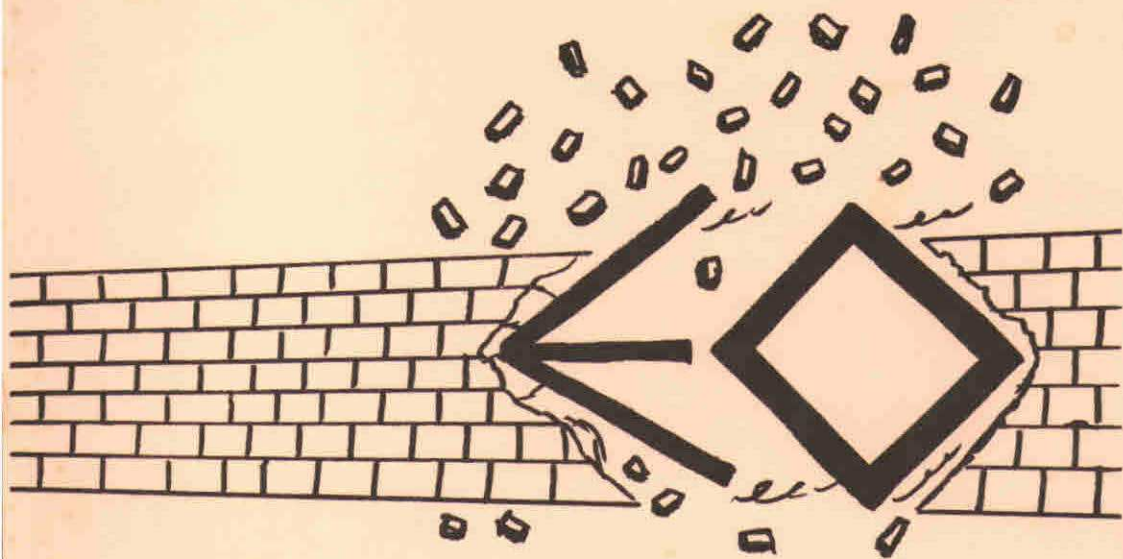


EDUCATION OTHERWISE



NUMBER
79

APRIL-MAY '91

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.

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.

This newsletter is edited by a volunteer member of Education Otherwise and its primary purpose is to provide support and communication between members.

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FURTHER NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

- 1) Please submit before the deadline.
- 2) Please write or type your material clearly and indicate if you do not wish your contribution to be retyped otherwise the editor will retype and make minor corrections of spelling, punctuation etc. Material of the wrong size, faint print etc. may well have to be retyped anyway.
- 3) If you are referring to a previous article or letter, please indicate reference of newsletter number and date.
- 4) Feel free to make suggestions about articles you would like to see in the newsletter or supplements.
- 5) Advertisements are accepted, space permitting, from members if they are of interest to EO in general. 10p per word.

If you would like to edit the newsletter or supplement, contact Lynne Greenhough, 18 Park Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE5 7JE Tel: (0773) 836662.

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Editorial

I've been a member of EO for at least 11 years and I have to confess that this is the first time I've edited the newsletter.

I've enjoyed doing it and it is easier than I expected, but I am glad I waited until Nicholas was old enough to do all the hard work. In fact he's really the editor in all but name.

We are - myself, Annabel (19), Nicholas (16) and Amber (5). I've been a single parent for 10 years. My older sons went to school, they are now 28 and 27. I never wanted to send them to school, but thought that missing the social side of school would be unfair to them - how wrong I was. I wouldn't like to go through that part of my life again.

Annabel is severely disabled and she is the one I would have considered sending to school if she could have gone to a "normal" school with her own teacher, as in Sweden.

Nicholas has never been to school and says he is glad - but he must speak for himself. So - please ask him if you want to know more.

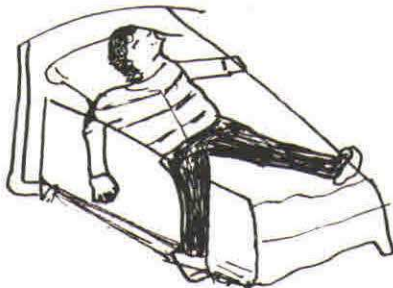
I've written many articles about our EO experiences, in my head, whilst walking the dog, but never got them down on paper. I'm glad some people have made more effort than me. Please keep writing.

Chris, Annabel, Nicholas and Amber, 13 West Close, Alconbury Weston, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE17 5JT.

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NEEDED FOR 1992 -
editors and supplement editors
for future Education Otherwise
newsletters (many thanks for the
recent offers I've received -
I'll be contacting you soon).
Lynne Greenhough -
Publishing Co-ordinator.



Chairman's Report

The January gathering at Cliff College in Derbyshire was a great success. Our thanks go to Stephanie Fatcher, Peter Darling, Lynne and Mike Greenhough, Anna and Paul Sains and Dineke De Jong and Paul Hodgkin for all their hard work.

The gathering included two workshops, one on child sex abuse led by Michelle Elliot of Kidscape and the other on organisational change in EO led by Kay Day. Although I didn't attend Michelle's workshop it was clearly thought provoking and generated a good deal of discussion. I was delighted with Kay's workshop. Her brilliant thinking about the structure of the workshop, about what needs to be done and about the different views of EO members provided a model of how we can listen to each other, celebrate our diversity and come together to accommodate the varying attitudes that exist in EO. We now have a very good base to work from and I look forward to our building on this.

A.G.M.

Mike Cook reported that EO is now in a strong financial position and that there is consequently no need to increase subscriptions at present.

Anne Wade reported that the heavy workload of the Legal Group has begun to be successfully delegated, with legal workshops proving to be a particularly effective means of achieving this. Anne pointed out the importance of co-ordinators seeing to it that families don't give in to unreasonable demands from LEAs as this can make things difficult for other families.

Concern was expressed about the Labour Party's intention to apply the National Curriculum to homeschooling families. I want to encourage members to make their views known to their Labour MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates. The way to divert the Labour Party from this course of action is to make them aware of our concerns.

Jo Rust, in a written report announced her resignation as Publicity Officer. Jo has worked hard at this job with great commitment and enthusiasm and we all owe her our gratitude.

Mike and Lois Cook have agreed to act as temporary Publicity Officers. The post remains vacant and a job description is printed in this newsletter.

Jo pointed out in her report that the task of Publicity Officer can be made easier by co-ordinators taking on responsibility for dealing locally with the Press.

Lynne Greenhough reminded us in her report as Publications Co-ordinator that newsletter editors deserve our support and encouragement to produce an individual newsletter and to use their discretion in selecting contributions. It is unhelpful for newsletter editors to be pressurised by contributors to have their material included or to have contributions sent after the deadline.

There was some discussion about contributions that are critical of other EO members and the meeting decided that such material should not be published until a right to reply has been offered. Future editors will be given information about this in the guidelines.

Personally, I'd like to encourage us all to think well about each other and to remember that each of us is doing her or his best in whatever job we take on in EO. We can gently and thoughtfully point out what we consider to be a mistake (and we all make mistakes) but public criticism and attacks on each other are not helpful to the good functioning and well being of EO.

Stephanie Fitcher, as Co-ordinators Secretary, pointed out that a clear job description for co-ordinators would be useful. Co-ordinators can tell her what they see as the most important aspects of the job. Stephanie will be including news of co-ordinators, including topics discussed by co-ordinators at national gatherings, in future newsletters.

Anne Wade and Peter Edwards retired by rotation as directors and were re-elected. Valerie Common, Lucy Charlton, Lois Cook and myself who were co-opted as directors at the September 1990 meeting, resigned and were re-elected.

At this point in the meeting I was elected as chairperson and took over the chair of the meeting.

Peter Edwards agreed to continue as Vice-Chair and was thanked for his thoughtful and sensitive handling of the issues arising during his time as acting chairperson.

The remainder of the meeting was taken up with confirming David Bettie as membership secretary for the South-East and Sarah Taylor as regional enquiries secretary for the South-East.

Members Meeting

Before the business meeting could begin two directors had to be co-opted to make up the minimum number of 14. Jane Lowe and Julie Turnbull were co-opted and will act as directors until the next AGM when they will resign and be eligible for re-election.

The meeting dealt with an urgent matter concerning an EO member in the Grampian region who had written to directors present at Cliff College asking for help from EO.

It was clear that Grampian Education Authority is taking an illegal and unreasonable stance in believing that it has the power to "allow" or "disallow" home education.

The meeting agreed that EO should support this EO member in the court actions being brought against her by Grampian Education Authority and should censure Grampian Education Authority for its attitude to home education and its intimidation of local families.

The meeting further agreed that Julie Lyons should attend the court on behalf of EO, both to support the EO member and to give evidence on her behalf.

The first matter arising from the minutes concerned the follow-up to the workshop on child sexual abuse. A discussion group had convened after the workshop which had come up with a number of proposals that were put to the meeting.

The meeting agreed that the Childline and Kidscape telephone numbers be printed in EO newsletters, that Kidscape leaflets be included in a future newsletter, and that a supplement on child abuse be included in a future newsletter.

There was considerable discussion on another proposal that information should be included in booking forms for EO gatherings to the effect that such gatherings do not provide a safer environment for young people than elsewhere. The prevailing view was that such information would have the effect of over-emphasising this one aspect and of possibly alarming some families. This proposal was therefore rejected.

The meeting went on to discuss procedures that EO might follow regarding allegations of child sex abuse. A proposal was put forward that any written and signed allegation against an EO member should be investigated by a committee, that the member should be disqualified from attending EO gatherings while the investigation is in progress, and that this disqualification should be lifted if the committee satisfies itself that the allegation was unfounded.

There was heated and emotional argument for and against this proposal and it seemed impossible to reach a consensus view at this meeting.

EO has been struggling with this issue for some time and the feelings and emotions that it generates get in the way of rational argument around it. I hope that we can now listen uncritically to all the arguments, recognising that people have strong views about it that we might not agree with, and each offer our own good thinking so that we can resolve this matter at the next meeting.

The second matter arising concerned EO's equivalent organisations in Europe. The meeting agreed that EO should subsidise travelling expenses for Alison Mafham to attend the AGM of "Les Enfants d'Abord" in Aix-en-Provence. Members of the Stapleton and Alcaraz-Perez family will begin a correspondence with a home educators' organisation in Spain.

A proposal from Mike Cook about limiting steering committee decisions to urgent financial ones was left unresolved.

We all need to think about how the steering committee should operate and about who and how many should compromise the steering committee, so that a decision can be made at the next meeting.

National Homeschooling Day has been fixed for 19th October. Lucy Charlton reported on behalf of Liz Ramsay that members' response to her efforts has been minimal. This day provides an ideal opportunity for EO to give the public some good information. I urge all members to think about how you can contribute to this day. Some members are organising displays in local libraries. Many more of us could do this. Other suggestions are for open days, and for families to be interviewed by local press, TV, and radio. Let's all decide that we have something valuable to contribute and make this a day worth our efforts. Please contact Liz Ramsay with your ideas.

Keith Charlton.

Kidscape

"IS KIDSCAPE RELEVANT TO EO?"

MY REPLY TO THIS QUESTION, POSED AT CLIFF COLLEGE -

"ARE CHILDREN RELEVANT TO EO?"

I know child abuse is a subject we'd all rather not know about - abused children more than any would rather not know of this subject. None the less, at Cliff College, in January, a group of brave people sat through and participated in a workshop run by KIDSCAPE, the organisation dedicated to making kids safe. I believe most or all of us came from that workshop with something more than we went in with.

The workshop, run by Michelle Elliott, consisted of video interviews with 3 abusers, facts, figures, slides of various things including a story by a 7 yr old girl survivor, of her own experience of abuse including very moving, graphically detailed illustrations by her. We also saw a comic written by the same girl survivor, in her attempt to try to protect other children from suffering the type of appalling abuse she had. There were question and information sheets, some discussion and much feeling.

After Michelle went home we felt we needed some time to talk through what we experienced at the workshop and to work through our feelings. It was unfortunate that this meeting, was delayed 3 times, but, eventually, at 9:30pm a group of people, most of whom were at the workshop, (some having been unable to make it to Cliff College early enough for the workshop) met, and began the long difficult task of talking through the workshop and deciding what we as a group wanted to put forward to the members meeting next day.

We felt we, as an organisation, needed to have a policy to deal with known or alleged abusers in EC. After hours of difficult, emotional, caring, thoughtful discussion, we formulated proposals, to offer the members next day - we then went off to our beds in the early hours of the morning.

Next day, we presented our proposals which will appear in the minutes of the members' meeting. Some were not accepted, those which were have resulted in the inclusion of KIDSCAPE (071 488 0488) and CHILDLINE(0800 1111) telephone no's in all newsletters (back pages) and in all children's supplements. Also, in the inclusion of KIDSCAPE LEAFLETS in the newsletters (on a one-off basis). I would urge all families to make these leaflets available to the children of the family - to try to keep them safe, and how to deal with uncomfortable situations they may find themselves in and to enable them to talk to their parents, should they encounter any person or situation which worries them.

Please remember, abusers don't have horns, two heads or neon signs on their heads to warn you - they're Mr/Mrs Nice Guy, often respected members of the community, often happily married with children. Abusers come from all walks of life, all classes, religions, races. They may be teachers, policemen, psychiatrists, motor-mechanics, taxi drivers, therapists, clergy, unemployed or any thing else you can think of - white, black, oriental, tall, short, fat, thin, rich, poor or anywhere in-between. One thing they have in common is a total lack of respect for children.

We must protect our children. We have all accepted that school is not suitable for our children, at some time and took the decision to home educate them, to protect them from an un-acceptable experience. To protect them from abusers, we must accept the reality of child abuse and teach our children to be safe, just as we teach them of the dangers of fire, water, traffic.

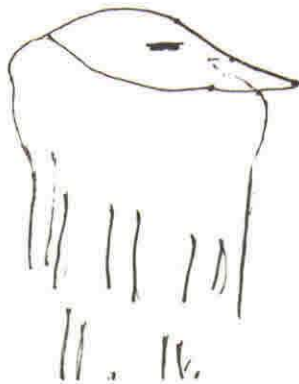
I want to thank all the people who attended the workshop and the discussion - especially the men - they were all brave and I hope they all gained as much as I did. Lets keep on working towards child-safety and let's acknowledge that child-abuse doesn't only happen to school children.

I'll be reviewing books connected with this subject as I encounter them.

REVIEW.

Home is where the hurt is. ISBN 0-7225-1631-2. £4.99. Author: Janine Turner. Publisher: Thorsons Publishers (part of Harper Collins) Glasgow. This book, written by a survivor of sexual abuse, gives voice to 5 survivors, detailing their childhood experiences and how they're surviving as women. Also the experiences of abusers and how they see their abusive acts, in their own words. Hints on street proofing your children. A section on recovery, hope and therapy and an invaluable bibliography, from which I shall be choosing books to review in future newsletters, I would recommend anyone involved with children to read this book - order it from your local library, then it's available to many people!

Jude Ashley-Walker, 1 The Firs, Dodpits, Ningwood, Isle of Wight PO41 0PL



Letters

Dear EO,

I was shocked and distressed to read Christopher Shute's letter in the Feb/March Newsletter (78). One of his articles "ended up on the spike" because it was too "anti-school". I thought EO was an open and democratic organisation which encouraged free discussion. Apparently not. I feel I have a right to read Christopher's article. I also feel I have the right to know the hidden editorial policy by which our newsletter is run. Let's have Christopher's article, and let's have a proper statement of beliefs and principles on page 1, to replace the folksy and disarming "editorial" which is the norm.

John Rooke, 20 Steakten Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 1ED

Ed's note: You, too, can be the editor. See advert on page 1 and good luck.



Grandparents and EO,

After seeing your article entitled "Grandparents" on page 16 of Newsletter No 77 - Dec/Jan 90-91 asking about any grandparents being involved with EO, I thought I'd write and tell you about my daughter's grandparents and EO.

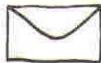
When I went through a divorce my eldest daughter of 9 years was badly affected. She is a very intelligent and also a sensitive child and getting her to school became very difficult especially when I started work, even though I work during school hours, so can take the children to school and also pick them up.

The school attendance officer said I was to drag her into school in her night-dress if necessary, using as much physical force as was necessary, because if my daughter did not regularly attend school five days a week then she would take me to court and have the child removed from my care. My parents just happened to see a television programme and from this sought further information about EO. They then arranged their working lives i.e. Both parents worked during the mornings and my mother changed to work afternoons so there was always one of them at home to educate my daughter.

I de-registered my daughter from school and my parents took on the task of her education. So far my daughter's grandparents have been educating her at home for nearly one year, and she is doing well thanks to EO and the love and care not to mention the hard work of her grandparents.

Thanking EO for all the advice and help received.

Paula Lucas, 35 Saxon Avenue, Stotfold, Hertfordshire, SG5 4DD.



Dear EO,

I first joined EO when I watched "The Time The Place" on television. I contacted the producer and he gave me a number to call. I did so and the recording gave me the telephone number of Brenda Holliday...

Chris started school when he was four and a half. As he did not walk without support until he was around two, he preferred to move around the classroom climbing on the table as well as crawling under. Therefore, his first school report mentioned how he did not sit still in his seat and do the work he was supposed to.

Chris dragged his left leg a little until around the age of seven. He did not play football as well as the other children and was singled out as "spastic". He was small for his age and became the target of bullies. His head was split open, he was dragged along the playground by his heels resulting in a grazed back. The same child who did this also forced Chris's head to the ground out of school and stamped on it. I complained to the head teacher and she remarked that Chris had drawn a picture of the boy which the boy did not like.

Over the years I believe Chris came to believe that being bullied, cut and bruised was the norm and when he commenced secondary school in a totally different area he was still coming home bruised. He was also being sick as much as five times in twenty minutes. I feared the educational system which stemmed from the power they used over me as a child and hesitated to take Chris from school after I found out it was legal. However, as life was a living hell at home with Chris coming home in uncontrollable rages and my not knowing when the school would next phone to complain about him not doing his homework and knowing I would be summoned to yet another meeting; I decided to take the step and permanently home educate Chris.

Chris stopped being sick almost immediately. His rages subsided and life was wonderful again. However, I did notice that Chris would set himself up around every second week, where he would continue with a tantrum for as long as a full morning and afternoon. Eventually, when he would start on the furniture I would smack him and he would stop. I firmly believed that Chris expected this kind of treatment from life and proved it to himself at all costs. I thought about psychiatrists, psychologists etc. I was even willing to pay for Gestalt therapy or one of the other expensive therapies. What I did do though was remove £1 from his pocket money if he had been smacked during the week. It worked!

Chris is now fourteen and is a very happy young man. After two years of home studies he has decided to concentrate on conservation and hopes to work in this field someday. He can relate to his peers as friends rather than potential bullies and enjoys many outdoor activities compared with hiding indoors.

Before Chris left school we had social work and childrens panels to cope with and this is where I would like to bring you back to my first paragraph.Brenda Holliday regularly drove from her own region to our region to support Chris and I at these meetings. Sometimes this would be as early as 10:00am and as late as 9:15pm. Many times I phoned her during her evening meal, when the social services had just left our house, and many times she sympathised and kept my mind and body whole. Social services penetrated my outer skin (my home) by force and I felt raped over and over. Some evenings I would wake during the evening and fall to the floor with pains in my chest unable to breathe, my left arm became numb and at times pain shot down the left side of my body. Brenda once mentioned that my partner was a brick. He is. But Brenda was the brick that got us through. Thank you.
Rose Wilson, 83 Fife Drive, Motherwell, Strathclyde, ML1 3UW.



Dear EO,

Can anyone help me please?

Firstly:- Can I have people's opinion on a child's very first learning books.

There seems to be such a profusion of them these days, I'm finding it hard to decide which are the best. Especially as I'm new to this.

Secondly:-I'd like to know where I can obtain some language tapes and books for the very young. I've read about them but cannot find an address.

Thanks in advance for all those who write and help me.

Helen Field, 104, Charlwood Square, Belgrave Road, Phipps Bridge, Mitcham, Surrey.
P.S. Perhaps local EO'ers would like to contact me with a view to visiting our local city farm together. I am closely involved with the farm and there are many potential educational opportunities that could transpire if people are interested enough.



Dear EO,

The reviews section in the Feb/March Newsletter looked at language courses and mentioned among others the "Paul Daniels Magic Language Memory Method. The reviewer's comments made it sound particularly attractive: "it seems to work - and fast", "it is an ideal addition to the resources of any family, especially home educators."

May I suggest that any attraction is purely superficial. As a language teacher I am well acquainted with the method and I must warn EO members against it. As the review says, its technique is to link "two objects in your mind - one known and one you want to remember - in a bizarre, dramatic or silly picture, e.g. cat = gato (Spanish), therefore imagine a cat eating a huge gateau." This, I agree, is not as crazy as it sounds for the purposes of immediate memory, but there is absolutely no evidence that words learned this way stay in the long-term memory, as needed for language learning, any more than words learned by other methods. Furthermore, any words learned this way are infallibly learned with a bad pronunciation as they depend on a near equivalent English word or words (e.g. a block of ice cooling a belly (and so "belly-cool") is the mental image suggested for the French word for film, "pellicule"). Finally, even if this method was better than others for learning individual words, that is all it would be better for. It cannot teach the structures or grammar of a language. And without these, individual words cannot be put together and proper language acquisition is impossible.

Which? magazine reviewed this language course among others in September 1990 (pp. 520-21) and its conclusion was: "Not recommended. These tapes are really an expensive way to learn little more than a limited vocabulary." They cost £100 by the way. EO'ers be warned!

Howard Mess, 8 Trafalgar Place, Brynmill, Swansea SA2 0BU



Dear EO,

In the Dec/Jan newsletter, no 77, I wrote a letter about single parenting and home education. Then, just before Christmas, moved house, and feel I must apologize to anyone who tried to get in touch.

However, some mail did get through, and there was a good response from parents up and down the country, echoing the fundamental differences between single parent and two parent families. It was lovely receiving all the letters from other mums in similar situation, and it just reiterated my belief as to how mutually supportive and beneficial it would be, to have some sort of phone line, or co-ordinator. The overall feeling was for more than one, as finances usually inhibit long distance telephone calls, and with this thought in mind, I would be happy to put my name forward for Sussex.

If anyone would like to get in touch over this, please don't hesitate.

I would also like to say a very special thank you to the anonymous Father (or Mother) Christmas from Wales.

Jenny Blewer, 15a Athelston Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 5JB

Tel: (0424) 722720.

Dear ED,

I wonder if there are any other de-schooling families out there who would like to combine with us in a joint living and learning venture?

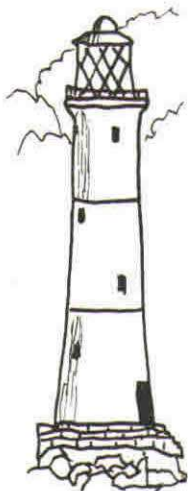
Our aim is self-motivated learning, simple peaceful living, and a possible long term goal of self-sufficiency.

This is purposely a short letter as I don't want to alienate anyone by going into greater detail.

I leave it up to you - if you are interested - to write fully about your aspirations for yourselves and your children. Let's take from there.

Dyana Hart (42 1/4), Luis (13 1/2) and Merrily (6 3/4), 28 Merrykill Crescent, Hereford HR2 7AH. Tel: (0432) 265218.

P.S. Who would like to co-buy the house advertised on p.21 of Feb/March newsletter - the one on Inishfree Island, Donegal?



Penpals

Dear EO,

My name is Fidelma Loughe. I am 13 years old and educated at home. I enjoy walking, camping and cooking. My favourite singer is Kylie Minogue. I would like to meet other girls of the same age and with similar interests. Please write to, Fidelma Loughe, 168B Eastwick Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7HH

Dear EO,

I'm a ginger Guinea-pig called Spice. I enjoy eating and sleeping. I like writing letters. I own a 2 legger called Sylvia. I'll write to any animal that writes to me. Spice, 26 Bladnoch, Wigtown, Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire DG8 9AB
P.S. Hi to Rena, Tiny and Tosca and Basil.

Dear EO,

Hi, I'm 11 years old, nearly 12 and I am home educated. I'm looking for loads of pen-pals girl or boy, aged 11+. My interests include astronomy, astrology, reading, writing and loads more. So pick up a pen and write to:

Genevieve Berentren, 4 Alexandra House, Beadnell, Northumberland, NE67 5AQ.
Write Soon!

Dear Home Educators,

Greetings from the U.S. We are members of a home school organization called Christian Home Educators Fellowship (CHEF).

Some of our member children expressed a desire to correspond with home-schoolers abroad.

My daughter, Fawn, in particular is 12 years old, 7th grade. If you know of a girl who would like to correspond, please encourage her to do so. My daughter is eager to hear from someone her own age (or close) from another country.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Irene (Fawn) Onorato, 919 Paola Street, Baker, LA 70714, U.S.A.

Anne Brosnan (14 years old) would like pen-pals of any age. She likes music (classical, folk, early American Jazz) and reading (she loves Dickens) writing, nature and history. She lives in America at:

137 The Crescent, Babylon Village, NY 11702 - 4412, U.S.A.

Dear EO,

My name is Jake. I am nine. I love Madonna and like Jason Donovan. I enjoy fair-grounds, swimming, cooking and going to the country. I am hoping to write to someone 7-14 years and look forward to seeing a letter in the post. Jake Molyneux, 45 Whittings, Oaks Lane, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex IG2 7PS

Dear EO,

Hi! My name is Daniella Covelle and I would like pen-friends ages 9-14. Must love animals and write regularly. My interests are, swimming, art, dancing, Watch Club and EO (this ensures this getting printed). I am eleven. 54 Nursery Road, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 7ET.

Dear EO,

I would like a pen-pal aged about 9-14 with similar interests. My interests are, chess, and other board games, painting Napoleonic soldiers and other models, animals, reading, carving, music, and I like swimming cycling etc. Allan Weaver-Bell, 26 Bladnoch, Wigtown, Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire DG8 9AB



Articles

WHEN EDUCATION BECOMES ABUSE;
A DIFFERENT LOOK AT THE MENTAL HEALTH
OF CHILDREN.

Raymond S. Moore, Dorothy Moore.

In Acres of Diamonds, Russell Conwell's most famous Chautauqua story, Al Haged sold his farm to finance his quest for a legendary diamond mine. He searched the world over until his fortune was gone. When he returned, hungry and penniless, to his village, he was met by excited neighbours. Yet, they were not stirred by seeing him, as he had often dreamed, but by the news that a vast diamond deposit had been discovered in the river sands which snaked through his own backyard, now the famed Golconda Diamond Mines, America's quest for excellence - for healthy, self-directed, student minds - very well could have the same ending.

From the White House to the humblest home, Americans are greping for answers to declines in literary, ethics, and general behaviour which threaten our nation. Apparently, few have noticed the close relationship between the achievement, behaviour, and sociability we prefer, and the lifestyles that we impose on our children daily which may amount to our most pervasive form of child abuse. For example, a surprising ignorance or indifference exists to peer dependency, a mental health nemesis that is rampant even in preschools.

Instead of studying how best to meet their needs, we often put our "little ones" out of the home, away from environments that best produce outgoing, healthy, happy, creative children. In a federally-sponsored analysis of more than 8,000 early childhood studies, Hewitt researchers concluded that the United States is rushing its little ones out of the home and into school long before most, particularly boys, are ready. The effect on mental and emotional health is deeply disturbing. Dropout rates are mute testimony, though in some cases, the dropout, like Thomas Edison, is more fortunate than those who stay.

From Piagetian specialist David Elkind in Boston to William Rehner in Berkeley, Calif., top learning and development authorities warn that early formal schooling is burning out our children. Teachers who attempt to cope with these youngsters also are burning out. The learning tools of the average child who enrolls today between the ages of four and six or seven are neither tempered nor sharp enough for the structured academic tasks that are increasingly thrown at them. Worse still, we destroy positive sociability.

The sequence for the average child these days often spells disaster for both mental and physical health in a sure sequence: 1) UNCERTAINTY as the child leaves the family nest early for a less secure environment, 2) PUZZLEMENT at the new pressures and restrictions of the classroom, 3) FRUSTRATION because unready learning tools - senses, cognition, brain hemispheres, co-ordination - cannot handle the regimentation of formal lessons and the pressures they bring, 4) HYPERACTIVITY growing out of nerves and jitter, from frustration, 5) FAILURE which naturally flows from the four experiences above, and 6) DELIQUENCY which is failure's twin and apparently for the same reasons.

Indifference to the mental and emotional health of children is not new. The pages of history outline great cycles that began with vigorous cultures awaking to the needs of children and ending with surrender of families ties and the death of societies and empires.

Research provides a link from the past to present and provides a moving perspective on children today. Persuasive reasons exist for declining literacy, academic failures, widespread delinquency, and rampant peer dependency. All four act in concert to deny our goal of happy, confident children who are healthy in body, mind and spirit. Whether or not we can be conclusive about causes, America's decline in literacy from the estimated 90 percentiles in the last century to the 50 percentiles today parallels the parental scramble to institutionalize children at even younger ages.

The Hewitt analyses concluded that, where possible, children should be withheld from formal schooling until at least ages 8-10. Elkind warned against student burnout which has become pervasive in American schools. Rohwer agreed, basing his conclusions in part on investigations in 12 countries by Sweden's Torsten Husen. Husen subsequently confirmed Rohwer's perceptions, according to a letter from Husen, Nov. 23, 1972. Rohwer, with deep concern for conceptual demands of reading and arithmetic, offered a solution: "All of the learning necessary for success in high school can be accomplished in only two or three years of formal skill study. Delaying mandatory instruction in the basic skills until the junior high school years could mean academic success for millions of school children who are doomed to failure under the traditional school system." This solution would delay school entrance until the child is 11 or 12, ages which become critical.

In face of present practice, how can these remarks be justified, bearing in mind that the present and future health of the child is at stake? First, children normally are not mature enough for formal school programs until their senses, co-ordination, neurological development, and cognition are ready. Piagetian experiments have shown repeatedly that cognitive maturity may not come until close to age 12.

Interestingly, the ancient Bar Mitzvah of the Orthodox Jew provided no schooling until after age 12 when the child was considered able to accept full responsibility for his actions. Fisher, then considered dean of American psychiatrists, wrote in 1950 how he started school at 13, unable to read or write. Graduating from a Boston high school at 16, he thought he was a genius until he found that any "normal" child could do it. He added, "if a child could be assured of a wholesome home life and proper physical development, this might provide the answer to ...a shortage of qualified teachers."

Nearly a century ago, Dewey called for school entry at age 8 or later. A half century ago, Skeels proved that loving, though retarded, teen-agers made remarkably good teachers. A quarter century ago, Geber demonstrated that mothers in the African bush brought up children who were more socially and mentally alert than youngsters of the elite who could afford preschool. Warmth was the key. Still later, Mermelstein and others proved that, at least until ages 9 or 10, children who went to school did no better than those who did not attend school. De Rebello (unpublished data, January 1985) reported that dropouts who find employment are ahead of their peers in mental and social perception.

Few conventional educators understand this situation. We do not understand this situation. We do not understand fully the damage of frustration nor denial of free exploration, nor the value of warmth as a learning motivator, nor yet the tutorial method which historically never has been equalled. A UCLA study of 1,016 schools found that teachers averaged about seven minutes daily in personal exchanges with their students. This would allow for no more than one or two personal responses for each student. In contrast, our counts of daily responses in typical home schools ranged from about 100 to more than 300.

We should not be shocked by the Smithsonian Report on genius which offered a three-part recipe for high achievement, consisting of 1) much time spent with warm responsive parents and other adults, 2) very little time spent with peers, and 3) a great deal of free exploration under parental guidance. Study director Harold McCurdy concluded: "the mass education of our public school system is, in its way, a vast experiment on reducing...all three factors to a minimum; accordingly, it should tend to suppress the occurrence of genius."

At Hewitt, we recently obtained the court-approved standardized test scores of children whose mothers or fathers were arrested for teaching at home. Most parents were of low socioeconomic status with less formal education than usual, yet, the children averaged 80.1%, or 30 percentile ranks higher than the nation's average classroom child.

Very young children do indeed learn very fast, as is commonly believed, yet only in proportion to their maturity. The child who combines cognitive maturity with 8-10 years or more of free exploration has developed thousands of "learning hooks" and an ability to reason consistently which is impossible for the younger child. Without this maturity, and confined to a classroom, the child often becomes anxious, frustrated, and eventually learning disabled.

The common assumption these days is that well-socialized children require the association schools afford. Replicable evidence clearly points the other way. Cornell studies found that children who spend more elective time with their peers than with their parents until the fifth or six grades - about 11 or 12 - will become peer dependant. Such "knuckling under" to peer values incurs four losses crucial to sound mental health and positive sociability. These losses are self-worth, optimism, respect for parents and trust in peers.

The loss to boys is of particular concern academically, behaviourally, and socially. Despite their widely-acknowledged delay in maturity, we demand their enrollment in school at the same ages as girls. In recent years, many reports suggest that boys are several times as likely as girls to fail, become delinquent, or acutely hyperactive. Perhaps most ominous are recent (Education Week, March 14, 1984, p19) findings in American high schools that there are eight boys for each girl in classes for the emotionally impaired, and 13 boys for each girl are in remedial learning groups. Self worth, male identity, and respect for women are lost - unfortunate outcomes in today's society.

We need more parent education and less institutionalizing of young children. In the home school renaissance, hundreds of thousands of parents have re-evaluated their child-rearing roles and have begun to study warmly their children's developmental needs. The result is higher achieving, better behaving, self-directed children.

Some demur, pointing to Head Start. Yet, the Ypsilanti study, the only long-range experiment consistently upholding Head Start, involves the home far more than typical programs. Even such key Head Start founders as Bloom and Nimmicht now laud the home as the best learning nest and parents as the best teachers. In physical health and behaviour - the home is 15 times as safe as the average day care centre.

Several suggestions can help us improve the mental and emotional health of our children:

- 1) More of home and less of formal school;
- 2) More free exploration with the guidance of warm, responsive parents and fewer limits of classrooms and books;
- 3) More concern for readiness for learning and ability to think and less training to be simple repeaters;
- 4) More attention to educating parents and less to institutionalizing young children;
- 5) More and higher priorities to child-rearing and fewer to material wants; and
- 6) More old fashion chores - children working with parents - and less attention to rivalry sports and amusements.

To some educators and parents such ideas may appear prosaic or dull - like the backyard Al Hafed left. Yet, everyone likes diamonds, and that backyard can be an exciting place. Anything else may be more child abuse than education.

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JUSTICE FOR KIDS - A MODEST PROPOSAL

When it comes to getting justice the dice are loaded against children. In fact, they're not just loaded, they have "loser" stamped on every face. We adults like to think we give children special consideration, and in many ways we do. However, when they annoy us or disturb us by something they do the rule is generally very simple. The child is wrong. So deeply has this idea dug itself into the core of our thinking that we hold to it even while we struggle to make life better for our children. Kind, gentle, altogether admirable parents, told that their youngster has annoyed an adult will feel driven to "defend" the grown-up, in public at least.

Alice Miller, in her seismic analysis of childhood, explains the almost universal finding of guilt against young people. I have found in her books so much truth and heroic self-understanding that I expect to see her message becoming the framework of liberal thinking about education in the next twenty years. In the meantime, however, something needs to be done to guard children from the un-thinking, mechanical criminalisation from which they suffer in their daily lives.

I recently found myself having to act as an advocate for a couple of children. The facts of the cases are not important, I am concerned only with implications. Both children were adolescent boys. Both had collided with authority. In neither case was authority willing to listen, even for a moment, to any explanation of what had happened which did not put the child squarely in the wrong. Both boys were seen as "difficult" in school, though not outside. In both cases there were things to be said in the boys favour. The school was visibly put out by the fact that I was speaking for them. One teacher led off with "Now, we're both teachers..." and expected me to respond as to a Masonic handshake. When I persisted in defending the boy, the conversation took a turn which made me feel as if he were exploring alien territory, even if I wasn't.

Both attempts at advocacy had mixed results. In one case a letter I wrote ended up with the Chairman of the Governors, who commended my "sensitivity". This was nice for me but did the boy in question little good. In the other case I won a conditional discharge. The school let the boy off detention and actually allowed him to explain himself on more or less equal terms.

One thing was clear to me. Both schools expected to solve their disagreements with their pupils without hearing - and weighing - the children's side of the story. They were ill-at-ease when I suggested that the youngsters might have a word to say for themselves. If I had been younger or less articulate than I am I should probably have been brow-beaten into changing sides. Failing that I might have been given a vague impression that the longer I carried on being difficult the worse it would go with the children: That would very likely have been enough to deter me.

Thinking back over these two encounters with the Great and Good I have come to the conclusion that we need, urgently, to become advocates for our children. Whether we educate them at home or send them to school we owe it to them to make a habit of defending them. I do not mean that we must never say: "That's wrong, and you have no right to do it!" Children do wrong, immoral things just as adults do, and we owe it to them to give them good information about their conduct. On the other hand they rarely stray beyond the bounds of morality as often or as badly as adults. Most of the "offences" which cause them to be punished could be classified as "not knowing their place". In other words, having a mind of their own and using it. We should therefore be ready to point this fact out to any adult who thinks himself entitled to judge our kids. By the same token, we must never allow ourselves to forget it.

We need to submit our conventional interpretation of children's behaviour to a radical revision.

We must get into the habit of assuming, unless the evidence absolutely forbids it, that our children act from totally innocent motives.

Then we must steel ourselves to anyone who wants to deal with our children on any other basis.

This may be difficult if the child has done something which, if an adult did it in a court of law; would be punished. If children lie, or become abusive, it is tempting to "throw the book" at them. We must, I believe, look at the difference in power between adults and children. The adults hold all the aces: it is understandable that the youngsters should defend their exposed position with the only weapons in their armoury - deceit and anger. People who are disturbed by children not telling the truth must learn that if they want the honesty they must make it safe to be honest. Also, they must be helped to understand that if they're anger is justified, so is the child's.

Therefore, we must begin to think seriously about advocacy. I am not talking about unpleasantness or abuse. Politeness is of the essence. Rather, I am trying to find ways of saying things which we have never said before, and which authority has never heard. The main problem seems to be that many people who are concerned with children have never, in all their experience, had to find an answer to some of the questions which we may want to ask them. By the same token they may be offended by any suggestion that their understanding of the situation is not the only reasonable one. We have to see to that, if they become angry, it is because of our ideas and our persistence in them, not because of the tone of our voice or the words we use.

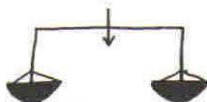
Here are some questions which I believe we are entitled to ask when our children get into trouble with authority: Of course we must also ask them of ourselves.

- Are you certain that he did what you accuse him of? I mean did you see it, or are you relying on hearsay? I know it's frustrating to have a clear idea of who is guilty and then be forced to let him go, but children in school are entitled to exactly the same standards of proof as everyone else. No proof, no punishment.

- My child feels he was treated rudely by your teacher. Therefore he feels entitled to reply in kind. Since you rely entirely on the teacher's word, and you say that you believe your teacher, how do you cope with my child's certainty that he is the injured party? You see no reason to cope with that idea? You must, because I insist on it!

- My child behaved offensively because he says he was bored. I believe him. If you were bored, by a play, say, or a film, would you not at least get up and leave the theatre? Since you won't let my child leave the classroom when a lesson reduces him to a gibbering rage, can you rightly be angry when he shows his frustration?

Christopher R. Shute, 7 Kiln Way, Polesworth, Staffordshire.



CHRISTOPHER

After reading the interesting and helpful article "Return to School" by Alvena Hillier in the no. 78 Feb/March issue of the newsletter, I thought it might be useful to others if I also shared our experience of mixing home-education and school.

We decided to educate our son Christopher at home until he was seven. We wished not only to give him a good academic grounding in the "Three R's" but also to enable him to develop a strong caring and loving nature toward others. We had lots of time, for example, to visit the elderly, bake for a sick friend, make creative thank-you notes to show our gratitude to others.

Christopher had time to "be himself". Along with many other EOers we believe that children should remain children for as long as possible. We lean very much to the principles of Charlotte Mason expressed in Susan Schaeffer Macaulay's book "For the Children's Sake". After his one to two hours of lessons each morning, Chris spent many happy hours in our garden, playing with his younger sister Charlotte-Rose doing all the usual things with sand and water, climbing, running, exploring and biking - using all that glorious energy that a five-seven year old exudes.

We chose age seven as the best time to integrate Chris into the school system as it is a natural time of change for most children when they enter Junior/Middle school and also the time when a child's personality and character becomes pretty well set for life.

So how did things go when the day finally came for Christopher to enter the regime of the local school? I was deeply concerned that Christopher might find school very daunting indeed. That he would miss his freedom intensely. That he would hate the rigidity of the school curriculum and the long hours of sitting and lack of personal attention etc. etc. But we decided to go ahead anyway. Christopher was looking forward to the experience and after all if things didn't work out we knew what we could do!

The first term was a time of great adjustment. The morning "dash" was hard for all of us to get used to. It took the whole of the first term for early morning moans, groans and mysterious tummy aches to disappear - and that's not counting Chris! Also "our boy" found the day agonisingly long and voiced his opinion on more than one occasion that if only he could go to school in the mornings and be at home in the afternoon life would be perfect. A very sensible observation.

Also, Chris literally stopped progressing academically, he actually regressed for a while. Most of his energy went into learning to adjust to the new environment, and to building relationships with the other children. It was a time of emotional adjustment for us as a family. We greatly missed each other at first and most evenings were spent making up for the long day's separation in cuddling, talking and reading together.

There were some days when I almost gave up the whole idea but common sense told me that I had to give him time to settle down. "Time would tell".

The point I really want to emphasise is that apart from the initial backsliding in all areas of development, from "Maths to Manners", Christopher very quickly reverted to his old self, and now half way through his second term he is more confident and enthusiastic than he has ever been.

We have found it a challenge to fit in our beloved "pre-school" activities of music and sport. It would have been too negative a move to have dropped them, and then again it is obvious that Chris age seven has developed a fair amount of stamina - probably from all the running around he did while the others were sitting in the classroom!

Of course the success of an experiment such as this depends greatly upon the school and teacher, and Christopher has been profoundly blessed in both these areas. He has an excellent teacher who has cushioned his first months at school in a most sympathetic and understanding way. She was amazed how "normal" he was after years of so called isolation. And so far we have not recieved one negative comment from anyone in the school.

Obviously Christopher has found that school, for the present, suits him. He enjoys most days and returns home in a relatively positive frame of mind. He enjoys the friends he has made and loves the lunchtime kickabout in the playground.

I do hope that our (so far) good experience will encourage others who, for whatever reason, are considering school after a period of EO. It can succeed if all the factors are right, and it is unmeasurably satisfying and inspiring to see those years of home schooling shining through and producing a confident and mature child who knows himself and is at peace with himself and the world around him.

A quote from Chris:

"It was good because when I was taught at home we did fun things and I could play outside. I enjoy school too because we do exciting things and we still have a bit of play time."

Anita Redit, 16 St. Vincent Drive, St. Albans, Herts AL1 5SJ

LANGUAGE AND ACTIVITY COURSES

For some time, Marc had shown an interest in learning German. I bought several Usbourne books which he enjoyed and we borrowed tapes and books from the library. Later, as his interest did not die a natural death (as sometimes happens) a friend arranged for me to meet the head of language department at the school where she worked. He turned out to be very amiable and showed us a number of courses which they use in the school. The visit proved very worthwhile. Marc and I found a course which we both liked, called Zickzack, and the teacher kindly gave us a set of worksheets to accompany the course. Up until then, the only courses I had seen had been aimed at adults, with the usual booking of hotel rooms and reporting lost car keys to the local police. That is all very well, but I felt sure that there must be more lively, stimulating material around.

Zickzack proved ideal for Marc. With the tapes, pupil and teachers handbook, we felt set to go. However, we'd overlooked one thing. To really enjoy and get the most from a language, you really need to use it. I don't speak German, and had little interest in learning (if truth be told). So, as Marc was still keen, I put a note in our village newsletter asking if anyone would be willing to meet in order to help Marc, and give a bit of encouragement.

We were surprised to receive several calls, one from our Parish Councillor telling me of a forthcoming town twinning and of a trip to Germany, and a couple of people offering their time. Initially we agreed for a German lady to visit and we made flexible arrangements from week to week. This worked to a degree, but the visits were a bit of a strain sometimes, as she was hesitant to lead the way or put any ideas forward. Often she would simply help Marc with his pronunciation and listen to him read or speak. What he really needed was to listen TO the language, and communicate two-way.

So, when I saw a leaflet in our library about a Language and Activity course I picked it up. I had no thoughts of Marc going (at that time), but was interested in finding out more about the course. I made a note of the phone number and added the leaflet to my collection - the ones that might come in useful "one day"!

However, after telephoning that evening for further details, the leaflet was soon retrieved. The course sounded an ideal way for Marc to learn German, but I still put the idea at the back of my mind for the time being. However, when I related the details to Marc he was very enthusiastic, and the more I thought about it, the more I became convinced he should have the opportunity to go. Phone calls passed backwards and forwards to the centre as I gleaned more details and three days later, Marc was on his way!

If I HAD been concerned about the unplanned expense of the course, the fact that Emma decided she'd now like to go along also, simply made me try to pretend the course was too good an opportunity to miss! My usual practical nature was overtaken by the event....but I was not to regret this. The course lived up to our expectation and I think if we had had more time to consider the expense we might have talked ourselves out of it.

So....what was so special about the course? To start with, I had not heard of language and activity courses before, and the idea appealed. Marc and Emma were especially lucky as they were the only children there to learn German. Lucky, in as much that just being the two, they received undivided attention and possibly learnt a bit more than they might have in a larger group. Tami, their German tutor, was very nice and they would meet between about 9 and 2.30 each weekday. They did some German cooking, walked around the market town, bought ice-creams on the river edge, and generally had a nice relaxed time together. I was surprised at how much German Marc and Emma had learnt during the week and at the end of the course each child is given a report on their progress and general well-being. If this smacks of school, forget it. The children meet each day to discuss and vote on all issues. Since they sleep in dormitories, some guidelines are only fair. So the children are encouraged to help agree on times for lights-out, last shower, etc. They also choose activities and outings, and there are always two or more choices. During Marc and Emma's stay they went horse riding, sailing, roller disco, on a sight-seeing tour of London, and to Madame Tussauds. There were a number of trips to the local coast, and places of interest, barbecues, folk evenings....I could go on, but I won't. In addition, the course was arranged in a beautiful private Suffolk school, set in 40 acres of park land. There was a swimming pool, 9 tennis courts, and a huge sports dome with every facility you could wish for. Consequently there was lots of opportunity for games and sports etc, all well supervised. There was also a games room with snooker etc. a social room with a record player and tape, and a television and video room. During the week, the children wrote and filmed their own play, did drama, or just made friends and relaxed.

Numbers on these courses are limited, and the other thing I liked was the international atmosphere. Marc and Emma were the only British children there, that week. The other 27 children came from Mexico, Sweden, Austria, Hong Kong.... and were here to learn English. There was a friendly and warm atmosphere, and on my visits to the centre I was made to feel very welcome. I would not hesitate to send Marc or Emma again and Marc has spoken of going there for two weeks this year. I have kept in touch with the course organisers and have some details of this year's courses. These are arranged in Suffolk from 21 July to 18 August, and are suitable for 8-17 year olds. There are two courses, for up to 14 year olds, and over, both organised in beautiful parkland settings with swimming pools and many sport facilities available on sight. Languages available are: French, German and Spanish. I can highly recommend the courses and if you would like a brochure, or further details, please send a SAE to me:

Sandie Cottee, 17 South View Rd, Rettendon, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 8DX
Tel. (0268) 733259.



JAMES

It was about 13 years ago when we first heard of EO on a television programme and we were given a light at the end of the tunnel. We didn't realise that one could take children out of school and because of our son's position, schoolwise, there was nothing to lose.

Where does one begin to tell the story of a child's life. It isn't until one meets with the authorities that one realises what struggle is, and when they are closed to you and your thoughts and feelings - you are, after all, only the parents. Our younger son James was admitted at the age of 6 to an assessment centre and after 2 years was transferred to an "E.S.N." school. James was a hyperactive child who was either high or low and from 2/3 years old was only able to repeat our words which meant he wasn't able to communicate.

Our reason for de-schooling James was that he was unhappy at school and also that the teaching staff were always negative. They stressed the subjects he couldn't do instead of finding out where his talents lay. On top of this the headmaster used the slipper occasionally, behind the curtain which didn't help towards a good feeling, not counting the effects on the children. I usually looked forward to school holidays as it was a time for James and Andrew (3 years older) to learn more than school. James's difficulties, by the way, were reading and comprehension, his inability to answer questions and writing them. When he was 11 we asked that he be given a chance to attend a secondary school. He was very proud when he set off for this new school and he liked wearing a uniform. Yet again he came across the same teacher problems in the remedial class, they wouldn't allow us to help him with his homework. After 6 weeks at this school and lack of care and concern (we felt the authorities wanted him back at the E.S.N. school), we deschooled him. We had no alternative. From then, 11½ years until 16½ years old he learned at home but also joined evening classes for pottery, art, bird study and music. At 16½ he joined a Y.T.S. scheme with a stained glass firm where he worked on the copper foiling on light catchers and terrariums. He worked for just over a year until redundancy at nearly 18 years old. All this had been good experience for him, although he was without social life.

From here he attended art class twice a week where he passed his A level. He was accepted on a foundation course in a college in London. It was a case of two round trips a day to the railway station to take him and meet him. He enjoyed that year, but after staying for a further 2 years on a diploma course he found it increasingly difficult because the other students did not accept him.

I cannot begin to tell of the anxiety of having to help one's child in this "society" of ours, which doesn't accept those with difficulties. Thanks to a friend who told me about a television programme, we discovered Camphill Village Communities for young people with disabilities, and without, who live together. These villages are run on the philosophy of Rudolph Steiner. They are self-sufficient and create some beautiful crafts, bread-baking, gardening and farming.

At this moment he has just returned home from two weeks at Camphill. We really expected him to be home within the hour, but within the week, after a few hiccups, he had settled in and joined in everything for body, mind and spirit. He had, for the first time, felt accepted, as he said that those with problems understood him. Now he is patiently (no, impatiently) waiting to return to Camphill for Easter.

I can only hope our experiences with James can be of some help to someone, or, at least, enlightenment as to what it is like to be on the periphery of society.

As regards James's paintings and drawings they are beautiful (I am biased!), and he has found a few galleries for his work. One gallery has accepted his work on a "4 artist summer exhibition", another gallery has promoted him for a scholarship for two weeks painting at a school of art in Tuscany, Italy. Well we shall see. His art has been accepted, let us see if they'll accept the artist.

If anyone wants to contact me they're more than welcome, I'm interested to learn if anyone else has had such traumas through the "art" of EO.
Ann & John Goodman, Primrose Cottage, High St, Alconbury Weston, Huntingdon, Cambs
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ANY QUESTIONS?
ANY ANSWERS?

Below is a transcript of part of an "Any Answers" programme broadcast on 15th of December last year on Radio 4.

The issue discussed was education, and I was responding to a comment made by Peter Lilley that education was "about teachers". He made his remarks in answer to a question about a Ms Garfield who'd failed to gain entry to Teacher Training College when citing her true academic qualifications (Classics at Oxbridge), but was admitted when claiming to be a Cleaner of Afro-Caribbean origin, and making a number of spelling errors in her application!

Eric Foggitt, 133 Saughs Drive, Robroyston, Glasgow, G33 1BN.

The point that I'm wanting to make is that education, it seems to me, is not about teacher training colleges, it's not about teachers, as Peter Lilley was saying, but it's about children. All this talk about qualifications of teachers and the regulations concerning entry into teacher training colleges is missing the point: that education must be a partnership between the who's at the centre of it; and the parent who has primary responsibility for the child's development; and the teacher, who is the specialist "enabler" in that educational and intellectual development. We should be talking much more about partnership - about the ability of teachers to work together with parents. Children who are not helped at home will never get anywhere....If what we've been talking about is anything to go by, I would suspect that there should be much more emphasis on being "parent friendly" as it were, and consumer-friendly; on developing means by which the child might perhaps spend a little less time in academic study at school, but more time would be spent between teachers and parents going over the child's work, and a lot more emphasis being put on parental support being given at home.

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY: Are your children suffering as a result of the way the procedures work now?

E.F.: Certainly not, no. We've decided not to send them to school. We educate them ourselves, which is an option being taken by an increasing number of people these days, because of the problems, as they perceive them, in school.

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY: Are you a teacher yourself?

E.F.: No, I'm not.

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY: How do you teach them yourselves effectively?

E.F.: Well, we both of us have a University Education, so we understand a little of the intellectual problems involved. We get a lot of support from other people round about us who do the same things, and we follow the child's natural development. We follow the child's individual lead.

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY: But you presumably have to do a job at the same time, one or other of you.

E.F.: Yes, I certainly work at the same time. We give up the extra luxuries we would have from my wife working because we consider education to be something that's important. We'd rather live a little closer to the bread line, as it were, and have our children educated in a way which we'd consider to be satisfactory. But the major point isn't that I'd want everybody to be educated at home. I think that the point is that partnership should be the centre of the issue: it shouldn't be that teachers are to become ever-better and more qualified. Miss Garfield...asked what on earth psychology and sociology had to do with it; well I would have thought that sociology and psychology had a lot to do with it; understanding a child's development in the context of the family and its society and so on must be basic. It's not just a question of the child in isolation.

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY: Very interesting: thank you for calling us.



EO AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (NO 9, APRIL 1991)

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.....

.....from the type of supplement I usually provide!
I made half-promises to several people about the content of this supplement, so I must now make half-apologies for changing my mind.

Instead, I give you the interesting, painful yet hopeful story of Alan and Helen Phillips and their younger son, Greg.

This is a story about autism and our struggle to discover the way forward to help our beautiful son, Greg, escape from his autistic prison. A story of hope and love which you may be able to identify with, whether or not you know anything about autism, because I believe like you we have not accepted the easy option for our child.

Some would say we have chosen the difficult path, more demanding, more sacrificial. We have moved away from the convenient, pre-packed, compromise education we were offered, towards providing Greg with opportunities that we believe will give him a chance of a future.

It has taken eight years to discover that we must return from whence we came. Like most other parents, in the beginning we trusted ourselves to instinctively provide the necessary stimulation at home to aid our son's development; but later, as if pre-programmed, thought it was right to pass our responsibility on to 'experts' because we were not 'qualified' now that he was approaching school age.

Ironically, the greatest progress Greg made was the time he spent pre-school with his Mom, and it is my regret that it has taken until now to realise that there is no-one with a greater determination or who are more natural teachers than a child's own parents. We are only motivated by the love we have for our children. For us no decisions have to be dictated by "financial implications", "lack of resources", "policy" or "setting precedents". If it is possible to provide Greg with opportunities that might prove his only lifeline, we are going for it, and politics are well down on our list of considerations.

What is Autism?

Being an opportunist, I appreciate the chance to explain what autism is and to share with people our knowledge on the subject. It is regrettable and very costly for sufferers that children with autism are so misunderstood and public awareness is so poor.

The word autism is derived from the Greek word 'autos' which means 'self' or 'alone'. Never has a single word so aptly described or summarised a child's desperate condition. Autism is basically a handicap of communication, coupled with a deficiency in the ability to socialise, further complicated by an inability to use imagination. The magnitude of such deficiencies makes it easy to understand why autistic people seek to create their own private strange worlds, full

of 'weird' behaviour that shuts out the real world they have so much trouble trying to understand.

It is difficult to imagine what it must be like unless you know of a family with a child suffering from autism and have witnessed the frustration for yourself. Consider what it must be like to be alone in this world, without a single friend to give comfort or share excitement. To convey something of the anxiety and sense of hopelessness felt by parents of these children, I ask other parents to think back to when their own children were young and had not yet acquired language. Perhaps they remember their child crying in their arms unable to ask for help or indicate where the hurt was and their feelings of helplessness at being unable to tell them the pain would soon go away because they were too young to understand.

Finally, try to imagine life without the gift of imagination. It must be like living without knowing that tomorrow exists, therefore what is the point in learning.

Autism is not very nice and these children desperately need your help and support. Autism is tough on its victims and on those who love them.

How is autism diagnosed?

Clinical criteria exist which must be fulfilled and the behaviour pattern observed in a child by the age of three.

- 1) Language impairment of a global kind, including gesture and facial expression as well as speech.
- 2) Social impairment - withdrawn and 'private', lacking empathy, no wish to show things, depleted eye contact, depleted cuddling, depleted physical accommodation and aloofness especially with other children.
- 3) Rigidity of thought processes. In the absence of imagination and pretend play, the child engages in repetitive ritualistic 'play', stereotypes, obsessions, routines and meaningless patterns.

These criteria (known as the diagnostic triad) concentrate on the problems at the core of autism. But many other secondary behaviours are observable in these children and it is important to realize that they are precipitated as a result of the triad of language, social and imagination defects. Of course, in common with all handicaps and conditions it is not sufficient just to label a child. A description of what the child can do is essential for such a diagnosis to be meaningful.

Autistic people can vary quite considerably in their perceived behaviour. For example, the common image of an autistic child is of one who runs from place to place oblivious to his surroundings, laughing to himself, pausing to spin round on the spot, flapping his arms. Totally ignoring his name when called as if he were deaf, clutching a meaningless object. Transfixed by the swaying of leaves and branches in the wind outside. Never speaking, never sharing,

shunning contact and interaction. Totally engrossed in the piece of string he is twiddling which has become the most important thing in the world - it has become his world and excludes any other learning experience, not just now, but later, tomorrow, seemingly for ever.

Possibly 80 to 90% of people with autism behave like this. The remainder use some language but tend to talk at, rather than with people, and usually use their language to speak about their pet subject in a very repetitive and ritualistic fashion.

However, people may have seen the film 'Rainman', a portrayal of an autistic 'savant' (a person, although autistic, who displays skills of genius in selected areas, ie. music, art, or, as portrayed in this film, unbelievable abilities to perform complicated mental arithmetic and incredible feats of memory.)

'Savants' account for only about 20 or so people in the world, so, whilst a film like 'Rainman' has value in raising awareness, it could depict the wrong image of the 'average' autistic person. Nevertheless, I am grateful that it did show the sadness of autism and the great frustration it causes to victims and their families, as I am sure anyone witnessing one of the frequent temper tantrums will agree. We have to help them.

A Brief History.

Our son Greg was born in September 1982. Like most parents we counted his fingers and toes and were thankful and relieved everything seemed fine. We were proud of the new addition to our family.

He appeared to progress normally, passing milestones of crawling, walking and - believe it or not - even talking. He seemed to play OK, and looking back over early photographs we believe had good eye-to-eye contact. We did think he was a somewhat private person, but regarded this as just a trait of his personality.

When he was about 18 months old, we and other members of our family noticed that Greg was using less and less language, and was now avoiding eye-to-eye contact, staring right through people as if they did not exist. At this time there was a suspicion that he was deaf because he ignored people. We agreed he did ignore but did not believe he was deaf as he used to hear a television jingle or a favourite programme song from great distances. I recall that our Health Visitor was quite convinced he was deaf - and if he had been so it would have been far easier to understand the situation.

Greg was starting to spend more and more time in his own world. He was developing obsessional interest in Postman Pat videos and small toy cars - not to play with, just to hold and collect. Because of the suspicion of deafness and his non-cooperation in run of the mill development tests, we were persuaded that his hearing should be tested. It was not until many tests later that it was proved that Greg *could* hear. It was therefore thought beneficial for him to be assessed at the Child Development Unit at a local hospital. The assessment indicated that he functioned at the 18 month age level. Greg was now 3 years old.

We understood that Greg was behind in his development and we were told that he was mentally handicapped. When we asked why he appeared to have progressed normally until he was 18 months old, even having developed speech and then for some unknown reason started to lose it, we could not be answered. Someone had suggested that he might be autistic, but when we asked, the idea was dismissed. They did not acknowledge autism, and of course we were confused and afraid for our son's future so we trusted and accepted what we were told. Autism is confusing and after such a promising start can be so cruel.

Statementing and School

It happened so fast. One day Greg was Greg, But then it was as if we had to hand him over to experts. However we were so relieved that our LEA had the answers. They knew what Greg required in terms of education and we were comforted by the promise of such a caring society providing the resources to help this child in need. A Statement was prepared. We trusted the educational psychologist and asked him if it was OK to sign. As green as grass we signed. Our first mistake!

Thus Greg started school before he was five. It was a Special School for children with assorted handicaps but with severe learning difficulties. He was taught in a group of five or six children by a nursery nurse. We had to give him time to settle in....we had to be patient. Twelve months passed and we started to become concerned. He had started school with some speech but it was disappearing. We could not see any progress but he had learned to thread some beads. He did not fit in with the other children. Somehow he did not seem to belong, and we were afraid we were losing him.

Due to our concern it was agreed that Greg could be re-assessed. It was a pointless exercise; educational psychologists and the school closed ranks, Greg was portrayed in the best possible light and we were served up the same vague recommendations as the previous Statement, which left us unable to quantify what specific help was on offer. However, one benefit from all this was that we learned he "had autistic tendencies". The LEA was claiming that his needs were being met, therefore the situation would remain as it was. We were unlikely to receive independent advice as to what Greg's true needs were, as educational psychologists and schools were the puppets of an LEA that always called the tune.

On the Right Track

I was spending every spare minute researching autism and it came as little surprise to me that children with autism needed individual attention and learn little or nothing in groups. We had noticed that Greg *could* learn if given individual attention, and we had also found that the real reason preventing his receiving any was a lack of resources. It was a question of what could be afforded. After months of appealing to the school he was eventually given *five minutes a day* individual attention. Later this was increased to fifteen minutes a day.

I arranged a meeting with the education authority and was duly advised that autism did not exist in our area (neither did dyslexia)! I must say say it was some comfort to me to be told this pathetic untruth. I realised that without evidence from an influential independent source we stood very little chance of receiving any help for our son. It was also obvious that there was no expertise available locally to help us with a diagnosis.

Our determination eventually paid off: we were fortunate enough to obtain appointments with two of the country's top specialists in autism - one in Nottingham and one in Oxford. Independently they both diagnosed Greg as autistic and were amazed that so obvious a case had not been picked up earlier, since it was evident that he was autistic at the age of three. I suggest that the 'professionals' betrayed our disadvantaged son by recognising he was autistic but choosing to do nothing so as to look after their own interests.

In the face of an irrefutable diagnosis - coupled with the fact that out of frustration we had had our story featured in the local paper, we were eventually given the additional resource of a part-time nursery nurse (NNEB). Perhaps I should say 'won', because we were not 'given' anything.

We were lucky to get a sympathetic NNEB who was sincere and dedicated to helping Greg, and was an oasis of support - considering the indifference of others to his needs. We shared with her our extensive knowledge of the needs of autistic children and how they need to be taught. Although we had won the extra provision it required many more battles before the NNEB was given the freedom to teach Greg in accordance with our wishes and the expert advice we had struggled to find.

We had always maintained that Greg's concentration would increase were he to receive the one-to-one attention he had so obviously always needed. The educational professionals had taken an opposing view, claiming that as his concentration/attention span was so very poor (one or two minutes), he would not benefit from individual attention. How silly and shortsighted their prophesy was made to look when Greg's concentration span shot up within a matter of weeks to over an hour in a single teaching session!

I continuously studied autism, discovering more effective teaching programmes which I passed on to the NNEB and which, thankfully, she implemented. So long as we were allowed to work together in a partnership of caring, Greg continued to make progress. I discovered the importance of structuring his whole day and realised that by making Greg interact with the other children in the unstructured afternoons we were actually promoting autism by subjecting him to something he was unable to handle.

Being relatively happy at having secured one-to-one teaching for each morning, we decided that, as they had insufficient resources to provide it for the whole day, we would withdraw him from school in the afternoons. We have enjoyed teaching him at home part-time for the past 15 months.

For virtually all his school life we have had to fight for his rights - which to us means his future. Although we had won all the battles, the cost in terms of energy and time wasted fighting for his rights was regrettable, considering it was negative and time consuming. We would have much preferred to spend the time constructively helping Greg.

The partnership between home and school teaching worked extremely well. We enjoyed a period without interference to get on with the job and Greg continued to make steady progress. Imagine our reaction when at his review meeting, despite their acknowledgement of his progress during the period of one-to-one teaching, the school recommended that he should predominantly be taught within a group! Simultaneously, our NNEB was to be replaced.

OK, nothing lasts for ever. We were just so grateful that we had managed to hold onto such a kind person for so long. But the success of our relationship with her was, in essence, due to the fact that we had worked so closely together, so I felt sure we could work well with her replacement. Before she was due to start I suggested it would be helpful to meet her, as we desperately wanted to share with her our information and our philosophies, so that Greg would not have to suffer because of a change round in staff, made primarily to benefit the school.

It seemed doomed from the beginning. Not only did we not get to meet her at that time, in spite of repeated requests we were not given an opportunity to meet her even after she started.

When it became apparent that access was being restricted, out of desperation I wrote out some notes, also conveying our intention to fully support her and wishing her every success. I was extremely disappointed when I received a letter from the school requesting that I should not write to individual staff.

It had taken us several years at some considerable cost, climbing up a very slippery slope to reach the point of starting to make some real progress with Greg so we were neither prepared to start all over nor to waste any more time entering discussions to fight for what I consider we already had. Whether relationships with the school were made intolerable by design or by accident due to a catalogue of regrettable decisions, we now considered Greg's position at the school to have become untenable.

Several meetings later, although we received apologies and assurances, I regret to say that we were not at all convinced of their sincerity. The school was very aware that we had identified a need for a caring, loving and happy teaching environment and that it was particularly important that his teachers had a positive and co-operative attitude. Clearly events could not be construed as compatible with these essential requirements.

I believe we were left with no alternative but to withdraw Greg from school. We have now written to the school and the LEA informing them that we intend to reclaim responsibility for our son's education and teach him at home.

Education Otherwise and Greg's Future.

I cannot pretend that our decision to home educate was easy. Given the choice I would prefer that Greg went to school, providing I could guarantee he would receive the special love he needs. But the difference between him receiving what he needs and what the education authority can afford might mean the difference between freedom or eventual institutionalisation. We are certainly not prepared to compromise with the stakes being so high.

Education Otherwise has provided us with an escape route. In our ignorance of the law we believed that children like Greg could not be withdrawn from school. We thought we had to beg or fight for resources, and that what people like us got depended on the strength of our arguments. Thanks to EO, and in particular Sylvia Jeffs, we have peace of mind in the knowledge that we can provide what Greg needs at home, and we do not have to accept decisions based on what can be afforded. Before, we were fighting with one hand tied behind our backs, now we have both hands free.

I mentioned earlier that we signed Greg's Statement, green as grass, trusting and naive. I would never have believed it possible that a family such as ours with a severely handicapped little boy, afraid for his future and only asking for help, could be duped into being persuaded to accept something which would almost certainly offer him a future without hope, but that was cheap.

I cannot make society care, but I think it reasonable to expect the truth. If they'd had the decency to tell us Greg was autistic when he was so young, I believe he would have stood a fighting chance. At least we could have found out about the condition and tried to provide an appropriate education ourselves at our own expense - especially if we had known about EO. Instead, the knowledge must have been denied to protect resources, and worse, our ignorance was exploited by being lead to believe he was in safe hands and his educational needs were being met. Individual education for an autistic child is the difference between life or death, and our son was starving.

How do I explain to Greg that I cannot replace those vital lost years? With my current knowledge of autism, I am convinced he could have been cured if we had started when he was 3 years old. What if we are too late? Sometimes it's hard to forgive. I am left wondering if Plato in his wisdom had our son in mind when he wrote all those years ago: "We can forgive a child that is afraid of the dark, the real tragedy in life is when men are afraid of the light".

Should you know of a child with autism, please help; they need all the help they can get. There are 20,000 of them in the UK but only just over 1000 specialist places. There are more autistic than visually impaired, and only slightly less than hearing impaired children: but how many autistic children do you know of?

A local journalist wrote: "in Britain, autistics are entitled to special education, but as there are few schools for them, local authorities prefer to tell the parents their children are mentally handicapped. I cannot conceive of a crueler lie." There is nothing I can add.

The Future.

I apologise that Greg's story has until now been negative - and I hope you haven't found it too depressing. However, we now have new hope for Greg's future. We have discovered an American programme for helping 'special' children and are so positive and excited about it.

The 'Option Institute' shares much in common with EO people, as they believe that parents are a child's best resource. Option's philosophy teaches us how we can trust ourselves and become the 'experts'. They believe these children are so sensitive that it is very important we develop a loving and accepting attitude; that this is far more important than any technique. Option consider it is so difficult for the children to enter our world, that we should consider entering theirs, as it is most important that we develop their trust.

After waiting on their list for 12 months we are so excited to be going to America in May. Option are so positive - they contrast dramatically with the generally pessimistic view that dominates over here. They believe in these children and in their parents. We are so grateful to be given hope for our son.

Sylvia has asked me to give more details about 'Option' philosophy and to 'report back' after our visit there. I shall be happy to do so. I hope it will be of particular interest to parents of autistic children - but it is such a story of love, determination and hope that it would also appeal to all caring people interested in children.

Meanwhile, if we can help anyone we would be happy to try.

Alan Phillips (West Midlands)

Editor's note: Alan and Helen are not listed in the current contact list, but any responses or enquiries can be made via me.....

Sylvia Jeffs 16, St. Bernards Rd., Solihull, West Midlands B92 7BB
Telephone: 021 706 6460

John Holt

JOHN HOLT WRITES..

"I was an ingenious and resourceful teacher, clever about thinking up lesson plans and demonstrations and motivating devices and all that acamaracus. And I only very slowly and painfully - believe me, painfully - learned that when I started teaching less, the children started learning more.

I can sum up in five to seven words what I eventually learned as a teacher. The seven word version is: Learning is not the product of teaching. The five word version is: Teaching does not make learning.

.....organised education operates on the assumption that children learn only when and only what and only because we teach them. This is not true. It is close to being one hundred percent false."

"The book will be a demonstration that children, without being coerced or manipulated, or being put in exotic, specially prepared environments, or having their thinking planned and ordered for them, can, will and do pick up from the world around them important information about what we call the Basics.

It will also demonstrate that "ordinary" people, without special training and often without large amounts of schooling themselves, can give their children whatever slight assistance may be needed to help them in their exploration of the world, and that to do this task requires no more than a little tact, patience, attention and readily available information."

"What adults can do for children is to make more and more of that world and the people in it accessible and transparent to them. The key word is access: to people, places, experiences, the places where we work, other places we go - cities, countries, streets, buildings. We can also make available tools, books, records, toys and other resources."

"Figuring out what you don't know or aren't sure about is the greatest intellectual skill of all."

LEARNING ALL THE TIME.

the tenth and sadly, the last book by John Holt.

John Holt died in the September of 1985. Learning all the time completes a decalogue of books including best sellers such as How Children Fail, How Children Learn, The Underachieving School, and Teach Your Own. Published first in the U.S.A. in September 1989, it is now available in the U.K. published jointly by Education Now Books, P.O. Box 186, Ticknall, Derbyshire DE7 1WF and Lighthouse Books, 55 Mint Road, The Mint, Liss, Hampshire GU33 7DQ as a tribute to John Holt's work as an educational writer.

Some advance review comments are given below:

"Of all the books I ever recommend to student teachers, John Holt's are the ones which obtain the warmest response."

Professor Ted Wragg.

"Reading John Holt again has cheered up a battle-worn veteran of education. Herein I can re-confirm my beliefs in the essential sanity of children. Now I recognise that some of the major principles of "market forces" approaches to education are no more than a temporary lurch back into the past."

Professor Philip Gammage.

"Learning all the time is a fitting epitaph for John Holt. All teachers, intending teachers and parents should read it before the crass thinking of management man sweeps us into an ice-age of commodity-based approaches to learning"

Professor Philip Gammage

"In his recent, sadly his last, book, John Holt has much valuable experience to share about how we may best sustain the naturally adventurous spirit of the child in the service of his, or her, own education, including the basics."

Dr. James Hemming.

"One reason why I have always appreciated John Holt's criticisms of formal educational methods is that I gained little from such methods myself. What I am now, whatever that may be, is the outcome of following my own curiosities, not of response to schooling."

Dr. James Hemming.

"John Holt patiently and gently dismantles the structure of dubious assertions and false assumptions that holds together the tower block called the British National Curriculum (or The 1988 Education Act) with the spanner of reason, the pliers of experience and the screwdriver of careful observation."

Dr. Roland Meighan.

"Mr. Holt has a lot to say about children that is original, acute, and worthy of our closest attention."

The New York Times.

The price is £5.95 (postage and packing included)

JOHN HOLT'S LAST WORD.

Great store is set by the fact that all EO'ers are in it for differing reasons, but are united by our common desire to have our children out of school. True, but I suspect there is another, subtler uniting factor. And I venture to say it is that, despite our differing educational approaches, we all agree that our children learn best when allowed to learn naturally, and by that I mean, by making use of the world around them in their own way and at their own pace. Nowadays, when the notion of organic learning is at an all-time low, it takes some courage and confidence to nourish this principle. What a relief it is when other, more public voices can make explicit and endorse such principles on our behalf. LEARNING ALL THE TIME is a superb example.

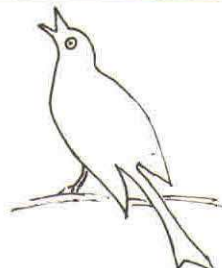
John Holt's books have paralleled my own journey towards understanding how children learn best (not that I've got there yet, but that's another story). TEACH YOUR OWN is, quite rightly, the EO bible. But LEARNING ALL THE TIME is the strongest, clearest, most eloquent message he could have left for us - not just EO'ers, but for all those wishing to resist the rising tide of educational fascism.

The book is also an extremely practical guide. Covering reading, writing, numbers, science and music, apart from wider issues about the nature of learning and parental involvement, it offers help in the basic areas of how to start, and the pitfalls to avoid. It could be a smug teaching aid, but being John Holt, it's written out of a warm, loving connection with people (he likes children!), he is reaching out to share his own experience.

Sarah Guthrie.

LEARNING ALL THE TIME

Bookshop price for this book is £5.95. It is available to EO members at the bargain price of £4.50, postage included, from:
Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire IV22 2HE.



Regional News South West



AVON:

The Avon Seed Circle is now meeting three times a week for workshops and outings and at other times for play and entertainment. Members from Somerset and Gloucester and visitors always welcomed. To receive mailings, send an SAE to Poppy Green, 15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol B58 1DB (0272) 735091.

For further information phone Julia Hammond on (0272) 636081

South East



BUCKS:

Several of us continue to meet on an informal basis, we also swim regularly at Northampton and sometimes at Bletchley and Wolverton.

Monday 15th April: Candle making.

Monday 20th May : Paper making.

Both to be held at our home 19, New Road, Castlethorpe.

Please telephone Milton Keynes 511247 if you are coming, and bring some lunch to share. Members from surrounding areas are very welcome to come.

We are also planning library exhibitions for the "National Home Education Day" - October 19th 1991. If you are interested in helping please contact me - Valerie Common.

KENT:

Adele Bright is organizing workshops for younger children, and would like to hear from other members interested in joining in. Please ring Adele on (0227) 265583 for information.

A free educational visit is being arranged to Deal Castle in May, and possibly to the Timeball Tower, only a few minutes walk away. Both are situated right on the seafront - so please bring a picnic to have on the beach. Ring Pam on (0304) 210997 for details of this and other visits, or to suggest places you would like to visit.

CAMPING WEEKEND IN KENT.

EO members in Kent are holding a gathering from Thursday 27th June to Sunday 30th June at Gloversbridge Farm, Grigg Lane, Headcorn, near Maidstone, Kent. (approx 2 miles from village centre and BR station).

We will have the use of a 5 acre secluded field with camping style toilet facilities and a cold water tap. There is easy access for campers who wish to bring caravans or motor homes.

The emphasis of the gathering will be on activities and workshops in which children of all ages and their parents can contribute and participate with plenty of time for relaxation and socialization. There will be workshops on drama, music and percussion, crafts, art and sculpture plus other activities such as non-competitive games, a ramble and visit to local vineyard. All EO supporters are very welcome.

There will be a charge of £1.50 per night per adult - children free (£3.50 per adult for a 3 night advance booking).

For further details or offers of more workshops contact Keith and Sue Burchett Tel: West Malling (0732) 870344 or write - see contact list.

Saturday 4th May 1991: Visit to Stone Lodge Farm Park, Stone near Dartford. A working farm park with museum of farming exhibits, childrens coramr, milking and spinning demonstrations. Reasonable entrance fee (unable to confirm at moment). Meet 12.00 noon in tea room. For further details contact Sue and Keith Burchett West Malling (0732) 870344.

London



NORTH LONDON: Meetings:

- 1) We meet the first Sunday of every month from 2-6pm (not 11.30-3.30 anymore) Venue: Friends Meeting House, Church Crescent, Muswell Hill N10. Nearest tube Highgate (15 mins walk) wheelchair access but some help needed. (Swiss Cottage is no more!)
- 2) We have a tentative booking on the 3rd Monday of each month at the Log Cabins, Interchange, Wilkin Street NW5. BR Kentish Town West or Kentish Town Underground. from 1.30pm-5.30pm. Please phone first (tel nos below).
- 3) A number of EO families have been going on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3.30pm-5.30pm to the family workshops at the Fleet Community Education Centre, Agincourt Road NW3 (nearest tube Belsize Park). They have arts and crafts for all ages i.e. babies to adults. You have to join the Centre £2 per term children and unwaged adults and £12 per term waged adults. It is closed during school holidays. First visit or two is free - trial.
- 4) Outings are often arranged during the week usually Mondays. Phone Belinda on (081) 343 1061 for details.

General:

For Friends Meeting House and Log Cabins (full wheelchair access) people often bring food to share. Tea and coffee provided. We ask for a contribution of about £1.50 some pay more some pay nothing. Meetings are very informal. Adults and children often chat in a circle and others play outside, the log cabins have extensive soft play equipment.

Phone David and Helen Michael (071) 284 2124 or Belinda and Alan Reid (081) 343 1061 or Jeff Bengé (081) 883 7906.

SOUTH LONDON:

We meet more or less monthly to encourage each other, meet new faces and play. We bring food and drink to share. All welcome.

Sat. Apr. 6 - At The Child and Parent Centre in the Albany, Douglas Way, SE8, 11am-3.30pm.

Sun. Apr. 28 - At Norwood Childrens' Centre, behind St Luke's Church 2-8 Norwood High St, SE27, 1pm-5pm. We are hoping that for this meeting Clive and Lisa will be able to come and lead us in an afternoon of co-operative games.

Sat. Jun. 1 - At the Albany 11am-3.30pm (see above).

Sun. Jun. 30 - At Norwood Childrens' Centre (see above).

For more details phone Nedge or Dorothy (081) 469 0413

LONDON VISITS:

Tue. Apr. 9 - MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE - South Bank. Talk at 11.30 for 7-11 year olds. Meet 11.20 at the latest. Entrance fee £1.15. Numbers limited, so ring to book a place.

Tue. May. 7 - MUSEUM OF MANKIND - Burlington Gardens. We can meet in Green Park at 11.15 or the museum foyer at 1.25 for activity session about Palestine - handling materials, being shown the exhibition and acting out a Palestinian wedding. 1.30-3.30. For 7-11 year olds. Numbers limited - ring (0892) 661319 to book a place. For Teacher's pack and worksheets ring (071) 323 8043.

Tue. May. 14 - TATE GALLERY - Meet at schools entrance 11.15 for talk at 11.30. If anyone has any particular ideas of what they would like to look at do get in touch as soon as possible. For 7-11 year olds.

Tue. May. 21 - POLKA THEATRE - Wimbledon. "Elementary Mr. Holme" a science based mystery thriller for 8's upwards. Ring to book as soon as possible. Cost £3.70-£4.00 per seat.

Tue. Jun. 4 - NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY - Explorers. Discussion of how explorers and the places they explored are portrayed followed by practical artwork. Covers Drake, Raleigh and Cook. Session 11.30-1.00 for 7-11 year olds. Numbers limited - ring to book. Covent Garden afterwards.

Tue. Jun. 11 - HAMPTON COURT - Meet at the Trophy Gate at 11.15. I have to check if we can get in as a group and the cost. Please let me know if you are interested - more later.

Tue. Jun. 24 - GEFPRYE MUSEUM - Kingsland Road, E2. In the William and Mary room 11.40-1.00 (lunch room booked for 1.00). Tubes - Liverpool Street (Bishopsgate exit) - Old Street (exit 2). Buses - 22A, 22B, 149, 243, 67. Numbers limited - ring to book.

West Midlands



BIRMINGHAM:

Our next meeting will be held at Harris House, 8 St Agnes Road, Moseley. Time 1.30pm. Date Sat 20th April '91. All areas welcome. Please bring food and drink for everyone to share. For further details on how to get there please ring Carol Willis on (021) 455 9742.

The May meeting will be held at Janet Dent's house at 2pm on Sat 18th May. 7 Featherston Road, Streetley, Sutton Coldfield, Ring Janet Dent on 353 4148 for details on how to get there.

East Midlands



DERBYSHIRE:

Third Wednesday in every month - swimming at Alfreton pool, pool open 12.00-1.30 usually. Bring lunch to eat afterwards at Lynne and Mike's (0773) 836662.

Wed. Apr. 17 - Read safety talk by Alfreton Police, including videos, at Alfreton Leisure Centre. Meet at Alfreton Leisure Centre for a swim first at 12 noon. Talk commences at 2pm, till 3pm approx. Phone Linda (0773) 608259.

Wed. May. 1 - Visit to Ripley Fire Station, Derby Rd, Ripley. Plenty of parking nearby. Meet at the Fire Station at 2.15pm (lasts approx 1 hour). The Fire Station is next to Ripley Leisure Centre, so those who wish to meet for a swim could meet in the pool at 12.15. Phone Linda for details.

Wed. May. 29 - A pond dipping session at Skipley Park. Contact Lynne for details.

Wed. Jun. 12 - Exploring Cresswell Crags with a ranger. Meet outside visitor centre 9.30. Bring a torch and lunch. Contact Lynne for details.

May - June - We are hoping to camp again this year at Hartington. For details phone Shirley and Ben Kelk (0332) 675535 or Mike (0773) 836662

Mon. Jul. 22 - Tissington Trail - bike hire in fine countryside, phone Mike (0773) 836662 for details.

Sun Aug. 18 - Elvaston Castle. Meet 12.30 in playground.

LEICESTERSHIRE:

Wed. Apr. 10 - Meet at Beaumont Leys Pool to swim. Any time between 12 noon and 4pm. Bring Lunch. This is a regular monthly meeting - 2nd Wed. each month.

Sat. Apr. 13 - Meet at Lesley and Pierre's house in Market Bosworth (tel. M.B. 291784). Bring lunch to share. We hope to go brass-rubbing and to a local steam railway (free). The brass-rubbing is cheap - 50p upwards.

Fri. May. 3 - Theatre trip to Derby Playhouse to see Molecule Theatre's "Gremlins in the Works". Aimed at 7-11 yr olds it covers fax's, satellites, etc. Book early April at latest - tickets from Liz and Gordon (0509) 856604.

- Wed. May. 8 - Beaumont Leys Pool (as April 10th).
- Sun. May. 12 - Meet at Lucy and Keith's house (tel. 053759 2118) and later on to the Wigston Framework Knitting Museum. Admission 75p and 25p. Bring some lunch to share.
- Fri. May. 31 - We expect to meet at Granby Halls, Leicester to rollerskate 2pm-4pm. Cost: 80p - but please phone Liz and Gordon to check as we're awaiting confirmation (0509 - 856604).
- Wed. Jun. 5 - Visit to Leicester's "Ese House", Western Park, Hinckley Rd. Meet prompt at 2pm as we've booked a tour. We need to raise about £17 for this so a donation would be appreciated. They will provide us with notes and info etc. Phone Liz and Gordon if you want to know more (0509) 856604.
- Wed. Jun. 12 - Beaumont Leys Pool (as April 10th).
- Sun. Jun. 23 - Informal gathering at Kevin and Frances' home, Mountserrel. Bring some lunch to share. Tel. (0533) 302504.
- Tue. Jul. 2 - Meet at Belgrave Hall, Belgrave, Leicester. 12 noon. Bring picnic lunch to eat in the beautiful gardens. This is a Queen Anne house with a stable block and period gardens. Admission free.
- Wed. Jul. 10 - Beaumont Leys Pool (as April 10th).
- Sun. Jul. 21 - Meet at Gordon and Liz' for lunch. Bring some food to share. (please phone to check this is still on nearer the time). We hope to visit a local hall too. Tel. (0509) 856604.
- We also expect to go camping at Beaumanor Hall as we did last year. Ideal for non-campers as all tents and cooking equipment are provided. This will be a weekend activity. By the time your reading this we'll probably have the dates. If you haven't got your own tent book early to avoid disappointment. (Phone Liz and Gordon (0509) 856604).
- Other suggestions: Dinosaur exhibition (Birmingham); canoeing; Fire Station; Iron Age settlement; a day on a narrow-boat and a series of bi-weekly art and craft sessions in Leicester. Phone or send SAE if you want to know about any of these. Liz and Gordon (0509) 856604.

East Anglia



CAMBRIDGESHIRE:

The Cambridge Group continues to meet at one another's houses or parks/nature reserves, depending on the weather.

Upware Field Studies Centre - We are arranging for a group to go to the Upware Centre (between Cambridge and Ely). The present group is aged between 6-10, but older children are very welcome.

For further details please phone Jacky Barlew (0763) 838941.



North West



MERSEYSIDE/CHESHIRE:

16th April. Thurstaston Visitor Centre, Heswall. Meet at 11.15 for 11.30 start. Ranger led scavenger hunt. Picnic lunch, then nature walk 1.30-2.30. If rainy we have the use of a room with nature videos and crayons for the younger members. I will bring balls etc. for outdoor games if required.
Mid June Fun Day; BOUNCY CASTLE at my house. Bring food, I will provide drinks. Games for the older children or we can walk to beach. ALL WELCOME. Ring Claire French, Caldy, Wirral on 051 625 1410.

MERSEYSIDE:

A trip is trying to be arranged to Fords of Halewood in July. Anyone interested in going please contact J.A. Fowler, address below. Also an informal meeting at my house 7th May. J. Fowler.

There is a FOSSIL HUNT with a qualified geologist in Holywell, Clwyd on a Sunday late May/early June. Contact Jan Miller (0352) 714 796 or Jane Woolfe 051-427 3212 for more details.

24th April; Talawa Theatre Company's production of Anthony and Cleopatra at the Everyman Theatre, Liverpool. Contact Jane Woolfe to book by 8th April.

Mr J.A.Fowler, 68 Harlow Close, Sutton Heath, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5EX.

MANCHESTER:

We were pleased to see so many new faces at our February meeting in Manchester and hope to see even more next time!

Join the Birch Band!

Andrew Basseby will be running a band for musicians and non-musicians alike, from 9am-10am every Saturday at Birch Community Centre, Brighton Grove, M14. The age range at the first session was 2½ to teenage and a good time was had by all. Instruments are available for those who do not have their own. For further information phone Louise Rhodes on 061-225 3492.

Meetings:

15th April/Manchester Craft Village, Oak Street, Manchester. At 11am. Come and see craftspeople at work. No Cost! Snack lunches available.

17th June /Informal meeting at Nancy Bailey's, 13 Criccieth Rd, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, 1.30-4.00pm. For more details 'phone Anne Nesbit on (0625) 871718.

MERSEYSIDE:

A group riding lesson has been booked at Croxteth Hall Park for Thursday the 25th of April at 2pm.

If you are interested contact Pam Parkin on 051-265 1538. Please book by the 12th of April as places are limited.

Yorkshire



SOUTH YORKSHIRE:

- April 4th/ 11am Weston Park Museum in Sheffield, a session on "The Weather".
April 11th/ Visit to the Colour museum in Bradford.
April 18th/ "Natural dyes" by Mary. For these last two events phone Mary for more information.
May 7th/ Visit to "The Tales of Robin Hood" in Nottingham. Phone Dineke 553836 for details.
May 26th/ Visit to Buxton Micrarium. To be organised by Janet and Philip. Tel. 348451.
June 20th/ 11am. Weston Park Museum in Sheffield, session on "Nocturnal Animals".
Every Thursday gatherings at Dineke's house from about 10.30, 48 Montgomery Road, Sheffield. Tel. 553836.

WEST YORKSHIRE:

- 16th April Visit to the Museum of Childhood, Dewsbury. 3/4 mile out of town centre, on the Huddersfield road. Visit free. Toys, games, 1940's classroom and space to eat lunch. Meet 11am.
2nd May 1.30pm. Trip around Archaeological Resource Centre in York. "Sort and date authentic archaeological finds...try out ancient craft. Members from other areas welcome. Meet outside centre or 12pm onwards in garden outside York Museum for picnic lunch. £2 adults, £1 children. I need to know numbers so please book. For details contact Alison Tribe (0484) 606618.
13th May Parents' meeting at Kim's house, 21 Drummond Avenue, Leeds. Phone 757473, for directions.
24th May Visit to the Railway Museum at York. Meet there at 10.30am. We have the use of "Magician's Road" 11.30-12.30, and can have lunch in a railway carriage! Cost: Adults £2.40, Children £1.20. Members from other groups welcome to join us.
25th June Day out at Lotherton Hall. Meet 11am at the cafe. Bird garden (free), Art gallery: Adults £1, Children 45p, extensive grounds.
13th July Parents and children's meeting at Alison Tribe's, 4 Penistone Road, Birds Edge, Huddersfield. Phone (0484) 606618 for directions. Bring your own lunch.
30th Sep. Parents' meeting at Jacqui Reed's, 73 Salisbury Road, Armley, Leeds. 8pm. Phone (0532) 798783 for directions.
Temple Newsam (Leeds) and Shibden Hall (Halifax) are two other historic houses with large grounds and "things to do". Phone Kim if you would like to "get together" at one or both of these places. Phone Kim for details of any of the outings, and if you have suggestions for future activities. (0532) 757473.
Celia Yates suggested a weekend summer camp. Anyone interested? If so contact her on (0274) 640127.

NORTH YORKSHIRE:

Thanks for the response to my newsletter - any more offers for get togethers very welcome! Phone (0904) 400173.

May 3rd Friday/ Informal gathering at Sue and Charlie Clare's house. Alexandra Cottage, Rievaulx, Helmsley, York. Tel. (043 96) 364. Meeting together at 12 noon; please bring your lunch. All very welcome.

May 31st Friday/At Ann and Gerrard O'Sullivan's house for the afternoon - from 2pm please. 11 Elmfield Terrace, Malton Road, Hewarth, York. Tel. (0904) 425523.

Please contact Gwen Baldeck (0904) 400173 for information about the co-ordinators job as it might not be too long before we move.

Wales



SOUTH WALES:

April 29th at 12pm. Meet at the Bullring in Llantrisant, next to the awful model house craft centre. Pond dipping and generally exploring on the common. Llantrisant is 2 miles off the M4. Follow the road as it zig-zags up the hill, turn left at the Cross Keys and the Bullring's the next thing you meet. Bring a picnic. Kate Powell.

Scotland



STRATHCLYDE:

Open day in Strathclyde. Sunday 5th May - 1.30-5pm. At the Brown's - Bert and Lorna, Alistair, Marina, Jenny and Caroline. 130 Greeneck Rd, Bishopton (near Glasgow Airport), Renfrew-Shire. Come and talk to other home schooling families. Everybody welcome - adults and kids. Bring a small snack.

EDUCATING ARCHIE : GULF CRISIS



NATIONAL HOME EDUCATION DAY - 19th October (followed by info/activity week).
I've now had more offers of help for this week of information and activities. If
ever you've felt the need to "spread the word" about home education, here's your
chance. Local libraries booked in advance can often make display boards available
- usually free. Some may want to keep the display up for a whole month. Most do
not. By October we will have some ready made exhibition material and many of us
have collections of press cuttings that can be photocopied to supplement this.

With a sheet (perhaps) of local information and maybe some photos a small but interesting display should be easily mounted. Please let me know what you have done/will do so that I can co-ordinate county by county what is happening and eventually act as a reference point for press and media. Thanks. Liz Ramsay, 1 Stanford Hill Cottis, Stanford on Soar, Loughborough, Leics LE12 5QL (0509) 856604.
+BOOK library exhibitions space now before it's too late.
+TRY to arrange at least one local activity during the week to which the public and/or press may be invited.
+KEEP me informed - please!

FACT PACKS.

Well, a big thank you to all those who have taken time and trouble to write with articles/ideas/suggestions for the fact packs. I wish I had time to write to all of you individually. Thanks also to the two families who have promised photos... There are still areas that no-one has written about and I'm trying to find people who will cover them. By the time you read this I hope it has all come together but we will still need childrens contributions and more photos.

CHILDREN: Let's have a few words on what you think about home schooling, socialising, EO gatherings, the difference between home and school, group trips to the museum, theatre, zoo or whatever. After all, the whole thing seems irrelevant without your thoughts and ideas!

PHOTOS: Come on! I know we're not the only EO family with a camera - it's not going to be very impressive if all the photos are of us! All photos will be returned if you put your name and address on them (or bundle a number together in a labelled envelope). At this stage we can't be sure where in the text photos will fit but any that look obviously "educational" or "child centred" or "social" may well be useful e.g. we have some at a party, a few abseiling, a few canoeing etc.... Are there any photos taken at Featherstone? Thanks. Liz Ramsay (address above).

TRIPLE BILL.

- 1) The new address of Tom and Caroline Brett with Peter (5½), Gregory (3) and Marianne (1) is 175 High Street, Chalgrove, Oxon. Tel (0865) 890365. We would like to make new friends.
- 2) Christchurch Gardens Kindergarten in Reading has places for children 3-6 years, various groups and interesting evening lectures. Phone (0865) 890365 for more information.
- 3) Peter, aged 5½, would like to exchange pictures and short letters with friends. He is interested in North American Indians and Lego, and is learning the violin. 175 High Street, Chalgrove, Oxon OX9 7ST. The Bretts.

Adverts

Comfortable, well equipped 6-berth caravan on organic smallholding in beautiful County Clare, Ireland. Fresh farm produce available, fishing, birdwatching, meeting our friendly animals or just relaxing in lovely countryside. For details write to: Shoosmith, Faha, Dromindoora, Caher, County Clare, Ireland.

PERSONALISED EDUCATION - AN AGENDA OF POSSIBILITIES.

A day conference is being held on Saturday April the 27th 1991 at Dame Catherine's School in Ticknall, South Derbyshire. The conference aims to provide mutual support and encouragement for all those trying to develop more personalised forms of education and to provide an opportunity for learning and dialogue about alternatives since these are rarely on the agenda elsewhere.

There will only be 48 places available due to limitations of space and facilities. The cost by advance application will be £20 (unwaged £10). If you are interested please contact: Education Now Conference Organiser, c/o 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3PQ.

We (Roger, Margaret and Robin(7)) live in a large house in the countryside in its own grounds about 4 miles from Hebden Bridge and two miles from the Pennine Way in West Yorkshire. The area is good for walking and exploring as well as being usefully close to Manchester, Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield. We have a playground, rough pasture and woods, an organic garden and a mill pond which we hope to restore as a source of hydro-electric power. We also run a small Montessori school (2½-7) during term time on the ground floor.

Whilst we have lived communally here we are at present on our own and would be glad of help in the garden, house or with the nature house or power schemes we have planned. In return for a few hours help we could offer accomodation (self-catering) study facilities, music room and a centre for holiday and visits in the area.

There is adequate parking, a friendly local pub, a station two miles away and good local bus services.

If you want to know more, phone us after 6pm any evening. Tel. (0422) 884682 Roger Scaife, Glen House, Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks HX7 5SQ.



The Henderson Family (Vera, Walter, Guy, Joey) have recently moved from London to Plymouth. Our new address is: 23, Hastings Terrace, Plymouth, PL1 5BD.

We would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to all our EO friends who we didn't get around to seeing before leaving London and to say if they are ever in this part of the world they will be welcome to call in. We are also keen in meeting local families, who would likewise like to meet new acquaintances.

SPORTS SUPPLEMENT: please send your ideas, articles, contributions. Sport/games: dancing, diving, karate, hockey, football: What is a sport? How is it educational? What can we learn from sports? Should they be competitive? How can EO'ers take part in sport? Is it a good way to make friends? How safe is it? How much does it cost? Lots and lots of letters, drawings, photos, stories and jokes please, for the worlds biggest and best ever supplement to: Kevin & Jody Fleisch, 62 Uplands Avenue, Connahs Quay, Deeside, Clwyd, CH5 4LG. Tel. (0244) 810153 by May 1st 1991.

ERYRI DANCE CAMP 1991, NANT GWYNANT, SNOWDONIA, July 30th to Aug 10th.
We can offer 20 free tickets for people to work part time in the children's area.
We're looking for input in the following areas: Arts & crafts, games, stories,
hill-walking, canoeing, creche and general helpers. If interested please contact
Caroline Bithell. If interested in coming anyway please get in touch. £80 adults,
£15 children (under 5's free), booking forms available send S.A.E.
Caroline Bithell, 3 Castle Terrace, Criccieth, Gwynedd LL52 ODY. Phone (0766)
522967.



CAMPING IN THE PEAK 1991, Thursday June 20th to Thursday June 27th.
There will be an EO camp this year at Hartington. Quiet, peaceful surroundings.
Basic facilities: showers, toilets, village nearby. 70p adults, 40p children, 50p
per car, per night. Caravans £2.50, with awning £3 (car free). Phone Ben and Shir-
ley for details and bookings. (0332) 675535.
P.S. Has anyone a large frame tent to use for group gatherings at the camp please?
Contact Mike (0773) 836662.

EDITOR'S APOLOGY to Mr. (C.A.?), who is looking for a house to rent. I lost your
advert. If you and anyone who has a house to rent will contact me, I will put you
in touch with each other.

Complete I.C.S. maths G.C.S.E. course (with test answers). We found excellent but
pricey at £119. Covers all topics from basic level to higher level in easy-to-follow
booklets. £25 o.n.o.

Wendy Downing, Oak Tree Cottage, Old Rectory Lane, Bratton Fleming, Barnstaple,
North Devon, EX31 4TG. (0598) 710774.

We also have a physics course. We couldn't do it so hardly used. If anyone would
like to try it. Offer p&p and it's yours.

Dear EO,

I read Sam Pay's letter about the scouts. I am a member of the Woodcraft
Folk. The Woodcraft Folk is a group for the age of 6 upwards. We play games, we
sing and dance, and we make things. The Woodcraft Folk is non-religious and boys
and girls go. If you would like to know more about the Woodcraft Folk and find out
wher your nearest group is, write to: Woodcraft Folk, 13 Ritherdon Rd, London SW17
8QE.

From Lewis Jackson, 87 Liverpool Rd, Irlam, Manchester M30 6EH.

CHILDRENS' CLASSICS STORY CASSETTES.

Why not introduce your children to these classic stories on audio-cassette?
Listening to taped stories may encourage them to read the book at a later date!

Choose from: Heidi, Jungle Book, Pinocchio, Pied Piper, Peter Pan, Robin Hood, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Treasure Island, Moby Dick, Tom Sawyer, 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea.

Adapted, abridged and dramatised for children aged 5 upwards. Each cassette: £2.95. (postage: 50p each)

"EARLY LEARNING" cassettes: Multiplication Tables; Alphabet; Counting; Simple Sums; Telling The Time; The Calender; Musical Sounds of the Orchestra; Primary French; Nursery Rhymes/Songs; Party Songs/Games. Each cassette: £2.45 (postage 50p each)

Immediate refund if dis-satisfied. Other helpful products available. S.A.E. for list.

Martin Evans (EO), 16, Thistle House, Dee Street, London E14 OPD (071-515-1797)

TEACHER REQUIRED

For primary education of boy aged 3 at present.

Please write for details to:
S.J. Wilson, 73 Harburn Rd,
West Calder, West Lothian,
EH55 8AT.

HOME EDUCATION AND THE LAW

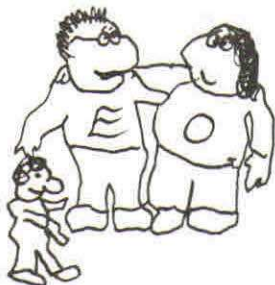
by Wolf and Deutsch.

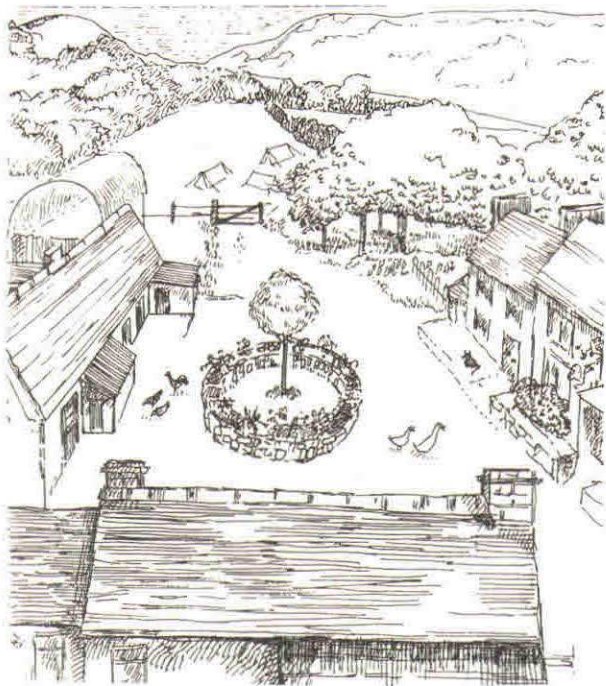
2nd edition now available!

Covers the law in England and Wales with regard to children who do not attend school.

Now includes de-registration, new legislation, etc. £5 from:

David Deutsch, 19 New Cross Rd,
Headington, Oxford, Oxon, OX3 8LP.





**CWM RHAFFAU - MAY EO WEEKEND
CAMP AND SUMMER FLAT.**

At Cwm Rhaffau, an old farmhouse within walking distance of the sea, not far from Cardigan, we have formed a small community of EO families and welcome visitors with out-of-school children. We have 17 acres of fields and woods, space for camping and a flat for visitors. The flat is available at special rates for EO families.

MAY CAMP 25-27 MAY 1991.

After last year's successful Bank Holiday weekend camp we are holding another this year. Please book early as there are limits on numbers. We would very much like to welcome other EO families from Wales.

Cwm Rhaffau, Sarnau, Llandysul
Dyfed SA44 6QZ Tel. (0239)
811118.

Looking for a narrowboat

The Slippery Fish Puppet Theatre, Sally, John, Claudie (11), Anna (10) is looking to rent a narrowboat for some time between June 1st and July 16th. We have been horse-drawn by road for the past 3 seasons, and take our show to EO groups, schools and parties. Please contact us now if you can help us get afloat so that we can arrange as many groups as possible.

Sally Hargraves, Cwm Rhaffau, Sarnau, Llandysul, Dyfed
SA44 6QZ Tel. (0239) 811118.



We are looking for a vegetarian, non-smoking family/single person(s) who would like to live in our 3 bedroomed house on the northern edge of Bristol, while we are away for the summer (approx late May-early September). Bristol has a very active EO group (Seed Circle). Rent would be about £30 a week. Quiet area, traffic free at front of house. Plenty of parking space. If interested please phone or write for more details. Vicki and David Willow, 85 Arlingham Way, Patchway, Bristol BS12 5NG. Phone (0272) 699454.

PUBLICITY OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION.

- The Publicity Officer will deal with calls from the media and give out information on Education Otherwise and home education in general.
 - The P.O. should have a good knowledge of the law with regard to home education.
 - The P.O. should be aware of the diverse membership of EO and the variety of ways in which they home educate.
 - The P.O. should be aware of the many reasons for peoples' decision to home educate.
 - The P.O. must be able to respond confidently to interrogation on matters such as:
 - a) Current education legislation and how it affects home educators.
 - b) Socialisation and the home educated child.
 - c) The current trends of peoples' decisions to home educate.
(These are the commonest enquiries received from the media)
 - The P.O. must be prepared to attend both radio and TV studios for recorded interviews.
 - The P.O. must be prepared to respond quickly to all media enquiries. Any delay in giving out information will result in loss of opportunity for press coverage.
 - The P.O. must be prepared for journalists misrepresenting his/her comments - and respond immediately in order to correct such mistakes.
 - The P.O. will find it useful, if not essential, to be kept aware of current educational reports in the press, as calls from journalists to EO may well have been inspired by such reports.
e.g. In 1990 there were HMI reports on childrens' failure in schools. The P.O.s response to this had to be an informed response.
- N.B. After a while it should be possible for the P.O. to anticipate the nature of enquiries from the press, following any controversial educational issues being made public.
- The P.O. must at all times be aware of the grass roots membership of EO, so that whenever possible he/she is able to make comments acceptable to the membership as a whole. Personal opinions may be useful in proving a point but in no way should ever negate the aims of EO as an organisation for which the P.O. is a representative.

Jo Rust, Publicity Officer 1989-1991

If this sounds interesting but more than you feel you are able to take on at present, perhaps you would like to become a local Publicity Officer, dealing with publicity for your local area or region? Contact Lucy Charlton or Jude Aslley-Walker for details.

FEATHERSTONE CASTLE

Spring Week - 25th April - 2nd May 1991.

For further details send S.A.E. to Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-Shire IV22 2HE.

Provisional agenda for Spring Members Meeting:

Quorum; apologies; minutes; matters arising; National Home Schooling Day; steering committee report; future venues; publicity officer (situation vacant); Magazine reviews (volunteer needed).

Please submit requests for additional items in writing to: General Secretary Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Rd, Dover, Kent CT17 0BH. Anyone placing an item on the agenda should attend the meeting, or send as much information as possible. Thank you.



EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS - EDITED BY SUSAN FERRIGNO.

I open the paper this morning... (Eastern Daily Press, 28 Feb) and read "60 million pound bill for school vandalism". Similarly "Councils to sue parents over classroom fires" (Independent some time ago) had an equally somber disturbing effect. I know the nasties are never ending, but I have had quite enough for the time being thank you very much. With Spring just around the corner, growth is the thing, and a little hope. Telegraph, Jan. 17 "The Middle East makes it clear that there are educational issues involved which are as great as those which have to do with whether a child can add up and spell... Now is the time for classrooms up and down the contry to be places where the importance of the UN is spelt out or dispatched to the rubbish dump of history..." (Peter Dawson).

"The Anglo-European School at Ingatestone in Essex, a 1,150 pupil comprehensive that successfully confounds many of the most widely held stereotypes... a school that would prepare young people to become full Europeans... for six months of the year it plays host to a stream of European exchange students and teachers. Its own pupils have the opportunity to make up to half a dozen separate visits, one lasting two months, to a choice of 11 twinned schools in Germany, France and Belgium. Others go to the Soviet Union and Norway. Everyone takes at least one foreign language. Yet it is poorly funded, inadequately equipped and shabbily furnished. 'If you value young people you should present them with a quality environment. What does this place say about the way we value them and their education?' says Bob Reed, the school's head..." (John Clare, "Tatty corridors of excellence").

A few headlines to finish.. Mostly from the Telegraph. "Snobbery harms pupils who are non-academic", "History should end in the mid 1960s", "Girls' schools produce best career wives", "Schools where girls are still just sugar and spice", "Reading standards on the decline", "Ognons cause tears in France"...

Many thanks to Janice Owen and Sarah Guthrie for contributions.

MULTI-FAITH TOPICS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

AUTHOR: JANICE WEBB

PUBLISHER: CASSELL PUBLISHERS LTD., VILLIERS HOUSE, 41/47 STRAND, LONDON WC2N 5JE

Although I gave up any serious attempt at following any religion long ago, I still think it is very important for my children to learn about all the religions of the world - how else can you understand other cultures and indeed world history and current affairs? This book although aimed at schools, is an ideal resource for exploring different religions and their associated cultures at home. After briefly describing the origins, beliefs and customs of each of four religions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity, the book then has chapters on the traditions, rituals and festivals of each.

It is filled with suggestions for practical activities, - recipes, painting, crafts and the stories of the religions for other projects as well. It has an extensive bibliography, list of useful addresses and an index (how essential, but so often omitted!).

If I have one criticism it is that the book is written for adults in a very matter-of-fact way - you don't get much feeling of the beauty of the ritual, the fun of the festivals or the poetry of the stories. However as an inexpensive, concise and easy-to-use resource on a subject that has little other literature aimed at young children, it will be very useful for any family who want to start, or add to, their exploration of world cultures.

Jan Miller, Whitford, Holywell, Clwyd.

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The following publications are available from: Bruce & Christine Wallace,
25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire IV22 2HE.

SCHOOL IS NOT COMPULSORY (SINC) - a guide to your rights £2.50.

EARLY YEARS - learning suggestions for under 12s £2.50.

LATER YEARS - learning for older children plus GCSE £2.50.

TEACH YOUR OWN - by John Holt, philosophy of home education £3.85.

LEARNING ALL THE TIME - by John Holt £4.50

SCHOOLS OUT - by Jean Bendell, a good why & how book by EO member and long term home educator £5.95.

EO NEWSLETTERS - back copies for '89 & '90 £1.00 each

EO NEWSLETTER BARGAIN BASEMENT - any 4 copies (our selection) from '87 to '88 £1.20.

NEWLY PRODUCED NEWSLETTER DIGEST - 90 page selection of the best from '82 to '86 £1.50.

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING - the newsletter of EO's parallel organisation in the USA. £10.00 for 6 issues per year starting March, from Jill Gillings, Ballaglonny

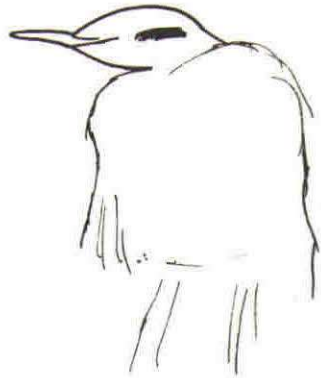
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EO STATIONARY, REUSE LABELS, MEMBERSHIP FORMS, EO LEAFLETS & HANDBILLS - from Lucy Charlton, 2 Wistow Lane, Newton Harcourt, Leics LE8 0FT. Send £2.00 for 100 reuse labels.

PRICES QUOTED FOR EO MEMBERS ONLY.



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Mon. Apr. 22nd 7.30pm BBC 1 - Family Matters. An EO family will be featured in debate about smacking.

Parents at Liverpool's Fundamentalist Christian School sign a declaration authorising teachers to use corporal punishment. Says the headmaster; "Corporal punishment is a corrective measure and we teach morals through it. It can be used to help train the nation's children." Observer 3.3.91



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HELP LINES

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Education Otherwise is a membership Organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Our principal aims are to:

encourage learning outside the school system

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

establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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