

# EDUCATION OTHERWISE



newsletter

NO. 26 • DECEMBER 1982

# contents

Editorial	Caroline Grant	1
What the Treasurer does	John Elenor	3
Education through the Press	Sarah Guthrie (ed.)	4
Talking about School	Sarah Guthrie (ed.)	6
A New Lease of Life	Anna Powell	7
Cheap and Cheerful Ideas	Christine Wallace	9
News from the Regions		10
E.O. in the Market Place	Vicki & David Willow	12
Educating Archie	Sarah Guthrie	13
Books in the Making		14
What the Membership Secretary does	Andrea Harrison	16
The Future of E.O.		17
Otherwise Books and Living	Eve Thacker	20
Notices for Co-ordinators		21
Notices		22
The Teachers		25
Letters to the Editor		28
He Seems Quite Happy There	A.M. Nimmo	32
Statement	Jacob Bush	35
Recipe for Algebra	Betty Ball	36
How's Ursula	Peter Jones	38
The First Explorers	Jacob Bush	41
Book Reviews	Betty Ball	42
	Annie Wilton-Jones	43
G.W.S. Snippets		43
Natural Learning	Jackie Goodsall	44
To Be Or Not To Be	Joan Hoare	45
Guidelines for Newsletter Editors	Caroline Grant	47
Biology : Beware!	Lorraine Walker	49
Wildlife and Countryside Act	Betty Ball	50
E.O. in Literature		51
Minutes of Core Group Meeting		52
Letter to the L.E.A.	Rob & Anne Wade	54
January Core Meeting		55

The next issue (February) is to be edited by Sarah Guthrie and Dick Kitto. Please send contributions to Sarah at Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk (Tel. Mellis 678). The deadline is January 6th. All material intended as such should be clearly marked "for publication".

---

# Editorial

---

## Caroline Grant

A book has recently appeared entitled 'How To Save The World', being a collection of papers presented to the First Assembly of the Fourth World. I attended that assembly last year, and signed up for the Education Forum. I was disappointed, to say the least, to find only one person there (from the States, too) who had her children out of school. And didn't she have a hard time of it! Cries of : elitist! what about the masses! it's all right for those with the cash! (she was more or less penniless and had been given her ticket over). Then it was my turn : I was presenting a short paper, partly about E.O. (it's not in the book!). I barely managed to get through it - we just got stuck in the old debate as to whether one should work to change the system from within or from without ... and the general consensus of opinion was for the former. So there were all these people, setting out to change the world while they consigned their children very firmly to the old world; trying to get rid of their various hang-ups and make good their deficiencies while subjecting their children to those same pressures that were doubtless accountable for their own problems; misplacing their faith in the god of Socialism which has somehow come to mean not being different from anyone else.

I have just read, in Resurgence, a letter from a 'small holder activist' in West Wales bewailing, amongst other things, the state of affairs at the local primary school. It is easy, she says, to get excited by articles and lectures along the lines of 'What's wrong with our schools' ... but there is one thing wrong with those articles and lectures : it's just theory, not practice.

It is one thing to sit around being highly articulate, but quite another thing to quietly get on with the doing. The point about E.O., it strikes me now, is that it is one of the few instances in which the theory has been transcended and we have landed with our feet well and truly down in the realm of the practical. We may be stumbling, feeling our way, but we are going somewhere. We may even be on our way to changing the world...

CONTINUED OVER

---

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of E.O. as a whole.

If you wish to reprint any material from this newsletter, please include an acknowledgement, and send a copy to : Education Otherwise, 18 Eynham Road, London W12 0HA.

The family-beneath-the-tree motif used on the front cover is the work of Roger and Lesley Downie.

Printed by Argraffdy Arfon, Penygroes, Gwynedd.

---

---

Now to this issue of the E.O. newsletter.

I suspect that many readers now share my confusion as to what exactly the editorial is expected to say or do or be. What follows is, to all intents and purposes, a continuation of my editorial, but I begin by stating that the views expressed herein are primarily mine and not necessarily those of the core group, steering committee, or whatever.

As you cannot have failed to notice, we have returned, for this issue, to the old format (or, at least, something resembling it) and some explanation would seem to be in order. Most of the members I have heard from or spoken to had been given the impression that the change of style was a permanent one. Far from it: the question of 'up-marketing' the newsletter had not even been discussed, let alone decided upon, and so 'we' were just as surprised (or whatever) to receive the October issue as anyone else. I have included the comments I received in the letters page.

My own impression was that the style just did not match the contents. It is, after all, a newsletter, and contains quite a large proportion of items which are 'internal' - notices for members, minutes of meetings, and so on - and I hardly think that this aspect would appeal to the general public. If anything is to be up-marketed in this way, then I would suggest that it be 'School Is Not Compulsory' and possibly the digests, both of which have a more obvious appeal to outsiders and do not date so quickly. From our own point of view, I do not think that we need the dubious security of having a professionally produced magazine.

I see this issue as a compromise. I have aimed at making it as attractive as I could, but without employing some 'professional' to do the layout: I, for one, would regret the entire passing of the 'home-made' look (can you spot the deliberate mistakes in this issue?). I have aimed, rather, at improving the contents. And I have aimed at keeping it cheap.

One of the main questions is, of course, that of finance. The October issue cost £645 (for 1,000 copies), while the present issue will cost, at the most, £340 (for 1,200 copies and several more pages). The present issue will, in fact, be considerably cheaper than the February, June and August issues as well (April was quite a bit cheaper, but thinner). This is not to suggest how wonderful I am at arranging such things, but to set the whole thing in perspective. A glossy cover alone costs very little.

The large amount of money expended on the last issue was justified by the hope that it would double our membership. Now, since there were only something over a hundred spare copies, how could it possibly do that? If we are going to increase our membership through our publications, then it stands to reason that we have to market them. Personally - if we are talking about attracting new members - I would rather see the extra money spent on leaflets and information sheets, which are likely to find their way to far more people. But since we haven't got that extra money (the last newsletter has been subsidised for the time being by an anonymous loan), we can do a fair deal to 'spread the word' by, for instance, writing letters to other magazines and journals - which is free, and is provenly effective. Or we can even write books...

Anyway... The last issue may have been hot on style - how is this one for contents? Of variety, and quality, there is plenty. There is much to excite, to stimulate, to uplift, to move. It brings the message that E.O. is alive. And for those who feel isolated in their task, it brings tidings of possible relief in the form of

---

residential core group meetings a cycle/camping trip and a whole week of workshops. .

I have enjoyed editing it tremendously - sitting here in the stillness of the night sensing, if not seeing, the snow on the hills ... Now it's up to you to enjoy reading it!

Thankyou to all contributors.

#### POSTSCRIPT

I apologise to anyone who might have tried ringing my number during these last weeks. We have temporarily moved out of our cottage while we (prepare to) carry out major renovation work and so we are rarely there to answer the phone, particularly in the evenings. (We are still using that address for mail, though.)

There are a number of items (they keep coming!) that could not be included in this issue. I am sending them on to Sarah Guthrie for the next issue.

Thanks to those who responded to my appeal for printers' estimates. One or two were of interest and we may wish to try them at some stage in the future.

---

THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR E.O. OFFICERS

## What the Treasurer does

John Elenor

I appealed in the June newsletter for someone to take over the job of Treasurer : the response was nil. The last core group suggested than an even more detailed job description might help, so here it is.

- 1) Settle all bills and expense claims against E.O.
- 2) At renewal time (now transferred to October), receive subscriptions, check them off against the membership list, and pay them into the bank; send a reminder to anyone who has not renewed with the December newsletter and instead of the February one.
- 3) Receive Bankers Orders from the Membership Secretary, add a code number to each (which is also kept on a numerical list) and pass it on to the member's bank.
- 4) Keep a ledger of all payments and receipts, and check the monthly bank statement against it.
- 5) Produce an income and expenditure account each January to be published in the February newsletter.
- 6) Consult periodically with the Steering Committee on the current financial situation, and make plans for future spending.
- 7) Give a brief written financial report to each Core Group meeting.

If you fancy that you could do it, please contact me at 18 Eynham Road, London W12.

---

# Education through The Press

Edited by SARAH GUTHRIE, with contributions from Janice Owen, Barbara Evans and Lorna Bicchichi.

LIFE IN SCHOOL The secretary of the Professional Association of Teachers told a conference that some children are evil and must be "exorcised from the classroom" (TELEGRAPH 30.7.82). ... The Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association insists that it is the duty of parents to cooperate with schools over discipline (TELEGRAPH 16.6.82). If not, they should be made to face harsher legal penalties, including prison sentences... The Government is slow to implement the legal changes demanded of it by the European Council, when the latter upheld parents' rights to forbid the beating of their children. STOPP feels that Dr Boyson could be influencing this delay; he has been dubbed Minister for Flogging by the Guardian (WHERE 10.82)... Corporal punishment is to be phased out of all Anglican schools and caning eventually banned (TELEGRAPH 23.7.82)... Said the Chairman of the Human Education Council, re-searching into the nature of animal experiments in schools, "I have found... that dissection... is putting children off biology. We are trying to teach respect for life at the same time as showing that life is totally disposable" (SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 1.8.82)... and an investigation has been ordered after a teacher at a comprehensive school killed four rabbits in front of pupils during a biology lesson and then gave them out to be dissected (GUARDIAN 29.10.82). The rabbits had been cared for by the children as part of a course on rural studies. "My son came home in tears after the horrifying lesson", said one mother... A Worcs. parents has lodged a formal complaint with the Education Secretary that Hereford and Worcs. authority are failing in their duty under the 1944 Act because of their excessive reduction in staff (GUARDIAN 14.7.82)... A school-boy who had been bullied daily for 4 years knifed a friend to death in "an inexplicable explosion of violence" (GUARDIAN 5.10.82)... Six out of ten children said they liked school but looked forward to the weekend (SUNDAY MIRROR 13.6.82).

DO IT YOURSELF Parents have set up their own school in Hartland, Devon, to avoid long journeys into the nearest town (GUARDIAN 8.9.82)... Fourteen children whose parents are refusing to send them to schools chosen for them by their local authority (Sutton) are being taught in a church hall by 4 volunteer teachers (TELEGRAPH 15.9.82). "If it's all right, then jolly good for the parents. If not, then we'll have to consider what action to take", said the Chairman of Sutton's education committee... Parents in Kent have started their own school in a church hall, for 18 eleven year olds who did not get into the school of their choice (DAILY MAIL 8.9.82)... The first purpose-built community centre incorporating a school has opened in Essex. Local people can use its resources, which include a hall, gym and police office (TELEGRAPH 28.8.82).

E.O. REVEALED Lorna and Brunello Bicicchi and their sons were featured in an article on home education for WOMAN'S REALM (9.82)... Sandie and Brian Cottee were interviewed for the ESSEX EVENING ECHO (6.8.82)... Iris Harrison told the EDUCATION GUARDIAN that there was a dramatic increase in home education (GUARDIAN 12.10.82). Yet this boom was provoking a reaction from local authorities in the form of more care orders. "Soon society won't be able to cope with the upsurge of parents wanting to take their children out of the system. We are facing a crisis : what we ought to be doing is sitting around a table seeing what can be done about it", she says... And the power of local authorities to lock up difficult children in care is to be restricted by the Dept. of Health and Social Security, following advice that the present regulations are contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights (GUARDIAN 9.82). The Department will insist that children can only be taken into care if there is evidence that their physical or mental wellbeing is at risk.

E.O. ATTACKED The following letter appeared in the EDUCATION GUARDIAN on 15.6.82 : "The correspondence about children being taught at home by parents reveals both the low status of teaching and teachers' willingness to accept far too much poor treatment and criticism... The teacher is made the scape-goat for every idle and stupid pupil and inadequate parent who is looking for an excuse for himself and his inadequacy... Neither the Archangel Gabriel nor Socrates could work wonders with the soggy mass of mediocrity which the population largely consists of in all age-groups..."



E.O. O.K. in THE U.S.A. Parents in over 200 Louisiana homes are teaching their children (DAILY AMERICAN 21.9.82). Approvals, by the State Board, of 'home schools', are expected to exceed last year's total, though some had been rejected because "parents didn't list textbooks used, didn't hold classes for the required 5 hours a day, didn't submit results of exams"... despite the fact that these requirements are not listed in the 1980 legislation. Parents must, however, list their proposed curriculum and promise to follow guidelines set by the state board of education. There is no direct on-site monitoring of a home school. Said a parent: "We believe that parents know their children best and can care and educate them best because who loves them more?" Said a school superintendent: "No-one can tell me these youngsters are getting any kind of education".

THE FUTURE In a recent pamphlet ENFORCED LEISURE : ENFORCED EDUCATION\* Ray Kohn argues that education should become, in practice as well as in theory, a lifelong process. He argues that the legal requirements for teenagers to attend school should be abolished (over 50% are truants in their last year). He would like to see a participatory, self-directed and voluntary education system for young people which was also part of their work. (60% of pupils leave school with no qualifications to show for 12 years' compulsory schooling.) Comments the reviewer: "Our present system clearly does not work past the primary school stage." (EDUCATION GUARDIAN 21.9.82).

FOOTNOTE A 1980 survey of favourite reading for 11 year olds puts Enid Blyton top of the list (GUARDIAN 24.9.82)... Surrey's Health Education Department distributes posters and leaflets designed to help parents who are 'at the end of their tether' looking after their children during holidays (COUNTY AND BORDER NEWS 26.8.82).

\* Ray Kohn's report is available from the Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1, price £1.50.

Contributions to this column should be sent to Sarah at Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk.

---

## TALKING ABOUT SCHOOL

---

Edited by SARAH GUTHRIE, with contributions from Janice Owen.

"School? I went to school as a social occasion - it was nothing more than that... I didn't have an education - I was a bad student." (Diane Keaton, SUNDAY TIMES 6.82).

"School was the unhappiest time of my life and the worst trick it ever played on me was to pretend that it was the world in miniature. For it hindered me from discovering how lovely and delightful and kind the world can be, and how much of it is intelligible..." (E.M. Forster, reminiscing in a 30s SPECTATOR article, quoted in Company magazine, 9.82).

"So tormenting was my experience that by the time I left I could hardly remember how to read and write. After the war the school wrote asking me for money... and I had the greatest pleasure in writing back to say I would not send them a single penny." (writer Elizabeth Jane Howard, in COMPANY magazine, 9.82).

"(The teacher) used to read gobblets out of my essay, aloud and out of context in such a way as to make me sound stupid. And she would say, 'Jane Howard has too vivid an imagination.'"

"He must realise that the world does not revolve around motorcycles, and thinking it does will not earn him a living." (from Barry Sheene's report, quoted in COMPANY, 9.82).

"But one aspect where the world outside school is very different... is that you become more self-interestedly discerning... you no longer have to spend your time with 700 other people, 650 of whom you loathe." (Victoria Wood, playwright, COMPANY, 9.82).

---

### AN APOLOGY

In the October issue, the names of two contributors were transposed when the titling was done (they remain correct in the list of contents). Regular readers will have guessed that 'Education Through The Press' was edited, as usual, by Sarah Guthrie, and therefore the 'Helpful L.E.A.' article was by Christina Cordingley. Our apologies to both.

---

# A New Lease Of Life

ANNA POWELL

Tom, our eldest child, now 7, was reluctant to go to school from the start. He coped well enough in the first year Infants, but after half a term in the second year Infants, began to loose what he had apparently gained in interest and confidence. He was becoming increasingly anxious, even panicky; had all kinds of aches and pains every morning and on the way to school; and, although one of the 'top' readers, was reluctant to read, wept for fear of 'questions', and begged not to have to go to school. Leaving him at the gate every morning was always a protracted business; but having the occasional quiet word with his teacher solved only a few isolated problems and did not improve the overall situation - nor his relationship with the teacher. At home he was tense, sulky, fearful; spoke in a 'school' idiom which owed more to television than any authentic child sub-culture, if there is such a thing; was very quick to jeer or to boast. At the same time, he produced work at home far superior in liveliness and imagination to anything he did at school - and had to be taken away from all this in order to get ready for school every morning... It reminded me of the old joke about the nurse waking someone up to give him his sleeping-tablet.

When Toby started too, I wanted to become more closely involved in support of the school, and became a Parent-Governor. I found I could not approach the staff on any kind of sensible basis without them feeling threatened by my elevated status. A guided tour of the school for the Governors was not quite the experience it was intended to be, as far as I was concerned; it was apparent to me that despite the lively and varied and sometimes outdoor activities and the comparative increase in freedom amongst the children, so vaunted by the staff who presumably had only their own schooldays to compare it with, schooling remained a boring and inhibiting institution. I thought the work-books and worksheets the children were occupied with were uninteresting, the expressions on the faces of the Juniors disturbingly resigned, switched-off, dull, especially after the bright eager little faces of the new arrivals I had just seen in the first year Infants.

I was concerned enough to start asking about a fairly nearby Steiner School. At the same time, what was really bothering me was the degeneration of our family life into harassed breakfasts, separations during the weekdays, and squabbling always-too-short weekends. I had begun to wonder whether there might be some means of going abroad, or some other way to drastically change our outlook.

Then a friend asked me to watch a television programme for her that she would not be able to see; I think it was 'Afternoon Plus', and it was concerned with home-schooling. If anything, I was rather reluctant. I had seen something of the kind before; I had read quite extensively of Neill, John Holt, the Ritters, 'Continuum Concept'; my babies and I had not made a success of self-regulation on the whole, and I had rather lost confidence in my ability to put such ideas effectively into practice. I also shrank from putting myself and the boys quite so firmly out on a limb. In short, I was not ready to do anything about incorporating my opinions into my way of life. However, I promised to watch for her, and duly turned on. As I had expected, the family featured in the programme lived in an apparently rural setting, father apparently at home; there was not much resemblance between our situation and theirs. Nevertheless, they were lucid, articulate and I was in sympathy with what they had to say. Like it or not, I had the idea that this was the answer I had been looking for, and the rather frightening feeling that I really was going to do it. When I talked about it to my husband that evening, rather to my surprise he was wholly in favour of trying home schooling. This was going in exactly the opposite direction to the course I had been following; I had been delighted to have time to

myself when the boys started school, had looked forward to Toby starting, had been impatient for Ben's turn to come too...and now I was about to turn right around, and look for freedom of a different kind in a situation where they were all to be at home with me again.

The Headmaster, other members of the staff, and my mother too, herself a retired teacher, but, more relevantly perhaps, someone who had been educated at home as a child and had hated feeling 'different' - all told me that they considered some schooling to be a very bad idea, mainly for the social reasons. The school was, however, most agitated about my position as Governor, and Tom's unhappiness was dismissed as probably non-existent, or else a fact of life. By the end of the Spring term, I was determined that he should not go back, and wrote rather briefly to the Education Authorities to inform them of our decision.

On the first day of the Summer term, Tom and I embarked rather nervously on a programme of work that I had worked out. We changed this programme several times during the term, trying to find one that worked. I kept a file, and spasmodic notes, which served their purpose well when, at the end of term, the Advisor came to see us. We tried workbooks, interspersed with games, puzzles, treasure hunts and other activities, working with library books and some of our own. Eventually we dropped the formal work altogether, as an experiment; but I think it has not been such a success as one in-between stage, when we did have perhaps one 'lesson' or so together every day, and we will probably return to this.

There were great difficulties of adjustment; to begin with, my whole day was completely taken up with the new situation; I felt that I was undergoing a crash-course in teacher training, I was trying to rethink all my assumptions about education, and at the same time I felt isolated and this made me feel unsure of myself. The turning point really was when the first batch of booklets, newsletters and so on came from E.O. - there is nothing like reading your own ideas clearly formulated by someone else, and supported by others, to give you strength in any enterprise! They also gave me practical details and facts to go on, so that I felt better grounded. I felt an enormous respect for those who managed to deschool their children before there was any support. I also read 'Teach Your Own'.

Nevertheless, I think there would never have been a question of giving up what we were doing, because the change in Tom was so palpably an improvement. It was very moving, after a couple of weeks of home education, to hear him singing; he sat in the sandpit running sand through his fingers, and sang - I couldn't remember when he had last seemed happy, compared to this. It interests me that the Steiner teaching lays emphasis on the physical aspect in the early years, for Tom's relaxation has taken a physical form. Always rigidly tense, he had taken part very gingerly if at all in school games and P.E.; now his whole body has begun to soften. He loves to go to adventure playgrounds, or to set up games in the garden; he leads the other two in games which involve a lot of dressing-up, face- and body-painting; there is much freer posturing, gesturing and dramatics generally.

The other thing that has made a startling difference is my reading books to him. This term we have read eight or so novels and several books of tales. Toby listens too, now. Their interest in television has decreased, presumably as a result, and they have both begun to read for themselves.

While Tom has relaxed, matured, grown in confidence, Toby, still at school, began to show the same symptoms as Tom previously - aches and pains, fatigue, anxiety, tension, aggressiveness, self-doubt. Something was making him unhappy about dinner-times, so he began coming home for dinner. Then I asked for two weeks' leave at the end of term so that he could join Tom in various expeditions - he had had enough, and I now knew enough about what I was doing to commit myself decisively to home schooling, or non-schooling. From now on I have the three of them at home; at least until the situation demands another course of action. While the house-keeping has suffered a little, our creative output has increased

ten-fold! I do not now feel that there is any question at all of choice between school and home education, as far as our family is concerned; it is only a matter of finding out how to improve on what we have achieved already.

Apart from the beneficial effects on the boys' personalities and on our family relationships, the main advantage of E.O. for us as a way of life has been the astonishingly liberating sense of not being bound by externally imposed restrictions on hours, dates, place, clothing and the rest. With this liberation has come a release of creative energy, a host of new ideas, a new interest in life for all of us. Instead of feeling hampered from leading any life of my own, I have begun to take up my old interests again - and that in itself stimulates their activities too.

I am still amazed at my good fortune in making this particular decision. It has 'made all the difference'.

---



## Cheap & Cheerful

### Ideas



### Christine Wallace

We've made a series of very successful playmats - far superior (and cheaper!) to those plastic abominations. The first ones were made on large pieces from cardboard boxes, using all sorts of fabric scraps cut to shape and glued on. Individual flowers cut out and stuck down made lovely borders and sand etc. for paths. Our latest effort is on an opened-out fine hessian sack (calico or bought hessian would be just as suitable) and has lots of roads and parking places made with an indelible felt tip pen. (How on earth have we managed to raise a car-crazy child in the middle of the country?) To balance the effects of pollution we have added plenty of fields, forests and flowers, rivers and a sea complete with pier and an island. Most of this is fixed on with zig-zag machine stitches and is fairly washable. We haven't managed to throw away any of the earlier ones yet, though.

Another success is our display unit. (What a fancy name for a thrown out 'coffee' table, which is long and narrow, and a large sheet of corrugated cardboard latterly tarted up by covering it with brown paper.) The whole affair is jammed in a corner, the cardboard sticking up at the back and ends held in place by the table. Anything can be pinned onto the card and bits and pieces stood on the table. Our current 'display' is snails in a home-made vivarium (Kirsty's) and worms in a large jar (Calum's). Relevant drawings, pictures and books make it ideal Ed. Dept. fodder too!

Lastly, for 39p worth of panel pins and a scrap of wood left from house-building, we made a rubber band board. The pins stick up on a 10 x 10 grid and it's used to make all sorts of weird and wonderful patterns using rubber bands (easiest), pretty wool or coloured shirred elastic. Even has mathematical connotations, I believe!

## NEWS *from the Regions*

### NOTTS.

It's been said before, and I make no apology for saying it again; it really does give one a lift to meet people of like mind, especially if one belongs to a minority group of apparently minority type opinions. Going by my own experience, it seems it is often considered to be extreme/eccentric/disturbing for one to educate one's own children at home, resulting more from the weirdness of the parents than the inadequacy of the systems of learning on offer. People congratulate themselves on belonging to a 'free' society with room for people who do not wish to take advantage of our wonderful (or in any case generally good) schools! But these are mere generalisations. There were a few of our species at the Notts. E.O. picnic. How enjoyable it all was, to be disgusted, horrified, hopeful, interested, not surprised and controversial together! This is not to say that there were no disagreements. Among the cries of "and don't you think..." and "Oh! Yes, definitely!" there was some healthy dissent and less than dispassionate discussion, but I don't think anyone was censored. The kids seemed to have enjoyed meeting each other and some long term friendships were made among us all. As a means of inspiring local support and enthusiasm, the picnic seems to have been a good idea. The prevailing atmosphere now, I feel, is one of optimism for Notts. E.O. I think local organisation is extremely important for individuals and E.O. as a whole, so I hope for more permanent results. We shall see. I recommend such meetings to any groups who have not yet had any; if only for the sake of having a blimp at who's who, it might be fun, but I am confident that (interested and concerned as you all are) you will get more from it than that - try it.

BARBARA CLOHESSY

### W. MIDLANDS

Early in October the West Midlands Area held a meeting - the first for several years - in the Children's Library in the middle of Birmingham. It was just a modest gathering, a chance for members to get to know one another, and to bring along any interested friends. Not many of us, it transpired, are actually practising E.O. at the moment. Some hope to, when toddlers reach school age; some want to keep options open for older children who at present like, or at least tolerate, school. We had at least 3 families at the meeting who were interested in E.O. mainly from religious motives; some were Jehovah's Witnesses, some strict Muslims. The most encouraging contribution, I think, came from a 16 year old who had been out of school since he was 11 and only regrets that the family didn't know about home education earlier. (He and his mother between them, by the way, seem to have achieved several 'O' levels and are working for more.) The group wants to meet again. We've discovered that one of our number is a mathematician and hope to draw her out on the subject of the New Maths some time in January. (If people in regions near Birmingham are interested, perhaps they'd get in touch with me nearer the time.)

HAZEL CLAWLEY 021 772 7165.

## WALES

A few families from North Wales met, in September, for a weekend at one of their homes. Apart from all of us having a wonderful time paddling in the stream and walking in the forest and talking about all sorts of things, we 'grown-ups' also got round to discussing what we might do on a local (relatively speaking) level (the problem being that members in Wales tend to be somewhat scattered). We agreed that we would compile a directory listing resources and facilities, people and places in North Wales which could be of use to E.O. families, both residents and visitors. We would very much like to hear from anyone who knows of any of these things in Gwynedd, Clwyd, Aberystwyth area and northern Powys (Montgomery). We also decided that we should produce a Welsh poster/handbill. (There will be a notice in the newsletter when these are available.)

Annie and Ian Wilton-Jones in Gwent have now joined us in our 'co-ordinating team' and are answering enquiries for South and mid Wales. We still need more volunteers to act as contacts in their own area, which would mean allowing us to give their names to enquirers in that area, and also people who have some energy to put into organising meetings and so on. Any offers?

CAROLINE AND SIMON GRANT, 3/4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, LL54 6RS.

## SCOTLAND

THE WALLACES? NEVER HEARD OF 'EM.

Following the Ed's cryptic N.B. at the end of the News from Scotland in the last newsletter, we thought maybe a little introduction was in order. So here we are : Bruce and Christine (the parents) and Kirsty (8) and Calum (4). We got Kirsty out of school just over a year ago, thanks to the moral support of E.O., and then felt we would like to make a more positive contribution than just paying our money. Living in a small, remote, crofting community in the top left hand corner of Scotland we felt rather restricted in what we could do. Remote though we are, we do have a postman and a telephone, so the obvious thing seemed to be to use them. There's not much hope of organising meetings - our closest member is 26 miles away, the next one 80! So - Robina is organising the meetings, we're coping with the paperwork.

We've decided our only hope is to hold an OPEN WEEK the last week in May. (We can't get to you - can you get to us?) We've plenty of room on our 5 acres for tents, plus we have a 6-berth caravan and floor space in the house for plenty more. The mountains, moors and wilderness are at our backs and the sea at our front - we have 2 small boats. We've cows, sheep, hens, pigs by then, cats, dog and . pet snails (!) and, all being well, a fair proportion of little black lambs and a calf or two.

It's even possible to get here by public transport.

P.S. EOers are welcome at any time really.

BRUCE AND CHRISTINE WALLACE, 25 Diabaig, By Torridon, Wester Ross.

\* \* \*

We had planned a kids week at the end of August and sent out an explanatory blurb to everyone we could think of, and some we couldn't (think of), advertising a week of living in our remote smallholding, doing lots of active things and having fun. Nobody replied to say they were coming - only two people replied at all. So on the day it was all supposed to start, there we were, doing a normal end of

August routine on the farm day, when a body arrived, then another body, then some more bodies - 25 bodies ranging from 16 months (Rowan) upwards arrived that week. Kids everywhere! I've never seen so many people feeding a cow or a chicken all at once: the animals thought it was heaven. Every time they turned round another small hand was offering something nice to eat. There was noise (needless to say) kids and food, laughter, mess, giggles, leaping, mirth, tears, joy. We went for walks, put on a show, drew pictures, wrote funny poems, went swimming in the loch, paddling in the sea - God, it was exhausting! We may well do it again next year - we will let people know earlier.

CHRIS MAGINN, Open Sky Community, Barrackan, Ardfern, Argyll.

---

## E.O. in the market place

### Vicki & David Willow

During the summer months, we had a stall selling E.O. publications and copies of John Holt's 'Teach Your Own' at various fairs and gatherings. For those not familiar with such events, the fairs I speak of are usually 2 or 3 day events where you can camp and set up stalls and there are all sorts of weird, wonderful, colourful, noisy things going on for people of all ages. We also had other things for sale, such as second-hand clothes and bits and pieces, which attracted a larger range of people to us.

There was a great deal of interest shown, quite a few books and magazines were bought from us, and we talked with lots of good people. If only half the people who picked up a copy of the introductory literature join E.O. there will be a noticeable increase in membership.

At the 'Green Gathering', near Glastonbury, we got together with Ivan Sokolov, another E.O. member, who was doing a workshop on 'Deschooling and its Relevance to the Peace Movement', which evolved into a general discussion on deschooling and E.O., and was attended by about 20 people.

We found it an enjoyable way to spend the summer - we usually go to these fairs anyway, and it was good to be doing something constructive there.

In view of the recent debate about getting E.O. into the market place, we feel this is one good way of doing it - maybe more members could try it in their area.

Anyone who is interested in more details of our activities, please write to us: David and Vicki Willow, Pollards Cross Cottage, Church Hill, Saffron Walden Essex, CB10 2PA.

---

## Birth Otherwise

(a regular column?)

Welcome to Tiili-Beth, born - at home - to Rosemary and Tony Taylor, whose other three children, also born at home, have been educated at home since 1978.

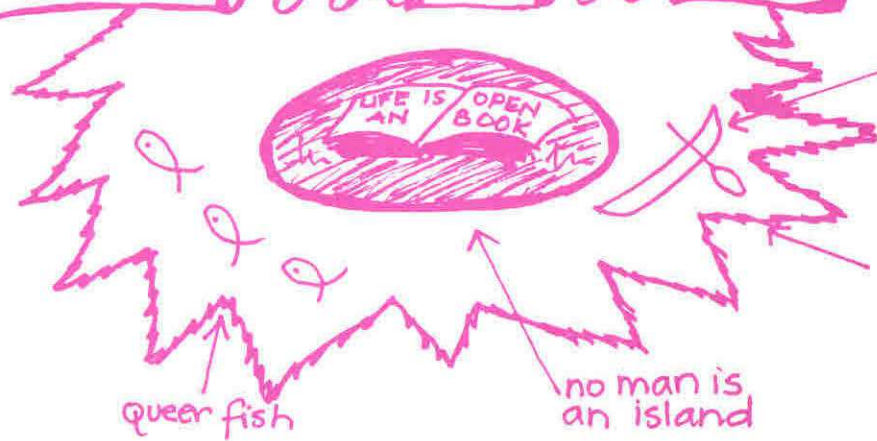
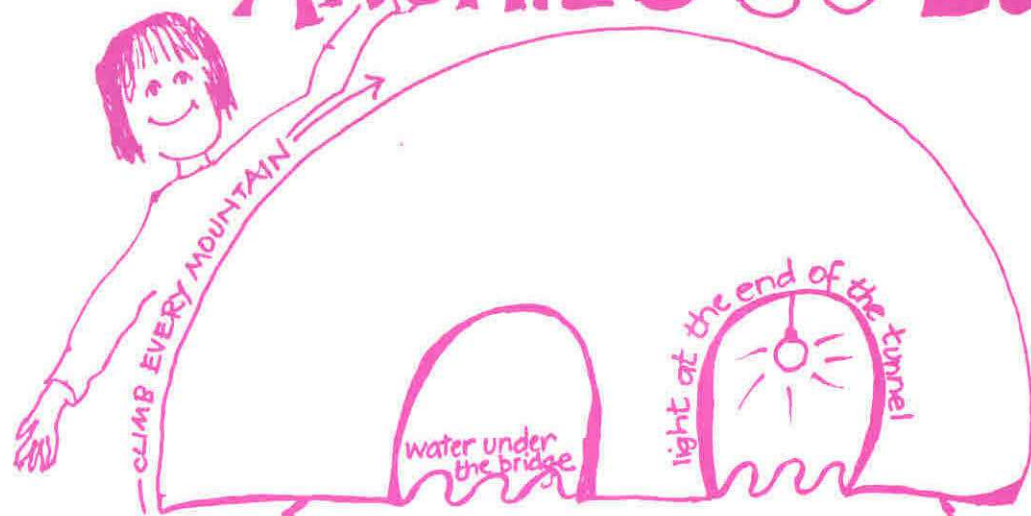
And welcome to Linnevah, born - at home again - to Dianne and Mick Moran.

And welcome to Linneveh Frances, born - at home again - to Dianne and Mick Moran.

(Keep it up! Ed.)

# ARCHIE'S GO LOGO

by SEG



paddle your own canoe

a vicious circle

queer fish

no man is an island

# Books in the making

---

## 1

---

We - Bruce Cox and Caroline Grant - are working on a book about practising E.O.

We do not envisage it primarily as a practical manual, a step-by-step guide to home schooling, but rather as an impressionistic kind of book, covering such topics as : 'why we were dissatisfied with school', 'how we plan our day', 'the effect of de-schooling on the child/our family life', 'our relationship with the L.E.A.', etc.

We are using as our starting point the back pages of the questionnaires, where people have indicated that they are willing for what they have written there to be used in publication. (Have you ever wondered what happened to those beautifully written pieces?)

It strikes us that there is much there that can be of benefit both to other members of E.O., especially those still at the stage of contemplating de-schooling, and also to the general public.

If anyone feels that they would like to contribute something and has not done so on a questionnaire recently - or would like to add to what they have said there - they are hereby invited to do so. We especially need contributions from E.O. children (especially teenagers), along the lines of : how do you feel about being taught at home? what difference does it make to you? or, if you are at school but would rather not be, what things do you particularly dislike about the school situation?

It does not matter whether you write a complete story/treatise or simply isolated comments : we will have a use for both.

Please send any contributions to : BRUCE COX, Grey Row Cottage, Flixton Rd., St. Margaret S. Elmham, Harleston, Norfolk, IP20 0PL.

---

## 2

---

"Shall we keep the children out of school?"

Where do you start to look for the answers to that question? By joining E.O. and studying the pamphlets; by reading the variety of theoretical books on the subject; by visiting lots of home educators in the country and realising the immense varieties of whys, ways and means. It is getting easier, this spring saw the publication of John Holt's practical guide to home schooling in the U.S., but what about a guide to what's going on over here. Don't worry, one is on its way!

I am going to write a book. I am going to write about a lot of boring stuff E.O. is made of : L.E.A.s; the law; the roles of welfare officers, advisors, educational psychologists, social workers; what resources exist around the country both within and outside the education field. All of that is, though, only at half the book. The most important part is about doing it. Since I joined E.O. some years ago and got involved in my children's education at home I have above all learnt about the diversity of principles and practices involved in the movement. I want to record as much of that diversity as possible, showing through the experiences of lots of families what home education can be all about. In this way I trust that the book will be of help to anyone thinking about deschooling whatever their philosophical standpoint, background or environment.

Back in the June newsletter I wrote asking for invitations to stay with people - an opportunity to share skills and experiences. This new plan is an expansion of that one. I am getting a bus with a friend and we will be travelling the country for a few years. We will kit out the bus both as a home and as a resource centre. We will build up a supply of equipment, skills and materials that will be of use to adults and children we will be visiting. These will vary from costumes to computers, masks to welding sets and anything in between people may ask for that we have room to carry.

So I'd really like to hear from you if you would like us to visit. You may have children out of school, have had them out, plan to or just feel that your views on the subject are worth passing on. In each county we need at least one place to park a 36ft bus near a tap and a drain, where we can stay for a week or two learning from you and visiting other people in the area. We hope to receive some research grants in the spring ; until then we will be looking for work. So if you have any skilled jobs piling up or even a complete renovation planned, maybe I can be of use to you. I have a wide range of professional skills and the tools to match ranging from joinery, plumbing, wiring, metal-work, welding, mechanics to shoe-making and massage therapy (see June NL for more details). I would like to combine teaching these skills to adults and older children with earning a non-professional hourly rate to help us through the winter living on our bus.

If you have work for me, want to share your experiences for the book or just want to meet some new faces, write to us (letters will be forwarded) and I will come your way with Candida and Julian (aged 15 months).

IVAN SOKOLOV, 42 St. Mark's Road, London W10.

---

3

---

I am editing a book on local initiatives in education. This is one of a series on local community initiatives which are published annually by New Direction Press. So far these books have covered housing, employment and health and community groups, and it is intended to extend them to other topics, including education. The books sell, usually in a set, mainly to institutions, local authorities and other official bodies, but also to the general public.

I am reasonably well informed about projects taking place within schools, universities etc. but have much less information about those out of school or outside the system. I'd be very grateful to be put in touch with any interesting initiatives which involve education of any sort for any or all age groups. The main criteria are that they must involve the local community, and be of benefit to it, and also to some extent establish some precedent for future action. The criteria are very broad and flexible, but I don't think education otherwise within a family would qualify unless it involved considerable interaction with the local community or with other families.

Detailed descriptions are not necessary, if you could send the name of the person to write to or, if it has a name, of the project.

Thank you. DICK KITTO, 27a Sydney St., Brightlingsea, Colchester, Essex.

---

#### FREE SCHOOL FOR PENDLE?

There seems to be a definite bond between free schools and E.O. people. Most of the E.O. people we have met seem to agree with the free school idea, and are disillusioned with the Educational System in the same way.

We saw a good potential for a free school in the Pendle area (N.E.Lancs.) and arranged a very successful weekend meeting in January. A small group has done a lot of groundwork since then, including finding a nearly ideal building : an 18th C. quaker-house with some nice countryside around it and a small garden. Now we feel it is time to expand. We need new ideas; enthusiasm; parents who would like to move into the area (which has lots of people and houses from £3,000); teachers who could help - in fact, anybody. If you are interested, drop us a line - any support would be great.

STEWART BACHELDOR, 29 Atkinson St., Colne, Lancs.

---

# What the Membership Secretary does

---

## Andrea Harrison

- 1) First job each day : enter all mail into 'mail record' book, numbering in sequence to co-incide with subsequent filing. (In this way, I can keep a check that all mail is dealt with.)
- 2) Decipher hand-written addresses - at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. each day.
- 3) Go through mail & pass over to Mum (Iris) anything I can't deal with. Also photostat letters that are relevant to others in E.O.
- 4) REGISTER NEW MEMBERS
  - (i) Make 3 copies of membership form to be sent to (a) Bob & Tess Emmett (computer recorders) (b) co-ordinators (c) Simon Grant (for resources/contact list).
  - (ii) Type index card.
  - (iii) Fill in introductory letter & address envelope.
  - (iv) Enter details onto my own county & index lists.
  - (v) Make up new member's pack.
  - (vi) Make out refunds or ask for extra cash - always frustrating.
  - (vii) Put pack into mailing bag.
- 5) Do changes of address for old members - almost as much work involved as registering a new member.
- 6) Send new co-ordinators their packs.
- 7) Keep co-ordinators and those running fairs supplied with stationery, publications etc. Keep records of everything sent out.
- 8) Answer letters on general matters concerning E.O.
- 9) Mail 'Teach Your Own'.
- 10) List subscribers to G.W.S. to be sent (monthly) to Stephanie Leland.
- 11) Photostat letters or other information to be despatched from here but written by others in E.O. for distribution.
- 12) List all cash & cheques & banking. Send paying-in slips monthly to John Elenor, with handwritten slips attached giving him details of new members & subscriptions. John deals with Bankers Orders.
- 13) Answer telephone - co-ordinators, new members & general enquiries. (Mum deals with all other calls.)
- 14) Originally, retype alphabet & county lists, but the Emmetts are now computerising lists. They will also do the mailing labels, which was previously a great burden to me.

Checking & double-checking lists is an 'on-going task' which I hope will be lessened once computerisation is finalised.

Apart from the odd day I dare not be out of the office due to my heavy load of incoming mail.

This is a bare outline of my activities : many other miscellaneous jobs are included.

There is a constant checking of stocks for re-ordering where possible, & I am always fighting Mum's mountains of paperwork which end up on my worktops & desk & TRYING to help her keep some order.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO FILL IN YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE!

---

# The Future of E.O.

---

Recently there has been much debate within the Core Group and in the Newsletter about the future organization of E.O. The Core Group thought it would be valuable to continue this debate at the Trent Park meeting, though not with the intention of coming to a series of binding decisions. This background paper and the proposals following it were prepared by a Steering Committee set up by the Core Group consisting of Bruce Cox, Caroline Grant and Helen Holland. The proposals were accepted by the meeting.

## Background to the Proposals

During the past year E.O. has continued to grow and flourish. Reports in recent Newsletters show a rapid increase in local activity, particularly in a few areas where membership is dense. Growth has posed some problems and we clearly need to adapt the way we organize to solve them. One possibility is to adopt a formal constitution which could lead us to take on the status of a limited company. The Core Group recently rejected this alternative, but opinion is divided (some of the pros and cons are given in the article on p. 45). This needs to be further explored in the Newsletter before any final decision is made and even if the decision were positive many months would pass before the matter would be finalised. In the meantime, and perhaps for the foreseeable future, we need an informal constitution which works effectively. This is the aim of the 12 proposals listed at the end of this paper. Firstly, however, we would like to describe some of the thinking that led up to these proposals, for many of which we are indebted to members who have written to the Newsletter.

E.O. started as a small organization but a national one. Families who joined often did so in the hope that active local groups existed. They were generally disappointed. In this situation E.O. provided practical and moral support mainly through its publications. (These still consume most of its income). Enquiries were dealt with on a national basis. As numbers have grown, more local co-ordinators have taken on more tasks. If membership continues to grow we can expect a rich growth of regional activity which will be more important to most people than what is offered nationally, although the Newsletter will continue to play an important role in communication. These changes mean that the relationship between the national framework and the regions has to be periodically rethought. One way of linking the two levels is to encourage regions to send representatives to Core meetings (proposal 3).

This leads to the general question of ensuring that E.O. is run in a democratic way. This is not as straightforward as it might seem. If all members met together regularly, then each decision could be approved by everyone. But there is no occasion when we all meet. The nearest we get to it is at Trent Park - which could act as a kind of Annual General Meeting (proposal 10) - though this discriminates against those who live furthest from London. One possibility is to have proposals placed in the Newsletter together with a voting slip to be returned to a central address. There are four snags in this idea:-

- i) It is time consuming - six to twelve weeks between the idea and the decision.
- ii) It would be difficult to amend or modify a proposal.
- iii) The power would lie less with the voters than with whoever selects and words the proposal.
- iv) A biased sample of the membership would probably respond.

We think that this idea should be used occasionally for major issues (proposal 8) but that the decision to do so must be left to the Core Group.

The form that democracy in E.O. has taken in the past is for the Core Group to be open to all members. We think that this is still the best arrangement and that it should continue (proposals 1 & 2). To ensure that members are, as far as possible, equally able to come to meetings, we believe that travelling

expenses should be paid to members who attend E.O. decision-making meetings of any kind, if they wish to claim them (proposal 11). This is on the understanding that attendance involves a willingness to take on some of the jobs that crop up (proposal 6).

We have always had difficulty in making decisions between Core Group meetings. We think, therefore, that the decision to set up a Steering Committee to make day-to-day decisions between, after consultation with others where necessary, should be accepted (proposal 4).

It should be made as easy as possible for members to plan their attendance at meetings by giving dates, venues and where possible agendas far in advance (proposal 7).

We aim to limit the number of national meetings, which are so costly of time and transport; to three - one at Trent Park and one each in the North and the West - so that as many members as possible have a chance to come to at least one (proposal 9).

Core meetings should not be restricted to business matters. They are also social functions. We suggest that each meeting covers a whole day but be split into two sessions. The first would be devoted to discussion and clarification of items on the agenda, but would also provide a chance to get to know others present and to exchange news, views and opinions. The second meeting would work through the agenda more systematically and make the necessary decisions. An effort should be made to arrange accommodation for those who would otherwise be likely to have to leave before the natural conclusion of the meeting, so avoiding the rushed and sometimes unbalanced decisions which have at times occurred (proposal 5).

#### MISCELLANEOUS POINTS

We know that some proposals have been put forward recently which we have not taken up but which we think we should comment on.

Professional Help Some members have argued that we should employ someone to undertake much of the work which is now done by the membership, a kind of national organizer. (We do, in fact, pay a token sum to the Membership Secretary but this is in no sense a wage). Other members believe that the whole ethos of E.O. is 'Do-it-yourself' and that we should remain a D.I.Y. organization through and through. We have not dealt with this question because it is at present completely academic. We cannot afford to employ anyone and will not be able to in the foreseeable future.

A related question is one of buying equipment to make administration and other tasks easier. Again, much of this discussion is academic in that we cannot afford a worthwhile computer, offset press or whatever. However, we do think that we should be prepared to use sophisticated hardware should any become available and if it were clear that this would save a great deal of members' time.

Elections The question of the election of officers is one which has surfaced more than once in recent months. Our feeling is that in some cases a formal election might be most appropriate but that to adopt it as standard practice would present more problems than it would solve. The problem so far has been to get members to stand for office rather than to choose from a plethora of candidates.

Splitting Up One way which has been suggested for adjusting to growth would be to split up into autonomous regions. We expect regions to grow in importance and to do in their own way everything which can best be done at a local level or which cannot be done nationally at all. On the other hand there are some things which are best organized nationally, in particular the publication of the Newsletter and other booklets, and the keeping of membership records and accounts. The exact division of labour should be continually reassessed.

## PROPOSALS for the Trent Park Gathering 1982

1. The Core Group will remain the principal decision-making and executive group within E.O.
2. Core Group meetings are open to all members.
3. Wherever possible, members in neighbouring areas should appoint a regional representative to participate regularly in Core Group meetings.
4. The Core Group shall be able to set up a Steering Committee with full powers to make decisions between meetings, as long as such decisions are unanimous and reported to the next Core Group.
5. Core Group meetings will normally be divided into two parts:-
  - i) A meeting to discuss any topic of interest, without making decisions.
  - ii) A decision-making meeting to work through a formal agenda.
6. Members should normally not expect to contribute to a decision-making meeting unless they have attended the preceding general meeting. Involvement in a decision-making meeting implies a willingness to take on some administrative tasks.
7. Times and venues of Core Group meetings and where possible agendas should be published well in advance.
8. Important and controversial issues, such as whether E.O. should have a constitution or become a charity, should be publicised and fully debated in the Newsletter before a decision is made.
9. Core Group meetings should be held three times a year, once each in London, the North of England and the West.
10. It should be possible, if funds are available, for members to claim expenses for attendance at regional or national decision-making meetings, (except that those attending Core Group meetings for the first time will be expected to pay their own way).
11. Regional events should ideally be self-financing, though small payments may be made to get a new venture started if approved by the Steering Committee or Core Group.

---

### a note from the Enquiries Secretary

I continue to receive a steady flow of enquiries, largely stimulated by recent publicity in the Times, Woman's Realm and Practical Self Sufficiency. Many thanks to those who have sent publicity cuttings to me. This does help me answer more fully enquiries stimulated by these articles. It always seems so limp to say, "I don't know, I haven't seen it:"

I am pleased to report that our son Nicholas (deschooled for 3½ years doing 'O' levels) has received a conditional offer for King's College Cambridge. Nicholas's personal tutor at his local Technical College feels sure he obtained the offer because of his proven ability to study unaided and unsupervised. I hope this gives heart to those members who worry about 'O' and 'A' levels taken out of school.

JANET EVERDELL

# OTHERWISE BOOKS & LIVING

Eve Thacker

## Alternative books for children

We have only just joined E.O. so are complete novices concerning what is available to aid do-it-yourself education. We read the article "The Peaceful History of the World" in Newsletter 23 and it was right in line with our thoughts on "where's all the alternative literature appropriate for children?" We'd been brainstorming all day - I'd even started an "educational cartoon for disillusioned kids" thinking about contacting "Woody Books" (a local alternative book workshop) or even "Community Arts" (who at least still have a print-shop). I read through the booklist by C.A.T. (Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth) and found only four titles not for adults only. I know some bright young things will be able to get into adult oriented stuff, but our son Nicki (11 yrs) finds even John Seymour long-winded and tedious. It doesn't capture the imagination - especially if you've been to schools and have developed "boredom-blocks" against everything except comics. Could there be a need for a "bridge-that-gap" publication/series of articles to at least sow a seed in a battered brain or two, to re-stimulate natural curiosity and give the message "knowledge is power" - the power and ability to DO. E.O. parents living in more self-sufficient ways would probably just let their kids learn by doing, but many won't be in such an enviable position, and will all the skills and knowledge be available for junior's every question even then? No, people living "close to nature" tend to be very busy with surviving, digging, reaping, cooking, etc. and not have time to devour books and regurgitate something digestible for their youngsters. At present, just about all we do have is time - unemployed and homeless, seeking some sort of Utopia that won't cost money we haven't got - and ideas.

We'd like to know of anyone else who may have likely material, preferably home-made, to go towards a sort of "book exchange" - maybe the odd worksheet, or some project completed(?) by a child who has outgrown it. We can't make promises, considering our circumstances, but we do have a few handy contacts with non-profit-making organizations who might just be interested production-wise.

## Education otherwise than expected

Something else I feel like mentioning is the strange and spontaneous way Nicki's education is progressing since he was de-schooled, only last May. We sold up and went to Inishfree, a small island off Ireland's N.W. corner of the Republic, (the 'Cartwheel' project is tentatively being transferred out there). We didn't get a place to live yet we learned much - and Nicki most of all. We'd visited the Machynlleth C.A.T. and he'd seen windmills for the first time. On Inishfree he observed someone make a small wind-powered generator and put it to use - lighting, electric fence, - and carved a model blade himself which worked. Lots of other things - living in tents, digging turf for fuel, fishing, cooking, shopping for a week on very limited money in order to survive by himself (he left 'home' seeking independence!)

Then we returned to England and after 2 months on a wild wind-swept island I thought he was bound to be too "liberated" to fit into Granma and Grandad's bungalow, the three of us in one room, and its rather a "select" area to boot! Just as I despaired that the colour T.V. had "got him," he finds a friend. The local gypsy - and he's offered to take him around with him a bit; tonight's

lesson was in paring down a horse's hooves and having a ride afterwards. Saturday is booked to fell a tree dangerously overhanging the road, maybe a bit of rabbiting.... (and the man says he'll tip us the wink if he finds a house to let, he'd like us to stay around here!). Niki is learning, but I wonder how the L.E.A. would examine such subjects, especially the skill of how to get along with so many different types of people! But then, they had previously put him in a "malad" boarding school because he got on better with adults than his peer group.

I'd like to hear if anyone has useful comments, and whether other members have found the strange and spontaneous way "education" may be "otherwise" than expected.

On a practical note, could anyone inform us of a suitable commune, house-share, accomodation in return for work, or other alternative?

Eve, Vince & Niki Thacker  
 "Bachcroft," Pulverbach, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

## notices for co-ordinators

It was decided at the last core group meeting that co-ordinators could, if they wished, ask enquirers to return membership forms in the first instance to them - the co-ordinator can then make a note of the new member before forwarding the form (and cheque) to the membership sec. This really only applies when a co-ord. is keen to know immediately when a new member has joined.

The enquiries secretary asks that co-ordinators should be encouraged to swot up their S.I.N.C. from time to time. She gets a number of enquiries which the co-ordinator could have dealt with themselves if they had consulted S.I.N.C.

Please, unless you have violent objections, remember to fill in your own address on any posters that you put up. This saves enquiries having to be sent back again from the London address.

## new co-ordinators

NORTHANTS. Chris Owen, 4 Church Street, Cottingham, Market Harborough, Leics. LE16 8XG.  
 Tel. Kettering (0536) 771127

S. DEVON Yvonne Box, Myrtle Cottage, Flood Street, Stoke Gabriel, Totnes, S. Devon.

MULL Charlotte Keith, Ambleside, Tobermory, Isle of Mull, Argyll PA75 6QA.

N. IRELAND Robert Stannard, Glendower, 136 Glen Road, Belfast BT11 8BN.

## INTRODUCTORY LITERATURE

Before parting with copies of the introductory literature, please make sure that the publications order form looks like this :

SCHOOL IS NOT COMPULSORY...		free	£1		
EARLY YEARS...		free	£1		
NEWSLETTER					
Digests...	1979	9 - 12	75p	£1	1979
Back issues...	1982	21 - 26	60p	75p	22 23 24 25 26
GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING...					
Back copies...					none
Year's subscription...			£3	£3.60	25 - 30

# NOTICES

## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Have you renewed your subscription for 1983? If not, now is the time to do so! (using the form in the Oct. NL). The Feb. NL will not be sent to anyone who has not renewed; don't let that be you!

## E.O. PUBLICATIONS

Publications currently in stock are: School is not compulsory £1 (non-members); Early Years £1; newsletters 22, 23, 24, 25 75p each. These, and copies of the introductory literature, can be obtained from the Membership Secretary (Andrea Harrison), The Burntlands, Rochford, Tenbury Wells, Worcs.

## DIGEST 1979

Were you a member of E.O. in 1979? or did you manage to get back copies of NLS 9 - 12 when you joined? If not, here's your chance to catch up! As relevant now as it was then - four issues rolled into one for only 75p (non-members £1). Also a good thing to have around if you're running a stall at a fair etc. Available from Caroline Grant, 3 & 4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS.

## GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

The nearest American equivalent to the E.O. NL, edited by John Holt. If you want to receive nos. 25 - 30, send £3 subscription (non-members £3.60 - cheques payable to E.O.) to Stephanie Leland, 2 St. Edmunds Cottages, Bove Town, Glastonbury, Somerset.

## RE-USE ENVELOPE LABELS

in red on white, with the triangle motif and the wording 'School is not compulsory', are now available, at £1 for 100, from John Elenor, 18 Eynham Rd, London W12 0HA.

## HANDBILLS

We now have a large stock of A5 size handbills with the triangle motif on one side overlaid with a brief description of E.O. and the aims and objectives on the other. If you are having a stall at a fair, or could place a wodge in your local alternative bookshop, community centre, library or whatever, please get some from Caroline Grant, 3 & 4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS.

## QUESTIONNAIRES

Thanks to those who have filled them in already - but it would be nice to have a few more. Here's what happens to them:

- (i) They are analysed - the results might be of interest in indicating how many children are out of school, the general attitude of L.E.A.'s, how people get to hear of E.O. etc.
- (ii) Relevant information is used to update the lists from which the next contact/skills & resources list will be compiled.
- (iii) The back pages are looked over with a view to being used in E.O. publications.
- (iv) They are sent on to the appropriate co-ordinator.

## NEW CONTACT/RESOURCES LIST

should be ready for distribution with the Feb. NL. Any final additions/alterations to Simon Grant, 3 & 4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS.

## NEXT CORE GROUP MEETING

to be held on Jan. 29th & 30th at Lower Rock, near Glastonbury. See p. 55 for details. Liven up your winter with a weekend away!

## LEGAL STUDY-DAY FOR CO-ORDINATORS

to be held on Jan. 29th. See p. 55 for details. Anyone else particularly interested should contact Simon Grant - there may be room for you.

## CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Julie & Malcolm Duff (Glos.) have produced a splendid newsheet and have been doing a lot of work on behalf of families with children with 'special needs'.

## RELIGIOUS GROUNDS FOR E.O.

Those motivated to practise E.O. partly on religious grounds may be interested in being able to contact one another. If you would like your religious beliefs to be included on the next contact/resources list (in simple code form), drop a note to Simon Grant. (This would be a separate category from knowledge of a religion which you are willing to 'teach' to others.)

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Janet Everdell would be very grateful to receive copies of articles about E.O. in newspapers or magazines, to help her deal with enquiries resulting from the same. Send them to Janet at 'Heathermead', 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs. PE18 9AN. Other articles about education in general but having possible relevance to E.O. should be sent to Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk.

## NEWSLETTER EDITORS

If you are interested in trying your hand at editing a newsletter, contact Bruce Cox, Grey Row Cottage, St. Margaret S. Elmham, Hazlestone, Norfolk IP20 0PL.

## POSTERS IN TRANSLATION

If you think there is a need for an E.O. poster/handbill in some minority language and would like to produce one, please consult the Steering Committee or Treasurer.

## NON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE GROUP

On Oct. 7th about a dozen people met at the Advisory Centre for Education to discuss some of the problems of children who do not attend school, and their treatment under the present law. The meeting was convened by Iris Harrison and included representatives from A.C.E., the Children's Legal Centre, Justice for Children, STOPP and E.O. It was a useful and constructive meeting and is likely to lead to increasing pressure for changes in the law. A full report will appear in the Feb. NL.

## THREATS OF CARE PROCEEDINGS

Iris Harrison is doing some research on threats of care proceedings in connection with the Non School Attendance Group and would be pleased to know of any such cases that might not already have been brought to her attention. Contact her at The Burntlands, Rochford, Tenbury Wells, Worcs.

## SOLICITORS

If you need a solicitor in connection with E.O., Ivan Geffen suggests that you seek out your nearest N.C.C.L. solicitor - Ivan will then liaise with them.

## CALVERT SCHOOL

The address of Calvert School was omitted from Sue Macaulay's article in the Oct. NL. It is: Calvert School, Tuscany Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21210, U.S.A.

## MANCHESTER MONTHLY MEETINGS

Manchester area members now have an informal monthly meeting in different members' houses. All members welcome. For full details of venues, contact Peter Jones, 3 Fairfield Court, Daisybank Road, Manchester M14 5GL, Tel. 061 224 9816.

## E.O. CYCLE/CAMPING TRIP

Peter Jones is planning a cycle/camping trip for early summer 1983. Anyone interested contact him at the address above.

## FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

'The Growing Child: An experience in Transformative Approaches to Learning' took place in Pisa, Italy, from 22nd to 31st Oct. John Holt was speaking, amongst others. The aims of the conference were to explore alternative and holistic approaches to children's education, development and learning, and it was intended for parents and professionals. We hope that an E.O. member in Italy will have been able to attend briefly.

## MONKTON WYLDE

has been publicising itself as, amongst other things, a centre for E.O. We had not been consulted about this and so do not know much about it. We have now entered into correspondence with them and a representative from E.O. should be visiting them in the near future to discuss the matter and explore possibilities.

## CENTRE FOR ADVICE ON NATURAL ALTERNATIVES

Set up recently by Annie & Ian Wilton-Jones, who are members of E.O. CANA will help direct people to appropriate alternative organisations and can offer personal help/advice on several subjects, such as natural childbirth, natural family planning, alternative medicine, alternative energy, nutrition (and, of course, home education). CANA is a non-profit making organisation, so enquirers are asked to enclose a S.A.E. CANA, Tyddyn y Mynydd (formerly Greenlands), Llanelly Hill, Gwent. Tel. 0873 831182.

## E.O. SUMMER GET-TOGETHER

We are hoping to arrange a get-together for a week early next summer, in Wales. The venue has not yet been set, but I am looking for somewhere with plenty of space for tents and also some indoor

accommodation and rooms to use for various activities. (Does anyone know of a likely place?) The idea is to have a number of workshops time-tabled (!) - for children and parents - as well as allowing plenty of scope for just getting to know people and pursuing all sorts of informal activities. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to hold a workshop. In the pipe-line so far are : computer programming, watch natural history, activities in mathematics for parents, electronics, German & Welsh (conversation, games, songs etc.), wholefood cookery, making posters, introduction to philosophy - over to you! Further details (I hope) in the next newsletter.

Caroline Grant, 3 & 4 Tanyrallt Cottis.  
Llanllyfni, Caernarfon LL54 6RS.

#### PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

At Trent Park a question was raised about insurance cover for holding E.O. meetings. We may hope that people invited to a local E.O. meeting would not hold anyone else responsible for any injury to their child, but let us be prepared for the odd case where an injury could end up costing a

family not only heartache but thousands of pounds in equipment etc. to cope with a permanent disability.

If you hold a meeting in your own home, you will probably already be covered for Public Liability by your household insurance policy. Even so, it would be advisable to take out extra cover in the name of E.O. AND yourself, just to be safe. If you are hiring or getting free use of a council hall, school or any public building, be aware that most authorities DO NOT provide cover for anything but their own events. Most insurance companies can provide one day Special Events cover for a nominal fee, e.g. the Prudential charge £5 per day for a meeting of up to 500 people to which the public are admitted. If it is by invitation only then it costs £2.50. This provides cover up to £250,000 - sounds a lot, but it is the absolute minimum nowadays. The premium ought, in my opinion, to be met by those attending the meeting, but otherwise it can be claimed back from the treasurer. The question of liability need not put us off holding meetings, and insurance allows us to be safe rather than sorry.

Ivan Sokolov

## SMALL ADS

#### TEACHER WANTED

Our children need a teacher - interested? Please write to :  
LINDA COKER, Pwllacca, Llanfihangel, Brympabuan, Builth Wells, Powys.

#### ACCOMMODATION WANTED

Required urgently for as early as possible in 1893 ; accommodation (preferably self-contained) for myself and 10 year old daughter, recently deschooled. Willing to do housework or whatever in exchange for the accommodation or pay reasonable rent. Prefer in or around London area. Anything anywhere considered! Contact MRS. J. RAIBOURNE, 101 Priory Road, Stone, Staffs. ST15 8NH.

#### PEN-FRIEND WANTED

Is there a 12 year old girl (BOer) who would like a pen-friend? My interests are art, cats and pop-music. If you would like to write, my name is JOANNA GUTHRIE and I live at Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk.

#### KNITTING & TYPING

Hand-knitting of all kinds, and typing undertaken. Very reasonable charges, or free if necessary. VICKI WILLOW, Pollards Cross Cottage, Church Hill, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 2PA.

#### BABY CARRIER

Sally Wilkins has designed a baby carrier which she is selling for £10.50 (plus £1 p.&p.). Details from Sally at 5 Brookfield Cottages, Acresford, Burton-on-Trent DE12 8AW.

# THE TEACHERS

## Who are they ?

'The Teachers' is a dedicated rationalist teaching order whose basic policy is "to acquire and spread education, and to encourage increased social responsibility".

Their main bases are near Bangor, North Wales, and in London. At the N. Wales base, the community is combined with a school, a farm and a wildlife reserve. They support themselves largely by work done in the computer field, and also produce their own paperback books and pamphlets, including the first book in a reading scheme for young children. In addition they grow much of their own food and manufacture much of their own furniture.

The Teachers run an education centre in Bangor itself, where they stock a wide range of books, toys, games, art materials, etc., all of which have a strong educational bias. The main reason for opening the centre was to take education onto the street (literally - the centre is in the middle of the shopping precinct), creating an environment where people can obtain help on teaching themselves and their children.

The Teachers are motivated by the belief that "a more informed society will inevitably become a more caring society and that society will be better for everyone including ourselves"; they are committed to the widespread reform of 'schools' and the 'school' concept. They see the teaching and learning of basic skills as essential to a civilised society, but believe that it is for the individual to choose which skills s/he wants to learn, and furthermore do not see such skills in isolation from society as a whole. Rather, they teach an integrated view of society, enabling the individual to see his/her skills in a social context. Education should be oriented to the learner's requirements, not to a 'curriculum'. A learner's work should be real, not a throw-away game which is time-wasting in disguise; children's work must be relevant to their society and the children must know that this is the case. Above all, The Teachers do not set out to teach people what to do, but how to fulfil their own objectives.

Contrary to what one might perhaps be led to expect, members of the community are not all 'qualified' teachers; "teachers, to us, are not people who 'passed' irrelevant academic parrot tests at 'university' or 'colleges of education'". The members who teach the children do, however, spend many years learning how to teach, under supervision. Education of the young is not, in their opinion, something to be undertaken by anyone, and not necessarily by the child's parent. (It is in their view of the parent/child relationship that The Teachers are perhaps at their most controversial.) Yet the qualities they look for in a teacher would, I'm sure, be applauded by many E.O. parents. The following are extracted from their booklet 'The Teachers Community'.

Teachers teach because they care, not to prove themselves.

Teachers do not 'put down' those of little confidence to protect their own fears.

The teacher is constantly aware that each person is a new experience and carefully evades generalisations and projection, the two great errors of the false teacher.

The teacher knows that the learner is a plant that must grow and is, therefore, patient.

A teacher knows that plants need sunlight and so feeds the hunger of curiosity.

A teacher teaches humility and patience in the context of an awesome and pretty universe, but counsels optimism, not despair.

A teacher has arms to hold as has any human.

# Children at The Teachers

We have 11 children at present, 4 of whom were born within the community, aged between 2 and 11 years, most of them 5 to 6.

All of our children (child defined as being under 16) are taught within the community, by people who specialise in working with and bringing up these children. We do not send our children to outside school for 2 main reasons :

- 1) we totally disapprove of the social behaviour taught in schools
- 2) we regard the level of education and achievement as both inadequate and irrelevant.

Our children are commented upon wherever they go for their behaviour (i.e. they are pleasant to have around), their ability to concentrate, their high level of independence, and their levels of achievement in their areas of learning and study.

We teach a separation between study and work. Study benefits them primarily; work they contribute to their society in which they live. Study and education are not things they get for free; they have to be earned in one way or another, as are other privileges.

The day is structured for the children : as they mature they are weaned into running and organising the structure of their own day, rather than organisation being imposed upon them. The age of this weaning depends on intelligence, and whether the child was born within the community, amongst other factors. For example, a child born within the community, of high intelligence, more or less achieves self-organisation at around 5 years of age, while a child brought in at 5 years old, of medium intelligence, tends not to achieve this even by the age of 11.

The children get up and are dressed by 9.30., at which time they get their own breakfasts and tidy up after them, putting dishes into the dishwasher and leaving the place clean and tidy. From then, they study until about 1.30., when they have lunch which has been prepared by one or two of them. The children all learn to read and write, plus they have to do mathematics and english. These matters are regarded by us as essential basics for survival in our outside society. After they can read and write independently, they are told "we don't care what you do, but you're going to do some thing" i.e. time (life) is not to be 'wasted'. This means that each individual decides in what they are interested. No 'subject' or interest is insisted upon in the sense that any of the children have to do, say, geography, history, etc., except for maths, english, reading and writing. Consequently the individual child develops their own set of interests which they study and on which they work. As an example, one child has shown a strong interest in languages and has been learning french, german, mandarin chinese and egyptian hieroglyphics for the past three and a half years, since she was 7 or so. She also reads widely and has read most of Dickens' books, for example (which many people would call history). She also is a purple belt in karate, is at grade 3 level for piano, does ballet, swimming, physics, chemistry and biology. All self-motivated interests, but all studied and worked at seriously, not frivolously. Another child concentrates on activities such as riding, karate, swimming, piano, violin, and chemistry; she is 6 years old.

The children are all taught to direct their own lives and interests, in co-operation with others. Competition is non-existent and anyone likely to try to import such sickness is not allowed contact with the children until the child is strong enough (developmentally) to be aware of such behaviour and not contract the sick behaviour themselves. The children are actively taught how to defend themselves from other people's lunacy, both physical and mental; all learn karate as a physical self-defence technique, and are also taught social defence.

Pleasant social behaviour and skills/competence being at a premium in the society at large, we make sure our children are not handicapped in these areas. One of our children, for example, reached his 16th birthday recently (having been with us since 11 years old). Before he was 16 he had been accepted for the job as a trainee programmer in London. He now lives in our London base and has been in the

job for 2 years. He is also skilled in electronics and has stated an interest in becoming a vet. Thus he will be able to put back into society through skilled work in programming before asking society to support him while he trains as a vet. We regard the traipse from school to university to dole as socially unacceptable and humiliating for the individual concerned.

## The Teachers and the L.E.A.

We have not had much trouble with L.E.A.s as we can show our teaching work to be far superior to state school standards. Various so-called 'inspectors' have attempted to dominate, bully, threaten us, primarily because we do not accept their standards or their statements that they are in a position to 'inspect' us. In fact, we say to them that we should be inspecting their 'teachers' and 'schools' because their standards are so low. This approach does not always seem to appeal to them.

When we were first approached by an L.E.A., two 'inspectors' turned up at the doorstep uninvited and without announcing themselves. One was grossly overweight, the other displaying his drug-addiction by smoking a cigarette and inflicting it on the atmosphere for others to breathe. They were met with the following statements when they asked to be let in :

1. Smoking is not permitted on our property. Get off our property while you are smoking. (This was insisted upon until the offender went to the nearest public road and dropped the cigarette and trod on it and left it as litter. Whereupon he was told to pick it up and not leave it as litter outside our property.) The gentleman argued the whole time about how he should not be dealt with thus.
2. You came without an appointment. We only see people with appointments. Go away, telephone or write to make a mutually convenient appointment. (This was again argued with, and threats made. You must let us in or we'll take you to court etc. To which we replied - we haven't said we won't admit an appropriate officer of the L.E.A., we have said we won't admit certain individual 'inspectors' on their terms. If you send someone not overweight, who doesn't smoke, and you make an agreed appointment, then we cannot object.)

Eventually, they conformed to our standards (after quite a lot of correspondence between ourselves and the 'Director of Education'), and visited by appointment. Since then we have had no further trouble with L.E.A.s.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Teachers are open to visitors, although access to the children is limited, else, as they are the subject of so much interest, emotional response and down-right nosiness, sorry, objective curiosity, they would become like strange and unusual exhibits in a zoo, and their environment consequently disturbed.

The Teachers offer information and education in the areas of education and communal living, and anyone interested should write to them at the address below.

THE TEACHERS, 18, Garth Road, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57.

---

Dr Rhodes Boyson has suggested that qualified women teachers who are not working should be encouraged to teach their children at home. These mothers could be given a voucher for £800 (the cost of a place in primary school). Standards could be maintained by an annual test. Society's role, he says, is to set the educational standard, not to say how it should be achieved. But a child who did not perform adequately in the test should be sent back to school....

---

# LETTERS



## Reactions to last newsletter

Dear Education Otherwise,

If our membership is likely to double "if we can present members with a more up market magazine" it's time for E.O. to pack up (NOT THE EDITORIAL, VOL. 6 NO. 5).

E.O. is not about selling soap powder; it's not about being snappy and clever; it's not about "fighting the enemy on their own ground" (anyway, who is the enemy); nor is it about convincing anyone that we are not "eco-freaks?" (what's wrong with eco-freaks?).

It's not primarily about choosing a logo, or forming limited companies. It's not about looking authoritative. It's not even about "entering the market place with a loud voice".

I don't expect, John Elenor, you will be deluged with complaints about the new-style newsletter because many people (particularly those with children not being educated otherwise) feel safer with up market magazines, and with appearing authoritative. Who cares if The Times thinks E.O. is now respectable. The Times, like the organisation E.O., is not the prime mover of E.O. parents - the parents and children themselves are that. E.O. is not itself a 'cause', an 'issue', a harbinger of change. It may help people, it can support. But basically it follows - it does not lead.

People most likely to choose alternatives to school, for whatever reason, are least likely to be "browbeaten by authority" - a small group will be, of course, but not most; and they do not need glossy mags to help them, they need support, particularly from those with real tangible experience to offer.

A 'home-made', 'home-grown' newsletter conveys exactly the message of E.O. : that is the idea of parents doing what they think and feel is best for their children, not necessarily what the 'professionals' say. Of course we need specialists to help us and I know through meeting some that we have some very dedicated specialist friends in E.O. Certainly they do not want to be seen as the focal point of E.O.

Let us not forget that E.O. is about ordinary parents taking responsibility for their children's education and learning from and supporting each other.

It is about being humble in the face of an evolving social movement which none of us fully understand - it is about learning again with our children to find something more appropriate. Anything which thwarts that halting but honest communication between parents about their successes and their failures would be disastrous.

E.O. does not have to take on the classic mantle of social campaigner producing needless high powered slogan based confrontations and inevitably a new orthodoxy in the process.

It does not have to be a charity or a limited company with offices in London. It does not have to have a glossy up market magazine. There is nothing glossy or up market about practising E.O. To suggest otherwise would be a dangerous deceit.

It needs to be an efficient but intimate organisation of people united by a sense of responsibility for their children.

If there really are thousands of people waiting to take their children out of school then the organisation should split into smaller local groups.

People who do things differently will always be "dismissed". It is part of the inevitable price you pay. A price that cannot be paid for in advance by bankers order.

JAMES FEARNLEY  
The Homestead  
Metfield  
Nr. Harleston  
Norfolk

Dear E.O. Editor,

The last newsletter was very nicely laid out and I enjoyed reading it (though I wish the typist would use a few more apostrophes!). The change seemed to be an improvement, and it certainly is an improvement in terms of making the newsletter more attractive and informative. But it was a very sudden change, and although I go along with John Elenor's views on reaching out to a wider audience - and doing it now - I am not at all convinced that this is the way to go about it.

At one end of the newsletter we had John Elenor justifying an immediate increase in printing cost, and at the other end we had an appeal for early subscription renewals because of cash-flow problems. In between, the minutes of the Core Group meeting told us: "It was agreed that a) forward planning of expenditure was essential, and b) newsletter printing costs need to be reduced". : Do you lot really know where you are going?

I should like to propose that if the E.O. newsletter is to become an authoritative campaigning tool, the project needs a lot more forethought than appears to have been given it. What sort of magazine can fulfil the two distinct functions of informing and supporting members, and reaching out to the as yet uncommitted public? I doubt very much that John Elenor is correct in suggesting that a glossy mag. would double the membership, which in turn would pay for the said glossy mag. You'd go bankrupt first! I also think that within any organisation, even accepting that some decisions have to be made or changed by individuals in between decision-making meetings, NO decision of this sort, where large quantities of members' money are spent without consulting them, should be allowed to be made by one or two individuals.

The idea of founding a limited company called 'E.O. Magazine Ltd.' sounds attractive, but no business venture should be lightly entered into, especially by a mixed bunch of amateurs, however enthusiastic or well-meaning. What are our resources? What is the actual rate of increase in membership? How much more would the proposed magazine cost to produce? At whom would it be aimed? Through what outlets would it be distributed, and if it is to be sold, at what price?

I probably sound unduly critical because I have no direct experience of core group goings-on, but I do have experience of a popular-magazine venture undertaken

by a local pressure-group on the initiative of one absorbed, enthusiastic individual, and the resulting disaster has made me very wary of such projects. It's our money, and we should all have been consulted before the prototype was sent to press. It is too easy to allow members to lose touch with what is going on.

JULIA GALVIN  
'Linden'  
Folders Lane  
Burgess Hill  
W. Sussex  
RH15 0DY

Dear Editor,

The current issue of the newsletter arrived today and all I've read so far is John Elenor's editorial (oops, non-editorial) but I feel I must write immediately to express my disagreement with the idea that the format represents some sort of trading up.

In the first place, the print is painfully small. Admittedly, I'm more geriatric than most parents of young children, but if I have trouble reading the newsletter even with a magnifying glass, I doubt that the magazine can make the kind of inroads into the mass market that John Elenor envisages.

Secondly, there was nothing wrong with the old format which was both convenient and readable and had at least one thing right with it that's missing in the current issue, i.e. some indication of the month and year that the newsletter was issued.

There are some minor professional touches I believe should be added whatever format the newsletter follows. One is an ISBN number. The other is the standard copyright notice.

I hope that whatever format you use, you'll revert to using more paper. E.O.'s message is clear. But it should be big and clear. This is one of those very rare instances where small is not beautiful. Now, where did I put that magnifying glass?

JACOB BUSH  
68 Maeglas  
Llanelli  
Dyfed  
Wales  
SA15 5SH

Dear Editor,

What a nice glossy looking magazine the October newsletter is. I like it. Having said that, here is a rambling letter of comments and ideas.

Firstly : if one of the aims of E.O. is to 'come out and shout' - that is, spread the message more widely - then we won't make it with just a glossy cover to a magazine. The contents have to be good too. I know that this is really stating the obvious and I would agree that, in general, the contents are O.K. and, to my mind, improving. There is one area, however, that seems to occur again and again and should be avoided. That is using the pages of the newsletter as a forum for internal squabbles and wrangles and expressing sourness at decisions made at meetings etc.

I say "seems to" because I don't suppose that anybody sees themselves as doing it; it's just that sometimes we appear not to be able to resist that little 'dig' here and there. A small example from the first page of the new newsletter (sorry about this, John Elenor, you just happened to be on the first page) : whatever you actually meant by the heading 'Not the Editorial' coupled with the P.S. at the end, it appears to be an airing of internal dissention. And that really won't do. The Great British deschooling public want to know about the positive things going on, we want to feel we've joined a positive and supportive team, we don't want to see the newsletter used for core group members to stamp their feet petulantly at each other.

How about concentrating instead on making the E.O. cause more widely known, deschooling more widely accepted? It must be one of the ways forward for E.O. Enough of that!

Jackie Mackay's idea about forming a limited company could bear far more fruit, I believe, if instead of making a publishing ltd. co. a workers' co-operative is made (they also have limited liability). The advantages of this structure are numerous for an 'enterprise' like E.O. publishing. Apart from all the legal and tax benefits that co-operatives have over companies and having a set of rules that will almost certainly give E.O. more credibility than any company rules could ( see the Industrial Common Ownership - I.C.O.M. - model rules and the Friends of the Earth, Birmingham Ltd. rules to give an idea) - apart from that, the help, advice and

assistance (both financial and material) available from the co-operatives movement can be invaluable. I should think that help with printing, printing facilities, venues for workshops and meetings, 'educational equipment' and all manner of things might be possible. Worth looking into?

And lastly : anybody interested in an 'E.O. against the bomb' group?

It's an O.K. newsletter!

CHRIS MAGINN  
Open Sky Community  
Barrackan  
Ardfern  
Argyll  
Scotland

JOHN ELENOR writes :

GLOSSY COVERS OR GRASS ROOTS?

I am told that I didn't make it clear in my October editorial that the format of that issue was a one-off venture, supported by an anonymous loan, which E.O. cannot afford at the moment. Jackie and I took a gamble on our issue since we think that is what the newsletter (or perhaps an E.O. magazine with more public appeal) should look like. The matter cannot be resolved until the January Core Group meeting has decided exactly how we should market ourselves (if we want to) and how we can pay for it. If we make a determined effort to double our membership in 1983 (it more or less doubled in 1982 without trying), we could afford to produce a glossy magazine once a quarter as well as a more 'homely' newsletter (for members only) in the intervening months - that is just one suggestion; if you have any more, please let us know.

## Help with baby's diet

Dear Editor,

Would anyone be interested in joining me in a project which requires an interest in nutrition and the preparation of food for a child on a very restricted diet? Our daughter Eleanor has P.K.U. She is nearly a year old and I am trying to make her low phenylalanine diet easier for her, myself and the rest of our family. Her brother is just 2½ years old.

We already have the assistance of the children's hospital's dieticians, paediatrician and a national society for children with this metabolic disorder. At present I am finding out if she could

eat seaweed and which of the foods that she is allowed contain the vitamins and minerals she has now to take in tablet and liquid form. I am making jellies from tapioca and fruit and also fruit juice with agar agar.

If you are interested in any aspect of this problem I will write to you with the details of the diet and we can proceed from there. I will pay for the postage.

ROSEMARY WILLIAMSON  
101 Ampthill Road  
Aigburth  
Liverpool  
L17 9QN

## W.E.S.

Dear Editor,

May I please correct some information given in the August newsletter under 'Home Study Courses' about the World-Wide Education Service.

It is not true that W.E.S. expect all their pupils to return to school at 14 to take 'O' levels or C.S.E. Although they do not provide preparation for such exams, they hand on pupils wishing to take them to one of the correspondence colleges such as Wolsey Hall. At present W.E.S. provides a non-exam course only until 15 but they may extend that to 16.

I believe, also, contrary to information in the same article, that correspondence schools will accept pupils under 16 for their courses, though it might not be possible to sit the exams as an external candidate under that age.

I'm sure that many of us with older children would welcome a letter from anyone having more precise information on these points.

JANICE OWEN  
101 Fortescue Road  
Edgware  
Middx.  
HAB OHW

## E.O. Logo

Comments received so far on the logos which were printed in the last newsletter:

I think that the best of the E.O. logos in the Oct. issue is the school sign. It is self evident, partly already familiar and has a nice element of wit.

Concerning the proposed designs for an E.O. logo, only one of them really stands out. It is simple, easy to recognise, easy to draw, and memorable. It could even be turned on its side to look like a rejoicing child.



I'd just like to state my preference for the logo as I think the other suggested ones (a) don't communicate enough at first glance (b) are either too simple (and could mean anything!) or ultra complicated. I think the above strikes a good balance.

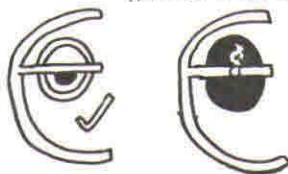
Sorry whoever designed the front cover of the last newsletter - we variously thought it had 'something to do with the sun rising and setting?' and 'the only good apple on a rotten old tree'. After a few days we noticed the red bits said E.O! Found the other designs all a bit uninspiring ... but maybe if those two children in the  $\Delta$  logo had big grins it would help...

ALL your suggested logos are really very poor quality...

How lovely to see all that E.O. represents to us in the first logo. The E as an open book... the O as an atlas as freedom and travel... Congratulations to whoever thought of it, they also see the very importance of E.O. to its members.

Please add to the pile -

Another Wise Owl!



An  
Otherwise  
Owl

# He Seems Quite Happy There

A.M. Nimmo

If you believe that children exist in a state of innocence, the receptacles of an inborn and natural wisdom, (and you might), do not let me detain you. If, instead, you think that children need adults to show them how to become competent adults in their turn, with a range of skills to help them make sense of the world and manage their own lives in it, then bear with me and read on. Please.

At the beginning of every academic year we read about the difficulty of gaining admission to tertiary education, the iniquities of examinations, the jiggery-pokery of standardisation, in short, the ruthless filtering action of the upper levels of the educational system. From the primary sector the children are received, all sorted, graded and stamped, for further grading and stamping. But what if the cream of the entrants to secondary school were simply the survivors of a system which functioned to produce under-achievers, as if by design? Would you not agree that there was a gross mismatch between the upper and the lower halves? What would happen to the secondary half if the primary half conscientiously enabled children to achieve their best? It would collapse from a surfeit of achievement.

## THEY WILL ONLY BE TEACHING LITTLE CHILDREN

So what is wrong with our primary schools? Answer : what is taught, how it is taught, and those who do the teaching.

Let us start with the last. To help us raise our children, we parents employ people who, in some cases, may not be very well educated themselves. It is only now that entrants to primary teachers' training are obliged to have 'O' levels in English and Maths. Their training, which is long on insubstantial but short on practicalities, furnishes them with a range - a short range - of one-line responses to criticism, with which to make parents feel superfluous, ignorant, baffled, helpless and wrong. Some teachers have a disproportionate confidence in their own powers. They know nothing of self-criticism. They are not equipped to see fallacies or contradictions, nor are they required to. They remain prisoners of their training. In extreme cases their minds tend to be, as someone once said in quite another context, half-formed and tightly furled, like aborted rosebuds. It is as if someone high up and long ago had said : After all, they will only be teaching little children.

One can recognise the honourable exceptions without demolishing the argument.

## WEASEL-WORDS

Parents may be more familiar with the nature of teaching than with teachers. They are puzzled when their children's work compares poorly with their own at the same age. Why do they write so badly, spell so badly, not know addition facts, let alone multiplication facts? Why is there so little 'work' in their books? Why is so little of that little finished or corrected? They are not convinced when told that spelling is trivial, or that a normal child of 9 is not mature enough to understand arithmetical division. They hear the weasel-words : the bad weasel-words like 'formal', 'academic' (usually 'narrowly academic'), 'facts' (usually 'dry facts' - the sort of thing which, oddly enough, turns into something good again in

the Brain of Britain) and 'middle class' (always vague and always pejorative); they hear the good weasel-words, like 'creativity', 'discovery methods', 'enrichment' (has anybody offered to enrich your child lately?) and 'compensatory education'. They will also hear about 'problems'. 'Problems' can occur in many different forms. There may be 'problems' in Maths, handwriting, spelling or reading, or in all of these; bad behaviour has become 'behaviour problems'; truancy is now an 'attendance problem'. What in the parents' day was called cheating has become 'helping each other', by which some children learn that they cannot function without support.

What parents might not hear are the weasel-words of the staff-room and of the literature of education, e.g. 'socio-economic class'. The lower you are on a scale of 1 to 5, the less will be expected of your children. Class 1, which is top, need never fear being overcrowded. "You cannot put in what is not there", said an infant head teacher of her pupils from a council housing estate. There exists a curious correlation between a child's predicted potential and his postal district.

Notions of class are engrained because they are cherished and they are engrained in ways which are not acknowledged. Notice the contradiction: social class will wither away under the compulsory and universal therapy of comprehensive education to 16 - except that it cannot because children have been silently slotted into a class setting already. (Which social class has your child's teacher put you in?)

'Parent' too is a secret weasel-word. There are no good ones: they are all either over-anxious or not interested.

#### PROJECT : A NEW SUBJECT

The content of teaching, as distinct from method, is even stranger. There is a great deal of something called 'Project'. What began as a means of presentation has been elaborated into a subject (you could not call it a discipline) in its own right. In ordinary schools you do projects; in really advanced ones you do 'Project'. Project can take up more time, and less effort, than either English or Maths. It will consist of bits of writing (original or copied), drawings (ditto), cut-out pictures, perhaps a map, rarely a diagram, and always something 'creative', all on a particular topic. Dinosaurs, caveman, Vikings and Romans are always popular. Your child might 'do' one or more of these each year, for several years in a row. But whatever the subject, the result is usually a ragbag without structure or guidance. Adult skills are assumed to exist in very young people. Highly able, highly motivated children will perform comparatively well, but there are few of them. And even they can be daunted by the subject set, e.g. a piece of the school playing-field, measuring 2 square metres, to be observed throughout a school year, without recourse to books.

Of course, there are other subjects in the school day. English has a place and takes several forms. Maths is there too, but in a curiously fragmented and disordered state. There is often some form of art or craft. Nowadays there is pretty general agreement that Science is important, but whether any really scientific understanding is imparted, or can be imparted, at this early age, is another matter. Besides, giving out information is not really the teacher's function. It tends to make them uncomfortable. They know they are supposed to be drawing out what is in the child already.

Some schools give the appearance of having placed a total ban on the giving of information of any kind.

What deeply worries many parents is the certain knowledge that their children spend their time in a turbulent atmosphere, doing very little to any purpose. Speaking gives way to shouting. Parents' fears are not allayed when they are told that their children are 'following their own interests'. And when assured that "each child is working at his own level", very few parents are bold enough to ask who says what that level is, though many may wonder.

It is on this fallacy - that self-revealing intellect will win through and that all it needs from the school is a warm environmental compost - that our progressive educational ideas rest.

That, and a million million toilet rolls.

### THE PROGRESSIVE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

We can form an idea of a typical progressive primary classroom. It is probably noisy, with a good deal of movement. Children will be sitting in groups, partly for social reasons and partly in acknowledgement of different levels of achievement. The slow table know they are the slow table and so does everybody else. Children will be doing a variety of things. They may have even planned their own individual programme for the day. Walls will be decorated with pieces of written work from those who can write and pictures from those who cannot; those with their heads down, hard at it, will often prove to be using hand and eye, but not brain, in copying something, and that inaccurately. (By the time you have copied the problem into your book there may be no time left to find the answer; you then ask a friend who might happen to know it. Your friend is not necessarily the best person to be sitting with.) On the walls there may also be some bar graphs showing the relative popularity of various pets, foods or colours. There may be some dinosaurs made from egg boxes and toilet rolls. There will probably be about 30 children, which everyone agrees is far too many. (But how is it that teachers once could turn out 60 at a time, reasonably literate and numerate? And what is the optimum number today's teachers would settle for?) Several of these children may be standing at the street corner, doing a traffic census, which will lead to another bar graph. A couple may be measuring the playground again with a click-wheel. Several more may have taken off to the resource area, where all activity is believed to be self-motivated, positive and productive. But of the skills, mental discipline, ability to persevere at something not immediately diverting, the notions which parents employ teachers to help them instil, there will not be a lot.

### THE TRULY HIDDEN CURRICULUM

It is easy to assess what is not taught, but as the educationists themselves tell us, all the time the children are in school they are learning something, and that something is called the hidden curriculum. The truly hidden curriculum, however, is one that teachers themselves do not see. Lesson One is that if you don't like it, you don't do it. Education has got crossed with entertainment. Television may be implicated, but it is not the cause. Children, it is believed, must be involved in their own learning. Involvement and stimulation will lead to creativity and expressiveness so that the truly 'educated' individual ('educated' in the contemporary sense) will evolve.

Lesson Two is that school has to be fun. If a youngster cries out "That's boring", he has pronounced sentence of death on whatever Miss or Sir has just proposed to do. And he is unanswerable, whether he is six or sixteen. Hence the phenomenon of the child who will not consent to be taught, and another of the one who is so continually giving out that he has no chance of taking anything in. But notice that "it's boring" can mean "I don't understand".

In fact, stimulation and the flight from boredom produce, all too often, excitability, distraction, bewilderment, explosive behaviour - and boredom. In the faces of weary little children you see boredom of a kind that no adult would tolerate. Older children become apathetic, argumentative and quite unable to attempt, let alone persevere at, anything which they do not like. Anything they are to do must be 'interesting', though what they mean by that they do not know. At 16 they emerge upon the world believing it waits for them to express themselves. It does not.

At this point some young people develop a vandalism problem.

## INSTITUTIONALISED NEGLECT

Looking back over their eleven or more years in school, what can we see? They went because their parents believed they were obliged to send them - but no-one was obliged to teach them anything once they go there. They were stimulated by the teacher in his role of grit-in-the-oyster; they were deprived of adult models by the teacher-as-liberator; they were amused, or not amused, by the teacher-as-fun-merchant; they were protected from realising their inadequacies by the teacher-as-ministering-angel. When they misbehaved they were counselled by the teacher-as-therapist or as social engineer. At the end of it all they emerged not able to do very much, speaking clumsily, writing badly, at sea with figures, lacking curiosity, passive, ineffectual - suffering, in short, from 11 years of institutionalised neglect. Child centred education can produce some sadly self-centred adults.

Other countries, e.g. France, Holland and Germany, are witnessing the same rising tide of incompetence, but they at least keep back the poorest under-achievers for a further year before transferring to secondary school. If nothing else, this shows that some kind of yardstick is employed. In the U.K. there is no yardstick. Schools have become youth clubs, compulsory day centres for the very young unemployed.

Parents of children in primary schools tend, on the whole, to expect their offspring to acquire those relatively low-level skills which will make them capable of managing their lives and of acquiring higher-level skills when they are more mature. The number of parents who feel disappointed, even affronted, and are willing to do something about it, is growing. And what they do is to find some way of by-passing the conventional system.

The purveyors of education, accountable as they are in practice, to no-one, do not have to live with the consequences of their actions. It is the children, and their parents, who do that.

The one union this country has not got and badly needs is a National Union of Parents. And I am not thinking of either CASE or the PTA.



In future issues I hope to take a look at dyslexia, maths failure, the structure of the education industry, and why things are the way they are.

## statement

when i was 6 they gave me silver stars

when i was 7 they gave me gold

when i was 8

i discovered you could buy

gold & silver stars in the store

& i lost my incentive

(c) 1978 by

JACOB BUSH



# Recipe for Algebra

BETTY BALL

I have devised and used successfully this simple technique for teaching even quite young children (my own son was 6) to understand simple algebra.

## INGREDIENTS

- some envelopes (used ones will do)
- something to weigh (I used dried beans and peas)
- a pair of kitchen scales
- ounce weights (e.g. 1oz, 2oz, 4oz, 8oz)

## PREPARATION

Weigh an envelope containing beans until their combined weight is 2oz and mark it x. Repeat several more times.

Weigh another envelope and beans to 3oz and mark it y. Repeat a few times.

Weigh some more envelopes and beans to 1oz and mark them m ... and so on with other weights and letters. (If the child is happy with fractions, use  $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz amounts etc.)

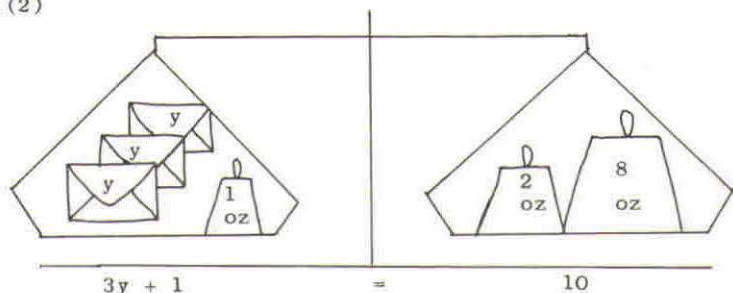
Make problem cards numbered in increasing difficulty using these unknowns.

- e.g. (1)  $x + 2 = 4$   
(2)  $3y + 1 = 10$   
(3)  $2m + 4 = 4m + 2$   
(4)  $3x + m = 2x + m + 2$

## METHOD

Place the envelopes and weights for the left hand side of the equation on one side of the scales. Now set the right hand side up on the other side of the scales. Check that it balances.

e.g. (2)



The aim is, by removing items and still keeping it balanced, to end up with one envelope on one side and only known weights on the other side, i.e. to solve the equation.

At every stage of the working the scales must balance. Do not tell the child any rules: he should soon see that he can remove the same thing from both sides or halve both sides. Get him to write down what is on the scales at each stage and to say what he has done at each step.

e.g. (3)  $2m + 4 = 4m + 2$

Place 2 envelopes marked m and 4 ounces on the left hand side of the scales. Place 4 envelopes marked m and 2 ounces on the right hand side. Check that it balances.

Step 1 Can remove 2 ounces from each side. Equation becomes:

$$2m + 2 = 4m$$

Step 2 Can remove 4 envelopes marked m from each side. Equation becomes:

$$2 = 2m$$

Step 3 Can halve both sides. Equation becomes :

$$1 = m$$

Equation is solved.

#### INTRODUCING BRACKETS

Use thin paper bags to act as brackets in such equations as :

(1)  $(x + 3) + (2x + 1) = 10$

(2)  $3(m + 1) + 2 = 8$

(3)  $2(y + 1) = y + 5$

e.g. (1) Put an x envelope and 3 ounces in a paper bag. Put 2 envelopes marked x and 1 ounce in another bag. Place both paper bags on one side of the scales and 10 ounces on the other. The immediate suggestion is to tip out everything and sort out what you have got, leading to :

$$3x + 4 = 10$$

and then proceed as before.

#### SIMULTANEOUS EQUATIONS

If feeling ambitious, try to solve these together.

e.g. (1)  $x + 3m = 3$

$$x + m = 3$$

Set up the first equation on the scales and see how the second can help. You should realise that you can take an  $x + m$  from the left hand side and a 3 from the right and it will still balance since these are equal, as the second equation shows - leading to  $2m = 2$  etc.

#### FOLLOW-UP

After quite a bit of practice with these practically, try doing similar ones on paper starting again with very simple ones. Again, get the child to explain what he is doing at each step and to write down each step even though he can already tell you the final answer. If he gets stuck, get him to picture the scales and what he would do. It is very helpful to get a picture of what you are doing in your mind. I found that with this method I didn't have to teach my child anything and he enjoyed them as puzzles to solve.

---

## Welfare Officers &c.

Several enquiries have shown that these people are in the habit of harassing less confident members with threats of 'care orders'. However, it seems to me that if members follow the suggestion on p.23 of S.I.N.C., saying that their child is to be educated privately, there is absolutely no reason for Welfare Officers (a euphemism for truant catchers) to call. The child concerned is not a truant and the Welfare Officers do not necessarily have any academic or teaching qualifications giving them the right to peruse children's work as happened to a local member recently. Another more disturbing case was a Bedfordshire enquirer who was given the choice by two of these people : have your 14 year old daughter taken to a psychiatric hospital or we'll slap on a care order within a week. The girl now languishes in a psychiatric hospital between forced visits to school. Do other members or co-ordinators have similar stories? If so, I'd be pleased to be informed, especially in the cases where E.O. has triumphed. Any other thoughts on the subject of welfare officers would also be appreciated.

Another question : does anyone know how adversely home education affects an application for custody of children after divorce of the parents?

JANET EVERDELL (Enquiries Secretary), 'Heathermead', 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs. PE18 9AN.

# how's Ursula?

Peter Jones

E.O. members and friends who have met my daughter, Ursula, always remember her and, on meeting, ask, "How's Ursula?"

Alas, Ursula's upbringing has taken a disastrous turn. She now attends school full-time, a monstrous comprehensive of over 1,000 children. Writing that is like saying she has lost a leg or an eye. The fact that she is now a slave within the compulsory state 'education' system makes me realise how deeply I feel that school is a bad place for a child to be. How has such a tragedy happened? Ursula has become the victim of the most bitter divorce and the pernicious pressures of the L.E.A., in this case Gloucestershire.

When we split up, Julia promised me in front of Ursula that she would never send her to school against her will. Ursula had chosen to live with Julia and her new partner. The aftermath of our split-up made me feel that I wanted to make a new start somewhere, and for various reasons Manchester was a good choice. Even so, I was anxious that my bond with Ursula, till then very close, warm and happy, might suffer. Her first visits weren't too easy for us, but she really seemed to take to Manchester and revel in the people, the shops, and new things such as ice-skating, the cinema, and steam-trains. She also came with me twice to Berlin on her first trips abroad. These were great adventures. The wall made a great impression on both of us. It is one of the horrors of our world that everyone should see. We stayed in a flat close to the wall and often wandered down to look over the canal at the sentry boxes and lights. She also played with the local Turkish children in the play-park, even though they had no common language. We had endless talks about the war, Berlin's strange predicament today, and the merits and drawbacks of 'capitalism' and 'communism'. We spent a day in East Berlin, and had yet more interesting talks about the guards and what we thought they might feel standing in their turrets with orders to shoot at any fellow citizen entering the forbidden zone. Ursula did a heart-rending picture of a girl in West Berlin trying to pass a bunch of flowers over the wall to a girl in the East. These visits really brought home to me what a stimulating, warm companion a self-educated child can be.

We have shared similar delights in and around Manchester. Ursula is very interested in history and trains, and we have visited lots of museums, historic buildings, and steam railways on our bicycles. These were always more interesting to me because of her untrammelled response and the endless discussions we had about what we saw.

At the age of 9½ Ursula couldn't yet spell very well, but she taught herself in a few weeks through playing Scrabble, so that she could play with adults. To begin with, she would just play 3 or 4 letter words. She'd then get ideas for longer ones, asking, for example, "How d'you spell 'speak'?" SPEEK, SPEKED, or SPEAK? She very quickly picked up the rules of English spelling, just as she did when she learnt to read. Within a few games she could hold her own against adults. She can now beat me without my having to play down to her at all. After our trips to Berlin, she knew enough German to play a bit in German. When I told the L.E.A. inspector of this he was quite uninterested to hear about a way of learning to spell that must have cost Ursula a thousandth the effort expended by children learning under compulsion. It seems to me that to most 'educators' the compulsion is more important than the learning.

Mr. Houlst, the G.C.C. assistant education officer, showed the same reaction to Ursula's history studies. Her general historical knowledge is greater than most adults', and in certain areas such as the Vikings and monasteries she has really detailed knowledge. My own interest in history has grown with hers. She has also visited Quarrybank Mill at Styal twice, and been very interested in the social history of the cloth trade. (The mill is a working museum, an enthralling place to visit for those interested in the Industrial Revolution.) All this Mr. Houlst

dismissed as 'project stuff'. I suspect that he couldn't stomach the fact that Ursula had learnt so much informally without writing a word down, and that she had enjoyed learning it. Of course, if 'project work' becomes the next fashion for older children, Mr. Houlst will doubtless grind his charges' noses in projects till they are as sick of that as they are now of the conventional school approach to history.

A marvellous adventure that Ursula shared with me and Hilary was a cycling trip to Norway on our tandem. We rode 350 miles in very heavy terrain in 7 days from Bergen to Oslo. What we all learnt about ourselves and Norway on that trip would fill a book. Again Ursula was a wonderful companion as we encountered fjords, ferries, islands, goat-herds, old Norwegian buildings, little flying-boats, apple-cake, hot chocolate, snow, mountain passes, tunnels, wild strawberries, lakes at every height, waterfalls, and stave-churches. When we got to Oslo, we visited the Folk Museum, a beautiful collection of traditional Norwegian buildings from all round the country. How our imaginations travelled as we looked into the farm buildings and tried to picture the self-sufficient, hardy life of the country people in their isolated valleys. But even this was dwarfed by the Viking Ship Museum. What a stirring trip through time it is to look at those beautiful, so cleverly engineered wooden vessels, nothing but giant, clinker-built rowing boats, really. Again we had endless talks about the questions raised by such ships. How did they row them? How many people to an oar? Where did they keep the food? What did they do for water? How did they keep the sea out in a storm? How did they sleep? A visit to this museum is a must for anyone whose travels take them within reach of it.

On our return we took part in the Manchester-Blackpool bike-ride which I helped to organise. Ursula, too, helped with various jobs. Before the actual ride she had helped us test-ride the route and had taken part as an equal at meetings. This all shows how children can participate effectively in 'adult' activities and that if they have the freedom to join in and exercise responsibility, they can early in life become self-motivated, self-regulated people in a way that school-battered children rarely can. Earlier that summer she had planned a cycling weekend in North Wales, estimating mileages, etc., from the O.S. maps, and as we sailed to Norway had again, as an equal, helped to plan our route to Oslo. There were several options, each one involving differing numbers of ferry-crossings, tunnels, mountain passes, longer or shorter mileages, varying countryside, more or less chance to cycle along the famous fjords, etc. We had to weigh up all these factors against our own riding ability, making intelligent guesses from the map. Ursula was just as able to do this as we were. It was a real joy to share all these decisions with her. I felt that the freedom I had tried to give her was having its effect and that she was growing into a happy, competent, autonomous young adult. This was brought home to me rather amusingly when she began to feel able to go shopping alone on her bike. The second time she was away much longer than I had expected. It turned out that she had juggled with the items and prices in the supermarket and managed to save enough to go to the cafe for a hot-chocolate and cream cake! What chance is there to learn such genuine life-management skills at school?

One of Ursula's 'weaknesses', as the L.E.A. inspector saw it, was 'number work'. I explained to her how important they thought it was and asked her if she would mind doing some, just to keep them happy. It seemed that it was worth a few minutes' boredom occasionally to maintain her freedom not to go to school. She had no trouble at all picking up long multiplication, addition of large numbers, and division. Even though she found it so easy, I felt very phoney teaching her things like this in the old 'teachery' way. Teaching a child something when their energy is not flowing into it naturally and enthusiastically is repellent to me. I could feel how Ursula's heart wasn't in it.

For a time Ursula had been going a day a week to a local primary school in Gloucestershire, where her best friend went. The L.E.A. had offered her the chance to do this. It was obviously an attempt to ease her into school, and I would advise any E.O. parents whose children are offered this option to think very carefully about the L.E.A.'s motives. Ursula would not 'normally' have

gone to this school. She seemed to find the time she spent there bearable, but rather dull and boring.

Then, after several threatening letters from the L.E.A. which she and I had managed to head off, the blow fell. After she had returned south after our summer holiday in Norway, communication with her became mysteriously difficult. She came to stay with me and Hilary for Christmas. She seemed very reserved and critical of us. It took several days to get through to her. Even so we discussed several things to do with future home learning, and made plans for several visits to museums, etc. A day or two after Ursula returned to Gloucestershire at the new year, I got a copy of a letter from the G.C.C. saying that she must attend school from the start of the next term or they would take the matter to court. This in spite of the fact that Mr. Houlst had earlier said that Ursula should not be subjected to any pressure in view of the traumas she must have suffered through our divorce. The whole thing was ridiculous. They would have had no case in court at all. Ursula was at that time such a literate, intelligent, knowledgeable, competent young person, that it would have been obvious to anyone that she was receiving an adequate 'education', either in the phoney or the real sense. Alas, she never consulted me or anyone else to find out the implications of the threat. I wrote to Julia asking her to phone me about the L.E.A. letter, but got no reply. I immediately suspected that something was amiss and that she was trying to send Ursula to school. The only way to find out what was happening was to go down to Gloucestershire myself.

I arrived one evening, intending to visit Ursula the next morning. I'd already talked to Iris Harrison on the phone and made an appointment with Ivan Geffen for the late afternoon, hoping to visit him with Ursula to discuss possible action. I was in a terrible state of alarm and fear, knowing 'in my bones' that the most valuable, precious thing in my life was perhaps about to be destroyed. How right I was: When I got to Ursula it turned out that she had been trying to phone me from a call-box that morning. Julia, in her cowardice and guilt at what she had done, had left Ursula to break the news to me.

Ursula was in a strange state when I met her. She said she had decided to go to school rather than go through the pressures of a court hearing. This seemed strange in view of the fact that she had done nothing to ascertain her rights and find out just what it would have involved. I was not at all afraid of a court hearing. I think we would have won hands down, the L.E.A. would have looked ridiculous, and E.O. would have made its case still stronger with another legal victory. Ursula said so many contradictory things that I wasn't able to find out the real reason for her sudden and total change of mind. I was so stricken and shocked by it and the effect it was going to have on our relationship that I was unable to think. I knew that at a stroke I would be reduced to being a peripheral, weekend father, unable to exert any influence on her upbringing or to protect her from the life-denying pressures that surround children at school, particularly in adolescence. In fact it has been much worse than that. I have not seen Ursula since she went to school. I have had one polite letter from her and two stilted phone calls in which she told me she wasn't coming to see me for half-term. And now - even during the summer holidays - silence. I have written to her making no secret of my pain and bewilderment and sent her several post-cards from my 'adventures', as we called them, adventures that she used to love taking part in. Perhaps she cannot face what she imagines are my feelings. I guess that school is not even an important question to her. She has been pressured into choosing Julia or me, and school is part of Julia's package, so to school she goes. She would not have been able to bear the split of 'needing' Julia and going strongly against her known wish for her to go to school. And all the time, in the background is the unspoken injunction that she must not want, like, or need me, and that it's not O.K. to make me an important part of her life. Apart from my own grief and anger at the sudden destruction of a bond that was more important to me than anything in the world, the frightening thing about this story is the easy way in which a wholesome, strong child can be manipulated into such an emotional impasse that she has to ditch a till recently valued and loved parent to retain the approval of the other one.

Since Ursula went to school, I have thought a lot about the effect schooling has on children. The thought of her going through the secondary system is more than I can bear. The morality of a brothel is more honest than that of a school. There, at least the exploitation is mutual and blatant. At school it is totally one-sided; the only sanctions a child can use are self-destructive ones such as dropping out. An authority figure, posing as a benevolent parent, as most teachers do, can have a terribly corrosive effect on a child. I only hope, to misquote that cry of anguish in a recent E.O. newsletter, that school does not destroy my child.

P.S. I cannot for a moment describe in words the anguish and despair that Ursula's loss has caused me. It has made me afraid to start anything new, to commit myself to any new relationship, or the possibility of being a father again, though I have always wanted and loved children, for fear that after another ten years' devotion and nurturing, all would be torn to shreds again. Two recurrent nightmares say it all; in one I'm on a long journey with Ursula, and at some critical point, as we change trains, she disappears, or the train goes without her. In the other, a little girl comes rushing up to me, and we hug in a joyous, mutual welcome. As we do so, we both break into torrents of tears.

### the first explorers

"The first explorers landed in Australia over 350 years ago. They found a kind of animal ... taller than a man."

- Bernard Stonehouse, Ph.D. (Oxon)  
from the beginning of his book,  
KANGAROOS (c) 1978 by Wayland Ltd.

the first explorers had blue eyes and every one of them was taller than a man. they were the first people that mattered, to notice the kangaroo. the brown aboriginals who had for millennia shared the land with the kangaroo were shorter than a man and didn't count. they were not explorers. they did not have doctorate degrees from oxford university and didn't know the latin name for a kangaroo. they were not explorers because they were already there, having arrived in australia deep in the womb of time. the first explorers were incarcerated in elementary schools in brooklyn new york in the 1930s and 40s and were taught to revere the first explorers and were taught a deep distrust of aboriginals either in australia or in the catalogues of their own souls. the first explorers explored without going anywhere and that was dangerous. the first explorers questioned the myth of the first explorers, never went to oxford, never learned latin. never got a ph.d., clearly were nearly as inferior as an australian aboriginal whose brown eyes were irrelevant in recording the discovery, the leap, the freedom, the unacademic wisdom of the tall kangaroo.

(c) 1982 by JACOB BUSH

# BOOK REVIEWS



## USBORNE BOOKS

reviewed by BETTY BALL

Age range 7 - 9 year olds to use on their own  
but even 5 - 7 year olds with a parent  
or even 9 - 11 if a new topic or slow learner  
or even for adults to really understand.

### LIVING IN ROMAN TIMES      Usborne First History      Paperback £1

A book for young readers about a 9 year old boy called Julius who lived in Rome 2,000 years ago. It looks at his home, holidays, entertainment, shopping and even school! The book is well illustrated and the text comes in small blocks which invite reading.

Also in the same series : 'Living in Prehistoric Times' and 'Living in Castle Times'.

Also sold as a combined edition 'First History Book'.

### CREEPLY CRAWLIES      Usborne First Nature      Paperback £1

Not just insects, this includes spiders, snails, worms, centipedes, etc. A fascinating look at movement, eggs, camouflage and feeding. Do you know whose feeding mechanism is like pliers, a sponge, a syringe, a file or a party blower? Presentation is attractive and similar to the Roman Times book above.

There are six other books in this series : 'Butterflies', 'Trees', 'Wild Animals', 'Birds', 'Flowers', and 'Fishes'.  
Combined volumes exist.

### THINGS AT HOME      Usborne Explainers      Paperback £1

An attractive 'How Does It Work?' book of similar presentation to the above. From telephones, cameras and washing machines to bread, milk and cheese, and ending with 'how this book was made'. Even Mum can understand these clear explanations.

Others in this series : 'Things Outdoors', 'Things That Go', 'Rockets and Spaceflight'.

The first three are combined in 'Everyday Things'.

Note These are just three of a vast array of excellent fact books for children from Usborne. There are many more worth a good look. I promise I am not a shareholder - although I wish I was!

The Complete Usborne Catalogue is available on receipt of a s.a.e. measuring at least 9" x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " from : Usborne Publishing Ltd.,  
20 Garrick Street, London WC2E 9BJ.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LADYBIRDS

ANNIE WILTON-JONES

Suitable books for children are very much a matter of individual choice. I am very traditional in this respect and consider Ladybird books to be amongst the best children's books available. The books are cheap, attractive, easy to handle for little hands and cover a wide range of ability and interest. The Key Words Reading Scheme,

while not generally favoured by E.O. parents and now going out of fashion with teachers, is, nevertheless, very suitable for some children and my 4 year old is thriving on it. Series such as How It Works, Natural History and the Ladybird Leaders are extremely useful. However, some are less suitable for use by E.O. (or any?) parents. Three year old Pete asked me to read him the story of Sheila Shallot (The Garden Gang Series No. 413). This was the first page :

"Sheila Shallot had a vivid imagination. She was always telling stories but no-one believed her. She really wanted to go to school like all her friends but, because she wasn't old enough, poor Sheila had to stay at home, and her mother was always too busy to play with her."

Sadly, these words were written by a child authoress.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Resources & Publications

TALKTAPES Poetry, drama and prose readings, children's stories, studytapes for 'O' and 'A' level science, languages, and a varied selection of topics under such headings as history, philosophy and religion, social science, etc. Further details - full subject lists, price list, etc. - from : Talktapes, 13 Croftdown Rd, London NW5 1EL.

THE LANTHORNE PRESS has a new list of publications. These are mainly concerned with biodynamic farming and gardening, but include poetry and stories for children that are in the tradition of Steiner philosophy. Details from : The Lanthorne Press, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 4NF.

GIFTED CHILDREN'S INFORMATION CENTRE offers a small range of publications, including 'Teaching Able Children : a handbook of practical suggestions', 'Working Alone : The Child's Guide To Independent Study', 'Has Our Child Talent?' Further details from : G.C.I.C., 'Hampton Grange', 21 Hampton Lane, Solihull, West Midlands B91 2QJ.

G.W.S. 

From JOHN HOLT's book HOW CHILDREN FAIL : Revised Edition; quoted in G.W.S. 27.

... So many people have said to me, "If we didn't make children do things, they wouldn't do anything." Even worse, they say, "If I weren't made to do things, I wouldn't do anything."

It is the creed of a slave.

When people say that terrible thing about themselves, I say, "You may believe that, but I don't believe it. You didn't feel that way about yourself when you were little. Who taught you to feel that way?" To a large degree, it was school...

A cartoon appeared in the DAILY MIRROR 7.10.82 with the caption : "Everyone has to go to school! Well maybe that's what's wrong with everyone."

---

# Natural Learning

Jackie Goodsall

---

Alas! I'm one of these EOers who has to make do with dreams rather than the actual experience of teaching at home. But what can you do with a twelve year old boy who throws up his hands in horror at the very idea of Mum knowing how to teach, and at the kitchen table of all places!

But chin up! If I sit and think about Colin's spare time activity, I've got a lot to rejoice over.

We live in 'good old Sussex by the sea'. The beach here is not known for its abundance of fish exactly, just a few eels and flat-ties, as they say. But, nevertheless, the fishing craze has taken my youngster and his friends by storm.

They will stand for hours, often in wind and rain on a deserted beach, willing the fish to seek out their bait. And all this is preceded by two hours of digging for worms on the sands.

Every fishing book that our local Library possesses has been taken out and studied. Angling magazines are borrowed and lent. Every fish, both seawater and fresh, can be identified. Colin and company have become friendly with newly retired, would-be fishermen, anxious for useful information.

"Just once or twice with no catch at all, and the whole fishing thing will be forgotten forever", I had said rather cynically, when being repeatedly asked to buy a new fishing rod. How wrong I was. I should think it's true to say that the boys have created for themselves something of a marine academy, specialising in intensive fishing courses, in-depth discussion groups, and countless field trips. And what's more, not a single parent or overseer in sight.

What a miserable contrast the other day when he brought his history homework to me. An essay about Count Schlieffen's plan to defeat France, did you say? Heaven help us! There is only one way to tackle that: for Mum to 'read up' about Schlieffen, write a rough plan, and then see if Colin has any ideas to suggest.

I practically prop him up while he yawns and tries to remember if it's the first or second world war he's supposed to be writing about. Who were the goodies and who were the baddies ... he does not know or even care! His only thought - how to write the smallest amount of waffle which would arouse the least degree of disapproval from the history master. You could say, another form of natural learning: how to keep nicely afloat in the classroom without being noticed.

But that is all part of life, he feels, and is preferable to risking this unheard-of step of being taught by one's Mum and having his friends laugh at him for not being quite proper.

Ah well! I will continue to enjoy the E.O. newsletter, about the child's right to freedom from schooling, and to fantasize on what might have been!



# TO BE OR NOT TO BE...

*- on charities, companies and constitutions*

JOAN HOARE

It is time that E.O. stopped behaving like Hamlet and found some identity. So I offer these thoughts about E.O. registering as a charity and/or company limited by guarantee, as there seems to be some confusion about what this means.

## WHY BECOME A CHARITY?

Do not be misled by the word 'charity'. It has nothing to do with 19th C. paternalism; it is best to think of it as a legal label.

- FOR 1) A registered charity can appeal for money or other material help.  
2) If E.O. ever occupied its own premises it would get rate relief.  
3) There are various tax advantages.

AGAINST It could place restrictions on certain forms of political/campaigning activity.

## WHAT IS CHARITABLE?

An activity is not necessarily charitable just because it is worthwhile. There are four heads of charity, defined in 1891:

- 1) relief of poverty
- 2) advancement of education
- 3) advancement of religion
- 4) other purposes beneficial to the community

The purposes of any group are usually described in the objects clause of its constitution, and must fall within one or more of the four heads of charity. An objects clause in a possible E.O. constitution might be: "To advance education in the U.K. for the public benefit, particularly through the encouragement of the home education of children as an alternative to schooling and to make public any educational insights gained from home education." This would fall under the second head of charity. The fourth head of charity allows such objects as moral improvement, public relief from taxes and rates (home education is much cheaper than schools), promotion of public recreation (E.O. picnics, workshops and the like) to which both E.O. members and members of the public could be invited.

SELF-HELP GROUPS: In order for self-help groups like E.O. to be charitable, their objects (or aims) must be for the public benefit, i.e. must be available to people nationally and locally, and not just for the group itself.

GIVING ADVICE is not necessarily charitable. Advice is considered charitable if it can be shown to be educational.

ACCOUNTS: If an organisation is registered as a charity then it must submit annual accounts to the Charity Commission.

## LEGAL FORMATS

E.O. already exists as an organisation since various individuals and families interested in home education have come together for mutual benefit (they hope).

PLEASE NOTE The courts will consider us to have a constitution, even if it is not written down. It is therefore important to draw up a constitution:

- 1) to define and agree objects of E.O. and how to achieve them;
- 2) for the right and proper conduct of E.O. and the avoidance of petty disputes;
- 3) to eventually obtain charitable status.

The major choice is between an incorporated or unincorporated organisation. An unincorporated organisation exposes its officers or committee members to unlimited personal liability in the event of any disaster. If the organisation is sued they will have to pay any damages. This is clearly an unsatisfactory situation and one in which E.O. might find itself. An unincorporated organisation has a corporate legal existence independent of its members. Although it is only able to act through its members, it has rights and duties in its own right. It is a manufactured legal 'person'. It can sue and be sued, own property, go into liquidation, change its constitution. It is owned by its members and is operated by its committee or directors (core group in E.O.), who are usually elected or removed by members. I personally think that a committee of volunteers is satisfactory, if the volunteer is deemed acceptable and can be removed if necessary.

The appropriate form of organisation for a charity is the company limited by guarantee. This is an incorporated organisation. There are no shareholders, but the members must agree to guarantee any debts of the company up to a limit of £1 each. This is limited liability. These members usually then elect the directors or committee members to run the company. The relationship between members and directing committee of a company is obviously complicated. The constitution of E.O. would need careful drafting to satisfy both the charity commissioners and the members of E.O. However I feel strongly that it should be attempted.

#### CONSTITUTION

1. **OBJECTS** This is the most important part of a constitution. The objects or purposes should not be narrowly defined, so that the organisation can evolve according to circumstances and members' wishes. We should "resist the temptation to draw up the objects clause as a ringing statement of social commitment", as this would suggest campaigning and political activity, which is not charitable, rather than the advancement of education, which is charitable.  
*Note* It is not a charitable object to try to change the law.
2. **POWERS** The constitution should define the powers or means by which objects or aims are to be achieved. A 'power' is a discretion and need not be exercised. It is a good idea to make powers as wide and flexible as possible so that, for instance, core group members can specify standing orders for meetings or how to use E.O. property. These everyday decisions would not be suitable for inclusion in a constitution.
3. **DIRECTORS/COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO RUN THE COMPANY** It is important to define the scope of the authority of the company's executive committee (i.e. core group in E.O.'s case). The wider the definition, the better. It is also important to decide whether we are all satisfied with volunteers for our executive committee (I am), and to describe in what circumstances members can be removed from the core group, if this were considered necessary.
4. **ALTERING THE CONSTITUTION** It is a good idea to give power for the constitution to be changed if need be, but the objects clause should stay the same to avoid conflict.

Charities often have trustees or patrons but I will say no more about that.

Finally, I ask the question: in the eyes of the Charity Commission, would E.O.'s objects benefit public education, which is charitable, or are we merely advancing our own preferred educational solution (namely home education of children), which would be propaganda rather than public education and therefore not charitable?

What I would like to stress is that we should think hard about these matters and seek proper legal advice urgently. I am myself strongly in favour of drawing up an E.O. constitution, becoming a company limited by guarantee and if possible a charity. Enquiries are in fact being made by Peter Tovey at Inter-Action in London about these matters. It should be possible to compose a constitution which (1) is flexible and not a straightjacket; (2) does not impose or impute imaginary needs on the membership; (3) will satisfy the Charity Commission.

Any E.O. member who wishes to read up about charitable status, organisations and constitutions, should get 'Charitable Status, A Practical Handbook' by Andrew Philips (Inter-Action Guides, available from Inter-Action, 15 Wilkin St., London NW5 3NG). This summary depends entirely on this book.

**Editor's note:** This whole question is to be discussed at the January core group meeting (see p.55 for details). If you have strong views on the matter, (a) come along; or (b) send your comments/feelings to Bruce Cox, Gray Row Cottage, Flixton Rd, St. Margaret S. Elmham, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0PL.

#### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Children, despite the trendy theorists and the educational flat-earthers who have never heard of the Garden of Eden, are not born good."

Dr Rhodes Boyson, quoted in THE TIMES 30.10.82.

# Editing the Newsletter

Caroline Grant

What does editing the newsletter involve? What is E.O.'s 'policy' regarding the newsletter? The following guidelines were approved by the last core group meeting.

## Guidelines for Newsletter Editors

THE EDITORIAL or equivalent should not appear to express the views of E.O. as a whole.

ATTENTION SHOULD BE DRAWN in the editorial, or in the Notices section, to any particular feature of this Newsletter (eg. "included with this Newsletter should be a questionaire.").

THE EDITOR is invited to include a page or so about him/herself.

THE EDITOR is at liberty to make points of clarification and information following members' letters, along the lines of: "this question was discussed at the last Core Group meeting - see page x"; or "for a different viewpoint, see y's article on p.z"; or "the usual procedure is ..." (if you're sure!).

THE EDITOR may find him/herself writing up some items for which the bare details only have been submitted.

BEYOND THESE INSTANCES listed above, the editor should refrain from intruding too much.

### REGULAR FEATURES

suggested position/supplied by

+ Through the Press )		
Talking about School )	.....near beginning	Sarah Guthrie
+ Educating Archie	.....	Sarah Guthrie
+ Notices	.....just before centre	
+ Letters	.....just after centre	
+ Small ads		
+ Help needed		
+ News from the Regions	.....1st half	
+ Notices for Co-ordinators		
+ Details of Core Group meetings (dates/ venues/agendas)	.....near end	
+ Minutes of Meetings	.....near end	
+ Books and other reviews )		
E.O. in Literature )	.....2nd half	Janice Owen
GWS etc. Snippets )		Jane Davies

ITEMS MARKED + ABOVE should not be omitted (except that letters and reviews may be selected and edit-ed and Through the Press shortened if necessary). Other items may be omitted in favour of something more relevant/vital if space is short.

ARTICLES WRITTEN BY MEMBERS should generally take precedence over reprints from other magazines/journals.

INDEXES, RESOURCE LISTS, etc. should always be included when supplied and are best placed as the centre pages so that they can easily be detached if desired.

WHERE THERE IS SOME DOUBT as to whether an item is intended for publication or not, the editor should take the precaution of checking with the person concerned.

IF THE EDITOR FEELS INCLINED TO MAKE CUTS in a particular item, care must be taken to ensure that the context/sense of the original is retained. If a contributor has expressly asked that his/her contribution should not be edit-ed, (s)he should be consulted before any cuts are made.

THE LENGTH TO AIM AT is 40 pages, but an issue may go up to 48 pages or possibly more if there is this much material that seems important, provided that the weight of the NL plus envelope and any additional inserts will not exceed the 15½p second class postage bracket.

ALL THE MATERIAL NOT INCLUDED should be passed on to the next editor.

THE INSIDE FRONT COVER should list the contents and give the name and address of the next editor and his/her deadline.

THE INSIDE BACK COVER should feature a list of E.O. officers with addresses and phone numbers where appropriate.

THE OUTSIDE BACK COVER should feature the aims and objectives and the central address.

#### PREPARING COPY FOR PRINT

Part of the editor's job is to type, or arrange for someone else to type, the material to be included and to add lettraset titles. Typing should be done with a carbon film ribbon and preferably with an electric typewriter (this is important for the quality of reproduction). The copy is pasted up onto A4 size sheets (to be reduced at the printing stage to A5). These are then pasted onto thin card, usually four to a sheet - the order is crucial! - depending on the method of stitching used by the printer, before being handed over to the printer (although some printers will do this part of the job themselves).

In the past it has been usual for the editor also to arrange the mailing of the newsletter after collecting the finished job from the printer. It is, however, possible for someone else to deal with the printing and mailing part of the job, especially if this means that we could use a cheaper printer.

If you think this could be your scene, contact Bruce Cox or Caroline Grant.

## SMALL ADS

#### HOSTS WANTED

I am planning an easy cycle-camping trip for E.O. children, parents and friends, early summer 1983. More hosts urgently needed - E.O. families with tent space, willing to cook an evening meal and breakfast (food paid for). Contact PETER JONES, 3 Fairfield Court, Daisybank Road, Manchester 14 5GL, Tel. 061 224 9816. Please enclose S.A.E. with enquiries.

#### CYMRAG

Oes aelodau sy'n siarad Cymraeg yn aelodau o E.O.? Rydw i'n dysgu Cymraeg. Fe hoffwn i ddod i siarad Cymraeg gyda chi. Ydy hyn yn bosibl? PETER JONES, 3 Fairfield Court, Daisybank Road, Manchester 14 5GL, Tel. 061 224 9816.

# Biology : Beware !

LORRAINE WALKER

As an ardent campaigner for animal rights, a vegan (practically), and an E.O. member, I have become very much aware of the way children are treated in school Biology lessons. I was amazed to find that many parents had little or no idea of what their children were being put through and were acutely disturbed by what they found.

This is something my family and I would like to bring to the attention of E.O. I hope that we're not preaching to the converted, but it's a subject that we feel is of vital importance ... to all our children.

Our own L.E.A. harped on at some length regarding the science facilities which would be "missing", and how difficult it would be to do experiments at home, in particular biological experiments.

In the last 20 years, science has become the 'New God'. The question we must ask is : what is this new religion doing to our children? The love of a child for an animal is a special thing. With a caring home environment, animals are loved, told secrets, confided in and cuddled - from cats to hamsters, horses to gerbils. How, then, after those tender years, can the Combined Science course affect a young mind?

The secondary school may bring a very rapid and rude awakening. Eleven and twelve year olds will soon find themselves watching the dissection of a freshly killed pregnant rat with possibly still living foetuses still 'in situ'. The process of de-sensitisation has begun. To be at all squeamish is 'soft'. Life is presented as being without value and wholly at our disposal. Teacher says so, and does so.

As studies proceed, the child will find himself presented with living embryos dissected from eggs and will be told, as an 'exercise', to keep the chick's heart beating for as long as possible; insects will have legs removed to see how it affects 'walking patterns'; and pithed frogs, technically 'dead', will be experimented on in a variety of ways. Hearts still beat, nerves and muscles still work, and if teacher isn't expert at destroying frog's brains, they work for real! - and not so many years before, one might have been a fairy story prince.

Through all this, children learn that living things that come into the lab. are destined to end up in gory-glory. For the poor animals, things are bad enough, but such cruelty and callousness will be ingrained in our children for good.

Looking through a mail order catalogue that arrived recently, I see that you can purchase a whole dissecting kit for your child's education, complete with scalpel and prepared slides of dead creatures. I appeal to all E.O. parents to think long and hard if they may be thinking of acquiring one. I teach my own daughter from books, diagrams and models. The anti-vivisection group that I run receives many letters from children who want us to help them get out of dissections as they are so upset by the lessons. More and more children are stopping and taking a stand, but nothing else is offered them; they just have to sit outside.

I would be interested to know how other E.O. parents get on with teaching Biology and so on, and what your reactions are to what I have said here.

E.O. children may be interested to know that there is a thriving youth group which they might like to join. (I have a few membership forms - Ed.)

We would also be happy to supply anybody who is interested with leaflets on vivisection and factory farming - free, but a S.A.E. would be welcome, please. If anyone is interested, there is also a very poignant film about factory farming called 'Kept in the Dark' - narrated entirely by children themselves - and I'd be happy to show the film at A.G.M.s etc.

Thankyou all for your time in listening to our fears and our 'flag-waving'.

P.S. We would love to hear from any nearby E.O. people : nearby towns - Hereford, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye and Gloucester.

Lorraine and Clive Walker, 2 Georgia Cottages, Llangarron, Ross-on-Wye, HR96 6NQ.



## Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981



BETTY BALL

This act, which is now in operation, puts the onus on schools to educate children about the act. Copies of a booklet entitled 'Wildlife, the Law and You' have been sent to all headmasters. It is far-ranging and includes lists of specially protected species.

The main points of the law include

- a) killing, injuring, taking or selling specially protected wild animals, such as the otter, badger and red squirrel, is against the law;
- b) disturbing them in their places of shelter is also against the law (even photographing them is banned);
- c) all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected (with exceptions for certain pest and sporting species), and there are special penalties for harming certain rarities;
- d) specially protected plants must not be uprooted, picked or sold, and uprooting any wild plant is illegal.

As schools have been required to teach this law, I feel that EOers should try to obtain the booklet and bring it to the notice of their children.

The Nature Conservancy Council booklet 'Wildlife, the Law and You' is obtainable free from : CoEnCo, Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London, NW1 4RY, on receipt of a 9"x6" S.A.E.

### Why do they do it?

The other night, at a reading, I heard a poet render a compassionate verse about his young son's anguish over being made to witness his classmates tearing live dragonflies apart. But, as the poet was a teacher, it didn't occur to him to keep his kid out of school. It may have been the same day, on the lunchtime news, that I saw the frightened face of a boy from that school in Northern Ireland where the headmaster was shot in front of his class. The kid didn't want to go to school, but his mother pushed and his brother pulled and in the end, the newscaster said approvingly, he was persuaded. Why do they do it?

JACOB BUSH



## E.O. in Literature



Contributed by Mandy Skinner and Ros & Jon Mackenzie.

"School?" he said. "yes, what do you mean by that word? I don't see how it can have anything to do with children. We talk, indeed, of a school of herring, and a school of painting..." and so I said, "I was using the word in the sense of a system of education". "Education?" said he meditatively, "I know enough Latin to know that the word must come from 'educere', to lead out, and I have heard it used; but I have never met anybody who could give me a clear explanation of what it means"... I said, rather contemptuously, "Well, education means a system of teaching young people". "Why not old people also?" said he, with a twinkle in his eye, "but", he went on, "I can assure you our children learn whether they go through a 'system of teaching' or not. Why, you will not find one of these children about here, boy or girl, who cannot swim, and every one of them has been used to tumbling about the little forest ponies...; they all of them know how to cook; the bigger lads can mow; many can thatch or do odd jobs at carpentering or they know how to keep shop. I can tell you, they know plenty of things." "Yes, but their mental education - the teaching of their minds", said I, kindly translating my phrase. "Guest", said he, "perhaps you have not learned to do these things I have been speaking about; and if that's the case, don't run away with the idea that it doesn't take some skill to do them, and doesn't give plenty of work for one's mind... but, however, I understand you to be thinking of book-learning; and as to that, it is a simple affair. Most children, seeing books lying about, manage to read by the time they are four years old..."

From NEWS FROM NOWHERE by William Morris. This was written in 1890 - nearly 100 years ago!

I went to school for precisely one day, at the age of six, by which time I could read quite well and write and calculate a little. Tremendous discussions preceded the experiment, whose brevity suggests that my parents thankfully accepted the first token of its unwisdom to return to their basic convictions. My one day was not unhappy but bewildered. Very quietly I sat in the class, the teacher stood at the front and said incomprehensible things for a long time, and my attention eventually wandered to the window, through which I could see a tree. The tree was the only detail I remembered clearly enough to report at home that afternoon, and that was the end of my schooling. Some time afterward Hephzibar attended this same school for a whole five days, at the end of which the superintendent asked for a private interview with my parents to tell them their daughter was backward; whereupon Hephzibar too was whisked home and within the year fluently read and wrote! After two failures, a third experiment for Yaltah was never even thought of.

So we were educated at home....

For the refinements of foreign languages tutors were to be engaged, but in the early days in San Francisco my parents divided educational responsibility between them, Aba taking care of the sums, of course, and Imma, who had no mathematical skills whatever, looking after the other fundamentals. Later, geography, of a more three-dimensional than statistical kind, was to be a by-product of our lives, and what may loosely be called the social sciences were a constant accompaniment.

From UNFINISHED JOURNEY by Yehudi Menuhin.

# MINUTES of Core Group meeting

Held on 26th Sept. 1982 at 139 Brooke Rd., Stoke Newington, London N16.

**PRESENT :** Yvonne & Malcolm Muckle, Bruce Cox, Helen Holland, Simon & Caroline Grant, John Elenor, Harold Sheckler, Eddie Freeman, Joan Hoare, Ivan Sokolov, Peter Towey, Cherity Laniado, Bruce & Christine Wallace, Geraldine Lockington, Dick Kitto.

**Apologies :** Stephanie Leland, Sarah Guthrie, Janet Everdell, Andrea Harrison.

1. MINUTES of previous meeting accepted.
2. MATTERS ARISING ; none.
3. OFFICERS' REPORTS

3.1. **TREASURER :** Financial situation much as before with money trickling in from subscriptions. Renewal notices will be sent out with the Oct. newsletter. Cherity suggested that the subscription renewal date be changed to Sept. as this was generally a more convenient time for people to pay out money. Also people joining half way through the year could pay half the subscription and not receive the full year's back newsletters as they do at present. This would make future printing quantities of the NL more easy to determine. The general feeling was that standing order payments could be left in Jan. but cash subscriptions changed to Sept. If at a later date records were computerised, subscriptions could be made renewable a year from when members joined. Bruce suggested that John form a financial sub-committee to discuss these matters and report back at the meeting after next. Volunteers required for this.

3.2. **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY :** Membership is now 812, an increase of 60 since the last report. Stocks of NL 21 have run out.

3.3. **LEGAL :** Iris is organising a meeting between ACE, Justice for Children, Family Action Group, National Children's Bureau, E.O. and similar organisations with a view to forming an umbrella organisation that authorities might take more notice of. Dick is to attend the meeting on behalf of E.O. Cherity suggested that a detailed report be compiled of incidents where dispute had occurred between a member and the authorities. This could be circulated to co-ordinators to help them when advising others in similar situations. Simon felt it to be more important to organise a day when co-ordinators could get together and be briefed on various aspects of the law and on cases that had already occurred. It was agreed that such a day should be held, or possibly 3 to coincide with the 3 core groups in different parts of the country. Bruce suggested that, as S.I.N.C. is to be rewritten, it should be discussed at this meeting. Cherity reported that she had approached a solicitor who was prepared to act as legal advisor for half of Norfolk ; it would be a good idea for other co-ords. to do the same. Bruce suggested that a solicitor already knowledgeable about the law and E.O. might write a paper which could be given to other solicitors who became involved with E.O. matters.

3.4. **ENQUIRIES SECRETARY :** a steady trickle of enquiries continues to come in. An approach has been made by a freelance agent on behalf of channel 4 for information about E.O. A request should be printed in the Dec. NL for members to send copies of articles about E.O. to Janet Everdell, so that she can keep a record of them. Other articles of relevance to E.O. should be sent to Sarah Guthrie. Information about E.O. abroad should be sent to John or Caroline.

3.5. **CO-ORDINATORS :** people should be encouraged to approach their co-ord. and offer assistance. Members should be notified of events and meetings in adjoining counties.

3.6. **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES :** Julie Duff has done a lot of work on this and compiled a newsletter. The core group wished to thank her.

4. **STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT :** £135 had been authorised for printing handbills.

5. **MATTERS ARISING FROM TRENT PARK ;**

5.1. The general feeling at TP had been in favour of E.O. applying for charitable status but there was not much enthusiasm for forming a ltd. co.

Peter volunteered to do some research and background work on both and to report back to the next meeting.

- 5.2. It had been suggested that E.O. might form a fictional title allowing members to appear as part of a school or similar educational group and thus get access to various places free of charge. The core group felt that this was not a good idea but that members should be encouraged to make their own arrangements with different authorities/organisations.
- 5.3. Members organising events on behalf of E.O. should take out public liability insurance.
- 5.4. A disclaimer should be put in the newsletter for E.O.'s responsibility for anything which may occur as a result of advice given
6. ACTION CO-ORDINATOR : Ivan volunteered to ensure that anyone who agreed at a core group meeting to undertake some sort of work did in fact do so.
7. HARRASSED FAMILIES
  - 7.1. An E.O. stronghold or centre was felt to be a good idea. It could be used as a refuge for families being harrassed or as a centre where children or families could go for holidays, lectures etc. E.O. has no such place at the moment although Gina Rannie (co-ord. H'ford & Worcs.) has offered Wheatstone.
  - 7.2. Monkton Wylde has produced a leaflet on which they describe themselves as a centre for E.O. No-one had been approached on this matter and we were not sure that we particularly wanted to be associated with them. Ivan agreed to try to visit and report back, but in the meantime John would write firmly stating that we did not wish them to use our name without our permission. This should be mentioned in the next NL.
  - 7.3. Members should still be encouraged to report on any centres they found where E.O. members could meet for activities.
  - 7.4. A regional list of places to go and resources available would be v. useful.
8. GUIDELINES FOR NEWSLETTER EDITORS : These were approved by everyone and should be printed in the next NL.
9. MEMBERSHIP FORM DISTRIBUTION : There was discussion as to whether new members' forms should be sent to the co-ordinator and then on to the membership secretary or continue to go direct to the mem. sec. Agreed that Simon should contact co-ordinators and give them the choice of which way round they preferred.
9. WELSH POSTER : Caroline should go ahead and produce an E.O. poster/handbill in Welsh. Anyone else who wished to produce a poster in a minority language should approach the treasurer and there would almost certainly be approval to do so.
10. A.O.B.
  - 10.1. Job descriptions of officers should be printed in the NL to enlighten members as to what is involved. John is to write one for the treasurer and Andrea is to be asked to write one for the mem. sec.
  - 10.2. Members should not claim expenses for attending their first core group
  - 10.3. Members intending to spend large sums of money on behalf of E.O. must definitely contact the treasurer in advance.
  - 10.4. Members should be asked to make a point of clearing up their rubbish when attending such events as Trent Park rather than leaving a lot of work for a few people at the end.

Thanks were given to John for organising the Trent Park meeting and to Malcolm and Yvonne for hosting the core group meeting.

FOR DETAILS OF THE NEXT CORE GROUP MEETING  
SEE PAGES 55 & 56.

# Letter to the L.E.A.

ROB & ANNE WADE

Rob and Anne sent this letter to their L.E.A. when they withdrew their son from school recently. It seems a good example of a letter of its kind - although we do not know how the L.E.A. responded.

Dear Sir,

We write to inform you that, after careful consideration, we have decided to take responsibility for the education of our son, Felix, aged  $5\frac{1}{2}$  years, in accordance with our duty under section 36 of the 1944 Education Act, otherwise than through attendance at school.

Felix has attended ..... First School for one year and, despite considerable help from Mrs. D., the Headmistress, he has failed to settle. He is normally a sociable, non-aggressive child, very self-willed but nevertheless amenable to reason, and pleasant to have around. He could read before he went to school, and enjoyed doing many things with us. Since going to school he has regressed in many ways and progressed in none. During the year he was very unhappy, had headaches and vomiting, bit his nails, was frequently slightly incontinent, insisted on being fed (something which he would never previously have allowed), had tantrums, refused to accept any checks or limitations when crossed - so that he had to be restrained physically - and, whilst often wanting to be cuddled, tended to react aggressively when his request was satisfied.

In school he was even worse. In the reception class he did not get on well with his teacher, but was at least happy with the other children, amongst whom he has made some good friends. After the Easter holiday he was moved to a second year class, where he was bullied and became wildly aggressive himself. He still refused to conform to classroom requirements and was frequently disruptive. At the end of the summer term he was almost unmanageable at home and in school.

As the school holidays have passed, he has improved daily, and the change in his behaviour has led us to the view that it would not be in his best interests to return to school at present. When we asked him if he would like to learn at home instead, he was delighted and relieved, and is already almost his old self.

We have been keeping a diary to show what he does on his own and what his social life is like. We are aware of the importance of seeing that he meets his friends often enough, as well as mixing with people of all ages. We have joined a couple of groups with this in mind. When he is six he will have the chance of joining the Woodcraft Folk and possibly Ealing School of Music, if he wishes. We have a gym club in mind, which he does not wish to attend at the moment. He has recently begun to enjoy swimming with friends, but has refused lessons.

Academically, we are confident that in a one-to-one situation we can encourage the effective development of his abilities and aptitudes. We propose to use TV and radio programmes to catalyse interest and ideas in a number of areas. Reading is no problem: he does it all the time. On the other hand his writing is still hardly legible, and he resists doing it. Where learning can be achieved orally we intend to avoid contaminating its enjoyment with unnecessary written work. However, we aim to provide enough situations where writing is obviously necessary - and to keep it fun! He is very interested in maths and logic, and we see no difficulty in providing for this area of his development by various means - including the use of a microcomputer where appropriate.

We have made plans for various other activities: physical activity - regular visits to parks and playgrounds, yoga, cycling, swimming; music - listening, singing, playing instruments (soprano recorder, glockenspiel, percussion); art - plentiful supply of materials, but we would like to know of an inspiring teacher for occasional 'art days', to help overcome inhibitions; science - plenty of books with ideas; craft - he has his own workbench and likes making things; outings - visits to museums, etc.

On the basis of Felix's experience to date we feel that his social, academic and physical development are all best provided for outside the context of school.

At present we have open minds about how permanent this arrangement should be, except that we would like his name to be removed from the register. We have written to inform the Headmistress of our intentions.

We trust that you will respect our decision; and we would welcome any advice you may feel able to offer. We look forward to the possibility of mutual co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

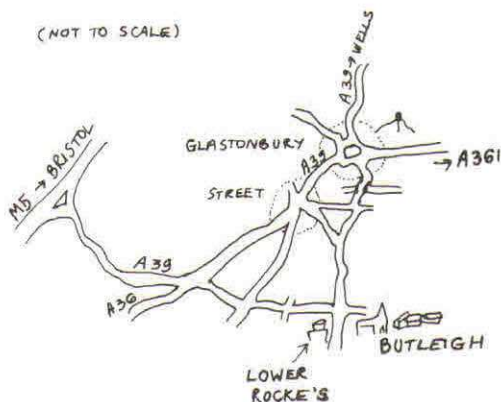
.....

## JANUARY CORE MEETING and legal study-day for co-ordinators

DATE Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th January

VENUE Lower Roche's  
Butleigh  
Glastonbury  
Somerset  
BA6 8SF  
Tel. Battonsborough  
(0458) 50737

(NOT TO SCALE)



### DIRECTIONS

By car : Butleigh is south-east of Glastonbury and Street and is sign-posted from both places. Lower Roche's is a large old house making up one corner of the first road junction in the village on the road from Glastonbury and Street.

By public transport : Butleigh is 3 miles outside Glastonbury, which has a bus link with Bristol and Bath, and 8 miles from Castle Cary Station, which has a fast inter-city rail link with Paddington. It should be possible for people to be picked up from the station if they let Barbara at Lower Roche know when they will be arriving well in advance.

### OTHER DETAILS

Lower Roche is an 18th century farmhouse run by a small community and providing a venue for workshops. Members may stay on both Friday and Saturday nights. If you wish to do so, please phone Barbara Luthy at Lower Roche as soon as possible - and you will need to bring a sleeping bag. If you do not want to stay the night, you should nevertheless let Barbara know you will be there, particularly if you would like to stay for an evening meal. No charge will be made for staying or for the evening meal, but visitors will be invited to chip in according to their means. Visitors should bring packed lunches.

All members are invited to come along either to take part in the meetings or simply to meet other members and chat.

N.B. Members should come to the decision making meeting on Sunday if they have attended the discussion meeting on Saturday.

## PROGRAMME for the Jan. core group weekend

Saturday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm LEGAL SEMINAR FOR CO-ORDINATORS

This will include a discussion, with Dick Kitto, of (i) the law as it stands and (ii) case histories. We hope that it will help participants to feel better equipped to deal with the different sorts of cases that might come their way.

1.30 pm - 3.30 pm CORE GROUP DISCUSSION MEETING

- (1) E.O. in the West : how can members help one another more effectively?
- (2) Should E.O. become a limited company and/or a charity? (Peter Towey will report on his investigations into the arguments for and against these options.)
- (3) The Future of the Newsletter
  - a) What should be the format and content?
  - b) Do we need different publications for different purposes?
  - c) Should we continue to pass the editorship round among members who volunteer?
  - d) How can we improve production, marketing and distribution?
  - e) How can costs be cut?

4.30 pm onwards DISCUSSION FOR CO-ORDINATORS and anyone else interested

- (1) local and regional activities
- (2) fundraising

Sunday CORE GROUP BUSINESS MEETING

- Agenda
1. Apologies
  2. Minutes
  3. Matters Arising
  4. Officers' Reports
  5. Steering Committee Report
  6. The Newsletter
  7. Other E.O. Publications
  8. Limited Company/Charity
  9. Follow-up to Co-ordinators' Seminar
  10. Other Matters Arising from the Saturday Meetings
  11. Centre for E.O.
  12. Membership Form and Questionnaire

## MAY CORE MEETING

This is the first core meeting to be held in the north. It will be at UNSTONE GRANGE, near Sheffield, from 6 pm on May 27th (Fri.) to 6 pm on May 30th (Mon.) i.e. for the three days of the Spring Bank Holiday.

Unstone Grange is described as "a peaceful country house set in several acres of gardens, with orchard, paddock and large games area". It will accommodate about 30 people as self-catering residents at a cost of £3 per head per day, but there is also space for campers who are charged 50p per person.

Full details and opportunity to book in the next newsletter - but put the date in your diary NOW!

HAVE YOU SENT OFF YOUR  
SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

# E.O. officers

## TREASURER

John Elenor  
18 Eynham Road  
London  
W12 OHA  
Tel. 01-749 2-99

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Andrea Harrison  
The Burntlands  
Rochford  
Tenbury Wells  
Worcs.  
WR15 8SH  
Tel. 058479 341

## ENQUIRIES SECRETARY

Janet Everdell  
'Heathermead'  
25 Common Lane  
Hemingford Abbots  
Cambs.  
PE18 9AN  
Tel. 0480 63130

(Please do not ring  
after 9.30 pm.)

MEMBERS with enquiries should contact their  
co-ordinator in the first instance.

## CO-ORDINATOR OF CO-ORDINATORS

Simon Grant  
3/4 Tanyralit Cottages  
Llanllyfni  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL54 6RS

## REVIEWS EDITOR

Helen Holland  
Inholms Farm  
Plumpton Green  
Nr. Lewis  
Sussex

PUBLISHERS please send copies for review  
to this address.

Education Otherwise can offer advice on  
questions relating to education out of  
school but responsibility for action  
taken on such advice does not rest with  
us.

# Education Otherwise

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

Our principal aims are as follows :

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

For further information send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to the address given below.

**18 Eynham Road  
London W12**

—  
**75p**