

...gent increased expenditure scapes their destructiveness I, home and abroad. - Ivan Illich.

...riculum has always been used to assign social rank. - Ivan Illich.

...there were no age-specific and obligatory learning situations. childhood would go off of production. - Ivan Illich.

...chools is an institution built on the axiom that learning is the result of teaching. And institutional wisdom continues to accept this axiom, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. - Ivan Illich.

...We have all learned most of what we know outside school. Pupils do most of their learning at home, and often despite, their teachers. - Ivan Illich.

...chools create jobs for child-teachers, no matter what you pupils learn from them. - Ivan Illich.

...he true test of intelligence is of how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do. - John Holt.

...chools should be a place where children learn what they just want to know. Instead of that we think they ought to know. - John Holt.

...The child who learns something to please or appease someone forgets it when the need for pleasing or appeasing is past. - John Holt.

...uch of what a child learns in school will be found, or thought of, before many years. To be intruded.

...ear is the inseparable companion of coercion, and its rescapable consequence. - John Holt.

...ut what about schoolwork? shouldn't it come first? The answer is a resounding maybe. Folklore abounds with tales of children who did poorly in school and went on to financial or creative greatness.

...matter how good the schools were. . . . the school is an artificial institution, and the home is a very natural one. There are lots of societies without schools, but never any without homes. - John Holt.

...home schooling appears to provide pupils with more interaction with adults than normally takes place in schools. . . . The evidence does not support the criticism that home schooling results in retarded social development. - Myron Lieberman.

...I think the teaching of reading is mostly what prevents reading. Different children learn in different ways. I don't think there's any way to make reading interesting to children in a family that isn't interesting to adults. - John Holt.

...It is in school that we meet, become accustomed to, and learn to believe in the totally controlled society. - John Holt.

...The fundamental theory of liberty upon which governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the state to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public school teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the state. Decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Oregon school case, 1925.

...It is customary, but I think it is a mistake, to speak of happy childhood. Children are often over anxious and acutely sensitive. Man ought to be man and master of his fate, but children live at the mercy of those around them. - Lord Avebury, 1887.

...Children need models more than they need critics. - Joseph Jobert, 1842.

...It is one of my duties in life not to believe a man who may happen to tell me that he has no interest in children. - Charles Dickens, Feb. 9th, 1858.

...The first thing obvious to children is what is sensible, and that we make no part of their rudiments. We press their memory too soon, and puzzle, strain and load them with words and rules, to know grammar and rhetoric, and a strange tongue or two, that it is ten to one may never be useful to them, leaving their natural genius to mechanical and physical or natural knowledge uncultivated and neglected, which would be of exceeding use and pleasure to them through the whole course of their lives. - William Ferris, 1593.

...To go to school in a Summer moon.

...Oh, it drives all joy away! Under a cruel eye at school, The little ones spend the day - in sighing and dismay. - William Blake, c. 1790.

...And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel, And shriving morning face, Creeping like small Unwillingly to school, - Shakespeare, c. 1600.

...One father is worth more than a hundred schoolmasters. - George Herbert, 1840.

...It is boasted sometimes of a schoolmaster that such a brave man had his education under him: but it is never said how many who might have been brave have been ruined by him. - George Mathew, 1710.

...Education has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading. - George Trevelyan.

...Parents learn a lot from their children about coping with life. - Muriel Spark.

...To me education is a leading out of what is already there in the pupil's soul. To Miss Mackay it is a putting in of something that is not there, and that's not what I call education. I call it intrusion. - Muriel Spark.

...Let schoolmasters puzzle their brain. With grammar, and

...harshness, but lead them by what amuses them, so that they may better discover the bent of their minds. - Plato, c. 370 BC.

...Children should be led into the right paths not by severity, but by persuasion. - Menander, c. 300 BC.

...It is the great end of education to raise ourselves above the vulgar. - Richard Steele, 1709.

...Education, however indispensable in a cultivated age, produces nothing on the side of genius. When education ends, genius often begins. - Isaac D'Israeli, 1795.

...Anyone who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape. - William Hazlitt, 1821.

...We are students of words. We are shut up schools, and colleges, and recitation-room for ten or fifteen years, and come out at last with a bag of wind, a memory of words, an do not know a thing. - F.W. Emerson, 1844.

...No mother's mark is more permanent than the mental mews and moles, and excrescences, and mutilations, that students carry with them out of the lecture room. - J.W. Holmes, 1855.

...You send your child to the schoolmaster, but it is the schoolboys who educate him. - R.W. Emerson, 1860.

...Let schoolmasters puzzle their brain. With grammar, and nonsense, and learning, Good liquor, I stoutly maintain, Gives gent a better discerning. - Oliver Goldsmith.

...Public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immorality. - Henry Fielding.

...There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but less is learned there, so that what the boys gain at one end they lose at the other. - S. Johnson.

...Educational disadvantage cannot be cured by relying on education within school. - Ivan Illich.

...One evening, when I was yet in my nurse's arms, I wanted to touch the leg-urn, which was boiling merrily. My nurse would have taken me away from the urn, but my mother said, 'Let him touch it.' So I touched it - and that was my first lesson in the meaning of liberty. - John Ruskin, 1870.

...The more liberty you give away the more you will have. - F.C. Ingwersoll, 1880.

...Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it. - George Bernard Shaw, 1903.

...Liberty is the only thing you cannot have

...whenever it is found it is considered to be a paternal government, there is found state education. It has been discovered that the best way to insure implicit obedience is to commence cranny in the nursery. - Benjamin Dezael, 1874.

...The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn. - Lord Avebury, 1887.

...Education is fatal to any fire with a spark of artistic feeling, and it should be confined to the dead and even them it does not drink. Will the world ever learn that we did not know more? - George Bernard Shaw, 1888.

...What task of all higher than? To make man into man. What are the things employed? He is allowed to suffer being allowed. - F.W. Nietzsche, 1889.

...It is an admirable thing that is worth learning that is worth learning from time to time. - George Bernard Shaw, 1891.

...It is proposed to state the rights of conscience of children as a principle of democratic education. - George Bernard Shaw, 1891.

...The highest type of American citizenship and the best government. - Democratic National Platform, 1892.

...The effects of infantile instruction are, like syphilis, never completely cured. - Robert Briffault, 1931.

...Anyone who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape. - William Hazlitt, 1821.

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...education is the process of driving a set of prejudices down your throat. - Martin H. Fischer.

...Classical education in the English public schools consists of castrating sham peasants before real swine. - Author unidentified.

...The animals glory in being cynical. Having no education, they are devoid of prejudices. - J.O. De La Mettrie, 1748.

...It used to take me all vacation to grow a new hide in place of the one they flogged off me during the school term. - S.L. Clemens (Mark Twain), 1867.

...Respect the child. Be not too much his parent. Tresspass not on his solitude. - R.W. Emerson, 1865.

...Our principal writers have nearly all been fortunate in escaping a regular education. - Hugh MacGinnis.

...Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten. - B.F. Skinner.

...Indeed, one of the ultimate advantages of an education is simply coming to the end of it. - B.F. Skinner.

...Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run. - Mark Twain.

...It every day in the life of a school could be the last day but one, there would be little fault to find with it. - S. Leacock.

...You can't expect a boy to be vicious until he's been to a good school. - Saki.

...Children should be led into the right paths, not by severity, but by persuasion. - Menander, c. 300 BC.

...It is the great end of education to raise ourselves above the vulgar. - Richard Steele, 1709.

...Education, however indispensable in a cultivated age, produces nothing on the side of genius. When education ends, genius often begins. - Isaac D'Israeli, 1795.

## Notes for contributors

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is **1st March 1993**. Items received after that date *will not be included*.

Send your contribution (clearly marked "For publication") as soon as possible to the appropriate editor, and please include your name, address and telephone number.

Note that any item published in the newsletter may be reprinted by other home education magazines at home or abroad. If you do not want your piece reproduced without your consent, please state clearly that you wish to retain the copyright.

If you refer to a previous article or letter, please indicate the reference by newsletter number and date.

If you have a computer, why not phone the editor to find out whether he or she would like to receive your contribution on disk?

Typed contributions should be double spaced. Sometimes it is easier to read handwritten material, particularly if your writing is large and well spaced, so don't be put off if you do not have a typewriter.

If there is something very important you want to say, try to do so *concisely*. Articles of 450 words (one EO page) are much more likely to be included than 10,000 word epistles.

Unless you state that no changes may be made, editors may make corrections (punctuation and grammar, etc.) and minor changes to fit the page. If you *do* demand no changes, *make sure your contribution contains no errors*, otherwise it may not be included.

Advertisements are accepted from members when space permits, and if they are of interest to EO in general, at 10p per word. Make cheques payable to "Education Otherwise".

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## Advance warning of possible Contact List up-date

At the February EGM there will be a proposal to up-date completely the Contact List. If this proposal is agreed, it will mean that if you wish to be in the 1993 Contact List, you will have to *write* to Bob Emmett (address inside back cover), giving *full* details of the entry you require. If the meeting agrees, no Contact List entries will be carried forward by default. Therefore if you receive your newsletters late, for instance if you are overseas, you might like to write to Bob *now*, before any decision has been made. The purpose of this proposed change is to provide a mechanism for the removal of completely out-of-date entries (dead phone lines, etc.) which have not been corrected, in some cases for years! If you have any questions about this, please ring me on 081 808 3200, rather than Bob Emmett.

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

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# Computer games: harmfully addictive or a unique educational environment?

An interview with Dr David Deutsch, by Sarah Taylor

**One in three households in America own video games. In Britain, the figure is eleven per cent. As the market here expands, more and more parents will have to face the issue. Are computer games addictive? Is the violence and sexism damaging to children's psychological well-being? Are there risks associated with the X-ray emissions from television screens?**

I went to interview Dr David Deutsch, academic, Research Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford, and author of *The Theory of Everything*, a forthcoming book about the borderline between physics and philosophy. Some readers will have seen the recent *Antenna* programme on BBC2, about his work on the physics of time travel. He is also planning a book on non-coercive education which will be of great interest to home educators. Far from believing computer games to be harmful, Dr Deutsch believes them to be very *good* for children. I asked him what is so good about computer games.

**Dr David Deutsch:** In a way, that is the wrong question, because it assumes that there is something obviously *bad* about video games, which might be offset by benefits I might mention. But there's nothing wrong with video games. So let's ask first, "Why do so many adults hate them?" I think that overwhelmingly what draws people's attention to video games is the fact that children *like* them. People jump from that solitary piece of evidence to the conclusion that there must be some-

thing wrong with video games! That is a fundamental mistake. *Prima facie*, the fact that children like playing video games is an indication that it is good for them.

Why is playing video games good for you? Video games provide a unique learning environment. They provide something which for most of human history was not available, namely, an interactive complex entity that is accessible at low cost and zero risk.

Let's compare video games with other great educational things in the world. Books and television have great complexity and diversity—they give you access to almost every aspect of human culture and knowledge—but they are not interactive. On the other hand, something like playing the piano is also complex, and is interactive, but it requires an enormous initial investment (months or years of practice or training) with the associated huge risk of misplacing that investment. One cannot make many such investments in one's life. I should say, of course, that *the* most educational thing in the world is conversation. That does have the property that it is complex, interactive, and can have a low cost.

Apart from conversation, all the complex interactive things require a huge initial investment, except video games, and I think video games are a breakthrough in human culture for that reason. They are destined to be a fundamental means of human learning for the rest of history, because of this interactive element. Why is being interactive so important? Because interacting with a

complex entity is what life and thinking and creativity and art and science are all about. All those are just special cases of interacting with a complex entity.

In *The Face* magazine (December 1992, page 46) Dr Margaret Shotton, author of *Computer Addiction?*, is quoted as saying, "Apart from increasing your manual dexterity and hand to eye coordination, video games speed up your neural pathways." This, the writer says, allows knowledge to travel around quicker, thus speeding up judgements and decisions, possibly leading to a higher IQ. Dr Shotton, like Dr Deutsch, believes that parents who disapprove of their children playing computer games are mistaken, but Dr Deutsch is sceptical about the neural pathways theory. Perhaps surprisingly, he doubts that computer games improve hand-eye coordination.

**D:** *Life* improves one's hand-eye coordination. If video games are well designed, they tend to use physical skills which people already have. They do not really require a new kind of physical skill, as playing a musical instrument does, for instance. What they require, and sharpen, is the fundamental *mental* skill of understanding the world, a complex external entity.

Sarah Taylor: **Many parents would agree that conversation is very valuable, and it is because their children spend so many hours playing computer games instead of conversing, that they worry.**

**D:** I do not accept that children play video games *instead* of conversation. They love both, and there is plenty of time in a day for many hours of video games and many hours of conversation—especially since, in my experience, it is perfectly possible to play video games and talk at the same time. If a conversation is interesting enough, children want to take part; if they

have to be forced, the conversation is worthless anyway.

**S: Could the number of hours children spend playing video games be harmful?**

**D:** Let me answer that question in two ways. First, how do you know what the appropriate number of hours is? Nobody can know that. If your children practised the piano, or played chess, for several hours a day, you would probably boast about what geniuses they are. There is no intrinsic difference between chess- or piano playing on the one hand, and video game playing on the other. They are similar kinds of activity. One of them is culturally sanctioned and the other is still culturally stigmatised, but for no good reason.

Could it be harmful? Suppose a child is for some reason unhappy with his situation and has very few creative outlets. Playing video games is such a good thing in this respect, that if he finds it, and finds other avenues blocked off, he may devote all his attention to it. Later, if his circumstances change, he may not be as open to taking up other opportunities as he might have been. If that is so, it is not the video game that is doing him harm, it is that he has been funnelled down a blind alley and not let out. The thing to do is to let him out, not to remove his last remaining source of joy and learning. If someone is in that state, just like with any compulsive behaviour, the cure is simply to offer him other things which he might prefer.

When children play video games for hours, they are recognising the opportunity to interact with a complex external entity. The natural and healthy state of human beings is that we are constantly looking for opportunities to improve our thinking skills, improve the complexity and the subtlety of the mental apparatus which we apply to the world. Traditionally, this has been expen-

sive, but people still did it. Even learning to play chess is expensive, compared with learning to play a video game. The expense does not make it any more moral. It is a *disadvantage*.

One of the ways you can tell that playing video games is not something which captures people and then holds them to their detriment is that each video game has only a finite lifetime. People *try* a video game, and they tell with one or two playings of it whether this is for them or not. If they like it, they tend to continue to play it for as long as they are still improving. The instant they are no longer improving, they stop, and they go on to another game. That is neither random behaviour, nor any kind of mechanical, Pavlovian or compulsive behaviour. It is typical learning behaviour.

You might say, okay, you are learning something, but what you are learning is not really very useful. But that is to misunderstand the whole point of the video game. The benefit of a video game is not that you learn the video game; it is that you learn the mental skills *with which* you are learning the video game, and *those* skills are good for learning *anything*.

**S: Could the element of violence present in many video games be harmful?**

**D:** First of all, it is not the case that most video games nowadays have violent themes. This used to be true a few years ago, and the reason for that was not at all sinister. When you have only crude graphics and slow processors available, you have little choice but to make your game be about following an object on the screen and pressing a button—in other words, shooting things. I remember having a conversation with John Holt about this in about 1983. Although, of course, he would never have stopped a child playing video games, he was worried about the ‘violent’

aspect of the ‘shoot-em-up’ games that were popular then. I predicted that within a few years, once the video technology got faster, most games would not be about shooting things at all.

The most popular types of games nowadays are platform games, whose basic themes are exploring, jumping around, finding and collecting things (though admittedly one usually has to fight the occasional monster on the way), and completely abstract games such as *Tetris*. But *whatever* the type of game, it is not *violence*. Violence is where you hurt people. Games just appear on a screen; they don’t actually hurt anybody. The only actual hurting that goes on is by parents when they prevent or discourage children from playing.

All games need an object and, if there are people in the game, it is natural to have drama, which means there will be goodies and baddies. The same is true in all drama, in all novels, plays, films, or whatever. If *King Lear* were the first play a person had seen, he might come out severely shocked. But once you know what a play is, have seen a bit of Shakespeare and know what it is about, you know that *King Lear* is not actually dangerous, that people don’t go around after seeing *King Lear*, plucking people’s eyes out. People are not harmed by seeing *King Lear* if they have reached the stage of wanting to see it gradually, at their own pace, for their own reasons, under their own control. Video games are *par excellence* a learning environment that is under one’s own control, and that prevents it from being harmful.

**S: Parents do worry that seeing violence on screen is much more damaging than seeing violence in a play because video games appear to draw people in very deeply and make them addicted.**

**D:** I think that is completely untrue. The only evidence that video games are addictive is that people play them. All this talk about being 'drawn in' and so on is not what scientists would call experimental data. The data are that the child is playing the video game. That is the only thing you know for a *fact*. You can't see this 'drawn in' business. That is just an interpretation parents put on what has happened. The rest is controversial theory, based on their own preconceptions. I am not making a value judgement here. I am just stating a fact. My *judgement* is that these preconceptions are wrong and that children play video games because they instinctively recognise their educational value.

Anything worth doing engages the emotions. What would you say about somebody who learned to play the piano, but never got emotionally involved? I remember once, I came back to playing the *Appassionata* after a long time, and I ended up with blood all over the keys. I saw that I had a cut, but I did not want to stop, so I carried on playing. If that had been a video game and I had been younger, people would have used that as evidence of addiction.

The reason parents don't like video games is that they are, in the true sense, educational. Everything else is an excuse.

**S:** **Most parents are really very keen to educate their children. Many parents don't object to educational games.**

**D:** But they have a preconception, a vision, of what education must look like, which results largely from psychological injuries inflicted on them in their own childhood in the name of education. They make the fundamental mistake of human relationships, which is to try to use *force* to make the other person act out your vision of him, instead of looking to see who the other per-

son actually is, and what he wants, and trying to help him *get* what he wants. A video game which is 'educational', like everything which is designed to be 'educational', tends to be bad. It is making the same fundamental error of trying to channel children into a predetermined vision.

**S:** **Are the X-ray emissions a risk?**

**D:** Hand-held video games emit no radiation at all. The radiation from a television screen is negligible. Even the radiation televisions do give off comes mostly from the sides and the back, not from the screen. It is completely crazy to react to that tiny 'danger' by preventing children from playing video games. If you can't help worrying irrationally about it, get a radiation shield for the screen, or an ultra low radiation monitor.

**S:** **Many games are very sexist.**

**D:** Most of the great literature of the world is sexist, but nobody would want to cut himself off from all culture just because it is 'something-ist'. The way to combat false ideas is not to censor them but to contradict them. Once you have pointed out to your child how silly it is, she will be able to recognise sexism in other contexts.

I think one thing that *is* sinister is how boys play video games much more than girls. This is part of the same phenomenon that makes girls reluctant to do science, reluctant to go into management and business, reluctant to do anything creative and effective in the world. The whole pattern of behaviour towards a girl rewards her for suppressing her creativity. The reason why this effect is more marked in video games is that video games are so well suited for developing creative skills.

### **S: But there is a whole world out there for children to explore...**

**D:** And I suppose that's why people lock them up in schools! Even home educating parents tend not to allow their children enough access to the world, just as schooling parents don't. Anyway, the video game world is a complex autonomous world. It is an artificial world, but then so is the street outside. The point is not *what* world you are learning about, but that you are learning *how* to understand the world.

### **Copyright © 1992 David Deutsch and Sarah Taylor**

A more complete version of this interview can be found in issue 4 of the *LOOSE Network* (see London section of the Regional News).

Dr Deutsch co-wrote with Kolya Wolf the invaluable *Home Education and the Law*. To obtain a copy, send a cheque for £5.00 (payable to David Deutsch) to 19 New Cross Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 8LP.

### **Acute school-induced anxiety**

In my study of children who were home educated after becoming frightened of school, and who had been labelled 'school phobic' or 'school refusers', I have now followed up fifty-three children, three years after the school crisis. My intention is to follow up one hundred 'school phobic' children three years after they began home education following a breakdown in school attendance. If you have a child in this category who has been educated at home, please contact me, even if your child has subsequently decided to return to school (as a small minority have done).

The aim of my research is to counter research carried out by the psychiatrist, Ian Berg. He placed a hundred 'school phobic' children in a psychiatric hospital for seven

months. Three years later, thirty-three children had severe psychiatric disturbances, and thirty-three had mild neurotic problems. This is sixty-six percent disaster, but Berg calls it success. Children who cannot cope with school are still being placed in psychiatric hospitals and other forms of residential detention.

**Patricia Knox  
Pen Llywenan, Bodedern, Holyhead,  
N. Wales**

### **Russians to stay?**

If your family would like to learn Russian, why not have Russian teacher, Margaret Novikova, and her son to stay this summer? She is prepared to help with housework too. If you are interested it is essential that you send them a formal invitation as soon as possible to enable them to get a visa (phone 081 808 3200 for the full wording). You might like to phone Margaret on Moscow 175 6957.

### **Grandparents and education otherwise**

I am gathering material for a book about and for grandparents, and would be interested to hear from other EOers about how their parents have reacted to the grandchildren being educated at home. In what ways have they been obstructive? Do they actively participate?

**Rosalind Barrs  
167a Porchester Terrace North,  
London W2 6BJ**

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This is a précis of an article which appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 28.11.92. The original article was written by Charles Laurence. Sent in by Martine Archer, who thinks this might open a debate.

**Lewis Perelman, an ex-Harvard scholar who has written a book entitled, *School's Out, Hyperlearning, The New Technology and the End of Education*, believes that children should be freed from the tyranny of school-based education. He suggests that attempts to reform the school system will be sabotaged by teachers and bureaucrats, who naturally have an interest in retaining the system which provides their livelihoods. He describes the school system as a huge waste of taxpayers' money.**

Schools and universities should be replaced by computer terminals so that everyone could be linked on-line to the limitless information pool of the world. Why hang on to such an out-dated, expensive and unnecessary notion as school when so much is possible on-line?

An excellent documentary might cost three million dollars to make, which amounts to ten cents per viewer. To give the same information to pupils in schools could cost six billion dollars and take a whole year. In Perelman's *hyperlearning* situation children could dial into the information source of their choice, setting their own pace through the material. This could include everything from traditional textbook material and lectures to film footage and interactive video.

Perelman believes that "Ninety per cent of what any American knows was not learnt in school. Schools were designed to prepare people to sit in factories or number-crunching offices that are already history." Formal qualifications are a meaningless waste of time and money. Perelman is reported to have said that it should be illegal for employers to discriminate against

# The end of education?

prospective employees on the basis of qualifications. Instead, job applicants could be tested to determine whether they had the skills necessary for the job. Perelman describes the school system as a day-care service. He says that children could learn a lot more through interactive sessions on-line to the world than through emotionally expensive sessions with a handful of teachers.

Learning is a lifelong activity, but because to many it only happens in schools, many adults have too much fear of the *process* of education to learn what they need to know. If schools were replaced with resource centres including terminals for on-line services, learning would then be seen as a natural activity of the human mind, thus helping *adults*, as well as children, to learn.

"Schools have been used to socialise people for only a couple of hundred years; we will return to the more natural system of socialisation within the tribe or community," says Perelman, who thinks that national, inevitably bureaucratic education systems are "the last empire of socialism."

See Chris Shute's piece on page 9 for a slightly different perspective.

The book is available (mail-order) from Borders Book Shop, USA, telephone 0101 215 568 7400

# National Vocational Qualifications

I wonder how many people know about the changes that are occurring with the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programme. When I began to find out about it from a friend who is involved in the programme I was amazed at what is being proposed.

As I understand it the Government has, since 1986, been requiring most industries and licensing bodies to define NVQ standards for all occupations. Work roles are defined within a framework of eleven general 'areas of competence' each with five levels. The areas of competence include such things as 'tending animals, plants and the land', 'engineering', 'providing health, social care and protective services'. Once the framework is complete NVQs are intended to cover almost every job in the land. Very roughly level 2 NVQs correspond to GCSE, level 3 to A-levels and level 4 to undergraduate work.

There are two characteristics of NVQs which make them especially relevant to home educators.

First, they are entirely based on 'competencies' (i.e. the ability to *perform* a specified range of skills). If you can show that you can do a particular set of tasks then you get that particular NVQ—where, how or when you learnt those competencies is irrelevant as far as getting the qualification is concerned. Thus while you can go on courses with the aim of getting a particular type and level of NVQ, you can also get it simply by showing an assessor that you can indeed do all the specified skills. The purpose of this is to allow employers and employees to formalise the in-house skills learnt on the job into transferable, recognised NVQs which will mean something to other employers. However it also means that children who have spent a

lot of time, say, farming, mending cars, or computing, might also be able to get an NVQ (or at least credits towards an NVQ) that recognised their skills.

Secondly, since NVQs are defined by the ability to do something, usually in a work situation, there are no exams. Assessors either simply observe the person whilst they are doing specified tasks or review evidence that the candidate presents that shows that they can do the specified skills. All the specified skills for a particular NVQ level have to be demonstrated before accreditation—but, on the other hand, skills which are shown to be satisfactory will count in the future and the person can concentrate on those which are still unsatisfactory for their next assessment.

Because NVQs are defined by the skills required to do particular jobs they will be relevant to anyone who can work in apprentice type situations. From my somewhat limited knowledge they seem to be a real route to get recognition for skills acquired in this way. Assessment of more theoretical knowledge is also being included in the NVQ framework. Currently various employers and FE colleges around the country are testing GNVQs which are supposed to become a formal alternative to A-levels. GNVQs are based on ability to perform specified skills rather than pass exams.

My knowledge of all this is a bit sketchy and may not be completely accurate. To find out more write to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, 222 Euston Road, London NW1 2BZ. Even better, has anyone out there direct experience of trying to get NVQs which they could write about in the newsletter?

**Paul Hodgkin**  
48 Montgomery Road,  
Sheffield S7 1LQ

# Teaching reading

by Chris Eastwood

Christians have always valued literacy highly. This is because it is only through God's *written* word, the Bible, that we can know his way of salvation. As Christian parents, therefore, we were felt that reading should form the basis of our educational programme.

We began in babyhood (from about six months old) by reading colourful picture books in short bursts to our children. Often we used books designed for older children, such as Medici books, which had good pictures with themes we liked. We made up our own conversational text as we went along. Very early on we started using the *Ladybird ABC* book and poster. This was not ideal in some respects but was the best we could find. When the child could point to a letter when asked (using the letter sound rather than the letter name) we introduced a set of magnetic letters.

With our eldest child we tried using the Glenn Doman *Teach Your Baby to Read* cards but found these rather a dead end so, with the second child, we made our own large version cards of words selected from the early books of the *Ladybird Keywords Reading Scheme*, by W. Murray. Like Doman, however, we began with 'Mummy' and 'Daddy'.

The magnetic letters were a very useful as-set, and we built up a large set of them, adding capital letters later on. We used a book and poster by Margaret Tempest, *An ABC for you and me*, to help the children learn these. A wonderful find was a set of letters in which the five vowels were in bright pink, making them stand out from the other letters. Using this set, the chil-

dren quickly learned which letters are vowels.

All this time we had been singing the alphabet to a tune we made up. Then we began to connect the letter *names* of the song with the letter *sounds* which the children knew. *A was an apple pie*, by Kate Greenaway, and the old rhyme *A was an archer*, were also much enjoyed at this stage. We find home-made songs and jingles such as the alphabet song very useful for learning all sorts of things, and we made up one for the pink vowels.

We began using the *Ladybird reading scheme*\* as it seemed the most suitable despite a number of drawbacks when used with younger children. We found that in the early stages nouns were easier to learn than other words. The *Ladybird* scheme concentrates on the most commonly occurring words, which are not nouns. Furthermore, the print quickly became too small. We overcame that problem by photo-enlarging the text of some books.

The 'C' series books, which provide phonic training and writing, were less useful. The phonics were too easy and introduced too late for our children, and the writing was beyond them. We just filled in the blanks in the early 'C' books ourselves and used them for extra reading practice. We made our own set of phonics cards showing pairs of letters, *sh, oo, ee, ou, ow, eo, er, ce, ai*, and so on. We also made our own books in the early stages with the younger child.

For us the *Ladybird* scheme represented good value for money because we managed to collect almost a complete set second-hand from charity shops and from friends.

To teach writing, we began by using a finger in a tray of salt. Then we used the

Early Learning Centre/OUP workbook, *Learning to write*.

From our own experience and conversation with other home educating parents it seems evident that, given the individual attention of the home education environment and a disciplined atmosphere, it matters very little what method of teaching reading is used. Almost anything works, so choose what suits you.

Another point—probably more controversial—is that you will not put your child off books and reading by teaching him reading when he does not want to learn. You do not have to wait until your child asks to be taught or give up if he says he does not want to do any reading today. Our own five-year-old book worm is living proof of this. Learning to read is hard work. If a child is constantly surrounded by stimulating books and read to frequently he will eventually learn the lesson that patient hard work can be richly rewarded.

\* I would like to know the suggested reading ages for the Ladybird series. The leaflet with this information used to be available from the publishers but is now out of print. If anyone has a copy, I would love to see it.



## ***Compulsory schooling disease***

**How children absorb fascist values**

**by Chris Shute**

I agreed to write this book because after twenty-five years of school-teaching I became convinced that I was engaged in a form of microcosmic fascism. It seemed to me that schools, whatever they claimed to be doing, were training most young people to be habitually subservient. I recognised that there were many seductive arguments

for keeping children under strict control. It made them easier to handle and it felt comfortable for it appeared to make the whole task of taking responsibility for their upbringing safer and more predictable. However, when they grew up I noticed that many school students became morose, unsociable, and philistine. The process looked satisfactory but the results were often deplorable.

In this book, I have tried to set out why I think that compulsory schooling and its apparatus of imposed discipline and control are dangerous to the mental and social development of children. This is not a book written by an expert to influence the thinking of other experts. It is based not on systematic research but accumulated experience. It records how I came to believe that compulsory schooling is the cause of many social problems which it claims to cure, and why I am no longer prepared to defend it.

Home-based education or home-schooling is not discussed. This is not because I do not take it seriously as a method of educating children. In fact, I believe it is currently the best way to educate most children. But I hope that one day soon it will be possible for children to use schools as they should be used, as places where any person who happens to need help with their studies can go and receive it. Until that time, I must confine myself to commenting on schools as they are now, and challenging us to consider whether their regime contributes to enslaving the minds of children rather than setting them free.

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# Education at home: A-level

by Ann Groves

Until she became weighed down by the pressurising to work, work, work leading up to the GCSEs, school had suited Morag admirably. After two terms of studying towards A-levels, she made her decision. She was feeling increasingly frustrated by many time-wasting irrelevancies at school—attendance at lessons not of her choosing, rigid forty-minute lessons, long lunch breaks, travel to and from school, frequent teaching of techniques and subject matter which she had long ago mastered, and so on.

With the excellent basic knowledge obtained from school both in facts and the technique of studying, with her own undoubted mature ability, and with her family's total support, Morag now studies successfully and very *happily* on her own. Our grateful thanks are due to Sandy Cottee and Betty Ball of EO for their helpful advice and support in the early days, when I phoned them with the question, 'Help! Where do we go from here?'

Morag's academic needs, to gain three A-levels, are being met as follows:

- A-level English is being tackled through a correspondence course with the National Extension College, Cambridge;
- her elder sister, a second-year maths student at Girton College, Cambridge, is her maths tutor on the few occasions when Morag is unable to work through a problem herself;
- her third subject is French, and she listens daily to the half-hour radio news in French, reads *Paris Match*, has a weekly conversation and written French lesson with a French assistant, sees French films at the cinema, and gets the odd morsel of

help from us when we are able. This is her choice for study at university, and she plans to work for a year in France before she goes to university.

A day spent in Cambridge at the extensively stocked book shops there furnished us with all the student books, teaching manuals and tapes she needed for all three subjects.

Socially, Morag does not miss out. She has friends from school with whom she spends time both out of school and once a week when she joins them for lunch in the sixth form common room. She has regular contact with staff and customers when working in our shop for us. Also, with Cambridge being so close, she visits her sister and *her* friends there.

As for outside interests, these include swimming, aquarobics, life-saving, teaching swimming, learning to dive, hospital visits as a member of the PAT Dog organisation, playing the clarinet for pleasure and working towards Grade 8, learning German from scratch for fun, reading, sewing, listening to nearly all types of music.

Although attendance at school has given her so much, we feel she was right to opt out and take charge of her own life when she did. She is a very much happier person now. Can we be of any assistance, with our very limited experience, to anyone in a similar situation?

**Ann Groves**  
297 Cardington Road,  
Bedford  
MK42 0DA  
Telephone 0234 354071

# Circus

You might enjoy a circus along the lines of those we have arranged for our local group in the past few months. Basically, you need a theme, some space, and a few friends. The preparation is just as much fun as the event and is certainly very educational for all concerned.

Clear as much space as you can and set out some stools and small tables here and there. These are your 'stations' and each will be the centre of an activity. Set out all the materials you will need—don't forget anything or it won't work. You can check this by having a dummy run the day before your circus.

The circus, once people arrive, runs itself. Each station is self-contained so those coming to it will either see a few instructions or some self-explanatory materials, and off they will go! Or it might be that one person learns how, then teaches the next and so it becomes skill-sharing.

If this sounds like an infant school classroom you could not be more wrong. You will see just as many parents as children busily engaged in the cutting, gluing, fixing, dismantling, dice-shaking, giggling and gossiping as children. This is the real value of circuses; the parents and children are all enjoying the same activities at the same time. This is really much nicer than the mums sitting together with their coffee whilst the children run around or amuse themselves.

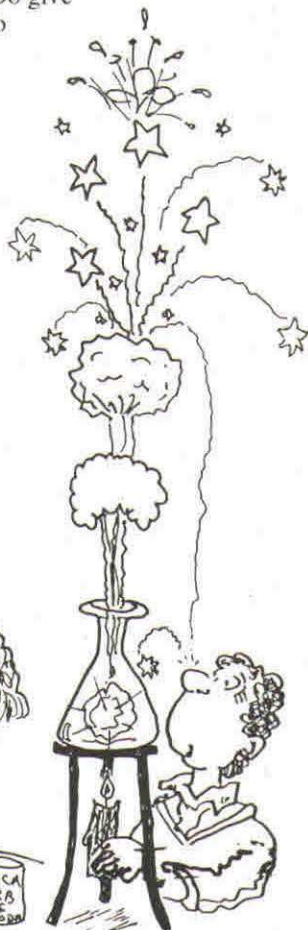
The host family will need to spend quite a lot of time pre-



paring the materials beforehand. That means coming up with the theme (it could be 'Europe' or 'Space' or 'Number Games'—or anything else). You don't need to be experts: you might enjoy it more if the topic is new to you and lots of research is needed. The library can be a good source of both inspiration and information. Your children will rapidly become experts on the subject and that means they can get things started at the stations.

Children seem to enjoy the independence of this style of working, as they are free to stay or move on to another station. Parents have said they enjoyed the circuses; one dad had to be asked three times to get ready to go home! Do give it a try. It is a way to foster a feeling of mutual cooperation and encouragement which is appropriate to EO. By organising a circus you are offering your time and effort to others. But you can be sure it will be appreciated.

**Rita de Selincourt**



# Early learning

by Lee Pattinson

I still vividly remember the day when apparently-meaningless 'scratches' on a piece of paper were suddenly, magically transformed and with delight I realised that they actually *meant* something. And, not quite four years old, I was a reader, with a whole world spread before me for exploring as and when I chose.

I was fortunate in having parents who were well ahead of their time insofar as they advocated and encouraged their children to explore any subject that interested them, and gave us unusual and unheard-of opportunities in an age when children were literally expected to be 'seen and not heard'.

Such freedom certainly did not meet with universal approval. In fact, many of my parents' relatives and friends regarded it as 'unnatural', and warned of the dangers of 'brain fever', or 'wearing out of young eyes' or 'not letting them be children'.

Many decades later I met someone whose philosophies and ideas about children and their abilities were as advanced as those my parents had held. By then I was an RN, a hospital-trained midwife, and was certified in the field of Early Childhood Development. I was an author of books on child care, and writing appealed to me, so I switched careers and became a medical journalist. I was offered a contract with a leading national family magazine in Australia, and for sixteen years was their in-house child-care authority.

In 1965 Glenn Doman published his classic *Teach your baby to read* - a best-seller, it was translated into some thirty

languages and has never been out-of-print. I read it, and insisted that the Australian rights be bought by my magazine.

Reading that book was like reliving my childhood, and my one regret was that the author and my parents had never met. It was obvious they had so much in common, and it became even more obvious as his other titles appeared, all with the same basic theme: that parents make the best teachers of their own children, and that a young child can learn absolutely *anything* if given the opportunity. And what is more, no matter how complicated the subject, a young child can learn it at a speed that few adults can come close to matching. In fact, the more complicated the skill, the easier it seems for a young person to master.

As did my parents (and every other pioneer in any field), Doman met criticism, and still does even today, when there is ample proof that the ideas and methods are not only correct but do no harm—as witness the hundreds of bright, confident, charming children whose parents have given them freedom and opportunity to learn.

One rule is absolutely inflexible: in every book and at all his lectures, Glenn Doman repeatedly stresses that learning is meant to be fun, and that if parent and child are not having a great time, then the teaching sessions should be stopped immediately. Incidentally, he also points out that it is impossible to make a young child do anything he doesn't want to—he simply activates his 'turn off' button and no adult can reach him until he wants to be reached.

I can think of no better way to strengthen the natural bond between parent and child than exploring a new subject together, making exciting discoveries and realising that boundaries are non-existent and that there are no limits to learning.

© Lee Pattinson, 1992

# Never offer, never refuse

by Earl Stevens

If I am ever forced to confess my faults as a homeschooling parent, high on the list will be my habit of butting into my twelve-year-old son's life with too much helpful enthusiasm. This has been the cause of some silly arguments and even some hurt feelings. I am getting better at controlling my impulse to intrude on Jamie's adventures, but sometimes I jump in without thinking. Luckily, he is getting better at fending me off.

Recently Jamie decided to try for a part in *Matilda*, a children's play based on the book by Roald Dahl and produced by a local theatre group. Jamie found out about the production on his own, made an appointment for an audition on his own, and went to the audition by himself. I was very impressed. When I was twelve I would never have taken it upon myself to make such arrangements in the adult world, and I would certainly never have left myself open to so many possibilities for failure.

When the theatre called a few days later to tell Jamie that he had won the part of Mr Wormwood, he was ecstatic. I was proud of him, and I was ready to get involved. What a wonderful opportunity for Jamie and me to work together! I would help him by reading through the play with him over and over again. This would give him the opportunity to get comfortable with his lines and fully explore his character and his voice. What a help I would be! How much fun we would have working together!

Jamie didn't see it quite the way I did. He thought that I might be helpful in reading through the play once or twice so that he could get his cues down, but he probably wouldn't be needing me for anything after that, thank you very much.

Nevertheless, as we read along, I made small suggestions, very reasonable ones. Jamie's voice needed to be bigger, and he needed to slow down a little for better pronunciation.

Jamie listened politely but declined to participate with me in working with his voice. "Why?" I asked him. "Plainly it is better to speak distinctly and to project your voice to the back row. If people can't hear you or understand what you are saying, they get bored and restless, the exact opposite of what actors hope for from their audiences." I complained about his stubbornness and repeated my critique.

As opening night approached there wasn't any practising going on in our house, although by this time, I wouldn't have been surprised if Jamie were secretly rehearsing in the basement, hiding from the Mad Helper who was lurking about upstairs. I wondered aloud in Jamie's presence how he could work on his lines and his character if he didn't practise a little at home. We argued about that for a while and became frustrated and annoyed with each other. In spite of my righteous attitude I was beginning to suspect that I was the one who was being unreasonable.

I described the situation to my friend Eileen Yoder. She said what she often says in such circumstances, "Never offer, never refuse." Eileen learned those words from La Leche League sixteen years ago. They emphasise a philosophy of breast feeding, but Eileen has also used them successfully over the years as a way to describe how one deals respectfully with children and, for that matter, with everybody else.

Never offer, never refuse. Of course, "never offer" does not have to mean that one should forever hold back all kindly

offers of assistance. It simply helps us to remember to stop rushing into the lives of our children at every turn with unsolicited advice. It helps me to remember (most of the time) to give Jamie a chance to learn independently the best strategies for dealing with his experiences. In my shoes, Eileen would simply have asked Jamie if he felt comfortable with his part in the play, and the rest would have been up to him. He is not shy about asking for help if he wants it, and he knows that it will be gladly given.

I apologised to Jamie for my intrusion and for my crabbiness when I discovered that it was not appreciated. He smiled and thanked me for apologising. We both felt a lot better. Later the local newspaper printed a review of the play headed "Strong cast makes 'Matilda' a winner on all levels." The third paragraph was about Jamie: *Jamie Stevens brings a nice amount of ooze to the role of Matilda's used-car-selling dad, a guy who's not above turning back an odometer or two and likes to lace shot transmissions with sawdust-saturated oil. He also enjoys bragging at home about his business 'achievements' and puts down his kids at every opportunity. Totally self absorbed, he's one of a very disastrous parental tag team.*

Not a bad review of Jamie's acting debut, and he did it in the midst of battling off the Mad Helper. Pretty sure that we were not a disastrous parental tag team like the Wormwoods, his mother and I returned to the theatre for the ninth and final performance. To avoid disturbing other playgoers I took some photographs from behind the back row. I could hear Jamie just fine.

#### © Earl Stevens

Earl, a long-term home educator, lives in USA with his wife, Linda, and his son, Jamie. He has a regular column in *Home Education Magazine*, speaks at conferences, and is currently writing a book on home education.

## Regional News

### Birmingham

For details of the Science Museum visits which have been arranged for 27.2.93 and 27.3.93, phone Coral and Paul Willis on 021 455 9742.

### Dyfed

A group is now meeting in Llanelli on the first Saturday of every month, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. For further information, phone Donna and Fred Coleman 0554 759090.

### Greater Manchester and Cheshire

For details of some very exciting activities, please phone Anne Nesbit (0625) 871718.

### Hertfordshire

A small newsletter is produced every two months outlining our programme of events. These include visits to places of interest, sporty meetings, and occasional workshops. Parents' evenings also held. For details, phone Rita (0727) 865501. All welcome, whether from this area or outside it, especially new members. If you have any needs or suggestions, do let me know.

### London

To receive issue 4 of the *LOOSE Network*, a twenty-page non-profit-making newsletter which includes articles, reviews, free resources, and a comprehensive listing of London EO events, send £1 plus an A4 SAE (36p/28p stamp) marked 'Issue 4' to 23 Whitley Road, London N17 6RJ, or phone (081) 808 3200 for subscription details.

### Scotland: Central Region

Karen Strang is a local artist and EO member who has offered to run art workshops in her Stirling studio for home educated children. Please contact Karen on (0786) 473702 if you are interested.

**16th March.** Spiers Centre, Alloa. Foam-filled gym. Afternoon session booked with instructor. Please phone Mike Barbour on (0786) 824210.

### Warwickshire

In **February** we hope to visit the Shire Horse Centre at Stratford-Upon-Avon. Contact Angela Potter on 0926 613230. In **March** a visit to Coventry and Warwickshire Radio is planned. Contact Sue Pountney 0789 731305. Vicki Rumble is organising a trip to Cadbury World in April. If interested, phone her on 0203 337953.

### Yorkshire, North

**Wed. 17th Feb.** Eureka trip. If you want to travel with us by train from York to Halifax, contact us, otherwise we'll meet you there at 11.30.

**Fri. 19th Mar.** Social meeting at Clifton. Ring to confirm address and time. Sue Clare 043 96364.

# Approaches to education: the debate continues

## Sensible words

I am just writing to say that I sincerely hope that the discussions for and against structured schooling (M R Ellis, Issue 88, and replies in Issue 89) don't turn into the sort of long-running dispute that took place over religion a few years ago. Home education is about *individuals* doing what they think is best for their children. Surely that is the one overriding thing we all have in common, regardless of our views on lessons, discipline, or anything else.

It would be very useful if representatives from the structured schooling group were to write to say what they are doing and what is useful to them. Likewise, it would be great to hear of experiences the free-learning people have which *they* find positive. What we *do not* need is EOers being critical of other people's ideas or methods. Such negative views are off-putting to old members and new ones alike. Please, *please* don't let's get into another round of bigotry and people-bashing!

**Terri Shoosmith, Faha, Dromindoora,  
Caher, Co. Clare, Ireland.**

## At last, a kindred spirit

What a relief! At last in the October/November 1992 newsletter, a letter from a kindred spirit. As a homeschooling family, we have thought for a long time like Valerie Cross and Mr M R Ellis, regarding the direction that the vast vocal membership, be it minority or majority, was heading. Of course we want a better, more peaceful world for the next generation, believe in everybody's right to bring up their children as they believe correct, but we were on the point of despairing

about ever meeting anyone else with similar ideas to ours.

Briefly, we home school because of the problems associated with schools. Most correspondents say this of course, but then go on to decry 'education' as the civilised world knows it, in every form. This is where we differ drastically. We believe in education, i.e. learning, in order to meet the challenge in the real world, and believe, rightly or wrongly, that we can do it at least as well as the LEA, and most certainly without the peripheral problems that schooling brings, i.e. thuggery, violence, bad language, solvent abuse, head lice, bullying, lying, and so on.

It is very apparent, however, as Mr M R Ellis points out, that people who think like us get a very small amount of help from the EO system. We are personally thankful to EO for the 'insurance' that belonging to the group brings (should it ever be needed). In particular, knowing that if we ever do experience difficulty with the LEA, we believe EO to be a good partner in our corner. It is also reassuring to know of the other hundreds around the UK who are home schooling and experiencing similar traumas and difficulties as ourselves. We would, however, *greatly* appreciate more information on structured courses, broadly following the National Curriculum, up to GCSE level and other courses leading to recognised qualifications.

We are sure from the previous paragraph that you will understand that our belief is in education and qualifications and, whilst we would not devalue the point of view made by the majority of your contributors, we wish to do what we feel is correct for us and our family, and defend to the end the desire of others to follow their chosen paths.

As a side issue, we have experienced nothing but courtesy from Humberside Ed-

ucation Authority, but we are left in no doubt of their philosophy: "You opt out, you sort it out." For instance, a request for French or German tuition in one of the LEA evening schools or language labs or via retired teachers was met with silence. We have subsequently made private arrangements with a charming retired teacher who visits us twice a week.

To sum up, we have taken the responsibility back from the LEA for the education of Oliver because we think that is the best solution for us. In so doing we would like EO to offer some sort of help towards structured learning.

Was it really necessary for the editor of the October/November newsletter to follow M R Ellis's letter with the quote from A S Neill? It shows total disrespect for another point of view. If anyone else saw the documentary on Summerhill, some months ago, I don't think they would hold this philosophy up as a shining example; but this is only our opinion, and perhaps the majority would disagree with us.

You keep asking for the viewpoint of the members. We have given you ours now. It is most definitely *not* meant to be any criticism of EO, as the organisation can only be judged by its membership.

Should anyone else in the organisation feel that they identify with our point of view, they would be most welcome to write to us, and we will then, if the numbers warrant it, approach the Council of EO to see what can be done.

**R A & M J Wild, Southview, Mill Lane,  
Skipsea, Driffield, E Yorks YO25 8SP**

### **Formal vs. informal approaches**

I would like to enter the debate on formal versus informal methods of education. When we first started home education, as the results of a crisis, we approached it in a very formal way, and tried to be just like school. As time went on, we became more informal. I believe that this has been the experience of many home educators.

All my three children, one educated formally at home, one educated informally at home, and one who always went to school, are now in college or university. If I had their childhood again, they would all be educated at home, informally.

Julie Webb, an EO member, carried out some research with the Open University, into the development of home educated children as they grew into young adults. Whatever the method of education had been, whether formal or informal, the striking similarity she found among all home-educated young adults was their high level of self-confidence, which contrasts dramatically with the low self-confidence of very many school-educated young people.

Another unexpected result of home education, which I have found both in my own experience and in the experience of many who have corresponded with me, has been the growing self-confidence of the parents.

**Patricia Knox, Pen Llywenan,  
Bodedern, Holyhead, N. Wales**

### **Free radical approach?**

Many thanks for the response to my letter in Oct/November newsletter, especially that of Zac Kipling's input. At long last one has had his suspicions well and truly confirmed, a fact hitherto unknown I'm sure by many of us who joined E.O. in the latter years hoping for good sound directive. What was it Zak said, "EO was founded by and for those with a free radical approach to education," that we with a 'structured approach' cannot be the sole governing force, that E.O. cannot be dominated by extremists. Well Zak, I have read some of the distressed letters from structured educators who on occasion have attended so called democratic meetings and, dominated they apparently are, with our views very much undermined. Unfortunately however, the Dec/Jan Editor omitted to make such letters public, perhaps the next Editor kindly will.

You ask, Nina Krupska, about my own approach re education. What I don't want for my family, is to be implicated if only by paid up membership, with those who by tone and content speak in terms of anti-establishment, though this of course is their prerogative. Nor do I wish to contribute to the demise of the current Education Act, which one has to stress is only in operation by the grace of Parliament and as such permits us to educate at home. One recalls only too well, that it was those with anti-establishment attitudes, which led to recent clamp down on DSS benefits, as a consequence many a needy soul will undoubtedly suffer. Is this, as a membership, how we want the Education Act to end up, to be replaced with compulsory school education?

**M.R.Ellis, Esq., Orchard Hill Cottage,  
Bulkworthy, Holsworthy, N. Devon  
EX22 7UP**

### **EO's diversity**

I think that every parent has the right to educate their children as they see fit; I also feel it should be the child's choice as much as possible. It is unfair to push one family's way of doing things on to another.

If people want a free copy of the National Curriculum, then it is up to them to go and get it, no one can stop them, but it is not their right to force others to. (This is also true about various ways of educating.) Not that everyone would feel forced, many people do prefer that way of going about things, but not everyone.

EO is supposed to be a support network of families home educating, not an organisation that pushes one particular approach. I think every approach should be equally respected by everyone and that it is the diversity of EO that makes it special. I myself have been educated with no specific routine.

**Hannah Bush  
68 Maeglas, Pontiets, Near Llanelli,  
Dyfed, Wales SA15 5SH**

### **Education Now Conference**

The 1993 Education Now Day Conference will be held on Saturday April 17th from 10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. at Dame Catherine's School, Ticknall, South Derbyshire. The title is: *Choice in education: escaping from uniformity?*, and proposed workshops include the following:

**Home-based education, Learner-managed learning, Young children learning, Compulsory schooling disease  
Human scale education, Democratic learning and learning democracy, Equal opportunities, Student-centred learning at Dame Catherine's school**

The cost is £30 (including buffet lunch) or £15 for the unwaged.

For further details, write to 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ or telephone 0602 257261.

### **Women's Institute Market**

Unfortunately, the WI Market is only for girls to join, to sell garden produce, crafts, and cooked goodies. It costs 5p. Elizabeth, aged seven, has joined, and has sold flowers and vegetables raised in her allotment bed. This has involved growing, weighing, packing, labelling, pricing, invoices, and delivery to the market through the checking-in procedure, all according to WI instructions, and a pay packet at the end of the month. More remunerative than waiting for teeth to fall out!

Rosemary, eleven, earned a few pounds by selling tomatoes and Christmas note-cards. There is no pressure to produce each week, and an additional benefit is to be able to buy something that takes your eye before the market opens. The WI takes 11½ per cent as a contribution towards the running of the market. They are a jolly nice bunch of ladies to be involved with.

**Suzu Griffith  
'Lilacs', 12 Love Lane,  
Rye, East Sussex  
TN31 7NE**

# Letters

## Dear Benedict...

(see Benedict's letter in last NL)

I'm sorry I didn't meet you at the Lake District gathering. I had to stay home and look after my Granny while Mum, Dad and my big brother had a holiday—though from the talk I've heard since 'twere a strange holiday...

They went there to find out how they could help my big brother, Alistair, and me learn at home by hearing how others go about it, but seemingly it was like getting milk out of a dummy. As you noticed, there were all sorts of meetings—even meetings to decide what sort of meetings they *were*—but in the short time my folks had there, nothing much was said about actually *doing* it. Whenever they tried to ask anyone how they actually *do* it the answer was always, "Oh, we don't do anything structured," which, as answers go, wasn't very enlightening. So they persevered and started asking people what this really meant, and were surprised to find that not doing anything structured could mean, on the one hand, having set projects but no set times, or, on the other hand, having set times but no set work, or something totally different. For only one did it mean doing nothing at all, leaving it entirely up to the child.

It seems that, as in most organisations, the potentially divisive extreme positions are held by only a few. Most are somewhere in between.

The other thing they found was that all the newcomers they spoke to were equally frustrated. Both extremes of methods hold fears as well as promises. Nobody wants to stifle our natural curiosity, but who wants to be an illiterate teenager?

So the message from my Mum and Dad is: get EO's structure sorted out so the politics can be forgotten and we can get on with sharing experiences and useful information, hints and tips. And how about hearing from some EO kids who've lived to tell the tale—how was it for you? Will you do the same for your kids?

**Michelle Tam Lit (18 months) (with a little help from my mum)**  
**Hallgarth Farm, Leavening, Malton,**  
**North Yorkshire**

## Peer pressure in schools

[In a recent article in the *Radio Times* Sue Arnold wrote, "Like every caring, reasonable, easy-going, even-tempered, liberal mother, I think computer games are the tools of the devil. ...I think computer games addle children's brains... Alas, like every caring, reasonable, etc., etc. mother who would rather walk through hellfire than see her little treasures pilloried in the playground or bullied on the bus because they didn't have some kind of game machine, I have surrendered. We have a Nintendo in the house..."]

I am always keen to have my prejudices against formal school-based education bolstered and I am sure there are other EO members similar to me in this way.

The piece in the *Radio Times* concerns the writer's reason for buying game machines. Note that the reason quoted is the *sole* reason given.

I am not writing this as an anti-computer-games piece, rather, to remind fellow EO members that peer pressure is rampant in schools. Why should peer pressure de-

# C.A.C.S.

COMPUTER AND CONSOLE SECTION

YES!!! IT'S THE RETURN OF C.A.C.S., THE SECTION DEDICATED TO COMPUTERS AND CONSOLES. OBVIOUSLY REALLY... <sup>1</sup>

HALLO. I'M BACK TO GIVE YOU INFORMATION, NEWS AND EVERYTHING ELSE TO DO WITH COMPUTERS, COMPUTERS AND, ER... COMPUTERS (AND CONSOLES OF COURSE). OWN ONE OF THESE MACHINES... MEGADRIVE, PC, SNES, AMIGA OR HAND HELDS? GOOD, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE THEN. YOU MAY REMEMBER THE LAST TIME WE MET, IN A RECENT E.O. MAGAZINE; SINCE THEN, QUESTIONNAIRES HAVE BEEN FLYING THROUGH MY LETTERBOX AND THE GENERAL RESPONSE HAS BEEN EXCELLENT. 8 OUT OF 10 IS THE AVERAGE MARK FROM FORM-FILLERS FOR THIS SUPPLEMENT, SO I'M GLAD YOU LIKE THE SECTION AND MY THANKS GO TO ALL WHO FILLED IN THE FORM. ENJOY...

N ~~W~~ NATHAN WHITE (BIG ED. OF CACS)

## THE REVIEWING SYSTEM-WHAT ALL THOSE BOXES MEAN

PRESENTATION GRAPHICS SOUND PLAYABILITY LASTABILITY

A EXCELLENT B GOOD C AVERAGE

A- B+ D- B C

PRESENTATION-2 PLAYER, INTRO SEQUENCE, GOOD MANUAL ETC.

OVER

COMMENTS  
HERE

GRAPHICS-HOW SUITABLE THEY ARE, ANIMATION, SCROLLING ETC.

**C+**

SOUND-GOOD SOUNDS OR MUSIC  
PLAYABILITY- CONTROLS AND GAMEPLAY.

ALL

LASTABILITY-HOW LONG THE GAME WILL LAST.



THE C.A.C.S. CLASSIC IS AWARDED TO HIGH QUALITY GAMES.

D POOR E AWFUL REVIEWS PAGE 7

# NEWS...

## THE NEW AMIGA 1200 IS HERE!

AFTER THE A600 COMES THE LATEST ADDITION TO THE AMIGA FAMILY - THE AWESOME A1200 FROM COMMODORE. WANT A RUN-DOWN ON THE TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS? YOU DO? OK THEN...

- 68020 14MHZ CPU • 4 TIMES THE SPEED OF THE BLITTER
- A PC SUPER-VGA-BEATING AGA CHIPSET (262,000 COLOURS ON SCREEN FROM AN AMAZING 16 MILLION+ COLOURS IN A 1280X 512 RESOLUTION) • NEW AMAZING DUAL-PLAYFIELD (PARALLAX) MODE • 64x ANY SIZE SPRITES - PLUS EVERYTHING ELSE THAT THE STANDARD AMIGA HAD. ALL THIS MAY NOT MAKE MUCH SENSE TO SOME OF YOU, BUT IF I SAID THAT A1200 GAMES WILL BE LARGER, BRIGHTER, FASTER, BETTER, MORE COLOURFUL, MORE VARIED AND MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN ANYTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE, YOU'LL KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN. OH, AND LET'S NOT FORGET THE 2 MEGABYTE OF CHIP MEMORY WHICH ALLOWS MORE SOUND AND ANIMATION IN GAMES...

IT'S NOT ALL JUST GAMES THOUGH, MORE SERIOUS SOFTWARE WILL BE AVAILABLE, LIKE DELUXE PAINT AGA - A BRILLIANT PAINT PROGRAM WHICH ALLOWS YOU TO DRAW AND ANIMATE IN 256 COLOURS MINIMUM, THE RESULTS BEING IMPRESSIVE TO SAY THE LEAST. ARTISTS WILL FIND NOTHING BETTER (DPAINT AGA IS £99 AND MADE BY ELECTRONIC ARTS). LOOK OUT ALSO FOR WORDWORTH 2-I THE ULTIMATE WORD-PROCESSOR.

THE A1200 IS AN EXCELLENT MACHINE. AT £399.99, IT MAY BE MORE EXPENSIVE THAN (SAY) A S.N.E.S., BUT THE A1200 HAS MORE THAN GAMES AND IS FAR, FAR SUPERIOR.

(CONGRATULATIONS!!! HAVING ROTATED THE PAGE 180°, YOU HAVE WON A PRIZE: A SUR-PRIZE! (IE NOTHING))

## ZOOL ON TOP

AFTER ZOOMING TO THE TOP OF THE 16-BIT COMPUTER CHARTS, ZOOL IS CERTAINLY GETTING INCREASINGLY POPULAR. THE ST AND AMIGA VERSIONS (BOTH OUT NOW FROM GREMLIN GRAPHICS PRICED £25.99) ARE GREAT PLATFORM GAMES BUT DON'T REALLY TAKE THE CROWN FROM SONIC-THE-YOU-KNOW-WHAT BECAUSE OF THE RATHER PLAIN BACKDROPS AND THE JERK-O-VISION GRAPHICS. THE NEW AMIGA 1200 VERSION COULD WELL BE A DIFFERENT KETTLE OF ANTS WITH SCRUMPTIOUS PARALLAX MULTI-COLOURED, COPPER-SHADED BACKDROPS, MORE SPEED AND MORE SOUND. MMM... EXPECT ALSO, A GAMEBOY, A S.N.E.S. AND POSSIBLY A N.E.S. VERSION OF ZOOL LATER ON THIS YEAR.



## KICK OFF 3 DELAYED

THOSE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE SEQUEL OF THE BRILLIANT KICK OFF 2 WILL BE DISSAPPOINTED TO HEAR THAT KICK OFF 3 HAS BEEN HELD BACK TO LATER ON THIS YEAR. ALSO, FOR FANS OF THE ORIGINAL SENSIBLE SOCCER, A SEQUEL IS PLANNED.

## SUPER SONIC

FOR PEOPLE LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING SONIC 2 (OUT NOW FOR MEGADRIVE, MASTER SYSTEM AND GAMEGEAR FROM SEGA), I THOUGHT I'D WARN YOU THAT IT IS FAR TOO EASY AND SHOULDN'T TAKE A DAY TO CLOCK. IT HAS HOWEVER, GOT FAB GRAPHICS AND SONICS (HO HO) AND IF YOU DON'T MIND FORKING OUT £25.99-£39.99 FOR A WEEK OF ENJOYMENT (MAXIMUM), THEN BY ALL MEANS, BUY THE THING. OH, AND BEFORE I FORGET, A SONIC 3 IS IN THE PIPELINE. LET'S HOPE SEGA INCREASE THE DIFFICULTY IN TIME FOR RELEASE.

## 68060 CPU PLANNED

MOTOROLLA ARE WORKING ON AN ACCELERATOR TO BOOST THE SPEED OF ANY AMIGA. THE CPU IS THE HEART OF THE MACHINE, IT CAN CONTROL ANYTHING FROM THE SPEED OF GAMES TO THE RENDERINGS OF RAY-TRACING AND IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF ANY MACHINE. WITH A 68060, YOU CAN EXPECT THE MOST DETAILED OF GAMES TO FLY BY IN REAL-TIME WHILE BLOWING ONE HECK OF A RASPBERRY AT THE INTEL PC '586 ON THE WAY. OF COURSE THE '060 WON'T BE USED FOR GAMES BUT TO HELP CALCULATIONS OF MOUNTAIN RENDERINGS ETC.. EXPECT 24-BIT MOUNTAINS TO ALMOST APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE. THE 68060 IS OVER 100 TIMES FASTER THAN THE STANDARD AMIGA 500'S 68000! IF THIS SORT OF TECHNOLOGY FILTERS DOWN EVENTUALLY TO GAMES, YOU CAN EXPECT ANY GAME TO RUN AT 50 FRAMES PER SECOND, HAVE 16 MILLION COLOURS, PERFECT PARALLAX AND FULLY DETAILED, GOURAD SHADED VECTORS. YUMMY...

## LEMMING MERINGUE

YET ANOTHER POPULAR CRAZE, THESE LEMMINGS ARE GETTING EVERYWHERE. OWN A SNES? GET LEMMINGS. OWN A PC? GET LEMMINGS. ST? GET LEMMINGS. GAMEBOY? N.E.S? APPLE MACINTOSH? ACORN? AMIGA? YOU KNOW WHAT TO GET. THERE'S EVEN A SPECCY VERSION. THE N.E.S., SPECTRUM AND GAMEBOY VERSIONS ARE OKAY, IF A TAD SLOW. THE MAC, ACORN AND PC VERSIONS ARE JERKY WITH SLOW PROCESSORS (CPU). I'D SAY THE AMIGA VERSION IS THE BEST BECAUSE THE S.N.E.S VERSION HAS INFERIOR SOUND. ALSO LOOK OUT FOR LEMMINGS 2, COMING SOON FOR AMIGA, ST AND PC.



# C.A.C.S. FEEDBACK

IN THE PREVIOUS C.A.C.S., I ASKED YOU ALL TO WRITE LETTERS OR ENTER THE COMPETITION, OR ANYTHING REALLY TO DO WITH C.A.C.S., COMPUTERS AND CONSOLES. SINCE THEN, MANY PEOPLE HAVE WRITTEN IN, BUT... I STILL WANT MORE, MORE, **MORE!** SO IF YOU HAVE ANY UN-FILLED-IN QUESTIONNAIRES, SEND 'EM IN **NOW!** IF YOU WRITE A LETTER, I WILL EITHER SEND YOU A PERSONAL REPLY (USUALLY IF I DON'T HAVE ROOM IN C.A.C.S.) OR EVEN BETTER, PRINT IT IN C.A.C.S.! YOU CAN EVEN SEND A QUESTION(S) WHICH I WILL TRY TO ANSWER IN THE FOLLOWING C.A.C.S. ANY WAY, ON WITH THE SHOW...

“BRAND NEW GAME GEAR FOR SALE, AC ADAPTOR, CAR CIGARETTE LIGHT ADAPTOR, GG SHINOBI, COLUMNS, CHESS MASTER, HALLEY WARS. £130 O.N.O. ALSO MASTER SYSTEM ADAPTER. £10. (0865) 57630 IS THE NUMBER TO DIAL” SAYS ALEX. SEEMS FAIR ENOUGH TO ME. WHY NOT GIVE ALEX A RING?

“I HAVE ACCESS TO AN APPLE MACINTOSH CLASSIC WITH GAMES AND I AM INTERESTED TO HEAR FROM ANY PEOPLE AROUND MY AGE WHO HAVE THE SAME.” ANY ONE INTERESTED? YOU CAN WRITE TO JOHN SCOTT (AGE 8) AT 33 CROSS LANE, MOUNTSORREL, LEICS. LE12 7BU.

FROM THE C.A.C.S. QUESTIONNAIRE, OVER 80% OF ENTRIES OWNED AN 8 BIT COMPUTER OR AMIGA. WHERE ARE ALL YOU CONSOLE OWNERS? MOST 8 BIT OWNERS ALSO INTENDED TO BUY AN AMIGA - WHAT SENSIBLE PEOPLE! I WONDER THOUGH, IF ANY OF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT THE NEW AMIGA 1200.

SOME OF YOU READERS HAVE WRITTEN A FEW <sup>FEED BACK</sup> 6  
 REVIEWS TO PUT IN C.A.C.S. HERE THEY ARE AND  
 IF YOU HAVE ANY, SEND THEM TO THE GIVEN ADDRESS.



“ALTHOUGH I’VE ONLY PLAYED THE C64 VERSION,  
 FLIMBO’S QUEST IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE AMSTRAD, ST  
 AND AMIGA, AND NOW IT’S CHEAP, IT’S A VERY GOOD BUY.  
 ONLY 6 LEVELS? WELL, THEY’RE BIG! A CERTAIN BADDY  
 LEAVES BEHIND A SCROLL WHICH YOU HAVE TO BRING TO A SHOP  
 SEVERAL TIMES (YOU CAN ALSO BUY SCROLLS AND OTHER THINGS  
 FROM THE SHOP). THE GRAPHICS AND SONICS ARE GOOD WITH  
 FUNKY MUSIC AND 2 SCROLLING SPEEDS (I THINK HE MEANS PARALLAX-NATH.)  
 ALTHOUGH YOU’RE CUTE, NOTHING ELSE IS. A BRILL PLATFORM GAME.”

• **MIKE FUTCHER.** YOU CAN BUY FLIMBO’S QUEST FOR £3.99 (8-  
 BIT FORMATS) AND £7.99 (16-BIT) FROM KIXX. **A** WAS THE MARK  
 GIVEN BY MIKE BECAUSE F.Q. IS GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY. ILLUSTRATION  
 WAS ALSO BY MIKE.

### LEANDER BY PSYGNOSIS FOR AMIGA PRICED £25.99

“WOW! AN OLDISH GAME WITH A WICKED STORY LINE AND AMAZING  
 GRAPHICS AND MUSIC. LEANDER IS A MUST FOR ORIENTAL SWORD-  
 SWISHING FANATICS. YOU MUST BATTLE THROUGH THE LEVELS (ALL  
 22 OF THEM) IN SEARCH FOR A TELEPORT WHILE AVOIDING THE  
 NASTIES. LEANDER ALSO HAS SELF-DES-  
 TRUCTION AND CAN COLLECT COINS  
 WHICH CAN BUY VARIOUS MAGICAL  
 WEAPONS INCLUDING THE FORCE BLA-  
 DE AND THE TEMPEST BLADE. LEANDER  
 IS WELL WORTH GETTING.”

• **ANDY  
 SKIPPER**

PRESENTATION GRAPHICS SOUND PLAYABILITY LASTABILITY

A-	A-	A	A-	B+
----	----	---	----	----

**A-**

STOP DAWDLING  
 AND GET IT!

READER RATINGS

# PINBALL FANTASIES

GAME: PINBALL FANTASIES  
 FORMAT: AMIGA  
 PUBLISHER: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ENTERT.  
 PRICE: £30.99

I REALLY ENJOYED THE FIRST PINBALL SERIES - PINBALL DREAMS - AND PINBALL FANTASIES IS MORE OF THE SAME. ADDITIONS INCLUDE THE NEW FLIPPER (USUALLY POSITIONED AT THE CENTRE RIGHT OR LEFT OF EACH



TABLE), THE PRICE TAG (P.F. IS A FIVER MORE), THE DOT-MATRIX SCORE-BOARD (FOR NEW ANIMATIONS) AND THE NUMBER OF DISKS (P.F. HAS 3). THE 4 TABLES ARE: PARTY

LAND (B+ RATING), →  
 SHOW (C-) AND →  
 'N' BONES (B+). →



STONES  
 FANTAS-

PRESENTATION GRAPHICS SOUND PLAYABILITY LASTABILITY

A-	B	B+	A	A
----	---	----	---	---

IES IS A BRILL PINBALL GAME AND ALTHOUGH I STILL PREFER THE ORIGINAL, IF YOU LIKE PINBALL, P.F. IS A GREAT BUY.



**B+**

TOP-NOTCH BALL  
 REBOUNDING & BRILLIANCE

## ALIEN BREED SPECIAL EDITION

AMIGA • TEAM 17 • £9.99

THIS IS NOT A SEQUEL TO THE ORIGINAL ALIEN BREED (ALIEN BREED 2 IS PLANNED FOR LATER ON THIS YEAR) BUT A NEW REMIX VERSION. AS YOU CAN SEE, I HAVEN'T REALLY THAT MUCH SPACE, SO HERE'S A QUICK RUN-DOWN ON A.B.S.E.: OVER HEAD 2 PLAYER SIMULTANEOUS SHOOT 'EM UP/DOWN • 32 COLOUR STYLISH GRAPHICS • MANIC GAMEPLAY • 50 FRAMES PER SEC. SCROLLING • SHOPS WHERE WEAPONS AND KEYS CAN BE BOUGHT • STUNNING SOUND • 16 LEVELS. AT ONLY £9.99, TEAM 17 HAVE A WINNER. BUDGET RATING: **A-**

## TEAM 17'S NEW LOT...

THANKS TO TEAM 17, YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO FOUR NEW GAMES. SUPER FROG WILL BE FIRST AND WILL BE APPEARING ON THE AMIGA FIRST WITH CONSOLE VERSIONS PLANNED. SUPER FROG IS SUPPOSED TO BE A MARIO/SONIC BEATER. THE GRAPHICS ARE A LITTLE SIMPLISTIC BUT 'FROG' COULD WELL BE WORTH A LOOK. WATCH OUT ALSO FOR BODY BLOWS (STREET FIGHTER 2 STYLE BEAT 'EM UP), ALIEN BREED 2 (LIKE THE ORIGINAL BUT MILES BETTER) AND PROJECT X 2 (VERY TASTY A1200 SHOOT 'EM UP - CAN'T WAIT!).

## C.A.C.S. CLOSES...

ER... HALLO, IT'S ME AGAIN. I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED THE PREVIOUS 7 PAGES. LOOK OUT FOR THE NEXT C.A.C.S. COMING SOON - IT WILL BE GREAT, BELIEVE ME. WITH THE HELP OF AN AMIGA 1200, A CITIZEN SWIFT 240 PRINTER, DELUXE PAINT 4.5, WORD WORTH 2 AND YOUR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION, THE NEXT C.A.C.S. SHOULD GIVE YOU MORE INFORMATION THAN EVER! LOOK OUT FOR IT!

THANKS GO TO THESE PEOPLE FOR WRITING:

MIKE FUTCHER (WHO GAVE C.A.C.S. 9 OUT OF 10) • GUY HENDERSON (ANOTHER 9 OUT OF 10) • JOSHUA MOSTAFA (5 OUT OF 10)  
 • S.J. RIVETT (5/10) • BEN MOORE (9½/10) • ROBERT FISHER (6/10) • ANDY SKIPPER • JOHN SCOTT - AND ANY OTHER PEOPLE WHO I HAVE FORGOTTEN - SORRY! REMEMBER THAT IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY, WRITE TO...

**C.A.C.S., 3 NEW STREET, CHASE TERRACE,  
 WALSALL, WEST MIDLANDS WS7 8BT. BYEEEE!**

NATHAN WHITE (EDITOR OF C.A.C.S.) VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS MAY NOT REFLECT THAT OF C.A.C.S.

termine how we spend our money? If we buy computer games for our children, we can do it because we think it is best for them, and 'best' does not have to take account of having to fit in with the crowd at school.

One day, someone is going to get an angry outburst from me when he or she refers to the benefits of school. At the moment, I smile politely and gently murmur that, yes, there are indeed some advantages. Between you and me, I don't think there are many.

**Alan Bright**  
22 Peridot Street,  
Beckton,  
London E6 4LZ

### Will he survive?

My 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-year-old has just chosen to go to school against my wishes for him. I feel that his choice should be important so I have decided to support his decision but inside, I feel very frustrated and disappointed. I spent a morning with the class he will be joining after Christmas and although the children were lovely, the teacher was uninspiring, spent practically no time talking with the children, and the activities were basically drawing and playing with Lego. The children didn't seem to be allowed to get other toys or activities out.

I read with some of the children, and the reading scheme books were terribly dull. I now just sit and hope that he will be bored in half a term and want to come home. Can anyone reassure me that he will survive this experience?

**Martine Archer**  
9 Meer End Terrace,  
Belmont,  
Durham  
DH1 1BJ

## EO Community

We are two families, living in the Devon-Cornwall area, who would like to buy some land on which to live as ecologically and self-sustainably as possible. We'd prefer to accomplish this in the company and with the support of like-minded people. We are looking for other people who might consider joining us in such a project. There are six children in our families, all home-educated, with ages ranging from two to twelve years old. For more information, phone us on 0752 252217 or write to us.

**Vera and Walter Henderson**  
23 Hastings Terrace,  
Plymouth PL1 5BD  
or **Roger and Michal Lovejoy**  
P.R. Saltash P.O., Wesley Street,  
Saltash PL 126 AA

### Can you help?

We are Aaron (4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>), Sharon and Michael, living in the South of England for a few years, looking for an older home educated child (18 or over) who would enjoy helping us out and living with us for a period of time. Sharon works full time and Michael is privileged to spend the day with Aaron. As Michael writes, and would like to have a bit more time to do so, we're looking for someone responsible who would enjoy playing and spending time with Aaron as well as helping with some minor tasks around the house. On average, we'd be looking for four to four-and-a-half hours a day, five days a week.

In exchange, we offer a beautiful large room with private bathroom, board (vegetarian), and £40 per week to start. There would likely be some opportunities to travel with us as well (the US, Canada, and Europe), expenses paid, but this is not a requirement, simply a choice. Michael and Aaron are heavily involved in local EO activities (Michael co-edits the local

Solent Area Newsletter) in Hampshire, as well as East and West Sussex, so there would be plenty of opportunity to hook up with EOers in the area. We're basically unstructured in our approach to home education—there is very little routine to our week—yet in the parental balancing act of letting go and holding back, we prefer to err on the side of protectiveness. If interested, give us a quick call to leave your number and we'll call you back, or write.

**Michael Taveler, Sharon Yankoo,  
and Aaron Taveler,  
The Old Forge, Farm Lane,  
Nutbourne, Chichester,  
West Sussex PO18 8SA  
(0243) 373 903**

### **Hurray for sums: a reply to Chris Shute**

My place in the structure debate is safely in the middle: my main concern is to give my child the best chance to achieve maximum independence based on a growing understanding of the world, the process taking place in a loving, minimum-stress environment.

Here are my reasons for including sums.

1. I see arithmetic as part of the process of experiencing numbers, an important part of understanding and relating to the material world. Numbers do not begin and end in the abstract world of meaningless calculation and rote repetition. Arithmetic only becomes the dreary and frightening thing expressed by Chris Shute if it is discovered in a way that does not start off by treating numbers as things to be touched, held and seen.

2. Although I would be the last person to abolish the calculator, to rely on it all the time would have undesirable consequences in the attainment of numeracy. It would mean that a child's mental development would not include an instinctive feel for how sums 'work out' and *why*, for exam-

ple,  $4 \times 5 = 20$ . A child who has been 'spared' sums won't know how to estimate—one of the most useful skills in the world. I would have to hate to rush inside for my calculator for complicated long division (not *my* favourite either) but a good grounding in the concrete understanding of it is the perfect way of avoiding the dreadful sense of alienation that numbers can inspire.

Anybody interested in finding out more about this approach to basic maths could start by reading *The discovery of the child*, by Maria Montessori, and *Teaching Montessori in the home*, by Elizabeth Hainstock, both available by mail-order from Montessori centres.

Long live EO and creative, provocative debate.

**Emma Woodcraft  
Ardullif, Dingwall,  
Ross and Cromarty,  
IV15 9TT  
0349 830724**

### **Talk sense, please!**

Was Mr Shute's article meant to be funny? I was no good at maths at school. We had to use our little grey cells as there were no calculators. I went to school just after the war, and when it came to sums I was always at the foot of the class, but I worked at them and at least I can work out my housekeeping and can help my son. I taught him to add, subtract, multiply, and divide, I made him learn his tables. It's all very well using a calculator, but God gave us the best calculators in the world, our brains, so our children have to use them as well as pushing buttons. So come off it, Mr Shute, talk sense.

**Mrs R Hemming  
20 Lamorbey Terrace,  
Lake Sandown,  
Isle of Wight PO36 9LX**

# Educating ARCHIE MORE OR LESS TV FOR US IN 1993?



for JACKIE FERRIS

## More on meetings

In October we held our Regional Meeting here in Hertfordshire. The weekend's programme began with Sarah Guthrie's fascinating account of her many years of EOing with her four daughters, which was inspiring, moving and very amusing at times. After lunch Roland Meighan spoke about home education from the research perspective. Roland recounted many anecdotes taken from his years of association with EO families and his talk was stimulating and wide-ranging, containing much 'ammunition' which would be very useful in discussions with sceptics!

Betty Ball gave two workshops, *Maths for the Timid* and *Our family's approach to GCSE*, which were packed with valuable practical help and reassurance. Anne Wade's legal workshop was well attended and the participants had a great many questions for her. The resources room became a focus for conversations while people were looking at the many books and materials on display, and a range of craft materials and other activities was available for the children. On Saturday evening there was an impromptu concert when the children gathered to play their musical instruments.

There were several media people present at the weekend, including an unobtrusive researcher for Woman's Hour. The meeting gave rise to a flood of media enquiries which resulted in some useful publicity for EO. Very many thanks to all the families who generously agreed to be interviewed, often at extremely short notice, and to all the people who helped towards the weekend in so many ways.

Around 200 people attended and we had to refuse many others because of limitations of space. Most people came from the South East, and the level of interest far exceeded all expectations. The

response shows that there is a need for weekend meetings of this kind which are quite distinct from the EO holidays.

In the EO Factpack we find the following: "Most of the families are not opposed to school in general but turn to home-based education as a last desperate act because their children are very unhappy at school, or learning little, or both." (Roland Meighan, in his article *Home-Based Education: a Political and Sociological Review*) This statement is no idle opinion; it is made as a result of years of research. My own experience during the past fifteen months has confirmed the existence of a large body of 'moderates' within EO, during hundreds of conversations that I have had with families in my efforts to find interviewees for the media. In the interests of democracy and fairness, therefore, we must try to ensure that the attendance at members' meetings reflects the diversity of EO's membership so that all views are respected.

Meetings with a pre-arranged programme of speakers and workshops will not suit everyone, given the range of interests, approaches and lifestyles within EO. However, the present type of national gathering only serves the needs of one sector of the membership. Our membership leaflet gives the impression that although "our reasons are many and we often differ widely in our views", EO exists for all who home educate, *whatever their reasons, lifestyle or educational approach*. If this is true, we should be looking at ways of doing more to give "support, advice and assistance" to all who join. If EO is to be purely a club for non-conformists, our membership literature should make this clear so that potential members can make an informed choice.

Our proposal (see last August's newsletter) that EO's decision-making meetings should be held separately from the holiday gatherings has provoked a lot of comment, and we would like to clarify some points.

We are *not* advocating the denial of the children's right to be considered and included in EO, and we have *not* forgotten that EO is a family organisation. As it is impossible to accommodate the diversity of EO in one type of holiday meeting, it is clear that many people will be excluded. We think that the children in *these* families are being deprived of the chance to meet together, hence the proposal for a variety of meetings. If we don't make the parents feel welcome and comfortable, how can the children participate?

We are totally committed to the pre-eminence of children, which is why we believe that EO should work unceasingly to promote public knowledge of home education. We cannot afford the self-indulgence of spending hours at meetings on issues which arise as a result of the holiday itself when there are children who are desperate—sometimes suicidal—in school, whose parents do not know about home education. We are failing those children if we become too caught up in our own concerns.

At the last meeting we heard a proposal from a member who was keen to see children's contributions given greater respect in the newsletter. She offered to act as a facilitator to encourage and assist the children to contribute to the newsletter if EO would pay her telephone expenses, but her suggestion was rubbished immediately with the assertion that "she's clearly not one of us." We were surprised that the proposal was dismissed by the adults without any attempt to consult the children.

We think that the separation of the business meetings from the holidays does not imply that young people would be

excluded from playing a full part in the running of EO. As far as we are concerned *any* person, *irrespective of age or viewpoint*, should be welcome to participate.

**Lost property**—did anyone leave a black leather jacket behind at the meeting? If so, please contact Jane (0707 335825)

Audio and video tapes of the talks are available—for details please phone Jane (0707 335825) for audio tapes and Bob (081 808 3200) for video tapes.

**Jane Lowe**  
5, Elm Gardens,  
Welwyn Garden City,  
Hertfordshire AL8 6RX

*Andy Newton writes:*

...It seems to me that a simple solution is obvious:  
Allow an unrestricted number of signed-up members;  
Simplify the process of becoming a signed-up member;  
Publicise the process regularly;  
Hold meetings in more accessible places.

Above all, *openness* is the key.

This method of democracy should be put in place before any other changes are made. This will safeguard EO's legal position (i.e. protection against being sued) whilst improving the representation of those members who desire it.

Being classified as "right wing, anti-children, anti-libertarian" and a "southerner" (with a spit attached to the last) does nothing to promote a reasoned argument. I am inclined to respond with "then a pox on your illiberal organisation—we can do without it."

**Andy Newton**  
6, Yeatmans Close, Enmore Green,  
Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8LU

*[Jane Lowe intends in the next meeting to support fully Andy Newton's proposal]*

# Sex, drugs and harpsichords

by Felix Wade

Kentwell Hall is a dirty great posh place which has been defiled by the presence of EO for years and years. Last summer there were ten EOers who spent some stimulating weeks there pretending to be Tudor. This is the most accurate reconstruction of Tudor life there is, with attention to details like wristwatches, language, shoes, arguments and physical violence. Fortunately the tourists and school parties go away at five, and then the accuracy is allowed to deteriorate. Making your costume beforehand is terrifically educational, but the food and camping are free, so it's worth it. The firewood and chemicals (and clay and wool and stuff) for doing Tudor things with are also free. The whole thing is free, in fact.

The school parties are good for a laugh as they fall into two groups: the insanely credulous, and the ones who try to get us to make mistakes (what's that big noisy flying thing in the sky then?). I have successfully sold ordinary stones to the first sort, for 50p each (in groats, of course). The tourists, who appear at weekends, assume that everything in a tub (footbath, brewer's malt, dye for clothes) is soup, and take photos of the peacocks, which are the only things they recognise.

The big snag is that you have to compete with around 1800 of the general public for

one of 600 places, and the length of your visit is sometimes cut from four weeks to one (or none; for the last three times this hasn't happened to me, but my character, a lazy, scavenging artist with unappealing personal problems, is difficult to play). The selection process depends on the whim of Patrick Phillips, who has been running Kentwell at a loss for ages. You just fill in the form that they send you on request with the role you incline towards; then you receive costume instructions, have the start of your costume examined, and then hope you aren't wasting your time when you attend the final meeting, months later.

The grounds are huge, and contain sheep, goats, archers, horses, pigs, peacocks and fish and (new) Tudor buildings (which are ostensibly built the hard way). Sometimes in the evenings the management tries to appease the rabid rabble with feasts and games, during which many of these things are put to good use. Usually the rabid rabble entertain themselves easily enough.

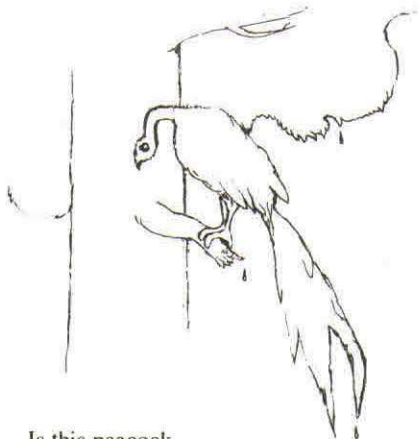
Last year Absalom Staffage built a diving helmet and a flying machine, both of which were very funny the first time. Also the alchemists, carpenters and pirates produced a mock sea battle against the Spanish, involving illegal Chinese fireworks, two ships with wooden wheels and

orchestrated oohs and ahs, on pain of death.

Most 'living history' is restricted to jesters, monks, morris dancers, calligraphy and mad axe-men. At Kentwell there was Mad Jack, who made a whole load of bricks; Honest John, who made many people sick of the word 'honest', and Diggory Sproat, who made drawings for a suction toilet. The two old hags are probably the best actors; occasionally they remove the dried frogs and lucky charms and become gentry instead. Small children are re-created too. Probably if a real Tudor could see the re-enactment, it would be far too exciting to resemble sixteenth century Suffolk; which is better than Ye olde country fayres, anyway.

Apply now, and don't be gentry unless you actually know something about history, have £200 for a heavily ornamental costume and want to boil in your own sweat inside it.

Kentwell Hall, Long Melford, SUFFOLK  
CO10 9BA



Is this peacock

- a) feckless
- b) suicidal
- c) about to make a loud noise?

## Natural learning

by Anne Brosnan

I have never attended a school, [state], private or parochial, yet I can't really describe my life as being un-schooled, home-educated, or anything to that effect. These labels make me feel as if I have been avoiding something my whole life—something people say I should have had, something they say was good for me. I simply think I am a young human, living on this planet Earth, being educated by the world.

I guess I have the honour of being one of the oldest kids whose future was influenced as a direct result of the work and study of one man—John Holt. I was born in 1977, the year John Holt started *Growing Without Schooling* magazine. Before this, my mother read his books and decided, even before I was born, that I was not going to school. I am extremely glad she made this decision, and of another decision she made: that while I was not going to go to an institution to get an education, neither was she going to give me an education at home. Both of my parents have been teachers to me ever since I was born, but I think I have been completely self-directed in my learning. They were teachers in a sense only because I wanted them to teach me something I wanted to learn.

### Young people learn easily

When I think of all the discussion about what children need to learn and what should be taught, it almost always appears to me to be completely irrelevant to the way young people think. When you are little, you learn things incredibly fast. It

seems as if your mind is clear and thanks to the intricacies of the human brain you can learn easily. Learning is just something that happens. Other people don't make it happen—schools, books, objects—nothing like that makes it happen, just the mind of the learner. The mind can be *influenced* from the outside, but the act of learning goes on privately inside the human brain. And children have an inborn sense of logic and foresight.

I don't think children need to be taught what are termed 'necessary skills', or even be introduced to them. It is natural for children to learn these things as they grow, and it is always relatively easy for them. I will never understand why adults created schools to help children learn these 'necessary skills'. In most cases, I don't think a parent will have to help a child directly to learn anything, unless the child asks for help.

I believe that if you are self-directing your education, you have the right to choose to learn some things and not others. There need not be an absolute rule that one must learn anything at all. I believe that people are motivated in life towards doing things they want to do, and when they find they need certain skills to do these things, they can learn them at that time. Their motivation and need for that skill makes learning natural and easy. Learning will never be natural and easy when children are required to learn something they have no use for at that time.

### **Beware the maths textbook!**

When I was younger, the only textbooks I ever used were for mathematics. I used them semi-regularly until I was thirteen. I find that I use arithmetic in everyday life, and I am proficient at using it. But beyond the basics, I could never progress. I have never learnt algebra, geometry, trigonometry, or calculus. I have never found maths

fascinating as others do, although some of my favourite fields of interest—music, science, astronomy—are supposed to be directly related to mathematics. Instead, I have what is almost an aversion to maths. This possibly stems from the hours I spent writing down numbers and answers in the pages of textbooks. Most of the things I learn, I learn on my own, by reading books, through direct experience, trial and error, or asking questions.

### **Advice to parents**

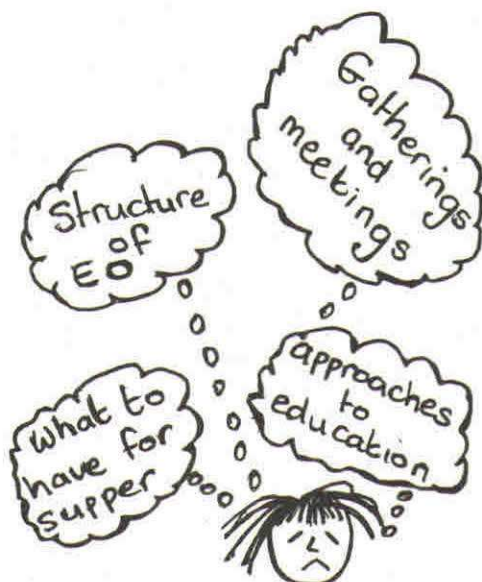
I have one piece of advice for parents: let your kids do what they want; give them absolute freedom to make their own choices in whatever they do. There is nothing that makes kids more responsible, mature, and dependable than a dose of pure freedom. Kids who are self-taught and who are allowed to live their lives exactly the way they want to are not the lazy incompetent slobs with no direction in life that some people suggest. They are more likely to know what they really like to do and want to be good at. They *are* good at what they do.

I would like to see all kids freed from the bonds of compulsory school, so that those who choose not to go to school can begin working, living, and learning in the world. I would say to homeschooling parents, let your kids drift through their education or abandon it completely if they feel like it; help them if they need help, but always let them lead their own lives.

### **© Anne Brosnan**

Anne Brosnan writes a lot for GWS magazine, was mentioned in Grace Llewelyn's book, *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, and has contributed a chapter about her life to a forthcoming book, *Real lives: teenagers who don't go to school*, edited by Grace Llewelyn.

## The Open School



Why not share your views on these and other issues?

Edit the EO Newsletter or Supplement.

Contact The Greenhoughs,  
18 Park Street, Alfreton,  
Derbys DES TJE (0773-836662)

### Home educators' community centre and café opening

On Thursday 4th February, a community centre for home-schooling families opens in North London. It will be open on Thursdays and Fridays every week. The main aim is to provide space for older children to use independently, but there will also be activities for all ages (including adults), e.g. yoga, stained glass, pottery, woodwork, etc. Members will organise activities and run the café. Contact Leslie Barson on 081 969 0893 for more details.

When a child is registered at school, the government pays a capitation fee for that child's education. The money is paid to the LEA or the school if it is grant-maintained. The amount varies according to the type of school and the age of the child. The money is used to pay teachers and LEA staff salaries, maintain the school buildings, buy materials and resources, and so on.

If a child is being educated otherwise, he does not benefit from any of this money. I have been wondering whether this money could be used to set up a national *voluntary* open school, along the lines of the Open University or the Open College. Local centres for these two organisations are already in place and could become centres for the open school as well. These resources—for instance, photocopying, loan of musical instruments, (parent) teachers' libraries of books and resources—could be used as required by the parent or child, drawn against an individual account which is the capitation fee for that child. Tutoring, study courses, laboratory facilities, and exam venues could all be used if and when chosen by the home-educating family.

The registration could be used to 'prove' education for 16-18 year-olds for continued child benefit, and could be the base for the 'advisors' if and when the LEAs are disbanded. If this seems a good idea, it is important that EO is closely involved in the setting up, so that we get what we want and need. Also, it must be a voluntary registration, and not a route to make the National Curriculum compulsory for those registering. What do members think?

**Rosemary Clayson**  
5 Baker Close, Teynham,  
Kent ME9 9DW

# Young people's power

Education Otherwise charitable trust recently funded us to attend The World Conference on Children's Rights at Exeter University. This was a three day conference and we went on day two which was loosely focused around listening to and hearing from children. I suppose we wanted this to be a conference about young people's freedom, autonomy and empowerment, and although there were aspects of this on the day we attended, which were very inspiring, we felt that most thinking wasn't focused on these areas.

The most interesting workshop from our perspective was Working Locally as Allies for Young People, led by Joanne Bird who has set up an organisation called Underground Power, both for young people, who she defines as anyone below the age of twenty-one, and their allies of whatever age. Joanne had this to say in a recent interview in the *Guardian* which seems to sum up the essence of the workshop: "Young people are systematically denied basic human rights. We are forced to go to school and bullied into further education. We are often physically mistreated and abused. We have fundamental decisions taken for us—what to wear, what to do, where to live. Many of us, especially those under eighteen, are economically dependent upon our parents. We are treated with disrespect, humiliated, not taken seriously."

## Adults disempower young people

We were sympathetic to all these thoughts and could think of many examples of when society and adults disempower young people: sending them to school against their will, excluding them in family decisions, perceiving them as unequal in many ways and so brutally illustrated by

the sign often seen in newsagents' windows which says, "Only two children allowed in the shop at any one time", next to the "No dogs allowed" sign. Of course there are much deeper ways in which young people are treated badly, especially by their parents, and perhaps, as EO parents who spend so much time with our children, we need to be thinking about these issues.

Joanne also talked about young people's fundamental rights and especially about their right to vote which would change their position in society. The fact that many young people don't want to vote or believe they would not know or understand which way to vote, is only an indication of their bad treatment which has become so turned inward that the young people have begun to believe it of themselves. Obviously this can be extended past the political issue and into many others concerning young people.

As part of the workshop, we spent some time in groups talking about how we were oppressed as young people and how we are disrespectful to young people now we are adults. I remembered the dreaded Thursday afternoons at school, when I had French-without-reading and the sweat on my palms and feelings of fear and powerlessness because I was unable to walk away from what I found an humiliating experience. Despite my parents being very laissez and supportive when I decided to "bunk off", writing endless letters on my behalf to explain my absence, there were still too many times when I could not escape French-without-reading. I had to endure the agony of being denied the human right to decide for myself to walk away from something I found torturous.

## Coercion and humiliation

Sadly, these experiences set up patterns which can stay with you for life. A child I know is sometimes coerced into playing with a boy she doesn't like. Will this same child, denied her right to decide who are her friends, form endless relationships with unsuitable lovers when she is a teenager/woman? When she came to our house to play, I said to her that she didn't have to play with anybody she didn't want to and she couldn't stop the tears from streaming down her cheeks.

The other thing I remembered was a book by the Ahlbergs about starting school which had been left behind at our house. This was, I suppose, a book meant to show school in a realistic way, for parents to read to their pre-school children by way of indoctrinating them about the joys of spending their lives in academic prisons. The picture I found most disturbing was of a small boy standing in a group of children and trying to get the teacher's attention. This boy had one hand between his legs and the other raised to the teacher, "Please Miss, please Miss." This child was having to ask *permission* to go to the loo. He was desperate. He had no power, even his body was not his own. This was a fictional child in a fictional school, but it serves to illustrate what young people have to endure to a lesser or greater degree in too many areas of their lives.

## Parental role in oppression

As EOers, our children are not magically free from this oppression just because they do not go to school. We parents are the worst oppressors because our connections with our children go so deep. I know many EOers who spend much time thinking about these issues and these philosophies and ideas form an integral part of EOing for them. Here in Devon, some of us have talked about these topics, especially about young people organising their

own social lives and being part of all organisational meetings as equal members.

Lastly, and perhaps most painfully, I thought about how I was oppressive to young people. Worst of all, I am oppressive to my own young people. Just remember how it felt, when you were small, to be shouted at by a giant adult, especially by one from whom you expected unconditional love, as was your birthright. Remember what it felt like to have to go to bed when you weren't tired; to eat when and what you did not want to; to be denied the opportunity to do so many things when you were full of enthusiasm; to be talked over, discussed, embarrassed, ridiculed. Perhaps worse, much worse, is hidden in our childhoods. And, of course, we pass this on to our children. I feel that we have a responsibility to spend as much time as we can thinking about and expressing these feelings, so that our children can grow up without these constraints and limitations which are imposed by parents, not for the good of the child as is so often given as the reason, but as a need for the parent. And unless we are frightened within, from our own childhood experiences, why should we fear our children's—and all young people's—vitality and freedom?

## The role of young people in EO

With regard to these thoughts and EO as an organisation, we advocate, as many EO families do, that EO should be more of a young people's organisation than it is at present. As parents, we feel we should be encouraging and supporting our young people to take a more active role in all aspects of EO, because EOing is surely about young people. On the back of the newsletter, along with the other aims, we would like to see something about EO aiming to reaffirm that young people have the primary responsibility for their own education. I know there are many who will think this is airy fairy nonsense, but we see this as a vital acknowledgement of young peo-

ple's ability to direct their own lives.

Following on from this, we would welcome many more letters from young people giving their own perspective on EO and young people's rights generally. We would certainly value these insights, and feel the newsletter greatly misses them. From the youngest to the oldest, please write.

If you want further information about Underground Power, please write to Underground Power, 9 Osmaston Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside L42 8PY.

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**I am Arran, and I went to a conference.** It was about children's rights. It was really funny because all the shows and dancing looked very odd if it was children's rights because it was all done by school children. I don't feel that school children really have rights because they have to say please and thank you and put their hands up if they want to do anything and they have to sit there at their desks nearly all day. And also I think it is wrong that they have to do homework instead of going out and playing. They don't really have much play time, school children, also when they do play, it's very short unless it's holidays or something because they have to go for baths and supper and bed-time because they've got to go to school tomorrow morning.

I think my mum and dad are good in some ways and bad in others. I feel like I have lots more rights than any school child will ever have. I like chasing my dad a lot, and most of my friends like chasing my dad with me. This makes it easier to play with my friends in some ways and harder in others. I find it hard getting time out of my mum and dad, especially with my baby sister around. I like my baby sister, she's fun when she's not annoying me but when she is annoying me, she's a very big pain.

I would like an EO meeting here at my house discussing what children want, and the grown ups go off into another room and we just talk about things. Also, I think we might be able to arrange our own meetings where the grown-ups don't decide what we do, they just come with us until we want to go, then we go. Maybe for a mountain walk or going to a park or to a beach when it's sunnier. And that really all I've got to say.

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Homecroft, Brownston Street, Modbury, Devon PL21 0RQ



## Coordinators' DOs and DON'Ts

I have put together the work of meetings held at various times to discuss what coordinators should and shouldn't do. Copies of these DOs and DON'Ts are available from Lucy Charlton.

Following recent anxieties I also feel a need to remind everyone that coordinators are there to help everyone who needs them. Many people in EO have strong personal convictions about education and other issues. These may be at odds with the opinions of other members living nearby.

### Coordinators are needed for:

Northamptonshire,  
Avon (Bristol),  
Cleveland,  
Manchester,  
Cumbria,  
Nottinghamshire,  
Ireland.

Stephanie Fitcher, tel. 0246 239048  
Coordinators' Secretary  
50 Springfield Avenue,  
Chesterfield  
Derbyshire  
S40 1HL

*As a member of the Legal Group, Anne Wade has worked tirelessly to persuade LEAs to behave sensibly. She has also disseminated legal information throughout the EO community. In so doing, she has revolutionised our movement.*

**It's a cliché among home educators that the hardest thing children have to learn is their first language, that most of them do so supremely successfully, and that this success may not be unrelated to the fact that they are generally allowed to learn it in their own way.**

Interfering adults can make children cry or stammer but they can't 'teach' them to be more fluent.

A child cannot learn to speak in isolation, though. Adults do a lot to help the process: they normally provide a wide variety of examples of speech in contexts which show that it is important and enjoyable; and they give children interested and loving attention and interaction as they learn to speak.

How far can this model be extended to education as a whole? In our experience, all the way. At the moment, though, let's stay with language.

From birth we talked normally both to and around our son Felix, with complex constructions and vocabulary. We refused to restrict our language for him, but we did gloss it with a simpler equivalent where necessary as we went along, without talking down to him. It was like being aware that someone in the room is not a native speaker, and being alert to translate for them. I wondered if this would slow down his acquisition of speech, as happens often with bilingual children, because he was being offered more complex material. But it didn't, presumably because it was all

# Autonomous learning and language

by Anne Wade

part of the same system.

We never explicitly corrected any of his pronunciation or syntax, but we found that he corrected himself with amazing efficiency. We actually welcomed syntactic errors. I used to jot them down, and I have a practically complete record, because they fascinate me as a window into how the developing mind works. We genuinely did not mind whether he corrected himself or not—either was equally interesting. The result seemed to be that he got a cue (which must often have been almost subliminal) that there was an anomaly, without any feeling of criticism. This was enough for him to deduce his error and search our speech for the correct form. Such ability is mind-boggling—and all children have it. And the mechanism I have described, if I have perceived it accurately, is a nice example against behaviourism. Straightforward stimulus-response training is notoriously counterproductive with young children's speech.

Can we generalise from this? What would it be like to bring up a child without correcting *any* mistakes, and yet somehow

signalling mistakes in a non-critical way? The child would have information without pressure—they would genuinely have full choice and responsibility in what they learned right from the beginning. If their adults established a loving relationship with them, they would be inclined to fit in with what the adults wanted, as long as this did not clash with their inner needs. But it would be a free choice.

No, we didn't do it. I can barely imagine how to do it, and what it would entail, but the possibility exists and it excites me. We are often only partly conscious of our behaviour, and the result is that we may behave arrogantly towards anyone in our power. If our children do not fit in with *our* needs, we all too often react unthinkingly and do to them whatever was done to us, dominating or manipulating them into doing what we want.

We went as far as we were able: we tried to avoid being critical and to restrict ourselves to giving information about what was appropriate. If we were genuinely uncritical there was no problem.

The first time Felix swore we were in the park, and a council van sped past far too fast. He said, "Bloody hell" and then, "Did you hear, Anne? I said 'Bloody hell'." He was pleased because he had used it appropriately. I confirmed that; and added that he should be aware, however, that this was swearing and some people take a dim view of it. It may not make a lot of sense, and he might decide to swear just the same, but he should know that some people would react badly. And he rarely swears. I am not, mind you, giving this as a recipe for stopping children

swearing. I'm sure it only had that effect because swearing has no emotional significance for us.

It is harder to maintain this uncritical attitude in areas in which we are less secure ourselves. I find tidying up difficult. Being nagged never helped me to do it, but I found myself nagging him. Instead of trusting that he would develop the ability to control his possessions, I communicated my anxiety that he might fail to do so. Intellectually, I knew that this made it harder for him to develop the skill, just as such anxiety would make toilet training more difficult. Everything I have learned from EO seems to centre on trusting children. Whenever I became anxious about him, I had really found something I needed to work on in myself.

We delighted in word-play and rhyming with Felix from an early age, and he caught on and played himself as soon as he could say single words. He never found it difficult to appreciate surreal and paradoxical

statements. He was beside himself with excitement when he discerned the 'Anne' in 'piano' and the 'toe' in 'potato'. When I found a wet patch on the carpet and said, "What's this?", he felt it, pointed to the ceiling with a grin, and suggested "rain?". These games make language into fun, and words are perceived as friends when children have to apply the same sort of analysis in learning to read and spell. This flexibility in using words and concepts helps later in learning to write fluently.

We started reading to them (we looked after Kiri, a friend's child of the same age, every day) before they were a year old, and this activity was always popular. Felix

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*If our children do not fit it with our needs, we all too often react unthinkingly and do to them whatever was done to us, dominating or manipulating them into doing what we want.*

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saw me reading Margaret Hooton's *Reading and writing*, a manual for teachers, when he was two or three, and demanded that I should read it to him. I did not take it very seriously, and when he wanted to draw a letter as directed, merely drew it in the air for him to copy. We realised later that these whole-arm movements for learning the flow of each letter were ideal.

I had made some word cards and tried the Glenn Doman method of teaching reading; it was a game the children were happy to play once but not to repeat. Much later Felix asked me to make a lot more cards with words of his choice such as 'and', 'the', 'dinosaur' and 'fire engine', and to put clues of his choice on the back. I would sometimes see him in a corner with this pack of cards, looking first at the clue, muttering the word, turning the card over, and repeating the word. This is actually a teaching technique used with people with learning difficulties, called 'errorless learning'. But I'm sure he wouldn't have worked like that if I had initiated it.

There were lots of games with these cards, and plastic and magnetic letters, of course. Mostly it was very casual, with us just re-arranging them in passing in a way that struck us as funny.

By the time he was three and a half we thought he could read but would not. I wrote "Felix is a pig" on his blackboard. He not only crossed it out but wrote underneath "No I'm not," complete with apostrophe (see photo). The only writing he had done was in the air.

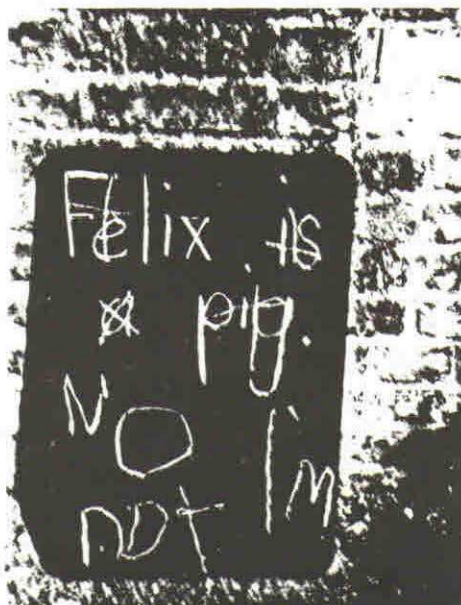
I made some large cards with him, the first one with three-letter 'a' words:

bag ball bat cab can cap car cat fan fat gas  
ham hat lad lap man map mat nap pal pan  
pat ran rat sad tap van wag yap zap

I wasn't sure about 'ball' and 'car', which

are irregular, but he wanted them. We searched magazines and catalogues for illustrations that he approved of for each word. We missed out some for which we didn't find anything satisfactory and some which didn't mean much to him. I made a matching set of the words, writing the consonants in black and the vowel in red in both sets. He took the card and words away and played with them until he was satisfied. He didn't want me to have any more to do with it. The second card had three-letter 'e' words:

bed beg bell den fed fed-up hen leg men net



peg pen pet red ten web wed wet yes

He was delighted to have both 'fed' and 'fed-up', and found good illustrations for them. He did the same with this card. Then we started to make the third card with 'i' words and he suddenly told me not to bother because he'd seen the pattern. It was important that I should not tell him such things unless he asked, although he might have been happy to read them in an

adult book. In general he has always wanted to take possession of ideas by discovering them for himself. He rejected many children's books as too patronising, although Usborne books were always acceptable. He still wouldn't read to us and we didn't press him but went on reading whenever asked, several times a day.

I had read a lot about learning to read and my inclination was to teach look-say to start with, so kids get a feeling that they are making progress, and then to get on to phonics as soon as they seem able to cope. In the event, I had little say in the matter, and yet this is the way Felix did it: he learned whole words with his small cards, and then with the large ones he explored how words are built up. It seems important to deal with phonics as early as is acceptable to the child, because seeing the structure of words must be involved in learning to spell.

On the other hand, different children have different styles, which must be respected. Veronica, one of his friends of the same age, seemed to be a late talker. More than a year after he had started saying single words, she was still babbling. One day we suddenly realised that she was saying, "Gogo want some beans." (This was her name for herself.) It dawned on us that she had probably been talking meaningfully for ages, but her phonology had been too fuzzy for us to interpret. Now we listened with the expectation of it making sense—and found she was talking non-stop. If a child develops syntax and semantics before phonology, it is difficult to assess their language level. This shows how crude it is to label children as 'slow' or 'late'. This child is now an academic high-flyer.

One woman had been a poor talker until

she was five, and had been frequently punished for being "lazy". Her daughter—but not her son, which is unusual—had similar difficulties. I taped her daughter's speech and found she was making phonological substitutions such as f→w, sp→fw, d→l and ai→oi. She was having speech therapy but the therapist said there was nothing she could do—she was a bit lazy! Again, it cleared spontaneously when she was about five. It seemed to me that the language centres in the brains of this mother and daughter had been inclined to make phonological hypotheses which didn't work, but which self-corrected in time. They are both fluent and capable speakers. They were both later reading than their siblings, but caught up.

We saw a good example of an incorrect hypothesis with Felix: he made a fascinating false start with talking. When he was nine months old, before he was really ready to speak, someone visited us with a very wild kitten. Felix was in ecstasies as it careered

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*Interfering adults can make children cry or stammer but they can't 'teach' them to be more fluent.*

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around. He shrieked with delight, and the word 'cat' burst out of him. We reacted to that, of course—his first word. The next day, when he was at the surgery for a check-up, I told the doctor about it. Felix immediately put his head on one side and said "Cat?" to the doctor, who responded enthusiastically. For a few days he did the same to everyone he met, including a child in a neighbouring buggy in a shop. You could almost see him thinking, "I've cracked this conversation thingy." Most people reacted well, but the child looked blankly at him, and a neighbour told him crossly that he was being stupid—there was no cat. This made him think again, and he said nothing for three months. Then he and Kiri both started spending hours finding items in picture books, dashing

round relating them to real items, and naming them with great glee.

Veronica was also much later reading than Felix, though she too caught up. But she was enthusiastic about writing from the age of three. Long before she could even read back what she had written, she would enjoy writing whole pages either to dictation or by copying. When she learned to read, it seemed to be more of a whole-word, right-brain activity. Her spelling was weak for some years, though she has caught up now.

I have seen this pattern quite often, of a late talker who suddenly starts talking in whole sentences, who is then a late reader who is happier with look-say than phonics, and who may therefore be late with spelling; and who sometimes has an unusual enthusiasm for early writing. It is very damaging when such children are thought to be slow learners, just because their learning processes are less obvious and follow a different sequence from that of other children.

Interfering adults may do even more harm at this age, when children are becoming socialised, than they do earlier, when children may be more able to ignore them.

*This article will be continued in the next newsletter.*



## Ecoschool 1

Greenwatch Ecoschool 1 is a complete kit designed to introduce students to environmental issues including acid rain and nitrate pollution. Anyone interested in environmental issues will find this very useful. If you are keen to follow the National Curriculum, this will provide sufficient information and materials to cover Geogra-

phy and Scientific investigation areas of the curriculum. The main book is beautifully presented, with Teaching notes, Background information, Investigations, Further work. It includes both structured and unstructured teaching options, so should suit everyone.

£22.99 + VAT from Greenwatch Ltd., 3 Walmer Studios, 235-239 Walmer Road, London W11 4EY, tel. 071 603 6731

## Blue Peter Badges

We have discovered that there are Blue Peter badges to be won, apart from the Gold for outstanding achievement and the Competitions badge for competition winners and runners up. To win them you must produce your best work, but it is worth a bit of a challenge! With the badges comes free admission to over 100 places of interest around the country, which can come in very useful. Green badges are awarded to people who show concern for the environment, and send in a letter, poem, drawing or painting on any subject to do with the environment. To get a Blue or Silver badge you must do two different projects from the following: an interesting letter, a good idea for a programme, a painting, or a model.

## Mount Fuji

After reading an article written by a man who climbed Mount Fuji, Rosemary and Elizabeth were fired with enthusiasm. As Elizabeth has only seven-year-old legs, and I have lingering ME, we're planning to make our ascent roundabout 1996. Anybody care to join us? More details on request.

**Susy Griffith, 'Lilacs', Love Lane,  
Rye, E. Sussex TN31 7NE**

## Where to get what

The following publications are available from Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire, Scotland, IV22 2NE. Prices quoted are for members only and include P&P to UK addresses. Please make cheques payable to 'Education Otherwise'.

*School is not compulsory* (new edition due soon) A guide to your rights. £2.50

*Early years* Learning suggestions for the under-twelves. £2.50

*Later years* Learning for older children, plus GCSE £2.50

*Teach your own*, by John Holt. The philosophy of home education. Staggeringly good value for money! £3.85

*Learning all the time*, by John Holt. A practical guide covering reading, writing, numbers, science and music, as well as the wider issues of the nature of learning and parental involvement. £4.50

*School's out*, by Jean Bendell. A good how and why book by an ex-EO member and long-term home educator. £5.95

*Contact list* Free. Send an A5 self-addressed envelope, marked 'Contact list', with 34p stamp, to Bruce and Christine, whose address is above.

**Note:** the information contained in the *Contact list* is confidential and is for the personal use of members only. Under no circumstances is it to be used for advertising, academic research, etc.

*EO newsletter* Single back copies of 1991 and 1992 issues £1.00

*EO newsletter* Bargain basement: any four copies (our choice) from 1987-1990 £1.50

*Newsletter digest* Ninety pages of the best from 1982-1986. Incredibly good value for money! Why not order a copy now? £1.50



*Growing without schooling*, the newsletter of EO's parallel organisation in the USA. Six issues per year, starting in March. £12.00 from Barbara Sheppard, 18 Queen Katherine Street, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7OG.

*Home education and the law*, by David Deutsch and Kolya Wolf. Everything you need to know about the law relating to home education. To receive a copy, send a cheque for £5.00 (payable to David Deutsch) to David Deutsch, 19 New Cross Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8LP

**EO stationery:** re-use labels - £2.00 per 100; leaflets, handbills, posters, forms are freely available for publicity purposes. Headed notepaper for coordinators and office holders from: Lucy Charlton, Church Lane Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire LE8 0FT

**Membership cards** Issued to home educating families on request. Send an SAE to Bob Emmett, 148 Gunton Lane, Norwich, Norfolk NR5 0AQ. Details of reduced admission charges to museums, and so on, are supplied with the card.

### Editor's note

Some contributors to this newsletter requested that no changes be made to their letters or articles. I have respected their wishes.

# Education Otherwise Officers

## General Enquiries

Send SAE for membership (etc.) information to 36 Kinross Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 7EF. Recorded Telephone Information: 0926 886828.

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### Also, school phobic support

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## Helplines

Childline 0800 1111  
Kidscape 071 488 0488

# education otherwise

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

Our principal aims are to:

- ◆ encourage learning outside the school system;
- ◆ reaffirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school;
- ◆ establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education.

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:

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