

Contents

Editorial	1
Education through the Press	2
What is EO made of? by Caroline Grant	4
Rohan's first nine months at home by Elizabeth Aman	10
Small Ads	12
EO in Wales	13
Why no School? by Maxine Toff	14
EO Nuts in May (next core group meeting)	16
Letters	20
Educating Archie by SEG	25
Universal Education: An International Conference by Etain Addey	26
From the Regions	28
Talking about School	31
Biologist Bites Back by Roger Downie	32
Jane by Ann Greenhop	35
Dreams by Piri Marcus	38
Job description: Enquiries secretary by Janet Everdell	40
Child's Play by Lorna Bicicchi	42
Aymes v. Wiltshire	43
EO in literature	45
Notices	46

Editorial

How different it was three years ago when we were last involved in producing the newsletter. The publications group would meet on Saturday mornings, usually in Roz and Dom Sweetman's house in Clapham. They would riffle through the slim folder of contributions for the newsletter, and then they would get down to the serious business of discussing the revision of First Steps, Early Years and the Introductory Letter for the umpteenth time. And then everyone would go home and the newsletter group would be left, feeling a bit like flotsam abandoned on a long desolate foreshore. On Sunday morning we would get to work. I still have memories of those mornings when Di Cox, Roz and Dom and myself would sit over the breakfast table trying to concoct three and a half pages of stunning, stimulating articles to bring the newsletter up to its statutory 28 pages.

But now one seems to be swimming - or sinking - in a Sargasso sea of contributions, letters galore, poems, newspaper cuttings, adverts, events, family accounts, far more material than can possibly be squeezed into 48 pages. Oh yes, and criticisms - recently there has been quite a spate of criticism and whining ('whining' is criticism you don't happen to agree with) and this seems to upset some people. But we

have nearly 1,000 families, and we have no dogmatic creed that everyone must subscribe to on joining. We embrace a whole lot of different attitudes and opinions and life-styles, so why should we expect perfect agreement? Also many of us put our opinions into practice - if we don't agree with formal state education we say so, and do something else. If the newsletter was not controversial and critical it would be failing to mirror the diversity of opinion amongst our members. As for Julia Galvin's asking "do you lot really know where you are going?" - well said, Julia, quite true, we don't. Teachers know what they are doing, they have been trained, they read the Times Educational Supplement, they are full-time professionals, ditto local education officers, but we are amateurs, and we don't have a lot of time to spare, and our children are at home, and anyway, we are not 'us lot' doing good or bad things for 'you lot', we are all one lot, mutually supporting each other, and even if it isn't always quite like that in practice, we have got by and for six years now it seems to have worked. And soon we'll have 1,000 members and that will mean an increasing amount of work but I expect it will get done, we will muddle through, even if at times we don't know exactly what we are up to.

Dick Kitto Sarah Gutwrie

Education through THE PRESS

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Janet Everdell,
Paula Theobald, Janice Owen, Bruce Cox and others.

QUOTES TO SEE YOU INTO 1983

"We need to be less obsessed with covering all the ground and with formal teaching and more concerned with giving our pupils time, guidance and an encouragement to learn for themselves."

(Warwick Hele, chairman of the Headmasters Conference held last September, and High Master of St. Paul's: TELEGRAPH 23.9.82) "We would have a better system of society if we forgot the microcomputer for the moment and learned the elegance of living." (Lord Davies of Leek: TELEGRAPH 14.10.82)..... "We could have teachers criticised in public and dragged through the local headlines for the kids to rejoice at the next morning" (Nigel de Gruchy, speaking for the National Association of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers commenting on Keith Joseph's decision to publish inspectors' reports about schools. Sir Keith felt that the taxpayer had a right to such information. (GUARDIAN 24.11.82) But the idea was dismissed as laughable by a GUARDIAN letter writer (December 82) who says: "With only 2% of schools inspected annually, any one school can only be inspected on average once every 50 years!".... "The whole of the evening class programme could go straight into the home" (Director of Cable TV commenting on the free programmes that will begin in London at Easter. (GUARDIAN 24.11.82)... "I have suffered from corporal punishment and I don't think it did me any harm." (Councillor Austin, of Berkshire County Council, commenting on the phasing out of the cane. (OBSERVER 5.12.82). The Councillor went on to suggest that children be allowed to go to school when and where they liked. Reporting this, Observer feature writer Richard North added: "The more I think about this, the less absurd the idea seems ... doubtless many would choose not to go to school. Who is to say they would be wrong?....It does seem a terrible waste that the years in which we are quickest at learning should be spent at school"..... "A lot of hocus pocus has been talked about dyslexia" (Neville Brown, principal of the first school for dyslexic children not associated with the British Dyslexic Association, which uses a different system of sight reading: (GUARDIAN 15.8.82).... "You must never push a child. It robs them of something very special. Everything must come in its own time." (Head of an American primary school, GUARDIAN 12.1.83).

ALL THE NEWS VIEWS SHOCKS AND PROBES INTO THIS MONTH'S
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: EXAMS:

86 pupils in Bucks had their English 'O' level results upgraded after the discovery of a marking error (GUARDIAN 15.10.82)..... An examining board had to declare an 'A' level practical exam null and void after an experiment failed to work, and it has asked that candidates should not be penalised (TELEGRAPH 12.7.82)Birmingham pupils were set the wrong book for English 'O' level and pupils in Stafford discovered at the last minute that they had been studying the wrong book (MIRROR 14.7.82).... The Law Society investigated complaints about obscure questions in the final exams set last year, having had to apologise to students the previous year for wrongly marking, 94 students subsequently passed who had been failed. (TELEGRAPH 7.6.82) Postgraduates baffled by a paper in quantitative methods will probably be allowed to try again with an easier exam. (TELEGRAPH 14.8.82). ...Exam papers were stolen from a London school and offered for sale at £20-£25 each (ibid)... "We must replace this dreadful, once for all competitive examinations by alternative modes of assessment" (James Hemming. (GUARDIAN 15.7.82).... Somerset's Chief Education Officer condemned GCE 'O' levels as a waste of time. (TELEGRAPH 12.10.82)

MEANWHILE IN SCHOOL: Health scientists in the U.S. are concerned that the huge amount of junk food commercials watched by children is affecting their health (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT 24.12.82)BBC1 Schools Radio now runs a news programme for 9-12 yr olds which covers shooting in Ireland, massacre and war (GUARDIAN, Dec)....Pupils attacked 73 teachers in one year, records a Leeds survey (GUARDIAN 22.11.82)A riot at a Durham school caused several thousand pounds worth of damage (GUARDIAN 9.12.82.)

MEANWHILE OUT OF SCHOOL:

The Cottee family and the way they teach their 2 children at home was a feature in the ESSEX EVENING ECHO (6.8.82). A spokesman said: "This is a very limited type of education..." ...The Bicicchi family were featured in WOMAN'S REALM last year, as were the Beale twins, who do their lessons at their mother's office....

Ruth Lawrence, Oxford's youngest scholarship winner educated at home, was featured in the SUNDAY TIMES COLOUR SUPPLEMENT (7.11.82) Describing her daily life, she said "I did see inside a school once. The classes looked all right but I don't think they could have given me anything like the education I received at home"....

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

WHAT IS EO MADE OF?

A report on the returned questionnaires.

A questionnaire was sent out to all members with the October '82 newsletter. The following report is based on an analysis of all those questionnaires returned by 31st December 1982 - a total of 173, which represents about 20% of the membership. (The last time a questionnaire was sent out to all members, in March 1979, 81 replies were received, which again represented about 25% of the current membership.) The sample seems to represent a reasonable cross-section, although one might expect that a higher proportion of those actually practising E.O. are likely to return their questionnaires than those with children in school. (On the other hand, perhaps the former are less likely to have sufficient spare time and more likely to object as a matter of principle to filling in questionnaires....)

HOW DO PEOPLE GET TO HEAR ABOUT E.O.?

In response to the first question, 'How did you come to hear of the existence of E.O. as an organisation,' the replies can be categorised as follows:

television	36
radio	14
newspapers (mainly national, also local)	34
magazines (various)	23
books	2
a friend/another member	32
other organisation (mainly A.C.E. and including social services)	15
conference (?)	1
E.O. posters/stalls at fairs	5
through being a founder member	2

These figures perhaps provide a helpful indication as to how E.O. can best advertise its existence further. Media coverage has clearly been a highly successful means of doing this in the past. In the case of the press, this has included letters and articles written by E.O. members themselves; likewise in the case of magazines. Any further efforts in this direction promise to be fruitful, so get your pen out! On the other hand, E.O. posters have been less of a success so far. It may be that a higher proportion of people respond to posters initially but do not then become members, but it may be that the posters are not displayed in the most likely places, or that they do not carry sufficient information. The high figure in the friends/other members category is perhaps not surprising but encouraging nonetheless: keep on spreading the word!

REASONS FOR JOINING E.O.

Responses to question 2 were as follows (most people placing themselves in more than one category):

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a) Those who approve of or at least go along with the sort of education that schools aim to provide but feel that parents can do as well or better. | 63 |
| b) Those who do not approve of the morals and social attitudes implanted by schools. | 129 |
| c) Those whose motivation is religious. | 26 |
| d) Those who have adopted, or are hoping to adopt, an 'alternative' lifestyle. | 59 |
| e) Those who are driven to E.O. by problems arising in school. | 55 |

The particular problems specified under (e) included: bullying, a 'bright' child being held back, boredom, withdrawal of the child, school refusal, an 'unacademic' child being neglected, child generally unhappy; concern on the part of the parents that the child was not being allowed to develop in a wholesome way, that 'practical' conditions at the school were far from ideal (too few teachers, too little equipment), that the attitudes pervading a particular school or schools in general were in various ways undesirable (competitive, sexist, materialistic etc.).

Those who indicated the 'religious' category (c) mostly qualified this in some way: some deplored the neglect of Christian values and religious education in schools while others objected to their presence; many felt that a 'spiritual' dimension to their child's life should be fostered, but that there was little scope for this in schools as it was usually in direct opposition to the values that otherwise obtained there.

HOW 'ACTIVE' ARE MEMBERS PREPARED TO BE?

In response to question 3, 104 people said that they might be able to make (or are making) an active contribution to E.O. as an organisation on a local level; 22 might be able to do so (or are doing so) on a national level. There is scope for more local groups!

CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL.

A total of 356 children were featured in section B. (All but 6 of the respondents were parents.) Of these, 195 were of school age and 140 of them are currently out of school (coming from 92

different families.) 43 have never been to school. A further 5 are to be withdrawn shortly. 13 children have spent some time out of school and 1 was never registered.

The reasons for a child returning to school after spending a period being educated at home were as follows (where given):

social considerations	3
child returned to do 'A' levels	1
part time schooling arranged	1
child to try new school	1
child wanted to return/felt able to cope again	1
pressure from child's father	1

137 of the children listed are still under school age. Of these, 79 will not go to school, 4 will, and 54 are as yet uncertain.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE L.E.A.

Out of those families who completed section C (including a few whose children are just approaching school age), there were 88 cases where the L.E.A. knew of children being educated out of school - in all but one case they were informed by the parents themselves - and 11 cases where the L.E.A. was ignorant thereof. 51 parents informed the L.E.A. before embarking on E.O., 25 after. A few informed them either during the holidays after which the child was not going to return to school, or actually on the first day of home education.

11 families had been threatened with court proceedings. Three of these were in Staffordshire, but the others were isolated instances in counties where other E.O. families had not been harassed in this way. Fortunately in most of these cases the threats had been dropped once the parents had made it clear that they knew what they were about, but a few families had actually been, or are now being taken to court.

The attitude of L.E.A.'s towards individual families varies greatly. A couple were positively helpful and encouraging, more were obstructive to varying degrees, but in the majority of instances the L.E.A. was simply 'vague', 'uninterested' and 'grudgingly accepting.'

24 families were asked to supply a curriculum and a timetable. Of these, 12 supplied both, 3 a curriculum only, 2 a timetable only, and 7 neither; 19 were asked to supply a curriculum only and 12 did so; 4 were asked to supply a timetable only and all did so. Some families were asked to supply neither. In 2 cases the L.E.A. was not satisfied when its request was complied with, in some cases it was satisfied when its request was not complied with, and in most cases either its response was not particularly positive or negative or else it did not respond at all.

59 families have been visited/inspected by the L.E.A. Some are still awaiting their first visit. Others have been left completely alone. Very few L.E.A.'s made a habit of paying surprise visits, although often the very first visit was unexpected, in which case it was usually agreed that future visits would be by appointment only.

The frequency of visits varied enormously. 18 families had only ever been visited once. 13 had received 2 visits over the past year, 9 had received 3 visits, 5 had been visited more than 3 times, including one family who had had 10 visits. Some families were still awaiting their first visit, while a few had never been visited even though their children had been out of school for some time.

In only 11 cases had the L.E.A. insisted or tried to insist that one of the parents or other person in a supervisory role should be a professionally qualified teacher. In 15 cases the L.E.A. had asked for a formal assessment of the children (in many cases this had been refused).

E.O. FAMILIES AT WORK

It is impossible to give any statistics here - the comments that follow are based on an overall impression after reading the back pages of the questionnaires.

Some families use a timetable, but the majority who began working to a timetable found that they gradually drifted away from it and now tend to do whatever the children are interested in at any particular time. This sometimes involves working at a particular subject for several days at a stretch. A few families use correspondence colleges or enlist other outside help. Most families say that the child needs to spend far less time on 'academic' work than they would be expected to do at school, and consequently have more time at their disposal for things that feature little if at all on a school curriculum.

WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME INVOLVED IN HOME EDUCATION?

I shall resist the temptation to launch into a treatise on the subject and instead let a few different members speak for themselves!

- "We gradually became involved in home education by just watching our son develop and through the realisation that school would have nothing positive to offer him, but would indeed strip him of his confidence and self-motivation."

- "How could I send him down the road on a path that I was still trying to recover from?"

- "I withdrew H from school because I didn't give birth to him to have him slotted into an assembly line and systematically suppressed into a cardboard copy of the teacher's? L.E.A's? idea of the perfect pupil."
- "I saw no reason why I should hand the responsibility for my children's education over to somebody else when I had managed quite happily for the previous 5 years."
- "I feel that the curriculum (official and hidden) as experienced by girls is a scandal and I should like my children, who are girls, to be offered something better."
- "She used to be (before going to school) a child that tackled anything. Now she gives up and doesn't believe she can do it. When we think how confident and outgoing she used to be - we could cry."
- "I decided well before my children were born that they wouldn't go to school as I intended to raise whole human beings not neurotic half creatures."

ADVANTAGES OF PRACTISING E.O.

The main advantages listed were flexibility, being closer together as a family, and children who had suffered at school recovering their former sense of well-being.

- "Their time and our time as a family is our own again.... our lives belong to us."
- "The main advantage is happy children. And, for myself, a new delight in learning along with the children."
- "I think it has been the best part of my life so far and want it to continue for us both."

DISADVANTAGES

Generally outweighed by the advantages, but recurring themes are: child's lack of social contacts (although many find that, on the contrary, this is not a problem, and others see it as a positive advantage); lack of contacts from the parents' point of view, with others doing the same thing; the fact that practising E.O. can be "very demanding on one parent when the other is out quite a lot of the time breadwinning" and there are never enough hours to the day.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF E.O. AS AN ORGANISATION AND AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT.

A number of people remarked on how grateful they were for the

existence of E.O. and in particular the newsletter for bringing them into contact with others who share similar ideas and ideals and have perhaps 'trodden the path before', as it were. Many say that without this, they would never have had sufficient confidence or knowledge to embark on E.O. alone. There are still a large proportion of E.O. families who do not have direct personal contact with other members and therefore look forward to the newsletter to relieve their sense of isolation.

Some see E.O. as having a wider significance as a vital movement for social change:

- "I now see E.O. as a revolutionary force - stops future generations being brainwashed into accepting whatever our dear leaders think fit for us - people can think and do for themselves!

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The main impression I am left with is: what a lot of nice, interesting, caring etc. people E.O. is made up of - but many of them still feel very much on their own. I personally would like to see more opportunities for members to get together, although admittedly there are the problems of cost and transport. A large proportion of those filling in questionnaires do also stress that they would welcome visits from other E.O. families, so do bear this in mind if you are visiting or passing through other areas. Do also continue to write up your experiences and send them in for publication in the newsletter - other members definitely find such contributions stimulating and helpful.

Caroline Grant

The next issue (April) is to be edited by Julie Duff. Please send contributions to Julie at Hasfield Court, Hasfield, Glos. by March 1st. All material intended as such should be clearly marked 'for publication'.

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.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of EO 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.

This newsletter was produced by Sarah Guthrie and Dick Kitto and printed by Dick and Grace Kitto and trainees in the Information Unit at Avon County Youth Opportunities Project.

Rohan's first nine months at home

Rohan, who is now 7, attended the local State School for 18 months. There was nothing particularly unusual or 'bad' about the staff or pupils, but the stress of simply being in the school environment with so many social, emotional and intellectual demands gradually weighed down on Rowan till he became severely bad tempered, frustrated and aggressive, and every day arrived home with a list of complaints in a state of depression and negativity.

I tried popping in to see his teacher, but she only saw a bright but rather lazy child with what she called a 'difference' - that was a compliment - and told both of us not to worry. She had clearly had enough, and after all what could she do about Rohan's biggest objection to simply having to be in a place he didn't want to be in five days a week?

Finally the strain on all of us made me ill, and after three months of struggling with I didn't quite know what I couldn't face sending Rohan to a place he hated every morning so I kept him at home. Rather to my surprise my husband completely supported me once I had made my decision, and then I set about making our situation legal. To begin with I told the school Rohan was ill, to keep them at bay while I got my wits to work. Through the CAB and ACE I came to hear about EO, and drafted my first letter to the Surrey LEA. This was followed by the Welfare Officer phoning and telling me I was not allowed to teach my child at home. By this time I knew better, and told her so. She never troubled me again. There then followed a few letters back and forth, all polite and normal, and a visit from the local Inspector which lasted about an hour and a half. He was very interested in the diary I had kept, and spent most of the time talking to me, which seemed very sensible since Rohan's education rests on my shoulders. At that time we lived on a council estate, so although he did ask what I thought would happen when the children 're-joined' society, he did understand that after 4 o'clock the local schools adjourned for play into our garden. He also asked me if I had thought of consulting the school psychiatrist before removing Rohan, so I put it to him as gently as I could that I wasn't puzzled by Rohan's inability to adjust to school, in fact I felt the same way myself when a child, and I was in full sympathy with his feelings.

Before he left he listened to Rohan read, asked him a mental arithmetic sum and recommended that Eliya, then 4 should join Rohan at home as he was in favour of a little group. A week or so later I received a courteous letter confirming that they approved my provisions for the children, and a wish to inspect us annually.

We are now fairly relaxed, or perhaps haphazard. Every day unfolds itself, not always serenely, but humanly! I still keep a record of the things we do every day. Monday and Tuesday this week we worked all morning at maths, writing, reading, drawing, and played all afternoon. Today, Wednesday the children started to play an involved game in their pyjamas, so I took the opportunity to sit down and do my business and write this letter. It is now lunch time and we are all still at it. I am not a timetable keeper, I just keep an eye on our activities and adjust when I notice an imbalance, rather like holding the tiller on a boat.

Every so often, like when we moved house and there was too much to do, too many children under my feet and they were getting a bit bored, I considered trying school again. My mind made up on Sunday night, I woke on Monday morning and realised that there was no way I could bear to have anyone else interfering with our lives, telling us where to be at what time, how to think, how to dress, what to say, and all the rest of the rules implicit when you play schools.

The children have now been educated at home for 9 months and during that time I feel I have unlearned so much it almost hurts. But it is a healthy sort of strain, like exercising muscles that have been disused since childhood. I have had days of doubt about whether I can stand to have no peace and quiet ever again, and the odd whim to pursue a career of my own, but I know that I will never be able to hand over the reins of my children's lives to another body unless it is at their request, and at the moment this looks unlikely. Eliya tried school at her own request for three mornings and had a fit on the fourth morning when I took her in. She said it was too long to be away from me. In those three days she had been quite happy, but she had fathomed the real game behind the sandpits and crayons. When asked what she did she replied "When the teacher asks me to do something, I do it as quickly as possible, and that way I don't get into trouble." This was a lesson that did not need eleven years of re-inforcement to make it any truer, so she joined Rohan at home, and has never again expressed a wish to go to school.

One particular skill we are all having to learn, which cannot be taught in the formal sense at all, but is vital to human existence, is how to live in harmony, and that failing, what to do, and how to start again. Without love and forgiveness we would never make it, and that love is the foundation for all our lives. When I first put Rohan in school, what broke my heart more than anything was to know that he was spending 6 hours a day in an environment where no one loved him, and he was too young to find that love inside himself.

To begin with I was definitely a bit paranoid about not doing it right, but now I know that no one is breathing down my neck with terrible threats, I am beginning to relax and I am really enjoying the daily freedom to run my own life, how it used to be before the children went to school, but much more interesting in terms of activities and mobility.

Elizabeth Aman
The Forge
Willey Park Farm,
Caterham,
Surrey.

SMALL ADS

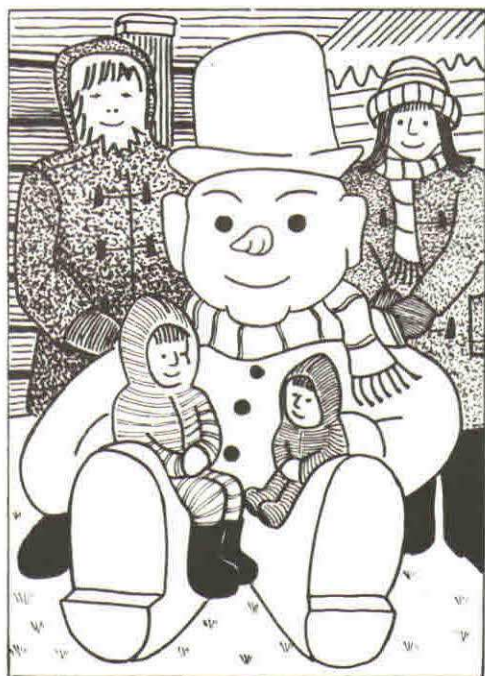
We are a family of two adults and two children (4 years and 18 months) wanting to move from our suburban cottage to a more rural situation, preferably in the south of England or Wales.

We have a wide range of artistic, building, organic gardening, beekeeping and teaching skills, as well as four years experience in an industrial woodworkers co-operative.

Our main aim is to move to, or create, a situation where our children can learn at home, alongside other EO children, either within a community or very near a group of other EO families.

Please write with details to Ken and Jill Beagley, 15 Salem Road, Winterbourne, Northavon, BS17 1QF

Would anyone like to look after our pure-bred German wire-haired pointer dog while we are in Canada for 2½ months? He is excellent with children (not with sheep or chickens). Phone Helen Ford, Ffestiniog 2558.



Will this be the most exciting EO gathering yet? Come and help make it so!

EO week in WALES

(see p. 24 of Dec. newsletter)



Meet other EO families....Parents come and share ideas and experiences....Children come and learn about natural history, electronics, penny whistles, computers etc....Everyone come and play new games and have some fun!

WHEN? Saturday June 25th - Friday July 1st

WHERE? at the Ozanam Centre near the village of Llanllyfni, 7 miles south of Caernarfon in N. Wales. Situated in lovely countryside, with views of Snowdonia on one side and the sea only 4 miles away on the other. Accommodation is youth hostel style, i.e. small dormitories with bunk beds (blankets and pillows provided). There is a large hall, plus a few small rooms and dining room, which can be used for indoor activities. The centre is reasonably accessible by public transport - trains to Bangor and then buses to Llanllyfni.

COST Between £20 and £30 per person, including food (depending on final numbers etc.) BOOK NOW! We need a minimum of 30 people to make it viable. The centre will sleep around 50. It may be possible for further people to camp in a nearby field, or to stay in a smaller centre about a mile away.

IF YOU WISH TO COME, please send a deposit of £3 per person, plus SAE for further correspondence, to Caroline Grant, 3-4 Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Cheques payable to EO.

We would also like to hear from one or two more people who could organise further activities/workshops, particularly in the line of drama/art/crafts.

P.S. This gathering is open to ALL EO Members - not just those in Wales



Maxine Toff from Hove, has two girls in the state system, and a son of 11 at home. The following is an extract from an article Maxine wrote for CONTACT, the magazine for the Pre School Playgroups Association:

Last summer I idly picked up a magazine and read with great interest of a family who were educating their children at home. The following week there was an article in the Sunday Times about a singular family. It seemed like a message meant especially for me.

Our whole family discussed, argued, questioned and thought about this totally new concept of home schooling, Zachary, delirious with joy at the thought, gave us a lot more reasons than we had thought about for not going to school. We joined EO and were comforted and supported by reading about lots of families whose children didn't go to school; some had never even started. In the end we decided tentatively to take Zachary out for a year and see how we went on.

I wrote to the Education Officer and to his school, explaining what we were doing.

The Head gave me a lot of encouragement. He reckoned that a year abroad would be a broadening educational experience; if I were prepared to spend a year with Zachary, he thought it would probably be equally good. The County Education Officer said that he would send an Advisor to see me. I am looking forward to meeting him.

I asked other parents educating their children at home what sort of programme they followed. I asked as many educators as I could, What was the most important thing we should do? Eventually, we resolved to extend our son's piano lessons to an hour in the morning when he was fresh and to pay for two separate hours of French; partly because he enjoyed it and partly because I couldn't cope with it. His teacher, a lively, jolly person was keen to co-operate in our experiment. For perhaps 10-15 minutes every day Zachary would follow the maths course he had been doing at school. He would also do some writing every day. We didn't specify reading, as he usually has his nose in a book anyway, but I wanted him to keep a note of what he read.

I was lucky to meet a couple in EO who would have Zac all day when I was working. He helped them look after their baby (rather well, I was told) made fires, plastered walls, cooked and generally lived with another family. We are gradually meeting more families like this and hope to set up a sort of club which meets in different houses. Each host

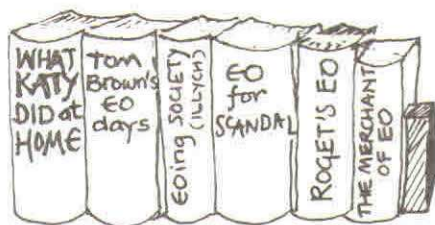
family will provide different activities, according to their interests. Adults and children can all dip and learn, according to our interests.

Zac has followed this programme more or less for the last year. His French is very assured and he likes learning it. His music has come on well. (We have added drumming to his formal lessons.) Best of all, he has become self-confident, articulate and happy.

What he is delighted to miss is hanging about the football pitch, being made to swim competitively (in fact, he is really pleased to be out of the competitive atmosphere altogether) and having to wait with his hand up to have a query answered.

We plan to return Zachary to the state secondary system after a second year at home, but we will see how things go next year. He is starting to work for his own pleasure, and sometimes spends two or three hours on a project which interests him; no-one makes him stop or go on to another subject. We are pleased at his general outlook now he is de-schooled, at the pleasant behaviour and mature bearing of most of the de-schooled children we have met; having to mix with different people in addition to their peers seems to have made a good impression on them.

EO in literature



"We found the village child, especially if caught at the receptive age of 12-14 to be very creative. Perhaps because of his early mastering of the techniques of jobs to be done about the farm he was already competent and able to take responsibility, and at the same time eager to learn new ways of doing things. His approach was simple and realistic, and we found him able to master complicated mechanical processes without difficulty. We tried in our collective living to bring in a new family spirit that would replace the old - girls and boys, old and young all learning from each other."

From "The People have Strength" by Rewi Alley published by the author Pekin China, 1954. Rewi Alley was a New Zealander who spent many years in China. He pioneered an industrial training school to help rural people raise their standard of living without becoming dependent on foreign countries.

Frances Howard

A gathering of EO nuts in May

Unstone Grange is a peaceful country house set in several acres of gardens, with orchard, paddock and a large games area. Inside, there's a large games room with space for arts/crafts/science activities, plus a lounge. It is the venue for the first core group meeting in the north; as well as being a business meeting it is hoped that the weekend would be a good opportunity for EO families to meet together. The accommodation is for self-catering only. Prior booking as essential for those staying overnight.

Accommodation in the house (Limit 30 people)

You must bring your own sheets or sleeping bag, and pillow cases. Blankets and eiderdowns are provided. Residents will be assigned a room number according to the size of the party. There are several small and medium sized rooms which can accommodate families - bring your own cot if needed. There are also 2 large dormitories which could be shared by 2-3 family groups. Please indicate on the booking form if a group of you would like to do this, or any other preferences about sleeping arrangements.

The kitchen is equipped with cookers, fridge, food storage space, crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils, washing up liquid. Bring your own food. There is a small grocer's in Unstone and shops in Dronfield, a short drive or bus ride away. There is also a fish and chip shop and Chinese takeaway in Dronfield.

Camping

There is camping space for tents for up to 20 people. Although there is parking space around Unstone Grange there is no actual motor access to the field. Campers should provide their own cooking facilities and food. Cold water is available in one of the outhouses. Campers may use all the facilities of the house, except the house kitchen which should be reserved for house residents. (There is a cooker and sink available in the outhouse.) There is space for two camping vans.

Day Visitors

People will also be able to come to the weekend on a daily or part daily basis. Please bring your own picnic and drinks, and let us know if you are coming by using the booking form.

CAN YOU HELP?

Betty Ball will be organising a programme of activities and workshops for the weekend. Can you run any? If so, please include details with your booking letter.

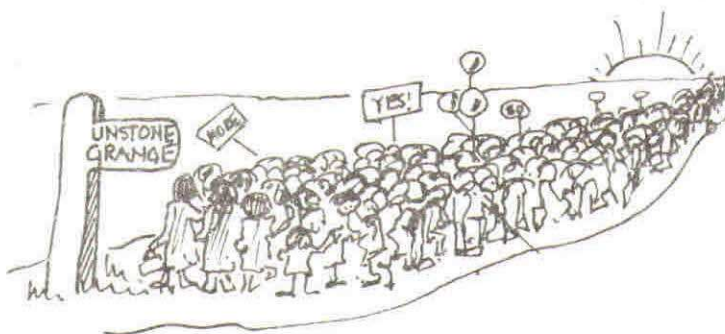
Picnic, Sunday afternoon 29th May

Weather permitting, there will be a picnic on the front lawn for campers, residents and day visitors. Afternoon visitors can turn up for this event without prior notice.

Please note Because this is a self-catering weekend it is very important that everyone should clear up after themselves and leave everywhere as clean and tidy as they find it.

Charges for Unstone Grange (children under 3 - no charge)

	Adults	Children (3-16 yrs)
Residential (in house) ...	£3.00	£3.00
Camping (tents) ...	£1.00	.50
Camping (van) ...	£1.00	.50
Day visitors50	-
Picnic only ...	-	-

BOOKING FORM

Names of people attending (with age if under 16)

	Age		Age
.....
.....
.....

Address and Telephone No.

.....

		Nights	Days only	Please tick
Will you be staying for:-	May 27			
	May 28			
	May 29			

If you are staying overnight, will you be:-

In a camper van

In the house

Camping in tents

Please tick

If we cannot give you an individual room, would you be prepared to sleep:-

In single sex dormitories

With other mixed groups/families

Older children together with other children

	Preferred	Possible

Please tick

Payment

Adults

£.....

Children (over 3 & under 16)

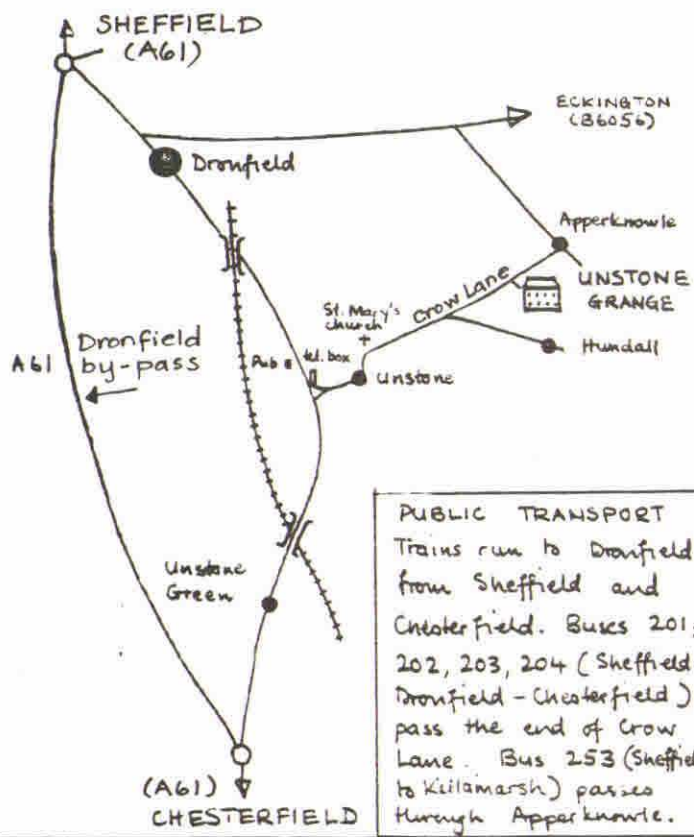
£.....

TOTAL

£.....

Please make out cheques/postal orders payable to Education
 Otherwise, and send cheques/postal orders and booking form to:-
 Joan Hoare, 25 Moor Oaks Road, Broomhill, Sheffield S10 1BX
 (Tel. Sheffield 666605)

Preference must be given to members who book for the whole weekend to ensure that we cover our costs.



FROM CHESTERFIELD
 Take A61 towards Sheffield, leaving dual carriageway after 1/2 mile and following signs for Unstone and Dronfield. Pass through Unstone Green and turn R (after L hand bend and school building) onto road signposted :- Hundall, Apperknowle, West Handley.

FROM SHEFFIELD
 Take A61 towards Chesterfield then follow signs to Dronfield. Pass through Dronfield, under railway bridge after 1 mile and turn L at telephone box.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT
 Trains run to Dronfield from Sheffield and Chesterfield. Buses 201, 202, 203, 204 (Sheffield - Dronfield - Chesterfield) pass the end of Crow Lane. Bus 253 (Sheffield to Killamarsh) passes through Apperknowle.

FROM EITHER DIRECTION
 After turning off Dronfield to Chesterfield road go through Unstone village (passing St. Mary's church on your L). Keep L at turning to Hundall. The Grange is 200 yards further on the R. Please park in the space on the L at the top of the drive.

Letters

Dear Editor,

Firstly thank you to Caroline for the last newsletter which we liked very much and secondly having visited Monkton Wyld I should like to say a few words about it as it seems to be causing some concern amongst members of the Core Group who seem to be able to decide for the whole of EO whether we ought to be associated with the place or not. Frankly I think its a fuss about nothing. Monkton Wyld as I see it, is simply a place which was once a 'progressive' school and is now in a state of change and is offering itself to any individual or group to use it for co-educational purposes. As some of us are concerned with this maybe indeed it does have something to offer as an EO resource. Certainly as a physical space with a large house set in extensive grounds with workshops, animals and more all set in a lovely rural setting not far from the sea, it has or could have much to offer children and families who do not have much chance to experience the joys of rural life - veg from the garden, milk fresh from the cow, the collecting of eggs, climbing of trees, the hoot of an owl, splashing in mud and more. I know that our kids are always extremely appreciative of these things after weeks of town. They would also be appreciative of finding other children to share it with.

As far as the Core Group at Monkton Wyld goes - they are in early days, learning and growing, open to suggestions and help, extending a hand just as we all try to do.

So let us not have division and judgement. An offer has been made, that is all and it is up to individual members to take it up or not as they please. Some people will like it there - some won't. Personally, If I have the time this spring I should very much like to organize a week, two weeks in the summer for EO kids and families to meet and have fun. If I do I will supply further details in the next newsletter.

Meg Robertson-Shopper

Dear Editor,

My daughter now 14 years has suffered for all of her schooldays. I de-registered her from school only to find the L.E.A. had overlooked this. I had five notices to attend court, each time cancelled at the 11th hour. Finally I placed my daughter in a private school which calmed everything down for a while, but it has since closed the senior dept. I've heard nothing from the L.E.A. since.

I had a long struggle with my L.E.A. five years ago when I removed my son from infants after only 16 days. The L.E.A. director splashed in our local rag that I was pretending that my son was ill but L.E.A. medical experts found nothing wrong with him. However, in 1980 it was

diagnosed that my son had a very rare psychiatric problem. The L.E.A. wasn't satisfied with the consultants diagnosis and indeed they summoned her to the L.E.A. offices for questioning. Since that day the consultant has quoted "That particular L.E.A. takes matters such as these so personally." Since that time I heard nothing from the L.E.A. about my son who has done very well at his home studies. He has written 2 fairy tales. I have heard from many literary agents who say its worth publishing. The second is an autobiography. We have yet to get this typed: funds are low.

The consultant has also said that had my son been forced to school any longer he would have suffered an irretrievable breakdown. So, had I not switched on my T.V. one day and watched as I saw and listened to Dick Kitto about EO I may not have my son here with me today.

Sincerely,
Maureen Balmforth

Editor's note: Lee Balmforth suffers from the rare Asperger syndrome, which means he cannot bear to be touched. There are plans to send him to Austria this year for treatment, which will make life easier for him though he cannot be cured. In the meantime, his book of fairy tales is at the Parents Centre charity in Canning Town - awaiting the £800 needed to get it printed.

Dear Editor,

Are there any practising EO members who are teaching normal and Down's Syndrome children at home?

We have just had our second child and now we know she has Down's Syndrome, wonder whether we should alter our plans of otherwise education.

Our first daughter is only 3 so we have a few years to find out how we will manage but if anyone has practical advice or help please let us know.

Margaret, Mike, Molly &
Kitty Gilbert
45 Burntwood Lane,
London,
SW17 0JY

HOME SCHOOL

It is nice,
I do sums,
I do tables,
I do it after lunch,
I do Essays,
I made a sheep while I was
doing my work.

Clare Louise Mary
Wilton-Jones
5 years 1 month.

Dear Editor,

I have just read the article by the Teachers in the December Newsletter. They sound wonderful. However, before anyone commits themselves to rushing off to live in Bangor I would like to briefly mention my own experiences with two of them.

Three years ago I took my son out of school, aged 5, as he was very unhappy. I was, therefore, also unhappy and nervous without any local moral support, so I contacted all the local people on the contact list, including the Teachers. I went there looking for help. I spoke to one of the actual teachers and their leader Kevin. The general impression they gave was that their education was academically superior to most others, but also there was a strong put-down attitude to other parents less efficient than themselves. Kevin then proceeded to systematically attack my life-style in an extremely ruthless and aggressive way, reducing my confidence even more. The last thing I wanted to do was join them or commit my children to people so lacking in compassion for others in distress. They certainly did not follow their own stated precept: "Teachers do not 'put down' those of little confidence to protect their own fears." Why then did they not treat me with the patience and understanding they advocate? Of course, I am speaking mainly of their leader Kevin.

You can never help anyone by negative attitudes - either to others or to yourself. I went to them feeling vulnerable and 'down'. I was upset enough to leave in tears, feeling even more down, less self-confident and angry.

Yours

Helen Ford

Dear Editor,

I don't expect the newsletter to get me putting pen to paper in anger or protest. But the piece by the Teachers in the last issue was so bigotted and harsh.

It would take pages to point out all the inconsistencies and authoritarian assumptions in their article, but their claim to be encouraging a more caring society is made ridiculous by their own description of their treatment of the luckless LEA inspector. Such behaviour is made more revolting by the obvious pride the writers take in meting out such repellent treatment. This is just the way teachers treat children at school, damning them for arbitrary 'crimes.' What happens to anyone in their community who gets fat? Are they automatically expelled? What happens if one of them wants to smoke? Are they not even allowed (by whom) to have a puff in the fields? (I abhor smoking myself, but don't think such intolerant treatment does anything for the cause of fresh air and the right to breathe.) I hold no brief whatsoever for LEA inspectors, but feel if we want

people to treat children as human beings, the best way to do it is by example, by treating others as human beings too. It's obvious that the 'Teachers' have fallen into the old authoritarian trap of deciding that certain people are 'enemies' and therefore worthy of any treatment, however nasty. Once you do that, the categories of people you decide are 'enemies' get wider and wider, until you are hanging, shooting and torturing, like any other dictator. The harsh language and dictatorial tone of the article make me shudder. Surely such authoritarianism has no place in EO.

Then there's A.M. Nimmo's article. What's he really trying to say? That children should sit down and learn what they are told to learn? Yes, the ambience of a 'progressive' primary school is how he describes. But why? Because you can't really let children follow their own wishes and learn what they want, how they want, when they are still prisoners and have no right to refuse. 'Progressive' methods are phoney and con children into thinking they are free when they are not. Has A.M. Nimmo ever met a truly self-regulated child? What a fount of knowledge and quiet wisdom they are! I suggest he reads 'The Continuum Concept' to learn what real self-regulation means in practice. Children 'educated' formally seem no more interested in life and learning than the victims of pseudo-progressive methods. Virtually all children leave school bored with 'education', unable to learn spontaneously,

and uninterested in the world about them. There is no such thing as 'child-centred' education in British schools. I'm getting more and more convinced that the hidden aim of schooling is to destroy a child's capacity to learn. With plainly authoritarian methods it's clear what is going on. With 'progressive' methods the child is coned into abandoning independence without realising it and while thinking she's enjoying it. The latter is much harder to resist emotionally.

Where are all those EOers with self-regulated children? I know you exist. I've met your children. Could we have some contributions from you? What a picture of EO newcomers will get from Mr Nimmo and the Teachers.

Peter Jones.

Dear Editor,

We would like to apologise to any member whose name and address details were incorrectly printed on their newsletter label. Such errors were due entirely to the haste with which the data were collected, as we wished to relieve the Mem. Sec. from the burden of producing them manually.

We have since undertaken a proof reading exercise, and you should note a marked improvement hereafter.

Bob and Tess Emmett.

CONFLICT WITHIN THE L.E.A.

Dear E.O.

Even within the L.E.A. there seem to be conflicting ideas about home education.

Our first visit, last February, by Mrs. H was quite enjoyable, as she agreed with everything I was doing with Heidi. (You printed my letter concerning this in newsletter 25 - for which letter, incidentally, Sarah Guthrie got the blame.)

The second visit on October 14th was by Mr. B and Mrs. D. They are both "experts and trained teachers" - a point they were quick to make and repeatedly reminded me of during the hour they spent with me.

Mr. B was disgusted that I had no qualifications and yet would still even think of teaching my children at home. He also said: "When Heidi gets older and you realise that you in your wisdom decide to send her to school, never having known the school environment she is not going to fit in. Do you really want to be responsible for that?"

Mrs. D had the nerve to suggest that maybe I had "introduced Heidi to sums too early" because, although she enjoys doing them, they were of a slightly higher standard than those done at school at her age.

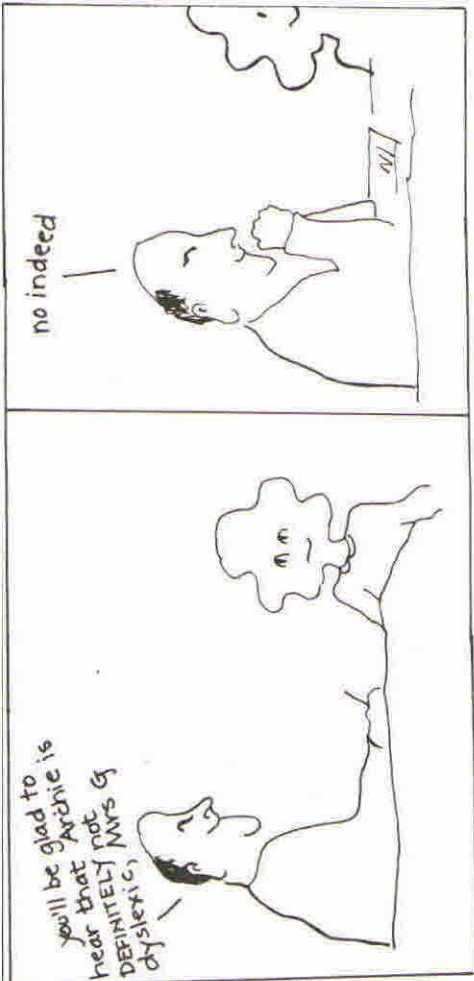
I made the mistake of not taking notes - I would strongly advise other members to do so. In fact, I shall put the tape recorder on during the next visit: after all, she shouldn't object if she isn't going to say anything wrong. I did, however, make out a report on their visit. I have also insisted that, for future visits, appointments must be made.

Commendations are in order, I think, for the new style newsletter. It gives EO the professional touch. I like the logo, too.

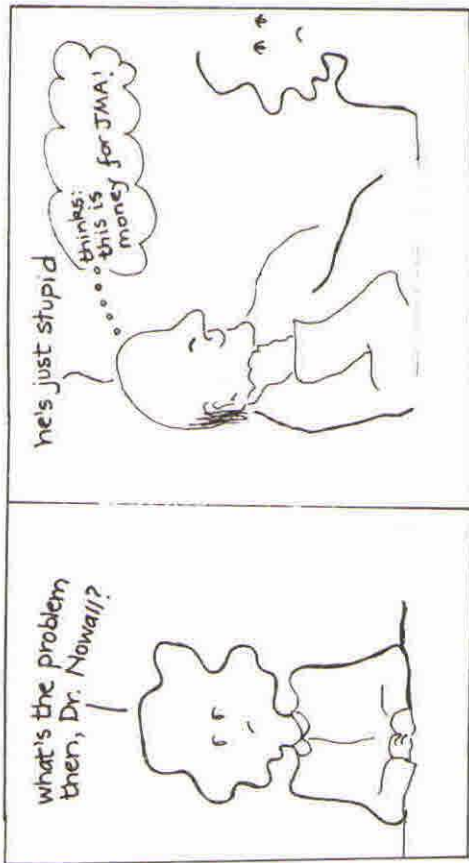
Christina Cordingley,
Hargate House,
Moor Lane,
Brierley,
Barnsley,
S. Yorks,
S72 9HE.

Editor's note.

We would strongly advise members to read SCHOOL IS NOT COMPULSORY if they are withdrawing their children from school, as it sets out in detail the sort of guidance you are likely to benefit from, including the advice that you take notes on all discussions and meetings at the time, without any concealment. See also the experience of Ann and Mike Greenop in this issue.



EDUCATING ARCHIE
By SEG



Universal Education: an international conference



In the midst of the Tuscan countryside stands the Tibetan Buddhist Institute "Lama Tzong Khapa", clearly a source of fascination to the locals, and it was here that the Universal Education Conference was held over the last week of October.

The Dalai Lama of Tibet himself opened the proceedings and the speakers were drawn from all over the world, so that the flow of unusually dressed participants must have reached proportions staggering to the surrounding population. In fact, the organizers say the numbers (around 600) were below expectation and they ran at a big financial loss.

Nevertheless the atmosphere, when we arrived for John Holt's "day" and the last but one day of the conference, was charged with enormous energy and an abundance of ideas.

As I expected, the American and English contingent seemed large compared even to the Italian group - and it was clear that although Italy has many progressive and radical individual thinkers in the field of "alternative" education, John Holt's message was a very new idea. He is a good, clear speaker and was attended by an Italian woman sitting cross legged and barefoot on a cushion, translating his speech. The audience, seated on the floor of the beautiful meditation room, was disposed in similarly oriental posture, looking more or less at home with it.

There was a good deal of (surprised) interest in his description of how children really learn and a lot of questions after his talk. His audience had just participated in five solid days of talks and workshops all centreing around progressive and humane techniques (such as the well-known Montessori method) of teaching and "liberal" schools of one sort and another, and, as John Holt himself said, "teachers often feel threatened by de-schooling." Certainly he was closely questioned and one of Italy's major objections here is always "How do you protect young children from the traditional exploitation of their labour potential?"

In the afternoon, John Holt held a workshop and more discussion took place. To me the most impressive response came from a rather grand and severe looking Tuscan woman in her sixties who made a revolutionary statement of her views. Her name is Teresa Mattei, and I had a long talk with her as we

drove homeward. She and her sister have been involved in a project in which primary school children were put in the position of making films - freed, in other words, from all "subject learning" and allowed to go through, and organise themselves, all the processes leading up to the finished "product." This experience as is obvious from the resulting book by Marcello Piccardi "The Movie made by Children", enabled the educators involved to see just how the spontaneous learning process really works and how children, if not halted in their tracks, will automatically correct and heal the things which are wrong with "school."

Among the speakers which I didn't have the opportunity to hear were Jungian psychiatrists, Italian and British speakers on children and peace (an important theme of the conference), on children and meditation, on Krishnamurti, Buddhism, linguistics, Montessori, and issues of contemporary education.

Myriad workshops were also taking place at the rate of knots, on subjects ranging from the "psychic life of the foetus" to the "Freudian perspective of fairy tale" and the conference was wonderfully well prepared for children - playrooms, helpers, amazing equipment (clay, musical instruments, paint etc.) and all sorts of special children's workshops.

The only drawbacks were the difficulty of reaching Pomaia without a car and the impossibility of staying for the whole event without a very big income indeed. Why are "alternative" events so often so exclusive? For these ideas to spread and filter downwards, it is essential that we think of ways to communicate less expensively!

I was sorry not to hear the other speakers and not to have more time to chat and exchange ideas. Also I was sorry John Holt was not placed early on in the programme where his words might have been pondered and compared to the ideas put forward by other lecturers.

I think it would be a good and valuable thing for EO to keep contact with the organizing "Universal Education Project" (whose director is Connie Miller of McMinnville, Oregon, USA). The Buddhist inspiration which has informed this project is, I believe, one with which we can all identify: their tradition is life-respecting, non-interfering and humane.

Editors note: Etain sent us the complete programme of the conference (it's the size of an EO newsletter) which includes statements from all the principal speakers. If anyone would like to borrow this, would they let me know (Sarah Guthrie, Tel. No. Mellis 678.)

from the regions

WALES:

At an initial meeting in December, EO members in South Powys and Gwent decided to set up a local group. Meetings will be held in the homes of members living in Gwent or Powys, south of the Black Mountains, but all EO members are welcome to attend.

The first meeting was attended by 14 adults and 17 children from eight families. Of all the children, only one was in school (his own choice) but several were below school age. After the discussion, members spent some time in general conversation while they ate the packed lunches they had brought. The last family left five hours after the first arrived which shows what happens when you gather together a number of like minds!

Further details from Annie and Ian Wilton-Jones
0873 (Gilwern) 831182.

INTRODUCING EO IN A WILTSHIRE PERSPECTIVE

Lower Shaw Farm, just outside Swindon was a natural choice for our first Wiltshire EO gathering. It was here that EO started six years ago. Dick Kitto, who had been involved in free schools and alternative education, joined Stan Windus in founding Lower

Shaw Farm in 1975 as part of the Alternative Society's ambitions to start an alternative university. At that time various writers had started to discuss 'de-schooling' as a viable and desirable option for parents to consider. So Dick Kitto and Stan Windus placed an advertisement offering a residential week-end at Lower Shaw Farm on alternative education. It attracted sufficient interest (about 12 individuals from far and wide) to encourage a researcher to trace others interested within and without the education system. Early in 1977 Granada TV got hold of stories of home educators which gave rise to their programme "Parents and Child." To everyone's surprise 500 enquiries poured in. The core group was formed, their first task was to produce a statement of aims, a booklet on the law and reorganise the newsletter on a regular basis. The national membership now stands at 881, having increased by 440 members in 1982. Other publicity but particularly John Holt's visit earlier last year have encouraged a lot of enquiries. John Eleanor now receives about 20 a week to process and distribute to co-ordinators.

This history I found encouraging. Wiltshire has 18 of these members with a healthy trickle of enquiries. But most members live around the edge of the county, very few living in the middle (like we do!) If people could come



long distances on a national scale, there was an even better chance they'd come a shorter distance to create more practical support. In the event my optimism was justified. 19 parents and 31 children came in mid-December. The relaxed atmosphere at Lower Shaw Farm helped us reveal some of our thoughts about education. It also revealed the value of exploring each other's aims and interests. Lower Shaw Farm are generously offering their facilities throughout 1983 on agreed Sundays to continue our gatherings and create new opportunities.

Kate Freeman

LONDON:EO members have produced their second local newsletter, covering something of what's on, resources available and other ideas. Contributions should be sent to Misha Wolfe, 12 Terrapin Road, London SW17. The next London meeting will be at Malcolm and Yvonne's, 139 Brooke Road, N16 (806 7285) on 24th February.

Stop Press: 3rd London newsletter just out...

GLASGOW: Roger Downie writes: "We recently had a successful get-together of parents, mostly new to the idea of EO, and everyone found it informative/supportive."

ESSEX:

"Come on" said Dick Kitto, it's about time you told everyone what the Essex Group have been doing!"

Actually, I have been meaning to do this....but you know how it is.

We do have quite an active group in Essex, as it happens. Many families feel regular meetings are worthwhile but the main problem is distance, since families are wide spread in all areas of the county. However, this does not deter, and we simply try to vary the locations to give everyone a reasonable chance of coming along, and also to distribute the costs as fairly as possible.

The summer months were quite busy with an average meeting every two weeks. These varied from casual picnics in a forest or park, to Educational Resource Centre's which are used by schools and arranged through the County Council. Own own local Council offers very good Playleadership facilities and these proved very good for EO meetings, providing many and varied facilities for the children (ranging from free swimming, boating lake, travelling theatres, crafts, games etc.) Other days were spent at the zoo, members homes, and at a favourite park which also includes a very good museum, nature trail and play area for the children. Needless to say most the time was spent with the children stripped off and playing in

the sand pit; however, a glass-sided bee hive did offer a little fascination and the children enjoyed watching the bees flying from the museum and around the park grounds, collecting pollen.

The visits to the Resource centres proved interesting. The first was to a commercial-type farm and followed by a picnic on the rivers edge. It is tidal and as the water was low the children lost no time in stripping off and generally covering themselves in mud. They collected stones and shells, watched boats going up and down, and fed the gulls. The other farm we visited was in total contrast, and an ideal EO meeting place. There are lots of animals to see, play area, barns with various and interesting objects to look at, and inside the farmhouse, a room full of spinning wheels, looms, and wool in various stages from fleece to finished article. A farrier came to shoe a pony, and the only thing that slightly marred the day was the rain that descended upon us during the afternoon.

1983 looks equally promising. Membership seems to be on the increase and we hope to extend our activities. A camping week is one possibility, we hope to arrange a few workshops or activity days; but equally important - lots of opportunity where members can meet, children can play, and friendships formed. Sandie Cottee

SUSSEX: We had a marvellous get together on 12th November when about 40 people, parents and children came together for a whole day of talk, food, music, books and stories. The day was grey and wet so our theme of the Sun was appropriate and cheering. We had the whole of the dining room given over to sunny collages, drawings and stickings and a steady stream of children dropped in to mess about with tissue and lentils and bits of coloured card while their parents sat and fiddled and chatted. A group in the kitchen cut vegetables and chatted and a delicious golden soup emerged. We had a fantastic music making session using balloons! In the afternoon children made more conventional music and sang and some had stories illustrated with felt pictures on a storyboard in both English and French.

I think everyone was relaxed and happy and enjoyed the opportunity to be able to talk at length to other parents of common problems.

(Maxine Toff)



Osbert Sitwell's entry in WHO'S WHO reads: "Educ: Educated during the holidays from Eton"

Marshall McLuhan said that the reason children don't like going to school is because they feel it's interrupting their education.

(both from THE OBSERVER, December 5th 1983)

All men who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education. - Sir Walter Scott 1830.

"All I ever learnt at school was how to bend not break the rule
Oh what fun we had
At the time it seemed so bad."
(Lyrics to a song by MADNESS)

Biologist bites

back

As a biologist and EO parent, I'd like to reply to Lorraine Walker's 'Biology, Beware!' in the last Newsletter.

People who say things like 'science has become the New God' worry me. Science is a body of knowledge, and a way of discovering new knowledge, and I hope most EO parents prefer knowledge to ignorance. The work scientists do in discovering new knowledge is limited partly by what is technically feasible, and partly by what society - that means all of us - will allow. In a relatively liberal society, limits on what scientists do are few, for the good reason that the freedom to find out should not be withheld lightly. How new knowledge is used is also everybody's responsibility, including scientists, who are better placed than most to see drawbacks. The answer to scientific 'advances' we object to is usually advances in other directions e.g. better windmills instead of nuclear power. (Apologies for this possibly pompous-sounding defence of science, but I think it is necessary to put biology into the context of science in general.)

Non biologists often do not appreciate the subject's scope (biologists can skip this bit) which is simply the study of all living things, from viruses to vertebrates, from molecules to muscles. Only a part of biology - zoology - is about animals. Nearly every kind of animal has a nervous system, responsible for information input, output and storage, but fewer have nervous systems centralised in the way ours is. It is fair to assume that many kinds of nervous system possess something akin to our sensation of pain (it is, after all, a useful sense) and, more generally, that animals may experience some kind of distress/discomfort outside their normal surroundings. However, what we mean by 'experience', 'distress/discomfort' in the case of, say, an earthworm, is a matter of debate. We should not assume as obvious the idea that what causes us pain must do the same in another animal. For a lizard to lose its tail, or a stick insect its leg is so much part of normal living that it is unlikely to be painful. In speaking with anti-vivisectionists, I have found that they tend to say that all experiments and observations that could cause even mild irritation to a 'sentient being' should be abandoned. This amounts to the abolition of zoology, and one could argue that plants are 'sentient beings' too. How many EOers would wish to go so far?

There is a middle way between callous cruelty and the abolition of zoology, and we, in the U.K. have trodden it (imperfectly) for some time. Experiments on animals are regulated by a rather ancient Act which is seriously in need of reform (the Government is awaiting an EEC directive.) One clear anomaly is that there is no restriction on experiments involving even the most complex invertebrates, such as octopuses. An important feature of the Act is that if, in any experiments licenced under it, an animal is judged to be suffering pain, it must be immediately and humanely killed. This restriction is not perfect: the judgment of pain is subjective and is left largely to experimenters, - but it is better than most countries have. To improve control, some biologists - notably animal behaviorists - have set up their own codes of ethical practice, which are additional to the Act. Biologists are as varied in their attitudes as any other group of people, but in my experience, most have a love and respect and fascination for animals which lead many to an involvement with wildlife conservation.

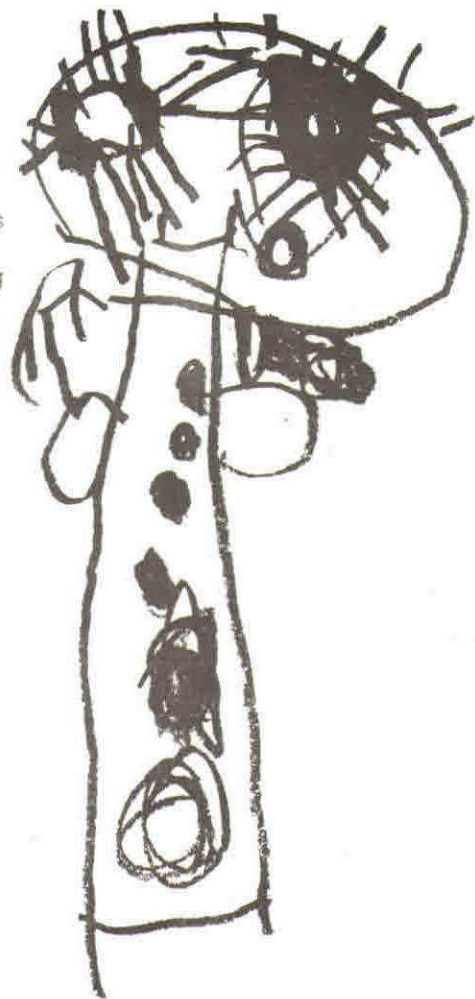
What about biology and children? I would not wish to defend the ethics of every school biology experiment (nor the behaviour of the teacher noted in 'Education through the Press' who reportedly killed four pet rabbits in front of his class)

but experiments involving animals are not inevitably de-sensitising: it depends on how they are done, and in what overall context.

Most people, including children in my experience, find opening up a humanely killed animal, in an atmosphere of serious investigation, fascinating. I would not make it compulsory, but that goes for most things for an EO parent, doesn't it? Models and diagrams can help, but are not substitute for some experience of the real thing. Children are born investigators: from practical biology, they will take new ideas, concepts, facts. Their feelings about animals will depend largely on how the adults handle the subject: broadening knowledge should increase fascination and respect, not deaden it. (What is the reaction of other EO parents to the fact that our little boy, after burying a guinea pig which died of natural causes, later dug it up to investigate the remains?)

Objections to animal experiments are often made as part of a general case against exploiting, interfering with, or killing any animal under any circumstances. This case has consistency, and the merit of avoiding the untidy problem of drawing a line somewhere. I respect people who take this view, but marvel at the problems of putting it into practice: every footstep must cause mental anguish, every lettuce eaten dooms some poor deserving rabbit. Lorraine Walker seems to be on this road, but diverges

in one respect: she is an enthusiastic pet-owner. But is she sure that her cats and gerbils enjoy being cuddled and told secrets? Might confinement of her hamster (in a cage?) not cause extreme anguish? Is the exploitation of animals for fun any better than eating them? A further dilemma for the pet-owner: cats kill. Is it wrong to observe them killing? And if it is not wrong, is it worse to set up a situation so that you can observe better how the cat goes about its work, in other words, do an experiment?



Drawing by
Melissa Beagley

It is important for parents and children to think about their feelings concerning other creatures, and about life and death in general. Children very quickly pick up their parents hang-ups about death, 'creepie-crawlies' etc. In my view, these issues come down to where we draw lines, rather than to absolutes of right and wrong. What do you think?

Roger Downie

TO ANYONE INTERESTED!

Public Liability Insurance

I rang the Prudential and others. Yes, it is £2.50 per meeting (Ivan Sokolov, Dec. newsletter) BUT there is a £10 minimum premium charge..... I ended up by extending my own household cover in my name only i.e. not EO, but I haven't had the bill yet!

Julia Hallett

JANE

Although Jane was 16 last October she cannot "legally" leave school until next Easter. She has always been above average and has been studying for 7 'O' levels and 3 C.S.E's. Until June this year she was working very hard sometimes till 11.30 at night and never really feeling that she was achieving anything. She finally gave up on herself and withdrew from everything. She never has got on well with children her own age and preferred to stay at home with the family, she never joined clubs and preferred to be left alone to be herself.

Towards the end of the summer term she became very irritable "at odds with everyone". Crying for the smallest thing and begging us to let her stay off school. We'd already had a letter from the headmaster pointing out that of 170 school days she had attended only 50. I had always supplied notes so she was not considered to be a truant. Because of this we mistakenly believed that she should be made to go. In fact Jane and her Dad had terrible scenes because he couldn't understand what she was going through. He wanted her to have the kind of education that he never had the chance of. His father died when Mike was 7 years old and he had to leave school at 15 and get a job.

Things were becoming unbearable with Jane always crying and her Dad always shouting so I went to see the deputy head teacher. She could only offer "counselling" IN SCHOOL! This was just what Jane found difficult, just walking across the yard was an ordeal. I went to see the school Doctor, a very understanding woman who offered to see Jane every week for a chat. I went to see our G.P., he suggested that an appointment with a female psychiatrist at the local hospital might prove helpful.

Jane, by now was convinced that she was some kind of freak and she refused to go out anywhere with anyone, she hardly left her room and never left the house. I promised her we would not send her to school until she'd attended the hospital. She began to set all her hopes on this one appointment. The card came for 22nd September and if I was to keep my promise this would mean that she did not have to go back with the new September term.

The summer hols were fraught with tension. I'd had long talks with her Dad and he was beginning to understand but he still wanted reasons and answers to questions that Jane and I couldn't give him.

The beginning of the new term brought visits from the E.W.O the head of middle school and the form tutor. They were all very nice people but could only insist that she must be made to go. I asked that they wait till after the 22nd.

The big day came and Jane, although apprehensive was still convinced that this woman was going to give her all the answers. We waited in an outer office while she saw Jane and 10 minutes later we were invited in. She leant back in her chair and told us that Jane was School phobic and asked us for names of teachers and E.W.O.'s that were familiar with Jane. She told us the way she treats her phobics was to make them do

what they can't by submerging them in their phobia, by using force if necessary. She looked me in the eye and asked "will you be able to physically force her into school?" I was now completely numb and could only shake my head, she looked at Mike "can you do it?", he also shook his head. "Then one of these people must be asked to" (indicating the list) Jane now had her head on her knees and looked terrible. I proceeded to give my opinions on how I thought phobics could be helped and about a book I had read called "School Phobia and Truancy" by Rev. Denney, but she was not interested in any of this and was on her feet showing us the door saying she would be writing to our G.P. and to the school.

We left the hospital in silence, shocked and disappointed. Jane cried all the way home and rushed to her room and stayed there for four hours not speaking to anyone except to say she was going to kill herself. Eventually Mike managed to convince her that no-one would ever use force on any of his children, and "over his dead body would they make her go to school until she was better."

It was sheer luck that I picked up a copy of Womans Realm the next day and found out about EO.

Meanwhile the E.W.O. was coming twice a week, one visit she had her senior with her and he seemed to think he would "sort this young lady out" but Jane refused to answer his questions and finally she left the room. He didn't seem to know what to do and said he would rather deal with boys because "It was easier to use force on a boy!" He seemed to think that a court order would "frighten" her into going because she wouldn't want to see her Dad in court. I told him I thought this was rubbish and showed him the door. He was still muttering about a court order bringing her to her senses.

The E.W.O still calls every week but Jane refuses to see her. The school Psychiatrist was sent to see us. By then I'd had my books from EO and knew some tricks, one of them was to write down everything people say, it makes them feel uncomfortable.

Visit number one went really well, she was young, sympathetic and full of ideas and promises. Jane took to her and trusted her a little.

Visit number two was very different. She'd had meetings at the school and had changed her mind about everything. The only way they would allow Jane to be given any help was in SCHOOL. Jane still could not even get into her uniform without choking, sweating and vomiting. She decided she didn't like this woman after all and would not see her again.

By now we had spoken to lots of EO members. Our local co-ordinator was very helpful and we all decided that enough was enough. I saw my G.P and he gave me a medical note to say Jane is suffering from Acute Phobic State. I sent copies to all concerned and told the E.W.O. that I was seeing my solicitor.

Jane is a different person now, she is happy and relaxed and more able to get on with everyone. In her own words "If only we'd known about EO sooner."

The local library has promised all the help they can with books although she won't be able to take exams this year, the main thing is that she can now return to her books without feeling threatened by anyone.

Ann & Mike Greenop

Apart from Jane Ann and Mike have Tracy (15) and Robert (11) as well as fostering 4 teenagers from 13 to 17.

GRAND EO DRAW

in which you might win a HOME COMPUTER! to take place at the MAY CORE GROUP MEETING.

Betty Ball is organising an EO draw (full details of which will be in the April newsletter.) In the meantime Betty would like members' help by donating small prizes. Craft work, unwanted gifts, duplicate Christmas books or toys would be welcome, or perhaps a local EO group would like to give a collective prize? Ideas and suggestions (don't post anything yet, please) to Betty at 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon (0487 822083)

000000

D-R-E-A-M-S

I had a dream about two years ago. I am standing among about fifty other schoolchildren, near to the edge of a swimming pool. The teachers, middle aged frightening men, especially one of them, with a big strong, terrifying body vibrating brutality, are hanging around at the front of the pool, In a few minutes they are going to order us to go to the very edge of the pool, to stand ready, and when the brute teacher orders ("one, two, three!") to dive into the pool, head first.

Everyone knows that is going to happen. The teachers won't dive, only us, the schoolchildren, who are under their heavy, frightening, extremely authoritarian power. I notice that there is NO WATER in the swimming pool. It is very, very deep and, of course, grey concrete at the bottom. Everyone is near enough to notice that there is no water in the pool. And no-one is doing anything about it. We are supposed to get readier and readier for the order to dive, the teachers are getting readier and readier to give the order. I look around, everyone is pretending that everything is fine. I'm thinking of making a big fuss. Thinking I'll start to shout: "There is NO water in the pool!" or "Don't dive!" I'm thinking of communicating something to the children, or to the teachers. I'm hesitating, I feel awkward about being the only person who doesn't fit into the order, who wants to do something, and I feel I'd rather not make a big fuss, though I also feel guilty about not wanting to make a big fuss.

I go to the main teacher, the brute with the big body. I tell him that there is NO water in the swimming pool. I tell it in a frightened way, implying, communicating, that I do know that I am guilty of causing trouble, so somehow with my voice withdrawing what I am saying with the words. He gets angry, and expresses nothing else than his anger about me daring to leave my role, daring to create a problem. He does not even react to the content of what I told him, he does not say that there is water, he does not tell me that I should mind my own business or how did I dare to leave my place or how did I dare to notice a problem etc. He did not specify my sin, because there was no need for it. I knew it, and had already implied this knowledge and my bad conscience in how I talked to him, in how I held my body (in my body-language), in how I felt about myself while I talked to him. All he communicated to me is this: it is right that I am scared of him but I should be even more scared of him, I should not occupy myself with anything else than the fear of him, my eyes should not be able to see the no-water, my legs should not be able to walk towards him to complain, my brain should not be able to understand what the no-water means. I should be waiting for him to order, in a

superficially relaxed mood, talking with my mates, pretending we are OK, but underneath to be occupied totally with experiencing his and the other teachers' power, their unquestionable power, and our unquestionable submission.

I go back to my place, feeling ashamed of myself. Ever since I noticed there was no water in this extremely deep pool, I had a voice in my head saying there probably is water in the pool, but I can't see it, so I am imagining that the pool is empty. Another slight voice in me was saying that probably in a minute water will start flowing into the swimming pool, so when we will be ordered to dive, the pool will be already filled enough for us not to kill ourselves. When I was walking towards the brute teacher, the same voice was supposing that probably the teachers just haven't noticed that there was no water in the pool, so all they need is me to tell them, and then quickly they will arrange the water to fill the pool.

It seemed a must, an almost unavoidable content of the nearing future, that we will have to dive, very soon. The minutes were passing. I felt very uncomfortable about myself both for having done something I am not supposed to, and for not having done more. I felt totally confused, am I completely mad when I see no water in the pool, are the other children seeing it or not, how is it possible, that they do nothing at all, but are getting ready to dive? Complete madness, what is happening, why don't they do something, my schoolmates, they must see it, they must know it, why don't they do anything, why are they turning their heads a bit away from the bottom of the terrifying pool, pretending to look only towards each other and lightheartedly chatting with each other? I also felt awful about my irresponsible fear which stopped me from acting. But this fear mixed together with the feeling of uncertainty, whether there is or isn't water in the pool, and all those feelings and uncertainties together caused a strong dizziness. Finally I could experience only the dizziness, and all the other feelings thoughts and doubts were disappearing in the background.

The brute teacher counts, I and my schoolmates stand at the very edge of the pool. We all bend down our heads, lift up our arms ready to dive into the pool. The man counts: one, two, - I secretly lift up my head a little bit to look around while pretending to be ready, I still hope they won't dive, and I hear: three! and I see everybody, all the children have dived, they are in the air, nearing their death, and suddenly I think, if they all have dived, I must be wrong, they can't all be wrong, so I dive too, I'm in the air, falling towards the bottom of the pool, among all the other schoolchildren.

My dream ended here.

Piri Markus
October 1982

What the Enquiries Secretary does

by Janet Everdell



I have in my possession a newsletter dated April '78 and numbered 5. I used to have even earlier editions but these were lent never to be returned. However, what I am getting at is that I have been associated with EO since its Lower Shaw, Swindon days. Not quite a founder member but almost. In that early - crudely stapled 5-sheet newsletter Dick Kitto wrote "It's clear that there is a pool of distress and anxiety amongst parents and children far greater than most people are aware of." Since then EO has worked steadily, helping alleviate some of that distress and anxiety by quite simply existing and letting people know their legal rights. Because I was given that help and support when my child was desperately unhappy at school, I took on the job of local co-ordinator for Cambridge shire.

However, because my de-schooled son was secondary age I was still on my own with 'O' levels work. Then when Nick was successful with his exams I soon found myself made EO's expert with 'O' levels. Questions on secondary home education were passed to me frequently by Di Cox, the former Enquiries Secretary. When Di wanted to resign I took on the job as I still feel the need to show my gratitude for Dick Kitto's early support.

Well, that's the potted history of why I'm the Enquiries Sec. - what does the job entail !

Obviously it means answering a very varied selection of enquiries but many are just routine requiring only the enclosure of introductory literature and membership form. This type of enquiry comes to me when there isn't a local co-ordinator in the area

concerned. I also deal with the enquiries that local co-ords. cannot handle. Refuting false declarations in the media is another area I feel responsible for and of course I use all opportunities to advertise our existence. Advising local co-ordinators accounts for quite a large proportion of 'phoned enquiries. Many enquiries come from people who are not members and do not have the grace to enclose a s.a.e. These people get a reply but not my de-luxe version!! I do send them a membership form just in case they have a twinge of conscience, but checking the new members lists shows they never do.

Questions come by mail and 'phone; I prefer the former because that gives me time to think carefully before I reply. The 'phone enquiries are a completely different matter. Dr. Rachel Pinney's Creative Listening tells us:-

'Creative Listening developed out of the realisation that a person cannot give full attention to what is being said to them at the same time as assessing it and framing a reply. I cannot do this, nor can anyone else I have yet met.'

Having read this I now realise why many of my answers to 'phoned enquiries leave me with a sense of dissatisfaction and often a very frustrating afterthought. As local co-ords are in the same position we must, I think, not be too hard on ourselves.

However, repetition brings much needed practise, expertise and some satisfaction until a new problem crops up!

When I do get a new problem I write a piece for the newsletter appealing for help and this has proved to be a successful ploy.

Mundane routine comes into the job with the keeping of records such as co-ordinator moves or new volunteers to be added to the lists. What is really needed for the job is a mind like a computer - then I really wouldn't have any problems with those 'phone calls!!

The time needed for the job varies but it can take as much as five hours a week. By 9.30pm I've had enough for the day and can do without any of the very distressing care order cases that crop up - hence the 9.30pm deadline. However, doing the job has shown me that the majority of the more distressing cases arise where the parents did not belong to our organisation from the start of de-schooling - usually truanting was the initial cause of the trouble. Fortunately I am still able to give these unhappy folk a sympathetic hearing then pass them on to Iris Harrison who now specialises in these matters and has requested the work.

All things considered it still adds up to a most satisfying job, especially when an enquirer says "Thank you very much, I feel so much happier after talking to you."

Jason Aymes is a big boy of just 15, who lives near Salisbury. He is a quiet trier, collecting glowing reports from his schools - when he goes. He would not hurt a fly.

Wiltshire County Council has decided he is to be sent to a school for maladjusted children, 150 miles from his home and family.

Jason finds school difficult, often feeling unable to face it. Perhaps it is because he is 6ft tall and built like a 20 year old, but with childish literacy skills. He is nobody's fool, and likes writing computer programs. He has a reading age of about eight years yet he is mature beyond his years and talks seriously about his deepening predicament.

"I don't know what's going to happen to me," he said a week ago, sitting in the waiting room of the Dyslexia Institute, in London, when, according to the senior clinical psychologist, he had been assessed as a classic case of someone with a specific learning difficulty.

After Jason spent six weeks at a Wiltshire County Council assessment centre, and following a case meeting in which 15 experts conferred, the council wrote a fortnight ago to Jason and his parents that they were to present themselves at a boarding school for maladjusted children on a specified date (they were given a week's notice) and that if the headmaster accepted him, Jason would then stay. His parents broke the appointment - last Friday - and are debating what to do. They certainly have no relish for the proposed school which, they hear, is regimented and tough.

Jason knows something about schools for the maladjusted. He was in one, mostly as a weekly boarder, for seven months in 1981. There, in front of his parents, he was threatened he must toe the line or risk being sent to a mental hospital, and that if he misbehaved he might not see his parents all year. His misdemeanour on that occasion was extreme reluctance to leave his parents' car after a weekend at home.

He and his parents are anything but rebellious. They have lived with Jason's dread of school for years now, reluctantly obedient to the county's attempts to make him conform to its educational ideas. They do, however, dispute that he is maladjusted. They always suspected that Jason's problem, apart perhaps from shyness, was a difficulty with words, and that his difficulty is educational, as his school reports testify, not behavioural, as council officers apparently think.

"The authorities seem prepared to spend several thousand pounds a year on Jason at this school for maladjusted children" said Jason's father, Martyn. "Why not send him to a school for people with learning difficulties, or even get a teacher to come to him at home? He's been tormented enough. I'm not prepared any more to send him to a school he does not like: we've insisted before that he do what the authority wants, as best he can."

Now, I really think it's time we as his parents, and Jason himself, do what seems right for us. You know, he's lost trust in almost everybody but the family now, but he's mustard keen to catch up."

POSTSCRIPT AT MID-JANUARY 1983

The situation is still being assessed. The Aymes family, among others, will be the subject of a BBC Nationwide programme. The Wiltshire LEA was invited to take part in the programme, but refused.

An interesting corollary to this case is of a family in Hampshire.

A boy of about 9 years, who is having unreasonable difficulty with his written and book work, has been trying hard to avoid school. His mother, who is prepared to keep him at home, was warned about how LEAS could behave if labels about learning difficulties get attached. Thus forewarned, she clearly showed the Educational Psychologist that she could not be fobbed off with noises about expert residential schools. She demonstrated her resolve there and then, at the first meeting, that she intended to educate her son at home with the aid of some home tuition. The Educational Psychologist was impressed, accepted and respected the decision, and it seems that the next step is sorting out who, within the LEA will pay the bills for home tuition!

Kate Freeman

His parents have recently realized that they need not take Wiltshire's actions lying down. Quite by chance they were put in touch with Education Otherwise, the "de-schooling" organization. Now they have hired probably the only firm of solicitors experienced in the field; and taken Jason to the Dyslexia Institute, following which they gather that there are schools devoted to Jason's sort of problem.

But there is potential penalty in trying to buck the system. When the Wiltshire County Council solicitor wrote to the family's lawyers about the decision that Jason must go to a residential

school and inviting the family's cooperation, he also said: "However, if there is not a commitment to this end the view of the case conference is that such is the concern for Jason's development that an application Under Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 should be made. I mention this not as a threat... but simply so that you and your clients are aware of the concerns of the case conference and are aware of the county council's proposals."

In other words, care proceedings would be taken if the Aymeses did not voluntarily submit to losing Jason. "They may not think of it as a threat, but I don't know how else to take it", says Jason's mother Anthea.

Until next year, when there is a change in the law, it is impossible for the family to demand to see the basis on which the 15 experts at the Wiltshire County Council assessment conference judged Jason: the family were allowed to attend only for the last half-hour of a two and a half-hour session, virtually to hear the verdict.

The Aymes's case is far from rare. Many education authorities take a punitive attitude toward those families who decide to keep their children away from school. Often, the authorities prefer to spend large sums of money on compulsory residential care, rather than support the family at home.

In at least one recent case, a de-schooled child was made a ward of court and sent to a residential school despite having parents who are intelligent and caring. Because of a controversial recent judgment protecting wards of court, it is impossible to write about the case in detail.

Now Education Otherwise is being formed as an umbrella organisation to link those who want to defend the family as being the best starting point for caring for children, and perhaps especially awkward children, and to defend the right of families to educate children at home, with support rather than interference from the authorities.

Mr and Mrs Aymes, meanwhile, do not know whether publicity will help or harm their own case: but they feel that airing it might at least help other parents in the same predicament to avoid feeling as isolated as they have felt for several years.

Richard North, The Times December 3 1982.

The latest figures we have are that in 1980-81 the number of children in care for truancy were 4,200, and the cost of this to the rate and taxpayer is approx. £30 million a year.

NOTICES

BOOKS

Andrea Lowe had so many replies to her offer of the L.E.A.'s recommended maths standard that she thought members might be interested in the maths scheme she started with her son when he was first out of school. "HEY MATHEMATICS", published by Caffrey Smith Publishing Co., 8 Forres Street, Edinburgh EH3 8BJ, roughly covers 9 years (recommended from 7). "I think that is a little old for the first module, 5 would be more in line with schools. It seems to cover everything the L.E.A. requires, in an attractive way. Needless to say we have abandoned it in favour of no maths at all at present, except any we may stumble upon, but for anyone who wants to follow a scheme it's the best I've come across."

E.J. ARNOLD, Butterley Street, Leeds LS10 1AX has large catalogues of educational materials to suit all ages. If you write to Mrs. Cohen (above address) EO members get 10% discount. Specify the age range you require if asking for a catalogue.

EO Cycle-Camping Ride.

There has been a very positive response to this, but we are still short of host families. We need enough to make the stages short enough for younger children. A beautiful route from N. Wales through the border country is taking shape. If you live in this area, have you got tent space nearby and are you willing to cook an evening meal and breakfast for hungry EO cyclists, expenses paid? If so, please contact Peter Jones, 3 Fairfield Court, Daisybank Road, Manchester M14 5GL 061 224 9816

NEW CO-ORDINATOR NEEDED, BATH AREA

Meg and David Robertson Shopper are leaving Bath at the end of February and can no longer act as co-ordinators for Avon. Can anyone take over? Let Simon Grant know, (his address is inside back cover).

A learning exchange is being founded in the London Borough of Redbridge. Any member in this area who wants to join (an ideal means of self help) or wants more information, should write to: MARK KINSLEY, 7 GAYSHAM AVENUE, GANTS HILL, ILFORD, ESSEX, IG2 6TH.

NEXT CORE MEETING

The next Core Group meeting will be held at Unstone Grange near Sheffield on May 27-30th. See full details on page

HANDBILLS

We now have a large stock of A5 size handbills with the triangle motif on one side overlaid with a brief description of EO and the aims and objectives on the other. If you are running a stall, could place a wodge in your local alternative bookshop, community centre, library or whatever, please ask Caroline Grant for some, address as above.

1979 DIGEST

Were you a member of EO in 1979 or did you manage to get issues 9-12 when you joined? If not, here's your chance to catch up with the EO 1979 DIGEST. As relevant now as it was then, four issues rolled into one for only 75p (£1 to non-members), it's handy to sell from stalls at fairs or similar events. From Caroline Grant, 3 & 4 Tanyrally Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 6RS.

There seem to be a lot of companies around offering educational material and activities clubs e.g. Elf, Humpty Dumpty Club, Macdonald 345 (for a few pounds a month you get an activities pack.) There are also several firms running book clubs for children. We'd be interested to know if anyone has experience of any of these. If so, what is your opinion of them? Do they appeal to the children? Are they worth the money? Or could you do the same sort of thing yourself with a little thought? Are some superior to others? Would you recommend them? Were they recommended to you or did you respond to an ad? Have you been bombarded with advertising/sales literature since joining? Please send your comments to Ann Simcock, 2 Y Garth, Pontllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. Any useful findings can then be published in the newsletter.

Multiplication tables on tape cassettes: Do any EO members know of a straight chanting version, without analysis? Etain Addey, Pratale, Vallingegno, Scritto, Gubbio (Pg) Italy.

Does anyone have space for our caravan from March 27th onwards? We are looking for a house to buy in East Anglia or the West Country, so preferably in those areas. It should be just for a few months and we'd like to be near another EO family. Our children are Lucy (5) and Daniel (3½). Please write to Jon and Ros Mackenzie, Gunthorpe Hall, Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR24 2PA.

I wonder if families who are interested in Natural History have thought of joining their local Society? I imagine most areas would have a group within reasonable distance, and from a personal point, we find our group extremely interesting and worthwhile. It manages several local Nature Reserves and members are encouraged to help with conservation work which involves coppicing, fence mending, pond clearing etc. There are many walks and field trips, and among the members there is a vast field of experience and knowledge. One feeds badgers in his garden and is happy to let other people join him; another is the head biology teacher at a local Comprehensive school and as well as being a mine of information, he is also careful to involve children in a positive way. A fungi foray occupied one recent afternoon, while evenings have been spent in a Nature Reserve with special lights and nets to catch and identify moths. Another evening was spent catching and ringing bats. Each month there is an indoor meeting. These can vary from a film show, to a collection of

live specimens, and are occasionally followed a few days later by a field trip or visit following the same theme.

We are interested in conservation and natural history anyway; but, from an EO point of view we find the group extremely interesting and worthwhile. The children are able to learn from many people, with various interests and knowledge - but above all they can be positively involved.

Sandie Cottee.

..BIRTHS..

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Penelope and Brian WIGGS

Congratulations to Penny and Brian Wiggs on the birth of a second daughter ROSE ERIN, who was born at home on December 4th 1982.

and to Vanessa and Richard Draper on the birth of their third child ELISSA, who was born on November 24th 1982 - a sister for Ben and Daniel.

EO gratefully acknowledges receipt of: Rydale Waldorf School newsletter (Advent 1982), Peace News (Christmas 1982), City and Guilds' BACKGROUND TO TECHNOLOGY Book 1 (to be reviewed later) FESTIVALS, FAMILY AND FOOD (Hawthorn Press) (review in next issue), PARENTING A PATH THROUGH CHILDHOOD by D. Turner Caplen (review next time.)

Education Otherwise Officers

TREASURER

John Elenor
18 Eynham Road
London
W12 0HA
Tel. 01-749 299

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
Cams.
PE18 9AN
Tel. 0480 63130

(Please do not ring
after 9.30pm)

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

CO-ORDINATOR OF CO-ORDINATORS

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

REVIEWS EDITOR

Helen Holland
Inholms Farm
Plumpton Green
Nr. Lewes
Sussex

PUBLISHERS please send copies for review
to this address.

Education Otherwise

18 Eynham Road
London W12

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 above