

February 1984

60p

Newsletter

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editor or Education Otherwise as a whole.

The Editor for the April Newsletter will be:- Jo Sharkey
35 Portland Street
Lancaster

Contributions should be sent to this address by 1st March. Please mark all material intended as such, clearly "For Publication".

It helps the editor a great deal to try and keep to the deadline!

The Editor of this Newsletter is Heidrum Warton,
Little Wyelies, Deaks Lane, Cuckfield, W. Sussex.

EDITORIAL

Even though we are already in February it might still be in order to wish you all a very happy, peaceful and joyous 1984. I wonder what your New Year's E.O. resolutions are! As far as I am concerned, "Educating Archie" has certainly hit the nail on the head! Being organised must be one of the secrets of life when you have your children at home all the time. I have to admit that we still have a long way to go towards that goal. But then we have only been practising home education for just over a year and it has certainly had its ups and downs. There have been many moments when I felt like giving up, wishing for the quiet times, when the children were both at school. My mind soon changed though when I really thought about it, and I would feel quite guilty even contemplating that idea. (This should really be in the Agony Column!). But what are the causes for these stressful times? For us it is usually one of the following reasons that make life difficult: (1) I try to do too much; (2) I try to make the children do too much; (3) We are in a rush; (4) One of us is in a bad mood. - Well, everybody has an off-day occasionally, we have to accept that. But all other points could be improved by better planning and more organisation. It should be so easy!

After I had agreed to edit this issue of the Newsletter I said to myself, "Goodness, you must be mad! How can you possibly take on such a task if you have not even got round to darning the holes in your daughters' tights!".

Organisation!

The holes are still there but the Newsletter is with you. Thanks to my husband, Richard, who feels more organised and who gave me a lot of help and encouragement in choosing items to be included and planning the layout.

Thanks to this planning we have managed to fit in every chosen article.

The arranging and putting together was the part I enjoyed most of all, although after rubbing down the one hundred and seventy third "Letra-Set" letter I began to wonder if I really like them that much after all!

- I am very glad I took on the challenge. To start with it was going to be a 100% home-made production. But thankfully I gave up the idea of doing all the typing myself - I would still be bashing away at it! Particularly after the beautifully produced December issue and some of the criticism one or two of the previous newsletters had received, I felt we could not afford too much of a homemade "look". I am very grateful to Mrs. Brenda Fenn for giving it such a professional sheen.

- Editing this newsletter has been a really valuable experience for me, apart from the technical "know-how" I am acquiring, (for instance I never knew there was such a thing as cow gum!).

So far I have felt a rather passive member of the organisation (there is that word again!). But now things are beginning to take shape, names are sounding more familiar and I am beginning to realise what a lot goes on behind the scenes.

- Up until now I have always looked forward to the next newsletter but have also taken it very much for granted. After having done "our own" we shall await the arrival of future ones much more eagerly and shall read them with even more understanding.

- I hope you will like the selection of articles; even though one or two are slightly back-dated (e.g. "Our first attempt at Education Otherwise"), they should be of interest to members. The choice of centrespread is a very personal one! When I first saw it on the back of the "Third World Calendar" I thought "How very apt for Education Otherwise!".

I would like to thank all those who sent contributions to be included. We felt it was out treat to read them all before anybody else did!

But now over to you!

Education through the Press

The last of 1983:

PARENTS IN EDUCATION

A survey of parents and teachers' attitudes to preparing children for school found that most parents believe that their children should know how to read, write and do sums before starting. But teachers disapprove of parental help, and were firmly opposed to parents teaching arithmetic, and thought that parents would only 'make a mess of' teaching their children to write. But seven out of ten parents see their extra-school tuition as both their duty - and enjoyable.

(TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT, 30.XII.83)



...The head of an Oxfordshire primary school allows parents to collect their child from school one afternoon a week to work with them at home. He believes that parents are the most powerful learning agents in a child's life (T.E.S. 28.10.83)...Education priorities for the Labour Party under Neil Kinnock include looking at how to encourage the involvement of parents in education and 'familiarize them with what their children are being taught'. (T.E.S. 7.10.83)...

CARE OF CHILDREN

A report published by the National Children's Homes last November 'shattered any illusion that the British are a nation of child lovers' said Viscount Tonypanady, Speaker of the House of Commons. (GUARDIAN, October 1983). Over 100,000 children in England and Wales are now in care, of whom 10,600 have been deserted by their parents...The Childrens Legal Centre claimed that young girls in care have been forcibly injected with Largactil and Valium and others have been put in solitary confinement for up to 36 hours in Lambeth. (Their news bulletin Childright is available from the Children's Legal Centre, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN)...Liverpool education authority has approved a scheme to provide free nursery care for all children between 2 and 5 whose parents want it (GUARDIAN November).

HEALTH

Criminal behaviour can be caused by bad food and treated by whole food, British and American research finds (SUNDAY TIMES October) Young people, especially, eats anything up to 1 lb. of sugar a day, mostly hidden in junk food, and it's now thought that this basic addiction to refined sugar can lead on to drug or alcohol addiction later. American drug addicts given a diet of whole food showed dramatically less aggressive and abusive behaviour...A survey of teenagers in Iowa, U.S. revealed their ignorance of children's development and health. For many teenagers, the information came from TV programmes and the unrealistic expectations they created led to frustrations and ultimately, to abuse. (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT, 7.10.83)...BUPA now offers a screening service to detect "learning difficulties" (at £85 a time). They maintain that learning problems (usually of vision, hearing or balance) can be overcome by early treatment following 'suitable training'. (DAILY TELEGRAPH 8.7.83)...Classroom stress has been blamed for the allegedly high rate of infertility among teachers (TIMES ED. SUPP.).

Future Trends?

A primary school has renamed Superman "super-person" in an effort to teach peace studies and sexual equality in one fell swoop (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT 30.12.83.)

Cont....

An essay set for 12 and 13 years old called 'How would you strangle yourself with a tie?' has been withdrawn after complaints from parents (GUARDIAN 3.11.83). A spokeswoman for ILEA who produced the worksheet said it was 'intended to be taught in a lighthearted manner'.

Most Helpful Warning?

"Where heads sit on their bottoms for much of the time, schools collapse." (Harry Greenway, Conservative MP for Ealing North: DAILY TELEGRAPH, 26.9.83.)

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Jackie Fearnley, Bruce Cox.

Talking about school

"There was very little stimulation at school. You were just grateful to anyone who taught you efficiently. I emerged a scholar in sciences and illiterate in everything else. You name it, I knew nothing about it...At school we had to use words like 'verdant'. We had to write in the literary tradition...feeding off other writers. That has to be second rate art compared with art that feeds off the real thing."

"Lumpen and unimaginative...you were educated to show no emotion at all. It was O.K. for women, but not for men."

(John Cleese, talking in the TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT, 14.10.83 and also in THE GUARDIAN 2.1.84)

"The teachers crammed in so much information in those days, although we were 48 to a class. Not a moment was wasted, and there was no nonsense talked about learning being fun. It's not fun, and children shouldn't be told it is. The modern fun idea starts at the nursery school - all these sandpits and slides when they should be learning to read and write..." (Irene Thomas, interviewed in THE GUARDIAN, 5 December 1983).

"The whole exam system should be changed. I used to cram it all in, as I had a good memory; passed the next day with flying colours and within 48 hours I'd forgotten it all." (Disc jockey David Jensen on Radio One, MAILBAG, 6.7.83).

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from Bruce Cox, Joanna Guthrie.

GOT A NEW COMPUTER FOR XMAS?

If you have, and don't really know what to do with it, write off now for the Computers Otherwise newsletter. Articles, book and software reviews, programmes and advice about the educational use of computers at home. Three issues have been produced already and back copies can be sent.

Send 4 large stamped addressed envelopes and £1 for 4 issues (cheques made out to E. Ball please) to:- Betty Ball, 1 Fenton Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs.

Please enclose a postcard, listing interested individuals and expertise, also, if you have a computer which make.

PUBLICISING EDUCATION OTHERWISE

Ann Greenop asked for ideas on how to get information about E.O. to families who need it. I am sure there are many people who need to know about E.O.: we, too, have been contacted by a mother who was being taken to court for keeping her child out of school. She had only heard about E.O., rather late in the day, from the child's solicitor, and we could have been more use to her if only she had known about us earlier on.

I suggest that EO members who feel strongly about this should take upon themselves some responsibility for publicising the organisation. It is in our own interest to increase the membership, and we have the right to make ourselves known. A lot of members are already doing this, of course, both as individuals and as groups, and it is thanks to them that people like myself have discovered E.O. If we all join in the publicising, it will snowball, making it a lot easier for families to find us.

Firstly, there are things everyone can do by themselves. Have you checked your local library and Citizens' Advice Bureau, to see if they have an up-to-date contact address? Are there any local guides or directories which might publish one, It is always worth writing a letter now and again to whichever newspaper or magazine you read, emphasising that parents do have a choice over education and giving a contact address.

Secondly, there is a great scope for publicising from the safety of a group. You can raise money and advertise at the same time by running a jumble sale, market stall, barn dance, etc. Advertisements in shop windows are cheap and reach a lot of people. With some funds, it would be possible to send literature about E.O. to all the local agencies which might be contacted by a family in trouble over education: doctors, health visitors, perhaps even teachers, who ought at least to know about us, even if they don't sympathise.

Thirdly, you can put yourself in the limelight by offering yourself as a speaker to local groups, contacting your local newspaper and/or radio station, wearing E.O. T-shirts whenever possible, and talking about it to everyone you meet. I have only attempted the last of these, since Jasper is now of an age where everyone asks when he will be starting school: and I have been pleasantly surprised by people's reactions when I say I am teaching him at home. They say how brave I am and what about his social life. I might even wear an E.O. T-shirt one day!

Julia Galvin

ENVELOPE RE-USE LABELS

MEMBERS OF EO WHO WANT TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT EO IN ANY EASY AND EFFECTIVE WAY ARE REMINDED THAT ENVELOPE RE-USE LABELS ARE AVAILABLE AT £1 PER 100 FROM JOHN ELENOR, BEARING THE WORDS "SCHOOL IS NOT COMPULSORY" WITH TRIANGLE MOTIF. WHEN YOU SEND A LETTER IT GETS SEEN BY QUITE A FEW PEOPLE APART FROM THE RECIPIENT, ANY ONE OF WHOM COULD BE A POTENTIAL MEMBER (POSTMAN/WOMEN, SORTERS, ETC.). ALSO, NO NEED TO BUY ENVELOPES EITHER! GIVE IT A TRY!

FINANCE... 1984 & beyond

E.O. reached the end of 1983 with a bank balance of £1,300 credit despite having begun the year with an overdraft of more than one thousand pounds. This means that in 1983 the organisation's income exceeded its expenditure by more than £2,300. The problem of making ends meet which beset us throughout the early part of the year no longer exists. But might not the present surplus of funds create a problem of a different kind?

Our surplus next year could well be even greater than it was last year. The following factors lead me to suppose this:- (1) Membership subscription was increased only in the middle of last year so that about 70 per cent of the members paid at the old rate and the average subscription was approximately £7.50. Next year almost all members will pay the ten pound subscription so that the average sub. can be expected to be well over nine pounds. (2) Income from advertisements appearing in the Newsletter began to be received only at the end of last year. This might increase during 1984. (3) Judging by recruitment figures for the latter part of last year it would be reasonable to expect the recruitment of not less than 300 new members next year and some printing and administrative costs rise at a slower rate than numbers catered for. (4) The change to charitable status, when it is achieved, may result in the receipt of donations from outside the organisation. (5) A small amount of interest will be earned by the money at present in deposit account.

Being very inexperienced at financial forecasting I hesitate to look further ahead than the end of 1984, but I feel obliged to point out that it is not inconceivable that E.O.'s income will continue to increase each year for some years to come. So that for a time at least the organisation might become progressively more prosperous. I think we should be prepared for the best!

In circumstances of increasing prosperity it is very easy for money to be wasted. (By 'wasted' I mean, principally, used to meet unplanned increases in administrative costs). I therefore urge the Core Group to take the first available opportunity to formulate a saving/spending plan. It is my experience that the best way of ensuring that money does not get frittered away, is to have in view at all times some definite project or projects, the achieving of which necessitates economy. What I am asking is, that the core group draw up a list of projects which the members would like to see put into effect, at the same time making a resolution to undertake each in turn as funds permit. (The number of items that such a list would consist of will depend partly upon the nature of the agreed projects, e.g. whether they are high or low cost, whether they are straight forward projects, such as the purchase of a piece of equipment, or more complicated projects which would be undertaken in stages etc.)

The formulating of the list could be done in Core Group time. But I would suggest that this might not be the best way to do it. The Core Group meets but seldom and always has a great deal of business to discuss. It is also a very large group and would therefore find it difficult to consult the membership in a systematic way, which I would see as a necessary part of doing the job well. I would suggest that instead the Core Group set up a sub-committee whose task would be to collect and thoroughly appraise suggestions from members and draw up a list of the kind described above for approval by the Core Group. (Might Unstone Grange be an ideal scene for at least one phase of such a sub-committee's deliberations, suggestions from members having already been sought?).

Though I believe that the duty to manage other peoples' money in a responsible manner is sufficient justification for my making the foregoing request to the Core Group, I would mention another benefit that could result from what I here propose. When E.O. has achieved charitable status it is likely that some individuals and/or organisations will be invited to make donations to E.O. funds. These will have a better chance of success if a definite and agreed plan for future spending can be presented at the same time.

Alison Matham (Treasurer)

Sussex

E.O.-Weekend & Core-Group Meeting

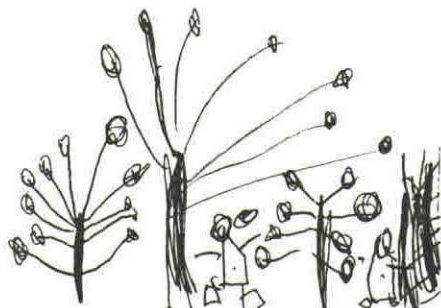
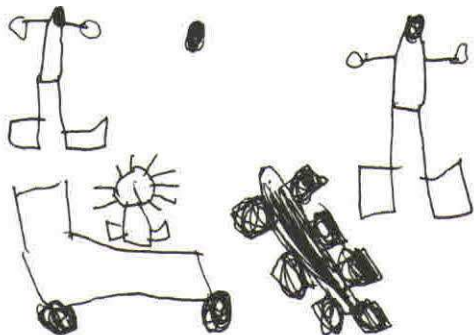
Saturday February 25th

Sunday February 26th

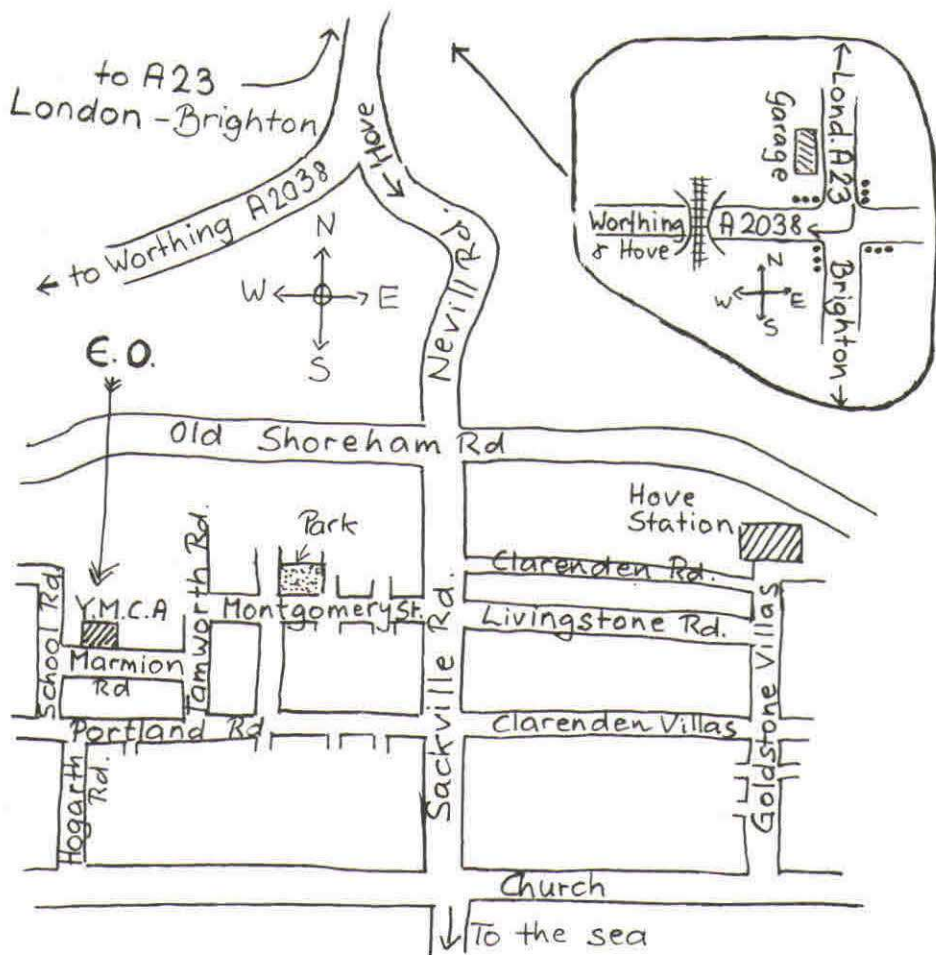
- Saturday - 10.00 a.m. Welcome to all. During the morning while visitors are arriving there will be a playgroup available for children to paint, make things, read, chat. There will also be coffee available and a book display for adults and children.
- 10.30 - 1 Gym session with Derek Vine who is the resident Gym Teacher at the Y. He has bravely said he will take all ages, we think young children should have an adult carer with them and soft or no shoes for all please.
 - 1.00 p.m. Lunch - B.Y.O.
(Bring your own).
 - 2 - 4 p.m. Discussion for adults. We also hope to offer candle-making, drama, music and parachute games.
 - 4 - 5 p.m. Tea - provided by Sussex members for all.
 - 5 - 7 p.m. Guest speaker.

Evening free to enjoy a cold walk by the sea or ramble around the Lanes of Brighton or relax with host families.

- Sunday - 10 - 1 p.m. Core Group Meeting.
Meanwhile in another part of the forest...playgroup session, outing to playground next door. Making lunch, chat, bookbrowse, computers.
- 1.00 p.m. Lunch provided by Sussex members and anyone else who has helped prepare it.
 - 2.00 p.m. More chat, core group, and a Beach Treasure Hunt if time and weather is fine.
Farewell.



Hermione Holland (5)



How to get to Y.M.C.A. Marmion Road, Hove.

Train to Hove Station (or Brighton Station and change to Hove). Then walk I'm afraid (Aldrington only a local line).

Buses 2, 12, 12a, 12b, 37, 37a along Portland Road - Scott Road Request stop.
along Church Road - Langdale Road stop.

Would Sussex members who can offer beds or floor space please phone Maxine soon as possible. Brighton 774860.

Visitors wanting accommodation please write to Maxine Toff, 50 Sackville Gardens, Hove, East Sussex BN3 4GH as soon as they can.

Our first attempt at Education Otherwise

by Colin and Caroline Riches

"They are delightful;" the headmistress was clearly impressed by the array of art and craft work on the table. "You could easily have carried on by yourselves until Abigail was 10 or 11 at least..." When Caroline and I were discussing her meeting with Abigail's new head we felt that her comments were a reassuring postscript to our first efforts at EO.

We have been reading, thinking and discussing alternative education for seven years when Abigail was still 'in utero' and Ben was waiting in the wings. It was reading "Children on the Hill" that set us thinking about the advantages of home education. We then devoured "Summerhill", John Holt, and anything else we could lay our hands on. We quickly concluded that home education, or something like it, was preferable to the unwieldy systems of state and private education. The question in our minds was - could we, dare to do it with our children. Initially the question was academic, but as time passed we realised we would have to make a decision - dare we stand out against the system or would we sink our growing convictions and fall into line with everyone else we knew and send ours to school at the magic age of 5?

Living of the Isle of Wight meant that our contacts with likeminded people were very limited. At the time we knew of no one else who was doing EO or who was seriously enough interested to do something about it. So we visited several EO families further afield to gain first hand information. These meetings were invaluable boosts to our thinking and each time we came away convinced we could manage. But as time passed so did our self-confidence. We realised that our biggest difficulty lay within us - our own fears of standing out against the accepted way of doing things, our fear of how the LEA would respond to our decision.

Our other reservation concerned our motives. Were we really interested in our children's growth and development or were we just working out through them unresolved conflicts and aggravations left over from our own childhood. The reality is that motives are always mixed and ours were no exception. Although we couldn't change our motives we thought it was very important to acknowledge them for what they were. By doing so we would be less susceptible to acting out our own neuroses, and better able to make sensible judgements about the children.

We identified several reasons that we thought were important and which results in our decision to do EO. We wanted to be involved with the children's growth and education rather than leave them to someone else's responsibility once they reached 5 years old; the home provides a quiet and stable environment where individual attention can be given to the children enabling them to grow and learn at their own pace. We also thought that creative work is as vital, if not more vital, than the traditional three 'Rs' in the early learning years. Art and craft work sensitively handled can encourage self-confidence and an ability later on to face and solve problems in other subjects. It seemed to us to be more important to cultivate right attitudes to learning rather than to stress achievements, to encourage a desire in the children for enrichment rather than reward.

Another major reason for educating at home was that we considered that Abigail would not be ready to leave home at 5 years old. She needed more self assurance before this would be the case. We preferred the system of other European countries whose children remain at home until seven.

But, like Winnie the Pooh, we found that an idea that seems very good when it is inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it. As Abigail's fifth birthday approached so the frequency of the questioning of friends increased - "You'll soon be going to school then?" "When do you start at school?" "Not long now, then?" We tried to explain that no, actually Abigail and Ben would not be going to school, because we think that... Our home-spun philosophy of education was

greeted by reactions ranging from dumb incredulity to delighted amazement and "...don't let my two hear about it or they'll join you!"

Meanwhile Caroline continued working with the children at home. A structure for each day evolved built around daily domestic work. In this way they were introduced to a wide range of subjects from maths to cooking and natural history although we neither labelled subjects as such nor worked to a strict syllabus. Our approach to teaching is a compromise between the extremes of the structured "school at home" and the laissez-faire of the "let them learn by living" approach. Art, craft and play activities dominated the programme at home with reading, basic writing and arithmetic becoming more important as time went on.

Two particular difficulties emerged as the weeks passed. The first being that of evaluating what we were doing. We had little to go by - were we on the right lines? What are the right lines anyway? Sporadic discussions with teachers and others involved in EO were reassuring, but there was always that feeling of how can we really be sure that we would not be depriving our children of the benefits enjoyed by their friends at school. We always came back to the conviction that we believed it was the right step to take. We also thought that, once officially "doing" education at home, our local education officer would be able to help us evaluate our activities. Our second growing problem was the chestnut/red herring of social deprivation. We eschewed the often repeated justification for schooling that "it does them good. They learn to cope." Our experience was just that - one learns to cope with an environment which can be very hostile and frightening, but schools seldom encourage wholesome socialisation. Our difficulty was simply that we live across a field, 8 minutes from the village and therefore, for our automobile age, beyond the average walking distance for friends to "drop in". So Caroline either had to take the children out to visit friends or make special arrangements for them to visit us. This difficulty increased when their friends began to go to school.

The time came for us to inform the LEA that we would not be sending our eldest to school. With some anxiety we wrote the letter suggested by the EO handbook. To our knowledge we were the first to do this on the Isle of Wight and we did not know what reaction to expect. The reply was non-committal and asked for our professional qualifications (neither of us are qualified teachers) and our proposals regarding the programme of work we intended following. To do this effectively we learned from teacher friends that there is an education mythology and language which we had to learn in order to communicate with the LEA. Broadly speaking this language uses jargon where simple words would be clearer, and a phraseology which sounds very impressive, even daunting, to the uninitiated but which expresses very ordinary ideas. Thus words like "structured approach", "autonomous learning", "integrated studies", became part of our letters to the LEA as reluctantly we played their game. It was a tortuous but entertaining activity applying the right jargon to the daily activities we had hitherto regarded as quite ordinary. When we had finished our programme of work sounded singularly impressive, full of activities like "health education", "home economics", "social development" and "creative activities". But we had to supply two more work programmes before the LEA's appetite for "bumf" was satisfied, despite the fact that from the start, we had carefully explained that we would not be following a strict timetable and that formal programmes were therefore largely irrelevant.

We awaited the first official visit from the LEA with some anxiety. It started as a pleasant enough meeting lasting one and a half hours (we kept a careful record of every meeting). But we were left feeling confused by the education officer's statements and his attitude, which were mutually contradictory. He said that we were not to feel under pressure to send Abigail to school but his attitude said that that was where she ought to be. It was not a very good start, especially as Abigail refused to read to him and he left muttering that she might even be ESN! Two months later we had a second visit, this time the LE officer was accompanied by the local headmistress. We had briefed Abigail this time and she performed admirably! She read and chatted for nearly half an hour and he was clearly impressed - "a charming and intelligent child". A month later we had a third visit and then nothing further for six months when he arrived unannounced just before we were leaving for a visit to a Christmas concert, ironically, being held at the local school.

cont.....

In retrospect these visits were not helpful. We were left confused by contradictory statements and irritated by his polite non-co-operation. His main concern was that we should have been following a programme of work whose content and practise would be the same as in school. He showed no interest in the creative and imaginative work which formed a large part of Abigail's activities. We felt sad that we were unable to form a more satisfactory and useful relationship with him. We concluded our dealings with this particular man (who has since retired) by sending the Chief Education Officer a summary of the year's work and activities with a brief account of our view of Abigail's progress.

In reality the work done during our official year of home education was simply a continuation of the activities which were being done previously. A little more structure emerged in the daily programme and maths and reading became more regular with a 'slot' early in the day. Visits to places of interest and to friends' homes were also important. Once a week we joined with two other families with pre-school age children for creative activities or visits and Abigail attends a ballet class and Ben a gym class. Many topics were "taught" as a result of questions asked arising from current experiences. While baking a cake the question may be asked - what are sultanas? This would lead naturally into an investigation covering natural history, geography and several other subjects. Such an approach to learning is very broad-based and open-ended, it does not lead to quick and identifiable results and is therefore difficult to evaluate or quantify. But what we sought to achieve was the cultivation of attitudes to learning as an experience which is both enjoyable and rooted in the reality of daily experience. It was this which our LE officer found difficult to comprehend because it was outside the system he understood. But the longer we continued with home education the more we were confident that we could do it, our early anxieties weakened and we became more relaxed in our approach to it.

But there was one difficulty we could not solve. Both Abigail and Ben clearly began to need wider contacts than they had at home. Although they have a wide circle of friends, friendships as such are difficult to maintain in our supposedly isolated situation. We also felt a growing need to be able to join with others who are doing home education, and to do so on a regular basis. The children would also benefit from learning with other adults. This need became more acute when the two families with whom we met weekly for various activities moved off the Island. We had visited several schools both on the Island and the mainland, one in particular attracted us. It has about 13 children from primary to secondary age and is run by artists and likeminded parent/teachers along lines that coincided with our own ideas. In many ways it seems an ideal place for us but for various reasons a move there is not practical at present. One of these reasons being the arrival in June of our third child.

Reluctantly we realised that formal schooling might be necessary for a while to enable us to meet these various difficulties. The decision to do this was almost as difficult as the decision we made 18 months previously to educate at home. Were we bowing to pressure, going back on our convictions and being weak-minded? On reflection we realised that we would be putting ourselves under needless pressure by continuing rigidly with our own home programme. We were very fortunate to find a local school whose headmistress was very sympathetic to our views and who was prepared to take Abigail. We visited the school and were impressed by the caring attitudes which the staff encourage in the children. As Christians we were pleased to find a school (it was Roman Catholic) which practised what it preached, and whose values were considered as important a part of the "teaching" as the traditional school subjects. The other feature which clinched our decision to send Abigail was the fact that parents are positively welcomed to join in the teaching programme, something that Caroline has already begun doing. Nothing is perfect, but we thought we would not find a better place for Abigail. Her start there was nearly as big a step for us as it was for her! It brought home to us just how big a step it is for a child to leave home, and for the parents to entrust someone else with his welfare. Our subsequent brief experience of official schooling has vindicated our earlier struggles to carry out the education at home, Abigail has faced her new tasks with initiative and a reasonable degree of competence. She has shown herself as being fairly well equipped to handle the new and unknown demands of school although initially she was daunted by the number of children and the noise they generate "en masse"! Her headmistress was impressed by the work she has done at home, particularly her art and craft projects. For our part we are convinced that it was the right thing for her and are reassured that we have been able to provide a satisfactory programme of home

education. We would like all our children to enjoy the benefits of either education at home or in a small group. If and when we come out of the system again we shall do so with the spectre of the LEA exorcised and with a deal more confidence than when we began two years ago. To those who are considering education out of school - our experience is - it is hard work, but worth every ounce of effort.



2

RESOURCES

I would like to inform members of EO through your newsletter, that I intend to start a correspondence college specifically for primary school children later on this year. Initially it will be for English and Maths only (I hope that this part of the course will be ready around Easter) but by summer, the full range of subjects, including geography, history, RE, science as well as help with art and music will be available. For those who like novel subjects at primary level, I will be offering Latin, and if there is sufficient demand, classical Greek!

Much of the early work has been tried out on my own children (who do not go to school), and if the course is followed, there could be no reasonable objection to the course content by education authorities. Of course, a variety of topics are presented, any of which could be explored in further detail, so you could be as orthodox, or unorthodox as you wish.


I imagine that the college prospectus, which will contain an outline of the syllabus to be followed, together with the fact that all tutors would be qualified teachers (though not necessarily working as such) would sooth the troubled breast of any Director of Education, and would make the task of the parent a great deal easier.

To get some idea of the possible response - and thus judge the quantity of course material to be printed - I would be grateful if any EO members who would be interested in the course could get in touch with me. I intend to advertise in the newsletter when the college is ready to enrol students.

Yours sincerely


C. Korycinski B. Sc (Hons) M Ed

Westnolia
Melville Terrace
Glentary
Perthshire



Resources

World Studies Journal: quarterly containing articles on various aspects of multi-cultural education, education for international peace and understanding, and world studies, £7 for 4 issues. Available from The World Studies Teacher Training Centre, University of York, Heslington, York, YO1 5DD.



Letters Letters Letters

Priscilla Park-Weir
6 Corunna Road
Bridge of Don
Aberdeen AB2 8DB

Open University

I am writing yet again in praise of the Open University. I have just finished a course called Developing Mathematical Thinking. It is aimed at Primary school, but many of its principles can be used later and many of the ideas are good for other subjects too. The emphasis is on the child learning, rather than the teacher teaching. There are lots of ideas for different approaches in all areas of Maths, along with games and constant emphasis on low teacher intervention. One of the useful things it teaches, is how to use standard text books and convert them to this practical base Maths, with its emphasis on doing and talking, with recording taking last place.

The Open University has a second hand swap shop, and anyone interested in obtaining the units and set book, could apply to me and I would see what I can do. I should think that second hand costs for units and set book would be about £10 plus postage. I would be willing to do the same for any other Open University courses too.

13 Hill Hay Road
Matson,
Gloucester GL4 9LS

Dear Editor,

I have been awarded a Blue Peter badge and I have a letter and book of the history of Blue Peter. I can, if you want, make a copy of the letter and send you one. I also told Blue Peter that I could not read, and write at all in 1980 before we came into E.O.

With best wishes,

Ursula Webb

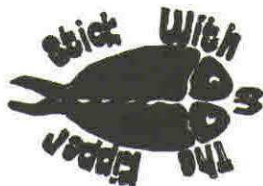
P.s. On Blue Peter today I saw the Christmas card that I gave them for Christmas. I am very, very happy to see it on Blue Peter.

Dear Members,

We would like to hear from any E.O. parents who are educating an only child at home.

We have a four year-old daughter, normally bright and sociable, and live in semi-rural circumstances. Both parents work from home, but we do not normally have many visitors. When Laura outgrows playgroup, all her friends will be going to school, and we fear that home education may not provide for her social needs. Can any parents advise us from their own experience how to overcome this problem of isolation,

Ray & Nan Cade,
Machio
Primrose Hill
Fairlight, East Sussex.



21 Devonshire Road
Liverpool L8 3TX

In reply to Mrs. Everdells comments in the December E.O. Newsletter.

Although we are all out of school, KIPPER is not an official E.O. magazine and does not aim to compete with the newsletter. KIPPER does not censor or criticize. We have never refused a contribution.

KIPPER is meant to be enjoyed and we hope all our E.O. friends do like sticking with it!

Yours sincerely,

Max Lovius

letters.....

A Village

A large group of families and single people, who are committed to alternative education and co-operative living, have been meeting regularly since the Totnes Hood Fair in June 1983.

After the last meeting at Monkton Wyld Court over the New Year, several members of this group are seriously considering a temporary move to the Taunton area. Some of them aim to buy and refurbish a large property, with support and help from people who will be renting accommodation in the locality and several other families who are already living in and about Taunton.

The intention is to give everyone the opportunity of getting to know one another better while working together and at the same time set up a meeting place and information centre as a stepping stone, before forming 'a village' somewhere in the south west.

If you can offer any help, please write to 'A Village' c/ 45 Ballater Road, Brixton, London SW2 5QS.



I would like to thank the numerous EOers, too many to write to individually, who replied to my request in the October Newsletter for information about how parents actually go about teaching their children at home and, in particular, about any difficulties they meet. (Some of these same difficulties emerged coincidentally in the "Dear Reader" page in the December issue).

I also want to thank those splendid people who wrote to say they had no difficulties whatever and that EO was a joy to all. Their letters were a delight and I shall always cherish the one that said "If you have a good grounding in the 3 R's, everything else falls into place as you go along".

What I have been trying to get at is whether there are patterns of difficulty which are illustrated by individual cases. I am still working at it and still interested to hear from anyone who cares to drop me a line.

Peggy Kann,
1 King Charles Close,
Buckingham,
Bucks MK18 1UZ

letters.....

Dear Editor,

My wife and I have recently joined EO. We have three children at present, one of 5, the other two below school age. We are keeping them at home to educate them for a number of reasons. We are both teachers, though Helen has been bringing up the family for six years. I teach at a Shropshire comprehensive and would therefore be grateful if you would omit my name, address etc. if you publish any of this letter.

Over a period of five years I have become more and more concerned at the condition of education within the school, a comprehensive of 1000+ pupils. Though I speak from personal experience I believe other comprehensives to be as bad in their own ways.

Firstly the school by some standards is popular and successful. It's examination results at 16+ are generally good, there is virtually no vandalism or overt trouble around the school or in the playground, all but a handful of kids wear a smart school uniform, the atmosphere is calm and pleasant. An ideal working comprehensive with few of the problems experienced by many teachers in other areas. Yet it is failing to educate large numbers of its pupils in anything but a statistical way. By that I mean that the results are as good as other comprehensives therefore a satisfactory situation must exist.

A handful of teachers are concerned, and most of them for a variety of reasons. Many, dare I say, most of the kids are underachieving. Whatever the problem it is of course in no way the fault of the school, its policy or its teaching staff. The child's ability, it's home background or it's parents are all to blame. SCHOOL presenting it's image to the public is INNOCENT. This state of affairs is known as professionalism no doubt with a capital P. It is the built in buffer that protects staff, policy and systems from assault. Poor staff with poor teaching methods following poor and often irrelevant curricula are protected by this cloak of silence. On the surface of it's public image everything is seemingly in order. The list of options written in brief appear to cover every area a pupil could wish to study, the standards achieved going by work presented by teachers for inspection is impressively high. The diary is full of meetings with jargon headings to impress the onlooker, yes indeed it does seem that education is going on. There is no one to be critical, no one that is except for pupils (who are most able at pinpointing ineffectual staff and methods) but whose opinion goes unheard or is punished as cheek and rudeness to Mr, Mrs, or Miss so and so. Teachers are uncritical of each other partly, as they seldom see each other in action and partly because it is not their role to be critical of colleagues. Heads or vice heads might be seen as safeguards, after all, their professional approach should weed out incapable, ineffectual teachers and suggest that they may be more suited to work in another field. I am not aware that this process is operating and when one considers that the heads tend to be the panel to select staff, it would be self criticism to observe later that poor choices had been made. So school inspectors should root out the problems - I'd agree but they don't, either because they are steered clear of problem areas on their inspections or because they are looking for other concerns not suspecting that poor staff could exist.

This maybe explains why and how school protects it's own, so why don't parents do something. I have very often wondered and there appear to be several distinct reasons:-

1. Pupils that succeed within the system tend to have the sort of parents who would complain - as their children are doing well they have no need to complain.
2. Pupils in the main fear they will be picked on if their parents interfere.
3. Frequently the parents of children who are failing, were themselves school failures and are intimidated by the jargon used by teachers to explain their child's problems.

cont.....

4. As the school is obviously (as it is presented) so good for so many, the parent is always made to view failure as their fault or their child's fault.

It really is no surprise that parents tend to shut up and believe that school knows best, or feel there is nothing they can do to combat the forces ranged against them, after all teachers are professionals and should therefore be trusted.

Critics of systems are often the unsuccessful getting their own back, and as far as promotion is concerned my career has certainly been unspectacular, but in terms of taking pupils considered to be failures I have consistently obtained results (using examination passes and grades as a criteria) that are a supreme credit to the pupils who are otherwise viewed by a system and themselves as failures. There are pupils with problems of a social and temperamental nature who need special help, but vast numbers who fail, do so because we as teachers fail to recognise their needs and provide the care and attention required for them to find school anything more than an irrelevance. It is a disaster that so many fail to obtain any more than a minimal education in a system more concerned with it's professional status than it is with it's clients' needs. In a free market the system would collapse because so many of the clients would fail to attend.

'Linden'
Folders Lane
Burgess Hill

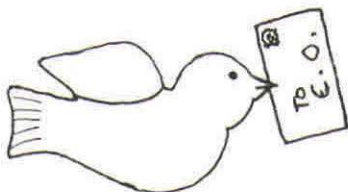
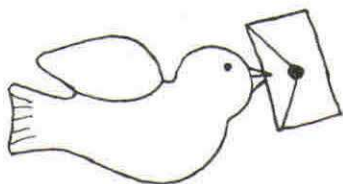
Dear E.O.,

I just want to say that I look forward to the E.O. newsletter, and appreciate it in all its manifestations. It worries me to see the negative criticisms which are continually being printed. We ought surely to be supporting each other through this, our main medium of contact. The varying quality of the newsletter is inevitable, given that it is edited by different people each time, and many of its editors have probably never done anything like it before.

If there is no such guideline, I certainly believe there ought to be one directing editors to avoid printing any sort of personal criticism from any quarter. It is so easy to annoy people without meaning to, and common sense is no protection against doing so. Personal grievances should be sorted out on a personal level, between those to whom they are relevant. Let's all be nice to each other in the newsletter - please!

Yours,

Julia Galvin



letters.....

Dear Editor,

"We are a group of parents in Snowdonia, N. Wales, who are seeking an alternative to state education. We have decided to set up a Steiner School. We have a superb building in 6½ acres, just near Portmadoc on the Lleyn Peninsula. It is within easy reach of beautiful sandy beaches, mountain climbing, lovely forest walks in National Park, canoeing, and several very well-preserved castles. There is also the famous Llechwedd slate caverns nearby. What we are doing to raise funds for the school is using the buildings for summer pottery/creative art/holistic health, nature enjoyment holidays. We will have facilities for child and infant care and activities for children indoor or outdoor depending on the weather. If you are looking for a place to have your Easter or Summer holiday, why not think of us? We could provide catered-for or self-catering holidays.

Also if you are thinking of moving to North Wales but are deterred by the lack of educational facilities or the distances between E.O. families here we have the answer. Any Steiner-trained teacher among E.O. parents, - here is a job waiting for you. We will be covering age ranges 4½ - 11 initially plus there will be a play group during school hours and a creche if necessary, should the teachers or other parents working at the school need it.

Write to me, Helen Ford at Haford Ysptyhy, Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, N. Wales, or Sheila Tyler, Ffestiniog Pottery, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd. Tel. Blaenau Ffestiniog 601.

Any parents who wish to have a working holiday will naturally have a reduced price but we do have to raise money from somewhere."

Many thanks,

Helen Ford

Dear Editor,

Please publish the following account of the problems we are having with the Gwent L.E.A.

The L.E.A. has now spent nearly 2 years being as difficult as possible. Other families in Gwent have had a peaceful time as far as we are aware, perhaps, they are sharpening their claws on us. They have made ridiculous suggestions like taking our children to school in their cars. They have repeatedly knocked at the door without prior appointment. They have bullied us whenever possible, threatening court action, even down to "when would we prefer to be in court, before Christmas or after?".

A year ago they issued a summons because Elizabeth was registered and not attending, but after much arguing, it was proved that her education was suitable and so the action was dropped. Not content, the L.E.A. started on David who is 9 years old. After a 45 minute interrogation for his 6 year old sister (Elizabeth) the two "highly qualified" advisors took just 15 minutes to decide that all of David's work was unsuitable, and that it had deteriorated since he left school the previous Christmas.

We have teacher friends who disagree. We have had an Educational Psychologist do an assessment of David and his work. The psychologist found that all of the work David does is totally suitable to his age etc. His behaviour pattern also proves that he is better off at home than at school.

But will the magistrates listen, now that Gwent L.E.A. have issued a summons for registered and not attending. What we really need to do is go for Judicial Review, but it seems that there is little chance of getting Legal Aid for that. We certainly cannot afford to do it without, and as it says in "School is not Compulsory" a test case is needed in the High Court. We would welcome any ideas of help.

Contact us at 32 Pillmawr Circle, Malpas, Newport, Gwent NPT 6WP or telephone 0633 854690.

All of the proof is to our advantage but we need help to show our proof, as the magistrates may not accept our defence against 'registered and not attending'.

Yours faithfully,

J.G. and L.D.I. Perry

Getting 'O' Levels out of School

By the time I left school, just before my thirteenth birthday, I had been convinced by the teachers that 'O' levels were tremendously difficult and that I would only pass them by doing exactly what they told me to and working like a Tojan. It took me several months to get rid of this negative state of mind; only when I began correspondence courses in the seven subjects I wanted to take, did I realise that they weren't so difficult after all. The courses were supplied by Wolsey Hall and I soon discovered the textbook is by far the most important part; for some subjects (e.g. physics) almost everything was learnt from the textbook.

Although, at the time I had been the youngest person to be enrolled at Wolsey Hall, I found the courses all very straight forward, all that is, apart from Latin where I think the material was badly presented and far too difficult for 'O' Level study. The rest were very good; the sciences I especially enjoyed. The studying here became virtually a hobby; the work often spilled over into what I had designated as my spare time.

I worked in the mornings only for much of the two years; each subject was divided up into a certain number of lessons; I worked out how often I needed to complete a lesson to get finished by the exam date. And so I had a 'timetable' of sorts; this was the only thing that determined how fast I worked.

Most of the subjects assumed no previous knowledge; the textbooks themselves are very clearly written and leave very little unsaid that is necessary.

Whenever I came across something I couldn't understand, the first thing I didn't do was panic, as I had often done at school. I would read through the work again; if it was something minor I might leave it for a fresh attempt later; if it was something major, and still not understood after several attempts, it always meant that I had not grasped what led up to it, thoroughly enough, so it was simple a case of revising previous work.

All this might sound difficult - it was not; in fact, I rarely got stuck. This was not through any special ability of my own but simply because I did the work methodically, making sure I understood one thing before moving onto the next.

Above all, I worked in a relaxed environment with no outside pressures as in school. I discovered that a keenness to study developed that I'd never had through a traditional school education.

Science subjects require some practical work but I was careful to choose a syllabus that didn't set a practical exam. However, being at home, there were endless opportunities for simple experiments connected with the three sciences, biology especially. I grew a Lemon tree and an Oak tree, planted two seed potatoes, one with fertilizer and one without, to see how the crop from each compared. I developed a Cabbage White butterfly in captivity from egg to adult.

For chemistry I obtained some of the more common chemicals from a chemists and did endless experiments; making Hydrogen gas was one of the most worthwhile of these. The aim here was to get a toy balloom to float; I remember feeling a tremendous sense of achievement when I eventually managed this.

I sat the exams as an external candidate at the local technical college; this was a daunting prospect, as I was a total stranger to the place - however this was no problem, once I had sat down in the exam room. My preparation had been thorough enough (too thorough in some subjects) and I didn't find the papers too difficult. In fact, the exams were quite enjoyable and I felt a great sense of accomplishment.

Overall I can say that being deschooled was a definite turning point in my life - a transformation from misery to contentment and confidence; the 'O' levels were almost a by-product of the experience; and I very much doubt if I would have passed any exams had I stayed in school.

Nick Everdell

BOOK REVIEW

(1) The "Anno" books published by Bodley Head. Mitsumasa Anno is a Japanese artist of enormous skill whose wordless picture books offer children (and adults) of almost any age pages of fascinating and intricate detail. In "Anno's Journey", "Anno's Italy", "Anno's Britain" and "Anno's U.S.A." a traveller arrives in Europe or one of these other countries and travels across each page through a glorious medley of land and townscapes. The child picks him out and can also discover a host of references to historic scenes, famous pictures, fairy and folk stories as well as well known places and monuments. Visual jokes abound and however well one thinks one knows the book there is always something new to find.

In "Anno's Counting Book" the younger child is introduced to numbers up to twelve as a village appears upon a blank landscape. Each month of the year sees one more building, one more adult, one more child and so forth appear whilst the seasons pass and the number of clouds, flowers, train trucks or whatever else is depicted corresponds to the month so that in April there are four of everything and in August eight.

"Anno's Mysterious Multiplying Jar" by Mitsumasa and Masaichiro Anno delves fascinatingly into factorial numbers ($10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$). The authors aim to give readers "an idea of the mystery, wonder and excitement that can be experienced through mathematics". With the usual superbly detailed drawings they certainly succeed in intriguing my children. I cannot recommend these books too highly.

(2) Wayland publish books for children that are really aimed at libraries. They are slim glossy hardbacks that tend to come in series such as "You and Your Body", "Picture History". "Planet Earth". Well illustrated and with glossaries and indexes they also contain useful lists for further reading. I particularly liked the "Looking at Art" series which illustrates and talks about works by famous artists. If one is building a home library I think it is well worth sending for a catalogue to Wayland Publishers Ltd., 49 Lansdowne Place, Hove, East Sussex BN3 1HF

by Helen Holland



Two bookshops worth knowing about if you live in or visit London:

- (1) Children's Book Centre
229 Kensington High Street
London W.8 Tel: 937 6314

A wonderful place for a morning's browse this, but they also do mail order, special order and catalogue (recommended book lists every two years).

- (2) Foyles Educational Bookshop
37 Upper Berkeley St. (just behind Marble Arch)
London W.1. Tel: 262 4699/5310

Nothing to do with the place in Charing Cross Road this shop has an extensive range of children's educational material. They do mail order and special orders.



A quote for Peace.....and for Education Otherwise

"When I played 'Risk' the second time at Kenneth's, I suddenly realised that it is not the sort of game a family in the Peace Movement should play. It's just exactly on the Nazi theme; everyone gets an army and you have to fight to take over the world. I don't think I want to play it again." Ewan Downie age 8½.

Slaves of the Lamp

There's a lot of innocent pleasure to be had from annoying teachers, and when I hear the usual tenor of staffroom chat clicking like a clockwork acrobat from children (stupid and criminous) to colleagues (too liberal or too savage) and finally settling down to a buzz of triviality, my daemon rises to the task. We are, I opined recently, the only true slavemasters left in the civilised world.

The storm didn't break upon me as I had expected, because they assumed I was joking. They weren't equipped for any other reaction than embarrassed social noises. I pressed the point. Slavery is involuntary servitude, I said. When you decide what another shall do and take the power to make him do it because of some accident like his age, his sex or the colour of his skin you are enslaving him. That he may at some time in the unforeknowable future be able to make use of a part of what you set him to do is no justification, any more than the affluent life-style of some West Indians today is a justification of the African slave-trade. Justice and injustice are categories which apply only to the present, and you cannot do justice in the unreal future by means of an injustice in the real present.

"But we are responsible adults!" They wailed. "We know better than the children what is good for them. Would you let a five year-old decide what he wanted to do?"

"Of course," I said. "You expect a 16 year-old to make important decisions. How can he make good choices if he hasn't started making them - and living by them - at the earliest possible age?"

"Suppose he chooses to do nothing?" They howled, scaling pinnacles of incredulity, very Everests of incomprehension.

"He won't, but even if he did we should have to let him get on with it, trusting that his 'nothing' was as important to him as everything else he did," I said. "His idea of 'nothing' and ours are certainly different. Perhaps he would be taking time to absorb some important experience or to live in a fantasy world. A child who was really doing nothing would be either very ill or dead!"

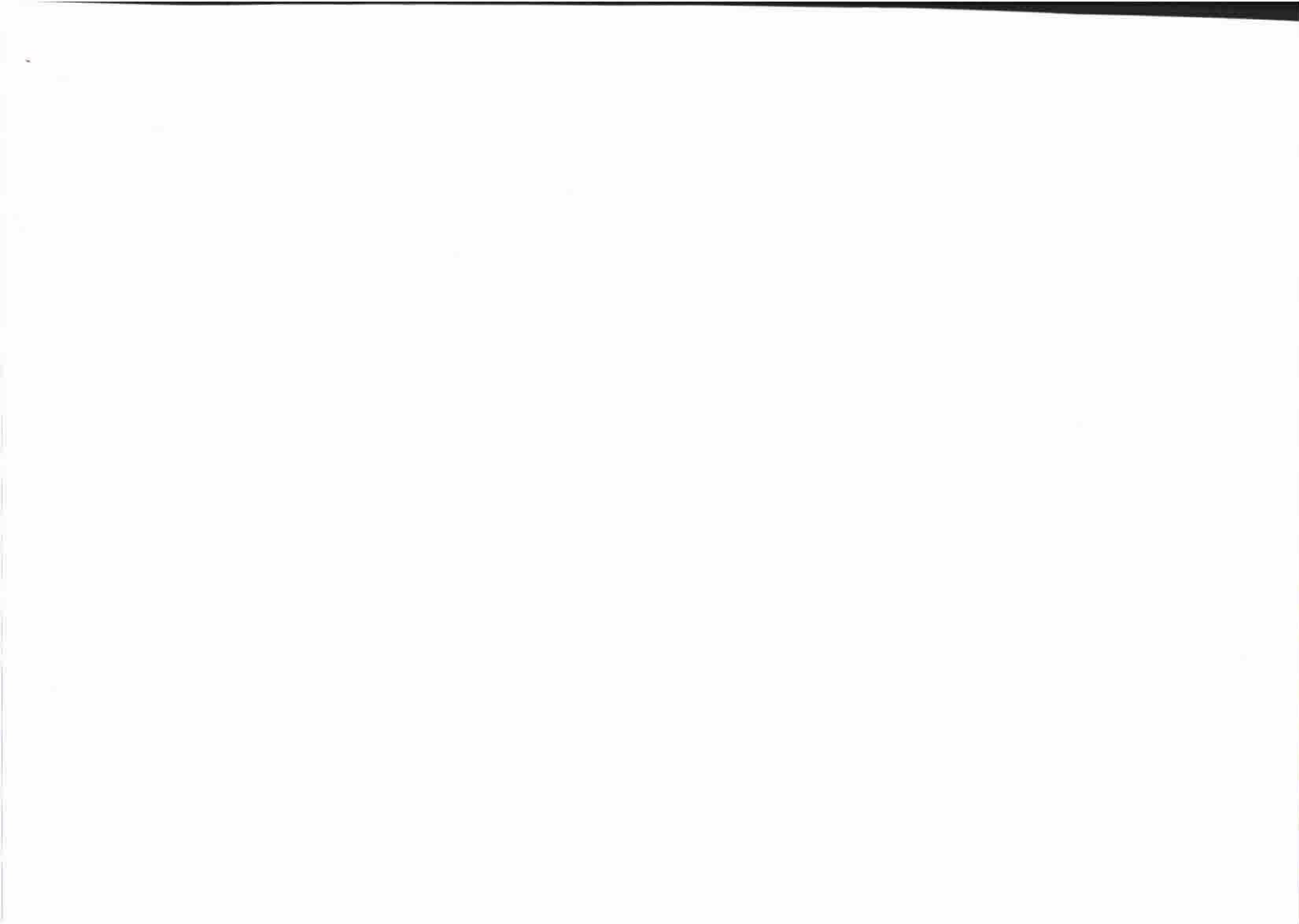
We plunged on, through the dialogue of the deaf, and inspite of my innocent merriment I left them feeling sad. Not because they disagreed with me - it could not be otherwise - but because in the end I knew they had managed to train the children to agree with them. Children are constantly telling me that they 'wouldn't do anything if the teachers didn't make them'. Thus is the lamp of learning kept alight!

So let us say it clearly and simply: compulsory schooling is slavery. We reject slavery as an acceptable relationship in which to hold our fellow man. In an imperfect world, however, we accept it in its legitimised form for our children because we can get away with it.

Is this just self-indulgent radicalism? Perhaps. Anyone who says what I have just said must entertain the idea that he is merely playing with words. However, when I think of the number of my own friends who cordially hated their schooling and derived no benefit from it, and when I project that number into the general population, I can only wonder why more ordinary people don't speak as I have done. We can afford to provide individualised and self-regulating education for all those children who want it. The sooner Education Otherwise, or some similar group, is in a position to say so boldly in the public prints and in the media, the better for all our children.

Chris Shute





Where the Third World is First

("Where the Third World is first" has been reproduced

with kind permission of "The New Internationalist").

Village Schooling

African villages are certainly no paradise - when one child in four can die from diseases related to malnutrition. But they do retain many things which wealthier communities have lost. Here for example are some of the learning methods which Western style education struggles to recreate.

There are plenty of grim statistics about childhood in the Third World showing that the struggle for survival is long and hard. But in the rich world, children can suffer from a different kind of poverty - a poverty of the spirit. For instance one Western country alone now sees 14,000 attempted suicides every year by children under 15, and one child in five is under professional psychiatric care.

The idea that something is lost as well as gained, by development and modernisation should not be romanticised. But there are many good things about childhood in the Third World that do point up our deficiencies.

Take the close and constant contact between children and their parents and relatives or neighbours. In the West the very nature of work puts distance between adults and children. But in most Third World villages mother and father do not go miles away each day to do abstract work in offices, shuffling papers to make money mysteriously bloom in banks. Instead the child sees mother and father, relations and neighbours working nearby and often shares in that work.

A child growing up in this way learns and defines his or her role through participation in the community's work: helping to dig or build, plant or water, tend to animals or look after babies - rather than through playing with water and sand in kindergarten, collecting for nature trays, building with construction toys, keeping pets or playing with dolls.

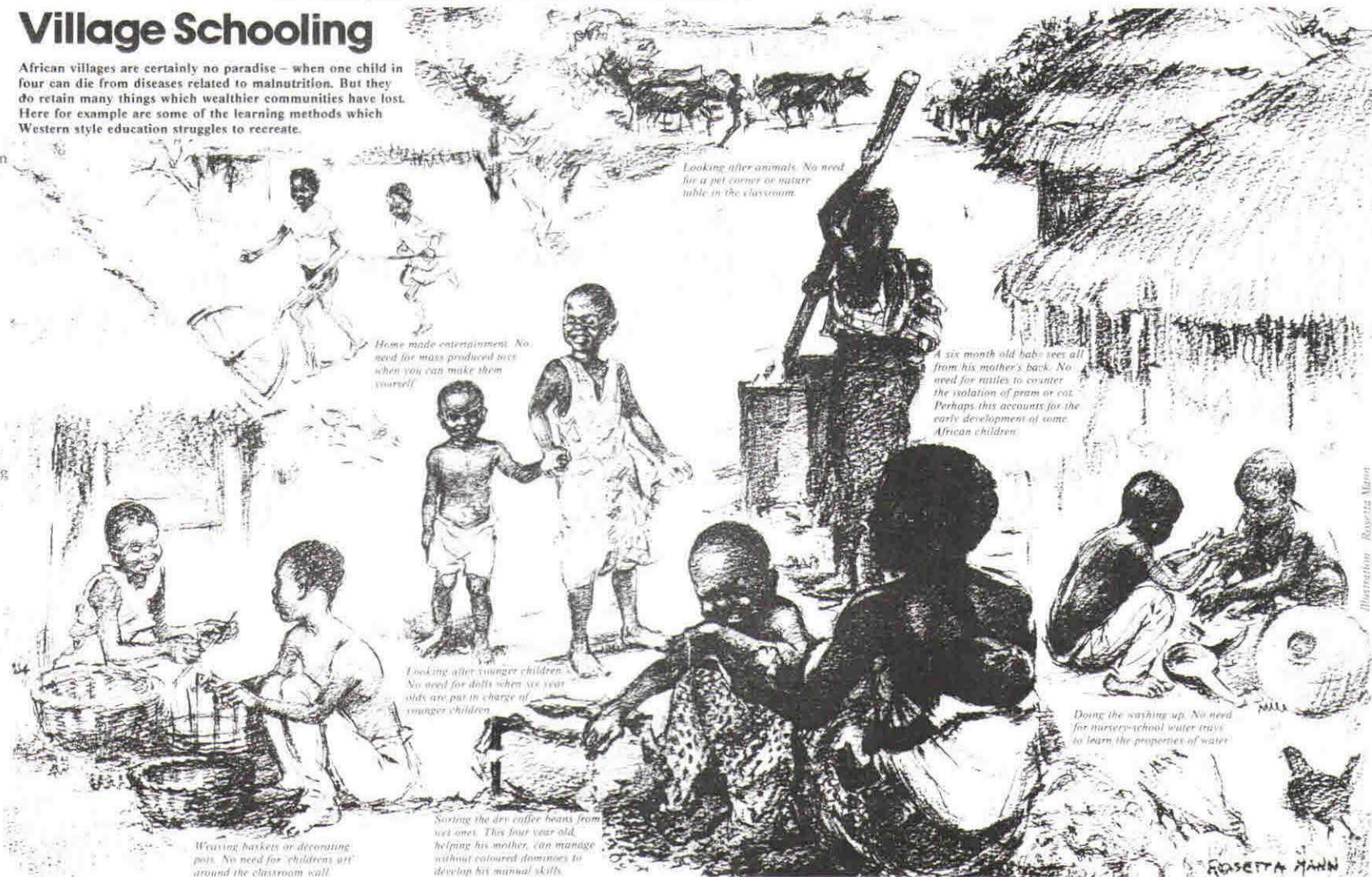
Village children in the Third World may grow up with a less oppressive sense of space and time than their Western counterparts. Set days and times are few and self-explanatory, dictated mostly by the rhythm of the seasons and the different jobs they bring. A child in the rich world, on the other hand, is presented with a wristwatch as one of the earliest symbols of growing up, so that he or she can worry along with their parents about being late for school classes,

meal times, clinic times, bed times, the times of T.V. shows. Third World children are not usually cooped up indoors, still less in high-rise apartments, and are not nagged about littering the 'non-child' areas of the house with toys. Instead of fenced-

off play areas, dangerous roads, 'keep off the grass' signs and 'don't speak to strangers' there is often a sense of freedom to wander and play. Parents can see their children outside rather than observe them anxiously from ten floors up. And other adults in the

community can usually be counted on to be caring rather than indifferent or threatening.

Of course twelve million children under five still die every year through malnutrition and disease. But childhood in the Third World is not all bad.



Looking after animals. No need for a pet corner or nature table in the classroom.

Home made entertainment. No need for mass produced toys when you can make them yourself.

A six month old baby sees all from his mother's back. No need for rattles to counter the isolation of pram or cot. Perhaps this accounts for the early development of some African children.

Looking after younger children. No need for dolls when six year olds are put in charge of younger children.

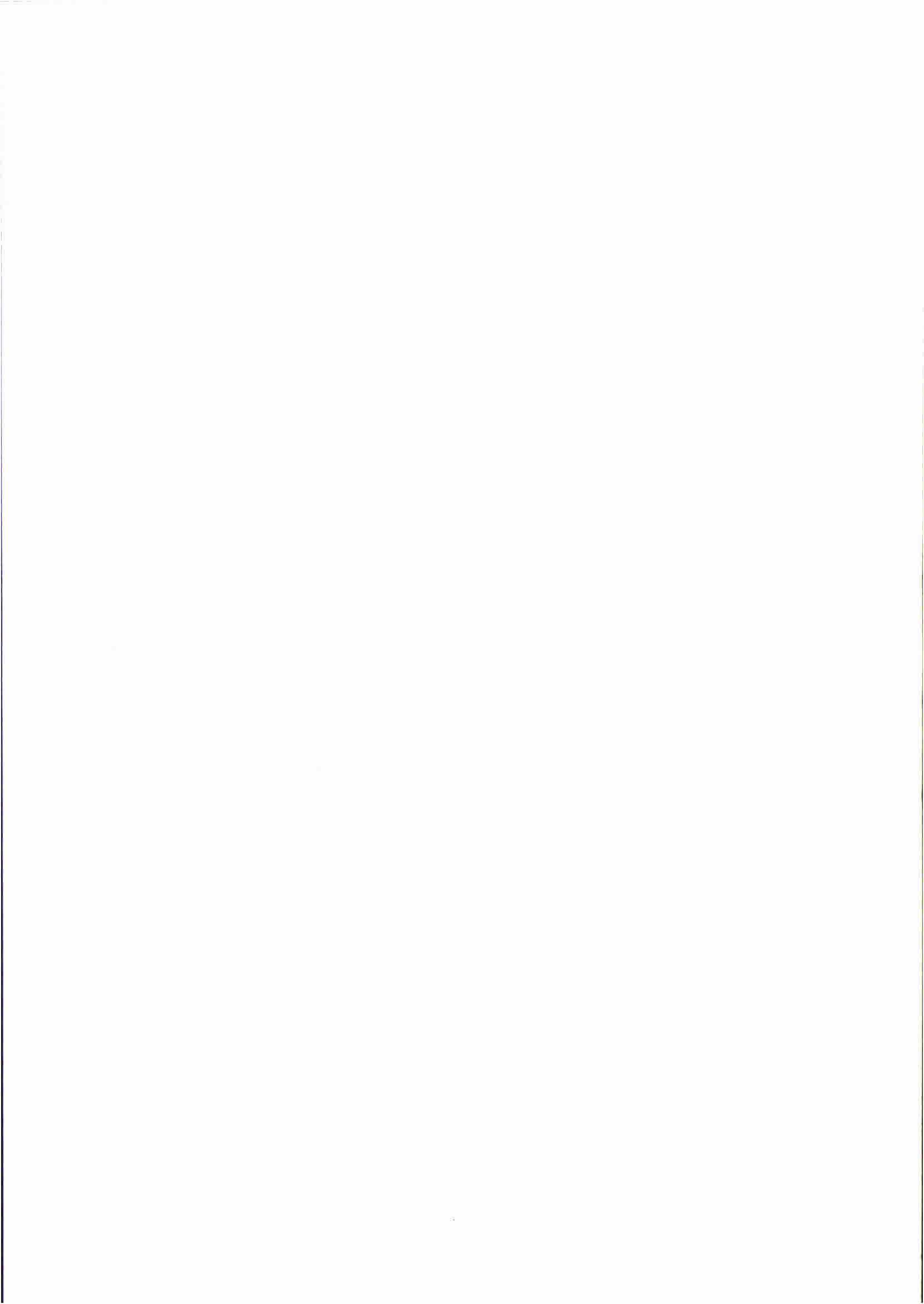
Weaving baskets or decorating pots. No need for children's art around the classroom wall.

Sorting the dry coffee beans from wet ones. This four year old, helping his mother, can manage without coloured dominos to develop his manual skills.

Doing the washing up. No need for nursery-school water trays to learn the properties of water.

ROSETTA MANN

Illustration: Rosetta Mann



DEAR READER

Replies to last issue's "Agony Column"

"Dear Reader"

1. Of course you can't pay equal attention to four children simultaneously. What you have there is a very small, vertically grouped classroom. You might try making some simple rules for the children (like "Youngest first" and "No interrupting anyone else's turn") and see that they are followed. You could have some modest rules for yourself: start around the same time each day, possibly with the youngest and working up to the oldest, and not spending more than, say, 10 minutes with each to begin with. You will soon find how long is appropriate in each case. Start with whichever subject each child likes least. Five human beings functioning in one space need organisation. Good organisation need not be obtrusive.

3. I have observed Downes Syndrome children bouncing up and down with delight at matching words with pictures of things they know. I don't know how far this might go but I would love to find out. Proceed a little at a time and never push. If it turns into something enjoyable, you might build on it with words like "wind" and "sunshine" and perhaps words for colours. You might move on to writing down things your child tells you and use these as reading material. And please let me know how it goes.

4. If your child's health is good he has not got dyslexia. He just hasn't learned to read yet. Bashing away at a reading scheme, especially one he hates, will put him off reading altogether. Does the specialist teacher ever read a book she doesn't like? I recommend you read a very recent and long needed publication which should be good news to all worried parents. (I think the specialist teacher should read it too):

Young, Peter and Tyre, Colin
Dyslexia or Illiteracy? Realizing the right to read.
The Open University Press, 1983.

The authors investigate what successful reading is, what reading failure is, they assess current news on dyslexia (including the Aston Index) and then go on to describe what teachers and parents can do to help. A good book.

8. Three hours' lessons a day are far too long for an 8 year old, and probably for a 12 year old too. I wonder how the advisor defines a "lesson". Much depends on this definition. Try sitting beside your little girl and just being there to put in the right word where necessary. Start with the subject she likes least. Stop altogether before she flags - you will soon know when. Reading should not be a "lesson" (though described as such it might plump out a timetable), so much as a pleasure, shared or otherwise. Competence in maths begins with knowing by heart certain number combinations and these can be learned at any time of the day. Handwriting needs to be carefully taught and supervised at first, and then used regularly. Try a minimum of two sentences a day, getting everything right. (Competence can build up very quickly). Above all avoid copying which does no more than fill in time. If you must fill in time, try reading or just talking, which are very educational, especially when the talking allows for reflection and patches of silence.

As for drawing up a timetable, I should be tempted to produce something so comprehensive and larded with jargon that it would take the advisor's breath away, and then just carry on as usual. ("Talking" you could put down as "Creative Language Development").

Pegg Kann,
1 King Charles Close,
Buckingham
Bucks MK18 1BZ
(Buckingham 872995)



Dear Reader.....

Do hope I can help with some of the answers. Here are samples of four of them.

1. The child is being distracted from its subject by the others. Insist that the other children wait their turn.
5. Do get more sleep, do get yourself a hobby that you will be happy letting the children be involved in with you.
6. Give them something positive to do, such as a cookery day, baking and making things.
8. Children are learning all the time. Get a blackboard for them to write on. Leave the child to work out its own timetable.

All you have to do is have a pen and pad handy every day for a week and first put down the day then the time that the child starts to do something, then what the child is doing. At the end of the week categorise every item, acceptable to the authority.

A sample day of my $4\frac{3}{4}$ yr. old son.

Timetable

Wednesday
8.00 a.m. Science
8.30 a.m. Animal Husbandry
8.40 a.m. Science
9.30 a.m. Tea-break

10.00 a.m. Science
10.30 a.m. Play
11.00 a.m. Nature Walk
12.00 Midday Biology
12.30 p.m. Dinner
1.30 p.m. Science
2.30 p.m. Play
2.45 p.m. Science
3.15 p.m. Play
3.30 p.m. Animal Husbandry
4.00 p.m. Tea
5.00 p.m. Writing

Science: starting little generator connecting battery etc.
Animal Husbandry: Feeding and watering his pet hen plus my four hens.
Biology: Plants and collecting seeds.
Writing: Writing lots of T and R's.

In other words they will work out their own schedule.

Good luck to the agony column.
Every problem is a solution in disguise.

Yours,

Sylvia and Fred Bancroft

"ARD-LA-BOR"
Bracken Lane,
Whatstandwell
Nr. Matlock
Derbyshire DE45 5HF

Dear Editor,

I am trying to answer the question about sitting down for three hours to do school work.

Perhaps it is more important for the officials to see work that the children have done.

I have bought scrap books for my 7 year-old. In one I stick pictures and stories she has written. This went down well with the authorities.

There is one scrap-book for nature, full of feathers and pressed leaves. One scrap book is for geography, in case she feels like tracing maps, etc.

There is one scrap book for number work. I use squared paper from a printed arithmetic exercise book to show the relation of numbers (for example, a column of 10 squares and seven individual squares stuck on a page to show 17). This type of thing, interspersed with formal sums and with squares and triangles, etc., went down well with our authority.

cont

Dear Reader.....

The officials were quite pleased with this array of work and did not ask how long it had taken to produce (less than one hour per day, usually).

For those who have been told to produce a timetable, perhaps this sort of thing might be useful:

English, maths, nature study, craft. (There is no reason to mention that the English was writing a shopping list and the maths was paying for the shopping).

Another bit of English often comes with the bed-time story. The child will often read a story,

However, with the older child of secondary school age a different approach is needed. Our daughter (14) will be sitting for O-levels so we have rather an academic approach and her exercise books have the appearance of school books. She is able to do quite a lot of independent work and it is unnecessary for either of her parents to be continually supervising her. She is motivated to produce a lot of written work as she knows that this will keep the authorities happy and they will put no pressure on her to return to school.

Your approach may be different. You may not have O-levels as your aim, in which case the education you give may be based mainly on reading or on practical craft subjects. But, we have found, certainly in Gwynedd, that written work, maps and diagrams keep authorities happy.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Knox

Pen Llwanan
Bodedern
Holyhead
Gwynedd LL65 4TS

Dear Reader(s)

1. Why not give the children a different aspect of the same subject when they get like this: then let them each give a few minutes talk - perhaps leading to a discussion - on their particular aspect, thus making a "whole" topic from which they can all learn.
2. Very few schools will allow part-time schooling and the best solution is to approach individual heads (by name if possible) explaining the situation and asking for their kind help and co-operation.
3. Children with Downes Syndrome are invariably very lovable, but it will still take a great deal of patience (depending on the degree of handicap) and lots of T.L.C. If you lived in the SE London or Kent area I would offer help as I teach handicapped, including visually handicapped, especially music.
4. Write to the Dyslexia Society who will be only too pleased to send leaflets and possibly contacts in your area. (Address??)
5. Why are you tired and bad tempered? Check with your doctor that there is no physical reason. Children need guide lines. It will probably be quite an uphill struggle, but perhaps if they are old enough to discuss the situation with, this might help. Has anyone any experience in this type of case?
6. Having "got your children out of school" they are no doubt finding it wonderful having you - not only as a parent, but teacher - to themselves and it will take a long time to adjust to not having to fight for, or demand, attention. Have you tried discussing the situation with (a) your colleague; (b) your children; (c) all of you together. This might help.

cont....

Dear Reader.....

7. There sounds as though there could be difficulties with this as you are in "loco parentis". Your best bet would be to see a solicitor.
8. Firstly, no timetable needs to be produced as this is not law. Autonomous education does not always mean that there will be masses of written work. "Seeing" and "doing" is the basis of home education as many see it and as long as she is progressing and learning in the way which suits both of you I shouldn't worry too much. As she becomes differently motivated then working periods will become longer. This will produce work to yours and her satisfaction, though probably not to the inspector's who mostly seem to think that all education should be run "like school" which doesn't seem to the majority of us to be the purpose of E.O.

(Mrs) Corolynne Batley LRAM
Mother of 5 (3 on E.O.)
and an I.L.E.A. teacher!!!

2 Ember House,
Brangbourne Road,
Bromley, Kent BR1 4LG.

"OPEN FARMHOUSE in central Italy - long and short stays - free lodgings for help on the farm. Children very welcome. Write to: Addey, Pratale, Vallingegno, Scitto (Pg), Italy.

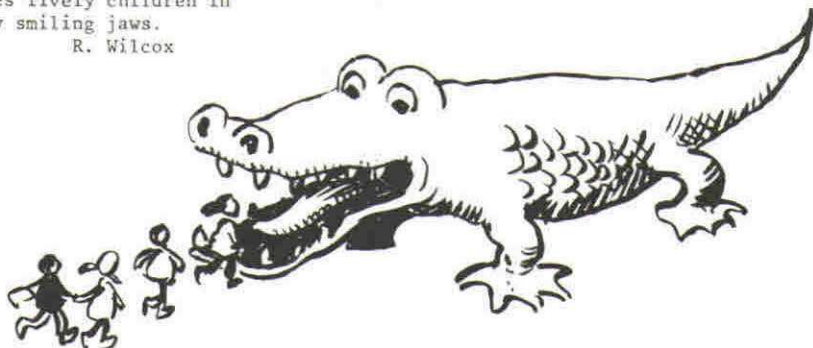
'How doth the little Crocodile'

Herewith a flippant parody of "How doth the little Crocodile" from Alice in Wonderland (with apologies to Lewis Carroll).

How doth the little L.E.A.
Improve his shining pride
He threatens those who don't conform
To lure them to his side.

How cheerfully he seems to grin
How slyly spreads his claws
And welcomes lively children in
With gently smiling jaws.

R. Wilcox





"Games Afternoon" at Chris Freeman's
27 Kingston Lane, Southwick. On Tuesday
28th February from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
bring your favourites (draughts - chess
- puzzles - yatzee - mastermind - snakes
& ladders, etc...)
If it is a success it could become a
regular event.

WANTED: Second hand books, cuisinaire-
rods or W.H.Y. for primary education of
our six year old daughter. Details and
prices please to Jack & Mary Avery,
Old Station Bungalow, Ashwellthorpe,
Norwich NR16 1ER. Fundenhall 681.

Very advance notice

There will be another EO gathering at
Unstone Grange near Sheffield over
the late May bank holiday weekend,
May 25th-28th 1984. Unstone Grange is
a splendid place for an EO weekend so make
a note in your diary now.

To all members and especially co-ordinators:

Until the revised edition of "School is Not Compulsory" will be available in mid-1984, please take a note of this very important addition.

Title page, page 2 and elsewhere: throughout, Section 36 of the 1944 Act and all other corresponding sections should read "suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any educational needs he may have, either by..."

More people are needed to act as co-ordinators in the London area. Anyone interested/willing to act in this capacity please contact Janet Everdell.

Notice for co-ordinators: Please amend the back of the membership forms - EO publications - as follows:

Newsletters nos. 22, 23, 24	30p to members
	45p to non-members
Newsletters nos. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	sold out
Newsletters nos. 32, 33	60p to members
	75p to non-members
Digest 1978	50p members
	75p non-members
Teach Your Own now costs	£5.50 to members
	(£5.95 non-members)

NOTICES.....

CAMBRIDGESHIRE It is planned to print in the April newsletter a list of meeting places with dates for our members to get together. These will be twice monthly, on Sundays from the end of April through to October. Will any members knowing places of interest in Cambridgeshire or surrounding counties please let me know about them before the end of February. All venues should have interest for children; a picnic area; car park; tea room or suchlike for wet weather. - Janet Everdell

Sussex: the local newsletter (Christmas issue) has now been printed and sent to those who have paid their £1. If you have not done so and wish to receive this essential round-up of local news and views send £1 (for 3 issues) to H. Holland.



LOWER SHAW FARM PROGRAMME of EVENTS - WINTER/SPRING 1984

10-12 FEB MESSAGE WEEKEND

- Learning and practicing different techniques of massage.

24-26 Feb.DREAMS WEEKEND

- Receiving and understanding the message of dreams.

9-11 MARCH VOICE AND CIRCLE DANCE

- A chance to find our voices, let our music out and remember how to dance.

6-8 APRIL GROWING AND USING HERBS

20-23 APRIL SPRING CELEBRATION

- Easter weekend including crafts and traditional games in the Wiltshire countryside.

4-6 MAY WRITING WEEKEND

- Creative writing - poetry, prose, diaries...

25-28 MAY WOMENS WEEKEND SKILLS EXCHANGE

Weekend from £25 - Concessions available. For details send SAE to Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw, Nr. Swindon, Wilts. Telephone: (0793) 771080.

PENFRIEND WANTED:- for Jessica Wharton (Age 8), 44 Montago Road, Erdington, Birmingham B24 8EG. Jessica has only been de-schooled for three months and would like to contact other E.O. children. Jessica's mum, Bernie Wharton, would also like to contact other E.O. mums for some new ideas and maybe get-togethers.

Bernie Wharton (Ms)

NEWS & VIEWS through central office

In the five months of Aug/Dec enquiries totalled 663. In the eighteen weeks from the beginning of Aug. to mid Dec. the Mem. Secs. enrolled 160 new members. November was the best month for enquiries with a record of 185, but the demands of Christmas made Dec. drop to a mere 81. At the time of writing, Jan 4th, business has again become brisk.

If last year is anything to go by we can expect a rush of enrolments in the months of Jan/Feb/March. With all the positive publicity E.O. enjoyed throughout 1983 it should be possible to better the enrolment rate of last year. Central T.V. has been responsible for many new members hearing about E.O. and the Living magazine article has brought in 130 enquiries so far.

Many enquiries come by 'phone (mostly via Citizens Advice Bureaux) and are referred directly to the local co-ordinator where there is one. However, there are still quite a few counties who need one, so if you think you could do this job for E.O., please offer. You will find all the gaps in the blue contact list, plus Durham, where Jacquie Didua has disappeared, and North London where the Muckles never took the job on! Don't worry about the inexperience of handling difficult cases. Quite a few co-ordinators of longstanding have been worried by this following the recent publicity and an influx of problems. Central office is where the buck can be passed to and is willingly held until confidence is gained. All offers of help will be greatly appreciated as enquirers often ask for a local contact, and it is a defeat, not to be able to supply one.

Enquiries continue to come from a variety of sources which is a healthy sign of our spreading fame. Those wanting more information include; research department of universities; social workers; legal centres; colleges of higher education; home tutors; correspondence colleges; journalist; solicitors; information directories and agony aunts.

The Ecology Party wrote asking for information on alternative education. The letter was passed to a member who is very interested in the subject. He gave them the full blast of his experience and was replied to with an invitation to join the party and become a member of its Education Working Party, which is trying to frame a general policy on education.

Other well known contacts have been; Home and Freezer Digest; Family Circle Magazine; Capital Radio; Parent magazine. In March the latter is doing an 'Alternatives to State School' article featuring E.O. families and written by the journalist who did the Living article.

The Mental Health Foundation has asked for details of our services and E.O. is to be included on their 'Someone To Talk To' directory. But this is an area we are already in, as central office and local co-ordinators often handle calls, some as early as 8 a.m., from desperately over-anxious parents who need to talk about their problems.

After negotiations with a group called "FOURTH WORLD TRUST", E.O. was regretfully informed that there would not be space to include them in their 'How to Save the World' book!!

Most enquiries are answered the day they're received with the exception of Saturday mail and those more difficult questions needing careful replies.

Quite an astonishing amount of enquiries come from parents of twelve year old boys. This has caused a real need for the Secondary Years booklet to be finalised after being at the 'planning' stage for over two years. Anyone having valuable experience of this age group in the usual areas of O & A levels, remedies for damage done by schooling, family benefit versus social security at the school leaving age and anything else you have found useful to know, please write it up and send to John Elenor with all possible haste.

Ten families responded to the request for help with media publicity. Max Easterman of BBC's Radio 4 "File on Four" still intends to do a programme questioning the State's attitude to education and the wider implications of E.O. And a writer/producer is trying to persuade BBC TV to do a substantial programme about E.O. instead of the usual snippets it gets.

The Society of Those Opposed to Physical Punishment (they've changed their title recently) wrote asking E.O. for written support for their opposition to Sir Keith Joseph's monstrously unfair proposal on corporal punishment in schools following the European Court of Human Rights ruling in Feb '82.

E.O. has appealed to the BBC's Children in Need of Help fund for a substantial sum of money (£3,000) to enable families with restricted means to attend their E.O. area meetings. However, this doesn't appear to be the kind of project they usually support as they seem to prefer the smaller local effort, e.g. £500 for canoes for the local orphans home. Nevertheless it should be possible for local co-ordinators to put on their thinking caps and apply next year for useful items for local groups. Details of how to apply will be given in a newsletter when the appeal time comes round again.

The jinx on the back page of the newsletter struck again in Dec. Caroline Grant's prompt action of printing a supplementary readable insert appears to have avoided problems but if anyone loses the slip of paper please DO NOT use the ENq. Sec. tel. no. in the Oct. issue as this results in an invalided old lady being troubled by a demanding 'phone she cannot answer whilst her son works. During Oct/Nov. British Telecom put an intercept on this wrong number which cost E.O. 60p a day but that was considerably cheaper than sending every member a correction. The intercept is now off (despite the injured party still receiving two or three E.O. calls a week) so it is very important to avoid the wrong number in the Oct. newsletter.

The Director of Education for Avon is sending to practising and potential E.O. parents a standard letter which contains many misleading, inaccurate and intimidating statements. Our members in the Bath area have decided to ignore it as they are aware of their rights and feel the letter has been 'all bark and no bite' so far. The letter is clearly designed to frighten those who are not aware of their legal rights and fundamental freedoms which leads to the kind of story that follows.

At core-group meetings the appeal for us to take ourselves really seriously as an organisation is often heard. That we should do this was evidenced by the receipt of a 28 page letter setting out the miserable history of one family's experience of continually forcing a child to school under duress and tranquillizers. These parents now have a boy of eighteen who is agoraphobic and suicidally depressed, yet his school problems were no worse than those of most families forced to join E.O. Their real problem was that they didn't hear about E.O. and therefore never learned their rights. For Nigel and myself their story is one of 'there but for the grace of God...' Our son is eighteen years old now, full of life and fully independent with a promising future - their child is broken by his ghastly experiences and the parents are struggling to pick up the pieces whilst working their way out of debts incurred by bad advice. Therefore I earnestly endorse John Elenor's request in the Dec. newsletter for each and every member to recruit at least two members this year and thereby spread the gospel of E.O. for it has the power to prevent young lives being wasted. For further encouragement the quotes for OUT-TAKES show the kind of appreciation E.O. receives through central office. To help advertise we have good supplies of A3, A4 and A5 E.O. posters. Work out where you could stick a couple and send in a large S.A.E. marked posters and the numbers and size you can use e.g. 2 A4 or 3 A5. One eager member in Bath painted a huge notice on her garage doors that front a busy main road. She created a lot of interest and local publicity but a "more royalist than the King" school dinner lady complained and the planning dept. ordered the advert painted over.

It has been estimated that with our present rate of enrolment our membership could reach 35,000 by 1994 - but why wait ten years?!!

JANET EVERDELL

E.O.-OUT-TAKES

'Many thanks for your help with Sue. She is fine now.'



'Thank you for your kind letter, it was a great strain off my mind when I received it. May I thank you for putting me straight over my parent's rights.'

(From a 16 year old girl)



'We had, until now, no idea there was an organisation called 'Education Otherwise' and although our contact may not result in a solution, it has given us a great measure of relief to know there is such an organisation, especially after years of worry over our son's unhappy state.'



'When I told my interviewer that I belonged to E.O. his attitude changes from a blunt 'NO' to - I think we will be able to sort this out to everyone's satisfaction.'



...but I saw Nick on 'Where There's Life' - and was impressed by the warm relaxed way he answered the interviewer. He really is a credit to E.O's intentions and philosophies.'



'I enclose a note from Cressie who appreciates that, lots of people she doesn't know, help her to stay out of school.' (Mother of Cressie)



Dear Janit Thank You
for Helping
me Be education
otherwise
it is from cressie

X X
X
X X

I am
50%

Apologies to Cressie for rearranging her letter (the Ed.)

NUTS IN MAY.....NUTS IN MAY.....

EO Gathering of Nuts in May - Bank Holiday Weekend Friday 26th May 1984 to Monday 28th May at Unstone Grange, Crow Lane, UNSTONE, Derbyshire S18 5AL Tel. Dronfield 95- 412344

"Can we come again next weekend?" said Ben as we drove away from Unstone Grange.' (wrote Sue Hart in NL August 1983). Yes, you can all come again, plus some new people we ^{hope} to Unstone Grange for an EO gathering cum Core Group Meeting. Sue Hart again, "The house is big and old with plenty of room for children to run freely indoors and outdoors. We only decided to go as our son sometimes seems lonely and we thought he would enjoy it - he certainly did! We enjoyed it too. The atmosphere was very relaxed and friendly and the house is so big that there was no need to chat to people if we didn't want to."

After the commercial, here are the details. The accommodation is for self-catering only. Prior booking is essential for those staying overnight.

Accommodation in the house (limit 30 people)

You must bring your own sheets or sleeping bag and pillow cases. Blankets and eiderdowns are provided. Residents will be assigned a room number according to the size of the party. There are several small and medium sized rooms which can accommodate families - bring your own cot if needed; there are some single and double rooms.

Sleeping on the floor in the house

2-3 families (depending on the size of the family groups) will be able to sleep on the floor in the main lounge at a cheaper rate than sleeping in beds. You must bring your own sleeping bags and be prepared to move your things to one side during the day so that the room can be used for meetings if required. These places will be given out on a first come, first served basis.

The kitchen is equipped with cookers, fridge, food storage space, crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils, washing up liquid. Bring your own food. There is a small grocer's in Unstone and shops in Dronfield. There is also a fish and chip shop and Chinese takeaway in Dronfield, and a sports centre and swimming pool.

Camping

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

Day Visitors

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

Cancellations

Money can only be refunded if you cancel 4 weeks before the weekend. I'm sorry but we can't refund last minute cancellations as we must cover our expenses.

Picnic, Sunday afternoon 27th May

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

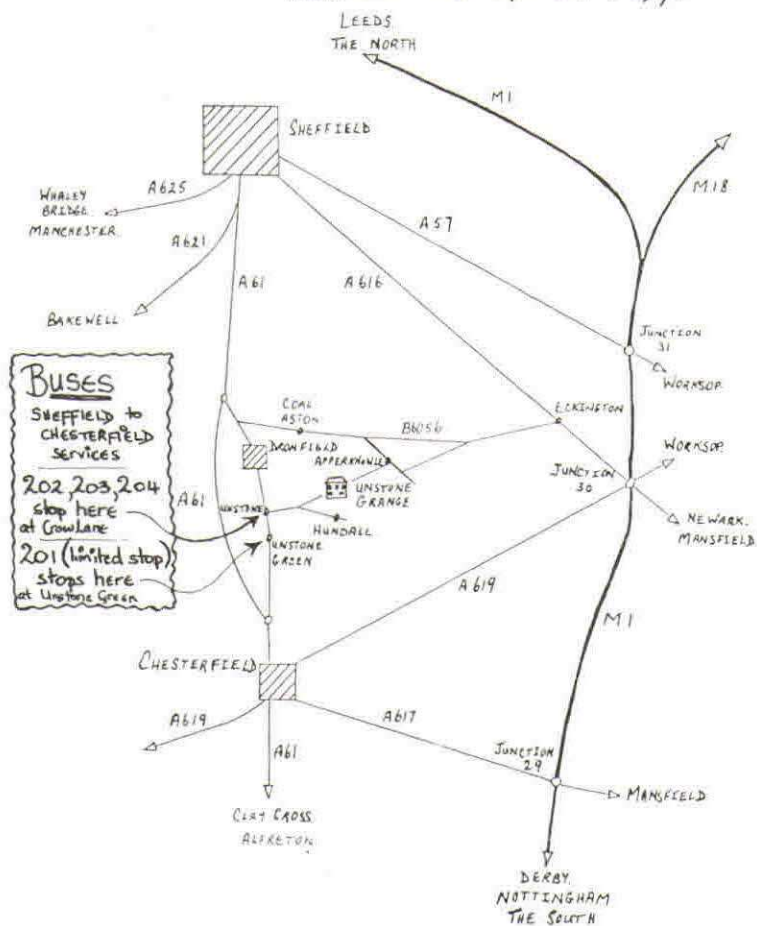
Please note Because this is a self-catering weekend it is very important that everyone should clear up after themselves and leave everywhere as clean and tidy as they find it.

CAN YOU HELP?

Betty Ball

will be organising a programme of activities and workshops for the weekend. Can you run any? If so, please give details on the booking form.

NEAREST RAILWAY STATIONS:- SHEFFIELD & CHESTERFIELD
(some local trains stop at DRONFIELD).



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

Per person per night

Residential (in house)
 Sleeping on floor in main lounge
 Camping (tents)
 Camping (van)
 Day visitors
 Picnic only

	Adults	Children (3-16 years)
Residential (in house)	£3.00	£2.50
Sleeping on floor in main lounge	1.50	0.75
Camping (tents)	1.00	0.50
Camping (van)	1.00	0.50
Day visitors	0.50	-
Picnic only	-	-

BOOKING FORM

Names of people attending (with age if under 16)

Age

.....

Address and Telephone No.

.....

Will you be staying for:- May 25
 May 26
 May 27

Nights	Days only

Please tick

If you are staying overnight, will you be:-

In a camper van
 In the house (beds)
 In the house (on floor)
 Camping in tents

Please tick

I/we can help with childrens' activities by (please specify)

.....

I/we can help with a workshop (please specify)

.....

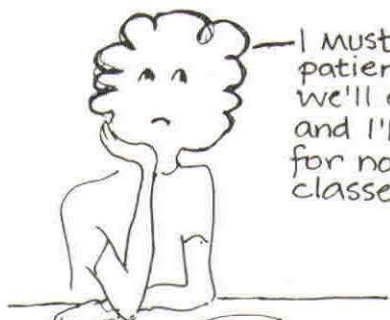
Payment

Adults £
 Children (over 3 & Under 16) £
 Non-returnable booking fees cover 0.50.pence
 postage and stationery costs
 TOTAL £

Please make out cheques/postal orders payable to Education Otherwise, and send cheques/postal orders and booking form to:- Joan Hoare, 25 Moor Oaks Road, Broomhill, Sheffield S19 1BX. (Tel. 0742-666605)

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

EDUCATING ARCHIE: New Year Resolutions



I must be more patient with Archie... & we'll eat PROPERLY... yes and I'll give up aerobics for non-violence classes... grumble less...



...I'll stop saying "hang on", and we'll do more SUMS... just a question of being ORGANISED...



isn't TEA READY yet MUM?



by-SEGI



THINKS -
WRONG!

Waddumean READY??
- Look just HANG ON a minute can't you while I get these baked beans on?
- I mean for HEAVEN'S SAKE Archie it's not easy you know... AND CLOSE the DOOR

INFORMATION LIBRARY

We are now in the happy position to be able to offer members nationally, the full use of the Information Library. If anyone has any queries or problems with regard to what educational material etc. is available, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time either by phone, letter or a visit. What we don't know, we will try and find out for you. Please feel free to use us.

We would like to thank those established educational firms, publishers and especially their reps., who have been so helpful in many different ways in the setting up of this Information Library.

To help with the cost of photocopying, please enclose a 2nd class stamp for each information sheet required or equivalent in P.O., or cheque - also, stamp for return postage.

Main Educational Publishers & Suppliers Addresses

Pre-school Materials

Reading Schemes

Reading Books

Book Lists - please state age group

English

Maths

History

Geography

Sciences

Languages

Music

Remedial Material

Remedial Reading Books - please state age group

Project Material

Project Books

Audio & Visual Cassettes

Ideas in Action (this can cover a lot of general things - ideas please)

Charts & Posters

Clubs, Groups, Associations etc.

Crafty Ideas (arts and crafts) yet to be put together - your ideas please.

MORE RECOMMENDATIONS ON ALL OF THE ABOVE PLEASE.

Please let us know what we have not included that you would like to see included. When recommending a book etc., please give publisher, author and price if known. When recommending anything, please give as much information as possible. We look forward to hearing from you with your ideas.

We are also willing to be used for putting people in touch with each other when they have anything to sell or are trying to obtain something. Please include:-

Your Name

Your Address

Your Telephone Number

Subject Matter e.g., Maths, English, etc.

Type of Material e.g., Books, Cards, Tapes, etc.,

Publisher

Author

Rough Age Level

Price

Any Comments

Is there anyone who would take on the job of collating and up-dating information on careers, job opportunities, Y.T.S., schemes, etc. etc.

In order to help the smooth up-dating of these information lists and to make them a free service, we are on the look out for something to do the job, i.e. disc drives and print out. We have a Sharps MZ 80K computer but would be willing to sell or swop if anyone can come up with the answer.

Andy & Diane Anderson
95 Derrington Avenue,
Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7JA
Tel: 0270 664060

"Eng. Lit."

The only bright spots in my bleak boarding school days were English lessons with a very wise and warm hearted lady called Miss Macleod. Her love of literature was genuinely inspiring and the sensibly unrestricted Scottish syllabus allowed us free range over the entire field of English literature. I have kept in touch with Miss Macleod over the years and asked her advice recently on teaching children English at home. Her reply was so interesting that I asked her permission to quote part of it to you.

"How thrilling for the children to grow into activities instead of having them imposed or totally undirected. Since you are the person on the spot you can gauge the potentialities of the children which you will want to encourage and recognise any weaknesses which can be made less burdensome by the incorporation of skills into other pleasurable activity. A useful device, that last, for it means the eventual recognition that even the highest and most pleasing skills involve occasional drudgery.

"Perhaps, however, it may be of interest to you if, in the broadest of terms, I indicate things which I should hate to see omitted from a child's education. First and foremost I put the heritage of every child: the great tales of the world: mythology, legend, epic, which lead on naturally to tales of adventure by individual authors. These, I feel, should cross language barriers to make cultural barriers less rigid and underline common human characteristics. Equally important, I feel, are the rhymes and mnemonics of one's own language and others, with their satisfying jingles and quota of information. From that comes an easy graduation to the wealth of English lyrics, past and present, a never-ending, pleasurable exploration. Contemporaneous with all this should be creative work, oral and written, graded according to occasion, opportunity, and need. Plays, composed and acted, however short, are a splendid introduction. More sophisticated genres can follow: letters, diaries, etc. From these can flow also more sophisticated and detailed studies of the language appropriate to irony, passion, boasting, reflection, summarising. Some children may enjoy keeping records and files of communal activities; others may draw and photograph. Etymology is not so popular a study as once it was, but your mention of Latin and Greek prompts me to suggest that, without being a close classical scholar, you can pursue some interesting changes of meaning and approach that later stylistic refinement where innuendo and irony depend on the double meaning that foreign borrowings convey."

I would be interested to read such outlines for other subjects. Any forthcoming?

Helen Holland

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education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organisation whose principal aim is to provide a support and information network for families whose children are being educated outside 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 re-affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school.

To establish the primary right of children that full consideration, with due allowance for their age and understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.

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