

education  
otherwise



NEWSLETTER

APRIL '84

N° 34

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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.

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



## GOING TO SCHOOL - SANITY PREVAILS

The twins, now twelve, have been out of school since they were six. In that time we have travelled, lived in communes, council houses, farms, cities. We spent two years until last August living 1½ miles away from the nearest road in the remote west coast of Scotland. We lived there with our friends (very important) our garden, animals and our happiness. We spent winters walking, skating on the lochs, sledging, exploring standing stones, rock pools and cairns and just running about and having parties. The summer was littered with beautiful naked brown bodies swimming in the sea (a.m) and lochs (p.m.) fishing, sunbathing, gardening, rearing young animals, sipping icy burn water, running about and having parties.

Unfortunate circumstances meant we had to move. The council have rehoused us and the twins got an itch to be doing. Here at Kilberry there is nothing to do. The only children for miles around apart from them go to school in a village 15 miles away.

Out of the blue Gwilym and Lucy (the twins) announce that they want to try school. "Oh no" says I "We'll be drummed out of E.O.". After getting partly over the shock the arrangements were made and off they went. Excited, anxious, nervous and confident all at once.

The first day over. An eye opener all round. Lucy and Gwilym were quite horrified by the sheer, raw brutality of the place. They could see clearly a war between two strange human like species. Pupils v Staff. Their shock was tempered by the novelty of being in the middle of it all. They decided to go back for more.

The twins spent the first 2½ to 3 weeks loving every minute of the experience - often, I think, more as social anthropologists or sociologists than as pupils. Most of their stories of school, after all, had elements of bullying, teasing, frustration, boredom, repetition, etc. Playground life they never liked much, all herded out to burn off their aggression and frustration before the next lesson. The twins found the other children (apart from one or two friends) immature, silly, loud and mindless.

After the first 3 weeks and as they adopted their school roles more, things began to look less interesting and not everything is so rosy now. History is boring (copy, copy). Home economics is all sugar, salt, white flour and sexism ("Why is a washing machine useful to a busy housewife?"). French "Oh you'll catch on." Technical Studies more a study in violence, stupidity and sitting still with arms folded.

The twins have now been going to school for seven weeks, they are becoming fed up, bored disillusioned. After six years of almost no formal education they are at or near the top of their class in the subjects they like (maths, English, music, games, nautical studies) they are in the school sports teams. (The young people who have spent their time from the age of five learning the peculiar lessons of the school social order, the school system of human relationships appear to me to be less able to cope with the real world because of it and have been sadly abused.)

At the moment both Lucy and Gwilym see the advantages as outweighing the disadvantages by a small margin. Both would like us to move to a situation where there are more people - more deschooled young people again, and more facilities for the arts, etc. We are looking (it ain't easy), but I predict that the twins are about to go through a bad patch soon where they will have to struggle with the decision of in or out. I think they will both opt out of school and back into life. Sanity prevails - I hope.

Its been an education to us all.

Chris Maginn

De - registration - The Legal Way

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There still appears to be considerable confusion regarding de-registration. The correct procedure was spelt out in N.L. 19, September 1981, Page 20, Para 4 and I quote;

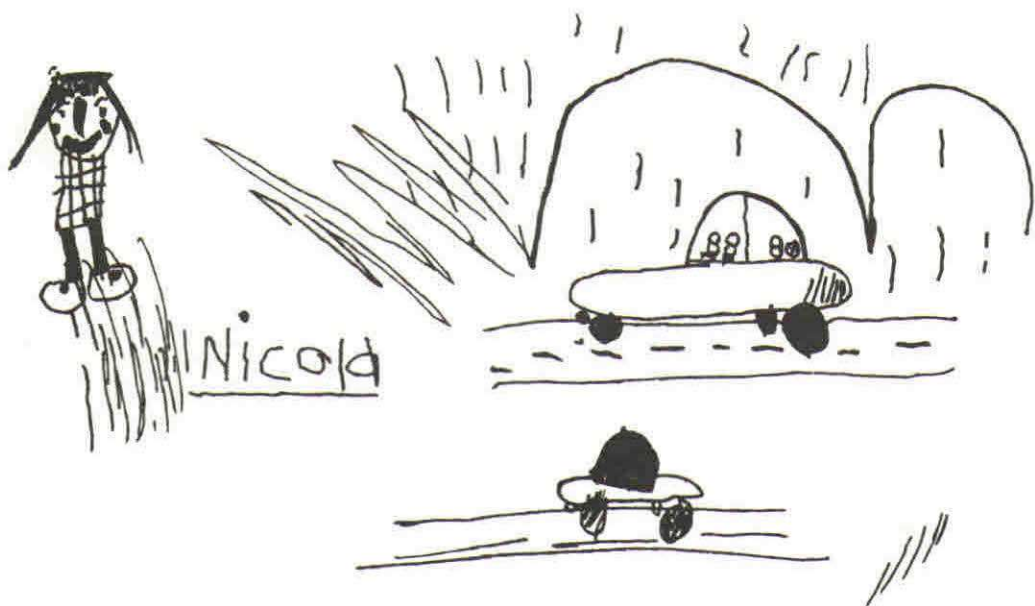
"My solicitor, the DES, and the Ombudsman all confirmed that de-registration will be given when a child is receiving an alternative education, so therefore commence Home Education during a school holiday, then inform the school, it is receiving an alternative education, letter to arrive first day after the holiday."

This procedure is as certain as it is simple, and is completely within the law. An authority can only refuse de-registration if it is requested "in order that a child may receive an alternative." and of course they do just that, but when de-registration is "because it is receiving" they have no choice, de-registration must be granted.

Notwithstanding our article in N.L.19 we are concerned that this information does not appear to have reached many of our members, and are afraid the guidance given in 'School is not Compulsory' is at best somewhat vague and may be misleading, and families are making the quite incorrect approach to de-registration and are needlessly suffering harrassment and intimidation.

Once the question of de-registration is disposed of, as surely it will be if this procedure is followed, then Clause 59 of the 44 Education Act cannot, under any circumstances, apply.

Ted and Mary Carter



Dear Editor,

We are two families living in the same county but under different Local Education Authorities. In January of this year we each withdrew one child from school. In one case from an infant school, the other from a junior. We are sending you copies of the initial letters received by us, to demonstrate their very different responses.

We both used the model letters outlined in 'School is not Compulsory' to send to the authorities but had no idea of the kind of answers we would get back. For this reason we thought that these replies would be of interest to those members thinking of withdrawing their children from school in the future.

We have removed the names of the authorities as we are both still very much in the throes of establishing ourselves as families learning at home, so we hate to jeopardise our positions in any way.

May we take this opportunity of saying a big thank you to all the V.O.'ers who have helped us to get ourselves started in home education.

Yours sincerely,  
The Griffins and The Lines.

THE REPLIES

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Lines,

Hannah Lines (aged 5)

Thank you for your letter dated 2nd January 1984 informing me that you intend to make arrangements for Hannah to be educated otherwise than through attendance at school.

Section 36 of the Education Act 1944 imposes on parents a duty to cause their children of compulsory age to receive efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. You have advised me that you will be taking responsibility for your daughter's full-time education and I must inform you that, should it appear to the Education Authority that you are failing in the duty under Section 36 of the Education Act 1944 as referred to above it would be the Authority's duty to serve on you a formal notice requiring you to satisfy the Authority that Hannah is receiving efficient, full-time education suitable to her age, ability and aptitude.

I will, therefore, ask Miss \_\_\_\_\_, the Area Adviser for Early Childhood Education to contact you to arrange an appointment to observe the arrangements being made for Hannah's education. Miss \_\_\_\_\_ will then submit a formal report to me on the basis of which the Authority will decide whether or not it appears that you are fulfilling the obligations referred to in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

THE GRIFFINS

Thank you for your letter of 3rd January 1984, in which I note you intend to educate your daughter otherwise than at school.

It is necessary to determine whether what you propose satisfies the requirements of the Education Act 1944 clause 36, which states:-

"It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability, and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

In order to enable me to come to this determination I should be grateful if you would let me have details of the educational programme you intend to adopt and of the qualifications of any tutors involved (including yourself and your wife if you are undertaking all or part of the teaching).

The details of the educational programme that I require can be summarised as follows :-

1. A general statement of the curriculum being followed;
2. Detailed schemes of work for each subject or area of work and methods of teaching adopted;
3. A weekly timetable for the child.

I should also be grateful for information on :-

1. The room(s) in which work is done;
2. Books and materials used;
3. Other teaching aids used, e.g. t.v., radio, video, films.
4. Facilities available for practical work (particularly important in regard to science and craft at secondary level).

When you have forwarded the above information and it appears likely that agreement that the proposals conform in general with the requirements of the Education Act 1944 can be reached, one of the Authority's Advisers will visit your home to discuss any problems there may be with you and to meet the child concerned. Further visits will be necessary subsequently.



Dear E.O.

A query; we moved to Milton Keynes at the end of November - our daughter is 5½. As yet we have not informed the Authorities of our presence. Are we legally obliged to inform them? I know we are legally obliged to see that she is educated but I don't know about informing them.

ANSWER: You do not have to inform the Authorities.

# BOOK REVIEW

by Jackie Fearnley.

I am often asked to recommend books to people interested in an educational approach based on the indications given by Rudolf Steiner. I have chosen some that are easy to read and have a practical application.

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## TEACHING AS A LIVELY ART by Marjorie Spock.

One available from the Rudolf Steiner Press, 38 Museum St, London W.C.1 which I have just read and which gives a very clear account of Steiner's recommendations for each age from 6 to 13. Especially helpful was Steiner's advice to the teacher who has a particular seemingly insoluble problem with one of his children. He said that he should call up a vivid picture of the child and immerse himself in it before he goes to sleep. On waking he will often discover that his concern has borne fruit in the form of an ingenious idea whereby the problem can readily be solved. If he wishes to cure the child of an undesirable habit he should not preach to him about it, but instead search out a bad habit in himself and set about its cure. "The moral momentum so engendered will have a direct effect upon the child."

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## PARENTING A PATH THROUGH CHILDHOOD by Dotty Turner Copley.

Available from Floris Books, 21 Napier St. Edinburgh. A fairly general book concerned with helping parents to provide the right environment for the child to grow into a fulfilled and responsible adult with a positive contribution to make to the world. Some parents produce a happy, smiling child but who is out of touch with herself, "is that what the world needs to solve the gigantic problems we are faced with.... Rather we need people who are real, people who have the inner ability to find out what is true, to sort out the good from the bad and to have the courage to defend what is right and to fight what is wrong."

Reading the book helped me to understand in a more vivid way the way in which the world surrounding the child becomes her inner world as she grows up and therefore how important are the early influences which she absorbs.

We are warned against making children "clever" too early in their life - of more importance is to cultivate their feelings of awe, wonder and reverence and to find a way of keeping the child's own feelings of warmth, love and trust alive. "We have the rest of our lives to be adults, so we need to let children be children. Let them use this time to live in their imagination and develop it to discover the world, to feel and touch. Then we will have mature adults.. The feeling of wonder is a gift that needs to be protected. It may be easy to give glib answers of explanation, but that does not lead to understanding. Interest in the world is enhanced by the feeling of wonder."

The theme of the book is summed up thus: "provide for your child the path he needs to find his way into the world, allow him to live in a consistent, protected, rhythmic environment, with form, not chaos, with family rituals, with natural substances, in contact with nature, allow him to be an apprentice to learn how to care for himself and others and care for the world."

The whole of this book could have relevance for those parents whose children have special needs but there is a good chapter on the needs of the handicapped child who is likened to the violinist trying to play on a damaged instrument.

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## CHILDREN AT PLAY: PREPARATION FOR LIFE by Heidi Britz-Orcelius.

A book with more specific advice on activities for children. She shows how without the aid of expensive or complicated toys the child should go through the various stages necessary to its development - becoming at home with the four

elements- using the playthings provided by Nature.

She shows how many games derive from the child's relationship with the cosmos (skipping, swinging, ball games etc) and how others are related to the child's experience of the incarnation of the soul in the physical body (slipping into tight containers, nooks and crannies, cupboards, baskets and so on).

The doll she sees as very important in the child's finding of its own self. Moving examples are given of the harm done by taking dolls away from children or by giving them either terribly sophisticated mass-produced dolls or toys which are ugly caricatures of animals.

She laments the present day impoverishment of children's games, explaining how much harder it can now be for children to be provided with a good environment for the necessary stages of play to take place. She picks out various negative influences such as living in towns with no 'wild' places, television, early teaching of reading and the provision of toys which leave nothing for the child's imagination to do. One boy she knew of used to destroy all technical toys and play instead with dolls and little animals, and used nails, a hammer and saw. When he was 9 years old, his parents discovered that their son had relaid the electric wiring in his grandfather's cellar...faultlessly. Thereupon they gave him a voltmeter and since that time, whenever the now grown-up boy goes to visit friends' houses, things which need to be repaired are laid out ready for him.

She suggests that a major effect of young children watching television is that they do not let themselves be impressed very easily - "they 'know' everything from television. Do they really know it? Or are they deluded into believing that they do?"

Another aspect of the modern tendency to substitute information for experience is the trend towards 'early learning'. She suggests that an over-early emphasis on the intellectual side can lead to the under-development of the social faculties. "The experts who lead the battle to teach children to read as early as possible emphasize again and again how much more quiet and well-poised early readers are than those who play - just as if quietness and pose were desirable in children. Well of course, the early readers can then read about all the things of which they have been deprived. But instead of assimilating experiences, they have information in their heads, and information is bound to be a quite inadequate substitute for experience."

"It will not be the intellectual abilities but the social faculties of human beings that will on the whole make it possible to live on this earth in the future ...Computers can do calculations of every kind for us, but social imagination, moral imagination - these our technological slaves will never develop - these we ourselves have to develop."

A good book to read to remind us of the profound and lasting effect children's 'games' have on them and the importance of being able to drop everything if necessary when our participation is needed.

#### MAKING SOFT TOYS by Freya Jaffke.

Floris do various craft and children's books and would send a catalogue on request. One that I have seen and would recommend is MAKING SOFT TOYS which gives helpful ideas for simple toys for children (not just soft ones) and which is a good starting point for those who are put off by having to follow patterns.

! NOTE:THE ROWAN TREE also sells Steiner books, modelling wax, crayons,water paints.  
ADDRESS

The Triangle  
Berkeley Place  
Clifton  
BRISTOL BS8 1EH

## NOTICE ABOUT BOOK REVIEWS

### BOOKNOTES

1. If any of you hear of an interesting forthcoming publication and wish to review it please get in touch with me as I can then write to the publisher concerned on our official paper and ask to have the book forwarded directly to you.
2. Naturally whoever wishes to review any older book he or she has come across and thinks would be of value to the rest of us is free to do so at any time.
3. What books did you find especially fascinating as a child? If you send me details I will compile a list and publish it later on.  
Helen Holland. (Address on inside back cover).

### VISIT EXCHANGE PROGRAMME.

This is still going strong with a steady trickle of enquiries from abroad. If anyone else wishes to offer hospitality to home-schooling visitors please get in touch with me. All I do is pass on names and requests and it is then up to the individuals concerned to make their own arrangements. And if you are thinking of visiting the U.S.A. and would like to meet homeschoolers there, again please get in touch with me. (s.a.e. appreciated).

Helen Holland. Inholms Farm. Plumpton Green. Sussex. BN7 3DE.

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# Education Through The Press

Edited by Sarah Guthrie with contributions from Bruce Cox and Janice Owen.

### Quote of the month:

In a study of the attitudes and beliefs of young people today "boys and girls in roughly equal proportions see death and school as two of the worst aspects of life." (Times Educational Supplement 24.2.84 )

**LIFE IN SCHOOL:** Devon Council launched an enquiry into the mock hanging of a 15 year old boy during an art lesson at Tavistock Comprehensive. The boy was doing a special art project on capital punishment. (Daily Telegraph 25.11.83 and Times Ed. Supplement)...classroom computers can trigger off a rare form of epileptic seizure if they are studied too closely for long periods, warns the Health and Safety Executive (Guardian 7.2.84)....education for parenthood is given low status in secondary schools, and usually confined to girls of 'average' academic ability (Times Ed. Supp. December 83 )....A teenage bully admitted copying the tactics of a bully on GRANGE HILL the T.V. series (Daily Telegraph 14.12 .83).....

### QUOTE NO. 2

"Having learned the basic three Rs over the 1st 7-8years of formal education, the bulk of the population has nothing more to learn from the formal education system as it now stands. Only those who enjoy the intellectual hoops and hurdles of an academic education really benefit from the classroom set-up. For the rest, it is a mere charade, a charade which the vast majority is surprisingly willing to endure." (Times Ed. Supplement 13.1.84 )

### QUOTE NO. 3

"We are going through an overly scientific phase in education in which we believe all that is of value must be able to be "quantified, categorized and logged"...Let us hope (for) a return to mystery , magic and a hope and a prayer for the future than instant measurability"  
(Geraint Lloyd Evans, in a letter to the Times Ed. Supp. 13.1.84)

**BIG BROTHER IS  
TEACHING YOU:**

Said Prof. Bernard Crick, Orwell's biographer:

"I am horrified that at least 3 examination boards have put "1984" on O level syllabuses. It's too complex to be handled at O level."

Replied John Swallow, from the National Association of Headteachers; "A man of the intellectual stature of Crick can't really bear to put it over to 16 year olds in the simplistic way that most O level teachers have to do because they are doing it for an exam".

(Times Ed. Supp. Dec 83)



**WHAT TO DO**

Children in secondary schools should be taught skills enabling them to use their wits, imagination and creativity, said the Dept of Education and Science in its CURRICULUM 11-16, published last December. The report also questions the future of school time tables - including the division of the day into eight 35 minute periods (Telegraph 6.12.83).... Traditional schooling should end at 14, according to a report by leading figures in education and industry. (Times Ed. Supp., December 83) Careers expert Tony Watts argues that school must change because the maintenance of the traditional curriculum, highly academic and geared to exams, is not a feasible option with youth unemployment at its present level. (Guardian 10.1.84)

**MEANWHILE:**

Office chiefs are disturbed at the failure of schools to teach the 3 R's properly, and concerned at the irrelevance to commerce of the school curriculum plus an over-dependence on the calculator (Telegraph 28.10.83).... According to the former education officer of the ILEA, some pupils are leaving school worse than when they went in (Telegraph 20.10.83).

**U.S.A.**

The Reagan administration is to launch a campaign against violence in the classroom with the Federal Government playing a larger role (Times Ed Supp. 13.1.84)..... some 12 year old pupils in Dallas Texas were unable to locate the United States on a world map during an educational test of students from major industrial countries set up by the Dallas Times Herald... (Telegraph 13.12.83)

**KEEP FIT**



Keep-fit classes for under 5s have started in the west Midlands for those children who 'travel too much in cars'.... (Telegraph 10.11.83).

# Talking About School

Edited by Sarah Guthrie with contributions from Bruce Cox, Janice Owens.

Interviewer to Buggsy, singer with MADNESS: "What was the best part of school for you?"

Buggsy: "Ding-a-ling-a-ling". (BBC TV, Jan 84)

Interviewer to Sean Lennon, son of John Lennon: "What's your favourite subject at school?"

Sean: "when it's over." (RADIO 1, 23.1.84).

"Three and a half years of pretty undistinguished striving, in which food, or rather the lack of it, played a leading part..." (Julian Critchley, on his youth at Shrewsbury School. TELEGRAPH, 28. 11. 83.) Of the present school he writes: "Beating and fagging are no more, and chilblains quite unknown....the boys seem happy, well-taught...and to be free of that grinding discontent from which I, and others, suffered."

"School is the same, week in, week out, only varied by the unpredictable moods of the staff...I, like most prefects, am a megalomaniac and thoroughly enjoy withering 1st. years with a carefully aimed eyebrow..." (schoolgirl Lucy Hull, SUNDAY TIMES, Jan 84)

School offered too few opportunities to interest and extend children "...working in discreet 40minute packages, giving homework every Thursday, because that's what the timetable decrees, whether or not it's appropriate, having to be a social worker...not what I went into teaching for." "It's the total degradation of not being treated like a human being. First year children you have to lock the door on them to keep them in the classroom-who'd laugh and say 'poetry-shit' and 'what's the point of working, I'm not going to get a job anyway'." "Perhaps the worst thing was that the only work that they would accept, could do enjoyed, was absolutely repetitive, sterile exercise sheets. Anything creative was a disaster." "It was so bad that some classes, good pupils with a prospect of O levels, had had five teachers by the March. They'd look at me and say to each other 'Wonder how long this one will last?' It was a challenge but in the end I felt that if I stayed I would become hardened ...inhuman." (TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT, Dec.83) Berdre Cohen, who now manages Lambeth City Farm.)

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A boy of eight was given some transcription to do, mainly because he had to be kept busy and at the moment his teacher could find nothing else. At the end of half an hour he said, "I am always going to write and do nothing else: I like writing." Needless to say, by the end of a week his interest was less, and he turned his attention to other things; but the amount of practice he had while he gave every spare moment showed excellent results.

From 'Learning And Teaching In The Junior School' by Nancy Catty, M.A.  
(Contributed by Jennifer Linsel.)

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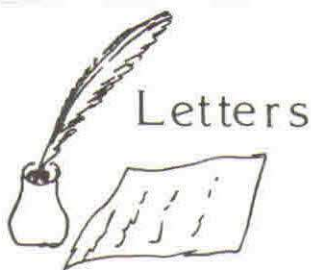
The man who  
had breakfast

by Marc age 6

once upon a time there lived a man.  
He woke up and he  
had some toast he put it under  
The grill. and  
He turned on The Hob's. and  
burnt The toast so he put  
some water on it so he got a dish.  
and had one bite.  
it was too cold!



by Marc Cottee (aged 6)



Lark Rise,  
Crapstone,  
Yelverton,  
Devon.

Dear Editor,

Re - child benefit claims as requested in February E.O. newsletter.

Vincent was 16 years old in November 1981 and his child benefit was promptly stopped on the week of his birthday with no warning or explanation. As we had moved from Northants. to Devon two months before I thought the DHSS had not 'caught up with us' so I wrote complaining and was sent the usual forms to complete.

The answer received was that he was not eligible for child benefit (no reason given) but that if we wished to challenge the decision we had 28 days in which to do so. Of course we did.

My husband spent several evenings in the reference library in Plymouth and discovered the relevant acts concerning education and child benefit. We were called to a Tribunal in February but this was postponed after a few minutes as the DHSS representative did not know her section 36 from her section 56 of the Education Act and wanted more time to get instructions etc.

Meanwhile we procured a letter from our chief education officer saying that Vincent was being educated under section 36 and partly under section 56 of the 1944 Education Act. Our second Tribunal hearing came up in June 1982 and all three decided in our favour but of course said that the DHSS had a right of appeal of which they must inform us in writing within 28 days if they intended to appeal.

The days passed and we heard nothing, then 3 days after the 28 days allowed we had a letter saying that the DHSS were to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners. We immediately pointed out that the letter was too late and they agreed that it was so - so we got the full back-dated child benefit. However they said that the appeal could go ahead.

More correspondence took place and the outcome was that in December 1982 we received a letter from the Commissioners saying that an oral hearing in our case was unnecessary and that a copy of the decision would be sent to us in due course. This happened and of course was not in our favour. However we did receive all the benefit from November '81 till July '82 and Vincent started at Plymouth C.F.E. in September '82 so the dispute ended.

This brings another point forward. Although Vincent had by law to receive full-time education until the April following his 16th birthday his Child Benefit was stopped 5 months before that. However he was not eligible to receive Social Security until April - the official school leaving date. He made enquiries to a very helpful youth employment office where he was told many different things-

- a) You must be eligible for one or the other.
- b) You should be able to get both.
- c) You can't have either.

The fact in the end was that he could not claim social security because he was starting full-time education at the C.F.E. in September. He could not claim Child Benefit because he was not in a recognised educational establishment.

The DHSS now have amended their forms and state in their section on 'Recognised Educational Establishment' they can include 'a hospital or the child's home if the education is being specially arranged by the local authority'.

However I still think it's worth appealing - there could be other botch ups like ours and people get the allowance through default. It's so obviously unfair that the Tribunals are bound to be sympathetic.

Our daughter is 16 this November so we're going to go through the same procedure again claiming that as the education officer sends an education advisor annually we have a special arrangement with the local authority.

I think it's time E.O. members lobbied their M.P.'s about this although the present government being very stingy with all allowances is unlikely to find in our favour. Our numbers are growing and this present situation is blatantly unfair.

I hope this throws some light on the situation. Paula Theobald.

18 Markham Place,  
Ladybrook,  
Mansfield.

Dear members,

With reference to the Aug '83 newsletter and the responses which have followed, (and at the risk of provoking painful memories for some,) I feel a need to communicate some of my thoughts to you which I had been loath to do after the Dec. criticism. However, it saddens me now that our last editor felt it expedient to avoid a 'home-made look'. Other potential editors may even have been put off by this fuss about things looking home made, thus restricting the editorship to a certain type of person and also therefore the range of approaches, ideas and experience which could be brought to the task with a resultant loss of potential and valuable enrichment. My main reasons for writing then are twofold; I would apologise to the editors of 'Kipper' for apparently bringing their name into disrepute, (whether this was because of presentation or the lovely work by young people which we fitted on the front page cover I could not say) and secondly I would say a couple of things drawn reluctantly from me by Janet's article 'News and Views' (Dec.) about which I have a basic difference of opinion. In my role as front page spokesperson -Aug - I offer apologies for back page mistakes and spelling and herewith, stick in my spoke.

Janet was relieved that a newsletter was to be produced because of the 'much needed confidence and contact' it gives members. Perhaps news, ideas and opinions from other members provide this. If however it is to be derived from a polished production and the feeling that the editors have good organizational ability and high standards impressive to Lea's, then we were, no doubt, lacking. For myself the message has usually received more attention than the medium but if the medium is to express by its presentation alone standards impressive to Lea's the hidden message gives me considerable discomfort. Nevertheless Janet felt that we must present an image to authorities which my friends and I failed to do, all fair comment, but the reasons for wanting a newsletter in this case and those for being disappointed in it do not seem related. I think the newsletter is for members.

Given the state of the law it is natural that points about Lea's should crop up like tares among the corn from time to time, sometimes in relation to the function of E.O. I would like to ask why we need to pin ourselves down to an image? Perhaps an acceptable category, if you can squeeze into it, offers a sense of security in the face of Lea's who make themselves a real pain in the butt? False security indeed since it can undermine the motivating force of many E.Oers. Such pressures can affect us all individually, but should not pressurize the very organization set up to provide self help and support opportunities to its members. I think there is danger in talking about an efficient, impressive image which might imply certain approaches to education we do not all share and which might alienate some members. Some might not derive confidence from such an image, quite the contrary. E.O. is changing now, it may become as high powered as can be and impress the hell out of Lea's all over the place, in dealing with problems we need this kind of efficiency, but when it comes to me talking to my local official, I can not pretend to be other than I am, and refuse on point of principle to pretend to conform to someone else's ideas to impress them nor do I see why our medium of contact and information should do so. Is Janet's article -'whether we like it or not' -asking us to identify with such an approach? There is something so much more important than an image of any description which we all, surely already share, and that, something of intrinsic worth. I mean the basic principle of freedom, rights and responsibility supported in our regular back cover feature i.e. the list of aims. Only a repressive society such as ours could evolve an organization which should really be an absurd irrelevance, because basic rights are threatened. Our aims don't need special treatment or dressing up do they? Do they? Smartly or not so smartly conveyed they mean the same.

B.Clohesy.

130, Wellmeadow Road,  
Catford,  
London,  
S.E. 6 1 HP.

My name is Soo Goodwin-Downes; I am a teacher/lecturer wishing to work in alternative education. I have been struggling with the system for fifteen years, supported by writings of John Holt and Carl Rogers but finding the battle increasingly oppressive.

I was very much encouraged by meeting and listening to John Holt in Birmingham and London on his tour and resolved myself to setting up a home base, from which to offer my services to parents and E.O. members. It is also my intention to educate my son at home in the near future.

I am currently completing a degree in Special Needs (which I have also been teaching for two years) and my intention is to complete a degree in Curriculum Development by the end of next year. My specialisms are Language across the curriculum, collaborative learning and study skills, pastoral and counselling care. I have deliberately taught all subjects at secondary school level although only a few to A level. (I am not competent in Maths, Physics or Advanced Chemistry.) I have spent a great deal of time as head of department for literacy and behavioural problems but chose to expand this (in the face of much opposition) to a person centred caring service for all needs. I now feel that unless I can collaborate with sympathetic minds and develop curriculum resources of a very different kind then I will have to leave education altogether. My greatest pleasure has been in working with the children of friends and others who have been referred to me as a result of school failure. We have shared a great joy in overcoming this false fail and developing self esteem.

I am particularly interested in helping people to develop their own programmes, acting as an enable between establishment and parent and in developing inexpensive resources to assist parents with children at home.

Would this be of value to your organization?

Yours sincerely,

Susan Goodwin Downes.

p.s. I am able to send school and college references if required.

Culloden Home Farmhouse  
Culloden  
Inverness

Dear E.O.,

What a pleasure the February Newsletter was, both in presentation and content. It gave evidence of the great support and problem-sharing there is among members, and is a good example of what E.O. is all about to show to potential or new members.

I agree wholeheartedly with Julia Galvin's letter concerning the negative criticisms that have come our way via recent newsletters. It ill behoves any of us to arrogantly criticise our fellow members this way. Central Office too, should refrain from rapping knuckles publically via the newsletter, and if possible make individual contact to help and advise those who fail to live up to their expectations. We members in the field greatly appreciate the effort and hard work put in by Central Office on our behalf, but every contribution to furthering the aims and message of E.O., however small, is important.

I was delighted to read Nick Everdell's success story. When I read about people embarking on otherwise education and overcoming the first hurdles, I often wonder what happened as time went by. I look forward to reading some more continuing stories in the future.

May I take this opportunity to thank those courageous members who have agreed to publicise E.O. through the media. I had read John Holt's books years ago but felt very isolated in my feelings about education until I discovered a magazine article, five or six months ago, about Jo Guthrie and the Fearnley children. It was a light in the darkness. Keep up the good work.

Heather Mitchell



Dear Editor,

I don't know how long it took the libertarian groups of the 19th century to become the monolithic, oppressive, and life-fearing organisations that we know so well today. Quite a few decades, I imagine. EO seems to be in danger of setting a world record with the speed at which it is abandoning its original aims and quietly setting up other ones which are the exact opposite. If you think this sounds extreme, look at the last newsletter. Page 24; 'then let them each give a few minutes talk....' This is exactly the language of the educational press. I remember an article in 'Teacher's World' - 'Give all your children a piece of paper. Let them draw a circle on it.....' A good word 'let' isn't it? Let = allow, permit, etc. But what does it really mean in those sentences? It means 'make, force, compell, oblige,' doesn't it? This sort of teachery jargon is creeping into the newsletter more and more. It hides from people's awareness what teachers do to children, and, it seems, what more and more EO parents are doing, depriving their children of their right to be responsible for their own lives, to make their own mistakes, and to learn from them in the way they think fit. I work for EO because I want to help protect those basic rights of children, and I hope that those members who share those aims will speak up loud and clear and stop EO becoming one of those gutless groups that has radical aims on paper, but whose members treat children in the same be-letting ways as most other people.

Helen Holland's 'Eng. Lit' on page 36 of the reb. newsletter is just another syllabus, it could even be a 'progressive' or 'liberal' A level syllabus. Is it to be inflicted on the child who would be happier and learning more making things out of wood, looking after animals, or making clothes to wear. If so all you will be teaching the luckless child is to hate 'literature', and you the teacher, too, probably. And suppose, to imagine one example, a child is truly inspired by reading a Welsh (or Russian or Irish or Viking) story - and discovers that that beautiful, ancient language is still spoken within Britain, and that she can watch it on television, hear it on the radio, go and stay in interesting places where it is spoken, and that all this leads to a lifelong passion for Welsh and all things Welsh (or any other country or culture). Are we to suppress all that blossoming joy and delight in learning and force her through Miss McLeod's syllabus so that she has a good grounding in English Literature?

Let's get off children's backs and let them learn what they want, how they want, when they want, Learning grows where it will, where the soil and climate are right. We can no more ordain learning by order, co-ercion, and commandment than we can produce love by rape or threat. Alas, the spirit of John Holt's 'Teach Your Own' does not seem to be taking root in the hearts of EO members.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Jones.

Dear E.O.,

In her, his contribution "Slaves of the Lamp" Chris Shute wonders why the vast majority of people fail to see that compulsory schooling is a form of slavery in which children have no say whatsoever in the organisation of their lives (Feb-Newsletter). I would suggest that parents fail to see this because their own lives closely resemble those of their children; their time-table and the nature of their work is decided for them by their boss while their leisure activities are restricted by the wage they earn, in the same way that pocket money limits what a child can do on a Saturday. Children are indeed slaves to their teachers and to the school system generally, but so are their parents slaves to their employers and to the money system. Not surprisingly, if one puts forward any idea of organising society differently, of getting rid of money, employment and bosses and working cooperatively together instead as free human beings, one invariably gets the same answer from adults that Chris gets from her, his pupils: "but we wouldn't do anything if our 'bosses' (substituted for 'teachers') didn't make us".

Only when we refuse to be slaves ourselves will slavery disappear from the lives of our children.

Christine Moss.

Dear Editor,

I am writing in support of Julia Galvin's letter in the February Newsletter. We do indeed look forward to each issue, precisely for the support and warmth that comes from the body of EO as a whole, without which we should indeed feel very isolated. And the last thing to generate warmth is any sign of ridicule directed at anybody in public - he or she may merely be human like the rest of us. Yes indeed, let's all be nice to each other in the Newsletter, and keep the rest for Core Group meetings, where it belongs.

Best wishes,

George Langstone.

"Wassail House"  
64 Severn Rd.  
Canton,  
Cardiff  
CF1 9EA

Dear Editor,

We have been onlookers into E.O. for a year now, and have decided to take the plunge this summer. We will be going abroad for fourteen weeks, and thought it would be a good opportunity to de-register our daughter age 11 years and educate her at home after we return. We have two boys in infant and primary school, and we do not want to take them away just yet.

We are wondering if this might cause problems, and having read the problems encountered by Mr and Mrs Perry of Gwent in your February newsletter, our fears are worsened. We would greatly welcome communications from other members telling us how they fared with their local L.E.A. and how they surmounted the problems. If there are any experiences of the South Glamorgan L.E.A. this information would be particularly welcomed by us.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Hubert von Stauffer.

60, Running Waters,  
Brentwood  
Essex.

21 Peartree Lane,  
Danbury,  
Essex.

Hi,

We took Trudie out of school in April 1983 after the "Open Night". Looking through Trudie's written work we were unable to make sense of her spelling, whole lines of writing were unreadable. This came as a shock to us as she was a bright 7year old with a good understanding and a reading age of 9½. We had a talk with the school headmaster who offered remedial teaching but, as we had noticed a lot of character changes in Trudie over the previous six months we decided to exercise our rights as parents and sort it out ourselves.

We first contacted the Dyslexia Inst. where Trudie had an educational assessment. Results, she was not dyslexic but she had a very poor short term visual memory. The Alpha to Omega text books were recommended but Trudie didn't get on too well on that system. We battled through the rest of 1983 with tantrums and tears everytime writing was mentioned. I insisted on a minimum of three lines of writing every day. The major problem was, and still is, spelling but a lot of letters and numbers are written back to front. I couldn't see how, if we had spent a whole week on one type of word, Trudie could spell it wrong the following Monday. At the end of eight months at home the L.E.A. inspector decided to drop in and see us. "Yes" he could see Trudie had a short term visual memory problem just by looking through her work, "no", conventional spelling methods would not work - she has to be taught to really look at words. He recommended trying Catchwords by Charles Cripps and written for children with this problem. We ordered the first two books and have started work on them and we are very pleased with the results. The idea is to try and look at a word, i.e. the-: practise writing it - use it to begin the-m the-n the-se, then cover the page and write the words from memory and check the spelling against previous work. That way words are broken into small one syllable words with just an extra few letters to remember for each word.

If anyone wants to try this system the books are published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Group-Australia Ltd. Blue book is first. They should help any child with spelling difficulties as they are very well set out, might even be worth trying for dyslexic children. If anyone does try then I would be interested to hear how they get on with them, also I would be interested to hear from any one who has had, or is still battling with the same type of problem as Trudie - i.e. ; either hatred of writing or very poor spelling ability but normal reading.

From

Veronica Gibbs.

p.s. Don't spend too much time knocking the L.E.A. they are only doing their jobs and, like any other section of the community, some are good, as well as the bad and indifferent. We are lucky in Chelmsford as they appear to be o.k. even volunteering advice when we came to start Kerry, our youngest daughter, at home.

below are two letters which Janet Everdell received from the Encyclopaedia Britannica as a result of a letter which she had sent to them.

Dear Mrs. Everdell,

February 6th '84

I refer to your letter of the 25th of January.

I am sorry that you and many of your members feel that we have misused your 'contact list'.

Certainly, it was not our intention to give offence and I am sorry if we have done so. I can confirm that I have deleted all your members names and addresses from our mailing list and no one will be contacted by any of our representatives unless they specifically request this.

Yours sincerely,

David Baird.

Dear Ms Everdell,

February 15th '84

I refer to your letter dated 25th January to Mr. Baird.

I can understand your unhappiness at receiving a letter from us to say that a representative will be calling on you when you had not asked us for any information. It is not our policy to call on people uninvited, and what happened in the case of Education Otherwise was I regret to say, due to a misunderstanding on our part.

I confirm that we have removed your name from our mailing list, and that you will not be called upon by one of our representatives.

Please accept my apologies for this unfortunate occurrence.

Yours sincerely,

Monica Branch  
Advertising Manager.

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BRITANNICA 3

Downie family.

Thankyou Joyce Swens for adding to our annual mountain of junk mail. We received a publicity booklet for Britannica 3 today along with a letter from Joyce and one from the encyclopaedia which informed us that their uninvited rep. would call on us soon. We are both annoyed and concerned about this abuse of the EO contact list. If Joyce Swens had wanted to let members know the value of Britannica 3, she could have sent a letter to EO news. The only possible justification of this unprecedented use of the contact list might be if the cheque she presumably earns goes to EO funds. The contact list is an invaluable source of communication, support and comradeship, please, please dont let it be used commercially - I have visions of being drowned in a sea of junk mail while trying to find the EO newsletter.



where is the EO newsletter?

It is time that members were given an explanation of what happened, and certain assurances about its non-repetition. I have undertaken this task since it was my oversight that allowed the affair to develop in the first place.

It all began when Joyce Ewens, who had purchased the Encyclopaedia, wrote an unsolicited testimonial to E.B. saying how delighted she was with it, particularly as an EO parent. E.B. very astutely (or very craftily, if you hold the opinion that selling things is wrong) recognized EO as a good potential market, obtained our Contact List from Mrs Ewens (of which more anon) and prepared a letter to send to everyone on the list.

At this point, being an honorable firm and concerned - as every reputable commercial organization is concerned - to maintain good customer relations, they sent me a copy of the proposed letter, with a covering letter from the advertising manager Monica Cranch, the relevant parts of which read:-

"Dear Mr Elenor, on the recommendation of one of the members of EO, Mrs Joyce Ewens, we are writing to the other members, giving them details of our latest edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica,.....We intend to post (this brochure) to members, together with a letter which Mrs Ewens has written.....I trust that our proposal to write to members meets with your approval. Yours etc".

This arrived as I was in the middle of organizing the renovations to my house, as well as coping with a new job; I knew at once that the passing of the Contact List to an outside body would cause problems, but being unwilling to pursue the matter I convinced myself that - since the date on the specimen 'Dear EO member' letter was a month prior to the letter from Monica Cranch - she was simply informing me of a fait accompli. I now realize that I was totally wrong and that the whole upset could have been avoided. As it was, I ignored the E.B. letter, events took their course, and a handful of members expressed themselves forcibly in all directions, not only at the fact of the Contact List reaching a non-member, but also (and I think unjustifiably) at the idea that a visit from an E.B. salesman, or even an unsolicited brochure, was a 'violation' of their privacy.

The culmination of this righteous indignation was the insert that appeared in the February newsletter, which has been construed by the E.B. Managing Director Mr. Adams as directly insulting to his company. It was, in fact, written in ignorance of the facts given above, but since I take responsibility for the lack of information (and the original negligence), I unreservedly apologize for this. In return Mr. Adams promised, when I met him recently, that no member of EO will receive a visit from an E.B. representative.

Apart from this aberration, the Contact List remains a private publication which members are not entitled to pass on to an outside body; future editions will be headed by a sentence that makes this explicit.

Finally I hope that a few members will be prepared to debate, in these columns, the merits of owning a set of E.B. - the case that has been implicitly made against it by this affair is not in the least proven.

'Cambridge Bound, the rebel who taught himself.' Janet Everdell.

The above was the title of an article in the Daily Express on Tuesday 23rd August. Sue Reid, the journalist concerned, had contacted me the week before saying she wanted to do an E.O. success story. Despite my trepidation the article was accurate and caused great interest. However, there was a drama going on behind the scene because although Nick had indeed gained three grade A's at A level he hadn't fulfilled the conditional requirements Kings College had made. He had failed both special papers (his first taste of failure) when the College wanted one Grade 1 or two Grade 2 passes.

We had an agonising week - filled with radio and T.V. interviews - waiting while Kings Admissions Tutor 'processed Nick's file'. Then on Sat 27th Aug. he received The Letter telling him he had a place for Oct. 84. The wording went as follows: "Although you did not quite meet the conditions of our offer, I appreciate that occasional slips may occur due to examination stress. I am therefore, pleased to confirm our offer of a place and we look forward to seeing you in October '84. Congratulations on your A level results. I hope that you are now enjoying a well earned rest." wasn't that civilised?

Nick actually applied for deferred entry which is now encouraged by both Oxford and Cambridge. In September he goes to Edinburgh to work for Ferranti for a year on what is called a Pre-university industrial Training. For those interested he found this through a booklet called, 'Temporary Occupations and Employment' (which the careers office knew nothing about) published by the Independent Schools Careers Organisation, I300, 12a-18a Princess Way, Camberly, Surrey GU15 3SP.

NB. Nick did return to a technical college in order to use their resources. He did, however, negotiate for a flexible attendance and mostly continued to teach himself as he had for O levels.

## Unstone Grange

E.O. GATHERING AND CORE GROUP MEETING - core group meetings are completely open meetings to which all members are invited either as observers or participants.

UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE

N U

S EO Gathering & Core Group Meeting S

T N

O There is still room at Unstone Grange, Crow Lane, Unstone Sheffield T

N 318 5AL, 25-28th May, BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND. There will be work- O

E shops and childrens activities. There are plenty of interesting N

G places to visit in North Derbyshire and Sheffield, including two .E

R good industrial museums. Unstone Grange is a really nice place,

A so come along. G

N Booking form in February's Newsletter or details from Joan Hoare, R

G 25 Moor Oaks Rd., Broomhill, Sheffield S10 1BX. Tel. 0742-666605 A

E N

UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE UNSTONE GRANGE G

# NOTICES

## Activities in and around Wiltshire for out of school families

We will not be holding organised workshops on EO Sundays at Lower Shaw Farm since most children simply want to play and enjoy the venue to the full, allowing the parents relative peace and quiet to relax, chat and bring their mending or Sunday newspaper. You are always welcome to bring any ideas, games, books and so on that you would like to share.

Lower Shaw Farm have kindly agreed to offer EO the following Sundays in the first 6 months of 1984:

15th April - nothing in May but there will be a gathering elsewhere (to be confirmed) - 3rd June. From noon until 5.30 pm.

A charge for all these: £2 per family (this rate to be reviewed from time to time). This includes light refreshments, use of kitchen and the various amenities. Bring a pic-nic for lunch &/or tea and Boots for wet weather. Enquiries: Devizes 5688 (after 6pm).



## CAMBS CALENDAR    ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

### SUNDAY PICNICS

- APRIL 29th    The Wildfowl Trust, Peakirk Waterfowl Gardens (about 7 miles N. of Peterborough on the B1443.
- MAY    13th    ORGANIC SMALLHOLDING WITH YOUNG ANIMALS by kind invitation of Ed and Ruth Stobbs, Fendyke Hyde, Station Rd, Emneth, Nr Wisbech. Arrive 11am onwards.
- MAY    27th    NENE PARK, Ferry Meadows, Peterborough. Between A1 and Peterborough city centre. Pony riding, boating, nature walks, bird sanctuary and much more.
- JUNE 10th    Anglesey Abbey, Lode. 6 miles NE of Cambridge. Outstanding 100 acre gardens renowned for its roses.

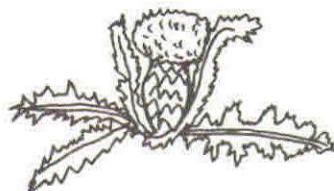
Gather in car park at 12.30 for 1.00 picnic (bring your own) lunch, unless otherwise stated. These are not organised outings or programmes, just a calendar of places for E.Oers to get together. Please try to wear some identification; how about EO T-shirts from Anne Moss in Hull? See p17 Dec. 83 nl.

### WEEKDAY SWIMMING

Tuesdays at noon, Parkside Pool, Cambridge; 24th April, 8th May, 22nd May, 5th June.    Cafe.

Wednesdays at Noon, Regional Pool, Fengate, Peterborough; 2nd May, 16 May, 30th May, 13th June. (Playground, learner pool and cafe.)





WALLACE'S HIGHLAND WEEK

THE WALLACE'S HIGHLAND WEEK '84

Once more we're inviting all you hardy souls to brave the mud and torrential rain (it didn't last year) to come and join us for a week from May 15th. Plenty of tent space, room in house and a six-berth caravan available. Catering communal or individual as you fancy. Advance notice needed if former as we normally shop 75 miles away - not exactly last minute distance. Read Aug. '83 newsletter to see what we did last year and Dec '82 and April '83 for other details.

If you can't make it to us for this week you're welcome any time except last 2 weeks in Aug. - 1st week in Sept. (unless you're a midwife).

ADDRESS: 25 Diabaig  
By Torridon  
Achnasheen  
Ross-shire.

'A VILLAGE'

During the last two months many families, from the large group of families and single people who are committed to alternative education and co-operative living, have been visiting each other all over the country.

Several people have recently moved into the Taunton area, as they intend 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 aim is to give everyone in the group an opportunity of getting to know one another while working together and at the same time set up a meeting place and information centre.

Other families have been researching the potential of forming a second stepping stone towards a co-operative village somewhere in the south west.

If you can offer any help, please write to 'A VILLAGE'

c/o 45 BALLATER RD.,  
BRIXTON  
LONDON  
SW2 5RS.

There is to be a Co-operative villages Conference at Canon Frome Court, near Hereford, on 5th and 6th May. More details are available from Jan Bourg Mount Pleasant, Hainton, Lincoln. Tel. Burgh on Bain 397.

We are a group of parents who get together with our children. We are having an OPEN DAY on Saturday, May 5th 11am - 5pm. Please come to visit us at:-

201, Wightman Rd.,  
London N8

Bring a lunch to share. At the moment we are 10 children between 1 and 5 years and meet twice weekly. We are looking for more people and are flexible about time. For details phone Pep. 348-7409.

NOTICE:

At the recent EO meeting held in Brighton Y.M.C.A. a large box of new pencil crayons, a birthday present only two days old, disappeared during Sunday afternoon. Anyone who knows what happened to it please telephone St. Cross 315 where Madeline Cox will be overjoyed to hear news of it.

# E.O. Gathering

in the South-East at



on 5th. May from 11a.m.

A 400acre farm specializing in rare, old breeds of cattle, pigs, sheep etc., easily visible and touchable.

Chicks and lambs to feed and handle. Wooded play area.

Nature trail and stream. Eat your packed lunch in picnic area

or in barn. Barbecue provided (bring charcoal). Have fun & meet others.

Access from Tilburstow Hill Rd., forking off A22, 100 yds. south of Godstone Village, Surrey.

75p. for each child over 18mths. One free adult per child. Please wear E.O. label if possible.



NOTICES

Peter Jones, Manchester Central and South Co-ordinator has moved to:-

29, Stockton Road,  
Manchester, 21 1FB  
Phone 061 860 6052

PEOPLE IN COMMON - OPEN WEEK 25th May - 1 June

We have planned to stop work during this week in order to be more available to visitors and to relax with them. The week is mainly for prospective members and people interested in communal living, but other communards are welcome, and so are local people who want to learn more about us.

We will be doing the things we most enjoy: gardening, yoga, swimming, singing, massage, boozing, eating, cooking, playing with children, saunas/sweat lodge and inevitably a party.

We hope to show people around Burnley so they can see what makes it enjoyable for us e.g. Thompson Recreation Centre, Library, local walks into the countryside, along the Town Trail and perhaps up Pendle, and a trip to see some theatre depending on what is on.

Although we intend to take it easy, there could be opportunities to take part in some of our work, preferably the things we don't often have enough time for, e.g. car maintenance, making a car park at the mill, food co-op, making fun things for children (toys, spaces, equipment), gardening.

We will give an illustrated talk on PIC's history and hold discussions.

We will be operating a creche for our own children during the week. We would like non-parents to be involved with children (visitors' and/or our own). We suggest concentrating the children towards the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, so that we can all do more childcentred activities then. Of course that does not mean that children would be excluded from any other part of the week. Prospective members please note that we have enough under four year olds, but welcome older children.

We will be limiting numbers of people staying at any time to 12 (children included) but people can come for the whole week, part of it, or just for one evening. Earliest time of arrival Thursday evening 24 May.

Cost will be £1.50 per person per day, children half price. Please let us know when you want to come, how many of you and your interests.

People in Common, 58, Clarence Street, Burnley, Lancs.



WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE MONEY?



As you will see in the Core Group Minutes a sub-committee was set up to gather proposals from members on how to make best use of surplus funds, over and above those required for the day to day running of E.O. and its newsletters. We now need ideas from you. (Big parties will not be considered a valid suggestion; attractive though it may be). Anything better? Please contact the undersigned;-

Alison Mafham, Betty Ball, Joan Hoare, Bruce and Christine Wallace.



#### GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING:

Apologies for non-appearance of Issue No.36 -half of it has yet to arrive from Boston. Watch this space for info about the next 6 issues.

#### HOME EDUCATION CONFERENCE:

Advance information for any of your readers who may be interested and moving in the direction of Melbourne, Australia about September-October of this year. The Alternative Education Resource Group is planning Australia's first ever national conference of home educators; three days of guest speakers, workshop sessions and mutual support. Sorry we aren't able to help anyone pay fares, but if you are able to get to Melbourne, we can give you friendly and welcoming accommodation with home educating families.

For further information contact A.E.R.G., 54 Park St., Hawthorn, 3122, Aust.

IMPORTANT - CORRECTION - SEE PAGE 26 FEB. NEWSLETTER.

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 special educational needs he may have, either by...."

NOTICE FOR CO-ORDINATORS: Please amend the back of the membership forms - NO-publications - as follows;

Newsletters (back copies)

- no. 23 (June 1982) 30p to members  
45p to non-members
- no. 24 (August 1982) 30p to members  
45p to non-members
- no. 32 (December 1983) 60p to members  
75p to non-members
- no. 33 (February 1984) 75p to non-members

Digests; selection of articles from a whole year's newsletters - still relevant and useful - 1978 -50p to members  
75p to non-members

#### WHERE TO GET WHAT

Central Office; posters; digests; old n/ls; handbills.  
Mem. Secs. current n/ls; old n/ls; S.I.N.C.; Early Years; Teach Your Own.  
Gen. Sec. Envelope re-use labels at £1 per 100.

CO-Ords Sec. Stationery; intro. lit. and membership forms; mem.secs.  
address labels.

ALTERNATIVE BRITAIN RALLY: April 28th from 11am till 8pm - Friends house,  
Buston Road, London N.W.1. Cost £2. Enquiries; J. Andrews  
16a Franconia Road, S.W.4  
Tel: 01-622 5734.

7th Congress of the European Association for Humanistic Psychology; at the  
University of Surrey, Guildford, 26th July to 1st August. For details contact  
BAHP, 25b Harecourt Road, London N1 2LW, tel; 01 226 5441.

STEERING COMMITTEE; its main function is to make decisions which are too urgent to wait for the next Core meeting. (see 'Minutes'). Some members had suggested that advertising should be dropped from the newsletter now that we are solvent. Correspondence in the newsletter will be useful. Send us your views.

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## A D S

SMP MATHS. Does anyone have any SMP Maths books they would like to sell. I am looking for SMP books B-H and Books X,Y,Z. Also, if anyone has or is taking SMP Maths CSE or O-level at home I would be interested to hear how long it took them and any difficulties they encountered. By the way I am a parent, long out of school. Contact: vivien van den Berg, 35 Lucien Road, London. SW17 8HS - 01 767 3602.

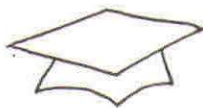
HOLME PLACE COMMUNITY has space for two more people. We are ten adults running a seven acre smallholding, holiday accommodation and deschooling our children. Varied interests and consensus decision-making. Capital needed. SAE Holme Place, Oakford, Tiverton, Devon.

BLANDFORD DORSET. Accomodation wanted within a 20 mile radius for a family of five (2 adults, 3 children). Anything considered (house, cottage, shared accomodation). Please reply: 26 The Green, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex. CM1 3DU

BUNGALOW FOR RENT. (3 bedrooms, large livingroom, etc.) on Essex / Suffolk border. If interested, write to us for details. David and Vicki Willow, Pollards Cross Cottage, Church Hill, Hempstead, Saffron Walden, Essex. CB10 2PA

SMALLHOLDING for sale in beautiful Snowdonia, 5 miles from Caernarvon, 3 bed. house and 7 acres bounded by river. £35,000. Write or phone: Mrs A Hopper, The Stone House, Nevill Holt, Market Harborough, LEICS. LE16 8EG. Tel. Medbourne Green 886.

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QUOTE



From "The Mind Benders" by James Gibb Stuart; an Embryo Book, published by William Mac-Lellan (£4.95); ISBN 0 85335 232 1; page 29;

"In many cases the desire for a degree, for any degree or academic qualification no matter how moderate, is made to supercede all other considerations. William J. Buckley, a well-known New York commentator, once remarked wryly that the only way to save his country's educational system was to give every American child a diploma when it was born, so that the high schools and colleges might be left more freely available to those with a genuine quest for knowledge."

# News From The Regions

## WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Membership has doubled over the past two years, totalling 25 at the last count. Of these, 6 families have children of school age being educated out of school. We now hold fairly regular meetings, usually in members' houses - nothing structured, just a chance to meet, play, chat and eat. It occurs to us that there are even smaller regions nearby - Warwickshire, Staffordshire - whose members might like to join us. It would help us, too, if this happened since we really have so few children out of school and they might like to meet some others. Our next meeting is on Saturday 28th April at around 2.00p.m., at Bob and Sylvia Jeffs', 16 St. Bernards Road, Solihull (021 706 6460).

.....LEICESTERSHIRE, STAFFORDSHIRE, SALOP, WARWICKSHIRE, and anyone else nearby welcome too.

## SOUTH YORKSHIRE

On Thursday, 16th February six of us met at 25 Moor Oaks Rd., Broomhill, Sheffield including 2 new members and one inquirer about EO. Last year's meetings were very poorly attended, but we decided that we would like to keep in touch. Any future meetings will be announced in the newsletter, as it is too expensive and time consuming to keep sending out letters to individuals.

The next meeting will be at 8.00p.m. on Thursday, 3rd May at Joan Hoare's house, 25 Moor Oaks Rd., Broomhill, Sheffield S10 1BX. Tel. Sheffield 666605. Please make a note of this date and come if you can.

## MOVE, EO MEETING FEB. 25, 26

I thought it might be of interest to members to give some figures about the members who came for the meeting.

Total visitors; 52  
Local people ie Sussex; 26  
Scotland; 4  
Beds., Hunts., Herts., 3  
Middx., Essex, Suffolk; 4  
Hants; 2  
Somerset; 2  
Yorks, Cheshire; 3  
Germany; 1  
London; 7

Two visitors signed as non members out of this total, both local judging by the signatures and people I knew, about 60 children were present in total (at least 60 I think).

Jane Davies.

NB Figures taken from lists of signatures and addresses requested by Maxine Toff. Visitors means surnames and could apply to individuals, couples, or families.

issued by the British Self-Study Centre Avon House, 360 Oxford St., London W.1.

### 'EXAMINER-PLAN' COURSES

'Examiner-Plan' GCE home Study Courses have been written by GCE Examiners purposely to avoid the delays of waiting for corrected lesson-work to be returned through the post, which is unavoidable with correspondence courses. This saving of valuable study time has resulted in the average 'Examiner-Plan' student completing an O-level Course in about 7 -8 months of part time study.

The Courses are delivered complete in every essential and the examiners who prepared them have set out to steer students away from the pitfalls that they know from their experience in marking candidates' scripts, so often lead to lost marks in the exam. Results have shown the Courses to be highly effective in leading to good grade GCE passes.

When the Lessons have been studied and the Test Questions answered the student opens the Model Answers which are individually contained in heat-sealed wallets. These Model Answer papers (1) repeat the question (2) give the full answer which (3) is followed by 'Instant Guide-Lines' which give (a) the reasoning which led to the answer (b) important factors to be noted and (c) common errors to be avoided.

The Courses conclude with a sealed set of 'Mock' examination questions. This 'Mock' is attempted under clear examination-type instructions and the students' attempts are sent to the British Self-Study Centre in London for marking by professional GCE Examiners (Note; This is the only occasion when the student has to use the post). The marked papers are returned to the student with a percentage mark assessment to indicate the grade the papers would probably have earned in an official GCE examination. Notes are given on any revision that may be advisable before sitting the examination.

The Courses are attractively presented in hard spring-ring binders and apart from the lessons, include study advice pre-examination guidance and instruction and testing in the Multiple Choice examining method.

The Courses have been approved by The Home Office and The Ministry of Defence and are being widely used by H.M. Prison Establishments and by a number of H.M. Forces.

#### Subjects.

'Examiner-Plan' Courses are available in Mathematics, English Language, History and Geography. Courses in Physics, Biology, Economics and Business Studies are in active preparation and A level Courses are being planned.

The Maths Course covers the new style O level requirement of these Boards where the exam comprises questions in Modern as well as Traditional Maths (e.g. London Syllabus 'B' ). The Course also covers the requirements of most other Boards.

The 'Examiner-Plan' English Language Course covers the O-level Syllabus of virtually all GCE Boards.

The History Course covering English History 1760-1955, is based on the London Syllabus 'B' and provides coverage of many other Boards Syllabuses.

The Geography Course provides tuition in General Geography and specifically in the Geography of the British Isles and Western Europe. It is suitable for students sitting the London(B)exam, Cambridge (2200), J.M.B. (A), A.E.B. (033), N. Ireland and Scottish S.C.E. (Traditional).

PRICE. Complete 'Examiner-Plan' Courses (including the marking of the 'Mock' exam- there are no extras) are normally priced at £49 per subject but have been made available to members of officially approved adult education schemes at a 50% discount (£24.50). This offer also applies to Education Otherwise members.

Prepared for the University of London GCE 'O' level Syllabus 'D'. This course is complete including even log tables and graph paper. It is separated into 30 lessons, clearly explained and generously interspersed with worked examples and short exercises to work through so that you are constantly checking your understanding. At the end of each 'lesson' you are given a test and then self assess these with a sealed packet of answers. The answers are very well done with a model answer exactly as you should do it in the exam, followed by 'instant guidelines' which are very detailed with notes on what the question required and how it has been answered. Students are requested to give themselves a percentage mark on the test and record this for their own guidance. The reasoning behind the self assessments is to get rid of the delay caused by sending off papers, and the sealed answers seem to be as efficient as possible in doing this. At the end of the course students are urged to take another sealed exam under self imposed exam conditions which can be sent away for tutor marking.

How is this course better than a good textbook? I think it scores highly for the advice and organisation it gives. Anyone needing confidence should find the structured approach sets them targets they can achieve and tick off on their route through the course. They should know how much they have achieved and, hopefully, how well they have achieved them. The idea of sealing answers should make it much easier to not cheat on yourself. The course is written by a Chief Examiner who has included lots of advice on how to satisfy the examiner. A well presented course.

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EXAMINER PLAN O LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE Charles Mutter.

This consists of 2 files; one contains a lot of things one needs to know about the GCE exam (syllabus etc. ), how to use the Examiner Plan system, plus the 24 Lessons. The other file contains 24 cling-wrapped Model Answers corresponding to the 24 Lessons. It is essentially a self-monitoring/self testing system; the publishers claim the advantage over correspondence courses is of much faster feedback.

I have not had experience of many English courses, but this one seems to cover all the necessary subjects in an accurate and readable way. Some of the examples of grammatical error are, perhaps, a little too glaring and obvious, but the rest of the chapters on grammar are clear, although perhaps not concise enough. The lessons on essays and the test questions that follow them, look very good indeed, particularly in the way that they are set out.

I think I would recommend this course, though whether I would still recommend it against unknown quantities in the form of other courses I cannot, of course, say.

### Words of power

Ask a teacher what he thinks are the key words in the educator's vocabulary and he'll probably answer 'discipline', 'order', 'rigour' (if he's an academic) and perhaps 'creativity', 'originality' and 'socialisation'. There's nothing wrong with any of them, of course, but when they appear in a school teacher's vocabulary you can be sure that somewhere in the hinterland behind these hopeful-looking, where-installations are stored things of greater weight; the teacher's self-image, his power to determine his pupil's behaviour and activity, his pride in imprinting his character and enthusiasms on others, even- and here honestly contends with charity-his enjoyment of power.

To me the truth is simpler and more immediate. Discipline, creativity and the rest are subjective, adult words. They assess behaviour and enable adults to react to it. As long as we conceive Education to consist, as largely as possible, of reaching goals set by some adult or other, we will find it easy to wrap the drama of childhood up in our efficient-looking container-words. We need a new vocabulary, one which works instead of merely describing and assessing. Its essential words begin with 'yes' and 'no', and the greatest of these is 'yes'.

Schools cannot readily say 'yes' to children. Their programs are built around adult knowledge and this often forces them to say 'no' to childish perception. It is not because they are evil or vicious that many Primary teachers would not, for example, allow a pupil to buy a book on writing styles and experiment. It's just that they have a good, clear, style of their own, and if the children can simply work out their private variation and use it, what is the teachers' function? Anyway, the school has a Policy, so there's no question of the pupils' taking the law into their own hands, is there? In school, no. Otherwise, yes.

'Yes' is the most educative word in our vocabulary. It is a kindly word, a relaxing, sunny word. Saying 'yes' brings joy and excitement. It reaches out a hand and is companionable. 'Yes' has dots after it which you can replace with 'and I'll come too' or 'and we'll see what happens.' 'Yes' says 'we can work as equals'. 'Yes' builds relationships and nourishes them. The more often you say it the more your children grow and the better they learn.

Nothing in this imperfect world is without danger. If we are going to use 'yes' as a key to our relationships with children we are going to have to take risks. Saying 'yes' to children is only honest if we accept that it is part of their programme of self-regulation. Therefore we cannot stop merely because saying 'yes' makes us uneasy. So we have at some stage to reassess our concept of parental responsibility. We fear, perhaps, that saying 'yes' to our children will 'spoil' them, and that we shall be taxed with raising self-centred brats. That fear is only justified, in my experience if our 'yes' has something of the nature of 'no'. 'No' ends things, and if you intend 'yes' to mean 'go and do whatever you want to do, but for pity's sake do it somewhere else,' you might as well say 'no' for all the good it will do. 'Yes' must mean 'Yes and I'm available to help', and it must also mean, 'Yes', and I'll live with your mistakes and misunderstandings, too'.

'No' is different. If you use it honestly it is most valuable, because it shuts doors and cuts threads. It's a hammer of a word. It drives in boundary markers, it ends discussion and speculation. It can save life and protect from injury. If you need to do any of these things, 'no' is invaluable. The question an educator needs to ask is, in what circumstances is it vital to end what is going on? Is it when the child is endangering his life, his health, or another's humanity, or is it when he is simply doing something 'inappropriate'?

or 'silly'? I should like to think that we in E.O. had contributed something to building a society in which fewer people felt entitled to force arbitrary and pointless decisions upon others. I should be satisfied if my own pupils learned from me that if they dream up a project, however odd or newfangled, they will always be allowed to realise it as far as it can be realised as long as it is safe and harmless to others.

Of course, you do all this anyway, don't you? Naturally, since you said 'no' to school because it said 'no' to your children. You said 'yes' to life.

Chris Shute.

## PEOPLE IN COMMON

We are a housing co-op in Burnley looking for new members. At present we are six adults and four children living in six terraced houses and have room for three more people. We try to be non-sexist, anarchistic, co-operative, humorous and non-violent. Mostly (sometimes, say pessimists) we succeed. We all help to run a creche during work hours, for our children, to enable both men and women to care for children and to earn money to pay their way within the group. We also take turns to cook and clean in the main house/office, which is two terraced houses next to each other. We usually do money earning work three days a week. We pool all our income. Some of us are interested in home education in the future and belong to Education Otherwise. We help to run a local food co-op which is based in one of our houses.

We have an old corn mill seven miles away outside the town, which we intend to convert into a variety of living and working spaces, some communal, some personal. We hope to have the first part of the building habitable in two to three years time. This will give some of us the chance to live a more rural and communal life, though some of us may stay here and form the nucleus of a continuing town-based group.

We would welcome new members who are either interested in helping us with our existing projects or who have ideas for their own money-earning projects to bring more diversity to the group.

### BUILDING.

We have run a building co-op for four years, usually doing grant work. We share the general building, job-organisation and paperwork, though we all have skills we concentrate on. We try to break down stereotyped divisions of labour. We need more people who are interested in building work, whether skilled or not. We are also agents for backboilers for Rayburns.

### TREE NURSERY.

We own a field of three acres next to the corn mill, where we have started a tree nursery.

### LOCAL POLITICS.

People in the group have always been interested in local political issues. Our interests cover anti-nuclear, feminist, anti-racist and anti-motorway campaigns. At present our particular interests are political folksinging and non-violent direct action.

If any of these ideas or projects appeal to you, write (with S.A.S.) to us for more details, and let us know something about yourself too, if you want to visit. We ask for £1.50 per person per day for food, and expect visitors to join in with whatever needs doing.

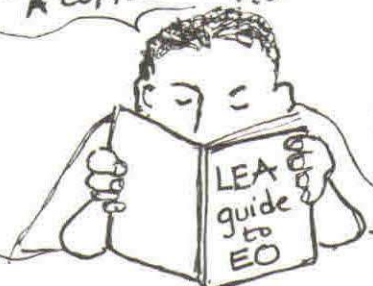
### DIRECTIONS.

Arriving by train - make your way to the bus station, then as below. My bus - catch the Townsley bus, ask for Kirkgate 22p. When you get off, walk on up the hill, take first road on your left, which is Clarence Street.

PEOPLE IN COMMON, 58 CLARENCE ST., BURNLEY. PHONE 36932.

ARCHIE INSPECTED

AND DO YOU FOLLOW A CURRICULUM?



I TRY TO BUT THEY DON'T MAKE MUCH SENSE

WHAT ABOUT SOCIALISATION?



WELL THERE'S THE W.I. AND A NICE WOMAN NEXT DOOR

DO YOU USE THE TELEVISION?



YES, WE KEEP THE DOLLS HOUSE ON IT...

BUT WHAT ABOUT TAKING EXAMS?



I WON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO TAKE EXAMS SO LONG AS I'M TEACHING ARCHIE AT HOME



## SOCIALISATION

Socialisation. Peer group interaction. Call it what you will, this aspect of social relations and the EO student tends to be a dominant theme in discussions of home education. And EO families seem just as afflicted - look at any recent newsletter - as the teachers, authorities, neighbours and others who use 'social deprivation' as their primary ammunition for the inducement of guilt.

All too often, EO families accept at face value the argument that no school equals no 'socialisation'. I'm sure any of you with any EO experience will be aware of the clichés; 'They've got to learn to mix.....mingle with all sorts.....take the rough with the smooth'. All well and good. But why do so many people blindly accept that schools are institutions which foster - efficiently and effectively - the development of the social skills we may deem necessary? Surely, on one level - 'learning to mix with all sorts.....taking the rough with the smooth' - prisons do at least as good a job?.

and the prison analogy is not untoward. The traditional school system, like its penal counterpart, relies primarily on compulsion, on the unquestioning obedience of the students/inmates to often arbitrary rules. Institutional life in both cases is also highly regulated, even to the extent and degree of social contact ('socialising').

I shall not press the prison analogy further, but here is the rub; the nature of the 'socialising' permitted and encouraged in schools - more especially secondary schools - is as limited and artificial as that in many prisons. Yet social skills are supposed to be learned to enable the individual to cope with life. And in the great big world outside the authoritarian institutions social intercourse is certainly not restricted to 'playtimes' and with people of like age (or sentence) who happen to be defined by some authority as 'peers'. Looked at in this way, the social interaction within schools can be positively harmful.

Think back on your own school days. You would be a very rare person if you could honestly say that the bulk - or the most meaningful aspects - of your social experience took place in school. We need to exercise our social skills in the community at large - on the streets, at work, parties and other gatherings. And this is where we also learn our skills. Schools - at their very best - play only a contributory (and non-essential) role.

Of course, it is easier for an EO student living in some remote area to meet very few people, to become a 'loner' in studies. But this, experience has shown, occurs because the student wishes it; because the student has decided that this should be so either as a confident expression of individuality or because of deep rooted fears. In the former case, there should be little, if any, cause for concern. In the latter, school - with all but a few remarkable exceptions - could prove disastrous. The attitudes of students determine how successful will be their social relationships and the speed with which they will pick up various social skills.

Attitude is, therefore, essential. And this brings us full circle; back to what is meant by EO. Educating children at home is no easy option. Even those parents who mildly genuflect in the direction of A.S.Neill and 'let them grow like flowers' undertake a great responsibility when they opt for EO. Since such decisions are usually made 'for the children', parents should be very clear about what they feel will benefit their offspring and where and how this can most efficiently and effectively be achieved. Parental vagueness and vacillation can only do harm to the emotional wellbeing of the child - and cripple and distort the ability to 'socialise'. And this would apply whether a child was in or out of school.

After many years of involvement - mostly outside Britain - with home and other educational alternatives, there is only one generalised comment I would apply to EO students; they tend to be socially more adaptable and outgoing - more mature - than their school-going counterparts.

And this is to be expected as EO students tend to have more open and understanding even democratic home environments. They also generally avoid the imposition of artificial barriers - mainly age - to social contact and can, for the most part, mix more freely and confidently with people of varying ages and backgrounds. This can make them, in a very positive way, different from their 'peers'; it is a difference which helps them to cope even better socially. And I have yet to find a neighbourhood where students - although not necessarily their parents - resented, opposed or thought EO anything other than a good thing. The standard comment directed at EO students by their school-going neighbours seems to be: 'Hey, you're lucky'.

Terry Bell.  
163 Beacon Road,  
Chatham,  
Kent

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#### ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE

I would like to let people know of the alternative education we have opted for after a gruelling year of State comprehensive education for our daughter aged 12.

To say we have all just come through the most miserable heartache in the past 12 months is indeed putting it mildly.

Our daughter Anne transferred to senior comprehensive school last September and from the first day our troubles began. She was bullied, beaten up, knocked down, kicked, and pressurised to smoke and swear. The teachers set a bad example to pupils by being late for lessons (sometimes as much as 40 minutes) or not even turning up at all; the children were often kept waiting outside school in pouring rain for as much as half an hour at a time waiting for teachers to arrive. The toilets were so badly vandalised that the headmaster took the easy way out and locked them. This meant that children had to chase all over the school to find a key holder and they were told by the senior mistress that if they had to use them in lesson time they must bring a note from parents. Ludicrous.

We got so dissatisfied with the school and the teaching methods that after writing numerous letters and getting nowhere we went to see the headmaster. The appointment was made but we found this person so unapproachable - starting with his first keeping us waiting 15 minutes after the appointed time whilst he stood gazing out of his office window - that the visit was a complete and utter waste of time. Letters and visits to and from the Local Education Authority and welfare Officer were also.

Our daughters health deteriorated, she could not sleep, she had nightmares, she was sick in the mornings, complained of violent stomach pains and had headaches that put her in bed for a day at a time. Eventually our Doctor said it was school phobia and in due course we travelled some 50 miles to the office of a top child psychologist whom we had asked our doctor to refer Anne to. Upon hearing the whole story he told us that we should have kept Anne off school until matters were to our satisfaction. We had, of course, previously broached this with the Local Education Authority and had been told we would be prosecuted.

During this time I had contacted Mary Carter of E.O. and had heard of her long battle with Derbyshire Education Authority and we felt that we could not put Anne under any more strain. She has always been an above average child but now she was becoming worn down by school life, she was getting a couldn't care less attitude that many of the teachers fostered in the children by their own examples. She had told the head-mistress that she had learned to touch type and was practising regularly at home but this woman jeered at her in front of the whole class and told her she was wasting her time as no one would want typists by the time she left school.

She came out of school one day, sank into the car with tears in her eyes and said "Mum, what shall I do - I feel suicidal". I was determined then that she was to be got out of the "System".

We have in our area a small Rudolph Steiner school, I was desperate when I contacted them. From the moment I walked through the door of Michael House School I was for the first time in all Anne's school life, treated as a sane person. There is no head teacher, the teachers work together as a close knit group WITH the parents. They say there should be no division of school and home life - every child is treated as an individual - they call it an education for life and we are finding it so. The parents and child are interviewed by the Administrator and the class teacher, nothing is too much trouble, the teacher even came to our home to see us so that my husband wouldn't have to take time off work - which he was perfectly willing to do. Anne was accepted at the school in July of this year and the change in her is unbelievable. She wakes in the morning eager for school, she has made new friends and no longer dreads each coming day. Parents are encouraged to go to the school and help in the smooth running of it. The school is maintained by parents contributions and also by parents being prepared to do physical work on and around the school itself to save on outgoings. School and home become one. I did not know such schools existed. I know it is early days at the moment but I can only think that this school has saved my daughters sanity. We have met many many parents at school who have been in the same predicament that we were - the local Education Authority try to make censorious parents feel in the minority to keep them quiet it seems. There are too many spineless beings in the authority who think more of safeguarding their own precious jobs than the health and welfare of the children they are supposedly there to protect.

There must be many more parents who feel they are banging their heads against a brick wall when talking to teachers and the authority. I know we were made to feel complete idiots who knew nothing worth knowing at all. We were talked down to and practically forced to hand our child over to a system we were in complete disagreement with. If anyone would like to know more about the Steiner way of education or to be put in touch - or receive literature about Michael House in particular which is situated at Shipley, mid-way between Nottingham and Derby I would be very pleased to help them all I can. No child should have to endure the misery we saw our own daughter go through when there is a way out.

by John and Jean Musson. Tel: Langley Mill 68299

## E.O. IN MILTON KEYNES.

We have been supporters of E.O. for a number of years but only for the last nine months have we been practising E.O. with our own child. (Apart from the first 5 years of their lives when we are thought to be responsible enough to teach them the rudiments of life). Having spent 3 years at Holme Place, a community practising E.O., we then lived in temporary accommodation as a 'Nuclear family' for 3 months, then lived with another E.O. family for 2 months where we shared the birth of our 3rd. child. Since the end of November we have been living in Milton Keynes and joy of joys we have walked into an E.O. community.

Zoe has never been to school and will be 6 years old in May. She is a lively active, inquisitive little girl, she enjoys numbers and their application, likes writing but as yet has shown no serious inclinations to read. When we knew we were going to move to Milton Keynes (to be involved with Greentown) we chose a property just around the corner from some friends we had made in the summer. These friends just prior to our moving had had a meeting to discuss the possibility of de-schooling their children.

Consequently when we moved Zoe had contact with these children out of school hours only. Christmas came and after Christmas none of these children in question went back to school. So that meant 4 boys aged 6-7 years were also at home during the day - 3 of them less than 100 yards away.

Since January there have been various activities that the children have been involved in - gymnastics, horse care and riding, workshops in music, circus and puppets. Because we live so close to each other we can support each other in many ways. We find in our house - either no children or many - ages range from 4 months to 7 years. They seem to fall into 2 groups 5-7 and under 5's quite naturally I suppose.

In our house there is no structure to the day, things just happen when they crop up. In some of the other houses there is slightly more structure as the 3 R's are practiced daily - although this tends to be in theory rather than in practice.

If anyone is interested there are 3 houses in our street, ironically, called School St., and other houses in nearby streets for sale. So if you want to see and perhaps join our informal E.O. community please write to or phone: Lynne, 29, School St., New Bradwell, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK 13 ODB Tel. Milton Keynes 314949.

BY Christopher s

Once upon a time there lived an old man and his wife. One day the old woman went down stairs for break fast, then suddenly something strange began to happen. The house began shake, the plant pot fell over and smashed. The old woman was frightened, she ran up the stairs and saw her husband had gone. "O dear me my husband has gone," said the old woman.

## EDUCATION FILMS

Others might like the moral support these two films could give by showing they are not alone in their distrust of the education system. (Both available for hire from Concord Films Council Ltd., 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, IP3 9RJ)

Learning to Lose. Colour, 26 mins, film hire - £14.00. Granada TV, 1982.

Exam-based, academic schooling is shown as failing many of our children, producing school-leavers who are unemployable. The schools blame the Universities for imposing outdated academic syllabuses but this is perhaps only an excuse for their own failure.

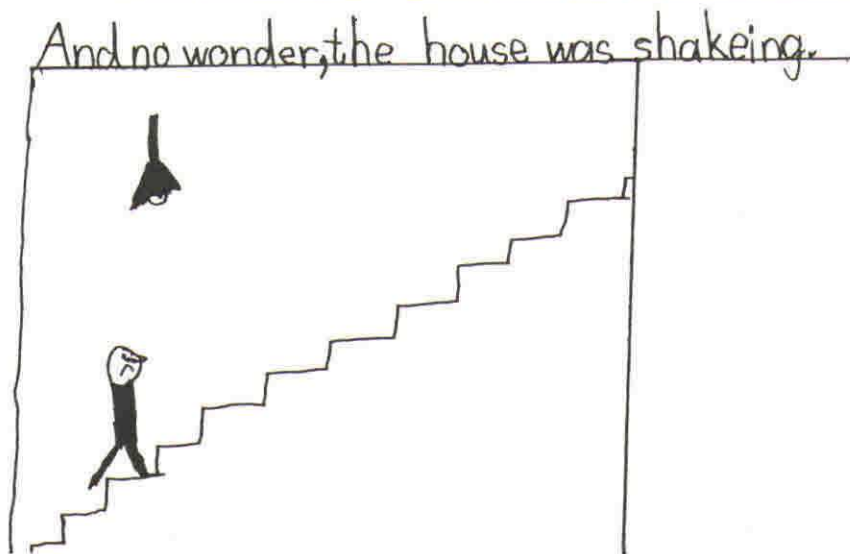
Out of school, many 'failures' do well in flexible learning situations that work with young people's interests, and emphasise the learning of skills: the film shows car maintenance and microprocessor classes. We need a definition of ability that appreciates 'doing' as much as 'thinking'.

The film begs some questions: is education only about getting a job? Can the needed reforms occur within the existing system?

The Diploma Disease. Colour, 42 mins, film hire-£24.00 video hire-£12.00, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, 1982.

This excellent film dissects the simple notion that 'education' leads to development. Using Sri Lanka and Mexico as case studies, with additional material from Japan, we see how education systems can become simply a race for qualifications rather than a way of obtaining useful or life-enhancing knowledge. The effects of this process are particularly serious in poor countries: qualifications lead to the well-paid jobs, the elite, but the struggle to get them batters away all originality, spontaneity, social consciousness. On the other hand, traditional knowledge, the learning of useful skills, becomes downgraded, of low status, whereas low cost improvements could make it much more effective. There are lessons here for the rich world too.

Roger Downie.



MINUTES OF THE CORE GROUP MEETING ON SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY, 1984

Present: Helen Holland, Bruce Wallace, Alison Mafham, Stuart Toff, Mick and Jen White, Madeline Gess Ratcliffe, Jeremy Griffin, Cathy Jupp, Andy Anderson, Christine Galvin, Janet Everdell, Priscilla Park Weir (minutes), Bruce Cox (chairman) and many others who did not leave their names.

1. Apologies were received from John Elenor, Simon and Caroline Grant, Dick Kitto and Anne Moss.
2. Minutes from the previous meeting were accepted with the correction of Anne Wades name to Anne Moss.
3. Matters arising

3.1 The typewriter has been sold and a cheque for £200 received from the Harrisons.

3.2 Midge whitelegg now has copies of Growing Without Schooling and some back copies.

3.3 Ivan Sokolov has been abroad and thus unable to carry out the revision of SINC.

4. Officers Reports

4.1 Membership secretary. Bruce Wallace said that membership was running at about the same as last year. The most recent figure was 995 members. Non renewals were quite high with 150 in December/January and 53 in February/March and there were about 9 areas without co-ordinators.

Andy Anderson said he would take on the job of Co-ordinators Enquiries secretary and ask co-ordinators to try and find out why members don't renew. His name address and telephone number are to be added to the list of officers at the end of every newsletter. It is hoped we can find out if we need to improve what we are providing for some members. There was a discussion about dropping the rate to those who pay by bankers order, but as bankers orders are more difficult to process no decision was taken over this.

4.2 Enquiries secretary. Janet Everdell said that enquiries for January were high and February is good with a total of 277 from the new year to Feb 23rd.

Media enquiries continue to trickle in and the latest is from Thames TV wanting people to interview. Parent magazine will carry an Alternative education article in March and Home and Freezer Digest will have an article on education at home in their June issue. For a small group we get a remarkable amount of publicity.

There are now many more enquiries from parents of secondary age children so there is an urgent need for a secondary booklet.

A member has suggested that central office Tel. no. could be put on the address labels as free advertising every time the newsletter goes out and this will be tried for the first time with the April newsletter.

John Perry of Gwent asked for publicity as he thought that this would be a way to help him during his legal battle over refusal to de-register David. Richard North and the Times responded with interest, but to date there has been no article. Apart from the Perry case there appears to be very little legal hassle for our members at the moment. There have been requests for advice from co-ordinators with members that have been threatened but our routine advice of an NCCL solicitor seems to quieten matters.

The request for £3,000 from the BBC's Children in Need fund will go before the committee but even if accepted it is unlikely we would get more than £500. However this is an area that can be tested again next year by local co-ordinators.

There was a discussion about the many hours Janet puts in and whether parts of her job could be broken down. She is happy with the work load at the moment but it was foreseen that it might get worse. She said that parts of the job could be split off and passed on to volunteers. As Andy Anderson would now deal with enquiries from co-ordinators she would no longer have to distribute publications and stationery to them.

4.3 Treasurer. Alison Mafham said that she was organising the accounting year from 9th Feb. '83 to 9th Feb. '84 and hoped this was agreeable. Accounts on 9th Feb stood at £4,953.59 in the deposit account and £753.07 in the current account.

4.4 Publications. Caroline Grant was not present due to imminent baby, but sent a written report. The next newsletter will be printed by a Penygroes printer. Lifespan had quoted a slightly lower price, but their distance away does not seem to make the lower price worth while. The Penygroes printer 'knows the ropes' and the delivery and complicated instructions can be done in person. They also do other printing for us and this time they will mail the newsletter to see how this works.

Leslie Downie has agreed to edit the June newsletter.

There is a good supply of Early Years and enough SINC for the present, but there is still an urgent need for a revised version and for a similar secondary publication. We also have up to date supplies of stationery, posters, introductory literature and membership forms.

4.5 General Secretary. John Elenor wrote in to say that there was still little progress on charitable status, and he was sorry there was nothing useful to say yet. Reporting on the Encyclopaedia Britannica affair he said that Mrs. Ewens wrote an unsolicited testimonial to E.B.. E.B. sent John Elenor a copy of the letter that was to go out to members and said 'trust this meets with your approval'. He felt that at that stage there was nothing that could be done about it. There followed discussion about how to make the contact list more confidential as it was felt that some people feel very vulnerable being on the list at all. Bruce Cox agreed to look into the possibility of copyright.

4.6 Steering Committee. The Steering Committee had little to report. Some members had suggested that advertising should be dropped from the newsletter now that we are solvent. It was felt that correspondence on this topic in the newsletter would be useful.

It was agreed that every advertisement for Core Group Meetings should state clearly that these are completely open meetings to which all members are invited either as observers or participants.

The meeting felt that it was worth restating what the Steering Committee is for. Its main function is to make decisions which are too urgent to wait for the next Core Meeting. All its decisions must be unanimous. Members wishing to raise an urgent matter should therefore contact a member of the Committee.

#### 5. Financial Priorities

It was agreed that we need to decide how the money that we now have should be spent. We need guidelines on what local co-ordinators can claim, and what travelling expenses core group members can claim. We need debate in the newsletter on things we could do and whether we should offer to pay legal fees. It was decided that we needed a sub committee to look into these things and Alison Mafham and Bruce Wallace agreed to be on it and it was proposed that Betty Ball and Joan Hoare should be approached as well. It was thought that meetings could most cheaply be conducted by conference telephone.

There was a suggestion that 1% of the subscription could be put in a distress fund that could be claimed for through co-ordinators. It was thought useful to point out to co-ordinators that if families in distress need practical help, this can often be obtained through the voluntary services.

#### 6. Publications

Bruce Cox agreed to take on the revision of JINC and the starting of the secondary booklet that is urgently required. It was agreed that he should be paid for his expenses and for his time as it was now most important that these things should be done quickly.

Dick Kitto agreed to tackle the New Law of Education by Butterworth that was coming out in March. It was thought that as this would be a 50 page booklet about the law and its application it would only become available free to local co-ordinators. It was agreed that Dick Kitto should be paid expenses including the £50 that the book will cost, though it was thought part of this might be recovered through selling later.

#### 7. Research

Anne Gude was particularly interested in what happened to parents who joined SW with children who were rising five, but still sent them to school. If they had had more support/help might they have kept them out of school? If there had been a local group would that have influenced them? Anne Gude agreed to go ahead with an open ended questionnaire which might be administered through the local co-ordinators to try and improve the percentage who return it.

#### 8. Future meetings

The next meeting would be at Unstone Grange, but it would be best if we could plan further ahead. It was agreed that the February meeting should be in an urban centre and Andy Anderson said he would get more details of a centre he knew of in Crewe for next February. For the other meetings the ideal places should be reasonably cheap, have residential and camping facilities and be easy for members to get to. Bruce Cox agreed to be meetings co-ordinator and said he would approach Joan Hoare to help him. He requested that members send details of suggested meeting places to him.

#### 9. Any Other Business

It was agreed to advertise two events in the newsletter in the hope that local members might wish to participate:-

- 1) Alternative Britain; Rally and Fayre, 28th April, Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd., London NW1
- 2) The Seventh Congress of the European Association for Humanistic Psychology: 26th July - 1st August 1984 at the University of Surrey, Guildford.

A vote of thanks was extended to Maxime Toff for organising the week-end.

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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.

For further information send a 9"x 4" s.a.e. to

25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs. PE18 9AN