature of a formal examination might have had the results feared by Mrs. Harrison. We can see no reason why assessment should have taken such a form, or have been made in a formal setting. After all, Dr. Hemming and Dr. Meighan have been able to make assessments for their own purposes and in their own way. We are, moreover, told that these children are by now serene and confident well beyond average. We suspect that a degree of intransigence on the part of the female Appellant has induced a commensurate frustration on the part of the Education Authority's officials, and has prevented a desirable mutual co-operation which the Authority would otherwise have offered. If so, it is most unfortunate.

Be that as it may, it is clear from Mr. Jellis that had assessment been made, and so justified the Appellants' programme, there might well have been no objection to the continuation of the children's education on its present lines. In Mr. Jellis's words, "If we had been allowed to assess the situation, we might well have approved of" - subject always to the question of literacy.

We accordingly have to form our own assessment from the evidence before us.

Dr. Meighan, currently carrying out research into some 250 families educating their children at home, describes this family in enthusiastic terms as the 'star pupils'; as "strikingly successful". His appraisal of the individual children as confident and mature beyond their years by comparison with the products of conventional schools, and as having a wide range of practical skills, is borne out by the evidence of impressive witnesses well acquainted with them, some of whom (Mrs. Bromley and Mrs. Jones) have teaching experience, or (e.g. Mrs. Salmon - AJ's violin teacher; and Mr. Tong - garage proprietor) have opportunities for appraisal by comparison with others of comparable age but conventional education.

We are satisfied that for these children, their manner of education has proved efficient. They are mature, confident, well-mannered, at ease in all sorts of company. They are lively-minded, have good general knowledge and are intellectually athletic. They have a wide range of practical skills - plumbing, building, mechanics, husbandry - and are commercially and financially competent. Any individual gift - such as AJ's violin-playing - is encouraged and given specialist tuition.

We would emphasize that we are not to be taken to endorse this approach to education as such. We suspect that the results are a tribute to the inherent ability of the children and to the influence of the mother. With other children, in a different environment, the results might well be disastrous. But we are not here to pronounce judgement on the respective merits of rival systems of education; this Appeal concerns *these* children only; in their case, their education - in its own field - has proved and is proving a marked success.

In achieving its intended aims, therefore, the education is efficient and full-time. The next essential question is whether that education is SUITABLE to the AGE, ABILITY, and APTITUDE of the children and each of them.

In our judgment, that requirement is fulfilled if, *and only if*, the education is (1) such as to prepare the children for life in modern civilized society, and (2) to enable them to achieve their full potential.

We have heard argument as to whether the principal end of education should be academic learning or practical ability. That argument has at times been confused with the rival merits of the transmissive and autonomous approaches to education, although for myself I see no reason why the transmissive method should not be directed to implanting practical skills and a pragmatic approach to problems if so desired. Again, fortunately, we are not called on to make any pronouncement about such matters. Whichever end is desired, and whatever the emphasis of the educational system, we see no reason why those objects should necessarily be regarded as totally mutually exclusive.

We regard the fundamental academic skills of writing, reading, and arithmetic as fundamental to any education for life in the modern world. We should be surprised if any of the signatories to Ex A(8) *Education for Capability* would be anything but horrified at the suggestion that their contention was an argument for the irrelevancy of literacy or numeracy. Those attainments are essential for communication, research, or self-education. The sooner they are acquired, the greater the advantage to the acquirer. We should not, in the ordinary case, regard a system of education as suitable for *any* child capable of learning such skills, if it failed to instil in the child the ability to read, write, or cope with arithmetical problems, leaving it to time, chance, and the inclination of the child to determine whether - if ever - the child eventually achieved even elementary proficiency in those skills.

Again, however, this is not the ordinary case. All three children - like their elder sister Wanda - are dyslectic. Of that, we are quite satisfied by the reports from Dr. Newton of the 5th July 1973 and 23rd February 1977 exhibited A(1). Their difficulties are described as classic examples of the dyslexia syndrome. It is this factor which presents the problem in the instant case.

Such children do not, and cannot be expected, to acquire an ability to read or write until comparatively late; some never do. They may well suffer marked loss of confidence and emotional stress if educated in the conventional school system in invidious comparison with other children. They may well feel a reflection on their own intelligence, which is totally unjustified. Consensus of opinion calls for a sympathetic and specialist approach to their problems.

It is only fair to say that the Local Education Authority have not behaved in any reactionary or dictatorial fashion. Between 1974 and 1975 Andrea Jane was sent to a specially selected school in Scotland, of good reputation, with only some 40 pupils and a high staff ratio. Her elder sister Wanda (with whom we are not concerned) was also sent there for two years. Grants were made to assist the parents financially. After those children were withdrawn from that school, home tutors were offered. It is true that none of the three individuals nominated had specialist qualifications in dealing with dyslectic problems, but that may well have been an impossibility.

The witnesses called on behalf of the Local Authority, accepting the difficulties of dyslexia, and that a sizeable proportion of dyslectic children (perhaps 25%) do not learn to read during their schooldays, nevertheless stress the need for a structured programme with daily repetition and careful guidance. The Appellants approach literacy as a skill to be picked up as and when the individual child feels stimulated by the desire to learn.

In the case of *Andrea Jane*, we are satisfied that she has learned to read and write competently. We have seen a substantial sample of her handwriting; she is coping satisfactorily with a correspondence course; she can do shorthand and can type. We are accordingly satisfied that in her case her education did equip her with the fundamental rudiments of literacy, and that her education was, on a balance of probabilities, suitable for her.

In her case, the Appeal is allowed.

However, we distinguish the cases of the two boys, on the facts presented to us - a conclusion to which we all three came independently, and before beginning to discuss the case.

It may well be that neither Andrea Jane nor her elder sister Wanda learned to read *fluently* at Kilquhanity School. It appears, however, from Dr. Newton's report of July 1973 that at the age of 10½ years Wanda had a reading age of 7. By February 1977 Wanda had a reading age of 8½ years; Andrea Jane (then aged 13 years) was reading as well as her co-aevals - albeit not as well as her mental age and intelligence might have enabled her to do but for her dyslectic problem. Both children had been given the foundations on which to build their ability to read and write as time passed. We do not think that their present level of attainment was reached by simple self-education.

We are not satisfied, even on a balance of probabilities, that either Grant or Newall have been given or will be given any such foundation. Newall, as his mother accepts, cannot read at all and does not know his numbers. Grant's reading ability is, at most, rudimentary. It may well be that external assistance, or structured programmes, might not have achieved any positive result, but none of us think it proper simply to discount the possibility or to reject any attempt to achieve literacy as a temporary irrelevance or indeed a necessary source of harm, as the Appellants appear to think.

That does not mean, I repeat, that we think that the children should be subject to conventional schooling, or that the whole balance of their present education should be changed to one of academic emphasis. Regard must be had to their disability; they should not be made to feel undue pressure or urgency which could undermine the benefits which have apparently accrued from their present upbringing. They need sympathy and a reassuring environment. But the problem of coping with the basic skills of reading and writing must be dealt with; we are not satisfied that any real or adequate attention is being paid to it. In this one respect, accordingly, we are not satisfied that the two boys have received or are receiving an education which will enable them best to achieve their full potential. To that extent their education is, in part, defective and unsuitable and for those reasons the convictions relating to these two children are upheld and the Appeals dismissed.

Some Notes on the Judgement

Iris Harrison

1. The name in the first paragraph should read GRANT
 2. The judgement fails to point out that I stressed to the Court that the reason that I refused assessments was that at the age of 10 Grant was assessed by Hereford and Worcester Educational Psychiatrist, and within a few days he 'phoned me to say that he had found a suitable school for Grant - ESN. At that time Grant was able to mend complex chiming clocks for an antique shop and to all who knew him was from ESN.
 3. The judgement says that Wanda and Al learnt to read fluently at Kilquhanity. In fact, evidence also stated that Al had learnt to read (taught herself) at the age of 10, before going to Kilquhanity, and Wanda had to wait until she was 14 years old. She left Kilquhanity at the age of 12 and, in fact, had only had woodwork classes whilst she had been at Kilquhanity. In no way had she had any reading lessons.
 4. Another important fact ignored from my evidence: I stated that at the age of 8 Grant had been assessed at Aston University by Dr. Margaret Newton. I was told by her that Grant was very dyslexic and not to expect him to read before the age of 18 - if at all. If this was the case, then how can it be said that Grant has failed to educate himself? (Incidentally, Grant's reading has romped ahead. Roland looked at a book that Grant had been reading last week and said that it was of a reading age of 18 years; but that if Grant was asked to read (aloud) in front of anyone his ability to read would disappear completely. On top of that, it might take several months to return.)
- So very few people understand the complexities of those using primarily the right brain hemisphere (least of all Sigrun Macgilehris) and the evaluation put upon them by Society does irretrievable damage to the personality. I had to help Grant to gain sufficient confidence to possibly face life without reading or writing, and still see himself as a whole person. This is the reason why I find it sad to read letters from our friend in Scotland - she is still using the same evaluation of success and failure as goes on in schools, and I believed that members of EO had a wider concept of LIFE - that being happiness, fulfilment, ability to adapt, an open mind to new ideas and so on and on ...
5. Newall also had dyslexia with numbers. He had to find the solution to this himself - which he did by stripping down a row-counter from a knitting-machine and putting it back together - at the age of 10. Until then oddly enough he could not even remember the names of numbers, e.g. an 8 was a double-tummy to him. Since the age of 10 he has found a deep understanding in this sphere.
- The Judge also does not mention that before Newall could understand numbers he was working with Fischer Technique for months at a time. My brother-in-law uses this in his 6th-form class, and he told me that what Newall was achieving by himself he was teaching at 16 years and upwards. This is apparently very mathematical.

It saddens me that ideals are just accepted and not researched to find deeper understandings. For instance, James Hamratty was a right-hemisphere person like Newall and Grant (he was in Geoff's class at school), and from a reasonable family background, but felt such a failure that he became a bully and so on. Do we want to perpetuate a Society that destroys a percentage of itself, or are we hoping to enable everyone to gain his/her maximum potential - be it learning to read or not - and it is recognized that certain people are physically unable to gain this ability; are we going to continue calling them failures?

EO in Derbyshire

Mary Carter

"Home Education cannot work, it is an impossible situation." The instant opinion of a prejudiced and objectionable man, one Whittaker, Area Education Officer. The following is an account of the 15-month fight for our rights caused by this man.

Both my daughters were at school (Josie was 11, and Gillian 9), so on February 7th 1980 I wrote to their head teacher requesting deregistration effective from February 22nd. So far the LEA have not replied to this letter, which was passed to the Area Officer, who asked me to meet him to "discuss my programme".

I prepared a curriculum for each girl and subsequently, on February 18th, I met Whittaker. His first objections were relatively mild - length of time involved, in Gillian's case 7 years; the social aspect, reclusive families, &c. He stressed that being together in school was essential for a good social life; to which I replied that prison must be the ideal for adults. He then complained of my lack of equipment for cooking, I hadn't got a salmon-poaching tin! He then said he was not satisfied as to the suitability of my programme, yet he hadn't looked at the papers I had given him. So I asked him to comment on them; he said "It is not a part of my job to teach you how to prepare a curriculum".

I reminded him that the meeting was to discuss my programme, made at his request; he merely repeated that he was not satisfied. Then, because I am not a qualified teacher, he said the authorities would require me to employ a resident tutor and submit a full detailed timetable; but he could not tell me which clause of the 1944 Act he was quoting. Finally, he said I was acting within my rights, but he would take steps to prevent me carrying them out. I left at this point, deciding to take legal advice.

On February 19th I saw my solicitor. He telephoned Whittaker to ascertain the situation, and on Saturday 23rd I received a letter informing me that Whittaker was advising the head to refuse to deregister. We spent a hectic weekend deciding whether to risk keeping them at home - after all, we had no written refusal, and the date for such had passed. On Dick Kitto's advice, at 9.30 Sunday evening we reluctantly decided to send them to school, and to try to reverse this decision.

A request by my solicitor for the LEA's specific objections was met by a request by them for another meeting. My solicitor refused this as serving no useful purpose, and as they had mentioned c.I.37 in their letter, he informed them that c.I.37 was not applicable. He confirmed my rights under c.I.36, and instructed them to deregister by March 7th. If no confirmation of this was received we would go to the DES. Three weeks later the LEA wrote saying an approach to the DES was premature; my programme had only been discussed briefly. A refusal to discuss at all being Whittaker's idea of a brief discussion! But he did not mention deregistration. So we went ahead and appealed to the Secretary of State.

As expected, we received what seems to be a stock reply: "The Secretary cannot intervene in matters of this nature". Enough said.

As it was now May, and Josie, my eldest, would be transferring to Senior School in September, I prepared a revised curriculum, and on July 29th submitted it through my solicitor. He was convinced that the LEA would raise further objections, probably requiring proof of my ability to teach before deregistering, i.e. they would ask for the impossible.

That evening I visited my local councillor, Councillor Wallis, to ask his advice. Coincidence! He works for a neighbouring LEA, and had in fact dealt with Home Education for them. He could not understand my LEA's attitude, and suggested an approach to the Ombudsman. Following procedures he rang the LEA to advise them of my intentions. After a short silence, they asked for a meeting in order to come to "an amicable settlement". After the threats at the last meeting, I asked Councillor Wallis if he would go with me; he happily agreed. So, on Tuesday 5th August, I once again came face to face with Whittaker.

On the previous Friday, when making the appointment, I had been told that my curricula had arrived; so was very surprised when told that the Area Officer had not received them till just before the meeting. I asked him to comment on them; they were not satisfactory (surprise). He insisted that I include General Science for Josie; she was only doing Biology. I agreed, as I hoped it would help deregistration. I asked Whittaker if he would withdraw his refusal to deregister, and he twice denied refusing it. It was only when I produced my solicitor's letter and read the appropriate passage out that he admitted saying "something to that effect". Councillor Wallis intervened and asked if Whittaker expected the children to go to school in September. Whittaker, forced to reply, said that he did not expect them to go. He agreed to confirm this in writing to my solicitor.

He appeared to have further criticisms of the curricula, but I couldn't understand him. I asked if I could see an official school curriculum.

"Oh no, certainly not", said Whittaker, horrified at the thought.

Councillor Wallis said, "Could I see one?"

"No", said Whittaker.

Councillor Wallis, "Could a member of the Education Committee see one?"

"No", said Whittaker.

Councillor Wallis then said, "Do these documents actually exist, Mr. Whittaker?"

Whittaker was quite sure they did, and he *might* let a school governor see them.

We returned to my curricula; the original documents had been criticed for "lack of curricular content", the new ones were fine on that, but lacked fine detail. Councillor Wallis remarked that curricula don't contain fine detail, that is contained in a syllabus. Yes, he now wanted a syllabus. Not only that, he wanted a timetable as well, in order that he could send in his *team* of expert advisors at the appropriate time. I told him that his demands were excessive. When Councillor Wallis asked him for his views on Home Education, Whittaker said it was unworkable; and when asked if he was prejudiced, said "Yes".

As a final gesture, Whittaker reached behind him and produced the 1944 Act, carefully marked at the correct page, and proceeded to read c.I.36 out to me. Then, as if that wasn't enough, continued with c.I.37, giving me a stern look as he finished. I quietly asked him, "What is the legal definition of an efficient education, Mr. Whittaker?" He turned fiery red, slammed the book to, then threw it, with great force, onto his desk. At this point Councillor Wallis thought it an appropriate moment to make our exit. I think he badly wanted to laugh.

Shortly afterwards my solicitor forwarded the letter received from Whittaker, who seemed confused: "When parents decide to educate their own children the decision rests with them, the question of deregistration therefore does not apply", whatever that means. The letter rambled on about the dissatisfaction regarding the curricula, very vague comments, then finished with a threat; he hoped "wiser council would prevail, the children continue to attend school to avoid an unfortunate dispute between the parents and this authority". We had been warned.

On Saturday 27th September, the morning of our visit to Trent Park, we received a letter from the LEA. Whittaker wanted to know who was teaching the children and where. Yet he'd criticized my lack of qualifications on three occasions. He also wanted a curriculum for each girl (the third), a syllabus for Josie, and a full detailed timetable. I was determined not to supply either the curricula or timetable, but prepared a syllabus for Josie and made an appointment with my solicitor for October 15th. On October 14th we received a Recorded Delivery letter from Whittaker. If we did not supply *all* the information requested within 14 days, he would take legal proceedings against us.

Extremely annoyed by this, my solicitor forwarded the syllabus, and told Whittaker, in no uncertain terms, that he was not entitled to any documents at all. He further informed him that he deplored his underhand, deceitful, backdoor method of approach, said he would no longer tolerate his threats, and that in future all correspondence concerning us was to go through his (my solicitor's) office. There was to be no more direct communication.

Three weeks passed. Then Whittaker wrote to my solicitor; he had, as expected, reservations about the syllabus for Josie. No surprises there. I was astounded to read he had similar reservations about the syllabus for Gillian; he hadn't asked for one, so I had not supplied one. My refusal to supply curricula and timetable now became a refusal to allow access. My solicitor replied that access had never been refused; in fact, it had never been requested. He agreed to a visit by a General Advisor, subject to him being informed of date and time.

Due to the extremely aggressive and dictatorial attitude of Whittaker, we had decided that it would be prudent to tape the proceedings, and I advised my solicitor accordingly. She duly arrived, the Senior Advisor, Primary, armed with notebook and pencil. I advised her of our intentions to tape, and told her the reasons. She was reluctant to continue without further advice from Whittaker. He said she was to withdraw immediately.

Whittaker 'phoned my solicitor later that day. My comment that I had advised my solicitor of my intention to tape was now twisted to he had told me to tape; Whittaker went on to threaten that if I did not remove the tape he would issue an attendance order on the grounds that the tape denied them free access. He then said to my solicitor, "It is my intention to leave no stone unturned, to put every spanner in the works I can to prevent her carrying out her rights."

By now I decided we had had enough of this kind of treatment. I had to stop things. So that night, December 4th, I returned to Councillor Wallis with a request to go to the Ombudsman. We then advised Councillor Fullwood, a member of the Derbyshire Education Committee, of our intentions, and he agreed to support me. He asked the Authority to meet him, and myself, to hear my complaint before making their own enquiries, giving them a week to do so.

As they were unable to arrange a meeting, saying they had to get a "carefully-worded" report from Whittaker first, we forwarded our complaint, supported by both councillors, to the Ombudsman, on December 13th.

We felt the authorities would try to arrange a meeting for the following week, partly to check if I had in fact approached the Ombudsman; if so, to present a show of strength in order that I would withdraw. On cue, the following Wednesday, we did receive a letter; one week they could not meet me, the next they were available any day, I could pick my own time to meet. We declined their offer. We declined a second offer of a meeting in January, made by the Director of Education himself.

We heard from the Ombudsman on March 17th, saying he was to investigate my complaint against the authorities. In my opinion they were guilty of maladministration on four counts:

- a. there was an unjustifiable delay in the Council settling the matter
- b. the Council were prejudiced against my proposals
- c. the Council failed to have any procedure for dealing with my request to educate my children at home
- d. the Council threatened me as to what would happen if I exercised my rights to provide home tuition for my children.

On Tuesday May 3rd the Assistant Ombudsman visited us at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. He had spent the morning at the authority headquarters investigating their version of events, and found discrepancies between Whittaker's version and mine; which he had clearly expected. The object of his visit on this occasion was to clear up several points, and we took the opportunity to acquaint him of the telephone conversation re "spanner in the works" &c. He found it most interesting, and asked would my solicitor confirm, to which I replied he would be pleased to give any help he could. Notes were taken by the Ombudsman during the conversation. His attitude gave us no clue to what he was thinking; he must at all times be impartial. He then advised us he was returning to Matlock, staying overnight, and would spend the next day interviewing all the executives involved, including the Director; also one Whittaker. He would then return to York, and an intermediary report would be issued to us only for our comments, before issuing his final report.

We were surprised late Wednesday afternoon when he reappeared; he had been giving the matter serious consideration, and because there were children involved he laid before us his plan, which if accepted would be more beneficial than issuing a report. His plan was to hold a meeting which he would chair, both of us were to attend, and the Assistant Director of Education for the authority, no notes would be taken, but he would sum up at the end so all concerned would clearly understand their future positions. We think his reasoning was that we and the authority would have to co-exist for the next six years, and a more amicable relationship would be possible if we hadn't forced the issuing of a report.

A meeting was arranged for Thursday May 21st. The Ombudsman decided against holding it at the Education Headquarters, and arranged for it to be held locally. Whilst it is not possible to detail all that was said, the attitude of the authority was the opposite to that prevailing for the past 15 months. The Assistant Director stated that the LEA wished to give positive assistance to families educating at home, they "wished to help to make it work". I insisted, on my solicitor's advice, that there would be no testing of work done; such tests would only test the child's memory, and are no indication of the efficiency of Home Education. Mr. Taylor readily agreed; he also confirmed that Home Education must of necessity be different to the school system. We then stated our position; "Under no circumstances will we have any further dealings with Whittaker". Mr. Taylor almost eagerly assured us we would have no further contact with him; he had, in fact, moved Whittaker from the case. Cheers! We must stress here that Mr. Taylor is a completely different person to the one who has caused all the trouble.

We have since received a visit from each Advisor; no problems.

Finally, my solicitor, the DES, and the Ombudsman all confirmed that deregistration will be given when a child *is receiving* an alternative education, so therefore commence Home Education during a school holiday, then inform the authority it *is receiving* an alternative education, letter to arrive first day after the holiday. In our case we found the services of a solicitor extremely valuable, and we were fortunate in getting a very good solicitor. We have, of course, of necessity, had to omit a great deal, space forbids. If you meet problems, be determined, keep full records, take a witness to any meetings, don't give way, and you cannot lose.

Our thanks to everyone in EO who has been involved.

Dick Kitto writes: As this was settled 'out of court' it has not received the publicity it might have done if the Ombudsman had submitted an official report, which in some ways is a pity, for the outcome implies a very clear-cut warning to LEAs that they cannot use their position to threaten and bully citizens who are exercising their legitimate rights. I hope this case does somehow filter round to other LEAs and act as a warning to them.

I think we all owe a debt to the Harrisons and the Carters for having the determination and courage not to give in to coercion. As a result we can, I feel, face our own authorities with much more confidence, not hoping or begging for their co-operation and respect, but demanding it as our right.

School Phobia

We are parents who have forced our 15-year-old son through the system - even though termed as school phobic by the Educational Psychologist (we had help in the form of a Tutor when M. was at Middle School) and causing him much unhappiness and despair by the pushing, dragging, persuading we have subjected him to over the last ten years.

We have been interrogated by psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, teachers, EWOs. Finally They attempted to take our son away from us ... and we were advised by our solicitor to change counties, and to place M. in a private school. We had not considered this before (not being in agreement with private education), but found a small school, which was run without academic pressure. We moved into this area last year, and M. could not cope with *this* school. The staff were kind ... but it was too late. The pattern of 'school hurt' set in long ago.

Subsequently we were asked to take him away from that school, even though he was much liked by staff and children - as he was so worried by going. So, here we are. We pay tutors to come to the house, as M's self-confidence has now totally diminished and he is almost housebound. His position in class, whichever school was attended, was very low, attainment marks being D and E. He is now doing O-level Maths and English, but is visiting our doctor regularly because he simply does not sleep. He feels guilty at 'failing', thinks there *must* be something wrong with him. We don't know how to help him onto his feet again, but keep trying. And how have They helped?:

The schoolteacher who said that *M was backward and needed to learn to read*. When the English teacher tested his reading, it was 13+ at 10 years. *But he does not do it in my lesson* said the first teacher.

The Maths teacher who complained that M was always asking questions about Maths. *He is always wanting attention*; when in fact M was always excited about Maths, and always wanted to know more. And we always told him to ask if he wanted to know anything from a teacher. Surely that is what teaching and learning is about?

The private psychiatrist who said *He won't go back to school because you don't want him to*. This when we were hoping for a state tutor to feed him back into school; which she did with some moderate success, while in middle school.

The Schools Psychiatrist who said to my husband *It is your fault; you are against the system*. My husband actually lectures in a College of Art. Without the 'system' we would starve.

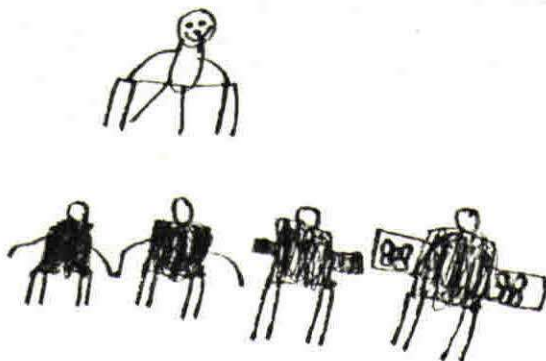
The doctor who said to Martin *You are like a ball swinging backwards and forwards between your Mum and Dad. When the ball stops swinging, you want to go to school*. Try explaining that remark away to a much-loved 10-year-old who knows that his parents care for each other. This remark was made while writing out a prescription for Valium and Tryphiol. It apparently does not matter if a child spends all of school time in the sickroom under the numbing influence of valium, because he 'has his mark' and is therefore attending. Mind: no one mentioned Education at this point.

The same doctor told me that *Just because you are lonely, you cannot keep M at home for company.* HELP! There was an outcome to this problem. We changed doctors and found that our new doctor had a SCHOOL PHOBIC daughter. The vast relief and the understanding were intoxicating.

And last but not at all least the Head who called me gravely into his study, and quietly said *Now, I am sure you will have no more trouble if you will allow Martin to come to school on his own.* I could simply have murdered the man, and his staff who always walked the other way when I was seen to be pushing a shivering white-faced teenager through the school gate.

I have written far more than I intended. May the last words come from M, who on entry into school said, "Do you have to go to school to be shouted at?"; and on entry into Upper School, "School is where they are not interested in what you can do, but only in what you can't do." I agree with the remarks made by Professor Guy Vermell: "They go reluctantly and learn little. Some are literally destroyed by school."

We just pray that our son has not been destroyed by school.



Mcroe's teaching my teddies

Dissertation

upon the Importance of Believing in Education amid Home and Family, and the Temptations not to do so ... See?

Jane Pairman

I have thought for a long time that, instead of passively receiving support and guidance from EO and its newsletter, one of us should write an article in the hope that it would interest or help others. But the details of our lifestyle seemed to be too dull to expound to others, so what could we say? Then I wondered if perhaps by voicing some rather negative thoughts it might strike a chord in someone and make them see that the doubts are shared. I should perhaps explain that our children are Joe, aged 7, Robin, aged 4, and Polly, aged 1.

Well, the main temptation to abandon my poor children to the clutches of power-crazy teachers is not social pressure, or lack of faith in my ability to direct them, or concern for their isolation, but fatigue; pure tiredness. We all have stories of changing nappies, playing Snakes and Ladders, answering the 'phone, baking a cake, and explaining the theory of Papal Infallibility at the same time, and, whilst it all somehow seems to get done, it leaves you utterly drained until the next day.

However we are lucky enough to have children who go to bed early and sleep well, so I have some time in the evening to recover. Some day I'd like to rediscover crafts and hobbies I used to have, but for the moment I haven't the strength and am content to passively read in my spare time.

Other temptations to succumb to sending the boys to school are less strong. I don't really mind criticism, or being seen as eccentric. I do get periodically worried about the social problem, though. Various attempts to involve Joe in clubs and social activities have fizzled out. He's just not that sort of child. However, he's perfectly happy and very friendly, so why bother?

Another recurring idea is to move somewhere with a Good Reputation for Schooling - maybe to Wales, with its strong musical tradition, or to Scotland. But we always remember, just in time, that schools, by their very nature, appal us, however good or bad their academic standards may be.

One completely unlooked-for opportunity arose when, following an article which mentioned us in the local paper, in which there was a passing reference to Joe being taught at home, two prep' schools offered us free (or just about) places! Now, these offers weren't difficult to turn down - that sort of pressure and conformity isn't for our children.

So, it wouldn't be fair to say that it is always easy for us to stick by what we know to be right. It remains indisputable, in our eyes, however, that this wouldn't be a true home without the children living, playing and working here.

Part-time Schooling 1

Mary Evans

I was interested to see the item in the March issue of *Education Otherwise* regarding part-time schooling.

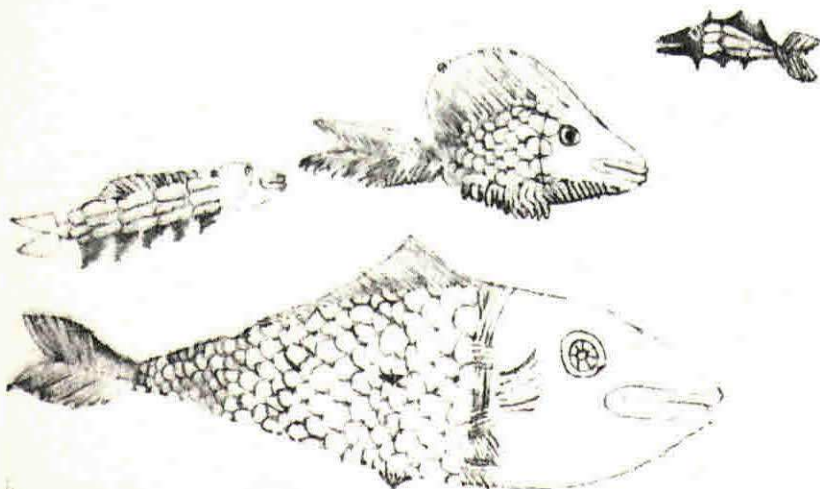
I would like to warn parents that the idea of part-time schooling might appear attractive, especially when one of the LEA's objections to home tuition is "lack of social contact". My family fell into this trap, and it ended unhappily.

Paul, at 6½, had been home-educated for 18 months when we were approached by the headmaster of a nearby school. He suggested that Paul could attend class one morning a week, play games, and have swimming lessons at the school. He mentioned that he wanted to boost the number of pupils he had in the school. We immediately contacted the LEA, pointing out that we wished to be fully responsible for Paul's education, and also asking them to be sure that there was sufficient provision for insurance. They agreed, by letter, to both our points.

There was no doubt that Paul enjoyed the next twelve months, attending the school part-time - however, he showed no inclination to want to attend on a full-time basis. Then suddenly, we received a curt note from the headmaster saying that he could no longer accept Paul at his school because it was now full.

Naturally, we were upset and sure the LEA would be sympathetic towards the fact that a seven-year-old was literally 'expelled' from a school for no apparent reason. On the contrary, the LEA said that they were *not* covered for insurance for part-time pupils - so there was nothing they could do.

EO members should bear in mind when any arrangement is made with headmasters that they are in effect absolute dictators. Together with LEAs they will hope that, with the help of a part-time arrangement, the pupil will simply slip quietly into the system.



Fish by Melandra
Bethell (8)

Part-time Schooling 2

Lorna Bicicchi

We recently moved to a village where the headmistress of the local school approached me and kindly offered to let Samuel (7) and Angelo (4) go to the school for extra activities such as chess and debating and to allow them to play in the playground at lunchtime so that they could make friends. Being in a village with few children, I found this an attractive proposition, so we all went along one afternoon. The children enjoyed it very much, so the headmistress and I began to make proper arrangements.

BUT then the local authority reared its ugly head. When the LEA was informed, it took exception to the arrangements. I telephoned one of the underlings, a typical bureaucrat, who went round in circles trying to convince me that "it is not council policy" to allow children to be educated part-time at school, and that if they are on roll they must be at school full-time; if not on roll, then the school cannot accept responsibility for them. I argued from all points of view, mentioning that other EO children have arrangements with schools or use their facilities. He said he had never heard of it happening, so I feel it incumbent on me to cite a few authorities who allow these 'part-time' arrangements.

I appeal to EO members to let me know of LEAs or schools which have allowed their children the use of school facilities or of part-time education. This would, at least, show my authority that there are precedents.

Please write to me at: 5 The Walk, Tandridge, Surrey
or 'phone: Oxted 2804

Danny Rotten and Peter Clever

Olive Manton

To the tune of All Through the Night

Danny went to school to learn things, all through the day.
All he did was break and throw things, all through the day.
He threw sand and he threw water,
Tried to throw the teacher's daughter,
Pulled her hair each time he caught her, all through the day.

Teacher said, "You're naughty, Danny, you must conform.
We don't like disruptive children, we like the norm.
Go and play with Peter Clever,
He's a good boy and he never
Swears or bites or steals nor ever calls teacher names."

Danny played with Peter Clever all through the day.
And he asked him many questions in his own way.
"Does yer muvver slosh and bash yer?
Does she always keep on at yer?
Whaddyer do if someone cops yer nickin' the grub?"

Peter said, "My Mummy Loves me, so does my Dad.
They're not very angry with me even when I'm bad."
"Cor", said Danny, "ain't they barmy,
My Dad's tough and in the Army,
So me muvver brings home Charlie or another Dad."

Pete and Danny at the easels painted one day.
Teacher praised young Peter's picture, so bright and gay.
She praised Danny too for trying,
Said (her eyes, her voice belieing)
"Danny, that's a very nice house." But it was a mouse.

On the wall went Peter's picture, and so did Dan's.
Peter's went right in the centre, Dan's far beyond.
Next day Danny saw the easel
In the classroom, calm and peaceful,
Took the liquid paints and turned them all upside down.

Danny couldn't learn to settle all through the year.
He was not her favourite pupil, teacher made that clear.
She said, "Danny, you're a bad one,
I am going to slap your bottom."
And she did and Danny spat on teachers and schools.

Danny went into the Juniors one gloomy day.
He could not add up nor alphabet could he say.
Teacher said, "This boy is hopeless,
He must go to special classes."
And he did, and broke the glasses of his classmate.

Danny must be taught a lesson, so said the Head.
He was taken from the classroom (where Peter led).
He was caned three times for crudeness
And another once for rudeness.
Teachers, sated with their lewdness, said, "Now he's deterred."

Danny's mother got to hear of Danny's disgrace.
 And she shouted and she chased him all round the place.
 "Them pigs got no right to touch yer,
 I will thump and I will bash yer."
 More confused did Danny feel by grown-up ways.

Mostly Dan was late for school if he arrived at all.
 Mother woke up in the mornings, turned back to the wall.
 Danny sometimes tried to get up,
 Couldn't find his clothes, got het up,
 Finally he gave it all up, took whatever came.

Dan and Pete were good at football, often they played.
 When 'twas time to choose a Captain both made the grade.
 Then they said that Pete had got it,
 Dan said, "Sir, I'm good as he is."
 Sir said, "Yes, but Pete, you see, is always in school."

Came the time to leave the Junior school and its pain,
 Dan and Pete went Comprehensive, equal again ...
 Pete with his work soon impressed them,
 Scruffy Danny soon depressed them,
 So the whirlwind raised and dashed them, worse than before.

Children sneered at Danny Rotten in his new school.
 Danny knew he was rejected, he felt a fool.
 They said, "Look at him in wellies!
 He's a yobbo and he's smelly,
 We don't want him, we can tell he's not one of us."

Danny told his mother he must wear uniform.
 She said shut up or he'd wish he'd never been born.
 School insisted, Mum said piss off,
 Incredibly the school told DAN off.
 Tougher yet must he become to survive it all.

Dan's reports were stark and brutal, some plainly rude.
 Not one ray of understanding shone through the flood.
 "Danny's lazy." - "Makes no effort."
 "He's disruptive." - "He's a drop-out."
 Mindless eliches, could but knock out any trace of good.

At competings and prizegivings Pete won his share.
 Danny, at the back as always, stayed in his chair.
 Pete and friends were loud applauded,
 Danny and his mob ignored, and
 So a little more diminished, Dan carried on.

Not yet satisfied, the school had lots more in store.
 They gave house-points to the good but not to the poor.
 Gave good acting parts to bright boys,
 Gave the rubbish to hoi pollois,
 Managed well to damage self-esteem more and more.

So Dan got a gang together, all of them tough.
 Bullied boys like Peter Clever, treated them rough.
 Dan was punished, he was beaten,
 He played truant, more was heaped on,
 Less and less could he make sense of his crazy world.

But at school he had to stay, no matter how bored.
 Harassed by some of the staff, by others ignored.
 Often caned as a "deterrent"
 So the lad from bad to worse went,
 Vandalised and mugged and threatened, to strife inured.

Finally schooldays were over, now fully grown.
 All their past defeats and triumphs over and flown.
 Peter got a First from Oxford,
 Danny's serving Life in Wormwood.
 Solemn-faced, the teachers cried - "We did ALL we could."





Shirley Meighan

We have heard with regret of the death of Shirley Meighan. Shirley and her husband Roland have been active members of EO for some years and many members in the West Midlands and across the country have benefited from their help.

Shirley was a warm and well-loved person who bore her illness with great courage. We extend all our sympathy to her husband Roland and her son James.

Intellect and Intuition

Joan Hoare

I have felt for some time that EO as a group is too anti-intellectual and hope in the following article to explain why I think this suspicion of the intellect is misplaced, but also at the same time justified. Unless we try to clear our thoughts on this matter, then our actions and our motives for them will be muddled and confused, and our lives therefore the less effective or even misguided.

First of all, we need to ask ourselves: what does the intellect do? It names things and ideas; it attempts to build up a structured body of information, abstracted from life and expressed in symbols or special vocabulary which command general recognition. Mathematics is the classical example of such a structured body of information. For instance, a young child will soon learn to count five digits on hands or toes, five sweets &c., and will not immediately appreciate that a number five can be abstracted from these concrete activities. This comes as she or he grows older and gains more experience of counting. Our decimal number system is in fact highly abstract, but works very well and is extremely useful. It is surmised that early counting was done by tallying, i.e., you counted your goats by matching each goat against a stick or mark or your fingers and toes. (Looking at the Roman numerals I, II, III, IIII, maybe there is something in that supposition.) Obviously, it is a very limiting system, and our decimal system is far superior. The point I am trying to make is that it is the intellect which abstracts the number from the specific, concrete situation of tallying, and then goes on further to manipulate numbers in arithmetic. To give another example using numbers:- have you ever seen a quantity of zero, 0? No? Nor have I, but I still use a zero when doing arithmetic. It's extremely difficult without it, as it is essential to denoting place value. For instance, try subtracting 1877 from 2101 in Roman numerals, which is a system without a zero or place value:

$$\begin{array}{r} 2101 \\ -1877 \\ \hline 224 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} MM C I \\ - MDCCLXXVII \\ \hline \end{array}$$

The Roman numerals sum is possible using a Roman abacus but it requires care and concentration; the Arabic version is simpler. In the decimal system our place value is based on 10, but this doesn't have to be so. It's just a convention, something we've all agreed to do, and is most likely based on the fact we have 10 digits. But having once made the abstraction of zero and place value we can then have arithmetics organized in groups other than 10, for instance binary arithmetic.

To summarize so far, mathematics (specifically arithmetic in our examples, but the same arguments apply to measurement as well) is a formal abstract system of knowledge with generally agreed upon signs and conventions. It helps us to understand and manipulate the world around us. "Reason is the capacity to behave, not in terms of our own nature, but in terms of our knowledge of the nature of the world outside" (John Macmurray)

When we come to look at structured bodies of information other than mathematics, then the processes involved and the conclusions arrived at are much less clear. Formal knowledge (I'm thinking mainly

of the sciences here) seeks to set boundaries and definitions, both to and within its particular sphere, in order to gain clarity and understanding. The fact that this is an intellectual activity does not in any way imply complete impartiality. All knowledge is bound to be incomplete, limited by a particular time and place, and, last but by no means least, by the proclivities of the investigator. In jargonese, data is theory-oriented, i.e. you seek out data which supports your hypothesis, not out of any particular ill intention, but because your hypothesis points you in a particular direction. There is no such thing as scientific detachment.

Intellectual knowledge is transient and unsure, and what is generally regarded as the 'objectivity of science' is models or constructs formed from definitions, using words through which we interpret the world we see around us. Darwin's Theory of Evolution, and the geological time column are examples from the Sciences of such models. They are not strictly speaking scientific, since they are neither experimentally reproducible nor testable. They are models which are fleshed out by data collected in the material world out there.

I think I can understand why this kind of intellectual activity is disliked and even feared. One can become so lured on by the false god of 'sure knowledge' that one's definitions become so tight and exclusive that one ends up with nothing to say. (I think this has happened to modern psychology in its efforts to be 'scientific'. It has given rise to behaviourism, which to my mind is the worst kind of manipulative, deterministic system there is.) The arrogance of 'sure knowledge' is, however, quite misplaced, as I hope I have shown. An intellectual, formal body of knowledge is extremely useful, provided it is recognized for what it is - an intellectual tool for a specific purpose. The manipulation of abstract symbols enables us to do what we want and need to do (e.g. count or measure) and to frame a model of the apparent universe around us (e.g. Darwinism, geological time scale).

This, then, is what I think the intellect does. It is in itself harmless enough. However, people look round them at a disintegrating world of horror, violence and inhuman technology, and science - offspring of the intellect - is blamed. People reject the manipulative, intellectual spirit which efficiently subverts 2101 and 1877, and seeks to dominate the world through its abstract models and symbols. The disinterested, even playful, intellectual inquiry has become the pursuit of power over things, and then of people. People are undoubtedly right to reject this and then to see the intuitive, non-intellectual side of a person's nature as offering a path towards wholeness and humanity.

But I must also add the following thought. Intellectual understanding can be genuinely liberating, as knowledge, constantly tested and revised, is a real challenge to authoritarian claims of expertise and "knowing what's best for you". It is constantly revolutionary. The intellect will not tell us the right way to live or what is the meaning of life; that is not its province - but it is necessary to give shape and form to knowledge through the setting of definitions and boundaries. What moral value one assigns to this knowledge is a different matter and this will always be problematical.

I have no wish to belittle intuition. If intellect provides form, then intuition provides content and motivation without which intellect is a dry husk. "Any enquiry must have a motive or it could not be carried on at all, and all motives belong to our emotional life" (John Macmurray). We need both intellect and intuition, the one illuminating

the other. Intellect cleaves apart, intuition knits together.

What does all this imply for education, both our own and our children's? We must somehow weave together intellect and intuition, which don't really operate independently at all, although as I've tried to discuss their different functions I've inevitably spoken as though they do. Here is an account of some of the activities we do at home, i.e. I and my two sons, Mark aged 12 and Robin aged 6. With Mark I feel it's worthwhile doing mathematics regularly, as this is a form of knowledge that builds up slowly and methodically. It's not much different from learning to play a musical instrument, which also requires regular practice; sometimes it's interesting and sometimes it's a bit boring, but we have to take the rough with the smooth.

Language is a structure through which we express our understanding and we have just started to approach English in a formal way; we do some English grammar every week. We don't do creative writing, comprehension or little essays on topic work, which has never got off the ground with us. Our informal 'work' consists of conversation which one obviously can't programme and wouldn't want to. I'm also sure that the structure of language affects our understanding, although this is a difficult process to observe, since one always uses language. I also intend later to do some logic, which I think is useful, and hope to discover how it is language-bound. I also want to look carefully at the way language is used in television, advertising and the press, as the language usage always has a persuasive intent as every author obviously has a viewpoint which he or she wishes to put over. Whether we will ever read together novels and poetry I don't know, but I think that reverence for 'great literature' is the greatest stumbling-block to genuine insight and appreciation, so I prefer to leave well alone. I don't think we should read Shakespeare just because we think it's good for us! If your child is interested, I think it's worthwhile learning a foreign modern language, or Greek or Latin, as the experience of a grammar other than English is illuminating, but only if the child wants to, since a close interest in grammar really is academic. These intellectual activities should not, of course, be forced upon young children; they will gradually emerge from the magic circle of young childhood as they become emotionally strong enough to cope with the outside world. Premature intellectualism is bad.

For the natural sciences, e.g. geology, botany, zoology, and for history and geography, a jigsaw approach with lots of field work and personal experience is appropriate from a quite early age. Robin, for instance, is very interested in history and castles, of which we've visited many. By a jigsaw approach I mean following up and talking about what interests you at the time - over a period of time it's surprising what a body of information one acquires. The drawback is that it's difficult being alert and interested in anything from slugs to castles all of the time, for one must of course occasionally draw threads of inquiry together and make connections, if one's activities aren't to be completely aimless. I think that discussion

of classification in botany and zoology is only suitable for older teenagers and adults as it is quite complex and also involves a massive feat of memory; but classification should be attempted as it is a formal structure which helps us to understand the world around us, and the learning and use of these structures is one of the purposes of education in my opinion.

All the foregoing intellectual activities are, I submit, worthwhile because "Reason is the capacity to behave, not in terms of our own nature, but in terms of our knowledge of the nature of the world outside". Intuition alone is too dependent upon circumstances; it is idiosyncratic and needs the discrimination which intellect and reason can bring.

The arts and crafts are another kind of shaping, either imposed or drawn out of the material in use. For instance, in pottery the shape is drawn out of the clay, quite literally, and is to my mind a happy example of intuition and reason working together. There is a technique of shaping, firing and glazing, gained from intellect reflecting upon experience, but it is applied intuitively. In dress-making shapes are imposed upon the material, cut out and sewn together, the sewing technique being intellectual, the design being intuitive.

I could obviously go on for a long time giving similar examples. Any explanation is bound to sound mechanical - if this, then that - and our everyday experience is not mechanical, however much we may wish to tidy it up a bit. I hope that I've explained why I think intellectual activity (naming and the building of structures) is necessary and have given some indication of how intellect and intuition interact together. A lot of my thinking is still confused and I would be grateful for any comments people may wish to make. Finally, as a corrective to the over-intellectual, consider the following from the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu: (Tao means 'the way') Book I section 72.

The way is for ever nameless.

.....

As soon as there are names

One ought to know that it is time to stop

Also this Buddhist proverb for pilgrims:-

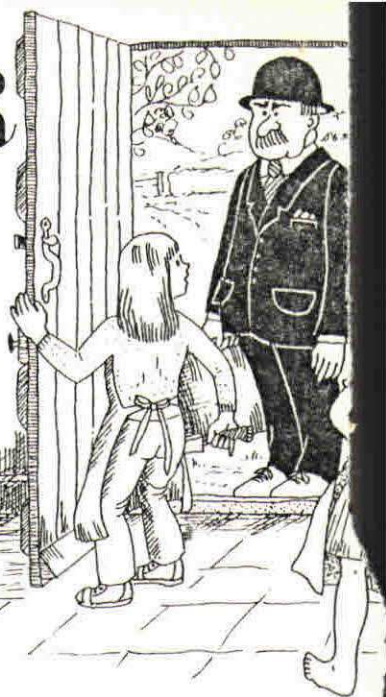
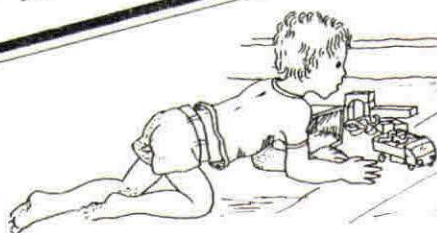
Really there is no east, no west.

Where then is the north and the south?

Illusion makes the world close in,

Enlightenment opens it on every side.

INSPECTOR KIDD



D.H.Shakespeare

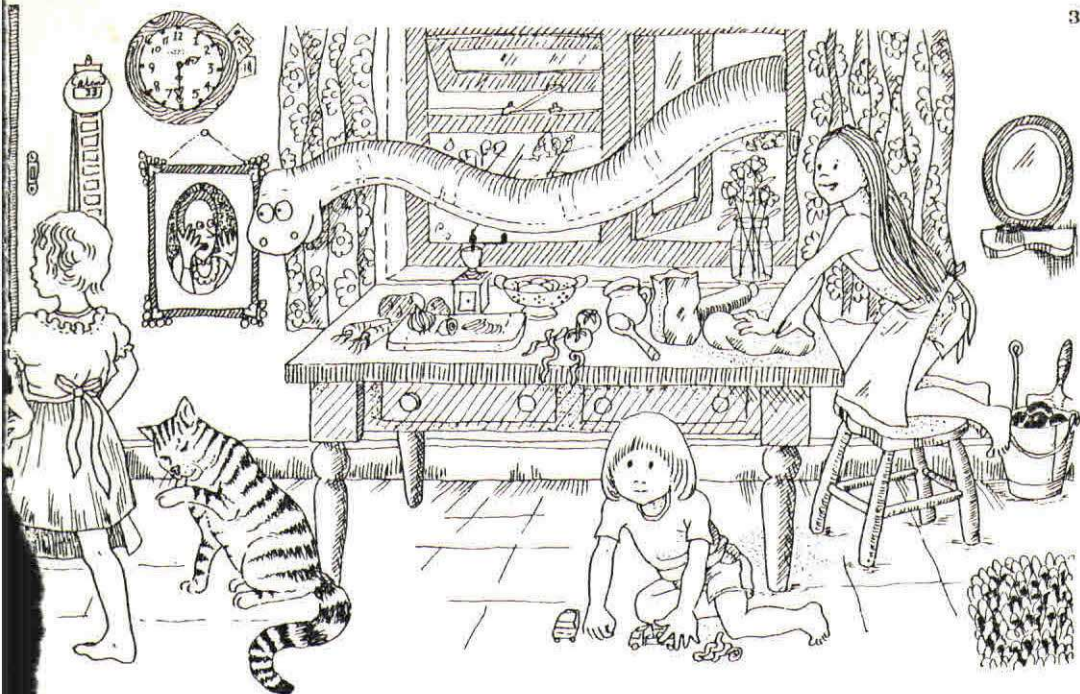
The Inspector drove down the track and cleared the last rise to see, spread before him in a small valley, the brickbuilt homestead at Rush Bottom. A blue curl of smoke from the central chimneystack drifted up towards the lowering clouds of the late September afternoon. From the west a shaft of sunlight cast the valley into a chiaroscuro of light and shade. There was a single cottage, with some wooden outbuildings. Hens pecked about the yard at the front; to the side was a vegetable garden, long bare rows a witness to a productive summer. From the house came the clatter of a typewriter; the halting chords of an inexperienced pianist; and the lively chatter of children.

Mr.Kidd smiled. So. Children. Not at school. He looked at the house with easy contempt. It had all the trappings of a failure. A little black car, with a B registration, stood by one of the sheds. Washing fluttered from a line. If these people pulled themselves together, there would be a nice flashy new car in a garage. They would have a washing machine with a built-in dryer. A television aerial, two, on the chimneystack. The parents could have decent jobs - he might be a teacher, even; she could be a typist for the LEA; no need to waste time growing veg which could be bought at any greengrocer. What were they going to do about pensions? Why throw away their lives like this? And those children should be at school.

Inspector Kidd knocked tentatively at the door. A small red-haired girl holding a cook's knife opened it; inside was pandemonium. The three girls were evidently cooking. One was kneading dough. Two small boys had loaded potato peel into toy lorries, and were brumming them to and fro across the floor. Before Mr.Kidd could say anything, the girl shouted upstairs, "Daddy, there's someone here."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know. A big kind man in a black suit."



Their father came downstairs, his heart sinking as he saw the inspector's uniform, his briefcase, his stony stare.

"Mr. Jack Johnson?" said Mr. Kidd

"John Jackson, actually."

Mr. Kidd flinched, but continued, "Mr. John Jackson, of Rush Bottom? I have reason to believe that you have three children, Daren, Karen and Sharon ..."

"Dorinda, Katisha and Sarah, actually"

"... of school age, not attending school."

"Yes, well, we're educating them at home."

"It looks like it. You realize that, under the Education Act 1944, keeping your children away from school is a very serious offence, punishable with fines and imprisonment? Well, then, look here, Mr. Jackson. You get them kids into Chepmundwick County Primary, Gasworks Road, next Monday 9 a.m. sharpish, or I'll be down on you like a ton of bricks."

As Mr. Kidd left, the clouds blotted out the sun, and a chill wind swept through Rush Bottom. John Jackson still held the door open, feeling very unhappy, and looking a little pale. He thought that he had been right, but Mr. Kidd seemed so uncompromising. What could he do? As he turned to go in, he noticed on the washing line a little brown bird; and yet, as he looked at it carefully, suddenly he could see every colour of the rainbow in its glistening feathers.

EO Bird *Educatio alternata* (Linn.)

Length 4 in. Resident. Call: ee-o, repeated frequently.

A small bird, just about large enough to get through a loophole.

Found throughout Great Britain, but commoner in south and east.

Numbers increasing but still rather rare.

Nidicolous; attentive to young.

Co-operation by the LEA

Roy Dunster

Both parents and LEA are committed by statute to the common objective of the most effective education of the nation's children. Those parents who withdraw their children from systematized or institutional education may be at a disadvantage which any LEA worth its salt will want to minimize.

The two main problems are facilities and expertise. On the credit side, a parent is able to utilize to the full the educative environment of home and community, with their wealth of potential learning experiences, to the full. Unconventional approaches to learning and close personal relationships can generate and minimize the lack of facilities of the type provided by a school and it should be possible to find some acceptable means of utilizing some forms of LEA plant and equipment without compromising the Education Otherwise principle.

In our case, the initial question was raised by the LEA; "was the range of experiences we could offer as good as that offered by a school?" We contended it would be and submitted and discussed with advisors the type of programme we intended to follow. Starting with basic examination syllabi was a help, as it gave us guidelines to work from. We had decided on a scientific bias, and Nuffield Science, together with my own agricultural background, satisfied the advisor with regard to expertise, but it was equipment which presented the problem. I had previously asked the chief advisor for the Division if there was any chance of laboratory time in a school - his reply was that lab's were in full timetable demand but technically they could be available for hire as could any school facility, if not being used by the school, on payment of a hire fee, and with the agreement of the head of a school. It turned out that on school lab' facilities the hire fee was very high and the availability (according to the local heads) was inconvenient. It was the science advisor who came to the rescue with the suggestion that we approach the local Polytechnic, who not only had a lab' but the full Nuffield kits which could be utilized by local schools on a loan basis. They also had greater autonomy to make their own decisions re hiring &c.

We negotiated and after checking my familiarity with the apparatus, we now have access to the lab' and they lend us modules of equipment for use at home, on a hire and rental basis.

The other advisors are most courteous and helpful, and although I face their reports &c at another interview on August 8th, I feel that if anything had been too damaging to the overall educational provision, they could be accused of negligence in allowing us to continue as long as they have. No - in spite of the uncertainty inherent in the situation, the LEA has been both helpful and supportive.

My own feeling is that there are other areas which could well be explored. Books: schools will sometimes loan books (unofficially and sometimes with official sanction), and on occasions dispose of surplus stocks for cash. Obviously, they have to give first refusal to other schools in the Authority, but it does no harm to make enquiries. Another possibility might be for a local EO area to become affiliated to the Youth Service and thus become eligible to use Youth Facilities of the County and perhaps even (where they exist) central buying facilities which could include stationery.

I believe that when LEAs see that we are genuinely striving to achieve educational objectives with our children and are not concerned to malign the authorities who are grossly understaffed, often with the wrong people in the wrong places to aggravate the situation, and neither are we making use of our children for personal gain, either monetary or industrial benefit, then a relationship will become possible upon which we can build, and we shall be in the unique position of being able to develop educational techniques, perhaps even along the lines of the Open University on a mini-scale, which may be a pattern for future development.

One last word - we have no rights as parents over the education of our children except that which the Law allows. Laws can be changed, but it is incumbent upon those of us engaged in this present endeavour to ensure that what we are doing is so eminently a valuable contribution to education and our children that no politician would dare restrict further in any future legislation the clause giving the right to 'education otherwise'. My own feeling is that a good LEA will realize the potential of EO and do all they can to help. Don't be afraid to say to them, "Why can't we work together on this?" We can do with help and advice in this particular - are there any particular ways in which we can try things out for you? Is there any way by which we can make your job of monitoring what we are doing easier for you?"

Lastly, if at local level you do not gain satisfaction, try county, or even your M.P. The more people watching your interest from a sympathetic standpoint, the less likely you are to encounter problems.

P.S.: We have on August 8th (original application December 3rd 1980) received official notification that the boys have been withdrawn, but my grandniece, who has recently joined the group, will not be likely to receive her official sanction until we have satisfied her programme criteria, which is likely to be about October. We originally applied in July; this is probably because of difficulties in school.

At the outset it would appear that any LEA genuinely fulfilling its role in vetting EO applications is placed in the embarrassing situation of not being adequately staffed to deal with EO requirements laid upon them by statute. Anything, therefore, that we can do to assist members in the presentation of cases - particularly with regard to deregistration - will only be for our common good, and enhance the repute of what we are seeking to do in educational circles.

It may be possible (with co-operation from an inspector or a sympathetic LEA official) to work out a questionnaire, which, when filled in, would supply basic information on premises, pattern of study, objectives, standard of pupils, proposed monitoring procedures, &c., which could inform the LEA of intentions and possibly save one of the visits by inspectors at a preliminary stage.

Final comment: Uncertainty is the enemy of any progress which we can make in the field of alternative education. I have found, in spite of my experience, the most testing aspect has been the waiting for approval of course of study.

In Confidence

Janet Everdell

Did you, like me, believe that you consulted your doctor in absolute confidentiality? Well, maybe you do. But, if you are a parent with no professional qualifications, and take your children out of a Special school, then again, maybe you don't.

In my capacity as a local co-ordinator I was shocked to discover that a local G.P. had been asked by the LEA's Educational Psychologist to provide full medical background on a family I was counselling. Fortunately, the G.P. told the mother of the request, but refused to comply.

I decided to investigate further what seemed to me to be totally unethical behaviour and have discovered from the *Advisory Centre on Education* that "the practice of sending medical records between doctors and education psychologists/welfare officers &c is probably quite common". The problem arises because records are not owned by the person about whom they are written. Therefore they are passed between any number of professionals without the permission or knowledge of the individual concerned.

The *British Medical Association*, a voluntary professional association of doctors, informed me that they "as such cannot advise members of the public on matters of this kind". However, they did send me photocopies of the relevant pages from their *Handbook of Medical Ethics* (available at £3 from their publishing department), and that listed five exceptions to the confidentiality principle, none of which applied to the family concerned.

The *National Council for Civil Liberties* told me "if the doctor in question has indeed released any records without the consent of the patient, then that doctor should be reported to the B.M.A. Ethical Committee." However, the problem here seems to be the obvious one that if a doctor co-operates with the LEA the family concerned is not likely to be informed until it comes up in legal proceedings. Still, it is nice to know that they do have an Ethical Committee!

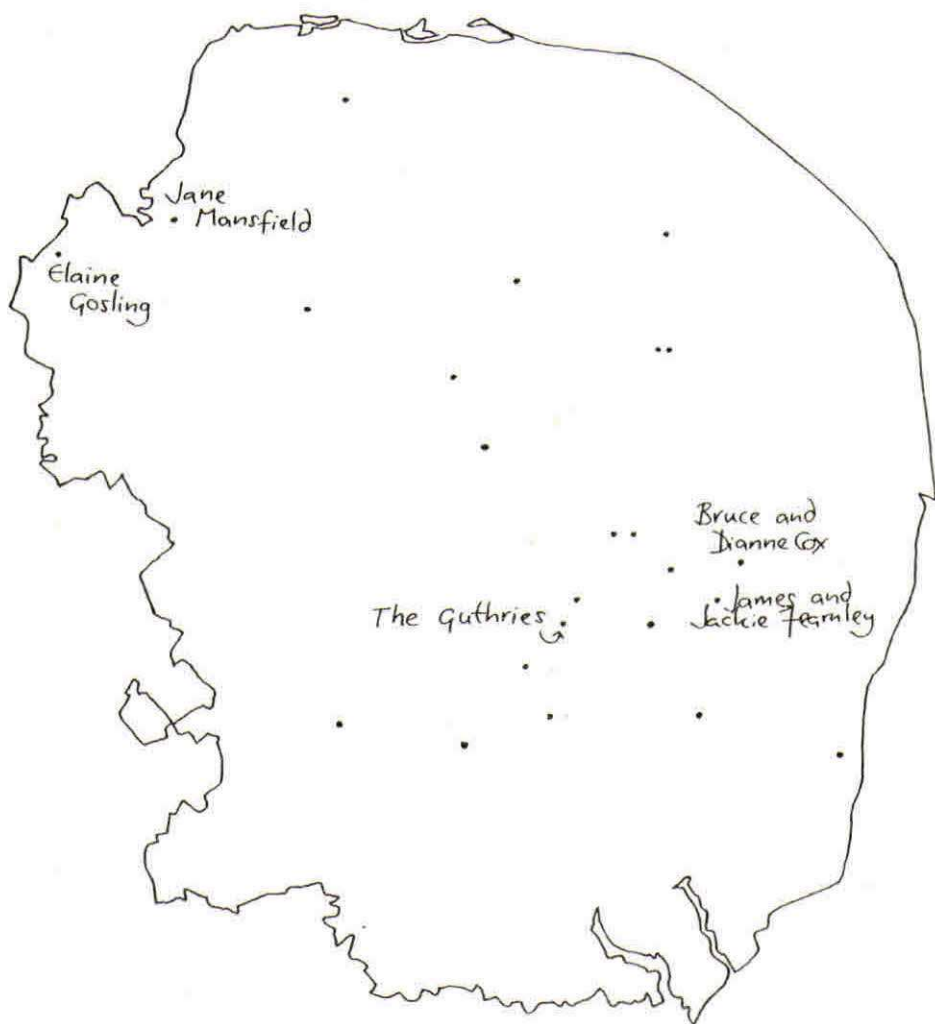
The NCCL have made an investigation into information-gathering, its methods and uses, and it is available from them, price £1.75: *Privacy - The Information Gatherers*.



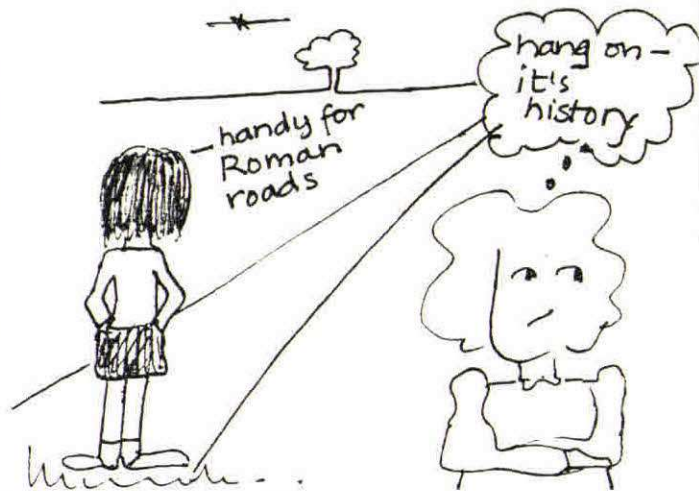
Arnemetia by Arnemetia
Bethell (6)

EO

in east anglia



ARCHIE in EAST ANGLIA





Through the Press in EAST ANGLIA

DAUNTING MISSIVE

Still Reeling, a would-be teacher at a private school in Suffolk has sent in a remarkable document which should allay the fears of anyone concerned about the decay of the British race. All who apply for a job at St. George's School, Great Finborough, (motto: "Be of good courage"), become targets for this missive.

"In the past," writes the headmaster, Mr. D.A. Slade, M.A. (Oxon.), we have found many teachers are (bluntly) insubordinate, uncommitted and lazy, quick to complain - and to take advantage." Serious applicants (and Mr. Slade emphasises twice that there are "hundreds", hence his refusal to pay travel expenses) are advised of the stringent requirements.

Apart from a nine-to-six day for the children, ultra-traditional discipline and teaching methods ("forget most of what training colleges have taught you"), staff must accept "stringent contractual conditions" and the sack after a year if they are less than satisfactory. Refreshingly, after all this, Mr. Slade (or his secretary/slave) cannot spell "fulfil" or "ultra", follows a colon with a capital letter, and forgets to append a comparative clause to a sentence introducing a comparison.

ARE SCHOOLS REALLY WORKING?

SIR: There has been a lot of publicity about truancy recently. The great fear in people's minds seems to be that truancy is the first step to crime - partly because it is an offence punishable in a court and partly because one of the functions school is meant to fulfil is that of child minding during the day time.

I feel that this subject needs to be looked at in a less superficial way. One point that people who have worked with school refusers frequently make is that they are often very bright children who are bored at school. Another aspect I have noticed is that the strongest disapproval goes to those parents whose children stay off school with their consent. Yet it seems to me that these children are less likely to be at risk. At least they are in touch with their parents and not lying about their activities, and the parents are perhaps trying to see the situation from their point of view.

A lot of children have a miserable time at school - not always through the fault of the teacher but perhaps as a result of bullying, or just not fitting in. Parents who do care when they see their children suffering are in a difficult position. They do not necessarily feel able to take on their children's education, especially when these problems occur most noticeably around the age of 14 or so. And they do not want to force their children to attend a school each day that does not seem to be doing them any good and may be causing positive harm.

If it is the result of the attitude of one particular teacher the problem can often be resolved by talking to the head teacher, but the more basic problem is that schools are only a reflection of the wider society and for that reason nowadays we would expect to find violence in them.

I do not pretend to have an easy answer, though I do firmly believe that the violence in our society can be traced back to the way each child is brought up. For this reason, schools have a very hard job and I think that everything which encourages parents to be responsible is to the good. Therefore, I feel that parents who keep their children at home should not be seen automatically as weak and uncaring.

Lastly, I should like to emphasize that to keep your child at home is not in itself illegal, provided they have been taken off the school register. You could be taken to court for not providing an efficient, full-time education suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability, but this would be more hard to prove.

We have to think hard about what education really is. I would say that it should be just as much concerned with what a person is and what he is able to do, as with what he knows, and at the present time more and more parents are feeling that they are providing a more suitable environment for the physical and spiritual development of

their children than can schools with their inevitable limitations. (*Letter from Jackie Fearnley, in The Norfolk and Suffolk Journal 5 June 1981*)

✱ A 74-year-old woman has won a place at the University of East Anglia to do a three-year degree course. She was offered a place in Glasgow, in 1923, with a £5 bursary, but her father spent it on whisky: SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 26 Aug 1981.

NEWS

EO GATHERING IN SUFFOLK

Sunday June 14th 1981

Bruce Cox

Anyone who organizes a gathering of EO members has reason for apprehension. Any positive arrangements, nature trails, seminars, public readings for EO newsletters, are sure to offend those for whom informality is next to godliness, whereas a total absence of 'arrangements' can leave those new to the EO scene wondering what they came for.

Anyway - what if no one comes? For myself, numbers were the main problem. Not till the day has arrived do you know whether the turnout will be five or fifty. Not till the day dawns do you know whether the meeting will be sabotaged by the weather.

The East Anglian meeting arose out of a Core Group discussion that harked back to distant memories of weekends at Lower Shaw Farm. Would not it be a good idea to have another residential weekend? The main difficulty was cost. Camping perhaps? We could find sites but nowhere with undercover accommodation if it were needed, so we decided to scrap the idea of a camp and simply have a picnic. At the last minute we were offered a site on a local farm. This was Hare's Farm, marked on all the maps as Hors Farm but rechristened, no doubt to avoid the suspicion that here might be the only red light district in the Green Belt.

As it turned out our efforts to find a site offering a retreat in the event of rain would have been better spent finding something that would give some shade, for the day turned out to be the hottest not only of the year, but for several years. Getting on for twenty families came, circulated, talked, and subsided in pools of sweat. Some went on to the coast to plunge their reddening bodies in the sea. The meeting seemed worthwhile. People came wanting to talk and found plenty to talk about. Friendships were renewed and new friends made - but perhaps there still exists the need for residential gatherings that can take these relationships further.

EO in East Anglia

Jackie Fearnley

It would be impossible to give a comprehensive picture of activity throughout the area, so I am confining myself to some notes of recent events and conversations.

Two or three weeks ago I had my yearly 'phone call from a woman in North Norfolk who took her little boy out of school about three years ago as a result of publicity we had in their daily paper about our own family and the group we had started called *Children First*. She was ringing to tell me how well everything was going - not only in the area of learning, but in terms of the boy's health and happiness. She wanted to say again how pleased she felt she had taken the decision.

The following week I had a conversation with a woman who lives about four miles away. As a result of the publicity over *Children First* (which took place about four years ago) she decided not to send her little girl to school. She is now 6½ and has been coming over to play with our children quite regularly. For various reasons - partly because she's an only child - they decided to try the local school. She was telling me that the teacher had not been interested in what they'd already done at home. She pronounced the child backward because she was behind in reading (i.e. their particular scheme) and yet was also critical of the fact that she used long words that the other children could not understand. The mother said that the main thing her little girl had learnt so far was a long list of swear words. She had no desire to force her to go and is waiting to see what will happen next term. She does in fact seem different already - more liable to be silly and giggly and to gang up with one of the children against another.

The same week I had a 'phone call from someone in the next village who had got hold of me as a result of a letter I'd written in a local newspaper. They were not at all happy about the effect that school was having on their 5-year-old, who had seemed to lose the keen interest she had had in learning about the world around her. They wanted to come and have a chat about it.

This week a friend came over who lives about three miles away. She has decided to keep her eldest child, who is approaching school age, at home, and was relieved to hear that Lillah had not started school either. She talked a lot about the effects of school on her neices and nephews - particularly the competitive element and the silliness that seemed to occur when they got together.

Another recent event that seems relevant was Rose's birthday party at which all the guests except one were not at school (basically three families). The one who had come from school was reluctant to join in any games he had not initiated, needed a large amount of attention and did not seem able to appreciate that it was someone's birthday. He also set a lot of store by winning any game in which he took part and was all the time trying to raise the level of excitement and encouraging the others to rush around.

The last development I would mention is that a group of people around here, mainly with under-school-age children, have been meeting with a view to starting some kind of centre or school to which children could come. I think it would be true to say that this could not have happened had people not already been aware that it is not necessary to send your children to school.

Since our *Children First* meetings one friend has also started a Steiner school in Norfolk. Many of the children who now go there were in the original group we started.

I suppose the point is that if you keep your children out of school and keep up some sort of publicity about it, perhaps with the addition of an open meeting once a year which is well-advertized, then the result (especially in a rural area) will be that a large proportion of the people there at least know that going to school is not a legal obligation and they are aware that people to choose to keep their children at home. We have had 'phone calls two or three years after a newspaper article, from people who'd kept our number 'just in case'.



Bruce and Dianne Cox

Bruce and Dianne Cox, familiar to most EOers as Core members handling enquiries and co-ordinating the co-ordinators, are recent immigrants to East Anglia from Leicestershire. This article, by VICKI MCKENZIE, was recently featured in the SUNDAY TIMES:

On a summer weekday morning in the Cox family's garden deep in the Suffolk countryside, Eleanor, Madeleine and Tom are at school.

Eleanor, nearly nine, is practising cartwheels on the wooden beam her father erected on the front lawn. Madeleine, six, is watching the cat play with a shrew and Tom, three and a half, is dashing from piano to vegetable garden to pick cucumbers for lunch. They are vital, happy children totally absorbed in life.

...

Bruce and Dianne Cox took Eleanor out of school when she was five and intend to send neither her nor their other children to an institution of education ever again. Their definition of 'education' is based on the broadest grounds possible and centres mainly on fostering whatever interests each child.

"We regard teaching as learning and in this respect everyone is a teacher." They say the children learned from them how to speak, and, similarly, how to read and write, by copying them and asking questions. "Children are infinitely curious creatures and naturally want to learn. The important thing is that the initiative comes from them - which doesn't happen at school," said Dianne, who often played truant. Recently she's discovered the pleasure of self-taught knowledge through an Open University degree.

Bruce Cox was a schoolmaster at primary and secondary levels before his beliefs about education forced him to resign. At Christmas he moved from Leicestershire to a cheaper 17th-century cottage in Suffolk, eliminating a mortgage and allowing him to stay at home for a while with his family living frugally off capital. He knows this luxury won't last much longer.

"I was at one of the most progressive secondary schools in the country and had as good an experience of state education as was possible, and it was just not good enough. Schools are concerned more with control than learning, with what teachers' objectives are and manipulating the children to achieve those objectives," he said.

The Cox children's classroom is wherever the parents happen to be - in the kitchen, garden or supermarket. Their timetable is non-existent. "There is no structure. We just live and the children join in whatever we are doing," said Dianne. "We spend most of our time answering questions." The day isn't cut up into 40-minute parcels.

Dianne and Bruce say "It's really much easier than people imagine. All you need is care, concern and time, plus an awareness of your children's development." However, home educators cannot send their children off at nine every morning: "Some parents do find it easier to link up with other families, and groups of home-educationalists are emerging, but it amazes me that people send their children to school to get them out of the way", said Dianne.

So far the Cox method of feeding the children's natural inquisitiveness has paid off. They reckon their children are learning at the level at which they would be taught at school - and beyond. Eleanor can read and write fluently, Madeleine can read simple sentences and Tom is already asking for words to be written on the blackboard and is able to write his own name. "We go to the library every week with a wheelbarrow. They all take out six books each," said Bruce.

Arithmetic is taught through the sums incurred in everyday living. Eleanor is a dab hand at mental arithmetic. "There are 16 strawberries here, if I pick two more we can have three each," she announced. "Eleanor was dividing the family allowance between all of us when she was seven" said Dianne. Geography and history lessons take place in the car, when they pass land formations, statues or castles that capture the children's interest.

Mostly the education is practical. Eleanor bakes bread, follows recipes, identifies flowers, reads maps. Madeleine and Tom draw, write, feed the chickens, garden and learn how to mix mortar for the extra room Bruce is building. There's a good case for fostering practical talents rather than accumulating academic data in a world where leisure time is on the increase. Eleanor is a keen gymnast (she won a gold medal at a local competition recently) and goes to classes three times a week. She and Madeleine also learn the piano and go swimming.

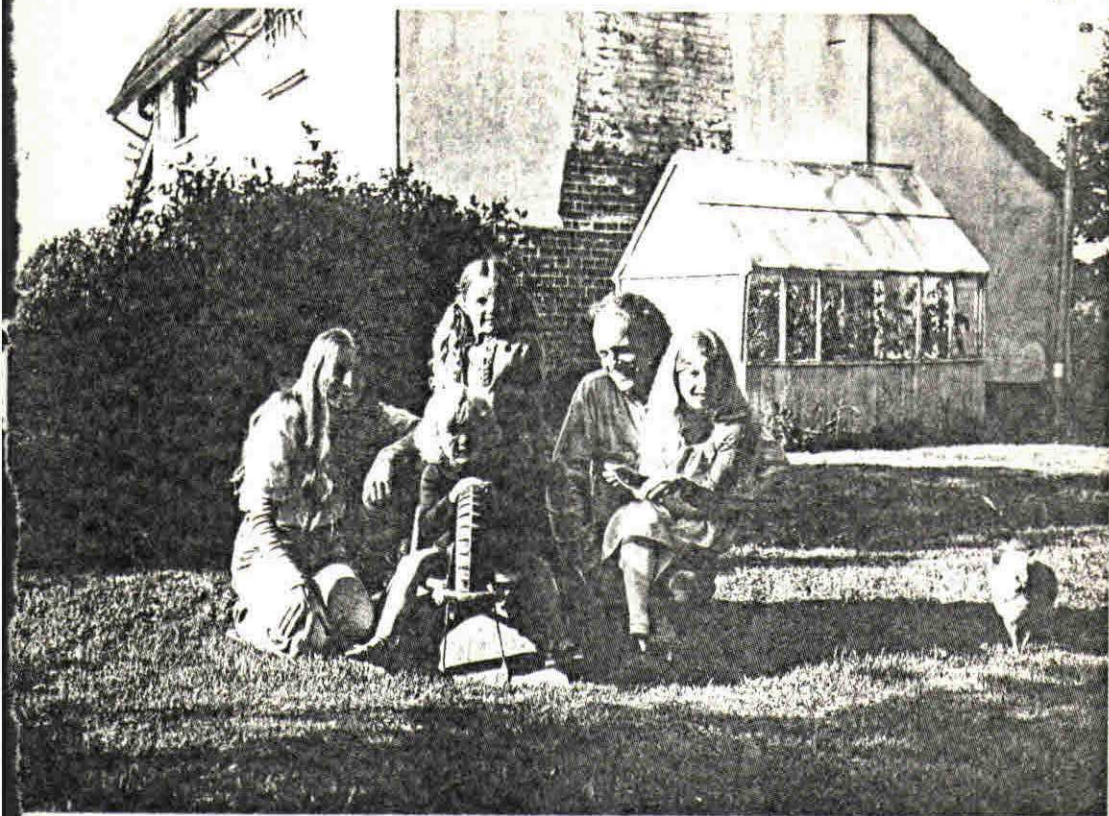
"One of the criticisms about home educators is that their children are deprived of social contact," said Dianne, who denies that this is the case with her children. "Often the social contact children get at school is damaging - bullying, conflict, competition. I feel very strongly about children being confined to a single age group - my children mix with all ages, which is far more natural."

The family are not yet formulating any policy about their children's secondary schooling needs. Dianne tends to think that they will be able to provide whatever is required. Bruce feels that outside help might have to be enlisted either from tutors or from the technological revolution. The onus will be on the children to request aid.

"By adolescence we are anticipating they will have longterm objectives," said Bruce. "I suspect that the technological revolution by then will have brought all the knowledge you need into your home. What is really required is the equivalent of Open University for schools."

Whether Eleanor, Madeleine or Tom want to be microsurgeons or whether "A" levels exist by then remains to be seen.

Certainly, the Cox family are not over-ambitious for the children. Dianne and Bruce say only that: "The aim of our education is to make them happy, fulfilled people, confident and effective in achieving what they want."



Dianne and Bruce also featured in the September issue of *Women's World*: a feature entitled IS SCHOOL THE BEST PLACE FOR YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION? talks about the Coxes, about the Head family, and has damping comments from Margaret Maden, head of Islington Green School. Here is a snippet:

Sometimes, just occasionally, eight-year-old Eleanor Cox wonders what it must be like to go to school. Her friends assure her unreservedly that it is awful and are madly jealous of her lifestyle. But still, a girl can't help feeling a little curious ...

Like her six-year-old sister Madeleine, and three-year-old brother Tom, Eleanor has never had a day's schooling in her life. It was when she was three that her parents, Dianne and Bruce Cox, decided, after due consideration, that there was nothing school could offer their children which they could not.

"I began to have doubts soon after Eleanor started playgroup," says Dianne, who herself left school with no regrets at 15. "Instead of doing all the things I had so enjoyed with Eleanor, I seemed to spend all my time taking her to be looked after by somebody else. It was crazy. And when I asked teachers what went on in primary school, they didn't mention anything we weren't already doing at home."

Bruce, too, was unwilling to entrust his children to the school system. A disillusioned ex-teacher - he finally gave up work last year when the family moved to Suffolk - he has some unconventional ideas about education.

"I am sure the main function of schools is a custodial one: they keep children out of the way. And instead of encouraging them to learn, they put children off learning by making it an unpleasant experience."

So the following September Eleanor stayed at home with Dianne and Madeleine. There was no clash with the education authorities, no surprise raids by inspectors; just two visits from the local infant education adviser and then a vacuum to fill as the family chose.

They chose what might be called free expression. "It becomes more and more apparent to me," says Dianne, "that kids learn most from conversation and imitation - two things schools cannot provide. Whenever Tom seems me writing - it might just be the shopping list - he wants to join in and that way he is learning to write. Eleanor and Madeleine picked it up in exactly the same way."

Reading and writing are the only compulsory subjects on the Cox curriculum. For the rest, the children do what they want when they want. Says Bruce: "There are lots of things we would like them to learn, but we're prepared to leave it to them. I don't believe in making a list and forcing them to follow it doggedly."

The result of this relaxed attitude is not, surprisingly enough, total anarchy. The children get up about 8 a.m. and turn in whenever they feel tired - usually around 10 p.m. In between, the day is crammed with activity: making bread, feeding the chickens, investigating wildlife in the nearby woods, helping Bruce renovate the house, reading, writing and drawing. "In school, teachers have a rate of progress they are trying to achieve. We wait until the children give us a starting point to discussion, and they always do. They are constantly asking us questions. Leave them to their own devices and they'll choose to learn."

I'll admit I expected children allowed such a free rein to be at best uncontrollable and at worst insufferable. In fact, they were a delight: polite, bright, active and articulate and as well-informed as any children I've met of their age. They mix happily with other children whom they meet through the local gym club or through *Education Otherwise*. And they show no signs of clinging to their parents.





James and Jackie Fearnley handmade in Welford, Suffolk

Jackie Fearnley

As we tend to crop up quite often in *Newsletters*, and Dick wrote about James a short while ago, I will keep this part as brief as possible. We are James and Jackie Fearnley and live in a small village in the northern part of Suffolk in a two-bedroomed cottage on the end of which we have made a pottery. James works on his own with occasional help from people who are keen to work for little at the same time as learning. A friend of a friend of Iris Harrison's has just spent a year living with us and helping out in all sorts of ways. We mainly sell the pottery at fairs during the summer and up till Christmas. This involves travelling in our converted police coach, which is almost as big as the house!

If we are not careful this kind of life can be too hectic and disruptive with the children getting tired and over-stimulated. At its best it means meeting other kindred spirits; the children (Rose 8, Lillah 5 and Felix 2½) meeting up with old friends and spending much of their time watching children's theatre, dancing, hearing all kinds of music, and being able to observe and talk to other people who are making things ranging from sculptures to corn dollies.

I have written elsewhere about our approach to 'formal learning'. I have also mentioned how lucky we have been in our schools adviser, who turned out to have been taught at home himself until the age of 9. He has always been very encouraging about 'doing our own thing' and not trying to emulate what we think schools do. He left us mostly alone so we have had no pressure from that direction.

Now he has gone to Yorkshire and we are awaiting a visit from his replacement in September. I have already had several imaginary conversations with him on the subject of Rose not being able to read and was quite looking forward to a battle in that area, getting him to explain why reading was that important at that age. But just the other day Rose picked up an old *Janet and John* book, and in three sessions of about ten minutes each has taught herself to read most of the book. She asked me any words she didn't know, guessed a lot of the others, and each time she got stuck she went right back to the beginning. Apart from the fact that this cost far less in time and effort than the same process in school, the main ingredient she needed was some peace and quiet and to be able to read to herself rather than out loud with someone else judging her.

It is difficult to know what to pick out when asked to write about oneself, but I suppose one theme of our lives is trying to stay in touch with the right thing to do. One aspect of this is trying to keep a balance between earning money, giving the children what they need, looking after the garden and house, being involved in the world outside - at village level and in a group we helped to start called the *Mid-Waveney Smallholders*. We've also been doing what we could to stop Sizewell B and we joke about my frenzied spells of letter-writing

on such subjects as low-flying aircraft, crop-spraying, home births, and, of course, keeping one's children out of school.

If all these activities are kept in proportion and everyone stays calm and satisfied it is fine, but sometimes things get out of control, perhaps when we also have a day of unexpected visitors turning up or when James ends up working until midnight and getting up at 5 in the morning, and then we have to pause and perhaps consider selling the house and moving to a Scottish island or - less drastically - work out the priorities again - acknowledging that they are not always the obvious ones and that anything might happen.

School

Elaine Gosling (14)

My reasons for not getting on at school were probably the same as most of the other children doing EO. For one thing, I didn't get on with any of the teachers, and if you get into a little trouble with one teacher, you get in all the teachers' 'bad books', and they don't give you a second chance, to start again.

I thought children went to school to work, but when you get to your lesson the teachers are 10 if not more minutes late, and then they talk for the next 20 minutes, and that leaves the children (pupils) about 30 minutes to get usually a large piece of work done, doing it in proper sentences, using commas, speech marks, question marks, &c &c, and no pupil I know can do a really good piece of work like that in 30 minutes, because it isn't possible.

The teachers at the school I went to also used to pick on certain people that they don't like, and it was always those people getting told off, and the others never got told off.

The Guthries

An everyday story of EO folk

CAST

eldest daughter of 11
middle daughter of 5
youngest daughter, 6 months
the cat
"me" their mother
their father
their granny
2 chickens
a Californian rabbit

Joanna Guthrie
Alice Guthrie
Lydia Guthrie (on various knees throughout)
Mitten
Sarah Guthrie
Brian Guthrie (offstage editing in caravan)
Barbara (offstage at her weaving loom)
Biddy and Marran (in the vegetable patch)
April (ditto)

The action takes place around the breakfast table

SCENE 1

ME: *Right. Fractions this morning, Jo. Let's really get cracking, eh. Because we haven't done any for ages. Then I suggest we all do some weeding, sort out the chickens, make chutney from all that rhubarb, and then have a look at that book I made you get out of the library. But first - some painting!*

JOANNA: *Telephone for you Mum. It's an EO enquiry.*

ME: *Oh. (Exit)*

SCENE 2 (half an hour later)

Enter ME, rather more slowly. Room empty. From the distance, peals of childish laughter.

ME: (through open window) *I'm getting out the CUISENAIRE RODS NOW*
long pause

VOICES OFF: *We just must finish this, Mum.*

SCENE 3 (later that morning)

ME: *Alice, perhaps you'd care to give your shelves a thorough tidy and collect together all your finger puppets, sort out the dolls' clothes, and build a den?*

ALICE (cheerfully): *No.*

But you can if you want to. (exits into garden)

I gaze into space for a while, then eat slice of bread and jam.

THE END



WILLIAM

Jane Mansfield

Let me think of William - William my 8-year-old son; tall and gangling - what he lacks in muscle power he makes up for in wit. Enthusiastic for things to happen, lively, high-spirited, adventurous. William, who needs to be cuddled just for a moment, and then is off again to join in anything lively that's going on. At the moment there's a tussle on the lawn, John - my husband - Harry 10 years, Michael 3 years, and William - all in a bundle of heads, arms and legs. William is taking their roughness without resentment and giving as much back with a whoop and a yippee!! He looks a happy secure little boy, definitely intelligent - usually able to make a bright quip, defusing an awkward possibly explosive situation by a laugh.



Just a term at home and he has found himself again.

Last year the situation with William was exactly the opposite to that described above. We knew he needed a change of school and so arranged for him to sit an entrance exam as a day boy at a caring, well-known, well-thought-of prep school. He was turned down - "quite simply nowhere near up to standard". Even I began to wonder if he was just lacking in intelligence, but remembering how he had been before he started school, I knew this could not be so. Perhaps he was ill.

He went to our paediatrician and after numerous painful blood tests nothing was found. It was then that I took him to a psychologist who had specialized in the study of specific learning difficulties, and had him assessed privately. He had a reading age of 7 years and a comprehension age of 12 years. Further tests showed he was experiencing the problems associated with dyslexia.

With the support of *Education Otherwise* to give me moral strength, I decided to take him away from the school he was at and let him be educated at home. I interviewed two tutors available locally. Neither felt they could handle his special difficulties. As an occupational therapist, I understood dyslexia and thus it was that I decided to take a course at the Helen Arkell Centre, Fulham, and help him myself.

I set a term's time-limit, feeling that socially he would miss out if he were to stay away longer. He moves from First to Middle School next term, so he will get the change of school he needed.

He is looking forward to the event. I am looking forward to it too; but I am hoping he meets a sensitive, understanding teacher. Already it has been made clear that my teaching methods will *not* be required and - "what is this 'learning difficulty' problem anyway?"

A cry to teacher training units - particularly at infant level - For William's sake and for others like him (and there are many, 1½ to each class of 30 pupils) please improve our teachers' understanding of the problems of dyslexia.

NOTICES



POSTERS advertising EO (A3 and A4 size) are now available from 18 Eynham Road

If you organize an EO stall at a fair &c., and want some of our PUBLICATIONS TO SELL, write to: Dom and Ros Sweetman, 69 Leathwaite Road, London SW11 AT LEAST two weeks before the event.

Some members may already be aware of the existence of the CAMPAIGN FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS WITHIN THE STATE-MAINTAINED SYSTEM. Anyone who is concerned about education of children in general and who would like to stand up for the right of every parent to greater choice of school, particularly in terms of its structure, may like to subscribe to their newsletter: £1.75 for 4 copies. The campaign wants schools that are democratic, non-hierarchical, small, open, and non-coercive, with full parental involvement. The address to write to for more information is:

Campaign for State-Supported Alternative Schools, c/o ACE,
18 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB

IN FROM THE COLD

Quite a number of EO families have children with disabilities, and the state provision of education for such children is often even more inadequate than it is for children without disabilities: and such is the law that the opportunity for coercion by the authorities is greater.

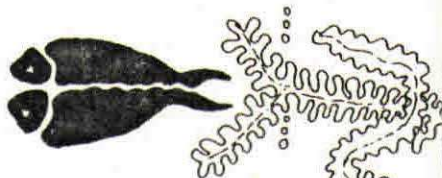
A new organization has just been formed: LIBERATION NETWORK FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, and it produces a newsletter three times yearly: IN FROM THE COLD. This title reflects the feelings of those who join the group - the ability at last to feel part of a movement with similar ideas and problems, to be within a sympathetic group rather than outside, alone and isolated. A year's subscription costs £1.20, a year's membership of the Liberation Network costs £2.50 (the magazine is free to members).

Address: Flat 4, 180 Ramsden Road, Balham, London SW12

WE WOULD LIKE TO MEET local EO members, especially those interested in shared activities: Yvonne and Malcolm Muckle (Gemma 1/78 and Yolanda 5/79), 139 Brooke Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 7RP

IT HAS RECENTLY BEEN SUGGESTED by a member that many EO children would enjoy and benefit from having pen-friends. Please send an introductory letter to the editors (Strines, Upper Hulme, Leek) and we will pass copies on to likely correspondents.

KIPPER



KIPPER 5 is out shortly:

As well as the usual dreadful jokes we have Bird Crosswords, Dino Page, Stories, Cartoons, and articles on Graveyards and Alpine Flowers. Plus a feature on Kilquhanity House school.

Send 40p per copy (incl. post): bi-annual. We accept anything in barter for payment: cheques, P.O.s, stamps, similar publications, W.H.Y.?

From: KIPPER OFFICE, Stable Back, Langley Priory, Diseworth, Derby.



GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

See further p.62. Available from Stephanie Leland, 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N19.

FOR SALE

45 BLOUNT TERRACE, FOLEY PARK, KIDDERMINSTER, HEREFORD & WORCESTER
3 bedrooms, 2 reception, bathroom, kitchen, all conveniences. Has stained-glass top framed windows. Also a garage. In need of some repair. Freehold. Undergoing an examination for sale of same. Toilets up and downstairs. Has been rewired. Gas installed. Keys at Walton & Hipkin, 1 Bridge Street, Kidderminster. Phone: Kidderminster 4774-5-6. Price to be negotiated vis-a-vis Mr. Brown of above firm.

MINUTES

PUBLICATIONS GROUP

10.30 a.m. 18 Jul 1981, at The Burntlands, Tenbury Wells.

Members present: John Elenor, Dick Kitto, Di & Bruce Cox.

1. APOLOGIES were received from: Stephanie Leland, Jane Davies, Cherity Laniado, Sarah Guthrie, Dom & Ros Sweetman, Helen Holland, James Fearnley, David Bethell.
2. THE MINUTES of the previous meeting. Dick pointed out two mistakes:

Item 3.1, third sentence should be amended to *and he proposed that we should let them have &c.*

Item 5.4 should read *Dick agreed to do a digest, with index, of NL5-12 &c.*

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 No one at the meeting knew whether the 230 copies had been sent to PDC.

(Subsequent investigation discovered that Dom had done this)

3.2 The Curriculum Debate is with Lorna at present. Bruce estimated that it will be typed up ready for circulation (in a limited number of copies) at the next Publications Group meeting.

3.3 Stephanie reported (by telepathy) that sticky labels were almost ready.

3.4 Stephanie reported (in the same manner) that the posters were ready for distribution. It was agreed that all local co-ordinators and Publications Group members should be sent approx. five of the large and ten of the small, depending on precise postage costs. John agreed to undertake this, and to write a notice about the posters for the Newsletter.

5.4 Annual index to Newsletters - we felt that there was a need for this, but no one present was prepared to do it. John agreed to look for a volunteer among the rest of the membership.

Digest of NL 5-8; Dick reported that he had made an initial selection which reached 67 pages and was possibly too long. Di agreed to read it with the view to further pruning, and then pass it to Sarah for her comments.

Digest of NL 9-12 is under way.

6. The GWS snippets have been compiled for the next Newsletter.

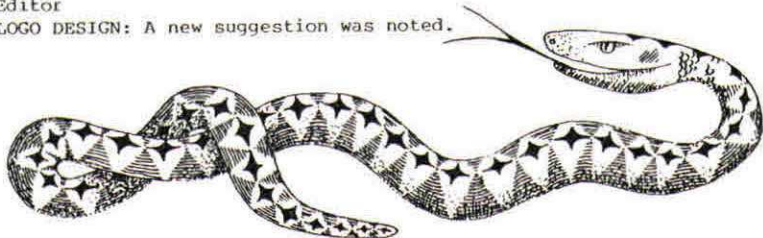
7. The local co-ordinators pack has been completed and distributed.

4. NEWSLETTER

4.1 NL 18 General comment on this issue, both from those present and from the membership at large, was highly favourable; we found it well-presented and lively in tone, giving a good image of EO. It was pointed out, however, that a policy decision of several years ago was against the inclusion of children's work for its own sake, on the grounds that 1) the Newsletter was designed principally to support and inform parents who were educating their children at home; 2) The Kipper already exists to publish children's work; and 3) a general appeal for children's work could (but not necessarily would) encourage the sort of competitiveness and showmanship that was counterproductive to the aims of EO. After lengthy discussion it was agreed to uphold this policy decision, with the proviso that the Editor should be free to include articles from children of direct relevance to the newsletter (e.g., a child's view of home education) and illustrations to articles.

4.2 NL 19 It was agreed that, though the Editor should be named, the views expressed in the Editorial should represent the organization, not just the Editor

5. LOGO DESIGN: A new suggestion was noted.



6. SELLING LITERATURE at fairs &c. Full discussion of this matter was deferred to the next meeting; for the time being, anyone wanting copies of our publications should ask the Membership Secretaries. (But make sure you do it in *plenty of time!* - preferably two or more weeks in advance)
 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
 - 7.1 The new John Holt book *Teach Your Own* will be published in the UK this autumn; it is hoped to offer a reduction to members of EO, details of which should appear in the next *Newsletter*.
 - 7.2 It was agreed that a new Contact List should appear in the next *Newsletter*, with the local co-ordinators' names asterisked as before.
 - 7.3 It was felt that if the Contact List appeared annually, another list should appear with each *Newsletter* containing the names of members who had joined in the preceding quarter, together with the resources they offered. *John* agreed to investigate the feasibility of this.
 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: deferred to Core Group meeting.
- Meeting closed in time for lunch.

CORE GROUP

2 p.m. 18 Jul 1981, at The Burntlands, Tenbury Wells.

Members present: John Elenor (taking minutes), Di and Bruce Cox, Dick Kitto (chair), Simon and Caroline Grant, Sandra Smith, Pam Goodrich, Iris Harrison, Barry Lovius, Vic Woolridge, Mike Hammersley.

1. APOLOGIES were received from: Stephanie Leland, Jane Davies, Cherity Laniado, Sarah Guthrie, Dom and Ros Sweetman, Helen Holland, James Fearnley, David Bethell.
2. MINUTES of the previous meeting were read and approved.
3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Entitlement to Family Allowance: Iris reported that her appeal against a previous refusal was to be heard at Worcester fairly soon.

3.2 Legal protection scheme: since Dick had not been able to contact anyone yet, discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting, with the suggestion that every member look out for a solicitor and an educational psychologist who might be willing to act for us.

3.3 Support Fund: it had so far proved impossible for the subcommittee to meet, and *Iris* suggested that she should take sole responsibility for the time being to investigate setting up this fund as a charity.

6. Patronage: Bruce agreed to collect a list of suitable names.

11.1 Resource list: since Jane was absent and her report delayed in the post, it was not clear whether she was able to continue with this. It was felt, however, that the list of resources offered by members should be updated; *John* agreed to ask Betty Ball if she was able to do this again.

11.4 Trent Park Meeting: we agreed a basic format for this, with a 12 noon assembly for picnic followed at 2 by a general forum; to begin with a report from the Core Group, proceeding to topics suggested in advance (and sent to *John*). It was hoped to offer in addition: a bookstall (hopefully Leila Berg again), music and art activities, lapel badges (the Harrison family will produce 200 of these), and perhaps stalls provided by members and their children (e.g.: theatrical make-up).

4. REPORTS

The Treasurer reported that we are still financially stable.

The Membership Secretaries had nothing to report.

The Enquiries Secretaries reported that little was happening at present - perhaps because it was the end of the school year.

5. PART-TIME SCHOOLING

Denise Mutter had sent a letter suggesting that EO should support this idea, despite the insurance difficulties. After some discussion we agreed to give this our wholehearted support, and to investigate the possibility of children under the age of 16 attending FE college. It was proposed that local co-ordinators should be asked to write to their LEA (in particular the FE adviser) about this. It was reported that Roy Dunster had negotiated part-time schooling for his children.

6. AFFILIATIONS

6.1 *London Educational Alternatives Programme*: this is a group (under the auspices of *Interaction*) which exists to support people who are working in educational provision outside conventional schools. It was felt that we could usefully collaborate with them; John agreed to investigate.

6.2 *Norfolk Voice*: this is a loose affiliation of Alternative organizations in the Norfolk area. Cherity was asked to keep us in touch with them.

7. JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

Now that we are affiliated, we receive their monthly newsletter. Iris agreed to take this and to report to the group on any relevant items; she will then pass it on to Dick, thence to Di.

8. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

It was felt important that the next meeting be held in London, which seems to be the easiest place for most people to reach. The obvious date was Sunday 27th September, the day after the Trent Park meeting; the place (fixed later on) is to be the Lelands, 82 Lady Margaret Road, Tufnell Park, London N19. Publications group 10.30, Core group 2.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 *Future Studies Centre*: they have proposed an exchange of newsletters. Simon Grant agreed to receive it on our behalf, and report relevant items.

9.2 Co-ordination: it was felt that the duties of local co-ordinators were not entirely clear. The idea that emerged as most popular was that of organizing meetings of one sort or another for local members. The Treasurer reiterated that funds were available centrally to defray expenses.

9.3 Members' problems: the Core Group members who dealt with these problems (mostly legal) felt that they were often working in isolation and possibly duplicating effort. It was agreed that these cases should be discussed informally after every Core Group meeting. Another suggestion was that a simple questionnaire be sent to members whose problems we tackled, in order to obtain feedback from them.

9.4 *Fourth World*: their First Assembly is being held in London at the end of July, and it was suggested that someone from EO might go to the Education section. No one Volunteered immediately.

Agenda items for the next meeting should be sent to: John Elenor, 18 Eynham Road, London W12, to arrive no later than September 20th.

BOOKS



ABSENT WITHOUT CAUSE

by Roger White

Paperback: Routledge & Kegan Paul, October 1980, £5.95

Reviewer: Piers Landmann

Roger White runs a sort of educational haven in Bristol for teenage children who have rejected school and might otherwise well be in care or on the streets. The homes of the children seem to be about as non-supportive (educationally speaking) as you could imagine, and the book is therefore largely concerned with problems very far removed from the experience of EO families.

In fact, the author regards himself as a practitioner of education otherwise, and in a way he is; but one gets the impression that the idea that kids who don't make it at school might simply stay at home hasn't occurred to him. Perhaps this is only because the children he's concerned with are so terribly deprived (these are the kids who are now rioting in the inner cities), but it does mean that there's not a lot in the book of direct help to EOers.

Except, that is, for one insight which struck this reviewer with great force:

Of course, in itemising a list of skills, the essential point about teaching methods is that the way such a curriculum is approached is more crucial than the content - because the strategy of the teaching/learning itself teaches many of the skills that are included in the list.

For example, in planning an overnight camp, where the emphasis will be on self-sufficiency and adventure training, it is quite possible to overlook the fact that the preparation for the camp can include crucial elements of your survival skill list. By accepting a strategy that involves the youngsters in selecting sites, writing letters, preparing menus, estimating costs and so addressing strangers, planning co-operatively, not to mention basic numeracy and literacy. It is strategy that is fundamental, and staff need to recognise the value of the time-consuming process that meaningful participation by the youngsters requires

There's also a pertinent dialogue with a teacher from one of the celebrated Danish alternative schools, and a useful up-to-date list of thirty alternative education projects around Britain, with addresses. And that's about it, really.

MAGICAL CHILD

by Joseph Chilton Pearce

E.P.Dutton \$12 (approx.£6)

Reviewer: Gabrielle Howard

This is one of the most important and beautiful books I have ever read; I only wish it could be read by every parent, parent to be, educator, in fact anyone who is interested in the future of our society - it is particularly relevant to EO families. Any reader would have to be inhuman to ignore the underlying message and its plea for a better world for our children, if not for ourselves.

I think the best way for me to review this book is to quote from the book jacket, which says it better than I could:

Beginning with that first great act of intellect - birth - the human child has only one concern: to learn all that there is to learn from the world that s/he is part of. This planet is the child's playground and nothing - neither adult values nor concepts of "normal" growth - should interfere with the child's "business" to play. Raised this way, the Magical Child is a happy genius, capable of learning anything, even of developing so-called psychic abilities, which we now consider the rare anomaly.

*In the West, we have traditionally started very early to thwart this wonderful plan of Nature: We even turn the act of birth into a trauma. Joseph Chilton Pearce, author of the influential *The Crack in the Cosmis Egg*, shows in this book that this is only the first of many tragic errors that we make in raising our children. The alarming rise in autism, hyperkinetic behavior, and adolescent suicide are the most extreme examples of the unhappy results of our methods. Pearce contrasts the neurotic and fear-ridden behavior of all too many Western youngsters with the remarkable abilities of Far Eastern and African children.*

Magical Child shows the way to recover the astonishing capacity for creative intelligence that is built into our genes. It challenges just about every notion we have about child rearing. And it makes us re-examine ourselves. The rise of the human potential movement attests to our desire to reach our full capacity - this book shows that it has been ours all along. Play, says Pearce, is the proper province not only of children, but of all of us, and when we rediscover nature's plan, we will learn that God works, and we play. Each of us, too, is a Magical Child.

Then there is a very good quote from the book concerning education and schooling which is very relevant to Education Otherwise:

The magical child's awareness of death unfolds in late childhood in the form of the child's driving desire for autonomy, an awareness of being responsible for his/her own survival. If the child has been given the proper education in survival, this expresses itself as designed: a period of intensive and ecstatic play in which varying the possibilities of one's survival tools are explored, in which concrete operational thinking and enhancement of primary perceptions are practiced. This would mean confrontation, the child actively seeking tests of his/her prowess.

Is this the education he receives? Of course not. At this most critical time, we slap the child into the anxiety-ridden and frightful experience of schooling. For the newly born individual system, this is the equivalent of a violent birth, and the results are pretty much a repetition of that earlier trauma: brain damage, shock, intellectual crippling, and an overall depression that becomes permanent. The great promise with which the child was born is now shattered completely. Each generation produced under schooling proves more shocked, crippled, violent, aggressive, hostile, confused, defiant, despairing, and the social body crumbles faster and faster. And increasingly, our reflexive, conditioned answer is to inflict the tragedy on the child sooner and sooner, in the hope that if we catch him/her early enough, it will all work out. Should we as a species survive our current destructive course, this period of history will be looked upon as a time of delusion and madness far eclipsing that blackest period of the Dark Ages.

The child is doubly caught because schooling has at its roots anxiety over survival, and this web of anxiety is all that is offered the child for modeling at this critical period of survival drive. The child must attend the culture's body of knowledge. If s/he cannot grasp its content and win applause, s/he will still grasp its intention and lose to anxiety. Because what is offered is proclaimed true by parents and superiors, and because there is a system of reward and punishment for success or failure in it, the child has no choice except fall in line. To refuse is to face abandonment by parents and society at large, to have no place left to turn to.

HAPPIER FAMILIES

For babies, children, teenagers and parents

by Tim Eiloart and Carola Byring

£3.50 price to bookshops; credit orders £2.50; cash with order £2.

from Tim Eiloart, Rivermill Lodge, St.Ives, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE17 4EP

Tel: 0480 67046 or 65856 or 67446

Reviewer: Jackie Fearnley

We have been sent a review copy of this book, which is an attempt to bring together many alternative ways of bringing up children. I enjoyed reading the book though it did give an impression of being rather a hotchpotch - of cartoons, children's drawings, and various quotations, useful addresses and books as well as the main descriptions. Personally, I found some of the quotations and illustrations only tenuously connected with the text. But for other people such a mixture may make the book more attractive or easy to read. I was relieved to find a bibliography at the end, as well as the references scattered throughout the book.

I feel that the book was probably put together in rather a rush, on a limited budget, and to me there were some gaps. At the end the authors ask for further suggestions, so perhaps this will turn out to be a book that could be revised and republished quite regularly with contributions from various people. Perhaps it is even time for a regular publication devoted to alternatives in child care. For some while there used to be one called *Children's Rights*, and later *Kids*. I presume it is now defunct.

The basic message of *Happier Families* is that bringing up the next generation is an important task and parents should be helped much more than they are, in an environment more suited to the needs of young children. The importance of the earliest days is recognized and the significance of the growing child's health and happiness for the emotional health of society is pointed out. The authors raise the questions of why governments are not interested in questions like how best to raise infants, and why children are not taught in school about their own development in a meaningful or useful way.

They assume that children are basically good, not innately aggressive, and have a great potential for sorting out their own problems, as long as they are given what they need in their early years in the way of time and attention.

There is a section comparing 'modern practices' with their alternatives. The authors point out that parents may not be able - or wish - to adopt them all. I thought it might have been helpful to have had more background on some of these ideas. There's a fairly long section of The Continuum Concept and parts about the work of Leboyer and Janov, but I thought something on self-regulation in the family, linking it to the work of Reich and Neill, would have been useful, with perhaps a

reference to *The Free Family and Feedback '74* (by Jean and Paul Ritter). In the list of alternatives to modern practice I did not notice any reference to leaving weaning until the child was ready, or of leaving toilet training *at least* until the age of 2, i.e. till when the child showed signs of being physically and mentally ready, or of the child being encouraged to choose the sort of food it needed, nor being woken up when it had gone to sleep, and so on.

There was a good piece on reward and punishment - not only can children learn to punish parents in subtle ways but learn to be nice in order to get their own way. Parents are reassured that it is not necessary always to be consistent and later the good point is made that children are usually so totally involved with what they are doing that they seldom realize their behaviour seems selfish.

One section is devoted to the advantages and disadvantages of communal living - one possible solution for people who find it difficult to create the best environment for their children in a nuclear family. The part on communities which were able to help teenagers with their problems - such as Summerhill, Finchden Manor, and an institution for maladjusted boys run by Kalevi Kaipio - contained much that could be applied to family life.

Several of the ideas in the book derived from an approach called 'Parent Effectiveness Training', which is taught to thousands of people in the USA and Scandinavia. It seemed to have a lot in common with an approach based on self-regulation, where a logical outcome should be that as the child grows older a lot of problems are sorted out on the basis of negotiation so that the child gradually learns self-discipline and responsibility, and parents and children grow to respect each other's needs. One of the important steps in sorting out a problem is, they say, firstly to define whose problem it is. As with co-counselling, they encourage 'active listening': *How conflicts are solved is probably the most critical thing affecting the relationship between parents and children.*

The last part of the book was taken up with examples of people acting together to change something in the area in which they lived. The part covering suggestions for exerting pressure on schools to change was rather unrealistic, I thought. One idea was to take bad teachers to court for not providing efficient education. Long may the problems of defining this phrase continue, I say.

The standpoint of the authors was that playgroups, nursery schools and schools were inevitable, but that parents should be allowed to settle their children in until they are happy to be left. They say rather regretfully that contact with violence is only avoidable until the time they go to school. Of course, for many people there is no alternative, but in a book that is recommending that childcare be seen as an important function, worth doing well, and not left just to 'experts', it would have been good to have seen more than an address for *Education Otherwise*. (I am going to suggest that next time they include a section devoted to the alternative of keeping your children at home.)

I am sure that parents who followed many of their other alternatives such as natural birth, non-violent non-hurried upbringing, both parents sharing in the responsibility, children being included in adult occupations, encouraged to develop their own self-discipline, would feel playgroup or school to be an irrelevant interruption to the life they were already leading, and that the time when children are young is too precious to be cooped up in an institution of any sort.

As I say, I enjoyed reading the book, but wondered if in a sense the alternatives were too mechanical for some people. I suppose, like everything, it is a matter of the spirit in which they are done - rather like self-regulation, which can mean for some people ignoring the child most of the time, or letting it do exactly what it wants regardless of the needs of other people. For this reason I have

suggested that amongst the book references should be included some relating to the work of Rudolf Steiner, *The Sufi Message of Inayat Khan* - vol.iii includes Education - , and J.Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*. Perhaps anyone with other references could send them to me and I will pass them on.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Available through Stephanie Leland, 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N19

Jane Davies

In the last *Education Otherwise* it was reported that I had agreed to contribute a regular item on *Growing Without Schooling*. Although the American movement is not directly comparable with *Education Otherwise*, the Publications Group felt it would be of interest to EO members. It would be heartening if some more members would subscribe to GWS via Stephanie, as there are plenty of spare copies, and there is a lot of reading in them. I have subscribed to GWS since it first appeared, and I think it is worth keeping tabs on. Here are a few snippets from GWS 18 and 19 that I particularly like:

no.18 p.7 Testing Compromise

For the past two years, the school people insisted that Ishmael take the Stanford achievement test. They acted as though they couldn't possibly understand why I was so opposed to this method of evaluation, since after all, it only tested kids on the bare minimums, and everyone knows that Ishmael is very advanced for his age ... It dawned on me that the school people are primarily concerned with Ishmael's ability to be like everyone else.

no.18 p.3 ... And NJ

I established the HOME EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER this summer, at the request of several friends around the country. I have a considerable amount of information and ideas on home schooling and wish to share it.

no.18 p.2 An Unschooling Co-op

Some of us have our doubtful moments: "Am I doing the right thing?"; "Is X really going to learn how to read, all by herself?" ... We have to remind ourselves not to come on as in the traditional teacher-student situation ... You have to stop and think why the kids are at home instead of in school.

no.19 p.9 Learning Italian

It may be unnatural and possibly unhealthy for the soul to pursue Knowledge ambitiously. Ambition implies a carrot-and-stick, reward and punishment system, and wherever there is punishment there is fear, even if the fear is non-tangible as in fear of social ostracism or ridicule. Could it be that ONLY what comes naturally out of an on-the-spot curiosity and interest is the life-giving experience we call discovery? ... I'm beginning to see that this is so.

no.19 p.7 Continuum Baby

Abbey (16 months) is an incredibly independent and capable girl. She is in love with the world and loves to get into every act. It isn't always easy being the kind of parents we have chosen to be. It's amazing how much disapproval we face.

(This snippet relates to the book *Continuum Concept* by Jean Medloff, which is very highly recommended by GWS and EO)

no.19 p.1 Reader's Digest Story

On the front cover of the Jan 1981 issue Reader's Digest is a picture of a child, and, in large letters, the words "Is your child's teacher fit to teach?". Inside the magazine has reprinted excerpts from the Time magazine cover story of June 16th, '80, called Help! Teacher can't teach.

EO in Literature

Janice Owen

With the summer came Peter to tutor me, a tall, handsome young man, fresh from Oxford, with decided ideas on education which I found rather trying to begin with. But gradually the atmosphere of the island worked its way insidiously under his skin, and he relaxed and became quite human. At first the lessons were painful to an extreme: interminable wrestling with fractions and percentages, geological strata and warm currents, nouns, verbs and adverbs. But, as the sunshine worked its magic on Peter, the fractions and percentages no longer seemed to him an overwhelmingly important part of life and they were gradually pushed more and more into the background; he discovered that the intricacies of geological strata and the effects of warm currents could be explained much more easily while swimming along the coast, while the simplest way of teaching me English was to allow me to write something each day which he would correct. He had suggested a diary, but I was against this, pointing out that I already kept one on nature, in which was recorded everything of interest that happened each day. If I were to keep another diary, what was I to put in it? Peter could find no answer to this argument. I suggested that I might try something a little more ambitious and interesting than a diary. Diffidently, I suggested I wrote a book, and Peter, somewhat startled, but not being able to think of any reason why I should not write a book, agreed. So every morning I spent a happy hour or so adding another chapter to my epic, a stirring tale which involved a voyage round the world with the family, during which we captured every conceivable kind of fauna in the most unlikely traps. I modelled my style on the *Boy's Own Paper*, and so each chapter ended on a thrilling note, with Mother being attacked by a jaguar, or Larry struggling in the coils of an enormous python. Sometimes these climaxes were so complicated and fraught with danger that I had great difficulty in extricating the family intact on the following day. While I was at work on my masterpiece, breathing heavily, tongue protruding, breaking off for discussions with Roger on the finer points of the plot, Peter and Margo would take a stroll in the sunken garden to look at the flowers. To my surprise, they had both suddenly become very botanically minded. In this way the mornings passed very pleasantly for all concerned. Occasionally, in the early days, Peter suffered from sudden spasms of conscience, my epic would be relegated to a drawer, and we would pore over mathematical problems. But as the summer days grew longer, and Margo's interest in gardening became more sustained, these irritating periods became less frequent.

From *My Family and Other Animals*, Gerald Durrell's hilarious account of his family's life on Corfu and his own equally amusing experiences with a most 'otherwise' education.

NEWS

EO PICNIC AT HORSGATE FARM, SUSSEX
(at Mark and Helen Holland's)

Reporter: Reg Mutter

*Being July, it was of course drizzling.
Dry in the barn, though, and plenty of straw-bales,
A tractor the children could play on, odd bits of machinery,
A tall ladder reaching up to the rafters ...
All educational, and dangerous; and all fun.*

*Seven families there; miscellaneous lunches;
Home-brewed beer brought round by our host.
Everywhere children, in esse and posse -
The real raisons d'être of our getting together.*

*They went to the woods after lunch, with one or two
grown-ups;
Gathered sticks, made a fire, beavered away
At damming the stream, got shoes and feet wet;
While in the barn the rest of us talked, and
Exchanged information, tuned in to each other,
Encouraged those still only toes-in-the-water ...*

*An enjoyable day; yes, and a useful one -
For half of our battle's to check isolation,
Gain reinforcement from very nice people,
'Otherwise' people, other wise people.*

*And so, after tea, the sun shining bright now,
Our children located, we bumped down the steep track;
New friends made, new ideas fermenting -
All thanks to the Hollands.*

EO ESPERANTO

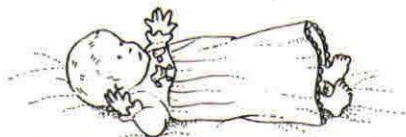
Reporter: G.E.R.Taylor

Friday 7th August 1981: At London Esperanto Club I gave an hour's talk, followed by discussion. Title: HEJMEDUKADO DE INFANOJ (home education of children). All in Esperanto, of course.

Covered relevant section of law. Mentioned that Act defines a 'child', a 'parent', 'clothing', but nowhere defines 'education'. Audience amused. Also covered my family's reasons for and experience of EOing. Then read (in translation, of course) a letter from a child as printed some issues ago in Newsletter.

ROS AND DOM SWEETMAN have a new baby daughter RACHEL LOUISE born on August 6th.

Tim says he's been holding the baby on his knee on the bed.



Name and Address Supplied

Correspondents in alphabetical order

The jokey tone of the introduction to the new editors makes us wonder how seriously to take the editorial page. But, have a care! The newsletter is the voice of EO, and, willy-nilly, even in the most decentralised, informal organizations, editorial articles establish policy and attitudes. Please remember that EO members are not *all* involved in rather fey activities in deep rural splendour. We often have ordinary, urban lives, and may be trying to establish alternatives in education for everyone. We could not, without a blush of embarrassment, show your editorial to our several working-class friends (your term, not ours: when will we get away from these silly stereotypes and starting thinking of everyone as people?) who are happy to join with us in establishing an alternative education group. The records of free schools like the White Lion in London, and Barrowfield in Glasgow, show that, given the chance, working-class parents may be as interested as any others in new kinds of education.

In addition, though we liked your distinction between laws and rights, we would dispute the idea, implicit in some EO writing, that parents have unfettered rights over their children. This is a tricky area which perhaps warrants an article in a future *Newsletter*. Many people regard us as seriously depriving our children by not having television. Do we in EO support the rights of any parents to make even the most bizarre choices over their children's education. I don't know how many are familiar with Kahlil Gibran's great poem on this subject. I think it should be pinned up in every parent's house.

★ That last paragraph in the June editorial just made me cringe. Sweeping consumerist predictions about the future, coupled with gross generalisations about individuals ... it's too much. Surely EO should not be selectively 'proselytizing the middle classes'. EO is about individuals, whatever their so-called 'class'. We should be informing families of their rights and responsibilities in the field of education; letting people know they have a choice. EVERYONE has a right to know their rights.

Congratulations on the newsletter - the look of it is superb, in addition to the contents. I support the idea of a permanent editor (particularly one with experience of graphic design), since I feel that it is a more likely way to produce a quality magazine - which always promotes confidence in the nervous possible-member. ★ Good luck with this issue, and keep it controversial!

What a pleasure your magazine is, it is so comforting to read of the views and experiences of other parents and children, and reading David Bethell's Editorial in the June *Newsletter* caused much excitement to my husband and myself. As parents who have 'forced' our 15-year-old son through the system - even though termed as school phobic by the Educational Psychologist - and causing him much unhappiness and despair by the pushing, dragging, persuading we have subjected him to over the last ten years, we do so appreciate the opportunity to see in print phrases such as "That is why so many of us are paranoid", "writing it all out on little pieces of paper", "we know the system is rotten", "the product is rubbish". Oh! I could quote on and on ... what an article!!



I like the newsletter very much, with one or two reservations ... It's lovely to see such a visually interesting issue ... I wonder how you feel about it, having done it? ... Why do you assume your plans will be overturned? I can't see the introspection you talk of - but then maybe I was too busy introspecting. But I do resent the implication that the core group/pubs group are a bunch of deadbeats. I see it more as a process of evolution towards the Ideal Newsletter. Up there in the sky.

☆ I thought on the whole it was a good step up from previous ones. An EO member told me "It really made me feel like contributing". But I would like to make the following points:

1. I think the editor should be low-profile. Otherwise the editorial comment can somehow overpower the rest of the contents. Though I think some autobiographical detail is good. On a carping level: David, I don't think you (or any of us) should be so critical of previous issues/pubs groups (see p.36), specifically because it may make potential contributors wary and inhibited. I can see that you want to improve the general standard, but I believe that the most important thing apart from that is to encourage people to write for it. There is a danger in being too sophisticated - too critical.
2. I'm not sure about having children contribute to the newsletter. We talked about this before and came to the conclusion that it was essentially an adult publication. The trouble with having children's contributions is that, I think it can begin to look twee and rather competitive ... "aren't these home-educated children wonderful" kind of tone. I'd personally not have children's but I can see that this might be being a bit extreme. If we do have children's things, could we not follow other mags' example and keep them anonymous? Thus, you have 'a drawing by a 10-year-old'. (Though on second thoughts this is perhaps even more competitive!) Again, I think it could be off-putting to those whose children may not be so talented. And should we be making children so conscious of their output, anyway?
3. I've had the best response to a newsletter yet, letters and contributions

I enjoyed reading *Newsletter 18* very much and found your new slick image very pleasing, although my husband thought it too slick for comfort.

I liked the June post-revolutionary issue ... I was roused by the Editorial. Could not EO have a one-page selling sheet as punchy?

I think we all felt very pleased at the production of the last newsletter and would like to congratulate you all on it. It is very good that our publications are now taking on a more professional appearance which does not look out of place in a bookshop - without being too glossy. I think many of us had reservations about some editorial aspects, particularly the opinions expressed in the Editorial. This has always been a difficult and at times controversial problem - how to ensure that the editorial policy reflects the views of the organization rather than those of the editor. We tried a system of group editorship but it presented great problems for people with families to find the time and opportunity to meet together to do the work; the present system of circulating the editorship amongst members of the publications group emerged, I think, as a stopgap rather than a permanent and satisfactory solution. We will be discussing this at the next meeting on September 27th and I very much hope you'll be able to attend that.



We had been trying to get them to jazz up the magazine and put in more illustrations for the past four years. As EO is all about kids, kids should have some articles in the newsletter. All that political stuff that even our mum wouldn't read was very boring. Not only that, the layout was extremely dull. John Elenor did a lot to liven it up and now you have taken over we can see that it can only get better and better.

It has always been my contention that no ^a organization can be successfully run by committee. Quite honestly I don't think you can beat a bit of autocracy, and certainly when it comes to design there can be no question about it.

☆ With regards to children's work. We have suggested on several occasions that what EO needed was a magazine for kids' work. Just what is EO about if it isn't about kids? I just don't understand it at all. Carry on with the good work and Bombs Away.

We liked your editorial, there was good sense in it.

The newsletter looks good and is livelier than usual, I think. But I never dared make jokes about the Publications Group!

Saw a programme re unemployment - drew the conclusion that the micro wave could declass classes &c. Perhaps this may be an answer to your Editorial. I firmly believe in what you say re most arguments.



No Introduction

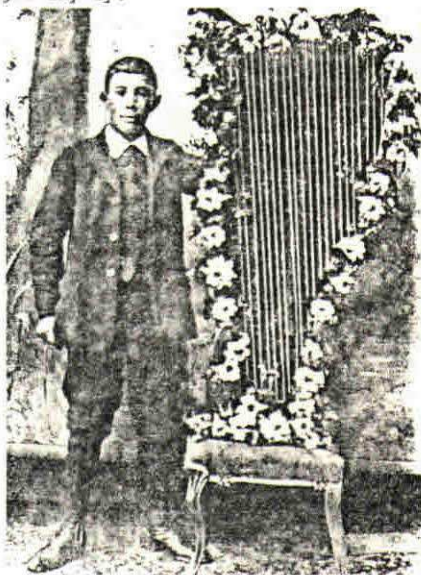
What a hectic month since the last *Newsletter*! After the tumultuous apathy of early July, and then some inner-city rioting over the use of the words 'working class' in the last Editorial, over a million EO members and non-members converged on London to celebrate issue 18, forcing John Elenor to retire incognito to a small Italian village in upper Gwynedd.

The success was not entirely untainted. A small revanchist clique of PGers and CGers met in secret conclave, and set up a government-in-exile, oblivious that the Bethells now have EO's one vital organ in their grasp. Plans were laid for the publication of a new counter-magazine called *Adults Only* in which various members will appear in otherwise positions. A resolution to 'expel from the organization all members with children of school age not attending school' (since these members are notorious for diverting EO from its major role as debating society) was rejected on the technical grounds that 'organization' is a value-laden word.

Some thought was also given to the knotty problem of Editorials. Obviously the One Vital Organ should appear to be essentially sane and should reflect the views of the organization, and not be dominated by the ramblings of a quirk. On the other hand, the organization, having no constitution, no leader, and no voting system, and being composed of as bizarre an assortment of progressives, regressives, libertarians and disciplinarians as one could hope to persuade simultaneously to pay £5 a year for four small newsletters, has no views, and if it did have views commonly shared by all the members, it would be pointless for the Editorial to exhort them all to think what they already all thought anyway.

Meanwhile, in the real world, it has been another glorious summer, marked here at Strines by the annual Dry Stones School Fete and It's-a-Knock-Out. Dry Stones School is a small village establishment; it has so far evaded the cuts and reorganization which have reduced the old schools in the area to a mere handful. The headmaster is an energetic young man, Kevin Alcock, who arrived in the district last year. He has a distinguished record, having served as Secretary of the local Manchester United Supporters' Club, and was once nearly successful in an audition for Thames Television.

Kevin has brought a breath of fresh air to the village school, which had suffered at the hands of the retiring head, an aged spinster interested more in the 3 Rs than in preparing the children for the rough-and-tumble of modern life. Kevin is anxious that the children should not be sheltered from the implications of the Global Village, and believes that, as most of them will doubtless spend most of their working lives as terrorists, sex-maniacs, interrogators, perverts, prison warders and pop stars, they should receive an appropriate training in sex, violence and political indoctrination. Why leave these to be absorbed haphazardly in their evenings' television-viewing?



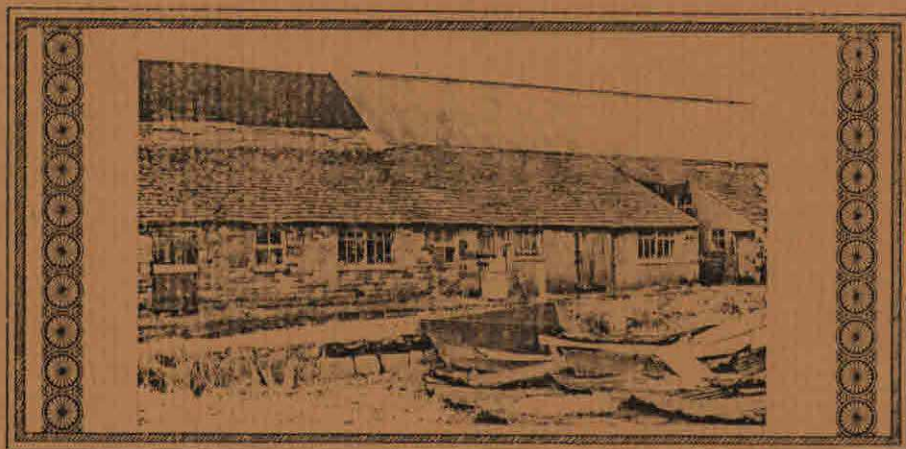
Gervase at his harp
[photo courtesy Reg Underbed,
Workers' Camera Co-op.]

And there is also a lighter side to Mr. Alcock's work at the school. He is a great believer in Culture, and has hit the headlines with the formation of the new school orchestra. Sensible of the importance of publicity to the survival of the school and his own career, Kevin daringly brought together an ensemble of no less than 34 double-basses, with one harp played by the head boy, Gervase Gaskell (below left). The pathetic sight of crowds of children heaving their unwieldy instruments to and fro school through the early July snows has already appeared as a humorous snippet on *look North*; and there was thus considerable interest in the annual Fete.

The Fete (pronounced 'feet' locally) was a huge improvement on last year's event, which had been marred by ugly incidents in which family feuding (largely provoked by arguments over straying cattle) had brought Gervase Gaskell's poetry recitation to a premature conclusion. This year the Gaskells appeared in such force, with a large group of relatives from Buglawton, that trouble was confined to some desultory booing during Gervase's harp solo.

The children mounted a series of tableaux demonstrating how they are preparing for Real Life. First there was a demonstration of playground brawling, with obvious analogies with the sort of fisticuffs to be expected during any adult's normal working week. Then there was bullying, name-calling, racial abuse, and intimidation, all vital in learning how to behave rationally in the future.

Next Mr. Alcock showed how school life, with its emphasis on mindless repetition, routine, excruciating boredom, senseless uniformity, interminable competition, prison clothing, regimentation, and the crushing of originality, was precisely the preparation necessary for the future, in which most people will work in extremely large organizations doing repetitive mindless tasks, and living their lives with the sole ambition of achieving a higher position in the pecking order. It all led up to a splendid finale in which the whole school trooped on in perfect drill, wearing faceless masks, and engaged in a general melee representing Progress.



Our little school here at Dry Stones
[photo courtesy Reg Underbed, W.C.C.]

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 benefiting 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 2" x 4" s.a.e. to:

JOHN ELENOR
18 Eynham Road, London W.12