

EDUCATION OTHERWISE

Sometimes I look about me with a feeling of complete dismay. In the confusion that afflicts the world today, I see a disrespect for the very values of life. Beauty is all about us, but how many are blind to it! They look at the wonder of this earth - and seem to see nothing. Each second we live in a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that never was before and never will be again. And what do we teach our children in school? We teach them that two and two make four, and that Paris is the capital of France. When will we also teach them what they are?

We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the world there is no other child exactly like you. And look at your body what a wonder it is! Your legs your arms, your cunning fingers the way you move! You may become a Shakespeare, a Michaelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel and when you grow up can you harm another who is, like you, a marvel? You must cherish one another. You must work - we all must work - to make this world worthy of its children.

Pablo Casals, cellist.

Newsletter 45 February 1986

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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

LOIS COOK
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Kent
CT6 6DJ

Deadline March 1st

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

Dear Friends,

It is exactly five years ago since we took our daughter out of school and became members of EO. Doing this newsletter is a way of thanking EO, for without its existence and our knowledge of that, I wonder what would have happened and how life would have been for our children. I am always so horrified when I read the sad stories in this newsletter of what children have had to endure before, by chance, their parents discovered EO. It is extraordinary that so few people know their legal rights and how, even now, LEAs do not acknowledge or recommend home education as a viable alternative to a family in crisis. It is perhaps time that all our stories were put together into some form and presented as a legal alternative that works, and made available to the general public, for there must be many more parents out there whose children are suffering at school but who do not know what to do about it. Unless someone else already has that underway I think I may seriously consider undertaking it this autumn.

I remember the first year of home education as being extremely trying as I battled with a child who had no interest in any formal work. I soon came to find out that most of what children are expected to do is quite meaningless to them and indeed is a great imposition on them. Very little is learnt from within and no sense of self is developed or indeed encouraged. After four years of schooling we found Alice unable to concentrate on anything or do anything for herself because she wanted to. Things have changed since then, since we dropped this compulsive need to learn things, to be endlessly doing, and she has found herself beautifully and has become an articulate, mature, sociable thirteen year old.

Alice's brother, Joshua, who had never experienced school, asked a year or so ago, just before he was seven, to go to school, and so he went. He left after a term declaring that that was quite enough of that. I do not worry like I used to for although he is nearly eight and doesn't read too well and resists all formal work, he seems to learn and absorb things in his own way and time and when he is ready to or needs to, I am sure he will do the things he has to do and be. If all children were allowed to do that in their childhood we would, perhaps, live on a happier planet.

I have enjoyed editing and I thank you all for your contributions. Anything that doesn't appear here has been sent on to the next editor. We have a very busy few months ahead and if anyone has a lovely sixteen plus daughter, or son, who might like to come and live with us for a while that would be wonderful. Briefly we are David and Meg, Alice (13), Josh (7), Mary (3) and Mark, our foster son (11), two dogs, two cats, a rabbit, six ducks and a pony. We live in a large house, with a beautiful view and about an acre of garden and woodland, some five miles south east of Bath. If you want to know more please be in touch. Best wishes to you all for the New Year.

Meg Robertson, The Old Thatched House, Midford Lane, Limpley Stoke,
Bath Avon. Tel: 022 122 3266

letters

Dear Editor,

Having aired the idea of giving over some pages of the EO newsletter to home-educated children to communicate their ideas and experiences, I would like to reply to some of the suggestions of other members.

It should be kept in mind that the term children is being used here to cover those from four years through to late teens.

Kipper, as I understand it, is not part of our organisation, so it does not seem appropriate that EO children's communications should be side-tracked to that publication.

A separate publication for children's communications may seem a good idea at first but the segregation of children's views from those of the adults does not sit well with me besides the difficulties of producing such a publication.

The censorship that others are suggesting should be placed upon children for their own good, need only be answered by the question of how would adult members feel if their contributions were censored in terms of whether they may make them appear 'curiosities', 'more gifted', 'competitive' or 'self-conscious'.

The children are more likely to be self-conscious due to fear of adult censure. It is incongruous to deny the voice of those for whom we claim to speak. (Are we politicians?)

If our children are not able to express ideas and experiences, or choose not to, perhaps that could be taken as an indication that EO is not always as liberated as claimed!

The quote in the last newsletter from 'Teaching Mixed Ability Classes' by A.V. Kelly, encapsulates our aim, so the producing of an EO newsletter for the adults who are 'talking over the children's heads', cannot be in those children's best interests.

Even if adult members form a consensus for or against children having this facility it will be irrelevant if these children do not choose to take up the pen. Surely they would want to say what home education means to them and what they would like to see the EO organisation doing or not doing? However, if they do not, it leaves a void in the democratic discussion which would leave us the worry. Why?

On a lighter but I suspect deeper note, referring to the principal aims printed upon the back of the newsletter, when on a point of disagreement with your EO child, which has priority - your parental primary responsibility for the child's education or the primary right of the child that full consideration, with due allowance for their age, understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.

Yours

K.V. Purvis

88, Hallside Road, Cowpen, Blyth, Northumberland, NE 24 5PF



Dear Editor,

I would like to thank you for the fantastic response we got to our letter about Rudolf Steiner Courses by post. To date twenty-seven people have responded asking for more details and at least eight now have the course. As there seems to be so much interest in the course perhaps you could publish some or all of the enclosed which we have sent to each enquirer.

We now have course Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, and 4 and we think they are all fantastic.

Yours sincerely,

Colin and Avatar Smith

5 Spenlows Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK3 6JT

Editor's note: I am sorry but I have found it impossible to extract from the sample pages sent. I could give the 'overview' of the Oak Meadow Curriculum, which is where these courses come from, but feel that this belongs in advertising space.



Dear EO Friends,

I would like to recommend the PICTOGRAM SYSTEM. It is a wonderful way for children to make friends with letters and to enjoy writing them and putting them together. Each letter has a character picture and a song to sing. There are stories about how the letters relate together. This system is ideal for home education. There is no need to follow an order in teaching just read the story of the letter combination which the child is interested in. Letters become action pictures.

It is expensive but I have found it far better value than other courses I have spent money on. It makes writing a pleasure and not a chore. I have purchased the two teaching packs - One and Two and a Parents book - 'Letterland ABC'. This cost £50 - I have wasted more than that on courses condemned by my daughter as 'boring'.

It is obtainable from: - Pictogram Supplies, Barton, Near Cambridge. If your children are in school and are aged 5-9 why not get details of this course and try to get your child's school to buy it. 20% of primary schools already use it.

You could make up your own pictogram system if you like but it would require lots of ready made ideas and could take a long time to think up such an ingenious system as this is.

Frances Howard

38 Hampden Road, Hitchin, Herts SG4 0LD



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We had a hips at
the school picnic

Dear Editor,

It was with dismay that I read EO's decision to discontinue banking with Barclays Bank. However well-intentioned this action may be, the fact is that it was made because of a difference in opinion on a political issue.

Apart from the arrogance in assuming that we all share the same viewpoint, I think this move is the thin edge of the wedge, and that once decisions are taken on a political basis, it will be difficult to argue forcibly against others being made for the same reasons.

EO's aims are clearly printed on the back of the newsletter, and I would strongly urge the core group to stick to their remit and not dabble in contentious issues which could seriously damage the cohesion of the organisation.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Holliday

10, Chalton Road, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, FK9 4DX

Dear EO,

Having been a 'passive' member for two years I am now beginning to panic at the thought of continuing to educate Oliver at home - he is now three and a half and I am told that we ought to start thinking of where we would like to send him to school - people assume of course that he will be going to school.

One of my worries is the apparent lack of other EO families in our area, Poole in Dorset. It makes me wonder if perhaps the LEA here is particularly difficult to persuade or whether it's that the schools hereabouts are particularly good!

I felt it would be easier for me to make contact through the newsletter than personally. I would therefore like to make an appeal for information about the situation in this area and also to ask anybody who is actually educating children, particularly young ones, out of school, to meet us, preferably in our home as we have no transport.

Having read and thought about views in the newsletter in the past couple of years, I believe that home schooling is highly preferable. However, I have also come to realise that lack of local support can make things extremely difficult. I sometimes have this sinking feeling that I shall let Oliver be sucked into the system whilst I stand quillily by.

Please write if you can help us in any way.

Melanie Morley

153, Churchill Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH 12 2JB
Tel: (0202) 723060



17, Westmorland St.,
Balby,
Doncaster.
DN4 9AA

Dear Friends,

I would like a pen-friend. I am interested in making bases because I have lots of wood in the garden. I am also interested in computers, we have a Spectrum, and lots of games, I have two gerbils one is my sister's. I also like wild-life, we encourage lots into the garden.

I also like science-fiction.

I am eight.
would anyone like to write to me.

yours,

Yan Rupik

Dear Editor,

I have recently joined EO. Perhaps the services of my tuition agency could be added to the 'Skills and Resources' section or otherwise given publicity in the newsletter?

We are a team of qualified teachers offering tuition in all school subjects at all levels, either in the pupil's or the tutor's home. Our fees are moderate and our success rate is good. Although based in Chelmsford we cover most areas of Essex.

If any EO member would like further details would he or she please contact me?

Sincerely,

Roger Page

Mr R.J. Page, 99 Lucas Avenue, Chelmsford, CM2 9JW, Essex
Tel: Chelmsford 261242

Dear Editor,

Sue Stephenson asks (December NL) why EO's affiliation to the National Council for Civil Liberties is of no benefit to those members whose civil liberties are under attack.

The interests of EO and NCCL overlap to some extent, and as I understand it we are affiliated to them in recognition of this fact. However, our interests do not coincide completely: they are the experts in civil liberties, but we are the experts in home education, and we have to be realistic about what we can expect from them. After all, the right to home education is only one small part of a very large area of concern.

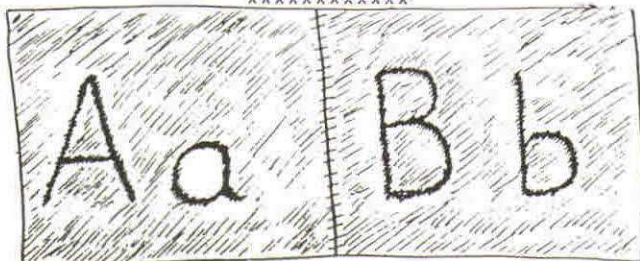
In practical terms, the NCCL have been of help in referring to us sympathetic lawyers, educational psychologists and so on, from time to time. Once a case has come to court though, they are not generally in a position to do anything more than we can do ourselves.

As for the activities - or inactivity - of the legal group, members will be able to make up their own minds after reading the report elsewhere in this newsletter. The group has no secretary as such: a list of members appeared on page 42 of the December 1984 NL, but EO members with problems should normally approach their local coordinators in the first place.

Yours,

Rob Wade

Rob Wade, 19 Perkin Place, Wembley, Middx. HAO 2LY



Dear Geraldine Taylor,

I want to write to say that I disagreed with your answer to the letter quoted in the December NL about nine year old Helena, the girl who was labelled a butterfly at school.

You say that you believe an end product matters though not every time; that you believe Helena's experience should be 'harnessed' into something. Then you ask the parent what end product he/she would like and talk about giving Helena 'guidance'.

I would like to suggest that the child knows best when she has achieved the end product she needs and desires. The parent only requires reassurance that his/her child's enthusiasm is guidance enough.

Often adults and children see the direction and the end product of a task very differently but that is not to say that the child is wrong. I will give an example from my own experience. My son and I agree to make a cake together. We start by looking at recipe books and find one that looks good and for which we have all the ingredients. Invariably my inclination then is to move into the kitchen and start work on the cake. My son, however, insists we should continue to look at all the recipes in all the books for a while longer. Who is the butterfly? Cataloguing possibilities before acting is a very wise and worthwhile activity.

Now I would suggest that maybe Helena only wanted to know that there was information in the library about windmills or that there were windmills that she could visit. She could store that information for future use so she didn't have to go right away. She could look at the other possibilities the library had to offer. To suggest that such a rational (if you see it in this light) approach is somehow to be discouraged is crazy.

Finally please do not give us part of a letter seeking advice and then refer in your reply to other information (e.g. windmills) that is not in the excerpt quoted. I would rather have more real queries and problems for us all to think about and less advice.

Yours sincerely,
Stephanie Fatcher

41 Devon Drive, Brimington, Chesterfield.

small ad

Informal learning holidays and course at Lower Shaw Farm.
Wholefood meals. Low cost. Children welcome on many events.
For details SAE please to:
Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw, Nr. Swindon, Wilts SN5 9PJ
Tel: (0793) 771080

THANK GOD FOR BUTTERFLIES

I too beg to differ with the advice given, by Geraldine Taylor, to the parents of Helena. Having taken an eight, nearly nine, year old daughter out of school, five years ago, we were not at all surprised by Helena's unwillingness or inability to concentrate on anything in particular. It is a classic de-schooling situation and should be allowed to run its course. Only when the child stops feeling imposed upon from without, stops having to do things which are ultimately meaningless to her, will she find herself and how she wishes to spend her day. It demands a great deal of faith. As dear old A.S. Neill said, "Making it all easy for a child is fatal to a child's character. But life itself presents so many difficulties that the artificially made difficulties which we present to children are unnecessary. I believe that to impose anything is wrong. The child should not do anything until he comes to the opinion - his own opinion - that it should be done. The curse of humanity is the external compulsion, whether it comes from the Pope or the state, or the teacher or the parent. It is fascism in toto. Freedom means doing what you like, so long as you don't interfere with the freedom of others. The result is self-discipline." Believe me, your child, Helena, will become what she has to be. I have seen it happen to our daughter. And by insisting on end products you will only delay her natural development. Most of us start things that never get finished. Does it matter and more important to whom does it matter. Not the child. Perhaps the neighbours, the parents, the LEA?

I am not an advocate or apologist for schooling (see Rajan Naidu's letter, Dec NL) and share the concern that EO is progressively losing sight of its aims. That members are seeking advice from someone who supports the education system. i.e. Geraldine Taylor, seems an extraordinary state of affairs to me especially when there are plenty of fellow members who have years of experience of home-education and who believe in it as a real alternative to the existing education system. Perhaps they should be asked for let us be in no doubt that there is a great distinction between supporting your school child at home, by supplementing their schoolwork, which is what Geraldine Taylor does, and truly taking the step of seeing education as something 'otherwise'.

Meg Robertson

LATE NOTICE*-ULTIMATUM is a new NL for young users of the ZX Spectrum, with game reviews, playing kits etc. If you are interested please contact: Peter Simmons, 53 Patricks Copse Road, Liss, Hampshire. Tel: Liss 892720

ALSO CONGRATULATIONS to Caroline and Simon Grant on the birth of their third child, a son, Finn Gwydion, born on December 12th.

Extract from EO member's letter, received in December, by Geraldine Taylor, with permission to publish.

My family circumstances have changed drastically. I am now a single parent and will need to work full-time. I have been teaching my son aged ten at home for several years but this is no longer going to be possible. I have been fortunate in that I have managed to get a job and I believe that the local secondary school is a fairly good comprehensive. The headmaster appears sympathetic to my position and beliefs. Given that I have no choice but to discontinue EOing - and I really have no choice, what is the best way to prepare my son for Secondary school? Please answer this question. I don't want to hear any suggestions for how I can continue outside school. It really is impossible in my case

Obviously, talk to your son all you can about what is going on - and I'm sure you will find he has ideas about how he can be best prepared! I sympathise with your apprehensions and would like to offer several ideas from my own years of experience as a secondary teacher. First, it's important for secondary school, that children are able to concentrate calmly enough to absorb instructions and understand what they are required to do. I expect your son will be able to do this - children taught at home are usually excellent at translating instructions into action.

I feel that it's important for children to be able to express uncertainty confidently so that they will ask - and persist in asking - if there's something they do not understand. So many children in schools fear 'admitting' they don't understand. It's equally important that children can talk to us about this - and again - that isn't going to be a problem in your case. It sometimes gets a bit harder to keep the communication as open when children become teenagers. But again, I'm sure the relationship you already have will stand you in good stead.

Finally it's vital that children have a sufficient sense of identity not to be too easily swayed by negative group pressure - which certainly cannot be underestimated. Strong interests and a warm home life are the anchor points here.

The relationship you describe between you and your son will be to your advantage as it is. Please don't feel you must lose that relationship - or that school is going to undo all your good work. You have given your son a deep feeling of personal identity and security and nothing can alter that.

Please, also, take this question to the headmaster of the school your son will be attending.

Geraldine Taylor, author of 'Be Your Child's Natural Teacher',
28 Berkeley Road, Westbury Park, Bristol BS6 7PJ
If any other member wishes to write to me please send SAE for reply.

EDUCATING ARCHIE

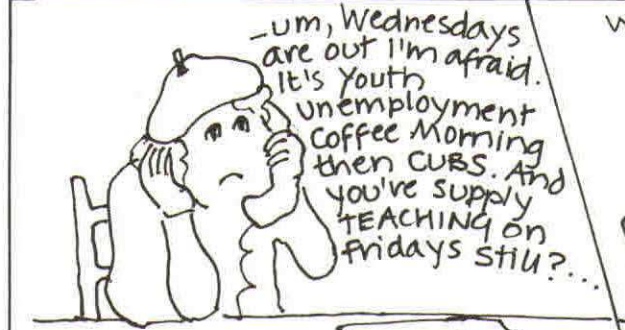
the new year...



-yes do let's meet up -after all, we in EO can take advantage of not being tied to school hours



Ah, not Mondays, Archie has junior taxidermy...



-um, Wednesdays are out I'm afraid. It's Youth Unemployment Coffee Morning then CUBS. And you're supply TEACHING on Fridays still?...



well, come over NOW if you don't



~mind us being out at choir practice, it's a concert in aid of a SCANNER, yousee



I wouldn't mind a few weeks in hospital myself

SCHOOL PHOBIA OR JUST SCHOOL REFUSAL?

It may be an unpopular notion but I doubt if 'School Phobia' exists. Indeed, I suspect that, by inventing it the authorities have pulled a fast one on ordinary parents.

'Phobia' is a respectable term used by psychologists and similar professionals to describe an irrational fear - of spiders, mice, the number thirteen or whatever. A typical phobia involves the patients suffering an incapacitating physical reaction such as dizziness or vomiting in the presence of some harmless thing which has no power to do the sufferer harm. 'School phobia' is not like this. It is no more irrational than a fear of going to the dentist or being operated on. Children who scream, vomit and take overdoses when the adult world tries to make them go to school are experiencing a normal, perfectly healthy and legitimate reaction to an environment - the school - which has hurt them and will continue to hurt them whenever they are in it.

I suppose it is all part of the tendency adults have to believe that children's motives are basically irrational. I am always hearing parents and teachers insisting on the children's 'lack of maturity', by which they tend to mean that, if left to themselves children will always do stupid things, whereas adults are gifted with a capacity for rational action which never, almost never, fails. We do not, I hope have to go too far into that argument but we ought to recognise that reason is not learned by simple experience, rather it comes from lengthy trial and error. When it comes to going to school the average child has, by the time he has been in school for a year or two, gained enough practical knowledge of that particular slice of life to have an entirely reasonable and mature opinion of it. If that opinion is bad there is nothing immature about wanting to get out of it. Adults do that too. When work gets too much for them they go 'on the sick'. I have seen it happen. I have done it myself. Noone comes after us with the School Board Man. Noone threatens us with care orders and court proceedings.

So let us articulate the 'problem' of school refusal as it needs to be articulated. Children who fear school fear it for real, honourable reasons and their physical reactions are not a sort of pseudo disease needing treatment but the response of a normal human being who feels threatened.

Christopher R. Shute

BOY HANGS HIMSELF

TOKYO: A 14 year old boy hanged himself from the rafters of a secluded barn in Northern Japan after classmates tormented him. Ken Kumazawa killed himself after leaving a note saying he had been bullied. Police said he had earlier complained to his teachers and parents that he was being picked on and beaten at school.

Taken from the London Standard 10th Dec '85, sent in by Sylvia Goldstein, 37 Compayne Gardens, London N.W.6.

MODEL GLIDERS - HAVE A GO

Model gliders are usually made out of balsa wood. The real planes (old ones) were made almost the same way. We made one which has a plywood fuselage. This type of model is called 'built-up'. This means the plane is constructed from small pieces of balsa wood, as opposed to the foam and fibreglass type of construction. Our plane was entirely built-up.

It sometimes takes a long time to build a model. I say sometimes because some people build their models in two weeks. We took about three months which is average, when you also do other things during the day.

Inside the fuselage there is the radio gear which consists of battery, receiver, servo's (which move the rudder and elevator) and transmitter which has joysticks (left, right, up and down). It sounds easy enough but it is not. I am only just getting confident. I can fly in still weather (not windy) which is good for learning in. The most common problems with flying are stalls. This means the plane goes up but because gliders don't have engines it can't go on, so it goes down in a dive and then repeats the process if you do not correct it. This is solved by just putting the elevator down when the glider is about to start another stall.

In the summer the main aim is to catch thermals which are rising air currents. These occur in warm weather and can carry the plane to over 400 feet, sometimes 1,000 feet! Circling for thermals is something I have never done but I am hoping to do it in the summer.

My father and I belong to a model gliding club in Norwich which meets regularly near us. If anyone is interested in this hobby do ring us. Our 'phone number is Foulsham 244.

If you live a long way from Norwich but are interested in radio controlled gliding, perhaps you can write to me:

George Weitz (10 years)
Glenmore House,
The Street,
Foulsham
Dereham NR20 5RT, Norfolk

BIRTH

Alvena Hillier (Devon co-ordinator) is pleased to announce the birth of a son, Peter, on 1st December 1985, a brother for Robert and Charlotte.

CONGRATULATIONS

EO - A personal viewpoint

Dear Friends,

We have two sons Richard, aged ten and George, aged nine. We took both our children out of school one year ago. Both for different reasons. We took Richard out because of School Phobia. At first we didn't realise that school was causing all his problems, but as one problem turned into another bigger problem it became obvious. He was never really happy at school, I was for ever seeing the headmaster or teacher about something. He had regular headaches, wet his bed nearly every night, was sure everybody at school hated him and he had no friends. Richard clung to me and screamed when we reached the school, teachers would come and pull him off me. This was all very disturbing, both for him and me. I would worry about him all day every day.

We took George out of school because he just refused to work at school. His teachers and I tried every trick in the book but still we were lucky if he wrote more than two lines in one hour. It was not because he couldn't do the work - he would do it at home but not at school.

Since they have left school things have been great. Richard has many friends that he plays with when they come home from school. The headaches are gone and he hasn't wet his bed since the day he left school. George works hard and does plenty of writing and I have peace of mind. In the good weather we pack up our books and a picnic and do our lessons at the park or on the beach.

Both boys like creative work most of all, so we do plenty of art, craft and acting and where possible these three subjects are joined to the more serious subjects. Maths is joined to craft by making things that involve measurements and counting. Art is joined by any subject as a picture or pattern can be drawn of anything. Acting is joined by history, acting out situations or people they have learned about.

Every child is an individual and it is up to the parents to make sure each child's individual needs are catered for. Sometimes it is necessary to teach my children the same subject but using different methods. This is not always easy but the end results make it worth while. So to all you other parents, if your child doesn't seem to be getting the hang of something try a totally different approach.

I have only one problem now. My son George does not believe that Hadrians Wall exists. I have shown him pictures in books and he saw it on Blue Peter. Any ideas? I can't afford to take him to see it.

Best wishes,

Pat and Roger

P&J Ivings, 56 Belle Vue Road, Southchurch, Southend-on-sea, Essex
Editors note - perhaps this a case for a bit of EO sponsorship?

Dear EO,

In summer 1983 my children and I embarked on home-education Prompted by a particularly bad attack on my son, then thirteen years old, I spoke to the children and decided to think of 'taking them out'. When I approached the school I was advised that as my son had encountered regular bullying, he should see the school psychologist. I questioned this and asked if the eleven boys who had attacked my son during the religious lesson, causing him to need hospital treatment, may not need a psychologist more urgently. I was told 'No!', they were behaving 'normally' by forming a gang and attacking a boy. My son, on the other hand, must obviously, want and need to be beaten up. The gang of bullies, (sorry normal boys!) were simply reacting to his needs!! I agreed for the 'Ed. Psych.' to see my son, providing he saw me first. He did - I explained to him that I had the solution to the problem - removal from school. After almost falling off his chair, he proceeded to tell me I could not possibly teach my children - I was not a teacher like him! My children would, of course, become totally unable to communicate with anyone, our family would become insular, isolated, introvert. In general, we would be totally neurotic! When I repeated my intentions, amid threats, insinuations about the women's peace movement badge and the women's movement badge I was wearing, he said that if I did 'this thing' - i.e. EO - he would definitely not see my son. I pointed out that he would not need to as I had no intention of beating any of my children nor encouraging any of them to bully each other.

NEXT STEP - informing the children's teachers and headmasters, that they would no longer attend school. REACTION - horror, disbelief and repeated assurance that children must go to school, that they would have terrible problems if they did not - that our family would be unable to cope.

On to the next step - an interview between us and the Education officers. In reply to their letter giving a date and saying we would attend their office at the time and date stated, I rang them to suggest that they came to our house unless their office was very big as it would need to accommodate two adults and eight children. They panicked and thought they had missed half the children from their files! No, I had my four, two foster children and two holiday children. They agreed to come here. On their arrival, they became even more confused and were too embarrassed to ask which were my own children! You see, there were five white, one coffee-coloured and two very black children! After their initial confusion - I never did say which were mine, they proceeded to patronise me and explain that I could not remove my children from school, as it was against the law and as I was not a qualified teacher. I replied that they were wrong. Then came 'you know that you can go to prison for doing this'. Rubbish! - not if I teach them. Next, the ultimate threat - 'you do realise we can remove your children into council care, at any time, without any notice or warning, if we feel that you are not teaching our standards'. Were they going to tell me their standards or send me a letter outlining them? 'We have no duty to tell you anything - You must come up to our standards or you'll have trouble'. When they, Mr Lloyd and Mr Worters, left. I crumpled. shook and felt

I was on a roller-coaster, but could not back out now, so just had to go ahead. Summer followed.

In September, equipped with desks, blackboard, books, pens - just like a real school - I proceeded to 'educate' my children. By the end of the day we were all verging on a nervous breakdown. The children had done no work. How could they? I had spent the day screaming at them! I knew it was all a mistake - how could I hope to come up to standards set by 'them' when I was a mere parent - one of 'us' - no qualifications. By about two in the morning I had worked out the problem - I was trying to be a school, I was doing exactly what I objected to the school doing to my children!

Next day, to the delight of the children, who were dreading a repeat of our first day, I got a picnic together, we dressed warmly and went off to walk across Tennyson Down for the day. We gathered flowers, a giant toadstool, feathers, shells, spotted birds and insects and met lots of people, had conversations with them and generally had a lovely day. After the children went to bed I wrote in my EO record/diary (long since abandoned) - Subjects covered today - physical exercise, history, nature, geography and socialization! For the rest of that week we drew pictures and wrote about our day out. Pressed the collected flowers, after identifying them, and stuck them on card on the walls/doors. We all decided that the second day was much preferred to the first but that we must make some effort to compromise and get some work in books to present to the 'authorities'.

In two years of home education we have changed, evolved. We sold the blackboard and the desks as we did not like living in a classroom and hangman could be played on card instead of a blackboard anyway. We now devote more time to practical subjects and less to laborious writing in books. We cook, work on our old Morris 1,000 car to try to keep it on the road, work on our old B.S.A. motorbike and sidecar to have it on the road for the spring (when the car will probably fail the M.O.T.). We write poems (Matthew's speciality), write stories (Leila's favourite), read books, write letters, dig the garden (hoping to grow our veg and fruit in '86), decorate the house, repair broken items, meet people, draw pictures, do jigsaws, play games, sing songs, listen to music. Of course we do maths and English, discuss history, look at maps, talk about the world, spin the globe, listen to the news, but again it's mainly practical work or discussion.

We have had no visits from any 'authority figures' for over a year now. For the first year we had visits each term from a fantastic education advisor who was so popular with my children that we used to have to bake a cake for his visit. He was greeted by my younger two - Leila and Danny, running down the path to hug him. He was invited to birthday parties and got Easter and Christmas cards (he still has the 1984 Christmas card made by Leila hanging in his office!). We now await our first visit from the Educational Welfare Officer, to whom the responsibility for EO family visits has been passed. We wait with curiosity but confidence. As we have not been visited for more than a year we wonder if we will be. Maybe they believe if we are ignored we will disappear but, in fact, we are growing in numbers and having recently become Isle of Wight co-ordinator, I hope to make 1986 a big year for EO on the Isle of Wight.

I apologise for the length of this letter but had to fit two years EOing into one letter! I kept meaning to write to say hello to you all but never seemed to have time! (Ed. Try editing a newsletter!!)

I wish every EO family a wonderful 1986.

Keep on EOing,

Love Jude, Matty, Leila, Danny (Ashley-Walker)

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

IF
a child lives with criticism,
she learns to condemn.

IF
a child lives with hostility,
he learns to fight.

IF
a child lives with ridicule,
she learns to be shy.

IF
a child lives with shame,
he learns to feel guilt.

IF
a child lives with tolerance,
she learns to be patient.

IF
a child lives with encouragement,
he learns confidence.

IF
a child lives with praise,
she learns to appreciate.

IF
a child lives with fairness,
he learns justice.

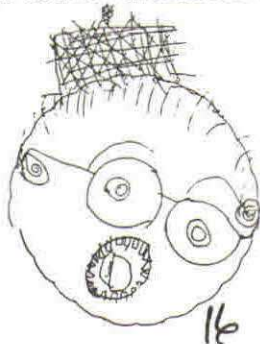
IF
a child lives with security,
she learns to have faith.

IF
a child lives with approval,
he learns to like himself.

IF
a child lives with acceptance and
friendship, he or she learns to
to find love in the world.

issued by the Scottish Health Education Group and sent in by Jude.

drawing by



Alex Freeman

COMPREHENSIVE COLLAPSE

Are teachers really teaching? Are children learning? Do schools fulfill their role in providing our children with an environment which is conducive to study and the development of the mind? These are three questions I would like to put to our educational experts and ideologues, but as a teacher with experience in various comprehensive schools, I am inclined to answer all three with a most emphatic 'no'.

And if Sir Keith Joseph really believes that the reform proposals as outlined in the White Paper 'For Better Schools' (that is its actual title!) herald a bright new era of educational advance, he lives in a dreamworld of falsity and illusion.

According to the purveyors of current educational orthodoxy, 'relevance' and 'efficiency' should be the yardsticks of our educational system, meaning what subjects should be taught and how they can be made relevant to the needs of our technological society. In this context, efficiency is defined in terms of seeking to process the maximum number of children through the education mill at the minimum cost, hence a minimum size for schools is recommended (i.e. about 1,000 pupils per school!). It is also suggested that a centralised, unified structure, better trained teachers and still larger schools will produce the educated, skilled and disciplined young citizens who will be the pride and joy of our educational reformers tomorrow.

Yet current reports and my own recent teaching experience clearly confirm that in numerous cases large comprehensive schools are out of control and that, far from bringing out the best in children and staff, they are bringing out the worst. The most dedicated and imaginative teachers (there are some!), the most expensive equipment, the widest possible choice of subjects offered have failed to stimulate the children.

The general atmosphere which permeates the schools with which I am familiar, from the first to the sixth form, is a mixture of boredom, cynicism and open revolt against anything or anyone remotely concerned with authority. Truancy, lateness to lessons, violence, especially against teachers, and vandalism are on the increase. Foul language is too frequent to be remarked or checked by teachers, smoking in lavatories even among first-year pupils is commonplace and in some schools drug trafficking is by no means unknown. In mixed schools, kissing and petting in corridors is apt to occur without regard to the passage of other pupils or the teaching staff.

To enter a 'sixth form' room, the class-room reserved for the exclusive use of this privileged group, is to find oneself generally choking from cigarette smoke, stupified by the loud, taped beat music and to observe the pupils either reading a tabloid or playing cards. In such circumstances any form of conversation or attempt to study is virtually impossible.

In at least one London school, a creche has been provided for babies brought by their schoolgirl mums. Is this the shape of things to come? Has the White Paper extrapolated these trends? A sense of failure is the dominant impression which anyone with a modicum of sensitivity is apt to feel in most of our comprehensive schools. Neither the lengthy reports nor the latest White Paper on Education focus on the real problems which are products of a system which Sir Keith wishes to extend. When I am confronted with any of my classes, frequently of thirty

children of various cultural backgrounds, whose ability ranges from very bright to the very dim indeed, and some of whom express distinct symptoms of chronic instability, I ask myself: what is the object of my work? To act as a remedial social worker? To train them for their future careers or to transmit culture? And if I am supposed to do all that, how is it possible with such a large heterogeneous group in a school milieu which appears to swamp individuality?

It is not surprising that many teachers feel a sense of futility verging on despair when faced with these questions. Many are frequently in a state of apprehension about their work and even experience fear at the prospect of entering a classroom. The effect of this kind of tension on their health is such that nervous breakdowns are on the increase and the profession is becoming notorious for its number of early deaths on retirement. To attempt to teach to the level of the lowest denominator tends to demoralise the brighter children whilst those below average are virtually unteachable in such large groups. Class disruption ensues and 90% of lessons tend to be spent on efforts to keep the class under control. A teacher feels a sense of achievement if a lesson finishes without a violent incident or without grossly offensive behaviour.

As so little actual teaching can be done, the syllabus has to much less demanding and so more indeterminate subjects such as Social Studies, Integrated Studies and Social Education have replaced the traditional academic subjects such as English Language and Literature, Languages, Maths and Sciences, which require more intellectual effort. The net result is a decline not only in standards, but also in the ability or willingness of young people, even the more able ones, to exert their mental faculties.

The problem has begun to worry some authorities and they recently sent out a questionnaire to London teachers requesting them to put forward reasons for 'under-achievement and truancy in able children' and to suggest possible remedies.

Only the exceptionally strong-minded pupils tend to survive such 'schooling'. It is little wonder that so many of our school-leavers are inarticulate, semi-literate, innumerate, unable to spell and have no knowledge of English History, English Literature, have no culture, no skills, no tradition, no vision and no hope. They are unemployable after having been for years unteachable and rely on the State to provide them with a pittance to keep them.

Why do parents fail to protest more strongly against this collapse of standards and achievement? I can only assume that some parents (the minority?) believe that their children are in expert hands and that they are being properly educated. It is possible that the majority feel alienated from the school system: very few of them are members of school governing bodies. Even though the White Paper specifies that more parents and less political appointees should be school governors, this is unlikely to have much effect since the school governing bodies have hardly any control over teaching policy and finance.

In view of the breakdown of our education system, what is needed is an entirely new conception of schooling, which neither the bureaucrats, nor the politicians, nor the N.U.T. officials can bring about.

Large schools under remote bureaucratic control have proved to

be a social disaster and must be broken up, and replaced with much more flexible small neighbourhood schools run by parents, teachers and members of the community who may wish to contribute their skills and expertise. Only then can we look forward to higher standards of discipline, teaching and achievement and far less waste of public funds. The comprehensive school system has proved itself to be a comprehensive educational disaster.

This article was written by Marcelle Papworth whose own children are now partly educated at home and any parent with children aged eleven to fourteen interested in joining her in setting up a small neighbourhood school should contact her at:
24 Abercorn Place, London N.W.8. Tel: 01 286 4366

EO IN LITERATURE - TALKING ABOUT SCHOOL

"The birdscarer's hours in that grey windy desolation must have seemed like days, and my passing was a break in the monotony, a little joyful excitement in getting to the road in time to see a passer-by more closely, and for a few moments gave him a sense of human companionship. I began even to feel a little sorry for him, alone there in his high dreary world, but presently thought he was better off and far better employed than most of his fellows poring over miserable books in school, and I wished we had a more rational system of education for the agricultural districts one which would not keep the children shut up in a room during all the best hours of the day when to be out of door, seeing, hearing, and doing would fit them so much better for the life-work before them... Can you have a better system for the children of all England than this one which will turn out the most perfect draper's assistant in Oxford Street, or go to higher, the most efficient Mr. Guppy in a solicitor's office? It is true that we have Nature's unconscious intelligence against us; that by and by, when at the age of fourteen the boy is finally released she will set to work to undo the wrong by discharging from his mind its accumulations of useless knowledge as soon as he begins his work of life. But what a waste of time and energy and money! One can only hope that the slow intellect of the country will wake to this question some day that the countryman will say to the townsman: Go on making your laws and systems of education for your own children, who will live as you do indoors; while I shall devise a different one for mine one which will give them hard muscles and teach them to raise the mutton and pork and cultivate the potatoes and cabbages on which we all feed."

* birdscarers were boys used on Salisbury Plain until recently.

Extract from 'A Shepherd's Life' by W.H. Hudson sent in by Kate Freeman. (A further extract has been sent to the editor of the next newsletter.)

music supplement

When I offered to edit the music supplement I did not count on writing nearly all of it myself!

Frances Howard wrote to recommend the Oak Meadow Steiner Correspondence course as giving a good approach to learning music at home. (Details of the course from Colin and Avatar Smith, 5 Spenlows Road, Milton Keynes, Bucks).

As no-one else wrote, I can only offer some thoughts from my own experience and leave it at that.

The Suzuki approach has a lot of valuable insights into how young children learn music. His book 'Nurtures by Love' is a good introduction to his method. Although it is associated mainly with the violin, it is used with most instruments, and is characterised by strong parental involvement, an emphasis on playing tunes by ear, and an infinite respect for children's musical possibilities.

In any case every child has a natural melodic instrument (their voice) and a natural sense of rhythm (what else is walking?), so every child is musical. If they are surrounded by music, they will sooner or later want to have an active involvement in it. Our daughter is 'only' three, but she asks me constantly to teach her to play the guitar. I teach the guitar professionally so this is quite a natural activity to her. She is also deadly serious in her lessons with me, and insists I teach her like I teach my other students. As she sits in on many of my lessons anyway, she can soon see if I am short-changing her! (And tells me so).

Since she does sit in on so many lessons, I have to keep dismissing the fantasy that one day soon she will start to play the guitar perfectly well on her own simply from her observations. I think it was Schnabel who learnt to play the piano when very small by sitting under it and watching the hammers hit the strings inside the piano, while his father played, unaware of the infant genius.

I do feel that music needs to be made real, and learning to play an instrument is a very valuable experience for everyone of whatever age. Music theory on its own can end up as another branch of Mathematics.

There is a book called "Choosing the Right Instrument for Your Child" by Atarah Ben-Tovim, which can be useful. Instrumental teachers can be contacted either through the Incorporated Society of Musicians list of teachers at the local library, or through music shops. Instrumental lessons, if available at all at schools, are not always free. It depends on the LEA. There are many teach-yourself books for every instrument, but they vary greatly in quality. The Resource Centre may be able to help here. Many music shops have a scheme where instruments can be rented if buying is too great a risk/commitment at an early stage.

Once a child can play an instrument to whatever standard, there are many social possibilities: choirs, music groups, instrumental Summer and Easter schools take place all over the country. Music is a wonderful social skill, and there is great pleasure to be had playing with and for others, and this can happen from the very beginning.

I have a large number of music/rhythm games that can be played with young children, if anyone would like to try these, do get in touch with me, (SAE please) and I will send a copy. Let me finish by recommending a wonderful book about learning music that fits perfectly into the self-directed learning approach and is rich in insights and knowledge. It is called 'A Soprano on her Head' by Eloise Ristad. It is published in America but is available in this country through music shops.

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

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF LOCAL RESOURCES

A few weeks ago the local council organised an official opening day for a group of craft workshops and a farm museum, reconstructed from disused buildings in a local country park. We went along but it wasn't until we looked around that it occurred to us that there were a lot of local skills we might be able to take advantage of! There are twelve workshops, all will be offering different craft skills but for the time being we decided pottery and weaving were the crafts we would most like to learn. The workshops were built to enable small businesses to work and sell their crafts from the same unit but after explaining our interest Brenda and Marion seemed only too pleased to give us lessons.

Up until now, the arrangement is working even better than we anticipated. There are three EO families using these resources (including ourselves) and six children is just a nice number - providing regular group contact whilst allowing plenty of time for individual help. We pay £5 an hour, extra for materials, although this is quite small. Having said that, since the children are quite keen we are gradually making bigger and more complex looms for which heddles tend to be costly but we envisage these looms will now offer more scope for the children! Brenda, who helps us with the weaving, often lends us different looms to try out and experiment with and even had small looms specially made for the children to start on. Already the children have finished a number of basic weavings, on which they experimented with colour, textures and patterns. Now they are involved in their own creations, wall hangings, scarves, bags and even presents for their toys! It's amazing how their personalities show during these crafts, especially with Emma and Kerry (same age, not related). They will often choose exactly the same colours, unbeknown to each other. Soon the country park will be buying a small flock of sheep and next year we shall be involved in the shearing, spinning and weaving of the wool. We never thought we would be so lucky as to have all these resources available, specially right on our doorstep.

The pottery too is proving great fun. It is so nice having all the proper facilities. Not having done pottery since school-days I had forgotten how many kinds of clay there are, the different colour slips and glazes, or the reactions that occur when fired. Marion is happy to let the children experiment and follow their own ideas and they are quickly learning the basic skills and working more and more unaided. The children

are still quite fascinated that having started off with the same colour clay, the end results of their handwork are all so different. Again, there is every opportunity for the children to express themselves freely through the craft and we are all gaining much more than we had first envisaged.

Sandie Cottee, 24 Deneway, Vange, Basildon, Essex.

In my opinion

Sophia Howard, aged eighteen, of 38 Hampden Road, Hitchin, Herts, who was educated at home for one year aged ten to eleven, and now has nine 'O' levels and one 'A' level and plans to take three more, does nearly all her learning at home in the evening despite an almost 100% attendance at Secondary School comments on the function of teachers: 'nobody can 'teach' you 'A' levels. They are something that you learn yourself. Of course, sometimes I get stuck on a maths problem or something like that and if the answers are not in the back of the book I need someone to explain it to me. Also I do need guidance as to how to use the laboratory equipment which is essential for the sciences. As far as I can see the main reason for having teachers is so that you can learn to co-operate with and please somebody by your work. It is a good preparation for having a boss!!'

SCHOOL

Between the ages of four and eight and a half I went to three schools, the first, a town school, I went to for three years and never really enjoyed it. I used to spend a lot of time having days then weeks off. The headmistress once told mum that it was too nice at home, but perhaps it wasn't nice enough at school. We moved when I was seven to a school in the country which was very modern and open plan and I really liked it and I had a great friendship with my teacher. (I think that liking the teacher had a lot to do with liking the school). After a year we moved back to the town. I didn't go to school for about half a term and then we all decided that I should go back to school. I made a decision on a school and went. The headmaster was a nasty little man who wore a toupe and he used to lurk around corners waiting for kids who came in late! I just about survived there two weeks. Then I left and said I didn't want to go to school.

HOME

I have been at home ever since and am now thirteen and a half. School was the wrong place for me but for some people it is right. I have sometimes thought about going back but then think to myself about all the things that I wouldn't be able to do! e.g, decide when and what I want to do, lie in bed late, ride horses all day. I am not very academic and I don't think I ever will be but if I decide to do something academic I am sure if I really wanted to do it I would manage to. I am

October/November Contact List Supplement
It must be stressed that this list is intended for the **PERSONAL**
use of members only. Under no circumstances is it to be used as a mailing
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From letters sent to the central address

'I taught in schools for 27 years (the last twelve as a headmaser) and gave it up three years ago because I came to the conclusion that schooling was not a very effective route to education.'

'It seems to me that any children, who do not fit into the LEAs idea of normal, automatically qualifies for one of their state dustbins... My child attended an appalling establishment calling itself a school for children with special educational needs... children fell in with the rest who all had criminal records.'

WEEKS Imogen; Tamsin 11/81;
29 Penare Road PENZANCE; (0736) 67579

Derbyshire Co-ordinators(s): Mrs M Carter
LORD Annie; SALMAN Luay; Maia Salman-Lord 09/80; Ben Salman-Lord 06/82;
Kai Salman-Lord 08/84;
10 Bath Road BUXTON SK17 6HH

Tm2

Devon Co-ordinators(s): Alvena Hillier

COTTER Jane & Timothy; Caroline 09/82; Jacqueline 09/82;
354 Beaumont Road St Judes PLYMOUTH PL4 9EN; (0752) 669038
PIERCE Mandy; Jahan 07/82; Oliver 08/84;
62 Higher Brimley Road TIEGNMOUTH TQ14 8JX; (062 67) 6013

T2 Sg

Co. Durham Co-ordinators(s): Andy & Sue Jackson

KING Mrs Patricia; Joanne 11/69; Lee 07/72; Beth 10/78; Sophie 10/80;
14 Mossway Pelton CHESTER LE STREET Durham DH2 1DL; (0385) 700060

Essex Co-ordinators(s): Sandie & Brian Cottee

COBBOLD Mr & Mrs; Richard 11/80;
57 Vicarage Lane ILFORD IG1 4AL; 01-599-1765
OSIEKE Anne;
114 Rayleigh Road Eastwood LEIGH-ON-SEA SS9 5XF
WOOD Annette & Christopher; Alexander 11/81;
Flat 1 33 Clifftown Parade SOUTHEND-ON-SEA SS1 1DL
WOOLLEN June; ** Mark ** 11/72; ** Gervaise ** 07/74;
141 Grosvenor Drive LOUGHTON

TU

L4

Gloucestershire Co-ordinators(s): Barbara & Michael Engel

BRAITHWAITE Sara; Richard 02/83; Li (All levels - I am Italian)
Well Close Lodge Painswick Road Brockworth GLOUCESTER GL3 4RZ; (0452) 862383
VICKERY Mr & Mrs Barry; ** Susan ** 02/70; ** Rob ** 03/73; ** Claire ** 02/80;
Flat 7 Sherborne House Sherborne CHELTENHAM GL54 3DZ; Windrush (045 14) 620

Hampshire Co-ordinators(s): Roy Dunster

COLLINS Jim & Christine; ** Shelley ** 08/74; ** Bryony ** 07/77;
Brambletye House 3 Clovelly Road HAYLING ISLAND PO11 OSD
PLATT Mr P E & Mrs A K; Georgina 04/75;
6 Sommerfields Locks Heath SOUTHAMPTON SO3 6NN; (048 95) 83810

Xe

Hereford & Worcs. Co-ordinators(s): Jennifer & Hugh Millett

MILLINGTON John & Lillian; Lawrence 10/79;
63 Cherry Orchard KIDDERMINSTER Worcestershire DY10 7SJ; (0562) 3571
RHODES Melvin & Diane; Alexandra 11/76; Kurt 02/79; Pallas 05/81;
13 Wrekin Walk Areley Kings STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN Worcestershire DY13 0LR; (029 93) 77195

Hertfordshire Co-ordinators(s): Jean Shepherd

CLIFFORD Mrs Jean; ** Graham ** 05/72;
127 High Oak Road WARE SG12 7PA; (0920) 4752
WICKENDEN Roger & Catherine; Rachael 01/82;
92 Neptune Drive HEMEL HEMPSTEAD HP2 5QD; (0442) 56221

Kent Co-ordinators(s): Pam & Bob Staples

CLARKE John; ** Jeanine ** 04/70;
33a Mount Pleasant Biggin Hill WESTERHAM TN16 3TP
FERRARA Mrs Michele; Anthony 07/80; Francesca 12/84;
27 Huxley Road WELLING DA16 2EN; 01-301-5512
JACKSON Mr & Mrs N; Graeme 11/75;
5 Laburnum Avenue DARTFORD DA1 2QN; (0322) 79884

MARKS John & Janet; Louise 02/72; Jolyon 06/73; Ellinore 12/75;
4 Coopers Close South Darenth DARTFORD DA4 9AH; Farningham (0322) 862914
STEVENS Arthur John; ** Tracy ** 04/70;
30 Stoke Road Hoo ROCHESTER ME3 9BL; Medway (0634) 252525

Lancashire Co-ordinators(s): Dot Bolan

EVANS Jeanette & Bill; Simon 05/73; Jacqueline 06/75; Jodie 11/82;
7 Hazelmount Drive CARNFORTH LA5 9HR

WAINWRIGHT Susan & Paul; Rachael 06/82;
29 Oak Street Shawforth ROCHDALE; Whitworth (070 685) 2073

Leicestershire Co-ordinators(s): None

BECKER Charles; Keats 07/70; Mo-Joe 04/73; Lucy 10/77;
161 Howard Road Clarendon Park LEICESTER LE2 1X0; (0533) 704418
BRANCH-EVANS Mr & Mrs H C; Amanda 04/75; Games: Small house-Large field!
78 Featherstone Drive E M E Glen Parva LEICESTER LE2 9RD
HIGHAM Richard & Pauline; Vicky 06/77; David 06/80; Nick 08/83;
119 Wyngate Drive LEICESTER LE3 0UW; (0533) 552056

London - North and Enfield Co-ordinators(s): Genevieve Bridgeman

BARRIE Mrs Cheryl; Richard 08/72; Matthew 05/74;
6 Topsfield Cottages Back Lane HORNSEY N8 8TB
BREEZE Frances; MATCHAM Colini; Jethro Matcham 01/81; Sarah Matcham 10/82;
43 Birkbeck Road ENFIELD Middlesex EN2 0DX; 01-366-8137
GLENWRIGHT M E; ** Reuben Seaton ** 03/72; Paint/Draw-ing, Creative Writing
24a Ferndale Road SOUTH TOTTENHAM N15 6VE; 01-800-7490
HAWORTH Susan; CHAPMAN Sally; Abigail Pudney 12/84; Zoe Chapman 01/85; Gr (SRN) Macrame M
5 Frome Road WOOD GREEN N22 6BP
MOTTURE Tony & Sandra; Anna 06/82; QT2m
48 Chesholm Road STOKE NEWINGTON N16 0DR; 01-249-0945
NORMAN Miss Linda; Sean 07/84; Mr (Treble&Descant)
32 Purcell House 2 Holbrook Close ENFIELD Middlesex EN1 4UG

London - South Co-ordinators(s): Margaret & Mike Gilbert

BAULCH Clive; Games Workshops, Research Alt Ed
111 Courthill Road LEWISHAM SE13; 01-318-1179
ELLAM Mr T M F; Andrew 01/77;
11 Derby Road WIMBLEDON SW19 1LP; 01-540-3995
FORD Rodney & Pat; ** Susan ** 10/71; Cm - Vintage M'cycle restoration
42 Howard Road SE25 5BY; 01-654-2214
GEORGE Karen; Hannah 09/83; Lfir Screen-printing resource
97 Drakefield Road SW17 8RS; 01-672-2341

London - West and Middlesex Co-ordinators(s): Rob & Anne Wade

GREENE Anne; ** Seke Chimutengwende ** 07/79; mT (Ed. material to share)
8 York House Upper Montagu Street W1; 01-262-5905
GUEBERT Rand & Debbie; Rachel 01/85; Sp Tm
Flat 3 24 Hatherley Grove W2 5RB; 01-727-9471
MCDONNELL P; ** Rachel Rockhey ** 03/74;
16 Tolson Road ISLEWORTH Middlesex TW7 7AE; 01-568-2447

Str. Manchester Co-ordinators(s): North - Andrea Lowe

BRIERLEY David & Irene; ** Emma ** 06/74; Judith 06/77; Info on "MonoSex Schools" Appeal
41 Moorgate Drive Carrbrook STALYBRIDGE Cheshire SK15 3LX; (045 75) 5981
MULLEN Mr Ken & Mrs Pearl; Michelle 05/73; Neil 05/75; Tina 01/77; Craig 04/78; Darren 03/80;
Matthew 05/83;
1 Annald Square DROYLSDEN M35 6HZ; 061-301-3838



Child Smokers

by

Russell Freeman

GRAMPIAN Co-ordinator: DALBY-BALL

HART, Brian & Judy; Noah 3/82; Jonah 3/84
Dalwhing House, Glen Tanar, ABOYNE, Aberdeenshire, AB3 5ET; (0339) 2160
HILL, Mrs Kirsty; Ross 11/80
1 Gladstone Place, KIRRIEMUIR, Angus

HIGHLAND Co-ordinator: WALLACE & FLEISCH

LEWIS, Penny; KEMP, Geoff; Casper 8/73; Bethanie 2/75
Barhams Croft, Ruig Riabhach, DUNDONNELL BY GARVS, Ross-Shire

LOTHIAN Co-ordinator: EDWARDS

DEWAR, Carol; Benjamin 6/78
Chauffeurs House, Lennoxlove, HADDINGTON, EH41 4NZ; (062 082) 3818

STRATHCLYDE Co-ordinator: DOWNIE & MACFIE

BELL, Bill & Carol; ** JUDITH ** 7/78; ** SYLVIA ** 12/79; Allan 9/81
Hillcrest, Wigtown, NEWTON STEWART, Wigtownshire, DG8 9DZ; (098 84) 3326
HIBBERT, Margot; Rachel 11/76; Emily 4/79; Michael 7/82
12 Helensburgh Drive, Jordanhill, GLASGOW, G13 1RS; 041-959-1099
MC MURRAY, Rosemary & Cambell; Henrietta 9/76; Fergus 1/80; Katie 3/81
Chapelhill House, 9 Aitken Street, DALRY, Ayrshire; (029 483) 2596

TAYSIDE Co-ordinator: MAC LEAN

KORYCINSKI, Chris & Zeb; ** ANASTASIA ** 7/79; Hannah /81
17 Pitcullen Terrace, PERTH, Perthshire, PH2 7E8; (0738) 37165
@Te12SbcsyCrsWdstAfhRc

GLAMORGAN Co-ordinator: MC DERMOTT

PUREWAL, Vicki & Dyal; Becca 5/76; Jai 10/77; Nicholas 11/80; Rhiannon 5/83 Wj
5 Min Y Nant, Rhiwbina, CARDIFF, CF4 6JR; (0222) 611013

GWYNEDD Co-ordinator: GRANT

WEST, Vin & Jo; Cara 11/72; Kaleb 3/75; Child 10/78; Child 10/83
Glyn Dwr, Upper Llandwrog, CAERNARFON, LL54 7RA; Penygroes (0286) 880761

OVERSEAS Co-ordinator: None

INCE, Julian & Liz; Theresa 7/82
P.O. Box 41968, Nairobi, KENYA, East Africa
LOWNDES, Mrs Lesley; William 6/79; Jonathan 9/81; Timothy 2/84
British Forces Broadcasting, Service, B.F.P.O. 19
(Work-Husband) 010 49-221-3769923

Tyne & Wear Co-ordinators(s): Rosie Walton

HAIMES Yvette; Fritha 10/82;

172 Doncaster Road Sandyford NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE2 1RB
SHELDON Dr & Mrs M G; ** Matthew ** 12/69; ** Polly ** 02/71; ** Barnaby ** 03/73; Toby 06/77;

Warwickshire Co-ordinators(s): Halina MacHale

Youth with a Mission The Kings Lodge Watling Street NUNEATON CV10 0TZ; (0203) 348128
Christian Educator

West Midlands Co-ordinators(s): Alan & Hazel Clawley

ADAMS Michael & Carol; Jason 12/76; Dominic 04/78; Danielle 04/80; Samantha 08/84;

14 The Grove Wednesfield WOLVERHAMPTON WV11 1RW; (0902) 732958

AHMED Yousuf & Ruqayya; Jameela 02/74; Laila 07/82; Suhail 04/84;

10 Millward Street Smallheath BIRMINGHAM B9 5BA; 021-771-0425

BEASHORE Mr J & Mrs A M; Julie 04/68; Martin 07/70; ** Paul ** 07/70;

235 Haunch Lane Kings Heath BIRMINGHAM B13 0PJ; 021-444-5748

JORDEN Eddie & Betty; ** Tracy ** 05/70;

5 Hammond Avenue Low Hill WOLVERHAMPTON; (0902) 728931

MOUNTFORD Mrs Clare;

Wesley Manse 16 Drews Holloway HALESOWEN B63 2AQ; (0384) 66040

PIETRYSZYN Valerie & Richard; Christoph 01/82;

90 Humber Road COVENTRY CV3 1BA Mgp Cycle Repair

Wiltshire Co-ordinators(s): Kate & Oliver Freeman

CREWS Jacqui & Roger; Kate 10/74; Alexander 10/79; Pippa 01/83;

BT2m + Maths with young children

The Garth High Street BLUNSDON SN2 4AG; Swindon (0793) 721322

DONE Mr & Mrs R; Mark 08/71; Gavin 01/77; Helen 05/80;

55 Ridge Nether Moor Linden SWINDON SN3 6ND; (0793) 47080

MILLER Keith & Wendy; ** William ** 03/74; ** Sarah ** 06/75; BT 8s Dip. Dyslexia Institute

31 Downsview Road WESTBURY BA13 3AG; (0373) 864166

Yorkshire - North Co-ordinators(s): Mick & Jennie White

CONNELL Jim & Anne; ** Jessa ** 08/71; ** Jenny ** 07/75; ** Julie ** 02/77;

** Jane-Holly ** 12/79; Johnny 06/81;

7 Red Bank Drive RIPON HG4 2LF; (0765) 5343

WATSON Mr I & Mrs A L; Nicky 03/82; Andrew 03/84;

13 Almond Walk Catterick Garrison CATTERICK DL9 3DN Cr - Hobby Print Shop

Yorkshire - South Co-ordinators(s): Joan & Richard Hoare

LYONS Julie; Toby 08/74;

56 Newtown Avenue Royston BARNLEY S71 4HB; (0226) 724518 @Teh+ef dealt with LEA, DES, etc

MILTON Spencer & Eileen; Dale 05/71;

16 Darton Street Stairfoot BARNLEY; (0226) 241662 [Business: 291222]

Yorkshire - West Co-ordinators(s): Peter Williams

HODSON Stephen & Carol; ** Vicky ** 06/78; ** Samantha ** 04/80; Michael 05/82; Siobhan 11/84;

14 Wood Street Haworth KEIGHLEY BD22 8BJ

HOLDING Alan & Vicki; Robbie 03/81; Jamie 02/84;

46 Rawdon Road Horsforth LEEDS LS18 5EW; (0532) 583225

LESTER Janine;

4 Northfield Crescent Cottingley BINGLEY BD16 1QP

MEREDITH Ellen; ** Daeron ** 09/73;

34 Mill Hey Haworth KEIGHLEY BD22 8NA; (0535) 44397 Ss (can teach to 0 level)

Ireland Co-ordinators(s): Clare Weber

CONVERY William & Puri; Christina 04/80;

22 Clark Avenue MAGHERA Co. Derry BT46 5BD

MCVITTY Martin & Hilary; ** Deborah ** 09/80; Andrew 02/82; Judith 11/83;

18 Park Avenue HOLYWOOD Co. Down BT18 9LS; (023 17) 6915

O'HIGGINS Siobhan & Mikail; Luke 08/84;

Fraoc 's Aiteann Rathgorragh KILTEGAN Co. Wicklow EIRE; (0508) 73292

TRYTHALL Richard & Lesley; Tamasin 07/81; Sorrell 08/83;

4 Cronan Grove SHANNON Co. Clare IRELAND

interested infashion, hair, make-up and at the moment I think I would like to make a career with horses. Since we properly moved to the country three years ago I have owned two ponies and ride various others. I spend a lot of time riding and learning about them. People ask me about my social life and just because I don't go to school they seem to think I don't have friends but I do - LOTS. My best friend goes to school, she is fourteen and also owns a pony. I go roller-skating and meet lots of kids there and I get invited to parties and discos etc. When people ask me how old I am and I tell them they usually think that I am at least a year older! I have enjoyed my five years out of school and will probably enjoy many more years of home education.

Alice Robertson, The Old Thatched House, Midford Lane, Limpley Stoke, Bath, Avon.

Drawing by her



brother Josh

Little Lord Jesus Asleep in his Manger

I would like to share with other EO members something that happened in our home yesterday evening before Lara(4) and Elrin(1) went to bed. Although we are not religious in the conventional sense of the word, Lara has become increasingly interested in the Christmas story after seeing nativity scenes in shop windows and I am all for encouraging her curiosity about it as it is part of our culture.

Laradecided that she wanted to play 'Little Lord Jesus Asleep in his Manger', so she found a wooden box and lovingly placed her rag doll in it and put some animals and other little figures around it and some 'presents', and asked us to help her make a paper star to hang on the lampshade above the manger, then asked us to light a candle and put it on the floor next to her. Then she switched the light off and in the flickering cnadlelight she sat with a very serious expression on her face and started to sing 'Away in a Manger'. We all joined in, including Elrin, rather tunelessly, then we sang all the other carols we could think of and at the end she got a lighted joss stick and carefully wafted it over the baby Jesus.

It all felt very sacred and Gerard and I both felt very moved that Lara could create such a wonderful moment totally spontaneously. I will treasure the memory of that evening for many Christmases to come.

Sue van der Ende, 72 Plain Pond, Wiveliscombe, Somerset TA4 2LG

John Holt In Memorium

John Holt is woven through the story of our life as a family. I believe it is true to say that his influence has been felt by most families who are educating their own children throughout North America.

In 1978 we moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and decided to educate our children completely on our own, having already taught them with the children of two other families in Victoria, British Columbia, in a small family 'school'. When we came to Boston we didn't know anyone else was even thinking about home education. But before long we were very glad to discover in our new community four other families who were considering the same idea. Much of their inspiration was derived from a new journal published by John Holt, Growing Without Schooling. Throughout that year we used the resources of Boston as our educational base and we felt little need of additional support. But it was good to know that John and GWS existed. When questioned by neighbours, we could tell them about the journal to let them know that we weren't loners or freaks: we were part of a movement.

Soon after, we moved to a rural area of western Michigan, and then we needed help. Again it was John and GWS that provided it. We didn't know the legal status of 'home-schooling' in Michigan, because each state makes its own laws about education and asking the local authorities seemed like asking for trouble. Through GWS we found out about legal options and responsibilities. Equally important, we were able to prepare a careful, self-confident description of our plans to educate our children, based on a model in GWS.

GWS statistics about home-schooling families and stories of famous historical figures who had been educated at home gave us courage and confidence as we met our new neighbours and answered the inevitable question, "where do your children go to school?" Though we continue to answer questions about how we educate our children, and why, we have never faced any difficulties with local officials.

About a year after our arrival in Michigan, we arranged for John Holt to come to western Michigan to speak at two colleges. (My husband teaches at one of them and a good friend heads the teacher training at the other.) We wanted John to come because he was such an articulate and persuasive advocate for home education! But we also wanted him for our own encouragement, as did many others who arranged similar visits across the U.S. We quickly discovered that what John did, whether it was meetings, travel, lectures, T.V. talk shows or books, he did because he honestly liked children. He felt that most children were growing up in a world where they weren't even tolerated, much less cherished.

I remember the first evening he came to stay with us in Michigan. We had taken him to the auditorium in my husband's college where he was to speak that evening. While the crowd gathered, John sat on the edge of the stage and greeted the nearest children. Soon there were children sitting on both sides of him swinging their feet and talking to him. Both John and the children appeared content to be there, none of them thinking about the impression they were making, or whether there were 'important' people who should be paid attention.

Later that evening, we took John and his cello home with us. John had spent a busy day in travelling, lecturing, dining with dignitaries, and giving a formal address followed by a question and answer period. We had explained to our children (then aged five, seven and nine) that he would very likely be tired and want to go straight to bed. But John wanted to visit with the children. He sat on the piano bench and took out his cello. The children crowded around curiously and he grinned at them but did not play: they hadn't asked for a performance so he wasn't giving one. But he did want to share something he loved - and isn't that what play is at its best? John sat there with his beloved cello, almost shyly, and invited them, by his look, to enjoy this wonderful thing with him. When they seemed fearful of touching it he said, 'Do you want to hear the bumblebee?' (Aha! I thought, he's going to play something for them. That will be nice.) But he had something else in mind. He made a sudden buzzing sound on the cello and the children laughed with delight and surprise. Before long each of them was having a go, all huddled round John and his cello.

The children said goodbye with genuine sadness when John left. They hadn't had a chance to finish carving their Halloween pumpkins with him before he had to leave. But 'see you in Boston', we said to each other.

And it was in Boston that we met again. This was perhaps the perfect place to see John. He once said that he felt incredibly lucky to be able to live in the city he loved best, doing work he really enjoyed. We met him in his crowded office and took him with us for a picnic in the Boston Public Garden. We three adults talked among ourselves and to the children as they came and went. We talked about children, perhaps John's favourite topic. He found children endlessly fascinating, as we did. Not everyone who says the right things about children likes to be around them, but John did. His chief delight in the office was a toddler whose mother worked for GWS. The baby had the run of the premises and a big sign on the office door warned newcomers to enter carefully so as not to knock the baby over.

I am sure I speak for all home-schoolers in North America and in Europe as well in acknowledging John's profound affect on our lives. The GWS directory provided us with contacts and friends wherever we travelled, including the 'musical family', a delightful Californian family who taped their informal family singing and made it available to us all through John Holts Book and Music Store. I wrote an article for GWS and received an answer from Julie Duff, then living in Gloucestershire. We thus

discovered E.O. and registered for the recent meeting at Wick Court when we knew we were coming to England this year. We ordered 'Teach Your Own' from the store, read it and keep recommending and loaning it to others. We mentioned Arthur Ransome to John. He had never read him but did so and then added his books to the store.

Best of all, perhaps, has been the chance to read regularly about the experiences of other home schoolers in GWS, and to know that we are part of a real if loose knit community whose rich experience with their children derives from a special commitment to them and a genuine openness to receive what children give when they have freedom, time and love.

This article has been written by Karen Cox of 1, Elsworth Place, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2RG, who comes from America. She, her husband John, and children Anna-Lisa (14), Jonathon (12), and Amelia (10) are staying in Britain for a year, while John is working at the university. The children have never been to school.

His train had been due in at 5.45am and now it was 6.30am. 'We've arranged to meet a Mr. John Holt here, do you know where he might be?'

They shook their heads. They didn't know. But a gentleman was coming towards us.

'Are you from Education Otherwise?'

'Yes. Are you John Holt?'

'Yes.'

So this was what the great man looked like. Big, smiling, warm and gentle.

'Hello. It's good to meet you.'

He knew our names, and to the children he said, 'I've some things in my bag you might be interested in, would you like to look?'

I didn't see a magic wand but a spell was cast for the children liked him from that moment on, enjoyed being with him and have never forgotten him.

We discussed his arrangements, a recording for the open university that afternoon, an afternoon seminar and evening lecture the following day, an afternoon lecture the day after that, then the evening train to Birmingham. There was plenty of time to spare so we phoned to newspapers and radio and television studios.

We explained ---- 'We have John Holt, author of 'How Children Fail' with us at present, would you be interested in talking to him?' ---- a short pause and then 'Yes, we would.'

John was pleased. He beamed with quiet pleasure that so little introduction and explanation should be necessary to achieve his interviews. He didn't have such an easy time in the States, he said, and he shared his pleasure with us.

The three days were busy. Recording sessions, filming, interviews, the seminar, lectures and the long drive from the city to home each evening. There were many times when we climbed out of and squeezed back into that wee car - two large men, three children, the children's mum and the cello. We hadn't know about the cello or we would have hired another car but it was fun and the weather was beautiful.

It was his birthday that first day in Scotland.

'I'll tell you something nice,' he said, 'it's my birthday.'

'Oh Happy Birthday John. How old are you?'

'Fifty-nine. I'm looking forward to another twenty active years.'

We all beamed. It was good to know this lovely man would be around for a long time yet.

We went to a friendly E.O. flat for his birthday tea, scotch eggs, home made scones with wild raspberry jam, and we sang Happy Birthday to him. He sang Happy Birthday to us.

'Happy Birthday to you,

You live in a zoo,

You look like a monkey,

And you smell one too.'

It was a good birthday tea.

He went to see Agnes that evening. She had looked after him when he was twelve and although had been part of his life for only a short while she had been important to him. When we collected him at 10 o'clock it was to find him playing his cello for her.

Next morning he went shopping and bought himself a shetland wool jumper the colour of moor and heather. He unwrapped it to show us. Yes, he liked it he said, he looked forward to wearing it and he smiled again his pleasure and shared it with us.

The seminar was that afternoon; twenty professionals around a large table. We hadn't heard John speak in public before; we assumed he would be skilled at his task and we were surprised when he at first sounded woolly, as if without direction or intent. Slowly things improved, his message became clear. 'These families by educating their children at home will do no harm, they may do a lot of good. And I ask you that if, as professionals, you should meet these families, that you be kind to them.' He'd had his reasons for carrying the discussion the way he did. Sensitive to the atmosphere of the group he'd recognised that there were some very angry people present and he'd wanted to keep things peacable. I think it wasn't necessary for him to shine, to be a personal success, it was more important to try and help families be allowed to educate their children at home.

His lecture was very good that evening, experienced, skilful, amusing, intelligent and the large audience liked it.

We had our last long drive through the hills to our home. Those drives were for us perhaps the best times. There was so much we wanted to ask him, so much we wanted to know, but aware of his possible desire for quiet we did not. However, wise man that he was, he knew without our asking where we were and what we wanted to know and he talked and we learned without asking.

Apart from the seminar there were children with him throughout his three days - at his interviews, whilst being filmed, at his lectures - he welcomed them and they in turn enjoyed him and gained from their encounter with him.

There was so much talk after the last lecture that there was no time for tea and we rushed to the station to say fond farewells

to this big brown bear of a man. He liked Scotland, he said. He would come back.

'Good bye.'

'Good bye. Good bye John, Good bye John. Good bye. Good bye.'

Goodbye dear friend.

Bruce and Christine Wallace (address on back page) have a C90 tape of one of John Holt's talks, recorded in Glasgow when he was in Britain in 1983. They both feel that it helps to give a more international feel to his work, to hear him speak, and would be prepared to loan it out, if you send a suitably stamped address label and promise to return it!

STEPPING OUT - INTO EO

"Well, at least I could teach the children by myself now", was just one of the thoughts I had as I neared the end of a post-graduate teacher-training course with no immediate sign of a teaching post, "It's a pity that I'll have to be at work in order to have a home in the first place! Ah well, there might be grandchildren!"

It was over five years ago and I was making the basic mistake of many - that of assuming that one needed a teaching qualification in order to teach one's own children at home. Anyway, a position (job!) was found and I commenced a new career in Comprehensive Education, looking forward to imparting to the children in my care, something of my own knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, my specialist subjects. How successful I was in achieving that goal must be left for others to judge, but I did get a real eye-opener into what today's Secondary Education in a state Comprehensive school is all about - and I was not impressed! Lack of discipline (which is not the same as 'child-bashing'), lack of motivation on the part of many (both pupils and staff), some staff spending, it seemed, more time in the staff-room, drinking cups of coffee, than in the classroom, actively teaching; morale at rock-bottom, negative attitudes, religious education, which went against much of what my wife and I practised and taught our children at home; - all came together to paint 'not a pretty picture'. At the back of it all, of course, was a distinct shortage of parental interest/concern/involvement - and my own children were moving on to that sort of situation!!! A business which my wife and I run on a part-time basis seemed to be the answer. If we built it up to the stage where it provided a full-time income, while still involving part-time hours, then I would have ample time to teach the children at home. However, while it is growing steadily, and solidly, it has not yet been able to provide that level of income. A second alternative was a new private school, with the aims and ethos of which we are very sympathetic. Unfortunately, it

is some thirty miles away and it seemed unfair to the children (and to us!) to add an hour of travelling to each end of the school day.

Then we discovered that a couple who attended the church to which we belonged, were educating their teenage daughter at home - and neither was a qualified teacher! A few chats, the loan of some literature, and a realisation that even if state examination passes proved to be necessary/useful, so much material was available in computer programmes and we were sold.

Just now, we are playing a waiting game - until the children are de-registered at the end of their primary education (as it happens our local Primary School is relatively good) - one more year for our elder girl, two for her sister. Arleen, the elder, is showing herself to be very gifted musically and is keen to 'major' in that direction. With EO she will be able to do so in a way not catered for within the state system. Fiona hasn't yet shown her particular interests but these, too, will be specifically attended to. At the same time, they will receive a good general education, and my wife, Joyce, (with no formal teaching qualification!) is looking forward to sharing in all of this. As our business grows, it will provide us with the opportunity of a great deal of travel - domestic and foreign - but little of it confined to school holidays. With EO we will be able to take the girls with us (and that will be an education!) and, as it were, take school with us as well.

Do we have any fears? We would be other than human if we didn't! Adventure of any sort always has that aspect - even though liberally coated with excitement. However, the knowledge that there is such a growing number of parents who are travelling the same road with their families will, we know, be an encouragement and a support to us - and we would hope, in turn, to be an encouragement and a support to others in the future.

C. Brian Ross, 29 The Cleaves, Tullibody, Clackmannanshire, FK10 2XD

NOTICE - CHILD BENEFIT 16 plus

Both Lynette Cameron of Berkshire and Mary Carter of Derbyshire are pressing their M.P.s to raise the question in Parliament as to why the D.H.S.S. regulations prevent a child who is not attending school, but is nevertheless being educated at home, from receiving Child Benefit. Mary Carter has written to some of you with children of nearly sixteen or sixteen plus and will use any of your replies to continue to campaign her M.P. This info will then be passed to Lynette Cameron who is compiling information on behalf of E.O. to press for changes in the law. She also suggests that any of you concerned about this matter write to your own M.P. about this anomaly, which exists over Child Benefit, between two Acts of Parliament - the Education Act which gives parents the right to 'educate their children at school or otherwise' and the Child Benefit Act which disallows Child Benefit unless children between 16 and 19 years of age are educated at school or college. For further info or advise on this please write to: Lynette Cameron, 79 Whiteknights Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 2BB Tel: 0734 661656

notices

Contributors for the supplement on one-parent families in April newsletter are still very welcome (deadline March 1st).

Please send them to : Julie Webb,
28 Churchway,
Haddenham,
Bucks.
HP17 8AA

The new co-ordinator for WEST Sussex is now:

Carol Kipling,
47 King Street,
Worthing,
West Sussex.
BN14 7BN
Tel: Worthing 211559

The new co-ordinator for EAST Sussex is now:

Carol Purves,
35 Lower Park Road,
Hastings,
East Sussex.
Tel: Hastings 428020

Would anyone in the London area be interested in a monthly outing somewhere in London. I have a 4½ year old boy and would like to hear from anyone with children of a similar age.

Please contact: Sue Petszaft,
The Old Squash Court,
Bayham Abbey,
Lamberhurst,
Kent TN3 8BG
Tel: Lamberhurst (0892) 890624

Anyone receiving exchange newsletters or magazines please contact: June Grant, 25 Chipperfield Road, The Manor, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP3 0AH Tel: Hemel Hempstead (0442) 64020

It is important that we have a register and that material should be available at Core Group meetings and be written up for newsletters to share with other members. By the time this NL reaches you the Core Group may already have decided to redistribute contacts since there has been no response so far to the request in the Dec NL. It must therefore be assumed that those people who are currently receiving swaps are either no longer interested or no longer belong to EO.

SINCE IT WAS FIRST ADVERTISED IN THE EDUCATION OTHERWISE NEWSLETTER, 2½ YEARS AGO, THE IDEA OF 'A VILLAGE' HAS ENABLED SEVERAL GROUPS TO FORM, AND HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE WANTED TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING, WORKING AND EDUCATING THEMSELVES.

FROM THE REPORTS IN THE E.O. NEWSLETTER SINCE THE REGIONAL RE-ORGANISATION OF E.O. THERE HAVE BEEN QUITE NOTICEABLE CHANGES, AS THERE ARE NOW MANY MORE GROUPS WHO ARE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER COMING TOGETHER LOCALLY TO SHARE IDEAS. SO IF ANY INDIVIDUAL OR LOCAL E.O. GROUP IS INTERESTED IN THIS PROCESS AND WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE NATIONAL 'A VILLAGE' NEWSLETTER PLEASE SEND 60p (FOR ONE COPY) OR £2 (FOR FOUR COPIES/ONE YEAR'S SUBS), AS WELL AS ANY WRITTEN/DRAWN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT EDITORS IN ROTATION :-

CAROLINE AND SIMON GRANT, % A VILLAGE (NANTLLE VALE), TY GWYDOR, FFORDD CLYNNOG, PENYGRŶES, GWYNEDD LL54 6NP

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SO YOU'RE IN TIME FOR THE WINTER EDITION WHICH IS DUE OUT BY THE MIDDLE OF FEBRUARY. PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO EDITORS!

A VILLAGE

SPECIAL NEEDS - Members who have experience of educating children with Special Needs at home are welcome to contact Sylvia Jeffs as are members who need legal/educational advice on children with Special Needs. Sylvia Jeffs, 16 Bernard Road, Solihull, Tel: 021 706 6460

OVERSEAS MEMBERS - the June Editor will be:
 Julie Webb,
 28 Churchway,
 Haddenham,
 Bucks.
 HP17 8AA

SPECIAL NOTICE - STEERING COMMITTEE - consists of three people currently Joan Hoare, Alison Mafham and Janet Everdell who have the authority to make decisions between Core Group meetings. Please contact any of the above (addresses on back cover) if you want any queries re EO policy discussed.

CONTACT LIST - a new Contact List is to be published in April and all details to be included should be sent to Bob Emmett, 8, Queensway, Liddell Park, Llandudno, Gwynedd LL30 1YJ as he maintains the list.

MONKTON WYLD COURT

Charmouth
Bridport
Dorset
DT6 6DQ

Tel: Charmouth (0297) 60342

Monkton Wyld has been running an educational centre for three years now. It is run by a resident community of nine adults and nine children, some of whom are educated here. What we share is a common aim to build an environment where children and adults can learn and grow in an integrated and balanced way. Many groups have stayed here now including a free school, international summer camps, healing groups, Friends of the Earth and E.O.

This spring we have set aside a time called 'Five days of March' for anyone aged between five and fifteen years who is being educated out of school. Younger brothers and sisters are welcome. What we have to offer is our ongoing community life i.e. cooking, milking the cows, gardening, egg collecting, circle dancing, bread and cheese making. We also have workshops open for discovery rather than supervised lessons. These include an art room, wood carving and pottery room plus a new library.

There is space here for thirty people to come so if the group is successful another week can be organised for the autumn. Please book beforehand and bring music, poetry, crafts or anything else to share. I also hope we can give each other support and ideas.

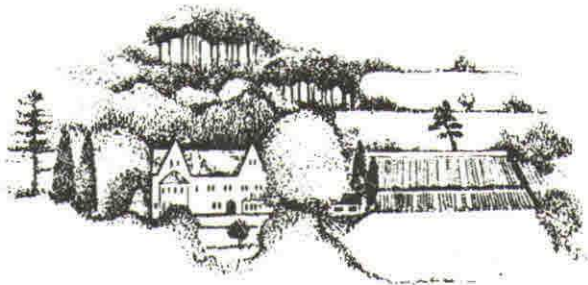
John

Date: March 2-7

Cost: Family £60 - £120 Single parent: £30 - £60

Deposit - £20

N.B. The sliding scale on the price is to allow for the expense of home-schooling, those unemployed and on a low income.



news from the regions

SURREY - all Surrey members are invited to a get-together at Joe and Jill O'Connor's, 4 Coombe Gardens, New Malden on Sunday 16th March from 2pm onwards. Please telephone first to say you are coming - 01 942 0286

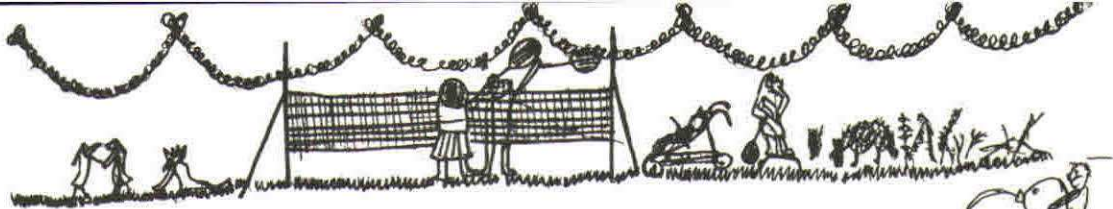
WEST MIDLANDS - Open meeting for interested families at 16, St. Bernard's Road, Olton, Solihull, W.Midlands - the home of Sylvia, Bob and David Jeffs Tel: 021 706 6460 - every other month on the second Saturday of the month from 2p.m. Nearby regions' members welcome.

NORTH LONDON - EO children's Group meets twice a week. Enquiries welcome. Contact Vere Tel: 281 0650

SOUTH YORKSHIRE and NORTH DERBYSHIRE gathering near Chesterfield on Saturday 8th February from about 10.30 onwards. Please bring something to share for lunch and contact Steph or Peter at 41 Devon Drive, Brimington, Chesterfield. Tel: Chesterfield 39048 if you intend to come. Members and friends welcome.

HERTS - Hertfordshire members continue to meet regularly most Tuesdays 10-12 at Apsley Community Centre, corner of Durrants Hill, A41, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead (not Tring), followed by swimming. Buses and Euston line trains stop within 200 yards. Bring your own lunch and activity. 75p per person including swimming. Please tel: June Grant (Hemel Hempstead 64020) or Mary Reid (Berkhampstead 450) to confirm. So far we have painted hankies and other things for Halloween, made paper dinosaurs, dried flower plates and marzipan fruits; made and stained microscope slides of cells from cheeks and touch typing; used computers for maths and spelling, played many domino type games and board games. Had good fun and met with other EO families. So far seven families have taken part.

ISLE OF WIGHT - 1986 is going to be a good year. Happy New Year to all Isle of Wight EOers, as to all EOers everywhere. In February I hope to have a 'charity shop' in Newport for a fortnight. Any donations of saleable goods can be collected by us if I get a phone call. Also, anyone who has things to sell may do so and donate a commission for EO. Please give me a ring for details. At Easter we hope to have an Easter Sunday EO Funday, near Ventnor - egg races, egg decorating etc. Again please ring me nearer Easter for more details. ALSO I am working on getting use of a craft room at Newport one afternoon a week - probably Wednesdays. Again please ring. Lastly I have been using 'Teachers Centre' as a resource centre. It is free to borrow books, equipment, films etc. Let me know if you would like to use it. My phone number is Calbourne 680 Look forward to lots of interest - Jude (Ashley-Walker)



The Wiltshire EO Christmas Curry

What an event! 24 adults, 28 children and teenagers, 14 babies. Thanks to the warm dry weather and plenty of outdoor space, it didn't feel like 66 bodies in our little village hall at lunch or at our house at teatime. Thanks are also due to every body great and small who came, the lovely food you all made, the decorations and flowers and music. Christmas carols didn't flow too easily - the scene was too unseasonal: badminton amongst the grazing sheep, outdoor scrambles in the hay and no fire to evoke a cosy wintry scene for jingle bells. Eventually the early setting sun brought us to our seasonal senses and evening found our voices and sang our way 'Into the deep mid-winter....'. Those who stayed long enough to welcome our late accordion player and dance outside in the dark, caught another sort of spirit ... more Australian perhaps? Even more thanks are due to the treasurer at EO for agreeing to sponsor the event due to various unexpected expenses. Did anyone leave a yellow spotted ball (3-4")? Sorry we haven't found your bracelet yet Sarah.

Kate Freeman

illustrations by Amelia Freeman



HAPPY NEW YEAR

EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS

Editor: Kate Freeman. Contributors: Sarah Guthrie, Carol Morris, Daniel and Fiona Barber.

Sometimes Sir Keith has said hurtful or tactless things about the teachers but nobody can doubt that when he talks of 'my beloved education service' he does so with sincere and genuine emotion. Yet Sir Keith has another and even more passionate commitment. To Treasury control of public expenditure he is as Moses to the Ark of the Covenant... In each generation we have sown the seeds for our future decline ... Higher education is just about the only area of public expenditure where the government has actually succeeded in making real savings in public spending. In Britain university education is a strictly rationed privilege...(Sunday Times 29/9/85). Only 14% of British 18 year olds take up places in higher education, while 50% of their American, and over 40% of their Japanese counterparts do so...(T.E.S. 22.11.85)

PUBLIC THOUGHTS ON HOME EDUCATION: The number of children being educated at home in Cornwall has escalated from ten in 1982 and 35 in 1983 to 86 today. Cornwall's Education Committee have decided to develop a set of standard letters for communicating with parents. These would emphasise that the authority was properly concerned about the syllabus and provision being made so that they could reasonably say it was monitoring the education of children at home, as required by law, while respecting the rights of some parents to disagree as to what was 'appropriate and efficient' provision ... "Children between 12 and 16 would not have anything like the education that could be provided in a school and it could be that later on they would ask why they had not had a chance like other people," said Mr Andy Morgan... (West Britton 28.11.85).

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND UNDER 5s: "Some parents and teachers seem to feel that the earlier a child starts full-time school, the better that child's education will be especially since many children do not have the chance to go to nursery school," said Norma Anderson, a senior primary inspector in Cambs. The 1984 DES statistics showed that more than 235,500 four year olds were being taught in primary schools, an increase of 12.5% over the previous year. The 1985 figures due out soon are expected to show that the trend is continuing. It is the falling rolls in primary schools that have led headteachers to encourage such young children to start school ... there is pressure on headteachers to maintain the number of pupils in their school or risk losing a teacher ... Parents and teachers also feel ... that the option of full-time primary school is better than the alternative of staying at home. Cynthia James, nursery-infant adviser, of Haringey, says of four year olds, "Their teachers should excite wonder and laughter - gales of giggles are frequently heard in nursery schools but are rarer in infants ... The environment should bolster the child's feeling of security, not leaving him or her to get lost while searching for the toilets ... There is also a growing feeling that placing four year olds with older children may in fact be having the reverse effect from the educational benefit intended". Norma Anderson explains,

"Faced with the teaching methods intended for older children, the under-fives can develop an attitude to learning that is not as positive as it could be. They become confused and may start to consider themselves stupid and unable to understand so they switch off. Their curiosity may be blunted, their desire to ask questions and seek solutions diminishes as they find the set tasks difficult and uninspiring". (T.E.S. 29.11.85)

BUT: "Do schools really want to produce children who don't accept that teacher knows best?" asks headteacher, Michael Sullivan. "We ought to question the assumption that confident pupils are really wanted in schools. Confident pupils would naturally be displaying their confidence through their behaviour. They would not be overawed by authority, but would challenge assumptions, make independent judgements, work with competence, and not seek constant reassurance. Primary teachers have previously not placed great importance on the task of developing confident children. In Pat Ashton's 'Aims of Primary Education Project' (late 60's) primary teachers rated 'self-confidence' eighteenth in the order of aims, just one place behind 'obedience'. Secondary teachers had an even lower regard for self-confidence, they rate it thirtieth and place 'obedience' ninth in their ranking.

If you are determined to develop strategies within your school to encourage self-confidence, then don't assume the approval and support of colleagues or parent. You will need to beware because you are opening up a Pandora's box, you will let fly demons to challenge the traditional beliefs and systems of control management and organisation that govern most schools. Self-confidence is developed through the reduction of fear, stress, uncertainty, confusion and failure - the very tools that too many of us skillfully use in the management of children in our charge. Children are fearful of verbal abuse, physical abuse and sarcasm. Children are stressed on the rack of tests and quizzes often facing inevitable personal humiliation. They are confused by our bad teaching and then made to feel guilty by us for our own shortcomings as teachers. Children's noses are constantly rubbed in their failures: research repeatedly shows that we teachers are more lavish with corrosive criticism than constructive praise.

Self-confidence is built out of self-respect and self-image. The images that schools create and reflect to their pupils are often distorted and flawed to satisfy the needs of the school rather than the needs of the children.

Most children start school as enthusiastic, curious, active and imaginative beings. Too often our school system deliberately stamps out these sparks of vitality. Confident people are more challenging than predictable, passive, dull-eyed conformists. In an increasingly demanding and challenging world our children will need to be able to swim with confidence in a sea of uncertainty. Enhancing that confidence should be the face of all opposition be the task in which we are actively engaged." (T.E.S. 18.10.85)

FOR THOSE WITH 'SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS': The DES is to issue local authorities with guidelines to help parents draw up 'profiles' of their child. These will be used by professionals as part of their assessment of the child and its educational needs.

The guidelines encourage parents to describe their child's progress ... The Spastics Society was concerned that the 1981 Act had failed to involve parents in the assessment of children's special needs. (T.E.S. 6.12.85)

RAGS, THE LAW, AND CURRICULA: The survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys suggests that the number of child smokers is increasing in some age-groups - particularly 14 and 15 year olds ... The survey suggests that almost a quarter of regular smokers have ten or more cigarettes a day ... Mr Rory Whitney, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Health, said that there was evidence that the great majority of adults who smoked took up the habit in their teenage years. (T.E.S. 6.12.85) (Has anyone any evidence to suggest that thumbsuckers are less likely to smoke? Ed.....)

Mr Justice Taylor has ruled that Hampshire LEA had made an 'error of law' in refusing to pay for a dyslexic teenager's education at an independent school with special facilities for dyslexic pupils. The 13 year old boy's dyslexia was clearly a disability, the judge said ... Hampshire had decided that the boy did not need a statement of special educational needs and could be catered for in the B stream at an ordinary comprehensive school. The boy had an IQ of over 140. (T.E.S. 13.12.85) Not all teachers are able to analyse children's error in enough detail according to Mr Neil Hagues, of the NFER's Test and Development Unit. "She could do it when I taught her but she forgot it two days later," was one explanation frequently given by teachers for children's mistakes. (T.E.S. 6.12.85)

A nationally agreed curriculum covering the entire years of compulsory schooling was called for yesterday by Mr Eric Bolton, senior chief HMI. He criticized the primary sector for lack of progress towards a common agreement on what should be taught, how and what pupils could be expected to achieve before they left for the secondary school. What evaluation and assessment there was, was found mainly in secondary school. External examinations, for instance, at least provided some guidance. (see Jo O'Connor's piece below) (T.E.S. 15.11.85)

EO THROUGH THE PRESS: Peter Williams was interviewed by the Yorkshire Press on 9,1,86. He is co-ordinator for EO in Yorkshire....

A wide ranging piece will appear in March in the Observer Colour Supplement interviewing different families....

EO has made the projected BBC Domesday Book for the 80s. It will include the as yet unpublished 'Woman' article....

Jo O'Connor's article on the curriculum debate was published in T.E.S. (6.12.85). This was written in response to Surrey's first 28 page curriculum guide for parents with prescribed targets for pupils up to secondary age. He pointed out that it needed to be read with a critical educationalist's eye in order to discern the contradictory connections between 'teaching', 'learning', 'autonomy' and 'testing performance'....

Meg Robertson joined a controversial conversation in December on BBC Radio Bristol with a panel which included an 'old school' head master and Geraldine Taylor....

EDUCATION OTHERWISE CORE GROUP MEETING
At Wick Court, Bristol on Sunday 13th October 1985

1. Apologies were received from Janet Everdell, Angela Montford-Bebb, Alvena Hillier, Francis Howerd.
2. The minutes of the last Core Group meeting were approved.
3. Steering Committee - the Steering Committee consists of three people, currently Joan Hoare, Alison Mafham and Janet Everdell, who have the authority to make decisions between Core Group meetings. If no-one has the power to make controversial decisions this can lead to problems, for example if speaking or spending money on behalf of E.O. is involved. There was controversy about buying an ansaphone without discussing whether we wished to adopt this particular piece of technology. Officers find it difficult to make decisions between meetings and it was difficult to get funding for printing leaflets. Expenses for visits for the Legal Group should be automatic. Alison should have the authority to make her own judgement about funding that doesn't seem controversial, but is not routine. Alison needs two signatures for cheques, currently her own and her husband's. Jean Lovius offered also to be joint signatory instead of John Elenor, along with Bruce Wallace, who is already a signatory. This was agreed. The Steering Committee is also empowered to make controversial decisions.
4. What should be considered routine expenses? - Janet suggested that officers such as the Membership Secretaries, Publications Secretary, Co-ordinators' Secretary, Enquiries Secretary and Publication Secretary should have a kitty and just deduct what money they use, as this would save repeatedly going back to Alison for funds. Alison needs a receipt from the officer concerned for the float and an account of how the money is spent, before more is given. The size of the float can be left to Alison's and the officer's discretion. Alison requested that claims for expenses should be written on small pieces of paper to save filing space.
5. Stalls - Any expenses should be claimed through co-ordinators or officers. Alison didn't want members all writing in for expenses for E.O. activities as this would mean a great deal of work and perhaps too great a call on finances. Any unusual expenses should be referred in advance either directly to the Steering Committee or through the local co-ordinator. Receipts for photo-copying etc. should be produced. The name of the Steering Committee should appear regularly in the NL. Sandy Cottee is to receive £25 as a grant for use by the Essex group and the Core Group will discuss local funding at the next meeting.
6. Computer system used by Bob Emmett for E.O. work - E.O. is the owner of a Sanyo computer and a Mannesman Tally printer. Alison has the invoices and receipts. Bob is in the process of transferring the Membership list from the Apple to the Sanyo

He thought that the suggestion of some form of reimbursement for the worn out Apple disc drives was impractical although kindly meant. The system can be used as a word processor, the quality of print as in the Amendments and Additions centre-fold in the October NL. Approximately £1400 has been spent on the computer system. Alison suggested that a fund should be set up to provide for the replacement of assets, in particular the computer system, ansaphone and electric typewriter.

6. E.O. is now a company limited by guarantee Education Association Otherwise Ltd., and a charity, the Education Otherwise Charitable Trust. The six members who signed the original Memorandum of Association of Education Otherwise Ltd. and the Trust Deed will produce an article explaining the workings of the Trust and the Limited Company. They will arrange to meet to produce this article. They are the Chairman, Treasurer, General Secretary, Enquiries Secretary, Membership Secretary and Publications Secretary.
7. Later Years - Bruce Cox said that the text was complete. Bob Emmett will do a draft. It may eventually be produced as a book by Dick Kitto with Lighthouse Books. Bruce is not entirely happy about this as some information about exams is ephemeral and books can take a long time to get printed. Also amendments can be easily done on a word processor. Bruce will contact Dick to see if the book can be speedily produced.
8. SINC - It is now produced. Another notice will be put in the NL saying that it is available free to all members.
9. Fund raising as a charity - We are a charity and can raise funds as such. Joe O'Connor proposed looking into this to raise money for specific purposes, e.g. equipment, centres which could be used by home educators. This is to be discussed at the next Core Group meeting.
10. Useful addresses - Andy Anderson and Kate Freeman will put a list together for use by co-ordinators and for sending out to enquirers.
11. Newsletter - Commercial ads are to be discontinued (see AGM minutes) Notices are acceptable between members. Small ads are acceptable up to thirty words in length and at 10p a word if relevant to E.O. A new guideline for editors is needed over advertising and editors in doubt should check with Jean Shepherd. Any additions to the Contact List published in the NL should also have a note that the list should not be used as a commercial mailing list.
12. Venues for future meetings - The next meeting is at Milton Keynes Youth Hostel on 24 - 25th January 1986. There is accomodation for 40 and we have full use of the hostel during the day. Valerie and James Gomon are doing the bookings. The adjacent Memorial Hall is also bookable. Larger venues are now needed. The following people are investigating venues: Caroline Grant, the Ozmanam Centre in Wales. Jean Lovius, a place near Formby, Liverpool. Sarah Guthrie, Lower Shaw Farm. Leslie Downie, Lauriestan Hall.

13. New stocks of stationary - Andy Anderson is now overseeing stocks of introductory letters, membership forms, stationary, handbills, posters and re-use of envelope labels. They will be printed in Crewe and Andy will maintain stocks as he thinks fit. He will change 'where to get what' in the NL as appropriate. Our charity number and limited company number will now appear on stationary and publicity leaflets.
14. Officers listing at back of NL should have phone numbers as well as addresses.
15. Alison will investigate the insuring of assets.
16. We agreed that Bruce Wallace should buy whatever shelving was necessary for the proper storage of publications.
17. Jean Shepherd will look into copyright laws.
18. Affiliations - An affiliation means taking out group membership of another organisation. The list of affiliations is not to be put in the NL any longer, but in the Contact List. June Grant volunteered to check up on who is monitoring newsletters from affiliations. If we don't hear from the receivers of newsletters, then the job should be passed on to someone else. We agreed to cancel the affiliation to the National Out of School Alliance.
19. Constitution - The availability of the constitution is to be decided by The Constitution Group (see item 6).
20. E.O. central phone number in London - Anne Wade will investigate this and report back to the next meeting.
21. Old Contact Lists should be kept in case we ever need to contact old members.
22. Funding for paper on school phobia - There was a proposal from Janet Everdell (not present at this meeting) that E.O. should provide funds for printing Patricia Knox's research on school phobia. We were unsure what was being asked for and felt that we needed to see a copy before funding could be agreed. Pauline Thomasson will send a copy of the paper to the Steering Committee. Caroline Grant will ask Pat what exactly she intends to do. We hope that this paper will be printed in the NL. Would Pat also submit in writing to the Steering Committee what she intends to do?
23. Publications and the need for auditing - We need to know where publications are and how many we have for auditing purposes. Alison proposed the following system. That Andy Anderson should send co-ordinators a given number of publications with a request for a receipt. Each co-ordinator is then responsible for the copies in their possession. Other members wanting publications should get them from their co-ordinator and also supply a receipt. Upon the resignation of a co-ordinator the publications should be

surrendered along with any receipts. All money should be sent initially to the person from whom the publications were received, so that the treasurer receives money from one person only, namely Andy. Bruce Wallace would follow the same system as Andy.

LEGAL GROUP REPORT

It is difficult to write a report about legal problems for two reasons: people have often complained that it is disturbing and misleading to keep reading about trouble with the LEA when most people do not experience it; and most families expect confidentiality while problems are being thrashed out and are not keen on publicity afterwards, especially as there may be no clear decision - the LEA just appears to 'lose' the file or gives only short-term approval.

First the limits of our activities:

1. We have nothing to do with money. The Family Support Fund has only just been set up, and is separate. Hopefully it will receive some money from fund-raising now we are a charity and from EO members who can afford it. We are still suffering from the unfortunate notion that we have more money than we know what to do with - this error was quickly corrected, but it is the original statement that has stuck.
2. We have no experience or competence to help in court. I'm sorry if that is depressing but we hope it will change in time.

What we aim to do is:

1. Become familiar with the very small amount of law which is relevant to EO - still quite a task.
2. Be available by phone for members to discuss difficulties with the LEA, preferably from the earliest sign of trouble; to suggest ways of handling them, and pitfalls which may be looming.
3. Write letters to the LEA where appropriate.

What we have done is:

1. Held a special meeting to establish the above.
2. Held meetings to exchange details of problems and cases at this year's Core Groups, supplemented by phone and post.
3. Received from Dick Kitto masses of legal information, and swotted it up with varying degrees of success.
4. Spent hours and hours on the phone: this may well be enough to preclude further trouble.

5. Written various letters to LEAs - often they are genuinely reassured to find that a family has the backing of such group, and is therefore more likely to succeed; sometimes they scent trouble and retract before it escalates, often by sending a different and less prejudiced officer.
6. Arranged a few meetings with the parents, ourselves and a representative of the LEA

Almost all problems seem to be the result of misinformation resulting in a wrong move in the early stages, often before the family has joined EO, and there have been some sad cases. At the moment I know of only two families who are clearly being victimised despite having handled things correctly. In both cases we suspect that the LEA was trying to 'tidy up' their 'deviant' children, that they started on one EO family in their area and are now probably wishing they had not, but are finding it difficult to back down.

One of these families has just written a report for the Ombudsman. This is always worth bearing in mind if you have trouble, but you need to have kept a detailed file, so you can quote accurately. You can only complain about maladministration, not, for example, assessment of education offered, but a difficult LEA is rarely faultless in its admin. The Carters (Derbys) used the Ombudsman successfully but we have not heard of anyone else trying. The family in question here had received all the school attendance orders, and were expecting a summons. The local councillor to whom they took their complaint showed it to the LEA, who realised how weak their case was and were then ready to accept a meeting, where we agreed no access to the children for the rest of the year, and a difficult inspector whom we are to interview before allowing a visit.

The other case is long-standing and we have not been involved, but everyone who knows the family agrees that the LEA is totally unreasonable and vindictive. Apparently it rested entirely on 'registered but not attending' i.e. truancing, and the LEA refused to accept ample evidence of effective home education. It has gone to ridiculous lengths and must have been a considerable strain in all ways, but they are prepared to fight on to the European Court if necessary, and hopefully EO will end up with a successful test case. Perhaps the family involved could write it up for the newsletter - anonymously if necessary - as this would be of considerable interest.

In addition to these two, a third family were in trouble before they joined EO because they believed the LEA, who told them that by law they must provide ten hours qualified tuition a week. Their hours were slightly under this, so they pleaded guilty when summonsed. They discovered it was not true and appealed, but as they had pleaded guilty the verdict had to stand, although the magistrate was sympathetic. The LEA took them to court again - I won't detail all the accompanying harassment - and after complex proceedings and an unexpected defeat (with a headmistress magistrate and an over-confident barrister) an appeal went to the High Court. They have now won their appeal, but the

LEA has in turn appealed against the High Court verdict. Meanwhile, the DES intervened to tell the LEA that they had to allow the family to home-educate, but were subsequently persuaded by the LEA's allegations of shortcomings in the quality of the education provided. The LEA have now brought a new case in parallel, based on another attendance order.

The boy concerned is just 14, has passed maths "O" level, and is sitting English this month and some more "O" levels in June. The LEA now demands more hours, more than one tutor, and that some of the tutoring should be in a group situation. They have dropped the threat of a care order, apparently because Social Services refused to co-operate. (This has also happened in another local authority.) The LEA is desperate to win this case because of the current secondary education situation in the borough. They seem to be afraid that a victory for the family might set a precedent for other parents to follow. It appears that the welfare of one child may be less important to them than their own credibility.

Don't feel that everything has to be done by the Legal Group - co-ordinators should be phoned first, as they can often handle it, as the Dewars found in Leeds. They won their court case, and Christina is now happily learning at home. They found a solicitor whom they recommend - not an easy thing to do - and we should be grateful for any more recommendations. And please let the rest of us know each story in detail, either in the Newsletter or direct to the Legal Group, so we build up a reservoir of experience for other members to use.

We have helped two families to avoid Statements of Special Needs, with the goodwill of their LEAs. We are still very concerned about the potential dangers of the '81 Act and would like to hear any accounts of how it is being used in practice. The individual nature of home education makes it especially appropriate for handicapped children, yet once a Statement is made, 'otherwise' rights are lost. And although it should only apply to a few of our members, many of our children could be said to have special needs if they are deschooled because they are distressed.

A different problem has been highlighted by Lynette Cameron of Reading (Dec. 1985 NL, p.12). Child Benefit was withdrawn by the DHSS from her daughter who is studying four "A" levels at home. Her main concern is the more general one of civil servants making the law, in this case by refusing to accept that 'recognised educational establishment' could include a home, despite full recognition and warm support from her LEA. This could affect all our children, as there is a suggestion that Child Benefit be made contingent on school attendance, as a way of controlling truancy. She has appealed but no answer yet, though benefit has not been withdrawn from her next daughter who is now past sixteen. She is taking the matter further on behalf of EO and would like to hear from other members in a similar position.

Finally, remember that the LEA is a collection of individuals, not a single entity. Don't assume they know something just

because you've told them; put everything in writing and keep a copy so you can prove that their communications are at fault, not you. Don't get paranoid - if they're driving you up the wall it's more likely to be incompetence than conspiracy. Most of them do have the welfare of the children as a priority, so start where they're at, and lead them from there to an understanding of your perceptions of what your child needs. If your inspector is hopelessly prejudiced and hostile, get help to change to another. It is sometimes surprisingly easy to stand up to bullying. One family received a school attendance order four years ago, wrote a long letter back, and have never heard another word. Another spent two years pleading with the LEA to excuse their school-phobic daughter ("not unless you provide ten hours a week qualified tuition"). They joined EO, rang up and said "I know my rights now, I'm taking her out." All they said was, "put it in writing" and they heard no more.

Anne Wade on behalf of the Legal Group.

INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE
Tel: 0270 664060

Andy and Diane Anderson, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire.

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 SAE for 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.

STOP PRESS: Special EO, tenth anniversary, T-shirts made in 100% cotton and with a full front triangle motif in red and black on white, still available. Children, all sizes @ £2.50. Adults, small, medium, large and extra large @ £3.75. Add 50p for postage. Orders to:

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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.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to:
25, COMMON LANE,
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