

EDUCATION OTHERWISE

NEWSLETTER



October & November 1993 / No. 94

EDUCATION OTHERWISE

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THE NEWSLETTER

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

Volunteer editors always wanted - please contact the Publications Director (see back page).

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A reminder to readers

The E.O. newsletter accepts adverts, offers of services, articles and notices of social events in good faith and cannot be held responsible for the consequences of responding to any of these. Readers are reminded that **SENSIBLE CAUTION** should be exercised when responding to such.

THE NEXT ISSUE

The deadline for the next issue is 1st November.

Send your contribution (clearly marked 'for publication') as soon as possible to the appropriate editor (see below).

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Please include your name, address and phone number. Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise and it would be helpful if they were typed. Some editors may be able to use a copy on computer disk.

***** STOP PRESS *****

CONTACT LIST : due to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act, individual entries in the contact list will only continue to appear with the express permission of the people concerned.

If you want your entry to continue to appear but have not yet filled in the form at the end of the June/July newsletter (and only 400 out of 1800 have done so), please fill it in as soon as possible and return it to Alan Balfe. The new contact list will not now appear until after the AGM at Beaumanor in October.



CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Regional Diary	3
Articles /Features	7
Thank God It's Friday	7
Update ... External GCSEs	9
But what about Peers ?	11
Vive la difference (or 'Diverse we stand,divided we fall')	13
How I learned to stop teaching and start educating	15
State Education, EO and the Economic System	17
Nuts and bolts / Resources	19
Books, NC checklist, WATCH/YOC, Educational Supplies....	19
Maths 100 Foundation	20
Writers' Circles	21
Vaccination, Nat. Curric.Doccs	23
Educating Archie	24
Letters	25
E.O. Business	34
Report from Structure Working Party, Beaumanor Gathering, Oct / Nov	34
AGM Notice	35
Situations Vacant	36
EO Unlimited	37
Advertisements	38
Where to get what	40
Who's who in EO.....inside back page	

EDITORIAL

We are Joy, George, Rosie who is 8 and home educated for 3 years and Jake who is 6, attends the local school and loves it. Not an ideal arrangement, but neither of them would thank us for changing it.

We live on a 5 acre smallholding in the Staffordshire Moorlands, with goats, hens, a lonely drake, a pony, cats and lots of organic garden. We welcome visitors, especially ones who are good at scything thistles, building stone walls... We're just above Biddulph Grange Gardens, NT members take note.

I started to write about 'where we're coming from' but it turned into an epic opus, so it may appear in the next newsletter, suffice it to say we're theoretical unstructured libertarians with authoritarian leanings on off days or just plain muddled. We love our children and want them to be happy and are probably making a similar mixed job of it to most everyone else.

We are both School Governors (through the Labour Party), as we are committed to improving education for all children, not just those fortunate enough to have parents willing and able to home-educate them. This has caused some confusion at Jake's school, where parents who see school as something to be endured, could not understand why a Governor had a 'School is not Compulsory' sticker on her car - unlike the head (and several teachers of my acquaintance) who would like to think that children come to their school because they like it, not because they have to.

We have been uncomfortable about some of the letters we have published in this issue but we felt that they were better out than in (like pus ?). EO is an extremely broad church and should be strong enough to express a variety of opinions.

Now this is over, we can get back to the thistles, selling seaweed and old pine furniture, the ironing, weeding, getting the goat kid ready for next week's show. Looking forward to the old newsletter editors tie. What's B.A.P. ?

Thank you to all those who volunteered to do **French Translation**, we've sent out the first copy, but you should all get one in your turn, although we have had a volunteer who is a native French speaking professional translator - thank you !

????? Does anyone out there want a supply of **envelopes** for reusing, just let us know and you can have a carrier bag full.

REGIONAL DIARY

SCOTLAND

HIGHLAND Here are some suggestions for Autumn get-togethers :
Swimming at Dingwall, doll making workshop, visits to Museum Ship and Kilmuir wildlife Park. Anyone interested in details or with ideas of their own, please contact Cheryl or Gavin Campsie, 0463 74607.

GRAMPIAN We are organising a visit to Elgin Transport Museum and the Moray Leisure Centre on Thursday 28th October. For more information, contact Jackie and Eric Foggitt, 0542 32103.
Thanks to all members who took the trouble to vote for the new coordinators, Joe Crockett withdrew his nomination and all votes received were for Jackie and Eric.

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Weds 6th October - Fossil beach near Scarborough, bring wellies etc. Meet at 11 am at Rosemount Hotel, Valley Road, Scarborough. Tel 0723 360658.

Thu 11th November - Railway Museum, York. Meet at 1pm. Free entry with E.O. card.

Any ideas for future meetings, contact Sue Clare, 0439 70056 or Gwen Baldock, 0904 421982.

WEST YORKSHIRE

I have arranged activity sessions at our church on Tues 19th Oct, 16th Nov and 7th Dec. Meet at 10.30am, drinks provided, please bring own lunch. Cost 50p per family per half day. Contact Kim Wark, Leeds (0532) 757473.

WARWICKSHIRE

Please come and join us for the following meetings :

October - Visit to Batsford Arboretum, contact Vivienne Bennett, 0608 642354.

November - Visit to Snibston Discovery Park, Coalville, Leics. Cost: adults, 1.50, children over 5, 1.25. 10am till 4pm, 6 different scientific areas to discover plus an outdoor playground on a scientific theme. Contact Barbara Cooper, 0203 412477.

NORFOLK / CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Calling anyone within 20 miles of Downham Market.

If you are interested in getting together for workshops, meetings, outings etc, contact Sarah Martin, 0945 772336.

BERKSHIRE

There are 2 or 3 families skating again. Fortnightly on Mondays at the Slough Ice Arena. There are not enough of us at the moment to be able to hire a room, so we are organising activities on an informal basis. We would be delighted to hear from other families. Please contact Lis Howlett, 0734 581805 or Karen Sternhell, 0628 32262.

BEDS AND BUCKS

Thursday 7th October, 1.45pm - Session at 'Activity World' in Rollers, Denbigh Centre, Bletchley. Price Adult 60p, Child 1.50.

Wednesday 13th October - Visit to Wicksteed Park, Kettering. Meet in car park at about 12.30 for picnic lunch. Large Adventure Playground and lots of rides. Contact June McDonald, 0234 341375.

Monday 25th October, 2-4pm. Get together at Isobel Hewitt's house, 66 Goldington Avenue, Bedford. 0234 345780.

Thursday 4th November - Swimming at the Splash Leisure pool, Rushden, 12-2pm. Cost Adult 1.45, child 90p.

Thursday 25th November - Session at Activity World as above.

Monday 29th November - Get together at Isobel's as above.

Thursday 9th December - Session at Oasis, Bedford. Cost adult 1.75, child 1.25.

For more details, contact Valerie Gommon, 0908 511247, Caroline Cook, 0296 720026 or June McDonald, 0234 341375.

KENT

Friday 8th October - Bewl Water, Lamberhurst. Meet at adventure playground, 12.00. Bring picnic. Car park cost 2.00.

Tuesday 19th October - visit to Walmer Castle. Free entry and car park. Meet at 11am at entrance. Contact Pam Stevenson, 0304 210997.

Thursday 21st October - Open House at Cath Cooper's, 162 Bush Rd, Cuxton, 0634 517389. Meet 12 noon, bring lunch.

Friday 29th October - Capstone Farm Country Park, Chatham. Meet 12 noon for picnic lunch by lake.

Friday 12th November - Swimming at Larkfield Leisure Centre. Meet 12 noon in water.

Thursday 19th November - Open house at Cath's as above.

Thursday 9th December - Open house as above.

Friday 17th December - Children's party, to be confirmed.

For further details, contact Sue or Keith Burchett, 0732 870344 or Amanda

DEVON

E.O. Members now have FREE admission to the North Devon Museum, The Square, Barnstaple (saving 1.50 adults, 50p children).

LONDON SOUTH

Get togethers at the Garfields Centre, Garfield Rd, Battersea. 2-5pm on: October 14th, November 11th and December 9th. All welcome, cost 1.00 per family. Contact Margaret Gilbert, 081 947 7706 or Bridget Meadows, 071 622 3998.

LONDON EAST

If you are interested in meeting, contact Liza Moon, 081 989 8077.

LONDON WEST

Get togethers have been arranged for the following dates :
5th October, 12th October, 19th October, 26th October, 2nd November, 9th November. For details contact Rachel Sanger, 081 579 0466.

LONDON NORTH

Get togethers have been arranged for the following dates :
4th October, 11th October, 18th October, 25th October, 1st November, 8th November. For details, please contact Jo Jenkins, 081 883 8052.

Dancing Classes have been booked for 5th October, 12th October, 19th October, 26th October, 2nd November, 9th November. Please contact Ulli, 081 292 9281.

The Otherwise Club meets at the Granville Centre, Granville Rd, NW6 from 10 to 3.30 on the following dates :

7th, 8th October, 14th, 15th October, 21st, 22nd October, 28th, 29th October, 4th, 5th November. Contact Leslie Barson, 081 969 0893.

The Home Education Library will be open at 25 Lincoln Rd, N2. 2-6pm on :
3rd October and 7th November. Contact Jo Jenkins, 081 883 8052.

Get together and discussion, Sunday 17th October, contact Sarah for details on 081 808 3200.

Outings for 10-14 year olds contact Sue and Justin Petschaft, 0892 661319.

LEICESTERSHIRE

Families will be meeting regularly throughout October and November for a variety of activities. Please contact Lucy and Keith Charlton for details. Tel 0533 592118.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Herts EO's latest newsletter and events listing is out now, including details of activities for September and October. Activity world - woodland walks - craft days - swimming and badminton - plus news of our new centre in Hatfield with something for everyone. For details and to subscribe, phone Glyn on 0707 335428.

SUFFOLK

3 -weekly meetings at Wetherden Village Hall, 10am - 3pm. October 1st, 22nd, November 12th, December 3rd...Activities to be decided. Cost 2 .00 per family. Bring lunch. Ring Sarah Jones or Guthrie (see contact list) for details.

N. STAFFS / S. CHESHIRE / W. DERBYS

Why don't we live in the middle of somewhere ?

Thanks to everyone who came to our 'at home' the other week- we still have some lost property, Vi and Caroline. It was lovely to meet some new people. Come and see us again, anytime.

I am hoping to have come up with a list of events by the time you read this, if only ones other people have organised that we are going to, like Museum workshops - I suspect The City Museum in the Potteries would run them just for us if we asked and there was enough interest. Any ideas ? Please get in touch.

Contact Joy Attwood-Harris, 0782 515679.

VENUES FOR SMALL GATHERINGS

For an informal get together in a different part of the country, Huntingdon Country Park offers excellent possibilities with camping, free in exchange for work in the Park.

There are also small Youth Hostels which can be rented between October and Easter e.g. the one in Dartmoor National Park. Converted barn with full heating. Sleeps 36. 1st and 2nd nights 3 . 00 per night, subsequent nights 2 . 00. The smallest hostel is at Bradenham in the Chilterns, sleeps 18. 3 . 50 nights 1 & 2, 3 . 00 thereafter.

Meetings for smaller special interest groups are an excellent way for us all to find support, however diverse our interests. Anybody can arrange a gathering to meet people with similar age children or similar interests. Get ion touch with me for more details or write to YHA, Trevelyan House, 8 St Stephen's Hill, St Albans, Herts, AL1 2DY for their 'Rent a hostel' brochure.

From Sue Petszaft. Tel 0892 661319.

THANK GOD ITS FRIDAY

by Rosemary Charles

SATURDAY is the only day when we have to be up and out soon after 8.30 and we're not very good at it!

Much-shouting-later, Daughter 2 is deposited at guitar class followed by a quick nip around the city before exchanging daughters an hour later, No. 1 being in the next group. Afternoon disappears ringing for two weddings: usually my only source of income these days. Must try to clean the bedrooms.

SUNDAY Ringing morning and evening separated by much needed catching up in the garden. As no 'Watch' group this week Daughter 2 aids with garden tasks which therefore take twice as long. No. 1 ploughs through new library books being 'awakened' to view Emperor moths emerging from the chrysalises we've forgotten have been in a jar all winter. Fortunately for them, today's been spent opening up the shed - shame about the neglected bedrooms.

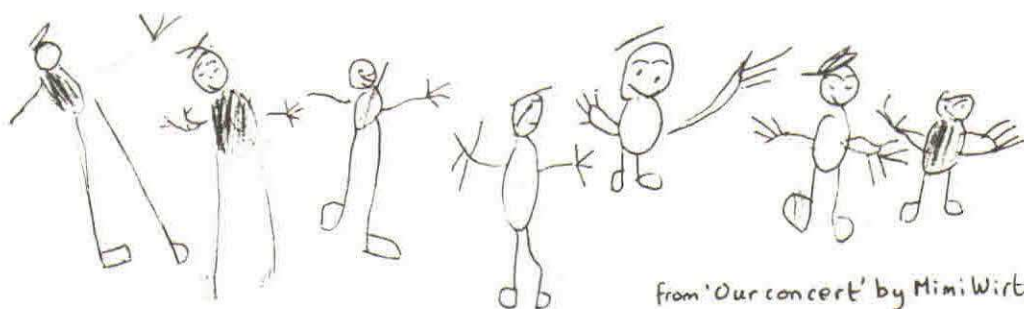
MONDAY Bank Holiday. Long-promised cycle hire in nearby forest, postponed from Easter. Lovely day but too many people: resolve to return when most folks are at work or school. Why in 1993 are mountain bike saddles designed without any reference to the female anatomy? Surely a Technology project for someone here. No.2's Brownies is cancelled but No.1 still goes trampolining at the leisure centre. Collapse in front of 'Riders' on television - excuse being that we were at the Show when some scenes were being filmed. Of course, we're only watching to try to see ourselves.....

TUESDAY Museum lesson in the morning. Although its a crowded week we still fight the traffic and parking to attend as these are such a wonderful resource for home educating, (E.O.), families. I've learnt more History and Natural History from these monthly sessions in the past four years than I seem to have picked up over the previous forty. Sainsbury's afterwards, seems almost as regular a meeting place for E.Oers as do the more formal events! Our children are well versed in the day to day aspects of 20th century survival. Deliver friend's birthday present: sorry not to be able to see her but although only being five she's in her third term at school. Home in time for me to run Rainbow Guide meeting and then dash cross-country to collect ballot Box for Thursday's election. Husband at Bellringing. No. 2 at gym so No. 1 and I check Box contents. Reflect that my offspring know more about voting than most of the electors seem to do.

WEDNESDAY Bedrooms still uncleaned during morning attempts to do usual chores - ironing, guitar practice, cooking, numbers etc. etc. Friend calls in for coffee. Early lunch then convert girls into 17th Century gentlewoman and serving man and set off for National Trust property where, with other families, we are booked in to a Theatre in Education re-enactment along with school groups. Wonderful surroundings, fabulous professional actors but the families we are with are left feeling that we were over-prepared, the children not having been called upon to use much of the weeks of preparatory work we have done. Still, certainly an event to remember. Drop No. 2 at gym and just make it to No. 1's Brownies. Pack for the morrow.

THURSDAY No. 2 wide awake early and decides to do some number work. I must be the only Presiding Officer today who is explaining how many faces of a cube can't be seen in a drawing, whilst getting dressed and wondering whether I've got any matches for sealing the Box. Lovely quiet day, catching up on local news, making useful contacts for local Heritage Society and speaking to a mere 799 voters. No major hassles except setting fire to Box string instead of sealing it: will I be fired next time? Children call in to report on day with Granny, early evening at leisure centre and later swimming.

FRIDAY Our fortnightly E.O. get together at a rural school, now village hall. Children play, some do cycling proficiency, the sun shines, Wednesday's post-mortem is discussed and written up, the Spring buds are very noticeable and all our batteries are recharged. Thank God its Friday. We may have less-than-clean bedrooms but there's always next week and children don't last forever.



(Would this make a good regular feature ? - volunteers ? - ed)

**** UPDATE ** THE CURRENT POSITION RE THE EXTERNAL GCSE ****
By Jane Lowe

Take heart ! It looks as if the external GCSE is not going to disappear. For external candidates who are planning to sit their GCSE examinations after June 1994, the following is a summary of the position:

THE CODE OF PRACTICE

The School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) has published a mandatory Code of Practice (with effect from 1994) which specifies that all candidates must undertake a significant part of their coursework under the direct supervision of a teacher. This requirement will create difficulties for home educated children as it appears that the parent's authentication and assessment of the coursework is not acceptable. It seems that when the Code of Practice was drawn up, the needs of external students were overlooked completely. There have been differing reactions from the examining groups, with the Southern Examining Group (SEG) taking the most uncompromising line of all.

THE SOUTHERN EXAMINING GROUP'S REACTION

We heard that SEG planned to reduce the number of its external syllabuses to five (English language, English literature, maths, accounting and law) after 1994. SEAC's spokesman said that SEG was over-reacting to the Code of Practice. He pointed out that the Chief Executive of the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board had stated that they would continue to provide a range of subjects for external candidates. Also, he said that the London and East Anglian Group would continue to provide their (limited) range of subjects. He said that SEAC could not tell SEG which courses to provide but he was hopeful that SEG would reconsider this curtailment of subjects.

Just before this newsletter deadline we heard that SEAC was about to write to SEG to agree the proposals for 1994 and 1995 (they are also looking at 1996). It appears that SEG will be providing more than the five syllabuses given above, but fewer than those which are available at present. The details of the syllabuses will be published at the end of the first week in September.

SCIENCE SUBJECTS AND COURSEWORK

SEAC has also expressed doubt about the feasibility of studying science at

home because of the practical work involved, an opinion which is hotly disputed by home educators with actual experience of science study. A number of members of EO are making representations to SEAC at present (August 1993) and SEAC is meeting with the examining groups and listening to suggestions from the correspondence colleges.

There are two problems. Firstly, there is the accreditation of the coursework, and secondly there is the assessment of it. SEAC's spokesman says that they are considering the possibility of requiring some form of declaration from a responsible person (a doctor, JP, lawyer or similar) stating that the work is the candidate's own. The second difficulty is more serious to SEAC as they cannot accept that a non-specialist (i.e. an EO parent) could have the skills necessary to assess whether or not the candidate's coursework was satisfactorily completed.

Comments and suggestions on this are being sought amongst EO members and these will be forwarded to SEAC in time for their next meeting in late September.

As from 1995 the Science syllabuses will be brought into line with the National Curriculum, and the coursework and investigations will require assessment along National Curriculum lines.

THE WAY FORWARD?

SEAC has stated that the Government cannot and will not exclude external candidates, and the possibility of some form of exemption from part of the Code of Practice is being considered. However, it would be unacceptable if external candidates were forced to accept a second-rate pass bearing the statement that their coursework had not been professionally assessed.

Currently the situation is unclear and it is impossible to give accurate information on the practical details of GCSE application procedure. However, SEAC have stated that they know that a way forward must be found, as it would be politically unacceptable for external candidates to be excluded from public examinations.

At the end of August, SEAC's advice to prospective candidates was that they should begin their courses in the certain knowledge that some means would be found for them to have their coursework accepted. SEAC's spokesman agreed that the position was not very satisfactory, but he assured us that an answer must be found.

For further details of the situation at present please contact Jane Lowe on 0707 390070 or Paul Bentley on 081 244 4590.

But what about *peers*?

MANY of us have occasional doubts about whether we are doing the best we can for the happiness and welfare of our children. One issue which crops up again and again is that of socialisation and peership. In my experience this is usually the second point people raise, the first being the assertion that children learn best by attending school. "But what about relating to people and having peers?", they may ask in a serious, concerned tone.

The argument frequently expounded is that children should not be deprived of the chance to go to school, where they will be taught and make friends. This implies that the alternative is sterile isolation. The fact that so many products of the school system seem so prone to think with such flawed logic is, perhaps, a good reason in itself to home educate.

Happy in school; happier out

Many children do enjoy the camaraderie of being in school together, but that does not mean they would be less happy elsewhere, with a different type of peer group, doing something completely different.

I was subjected to compulsory military service, thoroughly resented being there, and felt that it was a 'lost' year of my life. Given a choice, I would never have gone. None the less, I made some friends, had some laughs, and look back with a little pride that I survived the entire ordeal as well as I did. That does not make it right. That does not mean that the experience was of optimum benefit to me.

The prisoner may have a ready supply of peers and may enjoy prison life some of the time, but he might well prefer to take

his chances in the real world outside.

Some adults have been so damaged by their school experience that they genuinely believe that learning is possible only in a classroom setting, with a teacher and classmates. They fail to see that learning is very much an individual thing. They project their own school-induced need to learn in a group on to their children. Because they need a class of peers to make learning palatable, they assume that their children need the same educational environment.

Education without school as a concept is disturbing. It challenges cosy assumptions about parenting and the nature of the learning process. It makes people feel insecure. If children do not need to be with their age-peers in school, is it right to push them through the experience? That is a disconcerting thought, to many.

The real world

"Ah! But how will they survive in the real world of work, where you have to get along with those you work with? They won't be able to choose their peers then, will they? They need to go to school to learn how to rub along with people, otherwise how will they be able to hold down a job?" The assumption that school is the necessary ingredient in the production of socially well-adjusted adults is widespread. Parents fear that without school their children will grow up to be social outcasts. After all, *everyone* goes to school.

One has only to open a copy of *Growing Without Schooling*, with its many articles by older home-educated children and young adults, to see that unschooled indi-

viduals are often more independent, socially mature, and happy than their schooled peers.

Secondly, on the contrary, in work, one does have the ultimate control: one can always leave. In school, children have no such choice, and it is absurd to think the two situations similar. The belief some adults have that they have absolutely no choice in the matter of work and work peers is yet another sad reflection of the damage done by the school system. All too often, school breeds fear and self-contempt. Rather than nurturing, it seems to stunt emotional and intellectual growth. It crushes spirit.

The effect of school

Many families make the decision to home educate only after the child has been in school for a term or two. Which particular aspect of the school experience is it which such parents particularly dislike? Watching a once bright, sociable little person turn into a sullen, fearful child whose only concern is whether his toys are bigger than some other child's is deeply saddening. Almost invariably, it is this negative social and behavioural effect which makes such parents take their children out of school.

The 'right' to be coerced?

To many home educators, what is important is that young people are given the opportunity to choose whether or not to go to school, rather than the 'opportunity' to be forced to attend.

School socialisation: who needs it?

Bob Taylor

Bob Taylor occasionally writes for Taking Children Seriously (see ad. elsewhere in this newsletter or phone 081 808 3200 for details).

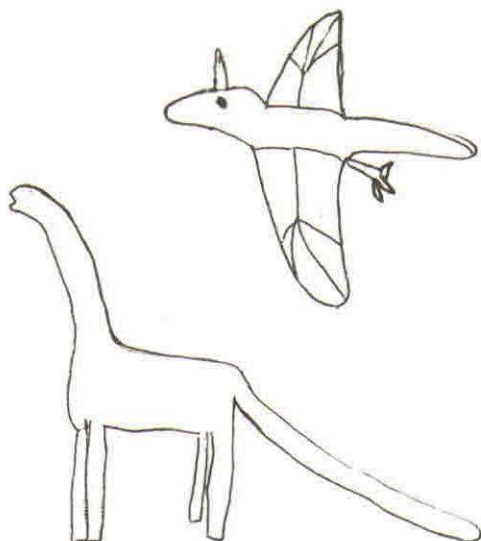
Taking Children Seriously

Forthcoming issues of this non-profit-making magazine will address:

- why having lots of children is a *good* thing;
- what home-educators can learn from the 'hot-housers';
- coping with criticism;
- home-educated individuals' views;
- is television really that bad?

Regular columns include • free and low cost educational resources • book reviews • computer corner • letters • TCS opinion.

Subscription rates: £5 (for 3 issues), £9 (for 6 issues) or £11 (for 9 issues). For the *London supplement*, which lists get-togethers and educational visits for home educators in London, please add 50p, £1, or £1.50 respectively. To subscribe, please send a cheque payable to 'Taking Children Seriously' to 23 Whitley Road, London N17 6RJ. (Tel. 081 808 3200)



Rosie.

Wive la Difference

Over the last few newsletters a heated debate, ostensibly about educational methods, has spawned attempts to create splinter groups within EO. The tendency to divide a mass into parts is latent in many organisations. An excellent example of this is in the school system.

Everything is classified. Strict boundaries are defined between subjects. Lessons are kept from straying from their own domains. The school year is rationed out in percentages to each subject. The pupils are categorised as well: those who are good at the sciences, those who show aptitude for sports, the arts, all subjects or no subjects. Classes are made up of children who fall into the same age group. Schools are themselves divided into types (whether or not the infamous league tables are successfully adopted). The backward, provincial school is better than an over-pupiled, understaffed inner city one, but not as desirable as the nice orderly establishment in suburbia. Not only position in one's school but the school to which one goes is a critical factor in forming the basis for our social blueprint in life. Science whizzes become doctors. Pupils who show artistic talent go into the arts. Children doing best at practical subjects become skilled tradespeople. And the underachievers become unemployed.

The odd coincidence is that this wonderful method of choosing a child's career stays, in the main, within the broad social strata. Kids from a middle class background achieve middle class aspirations. Upper class families breed upper class children. Working (or, increasingly, unable-to-work) class children are not assisted by the school system to get better jobs. School is a fundamental part of the system keeping people in their place - helping the doormat classes to accept their station and consent to be walked all over without complaining. The ethos of classifying permeates every level of human activity.

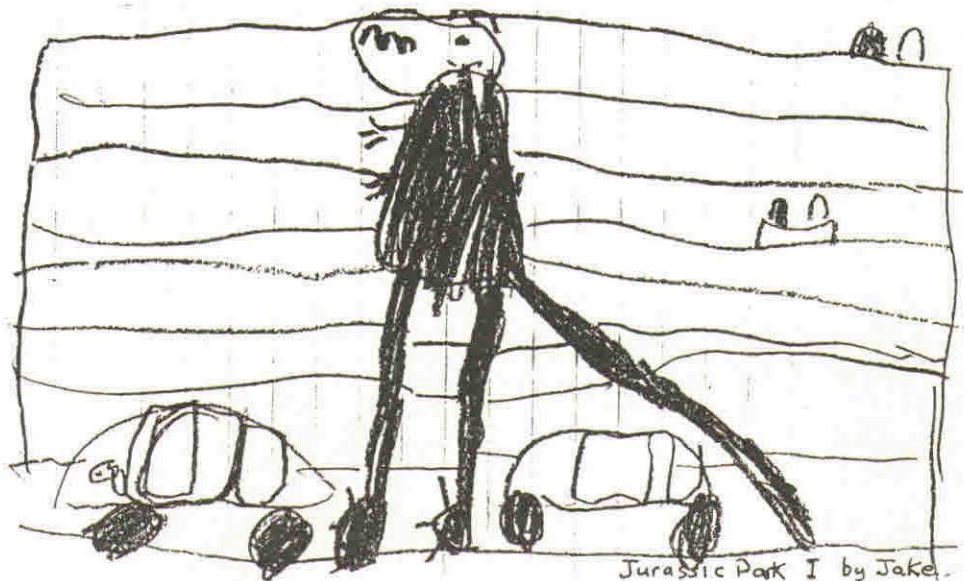
EO should reject this mentality. Labeling, ramming of individuals into pigeon-holes they appear to fit - are these the principles parents would like instilled in their children? If the most effective teaching is by example, that is what the divisive elements and people intending to found organisations within the organisation will do. Membership of EO is not a promise of adherence to doctrines as laid out by this or that authority on home education; it is simply fellowship with other home educators.

For we have one thing in common - we home educate. We must never allow our differences - religion, educational methods, cultural background, politics, et cetera - to split the organisation into convenient niches.

We must not allow EO to be carved up or derailed outright by these short-termist and irrational attempts to separate us into structured and unstructured, Christian and non-Christian. The supposition that unity depends on unified thought has no more validity for being widespread. Cliques generate antagonism to other ideas and other beliefs. EO as a minority representative tool is far more effective than a loosely linked or unlinked set of groups. There is no reason and no excuse for breaking up this body in the manner contemplated.

EO is not weakened by diversity. It is strengthened. A community of people with exactly the same opinions is no community. It is artificial. We must cater for all within the single organisation. Diverse we stand. Divided we fall.

Joshua Mostafa



Jurassic Park I by Jake.

HOW I LEARNED TO STOP TEACHING AND START EDUCATING.

by Chris Shute

I have many friends. One of them happens to be twelve years old, and I am helping him to make sense of computing. I don't know an awful lot about it myself, but I picked up some of the rudiments in those dear, dead days, all of ten years ago, when the Sinclair Spectrum was the Wonder of Wonders, so he and I work on programming together. He is slowly getting the hang of it, and I am learning something about myself at the same time.

I have a bad habit, which Earl Stevens put his finger on a few months ago in the Magazine. I still want to teach people things. Sometimes in our computing we come across a technical word, or a new concept. If the lad wants to know about it he asks and I explain it. So far so radical. But every so often we come across a word which just screams to be expounded by a Professional. I've a canny idea it's new to him but HE DOESN'T ASK ME WHAT IT MEANS!! So I just let the matter pass, like a good Libertarian Educator. Of course I do....

Well no, I don't. I say:"Do you know what so-and-so means?". and he, being a nice civil sort of chap, says:"No". So I tell him. Don't I just! He's educated otherwise, so he doesn't blow a raspberry or start playing Noughts and Crosses while I do my party-piece, but when I've finished I feel guilty. After all, I tell anyone who will listen that a teacher's proper job is to answer questions, but the lad hasn't asked me one.

I try to work out in my mind why I still do these things. I honestly believe that he doesn't need my promptings and explanations. I left teaching partly to get away from all the sterile paying out of Useful Knowledge to people who had expressed no wish to learn it. Yet I cannot throw off the habit. I suspect that deep down inside I still want to be a teacher and lead youngsters toward the Light of Learning. It's my profession, my special little skill, and I suppose I'm still a little proud of it. I began teaching, the best part of thirty years ago, believing that it was a complex, technically demanding business. I assumed that if the College needed to spend three whole years teaching me how to do it it must be full of jolly skilful little procedures that only clever chaps like me could get the hang of. Even when I had discovered that it was as much to do with demagogy and vaudeville as thinking and learning I valued it, partly because so many others did.

Yet now I reject the whole package: teaching, structure, exercises, curriculum, control and anything which says to children that adults and all their wonderful knowledge are some sort of big deal. I suppose it was one particular anecdote of John Holt's which set the seal on my present thinking. In 'How Children Fail' John describes a boy who was in the 'Backward Class' at his school. Try as they might his teachers could not train his mind to perform even the simplest bits of arithmetic. Yet it turned out that he was employed in the evening keeping score for professional ten-pin bowlers. He had to do complex calculations in his head and keep an accurate tally of 'strikes' and 'spares'. He was expected to control two sets of pins and work for hours without making mistakes. The owners of the bowling alley had not employed him in some sort of condescending job-creation scheme: they had taken him on because he was reliable and good at the job. Yet at school he could not do calculations, even the type which were a routine part of his evening work. In the abstract numbers meant nothing to him. He needed to see them attached to real skittles before he could manipulate them.

It is easy to say, as I am sure many readers will, that stories like this do not prove anything, except that some peoples' minds work in a strange way. However, I take responsibility for saying that as far as I am concerned, all children's minds are like that boy's. It is normal for children and young people to do apparently difficult, grow-up things at an early age. When the need is apparent to their minds they have no difficulty in learning how to things are done. In fact, I believe that formal teaching actually stunts the growth of a child's mind, by diverting it from the pattern of activity which is most appropriate to it. This leads not to good learning but to 'stuckness' and confusion.

I suspect that when adults try to 'enrich' young peoples' minds by telling them things which they do not wish to know it is their own needs they are satisfying, not the childrens'. They want to feel that they have taken responsibility for their young, discharged some sort of duty towards their nation's culture and traditions, or even simply shown their children how hard life is, and how necessary it is to do what adults tell them because they will always have someone in authority over them telling them what to do.

With all due respect to those EOers who sincerely believe that ideas like mine are dangerous nonsense (an opinion which I will defend to the death their right to express) I want to say that I have committed myself to 'never offering, never refusing' knowledge, as Earl Stevens expressed it in the

Feb./March issue of the Magazine. Anyone who entrusts their children to me in the future is going to have to accept that I am not going to make them do things, nor will I plan out a detailed curriculum with all sorts of facts which I will agree to make them learn for their own good. Treating children like that only 'works' if you have first made helots of them by convincing them that their learning is only 'valid' if you have initiated it. I may not succeed in keeping to this principle in everything I do nobody is perfect - but I resolve to do my best. After all, the alternative is what we see happening around us in school, and no-one should have that inflicted on them!

STATE EDUCATION, EO AND THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

By Patricia Knox

When I wrote my two books about "school phobia", I was concerned only with the plight of children forced into institutions in which they were unhappy, in which they faced bullying, intimidation and the like.

Even then, it was impossible not to notice that the economics of the treatment that "school phobic" children might receive from professionals was irrational. Why, for instance, might a "school phobic" child be placed in a psychiatric hospital, under the supervision of well-paid psychiatrists, when a much cheaper option would be for the child to be educated at home by the parents? Why might E.W.O.'s, educational psychologists, etc. spend many hours of their time trying to force these frightened children to school, with or without the use of tranquilisers or antidepressants? I began to suspect that the salaries of these professionals, and the income of the drugs companies was more important than the welfare of the children concerned.

After I had finished writing the "school phobia" books, I started to write a book about adolescents and the problems they face in the late twentieth century. This book was to be much wider in scope than the "school phobia" books. This was, however, laid aside during my husband's illness and our family's bereavement. I had by then realised that practically all the problems faced by our young people today are created by the way the economic system works.

When I felt able to write again, I did not complete my book about young people. Instead, I started to write about failings in the economic system. I am now convinced that the economic system is the engine which drives society in an irrational direction, bringing environmental degradation and gross pollution in its wake.

In newsletter Number 93, Susan Vaughan asks whether we ought to be pressing for a grant for home educating families. I am afraid there is not a hope that we would get this under the present economic system, except on condition that all home educating families follow the National Curriculum.

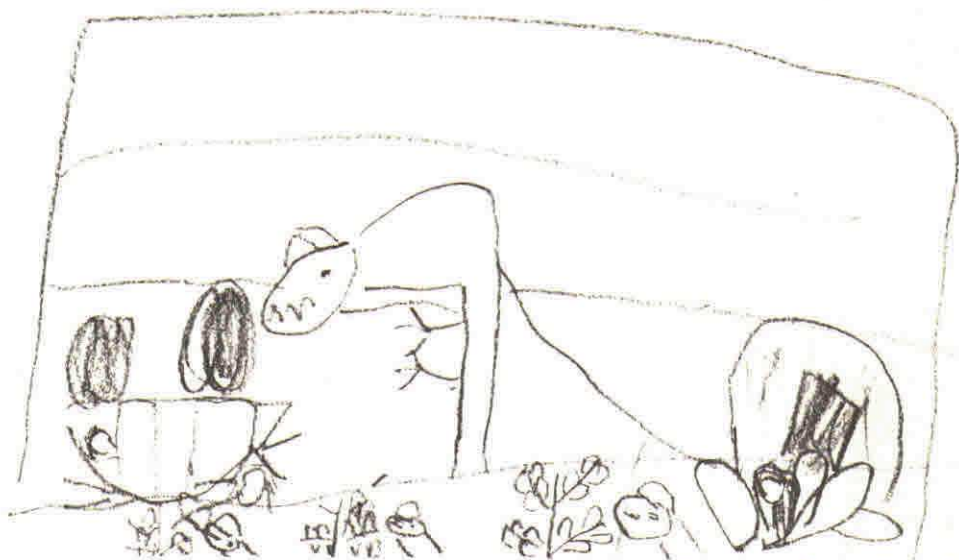
If the system were rational, it would indeed be much better to pay parents to educate children at home, since home education is much cheaper than school education. One would expect an educational system, which is trying to cut costs, to follow this course. But the system is not rational.

Rather than pleading with the government for government funding for home educators, should E.O. people be investigating the possibilities of a new economics, an economics in which the poverty trap is eliminated? In 1992, the total of all unemployment benefit, housing benefit, child benefit, income support, etc., together with tax rebates on mortgages, company cars, etc., added up to £122 billion. If, instead of the present system, this were divided equally between everyone, it would have given £42 a week to every man, woman and child in the country. Even under the present taxation system, a basic income is possible.

A basic income would abolish the poverty trap, as it would not be lost when a small income is earned, and it would begin to make life easier for unemployed families or single parents to educate children at home. (It would also eliminate the disgrace of allowing people to sleep in cardboard boxes). There are M.P.'s of all political persuasions who support this scheme.

Practically all the problems which face society: education, social breakdown, environmental degradation and pollution, can be traced to the way the economic system works. Changes are needed at every level: at the international, national and local levels.

If anyone is interested in exploring these ideas further, the address of the New Economics Foundation is:-
88 - 94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SE.



Jurassic Park II by Jake

NUTS AND BOLTS

BOOKS

The following are available from
Lighthouse Books, Field House,
Thrandeston, Diss, Norfolk, IP21 4BU :

Never too late by John Holt

An autobiographical account of how John Holt learnt to play the cello at the age of 40 onwards. "I applaud this heartily. May everyone reading it stay young, well and warm-hearted in the same way" - Sir Yehudi Menuhin.

8 . 00 post free

Dumbing us down

by John Taylor Gatto

A scathing account of American schooling, equally applicable to State Education in this country. (see review in Issue 92).

5 . 95 post free

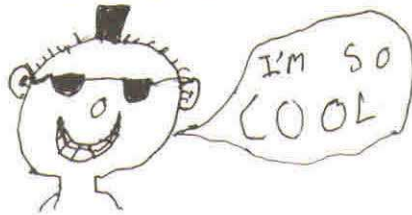
NATIONAL CURRICULUM CHECKLIST

Peggy Thomas has run out of copies of these, but they can be ordered direct from: National Curriculum Sales,

Modbury Marketing Computer
Services Ltd,

Sentinel House,
Poundwell,
Modbury,
Devon,
PL21 0XX.

at 2 . 25 per copy plus 50p p&p.
Secondary version also available.



WATCH & YOC

More than one member has recommended WATCH (Junior wing of Royal Society for Nature Conservation) and YOC (Young Ornithologists Club (junior wing of RSPB)). Both run local groups with lots of interesting indoor and outdoor activities.

Eleanor Markiewitcz runs Slough / Burnham Beeches YOC and has vacancies. Write to her for details / membership form for this or other local groups at : 46 Gloucester Ave, Slough, Berks, SL1 3AY. Tel 0753 538709. or to : YOC, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2DL. Tel 0767 680551.

And/or write to WATCH, The Green,
Witham Park, Waterside South,
Lincoln, LN5 7JR. Tel 0522 5444400.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES

Claire Young recommends :
Playaways Supplies (Scotland) Ltd,
Annick Industrial Estate, Shettleston,
Glasgow, G32 0HS. Tel 041 763 2121
Fax 041 763 1166. Good value for arts & crafts, puzzles and Stationery.

MATHS 100 FOUNDATION.

by Jane Lowe

While reading EO's copy of the Times Educational Supplement a couple of months ago I noticed an article about a new initiative in Maths teaching which might be of interest to EOers. Maths 100 Foundation is a non-profit making venture which plans to provide materials, tutoring and a telephone help service to children aged nine and over, up to A level standard, in their homes. The aim is to provide back-up and support in Maths to children in school, but director Cheryl Maiden told me that the Foundation would be happy to help home educators as well.

The fees are variable, and it is estimated that a family might pay 120 a year to receive help for all their children. The cost is related to the level of support; A-level work, for example, would cost more than help for the earlier stages. The scheme will also take into account the family's financial situation and scholarships will be available. A wide variety of approaches to maths will be used and the student will be in control, proceeding at his or her own pace. As with sport, the importance of practice in maths skills is emphasised, so that the skills will be retained.

Apparently the fact that home educators don't follow the National Curriculum presents no problems. The parents can pick up on the methods used, or the children can work on their own with the support of the Student Liaison Officer who phones them every month initially to support and encourage them. Practice exams are available too, which could be useful for children who wish to take GCSE maths. The scheme is not aimed merely at bright children but is offered to those of all abilities, although the Foundation acknowledges that it may be unable to cater for some children with special educational needs.

Maths 100 plans to organise conferences in which children would work with others of similar ability to do investigations and solve problems. These will be free to schools and to home educators. There will be a newsletter with a penpal club, puzzles and maths fun. There will also be some workshops which are geared to parents, perhaps once a year in different areas.

If you are interested please contact Maths 100 Foundation, Chiltern House, Fawley, Lower Assendon, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon. RG9 6AN.

There may be those among you who will idly wonder why this supplement is number 14, when my last one (April '93) was number 12..... Sorry - it's because *both* of my 1992 supplements (April and October) were inadvertently assigned number 11 !

Belated apologies to Innys and Paul Sayers for my having had to publish their contribution as the April supplement with no introduction or comment. Unfortunately, it was impossible to do otherwise, as I had only 4 pages at my disposal.... having been forced to forgo half of my space to make room for that wildly exciting EO restructuring document Funny that that supplement should rightfully have been number 13 !

Current apologies - if that's the right way to put it - to the authors of the two contributions which form the basis of *this* supplement (you know.... number 14). Alison and Dez Quarrel and Helen and David Graham actually wrote their articles for inclusion in the last (truncated) one, so slight changes etc, have been necessary because of the extra 6-month gap between creation and publication.

Read on for interest, information, details of a competition, and ultimately, amusement.....

Learning with Dyslexia

Our son Jackson is 12. He has an exceptionally high IQ. He also has a Statement of Special Educational Need for specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia). When he left his very supportive primary school in July 1992 he had the reading abilities of the average 7 year old. Often even a three-letter word was too difficult for him to spell. And dyslexia isn't just about reading and writing. Jackson has problems with balance, co-ordination, concentration and sequencing. He literally doesn't know what day of the week it is. We knew he would have a miserable existence in secondary school. This article sets out how we now teach him at home.

Most important is the timetable - and I don't mean one that says " It's Monday, it must be Maths, English and Art." Ever since he could talk, Jackson has started his day by yelling: "What are we going to do today?" He, and many children like him, need the emotional security of a plan, but cannot stand the same old routine. We work out his timetable a week in advance.

We bought a video machine. We record many schools programmes (1) and also a lot of documentaries (like the 'Legacy' series shown last year). Jackson has his favourites: Mathspy, Ghostwriter and (for some reason) The Micro Class. Despite his sequencing problems he can repeat dialogue virtually parrot-fashion and a good video gives him access to the knowledge he needs.

We also use a tape machine. After a lot of thought, we invested in an expensive portable model which he uses to make notes. He also makes summaries of some of the videos he watches and dictates essays and plays.

We haven't found many useful schools radio programmes, but we record plays from Radio 4. Jackson likes drama and goes to the local drama club every Saturday morning. He also belongs to the 'Woodcraft Folk' and goes Youth Hostelling and camping with them.

Like many kids, Jackson adores computers. We bought an Atari (for work) a couple of years ago, and he learned to touch-type on the word processing package. This is a real asset. It means that if he can spell a word in his brain he will be able to 'write' it. Previously he not only had to spell it correctly, but he had also to co-ordinate his hand and eye to get it down on paper. He is experimenting with desk-top publishing. This lets him produce really professional-looking work, and gives him the chance to show off his abilities, not his disabilities.

Jackson quickly loses skills if he doesn't get daily spelling and reading practice. Learning Development Aids⁽²⁾ publish books which he finds acceptable. 'The Book of Letters' and 'Word Quest' contain most of the basic spelling rules, but present them in a non-patronising way for a child of this age. His reading has improved dramatically. We get large print books for him from our local Schools Library Service, who also supply us with some videos. This service is free of charge - and it's nice to know that we have the same status on their waiting lists as the local secondary school!

Jackson spends much of his leisure time listening to tapes. He has a concessionary library ticket, so we don't pay for taped books. He is also a member of the National Listening Library.⁽³⁾ This costs £15 a year and is a similar scheme to the Talking Books for the Blind.⁽⁴⁾

Jackson is acquiring some spoken German. We have ignored spelling and grammar and he is building up a vocabulary of every-day words. We use a pack of 'Happy Families' playing cards and a doll's house as props.

Since Jackson was small we have always spent a lot of time at museums and those sorts of places. Now we incorporate days out into his weekly timetable. Much of his work is thematic. We live in Shropshire and we are contrasting the development of our three 'local' cities: Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. All kinds of work spring from visits; dictated essays, graphs and maps.

We are also building a wildlife pond in our back garden. Jackson researched the project (by circulating a questionnaire to various pond owners, as well as other methods) and will cost it out before digging commences. We plan to use this as a resource for much of his observational work next year.

His science work is based on the Eyewitness book 'How Science Works'.⁽⁵⁾ Again it is practical in the extreme. Each page is full of experiments that Jackson can do at home. He doesn't even need to 'write up' the experiment because it's all illustrated in the book. The same company produce some companion books on Matter, Electricity etc., and we read these to him.

Jackson understands Maths and enjoys learning new ideas but he cannot write down the calculations, frequently transposes figures in his head and has no hope of reciting his tables. Primary school taught him that using a calculator was 'cheating'. We are trying to dissuade him from this in the hope of relieving him of some of the hard and unrelenting slog.

We have received a grant from a local charity to go to the Institute of Neuro-physiological Psychology in Chester. Their work shows that many of the co-ordination, sequencing and motor problems of some dyslexic children are the result of immature reflexes. Jackson has a daily 15-minute exercise programme (slow and stretching, mimicking pre- and neo-natal movements). It seems to be working. We have noticed that his shoe-laces stay done up and he can manage a knife and fork correctly.

Dyslexic people can also register with BT to Freephone Directory Enquiries. This really helps Jackson be independent as he cannot read a telephone directory.

On re-reading this article, it sounds as if teaching a dyslexic child is expensive. It can't be! Together our family earns less than the national average wage. We don't have a car and are basically vegetarian - both of which help reduce the household bills.

Jackson wants to go to university to study and research space/time. We know he has the intelligence to make a contribution in this, or any other academic area, but doubt if he will ever have the necessary skills to pass exams, especially with the present pre-occupation with spelling and handwriting. This, however, does not make us despondent as from our experience of home education so far there seems to be a solution to every problem waiting near at hand.

Alison and Don Quarrell
28, Underdale Rd,
Shrewsbury.

.....

References and Notes

- (1) Back-up material, including teacher's and pupil's books and worksheets, wallcharts, audio and video cassettes, etc., is available for TV and Radio 'schools' programmes. To obtain the BBC's 'Annual Programme and Timetable' contact:
BBC Education Information,
White City, London W12 7TS
081 746 1111 (This is a 24-hour number)

For Channel 4's 'Annual Programme and Timetable':
Educational Television Company
PO Box 100 Warwick CV34 6TZ
0926 43333

You can ask to be put on their mailing lists.

- (2) Learning Development Aids,
Duke St., Wisbech,
Cambs PE13 2AE.
Tel: 0945 63441

Their catalogue is useful and interesting for any family, and indispensable for families who have a child with any sort of learning difficulty - especially dyslexia. A wide variety of reading books, games and equipment is available. The two books mentioned in Alison and Dez's article are intended to provide 'adventure and excitement' while helping to develop 'vital reading and spelling skills'. They are part of a range of items intended for pupils with a reading age lower than their chronological age.

- (3) National Listening Library,
12, Lant St.,
London SE1 1QH
Tel: 071 407 9417

Loans special tape players and sends books on cassette through the post to any man, woman or child who is unable to read books in the usual way because of disability, illness or learning difficulties.

To join, write or phone for application form. You will require proof of eligibility from a doctor, social worker, therapist etc.

- (4) British Talking Book Service for the Blind.
Mount Pleasant,
Alperton, Wembley,
London HA0 1RR Tel: 081 903 6666

A library of books on tape (free postal service for tapes). The annual subscription includes the hire of a special playback machine. A number of titles have been specially recorded for young children, and there is a student's library for GCSE and A levels and Open University courses.

- (5) Eyewitness Books are published by ::
Dorling Kindersley,
9, Henrietta St., Covent Garden,
London WC2E 8PS.
Tel: 071 836 5411

They are currently running a **competition** (until 1st. November) in conjunction with Waterstones Bookshops. There are three questions to answer "from their books" (eg: 'Who invented Oxygen?') I am told that there are prizes as follows:

First prize: Full set of 48 Eyewitness Guides.
Second prize: Choice of set of 10 Science, or 10 Art Guides.
10 Runners-up prizes of Eyewitness Guide calenders.

The following article was sent to me by Helen Graham when she had four children and "number five due at any time".

Thank you, Helen, for finding the time and energy to write (not easy to do at such a time). Congratulations on the arrival of 'Number Five', and best wishes to you now that Jamey is five and you are "officially home educating".

Our middle child, Jamey, (now five years old) is classified as 'special needs'. His problems stem from him having had a substantial hearing loss, probably from birth, caused by 'glue ear'. Despite his having failed - or having only partially responded to - several hearing tests, it wasn't until he was 2 1/2 years old and had very little speech that his problems were really taken seriously.

By this time he was very withdrawn and had serious behavioural problems. He would only respond to his parents and older sisters, screeching at other people (including Grandparents) if spoken to, or otherwise totally ignoring them. He had frightening temper tantrums with head-banging and head-butting and hitting other people, and he became obsessed with 'Thundercats' toys and videos.

At about 20 months he was referred to an audiologist, but it was nine months later that David finally took Jamey to see her, and he and Jamey both disliked her at once. In fact, Jamey never did take to her and she was the only 'professional' he was aggressive towards - hitting her, and throwing a toy at her.

Eventually, at 3 1/2 years, after we had spent a year seeing paediatricians, speech therapists etc, and after he had practically been diagnosed as autistic, worsening 'glue-ear' was diagnosed and he had grommets inserted and his adenoids removed.

We still have problems (he's currently obsessed with 'Batman') and his understanding of language concepts such as 'under', 'over', 'on top of' etc., has been assessed at only 2 years 9 months. Despite a vast increase in his vocabulary his ability to understand or use sentences of more than 4 or 5 words is limited.

On the whole, however, the transformation has been remarkable. From a child who I thought might never even call me 'Mum' to one who chatters non-stop, can count to 20, recognise and write numbers 1 to 8, etc, etc. His main problems now, regarding his learning, are that he needs someone who will sit down and clearly explain and demonstrate things to him, and someone who has the time to really *listen* to him when he's trying to tell them something. In other words, he needs someone who has time for him.

The subject of education, or 'schooling', first arose about a year ago when the intention to 'Statement' Jamey was first mentioned. We were unsure what direction to take at that time, so to keep everybody happy we just said the only school we would consider was the one our daughters attended - provided there was sufficient support.

Basically, we prevaricated. We were seriously considering home education but wanted to know what else was available. We kept putting off the first step towards Statementing, hoping to avoid it altogether. We made our own enquiries about local schools, speech and language units etc. in our area. We had to fight for speech therapy - which he is only just starting to receive regularly.

We were fortunate enough to have a lovely Pre-school Adviser whose confidence we gradually gained. She seemed to be impressed by our fund of information, also that we had found out for ourselves about resources and that we knew what was (or in the case of Kent LEA, what was not) available.

At our final meeting with her in February, we said that we intended to fully home-educate and in view of this we did not want Jamey Statemented as we felt it was irrelevant outside a school situation. We had no opposition whatsoever. She agreed that there are many unhappy children in school, and she was practically *anti* secondary schooling. All we had to do was inform the LEA formally of our decision in September. She also suggested we contact an association of home educators..... and was again impressed that we knew all about EO.

The main opposition we have had, as Kim Wark seems to have found ⁽¹⁾ is from health professionals. The senior speech therapist(not the one Jamey currently sees) said we were being very negative when we expressed concern about possible bullying and 'mickey-taking' at school because of Jamey's speech problems... the nurse at our doctor's surgery seemed horrified by the idea... and we've heard all the old cliches regarding socialisation, not learning to work alongside other children etc...

Our main support has been from the above-mentioned pre-school adviser and from the headmaster of our girls' school, who has seen David on several occasions and has been an important source of information about how the Statementing process actually works in practice rather than how the LEA says it works.

Obviously we can only speak from our limited experience with the Kent Education and Health Authorities, but perhaps the following points may be of help:

1] If you want to avoid Statementing, keep putting it off. The way we did this was by saying that Jamey had improved so much since his operation that we wanted to give him a chance to improve further so that a Statement wouldn't be outdated by the time it came into effect, and that we wanted time to investigate all the options available.

It appears that Kent's Special Needs budget is frozen at its present level so they are probably quite pleased to have one less Statement to fund! I know of cases where parents and schools are having to fight to have a child Statemented. The average time taken is 9 - 18 months if you *want* a Statement so it should certainly be possible to drag this out if you don't.

2] Find out what educational resources are available for your child. Contact schools, special units, etc.⁽²⁾ and find out what extra assistance, one-to-one tuition etc. your child could expect to receive. We were told that the maximum for any child would be 15 hours with a classroom assistant - who would also be assisting other children, and that Jamey's problems weren't serious enough to warrant anywhere near the maximum. Also, our nearest speech and language unit is 30 miles away and only takes children until the age of 7 years.

By finding out all about the various options you can find reasons for dismissing them before they are suggested by professionals. E.g: "the speech unit is too far away for a 5-year old to travel to every day."

3] Clarify in your own mind why EO is better for your child than the other resources available. E.g: one-to-one tuition, using interests to stimulate a child who is hard to motivate. (Jamey counts the number of Batman capes or Batsigns...)

4] Try to find at least one professional who agrees with you. Even if they are not in agreement with home education as such, perhaps they will agree that the facilities available are insufficient or inappropriate for your child.

5] Find out whether any benefits are available to you. David has been unemployed for 2 years and we have only just discovered that because of Jamey's behavioural problems we may be entitled to extra benefit for caring for him. (Our speech therapist told us of this.)

In addition we have also had Jamey's Special Needs Playgroup fees paid for us from the Pre-school Adviser's budget. I don't know if this latter benefit is available in other areas (3) but certainly information on the former should be available from any D.S.S. office.

6] Finally, I'd like to mention the Deaf Children's Society, which we have found to be an excellent source of information and advice - mostly free. Membership is free to the parents of children with hearing problems, whatever the cause, and they have excellent leaflets on glue-ear, sign language, etc. We also have a copy of their guide to Statementing, which although not directly supporting home education, has a very good section with specimen letters to write when you disagree with various stages of the process, and the time limits and procedures relevant to each stage. This also is free to parents, or £5 to others. The address to write to is:

N.D.C.S. 45, Hereford Rd., London, W2 5AH
Tel: 071 229 9272

In conclusion, I am sure that we may still come across problems when we have contact with various other LEA advisers etc. but at present we are happy to answer sceptics by saying we have approval from at least one branch of the LEA.

If anyone would like to contact us with advice or information, or if we can be of help... or if you simply want contact with someone who has a friendly ear... please write to:

Helen and David Graham
111, St. Richard's Rd,
Deal,
Kent CT14 9LD

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References and Notes.

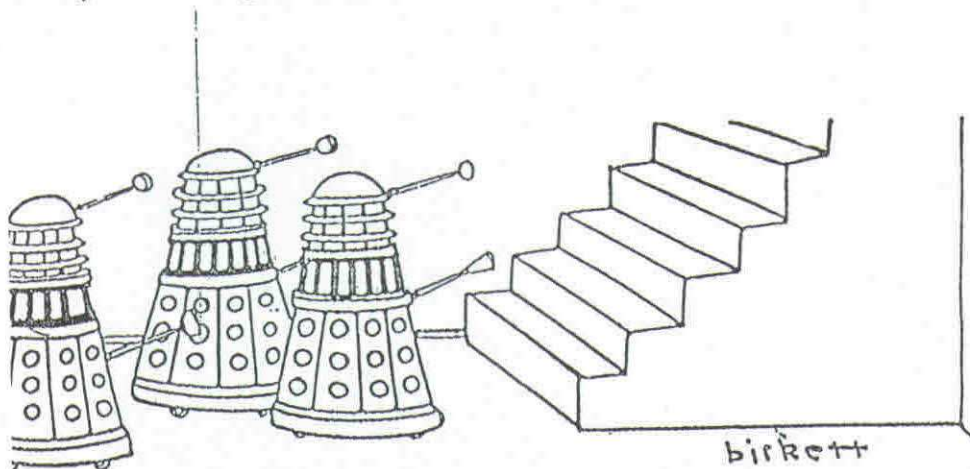
- (1) See Kim's article in the October 1992 supplement. (You know... the one that *should* have been number 12....)
- (2) Local ones are listed in the phone book. For those further afield, look at the lists in the Education Authorities Directory. or The Education Year Book - available in the reference section of good libraries.

- (3) The Children Act 1989 imposes on Local Authorities the duty to provide "day care" for "children in need" who are aged 5 or under and not yet attending schools. "Day care" is defined as: "any form of care or supervised activity provided for children during the day". The definition of a child "in need" is a bit too involved to go into here, but it almost certainly would include a child who had a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs' (or who would have one if the child attended school!). Anyone who feels it may be useful information for them can find the full definition in Part III Section 17(10) and (11) of the Children Act 1989, or can contact me (Sylvia Jeffs).

The Act does not specifically mention payment for such provision, but I believe that it may be free to those in receipt of income support or family credit, and 'means tested' for others.

A couple of months ago I talked about EO at a 'Contact A Family' education conference. One of the other speakers was Kevin Holmes, who has cerebral palsy. His talk was entitled: "How I feel about my education" - and he left us in no doubt about his opinions on sending a child away to boarding school! It had obviously been a disaster for him. Nevertheless, his wit, ironic comments and outspokenness made us laugh a lot.

Everyone liked the cartoon that he passed round..... and he thought you would also find it funny, and that I should include it in one of my supplements. I knew there would be objections to the original wording, so I have 'doctored' it a little....



"Well, this certainly ~~derives~~ our plan to conquer the Universe."

WRITERS' CIRCLES

We have two pieces on this subject, firstly from Peggy Thomas :

Recently I've joined a writers' circle and would like to pass on what I've learned about this. First of all, it's good fun to learn and improve a skill. Writing together is also an interesting way to learn more about other people and oneself. There's also a particular reason why I think it could be a good thing for EO parents to get involved in an activity like this, which is aimed primarily at adults, though older teenagers might like to join in. I think that sometimes the best thing we can do for our children's education is to get on with our own education, and leave our children alone. If we do this, we not only avoid projecting our unfulfilled ambitions onto the children, but we also provide a model of purposeful, happy learning.

Anyway, back to the circle. There are four of us, and we meet fortnightly in each other's homes. We start off with an exercise to warm us up, invented by the host for the day. Activities for exercises include:

- photocopying a poem with blank spaces for each person to fill in. People read their own versions in turn. (choose a little-know poem for this.)

- reading the first part of a Saki short story. Members write their own endings. Again, read these in turn. Then the host reads the actual ending.

- making up improbable phrases (e.g. "picking my way past the alligator bones on the floor") and then giving one to each person, who then writes a story using the phrase. Other members have to guess which is the special phrase in the story.

- each person has four slips of paper on which to write a time, a month, an ambition, an age. These are then redistributed and each person writes a story using these points.

After a few sessions, you will begin to get the hang of making up exercises. We spend about an hour on the exercise, and then members take turns reading anything they have been working on during the past fortnight. We also choose a theme for this. As I'm writing this article, we have a meeting tomorrow for which the theme is biography. This was chosen at the last meeting by the person who will host tomorrow's meeting. The theme is only a guideline; I often write about something completely different, or nothing, depending on what's going on in my life. Members are very supportive of each other's efforts, and offer criticism when asked, which I find very helpful.

Peggy Thomas, 7 Maybourne Close, Springfield Rd, London, SE26 6HQ.

....and the second from **Susan Wilson** :

Do you find your children are reluctant to write ? I have been thinking about this lately, about how writing often seems hard and a chore for children, whereas for some adults, including me, it is a source of great pleasure. As well as writing the obvious lists and letters, I write in order to express and clarify my thoughts and feelings in a way that is more restful than talking.

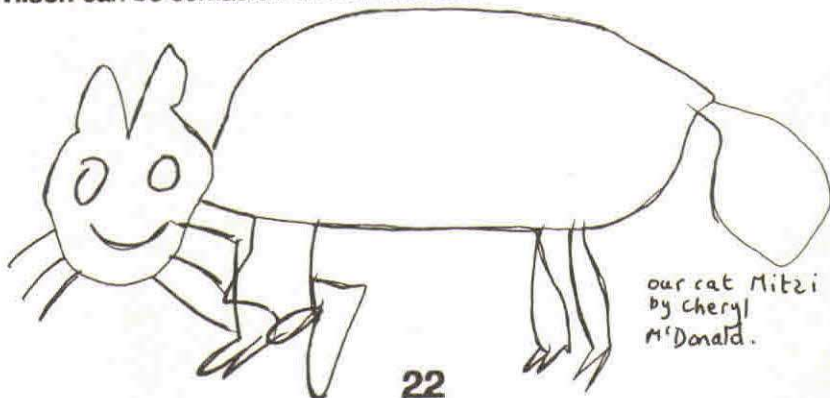
This got me thinking about a wonderful book I read by Donald Graves who introduced to his class a method of writing which was radically different from the writing activities normally found in schools. He treated the children like real writers and encouraged them to behave as real writers behave. The children chose what they wanted to write about, abandoned a piece if it wasn't working and perhaps came back to it after several weeks, drafted and redrafted their work, received feedback on it and decided for themselves when a piece was finished. It was then 'published' for the rest of the group. The writers in a group like this are concerned with what they want to express and how to choose just the right words to express it. Spelling and punctuation are worked on as a last step just before publication.

I want to start a writing group for EO children on these lines in September. At first it will be a small group for 6 - 8 year olds, meeting once a week. If anyone in this age group would like to join please give me a ring. The group will be at my house in Blackheath. I would like to offer it on a skill swap basis i.e. you offer to do something for me in return e.g. look after my younger child while the group is running, teach me how to use my computer, do something musical with my children...whatever you are good at.

There is also a possibility of having other activities on the same day so that people don't have to travel a long way just for an hour.

Hoping to hear from you. By the way, you don't have to be 'good at writing' to join in.

Susan Wilson can be contacted on 081 858 8714



our cat Mitzi
by Cheryl
McDonald.

VACCINATION ?

I thought EO families would be interested to know about an organisation called The Informed Parent, set up to promote awareness and understanding about immunisation and to offer information about vaccinations and their alternatives.

Immunisation is one of those areas where it is often very difficult to find out about the dangers especially when the majority viewpoint is so pro mass immunisation. To redress the balance, The Informed Parent has a regular newsletter, a suggested booklist, organises talks and seminars and hopes to establish a nationwide support network and register.

They have had some considerable response to their venture, especially after recent articles in The Independent and The Guardian, both of which focused on the negative aspects of immunisation.

The organisation is entirely voluntary and non-profit making. Annual membership is £5 for waged families, £4 for unwaged.

You can contact them by writing to The Informed Parent, 29 Greyhound Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4BY

Sammy Vidal-Hall, Homecroft, Brownston Street, Modbury, Devon PL21 0RQ

NATIONAL CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS

"Thank you for the many letters and telephone calls, which we have received in response to our articles in recent newsletters. It is very apparent that new E.O. members who wish to follow a structured approach are somewhat in the dark as to where they can obtain information etc., In the light of this I have compiled a fact sheet of useful addresses where one can obtain books, equipment, curriculum advice and software. If anyone is interested in receiving this sheet, please send a SAE and I will be happy to forward a copy to you. Many people seem to be wanting a curriculum to follow and as these are quite expensive to purchase, can we not swap the relevant parts between ourselves. I for instance have the history folder, is there anyone who would like to swap this information for one of another subject? This way we could eventually be able to provide members with a simplified version of the national curriculum. Any offers?"

from Hazel Ellis, Orchard Hill Cottage, Bulkworthy, Holsworthy, N. Devon,
EX22 7UP

EDUCATING ARCHIE

MOSCOW NIGHTS BY SEG



© 1993 СПАСИБО НАТАША ЯША УШАША АЛКА МУТЯ

LETTERS

External GCSEs

I have recently been told that from 1994, many GCSEs will no longer be available to students who are not attending a recognised college in order to have their coursework assessed.

This is already the case in Scotland and the home educated kids that I know of here of Secondary school age have had to sit the English GCSEs instead of the Scottish Standard grades. For this reason, and also because the Scottish Education Department refuse to allow anyone under 16 years to sit a Standard Grade.

No reason can be given for this rule and in fact it seems that it is regularly broken in schools.

Does anyone know any more about this? Can we do anything as an organisation to object to it and other decisions which affect our freedom to educate our children at home?

Lorna Brown, Renfrewshire, Scotland.

In response to 'Who can you trust?' by Joshua Mostafa; I suggest that concerned EOers write promptly to their MP about the alteration to private candidates' access to public examinations. The more noise people make, the more likely that this proposal will be dropped.

Anne Rogers, Beaworthy, Devon.

Having been dismayed to read, in Newsletter 93, of the impending withdrawal of the right to sit GCSEs at Open Centres as an external candidate (Article 'Who can you trust?' by Joshua Mostafa), we have been writing to various organisations for clarification of the situation and have not been encouraged by their responses.

For example, the Southern Examining Group replied as follows "Recently, and regrettably, our provision for private and external candidates has been constrained by two factors: the first is the National Curriculum subject criteria listing specific skills which can only be assessed by means of coursework; and the second concerns the authentication of coursework, as prescribed in the Mandatory Code of Practise for GCSE examinations which we are legally obliged to follow.

As a result of the above, we have had to withdraw most of the external syllabuses which we currently offer, after the 1994 examination." (They go on to list the 5 subjects which will be available for 1995.)

Correspondence colleges have been no more reassuring, one stating that "the position with regard to external candidates taking the GCSE examination is still

unclear" and listing a further 6 subjects which should still be available at least for the 1995 candidates "provided they can find a centre prepared to take them".

With Technical Colleges and Adult Education Centres unwilling to take on 'school age' students and Correspondence Colleges unable to 'authenticate' work, this would appear to be the death knell for the home education of secondary school age children 'as we know it' ! Is there anyone out there able to cast more light on this situation and, more pertinently perhaps, does EO have a coherent plan for lobbying the Department for Education etc. and publicising the latest developments with the aim of ensuring that we can remain home educators throughout our children's secondary school years without condemning them to a qualificational void !

After all, it is not only the end for home educators, many adults wishing to take GCSEs through their own endeavours will now be thwarted by the 'authentification of coursework' rule, so surely there must be some strength of feeling to be harnessed out there - somewhere ? !

The Flawn family, Margate, Kent.

(see Jane Lowe's Update : the current position re the External GCSE - ed.)

PSI.....

Claire Young's reaction to the listing of Psi skills in the contact list is intemperate. One of the purposes of the contact list - or so we have always understood - is to enable members to let other members know what their family interests are. This can lead to meetings, friendships, educational opportunities. There is no advertising in the contact list; an entry is no more than a statement that 'We are interested in...', and other members are free to make contact or not.

Surely one thing all of us in EO would defend is our right to live our lives in our own way; it ill behoves any member to be censorious about the beliefs of others, and, still worse, to attempt to impose censorship. The message at the heart of the Christian Gospel is one of love, a quality sadly lacking in Claire Young's letter.

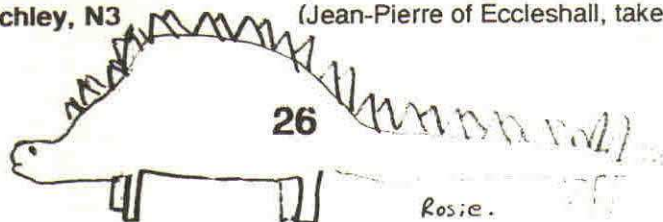
Stephen and Julie Turnbull, Bishop Auckland, County Durham.

JURASSIC PARK

Jurassic Park rules OK ! Any other JP fans out there ? I think it's brill. I've seen it 4 times. Please contact me for 65 million year-old chats. Bye, have a nice day.

Gus Reid, Finchley, N3

(Jean-Pierre of Eccleshall, take note - ed)



GOVERNMENT FUNDING

I was very pleased to read Susan Vaughan's article on Government Funding in the last newsletter. For some time I have had the impression that I was the only person struggling financially. I too am a single parent with 2 children who has pared down expenditure as much as possible. We have joined a local barter scheme (LETS), we grow some of our own vegetables, we make good use of bargains and free offers etc. I am very fortunate in having friends and family with many skills and equipment that they are prepared to share. But the problems still remain - do I spend £3 on the battery and bulb holders he needs to do the experiments he's keen on, from a book given by a friend, or do I use that for food, or to take them swimming? Any 'luxuries' are right out, such as concerts, theatre visits, trips to exhibitions, books, courses, workshops, unless someone else pays for them.

Life becomes a constant question of scraping and making do. I despair about the coming winter with increased bills caused by the extra time at home now I am no longer out at work and Simon is at home. My feelings of despair reached rock bottom last month when I even considered sending Simon back to school so that he would get free school dinners!

I think that the worst aspect though, is my feeling of guilt at not being able to provide for Simon's education and interests. I am convinced that he is better off being educated outside the state system, but it is hard to stick to that conviction when I can't afford the basic resources and have to rely so heavily on the goodness of others for support. I also feel angry that those with money can afford to live by their principles, and that those without are made to feel guilty at not 'contributing' to society.

Having said all this, I obviously support the need to put pressure on the government for proper funding. The cynic in me however says that it will never happen, for the very reasons Susan gives in her last paragraph, namely that "... (funding) would put a legitimate stamp of acceptability on the aims and aspirations of education otherwise and might start a revolution in the education of the children of this country". Precisely what this government does not want - to accept that its school system is not meeting the needs of children and that they can learn better via alternative methods. When I was thinking of taking Simon out of school, a friend said that the government would love that as they would no longer have to pay for his education. I feel that this is the main reason why the government has not acted to close the legal loophole of E.O - it saves them money. If home education were funded, the government would lose the control it so badly needs to have over their future potential voters. Children growing up to be independent thinkers are a danger.

Jenny Roe, Diss, Norfolk.

FUNDING AGAIN

I agree with Susan Vaughan in her letter titled GOVERNMENT FUNDING in issue 93 of this Newsletter. The Government automatically funds schools for the benefit of all children educated in them, and should support the law which allows parents to educate their children out of school, by providing the same access to books and stationary and educational equipment for all children educated out of school, either by offering vouchers, as they do with the school-uniform grant (affording the parent approximately the price of one pair of shoes) or by tokens, as they do with milk, or by a lump sum added onto the benefit, at intervals to be decided. At present the Government are ignoring the rights of all children educated other than at school, to have the same provisions as those in school, supplied freely or made available if requested by the parent.

I speak as a Single Parent and on Income Support, having four boys aged 12, $10\frac{1}{2}$, $8\frac{1}{2}$, and $5\frac{3}{4}$ years old, out of school (for individual reasons,) and if I didn't receive additional benefits on top of my Income Support (which I claim for my youngest son who is registered Disabled) I wouldn't be able to buy the books and stationary and other things for the boys which I have, and I definitely wouldn't be able to take them swimming every week and horse-riding every week for a half-hour lesson, which they love. I am better off than those single parents on ordinary Income Support who do not receive additional benefits, and before my youngest son qualified, making ends meet was always difficult.

Claire, Keith, Stephen, Oliver & Colin Reynolds, St. Albans, Herts.

Although a relatively new member, I have very quickly become aware of the factional differences at work within the organisation. In the hope that EO takes a purely informative / support role in the longer term, I feel it necessary to try and depoliticise a rather worrying current controversy.

Susan Vaughan's views (NL 93) showed very dangerous signs of communist elitism. In my own mind, a summary of her piece would read:

"Dear Government, Please could you give us lots of money so that we can set up another little state within yours, over which you have no control. We are sure that you, and all the taxpayers, will find this great value for money. Lots of love, EO."

Does Ms Vaughan not realise that "networks of libraries", "mini-schools" etc will all require their own power hungry little beaucrocracies, in effect, distributing state facilities ?

The State has got no right to steal money from decent working people and distribute it according to political preference - Tax is Theft !

The State has no right to own property exclusively - only privately-owned property can ever find efficient and productive use.

If Ms Vaughan really wants to secure her son a future of "considerable freedom", I suggest she forgets about her 'little statism' and campaigns for the State, guilty of its daily rape and pillage of private wealth, to be closed down.

Gerald Price, Colchester, Essex.

('depoliticising' ? - or a neo-Thatcherite Anarchist Party manifesto ? - ed)

HEART AND SOUL

I am a newcomer to EO, having taken my 10year old son Alex out of school 8 weeks ago. I have been reading the old issues of the EO Newsletter from the "Bargain Basement" dated 1987 to 1989, as well as the most recent Issue 91 April/May 1993.

I loved reading the old issues. They really meant something to me. They were full of stories that I could relate to. I found them uplifting and encouraging. What on earth has happened? Reading the 1993 issue is like trying to wade through a Party Polical Manifesto. Has EO been hijacked by a bunch of bureaucrats? Instead of real-life stories of humour and courage, we are told how EO proposes to "dissolve the limited company to be replaced by an unincorporated association with additional financial and legal indemnity....etc.etc."

I advise all EOers to read the old issues and see for yourself how much the newsletter has changed since 1989. I'm angry that something so simple, honest, innocent and good has been corrupted and turned into something political.

It's a bit daunting taking your child out of the "system". Having to contend with the school, the Education Officers, even friends and neighbours. I was comforted and encouraged by other EOers' stories in the old issues, but the 1993 issue left me cold. Please bring back the heart and soul. Who stole it anyway?

Frances Inglis, Barking, Essex.

(Yes, yes - ed)

WHERE ARE THE LONDON EVENTS ?

In a letter in the last issue (page 25, no. 93, August/September 1993) S. Bethune contrasts the recent lack of listings of London events in the EO newsletter with their regular appearance in the *London Supplement of Taking Children Seriously (TCS)*. The writer goes on to suggest that this is due to a conspiracy in high places to force London members to subscribe to *TCS*. As the editor of *TCS* I think I can shed some light on this situation.

The way the listings of events in the EO newsletter are and always have been generated is that self-motivated individuals submit them for publication. When there is a dearth of such individuals the listings tend to become sparse or non-existent. That is what appears to have happened in London. This has nothing to do with the advent of *Taking Children Seriously*. Our listings are compiled almost entirely by my phoning around on the day before publication, to find out what events have been planned. Only exceptionally are notices of events sent to me. It follows that the river of notices that used to flow into the EO newsletter has not been diverted towards *TCS*: it has (hopefully) temporarily dried up at source.

The idea that *TCS* is somehow conspiring against EO is ludicrous. To prove the point we will henceforth send our full London listings to the EO newsletter for inclusion in the ensuing edition. Regrettably, because of the minimum one month time lag between the submission deadline and the date of publication of the EO newsletter, some of the events we list in *TCS* will have been and gone by the time the EO newsletter reaches its readers.

Sarah Taylor, London N17.

(see Regional Diary - ed)

SUMMERHILL

I don't wish to enter the freedom / structure debate except to say that I am a long way from either extreme. However I do want to comment on R.A. and M.J. Wild's remark (Issue 90, Feb/Mar '93) on the Channel 4 documentary on Summerhill school shown in March '92. I have had regular contact with Summerhill for nearly 5 years and in my opinion the programme was unrepresentative to say the least. What worries me is that people (and I know the Wilds are not alone) are making judgements on the strength of a one hour T.V. documentary. I think that we often forget that this medium is not necessarily the gospel truth but merely one point of view often made with the aim of creating maximum sensation so that lots of people will watch it.

Alison Barnett, East Grinstead, Sussex.

(No, really ? - ed)

BE NICE

I want mummies and daddies be nice to children and children be nice to mummies and daddies. Some are horrible. I think mummies and daddies are being horrible to children and the children really upset with you now. Cuddling them when they fight with each other, that's nice. I want to play daddies and mummies 'cos I love it, 'cos I beed a baby every time. I want to play with mummy and daddy, proper ones. I love them very much.

Willow-Rose Vidal-Hall, Modbury, Devon.

I feel that these punishments written about in the newsletter are very wrong, especially as you're meant to learn from them. Punishments are not the way to learn. I think that these grownups are wrong. Well it is wrong isn't it, partly because it's frightening, partly you've got to be good because people are threatening you, and also it's nasty and horrible.

The way to learn is let children be free and learn from the world.

I think EO is freedom running and be free. I basically feel that EO is going for walks with you're mates and riding your bike round town and having good fun. What I think EO isn't is schooly people, coordinated games, teaching all day, exercise books and I don't understand this in an EO organisation.

I would like EO to be people who don't punish their children and don't teach them all day.

Arran Vidal-Hall, Modbury, Devon.

To the Barton family (newsletter 93). Hello. Yes, I DO think that a 'structured / formal approach to learning' is coercive. No child given complete power and control in their lives would choose such a way to learn. Why would (or should) they? Have you given your children the choice NOT to adhere to a timetable, and to learn just from living? Yes, your approach probably shows a more 'acceptable face to the suspicious sectors of the general public'. But to go along with the status quo is always easier. People are frightened to question the way society / schools / parents treat children. The repercussions are too great.

I had to reply to Edwina Theunissen's letter (newsletter 93) supporting corporal punishment. Please read 'For your own good' by Alice Miller (Virago Press). It may shine a light on you as it did for me. Corporal punishment should never be an option. Surely dialogue is the way forward. How anyone can physically punish their children in the name of love is beyond comprehension.

Belinda Reid, Finchley, N3.

OR

(The writer of the following, an EO member, asked to remain anonymous 'for fear of Libertarian backlash' (!) - ed.)

I get so perturbed when every EO issue I receive recently, I see an article from one of the Libertarians. On looking in the dictionary at the meaning of the word "libertarian". I saw it meant "an advocate of liberty". On looking up the word liberty, I saw it meant :

1a) "freedom from captivity, imprisonment, slavery, or despotic control

2a) the right or power to do as one pleases

2b) right, power.

These libertarians do not allow **you** to impose your values on them but **they** impose **their** values on you, Thus they are denying others the freedom which they so vehemently speak of.

They speak so passionately of children's "rights"; yet ask them of the liberty of the unborn, "the right or power to do as one pleases", (It would please the unborn to remain in the womb) and they change their tune. The unborn have no rights, they say, so it is only **some** children who are entitled to liberty - not **all**.

Many of us in EO do not allow our children to rule the roost, we are decent people, many of whom are Christians, we give our children security by being responsible adults who take decisions which often include our children, and leave them free to be - children.

I'm sure these Libertarian parents don't allow their children to smash up their homes - in the name of liberty, so we all have rules and why should libertarians get so outraged when everyone doesn't do things "their way?"

After all, "the right or power to do as one pleases" is fine as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else and, one might argue, as long as it is pleasing to God.

Name and address supplied.

EPOCH (newsletter 91) : I came across this organisation and it's literature before reading Susan Long's article. I am concerned that in it's zeal to rid the country of child abuse it will in fact create more serious and lasting consequences. I am a Christian, and in my Bible I read, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (Proverbs ch.13v.24). If this is God's way, then we reject it at our peril.

Is there a direct connection between the rise in statistics for bullying, violence and crime in our schools and society in general and the abolition of corporal punishment ? Children and young offenders no longer have a suitable deterrent. School children may perhaps lose a playtime or write lines. It isn't

working ! Now parents are being made to feel guilty about smacking their own children, when they need it, at home. Children are not innocent. Do you ever have to teach them to be naughty ? A "smack-bottom" is not a sign of weakness or failure on the part of the parent, but a reinforcement of a loving desire to see that child become a more responsible person.

Of course child abusers have got it wrong, and children must be protected from them. I am concerned that EPOCH advocates another form of child abuse by denying children - and parents - the right to corrective physical punishment. The frustrations caused may lead to worse physical and mental child abuse throughout our society. A new book on the market "Dare to discipline" by James Dobson, available from Christian bookshops, may be of help and/or interest.

Lesley Cox, Dudley, West Midlands.

(I know this topic raises terrifically high emotions, my own included, but I have tried to be balanced in the choice of letters to publish and I think we've had enough of it now - please ? - ed)

In the last generation there has been such a move towards all parents working that I fear it will soon be only the thinking, out of the ordinary folk, like us who'll stay at home with their children rather than go out to work. Where is our society going ? Our children are being shoved into institutions in the day and being left with minders in the evening. What is the fate of my grandchildren ?

F. Wilson, Harlow, Bucks.

HOW DO YOU SPELL FATOIS ?

I was sorry to see the criticism of the bible in Sarah Taylor's letter (P 13, Issue 91), marring an interesting discussion. Her comment was extremely misleading, to say the least, and bound to cause offence to a section of the membership. It is certainly not my intention to re-open the correspondence on religion but I think care should be taken not to make such disparaging remarks. I am sure members with other religious convictions would be hurt in similar circumstances, e.g. if there were to be criticism of the Koran.

After reading of the proposals for a new constitution, I was concerned at some of those put forward by Alan Balfe (p5 of blue supplement, Issue 91). After a long and happy membership we feel the time may have come for us to withdraw.

Mary Edwards, Acton, W3.

E.O. BUSINESS

Report from Structure Working Party.

At the meeting at Featherstone Castle it was agreed that we investigate the possibility of giving subscribers equal voting rights with Members. This was thought preferable, if possible, to making all subscribers Members of the Company or giving everyone the choice whether to become Member or subscriber.

We did look at this and found that it is indeed possible for the Company Instruments to be changed so that subscribers are given voting rights. The position of subscribers needs to be made clear in any case.

This would mean substantial rewriting of sections of the Articles and Memorandum in a form that would be legally acceptable.

We see the voting of subscribers to apply to the election of directors and to the formal business of the A.G.M. and any E.G.M.s that might be called.

The normal members meetings would not be General Meetings in the legal sense but would be open meetings called regularly by the elected directors to enable everyone (including children) to participate in the running of E.O. These meetings would continue to be held as they are now with an emphasis on consensus reaching by creative listening rather than debate and voting. A Special Resolution will be put to the A.G.M. to make the necessary changes.

Having reached this point the working party feel that we have accomplished the task of finding the best possible structural formula to express the general consensus of E.O. and reflect its real workings.



Friday October 29th to Tuesday November 2nd.

Education Otherwise Association Ltd AGM on Saturday October 30th.

For details of the gathering, please write to Alan and Pat Balfé, 10 Highfields Road, Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leics. LE12 7HH or Telephone 0533 376752.

NOTICE:

Pam Stevenson is giving up the duties of General Secretary because of ill-health and Julie Lyons, the Minute Secretary will prepare the Agenda and receive reports etc for the Beamanor meetings.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of Education Otherwise Association Ltd will be held at Beamanor Hall, Loughborough on Saturday 30 October 1993 at 10.00 am.

The business of the AGM is to consider the accounts, elect directors and receive reports from officers. The AGM may also consider any special resolutions which would change the Articles of Association.

At the last Members' Meeting it was decided that we would accept proposals aimed at making guarantor or 'signed-up' status available to any adult member who wants this. Guarantor status (*the guarantee is a commitment to pay £10 in the event of EO becoming bankrupt*) gives formal voting rights under Company law at an AGM. The proposals would have the effect of increasing the limit of guarantors from the present 100 to a figure which exceeds the current or expected membership i.e. 5,000. These proposals were accepted on the condition that enquiries are first made to find out if it is possible to have formal voting rights simply by joining EO. From these enquiries it appears that the mechanism for conferring full voting rights on joining would be costly and far more complex than changing our Articles of Association to include a signed up membership limit of 5,000.

One third of the directors must stand down each year, making a three-year term of office the norm since most do not stand for re-election. At present there are 14 directors, which is the minimum limit under our Articles, and if this number is to be maintained, new people will be needed to take on this responsibility.

MEMBERS' MEETING

The Members' Meeting of Education Otherwise Association Ltd will be held at Beamanor Hall, Loughborough on Saturday 30 October 1993 at 2.00 pm.

The Members' Meeting is technically an Extraordinary General Meeting but is known as a Members' Meeting to emphasise the fact that it is an open meeting where all members, regardless of age or 'official' status have an equal voice in the decision-making process.

No formal Agenda is set at present but among the items to be discussed will be the following:

- The new Contact List - There have been fewer than 500 responses to the Contact List renewal form in the June/July Newsletter and we will need to decide whether or not to publish the Contact List from these responses.
- Membership Subscriptions and Renewals - We need to decide whether or not to change practices relating to overdue subscription renewals and to negotiating reduced subscriptions.
- The Structure and Constitution of EO - This has been *the* contentious item at the last few meetings.

The Structure and Constitution is likely to take the longest amount of time and therefore it will be listed at the end of the Agenda so that the simpler business items can be dealt with first.

Please send any items for the Agenda and any reports to:

Julie Lyons, 56 Newtown Avenue, Royston, Barnsley, S Yks. Tel: 0226 700716

SITUATIONS VACANT

COORDINATORS

Willing volunteers are needed to act as coordinators for the following regions :
**Cumbria, Central Manchester, Cheshire, Northamptonshire, Berkshire,
Buckinghamshire and Somerset.**

Please contact Stephanie Fitcher for details. Tel 0246 239048.

SINGLE PARENT FAMILY CONTACT

Jenny Blower writes : After 3 years I have decided to retire from this delightful post which has brought me in contact with some lovely people. I am about to embark on a totally different way of life and feel that I am not able to give the time and attention that the job requires. Anyone wishing to take up the task can ring me to find out what is involved. Tel 0424 722720 or 0424 725076.

REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, S.E.

South East Region needs a membership secretary. The job involves receiving completed membership forms and subscriptions, sending publications to new members and banking subscriptions. A report is sent to the Treasurer each month and some storage space will be needed for stocks of books. Please apply to Pam Stevenson, Tel 0304 210997.

REGIONAL ENQUIRIES SECRETARY, NORTH

Northern England needs someone to deal with enquiries. The work includes :

Having your telephone number on the EO helpline and responding to telephone enquiries.

Receiving batches of postal enquiries from central address and responding promptly.

Writing letters, sending out information leaflets and membership forms to enquirers.

Keeping a note of expenses and claiming them from the Treasurer.

If you are interested in this post, please contact Mary Babs, 36, Kinross Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 7EF.

EDITORS

Editors for the Newsletter and it's supplements are always wanted. For details of the fun involved, please contact Publications coordinator, see back page.

EO UNLIMITED

Many people at EO meetings have a sense of frustration at the time and energy which needs to be devoted to discussing issues concerned with company law. Some of us want to return to the original ethos which we feel has become submerged and a few of us got together at Featherstone Castle to develop a new EO which is not limited by complicated legalistic constraints, but which operates in tandem with EO Ltd and is open to anyone who shares our aims.

We decided that people, adults and children, are of primary importance and that responding to the needs of people rather than the needs of a created structure, is what we want to do.

We are a group of people who support the right to home educate as an alternative to school.

We would like to further these aims:-

- * To share contact, information and friendship on mutual terms.*
- * To empower and enable children and adults to exercise the freedom to act in accordance with their beliefs whilst respecting the rights of others.*
- * To acknowledge all adults and children as having equal worth.*

To achieve our aims we will work openly and co-operatively and without anything that could be seen as a hierarchy - this is what we want to do in EO Ltd but we feel it has become unwieldy. We hope to have the freedom to work together and to grow. If you like the sound of this and would like to share in developing EO Unlimited please get in touch. We will be meeting again at the next Gathering at Beaumanor in October

Julie Lyons
(S Yks)

Nadine Edwards
(Lothian)

Jill Gillings
(Isle of Man)

Pam Stevenson
(Kent)

Miryam Bush
(Dyffed)

Stephanie Fitcher
(Derbyshire)

Lower Shaw Farm

Informal weekend courses and learning holidays, including:

walking ancient sites, weaving, self-build, co-operative designing.

Autumn activities, aromatherapy, drumming, permaculture etc.

For details please send SAE to:

Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw,
Swindon, Wilts, SN5 9PJ

Montessori in West Yorkshire

Our school is in the country with extensive grounds for adventures for our 16 children.

After running a nursery group for several years and educating Robin (now 6) at home, we now have a group of 6 children aged 5 to 10 years up to 4 days a week. Parents are actively involved, running 2 afternoon sessions on a rota basis sharing their skills in organic gardening, shadow puppets, drama, stained glass etc.

The children have become a close and caring group, able to communicate their knowledge, needs and interests. The stimulating classroom and country environment has given the children the opportunity to gain concrete experience and skills and to develop their enthusiasm for discovery.

Anyone who would like to join us, 4 days or part time will be warmly welcomed.

Contact: Margret Scalfé,

Glen House Montessori School,

Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge,

West Yorkshire HX7 5SQ

Tel 0422 884682

The New School, Poole offers GCSEs

The New School Firmly supports Flexischooling and approximately 50% of our children divide their education between home and school. The School offers a balanced curriculum and enthusiastic, qualified teachers, plus a firm belief that good education addresses social, emotional and spiritual needs of children as well as the intellectual.

We have 14 children, aged 8 to 15 and educate them by ability rather than age.

From September 1993, students at the New School will prepare for GCSEs in:
English Language (1 year course),
Mathematics, Music, Sociology, Information Technology and Business Studies.
Other courses will be offered in time.

We have chosen the Southern Examining Board and are in the process of applying to become an examination centre which will greatly ease the problem of having coursework moderated. If successful, which seems likely, teachers will be able to moderate most coursework and students will be able to sit exams at the school rather than attempting to find an Examination Centre after June 1994.

External Candidates are also welcome to sit examinations with us.

For more details, contact Nina Herne.
Tel 0202 744143 (day) or 742315 (eve)

Now available...

SCHOOL IS **NOT** COMPULSORY

The essential introduction to home-based education

Third edition

* note :- some copies already sent out may be defective, if you have a defective one, please return it to Pat Dixon (see below) for replacement.

Why do families educate their children at home? Can anyone do it? How do you start? What are the problems? And what will the authorities say? Although this publication doesn't aim to show you *how* to educate your child, it does try to answer questions like these, and if you're still considering home-based education you should find it particularly helpful. But if you're an established home educator, you may well find it useful too.

This is the first new edition since 1985, and at 128 pages it's roughly twice the length of the previous one. The original material has been extensively revised, and a lot more has been added. There are several completely new sections, including substantial ones on special educational needs and on the local government ombudsman.

Much of the new material is about the practicalities of your relationship with the authorities, with suggestions on writing letters, home visits, dealing with conflict, and so on. But if you are to communicate with the LEA effectively, you will first need to be clear about your rights and duties. The legal part of *School is not compulsory* has been thoroughly reworked and contains new information on topics ranging from deregistration through education supervision orders to work experience and child benefit. Although the main emphasis here is on England and Wales, useful details of the corresponding Scottish law are given alongside where appropriate, and there's a separate section on the law in the Irish Republic.

But above all, *SINC* contains a variety of personal experience in the words of parents and children involved in "otherwise" education. Most of the accounts published in the previous edition have been kept, but wherever possible they have been carefully used to illustrate points in the text, and some new ones have been added.

Many of "Archie"'s appearances from the old edition, together with a number of other cartoons, have been placed with similar care. And finally the new edition has an index, which should make it easier to refer to.

£3.50 to EO members inclusive of postage and packing.
(Non-members £5.00.)

Send payment with your order to:

**Pat Dixon, 110 Cambridge Street, Wolverton, MILTON KEYNES,
MK12 5AH**

WHERE TO GET WHAT

The following publications are available from Pat Dixon, 110 Cambridge Street, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, MK12 5AH. 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. A guide to your rights. 3.50

Early Years.

Learning suggestions for the under twelves. 2.50.

Later Years.

Learning for older children, plus GCSEs. 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 2.50

Schools Out.

By Jean Bendell. A good how and why book by an ex-EO member and long-term home educator. 5.95

EO Newsletters

Single back copies of 1991 and 1992 issues 1.00

Bargain Bundle

Any 4 copies of EO Newsletters (our choice) from 1987 to 1990. 1.50

Newsletter Digest

Ninety pages of the best from 1982 to 1986. Incredibly good value for money !
1.50

EO Stationary

Envelope re-use labels 2.00 per 100. Leaflets, handbills, posters, forms and car stickers are freely available for publicity purposes.

Headed notepaper for coordinators and officers.

All from : Lucy Charlton, Church Lane Cottages, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, LE8 0FT.

Contact List

Free (to a good home !). Send an A5 SAE marked 'contact list' with a 34p stamp to Pat Dixon at the address above.

NOTE: The information 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.

*******Very urgent note******* : Due to the restrictions of the Data protection Act, entries will only appear in the contact list if express permission has been given by the people concerned. So, if you are one of the 1400 who have not filled in the form at the end of the June/July Newsletter and returned it to Alan Balfe, please do so as soon as possible if you want your entry to appear in the contact list in future. The contact list will not now be produced until after the AGM at Beaumanor in October.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE OFFICERS

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Send SAE for membership and other information to : Education Otherwise,
P.O. Box 120, Leamington Spa, CV32 7ER.
For recorded telephone message, Tel 0926 886828.

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Tel 0227 367059.

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Tel 0707 390070.

SINGLE PARENT FAMILY CONTACT

Jenny Blower, 15a Athelstan Road, Hastings, East Sussex, TN35 5JB.
Tel 0424 722720.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Sylvia Jeffs, 16 St Bernards Road, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 7BB.
Tel 021 706 6460.

COORDINATOR'S SECRETARY

Stephanie Fitcher, 50 Springfield Ave, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 1HL.
Tel 0246 239048.

SCHOOL PHOBIA SUPPORT

Pam Stevenson, 25 Wyndham Road, Dover, Kent, CT17 0BH.
Tel 0304 210997.

SCHOOL PHOBIA YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORT

Angela White, 30a Field View Close, Exhall, Coventry, West Midlands, CV7 9BJ.
Tel 0203 312461.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Address changes and membership renewals to : Alan Balfe, 10 Highlands Rd, Mountsorrel, Loughborough,
Leicestershire, LE12 7HH. Tel 0533 376752.

REGIONAL ENQUIRIES SECRETARIES

East Anglia	Sandie Cottee	0268 733259
Midlands	Gillian Brown	0922 414286
Scotland	Mike & Riase Barbour	0786 824210
Wales	Miryam Bush	0269 861069
London	Susan Long	0245 421496
S.E. & S.W.	Jude Ashley-Walker	0983 78680

REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES

Scotland and the North:	Lorna Brown, 130 Greenock Road, Bishopton, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA7 5AS
Wales & Midlands:	Gillian Murley. Tel 0785 48753.
London & Home Counties:	David Bettie. Tel 0843 583260.
South East:	Isobel Hewitt, 66 Goldington Ave, Bedford, MK40 3DA.
South West:	Maggie Swatridge. Tel 0503 72087.

HELPLINES: CHILDLINE (0800) 1111. KIDSCAPE 071-488-0488

education otherwise

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

Our principal aims are to:

- encourage learning outside the school system;
- 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 (approx. 6"×8.5") stamped self-addressed envelope to:

Education Otherwise
PO Box 120,
Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire,
CV32 7ER

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