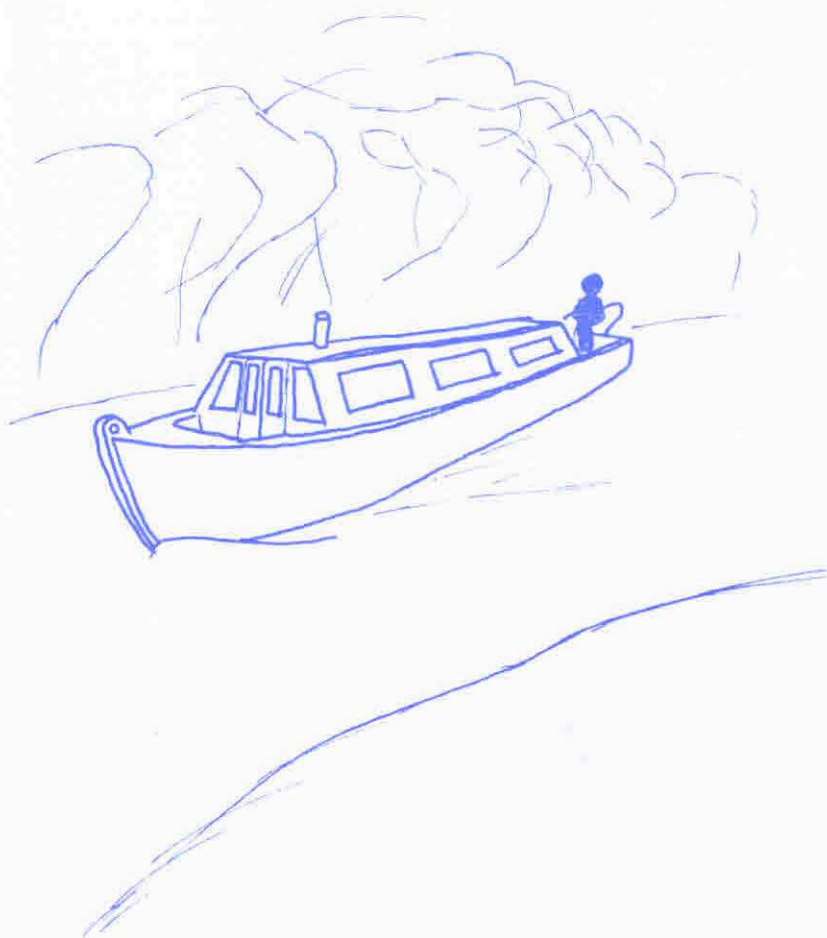


EDUCATION

OTHERWISE



NEWSLETTER NO.49 October 86

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(The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Editor, or of Education Otherwise, as a whole)

Editor for the December issue :-

David and Julia Cox,
16, Poulton,
Bradford-on-Avon
BA 15 1EA

Tel: 02216 6074

Deadline:- November 1st 1986

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.

Well, here we are. It's the Andrew family's turn to edit the newsletter so I'd better tell you something about us. We are John and Joan, (Dad and Mum), John (11), Emma (10) and Paul (4). We have been home-schooling for 3½ years and we live on a canal boat, (Kishti).

When we first started 'learning at home' we fell into the trap that is so easy to fall into, trying to make home a carbon copy of the school system with a timetable and a certain amount of time for each subject. That was no good. That was part of what we were trying to leave behind. So now we learn about things when the interest arises and spend as little time, or as much, as we feel like on a particular subject. We do spend a fair amount of time on the '3 R's', partly because we think they are important and partly because the children enjoy them. Reading is no problem, (All the family love books and stopping them from reading would present more of a problem than encouraging it.), and the other two are no problem either, thanks to excellent books by Ginn publishers. The main thing we want our children to learn is how to learn things for themselves, how to discover the wealth of knowledge and experience that this world has for them.

Our first Inspector was very hostile. He was a horrible little man, (in our opinion), who said things like, "My own children went right through the school system and got 'O' and 'A' levels and it never did them any harm.", and who obviously had no time for people who 'thought they knew better.' It was hard not to be affected by him and at times we found ourselves trying to get the children to produce the kind of results he wanted, but we soon found that the best way to deal with him was to overwhelm him with piles of writing and drawings when he visited and to draw up a timetable of everything we'd done purely for his benefit, so that a walk became 'a nature walk', writing letters became 'English' and finding out about the canals 'History' or 'Nature Study' and so on.

Anyway, he was soon moved 'sideways' so he wasn't a problem for too long. The Education Welfare Officer was totally different and she wrote good reports on us. Of course Inspectors are no worry to us now because we are constantly on the move. (We've been on a boat for 9 months) It certainly is good being able to relax and 'do our own thing' without the Inspector's visit always in the back of our minds.

There is a lot more I could say, but I'd better set a good example as editor and keep it short. I have enjoyed editing the newsletter and particularly reading about people's experiences of home-schooling. I always look forward to Christopher Shute's articles and letters like the one from Jill Greig. Like the previous editor I don't think much to 'Education Through the Press', and some of the letters positively got up my nose, but the latter are good to put in because they prompt lots of interesting replies in subsequent newsletters. The only regret I have in editing the newsletter is that I haven't got reading it to look forward to!

Joan Andrew
50 Broad Park Road
Coventry CV2 1DD

The Remedial Trap - Christopher Shute

You may remember the moment in George Orwell's "1984" when O'Brien, the State torturer, tells the dissident, Winston Smith, that the new commandment of totalitarianism is not "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" but "Thou art".

I saw something like this idea being worked out in my own school. A lad of thirteen arrived at the school from Jamaica and the professionals got to work finding out what he could do. The job didn't take long, it appears. The Remedial Department spent about ten minutes with him and confidently wrote him down as almost illiterate and more or less untouched by the school process. With his broad Jamaican accent and creolised English Christopher seemed a classic case of stupidity compounded by a 'poor background.'

Fortunately his teacher was a fiery West Indian. She did not accept the Head of Department's diagnosis of the boy's problems. She thought his difficulty was nothing much to do with intelligence but very closely connected with the fact that his class in Jamaica contained 46 pupils and his language, though based on a form of English, was full of special words and structures. She fought for the right to treat him as a pupil who needed orientation rather than 'treatment'.

The result of this conflict was a slanging-match and a lot of bad blood. Professionals do not generally like to be told that their judgement is faulty; Shute's law operates, which says that in any argument between two teachers the one with the higher salary expects to win

I was intrigued by all this sound and fury, so, in a free period I sought out the new boy and did my own bit of amateur diagnosis. He was painfully polite and conscientious, so I had no difficulty in getting him to try reading a simple book. It was a rather undemanding story about a comic sailor and his family having adventures in their little boat. Sure enough, he found it desperately hard. The trouble was that the text was in a language which was foreign, at least to the extent that Portuguese is foreign to a Spaniard. Many of the words were simply words which he would not say at home in Kingston, so he could not read them easily at school.

I told him, as I always do in these situations, that there was nothing wrong with him at all, and that he was just as intelligent as me (which may not be saying much!). He found reading hard for the same reasons as anyone finds a new language taxing. I told him to leave out any word he didn't know, and see if the rest of the sentence - the part he did understand - gave him any clues. It was important for him to go ahead, to enjoy the story even if he did not know every word. I managed to convince him that it was alright to miss out words, and soon he was reading fairly fluently, and correcting many of his slips by himself. He stumbled over some words and left out others, but he did not seem to be embarrassed. Often the word he did not read correctly was one which he had never met before. He did not know, for instance, what a picnic was, and he had never seen a lifebelt. Both are words which English people know well and naturally expect others to grasp easily. If you think the lad was 'stupid'

for not knowing these words, imagine for a moment that you are an English kid pitched into a Jamaican school and asked to understand a sentence like 'Me a go back a yaard fi nyam jackfruit.' He worked through the story with great concentration, clambering over the stilted reading scheme English like a runaway moon buggy, and he finished the book.

His teacher, the West Indian lady, was watching, approvingly. When I told him that it did not matter if he left out words which he couldn't read, she said, ironically, "What an unteacherly thing to say!" "Too right!" I replied. For both of us it was important to get the boy reading as well as he could, and the Devil take the traditionalists.

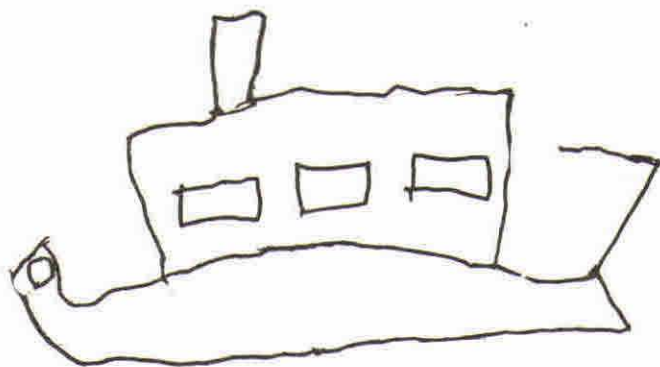
I had not thought much before this about 'Remedial' teaching. Now I am beginning to see that 'Remediality' (or whatever you call it) is as much a nonsense as anything else that a school sets out to cope with. A child who cannot do something the school thinks he 'ought' to be capable of can be seen in different ways. Either he is a worthwhile, intelligent person who finds himself without some skill which happens to be important in his present situation, or he is a pathetic little mental case, needing treatment by a highly qualified 'specialist'. In schools it tends to be the latter. The very word 'Remedial' suggests to me that schools look upon children with reading or writing problems as if they were ill. This dispenses the schools from thinking seriously about their pupils' real abilities, or the cultural and social reason why they are 'remedial'. The school's job is to 'treat' the pupils, and theirs is to be 'treated'.

The result of all this is that schools tend to adjust their pupils so that they play the role assigned to them. If they are "remedial" they are; necessarily, defective. Teachers' training predisposes them to think that if their pupils are not good at reading and writing it is because they are backward in the more general sense. Therefore they have to be treated as if they were more irresponsible and less perceptive than their "normal" schoolmates. After a while they tend to become what they have been told they are, thus proving the accuracy of the original diagnosis and the professionalism of the teachers who made it.

There is only one common exception to this rule. Teachers are generally happy to accept that a card-carrying foreigner, though unable to speak English well, has a worthwhile language of his own. This means that, even though he comes in the category "remedial" he is not, necessarily, a mental wreck. Christopher, however, was not able to claim that his language was "foreign". His Jamaican patois was just "bad English". His future looked bleak. There was no question of letting him speak his own language, read it, write it, and learn to feel its spirit working in him. He had to forget it, cleanse himself of it, and learn the new way. Until then he would just be a rather stupid, unreliable, black boy who was lucky to have the privilege of being educated in the mother tongue. I can predict with confidence that in a few years he will become what the school has decided he is.

The power of schools to define their pupils' intellectual and social standing by reference to irrelevant standards of attainment is well known. Unfortunately, many parents also think of it as a good thing. I hope we never have to pay the price of our complacency.

Our
Boat



by Paul Andrew
(4)

Dear EO

Help!

Dear EO,

I hope that this reaches you in time for publication, as we are now under pressure.

HELP! Can anyone let us know how they dealt with LEA regarding late readers.

Yours hopefully,

Jill Gillings.

Seacrest
Clay Head
Baldrine
Isle of Man.

(Editor's note: Sorry, Jill, you missed the August issue. Anyone with help needs to be quick about it, please.)

The Pioneer Health Centre

I'd like to share with you information I've received about what The Pioneer Health Centre and Jean Liedloff are working on.

Mr Allan Pepper, chairman of the Committee for the Pioneer Health Centre, recently wrote, in reply to my enquiry that, "Yes, there is a movement underway to begin an undertaking similar to that of the Centre at Peckham. We have been concerned with this for several years but with little material achievement, although we have discovered many people here and in North America who have a profound interest in the original project, in its contribution to human biology, and in its implications for today."

The address for the Committee is 7 - 9 St. Bride Street, London EC4. Also, there are now available in print several books about the Pioneer Health Centre, for example The Peckham Experiment. In case anyone at EO has wanted to read these books, as I did, having read about them in John Holt's writings, they and further information can be obtained from Dr. James Witchalls, Maddox Farm, Little Bookham St., Surrey. I was delighted to see that they also include on their list of books available, John's Instead of Education, where in the appendix, he included 13 pages of direct quotes from the 'Peckham Experiment'. Alison Stallibra's The Self-Respecting Child is also on the list, as she herself actually participated in the original Health Centre and many of the principles of human unfoldment which she discusses in her book she was first able to observe at the Centre. She is also a member of the Committee.

Jean Liedloff's book has recently been re-published by Penguin. I wrote to her in December of last year asking whether there were any kind of network or community of people interested in living continuum principles. She wrote back that she will be "making a worldwide list of people interested in making the Continuum Concept part of their lives." I believe she put an announcement about it in the new Penguin edition.

She will also be publishing a newsletter with the subscription price of 10 dollars for 4 issues. (I don't know the amount in pounds)

Lauren McElroy
3543 E. Bellevue
Tucson AZ 85716

Jason Adams, 14 The Grove
Wednesfield, Wolverhampton
WV11 1RW

Dear Newsletter,

I would like
a pen-pal. I'm nearly 10 and
educated at home. — I like
building things - models, toys, etc from
wood and kits. I like calligraphy
and art too, as well as computers.
We have a Spectrum 48k.

Thank you
— Jason.

Letting the Child Decide

Hooray! At last someone, (Juan Campos, August EO Mag.) seems to be expressing so well the increasing unease I've been feeling over the last few issues of the EO magazine.

So many letters and articles seem to come from anxious parents who try to copy the school-type environment by pushing lots of 'educational' material and activities at their children. The anxiety shines through their letters and I wonder how much of this anxiety to 'achieve' certain 'standards' affects the children these parents so much want to help. Whose 'standards' are they anyway? How should we EOers gauge progress? Not at all say I.

In my experience with Daniel, now 6, who has never been to school, the more anxious I became about the "Can he read/count/ rub his tummy while patting his head yet" type questions from 'friends' the less he was interested. After much worry on my part I decided that no formal teaching was necessary and we quickly relaxed into a lovely way of life. As much as possible now I just answer questions simply, avoiding the trap of grabbing at subjects to force the issue and I do not try to prolong his interest in any way. If he's interested beyond the initial question he soon lets me know, and there is absolutely no point in trying to tell him more if he's not interested.

I have recently been appalled at an advert appearing in some magazines encouraging "a test for two year olds" that some other members may have noticed. It implies that two year olds should be reading by that age, similar to that espoused by Glen Doman, which to me is awful. Children have a whole lifetime to learn, and if, as the experts say, a child learns most up to the age of five, surely the most important things to learn are the life skills of relating to other people, caring, and generally allowing the child's personality and character to develop as freely as possible. This to me must include trusting the child's naturally inquisitive mind to learn the things it needs at the time.

Having said all that, I must confess that, Daniel has decided to go to school! Much against my wishes, but it's his choice in which I will support him. Perhaps after a while he will tire of it as most children seem to after the initial excitement of the first few terms wears off. Perhaps it was my failure to stimulate him enough, and that has been difficult during a house move, separation from my husband and consequent struggle to survive the loneliness that these events have brought into my life. However, when I listen to my feelings instead of to my guilt and fear, I know I've done my best, and that rushing him around from one event to another, or trying to 'teach' him wouldn't have been good for either of us. He seems to me to be at roughly the same stage as others of his age who go to school, and benefitted enormously from the freedom to be at home just as long as he chose. For the moment he has chosen to go to school in September: he may subsequently choose to leave again, but the important thing is that it's his choice entirely.

Finally, I must say how, in the past, I've been heartened and helped by the EO newsletter coming regularly to let me know I'm not the only "crazy" person in the world trying to counteract the State Education System which so subtly incorporates violence, sexism and racism as a norm. I just hope that the beautiful person that Daniel has become will survive his dose of school.

Jill Greig
2 Oldborough Cottages
Morchard Bishop
Crediton, Devon.

The Magical Child

I am interested to know of any EO members who have read 'The Magical Child' by Joseph Chilton Pearce, and have put any of its ideas into practice. For anyone who has not read it, it is a very far reaching book with a lot of fascinating ideas. He says that there is a biological plan which first provides that the child remain squarely rooted to the mother while exploring and structuring a knowledge of the earth. Then from 7 - 11 the child structures a knowledge of its personal power in the world by interacting with the physical body of the earth. Learning to physically survive on the earth leads to a bond with the earth, and an awareness of being responsible for his/her survival. As it is, we generally have children in school. Chilton Pearce says, 'For the newly born individual system, this is the equivalent of violent birth, and the results are pretty much a repetition of that earlier trauma - brain damage, shock, intellectual crippling, and an overall depression that becomes permanent ..' He says that children at this time have a drive to learn about survival and instead are given anxiety about survival which is inherent in our culture. They are given to believe that if they fit in with the culture they will be protected, but they realise this is patently untrue, yet they have no alternative means of survival in any other way. They come to live in a world built world, and social consensus begins to crowd out a criterion of balance within.

This is a very inadequate, partial account of the book, and I would really recommend that everyone read it, as there are many more exciting ideas there. It gives such a wonderful picture of how a 'magical child' could turn into a magical adult if allowed to. Apparently Joseph Chilton Pearce has written a new book to be out next Spring.

On an entirely different note - I wonder if anyone can lend or sell me 'The Pictogram System, Sets 1 and 2, by Lyn Wendon.

I would also like to hear from anyone with children of 5 and up who would like to meet us (Justin aged 5 and I) for the day, more or less anywhere, and show us the sights of their particular area. We now have a motor caravan and intend to travel as part of the education.

Sue Petszajt
The Old Squash Court
Bayham Abbey
Lamberhurst
Kent TN3 8EG

P.S. I would like to offer our land for camping. Unfortunately we are not allowed caravans or camper vans. We have a quite secluded upper garden with trees around and a large wooden building where children can play. Neighbours are fairly touchy, so we could probably only have a couple of tents. Water could be made available.

Tues. October 14th:- Natural History Museum, Cromwell Rd. (Meet 11am Kensington Tube)

Tues. November 11th. London Planetarium. (Meet 11am. Baker Street)

Tues. December 9th. Commonwealth Institute. (Meet 11am. High Street, Kensington Tube)

Tues. January 13th. Geological Museum, Exhibition Rd. (Meet 11am. S. Kensington Tube)

any queries contact:- Sue and Stefan Petszajt, as above.

Monkton Wyld

Dear friends,

I was rather perturbed to learn that so many EO members and other deschoolers had attended a "De-Schooling Week" at Monkton Wyld Court in March.

Since there are many single mothers like myself in EO, I feel I must draw your attention to Monkton Wyld's policy of excluding single mothers.

I and my children (8 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years) have applied 3 times to join Monkton Wyld. I have been rejected each time because my "commitments" (in their opinion) would mean that I wouldn't be contributing enough to them. All their members are either exclusive couples or single people (usually male); the latter are, more often than not, temporary 'volunteers', and all permanent members are indeed nuclear families.

I was amazed at Monkton Wyld's attitude - particularly as I am a homoeopath and they would have me at their disposal. (Fees are usually £12 an hour). I must point out that I am not paranoiac - at least 2 other single mothers have had similar experiences. One woman received a letter from M.W. saying that they do not see sexism as an issue!! (!!)

Whatever M.W.'s real reasons for rejecting single mothers (sexual jealousy, insecurity, hypocrisy ?) you might like to know that I am starting a new community and growth centre, where single mothers (and fathers, aunts, uncles, etc.) and children will be welcome. The emphasis will be on personal growth and healing, and education free from sexism and gender stereotypes.

I am trying to raise money to buy a property in Wales to start this venture off. Anyone interested should contact me.

Love and light,

Dyana
11a Bridge Avenue
London W6 9JA

Return to U.S.

We have appreciated the newsletter and other information EO has sent this year while we have been living in England.

Our family is now returning to the States where we will continue teaching our 6 year old and 13 year old. Our daughter, 16, will return to school where she hopes she can put into practice values she has acquired while being home schooled in your lovely environment. We all feel we're better people as a result of all we've learned this year in England.

Any further correspondence should be sent to 2145 Brackenshire Circle
Jackson
Mississippi 39211
U.S.A.

Thank-you again.

Sincerely,

Mrs R. Barry Vickery.

One More View of Steiner

In your June issue you printed an anonymous letter entitled 'Another View of Steiner'. Your readers might bear in mind two things.

First, quoting from Steiner's 'Lectures to the Workmen at the Goetheanum' out of context is invariably misleading. To gain a more balanced view in this instance one should add that, not only is blond or fair hair related to intelligence (not in individual people but as a characteristic of the human race as a whole) but also black or dark hair is related to human will-power and brown or red hair to rich feeling life. Since Steiner schools have holistic aims, as your correspondent rightly says, the development of will and feeling are regarded by them just as important as the development of intelligence. Indeed, the whole trouble with today's world is that intelligence is given far too great a priority over the other two.

Secondly, your correspondent has an extremely biased view about Hermann Grimm, inferring political motives to his writing of fairy tales. Brief reference to the many good commentaries by historians on Grimm's sources, (he was a collector, not a story maker), would soon dispel that idea. Steiner schools, however, do not hold a special brief for Grimm. Fairy stories from lands all over the world, (Celtic, Japanese, African etc.), are told to 5, 6 and 7 year olds. Many of Grimm's tales are not considered suitable for children under 6, but juicy stories like Red Riding Hood being gobbled up, (She wasn't a Communist, by the way.), and the Wolf's stomach being attacked by scissors to release her do not evoke in children the horror which adult intellectuals may experience. Children feel an entirely different response to fairy tale imagery and it is enriched when the story teller knows something about the real spiritual sources which first created these images. But that would need an article to explain.

Ron Jarman
(for the Steiner Schools Fellowship)
The Hollies
Butterrow West
Stroud
Glos.



Replies to Mr Millen

Dear Editor,

If Colin Millen became more involved in the day-to-day running of EO he would be aware of the great lengths its worker-members go to in order to reach and help all people. Lack of money and membership are, of course, very limiting factors at the moment. And it isn't much fun to put yourself forward as an EO representative and address an audience where the majority don't like what they hear and would cheerfully tar and feather you: yes, even the schoolchildren.

Nevertheless, may I reassure Colin that the enquiries coming in to central address come from all social classes despite being top heavy with middle-class professionals. The Citizens Advice Bureaus are very good at pointing the 'less enlightened' our way.

What is more, I don't see any evidence to show that the state system is non-elitist. Quite the opposite in fact. The universities and choice jobs aren't filled by council house kids are they?

Janet Everdell,
Enquiries Secretary,
25 Common Lane,
Hemingford Abbots,
Cams. PE18 9AN.

Dear Sir,

If Mr Millen has ever tried to persuade a wild bird out of the only open place in a large window, he may appreciate how hard it is to persuade others to accept our idea of salvation

Most children go to school for one of three reasons. Firstly, the children want to go for various reasons.

Secondly, parents believe in school as it is now practiced, and if they have their doubts, by and large they would like to see it more (not less) chalk-and-talk; highly directed learning with little or no emphasis on self motivation or fun. Liberalism is deeply unpopular. Most people believe children will learn nothing, and certainly nothing academic unless bullied. They still see the expert teacher as passing on to the children powerful, almost magic, gifts which will bring health and wealth. Unemployment is changing this, but it dies hard. E.O. is unlikely to change it overnight

Thirdly, schools provide an excellent baby-sitting service. Kids who don't go to school may be easier to live with, so maybe we value this less, but many of us often wish that just for a morning we could get on with our own concerns, without the children there.

I would not have thought that many people were "unable" to help their kids escape school. Income is not a barrier to home education... in common with many home educating families we are always on or below the Social Security levels of income, and we manage. Of course many parents are lacking in self confidence about their own level of education, and their ability to help their children learn. We as an organisation should, as we often do, point out that to help people learn you do not have to be an all-knowing teacher, just somebody who knows where to go to ask. Also, most E.O.ers would be only too happy to offer assistance in areas where other parents would appreciate help.

This is not to deny that there are families so deeply in trouble that their undertaking any additional burden is unthinkable, but they are not a majority. To imagine that the "working-class" are a pitiful bunch of inadequates is as insulting as it is laughable.

Mrs Rosemary Hannah, Croc-an-Raer House
Port Bannatyne, Isle of Bute PA20 0QT

I felt I just had to write in response to Colin Millen's letter, 'Middle Class Elite'. I don't know if Mr Millen has ever attended an EO meeting (local or national) or even has any contact with other EO mebers, but if not I suggest he does so before making such strong statements in future.

The main reason most members do not "tell the world more vociferously" that their children do not go to school is the simple fact that they are so involved in doing what they believe. There can be no more committed way to spread the word.

I argue the claim that members are predominatly middle-class and well educated. Members come from all walks of life, including those with no formal qualifications, (including ourselves), unwaged families and single parents - all educating their children at home and managing very well.

I would hardly consider myself privileged to educate my children at home. However, I am more than happy to forfeit material incentives, an income and time of my own to do so. This option is available to all people. Anyone, regardless of status, financial position and lack of formal qualifications can educate their children at home - it's a case of putting your priorities in order and determination.

Sandie Cottee
17 South View Road
Rettendon Common
Chelmsford
Essex CM3 8DX

* * * * *

FOREST FIRE by John Andrew (11)

It crackles with a burning flame
Roaring on its way
Crashing trees down as it goes
Burning them away.

The water goes sshh!! by and by
Putting out the flames
The men work hard and fight with it
They have no time for games.

It doesn't make a sound at all
When it has died away
The smoke makes whirly patterns
And all is black and grey.

No grass, no leaves, no trees are left.
No birds fly past, no creatures run,
No people go a walking now.
The fire's work is done.



A VIEW OF E.O.

I had to think about it before I re-paid my £10. I am desperately 'hard up' and really rather dissatisfied with EO. I am a self-employed private tutor and would dearly like to put an advertisement in your magazine - offering reduced rates to EO members but, when I did have some potential EO pupils last year who were in deep trouble with Suffolk LEA, I got no help at all. I was threatened by Suffolk LEA officials with going to court on a charge of aiding and abetting an illegal act and was advised to write immediate letters of withdrawal from tuition with the family. As no-one wanted to help me if I complied. My money mainly comes from 'middle-class' parents who wish their children to sit entrance examinations etc., and was not enthusiastic about having bad publicity involving parents in trouble with the law.

I assure you that I uphold the right of parents to educate their ~~and~~ children as I was myself but I will not get involved with parents who are 1) Over protective, 2) Use their children as cheap labour, 3) Regard education as a waste of time, 4) Are 'Left-Wing' trendies who want their kids raised in Karl Marx's doctrines, 5) Too lazy and disorganised to get their children prepared for school, 6) The type of parents who are so arrogant that they believe that they are better teachers than professional teachers.

May I add to number 6 that in my long experience as a schoolteacher and a private tutor a child needs a teacher from outside his family group e.g. priest, retired teacher, graduate, doctor etc. A mother teaching children over the age of 11 tends to become possessive and the children are inclined to become over-dependant, immature and sometimes "spoilt".

I believe in Rousseau's methods with Emile, brought up to date. I think most children are better at school, private or LEA, but some children are more suited to home tuition. In the latter case this should be taken seriously with an eye on external examinations. If the family live on a deserted island, then by all means concentrate on woodcarving, farming, embroidery and social skills, but if they live in 20th Century Britain I feel it is irresponsible and grossly unfair to deprive children of their right to be accepted into this examination orientated society. Just look at the Job Centre vacancy cards to prove my point.

I would be delighted to teach, tutor, coach, augment any child aged 7 to 18 years in History, R.E., Geography, English, Basic Maths, Human Biology, Sociology, Politics, Art. I am an active member of the English Civil War Society and the 'Sealed Knot' and can talk about 17th Century life 'until the cows come home'.

So please use me to help EO people. I do not want to get involved with the ~~Law~~ again. Why are there no meetings locally? No little chat sessions over a cup of coffee - nothing at all. I am often asked about EO. Please help me to help serious EO families.

David Griffiths, Teacher's
cert., ACP, BA degree, BA(Hons) 2nd
35 Nat Flatman Street,
Newmarket,
Suffolk.

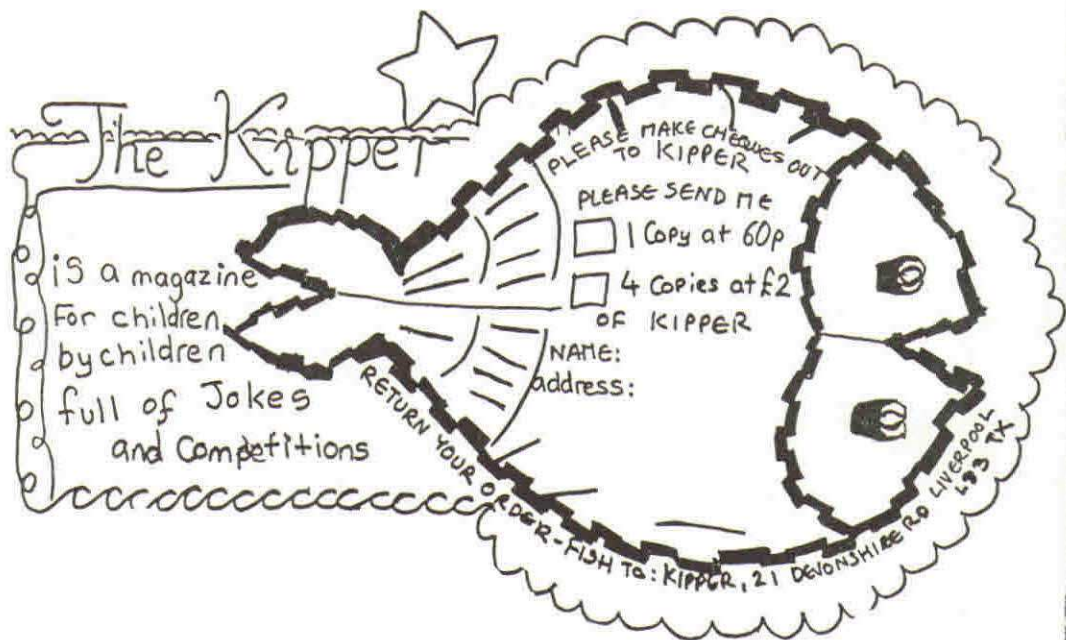
Very long sum from Benno White Lion

34354969529567290514407098245309817121231659

4 465239047204720452165928932678904456789

Answer in December magazine!

NB. A solution is not something we arrive at but something we've always known which we need to rediscover!



BOOK

REVIEWS

The Gnome Factory and Other Stories:- James Reeves, published by Puffin (£2.50) Illustrated by Edward Ardizzone.

This is my idea of a perfect old fashioned nursery collection. James Reeves is a master craftsman and his stories, whether his own creations or old favorites re-told, are delightfully fresh and imaginative. As ever Ardizzone captures their magical charm in his pictures.

The Wreck of the Zephyr:- Written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg, Picture Puffin (£1.75)

A book with the mystery of the Flying Dutchman about it, this story of a boat that glides through the air has beautiful pictures too.

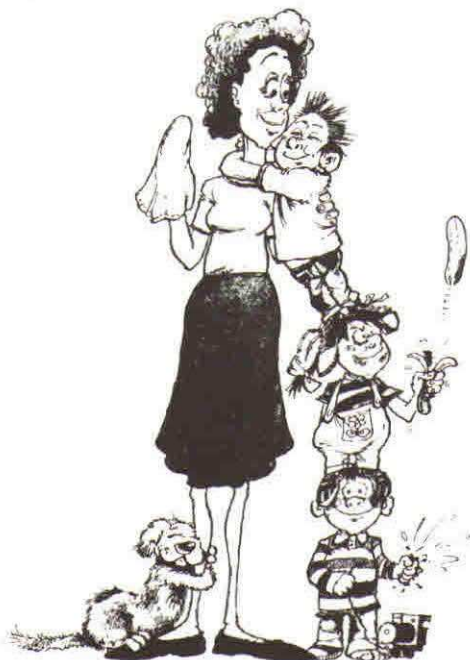
Gargling with Jelly:- Brian Patten published by Puffin (£1.50)

Comic book illustrations by David Mostyn accompany the zany verses in this amusing collection, but some of the poems are serious and even sad.

Illustration from
"Gargling with Jelly"

Squeezes

We love to squeeze bananas.
We love to squeeze ripe plums.
And when they are feeling sad
We love to squeeze our mums.



The Dragon With Red Eyes:-Astrid Lingren, published by Methmen (£5.95 hardback)

A delightfully whimsical story, beautifully illustrated by Ilon Wikland, of a small green dragon born alongside ten piglets to the family sow. There is something of Hans Christian Anderson in the telling, a Northern sadness that makes the tale memorable.

Getting on With Writing Books 1, 2 & 3

(99p each)

Getting On With Adding and Taking Away

Getting On With Multiplying/Dividing

Michael Holt & Ronald Ridout, published by Belitha Press/Collins Educational

Bright useful workbooks for those who like to practice such skills. They are meant to be self-guided, but I think parental involvement more than doubles the pleasure and learning.

You Start Biology by Chris James and Kevin Wall, published by Hodder & Stoughton (£3.95)

A really clear introduction to the subject, divided into seven chapters that contain, not only plenty of well illustrated information about a topic, but also suggestions for experiments and investigations and, finally, some questions to set you thinking.

The New Observer's Book of Castles by Brian K. Davison published by Warne (£2.95)

This is an attractive and useful little paperback handbook full of fascinating details and relevant facts. There are plenty of illustrations and an interesting history of British Castles, how and why they were built. Warne are re-issuing several Observer's Guides in the new paperback series - Pond Life, Pets, Aircraft, etc. All very handy for the enthusiast.

3 BOOKS REVIEWED BY ELIZA HOLLAND

Having a Picnic by Sarah Garland.

- 1** Sarah Garland has made a simple picnic in the park into a lovely story for children to listen to. The pictures are bright and colourful and there is lots to talk about.

Forget-Me-Not by Paul Rogers.

- 2** Sidney is a forgetful lion. He goes on holiday and carefully makes a list of everything he will need. On the way he loses most of his things. Children will enjoy looking for the things he has lost and where he lost them.

Have You Seen My Duckling? by Nancy Tafuri.

- 3** The title is self-explanatory. In each big, clear picture the child is invited to look for the naughty duckling who is hiding from its mother.

Introducing Geography by Patrick Wiegand, published by the BBC (£4.95)

Generated by the school radio series of the same name, this fascinating book introduces geography and the environment in very positive fashion. Lots of bright illustrations as well as ideas for projects and activities.

French Tapes

Mrs Beuret tells me that her excellent cassettes have now gone up in price to £5.99 each. However, the four titles are still excellent value and I recommend them highly.

"Tu as in Tuna Fish"
"An English Child in France"
"Make Sentences in French I & II."

The last two now have notes in proper booklet form. They are available direct from

Mrs H.J. Beuret
72 Manor Farm Road
Bitterne Park
Southampton.

Puffin Classics

Look out for these handsome, clearly printed paperback editions of such well known stories as Rip Van Winkle and The Hounds of the Baskervilles. A good foundation for a home library.

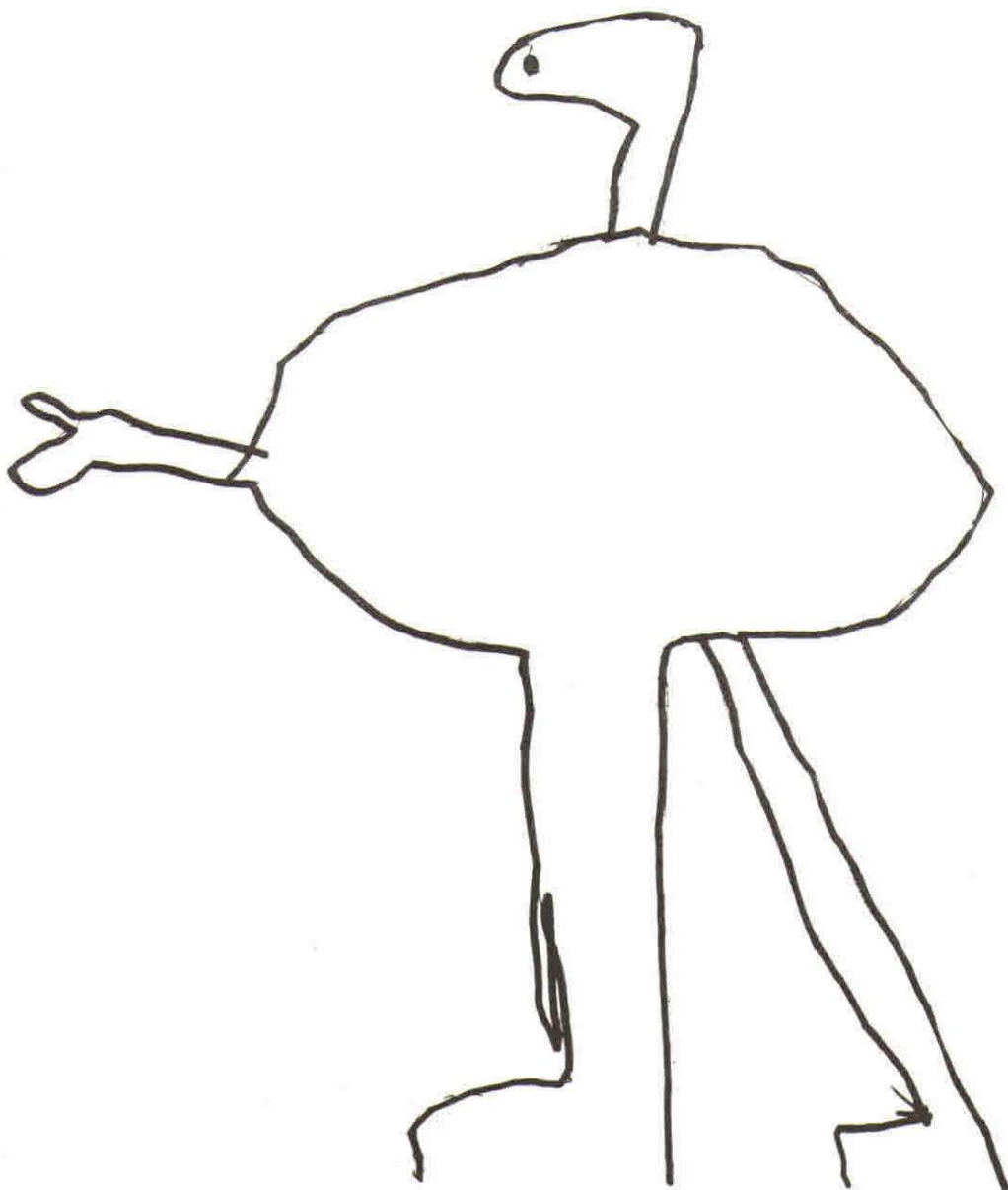
101 Things to do With a Baby by Jan Ormerod published by Kestrel Books. (£5.95) (hardback)

This book is a delight! A lovely picture book for any child who loves babies. The pictures are beautiful and Paul (4) was enthralled. A must for any small child with a new brother or sister (or one on the way)
Joan Andrew.

REVIEWS

Please send reviews of any books which you have read to the Editor, or write to Helen Holland requesting a copy of any new book coming out. Helen will try to obtain the book for you, but PLEASE WRITE A REVIEW if you receive such a book.





**Monster
by Paul**

NOTICES

New Address

Sue & Andy Jackson
(Durham Co-ordinators & Trustees
of the Family Support Fund)
now live at:-
Pringle House
Farm Cottage
New Brancepeth
Durham DH7 7HZ

MOVING CO-ORDINATORS

Sandie & Brian Cottee
(Essex Co-ordinators)
have moved to:-
17 South View Road
Rettendon Common
Chelmsford
Essex CM2

HOME SCHOOLERS VISIT EXCHANGE

New Secretary Wanted

This idea is still quietly chuntering away and I get the occasional letter offering or requesting hospitality from EO members in Britain (and Europe) and Growing Without Schooling readers in North America. The work involved of putting people in touch with each other takes up very little time, but I should like to pass it on as I feel I have done my share. If you are interested please write to me -

Helen Holland
Inholmes Farm
Plumpton Green
Sussex BN7 3DE

Teach Your Own

The new edition of 'Teach Your Own', the why to do it book by John Holt, is now available from Bruce & Christine Wallace, price now £3.85 p&p paid. (see back page for address)

Supplement

Christine Wallace will be doing a supplement on Reading & Writing for the December Newsletter. All contributions for this to:-

Christine Wallace
25 Diabaig,
Achnasheen
Ross-shire IV22 2HE



Sorry!

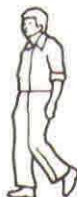
Apologies to Joan and to members for inserting the wrong address of the editor for this issue. Joan has done her best to produce this newsletter, despite contributions having been sent to her old address. Thank-you Joan.

Jean Shepherd.

February's Newsletter

Editor for February's Newsletter:-

Lois Cook
34 Beacon Road
Herne Bay
Kent CT6 6DS



EDUCATING ARCHIE BY SEB



SCIENCE IN THE HOME

Secondary level science teaching

Many parents remembering their own school days may feel daunted by the prospect of teaching their own children 'science' at home. Most of us cannot provide purpose-built laboratories, but there is still much we can do with the facilities available in the average home.

The science teaching in schools is undergoing an upheaval of its own. There is a move towards 'balanced science' rather than teaching the individual sciences. The advent of the GCSE will increase the incentive to make these changes. It is hoped to be able to give children more say in their curriculum. This should make it easier for the children to relate 'science' to their own lives.

These changes have implications for parents educating their children at home. Many parents are concerned that their children should receive an education which will leave them with an academic standard comparable to that attained by school-educated children. In such cases it is useful for parents to keep abreast of the changes in the educational system.

It should not be forgotten though, that if the children educated at home receive no specific 'science' education, but remain keen to learn they can easily 'catch up' with what they have missed if they wish to.

GCSE Textbooks

Parents may like to have a look at some of these to see the direction science education is taking. They may also provide new ideas for parents who have run out of them.

PHYSICS

Physics: A course for GCSE by ROWELL and HERBERT. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

A textbook which covers all the GCSE examining group syllabuses.

GCSE Physics by TOM DUNCAN. John Murray, 1986.

A textbook which claims to be in accord with the aims, assessment objectives and core content of the national criteria for GCSE.

BIOLOGY

Biology: A course for GCSE by GEOFF JONES and MARY JONES. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

A textbook including sections on social biology, humans and their environment and the living environment.

GCSE Biology by D.G MACKEAN. John Murray, 1986.

A textbook written to meet syllabus requirements for all GCSE boards.

CHEMISTRY

Moles: A survival guide for the GCSE chemistry. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

A book containing self-assessment, worked examples and answers.

EXPERIMENTS

Micro-Engine Boat

This experiment demonstrates how powerful the surface tension on water is.

Fill a bowl with warm water and leave it for a minute to settle. Meanwhile cut the head off a clean match and scrape a small blob of soap on to one end. When the water has settled, place the match on the surface and watch it propel itself across the bowl.

As the soap breaks the surface tension of the water it displaces the match. By increasing the temperature of the water the match can be made to run faster, this is because the soap dissolves quickly.

Try the experiment again, but before launching the match sprinkle a little ground pepper onto the water surface. Now when the match is placed in the water the surface tension can be observed moving the match along as it breaks.

Spinning Earth Experiment

We all know that the earth revolves (rather than being stationary and the sun moving around the earth), but early scientists had difficulty proving this fact. Here is a simple experiment to observe the revolving earth phenomenon.

Fill a large clean glass almost to the top with cold water and let it stand on a solid stationary surface for at least five minutes. Obtain a piece of stiff paper or card, large enough to cover the glass. Cut a slot in the paper or card about 5 mm by 25 mm. Place the card on top of the glass with the slot over the water. Sprinkle ground pepper over the slot so that a line of pepper lands on the surface of the water. Leave the card or paper on top of the glass to stop draughts blowing the paper. After about ten minutes observe the movement of the pepper on the surface of the water. The pepper should

drift towards the 'west' side of the glass. This is because as the earth revolves from west to east the inertia of the pepper on the water stops it moving at the same rate as the glass.

C.H. Thornton, Dorset

Making a Loudspeaker

Equipment: needle or pin, paper or plastic cup, old record, record player.

Procedure

Fix a pin or needle to the bottom of the cup (i.e. poke the pin through the cup so that the point is poking out of the bottom). Lightly hold the cup so that the needle point is resting on the revolving record. As the needle point runs in the groove of the record and picks up vibrations, the cup will amplify the effect and reproduce the sound like a loudspeaker. This experiment effectively demonstrates how the early record players reproduced music from old '78' recordings.

Keeping a hankie dry under water

Equipment; hankie, cup, bowl of water

Procedure

Put the hankie in the cup and place the cup upside down in the bowl of water. The air is trapped in the upside down cup (because it is lighter than water) and doesn't allow the water to fill the cup so the hankie stays dry.

Early diving bells used this effect when men were lowered to great depths under the water but kept warm and dry.

Jet Propulsion

Equipment; balloon, string, toilet roll, sticky tape.

Procedure

Thread the toilet roll onto the string. Stretch the string across a room. Attach the balloon (uninflated) to the toilet roll with tape. Blow the balloon up then release it so that the air rushes out, the balloon and roll should be propelled along the string.

Primitive Oscilloscope

Equipment; empty tin can, balloon, lamp or sunshine, glue, small piece of mirror, piece of card, sticky tape.

Procedure

Remove both ends of the can and clean it. Stretch the balloon over

one end of the can and secure it with the tape. Glue the small piece of mirror on to the outer side of the ballon. Place the can so that it reflects light (from the lamp or the sun) on to the piece of card. Speak into the can and you will see the light on the card move depending upon the sounds made. By placing the card further away from the can the effect of the modulation is increased.

Early high quality electrical meters used this same technique to magnify the effect of tiny electrical fluctuations. A small sensitive meter moved a small mirror which would cast a light reflection onto a paper scale. As the distance from the mirror to the scale was increased so the sensitivity of the meter would be increased.

KEEPING MINI-BEASTS

We enjoy keeping mini-beasts (current school jargon). Tadpoles are popular, and the pond water we have collected for the tadpoles has revealed lots of goodies: caddis fly larvae in their home-made case of stones, water snails, and great diving beetles which must be removed if you don't want them to eat your tadpoles! Usborne books are a good source of ideas.

Jill Gillings, Isle of Man

USEFUL BOOKS

How to make square eggs and lots of other zany science experiments by Paul Temple and Ralph Levinson. Beaver books, from Hamlyn, paperback.

Experiments with everyday objects by Kevin Goldstein-Jackson. Dragon books from Granada publishing, paperback.

The family scientist by Judith Hann. MacDonald general books. Large format hardback. These books are comprehensive, and contain lots of illustrations, headings covered are the science of: Plants and Animals, Body and Mind, Heat and Cold, The Sky, Physics, Chemistry, Food and Cooking, Light, Sound, Water, and the Atmosphere.

C. Wallace, Ross-Shire

NEXT SUPPLEMENT

The next supplement will be on Reading and Writing. Contributions should be sent to:

C. Wallace,
25 Diabaig,
Achnasheen,
Ross-Shire,
IV22 2HE

The deadline for contributions is 1st November 1986.

education otherwise

E.O. KEEPS EVOLVING Janet Everdell

I went to the January Core-group meeting with the intention of resigning but they weren't going to let me get away with that. My gripe was that I just couldn't handle the many distress telephone calls I was receiving each day. After an hour of trying to reassure a desperately worried parent that the world wouldn't end if his/her school phobic child left school my own nerves would be shattered. A quick count showed I was personally dealing with over 500 calls a year, many of them distress calls and sometimes two or three on the same day. I was a one woman Samaritan on call all day seven days a week.

Core group decided on the following solution:- install our own E.O. telephone line (thus releasing our personal 'phone) and put an answering machine to the E.O. 'phone carrying the necessary telephone numbers for help in different regions of the country. Some members offered their services there and then, others had to be approached after the meeting. The new line (which kept my old number 63130) was installed by early March and a temporary tape put on the answering machine until I worked out a suitable permanent message and the steering committee approved it. However, the machine soon objected to its extra workload and had to go back to the manufacturers for treatment. Two months later it hadn't recovered but persistent enquiries about its state of health brought its rewards in the form of a brand new machine and, to date, no bill.

The new system is now in operation and works as follows:- the caller is asked to send a S.A.E. to Central Address for routine details. Press, T.V. and radio enquiries are directed to Joseph O'Connor. Urgent enquiries are given regional telephone numbers. These gallant members are;

Jennie White North and Scotland
Miryam Bush Wales
Meg Roberson South West
Andy Anderson & Hazel Clawley East and West Midlands
Sandie Cottee East Anglia
Genevieve Bridgeman London
Jude Ashley-Walker South East

Ireland isn't represented as I've never received a call from there but if someone would like to volunteer there's room on the tape. Meanwhile callers are told they may ring any region thus ensuring they get someone in their hour of need.

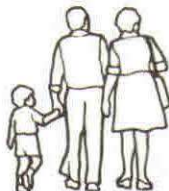
This regional enquiries team is backed up by another gallant band, our specialists who are:-

Special Needs - Sylvia Jeffs
Child Benefit - Lynette Cameron
School Phobia - Patricia Knox
Single Parent Problems - Julie Webb
Secondary Curriculum - Janet Everdell
Legal Problems - Bruce Wallace, Scotland - Simon Grant, Wales - Andy Anderson, Midlands - Anne Wade, London - Alvena Hillier, South West -

I'm now quite satisfied that people needing urgent personal help are still getting it. First they get the reassurance they seek, then they are handed on to the local co-ordinator and if necessary the specialist they need. We have over sixty co-ordinators who are always ready to lend a sympathetic ear, furnish E.O. literature on request and fill in the local colour re; E.O. and the LEA. All these gallant workers have now received up-to-date intro. literature and membership forms.

I now admit to missing the personal involvement but keep my hand in by answering the 'phone if it rings while I'm in the office answering the daily enquiries that come by post (in case anyone thinks I've now got my feet up all the time). These written enquiries can be as heart-rending as the 'phoned ones and serve as a constant reminder to me how essential our organisation is. The stories of mental and physical cruelty that some children are put through in school is a disgrace to our so called civilised society. So do let us keep up the good work and the pressure and let me know if any of you are willing to take on some work, however small. All too often it's the members who go to meetings that come away with yet more work to do.

My new personal number for members enquiries is: 0480 65774 and not as printed in the August newsletter which is now the number for E.O.'s Central Address.



Learning at home

Matthew

I have been home schooled for 2 years. I went to school for 2 years 9 months. I live in Nelson.

I came out of school after getting permission to home school. Mummy and Daddy helped me recover from school. After 3 months I had just about recovered. To begin with I just used school books to write as well as for maths. Then we decided to buy two files for me and my brother, Jack. At that time Jack was 5 and did not have to go to school until he was 6. Jack used his file mainly for pictures, but sometimes he put some writing on the bottom of his pictures. I used my file for pictures, maths and writing. I also had a bit of my file for letters.

In May 85 we moved to Nelson. We used to live in Silverstream near Upper Hutt but we didn't like it as much as Nelson, so after our Granny and Grandpa had visited we moved to Nelson. We stayed in temporary accommodation till we could find a house to live in. Daddy got a job with a computer firm, and he got another job at the Nelson Polytechnic. Now we have some nice desks.

I will now give you some thoughts on home schooling. I think it has improved me very very much. I think that I have learnt about twice as much as I would have at school. I enjoy home schooling very much. It is nice learning at home because you can get straight into your work without being bothered by how much further ahead the other children are. It is also nice being in a home environment rather than a stuffy school classroom. Jack, and I now have a little schoolroom. We are hoping to get a whiteboard or a blackboard. Blackboards are becoming rare in big sizes though. I learn the guitar at the Nelson School of Music. We also have a piano with which Mummy helps me with my guitar. I love having my desk. It's got a big worktop with five drawers. I am writing on it at the moment. Later I will type it out on a computer.

We live just across the road from the Queens Gardens. We live on Hardy Street. I think I have said all I have to say.

Matthew Ayre age 9
348 Hardy St.,
Nelson,
New Zealand.

Emma

My name is Emma Andrew. I am 10 years old. I think learning at home is ace! My favorite subject is Maths. My friends are jealous because they would love to learn at home. I go to Guides and I hope to go to tap dancing soon. My hobby is reading. I read about one book a day. Living on a boat is really great. It is very peaceful and quiet on the canal and you can learn about wild flowers and animals.

If any girls about my age would like to write to me I would be very glad to hear from them and I will write back to them.

Emma Andrew
50 Broad Park Road
Coventry CV2 1DD

The Bartrams

Well, the Inspector has been! It was his second visit, the first one, (Oct. 85) was dreaded and prepared for as much as possible, (arguments and possible questions anticipated, ...). We had only withdrawn Sven then (in June 85), aged 12, and followed EO's suggestions on procedure, scheme of work, etc. He did not seem hostile, so we tried our best to listen to his advice and follow some of it during the next few months.

After Christmas we took Ronnie out of school as well, (he hadn't been happy for a long time, but we wanted to see first how things went with one child before going ahead with two.) Ronnie was then 15 and had been going steadily downhill since we moved to this area 2½ years before. There was no question of him being able to enter for any qualifications, (only 16% were able to even try for GCE O's, I was told repeatedly), the enthusiasm of earlier years had gone, it was just a question of surviving day by day!

All the good advice in the newsletter about adapting to 'life out of school' and recovering from years of frustration came in very useful.

Sven, now a year away from school, has undergone a remarkable transformation. He is now the boy I knew was there all the time, (affectionate, caring, kind and so eager for knowledge.) With Ronnie it has taken months to recover and get the old sparkle back and something vaguely resembling thirst for education!! But gradually things are looking up.

Mr X, the Inspector was pleasant enough, though some of his remarks, ("so you took Ronnie out in the middle of his course" - What course?) we treated lightly. - I tend to take things to heart, but have hardened to criticism just lately! - He drew up a plan with us for Ronnie's possible exam subjects and seemed to be taking on an advisory role rather than just inspecting. We found him helpful and sympathetic. (One of my grievances had always been that neither boy could follow German at school, although most of their relatives, grandma, cousins, etc., live in Central Europe and we visit when we can and keep in touch by letter or 'phone.) He was pleased that we had purchased certain books he had recommended for Sven earlier, that we had made a weather study and a Chronological History Chart as he had suggested. Both boys are also learning to play the piano, which went down well. As he left, he remarked that he was impressed with the wide variety of learning experiences we are providing.

We would like to thank EO and especially the Essex members for their support and friendship (we go to meetings when we can), and also all the NL contributors who wrote about doubts, very hard work - it certainly is! - and being fed up with them all at times, etc. etc. It puts things in perspective. It is impossible to be perfect. Now, when we all get on each other's nerves we 'disperse' for a while and then 'Reassemble.'

Best wishes to you all.

Ron and Linde Bartram,
Ronnie, Sven and Ingrid,
61 Mumford Road,
West Bergholt,
Colchester.

P.S. Has anyone got any experience of teaching 'European Studies' - O level? Or does anyone know of any suitable book to follow? (The Dept. at Sussex Univ. dealing with these resources has closed down, I am told.) Answers greatly appreciated! Thank-you.

JAMES and TAMSIN

My children (James, 10, Tamsin, 8) gave up normal school after Christmas last year and I wrote to you at that time expressing my views on the probably damaging and limiting effect which school had had on them.

After a relatively short period of time elapsing, I am delighted to report that the children have responded most dramatically to their release from the mental and physical restraint of school. I began by providing the children with daily 'lessons' on subjects they were interested in, plus maths and English. This was curtailed by a sudden illness of mine which hospitalised me for two weeks. After my convalescence I decided on a different approach. Formal lessons were dropped, with the exception of one hour per week French conversation with a tutor.

After several weeks, during which the children read literally dozens of books of good literary standard (Nina Bawden, Roald Dahl, Frances Hodgson Burnett, L M Boston etc.) my son (10) suddenly decided to write a story. He sat down at the typewriter and so far, after two weeks of effort, he has produced 14 pages of closely written work. Prior to this his greatest creative effort on paper amounted to one or two paragraphs. What's more, the story is interesting, well constructed, amusing and looks like getting finished! He is contemplating how to write a satisfying ending, realising this is often where books fail.

I am truly amazed by this work. I always felt in my heart he had talent but it had never emerged in any guise at school. He may never be a great author, although to be a writer is now his aim, and the first ambition he has ever had, but this supreme effort on his part has lifted him in everyone's eyes, especially his own. I never thought it would happen to him, although I'd read about it happening to others. His written schoolwork was latterly so bad I had wondered if he were dyslexis.

Whatever other reasons may have contributed to this surprising event, I do strongly feel that leaving school was the major factor. There are still other problems we need to solve but there is certainly more hope for a solution now than before.

Thank-you EO, for helping me decide to deschool my children.

D. Greenwell,
Lympne,
Borough Green Road,
Ightham,
Sevenoaks,
Kent TN15 9HS



INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE

Tel: 0270 664060

Andy and Diane Anderson, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 7JA

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.



News From the Regions

Cornwall

Maggie Swatridge has contacted me to say that she has received a most comprehensive amount of (free) literature from Trinity House and would welcome contact from others interested in joining her and the boys for a visit to local lighthouses.

Best wishes from us all in Cornwall to Eileen Wainwright and Luther who are bound for North Wales and the Rudolph Steiner School at Tremadog.

I am still waiting for the results of the survey questionnaire into "alternative education" which many of our members replied to. Please contact me if you would like a copy.

Unlike some of the LEAs we read about in this magazine, Cornwall has been generally supportive of parents who choose alternative education. It was with pleasure that I learned of Cornwall LEA's application for membership of E.O. earlier this year, followed by their acceptance, as an "associate" member. Let us hope that many more authorities follow Cornwall's lead. Surely any move to improve relationships between parents and LEAs can only benefit the children involved. Peter Cornall, the Senior Inspector of Schools in the County, has indicated that he would be pleased to come along to any meetings we may have in Cornwall should other members feel it would be useful. Unfortunately, we do not hold formal meetings at present but if anyone is interested in such a meeting please do contact me.

Some of our members organised a series of poetry evenings recently and an open evening was held at St. Austell to discuss the possibility of setting up an alternative "school" in that area.

Finally, as my own children reach adulthood, I feel the time has come for me to step down as Co-ordinator for Cornwall and give another member the opportunity to take on this very worthwhile role. Would volunteers please contact me as soon as possible. There is not, at present, a great deal of work involved and I would be happy to support the new Co-ordinator if needed. The only essential is a telephone and expenses are reclaimable. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sylvia Roskilly, Lansdown Cottage, 2 Ventonleague Hill, HAYLE, Cornwall. TR27 4EH
Co-ordinator for Cornwall

North Bucks.

We seem to have had a quieter time of late, although in July several of us spent three enjoyable days at our local Community Workshop building a 'lake', boat and an island. We also had a picnic with members from South Bucks at Stockgrove Park.

We are sad to have said goodbye to several good friends of late, but wish them happiness in their new homes and look forward to visiting them.

Forthcoming events include:-

From September the Community Workshop re-opens.

Sunday October 12th 2pm. Tring Zoological and Natural History Museum.

Friday October 31st Halloween Party.

Wednesday November 5th Bonfire Party.

Friday December 19th Christmas Party.

For times and venues please contact me nearer the time.

Lastly, we hope to be moving shortly. If all goes according to plan, our new address from October will be:-

19 New Road
Castlethorpe
Milton Keynes MK19 7EH

Valerie & James Goman.

Lincolnshire

Since I last wrote we've enjoyed several more meetings in the country and in each other's homes, visiting a nature reserve and wildfowl trust reserve, and a wonderful day on the beach. We're planning outings to a panto and on the Nene Valley Railway around Christmas; if you're interested in either, or both, please contact me by October 15th with the dates that you're not available.

Panto details:- Dick Whittington, Lincoln (Eric Sykes, Jan Hunt, Duncan Mayhew) Dress circle tickets £4.50 each (20% children's discount) if we go after 6th January in the evening. (7pm) Matinees at 2.30pm on Fridays and Saturdays but no discount.

Nene Valley Railway Santa Special (Peterborough)

Gift from Santa plus ride on the steam railway with seasonal refreshments provided. Inclusive fare is £3 (adults and children). Trains running on 6th/7th/13th/14th/20th/21st/22nd/23rd/24th December.

Jan Marshall
Market Deeping 347793

Education Through The Press

Edited by Susan Wainwright with contributions from Ros Normandale, Janice Owen and Sarah Guthrie.

Prof Ron Todd of New York University claims Britain is ten years ahead of the USA in teaching children how to confront complex technological problems in ways that fit them for the jobs market. The examination system here however "makes no sense at all and cannot produce entrepreneurs." (Tel. 28/7/86)

A judge dismissed a claim for compensation against a private school headmaster who allegedly caned a boy so hard he was unable to walk for an hour. Stopp have said that the boy's family will take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. (Guardian 29/7/86)

Mr Hugh Ainsley, Chairman of the Professional Association of Teachers said "We still have many primary school teachers who have not passed 'O' level mathematics. Some of these teachers even admit they find maths boring and prefer to get their lessons out of the way so they can teach something more interesting". (Tel 29/7/86)

A four term school year could be in operation by 1988. The school year would remain the same length but there would be four terms of ten weeks and four holiday periods - two of two weeks, two of four weeks.

Ruth Lawrence who at 14 has completed two degrees at Oxford, is not the only exceptional child in her family. Her sister, Rebecca, 12, holds a scholarship at Chethams School of Music for her brilliance as a pianist. (Tel. 5/7/86)

HRH the Princess Anne said, "I suppose I've never really had any startling ambitions in any direction. Probably total inability to concentrate is my greatest problem it started at school when I wasn't allowed to do the subjects I thought I wanted to do." Radio Times 14/7/86)

Modern Maths may be to blame for Britain's schoolchildren being behind French, German and Japanese contemporaries in mathematics tests. (Tel 12/7/86)

Newcastle College, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffs, will launch a course on the Beatles in September " ... Because the Beatles had a profound impact on our society." (Daily Mirror 24/7/86)

The House of Commons decided by one vote to ban the use of the cane in schools, effectively from August next year. (Tel. 23/7/86)

A religious teacher is being investigated by education chiefs after claiming he was involved in witchcraft. (Daily Mirror 25/7/86)

Joan Sallis, chairman of CASE said, "Government talk of parental choice is a fraud. You can't have a choice between three under-resourced schools." (The Observer 25/5/86)

Almost a third of lessons taught in English schools are sub-standard, according to a report by Her Majesty's Inspectors (Tel. 22/5/86)

The Midlands Examining Group made a procedural error which resulted in 1800 students being given C grades in a joint 'O' level/CSE Chemistry paper when they should have been placed in A or B grades. Corrected results are being issued. (The Times 29/8/86)



The following article appeared in the Skegness Standard on Friday 22nd August 1986. Sue Evans of Willow Farm, Thorpe Fenbyke, Wainfleet sent it to the newsletter, horrified by it. Members will be pleased to know that Sue has since written to the newspaper correcting the statement that 'it is illegal not to attend school' and giving readers information about EO.

"...Darren Hartley, 14, of Hogsthorpe, was fine when he attended the local junior school but when it came to moving to Lumley School in Skegness three years ago, he developed school phobia.

And now, just as some people have phobias about flying or crossing bridges, Darren will do anything to not have to go to school.

The problem has become so bad during that time that now his mother Mrs Sylvia Hartley is selling her fish and chip shop to devote more time to her son and to trying to solve his difficulty.

He recalled how the trouble started; "After a few weeks of being at the secondary school Darren started saying that he didn't want to go to school. He couldn't eat and often didn't go to sleep until three o'clock in the morning.

"Eventually, it got to the point where we couldn't mention the word 'school' in the house."

When it got to the stage when Darren was locking himself into the bathroom and tearing his uniform so that he didn't have to go to school, Mrs Hartley decided to take him to a doctor.

He spoke to Darren alone and then advised Mrs Hartley to take him to stay at Ashvilla, the children's section of Rauceby Hospital. At first she refused, but then she decided to let him go. But after two weeks she brought him home.

After that Darren went to see many doctors and even had eight injections and blood tests to prove that he is sane. He went to see a psychologist in Sheffield who told Mrs Hartley she would have to physically take him to school. "I tried that but I came off worse. Darren is a big lad and not a small child and because he is frightened of school, he will fight anyone who tries to take him.

"Most of the doctors I have been to see have just told Darren that he is a naughty boy but that is not what he wants to hear. If he knew why he did it, he would stop, but if anyone asks him why he just says, "I don't know" because he doesn't.

At first, Darren's father, Mr Clifford Hartley, a steel erector, also could not understand the way he was acting but he has come to sympathise with him and now stands firm in backing his wife's determination to get a home tutor for Darren.

An educational psychologist from Leicester explained that the name school phobia is really a misnomer. The child is not really afraid of school itself but is more likely to be going through an emotional crisis which becomes focused on school because he is required to attend.

The problem can be likened to that of a child's behaviour when he first starts school. He might panic at having to leave his mother, but once at school he is perfectly alright.

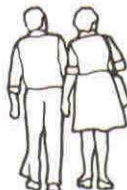
Most of the children who go through this sort of crisis are introverted and withdrawn anyway and have a high level of anxiety.

The local authority is now considering prosecuting Darren because it is illegal not to attend school and he could be made the subject of either a care order or a supervision order to ensure that he goes back to school in September.

However, Mrs Hartley is determined that her family will not be broken up. She said, "I am prepared to go to prison rather than let that happen."

The Hartley's younger son, Christopher, will be starting at secondary school in September and they are hoping that he has not been affected by his brother's reaction.

Skegness Standard 22/8/86.



Earlier this year I contributed a long article to the single parents issue, describing my search for a right environment in which my son and I could live. At that time I was helping to start The Continuum Trust in Wales. I am sad to have raised peoples hopes, that a caring and wonderful place existed, an ideal environment for children out of school, when even as the article went to press I was sitting in my top flat in London, nursing Benno's whooping cough and wondering what we could do next.

Forming any kind of group, tribe, community is fraught with hazards. My latest seems to be another example of the great divide between what is spoken about, written about and dreamed of and what actually happens.

The group was an anarchic one and I emphasised the sheer joy of choosing oneself ^{rather than} the gruelling procedure of selection processes. There was also a legal framework so that no member could impose on or eject another.

The Ox. Dic. meaning of anarchy is 'anarkhos, Gk., absence of government, without ruler.' The anarchy we experienced in Wales was the absence of the rules of leadership and organisation that this society adheres to, with no suggestions about what takes its place.

Of course we know what takes its place, although we hope for something better. The dictionary also says, 'lawlessness, disorder, confusion' and 'an anarch, leader of revolt'.

These destructive elements are akin to the organic anarchy of nature. (Not much caring here.) One species will wipe another in order to survive. Wounded animals are eaten by predators. Cro-magnon supposedly destroyed Neandathal, perhaps ate him/her, taking forward a re-cycled spirit. We are still destroying ab original peoples (Any that have survived the mass destruction so far) in both South America and Africa. Aparthied demonstrates the lengths to which a species will go to deny its origins, since it is now purported that the first homo sapiens were black and the oldest indications of life have been found in Africa.

Alongside this knowledge we also know that our brains contain the blue-print of life as it has evolved . eg. our reptilian brain. Also the curious developmental stages of the human embryo, embracing all evolutionary processes ie. fish, bird, mammal.

As one process survives at the expence of another, so it absorbs and carries forward the process it has destroyed.

I saw a film at the Museum of Mankind about the brutal killings of an Indian group that are being perpetrated today, in order to destroy the rain forest and use the land for beef-stock. One Indian person said she didnt mind dying and neither ultimately did others she knew. She believes she will subsequently be re-born a white person and life will be better.

The Hopis too had a vision of being annihilated and reborn as white men, the Rainbow People, who would come to

save the earth from destruction.

However horrific it is to consider these aspirations to be white ie. the 'ruling' race, we can also realise it is for the sake of the continuum, of life itself, that individual species are destroyed. Every dog has its day, and in the light of technology and the redundancy of human beings, we identify with the other endangered species and take their side in the fight for survival.

Mother Natures all consuming process is very different from the concept of God as Father, the top of the hierarchy. But is God of necessity an organiser. If we are truly one, how can God be separated from this other kind of caring, the furtherance of life.

I see the earth and universe contains functioning patterns, life/death, regeneration, cell division, growth, development. These continue to organise themselves, regardless of whether I observe them or not.

Genetic engineering, in its attempt to control, doesn't create. It has nothing to build on but the existing processes of nature. But in twenty years time robots with sensory systems, and perhaps extra sensory perceptions, those out of use but still coded into our DNA, plus all known facts at their beck and call, perhaps these robots, having us to absorb from, will create in a way we can't create them, and having truly absorbed us, will destroy us. Our life force will then become their continuum, just as the 'dead' American Indians are alive in us today.

This continuum of life, as described by Capra, can be understood as a concept of God. That God works through nature and all things living, that we ourselves are impregnated with the stuff of life, and thereby we are the mind of God.

Capra's work is based on the discoveries of great physicists like Hawkins and Bohm. They have found the 'mind' to be an element without which the breakdown of matter cannot function but only BE. Hence Capra's analogy with Tao, the Eastern Mystics way, the way of being not doing.

I begin to understand then, that an order has already been given, not by a hierarchy but by an at-oneness. There are already rules of organisation and leadership that govern the continuum. But anarchy doesn't include leadership or rules. So how does it function?

The purist anarchic groups, clearly described by Van der Post, Leidloff, Lyall Watson in *Lightning Bird* and by William Golding in *The Inheritors*, the so-called primitive people, have a bond that transcends anarchy with altruism. Until that group ceases to exist, individual members don't disintegrate in the face of insurmountable odds. Such experiences strengthen their bond and resolve. Their purpose is that of maintaining the group's continuum and this far outweighs their need to express individuality. The expression of self is done for the group, not against it.

An excellent example of this is the Peace Camp at Greenham. Because the women have no leader they bemuse the police, who struggle to devise a system to combat leaderless action. The authorities base their tactics on planned manoeuvres by controllers and subordinates. They have no means of assessing or combating individually instigated ^{action} which is based ^u altruistically on furtherance of the group as a whole. They even consider the feelings of the police and try as much as they can to help them to think about the part they are playing in their jobs to hasten war (and thereby their own destruction) rather than prevent it. This is the female approach. Spiral by nature it contains the answer in its secret depths. (Like this piece of writing.) Hierarchical government, moving along the straight line of logic and reason, is male. Our PM adheres to the male model despite her gender, thereby negating the female within her. We need both for perfect balance. We need to find a way of combining them, a way to harmony, through conflict.

Altruism, regard for others as a principle for action (Ox. dic.), (altru means, 'somebody else') hadn't been considered as an aspect of the anarchic structure in Wales. In consequence the group never formed. No-one could reconcile having to live with others who could do anything they chose, with no regard to anyone else or the valley.

To give a hypothetical example, the terms of the trust deed, existing before my appearance, allow for someone to go right now if they chose, chop down all the trees and concrete the valley over. I use this example as the people who wrote for information but couldn't commit themselves were mainly like me, conservationists, vegetarians, pacifists, tree-loving and ecologically minded. There was also a total stalemate with planning regulations with the local authorities, so no possibility of prospective members living in the valley. Applications for charitable status of the trust have failed, as the objectives are not considered charitable by the commission.

You may ask why I didn't envisage these drawbacks ahead of time.

Well, I am an eternal optimist and have great confidence in other people. This principle of seeing the innate goodness in everyone, feels to me to be the golden thread behind Leidlöff's Continuum Concept. However neurotic and distorted we appear to be, only in a very psychotic person can goodness find no vent for expression. Perhaps such people should be 'kept close 'til they see sense', in Anjou's words. A balanced group must contain all energies.

So what now?

Don't lose sight of the aspiration to one day be part of this balanced group of altruistic anarchists.

We need land, our own homes but close enough to be the modern equivalent of the hut circle. We need co-operative work ventures to maintain our lifestyle. We need each other.

If these things cause stirrings in your heart, please write to me.

Candida Fawcitt/Poppy Green, 42, St. Marks Road, W10 6NR.

Two Years of Freedom

David and I have two sons, Matthew and Jack, who are 9 and 6 respectively. We emigrated to New Zealand in 1981 when Matthew was about to turn 5 and absolutely longing to experience school immediately. He had progressed through toddlers group and playgroup in a small community in England and most of his peers had begun school. As parents, we were fairly ignorant of the various details of the education system in New Zealand at this time. Being fairly active in the environmental and peace movements and being Quakers, various educational possibilities had crossed our minds but we had done virtually no research or reading around the subject and approached Matthew's schooling with an open mind.

So Matthew bounced along the road full of enthusiasm on his first day of school...By the second and third day he was screaming and crying and had to be carried along the road by his father. (The social pressure to start school at 5 meant we were too slow in realising that legally there was no need to go till 6.)....Then there was an enforced break whilst he had chickenpox!....Then followed an endless stream of ups and downs - E.g. parents held at arms' length by teachers, new teacher each term, boredom with readers then sudden rapid progress and short term high spirits, one sympathetic teacher, playground bullying ignored, pressure to avoid girls, disappointment in competitive sport, teasing over diet, desperately trying to find like-minded friends, increasing boredom especially in maths. But it took two and a half years for the general negative trend to become obvious. During Standard 1, he started to "unlearn" his spelling and writing, lost interest in maths, and was becoming more and more of a handful for me to cope with at 3 o'clock with his aggressive outbursts as a result of frustrations that he had bottled up all day at school.

Matthew's particularly negative reaction to school was due to a combination of factors, we began to realise - especially (1) his sensitivity both physically (allergies) and emotionally, (2) our Quaker, pacifist, environmentally-conscious values tending to conflict with those implied by the school and peer group (no amount of PTA involvement seemed able to change this), (3) the particular school's inability to cope with children's individual learning needs either because of class size or because of policy or both. In other words, the school system may suit some children's needs but not others.

We thoroughly researched all possible alternative schools in the area, had lengthy discussions with the headmaster about the problem (to the school there was no problem - he seemed to be making satisfactory progress and to them was friendly, polite and obedient), underwent psychological tests both state and private. The state tests showed him as average, the private ones showed him as potentially far above average. By this time we had learnt

a little more about home schooling as a possibility but everyone we spoke to said we would never manage to get permission from the Wellington authorities and friends and relatives tended to be extremely sceptical. However, there was a slight glimmer of hope on the home schooling front when the headmaster inadvertently suggested it vaguely, and our extensive enquiries into the local case history showed a faint possibility of changes afoot. Around the same time, we stumbled across the Hendy-Harris story "Putting the joy back into Egypt", we read "Teach Your Own" and other of John Holt's books, someone recommended reading "Children on the Hill", and, through casual conversation in the mobile library, I eventually found someone in our area who had been teaching her two boys at home for many years, right the way through secondary stage. The series of articles in the Listener on "Schools without failure" and conversations with Jack Shallcross were also positive influences. Home schooling emerged gradually to the surface though we resisted it for some time, believing that it would be too much for us and desperately looking for another answer or even part-time school. At the time we had virtually no support for our views and no direct contact with a home schooling organisation. But eventually we sat down for 5 minutes of Quaker silence one evening and both David and I ended that with the strong feeling that home schooling was the right option to go for, for us...So forward with great determination, we started work on the local machine that can allow such things...What if we were turned down? How much should we tell the children to avoid disappointment?

That was April '84. We then began 3 months' intensive research into a wide range of educational theories using library books mainly and personal contact, contacting anyone who had had anything to do with applying for an exemption in the area, getting to know the sort of people in the inspectorate and the education board, acquainting ourselves with the law, and preparing a clearly-typed document of our reasons (without running the system down), our resources, our objectives and our guidelines for teaching.

This took a lot of energy but was worth it. Firstly, it increased our confidence to the level where we were sure we could do it and should do it for the children's sake. So we could assure the children of what the future would be. Secondly, we were providing ourselves with a "training", and a firm basis from which to do the schooling without having to continuously prepare and theorise. Thirdly, it was sufficient to give us a one-year exemption for Matthew, in the Wellington region, which in turn, because of its rarity, was a great help in convincing the Nelson authorities that they should give both Matthew and Jack (by then 6) an unqualified exemption in September '85. Our move to Nelson is another long story but, in short, living in the centre of this small, active, varied town is very conducive to home schooling and learning skills from different members of the community and

keeping in contact with other people, including children.

Our schooling method is a blend of Rudolf Steiner's and John Holt's views modified by the need to cover the essentials of the State primary school syllabus by the end of the primary period. Peace education is a fundamental thread running through it all, i.e. encouraging co-operation, non-violent conflict resolution, self-esteem, a study of history from as many different points of view as possible. I keep a daily record of learning experiences which helps to give us a sense of direction and to demonstrate what we are doing to the inspectors, whilst giving the children maximum freedom.

Now, two years down the road, we are all perfectly happy with this way of schooling. Although there are still ups and downs and times when we wonder, Matthew and Jack would not have it any other way. The stresses tend to come when we feel under pressure to keep plugging at the 3R's when it is more than clear that they will not be illiterate at the end of the day and their general, balanced educational level is more than adequate.

I will now give some practical examples of our experiences and how we go about things from day-to-day.

We encourage the children to set their own guidelines and objectives for the day, the week or maybe the month. These are not adhered to strictly and change frequently, but they do provide a focus for self-discipline. Sometimes it is a particular daily routine that is important, dividing the day up into compartments for the 3R's, physical activities, crafts and music : this is tending to happen now after a long period of "free-ranging". Other times, a daily diary, report or list is the focus when spelling or writing need practice. A weekly newspaper was produced for a while to integrate many different facets of learning and provide some definite output. On other occasions, whole days may be spent on knitting, woodwork, clay modelling, producing plays, concerts and puppet shows, or making a tape recording for sending to relatives in England. Creativity and co-operation are important products of what might appear to be "just playing" - whether it be imaginative play with lego, blocks, real furniture or dashing about outside.

They exchange letters or picture letters quite frequently with friends and relations, and sometimes a particular event or interest will lead to correspondence with officialdom, e.g. Matthew with the Consumers' Institute over tickly labels, with the City Council and the developers over a proposed hydroslide and Indy 500 track, and with the City Council and the Ministry of Transport over a dangerous set of lights for pedestrians; Jack with Lego over a new design of his, and with the Prime Minister over a request for a railway line to Nelson.

Of course, a lot of learning is via general family living experiences:- travelling to other places or other countries by car, bus, train or plane; house-hunting, house buying and selling, house alterations. Vast areas of social studies, mathematics, design/creativity and practical skills are covered through general observation and involvement in family decision-making on these occasions. The children also tend to be very interested in joining in adult activities in their attempt to piece together what the world is all about. They often attend evening meetings with us on a variety of issues, and Matthew has been to a health food course with me and a life skills workshop with David both of which he enjoyed, understood and benefited from despite being the only child there.

Other sources of learning that we make considerable use of are:

1. Video recordings of a few, selected television programmes that we watch and discuss with the children, "fast-forwarding" over advertisements, "pausing" to answer the endless stream of questions, and repeating the bits that need more time to appreciate.

2. Audio cassettes and records especially for music appreciation or for becoming familiar with Maori or other languages; and also blank tapes for making our own recordings to help in singing, reading and language development, and to record from the radio.

3. Other people in the community with particular skills, e.g. a Red Cross youth officer, weavers, potters, astronomers, geologists, ornithologists, different types of musicians, knitter, local historian, bee keepers.

4. Local events, e.g. live concerts, live theatre, range of exhibitions.

5. Visits and field trips, e.g. David's computer work, police station, fire station, Nelson Evening Mail, port, airport, Founders Park, gravel works, coastal exploration, bush walks.

6. Local public libraries, of course, but these are not particularly extensive and at present we are not allowed to use the School Library Service.

There is a new Teaching Resource Centre being set up that we are welcome to use and may prove to be very useful.

Sometimes special tuition is necessary outside the home environment. Matthew had a whole series of swimming lessons which he was very enthusiastic about and now he enjoys individual tuition in playing the guitar and a group drama class. Jack still definitely prefers to learn on his own in his own time. We avoid any long term commitment to formal instruction as children's needs change so rapidly. Similarly, we join in group activities as and when the children feel right in that environment. At present, we belong to Woodcraft Folk, the Discovery Club, and a peace, music, dance and meditation group, and the children come with us to all or part of Quaker Meetings as they wish.

Socialising is something that many people feel home schoolers miss out on. From our point of view, we feel quite glad to be away from the intense peer group pressure that was one of the destructive forces in Matthew's time in primary school. Both the children and ourselves as parents are quite happy with the type and amount of social contact and chance to communicate that is available to them. Regular chances to mix with their peer group in a positive, co-operative way are provided by the drama class, Woodcraft Folk and Discovery Club and yet there is no clear demarcation by age or sex. Several families live within walking distance of our house, and our boys are with our nextdoor neighbours' grandchildren (of 15 and 9) for long periods during the school holidays which they always spend in Nelson. Besides their peer group, Matthew and Jack meet many people who vary greatly in age, race and creed as a result of travelling, joining in various community activities, and meeting the full range of people who come to our house as either friends or visitors or contractors to work on the house. They have established a very happy relationship with many adults.

I will finish with some examples of the childrens' progress in conventional formal schooling terms i.e. the 3R's.

Jack has a fairly easy going and phlegmatic temperament, but he knows his own mind and direction and heavily resists being hurried or cajoled to do something different. Drawing is his principal activity and enjoyment, interspersed with clay modelling and other hand design work. The 3R's are developing slowly but surely and meticulously and always integrated with his artwork. Recognition and reproduction of letters and numbers has just been a gradual progress. Reading and writing are progressed mainly through annotating or dictating a story/explanation to accompany a drawing. Often the drawings are from unusual perspectives that require some guidance for the observer. Writing is also practised in simple correspondence to people. He can now spell a handful of words himself, and the rest he either eagerly looks up in a picture dictionary (or some other place he remembers seeing it) or asks me. What he does write is extremely neat, but he tires of it physically after a few words. Reading he prefers to do aloud, after being read to, and he has quite a grasp of word attack. Again the words he really knows consistently are few and the print needs to be fairly large, but he can now read quite a few large print books - mainly books we have collected over the years and that are on a topic of particular interest, e.g. aeroplanes, trains, creatures living in the sea, and Meg and Mog. Numbers work and basic mathematics are mostly oral and extremely practical. He very quickly grasps it when in a real life situation, such as numbers on a clock face; fractions and arithmetic operations at the mealtable or while folding towels or building lego models; geometry in clay modelling, the globe, use of ruler and compass etc in design work. We do supplement this with a few "lessons" using a hundred-

peg board, weighing experiments etc. Also he learns many things directly from Matthew.

Matthew's relationship to the 3R's is rather different. Of course, two and a half years in school did give him a basic grounding in all three despite the difficulties mentioned above. Since learning at home, reading has never presented a problem and he has never really required assistance apart from asking the meaning of the occasional difficult word and guidance in the use of a dictionary. He has gradually increased his competence in a natural way simply by reading around his areas of interest via books at home, in the public library, and the daily newspaper. Most of the time he "skim" reads silently and very fast, so difficult words are often skipped over and not much spelling is learned this way. Yet, answers to questions and the degree of expression put into occasional reading aloud, demonstrate good comprehension. Writing (including spelling, punctuation, sentence construction and grammar) does not come quite so easily. This had already begun to deteriorate during Standard 1 in the half year before he came out of school. A degree of unlearning and a fresh start were necessary. For some time we encouraged Matthew to practice daily, however small the amount, starting with simple lists of household jobs to be done etc. He went through bouts of enthusiasm and then resistance. Sometimes it was clearly due to frustration because his writing capability was nowhere near able to put his more advanced creative thoughts onto paper. Dictating his thoughts for me to write down helped for a while, as did me writing passages with deliberate mistakes for him to correct. Also we would alternate phases of going through his rough copy with a toothcomb and correcting it meticulously, with phases of leaving his creative writing uncorrected. After several months, we seemed to have got back onto the rails again and I could give him a freer reign to develop his writing himself. During this process, the beginnings of cursive writing started at school were abandoned. His writing became much neater and more consistent again and the joining up will come when the time is right. He continues to have ups and downs with writing, sometimes producing marvellously interesting and lengthy letters, other times very stilted depending on his mood, the line spacing that he likes at the time, the type of pencil used etc! In recent months he has developed quite an interest in calligraphy and has always tended to annotate his writing with little drawings. I forgot to mention that we started home schooling using exercise books but fairly soon changed to loose-leaf files for everything as they are far more flexible, and they can incorporate the photocopies of letters etc sent in the post which constitute the majority of the writing.

Again, with mathematics, it was a question of picking up the pieces from school and tackling things in a way that Matthew found more enjoyable and digestible. His last school maths exercise book had been mislaid at school and other project work

brought home looked extremely scrappy. Over the months we have tried all sorts of approaches, either suggested by us or Matthew. These have included working from the Department of Education School Mathematics books with him, allowing him to invent mathematical exercises for himself, using alternative mathematics workbooks, giving him lots of written and oral practice in basic computational skills, working with magnetic numbers, peg board and real life situations, working gradually through the times tables whilst washing up etc - reciting them together but not before he understood how to work the answer out from first principles. He now has a perfectly reasonable grasp of mathematics for his age, and enjoys calculating the answers to his self-set problems in his head. He enjoys budgeting and balancing income with expenditure in relation to the use of his pocket money, family financial decisions, and his own planning and design projects for the future. Design and the future are recurring themes of great interest and he loves planning and costing his own possible future house and amusement park he would like to build. There are gaps and weaknesses that need to be worked on specifically. For example, he enjoys calculating orally in large, rounded figures and finds quick application of his tables to problems difficult. Showing the details of his calculations on paper and working on them for any lengthy period is difficult. Yet we feel confident that by the end of the primary years, the State primary school syllabus will have been covered in a gentle and fairly natural way.

I could write many more pages of our thoughts and experiences, for instance in the areas of science, physical education, social studies, health, music, practical skills, personal growth, spiritual development. Yet I have probably written more than enough to give a general idea of our situation. Although I have mentioned many things in terms of conventional subject headings, we believe in and encourage the synthesis rather than the compartmentalisation of all aspects of learning to achieve a general feeling of oneness with the planet and universe. Occasionally minor problems cause us to question parts of what we are doing. These feelings are quickly balanced by the realisation that the future is uncertain and adaptability is therefore the important thing to develop. Knowing who to ask or where to look for information or solutions to problems would seem to be more important than being completely conversant in a few areas that may not be so useful later.

In our view, so long as children are happy and interested in what they are doing, they must be learning quite satisfactorily.

Sarah Ayre
Nelson
April 1986

Late notices

COORDINATORS NEEDED

Coordinators are needed for Hereford and Worcs

London North

Gwent

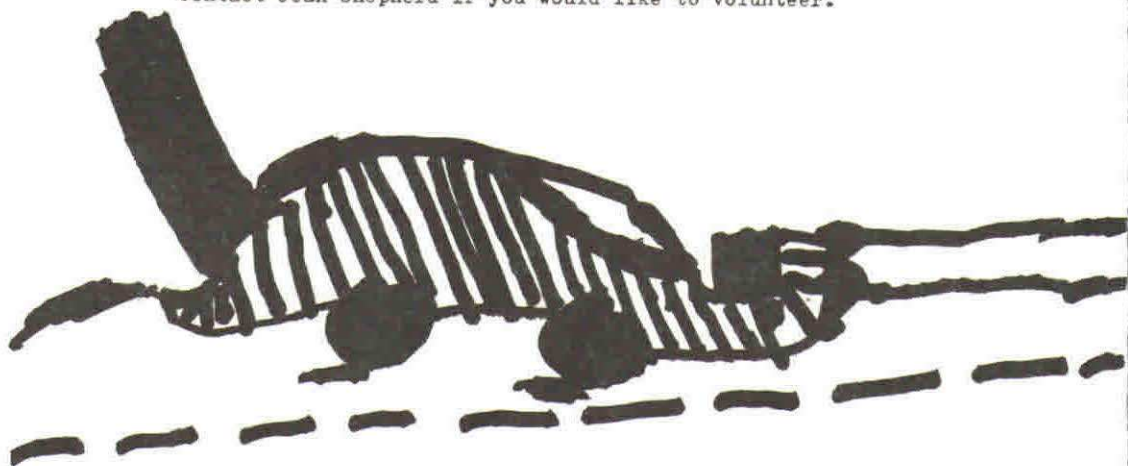
Anyone who would like to volunteer to be a coordinator for any of these regions please contact Andy Anderson, address on back cover.

DECEMBER ISSUE

The December issue of the newsletter is to be a special 10th. anniversary edition. Contributions from original members, children's ideas on what EO has given them / will give them, reminiscences, ideas for the future will be welcome. Contributions to the next editor.

Supplements

Editors for supplements are needed for 1987 issues of the newsletter. Contact Jean Shepherd if you would like to volunteer.



Jan-Jorn 6
BqJwq J-J

EO OFFICERS

General Secretary
Joan Hoare
25 Moor Oak Road, Sheffield
South Yorkshire
Tel: 0742 666605

Membership Secretaries
Bruce & Christine Wallace
25 Diabaig, Achnasheen
Ross-shire IV22 2HE
Tel: 044581 225

Enquiries Secretary
Janet Everdell
25 Common Lane, Hemingford
Abbots, Cambs PE18 9AN
Tel: 0480 65774 (not after 9pm)

Co-ordinators' Secretary
Andy Anderson
95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe,
Cheshire CW2 7JA
Tel: 0270 664060

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

Publishing Secretary
Jean Shepherd
9 Cranborne Gardens, Welwyn Gdn
City, Herts AL7 3NF
Tel: 0751 334225 (after 4pm).

Treasurer
Alison Mafham
3 Park Road West
Curzon Park, Chester
Tel: 0244 677452

Subscription Renewals and
Membership List
Bob Emmett
12 Tayler Avenue
Dolgarrog, Conwy, Gwynedd LL32 8JN

Reviews Editor
Helen Holland
Inholm Farm, Plumpton Green
Near Lewes, Sussex
Tel: 0273 890405

WHERE TO GET WHAT

Current and old newsletters, SINC, Early years, Teach Your Own, Growing Without Schooling;- Membership Secretaries.

Stationery, Introductory literature, envelope re-use labels (¹¹⁵⁰per 100) membership forms, posters and handbills;- Co-ordinators Secretary



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

Our principal aims are as follows:-

- To: Encourage the provision of alternative learning situations outside the school system.
- To: Re-affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education, and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school.
- To: Establish the primary right of children that full consideration, with due allowance for their age and understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to:
25, COMMON LANE,
Hemingford Abotts,
Cambridgeshire,
PE18 9AW

