

LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION 20p



LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION 22

Summer, 1977

As readers of the last issue may have noticed, **Libertarian Education** has had something of a facelift in terms of its general design and layout. As well as sharpening up the way the magazine looks, we also hope to do the same for what it says.

To this end one of the key areas we intend to examine more closely is the way extra-school organisations, such as the mass media, frame the behaviour and horizons of both children and adults. This issue contains a piece on Walt Disney, whose films are seen by virtually every child, and many adults too, in the developed part of the world and increasingly in developing nations as well. The piece shows that far from being innocent fun, Disney's products are laden with political and social propaganda.

As well as these wider spheres of interest **Libertarian Education** wishes to maintain a close eye on what is happening in state education as well as outside it in free schools. For this we necessarily depend heavily on articles from readers. In order to be a realistic forum for ideas, there must be two way communication between those who write for the magazine and those who read it. So don't be afraid to put pen to paper, even if it's just to say what you think of the current issue.

Contact us at:
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Leicester, England.
tel. (0533) 552085



positive proposal

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TRICKY MICKEY:

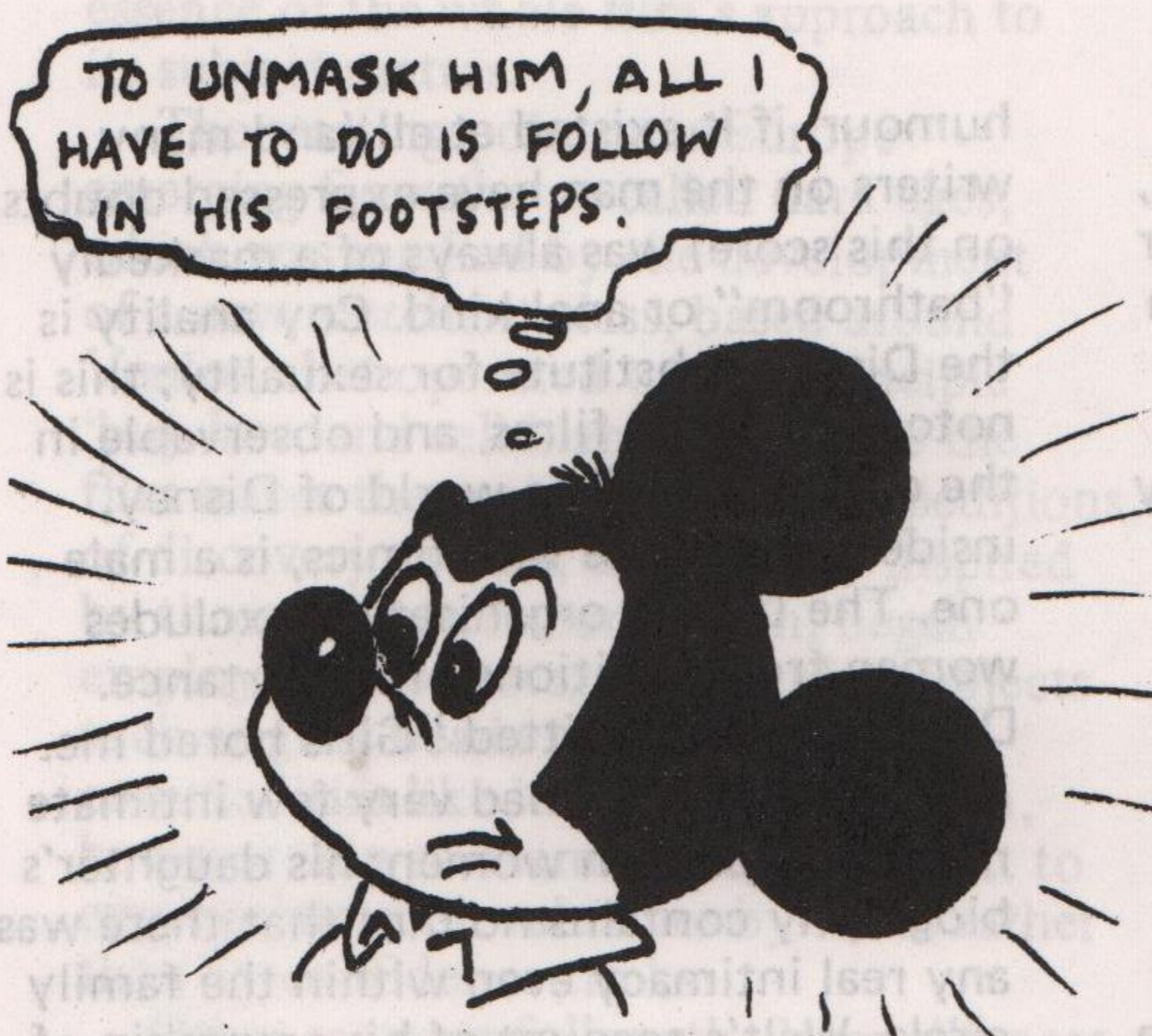
David Kunzle

How to read Donald Duck by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart was originally published in Chile as *Para Leer al Pato Donald* in 1971. The English edition was published in 1975 with an introduction by David Kunzle from which this extract is taken.

The names of the Presidents change; that of Disney remains. Forty-six years after the birth of Mickey Mouse, eight years after the death of his master, Disney may be the most widely known North American name in the world. He is, arguably, the century's most important figure in bourgeois popular culture. He has done more than any single person to disseminate around the world certain myths upon which that culture has thrived, notably that of an "innocence" supposedly universal, beyond place, beyond time — and beyond criticism.

The myth of US political "innocence" is at last being dismantled, and the reality which it masks lies in significant areas exposed to public view. But the Great American Dream of cultural innocence still holds a global imagination in thrall. The first major breach into the Disney part of this dream was made by Richard Schickel's *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney* (1968). But even this analysis, penetrating and caustic as it is, in many respects remains prey to the illusion that Disney productions, even at their worst, are somehow redeemed by the fact that, made in "innocent fun", they are socially harmless.

While many cultural critics in the United States bridle at the magician's unctuous patter, and shrink from his bland fakery, they fail to recognise just what he is faking, and the extent to which



it is not just things, but people he manipulates. It is not merely animatronic robots that he moulds, but human beings as well. Unfortunately, the army of media critics have focused over the past decades principally the "sex-and-violence" films, "horror comics" and the peculiar inanities of the TV comedy, as the great bludgeons of the popular sensibility. If important sectors of the intelligentsia in the US have been lulled into silent complicity with Disney, it can only be because they share his basic values and see the broad public as enjoying the same cultural privileges; but this complicity becomes positively criminal when their common ideology is imposed upon non-capitalist, under-developed countries, ignoring the grotesque disparity between the Disney

dream of wealth and leisure, and the *real* needs in the Third World.

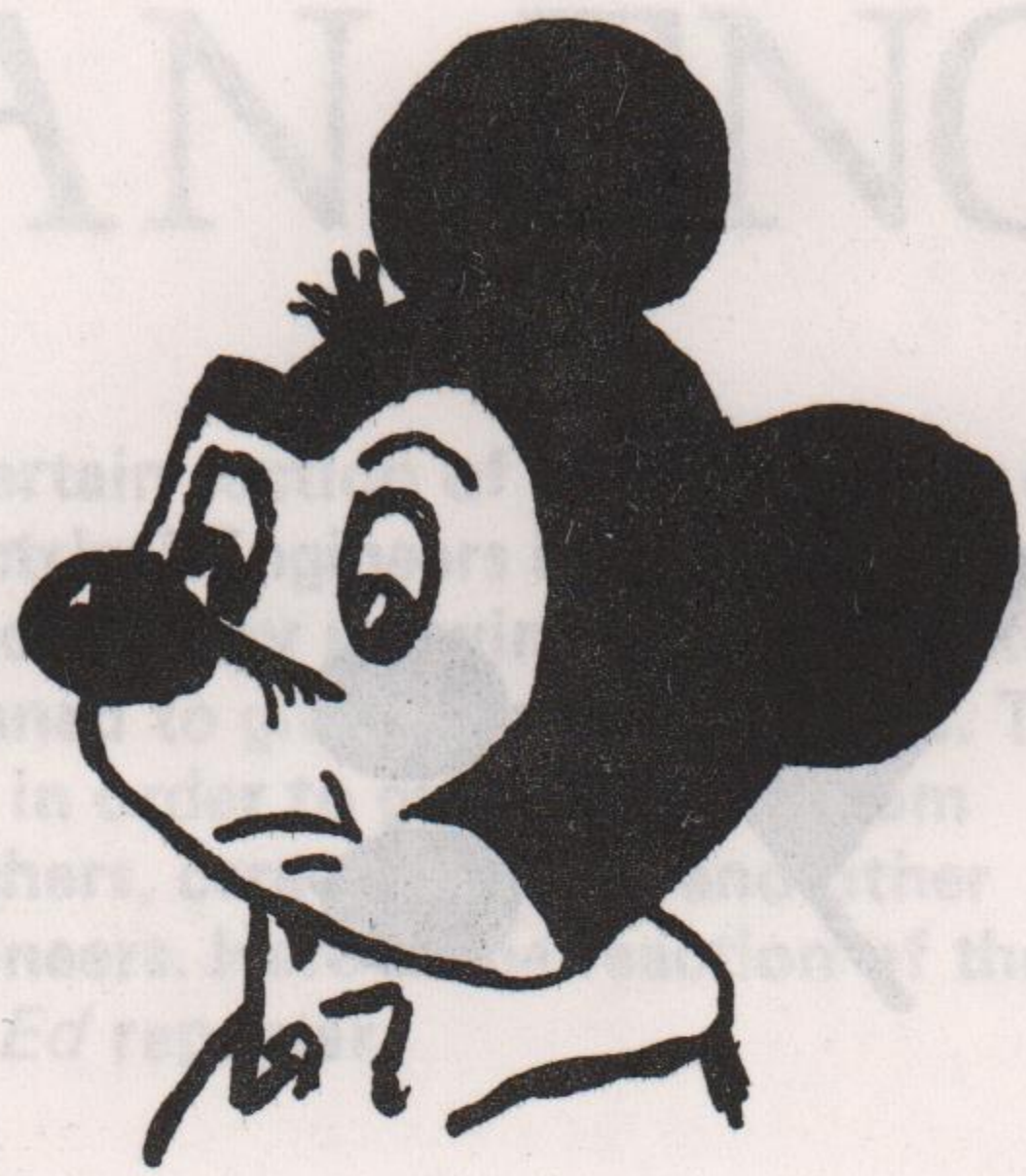
Walter Elias Disney was born in Chicago in 1901. When he was four, his father, who had been unable to make a decent living in that city as a carpenter and small building contractor, moved to a farm near Marceline, Missouri. Later, Walt was to idealise life there, and remember it as a kind of Eden (although he had to help in the work), as a necessary refuge from the evil world, for he agreed with his father that "after boys reached a certain age they are best removed from the corruptive influences of the big city and subjected to the wholesome atmosphere of the country.

But after four years of unsuccessful farming, Elias Disney sold his property, and the family returned to the city — this time, Kansas City. There, in addition to his schooling, the eight year old Walt was forced by his father into brutally hard, unpaid work as a newspaper delivery boy, getting up at 3.30 every morning and walking for hours in dark, snowbound streets.

The memory haunted him all his life. His father was also in the habit of giving him, for no good reason, beatings with a leather strap, to which Walt submitted "to humor him and keep him happy". This phrase in itself suggests a conscious attempt, on the part of the adult, to avoid confronting the oppressive reality of his childhood.



The ideology of Disneyland



disney continued

else; he married her (when his brother Roy married, and moved out) because he needed a new room-mate, and a cook.

But just as Disney avoided the reality of sex and children, so he avoided that of nature. The man who made the world's most publicised nature films, whose work expresses a yearning to return to the purity of natural, rustic living, avoided the countryside. He hardly ever left Los Angeles. His own garden at home was filled with railroad tracks and stock (this was his big hobby). He was interested in nature only in order to tame it, control it, cleanse it. Disneyland and Walt Disney World are monuments to his desire for total control of his environment, and at the end of his life he was planning to turn vast areas of California's loveliest "unspoiled" mountains, at Mineral King, into a 35 million dollar playground. He had no sense of the special non-human character of animals, or of the wilderness; his concern with nature was to anthropomorphise it.

Walt's mother, meanwhile, is conspicuously absent from his memories, as is his younger sister. All his three elder brothers ran away from home, and it is a remarkable fact that after he became famous, Walt Disney had nothing to do with either of his parents, or, indeed, any of his family except Roy. His brother, Roy, eight years older than himself and throughout his career his financial manager, was from the very beginning a kind of parent substitute, an uncle father-figure. The elimination of true parents, especially the mother, from the comics, and the incidence in the films of mothers dead at the start, or dying in the course of events, or cast as wicked stepmothers (*Bambi*, *Snow White* and especially *Dumbo*), must have held great personal meaning for Disney. The theme has of course long been a constant of world folk-literature, but the manner in which it is handled by Disney may tell us a great deal about 20th century bourgeois culture. Peculiar to Disney comics, surely, is the fact that the mother is not even, technically, missing; she is simply non-existent as a concept. It is possible that Disney truly hated his childhood, and feared and resented his parents, but could never admit it, seeking through his works to escape from the bitter social realities associated with his upbringing. If he hated being a child, one can also understand why he always insisted that his films and amusement parks were designed in the first place for adults, not children, why he was pleased at the statistics which showed that for every one child visitor to Disneyland, there were four adults, and why he always complained at getting the awards for Best Children's Film.

As Dorfman and Mattelart show, the child in the Disney comic is really a mask for adult anxieties; he is an adult self-image. Most critics are agreed that Disney shows little or no understanding of the "real child", or real childhood psychology and problems.

Disney has also, necessarily, eliminated the biological link between the parent and child - sexuality. The raunchy touch, the barnyard humour of his early films, has long since been sanitised. Disney was the only man in Hollywood to whom you could not tell a dirty joke. His sense of

humour, if it existed at all (and many writers on the man have expressed doubts on this score) was always of a markedly "bathroom" or anal kind. Coy anality is the Disney substitute for sexuality; this is notorious in the films, and observable in the comics also. The world of Disney, inside and outside the comics, is a male one. The Disney organisation excludes women from positions of importance. Disney freely admitted "Girls bored me. They still do." He had very few intimate relationships with women; his daughter's biography contains no hint that there was any real intimacy even within the family circle. Walt's account of his courtship of his wife establishes it as a purely commercial transaction. Walt had hired Lillian Bounds as an inker because she would work for less money than anyone

Prospective freelancers for Disney receive from the Publications division a sheaf of Comic Book Art Specifications which instead of inviting the invention of new characters do exactly the opposite: they insist that only the established characters be used, and moreover, that there be no "upward mobility. The subsidiary figures should never become stars in our stories, they are just extras".

Not only sex, but love is prohibited (the relationship between Mickey and





Minnie, or Donald and Daisy, is "platonic" — but not a platonic form of love). The gun laws outlaw all firearms, but "antique cannons and blunderbusses"; (other) firearms may, under certain circumstances, be waved as a threat, but never used. There are to be no "dirty, realistic business tricks," no "social differences," or "political ideas." Above all, race and racial stereotyping is abolished: "Natives should never be depicted as negroes, Malayans, or singled out as belonging to any particular human race, and under no circumstances should they be characterized as dumb, ugly, inferior or criminal."

As is evident from the analysis in this book, and as is obvious to anyone at all familiar with the comics, none of these rules (with the exception of the sexual prohibition) have been observed in the past, in either Duck or Mouse stories. Indeed, they have been flouted, time and time again. Duckburg is identifiable as a typical small Californian or Midwestern town, within easy reach of forest and desert (like Hemet, California, where Carl Barks, the creator of the best Donald Duck stories lived); the comics are full of Americanisms, in custom and language. Detective Mickey carries a revolver when on assignment, and often gets shot at. Uncle Scrooge is often guilty of blatantly dirty business tricks, and although defined by the Specifications as "not a bad man", he constantly behaves in the most reprehensible manner (for which he is properly reprehended by the younger ducks). The stories are replete with the "social differences" between rich and penniless (Scrooge and Donald), between

virtuous Ducks and unshaven thieves; political ideas frequently come to the fore; and, of course, natives are often characterised as dumb, ugly, inferior and criminal.

The Specifications seem to represent a fantasy on the studios' part, a fantasy of control, of a purity which was never really present. The public is supposed to think of the comics, as of Disney in general, in this way; yet the past success of the comics with the public, and their unique character vis-a-vis other comics, has undoubtedly depended on the prominence given to certain capitalist, socio-political realities, like financial greed, dirty business tricks, and the denigration of foreign peoples.

The Disney parks have brought the fantasies of the "future" and the "fun" of the comics one step nearer to capitalist "reality". "In Disneyland (the happiest place on earth)," says Public Relations, "you can encounter 'wild' animals and native 'savages' who often display their hostility to you — invasion of their jungle privacy... From stockades in Adventureland, you can actually shoot at Indians."

Meanwhile, out there in the *real* real world, the "savages" are fighting back.

David Kunzle is an art historian who has written extensively on comics



notes....

NOTE TO READERS

Unfortunately, due to ever increasing costs we have had to increase our prices but we have kept our basic cover price the same.

This magazine is distributed to bookshops, newsagents and similar outlets by the Publications Distribution Co-operative — details from PDC at 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

However, if you wish to take a number of copies of Lib Ed (sale or return, of course) to sell at meetings, conferences and so on, we will be pleased to send you a bundle, including back issues if you desire — requests to Blackthorn Books, 74 Highcross St., Leicester.

free school

Manchester Free School Needs Helpers

Manchester Free School was started five years ago by four parents of young children. Since then they have moved many times; some times they have been registered with the DES in their own building and at other times with the LEA as home tuition groups, which is the position they have been in for the last 15 months.

At last they have been able to buy a building and are moving in.

They need helpers— 3 or 4 full time plus any number of part timers. No qualifications are necessary but they are looking for a wide range of experience and a democratic approach. They can't afford to pay anybody.

Contact: Tony O'Mahoney
28 Brundretts Rd
Chorlton
Manchester 21
061 881 0477

back issues

Summary of contents of back issues of Libertarian Education still available.

16. Tolstoy on Education
1911 School Strikes
Critique of Illich
17. Racism in School
Syndicalism and Teaching
Guerrilla Teachers Manual
18. Victimized Teachers
The Sacking of Manny Moreno
The John Warburton Case
19. Behaviourism & Education
Vandalism
What do Schools Do?
20. Media Study
Subversive Drama
Questioning The System

IF WE DON'T WARN YOU, WHO WILL?

CITY OF LEEDS TWO Defence Campaign, Bulletin One, March 1977.

On 16th February 1977 two young people were arrested outside the City of Leeds High School, for handing out leaflets to the school students going in. The leaflet questioned some of the school's rules and pointed out the existence of the National Union of School Students. The two people were held for over six hours, before being charged with distributing leaflets 'of an abusive and insulting nature' that were 'likely to cause a breach of the peace' (under Section 5 of the Public Order Act, 1936). Whilst being held, their homes were raided without a warrant, and their solicitor was denied access to them for about two hours. One of them was also interrogated by two Special Branch officers.

The arrests followed hysterical front page publicity in the Yorkshire Evening Post against other leaflets being given out to Leeds school students, that pointed out the oppression faced by young people, and some ways in which they can and do fight back.

Although the two people arrested face a £100 fine and three months imprisonment, this is not all that is at stake. They are being charged with distributing leaflets that were likely to cause a breach of the peace; but in fact there was no breach of the peace, and we know of no instance where handing out leaflets to school students has led to a breach of the peace. So on what grounds did the arresting officers judge that a breach of the peace was likely on this occasion?

The arrests were obviously designed to prevent leaflets of a radical nature being given to school students. The Public Order Act is a very convenient way of doing this.

Why are the authorities afraid of such leaflets? They are afraid of young people thinking, discussing and organising together for change. People who fight for more control over their own lives always come up against the repressive apparatus of the state; be it the headmaster's cane in

school, the policeman's truncheon on the streets, or the soldiers' guns in Northern Ireland. The education system exists to produce a continuous supply of people to be exploited. Therefore, anything that challenges the basis of the education system is seen (correctly) as a threat to the existing order. That is why people who say that young people have minds of their own, that they are people in their own right and should control their own lives, are continually harassed by the authorities. That is why the Little Red Schoolbook was censored, why the editors of Schoolkids' Oz ended up at the Old Bailey, and why these two people have been arrested outside the City of Leeds High School.

If they are found guilty it will make it impossible to distribute leaflets to school students without the probability of arrest. And how long will it be before these powers are extended to arresting leafletters outside factories or at shopping centres?

Libertarian Education reprints the leaflet here:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CITY OF LEEDS SCHOOL?

There are lots of rules — do they help your education?

Do you agree with boys being caned for having their top buttons undone? Do you think girls should be stopped from wearing sleeveless tops? Are nylon dresses best for summer?

Do you want to be stopped from going where you want at dinner time? Is the ban on Lewis' justified? Do you think walking around town eating, or wearing woolly hats, gives you a 'bad name'? Do you think girls should be allowed trousers with bottoms wider than 12"?

Do you think that if teachers are allowed to smoke in school, you should have a place to smoke (if you're over 16 of course!) at break and dinner time — and that *no-one* should smoke indoors? Do you think that third and fourth formers are not capable of using the front door? Do you think that only 6th formers and teachers should be allowed to use the fire steps?

What are the reasons for these rules?

Do they help you learn about society, or to think for yourselves? Would you be lost without them? Some schools in Leeds seem to survive without school uniform. Does it really give you a 'sense of belonging'? Do you feel proud to walk the streets in the uniform of a school with a 'good name'?

Are such rules meant (by those who make them) to help you think for yourselves and make decisions about your own lives? The recent comments of two Headmasters tells us —

"14 and 15 year olds are quite old enough to understand they have responsibilities to themselves, their parents and society. They have to learn that when a rule is laid down they

will inevitably have to conform to it." (*Evening Post*, 28.1.77)

"It [the cadet force at his school] encourages a sense of manliness and discipline in boys.

After all, one has to take orders in real life, and a military environment is good for learning this." (*School Student* [NUSS paper] No 1)

These two Headmasters show what they think you're at school for – to learn to do what you're told, to take orders and shut up. What about Rocky? (the Head of Leeds School. D.C.)

He lets you have form representatives – have they really got the power to make and act on decisions? Or are these meetings just talking shops? Would Rocky really give it any power? **What can you do about it?**

In May 1972 the National Union of School Students (NUSS) was formed by school students who were fed up with school. They realised that trying to do anything on your own is like banging your head against a brick wall. But when you organise and act together your voice is much more powerful. You can force older people to recognise that you exist, that you are people in your own right.

Amongst other things, the NUSS fights to get rid of the cane, school uniforms and exams. They also campaign for a grant for all school students aged 16 or over.

If you want to be put in touch with some school students in Leeds who are interested in starting up the NUSS here, then drop a line to [address supplied. D.C.]

Is it possible to change things?

Up and down the country school students have fought and are fighting for more control over their own lives. And something you won't find in your history books is the national schoolkids' strike of 1911. Almost every school in England was forced to close!

There are dozens and dozens of schoolkids' strikes every year. Just a couple of weeks ago pupils of a school in Nottingham walked out after the Headmaster said that the girls dressed like 'tarts'.

Through strike action, school students have fought and won in many schools on issues like getting rid of the cane. There are many types of action that have been used – petitions, sit-downs occupations, strikes, demonstrations, non-cooperation (when you all refuse to do what you're told until your demands are met), etc.

If someone refuses to be caned, and everyone stands up for them, there's not much that Rocky can do. If it happens all the time he will either have to expel the whole school (and lose his job) or abolish caning. When you don't stand together, or if you hit back on your own, they can easily beat you. But if you stand up for each other you'll soon have them on the run.

Winning the right to wear woolly hats or to go into Lewis' won't make school that much better – but it will be a step in the direction of being able to determine your own lives. It will be a way of saying to those who try and control you –

"We've got minds of our own!

We'll make our own decisions!

You're not going to tell us what to do!"

And it is possible to change more than just school rules

In South Africa and Zimbabwe ('Rhodesia'), where black people are kept on their knees by white racist rulers, black school students have been rising in revolt in the last few months. They have refused to go to school, and have been out on the streets fighting their racist rulers. Only two weeks ago, 400 African schoolkids went (of their own free will) across the border from Zimbabwe to train to become armed FREEDOM FIGHTERS. They have the power and the will to win their country for their people and to build a new world.

There are lots of people who have decided that they're not just going to accept what they're told, and who have decided to do something about it.

As long as we think that things can't change, then things won't change. When we realise we can change the world, then we will.

If you are interested in the ideas of this leaflet (contact phone number supplied.)

Support to: **The CITY of LEEDS TWO DEFENCE CAMPAIGN,**
c/o 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2, West Yorkshire.

See
STOP PRESS
over Page

POLICE PROBE 'YOUTH POWER' SCHOOL THREAT



By ROBERT COCKCROFT
Special Branch officers are studying leaflets which are being distributed to hundreds of Leeds schoolkids, inviting them to join an extremist 'youth power' organisation.

Mystery man backs down
POLICE PROBE 'YOUTH POWER' SCHOOL THREAT

EVENING POST
Willie backs down



all together now...

In South Leicestershire they claim to have found a way of keeping down the crime rate for young people by getting fuzz from the Juvenile Bureau to go on 'meet the kids' tours of schools.

In fact the Bureau do seem nicer than ordinary run of baton charging pigs, but they are still policemen and have all the basic assumptions of the profession.

At one school they asked if they could see 'the lower ability boys' on their own for a talking to, there is no need surely to explain what was in the bluebottles' minds. Their request was refused. In fact when they were talking to the kids they seemed OK. They confined themselves to giving legal definitions of what the laws are concerning thefts, burglaries, trespass etc. However, to introduce the idea of the police to the kids they showed a young recruiting film. It began with a young office worker watching a bloke being forced into a Black Maria by two fuzz, over the sound track "Action" I thought "those two guys are really getting something out of life".

The film was revealing in its assumptions; a bloke and a girl fighting in the street were immediately labelled 'ponce' and 'tart' and were shown being mugged by the pigs and chucked into a Black Maria. Women are shown as sex objects (crafty shots of '60's style 'show-pants') even the fuzzwomen get sexually alluded to. Immigrants are shown as idiots.

Your friendly Juvenile Bureau are not ogres, they just subscribe good naturedly to the racist, sexist, property-protecting values that make our society what it is.

M.G.

The Leader of the Pack

Last summer I helped to organise a village study with a group of fourteen year olds from school. One of the local places of interest is a disused and water-filled quarry, a fascinating spot. At the end of a lunch break I set off to 'find' a group of lads who'd gone off without saying where, I had an idea they'd gone to the quarry. When I arrived there, police cars, fire engines were all over the place. There was smoke bellowing from the quarry side, the gorse was on fire and the firemen together with police frogmen were trying desperately to put it out. Through the smoke I spotted the 'gang' about a hundred yards away on the opposite side and I walked through the activity to get to them. They were obviously enjoying the spectacle, laughing and shouting encouragement (?) and didn't see me until I had almost joined them. Apparently the police had actually set fire to the gorse themselves and were putting it out as an exercise, things had got out of hand it seemed. We decided to set back to the village and walked towards the vehicles and men with me in the lead. As I passed the first panda-car a big, burly policeman jumped towards me shaking his fists and shouting abuse, "Why don't you lot piss off! Go on or I'll sock you one between the eyes!"

I was rather surprised, "I'm sorry . . ."
"Oh you're very big now, with your mates behind you, clever sod!"

"Excuse me," I said, very politely, "I happen to be these lads' teacher . . ."
He leapt nearly three feet into the air, "You ought to keep them more under control!" he spluttered after he'd regained his footing and then continued to accuse the lads of throwing stones at the divers (remember from a distance of a hundred yards) and "shouting and laughing at us!"
The other policemen backed him up and agreed I should have more discipline! We continued on our way contemplating what would have happened if he'd lumped me one.

R.M

STOP PRESS

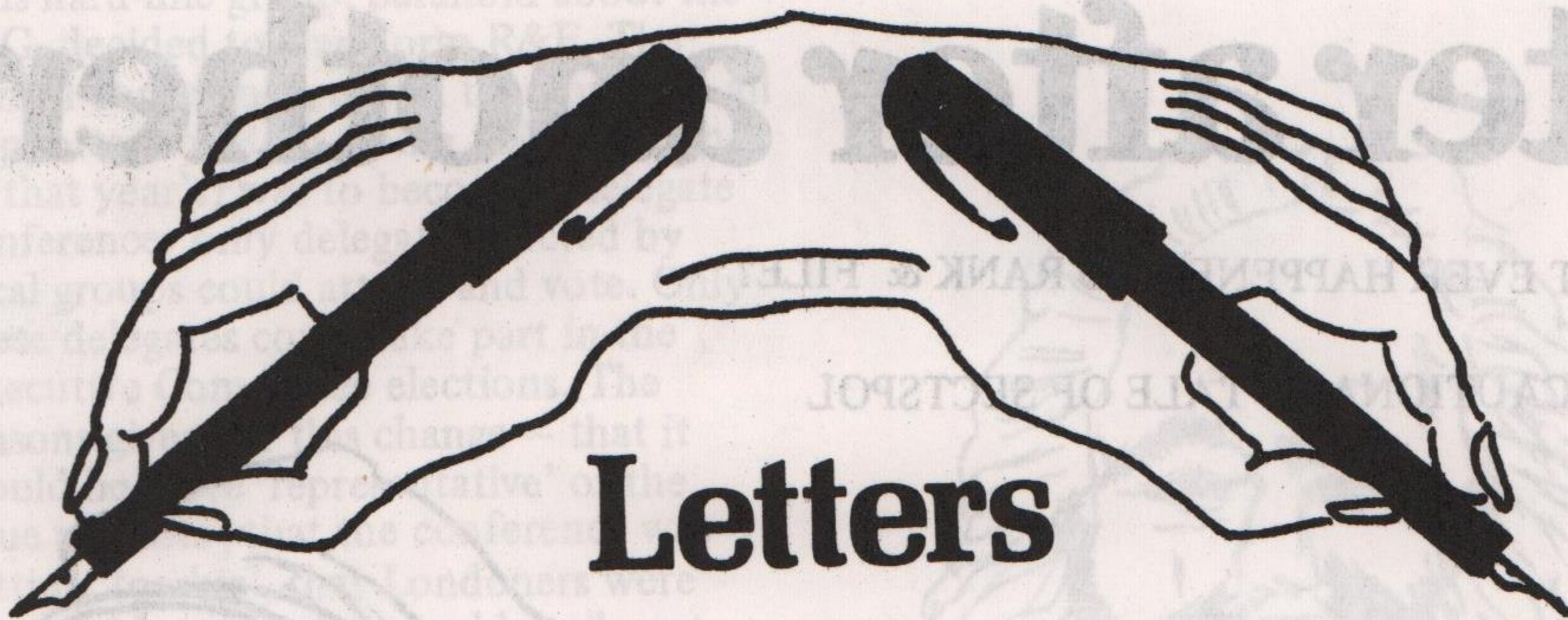
The two defendants have had the case against them dismissed! The Stipendary Magistrate, David Loy, said that the leaflet might be 'deplorable', but couldn't be called insulting or abusive and dismissed the case. There had been no evidence given, though the prosecuting solicitor, Pollard, had given a speech arguing that the leaflet would insult 'any teacher'. His argument was based on

the final paragraph which was headed 'And it is possible to change more than just school rules' (see leaflet). He said that this meant that school teachers treat their pupils in the same way as racist teachers and the regimes in Southern Africa treat blacks.

The prosecution seemed to be clutching at straws to justify the massive over-reaction which had brought to light a

number of aspects of police activity. One is that schools in Leeds have been instructed to inform the police and specifically the Special Branch whenever leaflets are handed out to pupils. The (Leeds) *Evening Post* had declared the leaflets and similar ones produced by the group which calls itself Youth Power as 'vicious nonsense' and a 'threat to our children' put out by an 'evil little clique'.

The Defence Campaign had been well organised, produced informative bulletins, was given a good coverage in the *Leeds Other Paper* and arranged a successful picket of the court on the day of the trial. They deserve to be congratulated, but no doubt this is not the end of the struggle. ●



Letters

Comrades,

Comrade Stuart Christie directed us to write to you for the following reason: we are interested in what has happened to Summerhill school since A.S. Neill's death, and how other libertarian schools are getting along. We wish to publish, in Mexico, a pamphlet or a book on the subject of the philosophy and practice of such schools.

Hoping to hear from you soon,

Fraternally,

Antarcha

OMAR CORTES
APARTADO POSTAL 12-818
MEXICO 12, D. F.

Can people with any information of use to the Mexican comrades please write to us and we will send it on.

Sir,

I have no objection to Messrs. Sherriff and Wade (or indeed any other Tom, Dick or Harry) tacking their 'points' on to the end of my interview with A.S. Neill. I do however fiercely object to their gratuitous generalisations.

What right, what *evidence*, do they have to label Summerhill 'a ghetto for the trendy'? The merest acquaintance with the history of the school would have informed them that Neill was forced to take a large percentage (particularly large during the early days) of youngsters who had been deemed uneducatable in conventional schools. We know Neill's interest was in the psychology of a sick society, he did not set out deliberately to have freedom for the 'problem' child, but he decided he had to make a start somewhere. Yes, these youngsters were indeed 'privileged'.

Second. Neill makes the point in the interview that he was following his instincts. He had no notion of developing 'a philosophy of libertarian education'. (What exactly *is* this philosophy? Surely not the series of slogans on the inside cover?) His interest was in the

integrity of doing, rather than the easy way of talking about doing. I await the practical contribution of Messrs. Sherriff and Wade, away from the cosy comfort of print and sloganising.

Perhaps they object to the fact that Summerhill was a private school? Neill was included in *The Sunday Times*' '1000 Makers of the Twentieth Century', where he was credited with helping 'to create the finest school in the world - the English primary school'. Sherriff and Wade would do well to realise that actual people learn from a *variety* of sources. It was as well that state primary schools did and were influenced by the rightness of Neill's findings, rather than by cold ideologies, untouched by human lives. History is littered with people who (like Sherriff and Wade) claim there is 'the only way' to salvation. Good Lord, protect us from them.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Featherstone-Witty

The arrogantly superior tone of the above letter speaks for itself, and manages in a long-winded fashion to avoid all of the specific points we made. Perhaps Mark Featherstone-Witty should try to understand what he reads before he petulantly rushes off to his typewriter.

Sid Sherriff, Graham Wade, Tom, Dick and Harry

Review

Sexism

Non-Sexist Teaching Materials and Approaches by Bob White, published by New Childhood Press, c/o Photography Workshop, 152 Upper St., London N1. Price £1

I'm not a teacher and I don't know a fat lot about schools; but I've worked in a primary school for a short time, and I'm writing this as someone who has felt both anger and blank incomprehension at hearing a teacher say, on handing out pictures to stimulate 'Free Expression' - "And here is a picture for the boys (photo of lorries); and now one the girls will like (photo of babies)." At the same time I was startled almost daily by the strength of feeling with which 7 year olds would tell me that *girls* can't draw cars (this from the girls themselves), and that only *boys* can move desks, carry milk crates and mend punctures.

For all teachers who know the daily confrontation with other teachers, parents and children who support and spread these illusions, there is a booklet, published by New Childhood Press, which will help you arm yourself for the battle. It is entitled simply *Non-Sexist Teaching Materials and Approaches*, and its aim is "to help you to dispel the sexist myths that surround and impose upon the life and growth of the young learner".

The text is brief and to the point. It deals, in two sections, with sex-stereotyping and the teacher's role, and approaches that could be adopted.

Many aspects of the process of breaking down prejudices and assumptions are examined, for instance, the need to combat social pressures and change the organisation of the school, the importance of providing alternative adult models, and encouraging a questioning attitude at an early age. An important omission, I felt, was how the teacher can help the child cope with the internal conflict that may well arise when two authoritative people, i.e. teacher and parent, are putting over opposing messages.

However, useful practical examples are given of what can be achieved in the

classroom, in terms of reinforcing the confidence of *all* children and combating discrimination between the sexes. Following this is what seems to be a very comprehensive list of resources available to teachers who want to meet the challenge that the wealth of sexist material, all too freely available, puts before them. It includes libraries, bookshops, feminist groups, magazines, films, kits and exhibitions.

For people who feel a fundamental sympathy with the fight against sexism, but who aren't sure how they can change things in their day to day approaches to children, there is a collection of examples of sexist language and possible alternatives, also examples of how ludicrous common descriptions of women appear when they are applied to men. For example "The candidates were Bryan K. Wilson, a handsome silver-haired father of three, and Florence Greenwood, a pert, blonde grandmother of five". The booklet concludes with a list of books and publications on women in history, on children's reading, marriage, the family and child-care, health and sexuality and sexism itself.

This publication, containing some fifty pages of resources and useful addresses, is well worth getting hold of. LR

one disaster after another

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO RANK & FILE?

A CAUTIONARY TALE OF SECTSPOL

Nigel Wright

Rank & File was started in 1968 by a group of teachers, mostly members of the International Socialists (IS) – now the Socialist Workers Party; the others soon joined IS, so Rank & File was an IS creation. But the journal they produced, called itself 'an organ (sic) of progressive teachers' and there was a clear intention to open it up to anyone on the left in the National Union of Teachers (NUT), Communist and Labour Party members as well as uncommitted people. Some libertarians, too, felt they could usefully join R&F. This idea of openness to all progressives wasn't just words: for the first few issues of the journal, the Editorial Board was elected at publicly advertised open meetings. This willingness to be an open caucus impressed me at the time. I joined.

In 1969, members of the *Militant* group (Trotsky in the Labour Party) tried to pack the meetings to elect a majority of their people on to the editorial board. They came near success with issues no. 5 & 6 (April & June 1969). It was alleged that *Militant* had packed the meeting with people who weren't NUT members. In any case, IS and others mounted their own packing operation so that by issue no. 7 (September) all the Militants had been removed. Two by-products of these events were that membership of R&F was restricted to teachers and student teachers, and the editorial board was no longer elected at open meetings. The Militants left.

Lukewarm coexistence between R&F and the Communist Party lasted until 1971 when differences over the Industrial Relations Act and other questions (notably salary differentials and school democracy), plus intense antagonisms between leading CP members and 4 or 5 key R&F members, turned into a furious hostility which never abated.

This left R&F as a consortium of IS, the International Marxist Group (IMG) and in the majority, nonaligned leftists of various inclinations. This worked quite well for a year or so. Everyone was on speaking terms and on the whole feelings were good. R&F was doing some useful work, gaining in credibility and coherence. As a measure of this, the NUT bureaucracy grew more and more alarmed and antagonistic.

In 1972 an attempt was made to get some communication going between R&F and *Libertarian Teacher* (now *Lib Ed*). The idea was squashed in its infancy by a few of the leading IS members (send SAE with £5 postal order for names).

In 1972 discussions took place about a possible merger between R&F and *Blackbored*, an excellent magazine produced mainly for College of Education students. *Blackbored* was running out of steam; it found it difficult to get actual students onto its editorial board and the whole workload was falling on 3 or 4 shoulders. As an experiment, a joint issue of R&F (no. 21) and *Blackbored* (no. 5) was produced in September 1972. It ran to an astonishing 9000 copies. Subsequently one or two *Blackbored* people stayed on the R&F editorial board but their identity was submerged. However, there was no question of R&F 'taking over' or 'destroying' *Blackbored*: they were free at any time to produce further issues of their magazine, but sadly they chose not to do so.

In late 1972 the IMG decided to start playing a more active and independent role in R&F. On reflection, they were probably making some important points, but they were badly expressed and the predictable result was that IS got all worked up about it. The annual conference of R&F in February 1972 became a rancorous confrontation between the two groups, with no attempt to suppress sectarian passions. The IS had decided to drive out all IMG people from the Executive Committee. (Originally, the R&F hierarchy was limited to the Editorial Board. In 1970 the functions were split: the Editorial Board concentrated on producing the journal, and an Executive Committee – the superior body – was set up to discuss policy and run the Supporters' Group.) Using their block vote they elected the full IS slate of 12 people. The IMG, who had no inkling that they would be excluded in this was were outraged. Subsequently they saw themselves as constituting an opposition within R&F and did little to further the group's aims.

Over the following months many of the nonaligned supporters of R&F, shocked at the sectarianism and at the way IS had brought R&F under their thumb, simply left. R&F began to shrink.



The new Executive Committee, selfconsciously embattled, appointed an editorial board consisting of 4 IS members (3 of whom were inclined to dissidence) and 4 non-IS members. The only issue of the journal this editorial board produced (no. 25: Summer 1973) led to the final blowup which ended R&F's attempt to be an open caucus of leftist teachers.

There was a row over the editorial of that issue, and about a cartoon which likened the NUT Executive to Prussian Generals of World War I. The printer had to rip out pages 2 and 23 from 5000 copies of the journal. The editor resigned in disgust. But far graver than this was that on page 22 was . . . a joke about Trotsky. (The joke in question went: Which is the odd man out amongst the following: Lenin, Trotsky, Marx, Engels, Desmond Dekker? Answer: Trotsky – the only one to be killed with an axe.) Hardliners in IS were enraged. Key R&F groups round the country who could be relied upon to sell several hundred copies of the journal refused to take any. A meeting of the Executive Committee sacked all the Editorial Board except the one faithful IS member.

The Trotsky joke wasn't the only – or the real – reason for the purge. A new hard-line had gained ascendancy in IS. They had a vision of R&F as a tightly-disciplined fighting force – a sort of leftist teachers' answer to the SAS. To them the journal was flabby and discursive: too much about imponderables like education, too much free discussion. They wanted a hardhitting 'agitational paper' – something that would remind them of *Socialist Worker*, come out monthly, and somehow agitate teachers into spontaneous acts of mass proletarian revolutionism.

This hard-line group, paranoid about the IMG, decided to transform R&F. The annual conference, up till then open to all Supporters of R&F (some 500 had come to that year's) was to become a delegate conference: only delegates elected by local groups could attend and vote. Only these delegates could take part in the Executive Committee elections. The reasons given for this change – that it would be more 'representative' of the 'true activists', that the conference was getting 'too big', that Londoners were favoured because they could easily get there – concealed the effect that the well-organised IS teachers could now be sure of retaining complete control of R&F. And that's exactly what happened.

The subsequent story of R&F was largely one of shrinkage. The paper became more and more strident as it became less and less effectual. Financially it only survived thanks to huge subventions from the IS printers, SW Litho. The activity of the leftists in the NUT has returned to being frenetic efforts of small ad hoc groupings which come and go like butterflies. Quite against the run of things, R&F gained and kept 2 places on the NUT Executive, probably because, whatever their faults, these two are preferable to any of the other dreary candidates, and will go on being so.

The important thing is to try and draw some lessons from this ghastly saga.



1. Sectarianism

Sectarianism arises when a legitimate difference of opinion is elevated to a question of 'fundamental principle' and gets mixed up with personal hostilities and rivalries. Have you ever known sectarianism which hasn't involved personal antagonisms? There is interplay between the hatreds and the differences of opinion: one succours the other. If X and Y dislike each other, the chances are that within a political framework they will construct theoretical differences in order to legitimise their feelings. There needs to be a deliberate effort to make conscious the personal feelings which lie behind 'theoretical differences'.



2. People not Structures

Organisations like R&F are conducted with no regard for personal relationships. Meetings are formal entirely business-centred. People sit in rows facing 'the speaker', 'the chairperson' or 'the Committee'. Communications are formalised and impersonal. These barriers are only ever dropped at functions, invariably called 'socials', at which we all sit in some dowdy room and get drunk. All meetings should be socials. We should look into all forms of therapy, interaction games, Gestalt methods and so forth which have developed in recent years (partly thanks to the Women's Movement) but which have scarcely touched most political groups. We need to get away from procedures like motions, amendments, standing orders and all that. Alternatives need working out. (To have no agreed procedures can be even worse.) R&F got too centralised; the Executive Committee became too important. R&F would have been better off remaining as a federation of autonomous groups, with a minimum platform. I do think there's a place for structural devices aimed at preventing malpractices: eg a constitution, accepted by consensus, which requires $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members to change it.

3. Publications

Almost all left and alternative publications operate in the psychological stone age. The shrill alarmism of papers like Socialist Worker is, above all else, ineffective. There is no justification – political or psychological – for pushing a didactic line. If your point of view is a persuasive one, and you put some care into expressing it, it can afford to stand alongside divergent or different viewpoints. Publications should be fun to read.

4. Consensus

The best way to reach decisions is by consensus. IS used their voting power to dominate R&F. From 1973 all other viewpoints were consistently excluded, and in the end people just left. Voting does *not* equal democracy. Minority viewpoints need fostering, not squashing.

5. Reform v Revolution is *not* the issue

We are often offered the choice of 'reform' or 'revolution'. But the real choice is between reform or *no* revolution. Maybe revolution is only a great bundle of reforms coming all at once. There was a time when R&F might just have brought together most of the radical forces in English education. Instead it took the 'no compromise' and 'stand by the correct principles' line. The outcome was that it had no significant effect on affairs and we had nothing to show for an awful lot of effort. No revolution – and no reform.

6. Theory

After 25 issues of the old Rank & File, 22 issues of Libertarian Education, 9 of Teaching London Kids, 7 of Radical Education, 5 of Hard Cheese, and 5 of Blackbored, we are little nearer to having a theory of education to pose as a radical alternative to the prevailing ideologies. As I see it, this theory would consist of

- a) an analysis of education as it is, and a critique of the theories that sustain it.
- b) a description of how things might be.
- c) a strategy for getting from a to b.

If we could begin to develop such a theory, it would give a coherence and impetus to our practice that might outweigh many of the difficulties that we face.

7. Onwards . . .

It would be nice if R&F veterans and others could take these preliminary thoughts further . . .



DESCHOOLING

Timothy Winters comes to school
With eyes as wide as a football-pool,
Ears like bombs and teeth like splinters:
A blitz of a boy is Timothy Winters.

When teacher talks he won't hear a word
And he shoots down dead the arithmetic-bird
He licks the patterns of his plate
And he's not even heard of the Welfare State.

From 'Timothy Winters' by Charles Causley.

The Timothy Winters of this world are at the sharp end of any debate on inequality in education: they know only too well what it is like to be the undisputed victims of a system which helps some more than others. Like many other disturbing features of both capitalist and state communist societies — racketeering, gambling, violence, prostitution and forms of extreme exploitation — they never seem to go away, although every effort is made to obscure them.

Leaving aside those people, probably the majority, who are quite happy to live in a society which is very unequal (because that's what they've been persuaded to believe), there are basically three schools of thought on the matter: those that believe by tinkering with the present system here and there will produce an acceptable society — they could be typified as liberal or social democrats; next come the marxists who basically follow a leninist line of replacing the capitalist state by a centralised communist one; and lastly comes a group I will term libertarian, which believes in neither capitalist nor communist state organisation, but a non-statist system where individuals actually exert a measure of control over their own daily lives in cooperation with their fellows.

The word deschooling itself was first used by Ivan Illich when he misheard a questioner at a public meeting who said 'Schools screw you'. Illich thought he had said 'Schools school you' and so had gone on to talk about 'de-schooling'. Since that point the term has never looked back and is now in popular usage.

Many years back, before the spread of universal education well into the teens had become a reality for industrialised nations, it was a common view that when the provision of free education did arrive it would bring with it a society of fairness, equality and justice. Education would be a panacea for most, if not all the problems of society. This somewhat simplistic analysis was at variance with the unfolding reality and has since been consigned to the wastebin of history.

Graham Wade

To take the UK, the last major phase of reform of the secondary schools has been the move towards the comprehensive system, but few real advances have been achieved from it. Truancy rates in many inner urban areas are very high, minority ethnic groups, such as West Indian blacks, do not appear to gain much from what is offered them. Many comprehensives have rigid streaming policies which effectively preserve the old division of grammar and secondary schools. A large number of children continue to go to schools in order to learn how to fail. To take John Holt's phrase: 'Schools are bad places for kids.'

Yet the painful myth that the only remedy for escape from lives of deprivation for the poor is to agitate for better schooling still maintains a strong hold over those very same people's imaginations. It is literally the same as trying to raise yourself up by pulling at your own bootlaces. The middle classes already are aware that no professional competence can be attained without an array of certificates and diplomas, but they are equipped to obtain them. The process by which this certification takes place has been termed by Illich 'the hidden curriculum'.

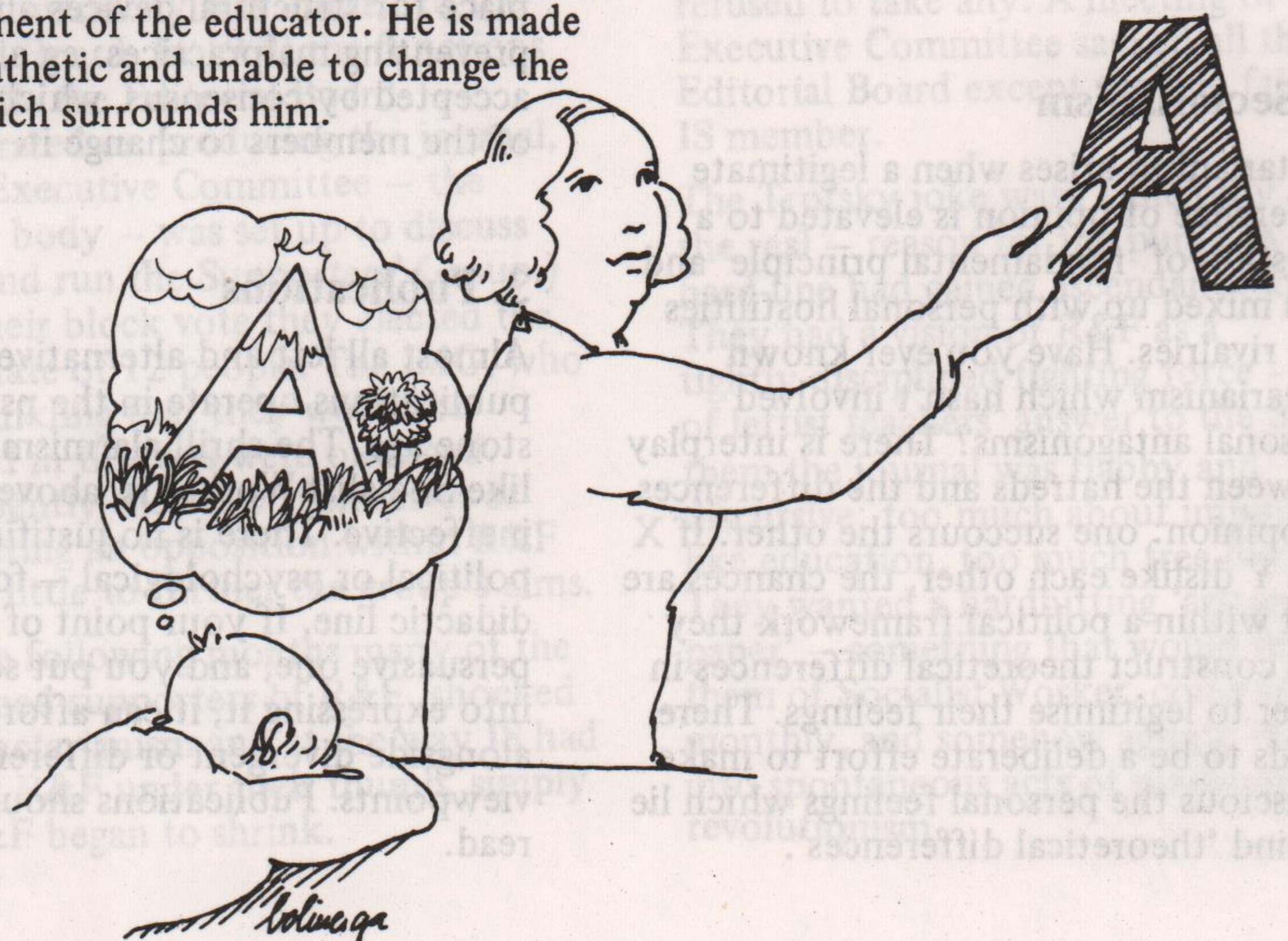
Using the idea of alienation Illich argues that in the 'service-centred' economies of developed industrial states, man is estranged from what he can do, as well as from what he can make. The process of education is an alienating one. It is part of the process of production and consumption which is basic to all varieties of capitalism. In a teacher dominated system the student is not encouraged to direct his own learning. He is condemned to accept the teacher's view, even if he resents the judgement of the educator. He is made to feel apathetic and unable to change the reality which surrounds him.

One of the most succinct efforts at conveying what deschooling is all about comes, again from Illich, in the pamphlet 'After Deschooling, What?'

'Deschooling must be the secularisation of teaching and learning. It must involve a return of control to another, more amorphous set of institutions, and its perhaps less obvious representatives. The learner must be guaranteed his freedom without guaranteeing to society what learning he will acquire and hold as his own. Each man must be guaranteed privacy in learning, with the hope that he will assume the obligation of helping others to grow into uniqueness. Whoever takes the risk of teaching others must assume responsibility for the results, as must the student who exposes himself to the influence of a teacher; neither should shift guilt to sheltering institutions or laws. A schooled society must reassert the joy of conscious living over the capitalisation of manpower.'

One of the central themes of this approach is its anti-authoritarianism; and in turn this trend underlines the libertarian heritage from which it has sprung. Rather than have the individual subjected to the unnatural constraints of a capitalist 'education' which produces people who will fit its requirements, whether they are destined to become unemployed or brain surgeons, deschooling stresses the civil rights aspect of education. Those elements which strive towards self-fulfilment and away from self-alienation.

The work of Paulo Freire amongst 'the wretched of the earth' — in his case the illiterate who inhabit the poorest areas in Brazil — explores remarkably similar ideas. The belief that ordinary men educate each



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other through the mediation of the world. That those who commit themselves to the pedagogy of the oppressed must be radicals and not sectarians. And in one sense his most important belief of all: '... my trust in the people, and my faith in men and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love.'

Inequality exists and will continue to exist in the future unless the core inequities of the class structure embodied in both developing and developed nation states are abolished. Necessarily elites will perpetuate themselves, and unless the class system itself is dismantled there will be only cosmetic reform.

But the kind of equality that the deschoolers are pursuing is not the equality of numbers. It is useless to achieve, let us say, an exactly representative entry into universities on the basis of a country's socio-economic class breakdown, if what the universities do has not changed. As Freire remarks: 'It is rare for a peasant, once promoted to overseer, not to become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself.' The thing to do is not change the overseer, or change the owner, but to abolish them, and institute a non-hierarchical, co-operative system. The same with the existing pattern of compulsory education. Don't repair — replace.

So in order to achieve any move towards this type of Rousseau-ian equality the whole machine must be dismantled. Some would not be more equal than others in the new system because there would be no urge to be superior or better or richer. There would be no pedants, demagogues or masters.

To finish with the concluding paragraph of Paul Goodman's 'Compulsory Miseducation':

'Nevertheless, in my opinion, the present system is not viable; it is leading straight to 1984, which is not viable. The change, when it comes, will not be practical and orderly.'

But I bet Timothy Winters will be there.

Graham Wade is a freelance journalist.

IT'S THE SAME OLD SONG

A review of 'Democracy in Education, A New School of Thought' . . . a recent pamphlet from the Young Liberal Education Campaign, 2 Whitehall Place, London SE1. 30p.

Our present educational system is an important support for an immoral society. Kids are repressed, conditioned, lied to and demoralised from the minute they enter school. Racism, sexism, political and cultural ignorance all thrive in our authoritarian schools. Kids are generally seen as factory fodder and turned into automatons. As John Kirkbride says in 'Once I Cried at School':



**the majority has
no right to impose
its idiocy on the minority.**

"By the time we hear the cries of children in school, we have been processed to accept that this is normal. Why do so many, many children scream in terror on being left in school? (don't worry, they'll soon get used to it . . .) Why is it so many people hate school . . .? Schools stop your genius at their level. Schools deny you your own special existence. In school you must not question beyond their limits. Schools select what you think, and when, and why, and how you will think. In our 'schooled' society, we put education before life, academics before discovery, curriculum before dreams, work before creativity, teaching before learning, lessons before exploration, punishment before understanding, conformity before individuality, fear before trust, examin-

ations before logic, subservience before freedom, acceptance before question, and school before you. At the moment, we've got our gods to front. And, of course, school means boredom, continuous boredom, incredible, time-wasting boredom. At school you can actually be wishing your life away!"

So far, so good. The Young Liberals recognise the problem, the real crisis in education. It is with interest, therefore that one carries on with the pamphlet to find the solutions, 'the new school of thought'. And it is here that the disappointment begins. For the Young Liberals the way to subvert the authoritarian system, is to elect school's councils which could advise, or perhaps decide, on all the important questions facing us in schools today! These problems revolve around corporal punishment, compulsory religious education, uniform, sex education, sex discrimination, exams, cadet forces and racism. There is no attempt to replace any of the structure of compulsory attendance, compulsory set lessons and syllabi, timetabling and teacher control. In fact, no attempt to recognise what real democracy in education is all about.

It is not good enough to talk about the delegated responsibility of school's councils or replacing religious lessons with 'social awareness' classes. These are ideas propagated and discussed nearly 10 years ago by the N.U.S.S., and even at that time could in no way be regarded as a new school of thought.

It is now almost universally recognised that education by itself can never change society or have more than a marginal effect on the individual child. It is naive of the Young Liberals to believe that a democratic educational system could solve nearly all our social ills. It is totally unrealistic to believe as is set forth in this pamphlet, that tinkering with the excesses of barbarism could produce a rational society free from prejudice and aggression.

Where are the dreams, the creativity, the freedom in the Young Liberals democratic school? And, finally, what attempt are they making to counter that 'incredible time-wasting boredom'? Reading this pamphlet the answer sadly appears to be none. J.W.



BUNKING OFF

Glenn Broughton

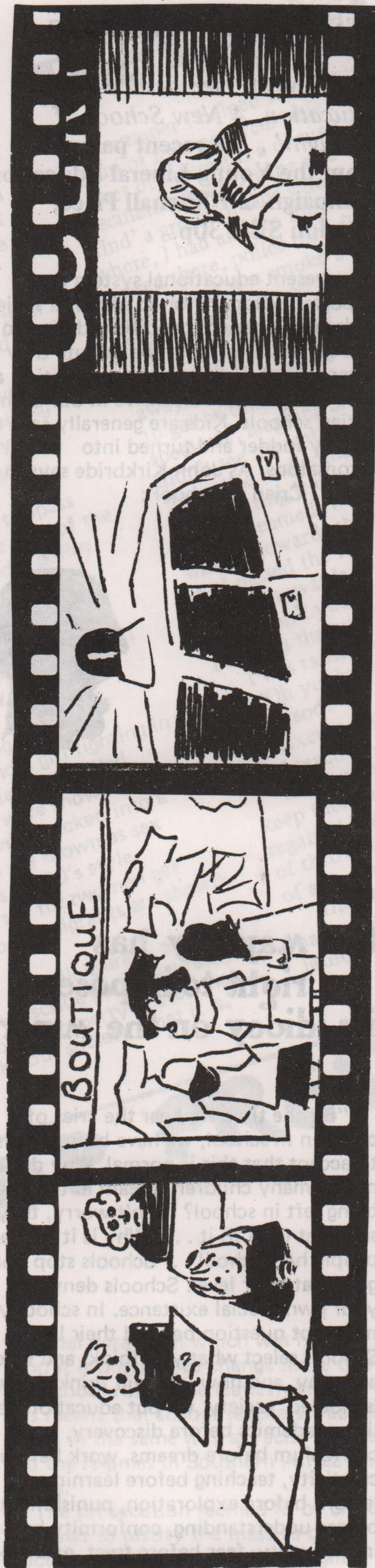
I have recently been teaching in a school which would admit to being traditional in its approach to discipline. As a believer in informal and progressive methods I found this a very restricting situation. As there may be many other people in this position I should like to share some successful work with them.

One of the most difficult tasks is to get the kids out of their 'switched-off' attitude towards school thus towards you also. I was teaching a mixed (sex, social class, race, temperament etc.) fourth year social studies class and failed to interest them even with up-to-date 'relevant' social studies packs.

By talking with them informally (and counting the number present on different occasions) I discovered that not a few of them were very interested in truancy and quite well practised in the art. And so next time I took in some copies of a cartoon strip on truancy which I found in a copy of *Teaching London Kids*. This cartoon, called '10 to 9' showed what truancy was all about from the kids' point of view.

The group thought it was quite good and wanted to record a version of it on tape which we did. After a couple of runs they decided they could write a better account which I was more than enthusiastic for them to do. By sharing different scenes among themselves they pieced together a realistic truancy story based on their own experience. Having done this we were left wondering what to do next. So far all the ideas had come from them. They asked me what I thought they should do. I suggested turning it into a play but that wasn't well received so I suggested going down town in school time actually truanting. This idea was received with much more enthusiasm. I arranged with the kids to ask the head to take them into town during our next double lesson. In fact, being the first two in the morning, I told the kids to meet me at my house. This was important because it cut many of the formal links with school and helped them to relate to me on a more informal and personal level. This was obviously helped tremendously by only having twelve kids.

The idea now was to do what they would do if they were truanting but this time taking a camera along and recording the events. They had previously told me this would include shoplifting and so I had arranged with a shop and the police for their co-operation in re-enacting a typical 'capture' of a young shoplifter. After briefing them on how to use the camera we headed into town. By this time they were fairly relaxed, but still not quite sure if I was serious.



We started in a cafe over coffee where they said they would joke about not being in school and what they hated about it — prefects' privileges, uniform, being bossed around. We took pictures depicting these things so that they could be shown, to illustrate the conversation in the cafe when we returned to school. Leaving the cafe and heading towards the boutique the camera kept clicking. Once inside, the assistant was very helpful. We rigged up some good pictures of one of the girls slipping a garment under her coat and being caught. The police were 'phoned (if they have enough time they will come with handcuffs rattling) and scenes photographed of her being taken off to the police station. Finally, we showed the girl entering and coming out of court after what can be quite a traumatic experience for an adolescent.

Back in school the kids printed and developed the pictures and then the story they had previously written was adapted as captions. The finished display, totally produced by the kids and put up voluntarily by them after school, was put on a main school notice board and the head was asked for his opinion. He appeared to be so impressed by the whole thing that all initial hesitancy was forgotten and he came to the class to personally congratulate the kids. The same reaction came from other members of staff who were surprised that such 'troublesome' and 'thick' kids could have done such good work.

From the kids' point of view it showed them that they were capable of achieving success despite having been told that they were failures from the year dot. It gave them a lot of confidence, it cemented a fantastic relationship amongst us, and it showed them that 'work' could be enjoyable as it was for us for the rest of the year.

From my point of view it gave me a glimpse of what education could be like given the freedom and the small number of kids to work with. Much of the progress and achievement of this project however, was countered by the system requiring me to enforce unjust and unjustifiable rules like kicking the kids out at break, forbidding chewing and jewelry etc. and by the kids being confused by two sets of values and finding themselves bollocked in other lessons for things which I allowed.

Trying to work from within means that kids suffer from conflicting values and standards and this often leads to the progressive teacher being seen as soft. Or the progressive teacher has to compromise her/his values so much that there won't be many of them left in a couple of years. I did, in fact, resign because I was too frustrated with the system.

Glenn Broughton is no longer a State school teacher, he is planning to set up an arts workshop in the future.

NURSERY IN DECLINE

We have recently received this contribution, which describes what happens to well-intentioned reform in education in the existing structure of society. Rachel McMillan School was originally viewed as a liberal experiment in Nursery Education and for all we know still is.

The Rachel McMillan Nursery School, Deptford, at present under the headship of Miss Grubb is failing to keep up with the image of an open-air nursery created by the McMillan sisters in 1917. The most significant difference, extracted from Margaret McMillan's own description of the school in 1919 compared to observation in 1977, is the authoritarian nature of today's structure.

Since the days of the 'enchanted garden of Deptford', an island of health, happiness and colour, in the midst of the slums, a great deal of demolition and high rise building has altered the sky-line and brought new people into the area. Better living conditions, increased hygiene and good food overall have minimised the spread of disease and the occurrence of malnutrition, both very common amongst the Working Class population of this district at the turn of the century. These are the sorts of excuses advanced to justify the movement away from the high standard of care given by the McMillan sisters to their school population of 260 children.

The principal theory on which their Open-Air Nursery was founded was the need to provide an environment rich in opportunities for early education — nurture — to take place. The low purpose-built shelters gave easy access to a large garden where the trees provided the climbing apparatus, shelter from the rain or sun and variety of colour throughout the year; where the flowers heralded the changing months, sensitising the children to differentiate subtle variations of colour, texture and smell; where the herb garden was observed for the rapid growth of the numerous, varied sorts of herbs, all added to the daily cooking together with the vegetables from the kitchen garden. Lastly the greenhouse with a grape vine and winter plants, as well as the terraces spread with rock plants and wild convulvulus completed the scene. The children were free to experience this environment and participated in the digging, planting and picking of its fruits. The nursery teachers and their assistants were available to encourage, to praise and to answer

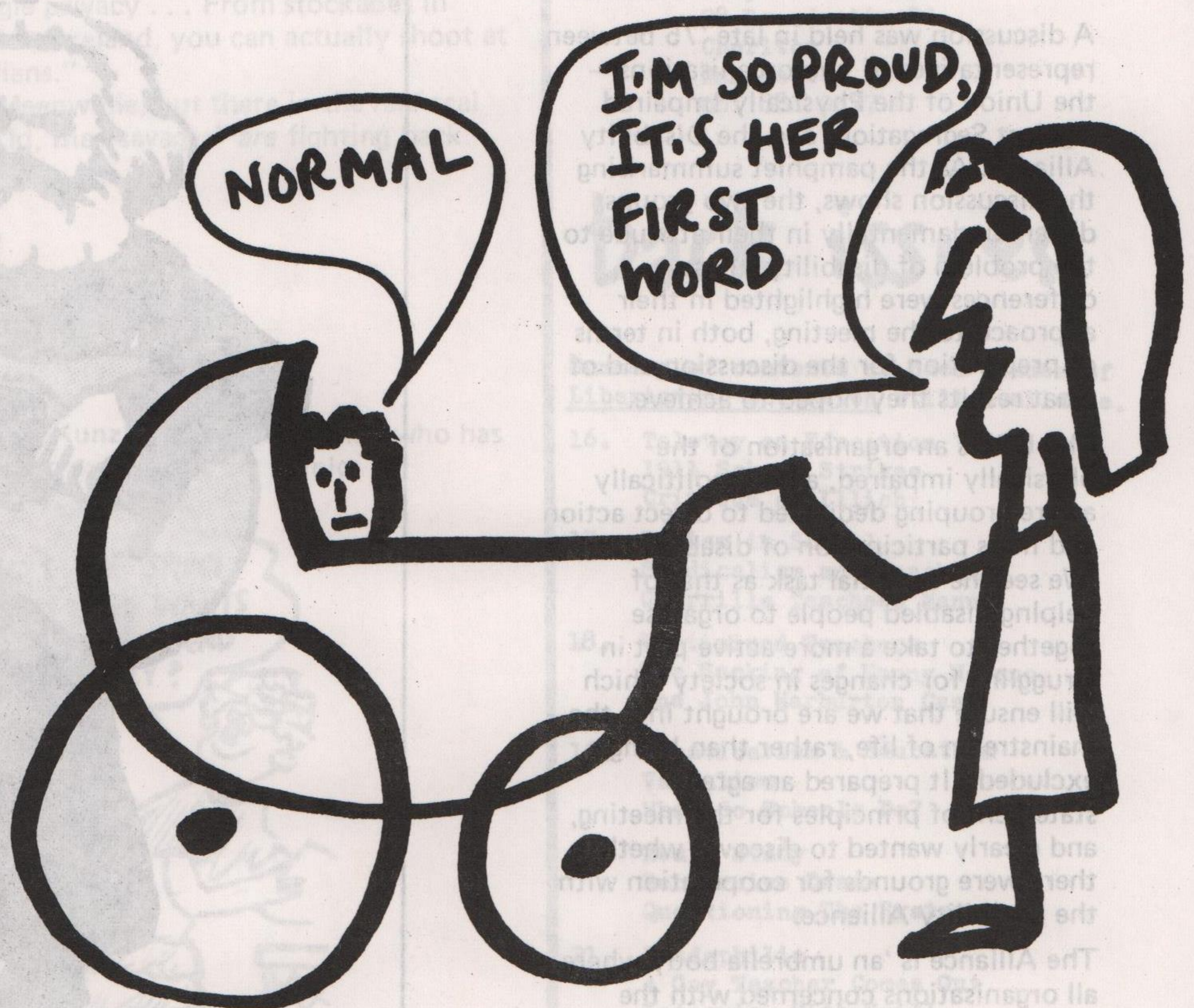
questions. Margaret and her sister Rachel believed that the daily chores were the responsibility of all the adults in the school. They disapproved of a social hierarchy among the staff and respected the individuality of their children and parents.

Long before the research by Piaget on the identification of stages of development and perception, Margaret McMillan recognised that the children at the nursery tested themselves and increased their understanding of the world in the suitably provocative environment which she supplied. Visits to near-by docks, bridges, harbour and pier also enriched their play and ensured that the nursery school was regarded as one part of the wider reality.

Today, the environment is changed. There remains only a couple of dying trees, a few climbing roses, no herb or kitchen garden, no green house and very little grass. In fact most of the old garden has been concreted over. Despite this, many visitors from the world over are taken on daily tours of the school. Not to disappoint them, the Head does the rounds of the shelters every morning: 'Have them all out by 10.00am'. Often reluctantly in

the bitter cold, the children are turned out to play.

Miss Grubb also makes daily inspections of the shelters and is quick to criticise a nursery assistant or student assistant for slacking. The pressures on teachers and assistants are increased when a member of staff is absent, parents are not invited or paid to help out in the shelter as in some other nursery schools. The staffroom at dinner time is a hotbed of gossip about the Head, deputy Head, teachers or assistants depending on whose company you're in. Until recently the high turnover of staff, in this somewhat unhappy environment, has meant that there is no overall stable atmosphere for the children to flourish in. While the feeling of being continually spied on by the Head puts a strain on the staff which is easily felt by the children. There is no longer that rich provocative environment spoken of before, neither are there excursions outside the nursery to the streets and river-banks. The children are not so free to learn the reality that surrounds them. Just as they and their parents have been made to conform to the nasty high rise council flat, so they must comply to the confined and dull nursery. •



Reviews



Disablement

***The Fundamental Principles of Disability* 25p (including postage) from Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation c/o 2 St Giles Court, Dane Road, Ealing, London W13. 'Society disables physically impaired people. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. Having low income is only one aspect of our oppression. It is a consequence of our isolation and segregation in every area of life, such as education, work, mobility, housing etc. We shall clearly get nowhere if our efforts are chiefly directed not at the cause of our oppression, but instead at the symptoms.'** – from UPI statement.

A discussion was held in late '75 between representatives of two organisations – the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, and the Disability Alliance. As the pamphlet summarising the discussion shows, the two groups differ fundamentally in their attitude to the problem of disability; these differences were highlighted in their approach to the meeting, both in terms of preparation for the discussion and of what results they hoped to achieve.

The UPI is an organisation of the physically impaired, a hard politically aware grouping dedicated to direct action and mass participation of disabled people. 'We see the essential task as that of helping disabled people to organise together to take a more active part in struggling for changes in society which will ensure that we are brought into the mainstream of life, rather than being excluded.' It prepared an agreed statement of principles for the meeting, and clearly wanted to discover whether there were grounds for cooperation with the Disability Alliance.

The Alliance is 'an umbrella body where all organisations concerned with the disabled, including those which consisted only of people, would all have a voice and

be represented . . . At the moment we are concentrating on incomes.' Its steering committee chose the four people to attend the meeting, who spoke 'off-the-cuff'. Their aim appeared to be to gloss over any differences in approach, and to welcome another organisation under its umbrella.

The paternalistic liberalism of the Alliance, its undemocratic structure, its use of experts 'to give dignity to an exchange of correspondence with the Prime Minister', its concentration on effects rather than causes, its advocacy of humiliating tests to assess the degree of impairment, indeed its whole State Charity approach is demolished, point by point, in the UPI commentary to the discussion.

The insistence of the UPI on 'mass involvement of the disabled in the struggle for control of their own lives' and their refusal to accept 'professional' judgement of their needs obviously makes the Union attractive to libertarians. But there is an aspect of their policy which deserves criticism.

They state that 'there is a single cause in the organisation of society that is responsible for the creation of the disability of physically impaired people' but their only attempt to analyse the nature of that single cause leads them to a position close to that of the Right to Work Campaign. 'All the other situations from which physically impaired people are excluded are linked . . . with the basic exclusion from employment.'

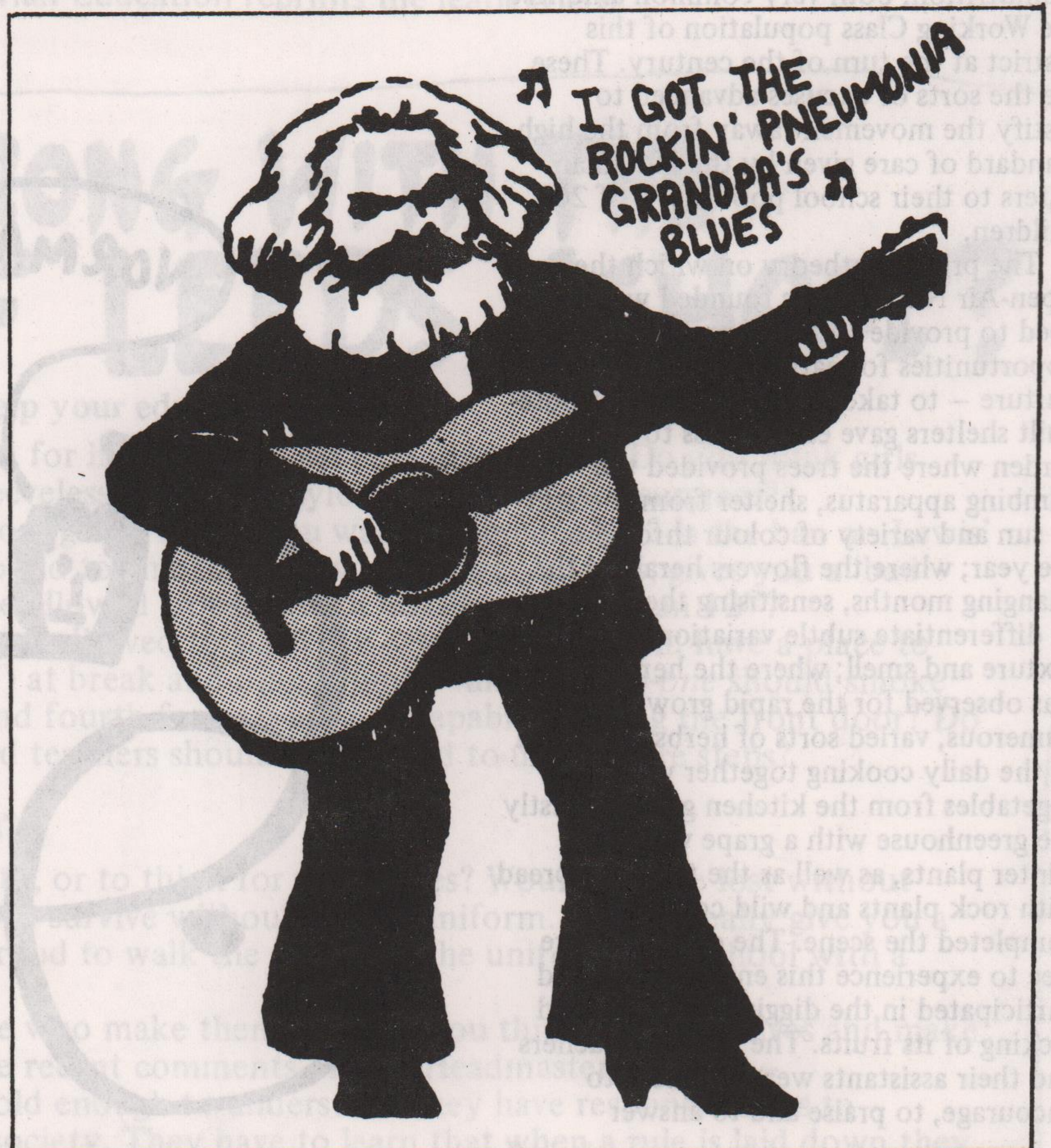
This analysis ignores two points. The first is that the segregating of the physically (and mentally) impaired begins long before the start of work. UPI mention education once, but appear to assign it a minor importance. In my own experience, the place of our Special School system in segregating, alienating and generally downgrading handicapped children is far from minor. The practice of busing, thus removing the children from the company of other kids in their community, the attitude of the (often well-meaning) teachers, above all the stigma attached to going to the dumbos' or cripples' school, begin the process which exclusion from employment, and State Charity, so efficiently continue.

The second is that integration into 'normal' employment will not end the oppression of the physically impaired, merely change its nature. The woman homemaker, the black man sweeping the tube station platform, the mongol washing up in a College kitchen, indeed all workers under Capitalism or State Communism are oppressed, though the degree may vary.

Despite these criticisms, the emphasis of the UPI on the social basis of disability and its entirely healthy distrust of liberals make it an organisation deserving of our support

Alan Ross

Alan Ross is an anarchist who until recently worked as a nurse in a hospital for the mentally handicapped.



FILM

BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT

The film, *The History Book*, 16mm colour, nine parts (total running time 2 hours 39 minutes), is available for hire at £5 a part, or £35 complete, from The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London, WC2H 7JJ.

The History Book is a Danish produced film, originally made for use with eight to twelve year olds in schools, which has only recently become available over here in a North American dubbed version. Through nine sections, each lasting 15-20 minutes, it attempts to present a history of the world, not just from the point of view of kings and military leaders, but also from the ordinary person's perspective.

One of its most striking features is an inventive use of animation technique, which gives the production a style all of its own, although there are also frequent inserts of stills of engravings, photo-montage and documentary footage. To help continuity, the series, which can be screened as individual parts or in longer blocks, has a narrator in the form of a female rat, who continually darts in and out of frame as the story unfolds to chip in with various comments. The art work for the animation relies heavily on water-colour painting, providing many richly textured scenes, well suited to the needs of a young audience.

The opening reel, *A Flickering Light in the Darkness*, begins with a straightforward inquiry: 'Why are some people rich and some people poor?' It is an important question to pose, and one that receives scant attention or is completely ignored in much contemporary history teaching. However, here it becomes the essence of the whole film's approach to its subject matter.

The starting-point sees Europe emerging from the so-called dark ages, which was marked by the development of a new merchant class, based around Venice, that operated on the principle 'buy low, and sell high'. From here the film traces the rapid growth of expeditions of discovery, which, consciously inspired by thoughts of economic gain, began employing the barter of worthless objects such as glass beads in exchange for commodities like ivory and gold. Soon, however, it was deemed more efficient to expropriate such valuables by force rather than by confidence tricks.

Other sections follow the later alliances formed between the merchants and monarchs to counter the power of the landlords. All through these episodes reference is made to the common man, woman or child, and during a fierce battle between the warring factions in this period, one of the soldiers remarks: 'This war is supposed to be between us and the merchants. But I see no merchants!' Of course they had been clever enough to pay people to fight for them, and by the way discovered that 'war is great for business'.

The victory of the merchants and kings over the landowners led to the establishment of states, and later of the accumulation of capital and the genesis of industrialisation. There is an impressive sequence of statements, presented in the form of today's TV street interview, by workers drawn into these new methods of production. In the early nineteenth century, Sandra Gooder aged eight, who works as a child-labourer down a coal mine for 12 hours a day, faces the camera and says: 'There's no light down here — it's ever so scary.'

Meanwhile in many other areas of the world the exploitation of colonies, both in terms of raw materials and human slave labour, is graphically portrayed. The last three segments deal with twentieth century events and the final part is devoted to the liberation of the Portuguese colony of Guinea Bissau in Africa.

Necessarily such a brief review can only convey the vaguest impression of what this film is like. However, it must be said that it is not only refreshingly original in its treatment, but combines this with high standards of production, which makes it suitable for adults as well as children. One of the most powerful images, which recurs in the title of each section, is a photograph of a group of children crammed tight in the desks of some dilapidated colonial classroom. They are all staring up towards the camera with blank faces. That is what the film is all about.

Graham Wade

- 'White Media - Black Britain' - Husband : 95p
- 'Education or Domination?' - Holly : £1
- 'Education: The Practice of Freedom' - Paulo Freire : £1
- 'The Tamarisk Tree' - Doris Russell : £1.95
- 'The Gender Trap' - Carol Adams
 - vol 1 education + work : £1.25
 - vol 2 sex + marriage : each
 - vol 3 messages + images
- 'Literacy in 30 hours' - C. Brown : 35p
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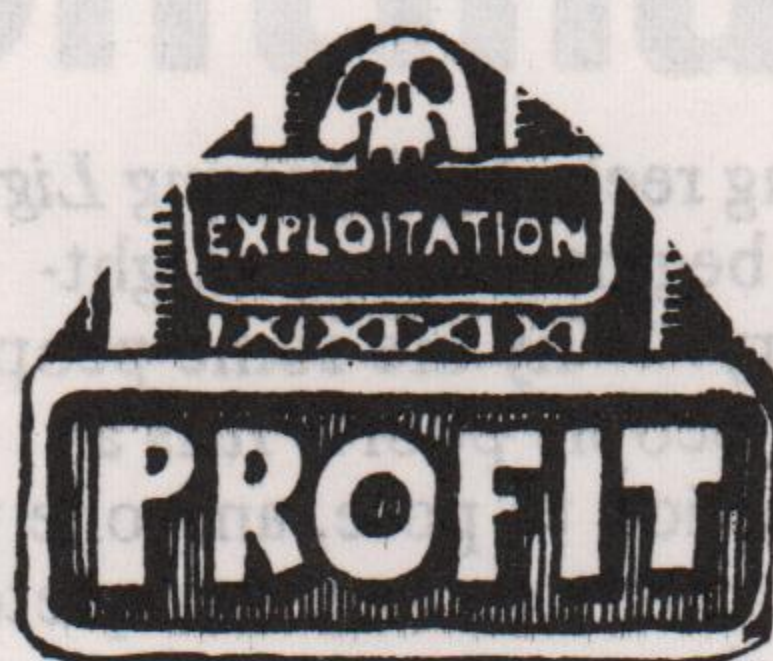
AN ENGINEERING

A certain section of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in the Midlands held a preliminary showing of a lecture they planned to give to schoolstudents. This was in order to gain reaction from teachers, careers officers and other engineers. Here is the reaction of the local *Lib Ed* reporter.

I've just sat through two hours of lecture, scheduled for sixty minutes, which has persuaded me that I ought to have been an engineer. It was broken up into six ten minute stints. Sorry, twenty minute. Wasn't there some talk that school children no longer had any concept of time? (*Sunday Times* 14/11/76).

The first was a representative of the EMEB. Let's start at home, an ordinary housing estate with ordinary two car garages. Mum in the kitchen with the cooker and freezer and dad in the garden on his motor mower. Children find it easier to relate to the things in their everyday world. Well at least they know this world from the TV. After slides of these typical scenes we're treated to lovely views of transformers, electrical engineers have been known to have multiple orgasms over them, and dug up roads. At least working class kids may be able to relate to these but I don't know about the rich ones.

Number two, EMEB again, the bias was supposed to be slightly electrical, after all this was the IEE. Thousands of volts flashed across the screen, we were told how expensive the machinery is. Bound to convince schoolboys, sorry, schoolchildren, to help the country out.



CON

Sometimes engineers have to get up in the middle of the night if something goes wrong and they get rung up about it.

"And we use computers a lot". More enthralling photographs are shown to us. "I hope this shows you something of the wonderful world of . . ."

NCB Babbington Colliery engineers, two of them did a double act, informed us that they had more problems than most, but their slides were more interesting. There was one of a telephone and another of a TV monitor. These were followed by computers, slightly more interesting looking computers, mining drills, reputed to have the same effect on underground engineers as the transformers on the surface ones, and pit winding mechanisms. But even they're being covered up in these modern times. Shame. We were then told how much equipment would be damaged if there was a methane explosion down the pit. No mention of mineworkers.

"Good afternoon, children", opened our CEGB lecturer, after all this was a dress rehearsal, even though addressing an audience of adults he had to act as though he were doing the real thing — lecturing to fifth year pupils.

The GEC speaker was content with his

work, it had just got his company a contract. What else could anyone desire from their labours? And aren't computers wonderful things? I can't remember if we had some more glimpses into that air-conditioned world. Probably.

"All companies must make a profit. British Rail makes a negative one", quipped their rep, afterwards to be admonished for his "facetiousness" — not the attitude of a professional engineer. Now his little piece on the new Advanced Passenger Train was genuinely interesting. Most BR engineers can't be like that otherwise we'd have an efficient railway system, or maybe they're better at PR than the others.

Unfortunately that was the end of the show apart from the post-mortem. Only one person (CEGB) had mentioned apprenticeships, the other speakers looked to those whose "ultimate aim in life" was to be a "professional engineer", for which title they admitted taking some poetic licence. Someone said that there was a "place for everyone to fit into engineering" but it was necessary to "differentiate between the Engineer and others". That means fitters and other plebs like that, I suppose.

The engineer speakers themselves seemed to be in their own company cloistered world where cost consciousness counted more than flair and imagination. The only human aspect presented was the unpopular working conditions. Some, afterwards, moaned about their pay and had a dig at the 'old boy' control of the IEE.

Is this the kind of future they have to offer the country's young people?

RM

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AGITPROP...

Photography by Richard Greenhill, Margaret Murray and Jo Spence, Macdonald Guidelines at £1. Informative and unafraid of relating social questions to what photography's about. Technical sections are clear, the whole book is beautifully designed- cheap at the price.

Interaction have just reissued 4 hand-books on communication in one package: Tools of Change. They remain useful guides to printing, community newspapers, video, and community bookshops. All the information you should, but don't know. £2.60.

Corner House Bookshop Endell St London WC2 has a comprehensive selection of education material. Worth a visit if you're around Covent Garden, where some interesting shops and art galleries are appearing.

Forbidden Pastures- Education Under Apartheid International Defence & Aid Fund at 60p, gives an account of South African Education, with a section on student discontent.

Peace News - occasionally carries interesting pieces on education 15P fortnightly from 8 Elm Ave., Nottingham.



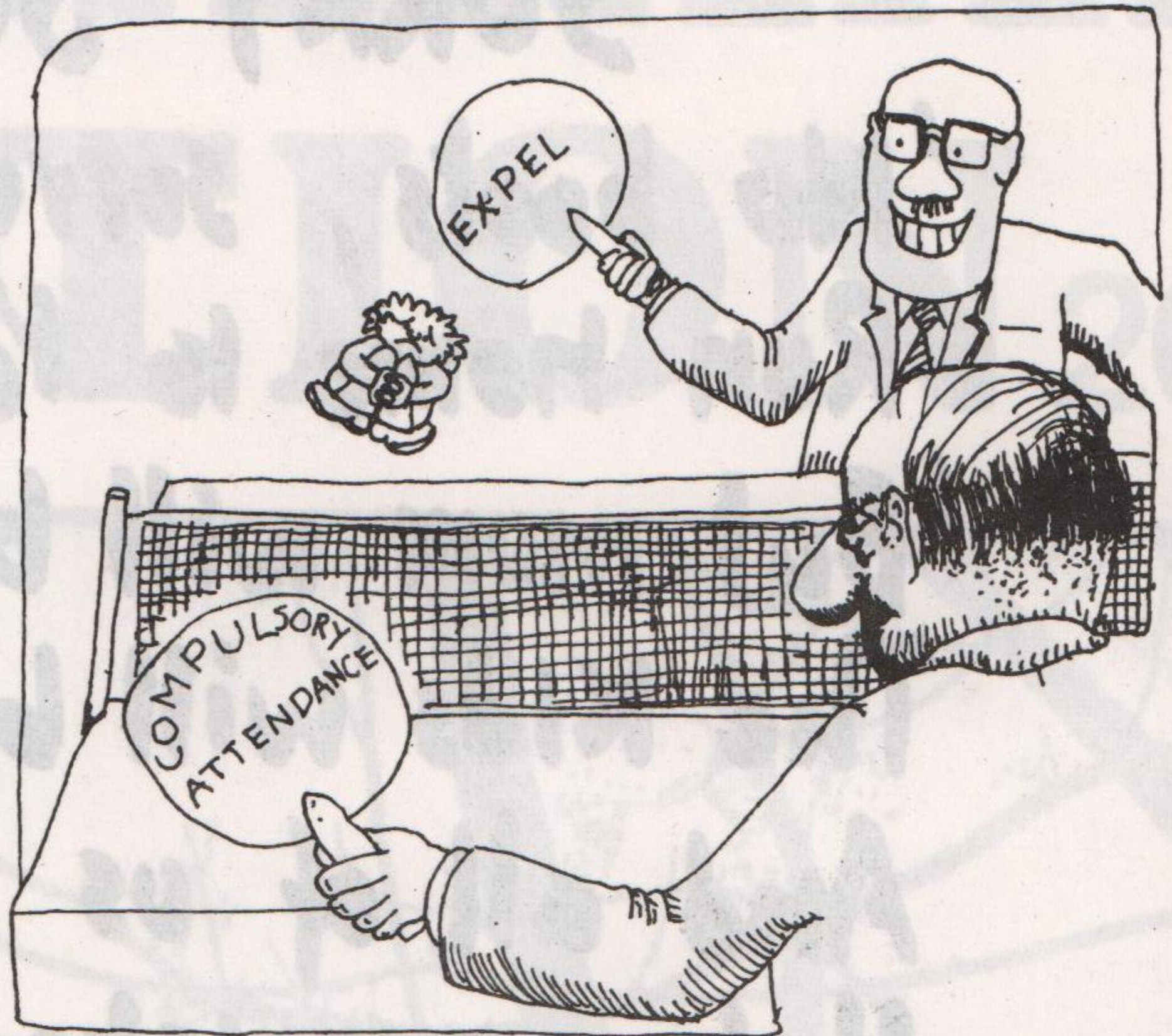
"I hope you are not going to engage me in conversation."

The Russian Tragedy by Alexander Berkman, Cienfuegos at £1.50. Three essays on the revolution by an anarchist eyewitness. Good introduction by Bill Knowlin.

The Underground & Education: a guide to the alternative press, by Mike Smith, Methuen, £1.60. Just out- review next issue. Long and at first glance interesting chapter on LibEd.

Two books, still worth reading if you haven't already. William Tyndale- the Teachers' Story from Writers & Readers at £1, and Tyndale, Collapse of a School or a System? from Unwin at £1.50. Try reading simultaneously with Boffy the Teacher Eater by Margaret Stuart Barry, published by Harrap, for light relief.

All titles mentioned in this issue are available from BLACKTHORN BOOKS see ad. page 17.



Cienfuegos Review of Anarchist Literature at £1. Large format collection of articles and reviews. Anarchism in Poland, Germany Spain, Russia and even London.

Portugal- The Impossible Revolution? by Phil Mailer, Solidarity at £2.25. A gripping eyewitness account and analysis of Portugal after Caetano, from a libertarian socialist viewpoint.

Classrooms of Resistance compiled by Chris Searle, Writers & Readers at 85p. Poetry, prose and drama by school students themselves.

The Unbowed Head by R.F.Mackenzie, EUSPB at 95p, tells of events at Summerhill Academy, 1968-74. Mackenzie, author of State School, Penguin, and contributor to LibEd 20, was appointed head of Summerhill Academy in 1968. At the time he said: I hope there will be a great deal of confusion between my school and another of a similar name. Six years later he was sacked by Aberdeen Education Committee. This book explains how and why.

The Crisis in Education, Big Flame at 35p, is a pamphlet by Marxist teachers in the Big Flame Teachers Commission. 'The crisis in education is nothing new and is not primarily due to government spending cuts. We discuss how the crisis is affecting teachers, pupils and parents, the principles of socialist education, and how we should organise for change.'- from the introduction.

Towards A New College, by Peter Abbs and Graham Carey, Heinemann £1.50 for 84 pages, puts forward the case for a new community of scholars on the lines of Ruskin College, Black Mountain and the Bauhaus. Review in next issue.

Two books invaluable for multicultural studies are East End At Your Feet by Farrukh Dhondy, Macmillan Topliner at 45p, which has six tales describing English and Asian family life both humourously and compassionately. Fills a sad gap in fiction for Asian teenagers.

The Slave Dancer by Paula Fox, Piccolo at 45p, describes a young American boy's traumatic experiences after being press-ganged to serve on a slave ship. He has to play his life while the slaves are exercised and ends: 'For at the first note of a tune or song, I would see once again as though they'd never ceased their dancing in my mind, black men and women lifting their tormented limbs in time to a ready martial air, the dust rising from their joyless thumping, the sound of the fife finally drowned beneath the clanging of their chains.' A must for anyone over ten.

Black Flag organ of the Anarchist Black Cross provides excellent coverage of the international scene. A paper which is not afraid to confront real issues and do something about them. 15p from Over The Water, Sanday, Orkney, KW17 2BL.

Catching Them Young in two volumes by Bob Dixon, Pluto Press at £1.80 each, are new analyses of children's fiction. One covers Sex, Race & Class, the other Political Ideas. Only just out- a full review next issue.

Camerawork published by Half Moon Photography Workshop, is the best magazine around on photography. They state: 'We see this as part of the struggle to learn, to describe and to share experiences and so contribute to the process by which we grow in capacity and power to control our own lives. 30p from HMPW 27 Alie St London E1.

Mole Express is the local paper for Manchester. Community oriented and radical. Well worth 10p from 178 Oxford Rd Manchester 13.

'SORRY SON'

'No boots, sorry son,
Run home to tell mum,
'But mum will be crying
The kids will be dying
And all of us suffering.
Help us mister,
Don't leave us alone,
My mum will kill me -
You know I can't cry,
I'd rather die.'

'We are the upper class son,
You are no use to me,
So run before you get
A kick up the bum,
See you squire
In about half an hour -
It's the upper class for me son.'

TREVOR CLARKE

from 'THE PEOPLE MARCHING ON' a collection of students' poems, drawings and stories telling the working class history of East London.
Produced by Langdon Park School, London, E14.

