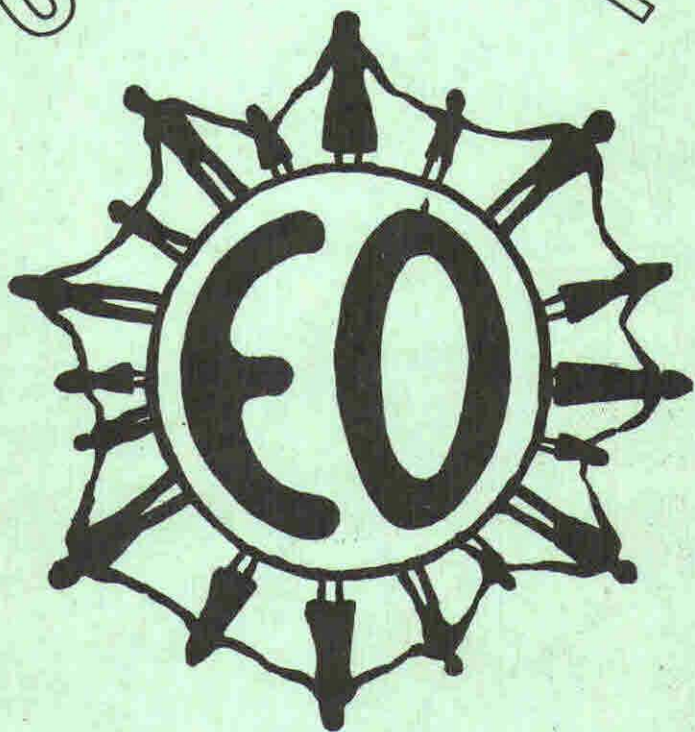


EDUCATION
OTHERWISE



NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 9
MARCH 1979

EDUCATION OTHERWISE
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MARCH 1979

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EDITORIAL

In case you read no further, I should first point out a regrettable printing error in my report of Cathy Isaacs' talk "The expectations of the LEA" in Newsletter No. 8. Line 25 on page 27 should have read "...she said, were MOST interested in the preparations parents had made...". This emphatically alters this part of the account!

This issue is noticeably smaller, with the express intention of reducing the cost of production and postage. I hope you do not object, but do not hesitate to write if you do.

Best wishes.

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

Views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily agree with those of the Editor.

CORE REPORT

The Core Group meeting of 10th. December 1978 was held at the home of Ros and Dominic Sweetman in London. Ros, Elizabeth Sturges, Sarah Guthrie, Dick Kitto and Alan Pye attended, and were happy to welcome John Elenor as co-ordinator for London, but regretted that Peter Jones had withdrawn from the Core Group; we are grateful for his hard work. Helen Fletcher sent her apologies for absence.

John Elenor (18 Eynham Road, London W.12) will put members and enquirers in contact with those nearest to them. However John is to be more than a post box and is to organise group project activities and expeditions for EO children in the London area. Ros Sweetman and John were to make local surveys of members' needs in these directions.

The Digest of Newsletters 1 to 4 has been completed. Compiled and edited by Alan Pye and printed by Ros and Dominic Sweetman, copies are available at 50p each with a 12p stamped addressed A4-sized envelope from The Manor, Thelnetham, Diss, Norfolk.

The 0-12 leaflet was not progressing well. Sarah Guthrie had received only one contribution but was expecting work from Sandra Holmes and Peter Jones. The leaflet is expected to contain a summary of the various "schools" of educational practice such as Steiner and Montessori, with a book list as a main source of information.

Shameem Naimudeen had disappointingly withdrawn from work on the Secondary Age leaflet. A curriculum or syllabus was not envisaged although a directory of educational facilities was to be included. "How to set up Local Groups" will be started by Elizabeth Sturges who will comb previous Newletters for information. A draft will be discussed at the next Core Group meeting.

Fund-raising had not progressed at all. Much will hinge on EO achieving charitable status. Unfortunately, Dick Kitto's first attempt with our Aims was brusquely slapped down by the Charity Commission with the comment that providing advice and support is not a charitable function. Dick was to contact the A.S. Neill Trust Association for advice and will make the next attempt for us in the approved manner - through a charity lawyer.

The research project described in Newsletter No.7 (page 4) was no further forward. Professor Ian Lister was still interested but had no funds. John Elenor, who is at Middlesex Polytechnic, was being urged to do research work and was to clarify his position in respect of financial support for a student.

The Legal Advice Centre is good, solid news. Set up in the wake of the International Year of the Child, it will consist of solicitors who specialise in the rights of children. It will be accessible only to organisations, not to individuals, and will it is hoped play a vital role in such things as interpreting the Education Act and case precedents.

Local Contacts and their role were discussed but were not clarified. However it was agreed that expenses would be paid out of central funds, and in some cases special payments would be made where non-payment might mean the loss of a committed person through financial difficulty.

The Trustee Savings Bank in Diss now handles the EO account and requires two signatures on cheques; Sarah Guthrie agreed to be co-signatory with Dick Kitto.

A questionnaire on members' progress and methods was suggested by Dick Kitto who asked that suitable questions be sent to him by 14th February for discussion at the next Core Group meeting.

This meeting is to be held on Saturday 3rd March 1979 at 2pm at the Sweetmans' house (69 Leathwaite Road, London SW11).

DICK KITTO'S COLUMN

Extract from the 'Bury Free Press', 2nd February 1979.

"Parents kept girl from school"

Two Stowmarket parents were "hoodwinked" into breaking the law, town magistrates heard on Wednesday.

They were led to believe it was legal to educate their daughter at home. But the couple were fined a total of £150 after admitting keeping a girl of compulsory school age away from school.

Mr P. Freeth, prosecuting, for Suffolk County Council, said the parents joined a group called "Education Otherwise", who persuaded them to teach their daughter at home. But this was not legal, unless the education authorities could be persuaded the child was receiving education suitable for his or her age, ability and aptitude.

A senior school adviser, who visited the girl twice, was not satisfied she was being adequately taught, Mr Freeth added. She was kept away from her school between September 6 and November 7 last year, and would now leave at the end of the present term with no qualifications, whereas she would normally have sat eight exams.

Mr Freeth said she was a nervous girl, and as her parents were both self-employed, they felt she could be better taught at home.

Mr D. Pye, defending, said "Education Otherwise" were to blame in this case. He had tried to contact the group, but was only met with "a lot of airy-fairy nonsense" he told the court.

He said the parents had been "hoodwinked" into believing they were acting within the law. "All you get from 'Education Otherwise' was a lot of waffle" he added.

Mr Pye showed magistrates exercise books containing work done while she was off school, but said: "I don't think she has done as well as if she had been taught by a professional teacher."

To explain the letter below, here is another extract from the same paper. This item was in the centre of the front page.

Suffolk County Council has been rapped by the teachers' biggest union because of the number of oversized school classes in the west of the county. More than 100 classes in the area have too many children, a report by the National Union of Teachers claims. And the blame is laid fairly and squarely with County Hall.

The council missed its golden opportunity to improve the

pupil-teacher ratio when smaller numbers caused by a drop in the birth rate started at primary schools. Instead of keeping the same number of teachers, the county cut back by more than 60 and classes stayed too big, the report claims.....

..The union also claims the provision for primary education in Suffolk is the worst in the country and only one other shire county spends less on education than Suffolk.

Below is a letter we sent to the editor of the paper.

6 February 1979

Dear Sir,

Your issue of February 2nd carries two items about education. On the front page is a claim by the National Union of Teachers that some of Suffolk's educational provision is "the worst in the country". On page 29 is a report that a family had been "hoodwinked" into attempting to educate their child out of school.

In the first report our County Education Officer, Mr John Hill, made the valid point that if the people of Suffolk want better provision in schools they must be prepared to pay for it in higher rates. At present through their elected councillors they are voting for lower rates, and this inevitably means lower provision for education and other services. This is a choice which the community as a whole has made, and must therefore accept responsibility for.

But what are individual parents to do if they think their child is suffering because of this lack of provision or for any other reason? What is not generally known is that under the 1944 Education Act it is the parents' duty to ensure that their child receives an "efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude". Most parents unload this responsibility on to the schools and forget all about it, but the fact remains that if your child is not receiving an efficient education at school it is you as the parent who has the duty to do something about it. What can you do about it, though - this is the problem?

Of course, you can make a fuss, see the headteacher and the authorities, write to your MP and generally earn for yourself the reputation of being "troublesome parents". You can even, if you wish, prosecute your LEA under section 7 of the Education Act for failing to "secure that efficient education shall be available in their area". But anyone who has taken on the system in this way will know that to do so is a long-drawn-out and frustrating process, and whatever its outcome is unlikely to benefit your child who is suffering here and now. And don't let us kid ourselves - there are many children who are suffering in our schools, both socially and educationally; many more than the authorities can cope with or would care to admit.

One alternative which is allowed for in the Act is for you to provide for their education "otherwise than at School" (Section 36). If you do this you have to satisfy the authorities that you are making responsible and adequate educational provision and not just covering up your child's absenteeism. Not everyone is in a position to do this, but as a number of families in all parts of the country (including Suffolk) are now taking this step with the agreement of, and in many cases assistance from, the local education authorities, there is a lot of experience to draw upon.

We cannot comment on the case you reported because although we offered to meet the defendant with his legal advisor this offer was not taken up, and so we do not have enough information to judge it. But by the size of the fine imposed we can only assume that the court was not convinced that the defendant had acted responsibly, and was not hoodwinked by their legal advisor's ill-judged effort to offload the responsibility on to this organisation from where it belonged, on the parents' shoulders.

This case apart, the problem remains, and it can be an agonising one for many families. Every child has a right to education, and every parent has a right and a responsibility to ensure that their children receive it. This is enshrined in Section 24 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a right which many of our children are being deprived of in schools throughout the country.

"Education Otherwise" is a national organisation which is backed by teachers, educators and other professional people, whose purpose is to advise and support families who wish to ensure that their children are not deprived of this right and who are determined to exercise responsible control over their education whether this takes place within the school system or outside it.

Yours sincerely,
Dick Kitto.

We are also making an approach to the local authority in the hopes of establishing a cooperative relationship with them, on the lines of what we achieved in Swindon with Wiltshire.

Without going into lengthy details, the facts about this case are as follows. The defendants (the Court ruled that they should not be named) joined EO in May 1978. On joining they of course received "First Steps to Education Otherwise" which sets out very clearly the need to satisfy the LEA about the educational provision being offered. There has never been any question of "hoodwinking" or "persuading" them or any other family that this requirement can be easily met or that it is not to be taken seriously.

They asked advice about their child and I referred them to James Fearnley who lives in Suffolk and who has a law degree (though is not a practising lawyer). James spent a great deal of time (and

telephone money) discussing the case with them, and suggested a number of questions they should put to the LEA. When I moved to Suffolk in December James and I offered to meet the defendant and his solicitor, and a provisional date was fixed; but in the end they did not take up this offer.

This case emphasises two things, I think. The first is the need for all our members, and especially our local advisors, to be aware of the powers of the LEA and of the Courts. Whatever provision we may think is right for our children the Law requires that we gain the approval of the local authority and just what their requirements may be in any case is quite unpredictable. And secondly, if you are threatened with Court action, is the need to secure sound legal advice from someone who has experience of education law and who is sympathetic to your outlook. By its nature, the legal profession is a very reactionary one and lawyers are only human; their advice is bound to be influenced by their prejudices.

I would like to draw up a list of legal advisers throughout the country who meet these two requirements. If you have had experience of anyone you can recommend would you please write to me? I do know two very good lawyers in London whom I would always put people in touch with if the need arises.

Dick Kitto.

NEWS FROM NOTTINGHAM by Helen Fletcher

Helen is a member of the Core Group and is also active in the A.S.Neill Trust Association. She has been working hard to arouse local interest in the Nottingham area. Helen concludes the unhappy story of Shirley Hastings, who appears to have become a victim both of her family circumstances and of professional interests; for example the solicitor who said, "But we want her to go to school". (Editor).

I have had great difficulty with the EO group here. A parent joined with his two children but his commitment was very low. His "progressive" theories changed continually; for example children learn from adult interests and activities, they do not have specific needs, therefore action is not required to satisfy those needs. His theory of freedom merely hid indifference and an inability to cope with the formal aspects of education which allow the discovery of concentration and self-discipline.

Some better news: I have offers of part-time help from three teachers and a new work-room in a friend's house which provides us with more space for the material I have collected.

I attended two Crafts Markets in Nottingham and set up my EO stall with a legal information board, leaflets, newsletters and books on display, but the occasions were only of limited success. I feel we need more publicity: I put my little EO cards everywhere but without results. However, I am also organising a jumble stall for

EO as money is a big problem, as you will know!

I was involved in the case of Shirley Hastings and wrote an article in the alternative newspaper "Nottingham Voice". This is an extract.

Shirley Hastings, 15 years old, has been going to Player School ever since she moved to Broxtowe in 1973.

Broxtowe is a council estate in which many "problem" families are housed. Player school is where their children are "educated" - all the children who are not going to make it, who are considered as having no future in this society (that means they are not going for O or A levels); and those are the words of some people who taught there.

Shirley asked for a transfer two years ago when she started to get beaten up by other young girls. No answer was ever given. So she started to refuse to go.

Her father, Frank Hastings, got caught into the legal blackmail. "If you don't force her to go, you will get fined", he was told. So he did his best. He even tried beating her up but she just went to the police and accused him of assault.

Shirley started to fake going and truanted during the day with three other girls. She told me that anyway she was not going to be in the classroom - the headmistress asked her to become the secretary's runner in her last year - and that nothing was really taught in her class.

"They don't know what to teach you. They're teaching me what I've learnt in the first form. I know all what I need and what I want now is to find a job." Shirley is a young determined woman who is literate and numerate (she has shown me some of her homework).

She got involved in a supermarket theft with three other girls who are living in the same area. One of the girls' fathers, unemployed like Mr. Hastings, was fined £30 for his daughter truanting. Another, unemployed as well, saw his daughter sent into care. The third, employed, managed to get the transfer for which, like Shirley, his daughter had asked before. Frank Hastings was sentenced to jail (two months). He is appealing.

Mr. Hastings, who taught himself to read and write when he left school at fourteen, is straight and articulate about what he thinks and is well aware that the Education Act is servicing the economic and political system and not the needs of the children.

Shirley was brought before the juvenile court as being in need of "care" and "protection" on the 4th of October. Her case was adjourned on the condition that she promised to go to school every day and that if she missed only one day at school she would be taken away into care the same day. No explanation was given about the meaning of being in "care" to her. All I heard was the threat

being repeated again and again.

When I told the Hastings about the Education Act (section 36) they were astonished. They thought school was compulsory. Nobody, not even Mr. Hastings' solicitor, told them it is not and in this country only education is compulsory.

Nobody listened to Shirley. Nobody enquired about her school and the so-called "full-time" education it provided. Nobody tried to contact her headmistress or teacher, as far as Shirley knows.

When I proposed to become her tutor till she'll be 16, her solicitor at the court answered with a sarcastic smile and interrupted me with: "Are you a trained teacher? - No? WE want her to go to school".

It is not only a "social" problem. It is a case of blackmail from the authorities to keep the people away from knowledge of the law so they can legitimise their power. Mr. Hastings should sue the education authority for not providing full-time education and for ignoring Shirley's age, ability and aptitude according to which she should have been educated.

In his battle he needs help because the Notts education authority have now started a hard campaign against truancy.

If parents and teachers were openly and loudly supporting similar cases all over the country (and there are many at the moment), maybe the suggestion in the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act that the protection of society and the promotion of the child's welfare are one and the same thing would start to appear to more people as wrong and dangerous.

Maybe more of us would have to face the fact that we are now standing at the crossroads and that we must choose between a schooled society or a learning society.

It looks as though the case is out of my hands. I wrote to Shirley a few weeks ago to tell her again that I was ready to help as a tutor with a new group and sent her the newspaper article. She never answered.

Editor's note: from a later communication from Helen it appears that the "progressive" EO parent has sent his children back to school. The only other EO parent has also sent her child back to school.

Helen is understandably frustrated by these setbacks; if anyone knows of a group working anywhere in the U.K. she would be pleased to know about it. Helen Fletcher, 18 Premier Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham NG7 6NW.

WISDOM IN SCHOOL : Colin Tudge

The following article first appeared in New Scientist, London, the weekly review of science and technology and is reprinted here with kind permission.

Why are educationists so slow to learn? Why have the lessons of the past 10 years that have so profoundly affected medicine, agriculture, or even architecture, passed them by? Why, like Robin Pedley, who presented some of the ideas from his Pelican "The Comprehensive School" in the Education Guardian (21 November 1978) do they still regard their profession, their trade, as if it were the new religion, when almost all other professions are learning very quickly that what they have to offer is limited in value and in scope, and are adapting accordingly? How much does the country have to spend and how much do children have to suffer, before these zealots see what is obvious to everyone else?

Mr Pedley believes in comprehensive education; if it doesn't seem to work, he says, it's because we don't give it enough support. But there are two kinds of flaw in this kind of argument. The first is confusion of quite separate problems, and the application of a blanket solution to all of them; and the second is the blind faith in that solution, which ceases merely to be a solution and becomes an ideal. Thus one thing that comprehensives do is to provide an antidote to the old tiered school structure, which indeed (despite its merits) was as erosive as apartheid. To be branded as second rate at the age of 11 is a hell of a thing, and at a purely secular level it is hard to see how British industry can ever cohere if its managers and workers continue to be raised as different species.

But though the democratisation of Britain is so desirable, and schools must be involved in it, the modern comprehensive is not designed merely for this task. It is also intended to give a "comprehensive" education which in the words of Mr Pedley means "a full, rich, education to all children - including - for the first time in history - individual attention to the categories labelled 'average' and 'below average'." It is part of the deal, of course, that children will be allowed and encouraged to follow all their aptitudes and inclinations, and "language studies and other academic subjects" should be available in "breadth and depth". Only large institutions can offer such abundance. So the individual attention must take place within institutions containing 1000 pupils or more.

At this point any competent works manager would hear the first warning bell of practical difficulty and would ask whether this simple draft plan could be made to work. He would ask whether "academic subjects", beyond the basic literacy and numeracy that are almost as much a part of human competence as the ability to walk, were worth learning, or teaching. He would probably conclude that they were: history, science, linguistics, and the rest, are a good thing.

Then he would ask whether such subjects should be taught to people who have not voiced an express desire to learn them; and this would give him pause, though he might reasonably conclude that it is part of a parent's responsibility (or of those in loco parentis) to take some decisions on behalf of the young, and that modest coercion to learn was justified.

Then he would ask whether academic subjects were taught well enough in schools to justify the effort; and here, particularly with Illich and Everett Reimer by his side, he would be forced to think very hard indeed, and might well conclude, particularly if he had been to school himself, that for people to learn French from people who didn't speak it was at least an equivocal exercise, and that Welsh might reasonably be allowed gently to go the way of Basque and Ibo, and that "history" was bunk. He would conclude that children didn't learn what they didn't want to learn, and when they did, learned very quickly, in school or out.

He would then ask whether it was desirable or possible to introduce children to subjects they did not know they would be interested in, and would certainly conclude that the answer in both cases was a resounding "yes". But is school the best place to open children's minds to new ideas? Mr Pedley tells us that we have "a splendid teaching profession" but teachers are no better at their job than grocers or general practitioners are at theirs. The difference is that a mediocre grocer or GP does very little harm but a mediocre teacher, like a mediocre comedian, is a bore, and to bore children is perhaps the cruellest and most destructive thing you can do to them. Outside the despised grammar schools, is there much evidence of children being directed into new exciting intellectual fields?

Well, even Mr Pedley admits that comprehensive schools and their predecessors did not inspire children as much as they should. But the reason, says Mr Pedley, is that society has been cheese-paring. Children in private education have three times as much spent on them per capita on tuition fees alone as children in state schools, and "in the end you get what you pay for." So Mr Pedley would like to see a massive jump in expenditure.

But here the hypothetical business manager surely would call a halt. We can all admit that education is a good thing, but there isn't much evidence that coercing children into learning is terribly effective and there is much empirical evidence that as exchanges for the conveyancing of ideas, schools are extremely inefficient. There is no compelling reason for thinking that a three-fold increase in outlay would remove those fundamental flaws. What's needed is to disentangle all the threads, political and social and practical and philosophical, that have become enmeshed in the "comprehensive issue" and to define a series of problems that are soluble and which society can afford to solve. The evangelical desire to baptise us all in the Pierian Spring is not a sufficient basis for policy or for vast increases in outlay.

Medicine has been through this trauma, and has almost come through. Thirty years ago Britain founded the National Health Service, based upon the idea that medicine was a good thing and everyone had a

"right" to health. Now, at last, attempts are being made to define what medicine can do and cannot, and which of its capabilities society can afford. Even 10 years ago Third World countries were building 1000-bed prestige teaching hospitals, just as we are now building 1000-plus schools; but those countries that have any money left are leaving those monuments and building ad hoc health centres, geared to the problems that people actually have. The malaria eradication campaign of the late 1950s was launched with marvellous optimism and zeal, and the world still has malaria. Smallpox eradication was carried through quietly in the 1970s by a series of co-ordinated but ad hoc measures, and smallpox is virtually extinct.

Nixon's "lets lick cancer in the 1960s" campaign was almost the last of the old euphorias, but although it wasted an enormous amount of money, it at least left medical science a little wiser. Educationists are entitled to waste money too. But I do wish there were some signs of growing wisdom.

HOME-BASED EDUCATION - an exchange of letters

This exchange of letters which took place between March 1974 and January 1975, was originally published in 'New Era', Vol 57 No.4 (1976). But the names of the people involved were changed to ensure anonymity for those involved.

Somewhat surprisingly, the letters also appear in the Digest of Newsletters 1-4 (price 50p with 12p stamped addressed A4-sized envelope from The Manor, Thelnetham, Diss, Norfolk) even though they did not appear in the first place and hence could not have been Digested! However, that is a bonus for Digest subscribers. I print the letters here because many of you will not have seen them before and they are worth studying.

It is interesting to note that Mr Milner's approach was firm without being strident and that criticisms of the schooling process in general (in the letter dated 8th April 1974) were followed towards the end of that letter by a disclaimer of direct criticism of Averton Hill Secondary School in particular. Interestingly also, in spite of the unveiling of the big guns in Mr Milner's last letter (more than one sympathetic Professor of Education, more than one sympathetic HM Inspector and more than one sympathetic senior Education Advisor) the authorities were grudging of their approval. Since few of us can command reinforcement to this degree on the Milner scale we must expect (even if we are qualified teachers) more than Mr Milner's share of difficulty with the authorities. (Editor).

The Director of Education,
County Office,
County Hall, Avertern

7th March 1974.

Dear Sir,

After long and careful consideration, my wife and I have decided to take responsibility for the education of our children David (age 13) and Helen (age 11), in accordance with Section 36 of the 1944 Education Act, otherwise than through attendance at school. We should therefore like you to send us any necessary forms or documents relevant to the proposed withdrawal of David Milner from Avertern Hill County Secondary School at the end of this Spring term, and the withdrawal of Helen Milner from school attendance on the completion of her school year at West Hartfield County Primary School in July.

Yours sincerely,
Don Milner.

25th March 1974

Dear Sir,

Further to your recent letter, I note that you and your wife wish to arrange for the private instruction of your two children other than by attendance at school, also that David, aged 13, attends Avertern Hill school and that you propose to withdraw him at the end of the present term, and that Helen, aged 11, attends West Hartfield Primary School and you propose to withdraw her at the end of next term.

There are no forms to be completed in the circumstances you explain but the Committee have a responsibility to ensure that all children in their area receive education "suited to their age, ability and aptitude" - to quote the words of the 1944 Education Act. So that this obligation can be met, I should be glad if you would let me have the following information with regard to their proposed instruction:-

- (a) The name and qualifications of the person or persons who will be undertaking tuition;
- (b) A copy of the timetable to which it is proposed to work, stating the subjects involved and the amount of time to be given to each;
- (c) Details of the text books which it is proposed to use in various subjects.

Yours faithfully,

P.A. Jackson,
Director of Education

8th April 1974

Dear Mr. Jackson,

Thank you for your letter of March 25, concerning our intention to provide for the education of our children otherwise than in school.

As only David (aged 13) will be leaving school this term I shall reply to your queries now only in relation to him. We can deal with Helen's plans later.

You ask us to supply you with the name and qualifications of the person or persons who will be undertaking tuition; a copy of the timetable to which it is proposed to work stating the subjects involved and the amount of time to be given to each; details of the text books which it is proposed to use in various subjects.

First of all let me say that we consider some aspects of normal schooling to be diseducational for children of this age group. Among the aspects that we consider diseducational are the rigidly programmed day, the fragmentation of learning into a subject timetable, the absorption of free time in prescribed tasks, and the reliance on standard textbooks as the basis of learning, rather than on diverse and real experience.

For that reason we cannot give a simple answer to your three queries. However, we do appreciate very strongly the need of children for encouragement, for information which will help them to achieve their goals, and for the support necessary to achieve self-discipline. I imagine these are the matters you are really concerned with, and that you wish to have information to show how we intend to carry out these responsibilities.

We foresee four main areas of work and interest for David during the coming year.

Leathercraft. David will spend a considerable proportion of his normal working week during the coming year practising leathercraft. He has a fully equipped workshop for this purpose, and he has already shown aptitude for the craft. In addition to developing his own skills he will be responsible for buying raw materials, taking orders for work, and keeping proper accounts. We shall arrange for him to visit skilled craftsmen wherever possible, but a great deal can be learnt by practice and the use of various illustrated manuals.

Music. Another part of each week will be spent playing or practising the violin. David plays in the local Saturday morning Music School. He will continue to participate in this and in various other musical events in the district.

We also hope to form a family trio (two violins and cello). My wife is a violinist and I am a beginner cellist, at present of a similar standard to David.

Building. During the course of the next year David will undertake

to design and build and equip a room about 8 ft x 18 ft on a plot which is available in the corner of our garden.

We shall ensure that he has the assistance and support which he needs at the various stages of the project in drawing up plans, getting planning permission, estimating and ordering materials, laying foundations, bricklaying and fitting of doors and windows, roofing, equipping and decorating. Much of the technical advice will come from a local builder.

Art David has always shown a keen interest in Art, especially in abstract design. He will probably spend a good deal of time on this kind of work during the coming year. In the Summer of 1974 and 1975 he will participate in a Community Craft Camp in Wales, where he will have the opportunity of developing new artistic skills, especially in sculpture and pottery.

These projects we have described do of course involve elements of various traditional academic disciplines. Bearing in mind however that David has already a basic competence in mathematics and English, we do not wish during the coming year (ie until the summer of 1975) to oblige him to spend time on what would normally be regarded as the basic GCE subjects. We consider the pressure and artificiality of working for exams at this age to be harmful to a healthy child's natural development and aptitude for learning through pursuit of his own real interests.

We recognise however that at a later age passing exams is a useful social skill, and is even conducive to learning if it is kept within bounds. We would suggest therefore that beginning perhaps in 1975 David will make use of correspondence courses, in order to gain 'O' levels or 'A' levels in subjects of which he sees the relevance, or subjects which are required entry qualifications for a career which he has chosen. My wife and I would of course give him any help he might need to carry through such a programme.

Besides these various activities which we can easily foresee at this stage, David will have a wide range of options open to him, and will have time and freedom to choose the activities which meet his needs. Likely options would include: the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Youth Hostelling, reading (especially biography-style history, general science, and fiction), chemistry (we may equip a simple laboratory in an outbuilding), the Saint John's Ambulance Brigade, woodwork and metalwork, and a prolonged visit to a family in France or a Spanish-speaking country to acquire the elements of a foreign language.

On another point, we do not underestimate the problem of companionship during the day, when all of David's contemporaries will be at school. In order to remedy this so far as possible, we intend to give him every facility to work or play with his friends in the evenings, at weekends, and in holidays. We have no reason for thinking this will be difficult, as our house has always been something of a social centre for the children's friends.

We should like to end with some general observations.

First, we want to stress again what we said at the beginning, that we are not providing a small-scale school, and we do not want to pretend we are covering at this stage a 'normal school curriculum'. We do however want to provide David with time and space to grow up, to make his own decisions, to acquire real competence in chosen fields, and to participate responsibly in the life of the family and in the wider community. This we see as the basis of true education.

Secondly, nothing that we have said is meant to imply any particular criticisms of Averton Hill Secondary School, which is in many respects an outstandingly good institution of its kind.

Finally, we think that the course of action we are taking (which is not simply a 'private tutorship' scheme), is a venture of some importance for others besides ourselves. We would therefore like to feel that we are working in full co-operation with the education authorities, and it might be helpful if we could meet in the near future to talk over matters of common concern.

Yours sincerely,
D. Milner.

21st October 1974

Dear Mr. Milner,

This letter is really my formal reply to your letter of 8th April, addressed to Mr. Jackson. Firstly, I should like to thank you for the thoughtful and well-considered way in which you have put your case for asking that Helen and David be allowed to remain at home for the purposes of their full-time education. I am also grateful for the ready way in which you have helped Miss Cook, my Adviser, to investigate the education programme which you have devised for your children.

I have been impressed with what I have read and heard about David's work and his attitude towards it and I am therefore agreeing to your proposal. My agreement is conditional on David maintaining his present commitment to a full-time programme of work as you have described it, and my adviser may from time to time take the opportunity of calling to see how he is getting on.

I believe that you asked whether certain specialist facilities available in the local authority's schools would be open for David to use. This must depend on the ability and willingness of the headmaster of the school to put his school building at the disposal of a casual entrant. Frankly, I shall be surprised if any Head is prepared to do this but I have, for my own part, no objection to any mutually agreeable arrangement. On the question of music, I have discussed David with Mr. Jenkins, my Music Adviser, and I am prepared to agree to his continued attendance at the Junior Music School based at Hartfield on Saturday mornings.

I regret, however, that I am far from happy with your proposal for Helen. Having fully considered all the reports about her I have come to the conclusion that she is too young and too immature to be allowed to remain at home for her full-time education. Furthermore, she has given far less evidence of being as committed to your proposals as David. This is hardly surprising. I must therefore insist that you take immediate steps to have Helen readmitted to a school of your choice.

I understand that you believe the secondary school to which Helen should normally go, ie Averton Hill, to be too big. I respect your wishes and am perfectly happy for you to approach the Head of any secondary school in the County to see whether he is able to admit her. You will understand that you will be responsible for any travelling arrangements to and from school. I have taken the trouble to acquaint Mr. Richards, Headmaster of Mansfield School, of Helen's case and he has expressed his willingness to admit her. The Mansfield School is a smaller community than Averton Hill and is in my Adviser's opinion a suitable environment for her.

Finally when Helen reaches the age when she is about to start her fourth year in secondary school, I shall be happy to review her case to see whether she can be regarded in the same light as her brother.

Yours sincerely,
C.R. Williams,
Chief Education Officer.

27th November 1974.

Dear Mr. Williams,

Thank you for your letter concerning our decision to take responsibility for the education of our children, David and Helen, otherwise than at school, according to the Education Act of 1944.

We are glad that you agree with the programme of work we have suggested for David. We ourselves are pleased with the work he is doing, and with his development in maturity and self-confidence.

In the case of Helen, this development is even more striking. I feel however that you may have been inadequately informed about Helen, since she had only been away from school for two weeks when your officer visited us, and for many important reasons her programme of work at this stage is less concretised.

First of all you should understand that she is a girl who reacts negatively to structural pressure and to crowds. For this reason she has been on the whole unhappy, depressed, and inactive in a school environment and comparatively active, happy and responsible in a home environment. Her need for home-based education is therefore stronger in this respect than David's.

Because of her disposition, her programme of work is one which must emerge more gradually than David's, and it must be a programme of work very delicately and sensitively adjusted to her needs and motivation. It is for this reason that I did not write for you a schedule of activities such as that which we devised for David.

However, elements of Helen's programme are now definable, and during the course of the year will gain in definition and impetus. The following elements seem to us to be of interest:

1. Helen has a passion for horses. She owns a donkey for which she is completely responsible (for feeding, training, buying equipment), and we are making arrangements for her regularly to attend a riding school. We are also arranging for her to have the care and use of a pony which will be grazing nearby.
2. She has begun, since she left school, to make clothes. She has already made several garments for herself and of her own design, and is in our opinion going to show talent in this field. We shall provide her with every facility to develop this talent.
3. She has read avidly during recent months, and she devised and typed for herself a hilarious 'magazine'. As a former Head of an English Department in a Grammar School, I can verify that the quality of her reading and her free composition is something that I would have been delighted to receive from any twelve-year-old.
4. She has also developed since leaving school an enthusiasm for cooking and baking. Fortunately we have a resident guest who is starting a cottage-industry home-cooking service, so Helen is becoming an informal apprentice.
5. Artistically, Helen has always been talented, and is now developing rapidly. She has outstanding gifts in painting and modelling, and we are discussing how we can set up a pottery workshop. She is also learning copper-craft from a Chilean refugee coppersmith, who is working on the premises.

Quite apart from these activities which are obviously 'educational' in the most narrow definition of the word, we must stress that the home environment itself offers to Helen at this stage in her life important and indeed irreplaceable resources.

First of all she has a younger brother of three with whom she plays a great deal during the day, and whom she cares for. The value of this kind of interaction for both the older and the younger child cannot be overestimated (It might interest you to know that I have recently, on behalf of the educational charity of which I am chairman, made a tour of what are reputed to be the most outstanding experiments in secondary education in this country. In one of those, the Abraham Moss Centre in Manchester, the placing of secondary school children for periods as auxiliaries in a creche for toddlers was regarded as an important achievement!).

Secondly, she has an older brother! Naturally two children of similar age working together in the same premises do an enormous amount to inspire and stimulate (and sometimes annoy!) each other. To split up this group at the present time would be extremely harmful to both Helen and her brother.

Finally, let me conclude at the point where I began. Helen is an outstanding example of a girl who needs at this stage in her life what we as a family can give her. She is in no way deprived of friends, since like David she has more visitors than she can cope with outside school hours. Moreover, it might interest you to know from the social point of view that we have had in the house in the region of 100 resident guest from many different countries and walks of life during the past eighteen months. Helen is visibly and demonstrably growing in self-confidence, resourcefulness and vitality since she has been based at home.

I think it might help you if we make our legal and ideological position a little clearer. We do not wish to make any general attack on schools. Indeed some of the Primary schools in this county are in my opinion outstandingly good learning and growing environments for most children.

We do however consider that the primary legal and moral responsibility for educating children lies with the parents. This responsibility is commonly delegated by parents to school authorities, but it is not necessarily so delegated.

In our particular situation we have, after years of careful consideration, decided with our children that for different reasons each of them would be educated better, in the fullest sense of the word, in a non-school situation. Nor have we made this decision in isolation, but have in our immediate circle Professors of Education, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, and senior Educational Advisers, all of whom would testify on our behalf on the basis of a close knowledge of the whole situation.

I think it would be helpful if we could meet to discuss this matter further. You may feel for instance inclined to allow a certain length of time to pass and then review the matter again. I have always considered this county to be an enlightened educational authority which has given a lead in this country. It would therefore be better in some ways if we could resolve this matter co-operatively without having recourse to the courts.

Yours sincerely,
D.B. Milner.

County Offices
31st January 1975

Dear Mr. Milner,

Thank you for your letter of 27th November 1974. It was a disappointment to me to read that you remained convinced that Helen

would derive greater benefit from full-time education at home rather than at school. I must make it plain that I believe this to be a mistaken point of view. However, my Adviser on her latest visit reported that Helen had indeed made commendable progress in confidence and maturity and I am therefore prepared, for these reasons, to wait and see. I trust that you also are prepared to wait and see. What concerns me about your stand is my feeling that you are so much identified with your aims and ideals that you will find it impossible to reconsider your position objectively. This could have grave consequences for your children's formal education. Will you ever be man enough to admit that you have been wrong?

As I mentioned in my previous letter, it will not prove possible for the educational progress of your children, nor the educational programme they are receiving, to be regularly monitored by my hard-pressed staff, but we shall endeavour to keep in touch from time to time with your situation and will certainly look again at Helen's case in September 1975.

Yours sincerely,
C.R. Williams
Chief Education Officer.

PROGRESS IN LEEDS

Mollie Jenkins sends in this invigorating report on her caring project for the school-weary teenagers of Leeds. (Editor).

January 1979: For the last four months we have concentrated on trying to set up a day centre in Leeds (the Caravanserai) for secondary age children who drop out of school. We decided on this age group as our first priority for two reasons: firstly, the worst school problems seem to arise when children transfer to the comprehensive school; secondly, it is much easier for parents themselves to cope with the education of younger children, rather than with the wider and more specialised interests of comprehensive-age teenagers.

A steering committee was formed in Manchester to manage the project until I move to Leeds, probably about next Easter; and then we shall set about publicising our cause and raising some money. It all seems to take a long time and a lot of effort, but we hope to have our first thousand pounds by the end of the month from donations (including two from EO members) and local fund-raising efforts. In fact, this is only a pump-priming operation: our initial aim is to collect about three thousand pounds to cover the rent, rates, heating, and insurance on a small house for the first two years. Then we shall be able to start taking our first children in September of this year. Once we are in business we are much more likely to attract funds from the major grant-awarding bodies.

We have applied for charitable status, and for this reason the Caravanserai must be kept separate from any political campaigning on the educational front. There should be no difficulty here - it

simply means maintaining an office that does not in any way draw on money raised for the charity.

The Rural Caravanserai is not progressing so smoothly. I have been in touch since September with several families who expressed interest in this side of the project - people who want to live in the country in some sort of loosely knit community, educate their own children, grow their own food, and practise their crafts and trades with like-minded people. We got very excited in September when an ideal property came on the market seven miles from the centre of Leeds. It consisted of a cluster of farm buildings including a house and cottage, and five acres of land.

The idea was that a community would run a smallholding there in conjunction with the City Caravanserai base. Two or three families would live on the site, run the smallholding with the aid of the children who came to the day centre (for the benefit of all) and also run workshops where they could both practise their own crafts and teach the children. Two of the families concerned were prepared to put up £22,000 of the £50,000-odd needed, move into the house and cottage, and so be on the spot to convert the stables for a third family. The three families, with grants and volunteer labour, would then have converted the remaining buildings into a day centre and workshops for the 'drop-out' children, and set up the smallholding.

A bank was approached and they agreed to lend the capital, so an offer was made for the farm. The blow came when we received the surveyor's report: he reckoned that a further £25,000 would be needed just to make the house and cottage habitable before we could get a mortgage. There was no way of finding that sort of money quickly, so we withdrew. Of course, the two families concerned looked for their own houses in Leeds, which meant that their capital was no longer available. However, we feel that if we all move independently to Leeds we shall be in a much stronger position to set up a collective enterprise. Meanwhile the other interested families are still in touch and may yet get themselves organised.

The L.E.A. at Leeds have responded very positively to our suggestions, and discussions are to open at the end of January between us, the Community Education Officer, and the Social Services - possibly the most encouraging feature so far.

The International Year of the Child regards us kindly; 'Make Children Happy' have given us an interim grant and have invited us to apply for more when we get going. Meanwhile, Rowntrees haven't yet turned down our application for assistance.

Joyce Grenfell is coming to do a show for us at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, and afterwards she will attend a local fund-raising jamboree for us. We have more events planned too. I gather my sister-in-law is planning more fund-raising in Bromley (Kent) in February.

So we have made some positive progress in the first four months of the campaign. Now we need all the practical help we can get,

particularly in the Leeds area - people who will give time and energy to fund-raising and actually working on the project. Will any volunteers please contact me at:-

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

THE VERNONS AND EDUCATION OTHERWISE

In Newsletter No. 8 the report on the initial exchange of letters between the Vernons and the LEA was concluded with the authority requesting an interview, and noting that they would keep Hilary's name on the roll of her ex-school "until such time as the County Education Officer's agreement has been achieved". This decision may be significant: while Hilary is not attending her school (even for the worthwhile reason of being educated Otherwise) she is probably being recorded "absent" on the register.

During the interview recorded here Mr. Vernon reacted strongly against the conversational techniques of the Advisor, returning constantly to the "legality" of his own position, the duty of the LEA under Section 37 and his readiness to "defend" the family and "combat" the authorities. This produced an unfavourable reaction from the Advisor. Meanwhile, the LEA offers help if Mr. Vernon should wish it and breathes co-operation; in letters at least. (Editor).

The Advisor came sooner than we expected (only fourteen days after notification of our EO intention) and was pleased to receive the first of our weekly reports on Hilary's activities at home. He gave us the impression of doing us favours, but in fact was acting only according to law: we soon saw the dangers of becoming beholden to him! His "short" visit lasted two hours.

In fact, we were incensed by the way the Advisor breezed in and invited us to tell him all about ourselves and our backgrounds. He had told us about himself (father of six, R.E. and P.E. specialist, confidant-type, outdoor man, folk music enthusiast) and tried to trick us into tricking ourselves into feeling guilty for not being qualified teachers, and not accepting specialist help on "weak points" like maths, French and physics. In fact we had already expressed our lack of confidence on these very topics in a previous letter! "What would we do if we ran into trouble? To whom would we turn?" We pointed out that EO has specialists. He replied that he himself would have no idea how to study physics - and him a teacher's advisor!! We said that we were interested in the "Made Simple" books designed especially for self-teaching to CSE and GCE standard, and he seemed aghast! We got to the point where we asked what we should do if the experts disagreed on material, but all he could say was that he was confused and would have to take advice! But who advises the Advisor?

The Advisor also tried the "matey" approach with his claim to personal friendship with a superior in Mr. Vernon's employment and with whom it would be advisable "not to get the wrong side of...". He also wondered if we, like many police people, had teaching aptitudes, and fished for details of our qualifications and academic connections but we insisted on bringing the discussion back within the scope of the law. This made the Advisor angry and he threatened to leave abruptly saying "You can throw me out if you lilke". He tried to ridicule me and to get my daughter Hilary to say that I thought the Advisor was a "bully". He said we should forget the law as most organisations "bend the rules"; I found this unforgivable.

His final words were that he would not implement our suggestion that he wash his hands of us immediately, but would make more enquiries and put more specialists in touch with us. We know that EO does not advocate confrontation, but after all, pressure will have to be exerted some time!

Approximately a month after the visit, we received the following letter from the Advisor:

"Dear Mr. Vernon,

I thank you for the copies of your most recent letter to the County Education Officer and to Dr. A.F. Pye.

In view of the County Education Officer's direct involvement I shall not for the moment take any further steps until I have heard from him.

Meanwhile if there are any specific ways in which you feel that we might be of assistance to you, you are most welcome to show in what ways we might do so.

If the County Education Officer so wishes I will revisit to see how Hilary's work is going on."

So far, we have not replied. To free ourselves entirely we could reply that we wish to gain complete independence of the authorities, possibly by challenging a court appearance. However, we are rather inclined to wait for the next letter and act according to its method of service.

(Editor's note: By "method of service" Mr. Vernon means that unless a mailed letter arrives by Registered Post or by Recorded Delivery, there is no proof acceptable to a Court that the letter has been "served" at all. Awkward letters delivered by ordinary mail could, he maintains, be ignored for this reason. Similarly, Mr. Vernon emphasises that letters to the LEA should be Registered or sent Recorded Delivery. The LEA then cannot deny having received any such letter.)

PARENTS' DUTY OR LEA'S? by Mick White

The Whites have been educating their daughter Rachel, aged seven, for two years, and are almost founder members of EO. Mick offers a startling interpretation of Section 37 of the 1944 Act which challenges the interpretation used by the authorities that Section 37 provides for access to, and inspection of, children educated otherwise than at school. (Editor.)

I note with satisfaction that section 5 of "The Aims of Education Otherwise: a paper to be presented to the Charity Commission" (December newsletter, page 3) does not endorse the usually held view that the local education authorities have a right and duty of inspection of children being educated otherwise. A careful reading of Sections 36 and 37 gives no such right to the education authority.

The phrase which the authorities (mis)use to support these powers of inspection occurs in the first paragraph of Section 37. "If it appears to a local education authority that the parent of any child of compulsory school age in their area is failing to perform the duty imposed on him by the last foregoing Section [Section 36] it shall be the duty of the authority to serve upon the parent a notice..." This is taken to mean that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is to be assumed that a child is not receiving efficient education. Or put it another way: "How do we know that your child is receiving efficient, full-time education?" On the contrary, Section 37 states clearly that only if the LEA has evidence that the child is not receiving efficient, full-time education (suitable to his age, ability and aptitude) has it any powers to act; Section 37 was not intended to be a means of harassing people who educate their children out of school.

If the act had wanted LEAs to have powers of inspection it would have said so, and it would have been drafted in a rather different form. Section 36 would have read: "It shall be the duty of the local education authority to ensure that every child in its area shall receive efficient, full-time education..." For there is no point in giving parents, on the one hand, the duty and responsibility of educating their children, and on the other hand giving an over-riding duty of censure to the local education authorities. Also, if a duty of inspection was intended, an automatic corollary would have been powers of access to the child. These powers do not exist under this section.

If one considers the 1944 Education Act in perspective, it is clear that LEAs were set up to provide the service of education to those parents who wished to delegate their responsibilities under Section 36 to the local education authority. LEAs were not envisaged as the ultimate authority over the education of all children in their area - which is what they are becoming.

It will be of great interest and greater importance to EO people to know that there is a test case on this point under way at present. A couple has been taken to the magistrates' court by the local education authority because they refused to allow the LEA to

inspect their home-educated child. The authority served a notice under Section 37 which the parents refused to accept, arguing that the authority had no evidence that their child was not receiving efficient education. They were fined. The couple has appealed to the High Court, and at the time of writing the appeal has yet to be heard.

Local education authorities are assuming a power here which allows them to dictate whether parents have the choice of educating their children out of school. By assuming overall responsibility for the education of your child they are ignoring the very heart of the 1944 Education Act.

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

Rights that are neglected fall into abeyance.

MATHEMATICAL EXPECTATIONS by Alan Pye

An extract from Curriculum 11-16, a series of working papers by HM Inspectorate: "a contribution to current debate", issued in December 1977. (Editor)

...these are some of the attitudes, concepts and skills pupils might reasonably be expected to acquire before leaving school. It is to be hoped that in the process of achieving these, pupils will also learn to think clearly, argue logically and communicate effectively.

They should:

- i. Feel familiar with and at ease among the whole numbers and their relationships one with another.
- ii. Perform with understanding the four operations of arithmetic.
- iii. Maintain rapid recall of the sums, differences and products of pairs of numbers from zero to ten; this will be achieved by continual application to questions which require it.
- iv. Apply with understanding the knowledge, concepts and skills of ii. and iii. to larger numbers.
- v. Perform with understanding straightforward operations on simple fractions and decimals.
- vi. Understand percentages and use them in simple problems.
- vii. Be able to estimate numbers and approximate.

- viii. Appreciate that pocket calculators do not make arithmetic unnecessary; use calculators efficiently and apply checks to ensure accuracy.
- ix. Know enough about computers to have no irrational fear of them, and have an appreciation of how logical processes are applied to the manipulation of data.
- x. Be able to read tabulated information, as in price lists and timetables, and work out the probable interpretations of unfamiliar information presented in this form.
- xi. Know enough about diagrams, charts and graphs to be able to interpret those commonly used for communication.
- xii. Know enough about simple statistics to be able to interpret them correctly and not be deceived by them.
- xiii. Be able to perform such calculations about money as are useful in everyday life.
- xiv. Be able to estimate and use a variety of instruments to make measurements in mass, length, time, angle and measures derived from these - for example, velocity; appreciate what they are doing when they measure and, in particular, understand approximation; be able to perform with confidence and understanding calculations depending on the measures, particularly those encountered in science and technical studies.
- xv. Be able to read and understand clocks and other combinations of dials.
- xvi. Solve correctly many real problems in real situations (for example, cut a dress from three metres of cloth, order timber for shelving, use a pocket calculator to tell which size of detergent is the "best buy".)
- xvii. Handle, create, discuss, write about three-dimensional objects, and solve some problems about them physically as well as by calculation and scale drawing; interpret diagrams, plans and maps; appreciate the abstractions made in all two-dimensional representation.
- xviii. Experience and understand pattern in shape and number.
- xix. Have some understanding of proportion, both in shape and in number.
- xx. Do simple algebra; they should, for example, learn to generalise patterns in arithmetic, be able to understand and use symbols in the context of mathematical statements, and carry out straightforward manipulation of symbols in simple formulae and equations when the need for this is appreciated.

SOME PERIODICALS REVIEWED: Helen Fletcher

"LIB ED": In its Autumn 78 issue, Libertarian Education presented itself with the new abbreviated title "Lib Ed" and a new subtitle: "For the liberation of learning", explained in its editorial. The purpose of Lib Ed is to examine the way our society educates its members, well aware that school is "only one of the agencies of conformity" but willing to look at them all.

This 25th issue presents amongst other things:

- A newsletter from San Diego free school "Ocean Beach", some games, some good advice about reading aloud with children and a general schedule of their activities.

- An article on children's cinema with an analysis of Enid Blyton's books and their adaptation for the screen (now shown on T.V. with great publicity). One remark from Bob Dixon (author of "Catching them young", 2 volumes, Pluto) summarises the article quite well: "The five are seen as yet another example of a middle class, self-appointed vigilante group, who are protecting society's (that is their own) standards.

- An extract from the book "Changing Childhood", edited by Martin Hoyles, published in October 1978 by Writers and Readers Publishing Co-op. Its main theme is that childhood is a social invention and not a natural state in our society. Childhood is a myth, portraying "children as apolitical, asexual, wholly dependent on adults and never engaged in serious activities such as work and culture".

- A books review with an enthusiastic recommendation for "Mother Goose Comes to Cable Street, Nursery Rhymes for Today", published by Kestrel books (Penguin) in hardback at £2.25.

"CHILD EDUCATION": The main theme of November's Child Education is dragons: dragoncraft, dragonlore, dragon word games, a very nice poster, a short story to read aloud but an awful song written in 1902 and very moralistic. I found the short article about the first stages of drama quite useful. This publication as well as the quarterly and the "Arts and craft in Education", are for teachers and school education. I just pick and choose some useful ideas. I found the "Arts and Crafts" not inspiring at all, full of very old-fashioned ideas for Christmas.

BOOK REVIEW

CHILDREN'S MINDS OR CHILDREN'S NEEDS? - reviewed by Helen Fletcher.

In her latest book, "Children's Minds" published by Fontana, Margaret Donaldson's whole concern is how to reform school so that it can become a better place; with the prediction that "if the enforced period of national service" (p.13) that is school, is not going to be treated more seriously, the future of our society is at stake.

After her refutation of Piaget's theory that children are mainly self-centred, with some well-explained experiments that make the book so attractive, she recommends some new ways of listening to children and some new methods of teaching. Unfortunately I have the strong feeling that the book is all about understanding where the children are at so that the specialists in education can make them adapt better to the way society works and to its values that have to be accepted because "it is life as we know it" (p.82). She admits that our society is hard on children because it threatens their self-esteem. Therefore she proposes that school has to start working on them from an early age so that they will understand and accept the content and style of the tests and problems posed by "some person whose purposes are obscure". What follows is an idealistic theory of the will-power of the mind thus freed from compulsion and necessity, which is for Margaret Donaldson the purpose of Education.

The "new" teaching methods have been proposed long ago in many deschooling books: for instance, John Holt expounded them in "How Children Fail" and "How Children Learn". Moreover, they were the result of many years of practice, not of research in a laboratory or office (Margaret Donaldson only left University for Piaget's laboratory). The fact that some of the methods she encourages were used in a one-to-one teacher-taught relationship does not make her stop and think about the classroom situation. For example, she ignores the importance of how children relate to each other and to the teacher and how this affects their learning ability to the point that very often it makes her methods practically useless. Her argument that school is an invaluable institution because it is a product of "long ages of culture" avoids a realistic look at its function nowadays and the question of its present justification. Likewise, her argument that school has fostered "latent power" and offered help ignores the historical influence of the family and the culture groups in childrens' lives.

Her belief in school (and a bigger need for it than ever) seems to be an attempt to defend the status of the Educationist and the Teacher (a parent is neither of these) and to defend society as it is. Her idealistic view of the teacher reminds me of the promoters of compulsory schooling at the beginning of the century with their fight against inequality and child labour and the view of certain liberals and socialists that education for all was going to be the answer to the social and political struggles of the time, aware or not of the fact that it was only serving economic purposes.

She concludes that schools and factories should be happier places, certainly for those who, unlike herself, don't belong to the privileged technocracy, so that the status quo is maintained in addition to the jobs of the "strange persons whose purposes are obscure". Unfortunately this book contains very few deep political insights, which is ironical considering that it comes from someone who advocates that teachers should not be frivolous about their failures because of "the intellectual needs of the Community". What about the children's needs? Margaret Donaldson did not write about them.

BOOK REVIEWS by Duncan Hannan

MOON JOURNEY: Jay Williams' adaptation of Jules Verne's novels. This book is very funny. It is about an imaginary trip to the moon and has ridiculous pictures like a swimming pool in a space ship. Published by Macdonald and Jane's.

MANX MOUSE: Paul Gallico. Manx Mouse is a blue clay mouse without a tail. He came to life and had many adventures. I like the story because Manx Mouse is so brave. Published by Piccolo.

BOOKLIST

1. MOON, MARS AND METEORITES (ISBN 0 11 880672 6); VOLCANOES (ISBN 0 11 880621 1); THE STORY OF THE EARTH (ISBN 0 11 880581 9); BRITAIN BEFORE MAN (ISBN 0 11 880774 9). All fully illustrated in colour with photographs and diagrams, at 85p each (which includes postage) from HMSO, PO Box 569, London SE1 9NH, or bookshops.
2. "MAKE YOUR OWN TELESCOPE (FROM EVERYDAY MATERIALS)" by Reg Spry published by Sidgwick and Jackson at £0.95 in paperback. Buy your optical components, then with an assortment of junk and very few tools make a cheap, effective telescope for astronomy. Strongly recommended.
3. HANDBOOK OF WORKSHOP CALCULATIONS (ISBN 11 36087 9) at 8p and METRES, LITRES AND GRAMS (ISBN 423 46520 1) at 50p from the Sales Department, Evans/Methuen Educational, North Way, Andover, Hants SP10 5BE.
4. THE YOUNG NATURALIST'S GUIDE TO CONSERVATION by Neil Arnold (Ward Lock, London 1978) at £2.95. This book has been well-received. Half the study projects are on birds but others range from pond life to trees: the importance of conservation is described.
5. WIZARD OF EARTHSEA; THE TOMBS OF ATUAN; THE FARTHEST SHORE. A trilogy by Ursula Le Guin, published by Puffin. Written for children, they do not insult adult readership and although not epics on the Tolkien scale, they are well-written. (Joan Hoare, Sheffield).

NOTICES FOR NOTICING

1. The Craft Weekend at Lower Shaw Farm will not be held at Easter as originally proposed because the Farm had a prior booking. Instead a meeting and skills exchange for children and adults will be held there on the weekend of 1-3 June. If you wish to attend please fill in the booking form enclosed with this Newsletter and return it to Dick Kitto; not to Lower Shaw Farm.

2. Throwing away those old newsletters? Only if you buy a copy of the Digest of Newsletters 1 to 4 , price 50p with 12p stamped addressed envelope from The Manor, Theltenham, Diss, Norfolk.
3. If you have not already received a correction, Dick Kitto's telephone number is 037-989-475.
4. Have you completed your standing order form for your subscription for 1979 and onwards? Please do so if you can; membership administration is marvellously simplified!
5. The Logo competition will be judged at the Core Group Meeting on 3rd March 1979.
6. The review of John Kirkbride's book "That'll Teach You" has had to be postponed as the book was temporarily out of print.
7. "Education Otherwise" advertisement cards are still available at 50p for 50 from Elizabeth Sturges, 80 Fairview Road, Stevenage, Herts.
8. On Saturday, July 21st at the Manor House, Theltenham, there will be a one-day seminar on "How to teach the Guitar". This is for those who already play, and will be run by David Pairman, G.G.S.M., Cert.Ed. Full details and a booking form will be given in the next newsletter.

This is an experiment. If it is successful we will hold more. But we are bound to be catering for a restricted local clientele - what about one-day events in other places? What about events for children, craft days, musical get-togethers, drama, dance - what happened to Peter Jones' suggestion of joint expeditions?

Would you like to hold an event in your house? Or to make it available for someone else to organise an event? Would you like to organise an event in someone else's house, if yours is not suitable? Would you do so if someone else helped with accomodation and catering? Are there any particular events that you would like to participate in if someone else put them on? Would you like get-togethers with no particular purpose except to meet other EO families. Could you hold one in your own home?

I think it would be very good if during this summer there were a whole variety of EO events in different places, because I think it is essential to the health of this movement that it should become decentralised and should spring from the needs and initiatives of members and local groups. We will help, we will publicise, we will provide lists of names, we will try to build up a pool of experience and information, but the actual events - they, I feel, are up to you.

9. CONTACTS

John and Jane McFie, and Gavin aged 4, are farmers on the Isle of Bute, and will shortly be moving to a large farmhouse there. They want to start looking now for someone to share their house with. Jane writes: "I feel that perhaps the initial introductions might well be done by letter. You can get to know quite a lot about someone by exchanging a few letters. What sort of people? What a question! Certainly not only farming people, though obviously someone very towny could never settle here. Crafty, certainly, though far from crafty myself, this place would in many ways be ideal, being a holiday resort (of a kind!). I feel it is all a bit pie in the sky at the moment, but if we don't make a start sometime... A one-parent family would be fine, they don't even have to be a family, though obviously someone with children would be an advantage. I feel that through EO would be a good way of contacting like-minded people, we would at least have something in common. EO does seem to attract such nice people!"

10. "CONSTRUCTING A PROGRAMME FOR THE 0-12s"

This booklet has now been revised and reissued, and copies will be available towards the end of March.

Like its predecessor it does not set out to be the final word on how to educate your child at home. We have never believed that any such ultimate method exists - rather each family will discover their own method which will match their child's needs and their own predilections; it is something which will emerge creatively in the context of the family life-style.

The booklet merely supplies guidelines, ideas, stimulus, and is itself emerging and changing to reflect the growing ideas of our members. We are already beginning to look forward to the next edition, so please do continue to feed us with your own experiences and ideas. We would particularly like to have some sample programmes. What sort of programme have you drawn up initially to satisfy the LEA and how far in practice have you attempted and managed to stick to it?

The cost of the new booklet is 40p (plus 10"x7" 9 1/2p sae). Special price to members to cover basic costs is 20p, plus sae. (To save bank and admin charges we suggest you send 3 x 7p stamps). Apply to Dick Kitto, The Manor House, Thelnetham, via Diss, Norfolk.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Our society requires its children to go to school and to stay there for eleven years".

From the general introduction to Curriculum 11-16 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, December 1977.