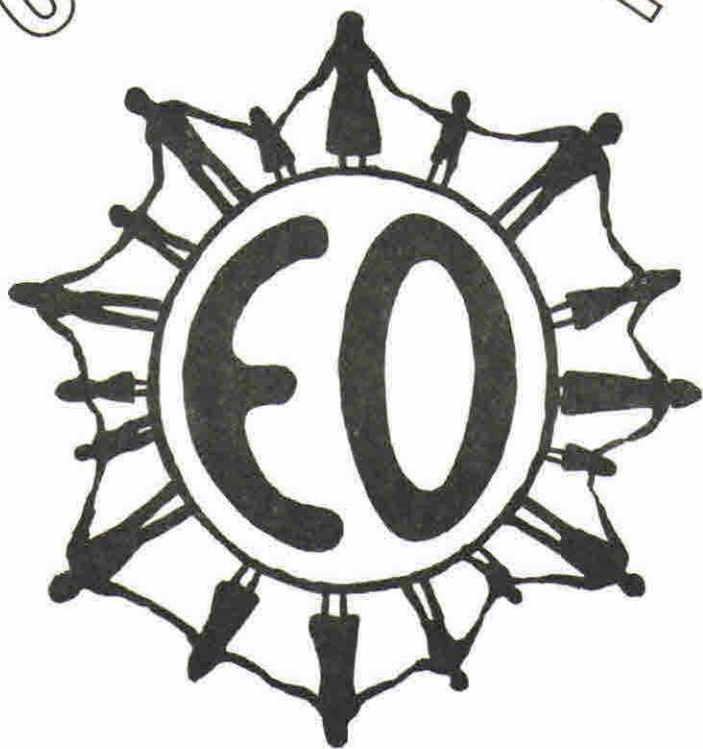
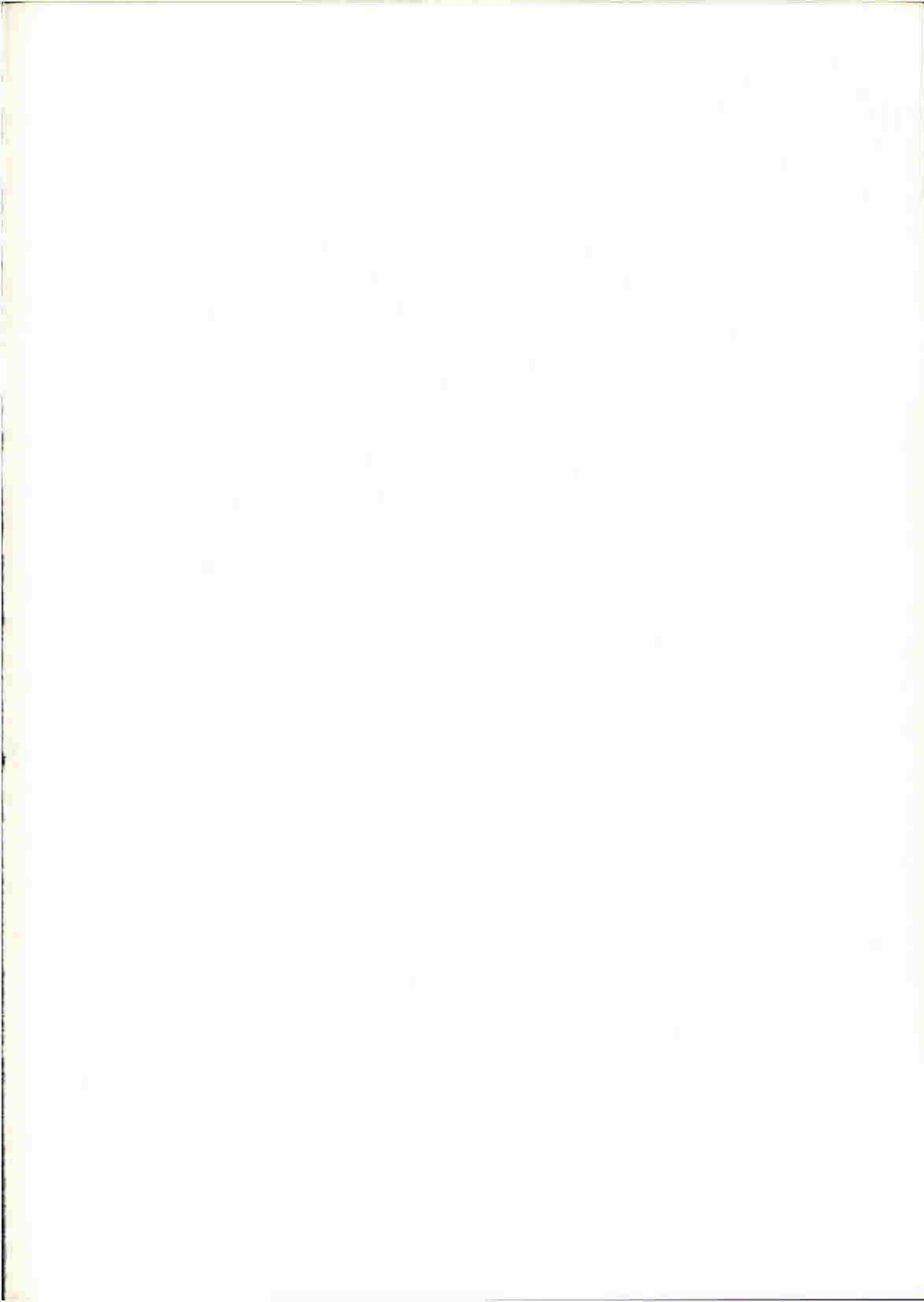


EDUCATION
OTHERWISE



NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 8
DECEMBER 1978



EDUCATION OTHERWISE
NEWSLETTER NO. 8
DECEMBER 1978

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EDITORIAL

The Core Group met at Lower Shaw Farm on the Friday afternoon of the EO Group weekend of 22-24 September 1978.

Dick Kitto was in the chair; also present were Helen Fletcher, Sarah Guthrie, Elizabeth Sturges, Peter Jones and myself.

Ros Sweetman was absent and missed the gratitude expressed by the group for her heroic efforts in printing work. She will be printing 150 copies of "First Steps to Education Otherwise" while the "Digest of Newsletters 1 - 4" will be in print shortly.

We dissected the Aims yet again to comply more closely with the ideals of Education Otherwise and the requirements of the Charity Commission. The final draft, which will be presented to the Commissioners when a suitable lawyer has been found by Dick, is printed in this Newsletter.

Monitoring the educational comments of the press was to be undertaken by Sarah (the London papers), Helen (Libertarian Education and other monthlies) and (hopefully) Roland Meighan who would comb the Times Educational Supplement. Sarah will produce a regular column of the more significant and interesting items, and her first dispatch appears in this Newsletter.

It was decided, after a ghastly tale of a TV producer's duplicity practised on Dick, that Mollie Jenkins - a very capable public person - would be asked to become EO's Press Relations Officer and Main Spokesperson for broadcasts. Let's hope Mollie gets plenty of work!

Other items mentioned were a photostat letter which is being produced by an EO member on what to say to LEA's, and that Sarah and Helen would write appeal letters to possible patrons (qualifications EO sympathy and money).

In addition, since there were difficulties in finding contributors or a co-ordinator for the 0-12 leaflet, Sarah would write a section on 7-8 year olds, while Sandra Holmes (our dynamic Cornwall representative) and Peter Jones will also be asked to help. Sarah and Brian Guthrie will co-ordinate all the contributions into a final document.

Dick attended an important conference arranged by the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) on December 9th, and will be writing a report on it for the first Newsletter in the New Year.

Well, Dear Readers, I wish you a very happy Christmas. Keep writing!

Alan Pye,
30 Frome Terrace,
Dorchester,
Dorset DT1 1JQ.

THE AIMS OF EDUCATION OTHERWISE:
A PAPER TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CHARITY COMMISSION

At a meeting held in September 1978 we agreed to the following statement of our aims and immediate objectives:-

1. To re-affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school.
2. To establish the primary right of children that full consideration, with due allowance to their age and understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.
3. To support families in which for any good reason a child is being educated out of school, particularly in the following respects:-
 - (a) By disseminating information through the medium of a Newsletter, booklets and in other ways about (i) people's experiences, (ii) available resources, and (iii) exchange of skills and resources;
 - (b) By providing advice and where needed specific help in (i) presenting their case to the authorities, and (ii) the legal aspects of education out of school;
 - (c) By providing advice about (i) educational methods and materials, and (ii) devising programmes of activities;
 - (d) By arranging meetings and by supporting the formation of local groups.
4. To support families where a child is suffering educationally, socially or emotionally from compulsory school attendance, particularly in the following cases:-
 - (a) When the family is being inadequately advised or served by the statutory services;
 - (b) When the family is in need of legal assistance.
5. It is not the intention of the group to act in conflict with schools or education authorities, and we endorse the legal responsibilities of the authorities in the following respects:-
 - (a) As a safeguard for children who might otherwise be deprived of their right to education, and
 - (b) as providers of educational resources and services.

We envisage a situation in which schools and other educational services provide a resource which is freely available to all members of the community whatever their age.

The right to education and the prior responsibilities and rights of parents with regard to the education of their children are universally recognised in the statements below.

From the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 24:

1. Everyone has the right to education.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality.
3. Parents shall have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

From the Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 2, March 1952:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the state shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

From the Education Act (England and Wales) 1944, Section 36:

It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

From the Education Act (England and Wales) 1944, Section 76:-

In the exercise and performance of all powers and duties conferred and imposed on them by this Act the Minister and Local Education Authorities shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

From the Education (Scotland) Act 1962, Section 29(i):

In the exercise and performance of their powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State and Education Authorities shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training, and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

From the Education (Scotland) Act 1962, Section 31:

It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of school age to provide efficient education for him suitable to his age, ability and aptitude by causing him to attend a public school regularly or by other means.

In the United Kingdom education is legally compulsory; schooling is not. The law is clear on this point. Parents are accorded the primary responsibility for their children's education and, while they commonly delegate this to schools, they need not do so.

The Education Otherwise group consists primarily of families who have decided that in present circumstances the only way to ensure that their children's education is "directed to the full development of the human personality" is to take upon themselves full responsibility for their education rather than delegate it to the schools. These families and their supporters believe that children have the right to relationships of concerned equality in which they can mature; that they should have considerable freedom of thought, decision and action; and that their value as people should not be related to their performance on narrow academic criteria. We also recognise that children have a right to a wider community than the home itself. It is on this basis that we believe "education otherwise" should be conducted, and the group exists to support any families practising or seeking to practise education on these principles.

We hope that you will join us even if you are not thinking of "otherwise" education immediately because we believe that the stranglehold schools and institutions have on education should be challenged and that there is a need for a strong group committed to re-establishing family responsibility for children's education. We feel that this should be the concern of every family, whether or not it is proposing to practise education out of school.

We issue a Newsletter four times a year, and information leaflets from time to time, all of which are free to members, and we also hold meetings from time to time, details of which appear in our Newsletter.

The organisation has charitable status under the aegis of the Foundation for Alternatives, Registered Charity No. 273566, and is applying for independent charitable status.

Our membership subscription is £4.00 per annum (£3.00 if paid by Banker's Order).

Our publications are available to non-members from this address, as follows:

Digest of Newsletters 1, 2, 3, 4:	50p
Other Newsletters - at present 5, 6, 7	40p each

Information leaflet 1:
First Steps to Education Otherwise 40p

Information leaflet 2:
Pre-school and Primary Education 40p

In all cases please send 12p stamped addressed envelope 10"x7" minimum.

The application form is attached and asks questions on possible skills or facilities, and whether, among other things, the new member feels interested in joining or starting a local group.

DICK KITTO'S COLUMN

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

1979 is International Year of the Child. Last Spring an invitation was sent out to about 200 organisations to attend a meeting to initiate the setting up of an IYC organisation in this country. Five working parties were set up under a number of titles to carry out an initial sifting and clarification of proposals. The idea was that each group should put forward proposals for projects and that a number of them would be selected for official IYC sponsorship. IYC itself does not have any funds to support projects, and funding for them will be sought from grant-giving trusts, the government and other bodies.

I joined the group concerned with Rights and Responsibilities of Children, and we have put forward a number of proposals, including one for a National Children's Legal Centre. If this is accepted it could be of great benefit not only to us, but to all people and organisations concerned with the welfare of children. Mollie Jenkins' project "Caravanserai" has also been proposed through another of the working groups.

LEGAL

We've been under a lot of pressure from LEAs during the last few months, and there is no doubt that a really determined LEA can create a very unpleasant and threatening situation for any family that does not contain qualified teachers, or has not got the active support of teachers.

Although I can get some advice in really acute cases, the legal situation is still very dicey. On this Geraldine Lockington has written to me "I refer to the item in the September Newsletter where it is suggested that a Research Worker might clarify LEA policy. It concerns me that it is planned to clarify LEA policy as regards to qualifications of parents because enthusiasm, experience of life, a lively open mind, patience and imagination are not qualifications that would be listed and as a result many children could be penalised."

The point is this, I think; vagueness in the law does ensure a certain amount of flexibility. This can be taken advantage of by families to do things which a more clear-cut law would preclude. Equally, it can be taken advantage of by the authorities to impose restrictions on families which a more clear-cut law would protect them from. So a vague law benefits those families who have the ability and background to take advantage of it, and discriminates against those who don't.

Our strategy must be threefold:-

1. to avoid trying to clarify the law to the point where very clear cut, and inflexible, regulations are laid down to cover every eventuality.
2. to make ourselves familiar with ways in which the vagueness of the law has been used to our advantage in the past.
3. to make sure that full support and advice is available to everyone who needs it.

We are still a long way from this situation, and it will be some time before I feel that we are able to offer the sort of service that is needed.

There's another point. The whole question of parental right of choice and the law relating to it is likely to come under the microscope over the next few months as a result of the new Education Act proposed in the Queen's Speech. Unless it is seen that there is a strong movement concerned to establish and protect, and if necessary fight for a right they believe in, there is a danger that the right may be silently whittled away overnight. There is something of a contradiction in encouraging people to practice EO, setting up networks and local groups to help them, and at the same time trying to retain our freedom by lying low.

LOCAL CONTACTS

So long as EO remains a small minority movement, most of our practitioners will be operating alone and in isolation, and it is for this reason, if no other, that we need to create a large network of members. The local contacts are a key factor in this, together with the time and energy they are able to put into building up local groups and networks.

I have recently circulated 30 members - all those I believe to have agreed to act as local contacts. Have I missed anyone out? If you haven't been circulated and are interested will you please write to me. The provisional list follows this article.

What do these contacts do? Well, it varies widely - there is nothing laid down. Basically the idea is that you provide a personal contact for people who need this in your area. You do not need to do anything beyond this, and how much personal contact you provide will depend upon how much time you have.

Of course, some contact people do do a great deal more - they arrange exchanges, set up meetings, provide advice about the local authority, and so on. But it is the willingness to meet and support people, or even to telephone them, that is important. You do not have to be practising EO, although obviously this is an advantage. Nor do you have to be an expert on handling LEAs, or on setting up work programmes.

The main thing is to know that families contacting us from anywhere in the UK can be put in touch with a local member who will give them personal support.

Again we are still a long way from achieving this, although we are steadily working towards such a situation. At present England is quite well covered, but we have no-one in Wales and no-one in Scotland and this means that people in these areas (where population is scattered anyway) are particularly isolated.

If anyone is willing to take this on for their area, and hasn't been contacted within the last few weeks, will they please write to me. We hope to publish a definitive list of all our contact people in the next newsletter.

How NOT to support EO

A letter from Wales, without comment.

Dear Dick,

It is difficult for me to show my face after not answering your request for yearly fee - some months back. It is not because we fell by the wayside, sucked into the state school system. Far from it! It is more because we gained confidence to go ahead and do it rather than read about it any more. Our own 5-year old will begin a kindergarten soon, formed by three other parents plus ourselves.

Thank you so much for your encouragement and letters early last year!

All the best,

NEW ADDRESS FOR EO HEADQUARTERS

I have now moved to the following address, and the administrative centre for EO has moved with me. It is:

The Manor, Thelnetham, Diss, Norfolk.
Telephone: 037-989-435

Please note, this phone takes incoming calls only, so until it is changed I cannot make outgoing calls without a lot of trouble.

Dick Kitto.

LOCAL CONTACTS

The following list contains the names and addresses of people who have agreed that they are willing to act as local contacts for EO.

Ron Baker: 36 Queens Ave, Woodford Green, Essex.
Ken Byron: 14 Norfolk Road, Desford, Leics.
Dianne and Bruce Cox: Park Lodge, Tilton Lane, Billesdon, Coplow, Leics.
Jane Davies: 4 Green Cottages, Torver, Coniston, Cumbria.
Pauline de Burgh: 53 Gracewell Road, London W10.
John Elenor: 18 Eynham Road, London W12.
James and Jackie Fearnley: The Homestead, Metfield, Harleston, Norfolk.
Helen Fletcher: 18 Premier Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham.
Sarah Guthrie: Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk.
Iris and Geoff Harrison: The Burntlands, Rochford, Tenbury Wells, Worcs.
June Heard: 19 Colley Crescent, Paignton, Devon.
Martin Hemsworth: 66 Landway, Bearsted, Maidstone, Kent.
Sandra Holmes: Briars End, Perrancombe, Perranporth, Cornwall.
Mollie Jenkins: 26 Clothorn Road, Didsbury, Manchester 20.
Graeme Johnson: 18 Station Road, Taunton, Somerset.
Peter Jones: Pathways, London Road, Thrupp, Stroud, Glos.
Tessa Kelland: 37 Portway, Frome, Somerset.
Mike and Ann Lydiat: 537 Crookesmoor Road, Sheffield 10.
Roland Meighan: 7 Green Lane, Great Barr, Birmingham 43.
Alan and Robina Pye: 30 Frome Terrace, Dorchester, Dorset.
Margaret Sanders: 40 Northumberland Avenue, London E12.
Trevor and Elizabeth Sturges: 80 Fairview Road, Stevenage, Herts.
Dominic and Ros Sweetman: 69 Leathwaite Road, London SW11.
Tony and Rosemary Taylor: 78 Petworth Gardens, Hillingdon, Middx.
Nigel and Paula Theobald: 34 Church View Road, Desborough, Northants.
Lorna Trevelyan-Bicicchi: 73 Park Road, Caterham-on-the-Hill, Surrey.
Derek and Jill Veale: 28 Upham Road, Swindon, Wilts.
Julia Waite: 9 Kitsbury Terrace, Berkhamstead, Herts.
Patricia Wharton: 22 Norfolk Road, Brighton, E. Sussex.
Mick and Jennie White: Wensley Mill, Wensley, Leyburn, N. Yorks.
Stan Windass: The Rookery, Adderbury, Banbury, Oxon.
Georgina Winkley: 176 Bellingdon Road, Chesham, Bucks.

If anyone on this list has not confirmed their willingness to become a local contact, would they please do so without delay by writing to Dick Kitto.

NEWS OF A LOCAL GROUP from Elizabeth and Trevor Sturges, Herts

The Editor of our local paper was either desperate for interesting material at the fag-end of the silly season, or else plugged in to the vast latent potential for EO among his readers. Maybe he just hated school. Anyway, to our surprise, late in August we got the front page headline plus photo as a result of sticking twenty odd posters around the area, advertising a meeting and briefly explaining EO.

The meeting was on a Sunday afternoon in September. A very mixed bag of fifteen adults came, with very few children - we had hired a potter friend to entertain the junior masses with his craft, and in the event he had a quiet time of it.

It might be interesting to mention who came, so diverse were their ideas and motivations. One lady of about 50 had invaded our home after seeing the article, and had poured out a stream of distress and muddled idealistic thoughts about the decaying world, not interested in tuning in to us at all or sharing our ideas. Another lady, rather older, once a Montessori teacher, was basically happy with the idea of schools. A young girl was just off to teacher's training college, but already was a member of EO and keen that our ideas should make her a better teacher. Another, expecting her first baby, was just wanting to think well ahead about her children's education. A couple in their late thirties, both artists, have a daughter of 7 who has never been to school. A woman expecting her fourth child was about to withdraw her second from school and build a home education for her around a correspondence course. Another young couple were worried about their children aged 6 and 7, seeming to need a small push of encouragement to withdraw them too. A man and woman we know well had decided the previous week not to return their son of six to school, where he had been extremely unhappy, also to keep their daughter of 5 at home where there is also a son of 3. A couple with two toddlers came out of general interest; with them came a woman who gave absolutely nothing away throughout the afternoon - subsequent enquiries confirmed our worst suspicions! A reporter from the paper, also a friend, came - and later wrote a piece about the meeting. Finally a woman with two pre-school children (if I dare use the phrase) came, pretty uptight about the ideas put forward because she seemed stuck in the I'd-go-mad-and-they'd-be-bored-to-death-if-they-stayed-at-home quagmire.

We began by sharing experiences about the attitude of LEAs, which ranged from helpful encouragement to naked threats of making life hell. In one local case the official had offered various books and put the family in touch with other people in the town who are educating their own children. In another case, the education department grew less friendly when they realised the couple weren't going to be deterred, but have at least kept out of the way and left them to it.

We shared thoughts on the deep-rooted assumption that schools have a monopoly as places where children learn, find friends, develop social awareness, prepare for "real life", and "have their edges knocked off". Some were nervous about swimming against this mighty tide, others (like the couple with the daughter of seven) said several clear and simple things about how she has grown as a confident happy creative person without a school; and they helped to illustrate how a child has a strong capacity and energy to learn if allowed the real freedom that schools inevitably crush.

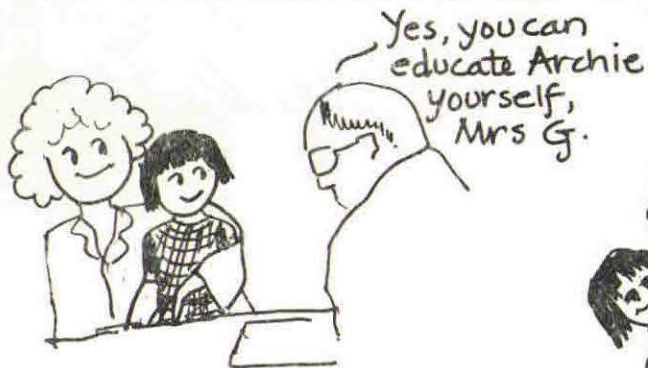
The notion of elitism was raised at the meeting, and we didn't like the way the newspaper report suggested that EO is elitist in the same way as sending children to boarding schools is. To us, the general feeling of the meeting was that it's sad that EO is mostly embarked upon by educated middle class people, but that (a) we've every right to decline the school system and (b) hopefully by the stand we take we will encourage more people to take this option and perhaps help to make schools better places for those who choose them. Unlike private education, EO is open to any parent, whatever their class background and whether or not they have academic qualifications - but sadly most people are deeply inhibited by fear of authority or lack of confidence, or of course ignorance of the legal possibility of EO.

We agreed that a list of those present should be sent to each person, giving names and addresses and brief details about ages of children. We did this, suggesting another meeting in Jan/Feb, and maybe an event like a family picnic for the kids next summer. We've had only three responses; but several didn't have children and/or lived quite a way from us. We are putting cards (as shown in the last newsletter) in various public places inviting contact. Two couples educating their four children have asked if we know others who might link with them; and we hope our linking function will gradually grow.

So that's how it is, isn't, and might become, in North Herts.

EDUCATING ARCHIE

BY SEG



EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS by Sarah Guthrie.

What the papers have been saying about schooling and children...

ALTERNATIVES: Families practising home education have received press coverage recently.

Irene and Geoff Harrison of Hereford were featured in Woman's Realm (August 1978) teaching their children "the art of living" ... the Kirkbride family in Norfolk hit the education headlines with the publication of John Kirkbride's book "That'll Teach You" (the book will be reviewed in the next Newsletter). Their home education provoked a local education officer into saying "It's a very delicate area for us" (Evening News, August 1978)... the Daily Telegraph (August 1978) carried an interview with the Vigar family of Bexhill who have been teaching their children for two years using PNEU. "What I'm really trying to do is make them think for themselves" said Mrs. Vigar.... "School's Out" was the title of She magazine's feature on home education (November issue 1978) which quotes from the Guthrie, Fearnley and Choudhuri families, Dick Kitto and several other EO members.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH... there has been concern over "falling standards"; HMI's survey was described as "this generation's biggest investigation into primary schools... which shows that reading standards have improved but maths are still decidedly shaky" (Guardian, 19.9.78).

HMI has also produced a report on secondary schools' curricula, pleading for "flexibility and definition" (Michael Duffy, Guardian, October 1978). This, however, is unlikely to be taken up and, says Duffy, "children will still be squeezed into the Procrustean bed of a curriculum whose shape is determined largely by the Examination Boards"....

Head teachers voted unanimously against the proposed replacements for advanced level exams after hearing of the possible "catastrophic" effects they may have on the first pupils to sit them (Guardian, October 1978).

However, Tories voted to back comprehensives and "push up sliding classroom standards" (Evening Standard, 13.10.78), while a US survey on educational standards showed that 17 year olds knew less about science than pupils ten years previously. But over 50% of Dallas' new teachers failed an intelligence test for people over the age of 13 (New Society, 10.8.78).

In France, educational psychologists reported that half of their clients are children suffering from exhaustion due to rigorous school hours - 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. in primary schools, and 8.15 a.m. to 5.15 p.m. plus homework in secondary schools (New Society, October 1978).

British educational psychologists seem, according to the press, to be more concerned with getting "them" back to school. Dr. Cameron (no relation?), consultant child psychologist at St. George's

Hospital, London, told a conference on "The Child Under Stress" of his successful treatment of school-phobics (Sunday Times, 22.10.78). 85% of the 11-14 year olds in his "school-refused units" return permanently to school. By not analysing the underlying fear but instead setting a positive date for return to school, enlisting a favourite teacher's support and asking parents to phone him daily, Dr. Cameron reckons that it takes between five and fifteen consecutive days to get the school-phobic "over the hump" and accept that "he must go to school" (at least two thousand children drop out of school each year as "school-phobic").

LAW AND ORDER: An anti-truancy patrol (including policemen) scoured the streets of Hastings to check on children not at school (Guardian 17.10.78). If excuses were not "medical or other" parents could face prosecution...

British police have called on educators to help stop rising crime rates (Guardian 17.9.78) by, in effect, ceasing to encourage children to ask questions. "They (the educators) let the genie out of the bottle as they always have done" explained the police spokesman...

ACE's first national conference on secret records in education was covered by the press, and it's director Peter Newell wrote an article in the Education Section of the Guardian (September 1978). He outlined the extent of secrecy and the nature of "reports which can result in drastic action - putting children into care or categorising them as maladjusted: parents and children get no opportunity to see or challenge such reports..."

Secrecy also prevails in records of corporal punishment administered in schools. Both the Campaign for the Advancement of Secondary Education (CASE) and the ILEA had produced surveys showing the frequency of caning in schools (Evening Standard 16.10.78). Some of the schools insisted on anonymity. The ILEA survey admitted that "... there is a wide range of practise in regard to corporal punishment..."

The front page cartoon in an October Sunday Times indicates how pervasive is our violence towards children. By TROG, it showed a teacher reading about the use of a drug to control prisoners. Another teacher is saying "How do we slip it into the school milk?".

More news in the next Newsletter.

DAVID BAKER

In response to a suggestion by Dick Kitto, David Baker (one of the famous "Baker infants") wrote the following article for this Newsletter.

I hope none of us have to demonstrate our beliefs to the extent that Joy Baker had to, in a ten-year ordeal with the authorities. Her pioneering fight should be applauded: it has made a valuable precedent for us who follow, and should be remembered.

Joy Baker's book, "Children in Chancery" recounts their experience. David Baker has been invited to appear on Anglia television to talk about his education.

In June 1960 I reached the age of fifteen without ever having attended, even for a day, any recognised school. A year later my mother, Joy Baker, won in the High Court the right to educate her children - there were seven of us - at home.

It was the end of a battle that had lasted nearly ten years. Although there were a couple of half-hearted attempts by the authorities to continue the offensive against us, they came to nothing, and we were eventually left alone.

Since then, my mother's defence of what I believe is the most basic parental right, the choice of education, has been described as 'unnecessary'; her book on the case as 'how not to deal with the education authorities'. But I think in fact that the reverse is true; had it not been for her efforts at a time when the present law on the matter (the Education Act of 1944) was new and untested, many of the parents who today are able to educate their children other than at school would have encountered far greater opposition to their wishes than they do now.

Understandably, the authorities are not keen to repeat their mistake; at that time they appeared to act on the unquestioned assumption that, despite the wording of the Act, they and they alone would decide how and where a child was educated. Anyone who expressed a wish to do it other than by regular attendance at the school appointed by them was given very little consideration.

The result was an enormous amount of publicity in the national press and on radio and television. In the end the welfare and education of 'the Baker infants' became very much a secondary matter to that of beating this woman who dared to defy the law. The authorities showed that they were prepared to go to any lengths to achieve this; in 1955 four of us were taken from our beds by police and driven to a council home. But they had clearly gone too far; we were released within twenty-four hours when my mother did not, as they apparently expected, agree to send us to school as a condition of allowing us out.

Now, more than twenty years after the start of my mother's campaign, things are very different. With a few exceptions, local education authorities will at least consider proposals put to them by parents. Organisations such as Education Otherwise, quite unthinkable even ten years ago, have been formed to assist people who feel that mass education very often cannot provide a child with what they believe is best suited to him.

I hope and believe that the numbers of people who do educate out of school will increase each year. If so, an organisation such as Education Otherwise will have an increasingly important part to play in the upbringing of some very fortunate children.

David Baker, 299 Landseer Road, Ipswich, Suffolk.

A CASE FOR ALTERNATIVES IN EDUCATION by Mollie Jenkins

In February 1978 a T.V. programme in the Open Door series presented members of an organisation called 'Education Otherwise'. This programme provoked over a thousand letters from people all over the country - teachers, parents, social workers, and people who had no direct dealings with the educational system but who were socially concerned. They came from every stratum of society - intelligentsia to unemployed labourer, hippy to bank manager - but they all expressed concern and dissatisfaction with the school system, and a large number were desperate to know how to pull their children out of it.

I have spent time this summer going through hundreds of these letters, and the stories they tell are alarming and heart-breaking - of ill-treatment of children and a failure to educate them on the part of many schools; of abuse, harassment and threats to parents who complain on the part of many local authorities. Several parents in desperation, had taken their children out of school and taught them at home themselves; most of these were threatened with court action by the local education authority, and if they didn't come to heel, care orders were served on their children. There were several cases of mental breakdown in children due to compulsory attendance at schools which terrified them, but in practically every case the education authority had been totally inflexible until mental breakdown actually occurred, at which point they insisted that the child should attend their own (sometimes residential) psychiatric units.

So parents have no power to protect their children from bad schools unless they are rich enough to pay for independent schools - and many people feel that these are often no better. This is not to deny that many people are satisfied with the state schools, particularly in 'good' middle-class areas. But those who are not satisfied are, at the present time, being denied their legal rights. For the British Education Act of 1944 states quite clearly that parents have a duty to see that their children receive an adequate education 'in school or otherwise', and that local authorities have a statutory obligation to provide suitable schools. There is no mention of compulsory schooling, though most local authorities behave as though this is a legal requirement.

The Act further lays down that parents shall choose how their children are to be educated; but for most people there is no choice: it has to be the primary or comprehensive school allocated by the local authority according to an arbitrary catchment area, and the schools are all basically the same anyway.

A case I was involved in recently will illustrate just how bad things are. It concerns Shirley, whose family moved house when she was just thirteen. She was transferred from a school where she had done very well to an inner city comprehensive school which she hated. She says that nobody could learn anything because the children were so far out of control that the teacher could not teach. There was constant noise and chaos from 9 till 4, five days a week, forty-odd weeks a year-how many adults could stand that?

She was bullied by gangs of older youths, and by girls whose sexual and moral standards were non-existent. Because of all this she maintained, quite rightly in my opinion, that she was not receiving the education that was her legal right and demanded to be transferred to another school. All this is corroborated by her mother and the social worker concerned. Her mother, a widow on social security, could not possibly pay for private schooling.

In theory, so a representative of the L.E.A. assures me, any child can be transferred to any school in the city that he or she wishes, only providing that the school named is not already full. Moreover, the child can be transferred as often as he wishes up to once a term. The snag is that nobody is ever told of this provision-in fact Shirley and her mother were told repeatedly that there was no other option but the school they had already rejected. (When taxed with this, the Education Department later put this astonishing slip down to 'human error!'). They applied for a transfer back to her previous school and were told that it was full, though on checking back later we discovered that this was untrue (another 'human error' according to the Education Office representative).

Shirley was then taken to the juvenile court for truancy - though the Education Act talks of prosecuting and fining the parents for their child's non attendance in the adult court. Finally a care order was served on her removing her completely from the control of her mother, and she was sent to a psychiatric assessment unit to 'assess the nature of her school phobia', as though it wasn't obvious. Shirley panicked at this: 'Once them shrinks get hold of you they've got you locked up before you can turn round, and they've got you for good. I'm not barmy - I just want some education'. One could see her point but her social worker was furious with her.

Next she was committed to a Remand Centre (described to me over the phone by one of the Education inspectors as a 'punishment centre'-but the child was only claiming her legal rights, and with remarkable courage refused to be intimidated. Here, to use her own words again, she was among 'sex maniacs, drug addicts, runaways, potential suicides and petty criminals'. She did a lot of cleaning and very little in the way of lessons, and when she objected they put her on strong tranquillisers - much too strong, according to her own doctor later. Eventually they let her out on condition she went back to the school she had rejected in the first place. Shirley tried, but couldn't face it. Another psychiatric centre was offered and refused.

This was where I came in. She saw a television programme put on by 'Education Otherwise' and wrote to Dick Kitto, who referred her to me. I was already teaching my own daughter, about the same age, with the sanction of the L.E.A., and I offered to teach both girls (free, incidently). This offer was refused by the authority, first on the grounds that I wasn't qualified, although they knew that I was and that I had done some supply teaching in the area in state schools, and when challenged, on the grounds that Shirley was too withdrawn and needed the company of other children. The social worker complained that she and her sister never went out in the

evenings, but preferred to stay at home with their mother.

The complaint was ridiculous - no girl in her senses wanders about that part of town on her own after dark. There are notices in the public lavatories warning women of gang rape in the area, even in broad daylight and infrequented places! As a matter of fact Shirley did go out to look up friends in her old haunts, but in the daytime.

So the inevitable happened, and Shirley was locked up in a Community Home forty miles away: it might as well have been four hundred as far as she and her mother were concerned, for they had rarely strayed from their own area of the city. She was bitterly unhappy. They read all her letters (tearing up the ones they didn't like), monitored her phone calls, and only allowed her home for four days after the first six weeks. She might almost be regarded as a political prisoner, for she had committed no crime, unless claiming your legal rights is a crime. Habeas Corpus doesn't appear to operate for children.

When she did come home she was uncharacteristically jittery, with sinister tales of girls having been beaten by the Head and then not allowed outside the house until the bruises had healed. It all sounded utterly Dickensian, but the child was badly frightened, and there has never been any suggestion from anyone, that she is untruthful. Moreover her stories were believable in the light of my own brief general impression of the place, of hostility and secretiveness. She was terrified that we would say anything - any complaints would be taken out on her.

That sad and distressing saga continues, and it is echoed in many of the letters received by Education Otherwise. Here are endless tales of classroom chaos, mindless violence, uncontrolled bullying, and an inflexible system that takes no account of individual human needs. No one person or department is to blame. Teachers can't cope with the size of the classes and the range of ability; schools can't cope with disturbed and violent children; some children can't cope with the impersonal barren environment of a monolithic comprehensive school, or being among strangers in a primary school all day at the age of five. Headmasters and Headmistresses, education welfare workers and social workers, implement what they imagine the law to be (though sometimes with a dash of tyranny thrown in); they can't change the law - only we can do that, you and I and all the other people we can persuade to stand up and shout with us.

HACTU : Georgina Winkley

Human Action Counselling and Training Unit, 176 Bellingdon Road,
Chesham, Bucks. HP5 2HG.

The problem that all EO parents meet sooner or later and resolve with varying degrees of difficulty and success, is that of working out with their LEA a fair interpretation and implementation of the "otherwise" clause in the 1944 Education Act. The lack of precedents relating to this issue is confusing, but also leaves it

open to us to establish our rights and interests in fact.

A legal advice centre would certainly provide a necessary service, and I hope that the International Year of the Child will come through and help us establish one.

However, legislation cannot do more than provide a skeleton which people themselves must flesh out as a social reality. The challenge of changing their own and others' established attitudes, whether of powerlessness or prejudices faces all people who attempt to realise a human right as fact.

After a year of explorations, we have defined this as the area we want to work in. Accordingly we have formed ourselves into the Human Action Counselling and Training Unit (HACTU).

During the spring and summer of 1979 we will be focusing on the education system and on the issue of sexism. We are offering a programme of course phases, consultative visits and oral and written analysis and reflection. Alongside these we are developing a crisis service for advice and support, as funds permit.

In due course, we would like to set up an association in support of our work: a hard core of people who would like to advise us, plan with us, link their efforts with ours and sometimes set up or consult to a particular programme, and any number of well-wishers to whom we could offer a growing network of communication and support.

We invite responses and ideas of EO people about this venture. If you would like details of the spring/summer 1979 programme, and of the proposed association, send a s.a.e. to HACTU (address as above).

CARAVANSERAI by Mollie Jenkins

Caravan-serai...the word means 'an unfurnished inn'.

It is also the name of an Education Otherwise project that I hope to get off the ground next year in Leeds, given a lot of support/help/determination from a lot of friends.

I am a lifelong school-hater. From my own childhood experiences, as a teacher and as a parent, I sincerely believe that school is often no more than an elaborate child-minding service, and that at worst it is positively damaging and a gross infringement of human rights. From the EO files it would seem that a great many other people feel the same way as I do.

Being middle class and articulate we managed to defend our own four children from its worst effects by paying independent school fees for the first two, and by de-schooling the second two for most of their childhood years. But in the last few years I have become involved with drop-out children and truants from inner city comprehensives, and am appalled at what the law does to children who quite legitimately reject the school allocated to them by the LEA.

Next year our last child will be launched and my husband and I will move to Leeds, where he takes up a new job. I shall be free to devote a lot of time and energy to putting up a fight against what I consider a criminally inadequate and unjust educational system.

This year I am recruiting troops and planning tactics. Caravanserai has three main aims:

- 1) To demonstrate a viable alternative to the present school structure.
- 2) To press for implementation of the law (and incidentally the Human Rights Charter which the U.K. has signed) which guarantees parental choice in education and the right of families to educate their children outside the school system.
- 3) To set up an educational Consumer Protection body, independent of LEAs to take action in complaints against schools and the educational administration.

The project envisages two main bases, plus a network of satellite projects and support groups.

City Caravanserai will be a place in the centre of Leeds which will serve as a base for any child who prefers to learn in small groups in an unstructured way, with a programme tailored to his own personal needs and goals. This is not quite the same thing as is usually understood by a 'free school'. It will be staffed by adults, many of them volunteers on a part-time basis, with a variety of skills, plus a deep respect for the child as an individual person.

It will also serve as:

- 1) A resource and advice centre/ support group for those families in the area who want to educate their own children.
- 2) A skills/learning exchange register available to everyone.
- 3) Possibly a shop retailing learning materials.
- 4) A complaints centre to fight on behalf of particular children threatened with care orders and/or psychiatric treatment by the LEA for refusing an unsuitable school.
- 5) A political base for a campaign to fight for the implementation of the 'parental choice' and 'otherwise' clauses in the Education Act, and to make sure that these are not written out of the new education act which the Labour government is rumoured to be cooking up.

Funding for this base will have to depend at first on voluntary fund-raising.

City satellite bases will be workshops or projects where Caravanserai children can learn skills and get experience that will enable them to earn a living afterwards - at the moment denied to many children because of their poor school performance. Such skills would also enable children to raise their own funds for books, travel and individual enterprises.

One such project might be a vehicle and domestic machine maintenance shop, another an allotment combined with a market stall, another a printing reprographic shop producing their own publicity/learning materials as well as trade commissions, another a permanent flea market for the collection and resale of donated goods - a sort of perpetual jumble sale. We would hope to get grants for these projects.

Rural Caravanserai will be the second base, situated somewhere in the Leeds area. It will consist of a group of people, mostly families with young children, living in close proximity so that they can educate their own children, grow their own food, and earn their living by practising their crafts and trades.

There will also be accomodation for Caravanserai children and families to stay for short periods to experience country living and learn skills alongside the adults as they work in the garden, with animals, or in their workshops. This would enable a two-way exchange of both children and adults between the two bases. There might be a woodworking shop here, perhaps screen-printing, more vehicle and machine maintenance - whatever emerges according to the people who turn up. This base would have to be built up gradually be people willing to move to the settlement and live there permanently.

This is an ambitious project, and can only be realised if everyone in the Leeds area who supports EO/Caravanserai aims weighs in with time and/or money. We need everyone's help - teachers of all kinds who could spare even an hour or so a week; legal and business advisors; people in the educational world and social services who share our concerns and are prepared to advise and work with us; fund raisers; office workers; people with building and other practical skills; people with 'connections' who know where to look for grants, or who can gain political support; people with the gift of the gab or the pen who can spread the message; most of all people who are prepared to join the 'corps group' to get the project off the ground - this will involve a certain amount of time this winter, and quite a lot next year.

So please, if you are as worried as I am about what is happening to some of our children, write in and offer whatever support or skills or time or money you can. If you want a reply please send money to cover the postage, stationery, and duplicating costs. I'm prepared to put in a lot of time but don't as yet have any funds at all.

I can be contacted during the autumn and winter at the following address:

Mollie Jenkins
26 Clothorn Road,
Didsbury,
Manchester M20 0BP Tel: 061-445-4347

I shall also be coming over to Leeds fairly frequently in the next few months to see and talk to people who are interested.

THE WAY TO EDUCATION OTHERWISE

Ruby and Frank Vernon withdrew their 13 year old daughter Hilary from school. Here follows their account of the initial stages, and some advice.

We first heard of the group by tuning into the last few minutes of the TV programme, and immediately rejoiced that there actually were other people within reach and of the same frame of mind as ourselves. We were very glad to realise that we were not alone, and that our attitude was conducive to the ordinary citizen's social obligations after all.

We thought deeply about opting out of the State system, but with Hilary's wishes and needs foremost we reckoned that the transition would not be all that much of a shock.

"First Aid" which might save families going under at the first meeting with the LEA would be to relate everything the Advisor said to the "First Steps to Education Otherwise" booklet. Anything not quite "right" can be referred to EO advisors for interpretation.

The next step is to combat and defend oneself against the pressure of the LEA. Do not be put off by the LEA regretting your combative or defensive stand.

We know that EO advocates working with, or at least not being wholly against, the LEA, but as we see it once they have gained your confidence you will probably see them beginning to take over your educational role. This can surely end only in family and personal demoralisation of the most humiliating kind.

Parents must be absolutely united on this issue and realise the ultimate intransigence of the LEA, which will NOT admit that you "have a case" - they will try any means to keep you under their stifling wing and prevent your complete enjoyment of otherwise education.

Encouraged by Mr. Kitto, we compiled a programme and timetable and sent it to the LEA on 21st August 1978. It read:

The Area Education Officer.

Dear Sir,

My wife and I, as members of Education Otherwise (address and telephone number) in assenting consultation with our daughter Hilary Christine 13 years who has completed the second year at Portchester School (2K 2EI) have decided to exercise our ultimate responsibilities and engage our daughter in a full-time course of education at home.

Hilary, whom we are confident is mature enough to make a considered judgement for herself about her future, has begun the adjustment to the new outlook to her studies with enthusiasm and eagerness to commence in earnest.

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her."

Hilary will study at home in a suitable room well lighted, ventilated and adequately heated. We are aware of the LEA's responsibility to ensure the efficiency of such education. May we therefore notify you of the Study Programme and Timetable in which we propose to engage our daughter.

"It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth". "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it".

1. English Language: Correspondence course on composition and spelling; GCE 'O'-level.
2. Maths: Correspondence course in "Business Arithmetic". GCE 'O'-level assessed by parents or use of "Made Simple" series of books.
3. Pursuit of Knowledge: Correspondence course and model answers on preparatory studies on History, Literature, Constitution, Environment, Geography I and II, Medical Science, Power. Assessed by parents.
4. Physics: "Made Simple" series.
5. French: building on previous learning and using "Made Simple" books.
6. British Constitution: Correspondence course assessed by parents to 'O'-level standard.
7. Introduction to 'O'-level English Literature: Correspondence course using Twelfth Night, The Rivals and seven poems of Keats.
8. Introduction to Elementary Logic: correspondence course material assessed by parents with reference to suitability.
9. Economics and Social History: 'O'-level correspondence course material assessed by parents to 'O'-level standard.
10. Current Affairs: at least one main TV news presentation per day with daily press, educational magazines, family discussion and record of events.
11. Household Skills and Family-Community relationships: such as home, fire, road accident prevention, hygiene, purchasing, catering, sewing, dressmaking; by outside class work. LEA-approved instructor for handicrafts including hessian modelling. Novice approach to country crafts via suitable reference booklet. Membership of model railway clubs and Railway Preservation Societies.

12. Historical Survey and Physical Science Survey: parent assessed and motivated, self-tested by question and answer.
13. Music: wide appreciation. Parental instruction in reading music and playing the piano, violin, recorder and other woodwind. Open University course units "Introduction to Music" and "Form and Meaning". At least one musical recording followed with the score. "Songs of Praise" on TV. Cruder pop music excluded.
14. Religious studies: the story of Jesus discussed. Open University study unit on Gospel according to St. Mark. The Bible as a source of words, from Harvey Day's "Thirty Days to a Superpower Vocabulary". Book of Common Prayer. Catechism introduced with a view to discussion of Confirmation.
15. "The Rainbow" (D.H. Lawrence): Open University set book. Family discussion to stimulate appreciation. Also possible play reading.
16. Ethel Cotton course in conversation: diction, speech guiding conversation, "living with people", poetic and dramatic interpretation. True appreciation of the arts.
17. Practical psychology: Courses and books; "vitalic breathing", family participation and evaluation, attempting to understand the mind. Edward de Bono and lateral thinking.
18. Fact Finding: Rosicrucians, Reader's Digest articles for discussions with essays and poems. 'A'-level Economic and Social History and General Principles of English Law. 'A'-level equivalent in Criminal Law.
19. Visits and outings mainly at weekends, with guide books. At least one visit to the Houses of Parliament planned within the three years. Education Otherwise functions and meetings.

We are strengthened in our beliefs by the personal reminiscences and reflections of one of Her Majesty's former Inspectors of schools who said: "The strength of English Education has always been in its variety and freedom of choice".

In just thirty months time, Hilary (purely as an illustration of the anxiety with which we view the situation) like thousands of young people her age, will be free to litigate on her own behalf, despite any parental objections, for the right to make probably the most momentous decision of a lifetime.

We have but one desire to, and great faith that we can, help Hilary become competent to argue for herself the facts of any and every contention in her life, bearing in mind the need to be aware of the particularly delicate relationships between some girls and their parents under certain circumstances in later life when the highest degree of reasoning is required to maintain family harmony and unity.

"As are families, so is society. If well-ordered, well-instructed and well-governed, they are the springs from which go forth the streams of national greatness and prosperity - of civil order and public happiness" - Thayer.

Yours sincerely,

Frank and Ruby Vernon.

The Area Inspector replied as follows:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Vernon,

I write in acknowledgement of your letter of the 1st. September in which you notify us of your intention to undertake the responsibilities for Hilary's education at home.

Without prior notice of this intention I am of course currently without any of the surrounding and supporting facts which will enable us to feel assured that Hilary will receive an education according to Law which is in line with her age, aptitude and ability and, as you have kindly appreciated in your letter, it will be my task to offer the County Education Officer a report reassuring him on this matter.

At this present moment therefore I will undertake the following on your behalf - I will seek from the school any information relevant to Hilary's abilities and needs and any related matters and then I will come to meet with you in order to discuss your plans and intentions in some greater depth.

I am committed to an in-service training course on my own behalf in Birmingham next week and therefore I will call, unless I hear to the contrary from yourselves, on Monday 18th September shortly after 9 a.m.

It would be very helpful indeed if you could have ready for the occasion the details of all the correspondence courses and the sources from which you are obtaining them.

I shall write to the school of necessity pointing out that this decision has been reached without prior notice and I shall therefore ask them to regard Hilary as remaining on their roll until such time as the County Education Officer's agreement has been achieved.

Yours sincerely,

An account of the first visit from the authority will be included in the next Newsletter.

THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE LEA. A report by Alan Pye.

Cathy Isaacs, Primary Education Advisor for Thamesdown, was invited to talk at the Shaw Farm weekend in September.

Although she was outwardly sympathetic, the points she raised were of a very general nature. Real information was not volunteered. Unfortunately, the meeting allowed this state of affairs to persist.

Isaacs began by defining the Advisor's role, talking in terms of advising the Executive arm of the Authority on priorities for staffing and expenditure on equipment, but also including the obligation to see that children were educated in accordance with their age, ability and aptitude.

Her personal opinion was that children should be educated by their parents - so long as the "intellectual, physical, social and spiritual aspects" were dealt with according to the age, ability and aptitude of the child. She neglected to point out that the Authority is the first-encountered arbiter where the satisfaction of these criteria is concerned.

However, she saw no value in setting up a school in the home, even though the ratio of pupil to teacher was at, or near, the ideal of one to one. Learning-by-doing was the most effective way, she said, and at home one should use this approach - something schools find impossible to do. In fact, she said, schools were attempting to do these things, but had obvious difficulties due to their size. She went so far as to say that things were done the way they were in schools because they were large communities - but I lost the point of the repetition.

Regrettably nowever, she said, it appeared that some schools were putting organization first and were forgetting the needs of the children.

She pointed out that each person has the right to make his own decision on education. But she stressed that this decision had to be an "informed" decision. Unfortunately the meeting did not attempt to clarify what the official view of an "informed" decision was, nor how one went about making oneself "informed". The serious implication that it is the LEA who decide whether the EO parent has made an "informed" decision (and therefore whether the parent's decision has any validity?) was not explored.

Bringing up the question of indoctrination in schools herself, she noted that although legislation cannot affect the attitudes of teachers, in any case parental indoctrination of the child had much more influence than that of the teacher. This potentially revealing line of approach to the official position on influencing the young was nipped in the bud by an interruption to the effect that children given freedom were not indoctrinated. Isaac's response was that we all bring up our children under a set of ideals or under the influence of a set of hang-ups; leaving open the question of

which category she would put freedom into!

In a general way she noted that there were drawbacks to every approach, and that sometimes we overprotect. Warning to this, Isaacs said that the EO parent must be very careful in his choice of role. She feels that children need a parent "to fight against" in order to find the boundaries of behaviour. If the children want to join this society of ours, she said, then they must come to terms with orders imposed by an external authority. More importantly, she made the point that she feels that children need other people (not their parents) who can teach them how to cope with this external authority by exposing them to it. There is a danger, she said, that children out of school never come up against the hardening effect of imposed authority, and that such children were over-protected and were not "hardened-off" to the world as it is.

There were several, simultaneous interruptions from the meeting at this point, objecting that all children meet situations in which an order must be carried out (for safety reasons for example), or meet people with arbitrary or unpleasant natures who seek to impose their wills or attitudes on the children they encounter at large. Furthermore, it was postulated that children with a security of self can survive these experiences as they arise (and they surely will arise) and do not need adult-initiated exposure at all.

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Isaacs then returned to the notional theme of her talk. Advisors, she said, were not interested in the preparations parents had made for the time when their children reached the age of eleven. She pointed out that a trained teacher in the family was not necessary - but what about these later years? Will the child receive a "broad enough" education? Again she used the word "informed"; the LEA looked for "informed, objective" parents.

Isaacs says "Watch it!" to parents who educate children at home, and repeated herself - "Watch it!". She warned parents not to take up campaigns which might only bring harm to their children. "In an impossible situation you do the best you can for your kid" she said. She added that the best one was able to do was always constrained by circumstances and of the constraints the most important was financial.

She noted (in a jokey voice) that greater pressure in educational matters came from people who believed that children were "inherently wicked". Her point was that on the whole, people who care for "individuality and self-understanding" are less "articulate" (presumably she meant less vociferous) and do not like working "through committees or parliament". Therefore, she said, the message that comes across to the authorities is "middle-class" and is "conformity"; the mixture as before, no change.

She went on to say that in her view, if a baby always had what it wanted immediately, then that baby could not grow to be a "whole person". Predictably, there was a noisy outcry from the meeting at this! Nevertheless, she reinforced her point. Some effort on the part of the baby is necessary right from the beginning, she said, before it has its demands satisfied.

This philosophy was obviously quite out of step with that of most of the members of the meeting. It was pointed out to Isaacs that her ideas when applied to a child of four or five years were probably valid, but that a baby should have its demands met as they occur.

More significantly, this outcry prompted a most important question: how can the EO parent cope with those in authority when they hold such different opinions on the way children should be treated and hence educated? The question went unanswered, although it has far-reaching practical implications for us all.

Instead, Isaacs responded to other, simultaneous and conveniently distracting (for Isaacs) statements about freedom. Yes, of course, we all agreed that front doors should not be left open where the house adjoined a busy street and the house held young children... But it was all a side issue.

A questioner asked what criteria were used for recommending school or care for a non-school child. Isaacs replied that she felt she knew people and knows herself well enough. Even if the child was in physical or emotional danger, she said, she would preferentially work "with the parents" and would not threaten. If the parents are "well-motivated" she said, then one can talk to them and "get them to know themselves". Even on the third or fourth visit, she said, she would not start... "you know". I presume she meant "to threaten". She would get the parents to come themselves to the decision to bring the child back to school, she would not order them to do so. However, one could observe that this maternalism was just so much cant, since as an Advisor it would never be her role to order; this would be carried out by the Executive, on advice from her!

She was asked how much time she could afford to spend on one family to this end. But her response was that this was her own activity, her hobby; she could spend as much time as she liked on it.

However, the question of criteria was raised again, the questioner pointing out that some authorities use narrow, academic criteria to judge on education. Isaacs replied that a child can have an apparent ability which is in fact spurious - quite advanced topics could be apparently mastered although basic knowledge might be unsound. This was often the case, she said, in families where one parent was a mathematics teacher.

The question is, she said, is the teaching "appropriate"; but hastened to say that a judgement based on appropriateness would not be used as evidence in a report to the Executive arm. For instance, she noted that some children of 13 and 14 cannot read, but that this was "within themselves" and "is O.K.". But presumably she was relating this state of affairs to a school situation (a cynic might say that it was a loophole or escape clause for the failings of the school system) - and the crucial point as to whether this "O.K." attitude would be applied to an EO child of this reading standard was not raised by the meeting. It seems to me that such benevolence would in fact be most unlikely.

A questioner noted that although one cannot legislate for attitudes on the part of teachers, their attitude was that parents are dumb and cannot do it themselves; they need experts to do their teaching for them. Neither confirming nor denying the presence of such an attitude, Isaacs observed that she had gone for promotion because, in her original capacity, she had not been able to make the changes she wanted. She claimed that, had promotion been impossible, she would have resigned from teaching rather than compromise her principles.

But as a member objected, resignation was impossible for the EO parent if the LEA did not allow the new educational approach desired by the parent; there was no possibility of promotion. No, the parent was taken to court; this was the EO dilemma.

Isaacs answered that she was a "reasonable, sensible" person; the operative thing was for the parent to "trust" her (Isaacs).

To the question, "Do authorities have more right to interpret the Education Act?", Isaacs replied that morally they did not. However, "unfortunately" the courts took more notice of a professional than a lay person. "An organisation needs the respectability of a professional" she said.

"Do LEA's have laid-down attitudes in interpreting the Act?" Isaacs said that in her experience they did not; many did not seem to have a policy. Attitudes were built up by actual interactions with the EO parent. We, as pioneer EO parents, should do it "right" she said, and make it easier for the authorities "to cope with those who follow". No one asked what the "right" way was.

Isaacs in summarising tone noted that the EO parent should act positively. Don't say that you will not send your child to school. Say "As I am allowed, I want to educate my child at home". Use, she said, a determined but low-key approach. "Make sure you know what you are doing and avoid a confrontation as much as possible".

I should like to conclude with some personal observations. The whole occasion was not constructively handled by the group. Isaacs was allowed to generalise and trade philosophical comments. Generally these were of no practical value to the parent actually dealing with an officer from the LEA.

Indeed, the discussion was allowed to dissipate its energy in the backwaters of statements on freedom and self-regulation. It even threatened to drift away completely into defining what might be meant by a free State.

Isaacs sat quietly by while all this ebbed around her and need not, of course, have been there at all. It had nothing whatsoever to do with her, neither did it have anything to do with the topic of her talk.

She described her work for the National Association for Gifted Children (her own daughter went to Millfield School - "for health reasons"), and this irrelevant topic was blithely accepted

by the group in an ill-informed and timewasting discussion as to whether gifted children existed at all.

Very many of Isaac's anecdotes ended with a winning smile and a conspiratorial "...you know" instead of a conclusion. But she was additionally spared the embarrassment of having to actually make definite statements by frequent, ill-timed and diversionary interjections from the audience.

With someone co-ordinating and guiding the discussion of what was a large group, Isaac's pronouncements could have been fixed and subjected to proper scrutiny.

As a public relations exercise for Cathy Isaacs and the authorities, the occasion was a roaring success. But the opportunity of putting close, searching and critical questions to an expert on "the expectations of LEAs" was squandered.

THE EDUCATION OF JOHN STUART MILL

Pat Wharton, who is writing a book, gives this account of an earlier Otherwise Education.

Education has not always been as standardised as it is nowadays. Many famous people, and especially many writers, have had a very unconventional upbringing by modern standards. They have been largely self-educated, educated at home or by relatives, sometimes because of ill-health or poverty, but sometimes by the deliberate choice of their parents.

It might be instructive for 'Education Otherwise' members to consider some of these people and perhaps collect some of their biographical details and opinions. Examples which spring to mind quickly are Elizabeth Barret Browning, Beatrix Potter, Elspeth Huxley and John Stuart Mill.

I have just been reading the famous autobiography of John Stuart Mill, the 19th century philosopher and pioneer feminist.

He was the son of an eminent Scottish scholar, James Stuart Mill, who earned his living as a writer of scholarly books (such as his History of British India) and was eventually employed as a senior clerk in the offices of the East India Company at India House, where his son was later to follow him.

John Stuart Mill was born in London in May 1806, the eldest son of a large family. In spite of all his other work and study, his father determined to educate his children himself and seems to have set about this task very methodically and very ruthlessly. It was perhaps fortunate that his eldest son was so remarkably gifted, for one wonders what the effect of his methods would have been on a more ordinary lad!

John Stuart Mill writes "I have no remembrance of the time when I began to learn Greek; I have been told that it was when I was three years old. My earliest recollection... is that of committing to memory... lists of common Greek words with their signification in English... I faintly remember going through Aesop's Fables, the first Greek book which I read. But my father in all his teaching, demanded of me not only the utmost that I could do, but much that I could by no possibility have done.

"What he was himself willing to undergo for the sake of my instruction may be judged from the fact that I went through the whole process of preparing my Greek lessons in the same room and at the same table at which he was writing... (and) was forced to have recourse to him for the meaning of every word which I did not know. This incessant interruption, he, one of the most impatient of men, submitted to, and wrote under that interruption several volumes of his History and all else that he had had to write during those years!"

He goes on to explain that "the only thing besides Greek that I learnt as a lesson in this part of my childhood, was the arithmetic" which he had to learn unwillingly in the evenings. Besides this he was expected to read many history books and to explain them to his father during their regular early morning walks before breakfast. He began to study Latin when he was eight and very soon had to repeat these lessons to his younger brothers and sisters - another task which he disliked. He also studied poetry under his father's direction and was expected to write it. At twelve (having read most of the classics) he began the study of Logic and philosophy, and when he was thirteen his father took him "through a complete course of political economy". He also read his father's own book "History of India" and those of his father's friends. Indeed, he co-operated with his father in writing "Elements of Political Economy". At fourteen he left England to stay for a year in France to learn French and some years later was also to add German to his studies.

Judging his own educational experience, John Stuart Mill later wrote, "The point most superficially apparent is the great effort to give, during the years of childhood, an amount of knowledge in what are considered the higher branches of education, which is seldom acquired... until the age of manhood. The result of the experiment shows the ease with which this may be done, and places in a strong light the wretched waste of so many precious years as are spent in acquiring the modicum of Latin and Greek commonly taught to schoolboys; a waste which has led so many educational reformers to entertain the ill-judged proposal of discarding these languages altogether from general education."

He feels that he was not abnormally intelligent, indeed "rather below than above par" and that "what I could do, could assuredly be done by any boy or girl of average capacity and healthy physical constitution", an opinion in which we may well consider him to have been too modest.

Most members of Education Otherwise would probably not consider Mill's education to have been in any way ideal or balanced, and, much as I love the classics, I would not advocate them for the average child. Also it is only right to add that John Stuart Mill suffered a very severe nervous breakdown in the autumn of 1826 (when he was twenty) and this doubtless was a result of overstrain and his precocious intellectual development. It took him some years to recover and to learn to balance his formidable reasoning capacity with emotional and aesthetic satisfactions from friendship and marriage.

PUMPING POLYSYLLABISM

Reprinted with John Holt's kind permission from "Growing Without Schooling" No.2; address Holt Associates Inc., 308 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116, USA. Available via Dick Kitto from The Manor, Thelnetham, Diss, Norfolk.

Two Chicago English professors have found that a good way to improve your grade on a term paper is to use what they call "verbose, bombastic" language.

Professors John Williams and Rosemary Hake say they took a well-written paper and changed the language a bit. They kept the ideas and concepts the same, but wrote two different versions - one in simplified, straightforward language and another in verbose language, loaded with pedantic terms.

They then submitted the two papers to nine high school teachers; they were surprised to find that all nine gave the verbose papers nearly perfect scores but downgraded the straightforward essays as too simple and shallow.

The professors then submitted the same two papers to 90 more teachers and came up with similar results. Three out of four high school teachers and two out of three college professors gave higher marks to pompous writing.

Reason to wonder what these same college professors mean when they tell us, as they do all the time, that today's students "can't write".

EO CHILDREN'S PAGE

Sophia Howard, a very new member, wrote her appreciation of EO in her English book.

Why I like to be taught at home.

I like to be taught at home because I get more attention. For in a class there may be forty or more children with only one person to teach them. Also if there are a lot of people in a class. each child can get only a fraction of the teacher's attention. Of course, not every pupil in a class behaves as he or she should and the teacher has to sort out fights and squabbles and make rules as to how to behave.

All this wastes time that you could be learning in. But when you are at home, there is no-one to fight with (except your Mum) no-one to queue with to get your books marked and find out what your next bit of work is. I have found, especially in maths that some people are stuck with their sums and cannot get on without help from the teacher. It has taken me ten minutes standing waiting for my turn.

Another thing is that it is more peaceful and quiet at home because even when everyone is silent there is still a sound which you are only aware of if you have heard real silence.

Sophia Howard (aged 10).

Sara Drake writes:

I like working at home because you get more attention when you need it. at school they just tell you to get on with something and expect you to know how to do it.

Once because I couldn't do any kind of division, and everyone else in the class could I was given something else to do. The same sort of thing happened with my handwriting, one of the teachers told me to do joined up writing, but another told me to do print. I kept getting mixed up. It was only when mummy told them that I couldn't hold my pen properly, and they did not take any notice that she took me out of school and started to teach me. Now I can do division and hold the pen properly.

I can now learn a lot more because I go to a lot of places that I would not have been able to go to if I had been at school. I do quite a bit of cooking, and often help mummy with the supper. We do some sport, badminton, rounders and running, I do rounders after work with my friends. I do quite a lot of handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

Sara Drake
(age 9)



From
Hilary Vernon
aged 13

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Frances Howard of Hitchin, Herts is a new member. She writes:

I and my husband wish to join Education Otherwise and subscribe to your Newsletter (the Howards enclosed a cheque - the RIGHT way to support EO!).

I am teaching the second of four children at home for one year. I have two children at school and one a babe in arms (in arms is the most educational situation for a person seven weeks old).

My daughter is doing a course provided by World Educational Services (formerly PNEU). While I agree with your correspondent's point that it is too expensive and does not provide value for money, it does provide a haven of respectability which conventional people like us crave.

I think there is a place for W.E.S. in the UK as it is a halfway house between school and total parental responsibility for education. Many people cannot make the psychological leap from reliance on schools to self-reliance. We are such parents. We like to have some moral and practical support to begin with anyway.

I don't really have the mental energy to plan a course myself as I'm still producing babies and that takes a lot out of me.

But I had no idea it was so easy; I do have to get up early to do the housework, but I go to bed early and my husband washes up after the evening meal and does the weekly shopping.

I decided to educate Sophia (my daughter) at home because she felt insecure and unloved being a middle child. She needs attention; her insecurity showed as intense jealousy of her younger sister.

Disbelieving children say to my daughter "You can't have lessons at home!" and "Your mother can't teach you!". Others just accept the situation with a slight twinge of envy.

I wish I had taught my eldest child at home, he still has not learned to spell and has other language difficulties. I found he was too tired after school to be able to benefit from any learning with me. However, he did make friends at school and I'm glad about that.

I wrote announcing our plans a week before the beginning of term to the local director of education. The Education Welfare Officer came round the first week wanting to know details of the course. He was not at all critical.

Well, thank you Frances. Please continue to let us know how you are getting on. Ed.

Robina Pye of Frome Terrace, Dorchester writes:

In response to the article in Newsletter No.7 "The Limitations of Self-Regulation?" by Mollie Jenkins, several thoughts spring to mind regarding the Sinclair family.

If the Sinclairs "did not believe in pressing their small children to do anything that they did not feel like doing" can they be said to have provided the environment necessary for self-regulation? If Mrs. Sinclair was "totally undemanding" was she creating the conditions within which her children could grow in self-knowledge? Is it possible to be undemanding of one's children and not indulge them as a result?

To allow one's child the freedom to be the person he is, to allow him to grow in self-knowledge requires of the parent the expectation and the confidence that the child will be responsible himself for the fulfillment of his own needs and desires. As he grows and takes on responsibility for his own life, so also must he learn the limits to which he may indulge his own desires without impinging on the desires of others. It is necessary for all concerned, the child, the family and society, to make demands.

It is difficult to live closely with a dependent person and to remain sufficiently sensitive to his growth so as to allow him increasing and appropriate responsibility for his life. In other words; to increase one's demands of him.

There does indeed come a time when it is inappropriate for a parent to dress a child, to decide what clothes he ought to wear, what food he ought to eat, what time he ought to go to bed, or what bus he ought to catch. And so too there comes a time in a child's life when it becomes inappropriate for him to expect meals to be prepared, clothes to be washed or a home to be provided. These tasks become his responsibility and it is only during the ages of dependency - childhood and old age - and in ill-health that he allows another to do it for him. On his ability to perform these necessary functions rests his self-respect and self-esteem.

One cannot force a person to acquire skills, but if he does not then he must be allowed to suffer the inconvenience imposed on him by that lack.

If parents indulge a child by providing for him that which he is capable of providing for himself, then they are doing a great disservice to that child and are denying him the opportunity for growth. On the other hand, to deny oneself one's rights, one's demands, is also to deny the child the experience of conflict with oneself, of sharing with oneself, of meeting with oneself. This is not to say that children need to have "the corners knocked off" but they do need to be allowed to live with the real expectations of real people.

If the Sinclairs did not make these real and reasonable demands of their children, then one cannot describe the children as having been accorded their rights of self-regulation.

Gillian Drake of Horsham writes :

Now that we have actually joined the ranks of those pursuing a home education programme, the newsletter provides a very valuable link with others in a similar position. Because of the solitary nature of home education, it is easy to feel isolated and I found great comfort in being reminded of the other people around the country sitting it out alone too.

Would it be possible to introduce a correspondence magazine as a way of keeping in touch with other families? I know time is at a premium when we are working with the children during the day, but I only envisage sitting down one evening every month to produce a letter about one's achievements, failures or amusing moments. I should be happy to act as co-ordinator and send the magazine round monthly on a rota system.

To comment generally on the Newsletter, I enjoyed reading the whole thing. The revised aims are very good and are clearly stated.

There is the usual fantastically varied mix of people writing - those rather vague airy-fairy types who give us few details but would have us believe that their children learn everything for themselves in a loving, happy home atmosphere; and the more disillusioned who tried school but found it didn't provide what they expected.

I am sure I would find it difficult, in such a group, not to help those 5 to 7 year olds learn new facts that their parents are denying them. My experience of normal, lively 5 year olds is that they want to read and write.

I should not want other EO members to think that we are completely formal and book-orientated at home as a result of my letter on the 0-12 leaflet. We are not completely formal, and I would not advocate a purely formal approach.

We do many things for interest which are not normally considered school subjects. For example, we do cookery (especially of wholefoods), anything to do with plants and living things, flower arranging, care of horses and riding, yoga, and visits to places of interest. I have other people (friends who are specialists) to teach the flower arranging, yoga and horse-riding and I join in too.

My older daughter Katie is at secondary boarding school. She is very happy there and thrives in the academic atmosphere and competition. Our intention is that Sara (at home at the moment) will go there eventually as we feel she will be very happy there too.

This particular school has a broadly-based curriculum and by no means does it concentrate on bright pupils only. We feel it will have as much to offer Sara as it has already given to Katie.

Gillian Drake, Newdenne House, Church Street, Warnham, Horsham, Sussex RH12 3QP.

Sandra Holmes writes from Cornwall.

The letter below was received in reply to my letter in the Daily Mail, in which I pointed out that parents whose children had educational problems were able to undertake the responsibility for their children's education and so help them.

I am urged to give my correspondent the full answer! However, my husband has restrained me! He feels it would only lead to a long, unfruitful exchange of letters with a total, rather conventional stranger. If we all took my correspondent's attitude none of us would even venture to change a washer! The plumber would always be called as he is the "expert".

Anyway, it occurred to me that this kind of letter might bring a good response from EO members. They may even be tempted to write to Mr. Glazier and convert him!

Dear Mrs. Holmes,

I read your letter in the Daily Mail of August 21st with interest, but with concern. I wonder to what level you intend to educate your children? If you are planning to teach your children to 'O' and 'A' level standard it would be impossible to teach them properly without some sort of qualifications. Not even a qualified teacher would claim to be able to teach all subjects! to 'O' level, let alone 'A' level.

I would also like to point out that even to-day, many parents are illiterate themselves, therefore it would be impossible for them to teach their children even the basics of Education.

Apart from the legal aspect which allows parents to teach their own children at home, if qualified, let us not forget that Education is not just the receiving of instruction in various subjects. It is important for all children to get out into the world and mix with others.

Yours faithfully,

J. Glazier (Mr.)
Grosvenor Hoouse
49 Hall Crescent
Hadleigh
Benfleet, Essex.

Clive Price of Reading writes:

I'm glad I went to the EO weekend in September. I liked Lower Shaw Farm, picked up bits of information I needed concerning Rural Resettlement Groups, and C.O.M.E.T., looked at the Farm's organic garden and compost heaps; made a leather purse; and met some like-minded folk.

I wasn't angry so much as disappointed at the content of some of the discussions - which sounded similar to many staff meetings I've

been in. There was some overstating of cases with vivid and violent words, here and there some almost obsessive opinions (on the oppression of women, for instance) and some who still needed to do a lot of talking-out of their problems. This is fine, but on that particular weekend maybe I was looking for something else in EO.

Now for Cathy Isaacs. For me, a teacher in a classroom, she can be a source of help against other staff and their blind orthodoxy. She is trying to make schools human and loving places where each kid is considered as himself and given as much help as needed.

Now, she is in the school system and is improving it from within. She accepts schools not for what they are so much as for what they might be if certain things were done.

As for her answers, she didn't run circles around us or avoid the issue; I thought she answered as best she could.

Consider: her brief was very vague, speaking to a set of people who, for various reasons, were against schooling. Some of her answers may have sounded vague - but I recall many questions which were a little pointless. Was there not one about whether or not we should have LEAs and such institutions? Well, I think Cathy Isaacs looks at it like this: LEAs exist, schools exist - let's go on from there. Let's see how we can make sure they are reasonable places.

I don't feel she pulled me under because having worked in schools gives you a feel for who's who and how they operate, and how to survive in spite of directives from above among other things. I don't think she thought of self-regulation as being good or bad, she just looked at the majority of kids in schools who have been brought up in prams, have been given money to bribe them into quietness, or have been told to shut up because dad is on nights and needs a sleep.

Therefore she spoke of stimulating the kids - giving them something which many have had little of.

No - if she was the official who had to visit me to check up, then I would feel O.K. But, as she said, she could only speak for herself and not other bureaucrats.

Tessa Kelland of Frome, Somerset writes:

If you want a 'good news' story for the EO Newsletter please read on.

We joined EO after the last TV programme, being at the time very worried indeed about our six year old daughter who had become, in the words of her ballet teacher, "an apathetic zombie" since starting school. The only aspect of de-schooling her which caused me anxiety was the lack of companionship during the day as, with her brother at boarding school, she is virtually an only child.

However, a couple of letters from Dick and another EO member gave me enough confidence to make the decision, partly because the situation couldn't become any worse anyway.

We weren't able to tell the Headmaster in advance as the decision was made during the Easter holiday. I wrote to County Hall, explained that I was taking Abigail away from school in order to teach her myself, offered a provisional curriculum, said I was willing to see an inspector or welfare officer at any time and added for good measure that I was a qualified teacher. Within a week I had two replies; an acknowledgement and an acceptance of the curriculum.

The inspector not only gave me a month's warning, but a choice of dates and times - something I had never encountered while teaching! After 15 minutes he was ready to depart, satisfied, but Abigail persuaded him to view her craft work of which she was very proud. He left, saying he wouldn't be back before February or March, though he had said earlier that he visits some families very frequently.

Abigail, as it happens has never been lonely. She has returned to being the happy, inquisitive child she was two years ago, with such an active social life that I am hard-pressed to keep up with her at times. She has said that she doesn't want to go back to school - life at home is far too interesting.

At this point we leave it, prepared to review the situation when necessary but without a single regret for having removed her from school. Thank you Dick and Graeme.

From a Member:

The advisor who came to the EO meeting in September was on the surface sympathetic but she has after all her own job to consider, and must therefore be constrained in what she says. She has the odd idea that "corners" must be knocked off children "for their own good", but whether she honestly believes this or whether she says it to explain the many brutalising effects on children in our schools is open to debate.

It would be foolish to take her sympathetic remarks at face value when one considers how defenceless parents are in the school system. She talked about trust, but how can one trust someone from the very system from which one has just escaped? It is interesting to note that had the apparent interest in the progress of one's children in all educational channels been shown at school, it would have been unnecessary to have removed them from school in the first place.

She touched quickly on the personality of the person educating their child at home. Nobody challenged this but it could have far-reaching effects if parents' "personalities" were to be in question.

From Ruby and Frank Vernon of Fareham, Hants.

We were extremely pleased to read in your editorial to Newsletter No.7 that the Group has the possible services of a sympathetic lecturer in Law, particularly one interested in children and having vital contacts with the legal profession.

EO members must NOT regard themselves as a "reserved, privileged elite outside the state system" with (we suspect) the emphasis on "elite". Most definitely must we attempt to help (however little) those who suffer under the State system.

We believe it to be incorrect to regard shedding the State system as an indication of failure to succeed in our compulsory education system. Many young people succeed in spite of it, though their task is that much harder.

We realise that a hybrid system of state/home education may be satisfactory for those who advocate co-operating with LEAs, but we hold dear the view that section 36 gives only two clearly defined alternatives with no provision for hypocritical half-heartedness.

From Jane Davies, 4 Green Cottages, Torver, Coniston, Cumbria.

I am a student in my first year of teacher training.

I am a new member of Education Otherwise, and would just like to say that I should be happy to help any parents educating their children out of school.

I should be glad to support you if you are having problems with the local authority, or I could perhaps help with suggestions for resources, and I would enjoy adding variety to your EO programme during my college holidays.

As a background, may I say that I have eight 'O'-levels, three 'A'-levels, a management qualification (law, accounts, economics and other management subjects), two year's experience as an assistant Manageress in Clark's shoe shops and, last but not least, I enjoy being with children and hold a deep concern for their education.

I am 21 years old. Do make use of me.

CAN YOU HELP?

I am looking for some information, and hope that someone in EO can help me.

I am very interested in leathercraft for saddlery and harness making. I have sent away for three leathercraft catalogues but have found that they are unsuitable, being mainly for people making belts and handbags.

I am looking for a catalogue for saddlery and harness makers but do not know where to find out about one. I also wonder whether anyone knows of a useful book - I have one edited by Paul N. Haslack but I am looking for some more.

Wanda Harrison (aged 15 and member of EO), The Burntlands,
Rochford, Tenbury Wells, Worcs.

BOOKLIST

1. "Signposts in spelling"; by Joy Pollock. Distributed by the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, 14 Crondace Road, London S.W.6. Price £1.75.
Lots of lists, mnemonics and helpful hints without rules. The book is designed as a quick and easy reference with sections on all the major areas of difficulty.
2. "Reading for Enjoyment" booklets at 50p each for 2-5 year olds and 6-8 year olds from the National Book League, 7 Albermarle Street, London W1X 4BB.
3. "Modern Maths Explained"; by Shirley Stewart. 40p from Home and School Council, 17 Jacksons Lane, Billericay, Essex CM11 1AH.
4. "Education Without Schools"; edited by Peter Buckman. London, Souvenir Press 1973.
5. "The Free School"; by Ken Richmond, London. Methuen, 1973.
6. "What School is For"; by G. Chanan and L. Gilchrist. Methuen, 1974.

These three books (4 - 6) summarise the anti-school arguments.

7. "The Vital Years and Your Child"; A. Bilski, Souvenir Press.
8. "How to Help a Child at Home"; by M. Newby and K. Hartley, from Home and School Council, 1 White Avenue, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent. 25p for a list of books and addresses.
9. "Talks to Parents and Teachers"; Homer Lane, 1970.
10. "The Lives of Children"; George Dennison. Penguin Education Special, 1972.
11. "County Hall" (The Role of the Chief Education Officer); Penguin Education Special, 1974.
12. "36 Children"; Herbert Kohl. Penguin Education Special, 1971.
13. "Children's Rights - Extinction or Rebirth"; SCCL and Weatherbank Press, price £1 plus postage. Scottish Council for Civil Liberties; includes paper by Colin McLean (former editor of Times Educational Supplement) which examines the way compulsion puts obstacles in the way of a genuine education.

14. "Units of Measurement"; a free copy of a poster from the National Physical Laboratory, Teddington, Middlesex.
15. "The Only Interruption in My Education was When I Went to School"; a useful summary of radical and libertarian currents in education which (apparently) raises some fundamental questions that teachers, students and parents should all think about. Price 50p (plus 15p post and packing) from Bob White (A.S. Neill Trust Association) 26 Clifton Gardens, London W9 1AU.
16. "On Teaching"; Herbert Kohl. Price £1.80.
17. "Send Off For It"; by Elizabeth Gondry, Hamlyn 55p. Suggestions for things such as posters and models available, often free, through the post.
18. International Bee Research Association, Hill House, Gerrards Cross, Bucks; two lists about resources concerning bees (25p each).
19. "The Teaching of Ideas in Geography" is No. 5 in Her Majesty's Inspector's series "Matters for Discussion", from HMSO, price £1.50.
20. "Junior Progress Tests"; by Isobell Marshall. Series One is suitable for average 9 year olds; the book contains thirty 4-page tests (one a week for most of the school year). Pupils' books 95p each, Teacher's books £2.90 each, the latter containing answers and a register for recording performance in each skill tested. From bookshops or Heinemann Educational Books, 48 Charles Street, London W1X 8AH.
21. "School Without Tears"; by Mollie Jenkins (the same!). Published by Collins, 1973. Like David Head's and Joy Baker's books, a "recommended reading" for beginning EO parents.
22. REPRINTS FOR 'A'-LEVEL BIOLOGY.

Selected and edited in association with New Scientist by Pauline Markovits (recently head of Biology at Filton High School, Bristol), they are accompanied by Structured Notes. These collections of worksheets cover 14 of the articles and are designed to help Sixth Formers to make clear, concise and comprehensive notes.

Copies of the New Scientist reprints for 'A'-level Biology (price 75p each) and the accompanying worksheets (Structured Notes price 20p each) are available from P. Markovits, 80 Kings Drive, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8JH, enclosing a crossed postal order or cheque (to include 30p for post and packing) payable to P. Markovits.

Some titles are:-

(Titles marked * have accompanying sheets in 'Structured Notes')

- * Two groups hit on the same structure for transfer RNA. Ribosomal RNA and genetic full stops.
How mammals get the message.
What marks a protein for export?
How recombinant DNA is made.
 - * Unravelling the way histones hold chromosomes together.
 - * Collagen - the universal body builder.
 - * Unlocking the Secrets of Enzymes.
 - * Self-control for enzymes.
 - * What makes proteins fold?
New data on how bacteria respond to chemicals.
 - * Tracing drug resistance plasmids among bacteria.
Mitochondria are more varied than we thought.
Are we powered by ancient bacteria? (chloroplasts and mitochondria).
 - * How proteins fit into the cell membrane.
 - * How molecules pass through membranes.
 - * The structure of glucagon.
 - * Communing with the sex glands.
 - * New approaches to contraception.
 - * Lung disease and the environment.
Throw away your zoology textbooks (Evolution of Arthropods).
 - * The fluid environment (the kidney).
Chloroplasts need some help from the boss.
An answer to plants' transport problems.
-

BOOK REVIEW: by Clive Price

"Entering the World of Number", by Green and Laxon, published by Thames and Hudson at £4.95

Here is a "lop"; when your child is playing with two toys of very different size you can ask him to give you the little one. Then you can ask him to give you the big one - not forgetting coos of delight and approval if he obliges.

A "lop" is a "learning opportunity", as opposed to a "task" or "problem".

This book is full of lops of increasing difficulty as they slowly lead to understanding of the concept of conservation, and hence to numeracy. The book takes you and your child through four phases:-

1. The pre-numerical launching pad.
2. The beginnings of number and logic.
3. Number proper.
4. Conservation.

Each stage has a chapter of explanation followed by a chapter of lops.

You might say that many parents already play games like that lop quoted above, so what is the point of paying £4.95? In fact you probably touch on most of the ground covered by this book, but this book will give you confidence that you are doing the "right" things and are aiming in the "right" direction. It will also give you lots of extra ideas (there were a good few new to me). But most importantly, it will give you a systematic framework in which to work so that you will not miss anything out.

Well, that sounds good in theory, all those interesting lops (there are 118 of them) interweaving and fitting together and leading towards conservation - but does that mean that you have to have all the lops in mind, ready to pounce at that special, optimum moment with the correct lop? Basically, the answer is no. The book will show you not to worry too much about that - not to look for constant daily progression; not to follow a rigid sequence, but to adapt the lops to suit you and your child and to let him lead you. That is why the book refrains from giving a convenient chronology to these lops. Little Johnny has no need to be moving on from lop 36 to lop 37 just because he is now 3 years 4 months and 2 weeks old.

The book can be used with children between 18 months and five and a half years. It has plenty of general educational common sense, with some golden rules for efficient learning. In fact, you could almost buy the book for that and have the conservation build-up as an added extra. This is mainly because the pre-maths concepts rely so heavily on language skills. The book's practical approach (with just the bare essentials of theory explaining why you are playing the lops) spends a lot of time working on the usage of such words as big, little, bigger, biggest, longer, shorter, amount, size, some, more, less and many others.

The end-point of the book should coincide with the understanding by the child of the concept of conservation. This is to say that a quantity (of plasticine, sand, buttons, money) stays the same no matter how it is physically arranged, unless you either add to the quantity or take something from it. Until the child has this concept, he is not capable of any truly quantitative reasoning or of doing maths with any real understanding.

The lops need simple equipment like toys, jigsaws, plasticine, buttons, card, and jars so there is little extra outlay once the book is bought.

Who will buy the book? Well, I can think of many children who would have benefitted greatly from the ethos embodied by this book - a good few teachers I know might learn something too! I fear the authors are preaching to the converted.

If you decide to buy this book, I advise you to read it through and get a feel for the lops and their progression - see the way the jigsaw builds up and what you are aiming at - and note the authors' golden rules for efficient learning.

Then, if you and your 18 month old child work together, suitably adapting the framework and the lops, I would say that there was a very good chance that your child would cope with all the maths concepts to follow - "New" maths or old, at school or otherwise.

MATHS MINIPACKS: a review by Jill Veale, Swindon.

"Maths Minipacks" is the name given to a new series of maths books by Harper, Harris and Strong (published by Addison-Wesley).

The accompanying boklet states that they were written originally for upper-junior to lower-secondary age children, but in practice have been found to be useful for older children with learning difficulties.

There are twelve books so far, with four more to be published in the new year. Each book tackles a different problem such as introducing fractions (book 3) or adding and subtracting decimals (book 6).

There are plenty of exercises; the first few have their answers provided at the back of the book. The problems are of a kind likely to appeal to most children since they use subjects such as football or pop stars, while amusing illustrations are found on nearly every page.

These books seem to be a good basic maths series.

BOOK REVIEWS by Joanna Guthrie.

THE LEMONADE MURDER by Thoger Birkdand: an exciting book, both frightening and sad. A good book for anyone from 8 to 10.

THE MAGICIAN'S NEPHEW by C.S. LEWIS: a story that is magic and amazingly funny and sad, also it is like a grown up fairy tale.

MY FRIEND MR. LEAKEY by J.B.S. Haldane: a nice book about a magician's friend and a magician. It's imaginative and the drawings are good.

DOWN WITH SKOOL by Geoffrey Williams and Ronald Searle: a book about boarding school and how awful it is. A funny book and very good.

Joanna Guthrie, Field House, Mellis Road, Thrandeston, near Diss, Norfolk.

NOTICES - NOT QUITE LAST THIS TIME!

1. CONTACTS : Geraldine Lockington asks any members in South Essex with children of about 5 years of age to ring Billericay 58495 if they are interested in meeting from time to time.
2. CRAFT EO WEEKENDS : First entry for your new 1979 diary! Four informal days over the Easter weekend 13-16 April 1979, devoted to craft work of all kinds - possibly informal drama in addition. More details in the first Newsletter 1979! Make it a date!
3. THE COUSTEAU SOCIETY : details from The Cousteau Society Inc., 777 Third Avenue, New York, NEW YORK 10017, U.S.A. Publications "The Calypso Log", and "Dolphin Log" for children, including "Photo Posters".
4. DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS referred to in the last Newsletter; more information is planned in the journal ("Concern") of the National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley Street, Islington, London EC1V 7QE.
5. UNDERSTANDING ELECTRICITY : a free catalogue of films, posters, and publications from The Electricity Council, 30 Millbank, London SW1P 4RD.
6. COPYDEX LTD., 1 Torquay St., London W2 5EL; for copies of "Let's Do Heraldry" - worksheets and teacher's notes are free - include 14p stamps and mention Times Educational Supplement.
7. GINN & Co. Ltd., Publicity Department, FREEPOST, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1BR; for advanced information on their "Reading 360" course, together with Newsletters 1 and 2.
8. "THE BOOKWORM CLUB", FREEPOST, Cumbernauld, Glasgow G68 0BR; for children 5-12. Free details and copies of the latest bulletin - mention Times Educational Supplement.
9. BOOSEY AND HAWKES are running a musical instrument rental programme. Ring 01-952-7711 for the addresses of local dealers.
10. THE WINDSCALE INQUIRY : for project work? Week-by-week coverage of the 100 days of public hearings, with analysis and comment on Mr. Justice Parker's report. Price £1.00 from New Scientist Windscale Inquiry Booklet, 2614 King's Reach Tower, Stamford St., London SE1 9LS.
11. SECOND HAND BOOKS? Tessa Kelland suggests a Newsletter list of books which members would be willing to sell. Even with postage costs this is a cheap way of buying necessary books. Perhaps members would like to write in with their requirements to - we could get a cost-cutting service going!

12. CHILDSPLAY ; a materials service with the accent on value in the materials and not on glossy packaging. Basic creative materials list from Childsplay, 112 Tooting High Street, London SW17. Tel. 01-672-6470. Agents in Surrey, Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Leicestershire and Bucks.
 13. "OPERATION DRAKE" , P.O. Box 23, 210 Euston Road, London NW10 2DA. "Eye of the Wind"; a progress map and a detailed log of visits, research and wildlife. Price £1.25.
 14. EO NEWSLETTER DIGEST (of issues 1-4) is now available for 50p with accompanying 12p stamped addressed envelope 10" x 7" minimum from The Manor, Thelnetham, Diss Norfolk.
 15. A (LAST) LOGO COMPETITION ANNOUNCEMENT : £5.00 book token for the originator of the logotype accepted by the Core Group as the EO emblem. The (few) designs already submitted will be considered. The result to be announced in the first Newsletter of the New Year.
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