

**E DUCATION
O T H E R W I S E E**



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE No.84 FEB/MARCH 1992

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors or of Education Otherwise as a whole. Each issue of the Newsletter is edited by a different volunteer member of Education Otherwise and its primary purpose is to provide communication and support between members.

If you would like to edit the Newsletter or a Supplement, please write or telephone Lynne Greenhough, 18 Park Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE5 7JE.

ADVERTISEMENTS are accepted (when space permits) from members if they are of interest to E.O. in general at 10 pence Per Word.

This issue edited by Jenny Aynes, Swindon.

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The deadline for submissions is March 1st 1992. Please send contributions to the appropriate editor marked clearly "For Publication" including your full name and address and telephone number on each submission sent.

Further note for contributors

1. Please submit before 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 to the Newsletter number and date.
4. Feel free to make suggestions about articles you would like to see in the Newsletter or Supplements.

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EDITORIAL

First of all I'd like to apologise for the lack of illustrations in this Newsletter. There wasn't time to get them in. But try to think of it as an extra bonus, you can have fun drawing your own!

Hopefully this Newsletter is interesting and readable enough for everybody. I would like to echo the feelings of the Bayliss family, in that anyone should have the opportunity to edit the newsletter, regardless of their equipment. We enjoyed their Newsletter very much, as we do every Newsletter. We look forward to seeing the varying typefaces and formats. Hopefully other E.O.ers feel the same.

Going back a bit now, I hope everybody had success with their National Home Education Day efforts. We are very pleased to say we are just about to be added to the Wiltshire Reference Library's Information Network under local clubs and groups, which will hopefully be a little more help towards people discovering E.O. Also E.O. has just had a mention in the local newspaper, congratulations to the Stephens family, who had their picture printed with the article!

It seems there is a curse to editing the Newsletter. Almost every editorial has tales of catastrophies! This is no exception, we've been stricken by illness, had disks breaking down, the phone has been difficult (it must have caught flu too), the printer didn't want to print, etc. It's been a very peaceful start to the year!

Thanks to everybody for the contributions and to Lynne Greenhough for bearing with the time it's taken to complete this Newsletter. We feel much more involved with E.O. since editing the Newsletter, but still we don't know many E.O.ing families, so anybody and everybody in E.O. - we'd love to hear from you! We are Maureen, Tony, Jenny and Matthew. Matthew has been out of school for about 4 months, and we are currently awaiting our first visit from the LEA! (Wish us luck!)

That's it for the Editorial, since I'm writing it at 2:38am!!

With lot's of love and wishing peace & harmony to all E.O.ers!

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Please note: due to lack of space, the Graffiti Board will be held over until the next issue, when it will be devoted to a discussion on The EO newsletter. Please send any thoughts on this subject to Kate Freeman, Wilts.

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Conservative & Liberal Democrat Views

With the General Election approaching it is important that those of us who vote should have some information about the views of the various parties on home education in general and the National Curriculum in particular. I am most grateful to Angela White of Warwickshire for her efforts on EO's behalf. As a result of her correspondence with the leaders of the main parties, we have obtained statements from Michael Fallon MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State) and Ben Rich (Deputy Director, Liberal Democrat Policy Unit) which clarify the Conservative and Liberal Democrat positions on the National Curriculum and other matters of interest to us. We are still waiting for a response from Labour's Jack Straw - but we know the worst about Labour's proposals already!

As a result of her correspondence Angela was invited to tour the Houses of Parliament last August (see her report on p.16 of the Dec./Jan. newsletter) and she also attended Prime Minister's Question Time last November. This visit was reported in the Times and Angela was also interviewed on local radio, thus gaining some useful publicity for EO.

LABOUR'S VIEWS DID YOU SEE IT?

THE REPORT ON OUR VISIT TO THE LABOUR PARTY TO DISCUSS THEIR PLAN TO IMPOSE THEIR NATIONAL CURRICULUM ON HOME EDUCATORS APPEARED IN THE DEC. NEWSLETTER.

UNFORTUNATELY IT WAS DISGUISED AS PART OF THE SINGLE PARENT SUPPLEMENT. IF YOU MISSED IT, GO AND HAVE ANOTHER LOOK!

I'D STILL BE GLAD TO HEAR FROM YOU IF YOU WOULD CARE TO CONTACT ME WITH YOUR VIEWS.

While she was at Westminster Angela met Ben Rich, and while they had lunch he asked her how the Liberal Democrats could help home educators. He accepted a Fact Pack and a copy of "Home Education and the Law" and he promised to speak to Matthew Taylor MP about the possibility of including home education in the party's policies. He agreed to provide a statement of the Liberal Democrat view of home education which is reproduced on the next page of this article.

I have also obtained and studied the relevant Liberal Democrat education policy documents, and I have included some extracts from these which might be of interest to EO members. These documents are:

The Learning Society
Putting Pupils First
Live and Learn (Scottish White Paper)
Putting Pupils First (Welsh Paper)
The Pocket Guide to Education Policy
These are available (tel.0305 264646, or 031 337 2314 for Scottish document and 0222 382210 for Welsh document).



Policy Unit

Party Headquarters
4 Cowley Street
London SW1P 3NB

Telephone 071 222 7999
Fax 071 799 2170

Thursday 5th December

Dear Mrs. Lowe,

My name is Ben Rich and I met last week with one of your members, Angela White, to discuss the work of 'Education Otherwise'. She asked me to write to you and clarify where the Liberal Democrats stand on home education.

Liberal Democrats believe that Britain will never be successful unless it invests in high quality education and training, creating the right conditions for wealth creation and an enterprise economy. We therefore place the highest value on education and are the only political party that has been prepared to say that, if Britain wants a better education system then it must be prepared to pay for it, possibly by putting a penny in the pound on income tax. We have clearly established our credibility as a party which cares deeply about the future of education in Britain.

Angela raised with me a number of issues of specific concern to those involved in 'Education Otherwise'.

First, she asked about the publication of information about the right of parents to educate children outside school. As you will no doubt be aware the Liberal Democrats are firmly committed to freedom of information; indeed, one of our MPs Archy Kirkwood is again introducing a Freedom of Information Bill in the new year. Under such legislation it would not be possible to obscure any aspect of the 1944 Education Act. It would also give parents easier access to curriculum information, previously published examination papers, and other useful educational material.

Secondly, she asked about the National Curriculum. The purpose of introducing a national curriculum in the first place was to try and raise what were generally perceived to be falling standards in education. It seems logical that if a curriculum is genuinely to protect standards then we should try to protect standards for all. For this reason the Liberal Democrats proposed a national curriculum long before the Government took the idea on. However, the Government got the curriculum wrong. Its version is far too rigid and far too inflexible to give individual schools or parents the opportunity to adapt a child's education to suit local needs and the individual learning requirements. We are therefore committed to abolishing the

national curriculum and replacing it with a far less rigid framework to ensure basic standards are maintained.

Thirdly, Angela asked about admission costs to museums. I am glad to inform you that our manifesto for London, 'Changing London for Good' published in September, proposes the abolition of admission charges for the main London museums. This is a commitment which our Arts working group is now looking to extend throughout the rest of the UK.

Angela made two points which I found particularly interesting. She commented on the intimidating nature of examinations and testing, and I see that this is a point which you raise in your literature. Please find enclosed a copy of our latest education policy document 'Fourteen Plus', which proposes reform of our whole examination system from the age of 14 upwards. Exams should be ability-based, not age-based (similar to the format of music exams) and designed to test what a person knows, not what he or she doesn't! I think this sort of examination system would be well-suited to home learners allowing a young person to progress at a speed which suits him or herself, not a speed which fitted in with the school timetable.

The second point which Angela raised was the refusal by her local FE College to allow her to use its resources. The Liberal Democrats have for a long time favoured the expansion of higher and further education and believe that the only way in which this can be achieved cost-effectively is through the expansion of distance and open learning techniques. Programmes developed for use on such courses could easily be made available to home learners and I will draw this suggestion to the attention of our Education spokesperson, Matthew Taylor MP.

In conclusion, may I say that the Liberal Democrats have no desire to restrict home education. Equally, we will not ease the procedures by which pupils are withdrawn from schools; we must safeguard against young people receiving inadequate education. Our policies to reform the examination system, to extend distance and open learning and to guarantee freedom of information will make easier the task of those who choose to educate their children at home.

On a personal note, may I wish 'Education Otherwise' every success in its future work and may I congratulate you on having found such an articulate spokesperson in Angela White. I look forward to reading your summary of our position in your future documents.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Rich
Deputy Director

c.c. Angela White, Matthew Taylor MP

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM AND THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

It is disappointing to see that the Liberal Democrat position on the National Curriculum is very similar to that of the Labour Party's, as they are committed to imposing it upon all children whether they are educated in State schools or not. However, the reasons behind the insistence on the National Curriculum appear to be different from Labour's. "Putting Pupils First" says that "there is room for an alternative vision of education, based neither on an all-powerful State nor on confused notions of the free market." The theory is that education should be "community based, democratically accountable, participative and responsive to changes in consumer demand, social and economic trends and professional advance. Above all, it centres on the needs and wishes of the individual pupil." (p.1). This would make an excellent manifesto for home educators! We can achieve all these aims without the strait-jacket of the National Curriculum.

Clearly the demands of personal liberty have to be balanced against the needs of society as a whole, but it is hard to see any justification for removing the liberty enjoyed by home-educating families when there is no evidence that they are failing their children. This document stresses (p.1) that "the basic belief of the Liberal Democrats is personal liberty for each individual", a theme which is found throughout the party's policies, but the extension of the National Curriculum would entail a significant loss of freedom for several thousand families.

"Putting Pupils First" says "All children need a balanced and broad curriculum, combining academic and practical activities, covering the humanities and sciences, and developing creativity and social understanding. There is clear consensus that up to the age of 16 it is inappropriate to have sharply differentiated curricula for different groups of children." (p.5) Clear consensus? I disagree - and so, I think, would many home educators, including many parents of children with special needs and others who have strong religious and philosophical views. It is interesting that Mr. Justice Woolf said in 1985 that "education is 'suitable' if it primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so" (judicial review, R. v Secretary of State for Education and Science, ex p. Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School Trust: quoted in "Home Education and the Law [second edition]", Deutsch and Wolf). David Deutsch makes the point that there is a huge diversity of forms of education to which the term "suitable" may lawfully apply. The idea of one curriculum for all seems to be at odds with the Liberal Democrat commitment to "the rights of the individual and the protection of minorities" ("Liberal Democrat Policies" p.1).

I note that "Putting Pupils First" mentions that the 1988 Act "allows some schools to develop their own alternative to the National Curriculum for special reasons. Although our proposal for a flexible national framework should mean schools would have less desire to follow this path, we see no reason to prevent it, where schools can demonstrate that they are involved in innovation, new

initiatives and development. Such variety is essential to a healthy education system." (p.6) Perhaps this could offer an opening for home educators?

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE?

The Liberal Democrats are concerned about the effects of inadequate education and training on Britain's economic performance. In the Liberal-SDP Alliance document "The Essential Investment" it was stated that the aim is "to make Britain the best educated and trained nation in the world". It appears that the National Curriculum is seen as a means of achieving certain ends: "Liberal Democrats wish to encourage development of the content of the curriculum in certain areas, notably education for Europe, education for the environment and education for design and technology" ("Putting Pupils First" p.10). The core curriculum would consist of Maths, English, Science and a modern foreign language in order to further these aims. Language study would be compulsory until age 16 as part of the Liberal Democrats' commitment to the ideal of a federal European Union.

The Liberal Democrats are more specific than Labour about their proposals for a reformed National Curriculum. They envisage that the role of the National Curriculum Council would be "to produce broad frameworks, defining those subjects which would normally be regarded as part of the education of all pupils up to the age of 16, ensuring continuity and common standards across the country... Schools and teachers would produce their own detailed curriculum, defining the proportion of time devoted to particular 'framework' subjects and exercising a wide discretion over alternative syllabi." ("Putting Pupils First", p.6)

PROPOSALS FOR ASSESSMENT AND TESTING.

The present national attainment targets would be abolished, and the national tests would be replaced by "a comprehensive and flexible system of continuous assessment, geared to the individual's learning needs and achievements." (op.cit. p.6) For assessment purposes there would be "a bank of models and examples of good practice kept at national or regional level" (p.7). This is very similar to Labour's view (see "Inspections and Testing" in the Labour Party report in the December newsletter). Each pupil would have an "Individual Diagnostic Record" and a "Record of Pupil Achievement". I can accept (as an ex-teacher) that when large numbers of children are taught by relatively few staff in the school environment, it is important to keep careful records in order to ensure continuity and accountability. When the teacher is also the parent, however, I cannot see the necessity for this. Each parent should have the freedom to organise their children's work in a way which is in harmony with their own methods and convictions.

Although "Liberal Democrats attach considerable importance to assessment under examination conditions, with the learning and preparation disciplines these impose..." ("Fourteen Plus" p.4) they also recognise that exams should be taken when the student is ready, not necessarily at a certain age.

OTHER PROPOSALS.

- Modular based courses from age 14 to replace GCSE and A level subject examinations, including academic and vocational elements.
- There is a proposal to open up the resources of secondary schools for use by the community, including computer centres, sports halls and study facilities.
- The introduction of a right of appeal to a tribunal against the provisions made in Statements of Special Needs. The LEA would be obliged to respond to the tribunal's decision.
- Each LEA would be required to set up a Special Needs Service with its own budget. This would be responsible for providing the specified resource for each child in the area.
- There would be a new "Indicative Statement" for children who have difficulties at school, but who are not classed as having special needs. (This might provide a "loophole" for children whose problems would make it impossible for them to follow the National Curriculum at home, but it carries the danger that a child who is already damaged may feel even more isolated and "different".)
- There would be some differences in provision for education in Wales and Scotland, with increased rights and powers given to a new Scottish parliament and Welsh Senedd. This is consistent with the Liberal Democrats' commitment to devolution.
- Education would be compulsory until age 19, with either full-time study or part-time study in conjunction with employment.

AND IN CONCLUSION...

We cannot reasonably expect that a political party which has not been in power should have discovered all the implications of its proposals for minority groups such as ours. There are signs that the Liberal Democrats are willing to listen to us, and I am told by a source within the party that at this stage there are good opportunities to influence the direction of party policy. If you would like to write to the Liberal Democrats and make your views known, YOUR letter may tip the balance. And who knows what may happen to British politics in the future!

* * * * *

All that remains is to give you the text of the letter from Michael Fallon MP, which confirms that the Conservative party is satisfied with the present arrangements for home educators. He also gives a useful confirmation of our rights regarding early admission to FE College. No comment from me is required regarding the letter. I'll just content myself with the observation that it occurred to me recently that EO has grown and flourished virtually entirely under a Conservative government. I wonder if we would have survived in a different political climate?

Jane Lowe, 5 Elm Gardens, Welwyn Garden City. AL8 6RX (0707 390070)



TEMF/0483/1036

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE YORK ROAD LONDON SE1 7PH
TELEPHONE 071-934 9000

MICHAEL FALLON MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

The Hon Francis Maude MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

27 OCT 1979

Dear Francis,

Thank you for your letter of 10 October to Tim Eggar enclosing a letter from Miss Angela White of 30a Field View Close, Exhall, Coventry, about education at home. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of Ministerial responsibility.

We are aware that some parents choose to educate their children otherwise than at school. They are perfectly at liberty to do so, providing that they are not in breach of their statutory duties. Under section 36 of the Education Act 1944, parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special education needs they might have, either at school or otherwise. Local education authorities, under section 37 of the same Act, have a duty to ensure that parents comply with their duties under section 36.

We view the "education otherwise" provisions as a means of accommodating, with reasonable safeguards, the wishes of the very small numbers of parents who provide or contemplate providing this mode of education for their children. We wish to see it retained, and its exclusion from the requirements of the National Curriculum can be seen as recent evidence of this aim. We believe that arrangements for "education otherwise" generally work well and there is no evidence that LEAs in general are antagonistic to parents providing it.

Since school attendance is a matter of continuing concern, and the general welfare of children so important, we would not welcome any easing of procedures for the withdrawal of pupils from school nor the establishment of an overriding right of parents to provide alternative means of education. Such changes might make it more difficult to enforce school attendance, and might encourage obviously inappropriate or inadequate forms of education, to the detriment of the children concerned. We

believe that the current balance of duties and powers between LEAs and parents allows parents who are both genuine in their wishes and competent to implement them to be accommodated and helped.

There is nothing to prevent a person under the age of 16 from receiving education at a college of further education, so long as the programme of study being followed by the young person conforms with the education described in section 36 of the 1944 Act. Since Coventry LEA has its own responsibility for ensuring that Miss White is receiving a full-time education suitable to her needs, her parents might like to contact the Authority to see which of the Authority's facilities are available to her.

If you would like to pass on Miss White's fact pack on education otherwise, we would be very happy to receive it.

I hope that this is helpful.

Miss White
Michael Fallon

MICHAEL FALLON

WANTED :::: WANTED

Someone is urgently required to take phone enquiries for the Midlands area. Very rewarding job - though somewhat emotional at times.

ALSO: someone to deal with general enquiries for the South-West of England. Phone and postal expenses will be paid for by EO. Interested? Please contact Gen. Secretary Pam Stevenson (Address & Phone No. on inside back cover)

Visit Parliament! Youth & Student Day 1992

THURSDAY 20TH. FEBRUARY

WESTMINSTER CENTRAL HALL 9.15am. - 4.10pm.

ORGANISED BY THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
BUT MP'S FROM ALL PARTIES ARE ATTENDING

Workshops on various issues - and A CHANCE FOR YOUNG EO'ERS TO SPEAK FOR HOME EDUCATION AT MP'S QUESTION TIMES. Open to anyone under age 25 (parents of younger ones may accompany them).

IF YOU WANT TO GO PLEASE PHONE JANE LOWE BY MIDDAY 17TH. FEBRUARY AS PLACES ARE LIMITED. (0707 390070) FEE £1.50.

LETTERS

There was a factual error in the Labour Party statement quoted in December's Newsletter. The statement begins: "There is now all Part agreement about the importance of a National Curriculum with the British education system." In fact, the Green Party has never supported the idea of a nation curriculum - not even a Green one - imposed from the centre on all state schools, let alone on home-based educators, Steiner schools etc. I am writing to the Labour Party officer who made the statement, but in the meantime I thought I'd like to put the record straight among fellow-EOers.

Hazel Clawley (12 years active in EO, 4 years in Green Party's Education Policy Working Group),
26 Taywood Drive, Small Heath, Birmingham, B18 0DB.

Education Politics

In view of the current concern over the Labour Party's plans to impose the National Curriculum on home-educating families, I thought members might be interested in the following extracts from the Green Party's Education Policy:

ED103 A person best develops and best contributes through self-motivated work, done voluntarily and with only a minimum of necessary directives and with a great deal of "confidence-building" encouragement.

ED106 ...we intend to abolish public examinations and to discontinue the grading of children according to their so-called academic ability...

ED108 ...All people must have access to educational facilities as and when they require them.....

ED200 (Under "Aims") To encourage the growth of appropriately sized educational centres, small enough to permit a sense of community and belonging, access and the opportunity for involvement being open to all in the locality.

ED314 The encouragement of awareness of and responsibility for the environment, with all persons (children and adults) connected with an educational establishment being expected to take part in the cleaning and general upkeep of their building and of the land surrounding it.

ED317 The facilitating of home education where parents ask for it, including the right to flexible part-time attendance at school.

ED318 Flexibility with regard to school attendance (even for those not educating "otherwise"), especially for those under the age of seven and over the age of fourteen. The possibility of "flexi-schooling" contracts between parents, children and teachers....

Yes, I do have a vested interest - I'm a long-standing member of the Green Party and have been a Parliamentary Candidate for them. I'm also local E.O. Co-ordinator, and have no problem wearing both hats! As the Green Party contests elections, it has the possibility of hitting politicians where it really hurts - in the ballot box. I am treading a delicate line here, since I may be seen as canvassing; however, some members may find some useful ammunition for putting pressure on their local Labour candidates in the above quotations.

Anne Rix, Silver Birch, Firgrove Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 8QL.

!!!!!!THEY-
LOOK!!!!!!

ADVERTISEMENTS

SPRING MEMBERS MEETING & HOLIDAY WEEK
FEATHERSTONE CASTLE
NORTHUMBERLAND

There is to be only one week at Featherstone Castle in 1992, the gathering to be from PM Thursday 23rd April to AM Thursday 30th April. The members meeting from 18am on Saturday 25th April, all EO's welcome. For those who have not been there before, Featherstone is a huge, ramshackle, but beautiful old castle, set in lovely parkland in the South Tyne river valley. During the week there we usually manage to have numerous "workshops" of very varied sorts, plus evening sessions, both dance and music. We also have some outside excursions to the Roman Wall and usually some other places of interest. Everyone joins in the day to day running (cleaning, cooking, clearing up, etc) and contributes to the activities according to their interests.

For booking form and further details send S.A.E. to:-
B & C WALLACE, 25 DIABAIG, ACHNASHEEN, ROSS-SHIRE, N22 2HE.

Would you like to join the H.A. Club? We publish a magazine for members and most members are aged 9. We plan to go on trips and to help other people. It will help if you live in West Wales but it does not matter if you live in another country. Please contact Sarah Millman, 155 Castle Way, Dale, Haverfordwest, SA62 3RN.

CHILDRENS AUDIO CASSETTES

Primary French: Multiplication
Tables: Alphabet: Musical
Sounds of the Orchestra:
Counting: Nursery Rhymes/Songs:
The Calendar: £2.95 each,
postage 60p, subsequent tapes
30p each.
Martin Evans, 16 Thistle House,
Dee Street, London. E14 8PD.
Tel: 071 515 1797.

PONY SHARING and or LESSONS MONDAY to
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2 small kind ponies for riders under 3
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£5.00/week share.
2 slightly larger ponies - lessons only
£4.00/45 mins.
MON - FRI as premises used by riding
school at weekends. (These ponies
privately owned.) Phone 0703 861833

CUMBRIA SMALLHOLDING. Self-
catering cottage. Within reach
Roman Wall, Eden Valley, Lake
District. Possible involvement
on farm and garden. Family
Downham, Allergarth, Rowelton,
CARLISLE. Tel: 06978 214

Renata Leuffen of Eisenstr. 39, 4000 Dusseldorf 1, West Germany writes:

"DEAR EDUCATION OTHERWISE,

Please read my appeal for help and publish it soon! My case will have a great effect on Home- Education in Europe - your support increases my chance to win. "

HELP!-SOS-HELP!

Dear readers of this encouraging and helpful magazine, today I want to direct my appeal to you to support my constitutional case against Germany with the minimal effort and costs of writing just one letter: "To the "Bundesverfassungsgericht Karlsruhe, c/o Verfassungsbeschwerde 1 BvR 1866/91 (Renata Leuffen), Schloßbezirk 3, 7500 Karlsruhe 1, West Germany" and : "To the European Court for Human Rights, att. Mr J. Marcetius, c/o Registernummer HR-WS 160.D, JM/id, PD 1868 (Renata Leuffen against Germany), P.O. Box 431 R6, 67006 Strasbourg-Cedex, France." I encourage every reader to write these two letters, because the acceptance or non-acceptance of my legal case by the European Court for Human Rights will directly effect you and all other European parents who are teaching their children at home. If you know parent-organisations for the right to home-education in other countries in Europe, please give me their addresses and pass on my appeal for help!

If you have books on home-education, illustrated statistics or scientific reports or newspaper-clips, please send them to me!

My case 1 BvR 1866/91 is right now before the highest German court in Karlsruhe. But, the ultimate and binding decision to which Germany must surrender, will come from Strasbourg. Please state in your letters that home-education works, that you think it is not right that my parental rights have been taken away on the sole ground that I am teaching my son, and appeal to the court to accept my case, and write how much you wish that Germany will no longer persecute good and concerned parents who are teaching their children at home!

I hope that at least one or two hundred letters will come from you (and one thousand from the USA-, because what is at stake is our parental right to teach our children and the health and future of our children! I do not, as do you, believe that children can learn in a regular school. I believe in God-given natural learning, and it works wonderful in my own family. Please write to any English member of the European Parliament you know and appeal to him to take action that the rights of European homeschooling parents will be 'secured'!

I am very grateful for your support. I think that my case for the right to teach one s child at home will be decided by the European Court for Human Rights by the end of this year. Here are my addresses: Renata Leuffen, Eisenstr. 39, 4000 Dusseldorf 1, West Germany, or: Renata Leuffen, Herzogstr. 14, 4000 Dusseldorf 1, West Germany, Tel.: 0211-787605 or 0211-377119. Please take action for our common goal! Yours with love, Renata Leuffen

PLEASE NOTE: LETTERS IN SUPPORT OF Ms LEUFFEN AND HER FAMILY SHOULD BE SENT FROM INDIVIDUALS - PLEASE DO NOT SEND CORRESPONDENCE ON BEHALF OF EU.

DIARY AND NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGIONS!

BATH

New Co-ordinator Carole Hayes (0225 339419). Open Learning Group. Workshops. Resource Centre Group. Zilla 0225 427759.

BERKSHIRE

We meet regularly in Berkshire but the events are not planned far enough in advance to be included here. All are welcome.

Please phone: Karen on 0628 32262

or Lis on 0734 581885 for details

BRISTOL

Bristol's Seed Circle Education Group continues to meet regularly for workshops and outings. Visitors always welcome. For mailings send stamps to Julia Hammond, 25 Dean Lane, Bristol, BS3 BS3 1DB.

"Hanging Gardens" Cooperative Learning Centre.

(Hussein Lucas, 11 Alma Road Avenue, Clifton, BRISTOL BS8 2DH.)

The above, also known as the ERC (Education Resources Centre), has been operating in Bristol since September 1991. It is principally for children who want to go to school but have not coped well with the traditional system. Most were reluctant home-schoolers and several are former Seed Circle members. At present we have six children aged from eight to fourteen and we are open to ages 7 - 16, including children with Special Needs. A qualified teacher is present at all times and parents take turns to assist with teaching and other activities. We also have guest project teachers and occasional weekend activities. We are based in Bishopston.

"The Hanging Gardens" has charitable status through its association with the Human Scale Education Movement. We are also linked with Forest School Camps.

For further details write to me at the above address.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Feb 23rd

There will an informal meeting to plan our forthcoming activities at the home of Valerie and James Gannon in Milton Keynes at 2.00pm. Please telephone if you intend to come on: 0988 511247

CORNWALL

Events for 1992

Jan 13th

Walk, picnic and pony rides at Poldice Valley- Industrial Archaeology

February

Juggling workshop, Penzance

March

Sheep dip near St Austell

April 17th

Stream dip and Barbeque at Jaqui Woods's home, near Truro. Bring nets, wellies and food.

May 1st

Mavpole dancing at Anna's Wheelers home, near Redruth. Bring musical instruments, food and dancing shoes.

June

Treveife Farm Park Visit, near Cornwall.

July

Neolithic Day, Chysauster, near Penzance.

MORE FROM THE REGIONS!

August

Moorland Walk, Cornwall.

September

Beach Barbeque, mid Cornwall.

October

Wheal Martyn, China Clay Pit, near St Austell.

November

Bonfire Party. Any offers for a site?!

December

Music and mince pies - with more music this time - Anna Wheeler's home, near Redruth. SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER.

Please contact Anna Wheeler by phone (0289) 890378, or send an S.A.S. to her at Cambrose Farm, Redruth, Cornwall, TR16 4HT, for more details on dates, times and meeting places, or any further offers or suggestions for outings or events this year.

DYFED

March 22nd

A Gathering to celebrate the Equinox at Cwrnhaflau, Sarnau, Nr Aberporth. Please bring lunch to share, plus eggs for decoration with Anne.

Many thanks to Les and Heather for leading the brilliant candle making workshop in December.

John, Julian, Emma, Roger and Sally (Tel: 0239 811118)

EAST SUSSEX

We have a full and varied programme of activities; but not arranged long enough in advance to be included here. Full details are given in our Local Newsletter, available at £8 per year (cheques payable to E.S.E.O.) from the Editor, Lyndon Pugh, 37 Nevill Road, Rottingdean, Brighton, BN2 7HH. Or you can telephone our events co-ordinator, Ian Laves, tel.0273 55 92 75

Our D.F.A. have recently begun sending out long forms to new G.O. members in the area (even those they have themselves referred to us!) requesting details of curriculum, timetable, facilities, etc. We are in touch with the Education Authority to discuss this, as we feel they are mainly irrelevant to home education. If you have received one and are wondering how to respond to it, you might like to discuss with me before deciding what to do. Anne Rix, (E.S.X. Co-Ord.) 0435 86 27 94.

Silver Birch, Firgrove Road, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 8QL.

GREATER MANCHESTER

THERE WILL BE A REGULAR MEETING AT BILL WILSON'S HOUSE, 18 Brook Road, Heaton Chapel, STOCKPORT. The first one will be on the First Tuesday in February from 19.30 to 3pm. Please bring your own lunches. Please phone before coming to check details, as the venue or day may change. Sorry to sound so vague but we have stopped having our Central Manchester meetings due to lack of funds and interest, and are trying to set up an alternative. If you know of a cheap or free venue in Central Manchester please let me know.

We will have something interesting for the children to do and the hope is that these meetings will be CHILD CENTRED and not only a talking shop for the adults!!!!

There will be a once a month evening meeting for parents to talk at Julie Furniss's house. Please phone me or Julie for details of this.

MORE FROM THE REGIONS!

ALL ARE WELCOME, but PLEASE PHONE FIRST to give me an idea of numbers and also to let you know any changes of plan on 061 442 8723.

Thank you to everyone who helped and joined in with the series of workshops which we held at Parr's Wood Centre for Rural Studies during the Summer and Half Term holidays. Special thanks to Janice Walsh and Carol Tonge without whom it would not have been possible.

For those who were not there, the sessions included: sowing seeds and taking cuttings and looking for minibeasts, (thanks to Peter Adshead), face painting, bird watching, mask making, recycled paper making, (thanks to Jo Fraser), kite making, musical instrument making and playing, parachute games, puppet making, fungi hunting.

I can take no credit for the weather but it was brilliant sunshine for every one of the sessions and everyone had a good time. The ages ranged from about 6 months to about 14 years and many thanks to the older children who were very helpful with assisting the younger ones and rounding up the stray toddlers and minding the babies.

We invited along EO members locally and also interested and sympathetic other people whose children do attend school and were eager to have an activity during the holidays. The cost for all this - an astonishing 78p per child per whole day!

In 1992 I would like to organise a similar series of workshops, possibly 2 a week instead of 1, but this time restrict numbers to those in EO who would be interested in starting a "learning group" locally. I feel this could become a half-way house between home educating in isolation and the more organised and complicated setting up of small schools. It may be possible to get time at Parrs Wood in term time too.

Anyone who is interested in any aspect of the above please phone or come along to one of the local meetings.

PS Congratulations to both Sue and Nikki on the safe arrival of Simon and Isaac. By the size of the bumps we were all convinced that they'd both arrive at one of the workshops!

FPS Please note that I am NOT the co-ordinator for Greater Manchester.

HAMPSHIRE

Feb 22nd

Hampshire, Fareham and Gosport Members to meet at the "Hastiers", 6 Sarsons Close, Hill Head. From 2 - 4pm. R.S.V.P.

HEREFORD & WORCESTER

Hereford & Worcester have been busy during 1991. Events included a picnic on the Malvern Hills, a midsummer picnic (indoors because of the rain) a summer camp, fireworks party and a Yuletide Party.

In 1992 we will be meeting on the Second Sunday of each month for fun, friendship and mutual support. Members from other areas welcome. Thanks to Martha and Amelia for frequent invasions from all of us.

Phone Bev for details of happenings on 0568 88473.

HERTFORDSHIRE

We are meeting on a regular basis in different parts of the country. Our recent activities have included a walk in the woods, a gym session in the

MORE FROM THE REGIONS!

Broxbourne area, making Valentine Cards, a mask-making session and another visit to Activity World (soft play centre built on three floors) in Hatfield. For details of these and other meetings please phone Christine Bassan on 0442 866648. New members and families from other areas are welcome.

KENT

We shall be continuing to meet regularly at The Friends Meeting House, Union Street, Maidstone, on either a Monday or a Thursday, 12 - 4pm Please phone to confirm day or to offer an activity (we are having a music workshop and a clay modelling session in January).

Feb 6th

Rochester Cathedral; Brass Rubbing. Meet at 11:00 am in castle grounds or 1:00 pm in Cathedral Education Room.

March 5th

Capstone Farm Country Park, nr Chatham. Meet at Visitors Centre at 12.30pm. Bring packed lunch (can be eaten indoors). Talk and slide show on Wildlife and Natural History; adventure playground. Free

April 2nd

Crabtree Museum of Kent Rural Life, nr Maidstone. Meet from 12.30pm in schools room. Bring packed lunch. Reduced entrance fee.

Phone Sue and Keith Burchett on 0732 870344 or Joy Lyon on 0795 530499 for further information about any of these events.

LONDON WEST

WE WOULD WELCOME OTHERS TO JOIN US ON WEDNESDAYS. Several families meet at about 11.30am, usually at the Fountain Leisure Centre (Brentford), for Badminton and/or swimming. There is a Cafe overlooking the main pool. Please ring for further information on 081 995 8954 or 081 992 8549

NORTH/INNER LONDON

We meet the first Sunday of every month.

PLACE: Friends Meeting House, Church Crescent, Muswell Hill, N10. Nearest tube Highgate (Northern Line - 10 mins walk)

TIMES: 2pm - 6pm

BRING: Food and drink. We are not allowed to use their equipment so bring playthings to share, eg toys, arts & crafts, writing material, dressing-up clothes, music etc.

COST: We ask for a contribution, if affordable, suggested £1.50 per family.

WELCOME: Everyone interested in EO is very welcome. Wheelchair access is not easy but possible via a slope in the garden, toilets are not fully accessible.

MONDAY OUTINGS

We generally meet every Monday at about 12pm, usually at a museum or park. Bring a picnic, sometimes there's a cafe nearby.

Please phone Jo and Roy on 081 883 8052; Belinda and Alan on 081 343 1061; Helen and David on 071 284 2124 or Audrey and David on 081 886 5393 for details of Monday outings - they are often only arranged the week before. Everyone is welcome especially new people.

MORE FROM THE REGIONS!

MORFOLK/SUFFOLK

1992 Events in Norfolk/Suffolk

E.O. meetings in Scout Hall, nr. Stowmarket, once a month on a Friday, from 10 an. For details of dates and themes phone Sarah Guthrie on Mellis 783 678.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Ice skating at Nottingham Ice Rink. Meet in Foyer at 1.15pm on 2nd February, 19th March, 16th April, 14th May.
Swimming last Tuesday of the month. More outdoor meetings in the Spring.

STRATHCLYDE

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday 5th April from 2pm onwards. Everyone Welcome!!! Bert and Lorna Brown, 138 Greenock Road, Bishopstone, Renfrewshire. Tel 0505 862122

MARMICKSHIRE

PLEASE COME AND JOIN US FOR THE FOLLOWING EVENTS:

Feb 18th

"Behind the scenes at Sainsbury's". Meet outside Sainsbury's at the Shires Retail Park, Leamington Spa at 9.45am for a tour at 10.00am. For further details ring Katherine on 0926 633418

March 16th

Visit to Kenilworth Castle - 10.00am to Mid-day. The date is provisional. Please ring Mary for further details on 0926 316631. Numbers may be required for this visit, so if you plan to go could you please ring Mary by March 1st.

WEST MIDLANDS - Birmingham

Feb 22nd

Meeting at Harris House at 2pm.

March 28th

Meeting at Harris House at 2pm

Please bring food/drink to share. For further details ring Carol Willis on 021 455 9742

WEST YORKSHIRE

Feb 7th

9.30am - 1pm. Activity session at Bradford Central Library. These will continue on 1st Friday of each month until further notice. Phone Linda Mercan on 0274 578778 for details.

Feb 11th

Instrument making and composition workshop at Myrtle's, 1058 Bolton Road, Bradford. (Tel 0274 64941-Daytime.) 10.00am - 12.30pm. No charge. Please phone in advance as numbers may be limited.

Feb 20th

"Fastnacht" celebration (German Carnival) at Margaret Sciffe's, Glen House, Cragg Vale, 10.30am onwards. Tel 0422 884682 for details and directions.

March 10th

Parents meeting at Kim Mark's, 21 Drummond Avenue, Leeds 16. (8pm onwards.) Tel 0532 757473 for directions.

March 17th

"Drawing in Perspective" session at Myrtle's (see above for details) 10.00am - 12.30pm. Activities for under 6's. Charge £1 per child over 6.

MORE FROM THE REGIONS!

April 9th

Easter workshops at Sue Hart's, 284 Halifax Old Road, Huddersfield, 10.30am - 2.30pm. Bring lunch. Tel 8484 537863 for directions and details.

Kim needs ideas for summer-time activities. Please phone 8532 757473 with suggestions.

MILTSIRE

Monday 30th March: 10.30 am. Meet at Hayside Farm, Etchilhampton, Devizes, SN18 3JT. Visit to Devizes Museum followed by informal meeting to discuss E.O. activities for rest of the year. Bring picnic lunch. Please ring Kate if you would like to come along. Tel: 8388 868 478.

The following is an article submitted by Sarah Taylor, first published elsewhere, which has proved very comforting to fellow home-based educators going through rough patches (all that guilt!) so it seems worth sharing.

Earl Stevens, a home-educator who lives in America, edits and publishes *Talk About Learning* which is a valued source of support and inspiration. He wrote the following article for a recent edition.

The Ideal Homeschooling Family

Yesterday Jamie and I got into an argument. I don't remember why we were arguing, and I would probably be a little embarrassed over my part in it if somebody reminded me. Both of us were a little tired and crabby, and we didn't have to look far to find a disagreement. At one point in the argument Jamie said, "Boy, if your readers could see you now!" We argued for a little while longer and then fell silent. Finally we both apologized and, both satisfied, went back to watching the Red Sox game and eating tortilla chips.

The Red Sox were choking, as they are apt to do, and as I watched the game I began to think about what Jamie said about my readers, and that led me to thinking of the images that we all have of each other. Recently I was introduced on a radio talk show as the "Guru of Unschooling." My host was only being amusing, and we laughed about it, but there is probably a lesson hidden somewhere in that image. I can see Jamie writing a book about me some day in a fit of pique: *The Secret Life of the Guru of Unschooling, What Really Happened!* My sins and my less than ideal behaviour would be exposed for all the world to see.

Have you ever seen photographs of the "Ideal Homeschooling Family?" I receive a lot of homeschooling catalogues and other publications so I see all the advertisements for homeschooling products. Many of them are accompanied by a photograph or drawing of the "Ideal Homeschooling Family," or IHF. There is Dad and Mom and the children. Everybody is dressed casually but carefully and neatly, and their clothes are clean and pressed. All of them are rather handsome, and their hair shines. There are no blemishes, only radiance. I look at myself in the closet mirror: Overweight, beard kind of wild looking, bump on my head, grass stains on my pants.

Books and resources

It is sometimes nice to know that there are resources and books specifically about home-based education, but bear in mind that the vast majority of E.O. members manage perfectly well without spending lots of money. No book or other resource is **necessary**, and **you** are the best expert on your family's needs. Reviews have had to be summarized or cut in some cases; my apologies. The full text of each review is available, should you wish to see it.

Organizations and publishers

Canadian Alliance of Home Schoolers would welcome contact with British home-based educators. Their eight page quarterly newsletter, **Child's Play**, is available from 195 Markville Road, Unionville, Ontario L3R 4V8, Canada.

Children's Home Education Association, 14 Basil Avenue, Armthorpe, Doncaster DN3 2AT, produces a newsletter, **R.U.N.**, and various other publications which might be of interest.

Worth joining for the resources section in R.U.N. £5.00 to subscribe.

B. Dalton, bookseller, 396 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10011, U.S.A., telephone 0101 212 674 8725, has an excellent, speedy mail-order service and takes VISA, etc. Contact Terrell Kent Holmes, Department Manager.

Family Learning Organization, P.O. Box 7256, Spokane, WA 99207-0256, U.S.A. provides support and communication for home-educating families. It publishes a magazine called **Family Learning Exchange** (see **Magazines**) and can provide several other sources of helpful information, including some free publications. F.L.O. offers useful courses and workshops, and hosts Family Learning Fairs. Funding is by donation and subscriptions to F.L.EX. only.



Forestry Commission, 231 Corstorphine Rd., Edinburgh EH12 7AT produces low-cost information.

Gazelle Publications, 5580 Stanley Drive, Auburn, CA 95603, U.S.A. publishes ultra-conservative Christian books for home-based educators with a rigid, school-of-the-1930s-at-home approach.

Geographical Association, 343 Fulwood Road, Sheffield S10 3BP

"Various grades of membership for all kinds of people, especially but not exclusively teachers, and lots of useful publications, including **Primary Geographer** for useful, tried and tested project ideas."

Holt Associates, 2269 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge MA 02140, U.S.A. publishes **G.W.S.**, sells books and materials for home-based educators, and publishes directories of organizations and home-educating families. When ordering books, add 20% (or 50% airmail) for postage. They accept Visa and Mastercard.

Home Education Press, P.O. Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855, U.S.A. publishes **Home Education Magazine**, **The Home School Reader**, and the annual **Homeschool Handbook**. It sells many other books for home-educators. When ordering, add \$3 shipping for the first book and \$1 for additional titles.

Learning Link, 83 Manor Park, London SE13 5RA, is a non-profit-making E.O. family run resource from which you can purchase educational computing hardware, software and books at discount prices. £1.50 catalogue available, including Apple Mac, IBM, Atari, modems, Logo, etc. When ordering books, add £2.50 postage and packing.

Mountain Meadow Press, P.O. Box 1170, Wrangell, AK 99929, U.S.A. publishes several books which are of interest to home-based educators. It also sells an audio

tape, **Home Education: A Parent's Choice**, which has no doubt convinced many a doubting friend or in-law that home education is the **best** education. We have been given permission to duplicate the tape so, if you'd like a free copy, telephone me.

National Homeschool Association, P.O. Box 290, Hartland, MI 48353-0290, U.S.A. A non-profit-making, inclusive, grassroots organization which is committed to emphasizing the diversity of home-based educators. The N.H.A. advocates individual freedom of choice in education and aims to promote a positive climate for home-based education. It has a democratically elected (by post) Council which operates by consensus. Services include a network of families, an annual conference with an ingenious, exciting set-up, and a newsletter, the **Circle of correspondence**. The C.O.C. consists of straight copies of contributions, a very refreshing format. \$20 per year to join. Maybe E.O. could learn a thing or two from this organization?

The Nature Conservancy Council, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA, sometimes produces interesting booklets.

The Questions Publishing Company, 6/7 Hockley Hill, Hockley, Birmingham B18 5AA. "Various regular publications, e.g. **Questions**, but the one for maths and problem solving (**Strategies**) is especially useful for a whole range of issues (e.g. turtle maths, patterns etc.)."

Renaissance Child, P.O. Box 141365, Austin, Texas 78714-1365, U.S.A. produces and sells books and materials which will be of particular interest to those with younger children. "We are oriented toward the concept of satisfying children's curiosity rather than forcing a fixed curriculum down their throats."

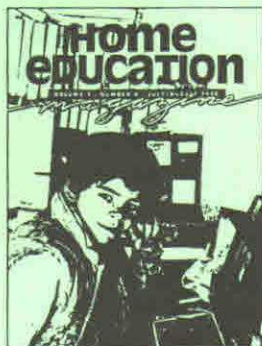
The Royal Meteorological Society, James Glaisher House, Grenville Place, Bracknell, Berks RG12 1BX, supplies free information.

Magazines

Family Learning Exchange is a well-produced publication full of useful articles about the practicalities of home-based education and good book reviews. Subscription charge is \$25 for four issues or \$50 for ten, from Family Learning Organization.

Growing without schooling was the first nationwide publication for U.S. home-educators. In the new edition of **Early Years**, Sarah Guthrie says, "Bear in mind that it no longer carries the stamp of Holt's own special insight and wisdom." Several E.O.ers have commented that "G.W.S. is increasingly geared to the academic." If you are looking for a Holtian or 'natural learning' perspective, you are more likely to find it in **Talk About Learning** or one of the other magazines listed.

Home Education Magazine is undoubtedly the best multi-perspective magazine for home-based educators on the market. It is packed with interesting, informative articles and beautifully produced. Well worth the \$48 per six issues subscription. Available from Home Education Press.



Talk About Learning, "a journal of thought and commentary about the education of children," is the most inspiring, **empowering** magazine for home-based educators that there is. If I could only read one publication, this is the one it would be. Its editor and publisher, Earl

Stevens, is himself a gifted writer who manages to combine refreshing honesty with unassuming wit and humour. Very pleasing production. One E.O.er commented, "This kind of stuff is very valuable and very difficult to find. Just what we need." To subscribe, either ring Sarah Taylor for details, or write direct to T.A.L. at 25 Belmeade Road, Portland, ME 04101, U.S.A.

Books

HOME-BASED EDUCATION

Better than school, by Nancy Wallace, is about the home education experience of one (musical) family. Inspirational! G.W.S. described the book as the best they have had on homeschooling. \$10.95, Holt Assocs.

Child's work, taking children's choices seriously, by Nancy Wallace, is about what happens when children are given the freedom to make their own decisions. If you wish to understand the nature of autonomous learning as it really happens, or if you are attracted to the concept but fear that the outcome might be disastrous, read this book. Nancy's gentle, sensitive writing may win you over. \$12.95, Holt Assocs.

The complete home educator, by Mario Pagnoni, is both a manual for home-based education and a clear explanation of computers and how families can use them. **BYTE** described the book as, "entertaining and useful." \$6.75 from Holt Associates.

Curiosity: the key to your child's development, from **Renaissance Child**, is both a catalogue of materials and a book full of ideas worth using. Its approach is an attractive cross between that of Doman, with his emphasis on early stimulation, and John Holt, with his emphasis on following the child's interests. Those who do not believe in pushing will like the exhortations not to push, not to 'teach' and not to test; those who have no qualms about the use of coercion may well be persuaded that it is possible to give a child lots of stimulation without forced teaching.

Help! I'm homeschooling, by Debbie Castaneda and Pam Geib, published by the Christian Home Education Association of California, P.O.

Box 28644, Santa Ana CA 92799-8644, U.S.A. "Although this book is very entertaining and down-to-earth, it would be limited in its appeal to those who practise a structured day. Home **schooling** is very much a description of what's envisaged. [It] is both American (they pledge to the flag) and Christian (they learn Bible verses) but you would not need to be either to gain organisational help from it. ...I... gained encouragement from the authors' general tone. [For example] 'The exciting thing about homeschooling is that **you** are one of the few original thinkers left.'"

Home school manual, by Theodore Wade, available from **Gazelle Publications**, will be liked by those who concur with the publisher's approach. It has received some good reviews in the U.S., but be warned: the author believes that home-based education is only possible up to a certain age; consequently, the book might be enough to make one give up and send the children to school. The author's description elsewhere of himself as a drill sergeant is apt. One E.O.er described it as "...offensively sexist, but it does have some useful curriculum ideas." \$20.17 surface mail.

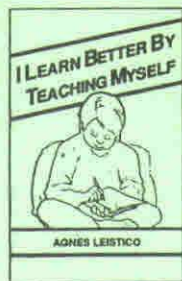
Home school source book, by Donn Reed, is both a catalogue of thousands of resources and the author's story of his experience of educating his children at home. The book includes many amusing cartoons which would give hope to even the poorest of drawers. Donn Reed

followed a loosely structured approach, sometimes unschooling, sometimes school-at-home-ing. Holt Associates, \$15.00

Homeschooling for excellence: how to take charge of your child's education - and why you absolutely **must**, by David and Micki Colfax, is the story of the (home) education of the authors' four sons, at least three of whom went on to Harvard. "The Colfaxes ...did not home educate in order to push their boys into Harvard - that was a happy side effect." All those difficult questions are answered, and the book has been enjoyed by home-based educators of all philosophical persuasions. \$8.95 from Holt Associates.

How to write a low-cost/no-cost curriculum for your home-school child, by Borg Hendrickson. Anyone who feels more comfortable with a planned curriculum will find this book invaluable. Why waste money on a curriculum or correspondence course written by someone else, when you can write your own? No purchased curriculum could possibly suit your child's individual learning needs, interests, and abilities in the way that your own could. The author takes one step-by-step through the process of writing a curriculum which reflects one's own educational philosophies, allows one to teach in one's own way, and permits one's child to learn in his or her own way. Borg Hendrickson makes no assumptions whatsoever about the reader's edu-

cational philosophy. Very impressive! Mountain Meadow Press, \$14.95.



I learn better by teaching myself, by Agnes Leistico, is the story of how interest-initiated learning has been implemented in one family. I might subtitle this book 'Confessions of a reluctant non-teacher', because the author admits to having found it difficult not to push sometimes. It is an interesting example of an experience-led philosophical shift **away** from teacher-directed learning. Home Education Press, \$9.75.

The Pennsylvania Home Education Handbook, by Diana Baseman, is more than the regional title suggests. Its model of educational styles is a non-judgemental exploration of the various approaches to education. With its unifying effect, this is just what the home-based education movement needs. If you enjoy paperwork, you will like the many suggestions for record-keeping; ideas are put forward even for those on the 'do nothing' end of the spectrum. \$13.50 from Tall Oaks Books, 1003 Arborwood Drive, Gibsonsia, PA 15044, U.S.A.

Taking charge through home schooling: personal and political empowerment, by Larry and Susan Kaseman, is one of the best books on home-based education around. It enables the reader to find his or her own way of home-educating. Many practical suggestions are given to

solve the everyday problems such as the feeling of not having enough time for oneself. We may soon find some of their ideas on how to foster a positive climate of opinion for home-based education very useful. \$12.95, from Holt Associates.

Three R's at home, H. & S. Richman. Directed learning approach. See Jude's review in the newsletter. Available from Sarah Taylor until end of July '92.

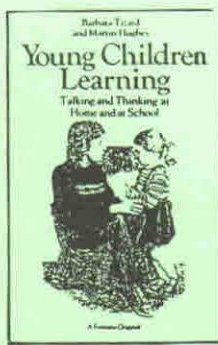
MISCELLANEOUS

Education without schools, edited by Peter Buckman, Souvenir Press, 1973 (o.o.p.). Contributions from Ivan Illich ('The deschooled society') and Peter Newell ('Abolishing the curriculum and learning without exams') etc. Illich is at his best, and the whole book is well worth hunting down (in a library, perhaps?).

For your own good: the roots of violence in child-rearing, by Alice Miller, challenges the way parents often rationalize punishment and coercion as being for the child's own good. As one reviewer said, "This book can change lives." Virago. See also other books by Alice Miller.

How children fail, by John Holt, is the book which changed profoundly my attitude to education. If you are not quite sure why it is that schools so often fail, **How children fail** will make it all clear. Pelican.

Siblings without rivalry, How to help your children live together, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, is not just about how to have a peaceful home: there are some valuable insights into the perils of comparisons and the dangers of pushing children into roles.



Young children learning, by Barbara Tizard and M. Hughes, is a fascinating account of a research project looking at children learning at home and at nursery school. If you have any doubts that your child

will learn more at home than in school, this book will banish them.

READING & ENGLISH

Reading through play: the easy way to teach your child, by Carol Baker, Simon & Schuster, £4.50, was described as "...an excellent practical, down-to-earth guide."

Oxford Reading Tree scheme was described as "...a very worthwhile resource" and "...[we] found that all three [children] really took to the characters and stories." Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight) can supply this at a 30% discount.

The great saltmine and hifwip reading program employs a 'vertical phonics' method. This involves teaching all the sounds of each letter from the start, for instance the letter **s** has the sounds sss as in 'sand'

and zzz as in 'has'. The child is encouraged to sound out new words by starting with the most common sound of each letter, then, if necessary, moving through the list of sounds until the word becomes obvious. Although this programme is designed for those with U.S. accents (major modifications might be necessary) it seems far more logical than the usual phonics method and might be particularly useful for children who are having trouble reading but want to learn quickly. **Parents as Teachers**, POB 44093, Tacoma, WA 98444, U.S.A..

Bubbles, poetry for fun and meaning, Theodore E. Wade, editor, \$12.27; and **With Joy**, poems for children, \$4, Gazelle, "I had great difficulty persuading my 7 year-old son to sit down and read these poems, or to let me read them to him! [But] I quite enjoyed some of the poems..."

Gnys at wrk: A child learns to write and read, Glenda Bissex, Harvard, is the classic book about how a child taught himself to write using invented spellings, then went on to learn to read. Available in Dillons.

MATHS AND COMPUTING

HBJ Maths, "...uses real world maths situations based on six project areas and covers all the National Curriculum if anyone is interested." The reviewers liked its cross-curricu-

lar approach and conclude, "strongly recommended after one year's trial with all three children [ages 3, 5, and 7] but must be supplemented with good arithmetic work (we use Ginn Maths and SPMG Workbooks)." Year 1 books £30, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Foots Cray High Street, Sidcup, Kent DA14 4BR (telephone 081 309 0807).

Mathematical activities

More mathematical activities

Even more mathematical activities, Brian Bolt, C.U.P., £9.80 each. "...stimulated their interest and encouraged mathematical thinking. Some of the activities included are

'An elephantine hole (topological trickery)', 'Palindromic termini (a number chain investigation)', 'Billy Bunter's bargain!'. Absolutely brilliant!"

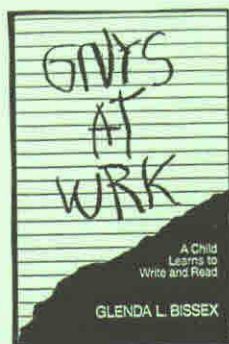
Computer science Logo style, volume 1, by Brian Harvey, £19.95 from Learning Link.

"The best all round self study text..."

Mindstorms, Seymour Papert, is a very special book about maths and fear of maths, children, learning, and Logo, £10.95 from Learning Link.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Seeing the sky, 100 projects, activities, and explorations in astronomy, by Fred Schaaf, Wiley, 1990, £9.95, "...no special equipment - or knowledge - needed."



Mission to the planets, the illustrated story of man's exploration of the solar system, by Patrick Moore, Cassell 1990, £9.95, "...is (home-tutored) Moore at his best."

Science activities for Christian children, by Clifton Keller and Jeanette Appel, Gazelle Publications, \$8.00 surface mail, "...contains a wide range of experiments, most using materials which are easily obtained and not too expensive. However I found 2 experiments very distasteful. One suggests you put a frog in the fridge... Many of the [90] experiments are interesting and fun."

The Selfish Gene, by Richard Dawkins, 1989, £5.95. For anyone at all interested in evolution, this is the book. Beautifully written, accessible, exciting style. See also the study guide accompanying the Royal Institution lectures: £2.95 to R.I. Christmas Lectures Guide, BBC Television, London W12 7RJ.

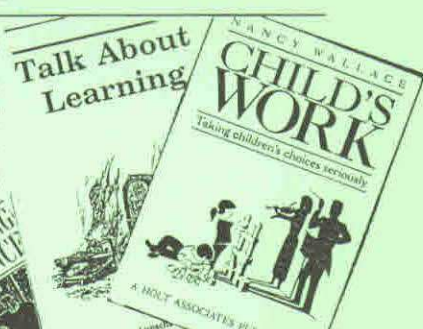
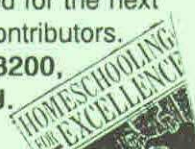
Beyond 2001, the laws of physics revolutionized, by Sandy Kidd, is the story of how an amateur scientist made a machine which defies Newton's third law in his garden shed in Dundee. "We were inspired by it..."

See also the publications E.O. sells and recent newsletters, which contain many reviews of books and other resources. If you have any resource or book suggestions or recommendations, your contributions would be greatly appreciated for the next such supplement. My thanks to the contributors.

Sarah Taylor, telephone 081 808 3200, 23 Whitley Road, London N17 6RJ.

The Very Bloody History of Britain (without the boring bits!), (a N.C. textbook) by John Farman is an appealing title to those of us whose school history lessons were such that we shudder at the very mention of any event further back than last week. It is full of funny, not to say puerile, cartoons, but the dreadful writing ("...Got you're buckets and spades boys?" sic) had me cringing! The humour is thoroughly racist, sexist, homophobic, and may be offensive to those with strong religious convictions; in other words, it is the true British 'schoolboy' or 'lavatory' variety. It might be worth buying this book to wave under the noses of L.E.A. officials when they suggest that your child is missing out on all the benefits of school. Piccadilly Press. See also **Europe united**, by Terrance Dicks and Ray Jelliffe, Piccadilly Press 1991, £9.95.

Dictionary of dates, by Audrey Butler, Dent, £7.95, lists the dates of similar groups of people, places, etc., and contains a chronology of events from 30,000 BC to 1985. An interesting, useful reference book.



Not so good.

IHF's are usually pictured in their homes, often gathered around a table or a desk. On it, among the textbooks, workbooks, and learning tools, there is often an absolutely perfect apple. You might also see a bookcase filled with neatly placed books or a big American flag with an eagle on the top, as is often found in a classroom or behind the President of the United States. There are no dirty windows or cracks in the ceiling. Almost always there are lots of healthy plants. The children have an air of duty and happy obedience about them. I feel confident their Dad could reasonably say to one of them, "Josh, I've decided that you are going to study hard and be elected Governor." The child would respond, "Why certainly Father; I'll get started right away."

I look at my own surroundings. My office looks like it has been vandalized. Molly, our dog, is scratching herself and making snarling sounds on a section of rug that is beginning to take on a permanent doggy odour. No plants. Downstairs a bunch of kids seem to be complaining about something.

The Ideal Homeschooling Family is happy, content, no worries. They look permanently airconditioned. Everybody is serene. Things are going very well indeed, just as they knew it would. Why are things going so well for them but not always for us? It is the magic of commercial photography.

To be honest, I have posed for pictures myself, and I didn't go out of my way to include Molly scratching herself or to have us looking tired and crabby. Furthermore, if I were having a picture taken to sell a product, I too would want the photograph to be happy and positive. I might even ask everybody to wash their hair. It isn't necessarily that we are trying to fool people, but most of us want to look pleasing, maybe even "likeable."

But commercial photographers are asked to take this impulse a few steps further and attempt to build an image which will trigger strong feelings in the hearts of consumers. That is their craft. The picture does indeed say a thousand words. The picture says, "Take a good look at this homeschooling family! Would you like to be more like them instead of like yourself? Do you want to be secure, confident, totally organized, maybe even kind of wholesome? We can help you."

Most of us live lives that are not as serene and confident as suggested in the IHF photographs. Sometimes we feel a bit guilty and insecure about our homeschooling or even about our parenting. We feel our responsibilities deeply, and there may seem to be very little sensible information available out there, given the numbers of people who have gone before us. We get into conflicts and misunderstandings with our spouses and children, and sometimes we say and do things that we would like to take back. We look at how much our children resemble others (or ourselves) in behaviour that we dislike, and we wonder if anything we do can make a difference. A moment later we may see how different our children are from others (or ourselves) and wonder if they will ever be prepared for life's unpleasant surprises.

As homeschoolers we have many people keeping tabs on us to see if we are doing the right things and whether or not our children are developing properly. Officials of the state, members of our immediate or extended family, and friends and neighbours are all interested in our "progress." So there is great pressure upon us to succeed even when nobody is quite sure what success looks like. Meanwhile those of us who are married are supposed to be doing better than average at it, and those of us who are not married are supposed to be doing better than average at that. The IHFs live orderly, manageable lives, and so should the rest of us.

In real life there is a lot to be done. There are jobs in the workplace and no end of jobs inside the home, there is recovering from illness or from grief, there is the birth or adoption of new babies into our families and all the complexities of family life, there is divorce and being a single parent, there are all the joys and worries and excitements (and sometimes depressions) of our relationships with our families and friends. There are children who need attention paid to special problems, and these problems can bring us into conflict with an entirely new contingent of experts. Sometimes day to day life itself doesn't shine as much as we think it should. There can be a lot to cope with even when things are going well. It is easy to think that home education is something apart from all this and that our home education adventure is not even within hollering distance of being ideal.

But home education takes place in the midst of these real life things just as it did when there was no such thing as public education. We call it home education and feel that it is special and apart from life only because schools exist. If there were no schools we wouldn't call it anything at all. It is nothing more than family life, and family life has always been a bit messy and unpredictable. If there is an Ideal Homeschooling Family, perhaps it exists among people who don't know they are doing something called homeschooling. We would probably have to search for this family in some remote corner of the earth among people who are not swamped by the images of giant institutions and self-conscious education traditions.

We should not look among ourselves for the Ideal Homeschooling Family because it is an illusion, an image with no substance and a detriment to clear thinking. My friend John Kelley likes to say about life, "This isn't a rehearsal." It's an amusing way of saying that it is time to stop worrying about the audience, time to stop apologizing for being human, time to stop preparing for the perfect performance, time to stop dithering. This is it, life, the real thing. Time to stop focusing on what we ought to be and time to begin living fully what we are. Otherwise we risk neglecting what is true and good in ourselves and in our children for a mirage which will always remain outside our grasp. It is scary to be uncertain of our own vision, but it is folly to put ourselves at the disposal of somebody else's. There is no Ideal Homeschooling Family; there is only us.

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I am looking for others to take out a joint subscription to *Talk About Learning* so, if you are interested, ring me (Sarah Taylor) on 081 808 3200.

LETTERS

A lot seems to be developing in Bath since I last wrote. There was a meeting held by the "Human Scale Education Movement", which I had never heard of, so along I went. They have a secondary school in Devon which they use as an example. It has 35 pupils, 2 full time teacher and 14 part time teachers! Parents come in to help and all co-operate to raise the cash to keep it going. The reason given for such a movement is: "People want small schools, parents, teachers and young people are desperate to escape the education factories that have proved so disastrous." Looking at their brochure, they also support parents and teachers working for change in the main stream. Flexi-schooling, encouraging schools to combine their resources with home-based education is also mentioned. At the same meeting a group of people were interested in starting a Steiner school in Bath, and yet another group wanted a community base with home education providing their skills, with workshops and so on. But I can see it needs a lot of organisation, time, etc., before any of these things get off the ground.

In the meantime, I am stuck in the present, with an eight year old son becoming increasingly phobic about school. I withdrew Tom from his present school just before Christmas, and he will be starting a new school on 6th January. I have heard glowing reports about this school, and since he was very lonely on his own when he was home educated, I thought I would give the state schools one last try. I don't hold out a lot of hope as schools are schools aren't they? By the time this letter is printed, I'm sure he'll be at home with the two of us looking at each other thinking, "now what". I have the E.O. contact list, but have been sporadic in contacting anyone. But if there is anyone in the area that would like to contact me, they would be most welcome. Tom will be needing the company of other children when he is totally at home.

Has anyone any experience of the World-wide Education Service? It seems expensive, £250 for a years course, plus £300 for books for the full course. Hope to see everyone at the EO Winter Gathering, and again at Featherstone in April. With Best Wishes,

Carole Hayes (Bath 339419)
5 Oakfield Close, Bath, Avon, BA1 2XR.

Dear E.O.,

I feel I must respond to Clive Allsops remarks on the single parent supplement contributions (issue 83), and his surprise that nobody moaned about lack of money. Personally, I don't believe that home-education has anything to do with money. It's neither better or worse, just different, and lack of finance isn't monopolised by single parents. I'm not saying that another tenner a week wouldn't come in handy, and who doesn't dream about a supermarket trip with an open cheque book.

But for me, I was gratified to see the honest and positive sharing of feelings that came out of the supplement, which I feel will be echoed and welcomed by many single mums. Don't know about dads, for as yet, have had no contact with any. Since being the one parent family contact, have got to know quite a few mums. One of the things we all seem to have in common is, how comforting it feels, to know there are others out there plodding courageously on.

Yours,
Ms Jenny Blower,
15a Athelston Road, Hastings, E.Sussex. TN35 5JB.

The First Year at School

After a quick but painful decision one day in court during my divorce case I found myself having to explain to my 3 home-educated children that they would be going to school. It was July, they would be going in September. They had never been to school.

Once they realised the position they accepted that they had to go but were naturally nervous. It was not made easier by many adults they knew expressing relief and making patronising remarks.

The first morning was practically difficult for me, having to get three children to three places at almost the same time. The eldest, then 11, was going into the first year of secondary school (now year 7); the next, then 8, was going into the third year of junior school (year 5) and the youngest into middle infants (year 1) aged almost 6.

LETTERS continued

During the court case they had all been tested and pronounced intelligent in varying degrees (much wiser than in reality is the case, one likes doing the tests, the other hates them and was very angry at being tested), in fact they are much the same but with different abilities. The sooner they were sent to school the better because then they can use their intelligence, according to the Psychologist - I wondered how they had got where they were so far?

I had been advised by a wonderful inspector and the schools chose teachers carefully, they were almost helpful - phew!

I had been labelled dependent on my children by the Psychiatrist - clearly the only reason why any nother would choose not to send her children to school.

I left my children with strangers - it did not feel good.

They did absolutely brilliantly!

I was concerned about the eldest as she was ill a lot (she'd never been ill in bed before in her life - none of them had) she had to cycle 2 1/2 miles to school and back each day. But the school was happy with her progress - many of the staff never knew that this was her first term at school ever.

The second one still hasn't had a day off through illness - a year later, I thought she would be very critical of staff - but she never complained about that first teacher - he must be good.

The third one - labelled so clever by the IQ tests - is doing well and is a pleasant, willing child in class - and has been very tired and difficult at home.

It has to be remembered through all of this that the court case continued, I didn't know what the care and control outcome would be, this was an Interim arrangement to see if I would send them as I said I would. The children's father still shouted and caused scenes, which distressed them when he fetched them each week for visits. I tried to keep my head down. Not ideal circumstances to start school in!

I have been impressed with a number of things about the children. Their self-discipline is evident, they are all careful workers, they wish to do their best. They are frustrated by petty rules but generally abide by them. They are most understanding of their teachers - they see them as people. They are enthusiastic and eager.

I have been surprised by a few things:- my outspoken daughter succumbing to teasing, what incredible hard work it is sending children to school each day, and the most amazing thing to me after all this: that the children seem to feel that they have a choice whether to be there or not because they know that this is not the only way.

Catherine Holland ((some of you may have known me as Barnett))

26 Lighthorne Road, Solihull, B91 2BD, West Midlands. Tel: 821 784 4229

What Co-ordinators Shouldn't do

Too much for people *** Give people things, materials etc. *** Lend them money ***
Con them into dependency relationships *** Inspect their education *** Be
manipulated by the L.E.A. *** See the L.E.A. without witnesses *** Local fund-
raising in the name of E.O. *** Feel you have to arrange everything in your area ***
DO EVERYTHING *** Be sharp *** Write curricula for people *** Tell people what to do
or what's right *** Convince people to do home education *** Feel you have to give
more support than you can *** Have a nervous breakdown *** Talk too much *** Make
judgements about people *** Impose your own values *** Get side-tracked *** Home
Educate other people's children for them *** Hang on to the job when you've lost
interest *** Offer services for remuneration *** Ban families from local E.O.
gatherings *** Get to feel guilty **** Forget to keep records of expenditure ****

Misuse the EO Contact List...

I took this list from a brainstorming session at the coordinators meeting at Featherstone Castle. This was a follow-up of the meeting eighteen months before when we discussed coordinators do (See N.L. 75, August and September '98).

I would value comments from anyone either through future newsletters or future coordinators meetings.

Stephanie Fatcher (Coordinators Secretary)

Coordinators Wanted: Cheshire / Cleveland / Lincolnshire / Strathclyde / Lothian /
Dumfries and Galloway / Borders.

LETTERS continued

I was very interested in the Oct/Nov newsletter's articles on the Peckham Centre and the Toronto gym. I was involved in the gym and very much appreciated Jutta Mason's work in setting it up, giving many families much needed support and contact in a relaxed and non-pressurised way. It was especially valuable to the kids in giving them a situation where they were able to make and break friendships naturally, with kids who had a similar variety of interests. The gym is one of the things they really miss about moving from Canada - we have to realise that kids also need contact with many other home-educated kids. They also need to know that there are others in a similar situation to their own, with similar joys and problems!

Since moving back to Scotland they don't have a lot of opportunity for that kind of social development (I did ask the school if they could go and play with their friends in the lunch hour, but permission was refused. If I hadn't asked, I'm not sure that anyone would have noticed!) Here we don't have a whole lot of contact with other home-schoolers. We can cope with being "odd-balls" but we do need contact with others to strengthen our resolve and develop our ideas.

I was interested in reading about Leslie Sarson's Croyley Club in the last newsletter (Dec/Jan), like Leslie, I feel it would be advantageous to supplement and swap skills in our situation. But it can take courage to build up the confidence - and skills - to offer to other people's kids!

Are there any others in this area who would like to meet somewhere - Glasgow? - perhaps fortnightly initially in a largish hall where adults could chat, kids could play and food and drink could be consumed. We would be free to leave it at that, or develop workshops, trips etc., for anyone who wanted them.

An "indoor park" for the Winter in fact. If so please get in touch.

Yours sincerely, Lonna Brown.

130 Greenock Road,

Bishopston, PA 5AS, Renfrew-shire. Tel 8585-862122

From: Andree Roberts-Keen, La Radissonne, Morance, 69488 Anse, France.

In the June/July '91 newsletter, I wrote that a new French association, Apprenche Autrement, had been set up, and that EO members could contact me for information. This is no longer the case, and I no longer represent this or any French organisation concerned with home-schooling.

Having been a member of EO for the past 4 years, I'd like to say how I much I appreciate the association, and this for the following reasons:-

- *the general friendliness, and readiness to help with advice, etc.
- *the freedom to exchange personal points of view without control from EO
- *the freedom to put forward ideas and opinions, without control from EO, and to be listened to (though not necessarily to be agreed with!).
- *the existence of a contact list for people to be able to get in touch with one another if they wish.
- *recognition and respect of the other home-schooling association(s) in Britain.
- *the tolerance and pragmatism that seem to be an integral part of EO.

I also appreciate that, when there are problems, which is inevitable in a group of so many and such a diversity of people, the matter is discussed openly, and a general consensus of opinion - and of action, if necessary - is reached, without recourse to personalities and personal criticisms and judgements.

Although there are constantly new problems and difficulties arising (I am not, in my praise of EO, saying that it is an eternally perfect structure!) I feel that, through the freedom of respectful communication which exists, these problems and difficulties can be, and are, discussed and aired, the results of which can continue to benefit EO members.

If this, and all I have said, were not the case, I would not continue my membership, with EO or any other homeschooling association. So far, the EO newsletter has been, and still is, an enormous moral (and factual) support to me and my family. Long may it continue!

If anyone wants information about life and living in France, I shall be pleased, as a fellow member of EO, to continue to reply to letters received. We have had several contacts from EO families, some of whom we have met with and with whom we still keep in touch.

I can't believe that my youngsters, who are now 14 and 16, have been out of school for more than 5 years. Before that, they attended school at infants and primary level. But they have never been to secondary school, apart from a trial period of one term. I should explain at this point that we set out, in 1987 to sail round the world. Matthew and Emily had been taken out of school at the end of the summer terms of 1986, when they were 9 and almost 11, at the time we moved out of a house and onto a boat. Well we haven't sailed round the world, but while we were in the Gambia, West Africa, after 3 deschooled years, both kids suddenly decided that they wanted to go to school, just for the term, to see what they were missing out on. I arranged for them to stay with friends while we stayed on the boat. At the end of the term, my son was happy to be back on the boat, but my daughter desperately wanted to continue at school. She loved the company, the sports, and even most of the subjects she was being taught. Alas for her, our way of life and our need to be careful with money, precludes her permanent attendance at school.

I suspect her real need was for stability, especially as regards friendships, and if we'd lived normally on land, she would have had this. So the problem wasn't the deschooling as such but our lifestyle. However, I think she now has mixed feelings, and I'm not sure whether, if given the opportunity to go back to school she would want any longer.

I would like to make clear at this point that our kids were not deschooled because we sailed away, but rather, we sailed away because we were happy for them to be deschooled. Naturally this was against the wishes of most of our relatives and friends.

As I just said, when they went back to the U.K. for their term at school, they went by themselves, were met by relatives and then stayed with friends. Everyone concerned, at the English end, thought that Matthew and Emily would be "scared". Hadn't they been removed from "normal" life and kept isolated from normal relationships? The feeling was that these kids deserved "to be given a chance" to turn out "normally" after all. When they both settled down - they were separated from each other as well - without a visible tremor, and appeared to be not only unscathed by their abnormal experiences but, on the contrary, full of self confidence, the friends and relatives were surprised. So were we. All said and done we hadn't really known how they'd react, but had assumed, as it was their own idea to do it, that they would cope well. And when they had fairly glowing reports, which, considering this the first formal education they had done for these years, was somewhat of a surprise, even to me, we actually received some apologies, and rather cringing admissions that maybe our way of life wasn't harming our children quite as much as everyone had feared.

Of course the crunch comes when the children get to the stage when they ought to be doing GCSE's. At this point, interestingly for us as parents, the major differences between our two kids became clear. Emily was begging to be allowed to do a correspondence course, so I booked her for a full 8-subject GCSE programme. It seemed to me that she genuinely wanted to do it and would do justice to so many subjects, despite not having been in school for so many years. However, there is only sixteen months between Matthew and Emily. There is - always has been - a lot of rivalry between them. So I had to enrol the older one too. Initially he said he wanted to do this course. But he is a totally different case to my daughter. He is slightly dyslexic, due to not having developed a dominant eye when he was little. He is also very stubborn, and wants to tackle life his way, not to be told by other people how to do it. I remember being a bit this way as a child, and how ruthlessly this tendency was suppressed by the nurturing adults in my environment. "Little Miss Independence", my mother used to sing mockingly. I don't know whether doing things my way when I was a child would have worked for me or not. I never had a chance to find out. I was directed firmly, at every turn, until I was old enough to escape as far away as possible from the parental influence.

Well, Matthew started the correspondence work. From Day 1 the stress level in the family rose unbearably. It was traumatic for everyone concerned. He wanted to be helped but didn't want to be helped. He was irritable and bad-tempered. At first he suddenly rediscovered all sorts of hobbies that were far more important than schoolwork. So he just had to practice his violin for an hour a day and paint lots of pictures, as a way of avoiding the schoolwork. Meanwhile my daughter, also thrown in at the deep end, conscientiously worked through her coursework, gradually getting further ahead of Matthew (they were both doing the same subjects, and at the same level). The comparison was invidious. At first he was jealous. Then he just gave up altogether. He

would spend a morning just sitting staring at a blank page. He was wasting his time and our money. I said to him "Look, it won't be the end of the world if you don't do this course. No one is making you do it. It is up to you." Finally, he decided to drop first the languages, then the sciences and maths and lastly the English. He seemed to find them all impossibly boring - and irrelevant. I had to keep reminding myself of John Holt saying that one should trust the child to know what he or she needs to learn. (I had just finished writing the above sentence when Matthew excitedly bounced into my cabin clutching a pamphlet on careers in art and design).

My philosophy has been, for many years, that young people learn far more by doing the things which interest them than by having information stuffed down their throats. However, I grew up "over educated" myself, having gone through the mill of school, university and then post-graduate studies. Therefore, despite my perception that most of the really important things I have learnt during my life were acquired by me outside of formal educational situations, still it is deeply ingrained in me that certificates of education are important. It's as if one of our kids picked up the part of my split feelings which believes in total deschooling, and the other has picked up my anxieties that they should be "properly" educated. I think the part of me which is interested in theoretical education is standing back fascinated to discover how these two very different approaches by Matthew and Emily will work out. The other part of me, the conventionally schooled part, is hovering in anxiety for my son. Are we doing him a tremendous disservice? Is it fair of me to test my theories on him? Or will he vindicate them?

They are now starting to give us feed-back. Matthew said, just a couple of days back, that he's glad he was taken out of school, that he thinks he had far more self-confidence than if he'd stayed at school. Yet he finds writing laborious, because he hasn't done much recently, and when he was recently having trouble composing a letter to his girl friend, he turned round and said, "Well, it's your fault!" And of course he's right, it is my fault, because I have chosen to take the burden of the responsibility of educating these kids.

Emily says she's glad she's doing the science subjects. Now here's an example of how I didn't live up to my principles. I had gone back to England on my own and was only there for a week. I enrolled the kids for the course virtually without consulting them, because communications to and from our boat were not easy or quick. I chose Maths and English as immutable necessities (there's my unquenchable conventionality coming to the fore). French and Spanish seem to be essential, in these days of a United Europe. Then Science subjects are what our kids have missed out on, being on a boat, so I picked Physics, Chemistry and Biology. My aim was more that they should make up for "education" they'd missed out on than that they should do more of the subjects they already knew a lot about and were continuing to learn about by themselves (history and geography). Interestingly, before the course Emily wanted to be a Lawyer (thanks to John Mortimer's Runpole.) Now she wants to be a Biologist! So in this case the "mother knows best" attitude, which I normally try so hard to avoid, has worked out well by broadening her horizons. When her school work for the second arrived, she immediately did the whole half-terms biology all at once, and also the physics! She says they are her favourites. She's planning to do B 'O' levels next June (a year early). Then as a reward she can do History and Geography, if she still wants to. But, for us, planning ahead is jumping the gun, because anything might happen in the meantime.

So one child is happy to have a certain amount of parental direction and to throw herself zestfully into a demanding course of study, while the other is totally rebellious about it. However, Emily has complete control over how she organises her learning. We don't tell her when to do it, or in what order. I'm constantly impressed when I hear her passing up invitations to go out with friends because, "Sorry, I'm doing schoolwork!" If she takes a few days off, I trust her to keep her work on an even keel. Moreover, she seems to do so, also taking an important role in the life of the boat, and leading, when other kids are available, a full social life. I let her have a cat, but with the conditions that she should clean up after it, totally. She is our chief seamstress, sewing everything except sails: shorts for us all, new cushions and beanbags, new duvet covers, and ship ensigns. Once again, she does this without prompting from us, because she sees it needs doing (I'd bought the material for the duvet covers, intending to make them up myself, one day. Before that arrived, she offered to make them for me). Matthew also is self-directed. He has built himself a dinghy from plans he drew up himself. He paints and draws a lot because he would like to do something artistic with his life. He shops for his own clothes, tidies and organises (even

rebuildst) his own cabin, takes his share of chores. He takes upon himself to make sure that the bottom of the boat is clean, and like Emily with the sewing does it without being asked, even when we may not deem it necessary! In fact, as far as maintenance of the boat goes, he is more concerned than the rest of us, fussing about rust or other signs of desuetude. He's also the one who worries most about anchoring, and who doesn't only do his own watch on passages, but is up at regular intervals to check that the rest of us are doing our job properly. This does tend to cause friction, however, as there's a sense of the two men jockeying for dominance. Matthew, as he's grown up with boats, has an edge on John, who came to them late in his life. Both kids of course are "boat wise" I am relieved to see that these youngsters regard learning as a pleasure. Em is actually enjoying most of her course. Matthew, while he dipped out on the formal learning, is still to be found with his head in Atlases and other reference books. I suppose the most important factor in this is that they see us as adults using books and learning things. I'm a perpetual student, and always have some programme of study on the go, whether it is learning to play the guitar, to speak Spanish, to recognise star constellations or to figure out how to use a word processor. As well as listening regularly to the BBC World Service and reading whatever current affairs magazine comes our way, we discuss the news items, which often are highly relevant because they concern countries we have visited on our travels or are about to visit.

I've enjoyed our kids as they've passed through each age and stage, but the stage they're at now is my favourite. They're good company but are responsible, largely, for themselves. When I hear people talking about teenage problems, I wonder what they're going on about. Then, when we meet other families, I notice things about them very clearly. American parents, for instance, tend to ignore teenagers and/or treat them as if they're still little, being very strict and imposing on them the things they think are important rather than allowing the kids to make their own decisions. The only thing a lot of teenagers ever talk to their parents about is pocket-money. I was initially surprised to hear parent after parent of grown-up children (20+) saying with surprise how nice it was now that their children had become real people at last. Of course they had been interesting and valuable all the time, but these parents, like so many others, dismiss teenagers as being uninteresting. I really feel sorry for them, as I enjoy our two so much, their fresh outlook on life, their lovely sense of humour. They indeed bring out a sense of silliness and the ludicrous in me which I display with no-one else.

However, by the time they are this age, there is no longer that wonderful feeling of how much they are learning each day. A parent can particularly feel like this about babies, as one sees them tackling and taking in the complexities of the world. Then when they were older, when we first deschooled them, I found it enormously satisfying teaching them, not in a formal way, but by constantly being on the look out for places to take them, things to show them, read to them, do with them. I was constantly educating myself so I could educate them. I found this very stimulating. I enjoyed the challenge of introducing them to as many aspects of the world as possible. I think parents who deschool need to have some of this sense, that learning ought not to be something drearily pursued out of books, but a living exciting process which the parents share with the children. Because what home-schooling, in my view, has to offer, is to show how all of learning is interconnected, that life and the world are dazzlingly varied, exciting and rich, and must be approached creatively, out of the joy of your own personalities and interests, not because some wally who wrote a boring text book said you had to know x, y or z. I hope I've taught my kids to think laterally, to analyse situations and themselves, and to know how to learn. If I haven't, I'm sad to realise that really and truly it's too late. From now on, their guidance and learning will come from their friends, and from those adults whom they admire. I think - and Matthew has actually said this - that they have already learnt from us as much as we can teach them. Perhaps this is why formal education now seems appropriate, whereas when they were younger, I always felt it was interfering with their own creative learning.

The End.

Tricia Peak, C/O 92 Holmdene Avenue, London. SE24 9LE.

LETTERS continued

SAVE MONEY DOING THINGS

(1) BOOTS FREE TRAIN TICKETS.

I have a Family Railcard on which up to 4 adults get reduced fares and up to 5 children cost £1 each. But using Boots Free Train Ticket vouchers the other 3 adults travel free. Thus 4 adults and 5 children could have a real bargain. Eg. Plymouth to London and back for a total expenditure of only £32! Are any members in Devon or Cornwall interested in a trip to the Science Museum, or a mid-week break (stay in a Youth Hostel, perhaps) to see more? In addition, E.O. kindly refunds my fare to the A.G.M. so 3 adults and 3 children could travel to Cliff College, nr. Sheffield, for only £3 using this Boots offer! (similar train travel benefits would be possible for people in other areas, except those travelling totally within the S.E. region. Ask around your local area.)

(2) LEGO TECHNIC - set 1838 Mechanical functions: Gearing, belt drives, slip, types of motion, steering systems, levers and linkages.
set 1832 Motors and transmissions: includes motor, wider range of gears, chain links, differential gear.

By using the Lego Spare Parts Service 4 families could each have both of the above sets and save £20 each. Parts come in multiples of 4 for the most part and the sets could be pretty accurately assembled but would not include the storage boxes.

If you are interested in sharing the above offers with me please get in touch. Maggie Swatridge, 32 Cary Park, Polperro, Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2JF. Telephone (05093) 72987.

**LEARNING FROM HOME BASED EDUCATION:
AN EDUCATION NOW SPECIAL REPORT**

Edited by Roland Meighan

In the U.K. and the U.S.A. and in various other countries an unusual, quiet revolution has been taking place in the form of educating children at home. At the same time as the fierce debate about mainstream education have been taking place concerning the National Curriculum, Testing, "Back to the Basics", Opting Out or Opting In, Local Management of Schools, etc., some families have just quietly been getting on with a "Do it Yourself" approach to education. In the U.S.A. over a million families are now "home-schoolers" as they are known across the Atlantic. In the U.K. between 5,000 and 10,000 families are estimated to be operating home-based education. This phenomenon is more accurately described as home-based education because the majority of families use the home as a springboard into a range of community based activities and investigations rather than try to copy the "day prison" model operated by the majority of schools. People find this quite hard to grasp, and this shown in the asking of questions about whether such children become socially inept. After a little thought, it is clear that learning activities out and about in the community give children more social contacts, and more varied encounters, as well as reducing the peer-dependency feature of adolescent experience, than the restricted social life on offer in the majority of schools.

People often try to generate generalisations and stereotypes about families education the home-based way. The only ones that the evidence supports are:

- (a) that they display considerable diversity in motive, methods and aims.
- (b) that they are remarkably successful in achieving their chosen aims.

Schools often take up the posture that if home-based education is to be tolerable, the families should learn how to do it from the 'professionals'. As this collection of writings illustrates, schools may have more to learn from the flexibility of practice of the families, than vice versa.

ISBN 1 871526 06 X

Price £5.

Send name, address and cheque payable to "Education Now", 113 Arundel Drive, Beacroft Hills, Nottingham, NG9 3FQ.

(Contributors include: Roger and Tina Rich-Smith, The Trafford Family, Bruce Cox, Fip Pupik, Sue Pattullo, Julie Webb, Roland Meighan, Patrick Pringle, Collette Bradley and Hendy Downing.)

★ MRS G OFFERS SOME HANDY TIPS ON HOW TO ★
 HANDLE THAT VISIT FROM THE INSPECTOR IN 1992 ★
 Cut this out & PIN to your BULLETIN BOARD! NE FRIENDLY!

EDUCATING ARCHIE'S PARENTS

① DO NOT INSIST ON SPEAKING FRENCH THROUGHOUT



② AVOID ENLISTING HIS HELP IN CUTTING HAIR



③ ENCOURAGE HIM TO BE EXPLICIT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE



④ DON'T ASK HIM TO BRING IN THE COAL



⑤ NEVER OFFER HIM YOUR CAST-OFFS



⑥ ALWAYS ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO HAVE THE LAST WORD



NORTH & EAST LONDON NEWS FLASH!
 For details of some new get-togethers, telephone Jeff Benge, (081) 883 7906, or Sarah Taylor, (081) 808 3200.
 Messy art days (plus the all-important mutual support!) at Sarah's:
 February 17th, February 25th, March 30th, April 6th.
 All from 1.30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
 Numbers will have to be limited so please phone beforehand to make sure that there is space. Everyone welcome.

Book Reviews Request
 Pam Stevenson (See back of N/L) has books for review from the "Easy Learning Centre" in basic Maths and English - GCSE Maths and English. Anyone willing to do a review for the N/L please contact Pam.

CONTACTS

Myself (Linda) and my son, Nicholas (aged 5) moved from London to Glastonbury in October and will be here until mid-April or longer. I have made contact with 5 other families and, by the time this appears in the Newsletter, we will have set up a weekly get together. If there are any other families in the area who want to come along please contact me - All Welcome.

Also we would like to travel around the country this year before deciding on a place to settle - Are there any E.O. families who would be willing to give us a place to sleep for a few days whilst we check out different areas and facilities. Please help, I am a single parent on Income Support who would like to find the best place, as regards E.O., to raise Nicholas.

Many thanks - Lynda Rea
16 Whiting Road
Glastonbury
Somerset
BA6 8HP

P.S. If anybody has any cuisiniere equipment they would like to sell please contact me.

Dear Ladies & Gentlemen,

I read about your organisation in Mary Pride's THE NEW BIG BOOK OF HOME LEARNING. We are a homeschooling family in Texas and would like to establish correspondence with one or more homeschooling families in the United Kingdom.

My son, David, is 7 years old and my daughter, Karen, is just about to turn 5. David is a second grader studying on third and fourth grade levels while Karen has recently begun kindergarten work. They would be interested in hearing from any home educated children in the U.K., no matter the age level.

Our address is list below. God bless your efforts to teach your own children and thank you for your help. Very truly yours,

Harriet J Hill
8315 Moorcroft
Dallas, Texas 75228
U.S.A.

A Plea For Help?

I am and always have been determined to home-educate my son, Sam, now 3 1/2. However I have recently separated from my husband, and it would seem likely that when we go to court joint custody will be granted, with care and control to me. My husband has in the past seemed happy with the idea of home-educating, but following our separation has said that he will insist on Sam going to school. I am therefore faced with the likelihood of having to convince the court that it is in Sam's best interests to be educated at home. Is there anybody out there who has been in a similar situation and can offer any help or encouragement in what seems like an impossible task?

Yours,
Karen Corbel,
28 Devonshire Place,
St Helier, Jersey.
Telephone: 8534 69183

PENPALS

I am 13 yrs old and am looking for a penpal. I like: Riding and horses - but I do not have one - theatre, swimming, reading and writing. All of which I do! I also like modern music but have no specific favourite singers. I would like a penpal who is between 7 and ... 777!!! I would like penpals who write regularly and do not give up after 4 or 5 letters!

My address is: Kerry Roberts, La Radissonne, MORANCE 69488, ANSE, France. PS. I belong to an association in France called "Apprendre Autrement".

Hi, my name is Kerry, I'm 12, and I'm a girl. I am really desperate for penpals. They can be any age. I like dancing, most music, walking, cooking, and I love writing, so please write to this address: Kerry Tiplady, 77 Richmond Street, BRIGHTON, E.Sussex, BN22PD, UK

Hi, I'm Jenny (yes it's me, the editor!). I would love EVERYONE in E.O. to write to me!! I've been a member of E.O for two years, but I still know very few E.O.ers. I'm 16 yrs old, I'm a vegetarian and I believe in equal rights for all living things. I LOVE music, especially Roxette, Depeche Mode and Marc Almond. I'm very interested in Scandinavia and Europe, and I've got many penpals and friends there. I'm looking forward to making lots of friends in E.O. My address is: 23 Ferndale Rd, SWINDON, Wilts, SN2 1BU, UK. Tel: 8793 537421. (My brother, Matthew, aged 9 is also home-educated, and needs contact with E.O.ers. So please write to him too!)

If you would prefer us not to print your full name and address, please mention this in your correspondence to the editor. Publications Co-ordinator Lynne Greenhough will be happy to receive mail at her address on your behalf, and send it on to you.

NOTICE

" LATER YEARS " UP-DATE

Julie Lyons and I are starting work on a new edition of " Later Years ". We would be pleased to hear from anyone with views on what should be included in the new edition, and in particular we would like to hear your children's experiences; what sort of approaches work for the 11-16s and what sort of support children (and parents) need.

Also, please let us know what sort of experiences you have had of GCSE, other qualifications, return to school/technical college, job hunting or any similar matters.

Please write to Malcolm Hornsby, 36 Burton Road, Ashby-de-la-zouch, LE6 5LQ,

LABOUR PARTY POLICY AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM: LETTERS MATTER!

If you wish to write to your prospective Labour Party candidate you could include the following general points in your letter. You will also wish to include specific points of your own, e.g. single parenting, religious objections, special needs, educational philosophy, etc. This is a possible opening paragraph:

"I am /We are writing to you in order to express my/our grave concern about the Labour Party's plan to extend the National Curriculum to all children, including those who are educated at home." (Next you could give any details - if you wish - of your own situation/views that indicate your interest. You could then include the following general points:)

- 1) Home education has been protected by law in all educational legislation since 1870. Parents have always had the right to determine their own curriculum suited to the child's age, ability, aptitude and special needs.
- 2) Home educators are not drawn from any particular section of society, nor do they share political or religious views. Neither do they have a common educational philosophy.
- 3) The two major reasons for home education are parental preference and children's needs. In practice there is some overlap between these two groups of home educators, but both would be affected by the imposition of the NC. Parents would lose their rights and children who do not fit into the school environment would no longer be able to follow a curriculum designed specifically for their needs.
- 4) The extension of the NC to home educators would also entail testing of children in the home. Testing is totally unacceptable to many home educators (say if you are one of these!). Some children have been withdrawn from school because of traumatic experiences. Many families aim to educate in an environment that is free from stress and competition. Testing may distress these children and inhibit their progress.
- 5) There is already adequate Local Authority monitoring of standards. Many home educating families have good, constructive relationships with Local Authority Advisers.
- 6) Parts of the National Curriculum are offensive to some home educating families on religious and philosophical grounds. The right of parents to pursue an education for their children in conformity with their deeply-held convictions is protected in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, March 1952. (Next is a possible conclusion:)

"Education is a complex issue, and it is entirely understandable that the special situation of home educators should have been overlooked. We appeal to you to press for a reconsideration of this policy so that the time-honoured legal rights of parents and the special requirements of thousands of home educated children may be safeguarded." (Any problems ring Jane Lowe 0707 390070 Liz Ramsay 0530 560460 Keith Charlton 0533 592118 or Malcolm Hornsby 0530 416734)

BOOK REVIEWS

I think members would like a publication called "O Write" drawn to their attention (only for the Midlands). Written work by 'Young People from Across the Midlands'. A selection poetry and prose sent in by teachers and chosen by a special guest editor and a panel of editors. It is in libraries but may not have been noticed.

It would be nice to have contributions sent in by EO children, it's really good to see children's work taken seriously.

The Winter 91/92 edition is £1 and I expect you could get one from Frankley Community High School, Pathways Publications, New Street, Rubery, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8EU. Tel 021 457 7733, if it is not available through your local library.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Holland, 26 Lighthorne Road, Solihull.

REVIEW

FREEDOM IN EDUCATION

A do-it-yourself guide to the liberation of learning, by the Libertarian Education Collective. Available from LEC, 170 Wells Road, Bristol BS4 2AG. (0272 778453) Price £3.95 plus 85p postage.

This interesting and useful guide has been updated and printed in A5 format with glossy cover - Looks good, reads well and adds considerable weight to the perennial arguments for the liberation of learning. Contains pertinent articles from Lib Ed Magazine; bibliography of relevant book titles; list of useful articles in back copies of Lib Ed; British and International schools of interest (oh - how we wish there were more!) and useful organisations. Well-priced and a welcome addition to my bookshelf. In tandem with the Advice Centre for Educations A - Z of Education I can answer most queries without further reference.

Poppy Green

EO Co-ordinator in Bristol

BOOK REVIEW by Jackie Fearnley

I have received several new books to review from Flans Books, 15 Harrison Gardens, Edinburgh, EH11 1SH.

For the youngest children there are two new board books, costing £2.58 each:

I Can Help by Carla Grillis, contains delicately drawn past pictures giving plenty of opportunity for talking with children about the different ways in which they like to help around the house and garden.

Playtime by Ronald Heuninck shows children playing with trains and dolls, having a teddy's tea party, painting and drawing, playing house and having a bath. Again plenty of scope for talking around these activities and a great relief to see sympathetic illustrations.

Sam Luckless, the Unlucky Lad is a pleasant tale for 5-8 year olds of a young boy's change from bad to good fortune - rather expensive at £6.95 to buy, so perhaps better ordered from the library first.

The next three books are for parents:

Festivals with Children by Brigitte Barz (£6.95 p/b) contains a general chapter on the basic elements necessary to celebrate a festival - the special corner or table, the appropriate picture, candle, contribution from nature, poems, songs or story. The following chapters cover all the festivals, including the lesser known ones which are so important during the years, with thoughts on their meaning and suggestions for appropriate stories and activities. The point is made that the most important element in the bringing to life of their meaning is for parents to have a genuine feeling for the significance of each festival themselves.

BOOK REVIEWS cont'

The author acknowledges that this is not always an easy task. For example "a worthy form of celebrating Michaelmas remains to be found in the future...(but) celebrating Michaelmas consciously gives the child courage for life and action." Yallowe'en provides other difficulties in the sense of not being a specifically Christian festival but children are attracted by it. The suggestion is therefore made that the emphasis should be put on finding the light, rather than the child being overcome by the experience of gloom and darkness. It is a relief to find such a book which guides one away from the superficial, commercial presentation of the festivals into a far richer and more profound experience of the meaning of their symbols.

A good companion book to this would be But Who Made God? (£4.99) It is written with a deceptively light touch by a wise sounding woman - Marieke Anschutz. Her theme is that prayer, festivals, fairy tales and other good stories are not some form of indoctrination but essential for the child's journey in life - in the end to be made use of or not as the child wishes. Such stories not only teach courage, compassion or whatever, but evoke images that are alive for the child.

Festivals are also food for the soul. Through such celebrations the child comes to feel more and more at home on the earth. "We will discover meanings if we search for the wisdom that lies in them, brought into our own modern consciousness, the ancient festivals stand in a new light and can be brought to life in a different way" "By following the rhythmic course of the year we strengthen the reservoir of life-forces, not only of our children and ourselves, but of the whole earth."

Prayer with children is also important (though recognition is given to the effort and difficulties involved) particularly before a meal - to express thankfulness and to achieve the "momentary restraining of the desires which belong to our bodies." The mood that is created before sleep is important to encourage the full strength of the regenerating forces at work during this time. Due importance is also given to the quality of a child's play - particularly in the realm of being able to initiate adult activities and in being able to create and control their own environment, as in building dens and houses for themselves. Not only is the rhythm and routine of life important but the atmosphere of warmth and trust which surrounds the child.

Two last quotations to convey something of the flavour of the book.

"Isolation is the pre-requisite of our spiritual lives; it is the element which makes it possible for us to be truly human."

"Through children it becomes easier for us to believe in the final goal; the overcoming of inherited loneliness and its consequence, egoism."

How Children Play by Ingeborg Haller (£4.98), despite its rather lurid cover it is a pleasantly produced book with appropriate line drawings scattered throughout the text.

The important message of this book is the profound influence of the parent's attitude on the children's playing - "One needs a loving understanding of children to be able to accept this early creative power - at its strongest between the third and fifth year - which enables them to transform everything that they perceive." They need the opportunity to play without having to be too often interrupted or to have to explain themselves. They need plenty of chances to imitate adults as they go about their work, to make houses, to copy simple rhymes and songs, to experience the elements. There are good chapters on the beauty and benefits of playing with mud, flowing water and sand. For a young child everything in nature is alive and much patience is needed on walks, when they want to explore the minutest creatures and plants. It is good for them also to return to the same places where they feel at home, doing the same things. But they should not be left completely alone in nature which is then experienced in too powerful a way. An interesting observation on playing hide and seek is that "as the soul becomes excited, the breathing is enlivened and as the excitement ebbs away, grow calms again. Children who regularly experience this sort of game become healthier for it."

The author has the gift of reawakening our own childhood memories, which must have the effect on us of being more able to create sympathetically the right opportunities and environment for our own growing children and/or taking seriously their play.

THE FATAL ILLNESS OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION

.....
An article that slightly lifts the lid be Dennis J. Leckey, B.A. (Open)
.....

Few who help to keep on the lid can see compulsory education living beyond this century. School systems are on the way out, many contemporary educationalists have indicated this, but also the concept of compulsory education has had its day.

Education has only been compulsory in this country for around 120 years but education has been around for many hundreds of years here and many thousands of years elsewhere in the world.

The problem with compulsory education is that firstly it is an outdated and unnecessary form of social control and secondly it is clear to any intelligent and truly educated observer that anything compulsory can only be complied with reluctantly and with little or no commitment or motivation. Real education, freely sought, on the other hand is the most valuable experience for mankind. Concern has been expressed recently about attendance and behaviour at our schools and this resulted in the Elton Report and the HMI Report (Education Observed-13) both these documents highlighted the problems and possible solution. It is unlikely that their recommendations will ever be fully implemented.

Education Welfare Officers/Education Social Works weekly face the practical issues of compulsory education. Their clients talk in a chillingly matter-of-fact way about being bullied physically and emotionally by other pupils but also often by teachers. They complain that teachers will not listen to their concerns about these and many other matters. For example, home or environmental problems which affect attendance. Return to school has been difficult but then exacerbated by sarcasm and victimisation; again by pupils and teacher.

But the biggest problem as far as school systems are concerned is that they have not caught up with the young person of the late twentieth century. In cultural and behavioural terms school systems are, at the most innovative end of the scale, in the middle of the century in ideological terms. This is not always the fault of the individual teachers; even in the more innovative systems it is the overwhelming power of the structure of the school visibly and the I.e.a. invisibly.

However, even if it were possible to change the system there is still the problem of the notion that compulsory education can be useful. Clearly, nothing that is compulsory can be. All teachers, and many Education Welfare Officers/Education Social Workers, have studied the subject of motivation in the learner and this is a major area of theory ignored in practice. Indeed, it would be easy to believe that all that part of teacher-training and social-work training concerned with psychological theory has been forgotten once the qualified person enters the education system.

What will be needed in the future, as educationalists have pointed out, will be home based education with the minimum of involvement from any systems around at that time. Television will be the new teacher. Also, as the young person develops, materials will be available in assignment form, to be completed and returned to a local central point. It has also been said that if some kind of schools exist then they will be for advice and social recreation. But this cannot be compulsory. Until that element is removed education will never be effective for the majority and society will continue to be ignorant. This, of course, may be the wish of those seeking to control in an outdated way. Social control should gradually give way to self control through honest and effective education, freely given and freely received. Anyone working in an open and equal way with young people knows that they

have become sophisticated enough to be able to cope with such a system. Non-compulsion would be the stepping-stone required. So, is there any future for teachers and Education Welfare Officers/Education Social Workers? There should be, though less teachers may be needed and this could be a natural evolution as there are teacher shortages and this looks like becoming permanent. But we will be required more than ever in order to perform our wider role of encouragement and resolving of practical problems that will be inevitably experienced in the future. When might this happen? Well, home-based education is a possibility in the next century but non-compulsion may tragically take good deal longer. To understand this fully you will have to turn to the Genius of Holt, Illich, and others. It is a catch 22 situation. The first thing that has to happen is that the masses have to experience personal conceptual development and then real education can take place. This cannot take place without a major war, fought long and hard. This article hopes to be just one small battle in that war. The lid will not stay on forever.

U.K. Parent' Forum and European Parent's Association

On 26th November last year a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of setting up a forum for U.K. parents' groups interested in education. A talk was given about the E.P.A., which aims to give parents access to the European Parliament. The Scottish Parent Teacher Council, who organised this meeting, invited many groups, including various parent teachers bodies, C.A.S.E., A.C.E., Inra Trust, Scottish School Board Association and so on. Perhaps not surprisingly, there were difficulties finding common objectives, however, it seems to us that it is essential that Education Otherwise should join the E.P.A., thus ensuring that our voice is heard in Europe. This matter is particularly important now in view of the fact that the Treaty of Rome is going to be modified to include education. It does appear that there may well be some truth in the fear that school will be made compulsory throughout Europe.

Sarah Taylor 081 888 3288

Eleanor Stapleton.

VISIT PARLIAMENT!

YOUTH & STUDENT DAY 1992

THURSDAY 28th FEBRUARY

WESTMINSTER CENTRAL HALL 9.15am. - 4.18PM.

ORGANISED BY THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BUT MP'S FROM ALL PARTIES ARE ATTENDING

Workshops on various issues - and A CHANCE FOR YOUNG EO'ERS TO SPEAK FOR HOME EDUCATION AT MP'S QUESTION TIMES. Open to anyone under age 26 (parents of younger ones may accompany them).

IF YOU WANT TO GO PLEASE PHONE JANE LOWE BY WEDDAY 17TH FEBRUARY AS PLACES ARE LIMITED.
Tel: (0787 390878) FEE #1.50.

WHERE TO GET WHAT

The following publications are available from: Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25b Diabaig, Achnasheen, IV22 2NE. Prices inc P&P to U.K. PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES/P.O. PAYABLE TO EDUCATION OTHERWISE

School is not Compulsory (new edition due soon) A guide to your rights.
Price £2.58

Early Years. Learning suggestions for the under twelves. Price £2.58
(edition number 5)

Later Years. Learning for older children Plus G.C.S.E. Price £2.58

Teach your own. by John Holt. Price £3.85
Philosophy of Home Education

Learning all the time. By John Holt. Price £4.58
(A practical guide covering reading, writing, numbers, science and music,
as well as the wider issues of the nature of learning and parental
involvement.)

Schools Out. By Jean Bendall. Price £5.95
(A good why and how book by an E.O. member and long-term Home Educator.)

E.O. NEWSLETTERS - Back Copies for 1989-1998. Price £1.00
each

E.O. NEWSLETTERS - Bargain Basement. Any four copies (our selection) from
87-88 Price £1.58

Newsletter Digest Price £1.58
Ninety page selection of the best from 82-86

Growing without Schooling - The Newsletter of EO's parallel organisation in
the U.S.A. Six issues per year (starting March) £18.80
from Barbara Sheppard, 18 Queen Katherine Street, Kendal. Cumbria, LA9 7QG.

EO Stationary. Notepaper, re-use labels, forms, leaflets and hand bills
from: Lucy Charlton, 2 Mistow Lane, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire.
LE8 0FT.

EO Membership/Museum Cards
All members of E.O. will automatically receive a membership/museum card
when they renew their membership subscription. If you would like a card
and your renewal date is some way away, please send a S.A.E. to:
Bob Emmett, 148 Gunton Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR5 0AQ.

EO Childrens Cards. These are personal I.D. cards to show that you are
being legitimately home educated. To get your card send a S.A.E. to:
William Rust, 8 Church End, Gamlingay, Beds. SG19 3P

LEARNING LINK is a non-profit making E.O. family run Resource, which can
enable you to purchase *Educational Computer Hardware at Discount Prices*
available to schools. The latest catalogue which includes Acorn, Apple,
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Pace; electronic musical instruments from Casio, Yamaha and Roland; and
Logo, scheme software and books are available from: LEARNING LINK, 83 Manor
Park, London, SE13 5RA.
Catalogue price £1.58

ALL PRICES QUOTED ARE FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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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 childrens' 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

For further information

Send a 9 x 4 inch sae to: 36, Kinross Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 7EF



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