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# EDUCATION

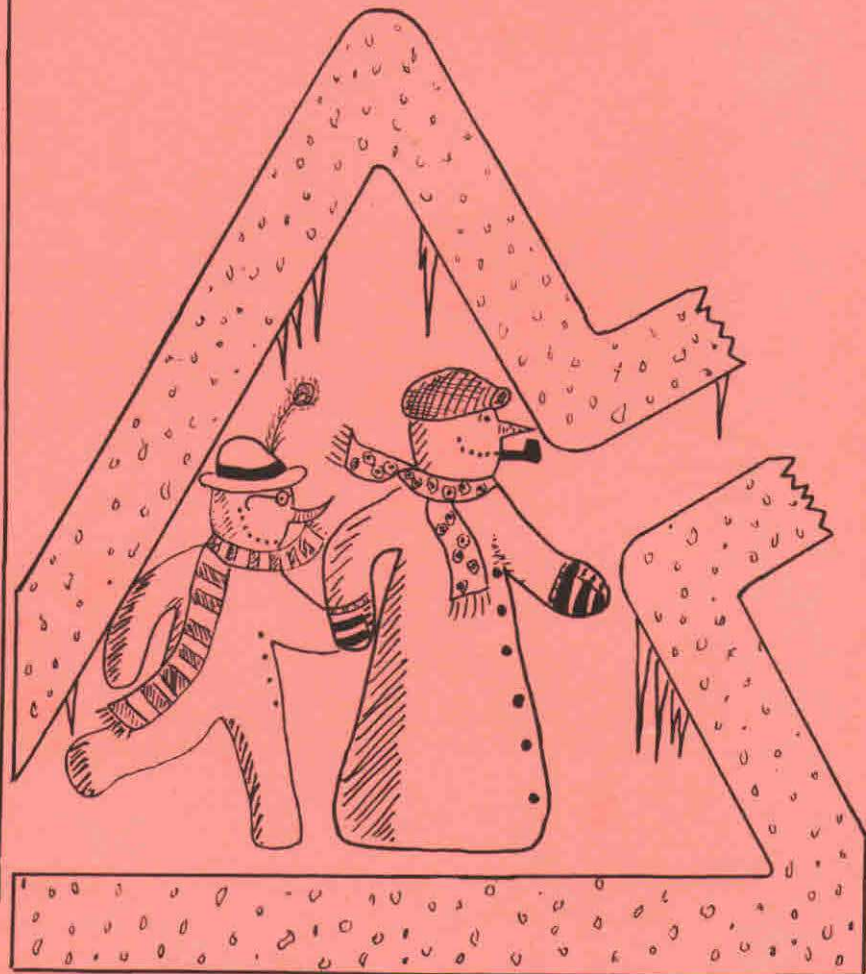
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NEWSLETTER NO. 44

DECEMBER 1985



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Contributions for the next edition should be sent to the editor by the deadline date, and all material intended as such, should be clearly marked "For Publication". Contributors are asked to ensure they include their name and address.

### NEXT EDITOR

(February 1986)

MEG ROBERTON

The Old Thatched House

Mitford Lane

Limpley Stoke

BATH

Avon

Deadline: JANUARY 1st 1986

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

## EDITORIAL

In the same way that no gardening gets done in this household unless the need is obvious, so it was with our children's education. As far as gardening is concerned, you might think that this would result in an untidy and unkempt appearance, but in fact the opposite is the case. Every weed that dares to expose itself amongst the massed summer display is quickly dealt with, and once the hoe is used to get rid of a small patch of unwanted greenery, my eyes get tuned in to all the other similar patches, and so the seemingly aimless trail round the garden with a hoe actually results in something that is lovely to look at and under control.

Unfortunately it doesn't work like that with education. No amount of visits to the school to enquire about progress and seek clarification about incidents that you find disturbing, will necessarily result in an adult with a rounded education and a happy healthy outlook on life - which I assume is the aim of all parents.

The reasons why this is so and what can be done about it, have been the subject of many books; but in the meantime we are left with our child who is unhappy and failing to thrive, our child whose full potential is not being tapped, and so, as desperate parents we defy "authority" and take them away from an environment that our culture has taught us is normal and right.

I am aware that many parents are more far sighted than the kind of parent described above (which is us of course), and I am amazed at their perception; that they should recognise the problems without having actually experienced them, and do not send their children to school in the first place.

Whatever kind of parent we are, we are held together by the common bond of wishing to take back to ourselves the responsibility for our children that has been until now the concern of the State.

Even so, most of us recognise the kind of world we live in, and that education is not such a bad thing really. Like all good salesmen, educationalists have created a need for their product, so that now your chances of getting a job stacking shelves in a supermarket are enhanced if you have one or two 'O' levels. How can we as EO parents, live with a foot in both camps? There are lots of ways of course, which sound easy when they are written down, but are in fact far from easy in practice. For example, I imagine that many EO parents are extremely anxious as they wait for their children to display an interest in reading that will enable them to learn that skill with a sense of excitement and consequently without stress. It is the same with us at the other end of the spectrum, but we do not have the courage to wait, and are gently easing our bright but unacademic 16 year old daughter into the world of examinations.

Personally, I would like to have formal recognition of our commitment and our aims. I would like the government to be made aware of us, and I would like monetary grants to be made available to us if necessary, and the rich facilities that there are in the education system to be at our disposal, so that we can take what is good, and leave what is bad, instead of the "all or nothing" attitude that is prevalent. There is no threat to the teaching profession in this for I think it unlikely that all parents would wish to take on this responsibility. However, we do, and not only is what we attempt not wrong, but it is courageous and deserves recognition.

I am no leader of men, but I would throw my hat in the ring with anyone who would care to carry our cause to a high authority in this land in order to obtain the very best that is possible for our children.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Holliday  
10 Chalton Road, Bridge of Allan, Stirling

## A TRIBUTE TO JOHN HOLT

Janet Everdell did not receive notification of John's death until the 30th September, but on behalf of EO, she managed to send the message below to be read out at a memorial service held on the 5th October.

From Education Otherwise, Cambridgeshire, England.

Our members have been greatly saddened by the news of John's untimely death. We extend our deepest sympathy to his sisters, relatives, friends and colleagues in Holt Associates.

We are very aware of the great loss John's death is to the home-schooling movement in both our countries. Our organisation received a great boost four years ago when John came over to talk with us at Birmingham University, encouraging us to shout our cause in the market place. Since then we have tried hard to do just that and now receive almost continual publicity through press, radio and T.V. Our membership has nearly trebled and after reading John's books many more parents have the courage to educate their children in the loving environment of their own home. Indeed, it is a great comfort to know that we can all continue in this important reforming movement with John's child-respecting, calm and practical writings to guide us.

"The home-schooling movement is growing and will continue to grow because it makes sense, and because it works", and because of John Holt.

\*\*\*\*\*

At our meeting at Wick Court in October, a friend from America talked to us about John, and we all sang the song included here. He will be remembered with affection, and as a man who proved a great inspiration to many of us.

"'Tis a gift to be simple,  
'Tis a gift to be free,  
'Tis a gift to come down  
Where you ought to be.  
And when you find yourself  
In the place just right,  
Twill be in the valley  
Of peace and delight.  
Dance, dance, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
I'll lead you all wherever you may be,  
I will lead you all in the dance, said he."

\*\*\*\*\*

True learning - learning that is permanent and useful, that leads to intelligent action and further learning - can arise only out of the experience, interests, and concerns of the learner.

Every child, without exception, has an innate and unquenchable drive to understand the world in which he lives and to gain freedom and competence in it. Whatever truly adds to his understanding, his capacity for growth and pleasure, his powers, his sense of his own freedom, dignity, and worth may be said to be true education.

John Holt

From **GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING**  
729 Boylston Street, Boston, MA02116

It is with sorrow that I write to tell John Holt's many friends that he died this morning, Saturday, September 14th at 6.50 am, of cancer (multiple metastatic melanoma). He died peacefully in his sleep, at his home.

When the cancer was diagnosed in June, John refused radiation or chemotherapy, believing from his own research that such methods do more harm than good. He spent 10 days in July in a hospital in Bangor, Maine, being treated (fairly successfully) for fluid accumulation in his lungs; then he spent several days with George and Mabel Dennison in Maine, and the Wallace family in Ithaca, New York. Returning to Boston, John stayed two weeks with the Van Doren family in Quincy and began to receive the Vitamin C treatment he wanted. On August 26th, however, he blacked out for several hours and spent the next 10 days in Mass. General Hospital, Boston. When he had severe internal bleeding on August 30th, we began to have friends to stay with him around the clock. At his insistence we arranged for him to go home on Thursday September 5th, where nurses and friends looked after him (particularly Leila Berg of England, David Chickering of Chicago, and Theo and Anita Giesy of Virginia). Over the last two weeks he lost much weight, was very jaundiced, and dozed most of the time. He was rarely in any pain.

John wished to be cremated and his ashes will be sent to his sisters in New Mexico.

If you have any particular memories of John that you would like to share, I invite you to send them to us, to be published in GWS.

As John knew, the staff and supporters of Holt Associates will continue the work he started, and this helped him to feel satisfied with what he accomplished in his life. It comforts us to remember that we will always have his writings to guide us.

Donna Richoux  
Holt Associates, Inc.

Other staff of Holt Associates:

Pat Farenga  
Steve Rupprecht  
Mary Van Doren  
Mary Maher  
Wendy Baruch

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear John Holt, wherever you are!

I have read lots of books and articles written by you, always at a time when I needed the comforting support your views gave me. You reflected my feelings so precisely time and again that thanks to you I had the courage to persuade my husband, and myself, to take our children out of school. Your perceptiveness never ceased to amaze. Your understanding of little children and their natural growth and development came across with such warmth that it was almost tangible.

I saw you at Birmingham in the large lecture room four and a half years ago and for some strange reason you inspired such trust. You sort of blew relaxation and amiability into the hall full of anxious parents and anxious organisers. And yet you said very little. I remember your message to let children be, with an explanation that struck home: to interfere suggests two things to the child: a) it reinforces how small and inexperienced he/she is and b) the adult knows how to do things so much better, thus devaluing what could have been an intelligent activity.

I have not been a very good pupil - I have interfered and bossed inappropriately time and time again. But my private thoughts have often been in conversation with you, and the children did benefit from these silent dialogues.

Even so, there have been many times when I have felt like writing to you to ask advice about this or that agony. But invariably the sun would come up the next morning and life would take on a fresher complexion, and we would readjust quite naturally to each other, renewed.

Thus, I have never written to express my genuine appreciation for giving your life so creatively to the happiness of children - and now it is too late.

With love

Kate Freeman  
Wayside Farm, Etchilhampton, Devizes, Wilts

EO OUT-TAKES

(from letters received at central address)

"We wish to teach our 4½ year old son at home as he has been sexually harassed twice at the school which he has attended for three weeks".

"I am an early retired teacher with six children who found their school experience not only practically useless after eleven years of it but even counter-productive. In fact one of my sons now in his twenties feels obliged to pay for private tuition in spelling and writing".

"A probation officer told me that if my children just thump back once it will solve all their problems. I explained my children do not want to do this, and he said it's the way of the world".

"I do hope you can help, so many are not satisfied with the educational provisions now made (including at least two headmasters we know)".

"I have not been satisfied with my daughter's progress at school since she started in January '84, and see no point in her continuing there as most of what she knows and can do, has actually been learnt at home".

"For your interest, my son (at the comprehensive) has no books - text books - to bring home in English, Maths, Science, History or Geography and the homework set is never up to the minimum which the school had given parents details of in a recent letter".

"It is a relief to know we are not on our own - I don't think I'm the pioneering type - and to know somebody is as appalled at the system as we are".

Janet Everdell  
25 Common Lane  
Hemingford Abbots  
Cambs

\*\*\*\*\*

Margaret and Alastair Bonham-Noyle are delighted to announce the arrival of a new brother for Vivi, Kyrsti, Ceri, and Rhodri. Stephen was born at home on 9th July, and weighed in at a healthy 9½ lbs.

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED

Language tapes or records in German (preferably) and French, Robina Pye, Edinample, Lochearnhead, Perthshire FK19 8QE

Musical instrument left at Wick Court: Phone 01 904 7155

At a recent EO gathering many mums talked about the bad days they have when teaching their children at home. These are days when the children are bored and fractious and the mother is starting to wish she could send the children to school for a few days just to get a rest from them. Many mothers find that having their children around them for 24 hours a day 7 days a week becomes too much and they do indeed abandon home-schooling.

I would like to suggest that this situation should not arise. I feel that the fault lies in the home situation still being too much like school where, of course, this situation continually arises.

Parents should be less active and more passive, less a teacher and more a resource. Thus the children become more active and less bored.

I would refer EOers to an extract from 'Teaching Mixed Ability Classes' by A. V. Kelly:

"If education is our concern, then one of our objectives must be autonomy for the learner. From the beginning we must be trying to create a situation in which our pupils' learning is increasingly self-directed and self-propelled, until eventually that education can go on without us, we become superfluous. It is the educators' job to render his own services unnecessary".

Perhaps it isn't easy to embrace superfluity but if we are not willing to do so we are holding our children back.

Nigel Everdell, 25 Common Lane  
Hemingford Abbots, Cambs.

With regard to Peggy Kann's letter concerning 5 year old Rebecca Andreas (see page 13 Oct NL) - for those interested, the parents of Rebecca are fully aware that school is not compulsory as I personally wrote to them over a year ago. An article in the local newspaper prompted me to contact them, and Mr. Andreas has since phoned me on two or three occasions - each time because the

LEA were making threats. We, on behalf of EO, can only offer our support and advice - it is up to the individual whether they accept it, or not.

Sandie Cottee, 24 Deneway, Vange,  
Basildon, Essex

I would like to take up a couple of points from the editorial of the Oct 85 NL. Firstly, in view of the limited space in the NL it would, I think, be preferable that "children's own work" be published in *Kipper* and that the newsletter remain, as presumably it was intended, a forum for information, ideas and discussion from anyone, including children, about any matter to do with the education of children out of school. This policy would at least avoid the invidious task of rejecting children's work for lack of space.

More jokes are really not called for. When we joined EO in 1979 we did not expect or wish for the NL to be "lighthearted". Rather, we expected, and generally received, something varied, stimulating and serious, relevant to the education of children out of school. If we had wanted light reading with jokes and quizzes we could have subscribed to *Reader's Digest*. The now traditional Educating Archie and the spontaneous, natural and uncontrived humour in the contributions are leavening enough.

Please could we also stop the recommending and extolling of schools in the newsletters. May I suggest that those EO members who are strongly in favour of any kind of school declare this in the Contact List so that interested people could contact them directly and privately.

Parents who educate their own children are still not numerous and generally receive little support and on occasion have to face suspicion and hostility. Through EO newsletters these people do find some small support; let us not weaken or reduce that. I feel strongly that articles in praise of schools (except as resource centres), and consequently against EO's aims, should not get past editors and into newsletters. It would be considered

self-destructive if, say, a peace organisation published articles warmly expressing the expediency and effectiveness of various forms of violence. If people are in favour of schooling that is fine and tenable, but let them find other channels of communication than EO newsletters through which to propagate their views on this. Our cohesion and power as an organisation stem entirely from our pursuing, as closely as we can, the common aim of retaining or taking responsibility for our children's education and welfare. If we lose sight of this we finally become fragmented, vulnerable and forced to transgress important personal principles. It is not unreasonable to expect that those who belong to EO have a certain degree of loyalty to the mass of members and adherence to its aims and ideals.

You may recall the strong reaction against the unfortunate EO members who misguidedly misused our Contact List to try to sell encyclopaedias. Why is there no such outcry when our newsletter is progressively being handed over, as an occasional platform, to advocates and apologists for schooling? EO's aims, if people need to know what they are, are clearly stated in brief on the back of every newsletter.

Let any newsletter reader, especially the first-time reader, be put in no confusion or doubt that the EO membership is convinced of the rich emotional, intellectual and social benefits for children and families of home education.

We look forward to reading more about the pleasures, problems and concerns of "education otherwise" in this and forthcoming newsletters, and welcome anything which helps or encourages families to educate their own.

Rajan Naidu, 21 Hilltop House,  
Hornsey Lane, London

I support Helen Howlett in her commitment to "Freedom to Choose", but I'm sure the fact that the majority of EO members have their children

in school (or so it seems) means that they are looking for a more flexible system rather than complete withdrawal.

So couldn't we lobby the government for more freedom within the schools. For a start the school day is too long for most little ones and five days at a stretch too much. (Compare with other countries - the Finns increase the school hours with the age of the child, the French have Wednesday off for the little ones, the Austrians finish at midday.)

Secondly, is compulsory attendance (for the registered) necessary? If parents feel their child needs a break (often just for 'refuelling') shouldn't this be possible. Why is it all right to say Jimmy was absent from school because of a cold rather than that he was exhausted (or confused) and needed a break.

So let's move forward and lobby for a change in the system. The schools are there to serve the people - they shouldn't be prisons, but resource centres, and we shouldn't need to turn our backs on them - after all we pay for them.

C. J. Reynolds, Flat 2, 56 Stoughton Road, Stonegate

Could anyone tell us anything about the laws regarding home education in New Zealand. We are thinking about emigrating there, but would not do this if it meant sending our young children to school. We should really like to write to anyone in New Zealand who teaches their children at home.

Diane Green, 10A Westgate, Honley, Huddersfield, West Yorks.

(See "Listening to your Child's Needs" on p 36 of Oct. 85 Newsletter - Ed.)

With reference to Janet Everdell's letter about EO's support, or lack of it, for families suffering legal harassment - of course these families should receive help, legal help, from the experts in civil liberties: the NCCL. Why doesn't EO's affiliation to this group mean anything in practical terms to those members whose civil liberties

are under attack?

The secretary of the Legal Group should have their name etc. on the back cover with all the others.

Sue Stephenson, 1 College Road,  
Barrow-on-Humber, S. Humberside.

I have recently joined EO. I have two small children under 2 years of age and I am interested in joining/starting a locally based group in the North London area and would like to hear from anyone who is interested.

I would also be interested in corresponding with any members with Downs Syndrome children who intend to teach their children at home. My one-year old son, Peter, has Downs Syndrome.

My telephone number is 01-444-6633.

Jeffrey Bengé, 22 Donovan Ave.,  
Muswell Hill, London N10

I read of the proposal in the last NL to have a permanent editor and would like to respond with my own feelings about it.

Firstly I think we need to define whether or not there is a problem. If it is not too difficult to find people prepared to take on this job each time, then the system seems to work very well. It has the advantage that we are treated to a variety of points of view and style, so that if one issue seems too full of computers and another too concerned about peace studies or Steiner education, a balance is achieved over the months.

It is difficult for an editor to be entirely neutral and other people will see a bias of some kind even if the editor himself is not aware of it. The same goes for the type of illustrations, decorations and whole layout. I should also just like to remind people that we did try the idea of a permanent editor about 4 years ago and for various reasons it did not work out. There are more safeguards when the system is more flexible.

Moreover, I think it's true to say that many people have enjoyed their stint of editorship. Although it is hard work, there is satisfaction too

from learning new skills, and being responsible for something tangible at the end of it.

There was too a suggestion made about competitions. Once again, I was not aware that we had a problem of shortage of material. If we need 'fillers' then should we not be asking more people to write in with their own experiences? I have felt lately that perhaps there are not enough articles from people talking about their own situation, what they do from day to day, what are the problems etc. I still tend to feel that the space in the newsletter is too valuable to fill with material which could be found elsewhere.

I have reservations too about children's work. A long time ago a clear decision was taken not to include children's work. I can't remember exactly why but I have a feeling it was from a desire not to make them feel too self-conscious about their work, or indeed competitive. I am sure there are large numbers of people who would like to send things in, but I wonder if this would not be more appropriate in a children's own newsletter. I seem to remember we did not want to encourage the idea that our children were in any way curiosities - either by implicitly saying "look, they can do as well as other children" or by creating the impression that they were more gifted. Another point about children's work is that a newsletter printed in the way ours is cannot do justice to any artwork except the crudest kind.

Personally I enjoy children's poems (some) and short articles, but I feel that some contributions have been very self-conscious - perhaps because the parents felt they should be connected with the fact that they were educated at home, and that the policy on this area of contributions is not any longer clear. When I think about it, what I have enjoyed more are reported snatches of children's conversations, rather than pieces written either with the newsletter or adults in mind.

I hope other people will write with

their feelings on these matters, as obviously EO policies should change with the opinions of the membership of the time.

Jackie Fearnley, Hove House, Egton,  
Nr. Whitby, North Yorkshire

I have just joined EO, not to seek help and advice but in the hope of being able to give a bit, based on our own experience.

Our children are now 19 and 17 respectively, and never spent a day in school; and in their most vulnerable years there was no EO to help us to keep them out. So we had to work out our own strategy and tactics, which we later developed to help other parents who, unlike us, had to deregister their children to get back to square one. We succeeded in one case after both the parent and the child had been threatened with gaol (ironically called 'care' in the case of the child). If any parent is in (or wants to avoid) a similarly desperate situation, we'll be happy to pass on our expertise, if that's not too grand a word. Write to me at my address in Spain where I'm living at the moment.

Patrick Pringle, Apartado 47, San Francisco Javier, Formentera, Baleares, Spain.

I read with great interest Geraldine Taylor's letter (author of "Be Your Child's Natural Teacher") and her feature on maths tables as another type of adding up.

I tried it on my son Benjamin, aged 7, who immediately objected, saying  $1 \times 1$  is 1, but  $1 + 1 = 2$  and  $0 \times 1 = 0$ , but  $0 + 1 = 1$  etc.

It is amazing how quickly he picked that out. I have been teaching Benjamin at home just since August 85. We are all really enjoying the experience with the help of a very co-operative Primary Care Advisor.

Carol E. Dewar, Chauffeur's House, Lennoxlove, Haddington, E. Lothian

I feel that one of the best points about the magazine is the exchange of ideas, and I was dismayed to

read in the Oct. NL that the letters had been cut to make room for less relevant items, such as quizzes.

Do we really need competitions to help us pass the time and fill out the magazine? Indeed many of us spend our lives trying to wean people AWAY from competitions, and TOWARDS co-operation!

Please let us have more examples of good practice and personal stories. By all means let us have some children's work, but could it NOT be geared towards showing how clever they are. Let us have a good interchange of ideas and thoughts, and the observations of children, which are equally as interesting as the experiences of adults.

Maxine Toff, 50 Sackville Gardens,  
Hove, East Sussex.

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Answers to quiz on page 39.

1. The baby in "Higglety Pigglety Pop".
2. The baby in "Alice Through the Looking Glass".
3. 'Swee 'pea from Popeye.
4. Little Peter from "Uncle Lubin".
5. "The Lamb" in E. Nesbit's books.
6. The baby from "Nurse Matilda".
7. Baby Roo from "Winnie the Pooh".
8. The baby from "Burglar Bill".
9. Tom Thumb.
10. The baby from "The Magic Fishbone".

## NOTICES

Diane Wilkinson of 47 Fulmerton Crescent, Redcar, Cleveland TS10 4NJ asks for a request to be published for a penfriend. Diane is 9½ years old and would like to write to a girl of a similar age. Her hobbies are gymnastics and swimming.

Will all those who receive newsletters from other organisations on behalf of EO please contact **June Grant**, 25 Chipperfield Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire Tel: 0442 64020.

**CO-ORDINATORS NEEDED** Could YOU be a co-ordinator for one of these areas: DORSET, JERSEY, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY or TAYSIDE. If so contact Co-ordinator Secretary **Andy Anderson**, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7JA. Tel: 0270 664060 who will be delighted to hear from you .....

Would co-ordinators inform Co-ordinator Secretary in the first instance of any **CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR PHONE NO., resignation, full details of who is replacing them, or any problems in their area.** Informing other people or the newsletter are causing long delays in communication and a lot of wasted time and money is spent trying to find where co-ordinators have moved to. It is recommended that if at all possible a phone no. be given for messages to be relayed to the co-ordinators who do not have phones.

Is there anyone coming to the Milton Keynes meeting who plays the **RECORDER** and would like to bring it along to play duets, trios, quartets or whatever, depending on the people available? I am a moderate player only but I enjoy playing music with other people. Please let me know if you are interested. **Joan Hoare**, 25 Moor Oaks Road, Broomhill, Sheffield S10 1BX Tel: 0742-666605.

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN 1986 !!** Next year marks the tenth year of EO's life and we hope to mark it in various ways. **EO CELEBRATION T-SHIRTS**, white (50/50 cotton/poly) with red triangle motif (full front) will be here in time for **THIS CHRISTMAS**, so order now: children's sizes £2, adults £3.50 (children's sizes: 4 - 6 years/6 - 8/8 - 10/10 - 12. Adults sizes small, medium, large). Orders plus 50p postage and packing to Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk IP21 4BU. **EO CELEBRATION WEEKEND** in June 1986: there will be a nostalgic reunion for 'oldie' EO members who were around in 1978. It will be at Lower Shaw Farm in Wilts - places available for 20 families plus 30 children so please book early to participate in this tear-jerking camaraderie! Cost is £24 all in for adults, £18 for children, under 3s free. Further information and booking from Sarah Guthrie as above. **EO CELEBRATION NEWSLETTER:** We're hoping that a bumper newsletter will appear in December 1986, and that special celebration features will appear throughout the year. If you have any ideas for this or any other ideas about how we might celebrate, please tell Sarah Guthrie.

**EO INSURANCE FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS.** EO has a public liability insurance with the Prudential against injury to participants in EO public meetings. If a co-ordinator or any other EO member organises a public meeting, would they please let me know the date, time and place of the meeting, plus the approximate number of people coming as I need to let the Pru have a list of our meetings at the end of the policy's insurance year. **Joan Hoare**, Gen. Sec., 25 Moor Oaks Rd. Sheffield S101BX.

**GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING.** It's coming towards the time for renewing subs. for GWS again. So that we can get continuity for a change I would like to order before we actually run out. The more favourable exchange rate means that the cost for 1986 will be £6.50, a drop of £1 from '85. In the past two years EO has subsidised the distribution costs of GWS but this year the £6.50 covers the whole cost. We still hold a large stock of the issues of 1984, if anyone is interested, at £3 for 6 issues, including post and package. They make a fascinating read. Please send subs. and orders for back nos. to **Bruce and Christine Wallace**, 24 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire IV22 2HE.

**SCHOOL IS NOT COMPULSORY.** A reminder to the vast number of members of EO who joined before March '85 that there is a new and totally re-written edition of SINC, the main advisory booklet for home educating (or intending so) families in Britain. It is obtainable free from **Bruce and Christine Wallace**, 25 Achnasheen, Ross-shire IV22 2HE. Please send an SAE with 22p stamps, of the size that would fit this newsletter.

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The **CONTINUUM TRUST\*** is a pacifist charity for research into and the achievement of a more respectful conserving compassionate attitude towards the environment and each other. The Trust provides plots for organic growing and shared areas for animal husbandry and other projects, including education, with independence and security of tenure yet working on the same holding as like minded people, remaining close to the possibility of community involvement, extending into it, setting own pace, commensurate with doubts and fears. No capital required. This arrangement is designed to ensure that co-operation is entirely voluntary and continuously negotiable providing the widest opportunities for interaction and research. Anyone interested may have the use of a plot and shared areas and decide after three months whether to become members. The Trust also runs the **ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES EXCHANGE**. Communities and people looking please write giving details for free registration. £5 secures twelve lists, dispatched monthly, commencing with current month's list by return of post. **Terry Murphy**, The Continuum Trust, Stone Hall Mill, Welsh Hook, Wolfscastle, Dyfed. \*"The Continuum Concept" Jean Liedloff (1975)

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**IDEAS AND PROJECTS WANTED.** Now that we are a registered charity, we are in a better position to attempt to raise money from companies and trusts. It was agreed at the last Core Group meeting that I would ask through the NL for member's ideas and projects that we might want to carry out but lack the money to do so. These ideas can be on a local, regional or national level. Please send your ideas to me - what realistic projects would you like to see EO implement if we had the finance? I stress realistic and should say that my appeal to trusts or companies for money will have to be very carefully presented, thought through and meticulously costed, so the more detail you could give the better. However, at this stage simply ideas are very welcome. This could be a very good opportunity to actually accomplish something tangible which would otherwise be beyond our financial resources. **Joseph O'Connor**, 4 Coombe Gdns., Malden, Surrey KT3 4AA.

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**MUSIC SUPPLEMENT.** I am editing a music supplement for the February NL. All contributions gratefully received. Please could they reach me by 1st January 1986 (post early for Christmas!) **Joseph O'Connor** as above.

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**CONSTITUTION.** A precis version of the constitution of Education Otherwise Ltd. can be obtained from **Jean Shepherd** (Pub. Secretary). Please send SAE. The complete version will be available at a later date.

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**IN PRAISE OF FAIRY STORIES (OCT NL).** The author of this article was not acknowledged in the Oct. NL. Would the author please write to **Jean Shepherd** so that we can put this matter right?

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**WE NEED YOU. VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED** for help with future publications. Members who have experience of paste-up work (i.e. preparing material for printing) and layout are particularly welcome. Also typists who are willing to volunteer their services for typing the NL (not all editors can type and need help in this area) and other publications. This will not be a regular commitment - you may only be called upon once a year or less, but a list of members who are willing to help in these areas would be of use. Please write to **Jean Shepherd** (Pubs. Secretary). Thank you to all members who have offered to edit the NL. We now have editors lined up until the end of next year!

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**SMALL ADS.** Small ads may be accepted from members up to a maximum of 30 words at 10p per word. Notices are still free. Send to **Jean Shepherd**.

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**OVERSEAS MEMBERS.** For the benefit of our overseas members who may wish to submit articles for inclusion in future newsletters, we will print the names of the next 2 editors in future in the Notices column. February NL see inside front cover. April NL - **Lois Cook**, 34 Beacon Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6DJ. There will also be a supplement on one-parent families in the April NL - contributions for this to **Julie Webb**, The Thatches, 28 Churchway, Haddenham, Bucks, England. **Note:** Deadline for Feb NL is Jan 1st '86, deadline for April supplement is March 1st 1986.

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**EGYPTIAN LANDSCAPES** - is the title of an exhibition of weavings from the school of Ramses Wissa Wassef. Ramses believed that artistic creativity in children was destroyed by formal art teaching; he set up his school in the village of Harrania, within sight of the pyramids of Giza, and encouraged local children to weave pictures from their own imagination directly onto the loom, without the help of preliminary drawings. The result of his experiment, 25 years later, is an amazing exhibition of tapestries, a must for any EO family within reach. The exhibition is on at the Barbican Centre, London from 25 Sept - 3 Nov, then moves to: Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery, 12 Nov - 14 Dec 1985, then to Aberdeen Artspace, 11 Jan - 5 Feb 1986, City of Edinburgh Art Centre, 15 Feb - 31 March, and Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, 9 April - 17 May. Genevieve Bridgeman, 25 Rathcool Avenue, London N8.

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**THE NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE SCHOOLS ART PROJECT** is now in its twelfth year. It invites entries from school children ".....and children in hospital studying under LEA provisions etc". I have checked with the organiser, Peter Gormley, who confirms that the "etc" does include home educated children. The theme for this year's competition is "Making Friends" - Co-operation at Work. There are cash prizes of up to £70 for each age-group taking part, and entries selected by the judges are exhibited each year at Co-operative Congress. Closing date for entries: February 1986. Further information from: **Mr. P. L. Gormley**, Co-operative Union Ltd., Education Dept., Stanford Hall, Loughborough, Leicester LE12 5QR. Tel: 050 982 2333 - or from the Member Relations officer at your local Co-operative Society.

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**Brenda Kent** of Surrey writes that she is planning to set up a small school (5 - 10 children) in their home probably next autumn. "Our daughters are aged 6 and 2 now. We hope to find other children of primary school age who would enjoy learning in a small friendly group. Being small we would be able to achieve a greater sensitivity to the needs of individual children and a far higher degree of parental involvement than is possible in a large institution. As a teacher in conventional schools I was worried about the encouraging-square-pegs-into-round-holes aspect of the job. As a mother, I am very concerned for those children who at 5 - and older - are not ready for anything as vast as the average school. Is anyone in this locality at all interested or do you have friends who may be? If so, please ring or write for further details, discussion or sharing of ideas. **Brenda Kent**, 26 Salisbury Rd., Banstead, Surrey SM7 2DR Tel: Burgh Heath 54762

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**SORRY - WRONG NUMBERS.** Please change your Contact List as follows: Catherine Frumin, LEARNING SKILLS SERVICE, Devon, is 0392 214400 and not 21400 as shown. Oliver and Kate Freeman, Wilts Co-ordinators should be (038 086) 470 and not 355, and John Elenor is at 75 Leigh Gardens (not 17), London

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**NEW CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED.** At the Wick Court meeting we had a discussion on the introduction of new articles to appear regularly in the newsletter as follows: (1) **HAVE A GO** - a quarter page or less (or strip cartoon) article by adults for younger EO members. Simple experiments, craft ideas, etc. are asked for -

simplicity, conciseness and fun are what we want! No complicated stuff!

(2) **IN MY OPINION** - a chance for younger EO members to have their say. What do you think of home education? Do you get fed up being with your parents all the time? What do you think of the books and equipment you use? How do you socialise? With whom? Do you have any problems being educated at home? Here's your chance to tell us how you feel.

(3) **OUR EXPERIENCE OF EO - A PERSONAL VIEWPOINT.** We want your personal experiences of EO from your standpoint. Why you took the step; problems you overcame, success you have achieved, even your reasons for sending your children back to school. We'd like the articles to be about your family's experience, not merely a discussion of EO in general; experiences which others may be able to identify with, both good and bad. We have had odd articles on this aspect in the past but not as a regular feature. Please send contributions to these new articles to the next editor. We hope the first batch will appear in the February NL.

Pubs. Secretary.

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### CHILD BENEFIT

Those of us with EO sons and daughters who have reached the age of 16 have met with the "Child Benefit Catch 22 Problem". I should like to make the problem more widely understood through the Newsletter.

If your child is educated "otherwise than at school or college" after the age of 16, the DHSS will stop Child Benefit. At present, there is no honest way round this. The problem is greater for parents who receive benefits which are dependant in the first place on receipt of Child Benefit - One Parent Family benefit, rent, rates, clothing etc., but it is, to my mind, a quite wrong ruling in terms of the Education Act for all of us.

At present, when Child Benefit is stopped, you can appeal against the decision. The DHSS will then send the matter to the Local Tribunal. At this point, you can, theoretically, appeal to the Secretary of State for Social Services for 'recognition of your home as an educational establishment'. In point of fact, if you try to do this, the DHSS will tell you to await the decision of the Local Tribunal. At the Local Tribunal, the DHSS's case will be based on C.F. 23/80 which is an Unreported Commissioner's Decision which says: "If the claimant has not appealed to the Secretary of State for Social Services for recognition, and been granted it, we must disallow the claimant's appeal in respect of Child Benefit". Catch 22! But it gets worse .....

If you are turned down at the Local Tribunal (and you will be) theoretically you can then appeal to the Secretary of State for Social Security, or you can appeal to the Commissioner. If you appeal to the Commissioner, he will give the same answer as the Local Tribunal - "no". If you appeal to the S of S for SS his decision is discretionary. This means that he may, or, more probably, may not, say yes (the Commissioner thinks he has no power to say yes) but it will certainly be a "one-off" decision and the DHSS will then start all over again with another EO family.

I have had no Child Benefit for my eldest daughter for nine months and the case has not even got as far as the Local Tribunal yet!

The Secretary of State for Education should be dealing with this matter. He is the arbiter of education under the terms of the Education Act. But it is difficult to see what more he and his department can do once they have - through the LEA and their visiting advisors - recognised the home as an educational establishment, if the DHSS simply ignore such recognition.

This seems to be an area in which the Social Services is trying to assert its authority as an arbiter of 'acceptable' education - i.e. school or college. By wishing to exercise our rights under one act, we are penalised by another act.

This may be a matter for the Ombudsman. I should like to hear from anyone who has experienced this or who has a child coming up to 15. Before 16, a card is

(Continued on page 18)

GERALDINE TAYLOR shares another letter received by her since the review in this newsletter of her book "Be Your Child's Natural Teacher". \*

We teach Helena (9) at home because she was unhappy at school and not making the creative progress I know she's capable of. We thought a long time about this decision and have been EOIing for 9 months. I'm not writing to ask if we are doing the right thing - but I'd like to know if you have any ideas about how to help her concentrate long

enough to finish anything. Helena has a head bursting with enthusiasms for investigations - but when it comes to getting some kind of end product - then I have difficulty - and this is proving a strain for all of us. Does an end product matter? At school, Helena was labelled a 'butterfly'.

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I don't usually deal in metaphor, but can we explore that description 'butterfly'? I expect it was used to mean 'superficial' and to imply that Helena wouldn't settle - that her attention was shortlived. (Another such label, less attractive, is 'grasshopper'). Remember that butterflies aspire to the most inspirational flights of creative fancy - provided that they settle on enough flowers as it were (I did say I didn't use metaphor!) to draw sufficient nectar.

First, congratulations to you for inspiring Helena into believing that anything is possible - into her initial enthusiasms. This is the special joy and privilege of parent-teaching. And, yes, I believe that an end product matters - though not every time. I agree with you that harnessing experience into say a story/picture/model/told story/letter is very important for creativity - and education.

Do you have any idea of the end product you'd ideally like? Or is this something you find hard to formulate - Helena may need a little guidance on what to do with her wonderful ideas. I wondered, reading your letter, if you feared that insisting on an end product would block Helena's mind to the other possibilities? It won't! But before you actually set out on an investigation, a little pre-planning will help.

You tell me, as an example, that Helena was fired with enthusiasm to research windmills and, after a visit to the library and finding out where to go round one, her attention was diverted to something else.

When Helena is, as you say, shaking with enthusiasm, help her list out the ideas she has. Then, rather than act at once, suggest that you have a 'planning session'. Sit together in a business-like way (I've found children love 'conference' type sessions) and agree on the one aspect which is most important to Helena. If it was, say, a visit to a windmill - plan that. If researching the types of windmill - plan that. Discuss what, apart from the experience, would be possible as a result of the trip of investigation. Will Helena write about it? Would she like to take a cassette and record her impressions at the time? Will she draw the windmill from sketches taken at the time - and add the family she imagines worked there?

This way you begin your investigation with a clearer idea of an end product. On your return, this end product need only be very short - and you may find it best to make a start on it at once.

Collect all the end products as they mount up over the months and return to them appreciatively.

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EO members are welcome to write to me - please enclose an SAE!  
28 Berkeley Road, Westbury Park, Bristol BS6 7PJ

If I use a letter for the EO newsletter so that other members can share, the names will always be changed.

\*Published by Impact Books @ £4.50

WINTER GATHERING IN MILTON KEYNES  
JANUARY 24th, 25th and 26th 1986

Milton Keynes is a new city in North Buckinghamshire. It's not all concrete and cows so come along and you'll be surprised by what you find.

We shall be staying in a Youth Hostel: it is in very pleasant surroundings in the old village of New Bradwell, which is within the new city. There is a small garden and a park nearby and immediately opposite is a village hall that we shall be using as an activity area.

The Youth Hostel has a kitchen (either for self-catering or meals which can be booked in advance), a dining room, a lounge and dormitory type bedrooms.

It will NOT be necessary for people to join the Y.H.A. However, please bring sheet sleeping bags or sheets and pillowcases.

Please send a SAE with the booking form on the opposite page so that we can send you further details. We look forward to seeing you all.

\*\*\*\*\*

COSTS

ACCOMMODATION	Adults	£4.60 per night
		£9.15 per weekend
	Children	£3.00 per night
		£6.00 per weekend
MEALS	Supper	£1.80
	Breakfast	£1.40
CAMPER VANS		£1.00 per night
BASIC CHARGE	£1.00 per adult - to go towards the hire of the hall. The charge applies to ALL ADULTS (residents and day visitors), and covers the whole weekend.	

\*\*\*\*\*

MEETINGS

Saturday morning: 'Getting to know you' in the Village Hall or 'Co-ordinators' in the Hostel.

Saturday afternoon: At 2.00 pm. General discussion meeting in the Hostel common room (lounge).

Sunday morning: At 10.00 am. Core Group Council meeting in the Hostel common room.

Please remember that EVERYONE is WELCOME to take part in all of these meetings.

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THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HELP

- Can you:
- Help with childrens' activities/workshops
  - Bring games, activities, (paint, playdough etc. will be there)
  - Contribute to an educational bring and buy
  - Lead a folk singing session
- Any other suggestion?

## BOOKING FORM FOR WINTER GATHERING AT MILTON KEYNES

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

.....

### RESIDENTS

Nights      Friday                   Saturday   
No. of Adults       No. of Children over 5 years       No. of Children under 5 years

Meals Required                  Friday supper                   Saturday supper   
Saturday breakfast                   Sunday breakfast

NB: We are required to take one meal from the hostel for each resident during the weekend, or to meet the cost of it.

Camper Van                   Day Visitors

Please return this booking form as soon as possible, with SAE and cheque/PO made payable to Education Otherwise, to:

Valerie Gommon  
11 Barnes Place  
Oldbrook  
MILTON KEYNES  
Bucks MK6 2RJ  
(Tel: 0908 667292)

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### INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE

Tel: 0270 664060

AN INFORMATION/ORDER FORM LIST IS AVAILABLE: The list contains used and recommended books and materials and can be used as a guide to assist those seeking suitable educational material for children of all ages.

MEMBERS ARE OFFERED THE USE OF THE RESOURCE CENTRE - If anyone has any queries or problems with regard to what educational material etc. is available, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time, either by phone, letter or a visit. What we don't know, we will try to find out. Please feel free to use us.

As we get no funding from any source, would you please ALWAYS include a SAE for your reply.

WHEN RECOMMENDING ANYTHING - PLEASE GIVE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE, and when recommending a book etc., please give title, author, publisher and price if known, and a rough idea of the age group it would be useful for.

## REGIONAL NEWS

**BEDFORDSHIRE.** The three practising EO families in Bedford itself are meeting each other quite often informally in each other's homes, or in my case usually on our allotment. Our family attended the AGM on Sat. 12th Oct. It was the first time that we had been to a national EO gathering. It was quite a long car journey for the little ones, which was completely offset by the welcoming people, efficient encouraging meetings, plus the extremely good food service from those in the kitchen. Many thanks.

Teresa Baines, Beds. Co-ordinator, 167 Kimble Drive, Bedford MK41 9SN

**SOUTH BUCKS.** There will be a seasonal social gathering on Sunday 15th Dec. from 2pm at the home of Julie Webb, The Thatches, 28 Churchway, Haddenham. Bring something for tea.

**ESSEX.** The past few months have seen us at the Commonwealth Institute, Southend Planetarium and various other places of interest. A resource day was held at the home of Pete and Veronica Gibbs, two local shops kindly lent books and other equipment on a sale-or-return basis and families took along favourite games, books and ideas to exchange. This proved quite an interesting day and we shall probably organise another resource day in the New Year. On another occasion a member invited a community policeman along to give a talk about "going off with strangers". He also brought along a couple of video films and we all felt it was a worthwhile visit. There was even talk that some of the older children may be able to go out on a police launch next year - I shall be following that one up!

Our Christmas party this year will be on Sunday 15th December, at our usual venue, the Pitman Room, Bichnacre. Everyone welcome - please call me for more details.

Incidentally, we do try to vary the venues so that members throughout Essex have an opportunity to come to meetings, but if, despite this, you have difficulty in getting to meet other families (and would like to be more involved) THEN PLEASE LET ME KNOW. You might like to offer your home as a venue, or know of a place suitable where the group could meet. Your suggestions are always welcome.

Finally, although the meetings for the New Year have not yet been finalised, there are plans for a language-workshop and a resource day. We continue to meet about every three weeks, and are always pleased to see members - old and new. If you haven't already got your name on the mailing list and would like to know more about the Essex meetings, please send £1 to cover postage etc. to: Sandie Cottee, 24 Deneway, Vange, Basildon, Essex SS16 4TJ - Basildon 554968.

**HERTS.** Hertfordshire are now meeting weekly to share skills in maths, science, computers, languages, typing, craft, art and games. Each family provides an activity which they supervise so why not come along and share skills with other EO families? All ages welcome. We meet at Apsley Community Centre, corner of A41 and Durrants Hill Road, Tring, on most Tuesdays (phone organisers below to confirm) from 10 am - 12 noon, then swimming until 2.30 approx. Cost - 75p each including swimming. Bring packed lunches and an activity. Tel: June Grant, Hemel Hempstead 64020 or Mary Read, Berkhamstead 4524.

Another "exchange of skills" meeting will be held on Friday January 17th at Hitchin. Please contact Jean Shepherd (0707 339750) for further details.

**KENT.** There will be a Messy Play Day for all Kent members at Victoria Park Pavilion on Wed. 12th Feb 1986 from 12.30 onwards. Please bring a packed lunch.

Soup and hot drinks will be provided. Please contact **Pam Staples**, 16 William Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 1UU, as soon as possible if you are able to come.

**NORTH LONDON.** Thanks to all those who replied to my request for information on skills and resources suitable for secondary age children. The families who actually want to get together in learning groups are rather widely scattered over north London and the travelling that would be involved makes that idea impractical; however, if families in the various boroughs make enquiries they may find that a skill-sharing network already exists in their area. We have one in Haringey; it is called the Haringey Learning Network and can be contacted via the White Hart Lane Adult Education Centre, 888-0952. Although it is sponsored by Haringey Adult Education it is available to people of all ages. Other useful addresses which have been suggested are:

**The Islington Arts Factory**, 2 Parkhurst Road, N7. 607-0561. Art, music and dance.

**Cecil Sharpe House**, 2 Regent's Park Road, NW1. 485-2206. Folk song, dance and instrumental workshop.

**St. George's Theatre**, Tufnell Park Road, N7. 607-1128. Runs a programme of workshop sessions and matinee performances of Shakespearean plays.

**Ormond Road Workshops**, 25 Ormond Road, N19. 263-3865. Woodwork, pottery, weaving, bicycle maintenance.

**Archway Library**, Archway, N19 has a particularly good children's library of books and tapes. Conversa-phone language-learning cassettes can be ordered from the adult section or Archway and other Islington libraries.

**Hornsey YMCA**, Tottenham Lane, N8. Martial arts, multigym, weight training, breakdancing, tap and ballet dancing, football, netball, badminton.

**William Forster Sports Centre**, Langham Road, N15. Martial arts, netball, badminton.

**Tottenham Sports Centre**, High Road, N17. Girls' football.

**New River Sports Centre**, White Hart Lane, N22. Athletics.

**Lee Valley Park**, PO Box 88, Enfield. Lea Valley 717711. Guided walks, sketching days, fungus forays, tree planting, bird watching, nature conservation.

**Butterfly Centre**, Crews Hill, Enfield. 363-7288. Butterflies.

If anyone discovers any more useful places, please let me know.

**Genevieve Bridgeman**, 25 Rathcoole Avenue, N8. 01 341 0751.

**WEST MIDLANDS.** There will be an open meeting for interested families or individuals at the home of **Sylvia, Bob and David Jeffs**, 16 St. Bernard's Road, Olton, Solihull (021 706 6460) from 2pm on the 2nd Saturday of every other month. (Presumably starting this month - check with Sylvia or Bob - Ed)  
Activities are planned for the other months, but Sylvia and Bob would like to establish a regular meeting in the meantime.

**NORTH-EAST REGION.** We are still here, even though numbers are small, and have arranged events and meetings into 1986. Earlier this year we invited speakers to our evening meetings, which proved constructive and enjoyable. Speakers included a Primary Schools' Inspector and an Educational Psychologist. Future speakers will include a Headteacher and a Theatre in Education worker. In October we had a day out at the beach which was a great success, and included sympathetic friends and their children and lots of sandy sandwiches! Future events:

**Sunday December 22nd** - Christmas party at Sue and Andy's, The School House, Hedley Hill, Durham. Please bring food, dressing up clothes, decorations etc.

**Monday January 27th 1986** 7.30 pm - meeting at Rik and Rosie's, 30 Cavendish Place, Jesmond, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

**Monday March 17th** 7.30 pm ditto

**Monday May 12th** at 7.30 pm ditto again

For more information contact Andy Jackson, Durham 734327 or Rosie Walton, Newcastle 2812833.

**SOMERSET.** We have noticed various letters from families in Somerset and would love to know if there are any other families interested in getting together with a view to mutual support, sharing resources, skills, having fun and getting to know each other. We are one of a small group of families who meet each week to go swimming. Occasionally we join in different activities although not as often as we would like due to distances and lack of transport. We would welcome contact with anyone.

Tim and Kerri Fitzgerald, 23 Beadon Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 2DJ. Taunton 82399.

**SOUTH YORKSHIRE.** There will be a meeting on Saturday 7th December 1985, from 10.30 am at 25 Moor Oaks Road, Broomhill, Sheffield S10 1BX. If you come in the morning please bring something to share for lunch and let Joan Hoare know that you intend to come on Tel: Sheffield 666605. Friends and members welcome.

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### THE MEDIA

Since the flurry of activity reported in the last newsletter, things have been fairly quiet, although the article in "WOMAN" magazine gave rise to several features on local radio.

I think media coverage is likely to increase, but I should say that no member should feel under any OBLIGATION to do any interview etc. National and local radio, newspapers or magazines, and especially television companies can be very insistent. Sometimes they may want to do an interview with a particular "slant" that may not actually be very relevant to EO. The media are also notoriously cavalier about their contacts: very short notice, cancellations, and a general assumption that you have nothing better to do than be at their beck and call. This happens with some frequency.

All this aside, we do rely on the media to present our ideas sympathetically, and let people who may need our help know about us. Such contacts are very valuable and the majority happen without any trouble.

Anyone can feel free to "pass the buck" to me if they are unhappy about an approach, it is interesting anyway to hear of any member's past or future experiences with the media for good or bad. Sometimes members have published them in the newsletter, and the shared experience can be helpful for everyone.

Most approaches are regionally based, and in that case I give what help I can and pass the enquiry to the local co-ordinator, if it is a case of needing local members to be interviewed etc. The co-ordinator is in the best position to deal with this.

As it is likely in the general educational mêlée at the moment there will be an increase in media interest in EO, it is worth at least considering whether you might be willing to be interviewed. This is particularly true of parents with children out of school. It is a pity to turn down publicity if it is favourable or simply informative. It would be good if a wide range of families could consider this, otherwise interviews become restricted to a relatively small number of families simply because of a lack of choice, and then these families find themselves open to accusations of pretensions to be "media stars" etc., and this is most unfair.

Joseph O'Connor, 4 Coombe Gardens, Malden, Surrey KT3 4AA.

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(Continued from page 12)

Child Benefit

sent by the DHSS which asks questions about the child's educational plans at 16. This needs to be answered very carefully.

I should be interested to know whether Mr. Bruce Cox intends to touch on this matter in his long awaited book on the teenage years.

**Lynette Cameron, 79 Whiteknights Road, Reading, Berkshire RG6 2BB**

(A letter from Michael Forsyth MP to the Minister of State, DHSS regarding his constituent Brenda Holliday, who has sought help in her case, concludes ".... I wonder if there are any plans as part of the Social Security Review to amend this absurd anomaly" - Ed.)

## SCHOOL PHOBIA

Did you know? School phobia is a result of "separation anxiety" (i.e. the child is afraid of being parted from mum; and mum is afraid of being parted from the child). Separation anxiety is, in turn, a result of "pathological dysfunction of the family". This is the theory at present held by child psychiatrists.

We are thinking of preparing an "open space" programme on the subject of school phobia. If you have experience of this and would like to help, please write to Patricia Knox at Pen Llywenan, Bodedern, Holyhead, Gwynedd LL65 4TS.

Janet Everdell

Patricia Knox

Sue Newman

The following is an expanded version of a letter which appeared in the "North Wales Chronicle". Copies are available from Janet Everdell, 25 Common Lane, Hemmingford Abbots, Cambs PE18 9AN.

If you would like to send one to your MP, County Councillor, Chairman of the Education Committee, local newspaper etc., please send a SAE and indicate how many copies you would like.

### When Schooldays are not the Happiest Days of Life

About three years ago my child became suicidal in school. This is a manifestation of school phobia. At the time I was advised by the authorities to ignore my child's suicide threat because, so the psychiatrist said, it was an idle threat. If I had done so, would I have my child now?

During the past 2½ years I have taught my child at home and have watched a withdrawn, frightened and unsmiling child develop into a happy outgoing person, looking forward to art college. (She did not smile for about 6 months when she was 12).

This has set me wondering how many parents are given the advice to ignore their child's suicide threat, and how it is linked with the suicide statistics. I am in contact with several parents with school phobic children.

School phobia manifests itself in many ways:

1. Suicide attempt
2. Suicide threat
3. Nervous breakdown
4. Anorexia nervosa
5. Hysterical paralysis
6. Child who started to stammer, the stammer eventually becoming so bad that the child lost her power of speech
7. Children who vomit every morning before school.

Both anorexia nervosa and suicidal behaviour are potential killers.

The official policy is to get the children back to school as quickly as possible. The methods used are scarcely credible in a civilized and democratic country:

1. Child forcibly taken to school each morning by the welfare officer (polite term for "truancy officer")
2. Threats of court cases and care orders
3. Psychotherapy (where is the boundary between psychotherapy and brainwashing?)
4. Confrontation treatment - see below
5. Enforced hospitalization in psychiatric unit (I thought it was only in Russia that "enemies of the state" could be put in psychiatric hospitals, but it can happen here if you are under 16 and too frightened to go to school).

6. Enforced drug therapy, if all else fails. (Imipramine, the drug normally used is a powerful antidepressant with some very nasty side effects).

This information is from "Out of School" by Hersov and Berg. One example of "confrontation treatment" given in the book is as follows:

A 14 year old boy and his parents were invited to meet the child psychiatrist in school. Once there, the boy, presumably kicking and screaming, was held down by two teachers while his parents were escorted off the premises.

They were tricked into attending what they thought was an interview. Since no follow-up study is normally made, the psychiatrist is obviously uninterested in the long-term effects of his actions, but I would not be at all surprised if this boy later joined the ranks of the psychiatrically disturbed.

There has been one follow-up study of 100 school phobic children who were forced back to school. Three years after the school crisis:

One third of the children had agoraphobia or severe psychiatric disorder; one third had mild neurotic trouble; and only about 33% showed signs of developing into balanced adults. This is 66% disaster. (There was no control group. The 100 children forced back to school should have been compared with 100 school phobic children who were home educated).

I have recently heard of a child who was taken to court for non-attendance at school when he was, in fact, being taught by a tutor at home. At another time he was given tranquilizers and forced to go to school. As a result of this treatment, by the time he reached school leaving age, he was both agoraphobic and suicidal. He is unemployable and on permanent sickness benefit. Now, at the age of 19, he is recovering from another nervous breakdown.

If the measure of success is school attendance, then this is presumably a success story, but both from an economic point of view and on humanitarian grounds, it is a disaster.

According to the Samaritans 750 per 100,000 teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 now attempt suicide. If a child or young person makes a suicide attempt, there is a 4% chance that that person will succeed in killing himself or herself in the next 10 years. After two attempts, there is a 10% chance that he or she will be dead in the next 10 years. In a recent study at Edinburgh University of teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19, one per cent of the girls made a suicide attempt. Fewer boys made an attempt but, because boys tend to choose more violent methods, more boys succeed in killing themselves.

With statistics like these, why was I told to ignore my child's suicide threat?

I have just heard from one parent that she, like myself, was told to ignore her child's suicide threat. Shortly afterwards he was rushed to hospital, having taken an overdose. He is 12 years old.

Imipramine, the drug most often given to school phobic children when forcing them back to school, is a powerful antidepressant (tricyclic) with some very serious side effects. Tremor, similar to Parkinson's disease, constipation, dizziness, blurred vision, palpitations, urine retention, excessive sweating, weakness, fatigue and headache. Too high a dose can cause epileptic fits; overdose causes fever, high blood pressure, seizures and coma. Even with smaller doses, chronic disturbances in heart rhythm may occur. (It is necessary for children on this drug to have an electroencephalograph, which

is, of course, a test for epilepsy).

It is not known how imipramine acts, but it is believed to affect the chemical messengers at the synapse between neurones in the nervous system.

It would be far better for the children to be taught at home rather than to be given such a dangerous drug.

Other drugs used for school phobic children are phenelzine, chlordiazepoxide, phenobarbitone, amitriptyline, diphenhydramine, amphetamines and diazepam. They can produce many unpleasant side effects; three of them are addictive, and some can produce quite severe withdrawal symptoms.

Living with a suicidal child affects the whole family. In a nutshell, I felt shattered. What do I mean by the word "shattered"? I have tried to analyse my feelings at that time. It was a complex of negative emotions including anxiety, fear, shame, bewilderment and guilt. It produced an emotional state similar to chronic depression, sapping both physical and mental energy, and resulting in an inability to cope.

Instead of using expensive and inhumane methods of forcing this group of children to school, parents should be encouraged to teach them at home. The cost of a correspondence course or similar, or a small grant towards books would be far cheaper than the methods used to force the children to school (cheaper also than a school place).

Where home education is impossible, small teaching units should always be available for these children (not special schools for maladjusted children. These children are not maladjusted). However, I believe that education in the family is preferable, not using a home tutor, which is expensive, but allowing the parent to supervise the child's learning. This can be therapeutic for the whole family, overcoming the tensions and negative emotions generated by the presence of a school phobic child in the family. This is already done in remote parts of Australia and in Alaska. (And Scotland! - Ed.)

The number of school phobic children is estimated as between 1% and 2%. In a school population of over 9 million, this gives a number between 90,000 and 180,000.

I am chiefly concerned with children as individuals, but there is also the economic consideration. If children grow up with avoidable mental illness, it is an unnecessary burden on both the NHS and the DHSS if they are unemployable.

Patricia Knox  
Pen Llywenan, Bodedern, Holyhead, Gwynedd LL65 4TS

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My thanks to all who sent articles for publication. I have passed on all unused contributions to the next editor with a request for publication in the February newsletter.

My thanks also to Jos Razzell, who designed the cover.

Brenda Holliday

## SCHOOL

I am 14 and before I went to school at about 13½, I had never been near a school before.

It came as a complete shock to my mum and dad when one night I announced I wanted to go to school.

After they had recovered (about 12 hours later!) they went through all the disadvantages and bad bits, but I still wanted to go. I don't quite know why I wanted to go to school, the only reason I could think of was that I was nosy and wanted to know if it was as bad as the other kids made out (it was!).

This was about Thursday and they phoned up the school and we looked round it on Friday and by Monday I was there as a pupil.

For the first few days I was just shocked, then I made friends with Viv and started going round with her. Everyone thought I was mad going to school when everyone else was doing their best to get out of school.

My first thoughts were of shock, as I had never been round so many kids in my life (there was only 520) and I didn't know where to go or what to do.

The work was quite easy and some I even enjoyed doing. The lessons were quite funny at first as the teachers didn't know me or want to know me, so I could walk into any lessons with anyone and sit down. They did ask me where I was supposed to be, but I didn't know and they could not be bothered to find out.

As I settled in and got used to the lessons I found out which teachers you could wind up more than others! The R.E. lessons were the best for winding up the teacher, she would shout and yell at us for the whole 35 minutes and we would never do any work at all. I did sometimes feel a bit sorry for her, but teaching R.E. in my school was the limit!

The other kids were great and I made quite a few friends. For the first few days I was asked endless questions why I was going to school. There was a few kids I wasn't too friendly with but on the whole they were OK. In fact the only people I had trouble with was some of the teachers and the headmaster

The whole time I was there (about 5 months) I only managed about 3 full weeks attendance, most of the time I was skiving. As it wore on I was skiving more and more, making myself ill with just the thought of school. I was getting really unhappy and depressed. So in the end I did leave school because I was so unhappy there. In the time I had been at school my mum said she had seen a big change in me and said it was awful.

Actually leaving was a big relief, but I was a bit torn in the decision, as I had made quite a few friends there and I really enjoyed some of the subjects like metalwork (I had made a plum-bob on a lathe), cookery, science and a few others, but on the whole it was a great relief to be free.

At the moment I am doing correspondence course in English and Maths, taking up Spanish and French, doing up our ageing van and anything else I can think of.

I really enjoy being out of school, but I will never regret going to school, it was very educational!

Rachel White  
Wensley Mill, Wensley, Leyburn, N. Yorks.

## EARTH EDUCATION

Earth education is a process of sharing the magic of nature in a structured way rather than telling by classifying and naming. It is about sensing and feeling nature through all the senses. The following is a suggested Snow Walk appropriate to the coming season as suggested in the Earth Education packs. First plan the walk with where the activities will take place, have everyone wrap up warm and suggest the magic you are about to find in the woods.

Meet at a point and form a circle. Invite them to join you in an Ice Cream Sundae Party with a difference. In a plastic glass or cup put a scoop of snow. Mix in flavour in the form of crushed dead leaves, perhaps a little soil, lightly stir. Decorate if liked with dried seed heads or a twig, name it 'Earthy Ripple' and invite your group to share a whiff. Invite your group to make their own sundaes and give them appropriate names. Arrange to meet a little further along the walk for the party where you will share sniffs of your creations. At the party offer a toast to winter.

You should be now at the beginning of the next activity, a woody area. As you walk along ask the group to imagine what it would be like with an eye in the top of your head. As they all look up comment on how we only see the world from our own eye level and how dangerous it would be to walk along looking up. Give each person a mirror about 10 x 15 cm stuck on a small piece of dark card. This is your 'eye in the sky'. Walk through the wood looking in your magic eye held at waist level. You are not allowed to look up, only into the mirror. If someone sees something interesting in the mirror, they are to describe it to the others so that they can find it in their mirror.

As you approach an area of pure untrampled snow, start the next activity. Talk about the record snow gives of who has been there and invite the group to leave the wood as untrampled as possible by following in your 'Snow Steps' so it looks as though only one person is there. Follow a short but interesting walk and watch for clues as to who has been there before. Go to the centre of a small clearing and walk round a small circle making as many steps as there are members of the group. Get them to follow you forming the circle. Invite each person to make their own 'Snowsteps' out from the circle to find an exciting secret discovery. They are only allowed to take 10 steps then they must draw an arrow in the snow to their discovery. They are to return backwards in their own foot-steps to the circle. Ask them all to move on one step around the circle and visit their neighbours discovery. Visit a few and leave the clearing by another set of snowsteps. Look back at the clearing, and think what others will make of your 'Snow Steps'.

On reaching the edge of the woodland suggest that many people think of winter as being colourless, only black and white and you are going to search for the colours of winter. Don't destroy only take dabs. Give each person a small white postcard cut like an artist's palette. Spread some glue from gluesticks on and send them to find a small area and collect colour dabs on there. Tell them you have some coloured pencils to copy any colours too rare or impossible to collect. For example, you are copying a spot of blue like the sky. Arrange to meet again in 5 or 10 minutes at an agreed point a little further on. Come together and share your colours of winter.

In this country there are one million acres of domestic gardens and only one-fifth as much area in nature reserves. Each garden has its own resident warden making them so important in nature conservation. Watch has invited its members to design a conservation garden to be constructed at the Stoke-on-Trent Garden Festival next year. Sandie Cottee's article below makes an excellent beginning to the subject.



### CREATING A WILDLIFE GARDEN

Whatever the size, or wherever your garden is, it is worth investigating. Just sit quietly for a few minutes and look around. Choose a leaf, or particular plant to look at, or even a small patch of soil. Most of the creatures are too small, almost insignificant - but if you take the time you will be amazed at just how intricate and interesting these life patterns are.

Early in the morning you hear the birds waking up, as the day warms up the butterflies, insects and bees will start appearing, by dusk a completely different set of creatures take over, slugs, snails and moths. These creatures will vary according to the season, weather and local conditions. Each garden is a nature reserve and to really appreciate it as such, you need to work out suitable food, hiding places and nesting sites for all the animals you can attract.

Plants are the first level of food chains, so consider these and who you want to attract when planning your wildlife garden. Many birds like berries, seeds and nuts such as elder, hawthorn, sunflower and honeysuckle. Thistles, teasels and grasses will attract small seed-eating birds, while soft fruits and berries attract others. Don't forget that fresh water is important to birds also, an old dish refilled daily is sufficient. Well chosen flowers can attract a great number of nectar feeders, Buddleia is a great favourite, also try lavender, angelica, borage and other herbs and nasturtiums are a favourite of caterpillars. If you have the space, try to leave an area wild for nettles, the main food plant of many butterflies.

Vegetable gardens are a great attraction to many creatures, plan to live in harmony. Dill planted among cabbage plants will often take the creatures away from destroying your cabbages. Try nasturtiums among the beans, and marigolds everywhere but especially with the tomatoes. Encourage wildlife by building a small pond stocked with a few plants, in no time insect life and pond snails will arrive. It may be possible to introduce frogspawn but be warned one species of newts has a protection order because it is endangered!

A compost heap, or small pile of logs or bricks will be welcomed by snails, slugs, woodlice and earwigs. Many hide up during the day and you can try simple experiments to learn more about these creatures of habit. Dab their shells with a little paint and check the shelters each day. Do the marked snails come back? What happens if you move a shelter at night while it is empty? Or put more shelters nearby?

The delightful illustrations of 'Things we found in our garden' are by Freda Jackson, aged 6 of Essex. Sorry I can't show more of them but I am sending them on to Kipper so that you can see more of them.



With winter coming you can put out various food for the birds. The following homemade feeder was very successful, and the children enjoyed making it. A piece of log, with bark on for the birds to grip, measuring about 14 cm across and 25 cm long had holes the size of a 2p coin drilled about 3 cm deep. Place them around the log at a slight angle so that they do not fill with rain water. Fix a hook to suspend and fill the holes with birdfood and pour in melted fat. Place in a cold place to set and then enjoy the birds who come to enjoy the feeders.

The articles Tree Study, Food Chain Game and Creating a Wildlife Garden are shortened versions of excellent writings by Sandie Cottes of Essex, I hope I have managed to keep the inspiration intact and wish I could have included more. Below are some excerpts from other Essex members, Veronica Gibb and Melanie Nield.

Veronica writes ... Both our children have always loved animals and since they were small have been interested in garden wildlife. ... Their interest has carried on growing, both belong to 'Watch' a national junior conservation club, which is very active locally. About once a month they meet on a local common conservation area where the children are given specific clearing tasks to do. Last time it was to clear the brambles and bracken from a glade to give the heather a chance to grow. This has led on, particularly in Trudie's case, to an awareness of conservation issues beyond the garden. We have visited a couple of breeding zoos and both girls understand the need for them and what they are trying to achieve. ... I am always surprised by the children's understanding of conservation but a quick look around our bookshelves explains a lot, 50% of our books are on animals or nature.

Veronica recommends the inevitable Usborne and Ladybirds, in particular 'The Naturetrail Book of Garden Wildlife' as an excellent good value starting point. She buys lots of these at jumble sales.

Melanie recommends ... the numerous country parks in Essex. Two parks locally have wood societies with information rooms and very helpful wardens. One has a 'Rabbit Club' for children once a month. Recently a warden gave a talk on the trees and explained the food system of a tree, illustrated by slides and followed by a walk round the wood with bark and leaf rubbings. The parks usually have open days often with traditional woodcraft demonstrations like fencemaking, charcoal burning, etc.

The address for Watch membership is The Green, Nettleham, Lincoln, LN2 2NR. Tel: (0522) 752326. Membership now costs £3 or £4 for up to 4 children in one family. Excellent value and great fun.  
EARTH EDUCATION ADDRESSES

This is only a very brief introduction, for more information the Regional Coordinator for Britain is Stewart Anthony, 6 Wicklands Rd, Hunsdon, Nr. Ware, Herts. Publications include 'Sunship Earth', a comprehensive earth education programme for junior and lower secondary schools just under £10 from Philippa McMurdo, YMCA National Centre, Lakeside, Ulverston, Cumbria.

## TREE STUDY

Some time ago we decided to study an oak tree for a period of one year. The idea was to visit the oak at the beginning of each month. We would take a photo so that over the period, these would fit together to show the seasonal changes and the pattern of growth. At the beginning of the project we measured the tree using a special measure, since used many times. It was simply a long piece of string, knotted at metre intervals and attached to a stick at each end. Friends helped to measure the tree and we also measured it in paces and held hands around the girth and measured it in children. We used the information to estimate the age of the tree and took rubbings of the bark.

Over the next few months we visited the tree regularly taking special note of the changes and insect and animal life associated with the tree. It was great fun whilst we did this, but we never completed the study. The children were perhaps a little young for a long term study, perhaps the tree was too far away, However the project holds happy memories, Marc and Emma produced some lovely drawings inspired by our tree and I hope one day we might do it again.

## FOOD CHAIN GAME

Onto pieces of strong card, draw or stick pictures of various wild-life. The more variety, the more complicated and interesting the game will be. Include mammals, (badger, fox, hedgehog, bat); insects (earwig, woodlouse, bee, wasp, ant) and spider; birds (including an owl); shrew, mouse, snake, frog, worm, snail and as many others as you can think of. Don't forget the most important of all - plant food; including berries, fruits, nuts and a flower or two. (You can includeman in your set of cards if you wish, as he is the only predator of some animals, especially fox, otter and badger.)

Even very small children can sort the cards into sets of animals that have fur, can fly, have feathers, and so on. Other sorting can be animals that are nocturnal; herbivore, omnivore or carnivore; metamorphic; hibernating; live above/below ground; number of legs, and so on.

Another game is to make food chains. You can play this on your own, and vary the number of cards to make it easier or more difficult. Choose a card and lay it face down, now choose the next card in the food chain. The idea is to form the longest possible food chain. Children will soon learn that animals at the top of the food chain (i.e. with least predators) form the most interesting chains. By varying the number of cards you will sometimes find a missing link (as sometimes happens in nature due to weather or environmental conditions) and your chain cannot be completed, a good discussion point. Playing together share the cards and either form own chains, or take turns to try to add to a combined chain, losing a turn if they cannot go. There are many more ideas to use such a card set.

Ed. Betty Ball

## EXAMS AND EO

There is a Buddhist legend about a king of a country whose people were all mad. The king became enlightened but then could no longer communicate with his people who were still mad. Isolated, and realising that he could do no good unless he could relate to others, he decided to go a little mad again himself.

EO families are often in a similar dilemma it seems. Learning out of school often feels much saner but we still have to live and work in a society that doesn't generally share our values. Sometimes it makes sense for us to go a bit mad again too.

The question of whether or not older home-educated children should take 'O' or 'A' Levels can bring this choice into focus especially clearly. Exams may seem to represent everything we have rejected about school-based education: rote-learning, competitiveness and learning from a set syllabus rather than from the felt needs and interests of the individual. On the other hand, not to do them is to opt more completely out of the system and possibly block paths to further education courses or work training.

In our case, by the time Jos and Luke were 13 and 11 they had had alternating experiences of school and a 'running-free' variety of EO, and neither had felt satisfactory in themselves. We moved house to a less remote area and wondered where to go educationally from there. After some family conferences we decided, for various reasons, that Jos would work for 3 'O' Level subjects via Wolsey Hall correspondence courses, and that Luke would start doing more formal work in maths, science and French. We knew that we didn't want exams to take over our lives as they so often do for school-children. Our decision to tackle just a few 'O' levels seems to have been a good one for us. Jos now knows that she is quite capable of taking them and doing well, but she hasn't been swamped by the pressures of doing the typical 8 or 9 subjects, so there has been plenty of time for her other interests such as patchwork, weaving, editing her own magazine and working with a group of 'special needs' children.

We wondered how she would find sitting the actual exam as she had never done one in her life before. In fact, she claims to have enjoyed them. She sat two of them with a friend (also an EOer) at a local high school. They found the teachers helpful and chatty and the whole atmosphere relaxed and unstressful.

Now it's all done and the exams passed, Jos has started a General Studies and Art course at a local College of Further Education. The time felt right for her to expand away from home-base a little. We negotiated for her to attend for only 3 days a week although a 5-day week is normally expected, as she felt that going full-time could be too much of a shock to the system after her self-directed regime at home. (Even 3 days a week has been quite a shock!) Luke plans to sit 5 'O' levels in 2 or 3 years time. Now we know the ropes we're going to manage without correspondence courses. There are good text books covering the 'O' Level syllabuses and it's not difficult to work out the practicalities of obtaining exam regulations, syllabuses and past papers. These are all available from the Examining Boards (some addresses at end). The correspondence courses were useful the first time round in boosting our confidence that all the necessary work had been covered to the right standard. They also cut my own work-load while I was helping two children work at different subjects while fitting in the usual housework, cooking and shopping, as Jos could often get on entirely by herself. Parents who lack confidence about being able to help with 'O' Level work are probably worrying needlessly if they have taken 'O' Levels themselves. I found that much of my very rusty 'O' Level knowledge could be dredged up and set to work again with

a bit of practice. Luckily my weak points, such as a total block about some of the new maths (indices and matrices make me feel weak at the knees) are balanced by Jos' and Luke's immediate grasping of it. Any problem that can't be resolved by them, me or the answer book is presented to the first unsuspecting person likely to be the right kind of expert, and one way or another understanding is always arrived at.

There have been times when it really did seem mad, 'just like school', and we could have happily thrown all the set books out of the window. But overall it's been worthwhile. We've appreciated being presented with the task of going into a novel, poem, period of history etc. in real depth which we probably wouldn't have otherwise done. Also, I think it's helped us all to develop more self-discipline, which is often lacking in children studying for exams at school, because the subjects have been more or less imposed with minimum consultation. Jos and Luke have been fully involved in the decision to take their particular 'O' Levels, so, even in less inspired moments, there is a basic commitment to keep working at them.

Taking exams won't be the choice for a lot of EO families, but for those who are inclined it can be a rewarding enterprise.

Wendy Razzell  
3 Edenmouth Cottages, Kelso

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Addresses of some of the Examining Boards:

University of London School Exams Dept.  
66 - 72 Gower Street, London WC1E 6EE

Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate  
1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU

Joint Matriculation Board  
Manchester M15 6EU

Associated Examining Board  
Wellington House, Aldershot, Hants

(It can be a good idea to check which Board your local centre for external students uses for its own students and go for that as this minimises complications with any aural or practical papers).  
WR

#### THE HORNSBY FAMILY

Jill and Malcolm Hornsby's children are Leigh aged 12, Sally aged 10, Robert aged 7 and Lucy aged 4. They write:

Our children dropped out of school in January 1984, after we had discussed the possibility with them for months. One Friday they told us that, rather than wait until Easter to leave, they would like to begin home education straight away.

Our relations with the schools had been good and friendly, although we had made formal protests about two changes in school organisation. Our children came home to dinner, and, as from late 1983, the dinner hour was shortened and the afternoon session moved forward in time. This was very inconvenient and led to rushed meals and, sometimes, late return in the afternoon. Unfortunately, Robert was the only "Infant" going home to dinner, and Leigh and Sally two of only four "Juniors". Our other objection, a very strong one, was the proposal to enrol children up to a year younger - at four rather than rising five. Our view is that five is too young for full-time school, and four, worse.

28.

When the children had made their decision to begin home education, our first action was for Jill to ring the Infant School Head and see him at home on Sunday to tell him of our decision. He was kind and supportive, and commented, as the Junior Head was to repeat the next day, that he was not surprised and could see it coming. The following day, Malcolm went to see the Junior Head, and the class teachers, who were very encouraging and anxious to help. The Junior Head even gave us a stack of books, mostly inspection copies of new schoolbooks, to help us get started.

The concern which lies at the centre of our home education is to keep our family together and to maintain its unity. This concern stretches back through a long fight for home birth, (successful in Lucy's case), through breastfeeding and La Leche League, and Jill's decision not to undertake any employment which detracts from the needs of the children. It is only secondarily concerned with the content and methodology of education (although here John Holt and A. S. Neill have been of great help).

Jill responded to a request for a curriculum with a long statement which revealed our educational ideas and set out a programme. In the event, after two or three days in which the children kept school hours and did "school" work, they all stopped formal work and rebuilt their lives and relationships. In the next few months, the most conspicuous activity was Leigh and Sally lying on their beds talking intensely to each other for most of the day, whilst Robert played and rested.

In June we received a visit from a representative of the Education Authority. She spent hours talking to the children and, in an informal and very friendly way, discovering how we and the children were working together. The children were delighted with this focussed attention, showed her their scrapbooks and other workbooks and treated her as a friend. Afterwards Sally commented that she was "just like any other visitor"; a compliment on her manner, but, in this adult-orientated society, the opposite of the truth, since few adults other than relatives feel licensed to relate closely with the children of another family.

The clearest expression of goodwill on the part of this visitor is that, following her two visits to date, she has sent us a copy of her report to the LEA. This is not a mere formality, but a useful guide to us, raising points which we can profitably keep in mind. She has also provided information and help on science, and is currently making enquiries for us about the implications of the GCSE on home-educated children.

This is a summary of our experience so far. In our view, the relationship of the LEA has been fruitful and constructive. They have the vital task of ensuring that our children are being cared for and that they are being educated competently. This task is being carried out sensitively and we are also receiving a little advice and help.

This letter has focussed on our relations with the LEA, because it seems to us that the role of monitoring by the LEA is important. This is not a world, as sometimes it appears from the newsletter, in which schools are all bad and parents all good. The needs of children are paramount; this is what EO is all about.

Jill and Malcolm Hornsby

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As EO speeds into its second decade, I thought I'd bring it to a rapid standstill, shake it to its very foundation, and unearth the thoughts of Archie's creator, Sarah Guthrie (alias SEG):

Technical Assistance: Russell Freeman  
Mrs. G. and Archie get a word in edgeways

- S. Archie began in December 1978. I had seen a funny cartoon about children. It was a cartoon version of a poem by Ogden Nash, inspired whilst driving along the road and seeing a sign saying: 'Children Cross Here' and he decided there ought to be another sign saying: 'Better Tempered Further On'. I made a really terrible attempt to copy it and I sent it to Dick Kitto, who said: 'Look, I can't really use the one you sent, but why don't you have a go at doing some anyway?' And Archie was born.
- K. Are ideas difficult to find?
- S. No, they're not, funnily enough. They're all based on real life experiences. Some emerge from jokes and conversation, some from my own experience.
- K. Why the name Archie?
- S. Well! Educating Archie, you know, the radio programme of the 50s! It was started by a man called Peter Brough. He had a ventriloquist act on the radio! The dummy was called Archie, and he was being taught at home! I've only realised this recently. He had a tutor. Isn't that weird? I really should have asked permission because Peter Brough is still alive. So it is an infringement of copyright. EO will probably be sent a vast bill....
- K. What sort of home life do you visualise when you're drawing Archie? Is it urban? Suburban? Rural? Is there a father around?
- S. It's urban and there's no Dad. Perhaps because I have always felt for single parents bringing up children, and because my own circumstances are relatively easy, I'm working off a sense of guilt by placing Archie and Mum against a background of struggle....
- K. The struggle hasn't really appeared in the cartoons.
- S. But it's there, lurking in the daily struggle in trying to keep everything ticking over.
- K. Has anybody every objected to Archie?

two frames from an embryonic **EDUCATING ARCHIE** (1978) by SEG



S. One chap believed that it was directed against teachers. It had nothing to do with teachers. The cartoons are occasionally anti school, but principally they are anti authority, so I suppose they must offend some people. That's fine. I mean cartoons ought to be provocative rather than boring. But I'd like to say that I don't really know what people think of Archie.

K. The first thing I do on receiving the newsletter is to seek out Archie. It puts me in a good mood. Do you think there is enough light relief in the NL?

S. I don't think the answer is to load it with jokes and children's drawings. Rather, the whole thing needs to give you a feeling of a lift instead of a down. And that requires imaginative layout and design. OK, so you may have fewer pages.....

K. What is Archie's mother like? Is she like you?

S. Yes, I'm afraid she's my alter ego!

K. And Archie? Whose alter ego is he?

S. I don't know. I don't think he's got one.

K. I get the feeling that 'Mrs G' talks a lot about geography and so on. Is she really guilt ridden with an academic conscience, or is she into self-regulation, but can't quite do it?

S. She is certainly guilt ridden. There is no question. She can do the self-regulation, but from time to time she's seized with a panic, so, for example: they'll be pottering along quite happily and she'll suddenly say: 'My God, Archie! We haven't done sums for a fortnight. Come on! And they'll sit down!'

K. Is the comfort that he brings mutual, since she's a single Mum?

S. No, I don't think so. In some ways she knows it would be a terrific relief if he went to school. She could then get a job, do her writing or whatever it was. But it's something she knows they're both committed to for reasons almost beyond her power's of explanation. She's got to do this for him. Also they're surrounded by the worst of schooling, though he's not one of your bespectacled geniuses, he is very wise.....and cheerful.

K. I'd like to have a few words with Archie: What would you like for Christmas Archie?

A. I don't want any more computers.

K. Have you got a special interest? Do you collect stamps? Or do you like going outside with a metal detector or just dig great big holes?

A. I think ..... I'd like a hammock!

K. Let's hope we have a sunny merry Christmas!

Mrs G explains: I think I must say he's an ambitious little chap. He's been cushioned from all financial and material worries and so he's a bit extravagant in his gestures. He's very peaceful. He's very stable. He's a lovely lad. But he's a dreamer and he could see no problem with having a hammock. He could see no problem with having a custom built little battery operated motor car to take him down to the swimming pool! He doesn't think in terms of money or difficulties. He's beyond all that.

K. What does he think in terms of?

Mrs G Finding answers to life.

=====

When the interview was over I felt disappointed that I'd never really discovered Archie's alter persona. I made a comment to that effect to the room at large. 'Oh, I think I must be Archie.' Brian Guthrie admitted. 'I do get mothered quite a lot!'

And so the mist lifted a little.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Please send reviews of any books you have read to the editor, or write to Helen Holland requesting a copy of any new book coming out. Helen will try to obtain the book for you, but please do write a review if you receive any such book.

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**Explorations with Art:** Activity Books 1 and 2 by John N. White: pub. Collins Educational (£1.25 each).

Two fascinating and stimulating workbooks that explore dots, lines, textures, shapes, symbols and patterns in a logical sequence. They are a far cry from conventional colouring books and offer a real chance to discover and enjoy art as a visual language.

**Powers of Ten:** by Philip and Phylis Morrison and the office of Charles and Roy Eames: pub. Scientific American Library (about £18 from W. H. Freeman).

This book, highly recommended by John Holt, is indeed a magical look at the universe. It is a transformation of a film that considered the relative size of things - the effect of adding another zero. From comets to fingerprints, from galaxies to atoms, the hidden unity of large and small is revealed. Order it from your library, but you'll want to linger over it.

**Who Needs a Home Computer?:** by Derek Rowntree: pub. Methuen (£4.95).

I think John Holt would have liked this book. "In principle", says the author, "computers should be able to offer extremely effective home tuition. In practice, they don't". Derek Rowntree, writing as a sceptic, examines the role of home computers and their relevance. He concluded that "Life is too short for home computers". A salutary antidote for those who are beginning to feel guilty about not succumbing to the pressure for possession, this book arms you with all the necessary information to ward off your critics.

**Micro Basics:** An Easy Introduction to Computers by Paul Meighan and Bernard McWilliams: pub. Impact Books (£2.95).

On the other hand, if you do go ahead, this neat instruction manual uses captions and drawing to make the whole subject remarkably clear.

**Photography Exposed:** (same author, publisher and price) explains in the same way, with clarity and concision, how to take good photographs.

**Nature Hide and Seek : Oceans:** by John Norris Wood and Mark Harrison: pub. Methuen (£4.95).

There's plenty to search for and find out about in this unusual look at sea creatures. The vividly coloured pictures seem to show little but when the fold-out flaps are lifted the strangest fish appear, then overleaf their names are given and details of their peculiarities.

**The Good Book Guide to Children's Books:** 1986 edition: pub. Penguin (£3.95). An independent and useful survey that includes a 50p voucher and some helpful advice on starting a home library.

**The Puffin Book of Indoor Games:** by Andrew Pennycook: pub. Penguin (£1.50). This is a jolly selection of card, domino, pencil, match and dice games that provides lots of inspiration for wet wintry afternoons.

**Poets in Hand : A Puffin Quintet:** Charles Courley, John Fuller, Elizabeth Jennings, Vernon Scannell, John Walsh: pub. Penguin (£1.95).

I like this anthology from five of our best writers of children's verse. The poems reveal a rich sensitivity to the world around, some haunt, some amuse, all show a real delight in language. We can feel with Vernon Scannell that

"he who needs no poetry or bread  
Is really in a devilish bad way."

**Poems for Over Ten Year Olds:** chosen by Kit Wright: pub. Penguin (£1.95).  
I've been looking for a collection like this for some time - lots of old favourites like Walter de la Mere's "The Listeners" and several stimulating finds are complemented by Michael Foreman's exciting illustrations.

**The Miracle Child:** by Elizabeth Laird and Abba Aregawi: Wolde Gabriel: pub. Collins (£1.95).

If you buy this beautiful book you will find much to inspire you in the story and 18th century illustrations of one Ethiopian boy who saved his people from famine and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that all the profits go to Oxfam's Ethiopian Famine Relief Programme.

#### PICTURE BOOKS:

Four delightful hardbacks from Methuen to be treasured on a family shelf (about £5.50 each).

**The Princess and the Frog:** by A. Vesey is a really amusing retelling of the old story with delicious illustrations.

**Once There Were no Pandas:** by Margaret Greaves is a Chinese legend explaining how the panda got his black markings. Lovely pictures by Beverley Gooding.

**Oscar Mouse Finds a Home:** by Moira Miller and Maria Majewska is a simple story as the title implies, but again superbly illustrated.

**Wild Goose Lake:** is another Chinese folk tale with haunting pictures by Tord Nygren.

Some paperbacks from Picture Puffin.

**Spot's Birthday Party:** by Eric Hill (£3.50).

Worth every penny because of the size of the print and the clear picture with flaps to lift.

**Norah's Ark:** by Ann and Reg Cartwright (£1.50).

An amusing story with bright pictures of a modern farmer who saved her animals from a flood and ends up with a good sized pond.

**Angry Arthur:** by Hiawyn Oram (£1.50).

Illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura tells graphically of a small boy's rage. I'm not sure whether a child would feel reassured or frightened of such drastic results.

**Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy:** by Lynley Dodd (£1.50).

A jolly rhyming story that young ones will enjoy chanting with the reader.

**Lucy and Tom's Christmas:** by Shirley Hughes (£1.50).

I highly recommend all the Lucy and Tom books for their sturdy comforting depiction of everyday family life. Shirley Hughes captures every detail with immense wit and charm.

All these reviews were sent by **Helen Holland**

**Anything School Can Do You Can Do Better:** Maire Mullarney: pub. Fontana (£1.25).

Mrs. Mullarney has eleven children, all home educated until the age of eight or nine. This book is the story of how she coped (chapter 3 is called "Painting, Drawing, and Mama Has a Rest"). She describes methods, equipment, and books which helped her, and discusses the teaching of reading and number. Included are brief biographies of all the children, from Barbera (born 1948) to Oliver (born 1964) so that we can follow their development and estimate the success of her work.

I found this an invaluable book, full of practical hints and reassuring personal experiences. It is possible to cope with all the work involved in caring for and educating four children and a baby - after all, Maire Mullarney managed with eleven!

**Margaret Bonham-Noyle**



**All About Your Street:** Stephen Scoffham: pub. Cambridge University Press, 1983 (£1.25).

It's a popular myth that to EO properly you must remove to the remotest countryside in order to become rooted in and to commune with nature. But for many of us this is neither a preference nor a possibility, so it was good to come across a book which recognises the learning potential in urban living.

'All About Your Street' takes what I call an environmental

approach - in other words, anything and everything can be an exciting resource and starting point for all sorts of learning.

This activity book uses quizzes, models, drawing, surveys, games, to encourage observation, questioning and imagination about all aspects of street life. I found the layout and illustration clear and appealing. It is intended, because of the reading involved, for 7s and upwards, but the ideas can be used successfully with younger children.

The author is Schools Officer for the Canterbury Urban Studies Centre and he has also written 'Using the School's Surroundings', a guide to local studies in urban areas.

**Ruth Lamdin**

**Individualised Reading** - Comparative lists of selected books for young readers. Bernice and Cliff Moon. (about £1).

A child who learns to read at home is very fortunate in having a whole range of books to use when beginning to read. There is no restriction to those often rather boring reading schemes. And yet that total freedom in the book world can sometimes be a bit bewildering, for the parents at least.

What books are actually available which would serve my child's needs at the moment? How do I know if these books which I think she might be able to read, are not in fact too difficult and off-putting? If you sometimes feel the need of a bit of help in these areas, you might find 'Individualised Reading' useful.

It divides books into 13 stages, from picture books with no text at all, right up to that exciting time when the child can tackle almost anything. In each there is a long list of available books, both fact and fiction. There is also an interesting introduction which explains their criteria for assessing at which of those stages a child could be reading to extend her skill but without excessive difficulty. Also their criteria for evaluating the readability and worthwhileness of a particular book.

Although 'Individualised Reading' is aimed at teachers and therefore suggests more structure than is needed at home, this does not make the book any less useful as a tool to have available when we feel the need for it. The book is updated annually and is available by post from: Centre for the Teaching of Reading, University of Reading School of Education, 29 Eastern Avenue, Reading RG1 5RU

**Ruth Lamdin**

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**STOP PRESS!**

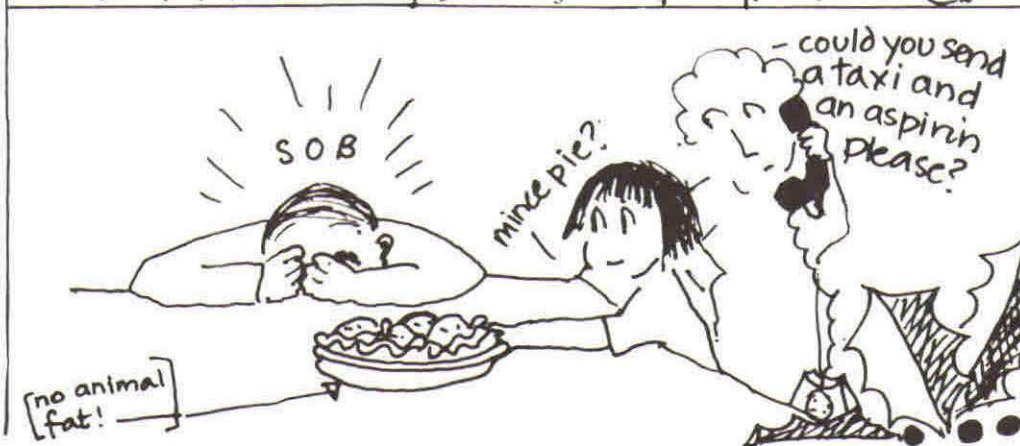
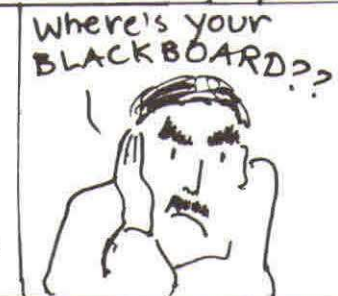
**James and Valerie Gommon**  
11 Barnes Place  
Oldbrook  
Milton Keynes MK6 2RJ

Have just taken over from Jo and Rob Paton as co-ordinators for North Bucks.

In the deep mid-winter, an INSPECTOR

comes to call on **ARCHIE?**

12-82  
SUG



## ADVENT AND EPIPHANY

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The weeks leading up to Christmas can be a wonderful time for people with their children at home, with more chances to make decorations, presents, labels, cards, wrapping paper, mincemeat, special biscuits and Christmas cake.

Whether specifically Christian or not, I imagine large numbers of us must feel we want to do something to counteract the prevailing atmosphere of materialism that can surround children at this time and try to create a deeper meaning for them - whether to celebrate the birth of Christ or to mark a time when we reach the depths of winter and re-emerge into a period of increasing light and new growth.

With this in mind I should like to suggest some ideas for celebrating advent - the four weeks leading up to Christmas. This season starts with a Sunday and in our family that is the signal to clear a suitable space to start an advent garden indoors. We begin by putting in a few interesting stones or crystals (the mineral world) and gradually add vegetation in the form of moss or plants or lumps of grass, also maybe cones and interesting pieces of wood. At the same time we make a very simple stable from pieces of wood or bark and make a little fire nearby for the shepherds. Then the animals can be gradually put in - the shepherds' sheep, the ox and ass in the stable with their manger. They are made from wool/fleece, beeswax, plasticine or brought from the children's farmyard. Sometimes birds, rabbits, cats and even pigs arrive too. It can get rather cluttered if you have 4 children all wanting to put something in the garden each day. Then come the shepherds, the angel, Mary and Joseph, and finally on Christmas morning, the baby Jesus. The figures can be made from beeswax or clay, felt and scraps of fabric or papier maché. Ours are mostly a head made of fleshy coloured material, stuffed with fleece with felt body simply drawn up round the neck and stuffed again, open ended to stand on a surface - then decorated with fleece for hair and beard.

On or before the first Sunday of advent we also make an advent ring, out of evergreen and wire or possibly a wooden circular base, to contain the 4 red advent candles, one of which is lit on that day, two the following Sunday, and so on. This is also our table decoration at this time, though some people suspend them above the table (watch out for dripping wax). When we light the candle we sometimes sing an appropriate song or carol and eat a special tea with advent biscuits made from Scandinavian, Dutch or German recipes. (Songs and recipes from "Festivals, Family and Food" available from Hawthorn Press, 1 Berkeley Villas, Lower Street, Stroud, Gloucester).

We have too a green advent mat made in the shape of a star, which adds to the festive feeling.

In some families the children are given a tiny present each day of advent. (Actually I adopted this custom for a few days after Christmas day so that it did not come to such a sudden end). But in a lot of families now the children have an advent calendar - either bought or home-made. (It is an idea to save bought ones and bring them out a few years later - if necessary using blu-tak to re-stick the doors). Home made ones can have many doors and windows or a more simple star coming down in stages to the stable whose doors open at Christmas to reveal Mary, Joseph and the baby. The star has a tail which fits into slots cut down the card. In one house I saw a beautiful calendar made with tissue windows behind which were shapes of angels. Each day a nearer one was lit by a night light in a special ceremony at tea time.

Some years we've had an advent candle with a division for each day but it can make eating the meal rather a worrying business if the candle gets left alight too long. I have found that telling the children about St. Nicholas (whose day is December 6th) is helpful at this time to put "Santa Claus" into context. Stories about Christmas customs in Holland, Germany and Scandinavian countries are also popular.

There are many ideas for Christmas decorations in "Festivals, Family and Food", and of course elsewhere. If you do not want a large number of bought ones,

a good effect comes from a mixture of evergreens and decorations made with gold or silver paper - you can have a thread across the room and put on it small fork-shaped pieces of ivy, mistletoe, etc. interspersed with hanging stars and angels. We usually also have a kissing bunch (à la Little Grey Rabbit) containing holly, ivy and mistletoe, tied with red ribbon which we put up after the children are in bed on Christmas Eve.

In different families there are different traditions about the Christmas tree. We try to keep ours bare until Christmas Eve or maybe a few days before, and then put on the decorations that have been made or collected over the years. But in many ways more effective and more symbolic of the whole festival is a tree adorned only with candles and rosy apples hanging down.

Making these kinds of preparations at advent, and also celebrating Epiphany and the 12 days of Christmas helps to restore Christmas to a season, rather than one day of feverish parcel opening, going to church and eating. At Epiphany making a special cake with a pea and bean (or 2 large sorts of nuts we use so that they don't get lost) to decide who is the king and queen for the evening, taking down the decorations and making an Epiphany star (cut out of a cardboard box with a light behind it) - to shine out of our window until Candlemas - all help us forward into the coming year in a positive way, bringing thoughts of a journey and an outward-going movement instead of a rather depressing end to something that comes and goes too quickly and leaves us feeling somehow unsatisfied.

Jackie Fearnley, Hove House, Egton, Nr. Whitby, North Yorkshire.

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#### EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS

Edited by Sarah Guthrie, with contributions from  
Janice Owens, Carol Morris and Rob Wade

**BITS AND PIECES.** Prince William started nursery school this autumn, aged 3. "He has got to go to school somewhere, hasn't he?" said one of the other parents. (GUARDIAN Sept).



..... Teachers for Animal Rights founder would like to stop nursery rhymes that encourage cruelty to animals such as THREE BLIND MICE, SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE, etc (TELEGRAPH 23.8) ..... Devon County Council is to investigate the possible danger to children of exposure to classroom computers and VDUs, following the decision of a teacher to withdraw her children from her school because of the possible threat to their health from VDU screens (NEW STATESMAN 11.10). In Japan, computers are not allowed in schools ..... Three separate disputes in October led to thousands of children missing lessons, while teachers voiced their frustration over low salaries and loss of status (SUNDAY TIMES 20.10)

..... Public schools are to start calling themselves "independent schools", decided the Head Masters (sic) Conference this year (TELEGRAPH 25.9.85) ..... Education Authorities are considering scrapping the 3-term school year and moving the main holiday back to June or July, following exams in April or May (TELEGRAPH 9.9)

**EDUCATION AT HOME.** WOMAN magazine (September 7) carried a feature on home education entitled "Is School the best place for your children?" The Everdell family, the Guthries, the John family and the Whites from Yorkshire were all interviewed. A lecturer in the sociology of education worried about the possible pitfalls for women in home education, as - unable to have a job outside the home - they would be rather limiting for their children.

Parents are the best educators of their own children when it comes to reading, writing and spelling, according to the authors of TEACH YOUR CHILD TO READ\*

(EDUCATION GUARDIAN 17.9). They say that the parents' role is not over when the child starts school ...

\*by Peter Young and Colin Tyre, Fontana, £2.95)

**EXAMS.** The Scottish Examination Board has been accused of accepting incompetent examiners for this year's O Grade and Higher exams, to cover for teachers on strike (GUARDIAN 26.9). This led to anomalies in results which were queried by parents and pupils ..... A 17 year old described as a brilliant maths student cracked under pressure to do well in A levels. He ran away from home and survived by stealing handbags (TELEGRAPH 2.8.8) ..... Rebecca Lawrence, sister of Ruth, has passed O level maths, aged 11 (TELEGRAPH 27.8)

**LEARNING MATHS.** In its July bulletin, ACE explains to parents the current emphasis on practical work in primary mathematics. Such work may take a long time to foster the right understanding of mathematical concepts. Parents, says the report, can help children develop practical skills at home, by providing a range of domestic activities which involve calculation and discussion and create interest. "..... most of the necessary experience in secondary maths is gained outside school ....." (Ace's BULLETIN July/August, which also includes an interesting maths reading list for lay mathematicians) - Enquiries to ACE, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB.

A report out this summer claims that failure at school maths does not prevent adaptation to new technology in the workplace (T.E.S. 23.8). Research showed that many employees without maths qualifications or even a 'strong aversion' to maths were nevertheless confident at maths in their jobs. Few employees, said the report (published by the Department of Education and Science), young or old .... could see much value to themselves in the maths they have been subjected to at school".

**STRATHCLYDE.** A judge refused to grant a court order brought by parents against Strathclyde Council to force them to provide adequate education for their children during the teachers strike (T.E.S. 11.10). But the judge rejected the plea by Strathclyde that the application by the parents was not competent, ordering a second hearing to determine whether there had been loss of education in the course of the current school session, under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 ..... Strathclyde Council is to raise extra cash by advertising in school exercise books, and the ILEA is to follow their example (TELEGRAPH 9.8) ..... a large survey by the National Conference of Parent Teacher Associations finds that schools are crumbling through lack of funding, with parents having to help out more and more for essentials (GUARDIAN 22.10).

**1066 AND ALL THAT.** HMI have launched a new and exciting guide to teaching history, to be widely distributed to local authorities. Called HISTORY IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY YEARS (available from the DES stationery office £3.95) it is a counter to those who want history dropped in favour of more up-to-date disciplines, and it argues that history should develop intellectual independence rather than the dull repetition of facts (GUARDIAN 1.10).



**FOOTNOTE FOR 1985:** Do readers find this column biased? Is it too anti-school, or does it reflect what the SUNDAY TIMES recently described as "the biggest crisis in the educational system since the war"? Whatever you think (and I'd like to know) Education Through the Press will be changing its bias for a while, when guest editors take over starting with the next issue and continuing throughout EO's 10th Birthday Year. If you are dying to have a go, write to Sarah Guthrie, Field House, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk. But regular contributors please continue to send stuff to Sarah.

## TALKING ABOUT SCHOOL

"I have been in education for 25 years and I have never known morale so low. Many many of our students are coming back from teaching practice reporting that teachers are urging them not to enter the profession". (Ted Wragg, Professor of Education at Exeter University, SUNDAY TIMES, 20 Oct.)

"There has been a retreat from authority ....." (Fred Smithies, National Association of Schoolmasters/mistresses, talking about children and discipline on DAYTIME, ITV, 23 Oct.)

"It seemed wrong that I was given so much power over other people's children and I began to give it away in large handfulls..." (Beverly Anderson, ex-teacher and senior lecturer in education, T.E.S. 11 Oct. 85).

"They come into schools with lively inquiring minds, but they don't leave with them ..... God created the universe; he separated light from darkness and land from water. Then he stopped. He didn't say a word about history and geography or maths and physics ... He knew when he'd done a good job ... subjects can't be didactically decreed; they grow up from the ground, like children, not from universities and the DES ...." (Ken Young, headteacher from Tower Hamlets, T.E.S. 11 Oct 85 (discussing school curricula).

"De-schooling is .... at the root of any movement for human liberation. Each of us is personally responsible for his or her own de-schooling, and only we have the power to do it. No one can be excused if he fails to cure himself of his addiction to school. Men could not free themselves from the Crown until they had freed themselves from the established Church. They cannot free themselves from progressive consumption until they free themselves from obligatory school".

(Extract from Ivan Illich's essay outlining his theory for deschooling society, from T.E.S., first published in July 1971).

Edited by Sarah Guthrie with contributions from Carol Morris.  
More contributions welcome please.

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Rosy Hunt, who is very young, has made up this quiz called:

### BOOK-BABIES

Who are these babies, and what books are they in?

1. Refused to eat, and threatened to summon the Lion to eat nursemaid Jenny up.
2. Turned into a pig when it was taken out of the kitchen.
3. Christened with spinach, and named after a flower.
4. Taken away from his loving Uncle, by a Bagbird.
5. His first word was "Baa" which is the reason for his unusual nickname.
6. Loved his "Nurk Maggigy".
7. Climbed a tree on a tiger's back, and got stuck at the top.
8. Among his first words were "Runfrit" and "Bogla Boll".
9. Encountered burglars, robberies, and farm animals just because of his tiny size.
10. Got a swollen face and black eye by falling off his royal sister's lap.

Answers on page 8.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
At Wick Court, Bristol on Saturday 12th October 1985

1. Bruce Cox expressed the meeting's thanks to Patricia Webb and Meg Robertson for their hard work in organising the weekend at Wick Court.
2. After introducing ourselves there were apologies for absence from Angela Montfort-Bebb, Alvena Hillier and Frances Howerd.
3. There were no minutes from last year, none having been taken. Business had consisted of the election of officers.
4. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Treasurer - Alison Mafham

Please see page 43 of this newsletter.

Co-ordinators' Secretary

Andy Anderson reported that there are now 68 co-ordinators. He stressed the importance of co-ordinators informing him of any change of address or phone number, of their resignation and of the name and address of their replacement. If they fail to do this it makes proper communication very difficult.

Some co-ordinators are not on the phone, which causes problems. If at all possible a phone number should be given for messages to be relayed to co-ordinators not on the phone. He will have to advertise in the NL for co-ordinators in Dorset, Jersey, Dumfries and Galloway.

Public Relations - Joe O'Connor

Publicity was felt to be an important area where people could be made aware of their educational rights. There had been an article in 'New Society' on 19.7.85, and one in 'Woman' on 3.9.85. There had been TV coverage on Miriam Stoppard's programme 'Where There's Life' in July, a news feature on TV-AM with film of two families in Surrey (Beavis and Last), and with a live interview with Joe in the studio on 3.9.85. On 19.9.85 HTV West featured two EO families with EO studio guests on 'The West This Week'. On Yorkshire TV there was a local news feature with Anne Moss, Jo Paton and Jenny White and 4 families were filmed. EO members were also in the audience of 'You and Yours'. BBC Bristol had been in touch to do a local feature on EO on 19.9.85. Mark Galloway of Yorkshire TV is researching a documentary on EO with 4 families. BBC South wanted to make a regional news programme on EO. On LBC Radio there have been interviews on 2.8.85 on the Gill Pyrah programme with Joe answering listeners' questions, and on 20.9.85 with Anne and Rob Wade. The enquiries resulting from this publicity were 16 in July/August, 159 in September and 14 in October.

Families with legal problems or who are being harassed by their LEA could contact Joe for publicity in the media if they wished.

Legal Group - Anne Wade

Report to appear in the February newsletter.

Family Support Fund

(This report was sent by Peter Gibbs after the AGM). Donations to date were £79 and one EO family had been given £25. The balance at 7.10.85 was £54 (excluding funds made available from the main EO fund and retained in the main EO account). Guidelines for the Support Fund have been made. The membership form is to have a space for donations in the Support Fund.

### Research Committee

Rob Wade read a report prepared from the replies to the questionnaire sent to the parents of children aged 6+. This is printed on page 44 of this NL. A questionnaire is being compiled to send to parents of children aged 11+. Our thanks to the Research Committee for their work.

### Advertising Secretary

Jean Shepherd reported that £374 had been received from advertising during January-September. There was discussion on whether we should continue with advertising in the newsletter, as an ad. implies an endorsement of the goods or services offered and that they are necessary, e.g. correspondence courses for passing exams. However, it does bring in money. As consensus could not be reached a vote was taken on whether to dispense with advertising - 17 in favour and 13 against. There will therefore be no more advertising in the newsletter. Members may write in with their own recommendations of books, courses, holidays etc. and current commitments to commercial advertisers will be honoured. Our thanks to Jean for her work in finding advertisers.

### General Secretary

EO is now a company limited by guarantee, Education Otherwise Limited and a charitable trust, the Education Otherwise Charitable Trust. John Elenor offered his resignation which was accepted and Joan Hoare elected to take his place.

### Membership Secretaries

Bruce Wallace reported that membership stood at 1525 families and individuals, an all-time high. There had been problems with the supply of publications, which had now been overcome. He and Christine hold a stock of publications of approximately 3000 booklets with 4000 SINC's to come. He requested funds for an adequate storage system.

### Publications Secretary

Caroline Grant reported that the publication of the newsletter (NL) had been uneventful. We have enough editors for the NL until December 1986. The average cost of the NL is £750, 1600 copies being printed in August. The run will be increased to 1800 due to increase in membership, which means an increase in postage costs. Supplements have included Development Education, Maths and Languages. Supplements on music, one-parent families, reading and writing had been offered.

SINC - 300 stop gap editions had been printed in July. 5000 copies of the proper edition were printed in September at a cover price of £1.50. Malcolm Hornsby has the text on his word processor, which will make it easy to do any future amendments.

Early Years - Reprinted from the last edition. Sarah Guthrie, the editor, would like to update it in about a year's time.

Contact List - A new list for new members only was printed in July. This should last until next April.

### Enquiries Secretary

Janet Everdell reported that there had been 1747 enquiries for the year ending September 1985, not including those received by Joe O'Connor. She had had a difficult year getting supplies and standing in for disappearing co-ordinators. The Consumers' Association is bringing out a publication called 'Children, Parents and the Law', in which EO will get an entry. We have had an excellent year for publicity.

The very sad news received on 30 September that John Holt, at 62, had died of cancer, was responded to with a teletext tribute on behalf of EO members to be read out at his memorial service on October 5th.

5. Caroline Grant resigned as Publications Secretary. Jean Shepherd volunteered to oversee the newsletter only, and will be called Publications Secretary. Someone else would be needed for SINC, Early Years and Later Years. (Pauline Thomasson subsequently volunteered to do these). Our thanks go to Caroline for her hard work as Publications Secretary over quite a few years.  
The General Secretary's job was split up into Minutes Secretary and Public Relations Officer. Joane Hoare became the Minutes Secretary, keeping the title of General Secretary, and Joe O'Connor became Public Relations Officer.
6. Pauline Thomasson volunteered to become Assistant General Secretary and to do the Unstone Grange bookings for next May. Jennie White offered to become EO's correspondent for the National Council for Civil Liberties. Rob Wade was elected vice-Chairman.  
Anne Wade said that the Legal Group would be grateful for transcripts of legal proceedings so that they could be available to anyone who needed them. It was thought that a fund raiser for EO would be useful.
7. A member had contacted Andy Anderson about posting EO publicity handbills through people's doors. Although we applauded the member's enthusiasm, we didn't think it a good idea, both on the grounds of cost and possible intrusiveness.
8. EO was founded in 1976, so that 1986 will be our 10th anniversary. Sarah Guthrie suggested that a quiet celebration should take place. She suggested a reunion at Lower Shaw Farm, which had been the original EO meeting place, a special edition of the NL, which she volunteered to edit, and a special T-shirt, which she would organise. We all agreed to this.
9. While EO's main account is with William & Glynns, our standing orders are with Barclays Bank. We all agreed that we no longer wished to bank with Barclays, and that this would be changed.
10. AOB. We agreed that a small gathering in memory of John Holt should be held during the weekend.

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## FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

As stated in the accompanying account, the sum that EO has in hand (18.9.85) is £7,254.93. On the same date last year funds amounted to £6,071.97. Therefore over the past year EO's total income has exceeded expenditure by £1,182.96. This is in spite of there having been a number of substantial extraordinary expenses during the past year (e.g. the purchase of the telephone answering machine for the Enquiries Secretary for £137.96, the purchase of the draft of SINC for £750, the purchase of an electric typewriter for £244.64, the purchase of a computer system for £1,442.10, and the costs of registration of EO as a limited company and as a charity - £350). It might be tempting for members to conclude that in a "normal" year the excess of income over expenditure could be expected to be much higher than it has been this year, but if we define a normal year as one in which no substantial extraordinary expenses arise, then I think we have to look a long way ahead to find a normal year. The particular expenses mentioned above will not of course occur again, but, in the present situation of rapid expansion of EO membership and, therefore, of rapid development in the structure of the organisation, others are likely to arise. Two such expenses are already foreseeable for the coming year; the printing of SINC and the purchase of "Teenage Years".

The foregoing is not intended to indicate that there is any foreseeable danger of EO suffering from shortage of funds - (the organisation still has the large

(continued on page 43)

ACCOUNT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE  
19 May 1985 - 18 September 1985

EXPENDITURE

Regular

Newsletter and Contact List	1788.89
Other publications and stationery	721.20
Purchase of T.Y.O.	273.00
Meetings (deposit for use of Unstone Grange in May 1986)	35.00
Officers' expenses	487.03
Co-ordinators' expenses	292.44
Bank charges	33.59
Legal Group expenses	16.00
Expenses of trustees of Family Support Fund	17.00
Stall expenses	40.00

Extraordinary

Purchase of computer	1192.55
C.E.D.C. Conference	32.00

TOTAL	4928.70
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INCOME

From subscriptions	2977.35
From sale of EO publications	163.00
From sale of T.Y.O.	380.85
From subscriptions to GWS	149.00
From donations	5.00
Interest	132.18
From ads in the Newsletter	211.90
Meetings (bookings for Wick Court)	371.50

TOTAL	4390.78
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INCOME	4390.78
In hand 19 May 1985	7792.85
TOTAL INCOME	12183.63
LESS TOTAL EXPENSES	4928.70
IN HAND 18 Sept 1985	£ 7254.93

surplus acquired in the year 83 to 84 which was a normal year as defined above). It is intended rather to indicate to members who might be tempted to conclude from a study of the past year's balance sheets that a surplus in the region of three or four thousand pounds might be expected in the next and subsequent years when, as far as it is possible to tell at the present time, a surplus of around £1,000 is far more likely.

Alison Mafham

## RESEARCH: FAMILIES WITH SIX YEAR OLDS

First of all, we are sorry for the delayed appearance of this report: it took us a lot longer to get it done than we over-optimistically thought it would.

To recap. last December's preliminary report: we wanted to know how many EO children were actually out of school - was it as few as might appear from the contact list? If so, was this due to any lack of support which we could give each other, since presumably most people join EO with the intention of home-educating?

In order to bring the problem down to a manageable size we limited our sample to children whose ages lay within a one year band. Of the original group of EO members who were invited to complete a questionnaire, over half, eighty families, responded, in very varied degrees of detail. Two thirds of the returned forms were from home-educating families, a predictable skewing in the sample.

Virtually all the families who were sending a child to school qualified this information with comments like "only sent because he/she wanted to go with friends" or "we would withdraw her if she became unhappy". Hopefully these were freely offered comments, not a result of EO pressure to conform.

There were some bravely honest responses from home educating parents about their own feelings of isolation, lack of 'space', time to pursue their own interests uninterrupted, and the acceptance that long periods of coping with the demands of home educated children can "wear parents down" and adversely affect the quality of the interaction with children.

The need of parents to utilise the 'childminding function' of schools was often quoted by families sending a child to school, for reasons like the need to earn, lack of energy for full time home educating, need for breaks from the children. The overwhelming demand for more and better local networks and contacts probably reflects this genuinely felt need.

The child's social isolation was quoted by families sending a child to school as an anxiety they would have about home educating, and it was also expressed as an initial anxiety by families who had chosen to home educate. It was never in practice experienced as a problem by families once they had been home educating for any length of time, the common experience being that this age of child seemed to be happy with siblings, what contact could be managed with other home educated children and 'out of school time' social contact, both informal and through a wide variety of organised clubs and activities. Some families also commented on the quality of friendships possible in a freer, less competitive environment.

Concern over possible legal problems and LEA pressure was far more widely expressed than was in reality experienced by home educating families. The potentially invasive nature of LEA demands for formal achievements when home educating was a cause for concern, but so far had not been found to be a problem for the home educating families. (These were, of course, all young children - it would be interesting to compare families' experiences with home educated older children - are more educational demands made with other age groups?)

Confidence in parents' ability to cope with the academic demands of home educating seemed to soar once the children were out of school for any length of time. A more flexible approach is frequently soon adopted, with parental role seen more as facilitator than coach. The wide variation in perception of what education is was apparent from the questionnaires, and the gap between parents' and schools' definition often mentioned, both as reason for de-schooling and for never enrolling a child, e.g. "We want a seven day a week preparation for life, not a five day week preparation for a five day week job".

Many parents described personality changes on starting school ("withdrawn", "bedwetting", "painfully shy", "more aggressive", "tells more lies".....) as a reason for subsequent de-schooling. Another reason given was the dampening of natural curiosity and a desire to learn ("It's more interesting at home", "Grown-ups don't like children who ask questions".)

Schools' preconceptions of what a child of four or five ought to achieve academically caused distress, boredom and frustration, and many children were withdrawn, both "under-achievers" and "over-achievers".

The questionnaire returns were overwhelming in their responses to Question 4, "What did you expect from EO .... What more could we do to help each other?" The personal contact with like-minded EO families was eagerly sought by most home educating families. This was often found, through the contact list and personal initiative, or more frequently with help from local EO groups and co-ordinators, and was highly valued. Members are seeing their needs as being met locally. The families who sought and did not find this local, family-to-family support failed for various reasons, e.g. "too busy EO-ing ourselves to find time to go to meetings", "the contact list was 'thinner' than is looked" (there are far fewer families actually home educating their children than join EO), "the range of lifestyles was so wide that we met nobody 'like us' at meetings", "there simply aren't yet many EO families near us", or people needing support were put off by 'calmer' home educating families, or by 'success stories' in the newsletters. One form included a plea for less dogmatism, of the "schools are all wrong, home educating is a bed of roses" type, and more open-ended discussion of the pros and cons of real situations.

Financial problems were mentioned frequently, in the contact of (a) the need to earn so that the childminding function of schools was being utilised, (b) the limits placed on 'EO-ing' - children being allowed to follow their interests can demand vast amounts of equipment, transport etc. as well as time and energy, and (c) limiting the chance to see as much of other EO families as was wished.

Far the most frequently voiced comments were those concerning the EO newsletter: "Let's see more 'grass-roots' practical, 'how different families cope day to day' types of article", and "Let's spend less time bickering and more time supporting". These two comments, and "We need unity - life-giving, supportive words", sum up the feelings about the much valued newsletter.

All the practical needs that were itemised, e.g. books, cheap paper, pass-on and sharing schemes, and skill sharing suggestions, would obviously be best met locally.

Once again, we would like to express our thanks to all those people who took the trouble to answer our questions at the time, and to all those who responded to our plea to put themselves on the Contact List, keep it amended, and especially to tell Bob Emmett (address inside back cover) if their children are home educated.

Anne Moss, 98 Victoria Avenue, Hull

Rob and Anne Wade, 19 Perkin Close, Wembley, Middlesex

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#### Two cuttings from the New York Times - 28 April 1985

Texas is emphasizing school work under a program adopted last year that is changing the lives of the state's four million school children. The program bars students who fall below a grade of 70 in any course from extracurricular activities such as sports and music for the next six-week grading period. Some say the program is working well, but others call it unfair and harsh.

Teachers must change their thinking

and take "a step beyond collective bargaining" if they hope to be fully accepted as professionals, according to Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers. In a speech at the annual convention of the New York State United Teachers in Niagara Falls, he urged a national examination to limit entry into teaching and impartial evaluation of teachers' performance, among other measures, as ways to enhance the standing of the profession.

(Sorry - the contributor of these two items is not known. Ed)

CORE GROUP PROVISIONAL AGENDA  
Sunday 25th January 1986 10.00 am - 12.00 am  
at Milton Keynes Youth Hostel

All members welcome to attend

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1. Apologies
  2. Minutes of the last meeting
  3. Reports of Officers
    - a) Membership Secretaries
    - b) Enquiries Secretary
    - c) Co-ordinators' Secretary
    - d) Publications Secretary
    - e) Treasurer
    - f) General Secretary
    - g) Public Relations Officer
    - h) Research Committee
    - i) Family Support Fund
    - j) Legal Committee
    - k) Steering Committee
  4. Our next steps as a charity and limited company
  5. Precis of constitution and availability of complete version at what cost
  6. Covenants - Alison
  7. Moving standing orders from Barclays - Alison
  8. Insurance of assets - Alison
  9. Rolling fund for financing local groups
  10. Has Alison's system for keeping track of sale of publications been instituted? Is it working? Do we need to do a stock taking?
  11. Fund raising as a charity - Joe
  12. Copyright laws - Jean
  13. Pat Knox's work on school phobia
  14. Silk screen for T-shirts. Did Alison buy it? (See minutes of Core Group Meeting at Unstone Grange on May 5th 1985, item 10, August 1985 NL)
  15. Central phone number in London - Ann
  16. Has National Out of School Alliance subscription been cancelled? Shall we subscribe to the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)?
  17. List of useful addresses for co-ordinators and enquirers - Andy
  18. Child Benefit for over 16's being educated at home
  19. Who should get copies of minutes sent to them
  20. Future venues
  21. Appointment of Company Secretary
  22. Any other business
- 

If any member has an item they would like discussed, would they please let me know, preferably by writing.

Future venues: The next venue after Milton Keynes is at Unstone Grange, Crow Lane, Unstone, Sheffield - May 23 - 26 1986. Suggestions for future venues are very welcome.

Joan Hoare

25 Moor Oaks Road, Broomhill, Sheffield S10 1BX. Tel: 0742 666605

(Joan has a message for recorder players - see NOTICES)

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Owing to lack of space, the minutes of the Core Group meeting of the 13th Oct. 1985 will be printed in the February newsletter.

**BANKERS' ORDERS**

There was a strong feeling at the General Meeting at Wick Court on the 12th October, that EO should cease dealing with Barclays Bank. Our main account has for some time been with William and Glynn's Bank (now called Royal Bank of Scotland), only the payment of standing orders being through Barclays. The main reason for this decision is the strong financial influence and involvement that Barclays International Ltd. (a subsidiary of Barclays Bank PLC) has with the present government of South Africa. A number of members have resigned from EO over this matter, and a large proportion have similar views (though of varying degrees). We are therefore intending to close our account with Barclays in the fairly near future, and would like members who currently pay with a standing order to complete the following form and return it to:

Bob Emmett  
8 Queensway  
Liddell Park  
LLANDUDNO  
Gwynedd LL30 1Y

We would add that this is a rational move from an organisational point of view and will make our banking slightly cheaper too. We'd also add that any member not paying by standing order, but who would like to, is welcome to send in one of these forms.

Many thanks

Bruce and Christine Wallace (Membership Secretaries)

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**BANKER'S ORDER**

Please pay Royal Bank of Scotland, Foregate Street, Chester (code 16-16-14) the sum of £10 (ten pounds sterling) on 1st..... (leave blank) each year until cancelled, for the credit of EDUCATION OTHERWISE ASSOCIATION LIMITED (a/c no. )

SIGNED.....

DATE.....

NAME AND ADDRESS OF YOUR BANK (capitals)

YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS (capitals)

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.....

Your a/c No.....

**BANK PLEASE NOTE** This order CANCELS the existing standing order payable to Education Otherwise at Barclays Bank, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

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or telephone 0865 52200 (24 hours) Dept. DT5.

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## EO OFFICERS

General Secretary	<b>Joan Hoare</b> 25 Moor Oak Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire. Tel: 0742 666605
Membership Secretaries	<b>Bruce and Christine Wallace</b> 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen Ross-shire IV22 2HE Tel: 044581 225
Enquiries Secretary	<b>Janet Everdell</b> 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs PE18 9AN Tel: 0480 63130 (not after 9 pm)
Co-ordinators' Secretary	<b>Andy Anderson</b> 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7JA Tel: 0270 664060
Public Relations Officer	<b>Joseph O'Connor</b> 4 Coombe Gardens, New Malden Surrey KT3 4AA Tel: 01 942 0286
Publishing Secretary	<b>Jean Shepherd</b> 9 Cranborne Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 3NF Tel: 0707 339750
Treasurer	<b>Alison Mafham</b> 3 Park Road West, Curzon Park, Chester Tel: 0244 677452
Assistant Treasurer (Renewals)	<b>Bob Emmett</b> 8 Queensway, Liddell Park Llandudno, Gwynedd LL30 1YJ
Reviews Editor	<b>Helen Holland</b> Inholm Farm, Plumpton Green Near Lewes, Sussex Tel: 0273 890405

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## WHERE TO GET WHAT

Current and Old Newsletters, SINC, Early Years, Teach Your Own, Growing Without Schooling	} Membership Secretaries
Stationery, Introductory Literature, Envelope re-use labels (£1 per 100), Membership forms, posters and handbills	
	} Co-ordinators' Secretary

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Education Otherwise is a membership organisation whose principle aim is to provide support and an information network for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to support the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their 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 Abotts,  
Cambridgeshire,  
PE18 9AN

.....