

no.29

**E**ffective  
**D**iscerning  
**U**biquitous  
**C**onsiderate  
**A**nalytical  
**T**houghtful  
**I**nformative  
**O**ptimistic  
**N**oteworthy

**O**utings  
**T**utorials  
**H**andicrafts  
**E**xaminations  
**R**ationalization  
**W**ork  
**I**ndividualism  
**S**port  
**E**xchanges

**B** **E** **S** **L** **E** **T** **E** **R**

**J** **U** **N** **E** **83**

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# «EDITORIAL»

This Newsletter is my first attempt at editing and, indeed, it is the first time I have typed such a vast amount of pages at one go. I realise I could have roped in others to help with the typing, but I regarded this commitment as a challenge, which I hoped to succeed in. Whether or not I have succeeded will depend on whether any subsequent offers I make to edit the Newsletter are accepted... I know nothing of the printing process, or of any of the practical side of producing (of producing) the Newsletter, but still decided to plunge in with both feet and have a go. Those of you who have been wary of volunteering to be an editor, just read this, and you'll pretty soon realise that you can't do any worse. Those of you who are experienced in the Newsletter's production (and who are expert typists) will, I hope, forgive the numerous mistakes I have made, and not be too critical.

We all have to start somewhere. How many of us have de-schooled our children not really knowing what to do with them as an alternative from an educational point of view? How many of us, once thrown in at the deep end, managed to stop ourselves from sinking and slowly emerged as confident educators of our children? Many of us, I'm sure. Well, the same goes with helping to run EO. The tasks may seem daunting, but even the founder members had to start the organisation somehow, probably with little or no experience either, but with plenty of will to succeed. So, come on fellow Newsletter readers, who like me have been sitting back letting others do all the work. There's lots of jobs you could help with - editing the Newsletter; publicising EO; running stalls at fairs; writing to newspapers about EO; becoming an area coordinator, or just making contributing to the Newsletter.

Contact your coordinator with any local ideas and offers of help; send contributions for the Newsletter to future editors, or write to Caroline Grant or Bruce Cox if you fancy having a go at being editor. It's been hard work, but I have enjoyed it. I hope you enjoy reading the articles I have chosen for inclusion this time. Some are controversial, some are critical, others are enlightening and informative. I hope they will give you food for thought, and perhaps inspire you to reply to them in words or by your actions.

Jean Shepherd

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The next issue (August) is to be edited by

Helen Fletcher, 28, Billesdon Drive, Heathfield,

Nottingham, NG 5 1NT.

The deadline is July 1st. All material intended as such should be clearly marked "For Publication".

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Please note that the expression of an opinion in the Newsletter does not mean that it is the opinion of the Editor, the Core Group or of the EO membership in general.

## JAN - JORN'S EARLY YEARS

Jan-Jorn was three in January this year. From the day of his birth his dad and I have been stimulating him in all aspects of his life. When he was in his cot he would look at the mobiles hanging there while he listened to the music on the stereo. Whenever I took him out in the pram (if he wasn't asleep) I would talk to him about what I could see and about the sounds he was hearing. He would play with many different sorts of toys and household objects. This 'Education' still continues, both intentionally and naturally as it does with many parents. At 8 months we started taking him swimming and he is still going regularly once a week with us, but in addition he is doing swimming lessons with a group of other children.

We decided that we would like Jan-Jorn to learn to play an instrument, and as I can play the piano (just about) we decided we would see if he took to learning that instrument by the Suzuki method. Travelling to and from the lessons twice a week takes up about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours, but Jan-Jorn enjoys them and the practice every day which he has to do. He has always been interested in music and enjoys dancing. Every Saturday morning he goes to tap dancing and acrobatic lessons which he looks forward to and where he meets the same children every week. As well as these social contacts he goes to a playgroup one afternoon a week, while I do keep-fit. He also visits friends and has them round to play at times.

We go out quite a lot. In the winter when the weather was bad we visited many museums - the Natural History, the Science, the Commonwealth Institute, the British museums etc (but not the Imperial War Museum. In fact Jan-Jorn has no guns or soldiers or any war toys to play with.) In the better weather we go to parks, out to the countryside, visit farms, go on 'nature walks' in woods on our own or with friends.

Jan-Jorn is allowed to choose what he wants to on any particular day, given the restraints of his lesson times and, of course, the weather. Every day I 'leave lying around' toys and objects, games etc., which he can just pick up and play with and I am always on hand to join in when and if he wants me to. Our lounge wall is full of his paintings and the sideboard has his models on it. If he wants to do something 'messy' he knows he has to prepare the floor area first.

From an early age we have given Jan-Jorn a great deal of responsibility and he accepts it readily. As he has started asking questions about what things say we have started reading books more with him. He often helps to make the tea, using the correct implements, though a little clumsily naturally, and he enjoys dusting and cleaning the house.

We have taken him to puppet shows, concerts and last week he went to the cinema for the first time. We visit the library every fortnight (he joined when he was one year old). Most of these things which we do with Jan-Jorn are available free or at a nominal cost, as we cannot afford much. Indeed, the Suzuki lessons are paid for out of the Child Benefit.

We are giving Jan - Jorn the opportunity to experience a vast range of things at first hand, and this we will continue to do as he grows older. All the usual 'school subjects' are being incorporated into his daily living in a natural manner. He will not be going to school at five. What could a school give him that he cannot have out of school? Nothing. One thing about it, he is never bored and neither are we.

Jean Shepherd and Mo Bajwa

# GRAND DRAW

## REMINDER

HAVE YOU SOLD YOUR DRAW TICKETS YET?  
IF NOT? YOU STILL HAVE TIME TO SELL THEM  
BEFORE THE GRAND DRAW.

Please send money and counterfoils, or unsold tickets to:-

BETTY BALL  
1, FENTON ROAD,  
WARBOYS,  
HUNTINGDON, CAMBS by

FRIDAY JUNE 17 TH. 1983.

(Cheques made out to Education Otherwise, please.)

For those who are opposed to draws,  
donations are being received and handled separately.

### E. O. WEEK IN WALES.

At Ozanam Centre, Llanllyfni, Nr. Caerarfon.

Caroline Grant writes that anyone near enough to do so will be welcome to join them for the Sunday, afternoon of June 26 th, when the Grand Draw is to take place. Please aim to arrive by 2 pm and take your own picnic. To find them:- Get to LLANLLYFNI, on the Caernarfon-Porthmadog Rd, (a mile or so south of Penygroes) and look for a turn off eastwards signposted TAN - YR - ALLT. The Ozanam centre is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile along this road on the left. If you intend to go, please give advance warning to Caroline Grant at  $\frac{3}{4}$  Tanyrallt Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

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# talking about SCHOOL

Contributed by Janice Owen, Janet Everdell, Jackie Fearnley and Annie Wilton-Jones Edited by Sarah Guthrie.

"all our children are being put through a overblown, over-academic syllabus in which the dominant experience for the majority is one of failure, not of achievement.....Whatever organisational form secondary organisation might take, Labour politicians well knew the grammar school curriculum could not be changed." (David Hargreaves - Reader in Education at Oxford, THE LISTENER March 3rd. 1983)

"Stop waging war on schools. A word of encouragement and praise where due will, in the long run, pay dividends." (Dr. Burstein, American psychiatrist, DAILY TELEGRAPH 14.1.83)

"Children want, not schools and teachers, but homes and parents. Surely the social health of the nation demands that a way be found to ensure that parents take more personal responsibility for their own children and that children go to school only if they want to learn, and are capable of learning, things that their parents cannot teach them." (Letter in the DAILY TELEGRAPH 4.1.83)

"Hearing the case of a prison inmate who, through studying pottery had then faked Bernard Leach pots that fooled Sotheby's; but who had obtained only an average pass in O level pottery, the judge commented: "It's impossible to satisfy examiners sometimes....I wonder what they give a distinction for?." (DAILY TELEGRAPH)

"I hated it, being stuck in bricks and mortar." (Horticulturalist and writer Geoffrey Smith on why he chose an outdoor career. DAILY TELEGRAPH)

## TALKING ABOUT E O

"I think that the organisation E O is a group that is going to assume some importance in Gwent in the future...." "We should not give this organisation our semi-blessing"...."If we allow any organisation of this type to take over the education system, it would shatter it."....."The applications (sic) put before the committee had obviously been prepared by an expert. The movement is highly organised, but I'm doubtful about it." (Comments from Gwent LEA during March 83)

"...While children sometimes leap ahead with home tuition, it is hard to see what real advantage they are gaining over the years....." (Nicholas Tucker, Educational psychologist, MOTHER, Feb. 83)

## RANDOM NOTES ACROSS THE PRESS

Keith Joseph announced reforms in teacher training which would ensure that teachers were qualified in what they teach... (GUARDIAN 22.3.83).... A head teacher from a school in Lanarkshire faces nine charges of assaulting boys aged 8 to 11 (GUARDIAN 7.4.83)... The Pre-School Playgroups Association has officially changed its main aim from a focus on playgroups to "encouraging parents to understand and provide for the needs of their children under statutory school age through community groups." (T.E.S. April 83).... Dr. Mia Kellmer Pringle, campaigner for the rights of children and founder of the National Children's Bureau died in February. (T.E.S. 25.2.83)..... A CSE exam on the threat of nuclear war is being planned by a group of teachers and scientists (T.E.S. Mar 83)

# EDUCATION THE THROUGH PRESS

## LOOKS AT MATHS.

The Cockcroft Report on Mathematics which appeared last year called among other things for the need to have practical investigational work in 'everyday' situations'....(TIMES EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT 25.3.83)....Doing sums is not the way to teach modern maths and it is debatable whether maths is as important a subject as is commonly claimed,says a maths tutor from the Cambridge Institute of Education(T.E.S. 4.3.83)Conventional teaching does little to develop survival maths,he claims,and few children need to know more specialised areas:they need to know how mathematics contributes to the functioning of the real world... Virtually no applied maths is taught in Russian schools,in particular no probability or statistics,because they feel it cannot be taught to any significant level and so is not worth doing it at all.(T.E.S. March 83)A report from the Schools Council suggests that young children who like the use of number in stories,take care in the positioning of toy cars and dolls in rows, and enjoy jigsaw puzzles may be mathematical geniuses.(DAILY TELEGRAPH 27.1.83) Other characteristics include the ability of an 11 year old to work up to 3 hours on a problem before showing any 'deterioration' in their performance....."We often worked on a problem for three hours at a time,a far cry from the rigid bell structure of school lessons," commented a sixth former about a residential maths workshop weekend."The curiosity and the interest can be enough for one to persist and go on questioning the reasons behind the learning."Another comment on the success of such workshops was that "they take maths out of the school environment and give pupils and teachers a chance to work and live together in an informal and relaxed manner."T.E.S. 25.3.83).....HMI's reported that 6th. formers find maths teaching rigid and dull and unrelated to the real world (DAILY TELEGRAPH 8.7.82)They call for urgent new teaching methods.....Card games and plastic puzzles are part of a new project aimed to convey basic mathematical concepts,since "....one of the most significant causes of failure lies in over-hasty attempts to get children working at an abstract or formal level.As a result children become lost trying to manipulate symbols which lost any real meaning.."(Project leader,John Ling,talking in the T.E.S.,25.3.83).....In some schools,classrooms are so small that no maths problem can be completed on the board on the board without rubbing off the earlier part of the solution(GUARDIAN Dec.82).See Cartoon.



Nearly half the British adult population cannot understand a railway timetable and three in ten cannot handle simple multiplication or subtraction(GUARDIAN)A national survey found that 30% of the country suffers from 'arithmophobia' or fear of numbers due to having over-anxious parents at an early age.....About £1,000 million is spent annually on the teaching of maths and about 25% of school pupils reach 0 level standard (GUARDIAN 13.4.82) Launching 1984:Every primary school is to have a micro-computer by the end of 1984.(GUARDIAN, Feb.83)

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Janice Owen.

### LIFE IS A PRECIOUS GIFT

Life is a precious gift, which is not to be wasted. Life with my husband and four children has taught me so much about using time wisely and productively and that is part of what we are trying to pass on to the children.

We finally took the plunge and de-schooled Seth and Esther last July. It was not a bad school as Village Primaries go, and they were not unhappy there, which is why it took us so long to break from the expectations of society and out into practice our lofty ideals.

Seth had been out of school for 7 or 8 months in 1979 when he was five, because his first term had such a disastrous effect on his character and personality, that was when we joined EO. (we had begun to have doubts about the values of school when Seth was 3 and Esther 6 months.) However, when we moved to Acresford in

Leicestershire - a very small hamlet with no other children and the prospect rather difficult living arrangements for several months, we decided that Seth (then 5½ years) should go to the small school two miles away - we supported him through the first difficult months and helped him overcome the problems he encountered there, having always, at the back of our minds, the thought that we would not be sending the children into the comprehensive system and that eventually they would all be educated at home. Several times we teetered on the brink of withdrawing Seth at the end of each school year. He stayed for three years partly because of Esther's desire to find out what school was all about and we didn't want a split family.

When we did de-school them they were quite sad about leaving, but now seven months on they have no desire to return. Having seen the change in them in those seven months we just couldn't send them back. It is the whole idea of school and its place as a social institution encompassing the damaging effects of peer pressure, loss of personal responsibilities for the use of one's time, television viewing, different attitudes and examples causing confusion within the child, seven and a half hours a day out of the family setting and so on. Suffice it to say that they are reason enough for us to take our children out of such a system. Having done that what did we provide in its place?

I knew the first year would not be easy - we had all grown used to school routine - there were occasions during the early weeks when I thought "Oh help - what have I done?" There were still the pressures from family friends and neighbours to contend with, but I can safely say that it took a comparatively short time to become so convinced we had done the right thing that we no longer feel the need to constantly justify and we just live our life as we think best and don't waste time worrying about what others think of us.

Children, while growing physically, are busy absorbing everything that happens to them and everything they see and hear, I believe they go on absorbing until they stop growing and then they gradually sift through it all and formulate their own opinions and ideals from what they have absorbed - that is another subject and story and could take pages to elaborate on - we all need the freedom to develop and learn at our own pace - I can give that to my children at home because no-one else can see more clearly and with the interest so necessary the stages, phases, needs and abilities of my children. I can see how different they are emotionally now, how their creative imagination has developed, how rarely they fall out with each other and how closely knit they are as brother and sister. They feel no need to compete with each other - or anyone else for that matter. They are learning that it is up to them to get things done, learning to finish what they start and that regular practise results in growing ability.

I try not to become over-anxious about having 'something to show' as a result of their interest in a subject. If nurtured appropriately the interest will grow. If I try to guide the interest in the direction I think it should go the child feels it is no longer his / her idea, no longer in control and they start to switch off mentally and the learning stops. However, there is one area which I suppose carries some element of pressure from us and that is the daily practice in the 3R's for Seth and Esther because they have acquired these skills already and I believe that I have a responsibility to help them keep them so that when they need to use them in the pursuit of their own projects their inability will not be a burdensome handicap. Practice does make perfect as my faltering efforts to learn to play the recorder have testified. Of course, there needs to be no pressure on four year old Gideon - for him reading and writing is the same as playing with the lego. It will be interesting to see how Matthew approaches it, and also time will tell if children naturally "go off" the 3 R's at a certain age.

As a parent it is my responsibility to be well informed and an example of being interested and enthusiastic about life and living, to guide our children through the network of society's conflicting attitudes and examples. It is a challenge and one that is not likely to grow easier as society seems to grow more self-centred and materialistic with each passing day.

We are fortunate to live in a rural area with access to peaceful walks and plenty of outdoor space, and some livestock to care for.

Life is a precious gift, I hope we will teach our children by our example that they have the ability and potential to do anything, that life can be a voyage of discovery and when we put thoughts and ideas into practice we can control our destiny.

Victor and Sally Wilkins

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No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

Kahlil Gibran

(Contributed by Jean Shepherd)

# H O L I D A Y

LOWER SHAW FARM - SUMMER PROGRAMME 1983  
Cycling weekend, rides, massage maintenance June 17-19  
Perceiving nature, slides, readings, paintings, music, grokking etc. July 13-17  
Art and Crafts, spinning, weaving, batik, pottery, screenprinting etc July 25-31  
Looking at alternatives, lifestyles, education, health, nutrition energy, microtechnology Aug 8-14  
Stretching out, yoga, dance, mime, juggling, singing etc Aug 23-29  
Rural setting, Low cost, Whole food meals.  
Reduction available for non-wage earners and people on low incomes.  
Also available voluntary working weekends which will be held on June 10th-12th and August 19th-21st.

For further details and booking form send S.A.E. or phone;  
Lower Shaw Farmhouse, Shaw, Nr. Swindon, Wilshire.  
Tel. Swindon (0793) 771-080

## SCREEDY FARM.

⋮  
This is a small livestock farm near Taunton in Somerset, which rears the usual farm animals and which offers accommodation for people wishing to experience life in the countryside on a farm. Accommodation is available on a self-catering basis or on a full board basis, and is in centrally heated farm buildings. There are

11½ acres of farmland and gardens and indoor facilities are available.

Further information from  
Screedy Farm, Milverton, Taunton, Somerset TA4 1NH  
Tel. Wilveliscombe (0984) 23530

## HOLME PLACE COMMUNITY

I  
D  
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S  
Urgently needs new members; two or one parent families, single people or groups interested in communal living. At present our children are home educated - and we think it's worked well - but as with everything else, deschooling is a matter which will be open for discussion and evaluation with new members.

⋮  
We live in an ex-Victorian rectory, and work and play and eat together and have our own bed-sitters. We keep goats and chickens and grow much of our own food on our 7 acres of land. On site is an old coach house stable block which houses a pottery/batik studio run by some friends. We plan to fully convert existing outbuildings to include a centre for conferences and courses, a wood / furniture workshop and accommodation for visitors. At present visitors can be accommodated in the house, in a caravan on site, or by camping. Pottery and batik courses will run from April. Please send a S.A.E. for details if you are interested in joining us (minimum capital

£8000  
required,per adult) or if you would like to come as a paying guest or attend a pottery /  
batik course.We look forward to hearing from you.The address is :-  
Holme Place, Oakford, Tiverton, Devon EX16 9 EW.

#### ITALY

Visitors, especially with EO children, welcome any time at our 'open farmhouse'--share  
food costs and lend a hand.Write to:-  
Addey, Pratale, Vallingegno, Scritto, GUBBIO, Perugia, Italy.

#### WHEATSTONE COMMUNITY PROJECT

Summer weekend courses.

During this summer we are devoting some weekends to informal courses  
We will have three on smallholders dairying covering the care of the dairy cow, hand-  
milking and making cheese, butter and yoghurt. Also we will have three weekends for  
learning about organic gardening and herbs.

For details contact Genevieve or Paul

De-schooling and communal living gathering.

The weekend of August 20 / 21 we are holding a gathering for people  
interested in de-schooling and communal living. We had such a gathering in summer  
1980 and a good time was had by all, so come along and make this a good one too.

Our charge will be £20 per adult for the weekend (full-board). If you  
want to come to the de-schooling gathering and can't afford £20 let us know, we should  
be able to make a few subsidies. For further information write to:-  
Wheatstone Community Project, Leintwardine by Craven Arms, Salop.  
Tel. Leintwardine 662

WHAT?

when?

where?

## -- practising p.o. ~~~ ^^^

### WHY?

Our children were unhappy at their schools. They were obtaining little in the way of "education" as we defined it, and our younger son's self-confidence was being visibly eroded.

### HOW?

Our system revolves around a Friday night meeting every week at which progress over the last week is reviewed, reports on work in hand are presented, points of general importance are discussed and objectives are discussed and set for the following week. All 4 of us participate on an equal footing, although naturally we offer a certain amount of guidance to the children.

A report of the meeting and a list of "Actions" following on from it is printed out for each of us. Within the guidelines/constraints of the Action list we allow the children to get on with their own things for the rest of the week. We thought the children might need formal work on a regular basis. We have abandoned this idea pretty quickly, apart from writing practice for our younger son.

### ADVANTAGES?

The children are happy. Their natural curiosity and joie-de-vivre is returning. They are learning to deal with all the practicalities of life at the same time as they are introduced to more academic topics. Particularly important to us is that there is now the opportunity to take them out and about to museums, exhibitions, lectures, cathedrals, visits to relatives and friends, nature reserves etc.

### DISADVANTAGES?

The children are omnipresent. There is a lot of hard work involved—preparation, discussion, and it is full-time. It can be exhausting physically and emotionally.

### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Uncertain, as we may go to live abroad. If we do not, we would aim for "O" levels then probably try a 6th. form college / Polytechnic or some such for "A" levels.

### ATTITUDE CHANGE?

We thought it would be hard work but rewarding, and it is. We thought we might meet opposition from friends and acquaintances but have had nothing but approval and encouragement so far. The children's attitude has changed from incredulity to a gradually developing security, but we feel they are still "defrosting" from school.

This article was included in the questionnaire received from Ian and Elizabeth Clark of Romsey, who gave their permission for its publication in the Newsletter.

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### A LITTLE GEM

We sometimes say very silly things to our children. Like the other day, when I said to my son: "Don't be childish." About a minute later he came back with "I bet you weren't grown-upish when you were a child." He's right. I wasn't. And neither would I want him to be. How terrible it would be if he were old-manish, or even worse, middle-aged-ish, when he's only 7 ½!

Elizabeth Sturges.

### Pre-School Education Packs.

We have had several replies to our request for details of the above packs in the February newsletter. May we say thank you to everyone who replied.

The only one people seemed to have tried was the Humpty Dumpty Club. Response was extremely varied. I think the answer lies in a quote framed in one reply "You pay for the convenience". Several replies stated that the children looked forward to the packs coming through the post and that  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the material could be used with other children as they came of age to use them. Presumably colouring in activities were not re-usable (Mum's could trace them first and save the result for younger children).

As to the question of recommendation the people who replied seemed fairly happy with what they had, but there was no overwhelming enthusiasm to recommend. Those thinking of purchasing might keep an eye on the advertising and accounting side. Those purchasing several years ago had no trouble but a recent purchaser had been bombarded with literature and discourteous letters.

I have bought the Macdonald 345 and Ready to Read kits. (not direct but from the Early Learning Centre). This consists of card press-outs and cut-out activities, number and reading related; a series of records, a village map, and 4 pages of information for the parents. Once again I quite like it. The records are greatly appreciated by my 2 year old. The parents information could be better organised as when the cutting and pressing has been done the resulting booklet is rather tatty.

Ann Simcock.

### Suzuki

Following on from the article "Child's Play" by Lorna Bicicchi in February's newsletter, just a few more details of the method as applied to young children. My son, Jan-Jorn aged 3 started to play the piano about the beginning of March. After observing other children having their lessons for four weeks the teacher felt he was ready to start to play the piano himself. We had been given a record and a tape to listen to at home. This was to be done on a daily basis and consisted of all the music Jan-Jorn would be learning to play in the near future. The teacher stresses that progress must occur in small steps and that repetition will improve the child's playing, hence regular daily piano practise is a must. Jan-Jorn really enjoys learning to play and he asks every morning to have his 'piano tape' on whilst we have breakfast.

On April 9th Jan-Jorn, his dad and I attended a concert given by European Suzuki children at the Wigmore Hall in London, and which was attended by Dr. Suzuki himself. Children aged from 5 - 16 played the piano, violin and cello, music ranging from "A Happy Friend" by Schumann to Sonata No. 2 in A by Brahms. The standard of even the youngest children was high, and the concert was enjoyed by the audience which comprised of babes-in-arms to grandparents, truly a family gathering.

Further information about the Suzuki method, addresses of teachers etc., can be obtained from British Suzuki Institute, Mrs. Whitehouse, 31, Watford Rd., Radlett, Herts. WD7 8LG

Jean Shepherd

# EDUCATING ARCHIE

by SEG

on her way to  
Greenham Common,  
Archie's mother  
stops off at an  
alternative  
education  
conference.....

When I say  
absolute silence I  
mean ABSOLUTE  
SILENCE

if I've told you once  
I've told you twice  
I've told you a  
thousand times

you'll be laughing on  
the other side of  
your face soon

I can wait here  
all day if  
necessary

RIGHT --  
hands on  
your  
heads  
everyone

it's your own  
time you're  
wasting

some people  
are STILL  
TALKING!

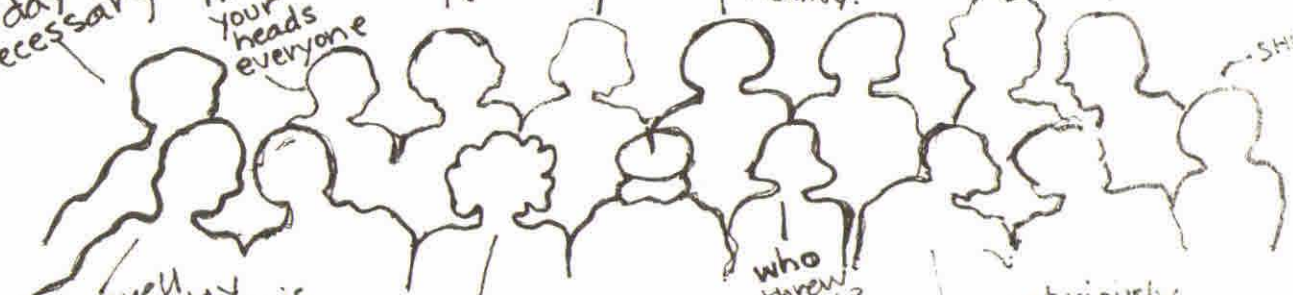
SHUT UP

very well  
you can all stay  
behind when this  
conference is over

Why not share  
the joke with ALL of us  
I'm sure we'd ALL LOVE  
to hear it

who  
threw  
that?

you obviously  
don't understand  
plain English



## THE BIOLOGY DEBATE CONTINUES.....

Roger Downie's article on biology (See "Biology Bites Back" in February's Newsletter) raised some fundamental questions that we need to think about when educating our children.

It is too easy to imply - as he does - that people are soppy or sentimental if they question the assumption that animals are on the earth for man to use in anyway that he wishes. Of course we must all decide where to draw the line, but I agree with Lorraine Walker (See "Biology Beware" in Dec. 82 Newsletter) that in many cases scientists have gone too far.

Roger Downie says we must prefer knowledge to ignorance. I'm not sure what he means. The way I see it is that man has been given a body and an environment that work well when kept in a certain harmony. There is nothing wrong with increasing our knowledge about ourselves and the world we live in, but in some cases - especially when connected to someone's pecuniary interests - a balance becomes severely upset. It is not so easy to reverse certain processes once begun - a good example being the knowledge gained about nuclear fission.

It is no good piously hoping that society will place restraints on the scientist. How does that work in practise? I for one would like to see scientists putting their skills to use in developing convivial tools, low energy projects, natural medicines and so on, rather than nuclear power, fast cars, aluminium smelting, technological childbirth, man-made fibres and so on.

Scientists spend a lot of energy trying to cure ills that would not have been created in the first place without them. Take the food industry - if what we ate was less refined and adulterated scientists would not be spending millions of pounds on cancer cures, as well as carrying out many useless animal experiments. I know we cannot turn the clock back, but one thing I would like to do is to get rid of our arrogant attitude towards the earth and its natural resources and towards the rest of creation.

Roger Downie says animal experiments should be a way of increasing our fascination and respect, pointing out that models and diagrams are no substitute for some experience of the real thing - i.e. dissecting a humanely killed animal. That may be so, but children have to make do with diagrams of volcanoes erupting. Perhaps we should think harder before assuming everyone has an automatic right to everything it is possible to obtain.

The situation where a child investigates the dead body of an animal it comes across maybe different, as it does not encourage such an attitude of cold scientific detachment. Yet Rudolph Steiner in 'Practical Advice to Teachers' said, "Thus we should never speak to the children out of doors on what we show them indoors, for instance, about the plants. We should emphasise how different it is to dissect dead nature in the classroom or to look upon the beauty of nature out of doors".

We sometimes assume the more information we have the better we will be. But surely what is important is to have some feeling of our position in the world - our relationship to the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms. Dotty Coplen in 'Parenting a Path In Childhood' says, "Children need wonder. When we give quick clever explanations about the world we deprive the child of an important experience. The feeling of wonder is a gift that needs to be protected. . . . . Experiencing wonder, reverence and respect allow the human qualities in the child to become alive. Later this can develop into a sense of responsibility for the world."

Children seem to have a natural affinity for animals and when they risk being stung to rescue a drowning bee or when they cuddle the hens and show me they are also lovable creatures, I feel we are all learning important lessons.

As our children gradually found out what was involved in the production of meat, cheese and eggs they found they could not eat these things. It has been their first encounter with a moral problem, which they have resolved in their own ways. (Do we eat ice-cream, cheese straws, jelly at parties?) I'm amazed at the strength of their will compared to my feeble attempt to give up coffee for Lent.

I agree that the question of pets, of the wearing of leather shoes and eating plants should all be taught about. And it is up to each person to draw his or her own lines. But as with EO if it is something we care about we are bound to want to help other people - whether children who don't wish to dissect animals, or those animals who are needlessly experimented on for the sake of a particular syllabus or for cosmetics, agricultural chemicals or cancer cures that cannot be applied to humans.

In the end we are brought back to our own values. If my children ask about the beginning of the world or about the first man, I talk to them about God, whereas another parent would speak in terms of evolution or the exploding universe. If the children were at school they would get the point of view of their particular teacher.

The scientists who see themselves as objective and detached find it difficult to grasp what is involved in an approach which includes more than measurable physical phenomena. Equally, it is tempting for those of us attempting to revive the contribution made by the feelings and the spirit to reject everything that has arisen out of science - where the best of both worlds can be combined, as in the case that Roger Downie mentions of scientists concerned about the environment - there might be a real chance of change in the world.

Jackie Fearnley

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#### AFFILIATIONS

EO is currently affiliated to:-

NCCL, 21 Tabard St., London S.E.1

Future Studies Centre, 15, Kelso Rd., Leeds 2.

National Out of School Alliance, Oxford House, Derbyshire St., London E.2.

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#### Home is the true school

If parents think that they can do what they like  
and still train children in good conduct,  
they are making a great mistake.

Parents and the home are the greatest and most powerful school,  
A child ruined at home cannot be saved even by God.

From "The Child" by Gijubhai

(Contributed by Jean Shepherd)

YOUNG E.O. 1 2 3 4 5 6

My name is Tamalaine. I am nine years old and live in Fakenham, at Hubbard's Barn. Most weeks a boy called Jamie comes to stay for the weekend and he lives at Fakenham. For most of last summer we have had the Lackington family staying with us in a caravan but now at the weekends I have to look after the rabbits (plenty). They are called Snowball who is an albino, Fluffbutton, a grey light brown, Fizz, aslightly grey, mainly white, Coconut, a black rabbit, and Teddy and her duplicates (5). I have got a ZX 81 and about thirteen tapes and Farid has got the ZX Spectrum. Every wednesday Edward, Vicky, Gerry, Cherity me and my two sisters pick up Emily Outred and go swimming at Kings Lyn and then go shopping.

Bye for now,

Tamalaine.

(From Tamalaine Laniado)

The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare.

Act 3 Scene 1

Bianca to Lutencio and Hortensio as Cambio and Licio respectively.

Why Gentlemen you do me double wrong  
To strive \* for that which resteth in my choice  
I am no breeching scholar + in the schools;  
I'll not be tried to hour nor pointed times.  
But learn my lessons as I please myself.

\*strive.....contend in rivalry

+ breeching scholar...schoolboy liable to be beaten

tried to hour nor pointed times..... will not be tied to given set times at  
which to do things.

EARLY ADVICE TO DE-SCHOOLED CHILDREN!

(From Beth Theobald, 14 years.)

CHILDREN.

Send in your contributions-poems pictures, stories, ideas; how you feel about being educated by your Mum and Dad at home. We'll print your contributions when we can. Don't be disappointed if they are not in the next issue. They will appear eventually.

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## DO IT YOURSELF -PLEASE

It is with a feeling akin to disgust (after our own battle with the L.E.A. ref. N.L. 19) we now read in the Newsletters the misconceived and somewhat dangerous suggestions put forward by some contributors. Probably done with the best of intentions, but with seemingly little regard as to the consequences.

These suggestions range from - approaching the L.E.A.'s for help with materials etc., if this was forthcoming I think this contributor must not complain if the L.E.A. wish to have more say in the way the child is educated and properly so.

We have members praising the L.E.A.'s for their 'magnificent cooperation', what this means is the L.E.A. is not obstructive, since you cannot 'cooperate' on the law.

Another gem - an L.E.A. booklet (N.L. 23) but they already have one, a rather thick one, the 1944 Education Act (we know Derbys have one) it only requires to be read. Their role as stated in the Act - THEY DO NOT HAVE A ROLE - see N.L. 23 P.6.

We now have the latest suggestion from Wales - to invite advisors to EO group meetings to discuss "the joint responsibilities of L.E.A.'s and parents" - THE LEA DO NOT HAVE ANY RESPONSIBILITIES, IT IS THE PARENTS RESPONSIBILITY? THE LEA ONLY NEED TO KNOW AN EDUCATION IS TAKING PLACE. ref. the 1944 Act and N.L. 23 P.6.

If members would take the trouble to examine the 1944 Act, as we have, they will not find any reference to advisors, not a mention, and only one clause regarding inspectors and they are concerned only with the inspection of educational establishments, definitions of these do not include the home, nor does it include private non-maintained schools.

Let us not overlook the fact we in EO have cast aside, for a variety of reasons an educational system in its entirety. Having opted out we feel those members who still lean towards the authority should now sever the umbilical cord and stand on their own two feet.

Members will no doubt recall the recent "caning case" before the European Court where the D.E.S. defence was "the obligation to respect philosophical convictions related only to the curriculum and mode of teaching." Therefore the D.E.S. understand their role in home education, simply respect the parents wishes.

Until that happy state exists where all authorities obey the law, and do not attempt to obstruct parents rights, only show of weakness in the public face of EO., i.e. the Newsletters, may only serve to strengthen those obdurate, bureaucratic authorities that, unfortunately still exist.

Ted and Mary Carter

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## BOOK REVIEW

With so many different publications and pressure-groups around now to do with children's literature, any attempt to bring them all together in one booklet would be most useful not just for teachers and parents, but also for librarians and bookshops.

"Children's Books; an information guide" therefore deserves a warm welcome since in only 32 pages it manages to list all the main societies, professional associations, publishers, book clubs, book-lists, periodicals, specialist libraries and overseas organisations that have mushroomed since Lewis Carroll first put pen to paper.

"Children's Books; an information guide" £ 1.70 post free. National Book League, Book House, 45, East Hill. London SW 18 2 QZ.

( Review sent in by Helen Holland )

# notices

## ALL COORDINATORS PLEASE NOTE;

Re EO Membership Form - Publications Page :-

Add Newsletter No.29 @ 75p to non-members and make Newsletter No.28 60p to members.

## NEW COORDINATORS FOR SHROPSHIRE:-

Contact Carole and Stuart Kipling, Lynroy, Ludlow Rd., Church Stretton, Salop  
Phone Church Stretton (0694) 722740

## Avon Coordinator-

Change of name. Was Mohol-Perschky-now Bendell.

## HANDBILLS? HEADED NOTEPAPER? INTRODUCTORY LITERATURE?

These are available, together with the 1979 Digest of issues 9 - 12 (@ 90p inc. p&p )  
from Caroline Grant, 3/4 Tanyralit Cottages, Llanllyfni, Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

## EO IN WILTSHIRE

Monthly Sunday afternoon gatherings are held at Lower Shaw Farm for members in  
Wiltshire and surrounding areas. -Contact is Kate Freeman, Southview Cottage, Wick Lane,  
Devizes.  
Phone 0380 5688

## SUNDAY 10th. JULY

On this day we, Trevor and Elizabeth Sturges are having another informal gathering for  
local members and anyone else who would like to come. It's at our house -  
80, Fairview Road, Stevenage, Herts. Come any time between 11 and 6-if you are coming  
early bring something to contribute to a buffet lunch. Let us know if you are coming, and  
we'll tell you how to get here.  
Phone. Stevenage 52645

## EO WEEKEND CAMP MEETING IN BUCKS 13-14 th AUGUST

At Stockgrove School, Near Leighton Buzzard.  
Can arrive Friday afternoon / evening (12th). Gym available for meetings / displays of  
information etc. Anyone welcome to bring along materials / resources etc., for display.  
School grounds adjacent to country park with woodlands and lake. Donation to school  
funds - £1 per family / weekend. For further details:-  
Jo and Vin West ;Phone Heath and Reach 485

## REGIONAL NEWS

Please send in your regional news. None was received for inclusion in this newsletter. You  
must be doing something out there. Write in and let us know.

### Preaching to the Unconverted.

Anna Powell and I were invited to the College of St. Mark and St. John at Plymouth, to talk to a group of third year student teachers on home-based education. These students had finished their practical training, and this talk was to be a part of their course on Alternative Education.

We entered the classroom, accompanied by Thomas, Anna's eldest son, and Charlotte, my daughter, both aged 7. We were greeted with a sea of interested faces (some more interested than others).

Anna had been practising EO for over a year. She began by giving a brief outline of the aims of Education Otherwise, and then talked of her experiences as a home schooler - the problems she has encountered balanced with the benefits of seeing her children lose their anxiety and regain the confidence they had once had. She also gave an account of her meetings with Educational Advisor, who had been most helpful and cooperative.

We resisted the temptation of trying to say everything we would have liked on the subject, partly because it would have not been very well received by our audience, and partly because there was not time. Many of the group seemed genuinely interested in what we were doing, and, not unexpectedly, some had obviously closed minds on the subject - which was a pity as they represented the teaching profession of the near future.

The questions were what one would have expected, but less penetrating than I had hoped. What plans did we have for secondary education? Did the Educational Advisor test the children? How could the children learn the discipline of finishing anything without being forced to? One of the questions - What do the children do all day? - made me realise how much part of everyday living the educational process had become. I had to think quite hard to separate the activities our listeners would describe as "educational" from the actual natural activities of everyday life.

In fact, it was after the group session had broken up and the majority drifted away that several students approached with supplementary questions and comments. Two students who had children of their own, said they would be pleased to offer their skills (physics and crafts) to our children, either individually or in groups, as the idea appealed to them. They said that they had had no idea that Education Otherwise had such wide support.

It was a most interesting experience for us, and I hope it was helpful to those students to hear from parents who have opted out of the system of formal mass education, and chosen to go it alone.

P.S. During the whole hour and a half of the session, both Thomas and Charlotte occupied themselves noiselessly at a table in a corner of the classroom. School sessions are limited in time because it is considered that children are unable to concentrate for long periods.

Alvena Hillier

## REDBRIDGE LEARNING EXCHANGE.

In February's Newsletter in the Notices section Mark Kinzley asked those who wanted to join a learning exchange in the London borough of Redbridge to contact him. He found some people who were interested and has actually started the scheme. Here is his account of how he initiated the Exchange.

The first thing was to find a group of people willing to participate, so that I had a base from which I could expand. I found that the mutual - support group of unemployed people in the local drop-in centre for the unemployed proved useful. A local group of EO members would do just as well. I passed round the group a piece of paper on which they filled in their name and address and subjects they would like to learn about, and subjects they could teach. I then typed the following and photocopied it :-

### Redbridge Learning Exchange.

Is there a subject you would like to learn? You can get tuition absolutely free by writing to the exchange. I will send you the addresses of people who want to teach the subjects you are interested in. It is then up to you to arrange to meet in each other's homes.

Is there a subject you could teach? Do you have a hobby you could share? Could you tell someone about history. Could you teach any of the subjects already in the "Teachers Offered" column. Please write and tell me.

Please say if you would prefer to learn or teach with one person or with a group. If you feel at all vulnerable, if you are old or handicapped for example, you are strongly recommended to be in a group rather than alone with one person.

Because the teaching is given for fun and friendship and not for money, the Exchange cannot guarantee that teacher and learner will find each other satisfactory. So it is suggested that you begin a trial period of 4 lessons before coming to any long term arrangement.

Send all entries for the Exchange, with 3 S.A.E.'s and your tel. no. if you wish to Redbridge Learning Exchange, Mark Kinzley, 7, Gaysham Ave., Gants Hill, Ilford, Essex. You will continue to receive the names of teachers / pupils as the Exchange receives them, until you notify me that you have received enough.

I filed the information I had in 2 boxes: names and addresses by alphabetical order and also subjects by alphabetical order. On the subject cards I listed names and addresses, using white cards for teachers offered and green for teachers wanted. Now I am distributing copies of the Exchange in the hope that it will expand.

A word of speculation to the future. If the Exchange were to grow large I would advertise for someone to take over the gathering of entries and the production of the newsletter in the far half of the borough. We would regularly swap all entries, so that each Exchange would still cover the whole area. Then each exchange could grow and split again, like splitting oells. Because each exchange would be swapping the entries gathered within its own area, with the entries of the immediately neighbouring area, each exchange would cover the surrounding area but not the entire network of exchanges beyond the neighbouring ones. Because all information would then be duplicated several times, if any exchange collapsed any one of a number of neighbouring areas could simply expand to fill the gap, and later split again. The entire network would thus be stable but without any central control.

Editor's note. I realise we offer a similar service by the use of the Contact List. However I think this may of interest to those of you who had considered a more local way of contact.

# Letters .....

Dear Editor,

One way we've integrated our home curriculum is by combining literature with cooking. We now eat Dickens, Witches stew from Macbeth, Roast Simon from Lord of the Flies ( a good treatment for awkward EO children ), Bacon and Eggs from James Bond. We're even thinking of trying to produce a book of literary "feasts". All ideas, suggestions, references etc., gratefully received and tried.

Kevin Fleisch,  
"Belroc"  
Newpark  
Whalsay, Shetland

Dear Editor,

I have been a member of EO for a year. I am amazed at the breadth of information that is contained in the newsletters and - were it not for the reiteration on every EO publication of the aims of EO - I would become very confused by the deviations from this purpose in every issue (fascinating and valuable though much of it is .) For example, it is clearly stated that EO is not an anti-school organisation while at the same time anti-school cartoons, articles and letters abound.

The reason I am writing this letter is because I have learned that many people who appear to have joined EO for the purpose of gaining support to take responsibility for their own children's education, have become bogged down with politics and opinions, even to the extent of resigning - e.g. The Bethells, Iris Harrison and lately Andrea Harrison. I am not saying that people should relinquish their opinions but I am saying that if the purpose is considered instead of personal opinions on politics and methods, then EO could become an idea of enormous value to our children and to the educational system of the country. Dare I say that since Britain has been looked to as the chief innovator of educational methods in the Western world, EO as an idea perpetrated by responsible and purposeful individuals could have far-reaching consequences indeed. Whilst we are all too busy, too broke, and too absorbed with our private lives, the idea that human beings are responsible for the education of their children could go on being ignored by the vast majority of people.

As a practical suggestion, we should enrol more members, decentralise, and maintain a higher degree of integrity than most politicians manage, who are noted for their opinionated mud-slinging rather than actually doing anything. (Personally I think we have already managed the latter objective.) I am still excited by the possibility of EO as a whole making it's mark and starting a new epoch in the education of this country. The worst thing that could happen is for the standards to be radically raised in the schools - and for children's rights to become a reality, and were the notion of freedom of choice to infiltrate our present authoritarian structure, the best thing that could happen is a new generation of happy and satisfied children.

Jackie Mackay,  
91a, Southfield Rd,  
Chiswick, W.4.

Dear Editor,

Home education in no way has to be a meagre alternative to school. Theoretically home education can provide intensive (preferable non-compulsory) courses in, for instance, oriental languages music, biological subjects, medicine, woodwork etc. Enterprising families can hire halls for group lectures or tutors for collective home events. Outings can be organised. The home can provide a far more intimate and safer environment for the child, especially with the increase of juvenile violence and other crimes.

It occurred to me that the authorities are only too keen to take the word of a home educated child if they show any interest in going to school, but very little interest in children who hate being at school. They also are very quick to introduce the psychiatrist to a home-educated child whereas what we obviously need is a survey of the damage caused by authoritarian education and school bullying.

Let's hope the day will soon come when the parents of a child who hates authoritarian schooling is advised that home education or a libertarian school is a possible alternative.  
A. Anderson.

Dear Editor,

A suggestion was made in the middle of last year that EO should perhaps produce a booklet aimed at giving particular support to one parent families practising or considering home education.

I spent nine long months last year as a single parent with two young children out of school, so I'm well aware of the stresses, strains and gains of that difficult road. To add to my limited experience I would be very interested to hear from other people. One or two have already responded to other writings of mine in the past, but I know there are more out there somewhere.

I am slowly working on my book on the practice of Deschooling and one of my chapters will be about the experiences of single parents. I feel that it would be little extra work to write a booklet for EO at the same time.

If you feel you can help, please write to me. Let me know what you think an EO booklet should contain. If at the same time you can share your experiences with me for the book, it would certainly help with preparing a useful chapter. As is usual in such matters, all material used will not show the identity of the source. I would be interested in why and how you took up deschooling, your relationship with the LEA; how you and your children cope; what, if any, 'system' you practice; particular problems and benefits too.

I seem to have finally found time in June and July to get away and visit people, so if writing a long letter now is really impossible, make it brief and I'll try and call on you before too long.

Ivan Sokolov,  
248, Kentish Town Rd,  
London .N.W.5.

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#### ON TELEVISION

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set I go into another room and read a book."

Groucho Marx.

## FREEDOM TO THRALDOM

It was over ten years ago that I last went to a school, yet I am now still only 17 years old. In my period of home education I have done many things which cannot possibly be condensed into a single magazine article, but the way and the reasons for having done them can be so condensed.

A few years ago I was quoted by a newspaper, the words being to the effect that 'I can do what I wish and when I wish.' However, these mere words were taken out of context, as so often happens in short high news items, and they took on a very different complexion to that which was intended. I had tried to sum up all that was good about being home educated.

As I see home education, the individual is left to develop at their own speed which is normally in leaps and bounds, followed by long slow periods. This development occurs in all living creatures which have intellects. They begin from birth, or hatching out, and slowly they explore the world. As one fact is established another two questions are posed. In this way, a young creature will experiment and explore to find out what the world is about.

However, the human is somehow different. Children are left in their parents care until they are five years old, the age at which they have learnt half of the things that they will ever learn. Then along comes an authority which says the parents are no longer capable of teaching the child; and it promptly places groups of children of the same age into a totally artificial environment. The school child is given a schedule by which they must live their lives, and they are 'protected' from society. Here I leave the tale of the ordinary child, for after only two years at school I left the system.

My life slowly lost its rigidity and began to revert to its former exploring nature. I slowly picked up my old fearless questioning habits. Of course, it is impossible to keep right out of the system, as it quite rightly demands that every child should be properly educated. That is why I began to keep my diary. It was not my idea. I hated writing at the time, but I am now very pleased that I did keep it. I also kept all of the things I drew, made and found. I enjoyed learning again.

My questions became more and more complex, and they were always stimulated by what I saw, heard or otherwise sensed. I then began to use books to find my answers, which also became more complicated, until they developed into very long and involved studies. I also developed special interests and specialised books answered my questions. All of these books can, and most of them were, from the public library. Some libraries will lend "de-schoolers" books for up to a term at a time, from the special stock kept for school teachers, but I never used this special extra source.

There was only one subject that I did, and that was maths. As this is so structured it must be followed through in a logical manner. I had a bit of a love-hate relationship with this subject, but I hated the silly questions, though I loved doing the work.

Now my life has taken yet another turn: again I have gone from the freedom of home education to the thralldom of a timetable at the college of further education.

At the interviews and the large meetings we were all warned that there would be a lot of work on our own, and that there would not be any pressure from the college. I have found the exact reverse of all these promises, though my classmates seem to find the promises true. I feel trapped by the timetable, with so few periods when I can work on my own. They all find it too loose and too much spare time. I find the pressures petty and poorly placed, they generally find that there is not enough pressure to make them work. Whatever was it like at school?

The only reason I am here is to find out how the examiners think, to find out how I am meant to think to pass the exams. When I have passed this set of exams and I have received a bundle of bits of paper I must sit another lot, to be able to train for the career I decided to do when I was still free. I am now advised I should do this task or that exam, but why when I have no interest? No wonder there are so many dissatisfied workers in the country, they have all been pushed to point at which they fail, and not left to contentedly get on with their own lives.

Many of my lecturers have come to teach after a job in some other part of society and one has been in many other jobs. He just changes jobs when he can no longer face the job any more. It is sad in a way that so few of them are doing a job they love for the work. Most work at a tolerable job for the money. It is the same with most people, why? I think a look at their lives between 5 and 16 years would hold the answer.

Vincent Theobald

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the siege

it is not the gypsies who steal your children.  
it is not even the educational authorities, the army recruiting  
officers, the sinister saints of television.  
your children are being stolen by automatons - by well-meaning  
or unmeaning, unthinking agents of sordid socialization ...  
those unlettered little old ladies, for instance who jump out  
from behind the hedges - confront your toddler and say  
"going to school heh heh heh?" these are the intergalactic  
truancy patrol ... those friendly men who show your kid  
their medals or their queen victoria coronation chamber pot -  
you must kill your child with love & silence & words  
against these guilty innocents  
who steal the gypsies' children

(c) 1981 by Jacob Bush

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# small ads

## WANTED

The good news is membership is up. The bad news is we need another 1,000 5" x 3" card index file priced £20 new. Therefore does anyone have one they no longer need? Postage reimbursed.

Janet Everdell, Temp. Mem. Sec.

## HOLIDAY IN MID-WALES

In the Small Ads leaflet which accompanied the April Newsletter re 'Holiday in Mid-Wales', we stated that the advertisers can provide "animal meals at reasonable prices". This should have read "animal-free meals at reasonable prices".

For further details please see Small Ads in the April Newsletter or ring Carno (05514)695. Apologies to Bob Crichton for the mistake.

## FAIR ISLE, PLAIN AND FANCY MACHINE KNITTING

Design your own pattern or motif. Have an EO logo on your chest, or a yellow submarine on your sleeve, your name on your leg warmers. Designs and knitting by EO parents and children.

We're still learning so relatively cheap. Matching leg warmers, mitts, Shetland wool sweaters and scarves a speciality. It takes about a month to finalise designs, patterns etc., with you and ( the quick bit ) knit.

Please send as many details of size, pattern, designs etc., and we'll quote you ideas and price.

Kevin Fleisch, 'Belroc', Newpark, Whalsay, Shetland.

## OFFER OF HELP AND ADVICE

I am at present running a small "tutor group" for children of parents who have decided to opt out of the system. My 6 pupils are aged 9-11 years and we meet from 9.30 to 3.00 during term time. The emphasis is on a sound knowledge of the "basics" within as wide as "all round" education as possible. By using a friend's room we come under the "Otherwise" category, although I have had to undergo a rigorous inspection from a local H.M.I.

Apart from the basics Of English and Maths, the curriculum includes geography, history, science, a little French, music R.E., swimming and a fortnightly trip to the library. We are also going on a school journey to the Isle of Wight in the Summer.

I am quite willing to give suggestions and help to anyone wanting to undertake a similar scheme and I will also have vacancies in September for anyone interested in letting their child be educated in an informal group setting but to as high a standard as possible without pressure.

Jane Dance (Cert. Ed. B.A.) 12, Rutherford House, Brady Street, London E. 1.

## ROLL UP, ROLL UP.

We are interested in forming a small community, whose main aim would be to create a lively home based education for our children. With this in mind, we are currently looking at the Totnes area of Devon. Should you have similar aspirations, we are having our first get together during the Totnes Fair Weekend 17th-19th, June, when everyone can meet, get to know each other and discuss ideas, over several days of medieval festivities.

For more details either come to the EO stall at the Hood Fair (entry to which is cheaper in fancy dress) or contact Ken and Jill Beagley at 15, Salem Road, Winterborne, North Avon. Tel. Winterborne 777314 A.S.A.P.

N.B. Also see our last 'Small ad' on the April EO newsletter supplement sheet.

## WHEATSTONE COMMUNITY PROJECT

Wheatstone, established as a commune eight years ago, now has five adults, three children, and three adults and one child joining soon. We need more people to stay with us long-term and, we need ways of getting in some money. We have always done casual work but it is increasingly difficult to find and we'd like to be able to make our required income at home. Our resources amount to a large mansion house, a cottage, a barn with bedrooms and workshops and seven acres of land which includes a large vegetable garden and grazing for cows, sheep, pigs, hens and ducks.

Amongst our reasons to be are de-schooling, cooperation support of the communes movement, income-sharing, personal growth, and producing as much of our varied diet as we can.

We'd be interested in hearing from people with energy, ideas on setting up workshops, and enthusiasm for quality survival. If there is a communally-minded potter around we have a good space for a potential pottery. We have a small amount of capital which we could put into a viable project for the group.

If you'd like to visit please write first. If any of you EO children want some space to run around and a holiday with a group of friendly people on a mini-farm, let me know.

Gina Wheatstone, Wheatstone Community Project, Leintwardine by Craven Arms, Salop.  
Tel. Leintwardine 662

## HOUSE TO RENT URGENTLY WANTED

I am looking for a house, cottage, bungalow to let at a reasonable rent (as I am a one-parent family), preferably in Outer London.

I can also offer help with R.E., History, Geography, Scottish Dance, Gardening, Rug Making, Embroidery and Farm Husbandry.

Carol Scott Tel. 01 474 7382 anytime.

## WHO WILL RELIEVE MY BOREDOM?

I am 3½ years old Anna. I am made to go to Nursery during the week, but what is even worse, I am imprisoned with my mummy during the weekends in a council flat, on the top of a big house, of course we have not got a garden. Both me and she get very very bored during the weekends, and at the end we are so frustrated we almost explode. I want to see my children-friends, but whenever we phone up my friends' mummies always say they have other programmes for their children. Sometimes we go the park or Zoo etc., but without friends even that is boring. When I am bored after a while I get irritated, then my mummy gets irritated, and it's really awful for both of us.

My mummy thinks the best solution would be to spend our weekends in the country, not very far from London, in the company of at least one other child, who is not much smaller or bigger than me. This would be good for our health too as we get quite weak during the winter and we are also fed up with continuously poisoning our brain with lead. We forgot what is fresh air.

Is there any child and adult or a community out there who live in the country-ideally in the Nature itself-who would welcome us for weekends? (Of course we could first meet just to see whether we get on with each other at all). In return, you could stay in our London flat sometimes, as we have a spare room.

Anna (child) and Piri (adult), 21, Bushfield House, Highbury New Park, London. N.5.  
Tel. 01-226 4806

## NEW GAMES

New Games are cooperative sports and games where participants only compete against their own abilities, not other people. No-one wins and no-one loses, so everyone can just play and enjoy themselves.

New Games are not instead of competitive games but complement them. For this reason ANY group can use them. New Games (U.K.) is a relatively young organisation, having only been constituted in 1980 with Charitable status. It is seen as a training organisation for people who wish to use New Games with their own particular groups. We organise trainings, disseminate information, on games and publicise new games generally, often by directly organising events or by hiring out referees for specific functions. Membership is £2 p.a.

Write to New Games U.K., 11, Plato Road, London S.W. 2 5UP

'On reading a tenpenny treatise on prosody picked up at a second-hand bookstall'-

or - 'The case for the formal teaching of grammar.'

Not every educated person of today knows what prosody is. I could have had recourse to a dictionary if the first sentence of the treatise had not made the meaning of the term clear. (Prosody, being the laws of verse.....)

As I read my tenpenny treatise I felt there was cause for regret in the almost total absence of the formal teaching of this subject.

From considering and regretting the absence of prosody from almost all the school curricula of today, it is a short step to the consideration of the present decline in the formal and systematic teaching of grammar. And this I find not only regrettable but reprehensible.

A knowledge of the laws of grammar seems to me to be important for much the reason that the supremacy of law is important; without it each case must be treated individually. Everyone is aware that where legal judgements are concerned, to have no rule of law leads to arbitrariness and to the condemnation of all citizens to an undesirable condition of dependence. So with judgements concerning language, without a law to refer to it is either impossible, or it is left to whim, or it is left to authority in the form of a person to decide whether a particular use of words shall be deemed correct or not.

Now it may be argued - and with justification - that knowledge of the rules of grammar is not the same thing as the existence of the rules of grammar; that the rules of grammar exist whether they are taught to children or not. It will further be argued - and again with justice - that it is not necessary to retain these rules in the head in order to have recourse to them; when one finds oneself having to make a judgement concerning the correctness of a particular use of words one can simply refer to a grammar book and so subsume the particular case under a general law as is desirable. The ordinary citizen does not, after all, go about with the entire code of common law in his head. When he wishes or is required to make a legal judgement he simply resorts to a book of law or, more usually, to an expert in law. This is indeed true (though no-one knows better than EO'ers what independence and self-confidence a knowledge of the law can give.) But the ordinary citizen is not called upon to make legal judgements, those whose job it is to make legal judgements do retain much of the common law in their memories and that which they cannot so retain because the subject is too vast they have still at some time been taught so that they can easily find any part of it in the relevant texts without confusion or mistake. The ordinary citizen is however called upon to make judgements about the correct use of words - both his own words and other peoples'. And he cannot do this consistently, convincingly, and independently without knowledge of, or at least, access to the rules of grammar. And much the surest way of giving a child access to the rules of grammar is to teach them to him formally.

There are, of course, people who, as a result of having both the necessary ability and the necessary inclination deduce the laws of grammar for themselves. But why should the advantage which they thereby gain themselves not be shared by those less gifted or differently inclined?

A teacher of any subject makes his pupils independent of him and of other

people by giving them a proper grasp of the general rules or laws basic to the subject. So, just as I have advocated the formal and rigorous teaching of the rules of grammar, I would advocate the formal teaching of logic and a teaching of the natural sciences which begins, rather than ends, with first principles.

Alison Mafham

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PIN - HOLE CAMERAS

"On Tuesday we went out into the garden to take some photos, but not the sort you would expect. It was a cardboard box with which we took them. The place where we got them developed was the stores room. We used developer, water, fix, and wash. Then we left them to dry. When we looked at them they were topsy-turvy, because everything that was white was black and everything that was black was white and everything was curved because the paper was. The book we rested the camera on was also curved and the windows and even the walls."

Chris 8 years

The above was written after Chris and a number of other children has made and used pin-hole cameras. Although no strict attention was paid to the technical side of producing a photograph, as you can see, Chris and the others understood the process perfectly well. In fact, having done similar projects with A level students the understanding, and certainly the enthusiasm, of the younger children was in many respects far greater.

What was written by Chris was not from any textbook or blackboard, but simply the process as he experienced it to be. It was indeed a magical happening for both the children and myself. To make cameras out of cardboard boxes and to take photographs, then to watch them develop in the darkroom (storeroom) within minutes of each other.

If any one would like details of how to make and use a pin-hole camera send a large S.A.E. to me (if possible including 35p towards photocopying) at 33, Park Road, Chilwell, Beeston, Nottingham NG 9 4DA. Or, of course go along to your local library.

J. Johnston.

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# woodcraft

# folk

The Woodcraft Folk is a national organisation which has close links with the cooperative movement. It came into being in 1925 as an alternative to the Scout movement. Its founders accepted much of the skills, education and practice associated with scouting, but wanted to work positively for a more peaceful and cooperative world in the future.

It is for both sexes and its members age range from 6 - 20 years, divided in to four age groups. The Woodcraft Folk "seeks to make young people socially aware of the needs of others and in teaching them the principals of cooperation and democracy, the Folk aims to prepare them to be tolerant, understanding and responsible members of the adult community." (Taken from Woodcraft Folk information leaflet).

As suggested by the name, The Woodcraft Folk have a prime concern all things natural, and help children to learn to live in harmony with their environment. However, there is more to it than that. They believe that through working and learning together, children can develop an understanding of their social purpose in life.

Their motto "Span the World" points to their aim to teach children to be citizens of the world. Regular exchange visits with other European countries help to give experience of other cultures and ideas.

The Folk hold weekly group meetings of 20 - 30 children and 3 - 4 adults, and these meetings include folk singing and dancing, craftwork, games, drama, discussions, and an educational programme built around badge attainments. They stress that this concept, shared with the Scouts, is more cooperative than most, and does not encourage personal competition. Additionally, there are weekend hikes and both national and international camps.

They ask people not to be put off by the common costume of a green shirt they all wear. Rather than a uniform they see it as a symbol of the things they believe in, it "unites us all".

Children interested in outdoor activities, camping and nature in general should find the Woodcraft Folk fun and appealing. Mary-Ann Reed writes:- "Having rejected the competitive and hierarchial organisation of schools, I expect the Woodcraft Folk to offer our children and the children in our locality the opportunity for social interaction of a cooperative and democratic nature and many hours of pleasure spent in constructive group activities."

For further information write to:-

THE WOODCRAFT FOLK , 13, RITHERDON RD , LONDON, S.W. 17 8QE.

(This article is a 'hybrid' of 2 articles contributed by Mary-Ann Reed of Tuebrook, Liverpool, and Ivan Sokolov of London).

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THE TEACHINGS OF ALICE BAILEY.

So much of your magazine is taken up with explaining 'methods' of education, stories of conflicts and successes with L.E.A.'s. All this is I feel very good and necessary in encouraging and sharing the practicalities of child raising with others.

However, I do wonder if sometimes we lose touch with or fail to acknowledge the Motivation behind our desires to 'do the best we can for our children.' To illustrate and elaborate this theme I enclose the following guidelines which we try to follow and which would seem to me to be very relevant in this day and age. They are taken from the 'Teachings of Alice Bailey'.

She writes on education as follows:-

"What should be the effort on the part of parents and educators? First and above everything else, the effort should be to provide the atmosphere wherein certain qualities can flourish and emerge.

1. An atmosphere of love, wherein fear is cast out and the child realises he has no cause for timidity, shyness or caution, and one in which he receives courteous treatment at the hands of others, and is expected also to render equally courteous treatment in return - Love always draws forth what is best in child and man.

2. An atmosphere of patience, wherein the child can become, normally and naturally a seeker after the light of knowledge, wherein he is sure of always meeting with a quiet response to enquiry, and a careful reply to all questions, and wherein there is never the sense of speed or hurry... This impatience on the part of those upon whom they are so pathetically dependent sows in them the seeds of irritation, and more lives are ruined by irritation than can be counted.

3. An atmosphere of ordered activity, wherein the child can learn the first rudiments of responsibility. The children who are coming into incarnation at this time, and who can profit by the new type of education, are necessarily on the very verge of soul consciousness. One of the first indications of such soul contact is a rapidly developing sense of responsibility. This should be borne carefully in mind for the shouldering of responsibilities (which is always concerned with some form of group relation) is a potent factor in determining a child's character and future vocation.

4. An atmosphere of understanding, wherein a child is always sure that the reasons and motives for his actions will be recognised, and that those who are his older associates will always comprehend the nature of his motivating impulses, even though they may not always approve of what he has done, or of his activities.

It is the older generation who foster in a child an early and most unnecessary sense of guilt, of sinfulness and wrongdoing. So much emphasis is laid upon petty little things that are not really wrong, but are annoying to the parent or teacher, that a true sense of wrong (which is a recognition of failure to preserve right relations with the group) gets overlaid and is not recognised for what it is. The many small and petty sins, imposed upon the children by the constant reiteration of "no" by the use of the word "naughty", and based largely on parental failure to understand and occupy the child, are of no real moment. If these aspects of the child's life are rightly handled, then the truly wrong things, the infringements upon the rights of others.... the hurting or damaging of others in

order to achieve personal gain, will emerge in right perspective and at the right time.

A better educational system, should therefore, be worked out which will present the possibilities of human living in such a manner that barriers, will be broken down, prejudices removed, and a training given to the developing child which will enable him, when grown up to live with other men in harmony and goodwill. This can be done, if patience and understanding are developed and if educators realise that where there is no vision the people perish."

Tamayra Hayman

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SCHOOL FAILURE?

The letter dated 3rd. of May 1978 was, for me, the last straw. It was one in a long line of correspondence between myself and my youngest son's headmaster. The sentence I really bridled at was, and I quote 'Perhaps it is time to seek medical or psychiatric exploration of his problem.' That did it. Nick had needed no medical or psychiatric help on entering the local comprehensive a year early after glowing references from his primary school headmaster; but two years and two terms of secondary education had reduced him to a pathetic shadow of his former self-confidence, who would indeed be seriously ill if the present unsatisfactory school situation continued. Already his nightmares were causing sleeplessness and loss of appetite which in turn caused overtiredness and depression. I had been told some children managed the apparently hostile environment of the school with the help of tranquilizers. This knowledge appalled me and made me all the more determined to rescue Nick from his isolation and misery.

So just before his thirteenth birthday Nick was de-schooled. I wrote a final letter to the headmaster informing him I was withdrawing my son. His brief reply told me he would inform the local Chief Education Officer. It had taken much agonising to actually make this final decision and my husband, himself a teacher, was not wholly convinced it was the right step to take. So many people, advisers, heads of department, welfare officers etc., had all talked of failure if Nick left school. Indeed the head of the lower school told me that in itself, leaving school would be a failure. I insisted that to remain there with the aid of tranquilizers would, for me, also be defeat. The headmaster disagreed telling me that many of his Rotary Club friends kept going with the aid of tranquilizers and he admired them for it. I came away from that particular interview totally incredulous of their apparent lack of accountability and understanding. Three months after that interview the headmaster himself was suicidal and out of school for months. The other gent, the head of the lower school, collapsed of a heart attack eight days later; he had been a lifelong chain smoker. So, against the advice of these two highly socially successful gentlemen I decided my son would stay at home and be given the chance to recover his previous good health and enthusiasm for learning.

Because of Nick's academic ability, we had to agree with the local Education Authority that he should continue his education with the view to sitting several 'O' levels. We were told that advisers would visit us regularly to assess our son's progress. The visits were regular at first but later dropped off to a six-monthly check.

For the first few weeks after leaving school, Nick behaved much as a fugitive might but gradually he regained his former appetite and vigour although sleeplessness remained a problem because school nightmares still punctuated his sleep. However, as the actual fear of school hostilities had been removed the improvement in his general health was soon noticeable. When people asked me why Nick was out of school, I could always sum it up quite simply by saying he was bright, bored and bullied. They needed no further explanation.

To get Nick to 'O' level standard we bought correspondence courses in seven subjects which made up a good spread of the academic disciplines. Nick worked out his own timetable which really amounted to dividing the time before the exams by the number of lessons, then heading each lesson with what came to be called a 'do by' date. This seemed to work very well and the advisers had to be satisfied with it as a timetable. Anyone taking a child out of school or considering it soon realises two things. Firstly, the authorities have an obsession for written work, curriculum and timetables. In their opinion if a child is not committing words to paper it is not learning. This attitude has become one of the biggest bug-bears for many parents teaching their children at home. Secondly there is nothing, absolutely nothing wrong with the system. It is your child that is at fault. In my case the many letters I received from the authorities told me 'Nicholas was just hanging on to his mother's apron strings; he was lacking in self-reliance unable to take advantage of the dynamic atmosphere of a busy comprehensive' -and so on and so forth. Re-reading these old letters that caused so much pain at the time is now an amusing experience.

The biggest difficulty to overcome was fear of failure. This was a hangover from school where endless tests and numerical standards were devised to enable the children to compare success and failure with of course bouquets for the successful and brickbats for the failures. I found the best way to help him was to take off the pressure by repeatedly explaining that if he did not pass his 'O' levels at the first sitting, there would be other opportunities to take them, or alternatively simply find work which did not require 'O' levels. This attitude always calmed him so I used it whenever he started to fret. Having lost the chance to compare himself with others seemed to undermine his confidence. However, after listening to a few radio programmes of 'Top of the Form' his confidence returned because he was able to answer nearly all the questions, even those put to the eighteen year olds.

In June 1981 Nick sat seven 'O' levels at our local technical college as an external examinee. When the exams were over he felt he had passed them all quite easily. All that remained was to wait and see how good his grades would be. The day of the results dawned and not wishing to wait any longer than need be, he cycled to the college to collect his grades. To his delight, he found he had gained all Grade 'A's which for the uninitiated means top grade. He telephoned me immediately and I experienced one of the best moments of my life. Our success was all the sweeter because of the cynicism and scepticism endured for so long.

Now I feel the three and a half years my son spent at home have benefitted all the family. We all see the results of the experiment which

allowed him to study quietly at his own pace in his own way whilst not being subjected to the endless time-wasting practices of school. Time that otherwise have been wasted during those vital years of development were spent exploring the environment and pursuing his many interests and hobbies which included astronomy; photography, including developing and printing; electronics; aero-modelling; cycling and much more wherever his curiosity took him. His knowledge of current affairs, national and world wide, became a source of incredulity to my husband who, as a secondary school teacher, was well aware of most teenagers ignorance in this area. This knowledge was acquired by the simple experience of listening to B.B.C. Radio's 'World at One'. And I can verify that he didn't have to write one word of it down to remember it.

Nick has now returned to the system by attending the local technical college where he is studying Maths and Physics for a conditional place at Kings College, Cambridge. He is disappointed with the unimaginative nature of the courses but, under his own initiative, arranged for a flexible timetable of attendance which enables him to do more self-directed studying than is usual.

His years of being separated from his peer group have not impaired his ability to mix. He joins in with many of the sport and social activities, has arranged a college disc, represented the college in cross-country races and become chairman of the Full-Time Students Association.

For Nick there are never enough hours in the day to pursue all his interests and keep abreast of his academic work. The biggest bonus of taking him out of school has been never to have heard the words 'I'm bored' pass his lips.

Now, my only regret is that I ever let any of my three children go to school. I believe that the unnatural environment of a school produces neurotic behaviour. This behaviour takes the form of continual approval seeking of peers and this type of behaviour kills independence and self-love. Conformity is the name of the game. Its reward is never having to take responsibility for oneself or to invite change or take a risk. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, all three of my children declare that their children will not be forced to attend school. I look forward to the prospect of delightful, life-loving and neurosis-free grand children.

FOOTNOTE.

The above article was written for publication but I didn't succeed in getting a magazine interested. I have amended and up-dated it for the newsletter because as enquiries secretary for E.O. I hear from many people who are now being subjected to the same psychological pressures I was back in 1978.

Janet Everdell

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Editor's comment.

This article should be an example to all EO'er's of the results that can be obtained if you stand by your beliefs and do not give in to pressure from others to send your children to school.

E O IN LITERATURE

G.K.Chesterton in 'What's wrong with the world' saw a mother's role in this

way:"To be Queen Elizabeth within a deprived area,deciding sales,banquets,labours and holidays;to be Whiteley within a certain area,providing toys,books,shets, cakes and boots;to be Aristotle within a certain area,teaching morals,manners theology and hygiene:I can understand how this might exhaust the mind,but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it.How can it be a large career to tell other people's children about the Rule of Three and a small career to tell one's own children about the Universe?How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone and narrow to be everything to someone?NO,a woman's function is laborious but because it is gigantic,not because it is minute."

Contributed by Jackie Fearnley

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Anna was a pretty child with a fresh complexion,dark curly hair and and a broad determined jaw.She was intelligent and highly strung.Her mother called her Nanny.Philip also was handsome and a clever child and on this promising material Mary set to work as a educator.She had strong views about the responsibilities of a mother.'Train up a child in the way he should go and he will not depart from it',was a passage from scripture she was never tired of quoting.'The education of the home is more powerful than that of the school or the pulpit,'she used to say.Indeed,so strong was the influence of her home that it created remarkable practical Christians not only of her children but but of her grandchildren.

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But Mary had to be more than a mother,for Isaac's salary would not stretch to schools or governesses.Indeed,there was not even money for books until she wrote a simple one herself,entitled 'Walks with Mama' and from it earned three pounds.This sum she described as ' a little fortune to me then',and out of it she bought Edgeworth's Practical Education,'the book I value above all others as a help.'

Practical Education was in fact the work of two authors,Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Maria,the second of his twenty-two children,better known to the world as the author of the Irish novel,Castle Rackrent.The Edgeworths were disciples of Rousseau and believed that independence and self-reliance were the qualities most to be encouraged in children.They did not go as far as Rousseau,who had suggested that his imaginary pupil,Emile,should invent a microscope before using one,but they considered that children ought to be allowed to discover the truths of the natural world for themselves.In moral education, also they should experience the results of disobedience,even if these were painful to the point of being dangerous.While pursuing these experiments young

people should be accompanied, rather than led, by a preceptor, who would step in with words of explanation or admonition at the right moment.

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When Anna was about five, her mother set about the cultivation of her mind, and this seems to have been an altogether jollier proceeding than the training of her morals. For Mary was an excellent teacher in an age when good teachers were rare. There are only too many references in the literature of the time to the imposition of tasks as a method of education. Children were set long passages to learn by heart regardless of whether they understood their contents. Indeed, Mary herself was educated in this way.

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Mary was true to Richard Edgeworth's principle that 'the knowledge that cannot be immediately applied to use, has no interest for children,' and she threw herself with enthusiasm into simple experiments in chemistry recommended by him. One suspects that she was as delighted (and surprised) as Anna and Philip when water coloured blue with radish skins turned red when lemon juice was added thereby proving the presence of an acid. She no doubt marvelled as they did when the lump of chalk in the glass of vinegar demonstrated the principle of effervescence, or when the addition of water to camphire in solution caused the camphire to precipitate. Nor would her spirit have quailed before a complicated experiment to show the repulsion and attraction of oil and water, involving a cork, a needle, a plate and a tumbler. One only hopes she drew the line at introducing a still into the playroom and proceeding to demonstrate the principle of distillation.

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From "The Woman who wrote Black Beauty"

by Susan Chitty, biography of Anna Sewell.

Contributed by Janice Owen

### Local Authority Reaction

I have just sailed through the local Department of Education, and have been "granted approval" to educate my children (Helen aged 7 and Gavin aged 5) at home.

After months of fear as to what their reaction would be, I took courage in both hands and wrote to them in January to tell them what I had done. At the end of last Summer term I had written to the school and said I intended to educate the children privately, and had heard no more. We struggled through the first couple of months of the autumn term, worrying that someone might appear on the doorstep with an attendance order and wondering if I was confident enough to stand up to officialdom. By Christmas I realized the children weren't really missing out on friends and they were just as ordinary as other children. We had managed to do a bit of the 3 R's and had lots more time for other things. I felt more confident and wanted to go official and test the ground for others. I wrote a long explanatory letter, largely cribbed from many sources and waited.

I had an official sounding letter in reply saying they would have to make a detailed report before coming to a decision and wanted me to make an appointment to discuss the whole question. My husband was abroad at the time, so I went alone in trepidation, determined to stick to what I believed. I expected a confrontation or at least to be enveloped in persuasion to send the children back to school. I was warmly greeted by the Assistant Director of Education (Primary) and his assistant who seemed genuinely interested in what I was doing. I felt cagey. Were they just drawing me out to pounce? Then he said "In our experience parents who educate their children at home are usually very successful". It was some minutes before what he had said sunk in. He said he would have to get the Child Guidance Service to make a report, but he left me with the feeling I had won already.

In due course I had contact from an educational psychologist, who wondered if he could make some reports on the children and would I rather he carried it out in my home or his office? His office was not far away and turned out to have some wonderful waiting rooms full of games and sand and paint which the children were allowed to play with when he was not seeing them. We went one afternoon and one morning and he seemed more nervous than the children and saw each of them for just over an hour. When he had finished he talked to me about the assessment he had made and was obviously prepared to make allowances for the unfamiliarity of the conditions and what was required of them. He later sent me copies of the reports and the long and short was that the children had good verbal ability and were otherwise about average.

The letter of approval, which followed shortly after, stipulates that I should have regular visits from the Primary Schools Advisor. But what does 'regular' mean? I have not had a visit yet.

Priscilla Park-Weir

P.S.

I liked this rhyme that my daughter learnt from a friend:-

Ba, Ba, black sheep, do you go to school?

No sir, no sir, don't be such a fool.

I don't like the teachers, I don't like the class

I'd rather stay at home and gobble up the grass.....

### ZOE'S PERIPATETIC EDUCATION.

I first joined E O at the tail end of the Seventies after reading an article in a magazine. A couple of years later I let my membership lapse when we went abroad, but now I've rejoined and thought somebody might be interested in my experiences.

At the time I first joined, I was in a terrible quandary. Zoe was fast approaching school age, had been to playschool, but I had a problem. You see, we were - living in a converted bus. I would like to point out here that we're not 'hippy' - we just converted a single decker coach to a motor caravan and travelled in Europe while Zoe was pre-school age. We travelled about a great deal and I didn't really know what to do about Zoe's education.

When I discovered (through EO) that I could legally educate Zoe, my problems seemed solved. I had already started to teach her to read anyway and my husband backed me totally. I soon became absorbed in the whole subject of education and realised that I was not very happy about the system in general. I began to have real faith in what I was doing.

After a while we went abroad again - still in our bus - a marvellous experience, although I appreciate the fact that not everyone can just take off for the continent. Zoe played with Lapp children in northern Norway, gypsy children in Germany, met lots of people and learnt about other countries.

Now we are back in this country and still travelling as my husband is a freelance photographer and travels the country taking photos. Because of our particular way of life, we have managed to avoid any conflict with education authorities - a blessing - and Zoe has never been registered at a school.

I keep notes on the work we do and we have a timetable of sorts, although this isn't always strictly followed. Zoe will be eight in June. She reads well and almost continuously. Her spelling is getting better although we still get very strange looking words from time to time. Maths always elicits a groan from her but she usually gets down to it. She has a fascination for maps, presumably because of all her travelling, is very interested in other ways of life, is an animal lover and conservationist.

The main burden of education has fallen on me, but my husband backs me all the way and helps when he has time. I thoroughly enjoy learning with Zoe, rather than just teaching her. I ought to add that I am not a qualified teacher. We have not always had all the companionship I would wish for Zoe - it is difficult when you travel as much as we do. Luckily, all our friends (all normal house-dwellers) have children of Zoe's age and younger and she gets to play with them. She also makes friends easily and usually manages to find either children or adults to talk to on her travels.

I would like to be able to visit other E O members, for Zoe's benefit really, but not everybody likes a converted Bedford coach pulling up outside their homes, even though we're quite ordinary people.

There have been quite a few times when I have wondered if I am doing the right thing, but then Zoe grasped what I was trying to explain or had written something particularly good, and suddenly it's all worthwhile. I have tried to visualise settling down in a house and sending Zoe to a school but I can't. Her education has become too much part of our daily lives. Zoe herself does not want to go to school - she is an outdoor person and says she would hate to be in a classroom for a set number of hours a day.

I hope this is of interest to someone. I can honestly say that Zoe's education is a wonderful challenge and we have great fun learning. I believe that's how it should be.

Sue Pickering

## War Toys - reality or conditioning?

It is generally accepted that children's play is not only for entertainment, it is a valuable way of learning skills to be used in later life. While they are learning these skills, children are also learning a sense of values. This is fine if the children are learning to be creative - they get a sense of achievement from what they have done - but where does teaching children to play with guns and tanks lead?

Some people argue that it channels children's aggression into a harmless outlet, others that war is part of our lives and our history and children have a right to know about it.

...Through television the images of violence are brought into the home, but children never see the real horror of war. They are even told that life during war can be quite amusing, through programmes like 'Dad's Army' and 'MASH', etc. Gangsters, cowboys and Indians and police detectives shoot each other every night on our screens. In this way children learn to accept violence, aggression against another individual as normal. By putting a toy gun in a child's hand, not only do they learn that killing is normal, but they are invited to join their heroes on the television screen. Even before the arrival of television, violence was made acceptable and glorious. The newsreels shown during World War II encouraged children to identify with the heroism and bravery of the soldiers on the screen. The toys they were given magnified this distorted image.

... In the same way, material given to children about weapons, planes and tanks etc., is often misleading. Rachel Anderson (T.E.S. 6.3.81) writes about her son's book 'The Fact Finders' Modern Aircraft', which shows a Harrier doing a vertical take-off on the cover. She asks: - "But why a war plane on the cover and not a Concorde, a flying doctor or indeed any of the civil aircraft shown in this book? Why should the only statistic accompanying an illustration of two nuclear-carrying USAF F-16 jets be that the parts are now made in five different countries, unless perhaps to convey a false sense of security about how many countries are on our side." By reading these books are children learning about their lives and history, or are they absorbing propaganda?

Our children are the future voters, politicians and possible war victims. We need to educate them not to tolerate or take part in the holocausts, nuclear or conventional. They must have the option to question the belief that war is inevitable because people are naturally aggressive. Children need to be taught that peace is possible and this begins with the removal of war toys. We cannot always keep our children away from outside influence, but we do not need to encourage it in our playgrounds and homes. We must offer them a more creative education.

There are two main organisations in this country that are interested in the campaign against war toys. The International Association for the Child's Right to Play have had some success in preventing the sale of war toys; in 1979 the selling of war toys in Sweden was banned. In Britain there is a private bill to prevent the selling of guns, and in other countries steps are being taken to either ban advertising or the sale of military toys. The Woodcraft Folk have produced leaflets on war toys and have incorporated the theme of "peace education" into their work.

For further information from these organisations, contact Duncan Bowling, 85, Nottingham Road, Leyton, London E 10 or The Woodcraft Folk, 13, Ritherdon Road, London SW17.

Colette Mercer.

Editor's Note. The above article appeared in "Schools Out" No. 4 Spring 83 journal of the National Out of School Alliance who are members of EO and vice-versa, and the article was sent in by Ivan Sokolov. More details of the Woodcraft Folk on page of the newsletter.

## BETTER EYESIGHT WITHOUT GLASSES?

"There are many differences between the conditions to which the children of primitive man were subjected and those under which the children of civilised races spend their developing years, besides the mere fact that the latter learn things out of books and write things on paper and former did not. In the process of education, civilised children are shut up for hours every day within four walls, in the charge of teachers who are sometimes nervous and irritable. They are compelled to remain for long periods in the same position. The things that they are required to learn may be presented so that they are excessively uninteresting; and they are under a continual compulsion to think of the gaining of marks and prizes rather than the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake'.

"Some children endure these unnatural conditions better than others. Many cannot endure the strain, and thus schools become the hotbed of not only myopia but of all the other errors of refraction".

This is a passage from 'The Bates Method For Better Eyesight Without Glasses', which I recently had the good luck to come across in the library. This book challenges the whole orthodoxy of Western ophthalmology, which could make would-be readers sceptical, so I say that I didn't find a hint of quackery in it. Bates' lifetime experience in this field led him to the conclusion that all defective eyesight is a result of mental tension leading to faulty habits of seeing. It's a universally accepted fact that a large proportion of children begin to have eyesight problems as soon as they start attending school. Bates suggests that this is a result of the stresses imposed by school. If the cause of bad eyesight is tension then the remedy is a simple one; relaxation. A series of easy exercises are given with the purpose of training the eyes to relax completely. Every kind of defective vision is amenable to correction, often with astounding rapidity, as long as the person is prepared to renounce glasses completely. For glasses, according to Bates, remove the eye's natural and necessary adaptability. "One cannot see through them unless one produces the degree of refraction which they are designed to correct". As soon as the glasses are adopted therefore the vision begins to deteriorate, so making the wearer dependent on ever stronger lenses. Bates says that there should be no reason for the eyesight to get much worse with age and for glasses for the over-forties to be an inevitability.

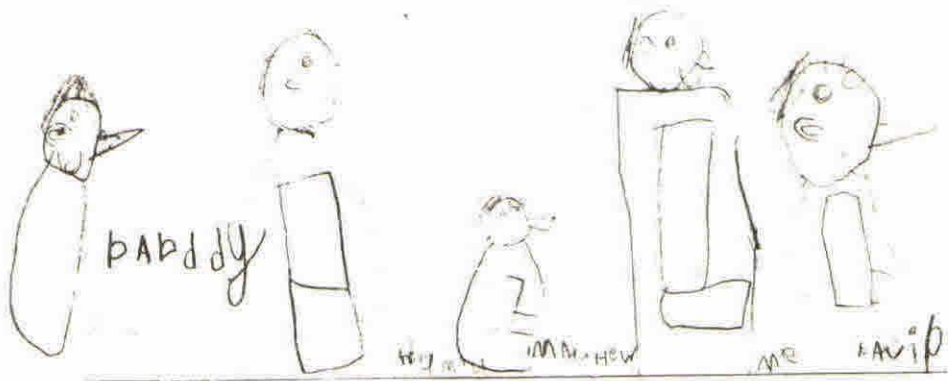
As a child of five, my teacher sent me home with a note to my parents to inform them that I was 'squinting at the blackboard'. How I wish that my parents had read Bates. My fate was the school clinic and a pair of pink N.H.S. wire frames. I remember distinctly the feeling of humiliation as I walked out of the clinic with those awful things on my face. For years I believed unquestioningly the official diagnosis, of astigmatism, supposedly incurable, and accepted that I'd always be almost blind in my left eye, (but I abandoned glasses as soon as I could determine my own fate anyway). After a few days of doing the Bates' exercises, I can already read small print with my 'bad' eye. It really is simple and effective, and I recommend this book to all children and adults who'd like to do away with their specs forever.

Wendy Razzle

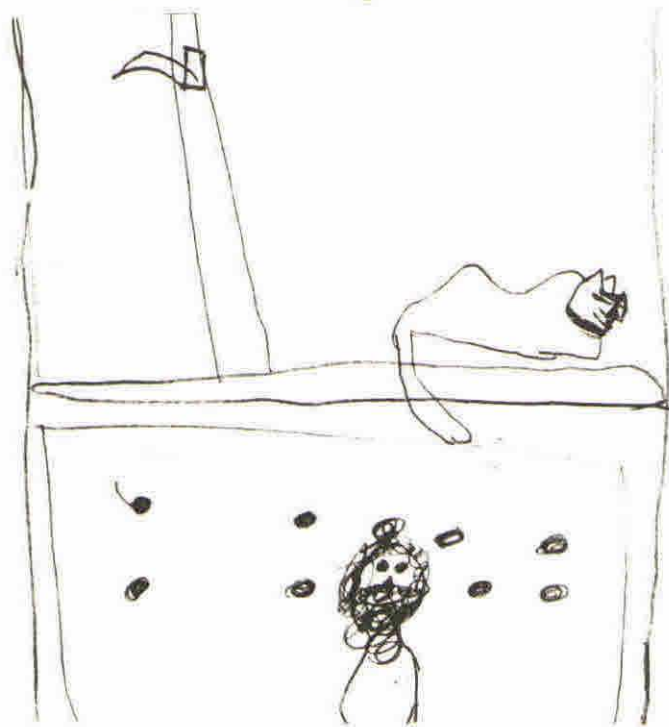
'The Bates Method for Better Eyesight Without Glasses' by W.H. Bates.  
First printed 1940. Published 1977 by Souvenir Press.

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## Green Gathering - Educational options

We have just received the following letter, which has been edited slightly due to lack of space.

Dear ED,

I am writing to ask for your involvement in our idea for an Educational Options Forum at this year's Environmental Congress (Green Gathering) which will be held at Lambert's Hill Farm, near Glastonbury, 26th - 31st July... We hope to put interested people in contact with a range of educational options from Private School to City Comprehensive, through Free, Progressive, and Steiner Schools, to Home-based or Travelling Education. To this end we are inviting the participation of people from many different educational backgrounds either to contribute their ideas on what we could usefully include in such a forum, or to offer some means of passing on the experience of how they do it, the results of doing it that way, and the motivation which brings this about.

Most importantly the collective are promoting the Green Gathering as a child-centred event with workshops, groups, talks and activities open to and designed for children as well as adults... There will be a marquee assigned to educational pursuits, equipped with many learning resources which may also operate as a skills exchange for the 5,000 potential learners and/or teachers which the gathering will provide. So if you would like to offer your services or get involved with children of all ages in learning situations, then here are some ways in which you could contribute: 1. send a representative or group to the event; 2. give a talk, workshop, or ~~take~~ a class to demonstrate your methods; 3. offer an audio-visual presentation of your experience of a past or existing school/learning - legal (?) situation; 4. suggest other people or organisations who might be willing to participate; 5. financial assistance or advice on how to get it; 6. the loan or gifts of equipment; 7. your own requirements which we may be able to fulfil.

Please send questions, suggestions or observations as soon as possible to: The Educational Options Co-ordinator to the Green Gathering, c/o Rew Farm, Rew Road, Ashburton Devon TQ13 7EJ.

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If you know of anyone who has not received a newsletter to which they are entitled, please notify Bob Emmett (8 Queensway, Liddell Park, Llandudno, Gwynedd LL30 1YJ), who keeps the mailing list.

Please also note that from now on all subscription renewals should also be sent to Bob, as the business of dealing with renewals has now been split off from the rest of the job of treasuring.

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Members with enquiries should contact their coordinator in the first instance.

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PUBLISHERS Please send copies for review  
to this address.

# Education Otherwise

25, COMMON LANE  
HEMINGFORD ABBOTS  
CAMBS PE 18 9 AN

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.

To reaffirm 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.