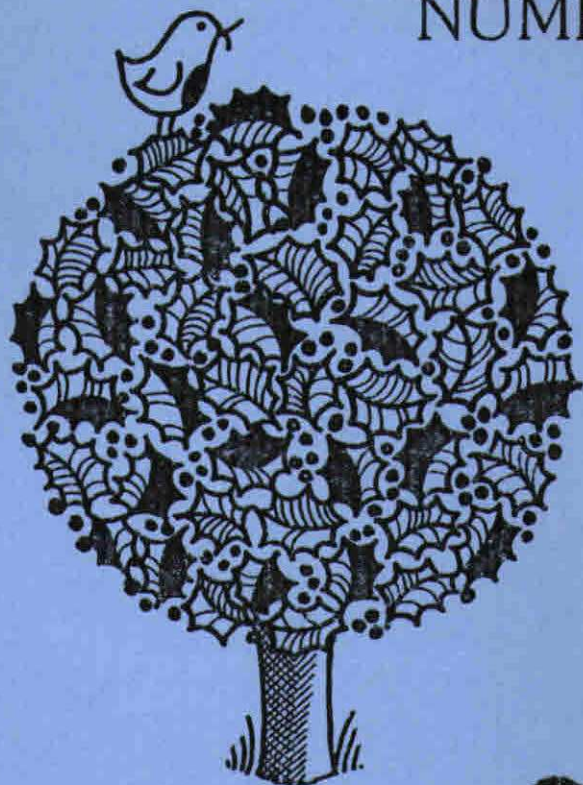
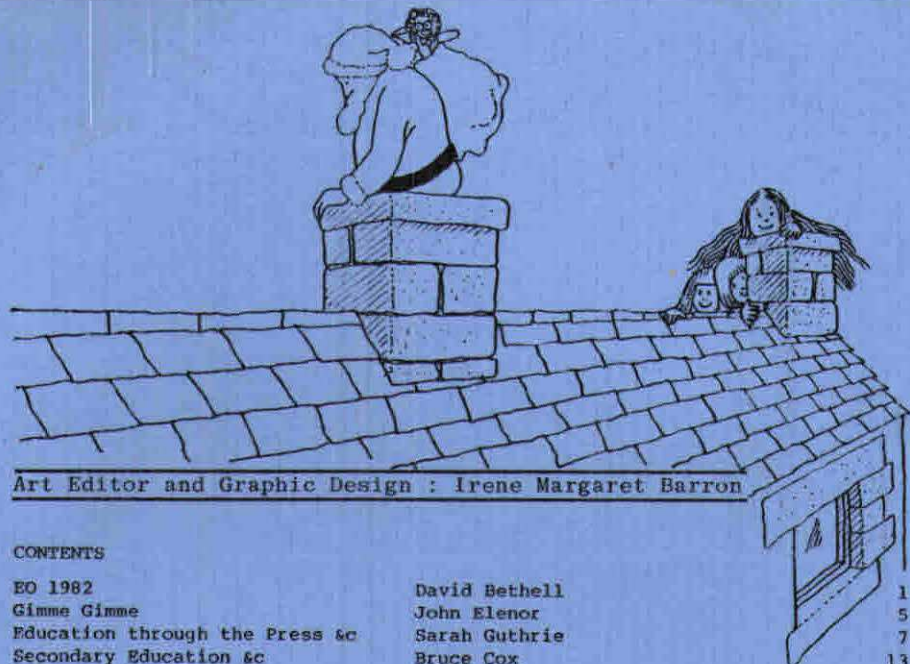


DECEMBER 1981
NUMBER 20



education otherwise

CHRISTMAS
NEWSLETTER



Art Editor and Graphic Design : Irene Margaret Barron

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deadline



All copy for the February issue must be received by January 13th.

Irene & David Bethell

STRINES, UPPER HULME, LEEK, STAFFS.

EO 1982

David Bethell

1981 has been a remarkable year for EO. There has been a marked quickening of pace, an upsurge of interest and enthusiasm. This seems largely to stem from the incoming tide of public opinion in our favour. Discontent with state schools has become endemic, egged on by the closure of village schools, the disastrous results of the large comprehensives, the disintegration of school discipline, and the continued bickering of educational theorists. The public and the media have become increasingly interested in the alternatives, almost any alternative, and have discovered that home education is not the preserve of cranks, but a perfectly rational, responsible and workable way for ordinary people to save their families from School.

EO has not doubled its membership this year, as we would expect in these circumstances. Despite the flood of new enquiries, and the solid basis of loyal support, the total membership at the end of this year will be only a fifth more than last year. It is easy to see why. EO is a voluntary body, staffed by volunteers. Most of those filling the most onerous positions already have very active lives outside EO, and a good number, of course, are very busy in the time-consuming business of actually bringing up and educating young families at home. If the organization had a stronger structure, and had recruited more officers we would have been better equipped to take the tide as it turned in our favour. In particular, there was a large drop of membership on renewal at the beginning of 1981.

The membership of EO is not, of course, evenly distributed over the country. The greatest concentration is in London, but in terms of proportion of the population the centres are elsewhere. Ignoring statistical freaks (e.g. the one family on the thinly-populated Scottish Islands makes this technically the most EOd part of the UK), the largest penetration by EO is in Cambridgeshire, East Sussex, Welsh Wales and the Scottish Borders. In numerical terms, however, the Big Twelve are Cambridgeshire, Devon, Essex, Kent, London, Manchester, Oxfordshire, Suffolk, East and West Sussex, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire.

In many counties the penetration is dismal. The poorest are Cheshire, Derbyshire, Durham, the Isle of Wight, Manchester, Merseyside, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, Gwent, Grampians, Strathclyde, Tayside and the Shetlands. Generally speaking, except for Scottish Borders, EO is very poorly represented north of a line from Chester to Birmingham to the Wash. It is true that EO fares worst in the old industrial areas of Wales and the North. But some of the areas, such as Cheshire, are largely rural or suburban, and are presumably fertile areas as yet largely untouched by EO.

The losses from last year's membership were not evenly distributed around the country. The absence of a co-ordinator in a county can be disastrous. Berkshire lost 5 of its 6 contact-list members, despite its close proximity to the hub of EO activity. Membership has, naturally, picked up again there, but we still have no co-ordinator. There have been similar large losses in Hampshire, Buckinghamshire and the West Midlands. The lack of a co-ordinator in a county which had a relatively large membership helps to undermine the continuity of the membership. Tremendous gains have been made this year in improving the situation, but every gap in the co-ordinator network should be filled.

Some of the worst losses to the membership were in counties where the co-ordinator has left. Notable losses were in Devon, Dorset, Manchester and East Sussex. Three of these areas are prime EO territory. New co-ordinators have been appointed except in East Sussex, which is administered by the Hollands from West Sussex.

Twelve counties lost a third or more of their contact-list members from 1980, despite the activities of the co-ordinators. There was significant decline in the southwest, stretching from Somerset to Oxfordshire, and in Yorkshire. These are areas where the organization has been reasonably strong, but distance from the mainstream of EO activity in the London area and lack of regional direction probably explain the losses. When recruiting new members, we should remember that there is a reservoir of sympathetic families who have left EO, and might well be interested in rejoining.

Apart from the steady natural increase of membership throughout 1981 as EO gains ground, there have been significant spates of fresh enquiries on each occasion that the organization has had a little publicity in national and local media. The greatest batch of new enquiries followed the article on the Cox family in the *Sunday Times*, but this media exposure is as nothing to that expected shortly.

Already the organization is creaking at the seams. The prime movers in the national sense are John Elenor, who serves as treasurer, runs our national address, organizes the quarterly and national meetings, and effectively heads national and London EO; Dom and Ros Sweetman, who deal with the continuous and onerous bookwork involved in keeping track of the membership; Bruce and Dianne Cox, who co-ordinate the co-ordinators, and have the exceedingly difficult job of dealing with individual members' problems; Iris Harrison, who shares in the agonies of members' wrangles with LEAs, and is the intellectual spearhead of EO; and Dick Kitto, the father of EO, who has immense and diverse responsibilities in keeping the show on the road. This year has seen Dom and Ros move out of London, with a brand-new baby, and out of the fray for the moment; Dick has been seriously ill, his failing health undoubtedly undermined in part by the demands of EO. John, Iris, Bruce and Dianne, caught up in the whirlwind of enquiries, the need to keep the organization going, and to help members new and old, have all been perspiring visibly. Even the humble job of preparing the newsletter has burgeoned into a major operation.

The peak of the flood has yet to come. By the time that this is printed, the ATV programme on the Harrisons will have been screened. In the New Year Thames Television are carrying a documentary on the Cox family. Previous experience shows that television coverage usually also creates a knock-on in radio, magazines and newspapers. We can hardly imagine that all this will pass unnoticed by the largely sympathetic public, but EO meets the challenge only half-prepared.

There have been several local meetings this year as individual areas have gained impetus. The star of the local branches is North Devon, where (largely through the work of Chris Stokes and Alan and Caroline Wright) a really active and worthwhile programme has been generated - see further in our Devon supplement below. Sussex has had local meetings, and also has a newsletter - and will be featured in our February issue. There have just been meetings in Gloucestershire and in Scotland, and earlier in the year a gathering in Manchester attracted interest from a large area. All the local co-ordinators are strongly urged to use the national newsletter as their own medium, for notices of forthcoming meetings, news of activities, messages and ads. Funds are available from the treasurer to help with local meetings, stationery &c.

This coming spring, provisionally on the weekend of April 16th to 18th (Friday to Sunday) a (probably residential) meeting will be held in Birmingham to discuss EO, and to plan possible co-operation with the Open University. John Holt is arriving in Britain on April 15th and will speak. The connection with Open University arises from the possibility that the OU system (which is to some

extent education otherwise at the university level) might be extended to teenagers, perhaps from 14 up. A large proportion of EO practice, of course, is autonomous, and hard to reconcile with the strict syllabus structure of OU, but the possibilities for mutual help are tremendous. A preparatory meeting including some EO representatives is planned for Milton Keynes. *

At the same time EO wants to set up regional meetings which will both help to stimulate EO locally, and also provide opinions and recruits for the April meeting in Birmingham. One such regional meeting will be held in Manchester, which, as the largest city of northern England, is vitally placed for improving EO in its weaker area.

There is also the possibility emerging of the much-needed secretariat or national office being brought together at the Burntlands, with Iris and AJ Harrison dealing with the jobs previously covered by the membership secretaries, and the more routine tasks of answering or rerouting enquiries, and organizing meetings. If this happens, it should also help EO financially - our finances derive mainly from membership subscriptions, and the room for increasing the membership is immense. The current aim is to expand to a thousand members over 1982, but a sober assessment has been made that a membership of 10,000 is easily possible. If we were to assume that in every class in the country there is just one child who is very unhappy and whose parents would be able to teach him/her at home ... An efficient secretariat would enable us to expand the membership immediately.

The local co-ordinators already have quite enough to do looking after their counties. In many counties the membership is so small that the resources are insufficient to keep a branch going. I have therefore suggested that the counties be grouped into ten regions, each with a representative who is not already a co-ordinator, nor has any national function. These representatives should keep in touch with their sets of co-ordinators and distribute news of local activities so that local meetings can be useful to the whole region. In particular, the representatives should act as press secretaries, sending news-sheets of local activities, notices of meetings, and copies of national newsletters and introductory material to local TV, radio and newspapers. All media are short of fresh pap and we can increase publicity and membership at an infinitesimal expenditure in this way. Incidentally, we also need a national press officer to function in the same way. The regional representatives can give the media names of likely families willing to be featured as local EOers.

Many members are disgruntled that EO does not advertise. The problem is not money. If we were to set aside, say, £100 for this from national funds, or from contributions from the disgruntled, we could plough back subs from new members gained in this way into such a fund, and the process would be self-perpetuating. We already have members who earn a living by small ads and they could advise us how to start.

Other members see the heady wine of their enthusiasm soaked up by the sands of the Core Group deliberations. The initial intention was to keep EO democratic by allowing every member an equal say in its deliberations. EO is now, relatively, so large that the mechanism no longer functions in quite that way. Action is dependent upon compromises hatched amongst a tiny and unrepresentative part of the membership, and a single negative opinion can sink or maim the best of proposals. Members who have been assigned responsibilities by the Core Group sometimes report back only to have their good work overthrown or ignored.

* See STOP PRESS, p.75

Families with children out of school are the members least able to make long journeys to attend the Core Group; as membership strengthens in the west and north the problem increases. The Core Group has been well aware of the problem; but when meetings are moved away from London, travel problems are even greater. The fact that the Core Group often appears in the Minutes as indecisive or pedantic is also a strong disincentive to members to attend; probably unjustly, there is an impression that proposals for immediate action bog down in a morass of doubt and procrastination. I believe that we need a postal ballot of the whole membership for a committee, and that that committee (which would really only be a formally-constituted core group) take decisions by majority vote. It is true that EO embraces a wide spectrum of opinions, but we can surely rely on the good sense of the core group not to take decisions which would totally alienate any particular section. I fear that EO is being enervated by compromises, compromises which are sometimes little short of blackmail by one or other ideological faction. We are all agreed that the main function of EO is to help spread alternative education, both in disseminating information and in supporting the members. Let's have a strong committee that can get on with the job. The core group meetings, which also function as national, local and social gatherings in varying degrees, would of course still be open to all members; and the national September meeting could become the AGM.

Most of all, we need more active members, and need them urgently. We need volunteers throughout the country, whether you can attend national meetings or not. We want you, where you are, now. We don't want to launch a drive for activity which just entails more work from the officers who are already close to exhaustion. We want you to help take the strain. If you are already very busy, so much the better; if you want something doing, ask a busy person! When you are renewing, or relaxing after Christmas pud, or better still when making your New Year resolutions, get in touch with me, or John Elenor, or Andrea Harrison, and together we can work out what you would like to help with, and how your help can best be used. Until then, *Merry Christmas, and sincere best wishes for 1982.*



Gimme Gimme!



John Elenor: treasurer

Money enables you to do things - as you may have noticed. The money that EO collects (88% via subscriptions) has enabled us, just, to provide a quarterly newsletter and various support facilities; the organization is ticking over fairly smoothly. But various things are happening: the volume of material reaching the editor of the newsletter is increasing fast enough to justify six issues a year instead of four; the feeling of the Trent Park meeting in September was in favour of EO becoming a more active organization (see p.38); and the Spring Conference, first mooted at the Core Group (see Minutes p.70 item 8.3), is taking off at a thrilling pace with the possibility of combining with the Open University, featuring John Holt as principal speaker, and being covered by ATV.

None of this is possible, however, without more money than we presently have. Hence the announcement (preceded by all this soft soap) that the subscription goes up on 1st January 1982. We have decided on a sliding scale to reflect members' varying ability to pay:

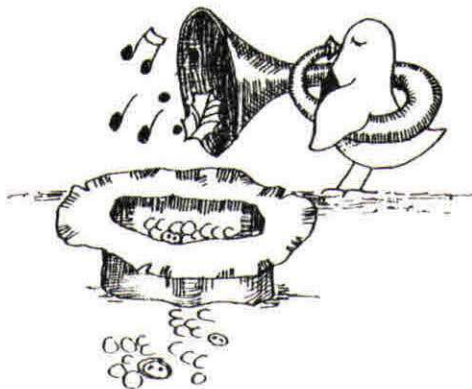
Top rate	£10
Average rate	£8
Direct debit mandate	£7.50 (since it saves administrative costs)
Unwaged	£4

As before, we are keeping to the policy that in cases of severe hardship membership can be free - please let us know.

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE ON JANUARY 1st 1982 unless you joined in November or December

USE THE RENEWAL FORM ENCLOSED

Members who are currently paying by Bankers Order: Please cancel the old order with your bank, and complete the new Bankers Order on the renewal form enclosed.



BY SEG

EDUCATING ARCHIE



EDUCATION
DEPT

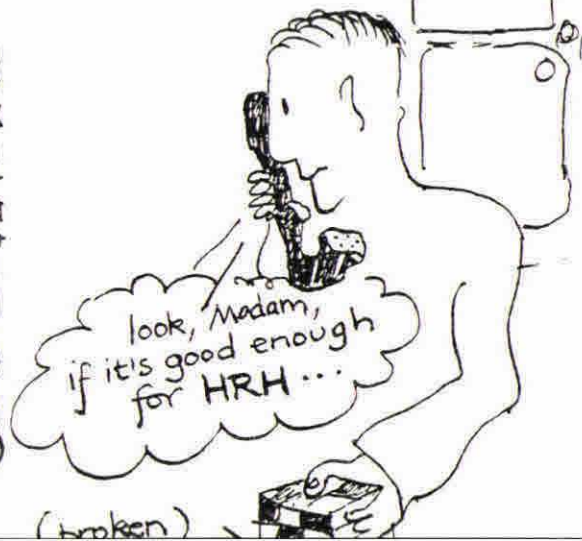
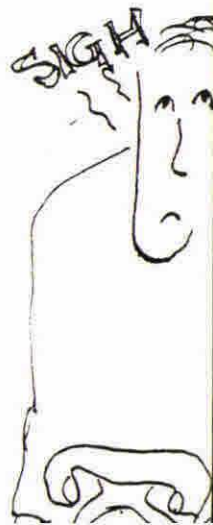
Mrs G? We
thought Archie should
be psychologically
ASSESSED in time
for Christmas



oh quite
straight forward - my
chap comes round in a false
nose, he jumps out at
Archie ... that
sort of thing....



I didn't say he PASSED, I
just said it was
GOOD ENOUGH



look, Madam,
if it's good enough
for HRH...

(broken)

EDUCATION THROUGH



LIFE OUTSIDE SCHOOL

10-year-old Ruth Lawrence, the maths prodigy who is taught at home, has enrolled at college for a part-time A-level physics course. Ruth says she'd like to be Britain's first teenage professor of mathematics (GUARDIAN, August). Says her father: "I don't think Ruth has any abnormal gifts ... I should guess that most normal people could achieve that standard without any difficulty." (SUNDAY TIMES 23.8.81) * An 11-year-old has returned to school after an absence of six years. He said it was "quite fun really" and is in a group of pupils who are being reintegrated into school life after long absences (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 18.9.81). A spokesman for the ILEA said: "It is the obligation of the parent to present a child at school and it is our duty to provide the education ..." * A Dyfed plasterer kept his 15-year-old son at home in order to teach him a trade because he was worried about unemployment. He was fined £10 and ordered to send the boy to school (DAILY TELEGRAPH 8.10) * James Thompson, President of the Education Institute of Scotland, said that with the increased use of computer teaching, pupils who lived in the remote part of the islands would be taught at home, using computers. He felt, however, that the case for continuing a 'social' education with other pupils in the school environment might be argued (STORNOWAY GAZETTE 17.10.81) * Three 18-year-old boys have created a micro-computer system at home in their garden shed (DAILY TELEGRAPH 25.9.81) *

SCHOOLS COUNCIL versus THE WORLD

A report published by the Schools Council on disruptive children urges teachers to change their attitudes. It says that disruptive behaviour is far less likely to occur if teachers can talk and respond to children warmly ... "children are sometimes made to feel inferior because of the brash and condescending attitudes of teachers who, while demanding politeness from children, are themselves rude." Schools are sometimes too large and too authoritarian for some pupils, who should be able to participate more. Speaking for the teachers' union, Nigel de Gruchy dismissed the report as "typical codswallop that emanates from inspectors and other refugees from the classroom" and invited the author to put on shorts and join in the action (DAILY TELEGRAPH 22.10.81). In an editorial, the TELEGRAPH recommended that the Government scrap the report * The Schools Council had previously been criticized by the Education Department as having committee members who were "rude, bad-mannered and anti-intellectual", and that they should stop wasting public money (DAILY TELEGRAPH 17.10.81). Perhaps this was in response to the School Council's other report that many pupils are incapable of gathering information needed for classwork (DAILY TELEGRAPH 17.9), or to their report that there have to be major changes in the teaching of reading if standards are to improve*. The Schools Council recommends that children be allowed to read books of their choice, on their own. At present, teachers can spend an average of 30 seconds listening to any one pupil reading. When asked why they should learn to read, few of the children interviewed mentioned enjoyment as an aim, and few teachers mentioned involving parents (GUARDIAN and DAILY TELEGRAPH 6.10.81). The researchers found that some pupils were taking a year to read aloud through one book (GUARDIAN 8.9.81) *

*EXTENDING BEGINNING READING, Heinemann Education Books for the Schools Council: £5.50; from 160 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6LL.

EDUCATION AND THE LAW

A comprehensive in Peterborough admitted it is operating illegally under the 1944 Education Act because it can no longer afford to buy the necessary equipment for a full education (GUARDIAN 21.9.81) * Comments CE on the Harrison case: "If local authorities are going to bring school attendance proceedings against ... parents like the Harrisons ... then there is a strong case for parents using similar tactics to challenge local authorities whose provision falls ... in relation to their children (WHERE September 1981) * Parents in Tirabad, Wales, have won a fight to keep their village school open (GUARDIAN 21.8.81) and another 9-pupil school in Wales was reprieved (GUARDIAN 20.8.81) * A 20-year-old took Harringay to court over their refusal to give her a grant to train in osteopathy (DAILY TELEGRAPH 12.10.81). Thirteen other authorities have refused grants to osteopathy students, because the qualification is not recognized in Britain *

THE COST OF EDUCATION

In Oregon, U.S.A., women on welfare must now seek work when their children are three, rather than six as previously (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 4.10.81) * A Cambridge reader in Iranian studies admitted that he had taught only sixteen pupils in 33 years * In a retirement speech, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge suggested

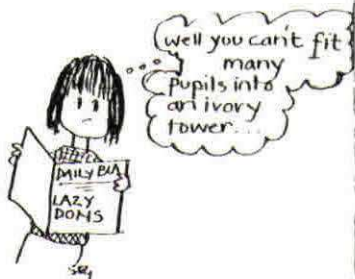
that many academics do less than a fair day's work (DAILY TELEGRAPH 3.10.81): "Oxford and Cambridge absolutely crawl with such people" said the head of a major college who prefers to remain anonymous * The DHSS stopped payments to an unemployed youth because he returned to his old school to take an examination * Teachers in the ILEA are encouraging youngsters on the dole to return for three days a week * Keith Joseph, Education Secretary, warned that parents may be charged for nursery education in the future (DAILY TELEGRAPH 27.10.81). He said, "I do have a slight feeling about the desirability of mothers of young children to be with them." *

If university students attended a local university

and lived at home rather than residences, it could save the taxpayer £180m a year (DAILY TELEGRAPH 26.10.81) * Meanwhile students at a North Staffordshire polytechnic were sleeping on corridor floors due to lack of accommodation (DAILY TELEGRAPH 11.9.81) * An £8m error, described as "an enormous cock-up" has been made in allocating Government funds to universities (DAILY TELEGRAPH 8.9.81) *

EXAM RESULTS

An Altrincham head of geography was fined £1000 for opening O-level papers in advance. The school had been contacted by the matriculation board in connection with its high success rate in the geography paper (DAILY TELEGRAPH 15.9.81) * A 64-year-old has passed GCE O-level in sociology (DAILY TELEGRAPH 3.9.81) * A GLC schools chief appointed to develop political education in the ILEA twice failed his 11-plus (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 27.9.81) * The leader of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children got 1½ in geometry common entrance (DAILY TELEGRAPH 17.8.81) * The director of St. Paul's Cathedral Choir managed to fail every music exam he ever took (GUARDIAN July 1981) * A woman dreamed she was set the wrong exam paper, and the next day it happened (DAILY TELEGRAPH 18.8.81) Due to a "human error" the students had been given the wrong syllabus to study * At a London poly 30 candidates found they had read the wrong play, and



in another school eleven boys studied one wrong set book for two years. Their teacher, Mr. Sydney Sparkes, was so distressed he was allowed to go home (DAILY TELEGRAPH, September 1981) * Ten 6th-formers taking A-level French were faced with a set book they had not been given (DAILY TELEGRAPH 19.6.81) * Said the Schools Council secretary, "We are looking into the possibility of devising records of achievement that will tell you a great deal more about young people than exam results on their own" (RADIO TIMES April/May 1981) *

AROUND THE WORLD

Japanese in the UK worry that a British education will leave their children deficient in maths, and so Japanese schools are being set up here to compensate (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 13.9.81) * The Peking government wants to stop primary and secondary pupils being taken on visits to watch the execution of criminals (DAILY TELEGRAPH 31.10.81) * In the USA the Reagan administration will examine the school system in an effort to halt "a long and continuing decline in the quality of American education" (GUARDIAN 27.8.81) * At the Montreal conference on gifted children held the autumn, the topic was how to identify and educate an elite. It attracted more than 1000 delegates from 43 countries. Commented the SUNDAY TIMES (30.8.81): "The idea of educating the elite seems to sell best to the developing countries which are daunted by the economic possibility of giving a good education to everyone." * Venezuela will now teach mothers how to "bomb the baby's senses" * Bulgaria's mothers of young babies are given lessons on how to stimulate the baby's brain: in the Philippines there is a similar procedure. "But", asks the SUNDAY TIMES, "had a parent, let alone a government, the moral right to engineer an individual's intelligence? And what are the eventual outcomes of the process?" *

CARE

100,000 children are in care in England and Wales: this is more than any other European country (DAILY TELEGRAPH 28.9.81) * A DHSS report on day-care for the under-5s claims that the most aggressive children at a day nursery were those who had been there the longest (CHILD EDUCATION October 1981) * Surrey police now take children into the streets to bring environmental hazards to their attention (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 25.9.81). P.C. T.Russier, organizer, includes a colleague dressed in a dirty mac to play shoplifter or mugger. "We have to keep warning them", he says, "because parents don't communicate with their children enough."

VIOLENCE

Derbyshire teachers claim it will cost over £3m to maintain discipline without the cane (DAILY TELEGRAPH 11.9.81) * Recent riots were caused by violent TV and permissive grandparents, say prep school heads (DAILY TELEGRAPH 3.9.81) * The young man who shot at the Queen says he failed at school (GUARDIAN 15.9.81) * A 'bright' 14-year-old American shot his parents dead because of their 'continual criticism of him' (DAILY TELEGRAPH 22.8.81) * Two Scots women are seeking support from the European Court of Human Rights in behalf of their sons who are threatened with beatings at school (GUARDIAN 26.9.81) * Lancs. will ban the cane from January 1982 in primary schools, from 1983 in secondary schools (GUARDIAN 16.9.81) *

THE CONTINUING SAGA of SPACE GAMES

Gwent has forbidden its 85000 pupils to play with space invader machines in amusement arcades (DAILY TELEGRAPH 15.10.81) "Is no one interested in moral issues these days? Someone ought to be." said the head of Newport's comprehensive, Mr. Blackmore. It is expected that punishment for using the machines will range from detention to canings (GUARDIAN October 1981) * South Yorkshire planned a 'fun and games' day during the school holidays for bored children, which included playing space machines (DAILY TELEGRAPH 8.8.81) *

LAST WORD

The GUARDIAN wrote of Mark Carlsle's sacking as Education Secretary: "... his main work has been cutting down the education system - not a suitable task for an amiable man who likes children." (September 1981) +

EDITED by SARAH GUTHRIE, with contributions from Helen Holland, Janice Owen, Jackie Fearnley, Ann Silversides, and others. Please send cuttings to Sarah (Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Suffolk) with a note of date and source.

Sir.—Where do these mindless young males who terrorize our streets and the football terraces come from? Obviously, from our homes and our schools. The homes are a law unto themselves but how is it that, with 11 years of schooling at the disposal of the educational system, hosts of young barbarians leave our schools annually?

The answer would seem to be that the schools are organised in terms of the wrong objectives. Their main goal at the secondary stage is to extract from the adolescents every possible ounce of exam-passing potential. Consequently, the education of young people as self-confident, sensitive, caring human beings is pushed into second place, or worse, in many schools.

Evidence is mounting that the quality of a school's life as a happy and purposeful community, which brings all its members achievement and self-respect, can greatly influence the attitudes and behaviour of young people. Has not the time come to drop our obsession with examination results at 16 and devote our best energies, and our evaluation techniques, to the development of confident, competent and fulfilled young human beings who have no need for these utopian demonstrations of self-importance?

James Hownine,
Teddington, Middx.

Above: GUARDIAN
10 June 1981

Right: THE AGE
[Melbourne daily
newspaper]

Home learning sparks interest

THE remarkable public response to John Holt's Australian visit surprised even his most fervent admirers.

On Friday, more than 90 mums and dads and kids — from babies in arms to teenagers — crowded the Zoo Education Centre to listen to the American education reformer and discuss his ideas about home-based learning; ideas which most of the parents present were already putting into practice.

Because of lack of space, dozens of disappointed people weren't able to attend the Zoo workshop, but they will have a chance to see a video tape of John Holt's address there. More of that shortly. On Thursday evening, John Holt spoke to an unexpectedly large audience of 400 at a meeting specially organised to satisfy the demand.

He was at pains to dispel the idea that he was involved in a frontal attack on schools.

Home-based learning would not undermine the existence of schools, he said. After all, even on the most optimistic projections, only 10 per cent of families in America and Australia were likely to have taken their children out of school over the next decade. That left the vast majority of kids still in school.

That did not mean, though, that schools should not change. They needed to take on a new purpose and establish a "proper" relationship with parents. That purpose, that relationship, was one where the school became a resource like a library — or a zoo — where kids would go when they needed special help, or access to the school's facilities, such as laboratories or gymnasiums or sports fields.

Despite his assertion that he wasn't attacking schools, Holt couldn't resist pointing out that in large groups children learnt to conform, to compete, to play "who's in, who's out" games, to pick on those who were different. He rejected the argument that schools brought children from different backgrounds, different

TALKING SHOP

ances, different classes together and helped them mix in harmony.

School zoning ensured the middle-class kids went to different schools to the working class; within schools, streaming kept apart the "bright" from the "dull", the "sheep" from the "goats". In the playground there was more violence between different groups than harmony.

On the other hand, when children were engaged in doing things they loved to do, things which they weren't compelled to do, made to take part in because adults thought it was good for them, only then was racial and class harmony possible.

This message struck a sympathetic response among the Friday audience. Many of the parents present had living proof, running around the room, of the success of their efforts when children leapt at home.

For other parents who might be thinking along the same lines, the Alternative Education Resource Group — the organisers of the Zoo workshop — has produced two booklets — 'Starting a School Kit', and 'Home Education Kit' — which describes how to go about taking your child out of school. Details about joining the group, or buying the booklets (which cost \$5 each) can be obtained from Lauris Jephcott (phone 82 7766), 101 Pleasant Road, East Hawthorn, 3123. Mrs Jephcott also has information for those wanting to view the Holt tape.

Incidentally, John Holt produces a bi-monthly magazine 'Growing Without Schooling' which is mostly written by parents who are using home-based learning with their children. Subscriptions are \$US15 to 729 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts, 02116.

— Geoff Maslen

Talking About School

"... some foreign languages were taught in such a dull manner that one kindly German mistress suggested that ... I should give the subject up ... Yet when I was well over 40 years old I learned to speak German quite adequately in three months, using Linguaphone records. I think I was quite sensible not to bother ... by storing what they tried to inculcate into it (my brain) ... As for gymnastics, I have suffered from slipped discs ever since an over-enthusiastic ... gym mistress insisted on pushing my shoulders ... to make my fingers reach my toes ... I lived for the day when the last school bell would sound and I would walk free for ever from (what would) be of little use to me for most of my life." BARBARA WOODHOUSE, *Vogue* July 1981.

"I believe that any government ... ought to make (educational) provision for five years of education for everyone after the age of 16; but should allow this ... to be taken up at any time ... It would not be compulsory for anyone." MARY WARNOCK *Guardian Women* 17 August 1981.

"I've had custody of Tony since he was two ... I've always shied away ... about his schooling. Educationally, he's always been OK being taught by me. At first we read ... together and now he chooses (the books) himself. He's behind in maths and he's really lost out by not mixing with other schoolchildren. But we've had some great times together. Really, we've grown up together. I've always treated him like an adult." PETER LAING, talking about his 11-year-old son Tony, who has been taught at home, *Daily Telegraph* 15 September 1981.

If you decide, when your child reaches five, that you don't like our education system and decide you want to teach him[sic], yourself you must satisfy which following body about your teaching capabilities? ... (quiz set by Jane Dobbin on caring parents, *Daily Telegraph* 18 September 1981.

"All through that first period in the afternoon I would huddle in my desk against the barely warm radiator ... anything was better than the buzzing of the bell; the emergence from warm grey clothes into chilly white clothes; the spatter of plimsolls up the school drive ... the first dreadful slash of mud ... Another boy ... ran beside us, crying out the names of home comforts from which he, as a boarder, was excluded. "Toast! ... Teal Crumpets! Marmite! ..." PHILIP NORMAN, writing in the *Sunday Times* 11 October 1981, on cross-country running.

"Happily-educated there (Oundle) as I was, you may be astounded to know that at the age of 14 I was taught how to shoe a horse ..." ARTHUR MARSHALL, *Sunday Telegraph* 4 October 1981.

"Teachers have watched milk and meals shrivel, paint peel and class sizes grow so that each year ambitions and ideals have seemed less and less practicable ... There is no point to it at all, except perhaps to avoid even worse rounds of scrimpy, save and slim, the three Ss of education in the 80s" BERNARD BARKER, Head of Stanground comprehensive, in a letter to Sir Keith Joseph, *Daily Telegraph* 26 October 1981.

"I've learnt never to give up when doors close on you. They can't teach you this at school, but I reckon I've got enough mouth to sell myself anywhere. If you can get your self-belief across to an employer, you can begin to walk on the water." MICK CHALMERS, a school-leaver interviewed in the *Sunday Telegraph* 6 September 1981.

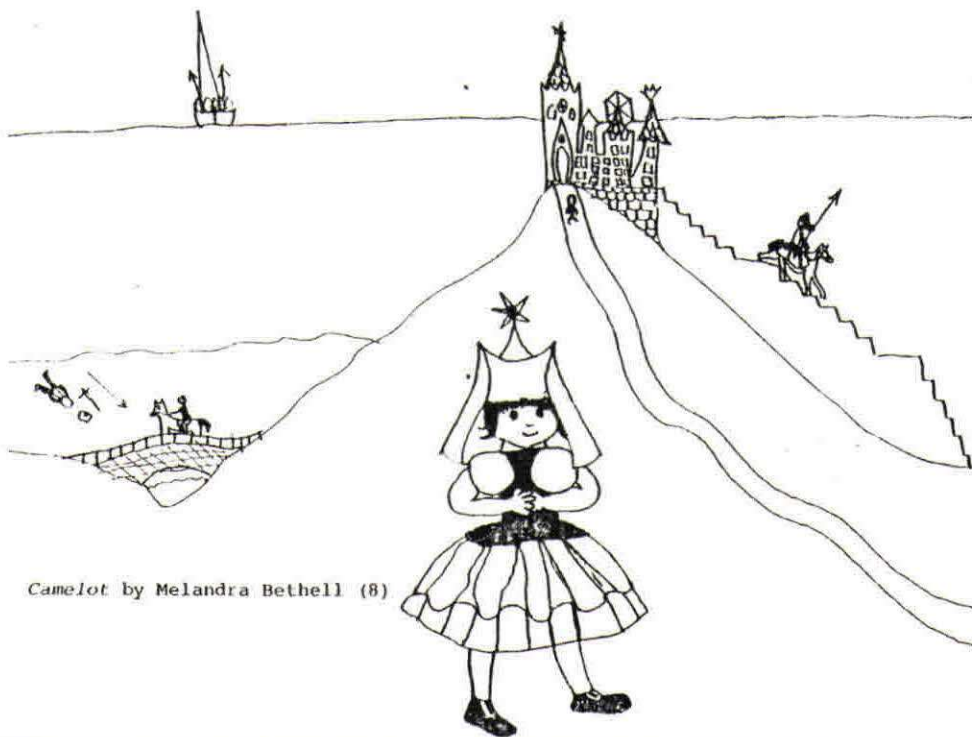
"I am concerned by a lack of intellectual curiosity amongst a sizeable proportion of the seniors in the school and the effect that apparently compulsive television-viewing appears to have on some. ... too few post-O-level students are ambitious readers or scientific investigators and I would like to see more sixth-formers show more openly an enthusiasm for intellectual matters and take fuller advantage of the privilege of having a good mind" HEADMASTER of Kimbolton School, on Speech Day, June 1981.

A Professor of Education, JOHN HONEY, from Leicester Polytechnic, claims that 29000 teachers in Britain are totally incompetent. He suggests regular testing of teachers. "Teachers would be asked to valuate themselves by spelling out their aims and objectives. Once they are asked to do this, many will decide 'This is a damn silly way for me to behave'." Professor Honey taught at a London comprehensive, where "I had things thrown at me by pupils." *Daily Telegraph* 19 October 1981.

EDITED by SARAH GUTHRIE, with contributions from Janet Everdell, Janice Owen, Sally Baker and others.

Quote of the Quarter

About a child educated at home for six years: "In the past, children would be spotted at post-natal clinics and the authorities would make sure they went to school. These days ... it's more difficult." A TEACHER *Sunday Telegraph* 18 August 1981.



Camelot by Melandra Bethell (8)

Secondary Education ~ a massive condemnation

Bruce Cox

"Boredom in school, and incompetence when they leave school; there are these two problems": Christopher Price, M.P., Chairmain of the Commons Select Committee on Education.

On 23rd September the radio programme File on Four dealt with the topic of secondary education. Although it included the opinions of establishment personalities or organizations it added up to an indictment of the education system so extreme as in some instances to be almost comic. I thought that a partial transcription of the programme would provide EOers with a useful source of arguments and quotations which can scarcely be dismissed as coming from 'freaky radicals'.

In evidence to the Commons Select Committee, looking at the curriculum and examinations, a wide range of organizations has been damning about the present system. The CBI and TUC complain jointly that schools are not sufficiently related to the world outside. Local authorities and industry argue that less emphasis should be placed on factual and academic learning, and more on practical and creative skills. One of the parents' groups talked of the universities having a strangelhold over the curriculum and the head of the HMIs referred to the overkill of examinations. The crucial role of the examination system in shaping secondary education lies at the heart of the debate. According to the Schools Council the influence is malign and the leading educationalist, Tyrrell Burgess (Chairman of the Education Committee of the S.D.P.), of the North East London Polytechnic, believes that exams do not even benefit the brighter children that they are generally regarded as favouring:

T.B.: The usual thing that is said about exams is that they do not suit most people but they are inevitable for the clever. I think they are very damaging to the clever. I think they stultify performance of clever people.

Interviewer: In what way?

T.B.: Well, I think that the capacities they require, which is very very largely isolated recall, pure memory, are far too limited and trivial to occupy their minds, and really clever children spend their time just multiplying the numbers of O-levels they take in order to keep boredom at bay, so you get clever children with twelve trivial bits of paper. Well, that's no education for the clever, and then I think the other thing about examinations is that they cannot accommodate all the kinds of qualities that you want people to show - ability to manage, ability to get on with other people, persistence, conscientiousness, flair - all the things that make the country go ... they are all ignored by an academic exam system.

Interviewer: The Chairman of the Commons Select Committee is the Labour M.P., Christopher Price. The evidence he and his colleagues have been collecting since the beginning of the year has led him to identify two main problems for those going through secondary education:

C.P.: Boredom in school and incompetence when they leave school. There are these two problems. When they are actually in school they are not doing things that switch them on and make them interested, and when they leave school they do not have the skills and competence that they need to live in the world, whether they've got a job or not. We've had a lot of evidence, particularly from the CBI and employers, to say "We don't like the curriculum at the moment. We would like youngsters, when they leave school, to have a greater range of skills, a greater range of competence."

Interviewer: How much of a condemnation of the existing secondary education system do you feel these criticisms are?

C.P.: Oh, I think they are a massive condemnation. What's wrong with schools is that 90% of the kids have to do a course which is only designed for 5% of them. *[Note the contrast with Burgess's opinion earlier that the system is not even suited to the 'elite']* That is the basic problem. Schools are machines for getting people into university, but most of the kids at school do not go to university. There is no defence of the system at all. They really ought to have an education which is directed towards being generally able to cope with life rather than bits of book learning which is relevant to a small proportion of them.

The recurring image is of schools left behind as society moves on. In one guise or another it's the theme which underlies much of the criticism of present secondary education. It's put graphically by Barry Hobson, an educationalist at Leeds University who is producing a course on some of the 'life skills' that he believes should be taught in schools:

B.H.: When you and I were at school the message that came across was that "if you are good little boys and keep your heads down and get on with your work you'll pass some examinations and if you pass enough examinations you'll get a good job and access to all the goodies that society can offer you." Well, for a start that now is not working. You can do all of those things ... and you're not necessarily going to get a job. People are now getting that message; so one of the traditional carrots that's been dangled in front of young people to force them to do some of these awful things in schools, that carrot has now gone pretty mouldy. Increasingly we are getting teachers who know from their experience every day that the traditional curriculum, traditional ways of working and organizing school systems are not working as they used to work, so consequently they are looking for alternative techniques.

Interviewer: Yes, you are not just talking about alternative techniques you are talking about a total change in what is taught, how it is taught, how it's assessed. Effectively a complete revolution. People in the past have talked about revolution in education. This one, if it came about, would alter schools so that parents would not recognize the place where their children are going from 11 to 16.

B.H.: I think they *should* not recognize it because society has changed so fundamentally that I would expect the school to reflect that difference and if we can feel at home when we go into an existing secondary school then that school has not changed in the way that it should.

The effect of school on young people is of particular interest to David Lewis an author and psychologist who has made a study of thousands of young children as they start school.

D.L.: One of the parents in my study had a particularly bright child who, at the age of four, went to school. She could read very well, she was very numerate, she had a lively curiosity. Within about six months he wrote me a letter saying "It's amazing how much Oswin regressed, these people must be experts, the damage they have managed to do to this child in six months. To achieve that kind of damage they must really be very proficient at harming children."

Interviewer: How typical is that example?

D.L.: Oh, very typical. Almost every parent who had a bright four-year-old that went into school early or at five would say to you, "The school has damaged my child, has put my child back by six months, by a year. The school has made my child uninterested in subjects which interested him or her greatly. School has forced the child to read books which are so trivial compared with a child's abilities that they just turn off reading. One little boy who was very good at numbers before he went to school, could really manipulate number systems very well, was told "Imagine the number eight is a dumpy little man with a hat on." When he said that he didn't see the number at all that way he was told not to be impertinent. A five-year-old girl in my study - one day she was in class, and the teacher pulled a television plug out by the flex, and she said, "You know you shouldn't really do that, because when you do, the wires might come loose inside and if they touch you will short-circuit it and blow the fuse." She got a real roasting from the teacher for being impertinent.

In the study we asked "What sort of things would you look out for to say whether your child was intelligent" and they came out with things like, "asks interesting questions", "learns things very quickly", perhaps "reads early on"; when the same questionnaire was put to teachers, they were ranking things like "writes very neatly", "arrives in class on time", "is quiet", "does not keep on interrupting". Now, in a sense you can understand that, because their criteria is to produce good results at the end - that's how they are going to be measured, and the child who is constantly asking questions, particularly questions that are not directly related to the syllabus, is wasting time.

Interviewer: Obviously, in both primary and secondary schools the need to maintain a well-organized and ordered school is important, but headmaster Mervyn Benford agrees with David Lewis that the natural conservatism of many teachers means that the time for change is long overdue.

M.B.: In over a century of state education it's quite clear that there hasn't really been much change at all, when all around in society at large there's been such a lot of change, particularly in the last two decades, and the pace of change gets quicker every year, and still the education system goes on in the same old routine, anachronistic way.

Interviewer: Why?

M.B.: Well, it goes on like that simply because the teaching profession over the years has been traditionally insular, behind its grey stone walls and 'parents keep out', it's somehow kept itself rather aloof from the world outside. "We know what's best, just leave it to us, trust us." Another factor which has reinforced the static nature of the education system, the intensive, rigorous grip of the academic system, dictated by the universities through meaningless examinations, which only emphasize the wrong skills and therefore accentuate the gap between school experience and the outside.

A detailed alternative to the present examination system is put forward by Tyrrell Burgess:

T.B.: Everyone should have a statement; at 16 a positive statement of capacities, achievements, interests, ambitions, qualifications; and this statement should be a summary in effect of a folder of work prepared over the two years. And I would go further than that and say that that folder be built up on the basis of a programme of education planned and organized and carried through by the students themselves. The trouble with the alternative, with presenting packages and subjects and syllabuses all leading to these very trivial limited afternoon-type examinations, is that you offer an education which in effect is offering unwanted answers to unasked questions.

Interviewer: Thinking of existing secondary schools, what you're suggesting seems to be a recipe for chaos.

T.B.: No, it's not, it's ...

Interviewer: ... children choosing 'to learn what they want to learn'?

T.B.: Well, in discussion with their teachers, but there is no reason to suppose that children and their teachers will produce chaos. What we are talking about is planning, negotiation, we are talking about young people and their teachers agreeing together what to do. This does pose organizational problems. I think it spells death to the forty-minute period. I think it spells death to the 35-pupil class. I think it spells the end of a lot of existing practices, and I think there is enough skill in the system to make it work.

Education costs nearly £8000 million per year, with secondary schools taking over a third of it. Evidence to the Commons Select Committee shows that dissatisfaction about what we receive for that outlay is widespread. Are we getting value for money? Labour M.P. Christopher Price, the Chairman of the Committee, views the question in two parts:

C.P.: Well, in one sense you get enormous value for money. Teachers flog their guts out for kids. Looking back, when I was a teacher, I'm amazed how hard I worked then compared with how hard I have worked since. The teaching force of Britain is an amazingly devoted group of folk. One doesn't get value for money in the other sense, in that though they're devoted they're tremendously cut off from the mainstreams of all sorts of things. All the evidence we've had from the employers, the trade unions, the inspectors, the DES; the Department of Industry says that there must be more contact between teachers and what goes on in the world outside. And I'm pretty certain ... we will recommend something along those lines.

We've allowed education to be a secret garden run by the professionals for far too long. It must not be a liberal conspiracy any longer, with a few people saying "We know what's best for your kids". It's got to be much more open, with much more discussion about what actually goes on in the classroom.

George Gyte (a headmaster): We've got it wrong in so many ways in education and we've got to start to put it right. We have had too big an emphasis on the subject-based curriculum. I think that the curriculum's got to respond to a changed reality.

Interviewer: That's 95% of secondary schools you've just condemned there.

G.G.: Um, well - then, there are - Yes!

Comments: I have included in this transcript most of the negative points made about schools. A substantial part of the programme, however, was devoted to describing a social education course for older children in a Middlesborough secondary school. Members of the local community were actively involved in running the course which was aimed at building up the confidence of students to cope with the outside world, rather as mental patients are deinstitutionalized before being discharged. The technique is rather like that of the hell-fire preacher. When a vivid picture has been painted of the torments of Hell, a chink of light must be pointed out which illumines a possible path to salvation. In the case of this programme, school is Hell but we can be saved by changes in the curriculum.



This will not do. Of course, schools can be improved. Some are better and some are worse, but there is no reason for supposing that schools will change radically, for there is no mechanism by which they can be changed at the grass roots. All the power is at the top. It is in the hands of universities, LEAs, the government, and teachers' unions. This is not to say that any of these bodies are free to do what they want. Each sets limits to the others. Most of their power is negative. They can stop change very effectively. Each new reform flowers for a while before being crushed and mangled between the conflicting interests of the powerful. Everyone agrees, for example, that A-levels should be changed and replaced by a system giving a broader education for 16 to 18-year-olds but each new reform ends by being talked out. Even if a new system was agreed it would be at least 10 years before the bureaucracy could manage to introduce it.

The criticisms of schooling are therefore radical and damning whereas reforms are marginal and shortlived. We must attack the myths that better-trained teachers, humane headmasters, progressive methods or increased expenditure are in themselves going to have much effect on the great inert beast that is the education system. Reform if it comes at all will come from the bottom. The only administrative measures needed to aid it are ones that give students and parents more choice. Once we can choose, the system will change in response to our needs.



Schoolgirl, flanked by EO girls: Melandra Bethell (8)

CATSEYES

Julie Duff

It was not through a desire to cram academic knowledge into our children nor because we believed in a particular approach, that we became an EO family - it was simply that we could not bring ourselves to trust the system. I think with hindsight we only sent Sian and Andrew to school 'because that was the done thing' - we never really questioned it - even though we had had fairly strong views about playgroups and nursery education! mostly anti!

School, however, was a shock to us and certainly an even bigger shock to our children! We often didn't agree with the system, feeling concerned at the way children were labelled successes or failures, from a really early age (we had one of each!). We watched their curiosity disappear but felt unable to accept that such conformity was necessary as a step to 'education'. We also watched with horror as our children were taken from our 'control' (I use the term in the loosest sense) and influenced by people with ideas totally alien to our own. At this stage it is fair to say that our children have been in two very small village schools - both with 'spinster-type' heads, who felt parents should be kept in their places. Those places being 'out' of the school!

At 10, Sian had given up completely and considered herself dozy and thick (her words) and Andrew (8) was becoming really naughty in class - his teacher complained that he always wanted to do something more complicated than she wanted to teach! After a year of EO Sian now thinks that she is really wonderful! Andrew is no longer frustrated and spends his day doing as many 'complicated' things as he wishes!

We follow a 'middle of the road' approach - I use some textbooks and follow the Nelson English series which I think is excellent *but* the children work on them as and when they wish - if they do not do anything that would be recognized as work I do not mind - they are certainly always busy anyway. But as neither my husband nor I are teachers we do feel safer if we have something that the education officials can see and recognize as 'work'.

I feel it is essential that we 'middle of the roaders' are not made to feel inferior - as freedom is surely the essential point of Education Otherwise - or else EO can be as restrictive as the system. It is interesting that so many of our members do not have children out of school - is this because they feel unable to take this step? I feel the middle-of-the-road approach has much to offer these families, who may reject a timetable approach but feel unable to cope without some 'protection' from the officials who can without doubt be very difficult if they choose. (Gloucestershire have been super but in Scotland our Education Officer told us that we were clearly a 'social case' and by keeping our children out of school were proving it! As we were not members of EO at the time, we were pretty frightened! Thanks to the support of EO we had no such qualms, the next time we tried!)

Those Perishing Pieces of Paper

Janet Everdell

A question frequently asked by those parents contemplating home education is, "How do they manage O-levels?" My answer, after three years of experience with our son Nicholas, is "Easily". And this especially so if they have never attended school and had the fear of failure drummed into them daily.

With Nicholas we started at a grave disadvantage. He was withdrawn from a comprehensive school just two weeks before his thirteenth birthday in May 1978. The reasons were typical; academically gifted, isolated, bored, bullied. When his nightmares began to visibly affect his health, we decided enough was enough.

The LEA agreed to his deregistration on the understanding that he was to continue to study for O-levels. The Senior Area Education Officer was courteous and correct, the Senior Area Advisor was almost enthusiastic, saying that he would send each member of his advisory staff in turn to gain experience in home education. The Wolsey Hall correspondence college lessons were agreed upon.

We got off to a shaky start because emotionally Nicholas now felt a failure and a fugitive. However, the courses started to arrive and by September he was getting on with the self-discipline of hard study.

The logistics were my responsibility, but they were quite simple. First, it is necessary to find a local exam centre that takes external examinees. This is usually a tech' but schools do sometimes oblige. Establish which examining board they use. There are nine altogether, but only two have nationwide exam centres; London University and the Associated Examining Board. Make sure the correspondence course caters for the board you require and obtain the board's Regulations and Syllabuses and a publications pricelist. Old exam papers are available and it is useful to study their format.

Nicholas chose nine subjects, which cost us about £260 (1978 prices) including books. But we soon realized that he and the lessons were so thorough that he would be hard put to finish the course in two years. He was still on target for taking O-levels at fifteen as he had been at school, having gone to secondary school a year early. A grave mistake on our part. We dropped down to eight but the progress, due to emotional problems, was still haphazard and slow. Timetables were reworked frequently and the advisors were always a little anti in their attitude, although pleasant enough to talk to. The senior science advisor, although he never met our son, told my husband, "Nicholas will fail."

Nicholas studied by himself with help from me in both English subjects and in any other way I could contribute, although I am not a trained teacher. As he didn't take either subject my husband taught, his father was not involved with the teaching. However, he did impress on Nicholas one thing; never do an essay on a controversial subject. When it came to the English language exam the essay Nicholas chose was 'My Fascination for the Railways', and left alone 'My Views on Corporal Punishment, Borstal and Prison'. My husband was dismissed from his teaching post in November 1979 after stating his views against corporal punishment.

When it came to the time to enter for the June 1980 exams, Nicholas was not ready, so we delayed for the June 1981 and rehashed the timetable once more. He was now well able to do home study and the method of sending off lessons to be marked and returned by tutors was well established and for the most part his marks were good. The method of study he developed was surprising, often spending days at a time on a topic; so different from the forty-minute periods of school. The friendly Senior Advisor came to see us telling us he was sceptical when he arrived but left highly impressed and wrote a full report to that effect.

In September 1980 Nicholas's confidence took another nosedive and for three months did not put pen to paper. This was a very trying time for us as 'failure' loomed large. However, we decided not to pressure him and after Christmas of that year he took up his studies again. In January I entered him for seven subjects (total cost £32.65) but dropped astronomy as that has to cost an astounding £20 with London University. As most universities only require five good O-levels of a good spread of disciplines, we had enough.

Nicholas conquered his fear of failure, sat the exams in strange surroundings, aided by friendly invigilators amused at the amount of examinations he presented himself for, fourteen papers in all. Whilst we were waiting for the results, he asked me, "Do you think Dad will be cross if I don't do well?" "No", I replied, "I will get the blame for insisting you leave school." Next day he came and asked, "Do you think Dad will get cross if I do well, because I made a lot of fuss?" I dissolved into laughter and reassured him all would be well.

When the results day came in August, he pedalled off to find out his grades. He was sure he had passed, it was just a question of how well. He gained grade A in all seven subjects and the LEA sent him a congratulatory letter.

With the experience of hindsight I would now advise parents to take correspondence courses only for those subjects which the child is likely to follow up at A-level. The Wolsey Hall courses are mostly too advanced for O-level work and for that reason are off-putting. The many study aids available in bookshops appear to be quite adequate (and much cheaper) for O-level purpose. Indeed, Nicholas resorted to one of these for Latin when the correspondence course reached a ridiculous degree of difficulty.

We joined EO in 1977 and now my only regret is that we let our three children go to school. By the time we took Nicholas out we had a very unhappy neurotic child on our hands. Indeed, his headmaster had recommended a psychiatrist! Our elder children, aged 20 and 21, are still suffering from the emotional effects of too much group-think and herd-mindedness.

Nicholas now attends the local tech' and is studying four science A-levels. He has become a confident sociable teenager with many interests and hobbies, well able to cope with the minor aggravations of institutionalized learning. I firmly believe that in the years to come EO children will have no difficulty whatsoever with these piffling exams. And they will astound most critics with their early maturity and confidence, gaining these qualifications (if they so wish) years before the average school-educated child.

Education Otherwise ~ but not quite at home

Caroline Grant

The shortcomings of our education system have been highlighted many times before, but since one or two people in EO have recently suggested that it might be good to remind ourselves from time to time just what it is that we object to in schools, or have our stance on the matter reinforced - and also to set the context for the following discussion - I shall take the opportunity here to launch into a brief summary of what I see as the main objections.

- In a class of 20 to 40 pupils with a single teacher, the real educational needs of very few children can be recognized, let alone satisfied.
- Schools in general thrive on and encourage competition. The child either succeeds (at this stage, at least) or fails.
- Too high a premium is placed on so-called academic subjects: a child attends art or cookery classes if she/he is not 'good enough' to do French, Chemistry or whatever.
- Schools tend to be exam-orientated: hence an over-emphasis on what is 'on the syllabus' to the neglect of all else (the latter often coming to be seen even by the pupils themselves as a waste of time).
- Many of the subjects taught in schools, and the way in which they are taught, are both uninteresting and of little practical use in the long term. Considering the vast amount of time each child spends at school, the gain is relatively small.
- The existence of a timetable, even at the primary stage in some cases, means that the individual child cannot fully explore whatever may interest him/her at a particular time: thus his/her interest may be deadened. The existence of a timetable implies the expectation not only that each child should be able to divert his/her attention and interest from one subject to another at the ring of a bell, but also that all the children in the class should be interested in the same thing at the same time.
- Schools tend to inculcate, whether consciously or not, a specific set of values which some parents do not endorse (the 'hidden curriculum').

For parents who take these shortcomings seriously, there is the alternative of educating the child/ren at home. In opting for home-education, parents can retain far more control over what, when and how the child learns, if they wish to exercise such control, or they can leave this for the child to decide.

Unfortunately, however, educating one's children at home is not something which everyone is happy to embark on at the drop of a hat: it takes confidence, thought and preparation to take this step in the first place, and time and energy once one has taken it. Parents with the inclination do not always have sufficient time to devote to the task, and it is not always practicable for them to act together with others of like mind in similar circumstances. Resources

and facilities may be limited - this includes specialist knowledge as well as material resources. Many parents feel that they are no longer 'up to it' if and when the child wishes to study for GCE exams and go on to further education. Other parents again may feel that the child alone at home is in danger of becoming isolated and denied the opportunity to mix with other children (although this is a fear more often expressed by those opposed to home-education altogether).

The obvious compromise - having the children attend school part-time and learn at home part-time - is one rarely entertained with any degree of enthusiasm by schools. What, then, can be done in the case of such parents who do not wish to send their children to school but at the same time feel unable to take on their education single-handed, for whatever reason?

There follow some ideas for what one might call a co-operative learning and workshop centre (maybe resorting to the word 'school' for official purposes). Simon has already written on his ideas for such a centre for the study of science in particular a few newsletters ago: this is a further development of those ideas. Obviously, it would take time to get such a project off the ground, and each centre could benefit only a small proportion of the people we are concerned with, but it would be a start ... Centres operating along similar lines do already exist, but they tend to cater for what are generally considered 'extra-curricular' activities - mainly arts and crafts. The centres we envisage would be equally suited to students working towards GCE exams, while also offering scope for subjects not covered by the average school curriculum, e.g. plumbing, how to set up a business. The advantages they would aim to embody would include the following:

- Parents would be able to play a part in their children's education by spending some time at the centre, but this would not make such excessive demands on their time as educating one child at home.
- There would be a reasonable range of skills and expertise on offer.
- Each child would have access to a large range of material resources and facilities.
- Children of different ages would be able to work together and help one another.
- Each child would have plenty of opportunity to mix with other adults as well as children.
- The centre might also provide workshop facilities which people could use for a small fee or in exchange for offering some teaching. The children would then have the opportunity of watching different people at work.

The most immediate problem is that of finance, to enable the acquisition of suitable premises. One could seek donations from trust funds and other bodies interested in educational research: this approach has yielded fruit in some cases in the past. One could also adopt the model of e.g. a squash club - interested parties could buy shares in the enterprise and would then have a say in the running of the centre. Once the centre was set up, those using it might pay a nominal fee of e.g. £1 per (½-day) session, while those who for any reason needed individual tuition might have to negotiate an alternative fee. Families who did not hold shares

could also pay an annual membership fee. These charges would be made primarily to cover running costs. As far as the teaching side is concerned, it would be hoped that the parents themselves would between them be able to provide most of the expertise required (likewise in the case of keeping accounts &c). Others might offer teaching in exchange for the use of workshop facilities. Professional tutors would need to be engaged only in the case of specialized subjects for which there was a demand but no expertise readily available.

Ideally, the centre would be attached to a small community, i.e. a group of people (perhaps three to six families) living together in a large house or collection of smaller buildings. There would then be a nucleus of children 'on the spot', and also a range of skills to start off with, and such a set-up could also obviate some of the initial financial problems in that the community may have sufficient space already to launch the venture on a small scale, gradually drawing in people from outside as it got more firmly established.

Any takers for starting an EO community? Any contributions to/ criticisms of the idea? If so, do contact us:

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Christmas: Melandra Bethell (8)

Max and Magic

Jean Lovius

Max started being interested in visual illusions both 'op' and surrealist when he was 5 or 6. He also about the same time started buying magic tricks with his pocket money. The shop he went to was an old-fashioned hardware shop. Buried at the back of the shop was a section of shelves filled with brown cardboard boxes with labels and prices of the magic and jokes they contained. Max could not read and he and I used to spend ages discussing the labels and prices as the man did not like getting too many things out.

A couple of years later we were in the city and Max saw a shop with balloons and masks outside, a strange sight in between Doric columns, municipal offices and banks. The windows were filled with masks, monster hands and feet, chests of gigantic proportions, things that itch, smell and make rude noises, and - magic. The magic is at the back of the shop. Even small customers are shown tricks and advised on best buys and routines, but, because it is magic noone is told how to do a trick until it is bought - learning the secret by buying the tricks can be quite an expensive business. Magicians have written many good books and Max now has a long list of autobiographies, histories of magic, magic magazines and mail-order catalogues from all over the world, as well as books 'revealing the secrets'.

There is one problem - Max is quite severely dyslexic, and struggle though he might he could not get enough by what he could read to give him the information he wanted. He does not really want his family to read the information as that can destroy the reception of a trick. Now, aged 9, although the majority of his day is unstructured he is going to a specialist dyslexic teacher and doing homework in quite a formal fashion, realizing that by doing so his ability to keep his secrets is increasing.



LAURA

Brenda Holliday

It is difficult to pinpoint why we (my husband John and I) decided to go it alone. When we took Laura out of school we had never heard of EO, and yet felt so strongly that we did not want Laura to go to the local comprehensive that we decided to risk the criticism of friends and relatives and go ahead. Incidentally, on reading through back numbers of the Newsletter, it was tremendously encouraging to know that all our experiences were not unique to us, and yet I felt cheated that having made a momentous decision all on our own, and beginning in a small way to experience the liberation of being released from years of anxiety, all the things I have to say to anyone interested should have been said before!

In a way we were like frightened rabbits, knowing what we did not want, but not what we did, and running from place to place trying to get Laura placed in a school which was not so awful as the local comprehensive (1500 pupils) appeared to be. In the end, when we could not get her into a school of our choice, we decided to enrol her with Worldwide Education Service (WES) rather than take the place offered. Once we had taken this decision, I cannot pretend that we were relieved for we could see many pitfalls in the way ahead. Only now, after several weeks, do we feel that we have done the right thing, although we confess that the choice may have been made for entirely the wrong reasons (for instance, out of a sense of pique that the local education authority was going to do us out of our legal rights in choosing how we should educate our children.)

Now that we have stepped aside, so to speak, we are clarifying our ambivalent attitude towards schools. On the one hand, we wanted our children and ourselves to conform, but on the other we did not like what we were expected to conform to.

To explain why we feel the way we do about schools would be difficult; small things happen that make you frightened or worried, you forget the incidents, but the feeling they create remains. Some people call it intuition. For me it may have started 33 years ago when I was hit by a teacher with a ruler on my first day at school. I have no good memories of school. All my years there were wasted.

We spent seven depressing and worrying years while our to us highly intelligent, receptive and perceptive son failed miserably at primary school, and was miserable there. We have John Aitkenhead at Kilquhanity to thank for the fact that he is now maturing at fifteen into somebody special - though both of us have serious doubts that he will ever be considered successful by the standards of today.

Laura was the one who made the best adjustment to school. She always appeared to be happy and have plenty of friends. But school was not very interesting, and her teachers were mostly women with young families, who wanted a job with hours coinciding with their own children's school hours. Not one teacher ever got to know Laura

and realize the important things about her, like her compassion and gentleness. She was average by their criteria. She was 'very quiet'. "If only Laura would ask when she is stuck, she would get on better". Was this the same girl who could talke the hind leg off a donkey, whom we had to interrupt if we wanted to get a word in edgeways. It appeared so.

I was always amazed that the children who used to come to our house and delight us with their chat and imagination, nearly always turned out to be the 'non-achievers' at school. What does it take to be 'successful'? A good memory, a capacity for learning facts even if they are not understood?

When it was Laura's turn to go to secondary school we were very anxious. We did not know that we did not want her to go to school, but only that over the years we had built up a bad picture of the local secondary and we did not want her to go there. We tried very hard to get her a place elsewhere, but failed. If we had managed to get her into another school, we would not, in desperation, have turned to WES. We did not know about 'deregistering', but it seems that we did the right thing by choosing to break off her formal schooling between primary and secondary schools.

Our local education authority has not been helpful to us in the past with regard to choice of school. We have told them what we are doing and have had yet another postcard acknowledging our communication. We have kept careful records of work done, not only for the inspector when he comes, but because I do not have the confidence in myself not to.

We did not make a decision, we were edged into it because every other alternative choice was closed to us, but I am glad that Laura and I are together much more. I have to admit that our schedule is a tight one because, in order to finance Laura's education I work part-time. My employers have been kind and sympathetic, and have placed a small room at Laura's disposal which she can use if she comes to work with me in the afternoons. Often she does not, either because she is expecting a friend after school, or she has a lesson to go to. Apart from her formal lessons which we do together, she has pottery, piano, gymnastics, dancing and riding. She attends the Bible Class at our church on Sunday and plans to go to their Saturday evening social club. It is true that she does not have as much contact with other children as she used to, but she has enough. Indeed, I think in retrospect that she found that constantly being with other children more tension-inducing than she would care to admit. I wish I had had the maturity and courage to take Alex out of school when he was five.

I am not a trained teacher and so I am glad to have the support of WES, with a tutor in London to appeal to for help. So far, the only serious problem we have had is with French, so if anyone has used the tapes that go with Longmans Audio-Visual French Stage I, we will be glad to buy them off them - at secondhand price, of course!

Almost There

Priscilla Park Weir

I am a new member of EO and have just finished reading four back copies of the Newsletter. It has been so refreshing to read so much that I agree with, and marvellous to think that 'out there' there are so many with similar views. Yet it also makes me feel untrue to myself, as my eldest daughter (6) is at school and my youngest son (4) is at playgroup five mornings a week.

I believe in self-regulated learning. I had even read Jean Liedloff's book *The Continuum Concept* before my second child was born. I thought it was marvellous, but I seem unable to carry out my beliefs. I am more often than not cross when they spill the milk, I more often than not make them tidy up their bedroom when I can bear the mess no more (or worse still lecture while I do it myself) and I find it hard not to get exasperated when teaching them anything, from peeling a potato to reading a book. All this leaves me in doubt that I would do it any better than it is done at school. I do not really have backing from my husband either, who, though he does not have strongly-held opposing views, does not really understand what I believe.

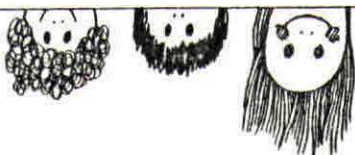
I myself was educated 'otherwise'. My mother did not want to send me to the local school, so taught me at home (mornings only and with rather short terms). She was no teacher by trade and always longed for an inspector come (which he never did), but we managed all the usual subjects, including Latin and French, and I passed the common entrance into a boarding school, and at the age of nearly 12 went off 600 miles to school! I did severely feel my lack of social skills there, but it is quite possible that, being an introverted child, I would have felt it just as much had I gone to the local village school first, where many of the social skills needed would have been different. I certainly feel that I learnt little of value at school, and believe that those things that are of value to me could have been learnt much more easily some other way.

Am I another of those mothers who would rather have their children off their hands at school? I fear I am, but perhaps with the help of your newsletters, and hopefully meeting some of you, I will slowly be given the courage of my convictions.

Crying by Melandra Bethell (8)

Tears are streaming:
You are crying,
I am sad -
And suddenly we get so glad.
Happy me!

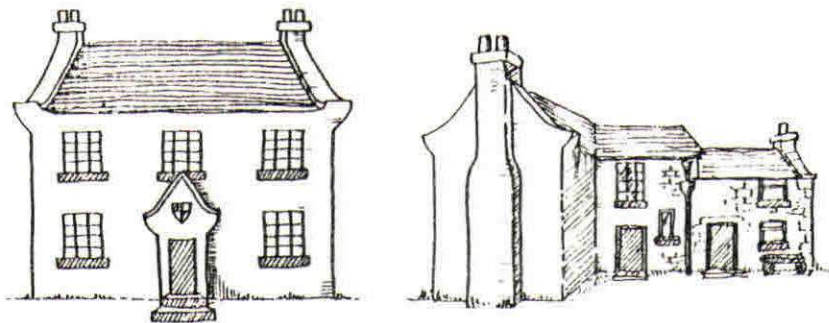




Caroline Grant

I am currently receiving on behalf of EO a newsletter 'about alternatives in education' put out by Rosedale School in New Zealand, and will write a bit about it from time to time in our newsletter. It contains some interesting reports on people's experiences with home education - why they do it, what they do, their dealings with the authorities &c.

For today, I thought readers might be interested to know of the legal position in New Zealand. Provision is made under the New Zealand Education Act of 1964 for children to be exempted from enrolment at school provided that they are elsewhere under instruction as regular and efficient as in a registered school. (The legal age for enrolment is 6). This is somewhat different from the situation in Britain, where the problem is to get the children deregistered. The procedure is to apply in the first instance to the local headmaster, who then contacts the Education Board and arrangements are made for an Inspector to visit. He expects to see a timetable, learning programme &c., and it is on his recommendation that a certificate of exemption is awarded (or not). Things then seem to progress in much the same way as they do here: sometimes the exemption is given without further ado, but often there is the familiar hassle with the authorities ... Anyway, the certificate is probably a good thing since once you've got it you have something material with which to protect yourself in the future.



Hargate Hill House, by Christina Cordingley

Why I Joined EO

Christina Cordingley

I joined EO in January this year, and I'm so pleased I did. It has helped me already in starting to teach my daughter Heidi (4). I look forward to receiving the newsletters too, as they are so very interesting, and each member is made to feel important. I enjoy telling people about EO and I thought I would write and tell you why I joined.

I live in a 6-bedroomed house near some woods. Up to 1841 it was a little cottage in the middle of Argill Wood. But in 1841 Ebenezer Elliott, a corn-law rhymmer, well-known to these parts, bought the property and extended the building to the size it is now, and called it Hargate Hill House. Some time after Elliott's death in 1849 the house and eleven acres of land were sold, and eventually became the property of my great-grandfather, and is now owned by my parents.

I was born here, and my pre-school life was very happy. I know the freedom of living where there were no neighbours to bother about or argue with. But on starting school, the first thing I learned was to hate it. I hated the restrictions. I was closed in, no longer able to go with Dad each morning to feed the chickens, or make mud pies, and go for walks round the fields or down the lanes. I was made to sit in a classroom and keep my mouth shut, memorizing things I didn't need to understand until much later. Although I did quite well, I was constantly being told how much better I could do if only I would show a little interest.

When I reached the age of eleven, and moved to a new school, I found it a little easier. At least now I could sneak out at lunchtime and find some place to wander around and spend the afternoon until it was time for my bus home. At the end of term, on my school report, the Times Absent bit at the bottom was always in red. "You have never been off school as often as that," my mother would say, "they must be wrong." They were not wrong.

When Heidi was born to us, I thought not only of my own school life, but also about the way children today change when they start school, and I wished that she would never have to go. I assumed that school was compulsory, until one day I heard a woman on the radio say she taught her children at home. So, I thought, surely then there must be some way out of it. First I approached the Citizens Advice Bureau, from where I obtained the address of ACE, who in turn gave me the address of EO.

Now I'm looking forward to teaching Heidi and eventually Tasmin (9½ months) myself, thereby keeping the good relationship we have already established. Heidi also has lots of little friends whom she sees regularly, so she won't miss out on her social life.

I have had some opposition from certain family members, but on the whole my intention to teach them at home is generally accepted now. Although the fact that my sister-in-law is one of EO's greatest opposers, believing as she does that a child should have a 'proper' education, always makes me smile when she complains about the effect that school has had on her own child and others, making them cheeky, argumentative and unruly.

GWS

Snippets from GWS 21 culled by Jane Davies

HOME-MADE SOCIAL LIFE

From Dan Shultis (NM): We have three children. Our community is very small - 100 people in 1600 square miles (20 mile radius). We are the only home-schoolers.

When the children were 1 to 5 years old, we made friends with some other couples on "their level of communication" and offered to babysit for their young children for *free!* - usually weekends. The word 'free' is magic, along with not talking above the neighbors' heads.

... The only drawback to this system is that it can get out of hand and the other adults start taking advantage of you ("Please bring Johnny back to me at 4.00"). One weekend we had nine kids here, six besides our own, and it took us two days to put the house back together again. But, overall, the advantages of having the other kinds over by far outweigh the few hours of inconvenience.

If you want a particular child to stop dropping by, just catch the ear of one of the parents and start talking about Karl Marx and mention a dreadful word like 'socialism' - and POW, just like magic, no more Johnny as a visitor.

Don't be afraid of any kid under five - they are all great. Some take a half hour to adjust to 'freedom', but they all do so, like ducks to water. We had one that would shout every swear word I ever heard and then some, for about half an hour at the top of her lungs. She did this every time she came over, same routine. After she got all the garbage out of her system, she proceeded to play with the other kids and there never was any trouble

VOLUNTEER FARM WORK

From the brochure of SATIVA (P.O.Box 2410 Sta.A, Champaign, IL.61820): SATIVA is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run organization which arranges temporary work on organic farms in the Midwest (primarily Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri) for its members. Sativa 'workers' donate their labor for a period of time to one of the 'growers' who, in return, provides the worker with meals, a place to sleep, and sometimes a lift from a local town.

... Descriptions of Sativa farms, along with dates when workers are needed on each farm, are listed in a bi-monthly newsletter ... Workers decide on which farms and dates (if any) they would like to work. They fill out a 'booking form', included with each newsletter. This is sent to the Scheduling Secretary, who confirms the arrangement with the grower and sends details of the farm location to the worker. The worker then simply shows up at the arranged place (the farm itself or a nearby town) on the arranged date, sleeping abg in hand and ready to work! Farm stays may range from weekends to weeks or months

Annual membership fee is \$4; send with s.a.e. ... Workers should be in reasonable physical condition and willing to pull weeds, shovel manure, churn butter, or whatever else might be asked of them. Many Sativa growers accept vegetarians, the handicapped, and workers with children

In the Flesh

Gabrielle Harwood

I was fortunate enough to attend two very relevant seminars here in California recently, one of which had as guest speaker the notorious John Holt, and the other given by Joseph Chilton Pearce, author of *Magical Child* &c and I would like to share them both with EO readers.

It was for me a marvellous experience to hear John speak in person. I had previously read most of his books. I even had a chance to speak to him in person during the breaks and afternoon discussion groups. They are selling three sixty-minute tapes on John's home-schooling lectures. I would be happy to buy them for EO if they would be of interest to anyone. Naturally, a large proportion of the speech is old stuff I had heard or read before. And the laws governing home-schooling here in California are different, so that is irrelevant to EO. But to actually hear my thoughts, feelings, hopes, ideas and ideals on education spoken by John gave me great incentive which is still burning strongly several months later.

The audience were on the whole people new to the idea of home schooling, so a lot of the discussions were concerning the initial stages of deschooling. He spoke about his new book called *Teach Your Own*, which I will be happy to review as soon as I get a copy. He went into the legalities of taking a child out of the school system and the alternatives, and how to do it. It seems that the easiest way here, in California, is to register your home as a private school; this only entails filling in a single-sheet form, and no qualified staff are necessary or required.

John answered many questions, but stating first he would refuse to answer Hippopotamus questions, i.e. questions which are not based on fact but hypothetical situations which would never happen. (e.g. What if everybody stopped sending their children to school tomorrow?) I was pleased to hear this for I'm sure we have all been to home-schooling meetings which have gone around in circles debating Hippopotamus questions.

John also spoke on his newsletter *Growing Without Schooling* and told us about letters from subscribers concerning their experiences with the law, regulations, ideas on learning aids and resources. Anyone who reads *GWS* knows the sort of thing, again probably not too relevant to EO. He then spoke of some of his own articles about how people learn and how other people help or hinder them; society's reasons for compulsory education, and the myth of learning disabilities.

In John's final lecture, late in the afternoon, he described why the family does not exist for many and what to do about it. He also talked about children and their place in society. Unfortunately, I missed this discussion as I had to return home to my 4-year-old son!

So to sum up the day's seminar, I hadn't actually learnt a lot about home schooling, for I had already read and researched pretty well into the subject - but, for me, just the atmosphere and hearing John speak, in person, was well worth it. And I did meet a contact with a 5-year-old son in my district. The first I've managed to find in my area. Distances are so vast here in America, that contacts are spread very thinly on the ground. I did mention this problem to John, but he seemed to think there was no problem there. One good friend is better than twenty with their ingrained school habits and ideas.

Here in America, particularly California, it seems that schooling is even more deeply entrenched than in England. For a large part it is used as a glorified baby-sitter, so the parents can both work, to keep as high a standard of living as possible. Pre-schools and daycare centres are one of the biggest

growth industries, starting with kids as young as three months. The American children seem very independent and self-contained at an early age; at first I thought that this was something in their favour, only to discover it is from just having to be - because they are given no other choice. It is sad, for one wonders what it is doing to these children's minds, to come out at a later age.

The second seminar was given by Joseph Chilton Pearce, whose book *Magical Child* I reviewed in the September newsletter. I hope by now you have all read it! and so will understand better some of his viewpoints. He too has a new book out titled *The Bond of Power*, which looks to be very interesting reading. (When do others find time to do all their reading?)

For me Joseph had many new and interesting ideas concerning child growth, some too complicated for me to fully grasp at the time. And although he did not mention home schooling his whole lecture pointed to that as being one of the solutions for mankind in its present predicament, in modern society. He quoted numerous facts, figures, researchers and professionals. I know this can be misleading, but it was certainly impressive. One statement stood out above the rest; Joseph said that in his seminars he can stand up and speak against country, religion and politics, and the audience will listen. But if he mentions that early reading is harmful for a child he literally gets shouted down. Why do we as a society place such store on early reading? In his eyes, and it is the conclusion of many researchers, early literacy is causing untold damage and tragedy for the youth of today; serious mental problems, premature sexuality and even child suicides, to mention a few he quoted. It is all due to the various and very particular growth stages that children go through. Reading requires using and dealing with symbols, and a child's mind is not ready to deal with this sort of abstraction until 7 years or later. (Do you remember Jackie Fearnley's letter which mentioned Rose at age 8 who has just decided to start reading?) At the earlier ages children's whole mental outlook is towards the physical, imagination, playing, movement, and more playing. So if they are forced to sit still, be quiet and deal with symbols (the alphabet) their minds are confused and twisted to such an extent that they will not be able to complete their physical bonding with the earth matrix, and therefore will be unable to go on to achieve the next stages of bonding, and will throughout life feel unfulfilled, dissatisfied and worse, possibly trying to make up for this by becoming materialistic. I am sure some of us have these feelings to a greater or lesser extent; I know I do. Joseph spoke long and well on this subject using and quoting many facts and figures to back up these conclusions - but I'm afraid I cannot now remember.

His other big bugbear was our western societies' modern-day birthing procedures and practices. On this account I again agree with him wholeheartedly. He talked about the incomplete bonding this time with the Mother, caused by many hospital practices, e.g. drugging, caesarians, induction, taking away the child for weighing and cleaning &c. I'm sure many of you have heard these arguments before and hopefully agree.

However, Joseph does hold out one hope for us all, that through meditation we can get back in touch with our minds and possibly make up for our missed-out bondings (to find out more read his new book).

I have barely touched the surface of this day-long seminar, and would dearly love to attend again for there was too much to take in all at once and Joseph had so much to say.

CATCHING CATERPILLARS



Barbara Clohessy

I thought you might be interested in what my daughter, Claire (6), had to say recently about school:

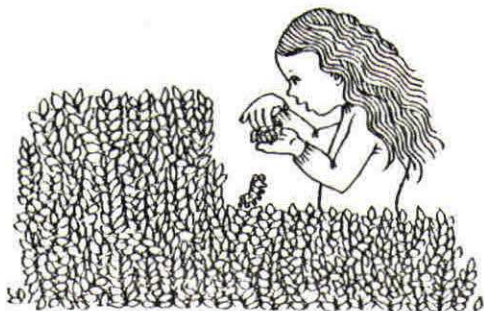
"Noise puts you off when you are thinking or working. You have to write when you don't want to and you can't have a chat or sit how you want to. They say, 'Sit with your legs crossed.' I don't like it. You can't go out to play when you want to - that's mean. You can only play for 10 minutes. They don't let you go to the toilet when you want to. You can't go home when you want to or catch caterpillars from the school hedge."

This expression of childish dissatisfaction reflects, to me, the repression and lack of respect on the part of adults for the developing intellect and soul of another, weaker human being. I think it is very sad.

Claire has been educated at home for the past year, after a year at school, a year which left her demoralized and miserable. We intend to go on with EO, but are not helped by a particularly unsympathetic inspector. After much trying, and in the face of his overbearing attitude, I find I cannot communicate with him. The result - school attendance order impending.

Many people we meet are curious about our way of life, so you can be sure that I am spreading the EO gospel here in Nottinghamshire. I never knew that I was thinking of EO as something rather strange until the realization came upon me quite suddenly one day this summer that it is so very, very ordinary. We live and we learn. We fulfil the present need as best we can on our journey into the future.

'The future', much spoken of by the established educators of our children. A lot of school time seems to be taken up in preparation for it, postponing 'real life' in the preparation. They talk as though *now* were not important, as though *now* had little contribution to make to this mysterious end. Surely, *now* is the seed from which it grows, but they waste valuable time in high-pressure methods of competition and examination. All that tension - what a waste of energy! Still, they can live according to their beliefs. They can have their philosophies, we will have ours and treasure our moments.



DIY

Dianne Cox

I have just reread a letter from Julie Waite of Letchworth in the March 1980 newsletter. A bit late for a response? Well, no, and anyway I didn't know the answer then! For those who were not members last year, the letter concerned the taking of exams before 16, and the fact that Exam Boards require "a certificate from 'the Principal' of the club's school or place of 'full-time education' to say that it is educationally desirable that the child sit these exams". Julie had got a friend/headmaster to agree to write on her behalf. But the fact is that EO parents themselves are the equivalent of 'Principal' &c. for this purpose, as they are the person responsible for the child's full-time education, and should write to the Board accordingly.

I would suggest that if the Board has a form, the parent just signs it where necessary; if name of school is asked for, what about "Home Tutor", to avoid argument! If no form is supplied, I'd just write something like:

"I hereby certify that the student named above is a suitable candidate for entry for the following examination(s) in (month and year of exam)."

Head the certificate, on plain paper, with the name and date of birth of the child. List the exam(s). And then sign it, with 'Home Tutor' beneath. Obviously it would be better typed.

Should any difficulties arise, a telephone call to the Board might sort it out. But a member earlier this year had to get to 'the top' before anyone would listen - but then extremely co-operatively. The usual case of the minor officials not knowing the answer, and it being easier to be dismissive. If you had real problems and have a good relationship with your LEA adviser, you could always, to simplify matters, ask him/her to write for you.

Anyone who's had any actual experience of this situation might like to add to what I've said?



NOTICES



COMPUTERS: We urgently need help from anyone with practical experience in the use of home computers: see Minutes p.68, item 3.8. In particular, or in addition, does any member have access to a computer for keeping membership lists up-to-date and printing newsletter address labels? Please contact John Elenor, 18 Eynham Road, London W12 (01 749 2199).

DYSLEXIA: Parents of dyslexic children might be interested to contact Barbara Spanner, British Dyslexic Association, 4 Hobart Place, London, for a list of groups and tutors throughout the country. (A member adds: She might also me a contact for sympathetic experts, and might be able unofficially to give some indication of tutors likely to be very structured or more interest-based.)

ERRATA: September Howlers: p.58 for Gabrielle Howard read Gabrielle Harwood; p.62 for Jean Medloff read Jean Liedloff. Sorry Gabrielle, sorry Jean!

FUTURE STUDIES CENTRE: The Future Studies Centre, 15 Kelso Road, Leeds (Tel: 459865) has a very well stocked and up-to-date alternative library which is grossly underused because they "haven't the funds to publicize it whilst the mainstream of mostly inappropriate education feels threatened by the prospect of there being alternative options for the future different from its own". Why don't we go and use it?

They also produce a bi-monthly newsletter which Simon Grant receives on behalf of the Core Group; it lists many sources of information, contacts and events (including EO, in the most recent issue). Here are some items from recent newsletters which may be of interest to EO members:

DIRECTORY of CENTRES for OUTDOOR STUDIES in ENGLAND and WALES
ISBN 0 906711 01 0. Third edition compiled by Carolyn Cocke. Available from The Council for Environmental Education (Director: John Baines), School of Education, University of Reading, London Road, RG1 5AQ (Tel: 0734 85234 ext 218). Listing of some 500 centres is arranged by county and includes booking addresses plus other general information in coded form. Contains map showing approximate location of centres using National Grid reference. Also lists other guides and resources.

FILMSTRIP/SLIDE SETS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

1981 price list available from Diana Wyllie Ltd., 1 Park Road, Baker Street, London NW1 6XP (Tel: 01 723 7333 or 3330). Separate pull-out sheets on: Energy; Nuclear Power; The Air You Breathe; Air Pollution; Water Pollution; Waste and Recycling; Population and Resources; Nature Conservation. Prices: £6.25 full-frame filmstrips, £10 slide sets in wallets; £3.50 cassettes.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Rosemary Clarke, CEM, 2 Chester House, Pages Lane, London N10 1PR (Tel: 01 444 8383) has sent us various items of interest, including: *Crisis or Opportunity* - 3 simulation games on industry (70p); *Look Into Waste, Look Into the Future and Look Into Crowds* (30-page pamphlets, 95p each); and, of particularly wide application, 4-page leaflets from the series 1999: *This Future is Mine* (e.g. Sexism, Law and Order, Poverty, Energy, Food, Politics).

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING: see Minutes, p.67 item 3.5. Available from Stephanie Leland, 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N19. See also September Newsletter p.62.

JEAN WHITFIELD recommends two books:

The Right Brain by T.Blacklees (about right and left brain spheres)
Overcoming Maths Anxiety by Sheila Tobias (about women and maths)
 Perhaps these can be reviewed for a future newsletter?

SARAH GUTHRIE has culled this list of new publications from *WHERE?* and elsewhere:

Reading for Enjoyment with 0-6 year olds/7-11/12 and up from Baker Boo Services Ltd., Little Mead, Alfold Road, Cranleigh, Surrey (75p each or £2 for three).

Dyslexia Review (vol.4 no.1) £2.25 from Dyslexia Institute, 133 Gresham Road, Staines TW18 2AJ

Your Choice at 17-plus (career guide and educational choice) £1.85 from CRAC, Hobsons Press, Bateman Street, Cambridge

Careers and Jobs without O-levels by Thelma Barber, £1.95, CRAC, as last.

Six pamphlets: *Focus on Examinations*: send stamped addressed A4 envelope to Schools Council Information Centre, 160 Great Portland Street, London W1.

INDEX: Alan and Hazel Clawley have indexed the newsletters for 1980; we hope to distribute the index, together with that for 1981, with the February 1982 newsletter (issue 21).

INTRODUCTORY LETTERS: It is important for all co-ordinators distributing introductory letters to remember that Andrea (AJ) Harrison is, at least provisionally, functioning as Membership Secretary, and the address on the top on the Membership Form (the yellow sheet) must be ALTERED accordingly. On the reverse side, under Growing Without Schooling, cross out "Back copies of GWS 1-10" and substitute "Single copies of current issue: 50p (members), 60p (non-members)". Suitably altered introductory letters will shortly be available from AJ, at The Burntlands, Rochford, Tenbury Wells.

JOHN HOLT, who runs Growing Without Schooling, the American equivalent of EO, and is the author of many well-known books, will be visiting England in April of next year. EO are hoping to arrange a two-day conference in Birmingham during the weekend of April 17th. There is a possibility that the conference may be run in conjunction with the Open University. We expect to give firm details in the next Newsletter. In the meantime you may want to make a note of the date - April 17th.

ADRIENNE KATZ (12 Wallside, Barbican, London EC24 8BH) is involved in a project which deals with children creatively working in the kitchen - cooking, playing, measuring, and learning many things from the everyday activities happening in the kitchen. She would be most grateful for any assistance we can offer in terms of discussions, suggestions, or ideas. Any experiences that a family might wish to contribute would be especially welcome. She would gladly meet anyone who has some ideas on this subject. Naturally, the source of the material would be acknowledged in her book, and EO credited where appropriate. The age group she is mostly working on is up to 8 or 9 years old.

KIPPER 6 is out soon: the younger generation strikes back!
Send 40p per copy (including postage) to Kipper Office, Stable
Back, Langley Priory, Diseworth, Derby.

PATRONS: At the last Core Group meeting the idea of approaching
public figures to suggest to them that they join EO was discussed
and decided upon. In order to prevent any potential patrons being
deluged with letters, please send any suggestions to:

SOUTH: Julia Hallett, 82 Hatherley Road, Winchester SO22 6RR

MIDLANDS: Simon and Caroline Grant. Pin Farm House, South
Hinksey, Oxford OX1 5BB

NORTH: Mandy Hammersley, The Cott, Clieves Hills, Aughton,
Ormskirk, Lancashire

QUALIFIED SPEECH THERAPIST willing to give advice and/or treatment:
Jan Rogol, 6 Avenue Court, Farm Avenue, London NW2 (Tel: 01 450 7160).

STOCK: The following EO publications are currently available from
the Membership Secretary (Andrea Harrison, The Burntlands, Rochford,
Tenbury Wells, is provisionally acting in this capacity, but at the
time of writing the publications physically remain with Dom and
Ros Sweetman, Old Hall, East Bergholt, Colchester CO7 6TQ). The
numbers in brackets indicate the quantity currently in stock.

<i>School is Not Compulsory</i>	75p	(361)
<i>Early Years</i>	50p	(18: reprinting)
<i>Newsletter 18</i>	40p	99
<i>Newsletter 17</i>	40p	127
<i>Digest of Newsletters 1-4</i>		72

Booklist: send A4 envelope with 17p stamp to Geraldine Lockington,
3 Meade Close, Billericay, Essex.

Spare copies of Newsletters 19 and 20 (40p each) remain at present
with the editors.

YOUNG ENTERPRISE, a charity founded in 1963, gives 15- to 19-year-
olds a chance to try their hand at running a company in microcosm.
There are now approximately 450 companies in the UK involving some
8000 young people at school, college or training. Each enterprise
is sponsored and advised by a firm and is expected to raise capital
to float the company, elect officers, decide on a product, manufacture
and market it. The company may be located in the school, sponsoring
firm or training centre. It involves all aspects of business
education. The emphasis is on real-life experience and a sense of
achievement at the end of the exercise. Contact the Secretary at:
221 New Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4QA.



THE NATIONAL TRENT PARK MEETING

Bruce Cox

The second national gathering of EO members was held at Trent Park on Saturday 26th August. Hitches in the production of the Newsletter perhaps meant that some members were reminded about it too late for them to make arrangements to go. Some also were deterred by early-morning rain and cold blustery winds. Not a day for a lakeside picnic.

Nevertheless, many families came and in spite of the weather the day went well. Leila Berg had set out a bookstall and children had the chance to draw or bang instruments. Much time was spent sipping tea in the canteen and drying out, but the focus of the day was a long discussion. The content is impossible to sum up in a few words, particularly as its aim was not to make decisions but to share ideas.

Several co-ordinators took part and seemed to feel that the social climate was now much more favourable for home education. Publicity had ensured that more people knew that it was legal and fewer were likely to dismiss it as wildly eccentric. Some felt the time was ripe for being more aggressive in spreading our views and gaining new members. The more people who practise EO the easier it is for all of us. Suggestions were made about further regional or local gatherings. We need, it seems, to develop a benevolent circle of growth. More members means more moral and practical support and more money for shared services which encourage more members.

There was some talk about the legal support that could be given for families that have trouble with their LEAs. The problem here is that these families are a small minority but when they need help they need it desperately. Ideally we need someone on call to deal with legal problems, but again the problem is one of money - or time!

Trent Park is to be the venue for future annual gatherings; so, if you have a 1982 diary, mark down the last day in September, the 25th, as the provisional date.

EO IN HAMPSHIRE

Julia Hallett

Although we have a comparatively low density of members here in Hampshire, I feel that we are being noticed. Roy Dunster was approached by Radio Victory (Portsmouth local radio), who wanted to do half an hour on EO. As many members probably already know, Roy has taken both his sons, David and Alan, out of school, and they have been joined by Peter Atkin. The programme was broadcast on 5th November and included interviews with Roy, myself, and the LEA Chief Adviser. Anne Dawson, who made and presented the programme, recorded the interviews individually, visiting us at home (the odd noises in the background whilst I was speaking being caused by 3-year-old Simon), and then edited her tapes heavily. She achieved a very balanced programme and we felt that we had a very fair hearing.

We are also having success with the new posters, which members have helped distribute round the county. Our only comment on these (endorsed by one Citizens' Advice Bureau, who rang specially) is that the top line could be misleading if the poster is not read in its entirety. The possible implication is that education is not compulsory, as opposed to school.

We are also hoping that the Isle of Wight will soon have its own co-ordinator there are four member families there now and the Solent is something of a deterrent to close communication.

Bored, Lonely, or just Over-Active?

THE DECEMBER CORE GROUP MEETING

will be held at the home of Mark and Helen Holland, Horsgate Farm, Cuckfield, Sussex, on Saturday 12th December.

All members are cordially invited to come and take part. The Publications Group will meet at 10.30 in the morning, the Core Group at 2.30 in the afternoon. If you are unable to come, but would like to raise a point, please contact John Elenor.

If you hope to come to the meetings, please phone the Hollands (0444 54259); they can give you directions, and your call will help the logistics.



EO GAME

Add lustre to your Christmas celebrations with the new EO game. No special equipment is needed, but all contestants are expected to have read several Newsletters. Usually played between 2 contestants, but up to 500 can play, given variations of the rules.

Contestant A says (for example): Mark

Contestant B should then reply with: and Helen Holland so gaining the advantage. Contestant B then suggests another surname, and Contestant A provides the spouse. The first contestant unable to provide the spouse loses.

For more advanced players, the whole name, address, and even list of children may be required. Thus:

Contestant A: Bruce

Contestant B: and Dianne Cox, Grey Ram Cottage, St. Margaret South Elmham, Harleston, Norfolk: Eleanor, Madeleine and Tam

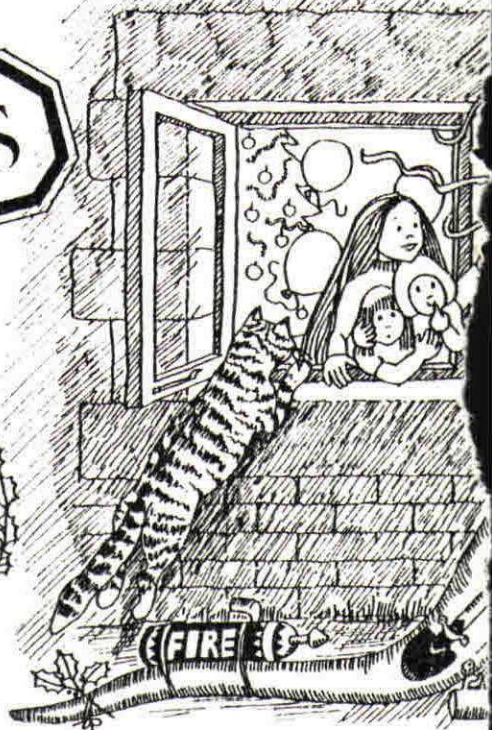
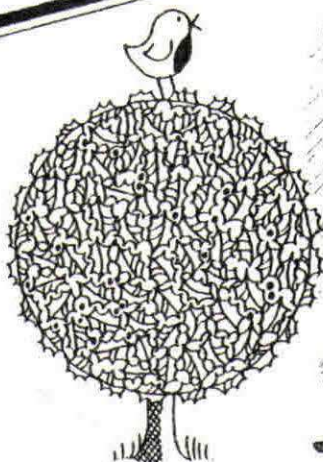
You will be surprised by how few surnames are duplicated, although there are some tricky ones, such as David ... Celand ... Pairman ... Bethell ...

Feminists are free to start with the wife's name; again there are surprisingly few duplicates.

Have fun.

INSPECTOR KIDD

INVESTIGATES



C.P. Shakespeare

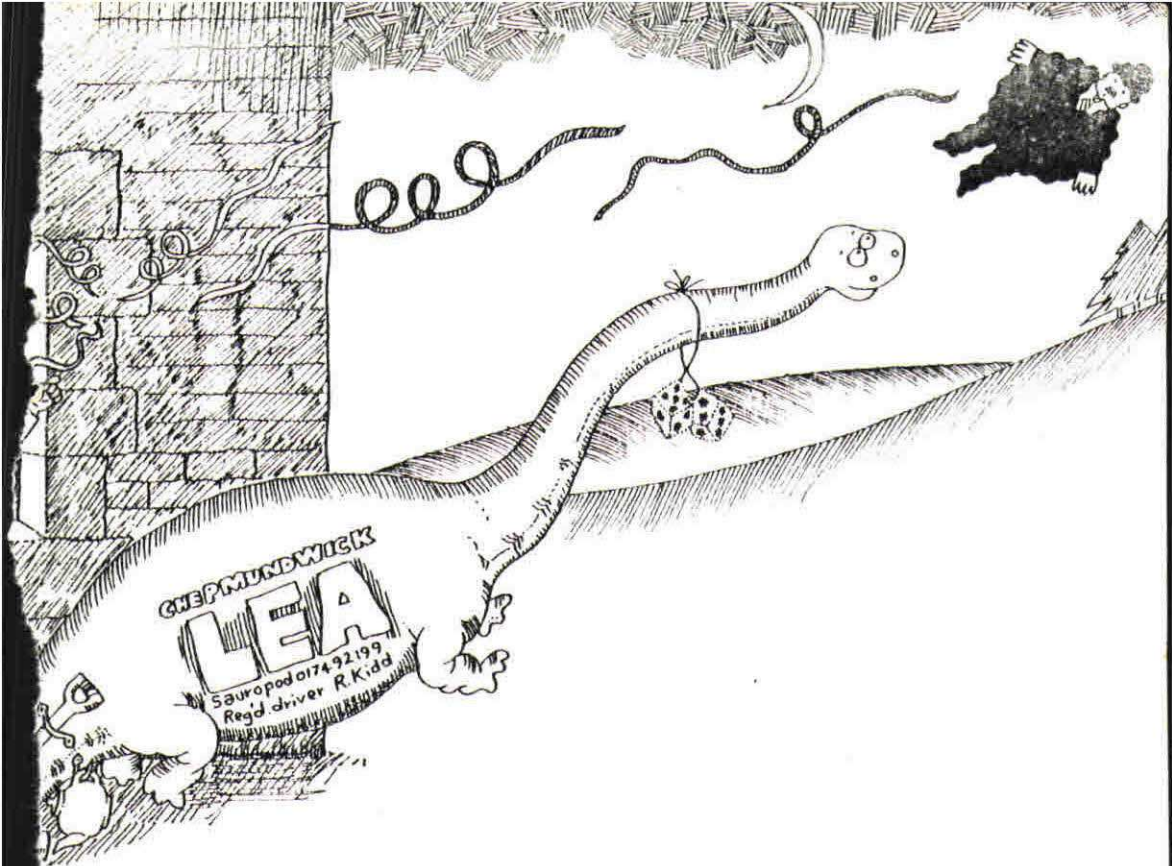
Week by week the EO bird brought news to Rush Bottom. Each time it came it whispered some more secrets into John Jackson's ear; and, although the winter was drawing on, the warmth of self-confidence began to spread through the family. The postman brought packets, with *Early Years*, *First Steps*, and newsletters. The Jacksons were no longer alone; they found another EO family only a few miles away; and after a little friendly advice John wrote to Inspector Kidd. It was a nice polite letter, thanking Mr. Kidd for his interest, and reassuring him that, in accordance with the law, he, John Jackson, was teaching his children at home.

They waited for the awful bang as Inspector Kidd exploded. Nothing. No sound from the education offices but the occasional snore and the clinking of teacups. So life continued normally at Rush Bottom, and soon the children were preparing for Christmas.

Inspector Kidd had read John Jackson's letter, with contempt. But still, he thought he'd better just check up ... he blew the dust off a copy of the 1944 Education Act, and found the appropriate sections. Ah! He smiled. Ho ho! ... He frowned; "Or otherwise? What the heck does that mean?"

Christmas Day at Rush Bottom was pure delight. The children had woken early, of course, and had then woken their parents with screams of pleasure as they unwrapped the toys and delicacies from their stockings and from under the Christmas tree. John and Jane sat up in bed and opened the children's presents to them, gingerly undoing the carefully-decorated wrappings to find little treasures (often oddly familiar) presented for their delight.

The morning was so busy that it lasted until teatime. It seemed as though the Christmas dinner would never be done ...



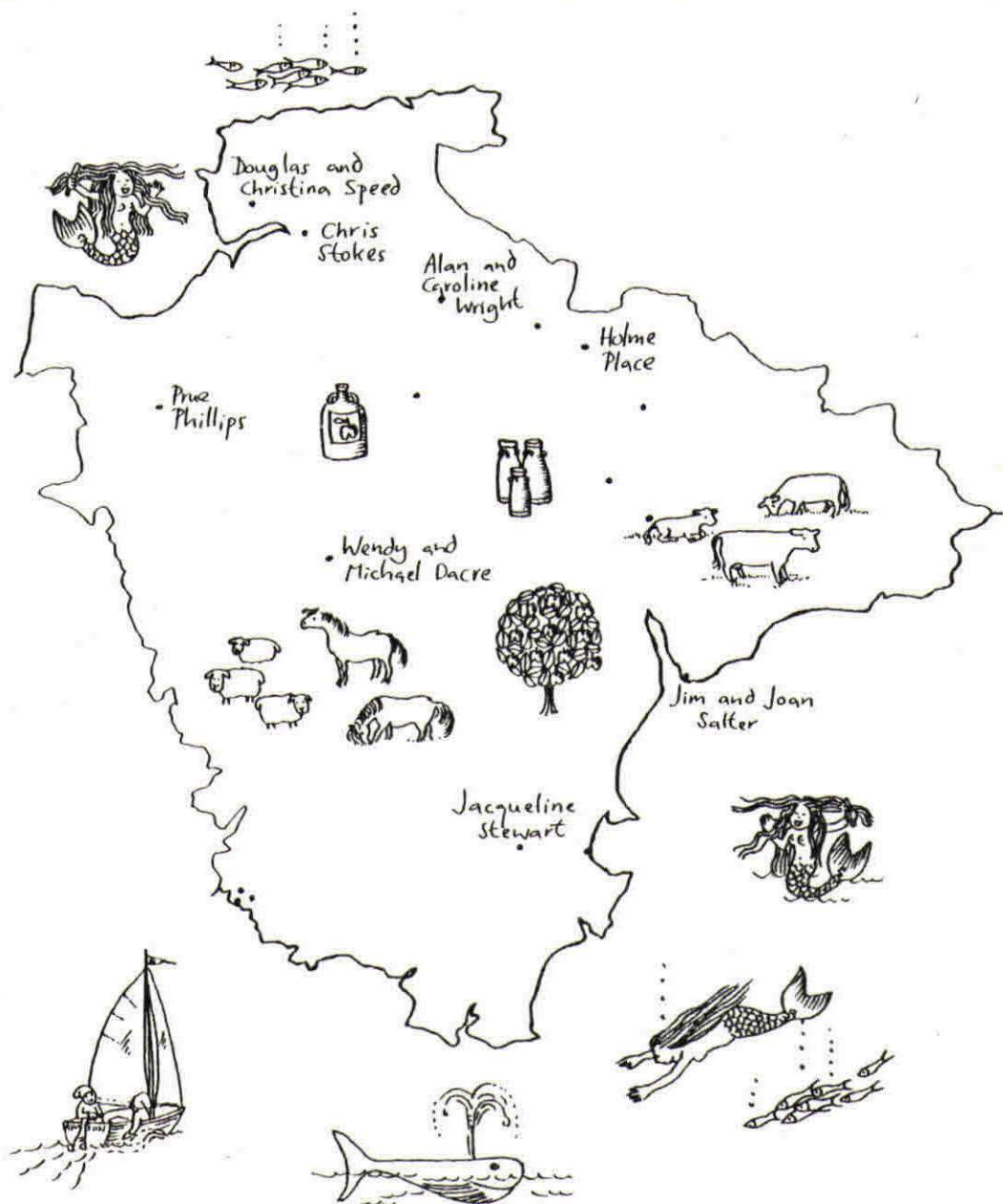
Inspector Kidd sat slouched in front of the television set, feeling rather dyspeptic, and wondering whether it had really been worth waiting all year to watch the antics of this overpaid moron. He opened the window, and from far away, across the snows, he could hear the tinkle of childish laughter. His nose twitched as it caught, almost imperceptible, the smell of ... could it be ... a juicy slice of pork? or was it turkey? or ?

Before he knew what he was doing, he was on his steed and off through the chilly evening air.

The plates were being cleared away, and the huge Christmas cake was brought in by a cavalcade of children, when one of them stared at the window in surprise. "It's Mr.Kidd, it's Mr.Kidd!" they started to chant, and rushing into the snow, brought him in and brushed the flakes off his jacket.

It was really quite irregular, and it isn't laid down in the rules, but before he knew what was happening, Inspector Kidd was joining in like everybody's favourite granddad, singing and joking, and helping the littlest ones win the games. When the girls produced the streamers, and the whoopees, and the giant balloons, Inspector Kidd took the biggest balloon of all, and he huffed and he puffed, and he huffed and he puffed, and he ... accidentally inhaled, and the next moment he was whizzing through the door like a giant bubble, soaring up into the starlit sky; and all the children rushed to the window laughing and clapping, and shouting, "What a marvellous trick! Good old Mr.Kidd! Happy Christmas, Inspector Kidd, Happy Christmas!"

EO in DEVON



Wendy Dacre

To write of the everyday learning of Rowan (5½) and Finn (2) would be so much a repeat of others' experiences of children outside school, that I will try and give instead a picture of mid-Devon as I see it and how it affects the lives and outlooks of ourselves and our children.

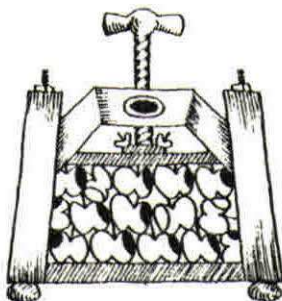
Devon is an area of great contrasts, of joys and frustrations. Nothing is half-hearted here - the vivid rich red soil and brilliant greens of the rolling hills and valleys contrasts with the bare granite wildness of the grey and tan moorland. Weather changes fast; storms sweep over, giving way to rainbows, fog descends behind one's back, there are blizzards, gales and days of sudden sleepy calm. The experience of the land and its rhythms is punctuated by the festivals marking the seasons which still abound here. Last week welcomed the coming of winter with a solemn procession of flaming torches carried by the old men and then the rough-and-tumble of the younger people pulling flaming barrels at great speed down the steep winding street of Hatherleigh. There are lots of craftsmen, opportunities to see alternative theatre, carnivals, brass and silver bands. There are unlikely people - a frozen-food factory manager who is a faith healer and an elderly JCB digger owner who dowses before digging. There are a great number of alternative thinking and living people, many who come from other areas.

But also there are an enormous number of very conservative people, and apathy among Devonians, most of whom deal with the land year in and year out and whose minds are perhaps dozed and lulled by the mere physical surroundings is amazing. The two elements rub shoulders uncomfortably. Despite great energy and will a tiny theatre/activities area, and also the Peace Group in Okehampton have the support of only handfuls of people. We shall never be respectable hereabouts even though we are a registered charity and care for mentally ill and handicapped people - that's just wierd! The army still fire round the standing stones and hut circles of prehistoric man on the moor - and want to build a nuclear training compound in the National Park. Change is slow, and distances great. The moor and the area north of it are surprisingly cut-off, with only small narrow winding roads north-south, though travelling east-west is comparatively easy. The 25 miles to the Totnes Steiner school would take over an hour to travel, whereas Bristol is just two hours up the motorway.

There is unrest in this immediate area about the huge local comprehensive school - there is no alternative without moving. On the other hand there are many very small county primary schools still functioning, some thought of very highly. Part of our business has been doing theatre in local schools, and reaction to drama concerned with the balance between the needs of people and the interests of money, power and technological advance has been very varied. Some found it exciting and relevant, some were utterly indifferent, one group downright shocked. Some schools are very sleepy, others forge ahead with 'the times' with seemingly little reference to the surroundings and actual lifestyle of their pupils.

Families I know interested in EO include a homeopathic consultant who taught her son until he was 14, an architect and his wife unhappy with the lack of spiritual consideration given to children in school, and a farming family terrified of playgrounditis. Personally, I am concerned that my two sons do not have their essential selves hammered out or pushed down under the surface by unfeeling people and surroundings, by playgrounds, competition, television, electric bells and boredom. It all seems so unnecessary when the challenge of just living here supplies so much.

THROUGH THE PRESS IN NORTH DEVON



The nine issues of the North Devon newsletter produced to date have been used as a forum for the discussion of several important topics related to EO. I have pillaged a few jewels from the treasure-house below:

Alan Wright (no.1):

I cannot say that I hated school at the time or that I liked it. The point, I believe, is that I felt throughout that my own feelings and desires were of so little importance that I couldn't even recognize them at the time. I was indeed schooled, taught, and educated efficiently. It is fortunate that I achieved adulthood and so ended my schooling.

Dorothy Brickwood (no.2):

The importance of learning to read just cannot be overestimated in the world we live in. To suppose that television or even personal experience can take the place of reading is to reject a most valuable tool. In trying to understand the human situation, in discovering new interests and extracting detailed information to further those interests, reading material has a vital part to play. So numerous and varied are the books and pamphlets produced that there is really no excuse for the all-pervading ignorance that characterizes so much of adult life today, unless perhaps it is the failure of society to appreciate the importance of learning to read well and easily as early in life as possible.

Caroline Wright (no.2):

Compared to learning to talk, learning to understand visual symbols isn't at all difficult, certainly well within the scope of ordinary children. Children have such an enormous appetite for learning that, provided they are interested and the motivation comes from themselves, they are capable of learning almost anything.

Robina Pye (no.2):

We have been surprised that the boys have taken so long to learn to read having shown an early interest and ability in the skill. From the age of four their interests have turned from exploring their immediate environment and sharing our activities to that of social interaction with their friends. Play, play, play, is what they crave, and what we endeavour to provide. It was sad for us to witness their declining interest in books and music and to hear them throw out the catch phrases of the TV superstars instead of playing puns with words from their favourite bedtime story.

Pam Rodway (no.2):

Children are born with great gifts, which life experience can easily take from them: two of these are memory and imagination. Before a child becomes a slave to the written word, he can glory in remembering a story he has heard at bedtime, a song he heard his mother sing, without resorting to anything but his own store of memories. He can learn to relate a picture to a real-life scene, to rejoice in sounds and patterns and textures and colours and to experience *life itself* before he begins to read about these things. I meet too many adults who have read too many books and have not allowed themselves the time to remember, to imagine, to live.

Chris Stokes (no.2):

Because the written words involve a one-way process, it is therefore such a suitable medium by which people can be pacified (information as reassurance, not challenge) and controlled (information as instruction). Information is never neutral. It is therefore surely naive to see reading as a process by which 'objective truth' is assimilated. Ever since print was invented, who controlled the medium has been important.

Veronica Ford (no.6):

And then, of course, the 'hidden curriculum' also plays its part - in many ways more invidious because of its overtones of moral (as opposed to academic) approval or otherwise. How many teachers ask for 'two strong boys to help me carry this heavy box'? How many schools are there still where girls cannot even wear trousers? How many times is academic laziness in a girl overlooked while in a boy it would be discouraged? How many times do we still separate a group into boys against girls for a quiz because it is the 'easy' way? How many times is rough-play in boys dismissed as 'natural letting-off steam' while girls are severely condemned for 'unladylike behaviour'? And the same for swearing, and even bullying? We praise a girl for 'neat' work, boys are 'naturally untidy'! The appearance of both work and self in a girl are almost seen as more desirable than her creative and academic work; we teach her that the way to win approval is to 'be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever'. And what an indictment that is!

Caroline Wright (no.6):

You do raise a point worth thinking about. Perhaps we should be saying and doing things more directly concerned with the children? Or perhaps all these 'pseudo-intellectual ramblings' are a kind of groundwork, a defining of ideas, a sort of mental clearing of the throat before going on to the more practical issues of EO? All the same, I think it would be all very boring if all we had to talk about was which books the kids might read, and the price of educational toys, and so on. Bringing up and educating children is no easy task and requires a great deal of thought and awareness about all aspects of life, perhaps especially those not directly concerned with education.

John Brickwood (no.7): Playgrounds of the West

People with long memories and a sardonic turn of mind will recall that period in the Fifties when leisure became a Problem. University professors and staff writers on the qualities agonized in print over the difficulties we would face as working-hours became shorter, holidays longer, retirement earlier. How would we face up to the problems of abundance? Could we, a stoical race committed heart and soul to the Protestant ethic, be taught to play?

Some dogged attempts were made to get the show on the road, and the events of 1968 (1969 in this country) seemed to suggest that at last we were beginning to put together a fun-generation. There was hope that when Utopia arrived we would be ready for it.

It began to arrive in 1975. Hundreds of thousands of people were liberated from the burden of paid employment. Working hours were cut, in most cases to zero. Holidays were indefinitely extended, and retirement came very early, often before you had started work. This was the Challenge. How did we meet it?

By colossal programmes of 'job-creation'. By a passionate commitment to 'work-experience'. By turning the press, the trade unions, the government into a vast outdoor prayer-meeting, supplicating a variety of arcane economic mechanisms for the ultimate boon of Work. What went wrong? Why was it suddenly closing-time in the Playgrounds of the West?

Because play-time is bought time, and now not everyone could pay. For those who could not pay there was no leisure, just hours and days in which to reflect that without paid employment there was no right to enjoyment. No pay, no play.

The message has not yet spread south of the Humber. Not many communards and libertarians from the South-West have visited, say, the ironically-named Blyth in Northumberland where they have been playing longer than most of us - from the Thirties, in fact. So while for 10% of the population leisure is the unattainable dream that Job Centres sell only to the fortunate few, for the rest of us it remains a Problem. The playground is getting smaller, the walls are getting higher, and the sounds from outside are not encouraging. Inside the walls the fun becomes ever more furious, the play more ludic. We are even teaching our children how to play.

When does a playground become a prison-yard?

Wendy Dacre (no.9):

I was brought up without a television; consequently, perhaps, it has never occurred to me to have one in my home. When away we occasionally indulge, and enjoy the experience usually in the way one 'enjoys' women's magazines, for the novelty and for the feeling, I'm afraid, of amused scorn. Every now and then, of course, we happen on an exciting programme, usually a film not around on the circuits any more, but by and large to leave the influence of the trash is a relief.

Rowan is fascinated by the box when he's near one - the images now seem to make sense to him, which they clearly didn't when he was younger. He watches zombie-like with thumb in mouth - a sign of needing slight reassurance now he's 5. He gets irritable if someone gets in front of the screen or wants to turn it off, but he doesn't seem to notice outside noise. He doesn't seem to enjoy it. But sitting still with the eyes on a fixed focus is obviously alien to a child's nature.

Chris Borsing (no.9):

It's a circular process with some delayed, dragged-back, evolution: the media writes its stories better to present the adverts the stories are written around to sell the wares in the commercial social system which provides the work whose demanding pressures render the workers pliable and passive, who relax in the evenings, knackered, needing passive entertainment, to watch TV/read the papers/ &c to have their softened heads slowly filled with the assumed, received values of the status quo and the adverts that persuade them to part with, and increase to have more to part with, their earnings and thus continue their little wheels within the system's efficiency and in their turn, barely conscious, pass on all the unquestioned values to their children.

The attitude that easily becomes ingrained is that life consists of being passive, being entertained, waiting for pretty images to fill the blank screen, accompanied by paternalistic voices which cannot be argued with because it is just a box, a machine with no chance of a living relationship. Seeing a world that somehow contrives always to be more thrilling than any home around them and yet cannot be participated in. So the kid grows up into good factory fodder because to him/her the world's structure has become such that it is something going on, always out of reach, and run by the experts, who always know so much better and are so much more capable and confident and tell you what to do. And the only way to penetrate these higher ranks of power is by agreeing with that class's consensus values, the underlying prejudices, perpetuating its myths.

EO in North Devon

Chris Stokes

The aims of the North Devon group have evolved to be mutual support, exchange of information, and contacts for the children. To achieve these aims, we have held several meetings, we produce a Newsletter three to four times a year, have just started a Round Robin letter, and try to keep everyone up to date with a list of other members, the skills each offers and any specific arrangements for visiting.

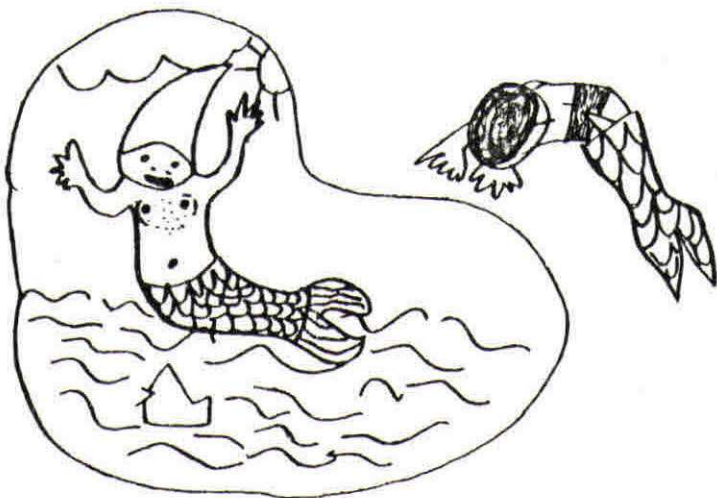
Hopefully we are a 'democratic' group, in that there is no committee - we are still small enough for anyone and everyone to make decisions, to initiate activities, to participate, and for responsibilities to circulate.

To date, we have held three discussions-cum-social gatherings, each also open to 'non-members'; an art workshop for the children; a nature walk over Bbraunton Burrows; and a bonfire evening. We have experienced some difficulty in arranging many meetings because our homes are spread so widely over the area. However, there have been many more meetings between individual families.

Different people in the group have suggested and organized these meetings and it remains up to anyone who wishes to hold a meeting to take the appropriate steps. The Newsletter is the main instrument of communication but separate notices about meetings can also be sent to members.

The Newsletter arose originally to combat the geographical spread of our members as a means of keeping contact. We hoped to produce it two to three times a year, and have indeed produced nine issues to date. As well as giving information and advertising events, its main function seems to be to provide a forum for the expression of ideas and feelings.

However, this could easily change. We instituted a system of a 'revolving' editorship, such that each person edits no more than two issues until every member who wishes to do so has produced his or her two. Similarly, it was hoped to involve every member in contributing to the Newsletter, however briefly. This has not yet been realized, but the aim still exists.



Holme Place Association

Introduction

In July 1980 the former rectory in Oakford, Devon, which for several years had combined the functions of private residence, battery-hen farm, and antiques sales, became a family community. Just over a year later, the number of residents has increased from 3 families comprising 6 adults and 6 children to one big family of 11 adults, 9 children, 2 goats, 2 cockerels, numerous hens and several pets. The present group in its entirety has only been together for a matter of a few months.

The children are Sam and Zoe Farrant (8 months and 3 years), Joel Goldman (nearly 2), Gavin and Conrad Hodge (7 and 8), Julia Wasserscheidt (from Germany, aged 12), and Becky and Mandy Freeman (9 and almost 14). All those of school age had attended schools before coming to Holme Place.

At an early stage we sought the co-operation of the local education authority, Devon County Council. We were asked to submit a syllabus and timetable with details of all resources used or to be used, including books and visits. We sent them a broad outline of our education philosophy and aims, plus resources, human and otherwise, and timetables and syllabuses did not figure in these!

We have received one visit each from a team of educational welfare officers and a senior education officer, who professed to be sympathetic to our approach but recommended careful monitoring of all that the children did. Local librarians, including the School Library Service staff, have proved to be most helpful. Probably the fact that there are qualified teachers and others with professional qualifications within the group puts us in higher esteem with the powers-that-be than might otherwise occur, even if we hold little store by such things.

The education of the children is closely related to the life of the community, which is evolving as a closely-knit family group, aiming at a simple, egalitarian life-style and a self-supporting economy. The children are playing an increasingly active part in the day-to-day activities, which are many, ranging from cooking, washing-up, washing and cleaning, to gardenening, animal husbandry, and structural alterations to the buildings. A self-determining philosophy generally prevails, though there are differing views as to where the line is to be drawn between encouragement and coercion to participate in day-to-day activities.

Policy is reached as far as possible by consensus, taking all views into account. The children are welcome to attend house meetings, though in practice they find it easier to voice their opinions with one or two adults who report back to them from the general meetings and who then put the children's views to the next meeting. Mandy, the eldest child, is beginning to summon up her courage to present her opinions on subjects she feels strongly about to the full assembled throng. Many matters are, of course, dealt with more immediately and more informally, whilst we are all at work or play, aspects of life which we are trying hard not to make separate.

Certainly, our children appear generally more happy, self-confident and fulfilled than formerly, and we are confident - most of the time, at least - that real learning is taking place and that our children are becoming better equipped than their parents to face the challenges of an ever-changing world.

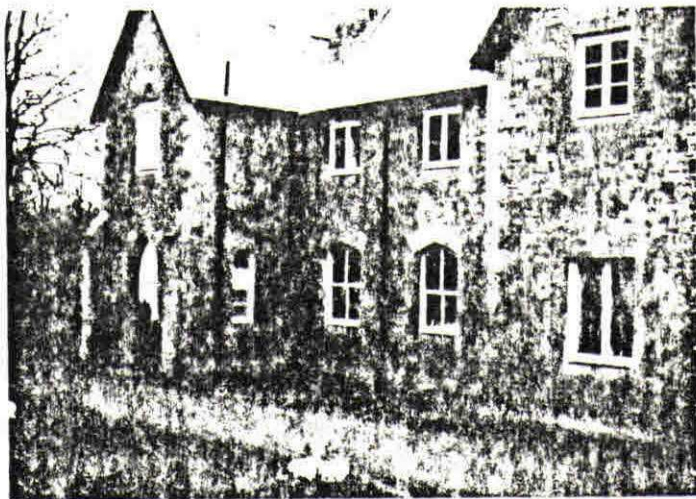
Experiences: Jill

One late Saturday evening in early May, the children and I sat round the TV. We all took to the handsome young Kunta Kinte as he grew to manhood in the Gambian forest. The children were shocked and appalled at his violent capture and wept bitterly as he was wrenched from his homeland. As the programme ended I sat Becky on my lap, myself crying now, and said that if these dreadful things hadn't happened we wouldn't have had Becky with us now. We asked the children if they wanted to go on watching the series, Pauline impressing upon Becky that it was her story. They expressed their determination to follow it to the end. Gavin cheered as Kunta gave his real name again and again under the whiplash, only to break out in fresh tears as he finally muttered brokenly, "My name is Toby". In a later episode Gavin was heard to exclaim "Long live the Black People!"

Last week with Julia Wasserscheidt we followed the series *How We Used To Live*. It was the pre-war years and families were being issued with Anderson shelters. Julia said quietly in the background "Ingrid (her mother) had to go in the cellar, and a bomb dropped beside her house". Later we told the others that Julia's grandfather, a Socialist, was captured by the Nazis and later murdered. Wendy, Becky, Conrad and Gavin were on the CND demonstration in London in October, and some of them heard the Fascists heckling in front of the platform.

My boys have come to love Becky as a sister, and it was delightful to walk through Tiverton with Julia and Mandy as they talked and laughed together, Julia picking up English fast. The others understand a few words of German now.

The main highlight in the year's experience occurred on March 12th, Mandy burst excitedly into the playroom and announced "Lynne's in labour and Mark's just 'phoned the midwife!" Half an hour later, by Lynne's and the midwife's kind permission, eight expectant faces peered from the bottom of the bed as Sam emerged. Later we took turns having a cuddle. Sam is a bouncing 8 months now and the children are very involved with their quasi-brother.



Holme Place

Martin Hodge

Throughout the 13 years of primary-school teaching (did I really last that long?) I was one of the hierarchical team of educators and the children were there to be taught by us. Or so we tried hard to convince them. Perhaps I didn't try hard enough - perhaps I was never confident of the role I was playing. Perhaps that's why sometimes they very nearly trampled all over me. Perhaps that's why I became defensive against the teachers, parents and inspectors who tried to convince me of the error of my ways in trying to give the kids some sense of responsibility rather than inculcating other people's standards and beliefs.

At Holme Place I find I can be much more me. I am still discovering more about the real me and everyone else seems to be taking a more searching critical look at themselves, questioning their own actions, words and motives.

I no longer feel that others are judging me by the amount of work I do or by the degree of pressure I can assert over others - or by the degree to which I give in to the pressure of others. Of course, none of us are perfect; none of us have completely thrown off the vestiges of the acquisitive, competitive, cut-throat society we have been brought up in.

My role for me is much more clear now and I can play it with my head held much higher than before. I am no longer a teacher, but a learner, like everyone else.

Julia Wasserscheidt (12)

Mittags um Zwölf sind Sue, David, John, Igrid und Ich nach Exmouth gefahren. Sue unterrichtet in Exeter schwangere Frauen und David unterrichtet in Exmouth im College. Auf der Fahrt war mir schlecht, aber auf der Rückfahrt war alles prima.

Am Strand gibt es Felsen dieser Farbe: (Rot-braun), es ist genau die gleiche Farbe wie von den Felsen auf Helgoland. Als wir unser Picknic am Strand beendet hatten zeigte John plötzlich auf einen Seehund der zwischen den Wellen auftauchte, er war ganz zahm und sicherlich von irgendjemandem das Haustier. Dieser Tag war sehr schön.



The Holme Place Family, Christmas 1980: From left to right: Back: Mandy, Dennis, Jill, Zoe, Lynne, Pauline. Middle: Conrad, Gavin, Becky. Bottom: Mark, Ray, Martin.

Biography: Pauline Freeman

We (the Freemans) joined the group before we moved into Holme Place about 18 months ago. 'We' are two girls, Mandy then aged 12½ and now 14 and Becky who is black aged then 8 and now 9½, also Ray aged now 42 and Pauline now 41.

Mandy had always attended state school prior to moving here and had just completed her first year at secondary school, where although happy enough she felt it was a sexist, racist, authoritarian regime. She was always seen as a very able pupil with a lot of promise and her eyes were always being cast to those horizons without any consideration for whether or not Mandy herself was interested in those horizons. She was fairly shy, somewhat introverted and always had difficulty relating to adults. At school she felt very different from her peers and never felt that she had very much in common with the majority of them. During the 18 months that she has been educated at home she has grown into a confident, self-directed young adult with strong views that she now feels more able and happy to express than in the previous system. She quickly became a vegetarian and in an atmosphere that encouraged her to be herself a young feminist, a supporter of FOE, a campaigner against experiments on animals and a conscience to some of the group on our views and intended treatment of animals. I am convinced that these views and interests have been arrived at because of the lack of authority and the atmosphere of caring interested adults in a family set-up, all be it a large one of 19 members! She may not know about the history of China or when Henry II reigned but she is prepared for a life in today's world of unrest, unemployment, inequalities &c., and more importantly she is at peace within herself, which will I feel equip her for most situations.

Becky during her 3½ years at school was rapidly becoming a casualty of the educational system that we have today wherein individuals do not fit in and problems cannot be well coped with because of lack of staff, finances, and misdirection. Partly because of an unsettled early life before we adopted Becky, she was an emotional and not very confident child, soon reduced to tears, though basically happy and always desirous to help. Her teachers had not the time to spend with her helping her to build up confidence and as a black child, these factors gradually diminished the little self-esteem that she possessed. As a black child she was accepted only on the same terms as a white child, no provision was made for herself and the others to understand other races and creeds, no importance was attached to her sense of identity (the only black face in the whole school) and no books or other teaching materials featured a black face. In the 18 months that Becky has been taught at home she has developed a very distinct personality - she has emerged as a second mother to our baby and toddlers here, with whom she has infinite patience and love along with a genuine desire to feed, bath, change and entertain them to the extent that she has a strong bond with them - all important to help redress the balance of her early subconscious impressions of mothering. Her confidence in her own abilities has grown rapidly because she has been able to take her own time and go over areas of doubt at her own speed without competition. Maths she still dislikes but she doesn't get into the blind panic of previous times. Amongst caring adults she has grown in self-esteem and is proud of her colour and heritage - a long and interesting black study was done and enjoyed by all the children, culminating in the group viewing of *Roots* on TV, which gave us all a deeper understanding of racism, inequality and the need for identity with one's culture that they would never have realized in a school project. Our children may not reach academic standards (and here one cannot help question whether that is the best provision for the future anymore) but they are developing their own individual personalities and are preparing themselves confidently to face the future without fear.

A Personal Viewpoint: Lynne Farrant

Zoe is now 3½ years old and we have been living at Holme Place since she was 2½ years old. Prior to moving into a community we lived in a small modern 'box'. We both felt that we should like her to be educated 'otherwise' as neither of us is particularly happy with the education system as it is at present, Mark more so than myself. We had experienced the 'Public School' and 'Grammar School' systems with varying degrees of tolerance, enjoyment, and dislike.

Our feelings about Education Otherwise were that it would not be a very healthy situation me taking on Zoe's education alone and we would have found others in our area so that we could have got together with our children's education, although we do feel that 'education' is taking place from the time we wake up to the time we go to bed. Moving into the Community solved this dilemma of isolation for us.

Zoe has been brought up in an unconventional mode, some of our ideas being based on the 'Continuum Concept', and she spends as much time with us as she chooses, day and night. She chooses her own bedtime and goes to sleep as and when she pleases. Zoe joins in with the older children and adults, joining them in their activities for varying lengths of time. This form of education we both find acceptable as it gives her scope to develop herself and not be force-fed or placed in an authoritarian, competitive set-up.

The older children seem to accept a 'little one' around and are very tolerant and helpful, encouraging her and advising.

Not having a child of school age it has been very interesting observing the 'education' at Holme Place evolve. I have been able to step back a little and watch it happen, although helping where I can, as I do not feel at all pressurized by the system and expectations of the authorities.

In my opinion Holme Place is an ideal set-up in which children, and adults, can learn. There are eleven adults who offer an amazing variety of 'skills' to share with each other. Another advantage is that the group is of various ages (8 months to 51 years), sex, colour and nationality, so this helps us all to understand others better.

I can observe a tremendous change both in Zoe and the other children over the past 15 months. Zoe's drawing and colouring capabilities have progressed in leaps and bounds, her number knowledge is to me at times quite amazing. Her vocabulary is vast and her use of English very good. Much of this I do not think would have been achieved yet without the communal life in which we share and the older children being educated at home.

During our time at Holme Place I have had a second child. I was pregnant when we moved in last August. This I found a most enjoyable experience as it involved all the adults and children. How often do children have a living Biology lesson from day to day and the ultimate conclusion seeing a birth? I was able to share my pregnancy with all the children, they listened to the baby inside me and felt it move and watched me change shape as the pregnancy advanced. Towards the end of pregnancy we talked about labour and looked at lots of diagrams. In conjunction with this one of the schools programmes was also dealing with childbirth and we watched this together.

Delivery day arrived and all the children and their parents watched Sam emerge into the world. They were as thrilled as I was and their closeness to Sam is a joy to watch. All the children without exception seem to enjoy contact with him and I think their presence at his birth has made a lot of difference.

Sam is now eight months old and they are monitoring his progress with great excitement and practising skills of parenting, i.e., nappy-changing, feeding, &c.

In retrospect, the first attempts at EO were of quite a formal pattern. 'Lessons' were each morning and the children used English and maths workbooks and were encouraged to do lots of written work. One adult supervised and worked with them all; this I personally found difficult, coping with such an age variation. We then had our first visit from the authorities, a week before Christmas, and I felt that it was quite a positive visit. In the new year we have revised our ideas somewhat and tried to be more child-led, by allowing the children to choose more and to pace themselves. We no longer encourage vast amounts of written work but leave that to the children themselves.

Just recently we have tried other schemes; two adults with the children at a time; all adults making themselves available throughout the day so that the children can join them in any of the projects they are undertaking, e.g., gardening (mountain beds at present), loading and unloading trailers full of wood, pointing walls, &c.

At present I feel there is a lot more co-operation between children and adults. The children are showing a lot more spontaneity in doing things in the community and have come out the other side of "I don't know what I want to do"; they no longer seem reliant on a teacher or adult directing their activities and initiate many things themselves. They are thinking communally on a number of issues, something we have all had to learn, but like us all there are lapses and unthoughtful acts carried out.

We are going through a phase of treasure hunts, raffles, games of skill &c and it is great fun. The children think them up themselves and give prizes. Also now that the nights have drawn in we tend to congregate around the fire and all play games. One evening recently there was a game of chess, one of draughts and five-in-a-row being played with numerous spectators and advisers.

Having seen EO in practice I now feel even more strongly that it has far more advantages than the State system. Perhaps one day Zoe will choose a more formal pattern of education, but until then it's EO for her.

Gavin Hodge (7)

We enjoyed digging. There was a side for the turf and a side for the soft soil and we dug a trench, and we put sticks in it. We were making a mountain-bed to grow vegetables

Conrad (8)

We have got a baby boy called Sam. His mother is called Lynne. We like working at home. We have a fire in the playroom. It sometimes gets very hot in there. The grown-ups made a hole in the dining room; there was two rooms and they made it into one.

Becky Freeman (9)

I like cooking because the best things I make are cakes and buns for people's birthdays, and rye biscuits; and also I helped cook a meal for nineteen people. Also I cooked something for Hallowe'en; I made toffee and on Bonfire Night I made toffee apples, and everyone loved them. Also I ground wheat by hand, and I helped bake bread. In summer I picked blackberries and made blackberry jam. One day for lunch I cooked soup and it had lots of things in like carrot, lettuce and radish.

Frost: Mandy Freeman (14)

The earth sparkles with a thousand million diamonds. All is still. A holy stillness.

All is crisp, white, unmoving.

The sun glimmers faintly up above like a lost memory, in its attempt to illuminate the darkest corners of the earth and warm the ground.

I am at one with the birds and beasts.

As I sit here, the frost is melting.

Soon all will be gone.

I caught only a few minutes of magic.

Magic that glistened with a thousand million diamonds.

For so short a time.

But there will be more mornings like this one.

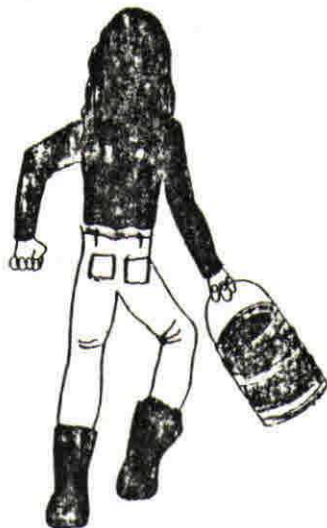
The white fields turn green again.

The snowy covering of the stones melts.

The ground becomes warm again

All is normal.

The magic is gone.



I felt I should write about one of the few natural things left on this earth. One of the natural wonders of the world. There is indeed magic in the air on a frosty morning. But too few people can experience it. I feed the hens every morning so I am outside by 8 o'clock. I experience these wonders every day.

Jim Salter

Sociologists, educationalists, and most representatives of officialdom like to categorize people in different ways - by class, occupation, status or social group. It seems to irritate them when people do not conform to these groupings, or these categories. It's too untidy.

Our family was definitely in what Sir Keith Joseph used to call Class IV, I believe. I was a dustman and had been one for years; we lived in a council house and had low income. Robert and Julie were sent to the local comprehensive school and, as it happens, it was the largest in the country, serving a large catchment area of a number of towns in the area. A fleet of buses come in every day from the outlying districts. It is spread over many areas and has its own bridge over a main road to connect one part of the school with the other. Comprehensive education seemed to us ideologically very sound and I had never been an advocate of private education. In fact, we did not give it a great deal of thought.

Nevertheless, it soon became very apparent to us that Robert was not happy when he transferred from the junior school to the comprehensive. Julie had not liked it much, but had tolerated it. Robert rebelled and eventually refused to go because he was very unhappy there. We were inevitably visited by a whole collection of representatives from the various authorities - educational, social services, &c.

Eventually Robert was sent to a special school but he kept running away. We were bewildered at first. The Honeyed words of their apparent concern and assurance seemed to conflict with what Robert was experiencing. We did not have the language to counteract or question the seemingly omnipotent wisdom of the various authorities.

Fortunately, we had a few friends in the educational establishment. Francis Canmaerts, the head of a college of further education in the town, seemed to understand Robert's difficulties and arranged a teaching programme with the members of the staff at the college, but this was not accepted by the authorities. They conducted a series of tests which indicated that Robert had a very high IQ (although I must admit I am very sceptical about these tests. I have since met a young man at Ruskin who had been abandoned by the educational authorities as incapable of benefiting from higher education and who left school with no qualifications. He is now doing an English degree course at Oxford!) We eventually sent Robert to a small group in the town, conducted by a lady with the sort of qualifications acceptable to the authorities - that is, she had an M.A. - but before this they had sent Robert to a fee-paying boarding school, where he was also unhappy.

This constant changing of schools, primarily at the behest of the authorities, took place over a few years, but during that time we were threatened (I don't think that is too inaccurate a word here) with Robert being taken into care. We had to fight this continuously. We even paid for an assessment of Robert's potential and advice on the sort of education suitable for him, by Dr. B. Lowenstein, a distinguished educationalist who now has his own private school, in Bournemouth. Dr. Lowenstein assessed Robert as having a very high IQ, which admittedly the authorities had already done, but they differed from him in his recommendations. He said that Robert should be in a small group without any undue pressures and not in a boarding school.

The authorities eventually agreed to permit us to keep Robert at the small local school run by the lady I have mentioned, but only on the grounds that there was little time left before he reached the statutory school-leaving age. All this took place over a number of years, during which time Robert had experienced no settled time at one place.

Both my wife and myself had left school without any qualifications, not even the School Certificate, as it was called when we were at school. We were not really aware of the ideological battle which constantly seems to be in process in the educational world.

I applied to Ruskin College just after this, was accepted and got a diploma, and am now doing a degree course of Exeter University. Robert is unemployed, but is reading widely and with great enthusiasm. He also goes to a local college on a part-time basis and is studying for his GCEs. He has no immediate plans and we are not making any for him. He is learning because he wants to. He thinks he might eventually go on to higher education and his tutors think he has the potential.

I think it may have been our acquaintance with Education Otherwise which ^asparked off a latent desire to pursue education that we had never known in our days at school. Up until the time I went to Ruskin I had been a dustman for a number of years. Enthusiasms for learning have been partially engendered by the experiences our children have had and our attempts to understand and cope with them. It is impossible in a short letter to develop all our ideas, but most of them coincide with the ideas presented in EO publications. We see now that these are inevitably connected with the understanding we have of ourselves. We feel we may just have begun to break through into a more fulfilling life for ourselves and our children, but it has not been engendered by the conventional educational processes.

I would except Ruskin College from this criticism. For those who have not benefited from their time at school Ruskin and the other adult educational colleges are certainly the places to awaken one to ideas and the pleasures and stimulation of learning.

Julie is a shorthand typist, but her enthusiasm is music. She plays the guitar, sings at folk clubs, and also professionally. None of this came from her time at school, but through our encouragement and from private tutors. Robert and Julie now have impetus and I think this would have been dampened, if not extinguished, if we had insisted they had gone through the normal educational processes and institutions.

I have dealt in large generalities. To detail all the difficulties we have experienced would take up too much space and too many words.

My degree course is a combined honours in English and Sociology. I hope to concentrate on education in the latter portion of the degree. I would like to eventually write a thesis on the whole alternative education movement, but this is only embryonic at the moment. I am still sorting out my own ideas.

My wife now goes to classes and is beginning to pursue an education she never received at school, although her intuitive knowledge of what is right is, I feel, much more valuable than my groping intellectual approach.

It is not particularly relevant to the understanding of our approach to the education of our children but it may be pertinent to mention that since being involved in these problems I have become more politically active, and although I often feel the ritual game of party politics has little to do with any attempt to understand human and even social relationships, they do contribute to the ideological framework which conditions some aspects of our lives. I was at one time a branch secretary and a shop steward for my union, the Transport and General, and also secretary of the Trades Council. I have always been a member of the Labour Party, stood as a candidate in the last county elections (unsuccessfully as a Labour man in a Tory stronghold) and am now prospective parliamentary candidate for the next general election. Although I am now at college I am still a member of my union and involved in industrial conflicts in our area.

The union do provide excellent training courses for their members, usually related to specific matters like industrial law, but sometimes extending their concern to more general ideological matters. I recently attended a course at the Transport Union's centre at Eastbourne in which worker co-operatives were discussed and a programme was presented on the Mondragon experiment in Spain. Education here is considered a continuous and life-long process, not confined to school years. It is something which was hinted at in the Robbins report which felt that more mature students should be considered by universities. Some are doing this and, indeed, on the course I am now pursuing we have one student over retirement age and a number whose days at school are far behind them. Many of the academic staff are very critical about what goes on in schools. The work of John Holt (*How Children Learn*), A.S. Neill of Summerhill, Paul Goodman (*Growing Up Absurd & Compulsory Miseducation*), Ivan Illich and others who are usually classified as the 'de-schoolers' and who have many ideas which would coincide with the sort of ideas presented by Education Otherwise, are considered, although not always uncritically.

Although I will not win the parliamentary seat in this area I do have a distant hope of one day getting into parliament and, even more distant, and perhaps unrealistic hope (but who knows?) of one day getting a safer seat and being elected, and even more distant, of becoming a future Labour Minister of Education. My approach would be very different to that of the present Shadow Minister of Education, Neil Kinnock. If that occurred, the ideas of EO would certainly enter more fully into the area of public debate.

I am a member of the Supplementary Benefits Appeal tribunals and the Disablement Advisory Council, both dealing with the immediate and specific problems of people who are more obviously disadvantaged, but I do not think it is possible to compartmentalize the difficulties people experience. They are interrelated and educational opportunity is bound up with so much else. I have tried unsuccessfully to become a member of the boards of governors of local schools, but I am considered rather too much of a subversive in my own community here. At the moment I am involved with the Trades Council, the local authority and the academic staff of Rolle College in the setting up of a centre for the predominantly young unemployed in the town. Educational courses, some of them quite simply remedial to help those who left school often without basic skills and some more intellectually orientated - discussion groups, lectures, seminars on matters like the nature of work, role playing, and even poetry readings and music evenings - are envisaged and certainly amongst the unemployed we have discovered many with ability and talent who will be able to contribute.

Our house is a sort of centre for Robert and Julie and their friends to gather, talk, make music and talk late into the night. They have their own enthusiasms and we do not interfere. We also have a wide circle of friends, not confined to one group; my old mates on the dustcarts, friends in the academic world and members of the business community. My best friend, with whom I conduct a continuous and lively argument, is head of an advertising agency, even though I leave him in no doubt that I think that the industry is concerned primarily with concocting seductive images and ideas which distract people away from any movement they might experience towards leading a fuller life. It is impossible to define what a 'fuller life' might be, for it is a continuous process. Education of any sort should be the spark which sets that continuous process in operation. It does happen in some schools, but much less frequently than it should, and often much later than it should. We feel now that withdrawing Robert from the conventional educational structure was the wisest thing we did. At one time we were reacting very much in the dark. Our contact with the ideas of EO has been very helpful.

Jacqueline Stewart

I have not written an article for you because I have not actually taken my children out of school, although I fully support EO. However, if you ever run an issue about parents who haven't ... quite ... yet, I would be glad to contribute!

My children had awful experiences in state schools, and about two years ago I decided I couldn't subject them to that system any longer. Amongst advice I listened to was that of Dick Kitto, who advised me not to teach them at home because I am a single parent and they would get too isolated, no other EO families being near.

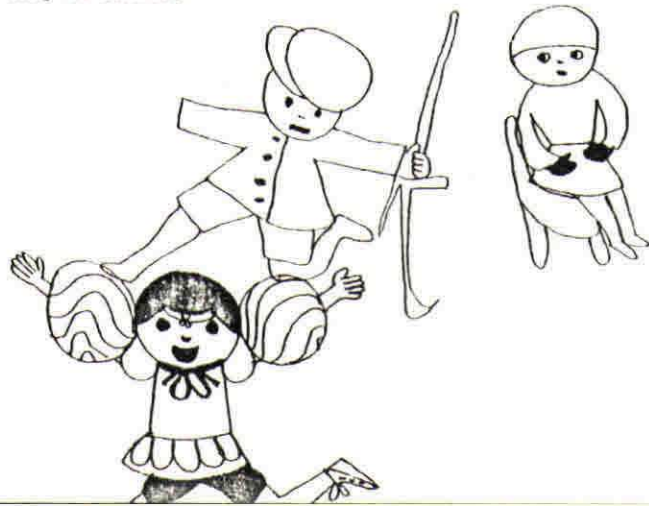
Going to the other extreme, I sent them to Dartington Hall, where they are blissfully happy and have no problems at all. I expect you have heard of it and its ideas. Its only drawback is colossal fees, so it is still possible that we will drop out, isolation notwithstanding, because after experiencing a school like Dartington Hall, there is no way that I would send my children back to the misery they endured before.

Prue Phillips

Things have changed a bit since September; Charles (13), and Robert (11), are at Queen Elizabeth's School, Crediton; this is a good comprehensive. Charles has always gone there and it was planned for Robert to go. They board and come home weekends. This is common here - there's only a few nice schools and they are in South Devon, we are North. We have what is known as Farming Mafia operating in most of our local schools.

Brooke and Mark also asked to go back to school. They chose a small primary 10 miles away, so I have an awful lot of travelling to do, but it is a nice happy school, and was their choice. I don't think they will continue into senior school (we can't afford four boarders), so even though their going to school is making a nice break for me, I'm looking forward to them being at home again.

We EO people all have a common problem here, we're all working in isolation, distances are too far and petrol too expensive to get together often. We all need a collective wing together sometimes; problems don't seem so bad when they're shared.



*Girl running off to play, in her best clothes (Note indignant parents):
Melandra Bethell (8)*

Douglas & Christina Speed

We have four children, although only three of them seem to exist as far as the LEA are concerned. Kevin who is nearly 6 has never been to school and we have had no queries regarding him so far. The other three children, Andrew (14½), Nicola (10) and Alison (9½) originally went to school in South Devon. We moved to Leicestershire in 1978 where the children again attended schools; however, we became dissatisfied with their schooling there and at the same time heard of EO through a radio programme. We subsequently decided to join EO and withdrew our children from school without any problems. We were asked by the LEA for a curriculum but produced instead a list of textbooks we had purchased and proposed to use. We had a visit from two Advisers, followed by a letter asking us to keep records so that their Advisers could assess progress on subsequent visits.

We had the opportunity to move back to Devon, but this time to North Devon, in 1979, and on arrival wrote to Exeter to inform them what we were doing. No reply was received, but within a short time we had a visit from an EWO who said that Leicester LEA had notified them we had moved and querying why the children were not at school. We informed her of our intentions, and she said we would be visited by an Adviser 'sometime'. Next we received a letter from the North Devon Area Education Officer informing us of the appropriate schools to which we should send our children and urging us so to do. I replied to this again stating our intention to educate our children at home. We were asked to provide a 'programme of work' and requested to give our qualifications for teaching. We sent them a list of the textbooks we were using and pointed out that our interpretation of the Education Act did not specify that we required any qualifications for teaching our own children.

Shortly after this we had a visit by two Advisers, one for the two girls of primary school age and the other for Andrew; this one commenced his interview by saying "Of course, I don't agree with your plans; the correct place for your son to be is at school." However, they looked at what the children were doing and discussed why we had withdrawn our children from the system. We found the Primary Adviser most helpful, suggesting books we might like to try &c. The Secondary Adviser told us he was an ex-maths-teacher and was not qualified to judge Andrew on any other subject (maths happens to be one of Andrew's weakest subjects). He expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of written work.

This visit was followed by a letter stating that both Advisers were not satisfied with the programme of work or the qualifications of those providing the teaching. We requested particulars of what they had found wrong with the programme of work and again pointed out that qualifications were not required. We had two more letters over the space of the next two months reiterating the original letter, but although requested on each occasion to be more specific as to their objections, they refused to answer on this point.

We then had a visit from a thoroughly nasty EWO demanding to know why Andrew was not at the local school, since "his name is on the register". We pointed out that this could not be the case since he was not a pupil of any school. He wanted to know why he wasn't at school and when told that he was taught at home replied, "But you can't do that; it is against the law." He was told to go and read the Education Act, and left muttering threats that he would be back and that we should be taken to Court.

It was now apparent that we were making no progress with the local Area Education Officer, so we wrote to the Chief Education Officer in Exeter requesting specific information as to what was wrong with the programme of work we were following so that we could consider making any necessary adjustments or alterations. This produced a reply stating that as there had been an apparent delay with dealing with the matter they would send their Advisers again and would communicate with us when their reports had been received.

The Primary Adviser called, was again most helpful, offered more advice on books, suggested ways to approach subjects, spoke to the girls, got them to read to him, and left saying that he was quite satisfied with their education. The Secondary Adviser called a few days later, but except to ask Andrew if $3 \times X$ is 12 what does X equal, he hardly spoke to him. He looked briefly at his work, again expressed dissatisfaction because there wasn't a pile of exercise books full of written work, discussed at length why he thought we could not teach our son, and left without making any comment as to whether he was satisfied or not.

Instead of getting the promised letter from Exeter we next got a letter from the County Solicitor at the County's Offices in North Devon saying that the LEA did not think we were educating Andrew satisfactorily and giving us 21 days to prove that we were. I telephoned immediately to ask how I was supposed to prove this and was told to seek an interview with the Area Education Officer (the North Devon Office again, with whom we had got nowhere); I said that I should like to take a fellow EO member to this interview since he had given us advice on the programme we were using and was a qualified teacher - he in fact works for Devon County Council. I was told that this would be all right. I then telephoned the Education Office and made an appointment with the Area Officer's Secretary. Within half an hour this official rang me back saying he would not see me in the presence of anyone else, neither would he put into writing anything. He was only prepared to see me alone and would not tolerate any witnesses to our discussion. I contacted the Solicitor's Office again and told them what had taken place and said that I was not prepared to meet the Education Officer in these circumstances. He subsequently suggested arranging a meeting at his office. This took him some six weeks to arrange, and at the end of February this year (1981) we went to this meeting.

At this meeting the Education Officer said that he was not prepared to discuss anything, he was only there to be convinced that the education we provided was satisfactory. However, after again outlining the books we use &c, he was drawn into the discussion. He said he had information that he was only prepared to reveal in court; that his sources of information came not only from his Advisers who had visited us. He flatly refused to disclose what this information was and the meeting finally broke up with the County Solicitor suggesting that he should look at this information to see whether or not it would be admissible in court. He promised to contact me after having further discussion with the Area Education Officer.

We decided it was time to seek help from EO. Dick Kitto suggested we should take the initiative and threaten to complain to the Ombudsman and the Secretary of State over the Devon County Council's maladministration. He drafted a letter for us and we also decided to seek a sympathetic solicitor. The solicitor forwarded this letter on his notepaper and this produced a telephone call from the County Solicitor within the two weeks' deadline informing us that the Area Education Officer was on sick leave and the matter would be dealt with from Exeter. We were given to understand that the Area Education Officer had suffered a nervous breakdown!

On 20th May (three months after the meeting) we received a letter setting out the LEA's case, which boiled down to a complaint that Andrew was being educated in a 'non-school' environment, was not participating in group activities, and was not being educated by 'qualified' teachers. Our solicitor replied to this pointing out that their letter referred to September/November 1979 when first visited and was hardly relevant to now.

We received a further visit from the Senior Adviser for Secondary Education, who had previously visited us, but this time our solicitor was also present. This official was his usual non-co-operative self. A few days later we had another helpful visit from the Primary Adviser.

On 18th August we received an official notice that a School Attendance Order would be issued within fifteen days if we did not send Andrew to the local school or designate some other school we wished him to attend. On 7th September the Attendance Order was received. Our solicitor replied to this on 21st September; part of this letter is quoted below as it would seem to raise many interesting points. No reply has so far been received or any action taken to date (26th October 1981).

Extract from solicitor's letter:

... It also seems to us, with respect, that the notice enclosed with your letter of 28th January 1981 is now so out of date that it would presumably be incumbent upon the local authority to serve a new notice as a prerequisite to the making of a school attendance order.

For the avoidance of any doubt, however, and without prejudice to the contention set out previously in this letter, we would be obliged if you would take this letter as the appropriate notice within the provisions of section 37(4) of the Education Act 1944 that Mr & Mrs D.A.J. Speed as the parents of Andrew Speed apply for a revocation of the school attendance order dated 7th September 1981 upon the grounds that satisfactory arrangements have been made for the education of Andrew Speed, otherwise than at school.

Presumably you will accept service of this notice on behalf of the Education authority and you will not require a separate notice to be served on them. If you do so require no doubt you will let us know immediately.

Consequent upon the giving of the notice under Section 37(4) of the Education Act 1944 it seems to us now to be incumbent upon the Local Education Authority, if the authority are of the opinion that no satisfactory arrangements have been made for the education of the child, otherwise than at school, to specify in precisely what way it is alleged that the provision of the education is falling short of the required norm (whatever that may be), in view of Andrew's age, ability and

aptitude and to specify precisely what education would be provided by the Local Education Authority for Andrew if he were in attendance at a school provided by the Local Authority. Correspondingly, it seems to us that this is a matter that should be resolved before any proceedings are taken against Mr & Mrs Speed within the provisions of Section 37(5) of the Education Act 1944 as, in the present circumstances, we contend that Section 37(4) of the Education Act 1944 has to be complied with before Section 37(5) can become operative.

small ad's

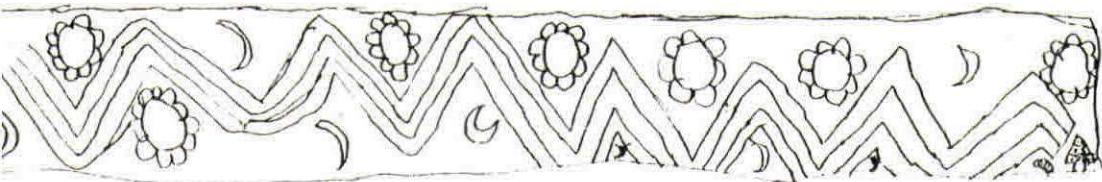
FOR SALE: I have three collections of different things, which I would like to sell. These are matchbox labels, beer mats, and cigarette cards. I have no idea of the value of them and am a bit wary of dealers. Any EO member or friend who is interested can write to me for more details or arrange to visit to see the collections. We'd be pleased to accommodate you overnight if necessary. We have two children, Melanie 10½ and Gwydion 2½ and are always glad of contact with other EO members: VICKI WILLOW, Pollards Cross Cottage, Church Hill, Hempstead, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 2PA.

TO PENNY of PLOVERS MEADOW: Thanks for your letter and I WILL REPLY before Christmas, so don't give up!: SARAH.

WANTED: Has anyone got a copy of *Teach Your Baby Maths* by Glen Doman which they'd like to sell or swop/barter for something else?: VICKI WILLOW, as above.

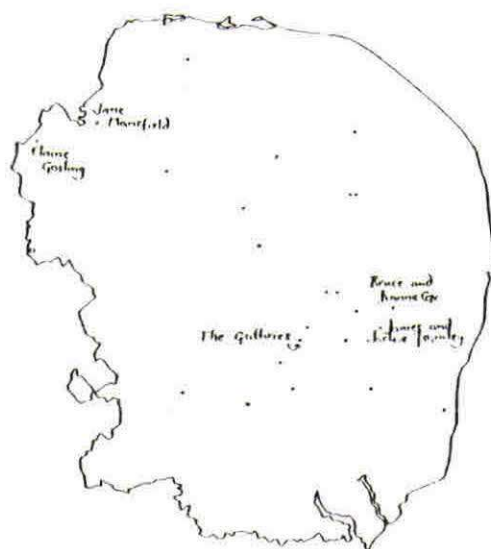
Jane Davies writes: A friend of mine, Kerstin, teaches 13-year-olds English at the local middle school. She'd like to help our language come alive for them through letter-writing and cassette tapes to English children. I thought there might be some children who read the EO newsletters who'd like to write to Kerstin's class. I know all the children in 7D and like them all very much. It could be a good opportunity to find out about Sweden and perhaps to learn some Swedish; and to make some good friends. The address to write to is: Class 7D c/o Kerstin Franke, Mogarde Skolan, Kullgatan 5, 57400 Vetlanda, Sweden. Or you could write to me first at Magasinsgatan 24, 57400 Vetlanda, Sweden.

THE NEWSLETTER NEEDS NEAT DRAWINGS IN BLACK INK (not jokes or cartoons) FROM EO CHILDREN TO HELP ILLUSTRATE AND ENLIVEN THE TEXT. DON'T BE BASHFUL; SEND ANYTHING INTERESTING TO THE ART EDITOR.



EO in east anglia

63



Mrs P A Moore

I am always interested in learning about parents who have chosen to provide an alternative education for their children. These parents generally have ideals and beliefs about society that are reflected in the educational programmes they devise.

What worried me about the Cox family is that they seem to have added nothing to their children's lives. The family life they describe might be that of any number of similar middle-class families that I know.

Swimming, interesting outings, baking, helping Dad, making full use of the library, incidental mathematics and language development and parents ready to guide,

listen and explain - many families provide all this and offer the experience of school too. School is only part of a child's total learning environment. Playschools, nursery and primary schools all encourage parents to foster a child's development.

At a later date "the onus will be on the children to request aid." If the request should be for regular schooling will it be granted? Finally, how do Eleanor's parents reconcile their feelings about the competitive nature of school with their encouragement of her in that most fashionably competitive activity, gymnastics for little girls?

[Sunday Times]

As you might expect, Margaret Maden, head of Islington Green School, is unconvinced by the anti-school argument:

There are several reasons why, in nearly all cases, it is not a good idea. First, one of the main aims of school is what can best be described as social education—that is, children learning to live with others from different kinds of social, ethnic and racial backgrounds. You simply cannot recreate that within a family.

"Of course, learning give and take should be part of any good family life, but working with complete strangers and coming to terms with them is what life in a developed industrial society is about.

"It is also important to know how to cope in a large institution like school because some of its characteristics will be found in most workplaces. It would also be interesting to know how young people educated at home make out if they go to work in a large organisation.

"And then there are the facilities of school—the laboratories, gym, technology workshops, and music rooms with all their equipment and materials. With the best will in the world I don't see how these can be duplicated at home.



Jackie Fearnley replies:

Why is it that we get into such a panic that a child who doesn't go to school won't have any friends and won't be able to get on with all sorts of people?

Firstly, I should say that our children (ages 8, 5 and 2½) do not go to school and have friends both in and out of school (not many - but you don't need many if they are good ones). They are also acquainted with a wide range of people of all ages - people in the village, friends and relations of the family and people they meet at the fairs where we sell our pottery.

I cannot help feeling saddened when after being with children who are at school their playing is characterized by attempts to keep one or other child out of a game, punctuated by frequent references to bums or boobs, and by phrases such as "I'm telling", "I won't be your friend if you don't", "I'm not going to play if", "so ha ha ha".

We seem to accept that this is what children are like and say that they are going through a stage or need to let off steam. I do not agree that there is anything particularly natural about this behaviour - it is just an adaptation to being put with a lot of other children at an early age. I don't know of any reason to link this with a child being able to adapt well to society later on, a skill which I would have thought was best learnt by actually living in society.

My own observation is that if the child is provided with a stable and loving environment when small and not prematurely forced from it, he or she will not need to react aggressively to other children and will not need to find security in doing something better than someone else; children who have been given what they needed at this stage are able to relate sympathetically to one another. Ours are not angels by any means, but I have heard them listen interestedly when a friend comes along and says "I can do so-and-so", rather than responding with "Oh, that's easy peasy" or "I could do that last year". If a friend has a problem they are concerned to find a solution - even on one occasion to the extent of giving up a lolly that was wanted (needed more) by someone else.

I'm sure many people nowadays must be worried by young people's inability to relate to adults. The combination of nursery school/school/television in their lives means that they see very little of adults whether earning their living or taking their leisure. A busy teacher does not have the time or opportunity for the sort of conversations which range over all kinds of subjects - one thing leading to another - and from which children find out so much that is basic about the world they live in, both in a practical and moral sense.

I feel that once they feel at home in the world themselves then they will begin to be able to understand other people's backgrounds and ways of living their lives. It seems a topsy-turvy way of looking at things to say that it is only in school that a child can meet new people.

Finally, I should like to say that there is no reason why children taught at home should not be more adaptable and responsible and therefore able to work in large organizations when this is necessary. Recent studies have shown that employers are more interested in a prospective worker's personality and attitude than in exam results or teachers' reports. There are now a number of people around who have been educated at home and they are certainly not all unemployed misfits. Maybe you will receive letters from some of them.

-oOo-

EO POSTERS

Jackie Fearnley

Over the latter part of the summer we have been displaying the new EO poster on our pottery stall at fairs and each time have had around half a dozen people who have wanted to talk seriously about keeping their children out of school, some of whom have left their address for further details to be sent on, or who have bought a copy of *First Steps* or *Early Years*.

In some ways this seems to work better than having a separate stall devoted to EO - though if we're extremely busy we might have to arrange to talk to people at another time.

-oOo-

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE HOMESTEAD ...

Jackie Fearnley

In September we received our visit from the new schools adviser. She came along with the educational welfare officer (who no doubt has a new label now but I can't remember it). As expected, she did show more concern over literacy - pausing at certain points in the conversation to ask, "But Rose *can* read, can't she?" I explained that she could write quite a lot but I wouldn't say she could read much - also talked about why we thought other things were just as important and how reading comes out of all sorts of situations. She suggested that I should manufacture these sort of occasions so as to show that you can't do certain things without being able to read. I said I was dubious about that as I thought these situations arose naturally and that they would be wary of the made-up sort. She asked Rose to get books she liked having read to her, and she produced the Narnia books, The Little House books and a Steiner story book, so I suppose it was obvious that we were not anti-books as such.

She left without laying down any conditions but just hoped that we would bear the literacy question in mind and get in touch with her if we needed any help. In any case, she would visit again next term. We had a quite stimulating discussion about the question of whether we would always keep them at home - agreeing that it was necessary always to be open-minded but that if one was doing what one felt to be the right thing, solutions often occurred and help often materialized. In all, a quite amicable and fruitful occasion - added to by the fact that outside all the children were playing chase and football and pig-in-the-middle with 'Uncle' Thompson. Lillah came rushing in afterwards saying "I managed to guess his age."

Inevitably after such a visit you ask yourself certain questions - should we be doing more that is more obviously 'education', are we catering for the needs of each one? I was very cheered when I came across something John Holt said in *How Children Learn* about no-one being able to decide on the right mixture for another person. For each child the situation must be different and there is no ideal combination.

Basically their lives still consist of a very large amount of 'playing' - games with dolls that can go on over days. But then a sudden burst of activity in another direction; for example, last Sunday Lillah was away at a fair with James, and Rose wanted to learn how to add up large figures because she'd seen James doing it. I showed her how to do simple ones and then those where figures had to be 'carried'. She was so excited and amazed that she spent about three hours doing sums. I suggested, or ones she made up. She couldn't even stop for lunch. She made very few mistakes and the harder they were the more she enjoyed them.

The next two days were mostly spent 'playing' and the following one we went out but the day after that Rose wanted to learn lots of words of 3 letters and play a game of me leaving the middle letter blank. She also made up a little story from words she found she knew. She learnt more about the sounds made by vowels and I'm sure that in a very short while she'll find she knows how to read - i.e. at the age of about 8½ - and this will have been achieved with a very minimum of conscious effort.



Dustbin Crow
and friends:
Melandra
Bethell (8)

PUBLICATIONS GROUP

10.30 a.m. 27 Sep 1981, at 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N19.

Members present: Helen Holland, Di & Bruce Cox, Stephanie Leland, Mike Hammersley, John Elenor, Iris Harrison.

1. APOLOGIES were received from: Dick Kitto, Ros & Dom Sweetman, Geraldine Lockington, Sandy Cottee, Lorna Bicicchi, David & Irene Bethell, Sarah Guthrie. Good wishes were conveyed from Jane Davies in Sweden (the furthest outpost of our empire?).

2. MINUTES of the previous meeting were read and approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The *Curriculum Debate* is progressing well, with useful contributions from Lorna. Bruce would have liked to wait until he could include further comments arising from discussions (possibly tape-recorded) on the present draft, but the meeting felt that it was more important to produce a first edition with minimum delay and perhaps add comments on it in a second edition. Bruce agreed to get it typed and duplicated.

3.2 Posters

3.2.1 John reported that the posters had been sent to co-ordinators.

3.2.2 It was agreed that one A4-size poster should be sent to each member with the next newsletter.

3.2.3 One or two members expressed disquiet with the present design (e.g., too many words in bold type, underlining NOT looked aggressive, top of triangle shouldn't be cut off), thus unleashing a flood of suggestions for redesign; to cut short discussion it was agreed that those who wanted it redesigned should submit a concrete proposal to the next meeting, always bearing in mind that a new poster might be considered too expensive.

3.3 *Digest 5 - 8* is about to appear; *Digest 9 - 12* is under way; no-one has yet been found to do the annual index, but John will keep looking. [An offer has since been received (unsolicited!) from Hazel Clawley; and indexes to 1980 and 1981 are included in this issue]

3.4 *Sticky Labels* Stephanie had produced a trial run of 100 so far; these were sold to publications group members at cost price. It was agreed that they looked good, as well as fulfilling their purpose, and should be mass-produced for general sale; a decision on the selling price was deferred until Stephanie had investigated the cost of printing (the trial run was duplicated).

3.5 GWS Stephanie reported that the supply of back copies had run out, but she had extra single copies of the current issues available, at 50p (members) & 60p (non-members). John agreed to write to co-ordinators asking them to alter the yellow sheet of the inquiry letter to this effect. It was felt that there should be a regular notice in the newsletter to remind members that GWS was available (see 5.1).

At this point the meeting was briefly adjourned while a wasp, which had gate-crashed, was evicted.

3.6 *Selling literature* Sarah had written to suggest that anyone setting up a stall for EO (at fairs, &c) should use a standard fascia; we liked the idea, and commissioned her to design it.

3.7 *Contact and New-member lists* The membership secretaries had included in their written report advice against a quarterly new-member list; it was felt, however, that the first point (about permission to publish a name) was covered by the question on the application form; and that although a quarterly list would entail a little extra work, so long as it merely gave name, address and children as listed on the application form it would not be a heavy burden. It was agreed that this list would be printed in each newsletter while the complete Contact List would appear annually as an enclosure with the December newsletter. [Ed: The full 1981 Contact List was distributed with the September issue (19). The membership secretaries have been unable to produce a list of new members for inclusion in this issue (20).]

3.8 *Questionnaire* Betty Ball, who has been collating the information from these, is forced to give up the job. Discussion of the value of the questionnaire and the use to be made of the information prompted us to suggest storing the material on a computer. It was decided to appeal in the next newsletter for a member who could offer us computing facilities and experience both for this task and for teaching members and children about computing and computer-aided learning. Since we are out of stock of copies of the questionnaire, Bruce agreed to choose a member from the resource list who could duplicate more from the existing skins.

4. NEWSLETTER

- 4.1 The PG unanimously agreed to offer even heartier congratulations to the editor for NL19, not only for the quality of the magazine, but also for surviving the struggle involved in printing and distributing it.
- 4.2 In view of the above it was agreed that the jobs of editing and publishing should be separated. David was contacted by phone and readily agreed to continue editing. Helen offered to organize the printing and distribution, aided by members of the W.Sussex group. [Ed: We hope to bring this new system into effect with the February issue]
- 4.3 In view of the amount of material now being received by the editor, and the enthusiasm of yesterday's Trent Park meeting for more activity, the PG took a calculated risk in agreeing to increase the frequency of the newsletter to every two months (editor and publisher having already expressed their willingness).
- 4.4 It was agreed that, since part of an editor's job is to edit, the newsletter editor should feel free to shorten articles where necessary, except when the author specified to the contrary. It was also agreed that the weight of one issue should not exceed the 154p bracket (2nd class postage).
- 4.5 The matter of an 'editorial' was deferred to the core group meeting.

5. AOB

- 5.1 A previous decision (25/4/81, item 5.3) was reaffirmed, namely that each issue of the newsletter should contain 1) a notice of our publications on offer, with the amount in stock, and 2) a notice that copies of the introductory letter (for possible distribution to libraries &c) are available from the membership secretaries.
- 5.2 It was agreed to ask Sarah, since she expressed a willingness, to re-edit *Early Years*.

Meeting closed hungrily at 1.45

John Elenor

CORE GROUP

2.30 p.m. 27 Sep 1981, at 82 Lady Margaret Road, London N19.

Members present: Bruce and Di Cox, Helen Holland, Geoff and Iris Harrison, Simon and Caroline Grant, Mike Hammersley, Julia Hallett, Stephanie and David Leland, John Elenor.

1. APOLOGIES were received from: Dick Kitto, Ros and Dom Sweetman, Geraldine Lockington, Sandy Cottee, Lorna Biccicchi, David and Irene Bethell, Sarah Guthrie, Alan and Sandra Smith.
2. MINUTES of the previous meeting were read and approved.
3. MATTERS ARISING
 - 3.1 Iris reported that the Minister of State for DISS had ruled that following the recent court case the Harrison family were not entitled to family allowance for any of their children beyond the age of 16.
 - 3.2 A report on the legal protection scheme had been delayed because of illness.
 - 3.3 No action can yet be taken on the Support Fund since it may be swallowed up in costs for the Harrison case.
 - 3.4 Patronage - it was agreed not to approach possible patrons until EO had more clearly defined aims (which may emerge fairly soon as a result of yesterday's Trent Park meeting).
 - 3.5 A related suggestion was accepted, that an appeal be made in the next newsletter for members to propose public figures whom we could approach to suggest that they join EO. Mike agreed to co-ordinate this, assisted by Caroline, Simon and Julia.

At this point in the proceedings, the meeting was entertained by a troupe of actors and dancers, including Chloe Leland and Madeleine Cox

- 3.6 LEAP - John has not yet had a chance to investigate; he will report to the next meeting.
4. REPORTS
 - 4.1 The treasurer conveyed an air of marginal solvency, with approx. £200 in the current account, £500 on deposit in London, plus £407 in the previous current account at Diss; but with a bill of £300 outstanding for NL19. It was felt that with some Standing Orders still being paid into the Diss account it was worth keeping open, but with most of the money transferred to the London deposit account.
 - 4.2 The membership secretaries, in a written report, gave the size of the membership as 487 (as of 13/9/81), listed the stocks held of publications, and questioned the usefulness of the resource list since it is long out-of-date. No solution was found to this problem, but a general discussion came up with the view that we should aim to double our membership in the next twelve months, to enable us to expand the scope of our activities.
 - 4.3 Future Studies - Simon quoted several lists from their newsletters of outdoor study centres, resource packs, &c; he will detail these in our next newsletter.
5. Findhorn Foundation. A copy of their newsletter had been received from a new member; it was agreed to exchange newsletters with them, and Stephanie agreed to report on them for our newsletter.
6. Beauchamp Lodge is a settlement with rooms to hire near Paddington Station; they have written to express an interest in our work, and to make known to us their facilities. Stephanie offered to investigate.

7. Date and place of next meeting. Sat 12th December, chez Holland, Horsgate Farm, Cuckfield, Sussex.

8. AOB

- 8.1 Local groups - It was felt that local co-ordinators should be encouraged to write to the newsletter whenever they had any news to report from their area; John agreed to add this to the letter he was drafting.
- 8.2 The Core Group joined the Pubs.Group in congratulating the editor on NL19; a letter from Jean Lovius was read which expressed the feeling of several members that the idea of an 'editorial' as such was unnecessary, though an editor was always welcome to add contributions in his private capacity.
- 8.3 A vote of thanks was passed to John for the organization of the Trent Park meeting. The discussion at that meeting had been sufficiently encouraging that we were inspired to think of holding a conference next Spring, widely advertised, with guest speaker, possibly in Birmingham. Bruce agreed to write or co-ordinate an article for the next newsletter which would give an account of the Trent Park meeting, mention more concrete ideas for the conference, and solicit the views of members.
- 8.4 The above item led naturally to a consideration of how EO could follow up the feeling of yesterday's meeting that it was time to be more active. One idea, proposed by David L., was to finance an expanded version of *School Is Not Compulsory* edited by Dick with contributions from various members; this would help to keep our name in the public eye, and could eventually become a book. It was obvious that this and other activities would need more money than we had currently available, which meant raising the subscription (partly because inflation had reduced its value by over 25% since it was last raised in January 1980). A proposal was accepted that a variable subscription be fixed giving families a choice, either of £6, £8, & £10, or of £7.50 & £10, depending on what the treasurer finds is a workable minimum. Non-waged subs would be £4, with a note that in cases of severe hardship even this can be waived. John agreed to write an explanation of the new system and reasons for it in the next newsletter, along with a subscription renewal form that was VERY simple and VERY obvious! We would also use the opportunity to change the Standing Orders to Variable Debit Mandates. *[Ed: for technical reasons, this last move is not immediately possible]*
- 8.5 Sarah had passed on to us an appeal from the Alan Corkish Defence Committee, set up to defend the teacher who had been suspended without pay for revealing to STOPP the appalling punishment book of Litherland High School, Liverpool. We all supported his action, and agreed to send a £10 donation.
- 8.6 Rosedale, a free school in Australia, had sent us another newsletter; Caroline offered to liaise with them.
- 8.7 Caroline gave a brief report on the Education section of the recent Fourth World Assembly.
- 8.8 It was agreed that while second-hand books, resources, etc., should continue to be advertised in the newsletter, ads for items over £10 in value should be charged at cost price. (Cost to be worked out by the editor) *[Ed: £2 per inch]*
- 8.9 A final vote of thanks was passed to Stephanie and David for their hospitality.

meeting closed 5 p.m.

EO in Literature

Janice Owen

What would the new governess be like? It was a time of suspense for Nellie (aged 11), and Joe (aged 9), and Bertie (aged 5).

The first remark she heard from Papa was: "I like the look of you! You're not going to teach them anything they don't want to learn! The girl has headaches. Leave her alone!"

From me: "I don't like sums. Can I do German?"

German, I knew, was among Miss Newman's accomplishments. It wasn't Otto's Grammar I was after, but Schiller.

To sweeten the grammar, Miss Newman copied out in plain script Schiller's Semele, page by page, and word by word made me translate it with her every day. I took the script away, and next day gave it to her in English blank verse; and, for the sake of Schiller and my Greeks, cracked the hard nut of Otto's German Grammar.

Apart from this I dawdled; because of my headaches and almost sleepless nights, I was allowed to sit at the piano as long as I liked, muddling out Schubert and Mendelssohn accompaniments, while Joe and Bertie got on with the lessons set for them. Lessons were set for me too, in history, geography, grammar and sums; but the first three I was already absorbing ignorantly and copiously from my reading, and as for the sums, I never really knew, and don't quite now, just what the two little brackets were for in Long-Division. I still listen resignedly if the simplest formulas of x and y are explained to me, or if someone tries to tell me the meaning of the term which sounds to me like one-over-the-eight. Then my mind rejects it all, and continues to reach its own results rapidly, and not too inaccurately, by private methods. I never learned how to learn from other people; I hated being obliged to follow any other mental process than my own. But I tackled German Irregular Verbs without a pang, because they were a road to Wilhelm Tell.

-oOo-

Ecstasy cannot be constant, or it would kill. The glow comes and fades, comes and fades as it has always done since I was a little girl. Writing gets done in queer irregular ways at queer irregular times. I still want everything so much, I don't know where to choose. If I had had a regular, disciplined education, should I have learned how and what to choose? Should I have made more of the glow when it came, or would it have stopped the glow from coming so often, and dimmed it when it did come? I don't know. I have no rule to go by. It seems to me that there are no rules, only instances; but perhaps that is because I learned no rules, and am only an instance myself

from A Nursery in the Nineties by Eleanor Farjeon, best known as a writer for children, winner of the Carnegie Medal, the Hans Andersen International Medal and the Regina Medal for lifework for children.

Jackie Fearnley

Education means breeding up, bringing up or rearing up; and nothing more. This includes everything with regard to the mind as well as the body of the child; but, of late years, it has been so used as to have no sense applied to it but that of book-learning, with which, nine times out of ten, it has nothing at all to do. It is, indeed, proper, and it is the duty of all parents, to teach, or cause to be taught, their children as much as they can of books *after*, and not before, all the measures are safely taken for enabling them to get their living by labour, for *providing them a living without labour*, and that, too, out of the means obtained and secured by the parents out of their own income. The taste of the times is, unhappily, to give to children something of *book-learning*, with a view of placing them to live, in some way or other, *upon the labour of other people* ... But I am wholly against children wasting their time in the idleness of what is called *education*; and particularly in schools over which the parents have no control, and where nothing is taught but the rudiments of servility, pauperism and slavery.

from William Cobbett, *Cottage Economy*, 1823.

Tim Whitmore

I thought I was in for a relaxing uncontroversial read about dry-stone walling by Colonel F.Rainsford-Hannay, C.M.G, D.S.O. (Dry Stone Walling 1957) when I came across this passage:

All through the joyful weeks of spring and early summer when the rural scene is at its best, the children are at their desks, each qualifying for the post of a cog in a cumbersome nationalized machine. Their great-grandparents tended the flocks, generally in pairs. They were out all day throughout the months of spring, summer and early autumn, They benefited greatly in health and mind, for nature blossomed and burgeoned all around them. They learnt the signs of the weather, the names of the trees and flowers, and the ways of wild life.

He mentions, interestingly, that in Scotland at one time the children did their schooling in the winter. The Colonel died before the founding of Education Otherwise. Had he lived he might have been an enthusiastic supporter.



Craft Clay

Combine 1 cup cornflour
2 cups bicarbonate of soda
1½ cups of water

Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until it thickens.
Knead lightly.

When exposed to the air this clay will dry very hard and it can be painted and glazed. It will keep if covered with aluminium foil.

OR

Combine 2 cups salt
2/3 cup water
1 cup cornflour
½ cup water

Mix salt and 2/3 water and cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly until bubbles form. Remove from heat and immediately mix 1 cup of cornflour and ½ cup water and stir mixture to a stiff consistency, over heat if necessary. Knead until pliable and store in airtight container. It hardens in 36 hours or can be baked at 350 F.

Play Dough

3 lbs plain flour
1 lb salt
2 tbs oil
water as required

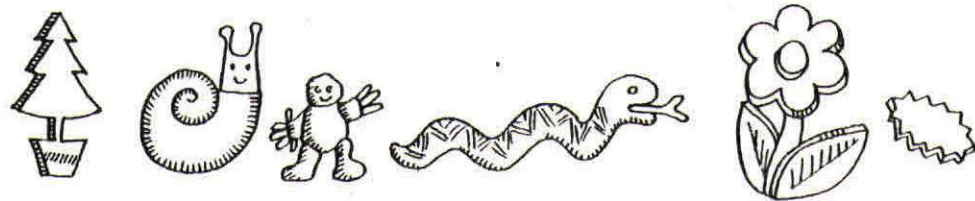
Knead well. This makes a tough dough with a nice gleam that is easily cut with pastry cutters and is pliable

OR

1 lb self-raising flour
1 lb salt
water as required

This dough is not sticky, is good for modelling and can be dried hard in the oven and painted

OR



- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 dessertspoon of powder paint or a few drops of food colouring

Cook mixture over a medium heat stirring constantly. Remove from the heat when the mixture comes away from the sides of the pan. Knead and store in an airtight container. This keeps very well.

Soap Snow

- 2 cups laundry soap flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

Whip with mixer until it is the consistency of very thick whipped cream. Dip hands in water before moulding so that the soap will not stick to them.

Mould it to various shapes or press it through a pastry tube or use pastry cutters. It dries to a porous texture that will last for weeks.

Finger Paints

Polycell (without fungicide) mixed with water to a dropping consistency; plus powder paint or food colouring

OR

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soapflakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water starch (without borax)
- colouring (as above)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water

Beat together till the mixture is consistency of whipped potatoes

OR

- 1 cup cornflour or maize starch (available in Boots)
- drop of cold water
- 2 pints boiling water
- 1 cup white soap flakes
- colouring

Dissolve cornflour or maize starch with a little cold water in saucepan; add 2 pints of boiling water; bring back to the boil. Remove from heat and add soap flakes. This will be runny, but will get firmer as it cools.



HUGO



We send our heartiest congratulations to James and Jackie Fearnley on the birth of a baby boy - Hugo. Jackie and Hugo are reported to be doing fine.



STOP PRESS

Plans are well in hand for the EO conference in April. It will definitely be held in the Birmingham area, but the precise location is not yet decided. There will be an informal gathering on Friday 16th April for those in residence. The conference proper starts 10 a.m. April 17th with an address by John Holt. Later there will be a presentation by a team from the Open University. A panel, including John Holt, James Hemmings and Mary Geffen, will answer questions from the audience, and there will be a general discussion. Further details will be given in the February newsletter, but members and non-members wishing to attend should contact Iris Harrison, The Burntlands, Rochford, Tenbury Wells. Suggestions for concrete proposals to be put to the Open University should be sent to the editor, who hopes to compile a resume of ideas and opinions for the February newsletter.

Name and Address Supplied

Correspondents in alphabetical order

I've been looking at NL19 again, and though its beautifully presented(!) there is rather a lot of the unrepresentative bad legal stuff? I hope contributions for 20 - in view of renewal - will be more positive. If not, lets exclude?? I think we can afford to postpone stuff if we're going bi-monthly. Though even 1982's 1st NL will need to be good to encourage those who delay renewing! This year we sent out only reminders in March, whereas previous year we sent NLs - John thinks this was a mistake.

Back to NL content - as I've said before, we've never pub'd everything. I think one has to be careful not to lose some members by offending them! Do you not think X's stuff (*) might do this? Some folk in EO are very conservative you know (You'd've found Trent Park an eye-opener!) Actually, we have a good cross-section - I just wish the working class (there are some, you know!) didn't always manage to strike up legal battles - though admittedly only half the time their fault. A poor woman in one county with all the arguments and the best of motives (her children's welfare!) is clearly suffering because of her accent.

Do members always make it clear their communications are for publishing? When we had the group to discuss what we'd publish, we found it often wasn't clear, and had to contact them first. But then, at that time EO only had one address and everything went to it. So maybe it's different now. Though some people will cotton-on to any address they see, for just a sympathetic ear!

A few people have recently mentioned 'the return of the legal battles' - wanting to read something more positive. So please baer it in mind! Also NLs go on sale in bookshops, and recently journalists have been asking for them.
☆

Re the article *No Introduction* (p.68, NL 19), it took me some time to make sense of it, because I couldn't understand what PGers and CGers were. Pretty crucial to the point of it, I think you'd agree? So for those members who don't take so much interest in the Minutes recorded in each Newsletter, I thought a little explanation worthwhile.

PGers and CGers are members of EO who meet each other every three months and have - perhaps unfortunately - come to be referred to as the Core Group (CGers) and Publications Group (PGers). Now do you see why 'unfortunately'? Well, because some members seem to think that these groups - because their 'title' is permanent - are permanent groups of members. (Some - even more unfortunately - think of them as permanent 'Officials' of EO). I think I'm right in saying (and no doubt the editor will correct me if I'm wrong - David?) that the only members who have turned up regularly to the last, say, six meetings, are John Elenor and Di and Bruce Cox. There are others whose attendance is less regular (how dare they - but then legitimate truancy is what EO is all about?), but it was apparent at the Trent Park meeting that several members not only had not noticed that meetings were being held the following day (see NL19, p.57, item 8 - admittedly it could have been more prominent!) but did not realize they were 'welcome to attend'. So may I say - largely! PGers & CGers ARE ANY MEMBERS OF EO WHO WANT TO BE! Meetings are always friendly (if friendship includes the odd heated debate!) and take place in the sitting room of another, hospitable, member.

I think the groups need some regular members, to carry things along; but they don't need to be permanent, as long as they overlap a bit - to ensure a relay. So is there someone out there who'd like to take over one of the batons? For quite frankly, I feel I've done my stint! I'd hate to see EO 'fold up', for I feel it's existence is important not least for all those people who don't yet know that 'it's legal'. I feel it's important, too, that our numbers increase, so that we can say to LEAs so "Look, there are X thousand people who believe as we do". However, we're probably at a tricky point right now: several PGers and

CGers seem to want a rest at least (including myself); and yet before this Newsletter comes out, there are likely to be several more press articles or TV programmes in the pipeline (if not happened) as a result of journalists' enquiries following the *Sunday Times* article. So who is going to do the work involved? Most of us, I think, don't remember that when we received our first communication from EO it said things like "we are a self-help group ... a mutual support group ... not a 'them and us' group" - because we were more concerned at that time with the legal ins and outs of it all. Until we meet one of 'them', and they persuasively try to remind us! Well, just in case you had not yet realized - I'm trying to persuade you!

Dear Rambling Quirk (is that the name of the dragon?): Surprisingly I find I agree with your second editorial roar.

What causes the 'homebased concentration camp' syndrome? The fact that there is a school system means we are all aware of standards and may have expectations about what we think children ought to achieve and by what age. But expectations and standards are dangerous, they generate worry and fear in parents and impose pressure and coercion on kids. Can we as EO idealists replace the worry and pressure, standards and expectations with FAITH, HOPE and LOVE:

FAITH in children as self-motivated learning individuals

HOPE that children's progress continues to be unpredictable yet full of pleasant surprises

LOVE of learning and of each other.

Yours intimidated, one of the inner-city rioters!

I have just finished reading the September newsletter; it is always interesting and stimulates my interest and confidence in home schooling. My husband, John, particularly liked your editorial on Puritanism, he sometimes accuses me of the same; it is an easy trap to fall into. I would like to make a couple of comments concerning some of the articles. Firstly, congratulations to Iris Harrison on her case so far, and all the good work she is doing for EOers. I hope she wins through in the end; she seems a very intelligent and determined lady, and I'm glad she's on our side. Also I would like to say well done to Jackie Fearnley for having the courage to just wait until her daughter was ready to learn to read. I hope I will have the same with my son, who is now 4½ years. I feel this is a very, very important issue. ☆ I have not included any drawings by my son, for, being 4½ and left to his own devices he is too busy playing and imagining and I do feel it is rather competitive, putting the child's age and name.

We thought very highly of your Editorial Efforts and so did other members in our county and the general view was Yes.

[Re NL 19, June:] I am very grateful to our new editors for taking on the task of producing the newsletter in such an attractive and vivacious fashion. Long may they continue!

Two points do worry me. I regret the caption 'Editorial' and do hope it can be made very clear that the views in that article do not reflect the views of the Core Group. I feel the final comments are so heartless as to need an apology.

[Ed: I stick by every word] Similarly, who wrote our editors' superb biography?

I get the impression we are entering the realms of *Private Eye* and much as I enjoy that mag I wonder if it is a wise move for EO newsletters.

In the September newsletter one of your correspondents asks if EO supports the rights of any parents to make even the most bizarre choices over their children's education. I certainly do and I hope that the rest of EO is solidly behind me. Who is to judge as to what is 'most bizarre'? The LEA perhaps? Sounds like a familiar position, eh? I can just imagine the legal wrangling as to the exact definition of 'most bizarre'.

Local authorities already have ample powers (too ample some might say) to whisk children away from parents. Let's be clear that we stand for parents' rights without equivocation.

A thousand times no - editorial articles must not 'establish policy and attitudes' for an organization! Your first correspondent in issue 19 (NAAS) would give his editor too much power by far. Attitudes are, in any case, brought by the reader to the newsletter, not by the newsletter to the reader. The editor cannot be made accountable for other peoples' attitudes.

But there are two sorts of 'policy' here. Neither of them is raw material for an editor. Policy-making for an organization (defining the way it operates and what its function is) is the work of a steering group, and 'policy' is the result of that group's discussions. Call it a Core Group.

Policy-making for a newsletter is also the work of a steering group (call it a Publications Group), where such ideal-testing questions as the inclusion or exclusion of children's material are decided. The editor must be a member of that group and must have his say, but in the end he must carry out the majority decisions of that group concerning the presentation and content and message of the newsletter.

But once appointed the editor must be allowed scope for personal inventiveness in carrying out newsletter policy, and to this extent editorial work is creative. Only when the steering group does not give policy guidelines is the editor failed by that group, and he may not be held accountable to unvoiced and misty organizational ideals for his choice of material or any other aspect of a Newsletter's character.

On the other hand, the editorial article should remain the sole province of the editor. It is his one chance of expressing himself as an individual. Because of this the editor must be named, so that readers can attribute due reward to the right quarter, and he must be accountable to the newsletter steering group and the membership at large for his opinions and their effect on the organization as a whole - the editor has much responsibility. It is monstrous to expect the editorial article to reflect the views of the organization (page 66 correspondent). The newsletter as a whole should do that job, and in EO, where views are so diverse, it takes a whole newsletter.

There can only be one editor at a time - so good luck to him.

✧

Hey ho, what fun we are all having.

I've been rummaging in the archives of our children's work for something suitable for the newsletter. I've come up with the following, which I think aptly demonstrates my children's unique geniuses. It, I'm sure you'll agree, deserves prominent positioning - perhaps inside the front cover.

The words are to the tune Bell Bottom Trousers and Suit of Navy Blue:
[Ed: I have been requested not to print the mildly obscene ditty that follows*]
by TAMASERUS 8 yrs 9 months 2 weeks and 5 days at date of publication.

I thought if you surrounded it with a frame of toilet seats it would suitably draw the member's attention to it.

To balance it I have one for inside the back cover:

[Ed: I have &c &c*]

by Nickolinus 7 yrs 3 mths 1 wk 2 days etc etc. Orchestration for it is under way at present and I will forward it when completed.

However, to the real business of this letter. I'm going to bring out an EO regional newsletter for this area. It will contain only 2 or 3 articles and so will be of 4 pages (8 sides). I want to make it the same size as the national newsletter so that takeover will be easier - I mean so that it will share the bookshelf more easily - and I wonder if you could supply me with 200 EO covers with the back printed as it is at present. I intend to do a Celtic design for the front - could you print that for me? If you cannot it is OK, I'll do a linocut or something and type the inside pages. In any case I'm investigating the local printing facilities as well as your good selves.

☆

Re minutes of the Publications Group item 4.1 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." I ask the Publications Group - are you mad or just overtired? Is there a view held by any one member that exactly corresponds to a view held by another? A more diverse group of people I have yet to meet. Please go back to your bed.

As for Item 4.1 NL 18 line 7 "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", I find it offensive and pre-judgemental. How will you know whether someone is offering a child's 'work' for publication in order to exhibit it or to allow others to share their pleasure in it? You will not.

☆☆

I am interested in the authorship of some of the letters on pages 66 and 67: [September newsletter, no.19]

Page 66

1. I like the newsletter very much
2. I thought on the whole
5. I think we all felt

- Sarah Guthrie?
- John Eleanor??
- Dick Kitto?

Page 67

1. We had been trying
2. With regards to
3. The NL looks good

- ???
- ???Heather or Courtney
- ??

[Ed: 2 out of 6. Beta minus. Try harder next time. Any pupil scoring six out of six will receive the David Bethell Bursary, which this year consists of a copy of *Psychic Pets* by Joseph Wylder.]



No Introduction

This issue sees another victory in the battle against inflation. Whereas the September issue was 89% larger than the June issue, inflation has been reduced to 17%; if we can hold it down to this level, the last issue next year will be only 210 pages. The Editor has again mislaid his scissors, and the contents are completely unabridged, except for two sentences at the end of Bruce Cox's article on page 38, and a letter from the Editor's Aunt Aggie about her Jack Russell's dietetic problems. Readers have also written to complain that the September issue was so thick that it shed leaves as the staples gave way, and the print rubbed off the covers. These were, of course, purely symbolic phenomena, capturing the essential feel of autumn; as the year progresses you will find the issue disintegrating into a soft organic mulch ideal for potting out next summer.

Complaints have also been received that there was too much about Upper Hulme in the last issue, but these also are misguided. Most of you will have realized that Drystones, Upper Hulme, Leek, and, in fact, the Editors, are all quite imaginary, and have no basis in reality, or at least are highly improbable.

It is not generally known that the Welsh poet Taliesin, Sir William Shakespeare and the Omar Khayyam were all born in or around Leek, which has justly been termed "the Athens of North Staffordshire". The moorlands above the town are the scene of the annual Poetry Declamation Olympics, the origins of which are shrouded in antiquity. This year's finals have been something of a local Derby, being between the Upper Hulme Iambics and the Dry Stones Sesquipedallians. In the event, the honorific title of the Staffordshire Bull Roarers was seized by the Dry Stones squad in a dramatic finish. Top marks in all categories were awarded to Gervase Gaskell, head boy of the local school, for his bellowing of "The Buds of Darling May", and his contribution secured the coveted trophy for our own side. Mr. K. Alcock, headmaster of the local school, and Reg Underbed, of the Workers' Camera Co-operative, have together assembled a video of the event and are hoping to sell the programme, under the title *Kevin Alcock Presents* to ATV. The St. John's Ambulance Brigade was in attendance.

In October Mr. Alcock obtained a grant from the DHSS for the establishment of the Dry Stones Leisure Centre (under the 1944 Education Act Emergency Powers Amendment). The headmaster's study has been furnished with a formica-topped table, a television and video machine, and a library of video tapes, generously loaned by Mr. Underbed. These include *Socialism in the Fifties*; *Bevanism Today*; *Steel: the Road to Coproductivity*; *The End is Nye*; and *Labour Under Aneurin* - five great classics produced by Mr & Mrs Underbed with a grant from the Dry Stones Wildfowlers League.

The new Leisure Centre has attracted a good deal of local interest, and every evening you can see there a group of farmers discussing the weather, the latest cow-feuds, video machines, Bevanism, and the weather. Late in October, however, Mr. Alcock succeeded in his application to have the whole of Dry Stones declared an Area of Special Anthropological Interest, which allows the inhabitants various grants from the European Community towards maintaining rustic farming practices, wearing old or unusual clothes, and generally behaving oddly. By the end of the month three foreign camera crews had descended on the Leisure Centre and the locals were becoming used to the sight of a telephoto lens poking through their bedroom curtains, and bevels of excited Danes surrounding them during their ablutions.

Martha Gaskell, who recently mysteriously received through the post a book by a certain Joseph Medloff, has become deeply worried whether her son Gervase is bonding with his matrix; so much so that she ordered him a new Slumberland matrix from Staleys, the Leek superstore (you know - "Don't say cakes, say Staleys!"). The Staleys van arrived on November 5th but was turned back by a chanting mob of locals burning an effigy of Aneurin Bevan. All this has been recorded on video and will doubtless be appearing on your local TV soon.

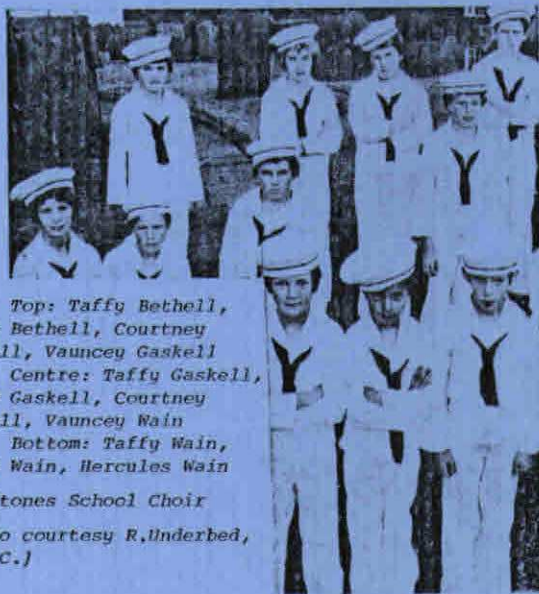


*Dry Stones Leisure Centre : Locals enjoy another showing of Steel: the Road to Coproductivity.
[Photo courtesy Dansk Anthropologisk Foto-Archiv]*

Owing to the extreme longevity prevalent in Dry Stones, the government has made a special dispensation waiving the age limit on its Youth Opportunities Programme. Vauncey Belfield, aged 73, a fire-minder at Rob House Farm, has been awarded the Golden Poker for his achievement as the oldest surviving YOP in North Staffordshire.

The award was made at the Dry Stones Hallowe'en party and Its-A-Knock-Out, and was presented by Sir Jasper Buck-Rake of Dry Stones Hall. Star turns included the Centenarian Glee Club, "Quid's Worth" (the stage-name of a folk duet of the local Vicar and his curate), and an exhibition of chair-mending by the landlord of the Rumping Donkey. The School Choir (see photo below) sang several local sea-shanties, including "On Upper Hulme Rock", "Ey up, I see a Mermaid", "The Jolly Winker" and "The Tittesworth Bells".

Sir Jasper, only recently discharged by Leek magistrates in the now-notorious Buxton Beauty case (in which Miss Mavis Meerbrook, voted Miss Axe Edge 1981, had claimed that he badly ogled her during the presentation of her sash), received a standing ovation, but was later pelted with aniseed balls by the Leek organizer of Friends of the Earth. Sir Jasper is Last Trump of the Dry Stones Velocipedarians, who hunt moles on bicycles with packs of cats; it is a moot point whether this is a cruel sport - the intention is obviously cruel, but no mole has ever been caught, and Sir Jasper claims complete innocence of all charges.



*Top: Taffy Bethell,
Puffy Bethell, Courtney
Bethell, Vauncey Gaskell
Centre: Taffy Gaskell,
Puffy Gaskell, Courtney
Gaskell, Vauncey Wain
Bottom: Taffy Wain,
Puffy Wain, Hercules Wain
Dry Stones School Choir*

*[photo courtesy R.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 9" x 4" s.a.e. to:

JOHN ELENOR

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