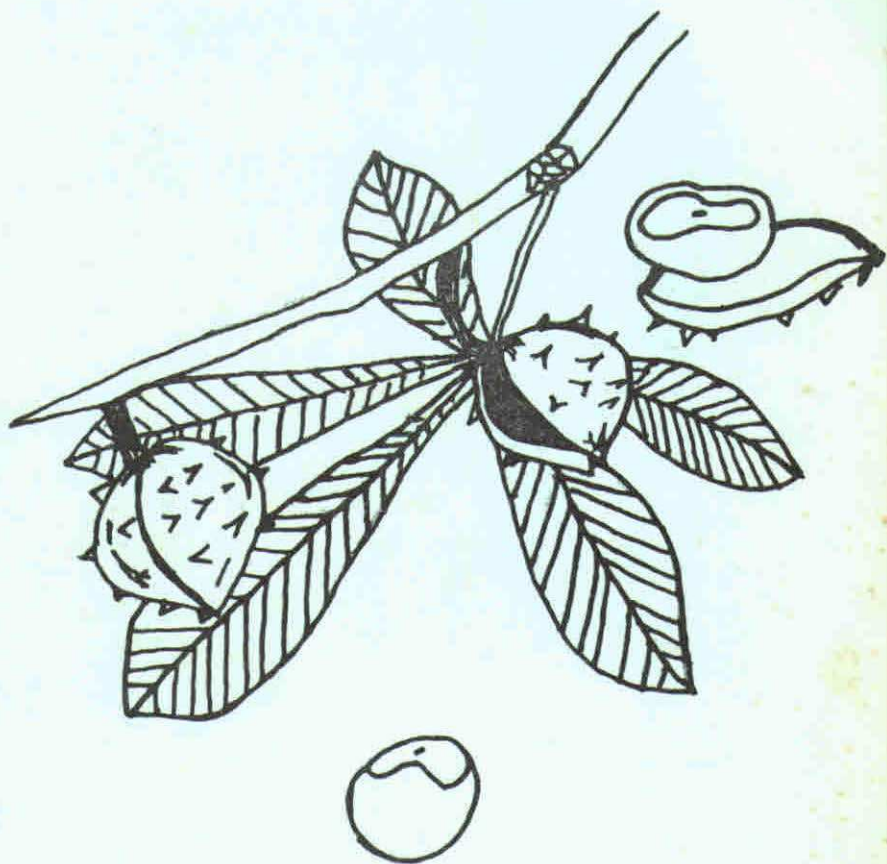


# EDUCATION OTHE RWISE



## NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER '83

No. 31

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Cover drawing by Katy Whitelegg, 11.

## EDITORIAL

If ever there were any doubts about the necessity of EO.'s existence and the importance of its central purpose, these were eliminated for all time in a ninety minute interview with a County LEA adviser. I say 'interview' but 'interrogation' or 'grilling' would be more accurate descriptions. This was the first encounter between the family concerned and the adviser and all attempts to co-operate and be friendly were brutally crushed. The adviser stated categorically that his role was to advise schools and not home schoolers. He threatened compulsory examination of the child by an educational psychologist and trotted out every biased misconception ever heard against home schooling and in favour of formal school education.

We may occasionally tire of our organisational trappings in EO; core group activities, minutes, finances, and the star-like activities of prominent EO families are not everyone's cup of tea, but all of this and much more is fair exchange for the additional strength which an organisation like ours gives when the unacceptable face of bureaucratic intransigence and malice rears its ugly head.

John Whitelegg.  
Midge Whitelegg.

#####

The next issue is to be edited by

Hazel Clawley  
26 Taywood Drive  
Small Heath  
Birmingham 10.

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

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Please note that the ideas expressed in this issue are not necessarily those of the editor, the core group, or the EO membership in general.

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## EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS

End of term: A 16 year old boy burned down his school through setting fire to his reports (DAILY TELEGRAPH 12.3.83)... In separate cities in Greece, 2 schoolboys hanged themselves because of poor Easter reports (DAILY TELEGRAPH 4.4.83)... A 17 year old American shot his mother dead because she was angry over his poor school report (TELEGRAPH 27.5.83)... A 'shy' 13 year old hanged herself because she hated school (TELEGRAPH 15.6.83)... A 14 year old ran away to Ireland to escape bullying at school. It took him 18 months to pluck up the courage to return home (TELEGRAPH 17.5.83)...

School life: Nuclear war sirens are being discreetly introduced into the community via some Kent schools (OBSERVER 29.5.83). A teacher who tried to find out what procedure to follow if the sirens were activated was told by police that he was 'acting irresponsibly'. The police went on to say that people would be advised about what sort of things to look out for...



66 schoolchildren suffered abnormal reactions and scarring following TB vaccinations by untrained staff who used the wrong size needles (TELEGRAPH)... The royal society says that science education for most pupils is inadequate (GUARDIAN 25.1.83)... Given more involvement in school life, parents are now teaching pupils how to cook, sew, read and play sports, according to a teacher's survey of 137 schools (TELEGRAPH 18.4.83). It found

that parents can have a calming effect on pupils and improve their work standards... Most parents do already help their children to read but now schools are openly seeking parents' help in this 'high-status' activity normally surrounded in mystique. However, few schools will allow more than token parental involvement (Bernard Emblem, writing in the GUARDIAN 30.8.83)... The use of corporal punishment is still a workaday occurrence in British schools, according to a STOPP survey, despite the fact that 14 LEA's have now abolished it (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT 5.8.83).

Abroad: Voluntary night school exists for 6-16 year olds in Rangoon for those children who have to work during the day. The main aim is to give the children basic knowledge to help them with their adult life and 'understand the world better'. Passing exams is not a priority. (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT May 83)... A report on American educational standards claims that if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, it might well have been regarded as an act of war. (Stephen Jessel, in 'From our own Correspondent' Radio 4, reported in the LISTENER 12.5.83)... In West Germany each person receives expenses of £150 per year per child "in respect of supervising and caring for children undergoing education" (DAILY TELEGRAPH 25.4.83)...

Machines: Gamblers Anonymous is to help children who have become addicted to one-arm bandits (TELEGRAPH 22.3.83)... Over-dependence on computers has led to a lop-sided and inadequate approach to some studies, according to a senior lecturer in education (T.E.S. July 83)... Heads are worried about the harmful effect on primary age children of seeing "man's inhumanity to man in graphic detail almost daily, not only on the main TV news but on junior newsround programmes". They have also published a booklet 'Language and the Primary School' in they also voice concern about parental lack of control over video "nasties". (T.E.S. 6.5.83)...

A working party from the National Association of Head Teachers is to report on the future of religious education in schools. Some teachers admit that they are breaking the law by not holding morning worship (TELEGRAPH 4.6.83)... Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in a visit to Eton, warned the boys that they needed to strengthen their spiritual faith if they were to overcome the dangers the world is entering into. His talk received a 'rare' standing ovation from the pupils. (TELEGRAPH 4.6.83).

EO: Annie and Ian Wilton Jones defended themselves against charges that they were undermining the state system of education by teaching their children at home (S. WALES EVENING ARGUS 31.3.83, and EO news-letter No. 29)... The CHEPSTOW FREE PRESS (31.3.83) reported that a local headmaster was against meeting the local EO group. "Half a child's education comes from meeting other children. If we meet this group we are giving them a respectability they do not deserve and will take advantage of." While Finance Committee chairman of Gwent Education Committee said "I don't see why we should be helping any organisation whose purpose is to encourage parents to educate at home"... Nick Everdell was the focal point of a feature on home education in the DAILY EXPRESS (23.9.83). Says the EXPRESS 'this stay-at-home boy is set to win a place at Cambridge University where Prince Edward will be a fellow undergraduate.' Calum Wallace' home education was also described.

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Janice Owen, Janet Everdell, Annie Wilton-Jones.

#### Talking about school: Getting a job:

"I was a dunce at school - but I was worldly. I knew I had to go out and earn a living... Things are reversed now. You've got kids who are academically brilliant, ... but they don't know how to earn a living. And I think that's a tragedy... some of the kids today are very naive about the world and how it works. This education thing's the be-all and end-all of everything isn't it?" (Henry Cooper, interviewed in the TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT 12.8.83).

"A career today is more likely to be something not planned in prospect but understood in retrospect... in which chance may play an alarmingly large part. If our children seek, or we seek for them, certainties, or the security that comes from certainty, they are pursuing an illusion. Rather they should be seeking to develop to the full a wide range of talents, skills and activities, many of them perhaps only remotely allied to the acquisition of knowledge and the bits of educational paper that go with knowledge. It is likely to be these talents... and the attitude that goes with them, which will enable them to be the right person in the right place at the right time when opportunities occur." (B.J. Holloway, Secretary to Manchester University Careers Service, writing in the DAILY TELEGRAPH 14.3.83).

"But in the end what makes you do well in life? It's not your qualifications - it's something else. I am trying to educate the children to enjoy their lives, to think straight and to behave better morally... not to be selfish and beastly and jealous and not to lie and cheat. (The retiring Headmistress of a private London girls' school SUNDAY TIMES July 83). "She has a sneaking admiration for the Princess of Wales getting no O-levels at all. 'Jolly difficult not to get any,' she said."

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, contributions welcome.

## THE REASONS WHY

A.M. NIMMO.

After casting a cheerless eye over the contemporary educational scene, one has to ask, and try to answer, two questions: how did this state of affairs come about, and what can be done about it?

The easy question is the first one. Diagnosis is one thing, cure is another matter.

The first malign influence on schooling was that of the psychologists, not because of what they said or did so much as what was made of what they said or did. The chief among these was Piaget. Piaget is difficult to read, so teachers in training tend to make do with being told what Piaget meant. After training they go on repeating what they remember of what they were told. His name can be invoked to bless every loony innovation. Part of his message was that children understand more as they mature; he has been interpreted to mean that if children do not know something already, we must not try to instruct them. His conclusions and his universality are unquestioned. Piaget said it all, see?

The second damaging influence has been that of the sociologists. They have done the worst damage. Thanks to them, shortcomings of whatever kind tend to be seen as "problems". Through them notions of social class (which in themselves are increasingly unreal) are allowed to permeate to areas where they are irrelevant. Teachers' expectations of children tend to relate to postal district, and to parents' marital status and occupation. No-one can pop you into a socio-economic slot more quickly than a teacher. Sentimentality is mistaken for understanding. Children who are trying overtly to find the limits of adult tolerance are not told; they are counselled. Instead of simple law and order, or even an insistence on civility, we get "behaviour modification". Most of us have probably met the teacher who cannot wait to talk to children, however young, about sex.

I cherish the memory of a middle-aged colleague who confessed to having had a deprived childhood, which he had not realised until he became a teacher.

Thirdly, among teachers, especially primary teachers, there is a severewant of intellectual honesty. There is no kind of quality control in teaching. Teachers of the future are often people of very modest achievement who are given a training which puts them in blinkers for life. The moment they pass their probation they achieve an instant omniscience, and all without ever having left the educational machine. What precisely should be the aim of a school, or a head teacher, or a class-teacher? ("Promotion" is not an acceptable answer). Are they achieving it? If not, why? Ask these questions and you unleash a hurricane of hot air. Combatants polarise themselves, adrenalin running high, into those who are with (most are with) and the rest who must therefore be against (no other position is allowed) whatever issue is up for discussion. Cliches fill the sky. Would anybody with incisive honesty ever have accepted open-plan

architecture and mixed ability teaching, or tolerate the fact that children can spend six or seven years in school and still not know how to hold a pencil?

Fourthly there is the urge of primary teachers in particular to acquire professional status. This is more than a question of salary, though money is central. Real professionals mystify; hence, to mystify is to be a professional. Medical models (and who are more "professional" than doctors?) are constantly invoked. Alleged syndromes, with Greek names, are on the increase.

This drive to professionalism has been pretty successful. Consider the towering superstructure of specialists which the system supports: psychologists, advisers, counsellors, and the mighty army of "educationists", all moving up an edifice from the heights of which they can barely see the children on whose shoulders they stand. As they go up, they ask those below them to do what they themselves might not have managed in their own teaching days. Those who have not yet risen cannot call the bluff (though few realise it is a bluff) for fear of damaging their own prospects. A teacher's chief duty is to stand well in the eyes of other teachers. The smartest are assiduous self-publicists. They write a book, or a series of books, on the teaching of reading, or spelling, or maths, or art, or all of these. They give lectures. They seize at the fashion of the day. A few years ago it was "language development"; now it seems to be "communication studies".

This overblown career structure, which claims too much and achieves too little, will be demolished only by financial collapse. Our present national plight might carry its own bonus: when the money runs out we might see that the effectiveness of education is not to be equated with the money spent on it.

To improve schooling, there would be needed changes so vast and radical as to be out of the question. Teaching needs entrants of higher calibre, with successful experience outside the system. Training should be more realistic and lead to careers with fewer pretensions. There should be less theoretical flummery and a great deal of modest good sense. And there must be more evidence of intellect at work. Yardsticks are needed, in the form of graded examinations, like music examinations, for all children over the entire syllabus. There has to be a syllabus, and responsibility for meeting it must be placed on the teachers themselves. Exams exist as much for teachers as for children: an obligation to teach rather than to divert exists only where there are external standards to be met.

But what can we actually do? The world of education (which costs the country about as much as defence does in a year without a Falklands war) is too entrenched, too emotive, too powerful to stand any of this. Where it will not change, the System must be bypassed. It is too late to cry "stop". We can only say "Out!" and do the one practical thing possible which is what EO parents are doing already. The success of EO must be publicised to encourage the rest. When parents of children in school catch themselves saying "I could do better myself", they must understand that they are not uttering a heresy.

Some parents recoil from the idea of teaching their own out of misplaced modesty. They deserve information, encouragement and support. It is harder to help those whose children reject them as teachers. How do children get the idea that mum or dad (but usually mum) is not up to it? It is probable that parents, blinded by the mystique of educational parlance, have sold themselves short.

If so, it is contemporary education's greatest achievement. We owe it to people in this situation to show them that being a teacher and being a parent are not incompatible.

But there is one particular hazard which works against the continuing strength of EO. It is the same that insidiously helps to perpetuate the school system and its nonsense, incompetence, mythology and waste. For however passionate our concern for our children is, it can only be temporary. We tend to think of what lies ahead and want only to forget what has been or might have been. You can hardly blame us. This built-in, slow-motion transience, this long-term passing concern is the silent enemy of all who want change. It ensures that those in the conventional system, from seers to sycophants, merely preside over a steadily changing population of children. EO must have a solid, active and unshakable nucleus which will continue to be active long after their own children have reached independence.

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## FAMILY TREES

BETTY BALL

In a few aspects of education we can be at a disadvantage - having large groups of children available for drama or team games takes a little organising. However there are many projects which are available to home educators which would produce tremendous problems for schools. I am thinking in particular of family tree investigations as a starting point for history. You will know of any complications in your own family situation to be prepared for and can also feel free to follow the search in any direction. It is likely to become a family hobby and a source of endless visits particularly when visiting grandparents which can at times be boring for children. I am not an expert but have compiled some ideas to start you off and a reference book of where to go next for more advanced information.

### Making a start on your family tree

Start with each of your pairs of grandparents and draw a rough family tree for each side. Below is the best-known family tree in England, the royal side of Prince William's.



### Recommended books

1. My Family Tree Book 12.95 by Eileen Totten & Ann Doolan. Publ. Evans Bros. (Try W.H. Smiths) This is particularly appropriate for the 6-11 year olds. A sort of activity book to fill in brief details, stick in photos, newspaper clippings. Has an excellent bibliography especially where a branch of the family either immigrated or emigrated.
2. Your Family Tree (approx £1) by David Iredale, Discovering Series Shire Publ. A pocket sized reference book suitable for older children or parnets who want to go back into history. Sets out the records available and where to find them.
3. Public Record Offices often have their own leaflets with general as well as local notes.
4. I have prepared a pack of duplicated forms to help with organising your search. Send 50p in stamps to cover the cost of forms and postage. Any profits to EO funds. About 20 forms are included. Send to Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs.

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### TEACHING GRAMMAR: CURBING FREE SPEECH.

Andy Jackson.

Yet another example of the breadth of opinion within EO was illustrated by Alison Mafham's reactionary stance on the formal teaching of grammar. The substance of her article was adequately mirrored in the wooden archaism of her own language: "I would have had recourse to a dictionary if the first sentence of the treatise had not made the meaning of the term clear". (Dickens would have been proud; allowing style and grammatical fastidiousness to dominate meaning).

I will not waste time dismembering Alison's argument except to point out that its extreme right-wing premise: that AUTHORITY (variously referred to as "law", "first principles", "rules") is in itself a GOOD THING, is at odds with the stated aim of EO, that is, freedom to reject the educational status quo. All I wish to do is make a few observations about grammar taken from recent research in linguistics.

One: Grammar does not need teaching because it is accurately deduced by all native speakers. For example, young children will say "I goed" not "I went", applying the observation that the past tense is usually formed by adding "ed" to the present tense. When they are a little older they learn the valuable lesson that grammar is not as they at first assumed and start using the irregular "I went" like the rest of us.

Which brings me to my next point: Grammar is neither logical nor rigid. "Formal grammar" as it used to be taught, and probably still is for all I know, is an invention of classically trained academic minds and has only tenuous links with the English language as she is spoke. Every year the living language develops in different ways throughout the world and grows further away from the dead language of the text books, which is already anachronistic and will soon become laughably so.

Thirdly, the concept of fixed grammatical laws in language is an imperialist one. It assumes that tense, person, gender, case etc. are "first principles" and languages which do not make use

of these are therefore devoid of principle, one might almost say immoral. Indeed, the whole process of elevating grammar, (which should be a system for describing language), and using it as a platform for a moral stance has a missionary quality about it

To summarise and make some constructive suggestions: Do away with grammar as a prescriptive process, teach your children as much of the conventional terminology as they need to deal with the language they actually come across, encourage them to read simple books on linguistics in order for them to understand language as a system of communication rather than a book of rules with which to chastise language users who get it "wrong".

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### ATTENTION!! YOUNG SCIENTISTS

The British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) actively encourages an interest in science amongst young people (aged 11 - 18). The British Association for Young Scientists (BAYS) is a youth organisation of BAAS open to anyone in this age range. BAYS aims to help all young people to gain a greater understanding of science and its applications, and to recognise the enormous effect these have on everyone's life. BAYS has thousands of members (including maybe some EOers?) in over 100 branches throughout the UK. Activities include talks, visits, film shows, competitions, a residential conference and much more. Membership is £7 per school year and includes BAYS NEWS a magazine which comes out four times a year. More information from: Alison Roberts, BAAS, Fortress House, 73 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB.

BAAS has also instituted a scheme entitled "Awards for Young Investigators" open to children between the ages of 8 and 12. The scheme is designed to help young people to develop an ability to investigate in a systematic way and become familiar with a basic approach to science and technology. The awards are not designed as a teaching scheme for primary science and do not require that a child should have studied science. Individuals cannot register but groups of at least five can do so, perhaps presenting opportunities for local EO groups to add a new dimension to their activities.

Whilst we haven't tried either of these things the literature supplied by BAAS seems sufficiently interesting to warrant bringing it to the attention of a wider audience. It could be particularly useful to those concerned about science in home schooling.

John Whitelegg.

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### RECIPE FOR PLAYDOUGH

(guaranteed by the local playgroup and lasts for ages) Sue Hart

2 cups flour	1 cup salt	2 cups water
2 tbs oil (cooking)	4 tbs cream of tartar	food colour

Mix up ingredients gradually and heat slowly till mixture looks - right

## CALCULATOR MATHS

Betty Ball.

Until recently I, like many others, saw the calculator as a tool for getting answers and was wary of letting children rely on them before they had the background to use them properly and to judge the viability of the answers they produce.

I now see another role for calculators in aiding the development of mathematical thinking. Perhaps this is best shown by looking at a few examples.

1. Pretend that all the keys on your calculator are broken except those for 4, 3, x, - and =. How can you get the display to show 13? This is possible by pressing  $4 \times 4 - 3 =$ , i.e. 6 keys. Repeat the process for the displays 5, 36, 44, 23, 25, 169 etc. Try similar exercises with number pair changed to only 7 and 2, or only 9 and 6 and so on.
2. At another session pretend that all the number keys are broken except one, say 3. All the operation keys + - x / and = work. How can you get the display to show 12? Possible answers are

$$(a) 3+3+3+3=$$

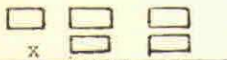
$$(b) 3 \times 3 + 3 =$$

$$(c) (3+3) \times 3 - 3 =$$

$$(d) (3/3+3) \times 3 =$$

Clearly (b) is the most efficient. Try to display 21, 30, 36, 84, 100 etc. in several ways if possible. Now try a similar exercise with a different number key working.

3. Cut out 5 pieces of card numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Place them in various arrangements of the pattern shown so as to get the largest answer, using the calculator to calculate the possible values. The answer is not necessarily what you would expect and you need to develop some kind of strategy to know whether you have actually found the highest value.



e.g. 

x		

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4. Can you arrange the numbers from 1 to 5 to give the answer 111 in a calculation?

e.g.  $135 - 24 = 111$

$$(42 - 5) \times 3 \times 1 = 111$$

Can you make them give 159 as an answer?

e.g.  $134 + 25 = 159$

$$(54 + 1 - 2) \times 3 = 159$$

$$213 - 54 = 159$$

All these are just examples. Each is of limited value but the aim is to develop mental dexterity with number. They are fun for parent and child to do in 'competition' but be prepared to be outwitted by an inventive child. Using a calculator these are self checking.

## EDUCATION FOR PEACE

A conference on Peace Education was held in Glasgow on June 18th and was organised jointly by Parents for Survival and Teachers for Peace. I was involved in the planning group and I think helped to balance off the over-emphasis on school education. The programme eventually included workshops on preschool and community education as well as a New Games workshop and a very stimulating talk from Stuart Jones of the Avon Peace Education Project. This was all in addition to a lot of talk about Peace Education in the school curriculum.

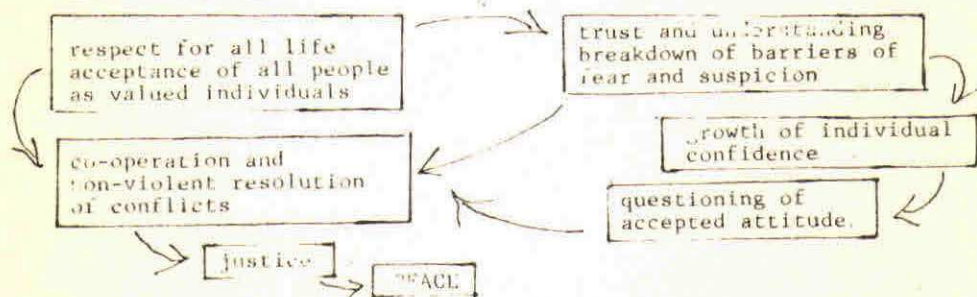
I took along information about Education Otherwise and also Woodcraft Folk, New Games, Harmony Games and Servas. (All the EO leaflets went). Woodcraft Folk and New Games were mentioned in the last EO newsletter, so perhaps I should say a little about Harmony Games and Servas.

Servas is an international co-operative system of hosts and travellers, established to help build world peace, goodwill and understanding. It is non-profit, non-political, inter-racial and inter-faith. (We have been hosts for 5 years now and have enjoyed visits from travellers from many different countries). If you are interested contact Servas, PO Box 17, Hayes, Middlesex, UB3 5BZ.

Harmony Games stock co-operative games suitable for family, children's parties, classroom etc. - board games, card games etc. Play to win together - not against each other. Write to Harmony Games, 2 Glenroy Villas, Uplands Road, Stroud, Glos.

Peace Education is something I believe it is important to get involved in, as real education for peace is not just about banning the bomb or preventing war, it is a philosophy, a way of life, and our family's home-based education is very much based on this. I see it in this way:

### Peace Education



If peace education becomes included as an accepted part of the school curriculum, it will be in complete contradiction to the usual messages of the Hidden Curriculum - competition, accepting authority, injustice, lack of respect for individuals, fear and lack of self confidence. It is just possible that these messages might be slowly replaced by co-operation, trust and open-minded questioning.

Lesley Downie.

# NOTICES

## INFORMATION LIBRARY

Andy and Di Anderson, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe  
Cheshire, Tel: 664060, would like to hear from you  
if you can recommend any schemes, books, materials  
ideas etc. that you have used. Details for obtain-  
ing these lists will be published in New Year news-  
letter. Dont delay, let us know today!!!!

## EO INFORMATION REQUEST

I am interested to hear, as soon as possible, from members of their  
experiences in teaching their children at home, now or in the past.  
Please write to me, telling me as much as you can about what you do,  
how you do it, what benefit and problems you have discovered. I am  
particularly interested in practical aspects of making EO work, and  
above all, in difficulties. Peggy Kann, 1 King Charles Close,  
Buckingham, MK18 1UZ.

## WEST MIDLANDS REGION

About a dozen people of all ages met in Cannon Hill Park on a Sat-  
urday in August, in response to a notice in the last newsletter.  
Now EO's finances are tight, this seems the best way to announce  
meetings - so here's the information about the next one:

Date: 12th November - a Saturday so those at work in the  
week can come.

Time: 2.00pm

Place: 16 St. Bernards Road, Solihull, B92 7BB - thanks to the  
kind invitation of Sylvia and Eöf Jeffs, who can be phoned on  
021 472 4349 for directions. Members from neighbouring regions  
welcome!

## WILTSHIRE OUT OF SCHOOL HAPPENING

Three knowledgeable naturalists are coming along to forage for fungi,  
woodlice etc., and help you decide whether its animal, vegetable, or  
mineral, edible or inedible.

SUNDAY 2nd OCTOBER: 12 pm picnic for 2pm tramping through the New  
Forest, Hampshire borders.

If you would like to come along with your children, friends, neigh-  
bours and dogs, please contact me, Kate, at Devizes 5688 (0380)  
after 6pm for details.

## "WESSEX EXCHANGE"

- a newsletter covering news of meetings, social events etc. in the  
Wessex region. 6 editions per year proposed. To be added to the  
mailing list please send £2 and your name and address to Les Mitchell  
Hynd, 55 Hursley Road, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire SO5 2FS.

BORN to Azlin Hezri a 6lb 14oz baby girl, Kauthar, sister for Iman  
Muadz and Musab. Praise to the Lord, Allah, the creator of Earth  
and Heavens and everything that's in between them.

## ENQUIRIES REQUEST From Janet Everdell

Nick Everdell's success has led to many enquiries from the media but we only have a very limited list of families practising EO and willing to be interviewed by press, TV and radio. This is because only 20% of you filled in the last questionnaire. I don't like to use the contact list for this purpose as I realise many of you feel it is only for contact between members. So would you all please give it some thought and let me know if you would be willing to help me out with this as the Everdell family is being overexposed! I would appreciate you dropping me a line with your preference of medium, and your main reasons for home education. It can be very educational for the kids when the TV cameras turn up and we've had a lot of fun with the programmes made here and in recording studios.

## BEWARE

I recently answered an EO ad from a woman in Brighton, who said she wanted to start a community, starting in her own house. Further discussion revealed that she takes in lodgers, and would charge me the same as any lodger. For one large bedroom I was quoted £31, plus use of her kitchen. To have another bedroom for my child, I was asked for another £20. Somehow that doesn't square with her ad. Community seekers beware. This person is still advertising!

## DESCHOOLED COMMUNITY

As part of the process of forming a deschooled community, seven families camped together for a week in July at East Prawle in Devon. This shared holiday proved an ideal opportunity to get to know more about each other's ideas and feelings, while also having ample time to swim and sizzle, collect seashells and seaweed, build sandcastles, explore rockpools, divert streams and have a beach barbecue. At the end of the week we all travelled up to the Glastonbury Greens Gathering, and met up with lots more people, who are also interested in alternative education projects. Dave and Lorna Bird agreed to organise the third group meeting in September, when we are hoping to discuss the practicalities and structure of the scheme in more detail, as well as finding time to continue enjoying one another's company. However the costs of postage and photocopying, to almost 50 families, have quickly risen, so in future we ask everyone who wishes to be kept in touch with developments to contribute 30p per mailing (i.e. 90p for 3 mailings) to 15 Salem Road, Winterbourne, Northavon BS17 1QF.

## GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Growing without schooling No.s 31 - 36 are now available from Midge Whitelegg, 53 Derwent Road, Lancaster LA1 3ES. Subscription for the six issues £3.60 (£4.20 non-members of EO). Cheques made payable to Education Otherwise please. Some back issues also available.

OPEN FARMHOUSE in central Italy - long and short stays - free lodgings for help on the farm. Write Addey, Pratole, Vallingegno, Scritto, (Pg) Italy.

## "MAKING THAT FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL A HAPPIER ONE"

Contributed by a member from Buckinghamshire.

Excerpts from a local newspaper article headed as above:

'We asked the two ladies how parents could make the whole experience easier for the innocent little 5 year old launched unsuspectingly into seven years hard labour.

"A familiar face is a help to a child dropped into a sea of 30 unfamiliar faces" they said. "Other preparations are just common sense. Don't overdo school talk as many children are very upset at not being able to read after the first day after being told that they are going to school to learn to read. Be careful to make life at home sound dull and boring or the child will think he is missing out on something. Be firm. They have to go to school, there's no alternative. Mothers should leave their children as quickly as possible even if the children are crying their eyes out. Most mums are embarrassed that their children are making a fuss. It is important to expect the child to be tired and cranky after starting school. Most children manage to keep their tempers till the end of the day and then go home to be thoroughly repulsive. During the first few months it is important not to expect miracles in learning every day. Some children race ahead and then stop and it can be very disappointing for parents. A final plea from the women is to spare a thought for the poor teachers. They have to cope with not one but a classful of children and they are only human."

My comment - HELP!!!! Thank goodness my three sons are being spared all this craziness.

EO in Literature: from *The Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley.

Submitted by Lesley Downie.

"You see," said the stick, "they were as pretty little children once as you could wish to see, and might have been so still if they had been only left to grow up like human beings, and then handed over to me; but their foolish fathers and mothers, instead of letting them pick flowers, and make dirt-pies, and get birds' nests, and dance round the gooseberry bush, as little children should, kept them always at lessons, working, working, learning week-day lessons all week-days, and Sunday lessons all Sunday, and weekly examinations every Saturday, and monthly examinations every month, and yearly examinations every year, everything seven times over, as if once was not enough, and enough as good as a feast - till their brains grew big, and their bodies grew small, and they were all changed into turnips, with little but water inside; and still their foolish parents actually pick the leaves off them as fast as they grow, lest they should have anything green about them."

"Ah!" said Tom, "if dear Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby knew of it she would send them a lot of tops, and balls and marbles and nine-pins, and make them all as jolly as sandboys."

"It would be no use," said the stick. "They can't play now, if they tried. Dont you see how their legs have turned to roots and grown into the ground, by never taking any exercise, but sapping and moping always in the same place? But here comes the Examiner-of-all-Examiners. So you had better get away, I warn you, or he will examine you and your dog into the bargain."

# LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I am writing to say how sad I was to read of the enormous lack of support for the EO Draw - quote: "over half the members did not buy or sell any tickets". Apparently this was not because they were opposed to the draw (these - a mere 15- at least had the courtesy to write and say so and also enclose donations). No, this was plain APATHY typical of the type of member whose attitude is "well I've paid my membership fee, what else do you expect me to do?".

I feel that if EO is in financial difficulties we should all 'pull together' to help. We are ALL members, not just the few who do all the work; the draw was an ideal way of putting this into action with very little hardship to anyone. If people cannot make the effort even when it is made so easy for them, I can see only two alternatives: either to put up the membership fee, (personally even though I have two children, another due at the beginning of September and we are on a very low income, I would still be willing to pay £20 a year for the support and confidence I get from EO), or let the whole thing run downhill - we already have the new diminished size newsletter.

As you read this letter please realise YOU ARE EDUCATION OTHERWISE, without your support it will not exist, so let us all help to get EO 'off the rocks' and put in that bit of extra effort that will ensure the continuation of EO at its present standard.

yours sincerely  
Mandy Skinner.

Dear EO,

I am doing home school, and have been for a year. My name is Caleb and I write lots of poems. Lots of them about politics. I talk to my friends about politics and I have been very nearly beaten up for it. I am gathering together material for a poetry book. I have written half the amount I think is required. Here is a poem for your newsletter.

A secure economy  
The jet plane streaks overhead,  
the cars and lorries rumble through,  
pollution, pollution, lots of lead,  
Ships sink, cars crash, more people dead,  
dictators imposing dread,  
We must stop, we must stop, a few people said,  
economy races on.

Caleb Davidson (11 years old)

CHEMISTRY SETS BY THOMAS SALTER

The set I was asked to review was No.4, midway in the range. The sets are stated to be suitable for children who are 10 years and over but we have used them with a six year old under careful supervision. Obviously this will depend on the child as certainly some chemicals are poisonous.

The set is well packaged and revived memories of my own chemistry set: the mystery of test tubes and strange chemicals makes it as attractive to many children as any toy. The manual is very comprehensive and has a large amount of basic chemical information. Initially this material does rather swamp the simple experiments but the book is structured so that you work through it in some sort of sequence. Whether you try to work through it step by step or let your child dip into it will depend on you and your child.

Some members may object that it is an expensive way of buying the equipment, although compared to the costs of other toys I think it is very reasonable and in fact unless you are very knowledgeable it is very difficult to construct your own kit which is easily accessible for a child to use. Also important, Thomas Salter spares, both chemicals and equipment are available from larger toy shops so the basic kit can be built up.

From an EO point of view, a kit working from real situations with an ecological approach might be more acceptable to many members. This might look at garden sites from the point of view of types of weed, chemical soil analysis, microclimate, trace elements etc. To construct such a kit could be a difficult task for an EO member. In the meantime if your child has an interest these kits could provide hours of fun and perhaps stimulate him to apply his knowledge to real life situations.

EQUALITY BY PETER PAN PLAYTHINGS

Equality is the numerical version of scrabble. The board is very similar, the tiles are numbers, mathematical operators (+ - x ÷) equals signs (=) and even brackets. The object of the game is to form valid equations of the types:

$$6+4=10 \quad 2x5-2=4x2 \quad (12-4)\div 2=(1+1)x2 \quad 12\div 3=4x1 \quad \text{etc.}$$

Equations can have more than one equals sign:

$$10-6-4=5x3x0=0\div 12=0$$

and can be added to to give new relations:

hence  $6+4=10$  can become  $7-6+4=10\div 2$

I would recommend that it is played by even quite young children using only the + and - operators and removing the brackets. Later add in the x sign, later still the ÷, and much later the brackets. This game should develop imaginative attitudes to numbers and dexterity of mind. A vast improvement on pages of repetitive, boring calculation.

## SPACE LINES BY INVICTA PLASTICS

In its' own right this is an excellent game for 2 or 3 players. Three dimensional noughts and crosses demands good concentration and imagination to work out just what your opponent is planning. It is also an excellent tool for mathematical learning, particularly three-dimensional geometry which many people find difficult to visualise. Follow up the use of coordinates in games such as battleships (the pencil and paper kind) and map references by work on this.

A is the point (3,4,3)

B is the point (1,1,2)

and so on.

Try C and D, answers at the end of this article.

Try looking at the coordinates of points which make a line and looking for the pattern in the coordinates. The black diagonal on the top level has (x,y,z) coordinates

(1,1,4)      (2,2,4)      (3,3,4)      (4,4,4)

which have the pattern

$$x = y \text{ and } z = 4.$$

Each of these equations describes a plane and this line is the intersection of those planes. Take a pattern

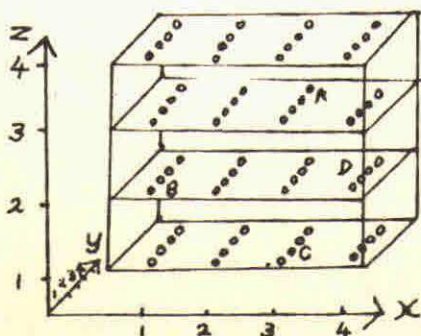
$$x + y + z = 6$$

and work out all the coordinate patterns which fit this.

e.g. (2,2,2)      (3,2,1)      (1,3,2)      (1,1,4)      and so on.

Cover these points on the Space Lines grid and you will find that you have covered a whole plane.  $x + y + z = 6$  is the equation of the plane. This is a good tool for turning an abstract idea into a visual experience.

(The points are C = (3,2,1) and D = (4,3,2).).



## DYLON COLOR-FUN FABRIC PAINTS

When Dylan generously donated several sets of Color-Fun Fabric Paints for the EO Draw they sent an extra set for the reviewer. My children and I set out to decorate some old vests and T-shirts. Lacking in imagination I felt the need to copy and first traced the EO "school is not compulsory" road sign symbol. The vest has to have thin card (cereal packet) inserted, so that you don't paint the back as well, and the fabric paint is applied with a dry brush to a dry, clean garment. I expected it to run a little at the edges on knitted fabric but it didn't and the effect was very pleasing. When it has dried completely, you cover it with a dry cloth (old hanky) and iron for a few minutes at a high setting to fix the dye. It doesn't feel hard but you are recommended to wash. Apprehensively I did and it stayed beautifully. It's since been through the washer several times and come to no harm. Excitedly I got going again with World Wildlife Pandas and Watchclub symbols. Getting colours right is no problem as the colours can be mixed easily. Colours can be bought separately and you could start off with say a yellow jar and a blue jar giving you also several shades of green. I think you would soon find yourself excitedly buying more colours.

My children were much less nervous about trying things: the 6 year old drew faces all over his vest and the 8 year old making a fairisle vest with his name in the middle. The young one has always wanted numbers on T-shirts for football, this is now no problem. There is a great pride in wearing something you made your-self.

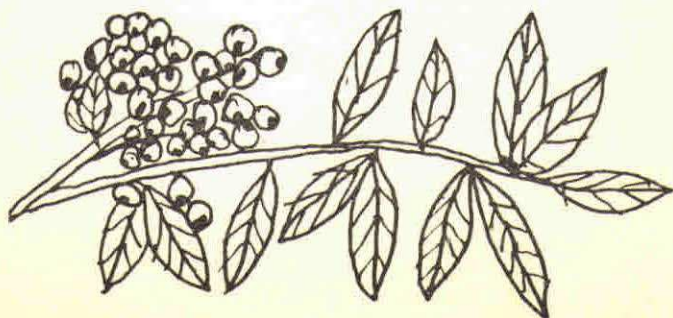
I really fancy trying a landscape around a tiffany style lampshade and would love to buy some cheap sheeting and design my own sheets, curtains, cushions and lightshades to match in a bedroom. Something an older child would love to do. I have already been and bought a few more colours and scout round the sales looking for cheap plain T-shirts to decorate.

## SCAREDY CAT, GRANDMOTHERS FOOTSTEPS BY ORCHARD TOYS

Scaredy Cat is an early counting game which my children were brought up on. You collect cards with 1, 2 or 3 blackbirds on and if you pick up a cat it scares all your birds away. Lots of discussion on who has more cats and counting all the cats as they accumulate.

Grandmothers Footsteps is a new game I haven't played. You have a footpath card each with places for footsteps 1 to 10. You have to try to collect each of these before you pick up a grandmother card or you start again. A novel way of practicing number sequences.

illustr.  
Maia  
whitelegg  
(9)



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or telephone 0865 54231 (24 hours) Dept DT2.

# EDUCATING ARCHIE

Archie's cousin  
ULSATILLA is on  
holiday from  
WINTERDALE, the  
homeopathic boarding  
school...



Your hair's a  
bit passe, Arch.  
Give it a trim  
shall we?



Some hours  
LATER

RELAX MUM, I  
didn't have my  
ears pierced!



G. Palmer.

It would seem that one needs £8,000 to be a communist these days! I refer, of course, to the now immortal advertisement that appeared in a recent newsletter asking for a family to fill a place in an established commune dedicated to bringing up their children by 'alternative' means, the payment effectively excluding those without means, and committing those who do have the purchasing power to the potentially fickle temperament of their new 'friends' from which they cannot easily extricate themselves. Such an establishment, infused with middle class values and people who cannot bear to subject their children to the miseries of the state system yet cannot bring themselves to opt for the increasingly unfashionable idea of public schools, make a mockery of the Freedom which I expected members of EO to crave. I use that much maligned and devalued word, Freedom, not in its conservative sense, no I'm not advocating public schools, but in its purest sense.

People who join EO do so as a consequence of a positive decision because they have thought through this idea of state education and found it to be lacking due to it being an authoritarian conditioning centre or simply that it robs them, the parents, of part of their children's nurture. It amounts to the same thing. But why stop there? Why stop at being a contact organisation for mutual support? Why limit ourselves to this important but very minor role of altering the mode of our children's education when it is quite obvious that 'education' and the existence of children are inextricably mixed up in the myriad of actions, decisions, joys ecstasies, miseries and pain that is the very stuff of life?

The membership of EO is scattered thinly all over the country and there is no doubt in my mind that many members suffer from this sense of isolation, as I do, and that no 'workshops' or 'lecture weekend' can satisfy this primordial craving for contact between fairly like-minded people whose goals are, in essence, the same.

The enemies of the dedicated parent are not only those that seek to curtail our actions through misinterpreting education legislation such as the LEA's and political parties who seek to make state education compulsory, but the isolation of sheer distance between those who seek personal contact, the isolation of poverty for those without a car and unable to afford transport, the consequential pressure felt by parents of demanding and vivacious children. Let's face the inevitable. It is easier for four people to respond to the needs of four children in a 24 hour day than it is for one person to look after one child. It is not only easier, it's more enjoyable, more satisfying and any sanity that may depart from the isolated person would never be endangered if the pleasures and pains were shared communally.

So, if you aren't satisfied with your lot, then ORGANISE. Try and recruit members through personal contacts and placing posters in sympathetic shopkeepers' windows and noticeboards (vegetarian shops are good examples of this outlet). Collective action of individuals and families leads to collective power. Estate Agents are more likely to be sympathetic and let large houses if it is a bona fide organisation that they are dealing with. Governments will actually give money in grants to housing co-ops to buy and renovate houses for its members to rent. You are all free therefore choose. What are YOU going to do about it?

## ADS

## ADS

## ADS

SWAP We have an excellent P.I.L.L. Russian Language Course on tapes. We would like a French Course instead. If anyone has a French Course and would like to swap or would lend it to us, please contact Jean Bendell, 61 Cotswold Road, Bath BA2 2DL or telephone Bath 313 634.

IS THERE any family in or within reach of Oxford who would like to meet me and my two children Baya, 8, Ashlee, 4, with a view to joining us for some sort of occasional, once weekly activity, project, get together, during the autumn. Please ring or write: A. Symington 1, Whitehouse Road, Oxford. Tel 721011.

I WOULD LOVE to hear from anyone interested in joining me and my two small boys in buying a large house with a large garden, dividing it into separate units, and creating a friendly working environment for children and adults to develop in. I envisage outside work being necessary at first, but would like to work towards producing enough resources to live on. Please write to: Mary Ferguson, 2 Hill House Cottages, Catsfield Road, Crowhurst, East Sussex TN37 9BU.

WE ARE a group of South London parents eager to establish an alternative form of education for our children, creating a community rather than a school. We are committed to the idea of a creative and non-authoritarian atmosphere. We want to share teaching skills and available time. If your child is approaching secondary school age and you are interested in putting energy into such a project, then please contact Tom and Auriel Hill, Tel 274 5349.

LIVING SPACE wanted in London for about a year - perhaps a house share or is there rented accomodation near you? I can afford up to £25 a week. Any ideas? I have one more year at LSE and would very much like to spend it in London hopefully with support from another EO family - who would also gain support from me. Emmie, 7 is de-schooled but Julia aged 12 is not. Please write to Gina Holman, 38 Greenland Road, Camberley, Surrey. Tel: Camberley 22671.

EDWARD, Ruth, Jonathan(9/71) Kathryn(10/73). We have well developed 10½ acre organic smallholding, for own food - fuel only, particular interests include transactional analysis, autonomous lifestyle, active birth movement (Ruth member of Assoc. Radical Midwives). We would like to develop co-operative lifestyle including EO with other families based on above holding, providing most of food and recreational needs. Houses available in immediate area around £14,000. Other possibilities for more/less capital. Would anyone interested please contact: Stobbs, 'Fendyke Hyde', Station Road, Emneth, Nr. Wisbech, Cambs. Tel: 094573 539.

FOR SALE All of interest to those involved in Steiner education. Will sell only as one lot. All printed by Steiner Press: Teaching of Arithmetic (now o/p) £3.00. The Education of the child in the light of anthroposophy £1.50. Book of Songs vol. 2 £1.40. Child is Born £2.95. Teaching as a lively art £3.95. Teaching children to write £2.25. Understanding children's drawings £5.50. Man-Maiden Tree, Mystery play £1.25. Witch and Woodpecker Myths £1.25. Cinderella (Grimms, Steiner type) £4.95. Form drawing (now o/p) £3.00. Games, gymnastics & sport (o/p) £4.00. Geometric drawing (o/p) £2.50. Would cost £37.50 + p.p. Will accept £25 + p.p. (offers). Contact: Mrs. P.C. Wiggs, 41 Highfield Road, Petersfield.

It was with great interest that I read the article on dyslexia in the April newsletter - but I cannot quite decide whether I agree with the very strong opinions of the writer (certainly I think the bit about brain damage was rubbish! Our daughter has slight brain damage, serious spelling and reading problems despite a normal I.Q. but is not dyslexic!) However in many other ways I agree with her - quite how much I agree with her I will leave you to decide!

Andrew is ten and has been deschooled for two and a half years. A happy, friendly little boy who started school eagerly, it was obvious to everyone who knew him that he was 'quite bright', he excelled at painting and knew a lot more than a lot of children of four. When he first started school all went very well (despite having a sister who hated it in the same classroom!) but over the next couple of years it became painfully obvious that all was not going 'to plan' (the school's plan that is!) we weren't very concerned, feeling that lots of other things were important besides purely academic progress. However, we moved, Andrew changed schools and then the real problems began. "Andrew is very 'behind' in his reading", "his maths is very poor" etc., etc. Andrew became very miserable and as so often is the case, started to get quite naughty in class. We had no problems with him at home but he did cry about school quite often. Sian was already deschooled so at the age of eight Andrew asked and we happily agreed to his leaving school too.

By now Andrew was so uptight that it took him the best part of a year to relax and start to write again but he was always busy with some interest and obviously much happier. BUT despite the fact that he always had his head in a book his reading remained poor and he was frustrated by not being able to read the more mature books he wanted to read. I read to him to counter this. Andrew's spelling remained very poor and in fact, to my concern, appeared to deteriorate in view of the two years that had now lapsed since he left school. I determined to leave him to develop as a 'free child' but Malcolm and I could not rid ourselves of the worry about the 'lopsided' way in which he was developing. (I would emphasise Andrew's own frustration). The arguments against any formal teaching were very strong but we live in a world where reading opens endless doors and spelling is almost as important. Andrew certainly thought so. (Unlike our daughter whose ability is less and is therefore over the moon when now, at twelve, she can read quite well - it has been a hard struggle but success is sweet because she has stretched herself to her fullest ability). Andrew had no such feelings - he was just frustrated and getting angry too.

In the end, with a great deal of reluctance on our part, but enthusiasm on his, we took Andrew to Aston University in Birmingham for assessment. To cut a long story short, we are now the possessors of the results of a series of carefully worked-out tests which announced him 'dyslexic'. Andrew's I.Q. is high and, in fact, on some parts of the test he scored at the level of a sixteen year old. We all felt 'relieved', certainly Andrew's morale was greatly improved, overnight. He became a different child - once more sure of himself. Aston University, realising that Andrew did not attend school, (they gently suggested a school for

dyslexic children), provided us with details of the type of 'programme' of work that should be followed every day without fail. Aston explained that a dyslexic child needs 'teaching' and that it was impossible for them to pick up spelling, grammar and the rules of reading without deliberate, careful teaching. BUT they emphasised, I probably couldn't achieve the results required as it would be a very hard struggle to get Andrew to learn and they doubted that this could be achieved at home.

I bought the recommended book (Alpha to Omega) and Andrew, in his desperation to learn, ploughed in with enthusiasm. Andrew just soaked it up like a sponge, his spelling improved literally 'overnight', we raced ahead, although being thorough and not missing any sections out. We still have a long way to go but the improvement has been nothing less than spectacular. So now two things disturb us: is Andrew dyslexic? Certainly he has been assessed as such, but if he was, would his progress have been so fast? There are still problems of course, and it will take a while - but then there is a lot of the book left to cover! But we do feel that the likely explanation is that Yes he is slightly dyslexic (as opposed to severely - which presents very serious problems) but it could be that in the past children in school were taught to read and spell by very boring 'old-fashioned' methods with lots of constant repetition (exactly as recommended by Aston for Andrew) and therefore the majority of slightly or even moderately dyslexic children did learn. Andrew was taught by the look and say method - but even other methods seldom repeat methodically the rules of spelling over and over again. This would account for the rapid increase in the number of dyslexic children coming to light. There is no doubt that it gives cause for thought!

---

## TIME TAPES

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Each cassette costs £4.99 plus 50p postage and packing.  
TIME TAPES, 127 High Street, Hampton Hill, Middlesex.

## BOOK REVIEWS

HEXAGONE is a three part beginners French course, suitable for a wide ability range. Emphasis is on listening, speaking and reading skills, with some writing exercises at the back of the books. It is based on the use of a tape and a pupils' book which I found cleverly designed to hold interest and speed progress without pressure and with fun, my children love it. It could be used by a parent without French knowledge (teach yourself!) or like me the possessor of rusty school French. I thoroughly recommend this pack. Hexagone 1 - Pupils Book, Tape/Cassette, Teachers Book, also available are flashcards which I haven't used, as I am making my own. Available from Oxford University Press. Reviewed by Julie Duff

ADVENTURES WITH PHYSICS Tom Duncan, Publ. John Murray £1.80. Good science starter book for use at home. Suitable for any age and describes some useful techniques e.g. cutting glass tubing. Things to make and 'magic tricks' rather than the drier scientific experiments.

HOW THE BODY WORKS Ron Wilson, Publ. Ward Lock £3.95. Very readable, lots of good colour pictures. Beric (aged 8) read it out of interest or it could be used as a human biology O-level text book.

PEAK MATHS Publ. Nelson. Good maths course from infants to lower secondary age groups. 10 student books, 5 teachers guides, and 5 answer books starting with infant handbook 1.

SMP MATHS Cambridge University Press. Books A-H are the CSE course, followed by X,Y,Z to get to O-level. Books 1-5 cover the O-level syllabus. I think that the CSE books are probably better for home study because they are easier to follow and aim at a more practical syllabus. There is always the option of adding books X,Y,Z to reach O-level. Advanced maths books 1-4 go up to A-level. This is modern maths which is more fun to do than traditional maths.

PHYSICS - A PRACTICAL APPROACH D.N. Bishop, Macmillan £3.95. This is the best physics O-level book I have come across, with well integrated practical and theory. Most of the experiments can be done with inexpensive or domestic equipment. Like all physics O-level text books it assumes a knowledge of maths to about O-level or CSE.

ADVENTURES WITH ELECTRONICS  
ADVENTURES WITH MICROELECTRONICS  
ADVENTURES WITH DIGITAL ELECTRONICS  
Tom Duncan, Publ. John Murray. Approx £1.80 each.  
Very good if you understand a little about electricity and electronics first. I am writing a basic electronics course booklet to go with these books. If anyone would like a copy please let me know.

KENT MATHS SCHEME boxed work cards. I have used these in school and was impressed. Work cards are a good idea because a child feels that he or she has achieved something each time one is completed. Also suitable for several children in a family who may otherwise want the same book at the same time.

(No name was supplied with these reviews, would the reviewer care to supply his/her name to the next editor for publication. Thanks. - Ed.)

HOW TO BUILD A FLYING SAUCER and other proposals in speculative engineering. T.B. Pavlicki, Publ. Corgi £2.50. Fascinating book and one which provides a fantastic incentive to further study. A tantalising mixture of fact and speculation which whets the appetite and fires the imagination. I even found myself looking at prospectuses for part time engineering courses at the local technical college. Suitable for adults and teenagers with a basic science/meccano background or anyone with a good dictionary, an O-level physics book and a willingness to learn

BRIGHTER GRAMMAR Books 1-4, C.E. Eckersley and Margaret Macaulay, Publ. Longman, about 80p each. Recommended to me by a very good and experienced teacher and certainly the best I have seen. Book 1 is simple nouns, verbs etc. going up to things like defective verbs and the present infinitive in Book 4. (No, I didn't know what a defective verb was until I read the book just now but it seems quite simple). Written in a clear and interesting way with amusing little pictures.

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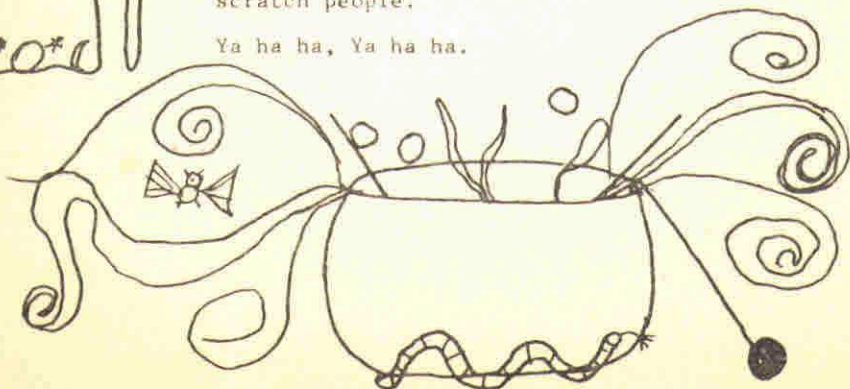
A POEM FOR HALLOWEEN by BETHAN WILSON  
(Age 5)

It's halloween, it's halloween,  
The witches make such cackling noises,  
that you can hardly speak.

Ya ha ha, Ya ha ha,

They stir the cauldron thick  
And bubbling spells of spookiness,  
of flapping bats,  
of wiggling snakes,  
Jumping frogs and toads,  
and crawling spiders webs,  
She stirs it with cackling magic spells,  
They strip up and down in a witchy dance  
the cauldron bubbles and simmers,  
the chalice gives them strength,  
They have sharp pointed nails and sometimes  
scratch people.

Ya ha ha, Ya ha ha.



illustr.  
Katy  
Whitelegg

One of the clearest proofs that Primary Schools are really about adult anxiety is the belief in the minds of their teachers that children must be forced to finish what they begin. An extreme statement perhaps, but I do not make it without careful thought. As a teacher I have always tended to want to see pupils pressing on and reaching some sort of conclusion because, in the big world outside, nobody will pay for tentative, boded-up and half-completed work.

In the secondary school, where one imagines that pupils have been induced to accept the broad aims of their course, it is probably reasonable to lay stress upon "getting the job done", but is the education of pre-adolescent children in the same mould? I think not.

My own childhood was a time of powerful enthusiasms. I experimented with everything in sight, I tested the physical and emotional constitution of every object and relationship which became available to me. I was unable or unwilling to 'finish' every 'task' because, as far as I was concerned, I had 'finished' whenever the activity no longer gave me any satisfaction. What the adult world called 'finishing' seemed to me much more like a formal act of disconnection from the moment's activity, conveying more than anything else that I had no further need to do it. 'Finishing' meant 'abandoning, losing'; to finish something in that forced, adult way was to devalue it and to make it no longer mine.

The tendency which teachers have to insist on the finished product seems to be part of a fear lest their children grow up 'feckless', 'lazy' or simply unemployable by reason of their being unable to produce a completed job. It is time, I suppose, that they must learn someday', but why at the golden time of their lives when everything is possible, when nothing is excluded, when anything can be safely tried and equally safely abandoned, or just 'put aside for a time'?

I would suggest that 'tidying-up' is part of the same adult behaviour; making an end of something and tidying it up may seem to an adult like mere housekeeping. To a child it can be the smashing of a universe in which he is god (or at least a king). Even if he takes his toys out again, he is compelled to remake a world which his parents have destroyed root and branch. The sadness of that destruction cannot be shared with his parents because their world is so much less fragile than his.

Finally, is it not possible that the adult's life-long quest for neatness, completeness and totality has more than a little in common with the life-denying impulses from which unspeakable regimes of right and left have drawn their inspiration? I don't know - but every dictator, every oppressor of recent times went to school, and as far as order, 'standards' and intolerance of unfinished work are concerned, I suspect most school systems are at bottom similar.

## EDUCATION OTHERWISE OFFICERS

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in the first instance.

REVIEWS EDITOR

HELEN HOLLAND  
Inholms Farm  
Plumpton Green  
Nr. Lewes  
Sussex

Publishers please send copies for review to this address.

# EDUCATION OTHERWISE

25 COMMON LANE,  
HEMINGFORD ABBOTS  
CAMBS PE18 9AN

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.



June/July 1983

# Michael Harrington Ltd. BOOKSELLERS

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The directors of Michael Harrington Limited are pleased to announce this, the first of our bi-monthly book lists to enable you to purchase your educational books by mail. Each list will contain different, tried material which you should find helpful in the education of your children. Please get in touch with us if you have any wants or suggestions, and we will be pleased to help and advise. Your contact will be Julia Hallett.

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This book is fun. It might be described as a children's phrase book, but it isn't exactly that. It gives you help with pronunciation and then provides you with lots to read or say in French. A good introduction to the language. Plenty of illustrations too.

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These books are overflowing with ideas and instructions for carrying out experiments at home. Younger children will need some help but the over 12's should be able to tackle them on their own. No special equipment is needed.

**WHERE THE WILD GEESSE FLY** Sheila McCullagh & Peter Scott

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**LADYBIRDS** as reviewed by Annie Wilton-Jones in E.O Newsletter 26. 60p each

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# BOOKS FOR PARENTS

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## LETT'S STUDY AIDS and KEY FACTS for 'O'-levels

These books are designed as examination aids, but are very useful for a parent who has become rusty. The Study Aids are specifically for revision, the Key Facts are supposed to be used during a course.

**Study Aids:** £3.95 each

French, Biology, English, Geography, British Political & Social History, Mathematics.

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A brand new, very practical and comprehensive manual of home cheese-making. Lots of information on all aspects of this traditional craft.

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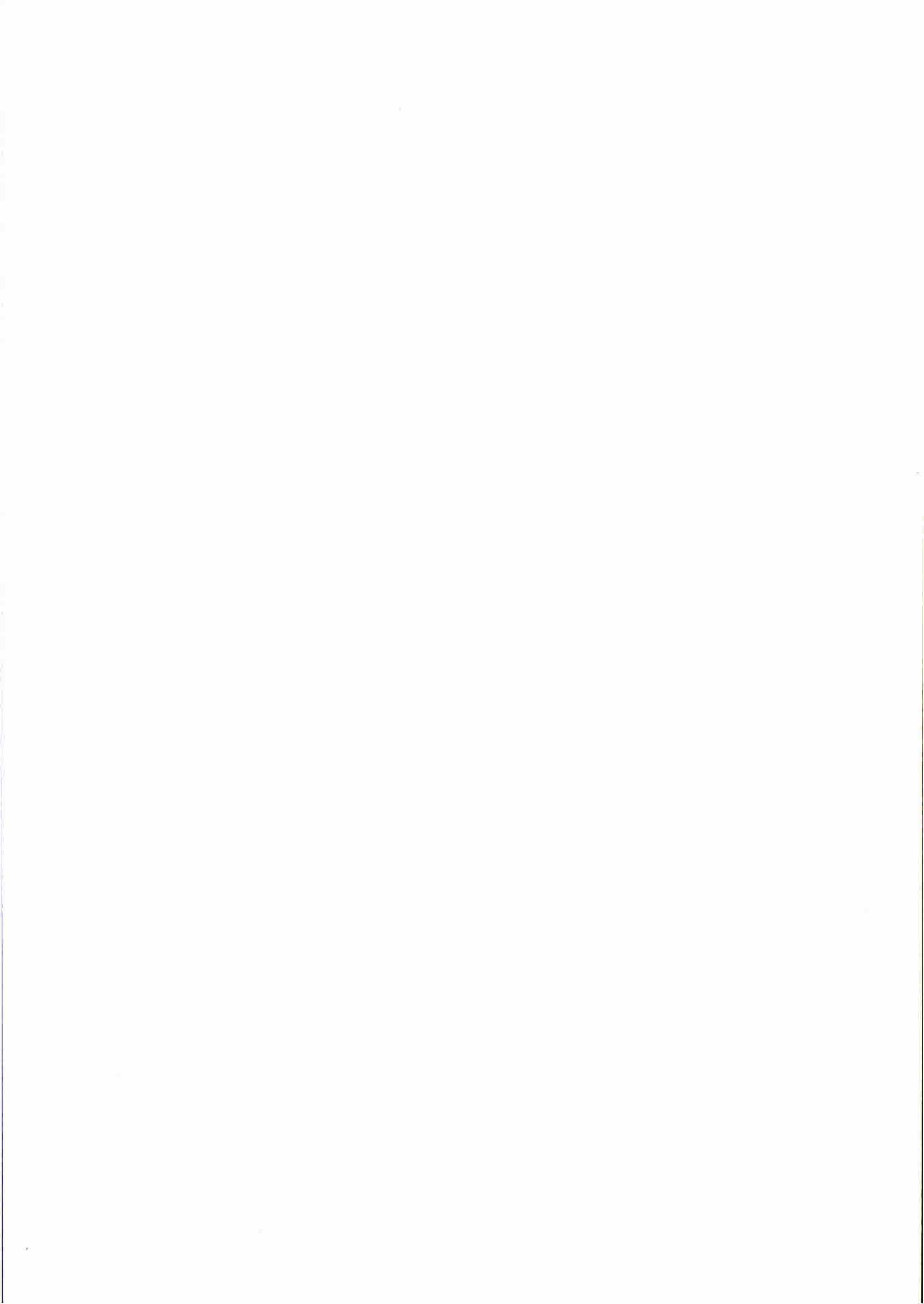
## IMPORTANT NOTICE

**These lists should be treated as a cumulative catalogue SO KEEP THEM! Any price revisions will be notified to you in subsequent newsletters.**

We can obtain anything in print (and check to see if it is) so please ask. Also, we hope to be able to start a secondhand book service in the future.

Correspondence to Julia Hallett please. All comments are welcome, but it would be nice if they were constructive!

Enclosed are some labels bearing the address of the new membership secretaries, Bruce and Christine Wallace, to be used for the membership forms from now on.



## LETTERS

### Dear EO

I am a newcomer to home educating, having only been teaching my son (who was eight years old in October) at home since September. At that time I wished to enrol for a daytime GCSE art class in a local community school and planned to take my son along with me to sit in the class but do work of his own. I was however appalled to discover that the college which funded my chosen course did not allow children and young people under the age of 16 to be present in adult education classes. The reasons given were, I felt, highly vague and spurious, namely their insurance did not cover this situation (the class was only held in a school after all), the other adults in the class might object and anyway it was simply "not their policy".

I would be very interested to know if other EO members have encountered this situation. Conversely has anyone been able to take their children to classes with them?

I would add that I have subsequently found the Workers' Educational Association to be considerably more enlightened: they were happy for my son to accompany me on one of their courses so long as the course tutor and the owners of the premises were in agreement.

Sheila Walton  
103 Cromarty  
Ouston  
Chester-le-Street  
Co. Durham DH2 1JU

### Fir Cone Birds

- Collect together some fir cones, coloured paper, strong glue and black felt-tipped pens.
- To make the eyes of each bird, cut out two small circles from white paper and use a black felt-tipped pen to draw in the pupils.
- Cut a diamond shape from yellow paper and fold it in half to form a beak.
- Glue the eyes and beak into position at the rounded end of the cone.
- To make the tail, cut thin strips of paper in a variety of colours and curl them by pulling across a safe scissor blade or ruler.
- Load a brush with strong glue and liberally apply it to one end of the strips of paper. Then poke the glued ends of the strips into the openings of the cone at the pointed end to make a colourful tail. (Working in pairs will make this tricky stage easier.)
- Attach glittery thread or string to the cone to make a hanging loop.



## FUTURE EVENTS

### SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE WORKSHOP IN SCOTLAND:

This is an idea we are hatching. Ideas so far:

1 To be held in Glasgow, one Saturday in March 1988

2 First speaker to give information on different exam options: GCSE, Standard Grade, City and Guilds....any other suggestions?

3 A series of 30 mins chaired discussions on topics e.g. science learning without expensive equipment, when to sit exams, tutors & correspondence colleges etc.

4 The subjects of these discussions could be introduced by 2 people giving 5 minute accounts of their own experiences and then opening to the floor. This requires several home educators who have experience to offer to start us off - will anyone prepared to help let me know. Suggestions for topics are needed.

5 Venue on offer is donation only - good news!

6 I would like to finalise dates and speakers by mid January which means asking you to think this through in the middle of Christmas preparations - sorry. Anyone interested please send me a s.a.e. If we have a big enough response to justify booking venue and all the organising involved, I'll aim to send out details of when and where by the end of January

7 Any advice or suggestions gratefully received, we've not done this before.

**Claire Young,  
3, Wyvis Place,  
Middleton Park,  
Irvine, Ayrshire KA11 1NA  
Phone (01294) 218562**

### EO BY-THE-SEASIDE WEEKEND CAMP

There will be an EO weekend camp on **May 15th - 17th 1988** at Monkton Wyld Farm, Charmouth, Dorset. This is a beautiful site, just 3 miles from a lovely beach at a quiet and secluded spot amongst 300 acres, with playground, free hot showers, toilets and launderette. 1/2 mile from A35 and 3 miles from mainline train station.

Events planned include beach games with a Bar-B-Q and get together with local EO members at Monkton Wyld Court. **Only £13 per family.** Some rooms may be available at a separate price. For information pack and booking form please send A5 s.a.e. to:

**Andy Blewitt,  
69, Ripley Road,  
Belvedere,  
Kent DA17 5AH  
0181 306 0168    aannd@mcmail.com**

### LOTTERY GRANT

I am pleased to say our application for funds from the Lottery to produce some guidelines to be distributed to the LEAs throughout the UK has been successful. The guidelines themselves have again been delayed due to some rethinking on how the law applies to home educated children and we are taking advice on this.

**Priscilla Park Weir**

## **EO PUBLICATIONS**

### **TEACH YOUR OWN: by John Holt**

This book is back in stock. It confronts head on the common objections to home education and offers practical guidance to would be educators. This inspirational book is a must.  
206 pages, members' price £4.50

### **SCHOOL'S OUT: by Jean Bendell**

EO has reprinted this personal account of Jean's experience of educating her own daughters at home and of how she and her husband reached their decision. As well as being a 'good read' it contains practical information and is an authoritative and informative work by someone who has studied the history, philosophy and practise of education.  
204 pages, members' price £5.00

### **TEENAGE LIBERATION HANDBOOK: by Grace Llewelyn**

Although you may obtain this book from a bookshop, we are stocking some copies as a service to members. Bookshop price £5.99, members' price £5.50.

### **BEST OF ARCHIE: by SEG**

Sarah has made a small book of her cartoons and for those who are "Archie" fans, this is a must.  
32 pages, members' price £3.00

**Please add £1.00 postage and packing to all orders and send to Chris Harper.**

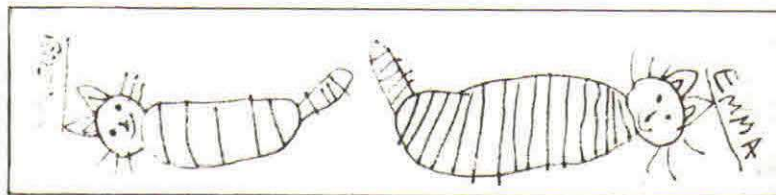
### **URGENT Special needs information and support group**

At the last EO meeting I was asked to organise a get-together of people who have offered to be part of a special needs team. Leslie Belgium is kindly holding the fort at present, but we do need to develop a network of members (plus others with special knowledge) who can offer information and support to the increasing number of families joining EO with special requirements.

You might feel able to join Leslie's list of telephone contacts on specific issues; you might be well informed on legal aspects (or are prepared to become so); you might like to maintain an information database (could the person offering this please contact me); or you might be happy to write a small piece to inform members of specialist support groups that they too can home educate.... Could those who have offered help so far please contact me a.s.a.p.!! Likewise anyone else who might be interested. Thanks.

**Gwen Baldock,  
6, Villa Grove,  
Heworth Green,  
York YO3 7TB**

**Telephone (01904) 421 982**



## EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS

From the Guardian: October 27th 1997 - Thank you to the writer of this reply, whoever you are! (Sent by Sarah Guthrie)

### Take him seriously

It is a fallacy, often fostered by officialdom, that school is compulsory in Britain. Your parental responsibility under the 1944 Education Act is to secure for your son a suitable, full-time education "by regular attendance at school, or otherwise". Thousands are educated outside the school system.

Your son has let you know in no uncertain terms that he was miserable at school. You can help him by taking this message seriously and accepting that school is not for him, at least not in the short term. Tell him that there is no question of him going to school while he's so unhappy about it. The alternative — your son being defined as a "psy" case, at as vulnerable a stage as adolescence — is too awful to contemplate.

To rebuild his self-confidence, he needs you to have confidence in him and stop seeing *him* as the problem. Free yourself from the mind-set, dominant in our society, that sees his nonconformity regarding school attendance as failure on his part or yours. We'd dismiss as ridiculous the idea that everyone is suited to similar employment, yet herd our children through an increasingly uniform education system.

You will have to make alternative arrangements for your son's education. This need not be as daunting as it sounds. In a similar position four years ago, I received excellent support from the self-help organisation Education Otherwise. (Send an A5 sae to Education Otherwise, PO Box 7420, London N9 9SG or call the helpline on 0891 518303.)

Like mine, your son should benefit from the experience of taking more responsibility for his own learning and being fully involved in decisions. You will also be building sure foundations for your future relationship by avoiding a "battleground" model of parenting.

**Name and address withheld**

## The problem

“ Six months ago, our son, then 14, refused to go to school. He had excellent reports from every teacher, but had been bullied. Then he said he'd fallen out with friends and everyone was ignoring him. He now stays barricaded in his room with the curtains closed, watching TV and playing music. He comes out only to have a bath or get food. He ignores all efforts at conversation and suggestions of changing schools or doing things. We've tried persuasion. We've tried being tough. We can't get through. Our GP sent him to a family psychiatrist. He barely spoke. They suggested an adolescent in-patient unit, but there is no place until next year. The school shows no interest. The educational psychologist suggested a meeting of school, hospital, education welfare service and us. This was ignored. The 'special needs' teacher did (once) ring me to say we 'are not alone in this'. But we *are*. Can anyone help? ”

