

CONTACTS Groups

Lib Ed groups
Leicester 0455-209029
London 01-263 8801
Bristol 0272-41380

National Union of Students
461 Holloway Rd, London N7.
01-272 8900

National Union of Teachers
Hamilton House, Mabledon Place,
London WC1
01-388 6191

Gay Youth Help Service
37 Rosenthal House, 45 Rushey Green,
London SE6 4AR.
01-698 2857

Woodcraft Folk
13 Ritherdon Road, London SW17.
01-672 6031
(kind of non-sexist, non-militarist
scouts and brownies)

Publications

Alternative Talking Newspaper Collective
27 Ventnor Rd, New Cross, London
SE14.
01-318 2002.

(Put feminist and socialist magazines
and papers on tape.)

Peace News
8 Elm Avenue, Nottingham 3.
(Declares itself for nonviolent revolution
and concerns itself not only with
struggles against oppression but also with
the construction of nonviolent alter-
natives in all areas of our lives. It draws on
a wide range of traditions — socialist,
anarchist, 'ecological', the ideas and
practice of feminism and pacifism —
fortnightly, 50p.)

Freedom
Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High
Street, London E1 7QX.
01-247 9249
(Founded one hundred years ago it
continues to provide a lively forum for
all sorts of libertarian and anarchist ideas
— monthly, 75p)

In From the Cold
c/o 49 Cabrera Avenue, Virginia Water,
Surrey GU25 4HA.
(A liberation magazine for people with
disabilities. Pressing alternative images of
disability from those current in the
media.)

Dialogue
The Small School, Fore Street, Hartland,
Devon.
(A magazine for local partnership in
education — 3 times a year, £1.50.)

**Liberation Network of People
with Disabilities**
c/o Townsend House, Green Lanes,
Marshfield, Chippenham, Wilts.

**Society of Teachers Opposed to
Physical Punishment**
18 Victoria Park Square, London E2.
01-980 8523

Anti-Apartheid Movement
13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW
01-387 7966

Education Otherwise
25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots,
Cambs.

Teachers for Animal Rights
c/o Wanda Dejliko, 29 Lynwood Rd,
London SW17.

**National Association for the Support
of Small Schools**
91 King Street, Norwich, Norfolk
NR1 1PH
0603-613088

Mukti
213 Eversholt St, London NW1.
01-387 2777
(A twice-yearly magazine by and for
Asian women. As the Mukti collective
says, it is concerned with our struggles,
our experiences, sharing our ideas and
creating our own images. Published in
Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu
and English — £1.50.)
213 Eversholt St, London NW1.
01-387 2777.

Multicultural Teaching
Trentham Books Ltd, 30 Wenger Grove,
Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST4
8LE.
(Although aimed at 'professionals in
schools and the community' this
magazine isn't as elitist as it sounds.
Some excellent well-researched articles
but a prohibitive price — 3 times a year,
£3.00.)

Gen
Drama and Tape Centre, Princeton
Street, London WC1.
(Magazine produced by the 'Women's
Education Group' — quarterly, £1.50.)

Socialist Teacher
c/o Judy Rixon, 28 Gresley Rd,
London N19.
01-263 0442.
(Journal of the Socialist Teachers
Alliance — quarterly, 50p.)

TLK
20 Durham Road, London SW20.
(Originally founded by language teachers
concerned with 'Teaching London Kids',
it has developed into a well produced,
progressive educational magazine of
general interest — twice a year, 50p.)

Resources

**Afro-Caribbean Education Resource
Project**
Wyvil Rd. School, Wyvil Rd, London
SW8.
01-627 2662

Advisory Centre for Education
18 Victoria Park Sq, London E2.
01-980 4596

Children's Legal Centre
20 Compton Terrace, London N1
01-359 6251

Greenpeace
36 Graham Street, London N1
01-251 3020

Minority Rights Group
29 Craven St, London WC2N 5NG.
01-930 6659

Oxford Youth Education Dept
274 Banbury Rd, Oxford OX2 7DZ.
0865-56777

Peace Education Project
Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh Street,
London WC1.
01-387 5501

Workers Educational Association
9 Upper Berkeley Street, London
W1H 8BY.
01-402 5608

Anarchist Book Service
BM Bookserv, London WC1N 3XX.
(They will supply a wide range of
Libertarian Literature by post; send for
their free catalogue of titles.)

Third World Publications
151 Stratford Road, Birmingham
B11 1RD.
021-773 6572

Letterbox Library
5 Bradbury Street, London N16 8JN.
01-254 1640
(Specialise in non-sexist and multicultural
books for children. For details and free
catalogue, write or phone.)

Commonweal Collection
c/o J.B.Priestley Library, University of
Bradford, Bradford BD7 1DP.
(A small library designed for anyone
interested in libertarian, anarchist and
pacifist ideas.)

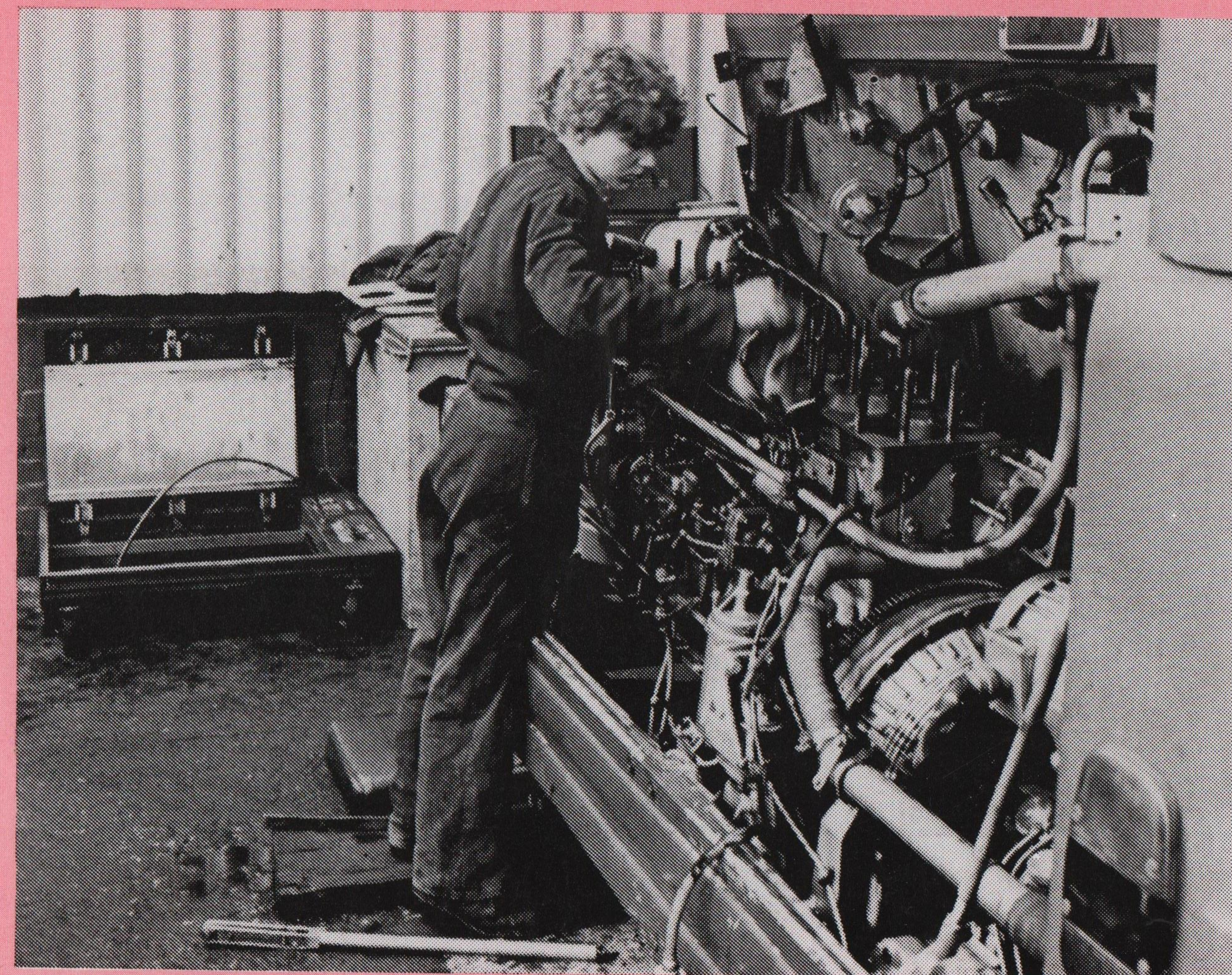
Wanted

P.S. There is still room on
this page... Info from
groups, publ'ns and about
resources is welcome.....

LIB ED EDUCATION

Summer '86 50p

A Magazine for the Liberation of Learning



Woman in the driving seat
School beatings
White Lion special feature
News Reviews Comment

LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION

Summer 1986
Vol 2 No 2

As many of you will know, **Lib Ed** has been published regularly and not so regularly since the late sixties. Between 1982 and 1986, however, there was a lull in publication. This January's issue would have been number 31, but due to the exceptionally long gap we decided to launch a completely new series. Your response to the revived **Lib Ed** has greatly exceeded our expectations, more than confirming our belief in a demand for a magazine dealing with radical ideas in education.

The editorial collective has also changed, with some of the old members being joined by new members, which has resulted in a different style magazine. Some of you approve of the new style, while others have criticisms. This has created a very lively letters page which we hope will be repeated in future issues. We have taken many of the criticisms and suggestions on board and hope you will agree that the second issue is the better for it.

A suggestion repeated time and time again in our postbag was for the creation of a network of people concerned with libertarian education. We certainly want to help this happen, indeed the original **Libertarian Teacher** magazine was born out of the newsletter of such a network in the early 70s, but as yet we haven't the resources. However, we plan to organise a conference in Leicester on October 4 and hold a readers meeting in London on November 22. Hopefully, these will enable our readers to come together and recreate the network, and maybe spur some of you to join the editorial collective — there's plenty of room!

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Cover photo: Terry Morgan, 41 Wilson Street, Leicester.



- This magazine is against authority.
- Schools and colleges use their authority to define, to grade and to discipline, in order to transform the learners into the sort of 'products' the state demands.
- In contrast *Libertarian Education* sees education as liberation. The learner, young or old, is the best judge of what they should learn next. In our struggle to make sense out of life, the things we most need to learn are the things we most want to learn. The liberated learner controls the process — no longer the victim.
- We don't pretend to have all the answers. *Lib Ed* magazine is a forum for everyone who is interested in the liberation of learning.

Once every nineteen seconds

Lib Ed looks at Britain's ghastly record of school beatings

Children are the only group in society with no protection in law against violent assault. 94 LEAs out of 125 in England, Wales and Scotland still permit children to be beaten in their schools.

Since a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in 1982 that parents have the right to exempt their children from 'corporal punishment', most groups involved with schooling have been forced to come out against beating. The Catholic Church, the teachers' unions (even the pro-beating National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, NAS/UWT), all agree that total abolition would be preferable to partial exemptions. The Education Institute of Scotland have been in favour of 'phasing out' the belt since 1968, the same year that the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP) was formed. The National Union of Teachers (NUT), the most progressive union, took until 1982 to pass a resolution opposing beating. Teachers have been extremely reluctant to give up their power to hit children.

Girls and boys of all ages, including children with disabilities, are beaten — 63% of LEAs allow all disabled children to be hit, whatever the nature of their disability. And we are not only talking about 'caning' or 'smacking'. Belts, rulers, shoes and slippers, cricket bats, table tennis bats, blackboard rubbers, walking sticks, riding crops and wooden spoons have all been used on children in school.

A boy aged 12 who had been taken into care because his parents physically abused him was belted eight times in his first week at secondary school.

There seems to be a widespread belief that beating is rarely resorted to these days, so there is no need to ban it. It's useful, therefore, to compare figures for 1974 and 1984 for secondary schools which used 'corporal punishment'. In 1974 the National Children's Bureau found that 80% of secondary schools allowed beating of children. In 1984 STOPP discovered that in LEAs which had not banned corporal punishment, beating still occurred in 81% of secondary schools.

A boy aged 14 killed himself with a shotgun because he feared being caned by his headmaster.

State schools in England and Wales have to keep a punishment book where all instances of corporal punishment are supposed to be recorded. Obviously, most physical assaults on children are unofficial, but even using the figures in these punishment books produces an

estimate of 250,000 officially recorded beatings every year — or one every 19 seconds.

But if most assaults go unrecorded, abolishing 'caning' might seem to be an irrelevance. In fact, officially sanctioned beatings and 'unofficial' attacks go hand in hand. In a school where beating is allowed, physical violence on pupils is seen as acceptable and a brutal teacher is unlikely to worry about getting into trouble over a 'clip round the ear'. So schools where caning is abolished also have a much lower incidence of 'unofficial' attacks by teachers on children. Britain is the only country in Europe where beating children in schools is legal. The date of abolition is known in these countries:

Greece	never practised
Italy	never practised
Iceland	never practised
Luxembourg	never practised
Poland	1783
Netherlands	1820s
Belgium	1867
Austria	1870
France	1881
Finland	1890s
USSR	1917
Turkey	1923
Norway	1936
Romania	1948
Portugal	1950s
Sweden	1958
Cyprus	1967
Denmark	1967
Spain	1967
W. Germany	1970s
Switzerland	1970s
Ireland	1982

One country did feel it necessary to reintroduce corporal punishment — Nazi Germany.

Countries which are known to allow beating are:

Australia, Barbados, Canada, Kenya, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Trinidad & Tobago, USA.

It's very interesting to note that these are all countries where Britain had a colonial presence.

Of course, the moral/political argument against beating is the only one that counts, but it's worth pointing out that:

1. beating has never acted as a 'deterrent' — punishment books show that the same children are beaten time and time again.
2. in schools where beating has been abolished, children become less disruptive, and the level of attacks by children

on teachers also falls. Beating is both physically and emotionally damaging. STOPP has files of cases where children have suffered permanent physical damage as a result of an assault by a teacher. Only if the beating is 'excessive' is there any possibility of taking legal action against the teacher responsible; and that only if the child's parents are angry enough and confident enough to take this step in the face of police reluctance to prosecute. British courts tend to acquit teachers, or pass very lenient sentences, even in cases of vicious assault.

In 1984 a teacher was given a conditional discharge after punching a 15 year old boy in the face so hard that his cheekbone was fractured in three places, and he spent four days in hospital. The boy's offence? — saying 'knickers'.

Children may be terrorised by beatings or by the prospect of beatings. The threat of caning at school may be the last straw for a child who is already suffering emotional disturbance.

A boy aged 9 was caned for visiting his father's grave in school hours, a few days after his death.

Schools where beating is retained would no doubt claim to teach children that violence is wrong. Caning is often a punishment for bullying; the logic of hitting someone smaller than yourself in order to punish them for hitting someone smaller than yourself defies belief. The humiliation and pain suffered by a child being beaten is a source of sexual pleasure to some teachers. Getting sexually aroused by beating or by being beaten is very common — witness magazines such as *Joy of Spanking*, *Art of Caning*, etc. The formalised ritual of caning adds to the degradation of the child and the pleasure of the sadist.

'My partner is a retired headmaster of a prep school where he had the power to beat any small boy. He now spends a great deal of time and energy in contacting young men and women who are willing to be beaten, as this is the only way he can get sexually aroused.'

Letter on Radio 4's 'Any Answers' April 1984

Beating is not carried out by sternly moral people who mistakenly believe it to be an effective deterrent to wrongdoing. It is the action of warped personalities who enjoy children's pain and humiliation. Unfortunately, our authoritarian school system is only too full of such teachers.

LETTERS

Keep the wheels a burning

I got your address from Balck Flag. I believe Veronica from Hackney is involved??? I'm a parent in Hackney and a writer who visits schools. Am pissed off with the closed doors of schools, their lack of creativity, their inability to generate enthusiasms, their refusal to involve the culture of children and their parents, and their pathetic little hierarchies and rituals. What a todo what todo.

Michael Rosen

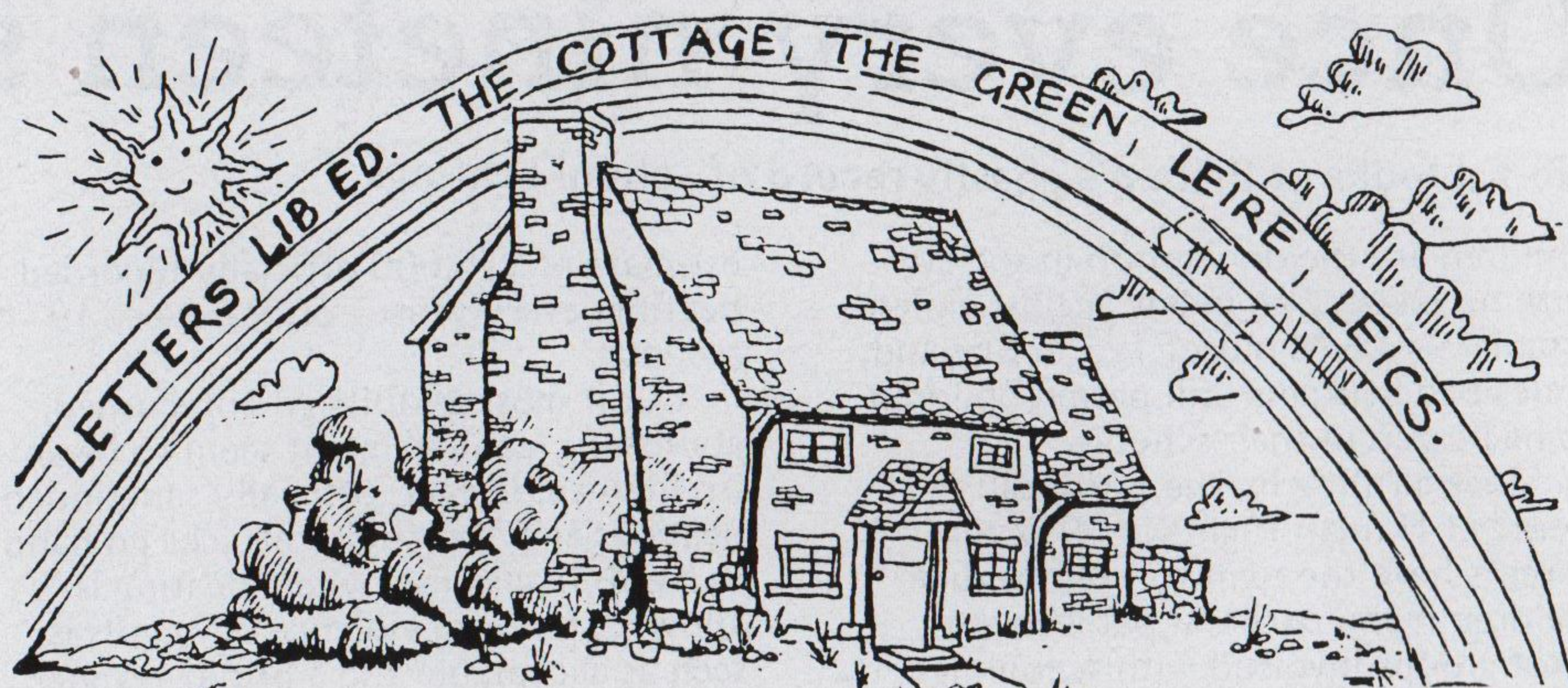
Misleading

Dear Lib Ed,
I found your treatment of GCSE (*Lib Ed* 1) somewhat simplistic and in danger of being misleading. Whilst I agree with your central point that GCSE indicates an increasingly centralised control of the curriculum, and the problematic status of Mode 3s exacerbate this situation, this point of view would have been better made if you had substantiated your point of view. Otherwise your critics could accuse you of invective rather than analysis. Do you, for example, have any evidence of the extent to which the DES or Keith Joseph have actively controlled the establishment of the National Criteria?

I wish to take issue with you on three points. You are wrong to say that GCSE 'will be a system of examinations with differentiated papers and questions in every subject'. Social Science, for example will not be like this. The Social Science committee at SEC made a deliberate decision to have differentiation by outcome whereby all candidates will attempt the same papers and the same questions and differentiation will be achieved by their responses. You also fail to point out two positive developments in GCSE. By focussing on process rather than product GCSE should stimulate far more effective teaching and learning than has been commonplace so far. Also, finally, GCSE will help to promote cultural diversity within the curriculum. General Criteria 19.1 requires examination groups to 'bear in mind the linguistic and cultural diversity of society' and SEC committees consider each syllabus to establish the extent to which this dictum is observed. By locating diversity centrally within the curriculum, multiculturalism can be approached through the positive treatment of different forms of knowledge.

Whilst it is probably true that to introduce GCSE now is inappropriate as a break in schooling at 16 is becoming less and less possible, we teachers are going to be stuck with GCSE for some years and should not be too quick to dismiss it without giving it careful and considered analysis.

Yours sincerely,
John Robinson



Delighted

Dear Lib Ed,
I was delighted to hear from you and to receive the first issue of the reborn *Lib Ed*.

I enjoyed reading the first issue. Particularly the GCSE article — I have been appalled by the way people I know have been sucked into that exercise. I was disconcerted by the lack of named authorship. I couldn't work out whether this was ideological or whether it meant that in fact everything had been written by one person. On reflection I found that I was still stuck with a familiar expectation that I needed to know the teller as well as the tale. In particular, I need to know in all articles on education where the writer is coming from. My own hope is that the majority of writers will be teachers at state-schools.

You will no doubt be bombarded with more private prejudices. For what it is worth I have one more — that I prefer longer reviews with the reviewer writing discursively about the issue raised by the book in question.

Dick Tahta

Dear Lib Ed,
Welcome to the range of libertarian publications and good luck. There is a need for a journal specializing in education.

And thank you for using a cartoon from the Wildcat book in the first issue. I'm flattered.

Donald Room

Dear Lib Ed,
I was delighted to receive your magazine, very professionally produced and full of interesting articles.

Would it be possible to do any articles for parents with children in the state system who believe in libertarian/anarchist ideas? I am not convinced that separate schools for libertarians are the answer because children have, unfortunately, to live in an authoritarian world at the time being. I admit to my thinking being confused and would welcome articles in this area.

Yours in freedom,
Jon Godfrey

The two armies

Dear Lib Ed,
My impression from reading the magazine is that you are two armies fighting under the same banner, the two armies that so often turn up in progressive schools, the political left and the educational left. I think their views are largely incompatible, and would categorise their differences like this.

The political left wants a new syllabus, believes in collective decision making, attaches great importance to union membership, is chiefly concerned with teachers and administration and is fundamentally authoritarian.

The educational left wants no syllabus at all, believes people should be left to make their own decisions, sees unions as largely irrelevant, is chiefly concerned with children and is essentially anarchist.

If it is true that you are trying to represent both these points of view, your magazine should include some energetic controversy.

Best wishes,
David Gribble

Dear Lib Ed
Gratified to see another issue of *Lib Ed* after such a hiatus, I nonetheless felt very let down by the contents. Where was that cutting edge of the old (*young* rather) magazine — the wisdom and the courage to examine *all* children's issues, never mind schooling of whatever hue. Your new number 1 issue struck me as having much more to do with teachers' lib rather than children's lib. I hope this pattern isn't sustained. The original *Lib Ed* in this household, at least, is sorely missed.

Yours
Roger Moody

Dear Lib Ed,
Do you know of anyone living in this part of the world (North Norfolk) with similar views (who take *Lib Ed*) with whom I could get in contact and maybe form a group for discussion of ideas.

Yours sincerely,
Colin Miller, 9 Seaciff, Vincent Road,
Sheringham, Norfolk.

Network

Dear Colleagues,
Thanks for my copy of *Lib Ed*. I look forward to seeing future issues. The most exciting part of the project, I think, is the idea of a network of libertarian teachers throughout the country — and care staff, psychologists, welfare assistants and others connected with education.

At the moment I am doing a part-time M.Ed at Liverpool University. Unfortunately I couldn't get secondment or any help with fees or travelling expenses, but I thought it was worth doing anyway. I have reached the dissertation stage and my subject is A.S.Neill's influence on special education. I would like to contact teachers sympathetic to Neill regardless of whether or not their teaching situation permits the implementation of Neill's ideas.

Many thanks,
Mary Dixon, Moston Cottage, Moston,
Stanton, Nr. Shawbury, Shropshire.

Dear Lib Ed Folk,
I'm glad to see you restarting your magazine and enclose my subscription.

I hope that you will get lots of practical positive ideas.

I would be pleased to contribute a piece on home education. I am educating my youngest child, age 7, at home.

Yours sincerely,
Mary Frances Howard

Dear Lib Ed,
Glocksee-Schule is a small alternative school in Hannover. Founded in 1972 the school now has about 200 pupils and 20 teachers. Until 1983 we had the primary school and the two first forms of secondary school and the children had to go to a comprehensive school afterwards. Since then we are allowed to go on to the 10th form and pupils have the choice to pass all exams that are also possible at a regular school. We teach English and French and most of the older pupils (15-16 years old) have been learning English for about four years. In the forms we have not more than 24 children and in the three last classes we have between 16 and 19 pupils.

For these pupils we are looking for contacts to English pupils learning German or French. We are looking for either penpals or pupils or teachers who are interested in an exchange.

So we hope very much that you are interested and answer our letter.

Astrid Wenten
Glocksee-Schule
Am Lindenhof 14
3000 Hannover 81
West Germany

Take two schools

LIB ED looks at two examples of progressive education in Australia

It will come as no surprise that a brief glance at the Australian school state system reveals a highly centralised, authoritarian structure with Melbourne standing at its heart directing policy and organisation. There is, however, an anomaly here in that even in 1986 Victoria state boasts a series of progress-

ive institutions which have developed within the centralised system and, even more importantly, survived a series of concerted attacks in recent years. Two schools in particular warrant immediate examination: Huntingdale Technical School and Swinburne Community School, both of which grew out of the interest generated by teachers becoming interested in the ideas of Neill and Holt in the late sixties and early seventies.

Huntingdale Technical School

The Australian school system is a bi-partite system with high schools and technical schools. The high schools are essentially very academic and comparable to the old English grammar schools, and the technical schools are mostly vocationally oriented. Huntingdale is a purpose-built technical school which in the 1970s grew to challenge the highly centralised educational system with its emphasis on Godliness and good learning. Under its first principal, Tim Delves, it developed a highly individualised curriculum where students had complete choice over what they studied. From the outset no subjects were compulsory and students negotiated their own timetables. Further, students were totally involved in the organisation of the school, not via a typical tokenistic representative schools council but via a completely open general council. Peter Gill, an Australian educational lecturer, argues that the educational chiefs were for a long time unconcerned with technical schools as they were not concerned with the academic elite and that in consequence in the 1970s experimentation went largely unnoticed.

Surviving the backlash

Both Huntingdale and Swinburne had developed in an era when experimentation if not actually encouraged was certainly ignored. In the late 1970s a backlash began with the fear on the part of the educational establishment that they were losing a grip. Huntingdale and Swinburne were put under pressure to conform to notions of core curriculum and traditional vocationalism. They have survived though and it is interesting to consider why. Australian teachers only have one trade union. This has produced tremendous unity on issues associated with pay and conditions of service. Australian teachers receive much higher salaries and have infinitely better conditions of service than any British teacher. For example, they have not had

Swinburne School

Swinburne Community School is very different to Huntingdale. In the first place it is very small. Whereas Huntingdale serves over 1,000 students Swinburne began in a village hall serving under 100 students as an annexe to a large technical school. This was largely as a result of the initiative of the staff who won approval for the development of the annexe from the authorities in Melbourne who, as in the case of Huntingdale, were unconcerned with a piece of 'minor experimentation'. At the Swinburne annexe a non-compulsory curriculum was developed with a lot of emphasis on getting students out of school into the community. A strong emphasis was placed on work experience and on working in the community. Students were encouraged to spend as much time out of school as they wanted using whatever resources were available to them. This could extend from doing projects on local farms for social science work to working in local enterprises like food co-operatives.

to cover for absent colleagues for over fifteen years. A consequence of this has been that the union has defended with vigour and action the reforms generated at Huntingdale and Swinburne because it is not solely concerned with pay and conditions of service. This has resulted in places like Huntingdale and Swinburne now existing as 'free standing alternatives'. The consequences of this have been enormous with the issue of alternative schools now being at the top of the educational establishment's agenda. Consideration, for example, is now being given to the development of ethnic alternative schools and similarly a lot of money is being generated into alternative learning networks like councils for adult education and councils for home education.

Visions of reality

Frank Kerrigan argues the case for media studies in school.

Teaching about the media has traditionally been embraced by well established subject areas in the curriculum, for example English and Humanities. Too often this tends to be teaching *through* television rather than *about* it, with occasional comment on the notion of balance versus bias in television presentations.

Media education has developed over recent years and now claims a place on the curriculum as a distinct area of study. Such progress is at a difficult stage given the current climate in education and debate continues in a variety of areas about the exact nature of such discipline. There is, however, increasing acceptance of the notion that visual literacy — how to read TV or films — is of considerable importance in a world increasingly dominated by such media. In Britain today the mass media are the source of much of the information upon which our opinions and ideas are based. They influence our understanding of the modern world and to an increasing extent create our 'reality' for us. If, as many suspect, the media present only a limited spectrum of ideas, and foster a uniformity of values and attitudes then they construct a 'reality' for their audience which threatens individual freedom of choice and dominates their response to the world. It was indeed prophetic that George Orwell should have chosen the ubiquitous tele-screen as the symbol of the domination of the dictator Big Brother.

Power of television

The power of television to influence audience opinion is pointed out in several studies, for example the DES report *Popular TV and schoolchildren* and the recent BFI publication *TV and Schooling* and it follows that such an influence ought to be at least recognised if not positively counteracted by teachers.

Clearly the media simply communicates messages between receivers and senders. Some media representations of the world can be seen to dominate others. The media are themselves systems which construct and confirm our ideas of the world. They are engaged in an active way in cultural production, with producing rather than reflecting meaning although practitioners in the media would probably argue that they only respond to and serve public opinion rather than actively shape it. Educational institutions should consider the ideological power of TV as a matter of urgency and should prepare their students to recognise and evaluate what they see.

Resource

In order to establish a strong position in the curriculum, teachers need to coherently argue the case for media education. Otherwise it will continue to remain an area which is 'touched upon' within other subjects, failing to recognise the immense power of the moving image. As a culture we are swiftly moving from the general consumption of printed material, a shortlived period in itself, towards a society dominated by the visual media. Teachers gain nothing from reacting negatively to this dominance. Since it is impossible to resist, then it should be recognised as a resource. *Dallas*, for example, can be used to stimulate discussion about representations of the family, the role of women and attitudes to wealth, power and status. The values behind the programme quickly become clear. I have recently worked with students in an analysis of quiz programmes aimed at young people. Their study of ITV's *Blockbusters* led them to consider what idea of knowledge and the benefits of knowledge is presented in such a programme. This resource is widely accessible yet schools seem wedded to the printed text. They continue to push written classics on students who have grown up with a diet of fast information and sophisticated images and who have internalised the vocabulary of TV, taught to them by TV. Media education ought, therefore, to be an intervention in this relationship between

receivers and senders, to help to unlock this vocabulary and encourage a two-way dialogue rather than retreating in the face of the apparently unassailable monologue.

Nature of study

Adding to the problem of establishing media education on the curriculum is the argument about the exact nature of such study. The current context in which such a case has to be argued is a confused one. There is a new orthodoxy which privileges the acquisition of skills above any other possible outcome of education, basing many of its arguments on vague notions such as the 'needs' of the nation. Media studies could direct its emphasis towards technical skills and competencies, the kind of areas which are manageable and simple to evaluate. Or media education could be seen as a more open ended, rigorous and critical study of the complexities of media systems. Of the two directions clearly the former would gain the approval of the new orthodoxy whilst the latter could find itself under the very hammer that has been wielded against Peace Studies and hovers critically above Social Studies.

Teachers interested in this debate or who want more information about approaches to media education should contact: *The Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT)*, 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL.

Conference

On Saturday 4 October 1986 Lib Ed is organising a libertarian education conference at Countesthorpe College, Leicester.

At the moment various workshops are being planned looking at: particular initiatives in libertarian education past and present; current educational policies and trends; and the future organisation and development of the magazine. We see this as part of an attempt to build a network of those

interested in libertarian education and the exchange of ideas and information. There will also be bookstalls, music, exhibitions and a creche. Free accommodation will be available for those needing it on Friday and Saturday evening. The cost will be £5, including food. If you would like to attend, present a workshop or run a stall please let us know by May 31 and we will send you further details.

Woman in the driving seat

Teresa Wilson is eighteen. She was a student at Countesthorpe College, Leicestershire, the school we featured in our spring edition. For the last eighteen months, though, she has been working for a bus company as an apprentice mechanic. She writes here about how she came to get the job and how she finds working in this traditional male domain.

'Would you be prepared to be interviewed and the subject of an article in an educational magazine?' Fair enough, I thought, anything's better than the local newspapers and their 'look at this strange girl but isn't she wonderful' reports. But when it was eventually suggested that I write the article I couldn't help but feel I was getting in out of my depth; anyway after a bit of thought, here it is.

I suppose it all started with *B.J. and the Bear*, the American trucker and star of children's TV. Of course you teachers and intellectuals won't know about BJ but him and my grandad (he had a lorry, too) were my heroes. I wanted to drive a lorry too. Of course everyone dismissed it as a girl's silly fantasy, something I would soon grow out of. People didn't so much want to stop me from thinking about it as they assumed it was me going through a phase, a 'boyish' phase of course. God, did that annoy me. In the same way I always sensed people thought it was a bit odd when I said I wanted to do vehicle engineering at school. That annoyed me too and so did a lot of the gobby boys who were in the class. School was a big problem really because those who didn't see what I wanted to do as a phase saw it all being a case of me just trying to be different. Great encouragement, eh? Mind you I did get some encouragement but it was mostly from one woman teacher who was probably the first person to take me seriously. My parents eventually started to encourage me too. I thought 'I ought to train to be a mechanic first, start at the bottom, the driving can come later'.

I got a grade 5 CSE in vehicle engineering, an 'O' level in English and a couple of other CSEs but that didn't bother me in the end. The work in vehicle engineering was useful but when I left school I went on a YTS at a garage for two months and then I decided to apply for an apprenticeship with a local bus company. To my surprise I got it and whilst many people will say 'Ah, she only got it because she's a girl, in these days of equal opportunity', I know that I got it on merit and so do the people I work with and for.

Needless to say, it was fairly difficult to begin with. There had never been a woman apprentice before, all the blokes had to get used to me. Then there were all the wisecracks, the feeling that a whole load of people thought you shouldn't be there, the 'let me do that for you' brigade,

the sneers behind my back. Things are very different now. Of course to begin with I couldn't undo the wheel nuts, I couldn't lift the brake drums but there are ways and means. Blokes think it's all about their strength that they find it so easy, maybe for some it is but I only couldn't do it because I'd never actually had to do anything like that before. If I'd had to use and develop my strength when I was a kid it would have been different. I'm not necessarily any stronger nowadays, I just don't see what I can't have a go at. It's all about what you think of yourself and what you're encouraged to do.

People say to me, 'Well isn't it a pain working with men all the time?' or 'aren't you losing your femininity?'. Sure,

men can be a pain but it's OK down here and as far as becoming 'male' is concerned all I can say is 'rubbish'. I'm a mechanic not a tomboy, not a weirdo, not an oddity. The people who really annoy me are the visitors, the reps. They just can't resist making some crack, mind you they're likely to get a crack themselves and not necessarily from me either.

'Aren't you just succeeding in a man's world?' someone asked me. When they explained what they meant I couldn't help but laugh. I know that it's a man's world down here but just because I work in it doesn't mean that I'm less of a woman as a result. I think I've made a few people sit up and think and if you think I've forgotten about learning to drive a lorry, forget it, that comes next!



Heads: the only winners

Where are Britain's teachers after a full year of dispute, Lib Ed reports.

In many ways the position that teachers find themselves in as we go to print could not be worse. They will receive a paltry 6.9% increase in their pay as a result of a year long campaign with an extra 1.5% from March 31. They have also been utterly compromised by the decision of all the unions, except the NUT, to agree to talks with ACAS linking pay to conditions of service. Furthermore, having seen working conditions improve during the campaign, with cover for absent colleagues seeming a thing of the past, they now face the prospect of cover again.

The NAS/UWT are certainly prepared to accept all this, as is the NUT in the light of its conference decision which rejected a ban on cover.

Demoralisation is widespread with many teachers drifting back to supervise students at lunchtime and attending parents' evenings. After 13 months of hard struggle in support of a £1200 flat-rate increase for all teachers we are forced to ask where it all went wrong.

Why have the only victors been the headteachers? Their hold on schools has been strengthened as they relish the prospect of teachers being contracted into previously voluntary duties, and they are the only ones getting that £1200 increase in their already fat salaries.

Burnham

Some answers are easy to find. Keith Joseph's decision to reconstitute the Burnham Committee is undoubtedly one. This took away the NUT's majority and left the field open for the other unions to sell out. It took some time for them to do it, but led by the NAS/UWT they duly obliged. Having said in October 85 that the *real* fight was to come this year the leadership

of the NAS/UWT sold a package to its members which gave them less money than was on the table in September. Now they are negotiating away teachers conditions of service at ACAS in return for what promises to be a minimal increase and a whole new set of contractual obligations. In reality what teachers gained during the dispute — not having to attend parents evenings and staff meetings, not having to cover, not having to write reports in their own time — is about to vanish. Fred Smithies, of the NAS/UWT, is actually on record as saying that he foresees no industrial action taking place in the coming months; so much for the *real* 1986 fight.

Bureaucracy

The NUT led the 85-86 campaign from the start but despite the fact that the withdrawal of goodwill and no-cover action was solid across the country, the leadership of the NUT consistently failed to call for even a one day national strike and for action which would affect public examinations. The same leadership turned the campaign into the most centralised bureaucratically controlled campaign there has ever been. Associations wishing to take action constantly had to seek the approval of the action committee who in turn had to seek approval of the notorious executive 'gang of four' who effectively controlled the action committee. Thousands of teachers anxious to take strike action were held back by the centre and denied the opportunity of linking up with other striking teachers at rallies and demonstrations.

Smaller units

Yet that cannot be the end of it. Many associations have sought bureaucratic solutions to bureaucratic problems. The targeting of schools in particular electoral constituencies became big debating issues at association

meetings, as did staggered strike action where teachers took as little as twenty minutes off at crucial times during the day. Where such action was taken the areas concerned won themselves a militant reputation and yet many teachers felt excluded, because they were not in the right constituency, for instance.

As ever the association meetings were dominated by secondary school teachers. In many areas there was a total failure to build up smaller units from which to organise, for example clusters of schools, both primary and secondary, within associations. For many teachers large association meetings have proved too intimidating an arena through which to channel their views.

The coming year

What then of the 1986-87 campaign? The NUT, the only union apparently committed to fighting a campaign, will have its difficulties. Its leadership has already shot itself in the foot, minimising the chances of defections from the NAS/UWT, by failing to call for a ban on cover and a one day national strike in pursuit of an immediate £800 for all teachers. A fighting union might attract more scale 1 and 2 teachers, a passive one "keeping an eye on ACAS" certainly will not.

As ever the responsibility rests with the local associations. It is vital that the policy of withdrawal of goodwill is continued and, irrespective of the conference decision, there should be a ban on cover at local level. However, the association leaderships would do well to realise that teachers can only be enfranchised politically in smaller units. Teachers in their turn would do well to realise that the organisation of cluster-based action developed by action committees outside the bureaucracy is their responsibility and the only way to develop a more militant campaign in the coming year.



White Lion Street Free School

~ an inner city success story....?



INTRO

The White Lion Street School was born in 1972 in an old derelict house near London's Kings Cross Station. From the beginning the idea was to create a space in which local kids could learn without the regimentation, the boredom and the fear that is so much a part of traditional schooling. As the renovation of the building progressed kids wandered in off the streets and many stayed to lend a hand. When the school finally opened that September most of its kids had not only discovered the school themselves but to some extent had physically created it. Seven of the total of twenty-seven kids had arrived by a different route, via social services. They were

introduced to the White Lion because each in their own way had previously demonstrated their rejection of traditional schools. By the middle of 1973 the number of kids had risen to 43 and has remained at between about 40 to 50 since then, with usually about eight full-time workers.

There is no hierarchy amongst the workers, there's no Head and no significant division of labour. Work is shared or rotated and kids are expected to help with routine tasks like cleaning and washing up. The kids have the same rights as the adults and attendance, lessons and work are voluntary. Parents or friends are welcome anytime and the atmosphere is definitely informal. The

kids all come from the immediate area around the school which is the working class end of Islington.

The school building is a two hundred year old listed Georgian house which sounds good but has little of its original character left and is pretty inconvenient. The rooms are spread out over five floors (including basement) and so communication between groups in different rooms isn't exactly easy. It's owned by Islington Council who lease it to White Lion for a nominal £100 a year. Other expenses are not so nominal, but the full story of the school's finances, philosophy, failures and successes will be told over the next few pages...

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE WHITE LION



Chris Hughes – parent

I remember when they were still doing up the building, they put up posters round the area advertising a jumble sale. I went along to that, talked to three or four people and was overwhelmed with joy about the place. I was thrilled to find such a place that operated in such a positive way. I'd been worried for quite a time about what I was going to do about my kids' education because I can't stand schooling. I don't think it has anything to do with education. It just seems to constrain children, control them and do a great deal of damage to

their desire to learn, and the idea of corporal punishment appalls me. The White Lion seemed to be a place that met every requirement I had.

My eldest child, Moraig, started there straight away. She was three then, she loved it. She stayed at the Free School until she was thirteen and then she decided that she wanted to do lots of exams and so she transferred to the local comprehensive, Islington Green. I thought it was really positive for a thirteen year old to make such an important decision for herself. There were some things she missed but White Lion had given her enormous self confidence. During her first term her year-head at Islington Green said to me, 'Gosh she's a real recommendation for the Free School system'. She got seven 'O' levels there and now she's doing three 'A' levels at the sixth form centre.

My son, Hamish, started at White Lion two years later than Moraig, when he was three. Like Moraig he eventually decided to go to Islington Green to do his 'O' levels. When he first got there his year group had to do a maths test and he came third out of the whole year, so academic standards at the Free School are obviously pretty good. My youngest child, Beth, is still at White Lion, she's 4½. She's been there for a year and a half and really enjoys it.

I think there's so many good things about White Lion in terms of what it teaches kids about taking control of themselves and their lives, how it tries to teach kids about making decisions and taking responsibility.



John Griffiths – worker

I have been a worker at the White Lion Street Free School for 2½ years. I am employed as an art instructor. Official job tags are however unhelpful in establishing any realistic definition to the role that is expected of me within the structure that the school operates. I have, like all the other workers, not one, but many roles.

I am also during the course of the week engaged in activities which vary from cooking and cleaning to individual counselling and family visits.

My morning may well start with the making of sculpture. At 11.15 however, the priority would possibly be confronting the delicate problem of dislodging the remains of someone's supper from a malfunctioning loo. The afternoon could begin by discussing the difficulties a single parent mother has in communicating with her 12 year old son. When 3 o'clock comes round I am perhaps helping four year olds to roll dough, and

A day in the life

Most of the workers have dribbled in by nine o'clock. The office is soon crammed with letter-openers, typists, telephone callers, tea drinkers, photocopiers etc. . .

Kids begin to drift in, play table tennis with each other or workers, chat . . . Younger kids arrive with parents who maybe stay on for a while.

By ten o'clock most of the kids are in and the office workers are transformed into teacher workers. The nursery group might be listening to a story . . . or sitting in a heap on top of their reader — sometimes a squashed worker, kid or parent. Some of the Blue Room children (5-8 year olds) and Lesley plan out lunch and then do the shopping for the ingredients — others paint exotic pictures, themselves, each other or maybe join the school meeting with the older kids. Charlie chairs, Danny wants to organise a trip to Yorkshire, Tommy would like to borrow a school guitar, Liz suggests holding a jumble sale, no-one's been washing up again . . . Votes are taken, decisions made.

Break time in the kids cafe — only 5p for a cup of tea.

The middle group have a choice of music with Pete, basic skills with Liz or Pottery with Bill; older kids can do language work with Teri, maths with Kevin or maybe persuade Eddie to come up with something else.

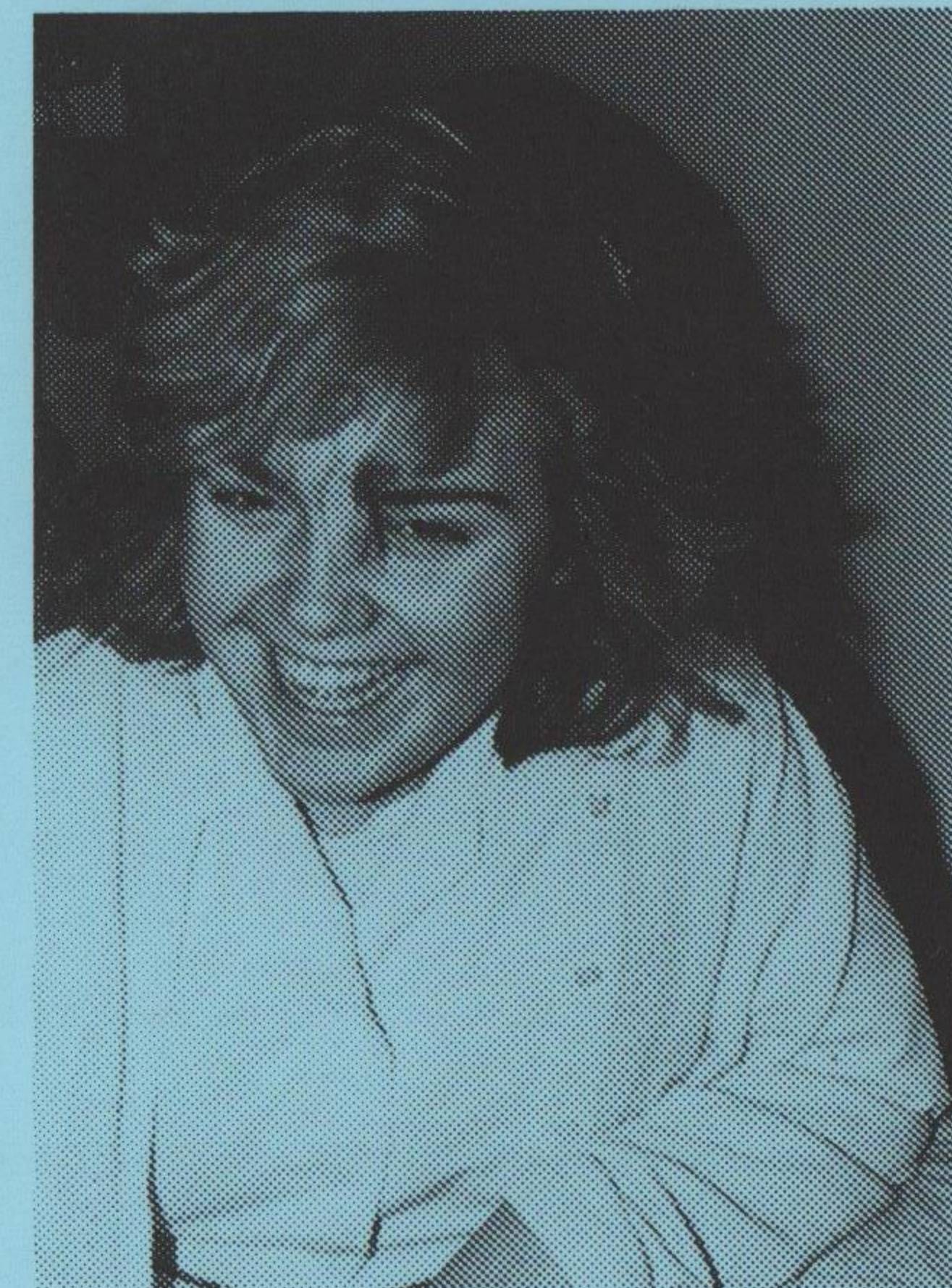
Lunch from 12.30 till 1.30. Matt, Pete, Aaron and Bill wash up and clean the kitchen and dining room.

Trev's keys are missing, an emergency meeting is called. Where are they, who did it? . . . the workers are asked to leave, kids sort it out, keys returned.

The older and middle kids combine for men's group. Liz, Teri and the girls go for a sauna.

Things begin to wind down about half past three, office work is completed, some workers go off on home visits, some work with Bob on the cleaning and tidying up. People drift off . . .

of the Free School



Karen McDaid – past pupil

I was one of the original kids at the school. My mum used to go to Risinghill School before it was closed down, and she liked the head Michael Duane, he recommended the White Lion for me. I was only three then so I don't really remember the beginning, but I think my mum helped do the school up. I remember when there used to be baths on every floor and when you'd come in in the morning some of the teachers would be having a bath, sometimes kids would have baths, some of the teachers used to live in the school then. It was really more like a big family than a school.

A lot of my friends though used to say it was a backward school or for kids

who'd been bad at their other school, just because they didn't know enough about it. People always do that, it's just ignorance. I liked the teachers there, they're more like friends not sir or miss, just Lesley or whatever. I used to talk to them about all my problems and they would listen. I liked the choice if you wanted to do something you just had to organise it.

I thought the meetings were good, like the way a five year old could say 'I don't agree with that' — so you're learning from an early age to be independent. Some times maybe a teacher wanted to get their own way and they'd start using long words or something but the kids wouldn't let it happen, they'd say, 'put it straight, say what you mean'. I don't think the teachers could get away with a lot at the meetings.

One thing I really didn't like was when the ILEA took over us they put a sign up that said 'White Lion Street Free School Centre'. I hated that 'Centre', 'cause it's not a Centre it's a School. I wrote to Frances Morrell about it but she just said it was for 'legal reasons'. Anyway I just got a brush and painted over it.

I was sad to leave the Free School. My mum saw an advert for a job as a dental nurse in the *Hackney Gazette*. I went for an interview while I was still at White Lion. They asked me to start on the Monday so I left before I'd had much time to think about it.

If I have kids I'd like them to have some experience of an ordinary school and some time at the Free School, so they could choose for themselves, but I'd prefer them to choose the Free School.

Kids



HELEN: I've always been at this school. I did visit another school once, but I didn't like it.

JAMIE: I like loads of things about this school. I like reading, washing up, cooking, art and pottery. I like doing photographs with Trevor, as well. You put films into a tank and then you shine this light and make pictures. I like the teachers here, they are friendly. At my other school they were all bossy boots — and you had to line up for dinner.

RANIA: My mummy and daddy chose for me to come here because they thought it's better than other schools. I used to go to a school in Highbury. I liked it there but there were lots of children in my class, it was too noisy. **TAMMY:** It's fun at the free school, we all have a laugh. Like yesterday we had a towel fight, some of the workers play, but some are a bit moany. I went to another school for about a week but I didn't like it. It was too big and I didn't like the kids there too much. We go on

lots of trips here like swimming, horse-riding and ice-skating. I like cooking as well.

I made the dinner for all the kids. We had beefburgers, chips and peas. We don't like the workers' dinners much, like when Lesley makes spaghetti bolognese. The kids like kids' dinners best. I don't like the school meetings much either, it's alright if something's really a problem but mostly it's a waste of time. I don't mind our group meetings though.

DAVID: I've been to this school since I was three so I don't know what other schools are like. It's good here. I don't like some of the older children, they nick things.

SAM: It's good because there's no head-teacher and you can do what you want to. I like to do maths and reading. I like to cook dinner and cakes. I think this school is big and there's too many big children, I think small children are more kind.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

'Right from the start the free school was to be a community school. That means we wanted people round about to feel it was their school, a place that belonged to them and was for their use.'
(from WLSFS Bulletin 5)

The White Lion started with a determination to provide a learning centre for anyone in the area who wanted to use it. There were no arbitrary age limits. It stayed open evenings and weekends as well as usual school hours — all the year round. The adults began to come along with the children, some to learn alongside the kids, some for specialist help, like learning to type. Others came merely to use resources like tools, books or even saucepans. A general study of cities led one group of older children and adults to discuss the council's redevelopment plan for their block of flats. The group moved on to make a video about the residents' reaction to these plans. The film was shown at a public meeting and from that a Tenants Association was set up.

The 'allocation system' has also ensured the school maintains its roots in the community. As each child enters the school they are allocated a worker who maintains close contact with the child's family. During home visits workers are often asked to help with DHSS problems, unpaid bills or maybe just moving furniture. Islington Council have provided financial help in recognition of this 'family support' work.

All of the original workers have now moved on but some are still involved as 'stooges'. These are a group of seventeen parents, ex-workers, ex-parents and other local people who act as a sort of support group for the school. This structure of 'stooges' ensures the continuity of the White Lion.

CURRICULUM

Many schools have a 'hidden curriculum' of fear and authority but at White Lion these underlying values and relationships are brought out and are considered as the core curriculum. By relating in a reasonable community children learn to be reasonable. The kids are encouraged to take part in lessons but not forced, so the whole context of learning differs radically from traditional schools. It's surprising then to discover how traditional White Lion's academic work is. The books used and schemes followed are much like those to be found in any other London school. There's probably more sport and trips offered than elsewhere and more venturing into the local area to discover, explore and learn. No straightforward comparison of academic standards has been made but kids who transfer to local schools from White Lion seem to suffer from no academic disadvantage.

MEETINGS

Meetings are at the centre of Free School life. It isn't just that they hold meetings to make decisions; the meetings are seen as an education in themselves. People learn about each other, and about each others' ideas and feelings and why you can't always have your own way. They learn to argue and to gain information and independence.

Every Wednesday morning the kids and workers get together to discuss whatever anyone has written up on the agenda. It

could be a trip someone's organising, it could be about washing up, personal relations or a request from someone who'd like to visit the school. This 'School Meeting' is usually chaired by one of the older kids and as far as possible decisions are arrived at by consensus. If it comes down to a vote a worker's vote is worth no more and no less than the vote of a five year old.

Every Tuesday evening there's a 'General Meeting' which is open to kids, workers and interested parties (such as the stooges). This is the ultimate decision-making body of the school and again kids can have an equal say. This meeting tends to concentrate on longer term principles of operation as well as the intricacies of administration, and the appointment of new workers.

The stooges hold their own AGM but their main involvement has usually been through the General Meetings.

FINANCES

The running costs for the school's first year of operation ('72/'73) amounted to £9,300. This included £1,200 for renovations and furnishings but only £1,800 for wages, the workers surviving largely on social security and commitment. The funding came from three main sources: the Wates Foundation £6,000, City Parochial Foundation £2,000 and Islington Council's Social Services Dept £4,000. The council's money was in recognition of the school's playgroup and family support work. The council also helped by leasing the building for the nominal rent of £100 per annum.

Gradually more donors joined the list including small but welcome donations from the stallholders in the nearby Chapel Market. As finances improved the workers felt able to pay themselves small regular salaries, by 1975 this amounted to about £15 each a week. In 1979 there was a huge financial breakthrough when the council agreed to support the school through the inner-city partnership scheme. The initial grant of £22,500 was to be indexed and renewed for three years. Before those three years were up, though, the cuts began. In 1980 Islington Council cut its grant for family support work from £9,000 to nothing, it also cut back its grant for the nursery. More money had to be sought from charities but for every 30 or 40 individually written applications there would be only one favourable response. Even then it was all very uncertain as no charity was prepared to make a permanent commitment.

The 'inner-city' money was to end in 1982, there were more cuts on the horizon, things looked grim.

The only real hope lay with their perennial application to the Inner London Education Authority for funds. In 1979 the Education Committee had turned them down by a majority of only two votes, but in this new climate of cutbacks they were not hopeful. Fortunately the 1981 GLC election ushered in 'Red Ken's' new-left councillors and the application was approved. Funding was no longer a problem.

ILEA

In becoming part of the ILEA the Free School had to meet two immediate demands. Firstly the authority had no such category as 'Free School'. In order to satisfy the bureaucrats the school agreed to be officially designated as an

'off-site unit'. This means that the kids are officially all on the roll of other 'proper' schools but it hasn't required any real change.

The other demand was from the unions who wouldn't accept the precedent of ILEA paying qualified teachers below Burnham rates. The ILEA therefore pays the salaries of five teachers at the Burnham scale two rate. The school however employs eight full time workers and shares out the five salaries between them.

The initial transition was therefore achieved without losing control of the school's ability to maintain its name and staffing ratio. As time has gone on the school has retained its independence. It's kept complete control over the appointment of workers and the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The school's commitment to becoming a community school has never been fully realised. The workers appreciate this and have begun to develop more modest plans for its role. The school only ever really served the needs of part of the community and now it is attempting to more effectively serve the needs of a smaller but more clearly defined part — the children from 3-16 years old who attend, and their parents. Even so, White Lion maintains better links with the wider community than traditional schools.

The curriculum too has its limitations, it seems to reflect a belief of A.S.Neill that: 'All that any child needs is the three Rs; the rest should be tools, and clay and sports and theatre and paint and freedom.' The curriculum at WLSFS may operate in a radical context but the school has not produced a distinctive pedagogy.

The financial situation is better than ever before but even here there are problems. The immediate one is that the workers are still exploited. The ILEA gets eight workers for the price of five. This situation also means that some good people just can't afford to take on jobs at the school. In the longer term the security of funding may also be in question. Although relations with the present ILEA have been good the newly reconstituted authority may see things differently and decide on cutbacks (as Islington did in 1980).

At present the main problem is ideological rather than financial. The workers believe the rights of the existing school community are paramount. They don't want to accept kids who may threaten the balance or stability of that community. The stooges assert the individual right of any local child to attend the Free School if that child wishes to. This division over individual vs. collective rights is still unresolved as we go to press.

The White Lion isn't after all the complete answer to every Libertarian's dream; it doesn't solve everyone in Islington's problems, it hasn't pioneered curriculum innovation, there's division in the school community and it takes money from the state, but it has achieved much. It has helped many kids who were failed by traditional schooling, it has supported many local families and it has demonstrated that freedom isn't just for the upper and middle classes. It has shown that Free Schools don't need idyllic rural retreats or fee paying parents (like Summerhill and Dartington Hall) but are a real, viable alternative for all our children.

On the road

Lib Ed examines the Travellers' alienation from the education system.

There are about 80,000 Travellers in Britain today. Less than 50% of them have free access to clean water and the infant mortality rate amongst many traveller communities is as high as 500 per 1,000. This situation exists despite the 1979 Local Government Planning and Land Act which enables local authorities to build and provide sites for Travellers through 100% central government grants. With this in mind it is hardly surprising that Travellers are deeply suspicious of the state education system irrespective of the fact that in a recent survey of Traveller parents 60% of those interviewed wished their children to go to school.

Where does such suspicion stem from? In many ways it is rooted in Travellers' day-to-day existence where early morning police raids on roadside camps (these camps are often a necessity because of a local authority's refusal to build sites) and harassment by local residents are accompanied by campaigns to keep Traveller children out of state schools. Consider this letter printed in the *Walsall Observer*, '... Stand together and resist with all your might the infiltration of the tinkers into your children's classrooms. Your children will be dragged down to their level, and we ... know what a foul-mouthed lot these children are. For your children's safety and health resist at all costs.'

As if this were not enough, inside schools and even in the special units developed for Travellers in such areas as Yorkshire and Oxfordshire even worse prejudice exists. Except in very exceptional circumstances Traveller children when they go to school find themselves behind in academic terms and are immediately classified as remedial. For many traveller children remedial education is the only kind of provision available to them. Such children claim to be 'bored and dissatisfied' and it is not surprising that of the children who attend schools only 20% of those under eleven do so for more than one month, with the figure dropping to 0.7% for those over eleven. The British government, its schools and its educationalists fail to recognise that although literacy might be a priority for Travellers nowadays, enormous cultural differences exist between Travellers and non-Travellers and we are certain that the root cause of the deprivation of Travellers, both educational and otherwise, lies in the continuing failure of government to state unequivocally that Travellers are a specific ethnic minority group.

The prejudice that exists towards Travellers is totally racist with the words 'Gypsy' and 'tinker' being used in



exactly the same context as 'paddy', 'nigger', 'wop' and 'paki'. Every local authority should be obliged to make provision for Travellers, just as they do for other groups such as New Commonwealth children, under Section II of the 1966 Local Government Act, hence establishing the legitimacy of Travellers as a specific ethnic minority group. This could begin a process whereby schools and other institutions are forced to recognise the inherently racist nature of their provision for Travellers. The cynical will of course question this, *Lib Ed* amongst them, for as we argued in our last issue, where has multi-culturalism taken us? However, at this stage that is not the point. Technically, this issue is important because an assault upon the prejudices towards Travellers cannot begin until they are accepted as a cultural entity, at the moment they have no cultural status whatsoever despite the fact that our prejudices are essentially cultural ones. However, let no-one think that this is simply a technical issue. At the heart of the issue must be an assault on our own inherent racism.

The issue, though, cannot end there. Were every educational institution in the country to develop an anti-racist curriculum that sought to confront head-on the issue of prejudice towards Travellers there would still be the issue of the relevance of any institutionalised curriculum for Travellers. If a twelve year old Traveller, whether male or female, can earn £40 per week for two months during term picking potatoes with a group of friends, feels extremely adequate and useful within the extended family, can buy some new clothes out of the family pooled money, can go to the disco and can find out all they want to know from the grapevine and TV what is to be obtained by dictating that he or she should attend under compulsion, the local secondary school as an illiterate in

the remedial stream? As we know, the curriculum makers and the benevolent technocrats have made a monster of education with its inflexibility and its moulding processes for the functioned society. Traveller children have many problems but they never have identity crises. They must be given the opportunity of education through access but we cannot offer what we presently have and hope to think that the issue is dealt with. School helps children to become literate but it does not help children. The Traveller has shown us the inadequacies of the service rejecting it as unhelpful to daily needs and prejudicial to Travellers' culture. We are running something which is supposed to be comprehensive which unfortunately is really only helping a minority of attenders and in this sense surely it is important to develop an individualised approach to the curriculum which addresses the needs of people as individuals instead of assuming, as all the DHSS Red Books do, that there are 'certain areas of experience, scientific, religious, technical ... Which should stand at the heart of our curriculum.'

In the end, as Robbie Brittan has argued, there are a series of questions to ask. In whose interest is any classroom strategy? Is it in children's individuality? Can it be in every child's interest? Does it fit the culture of the child? In whose interest does the teacher function — Is there an interest queue? Of course there's an interest queue with the children at the end of it and guess who's at the very end of the children bit.

For further reading consider:
Bill Forrester, *The Travellers' Handbook*.
Robbie Brittan, 'The Education of Travellers as a Contemporary Issue in Multicultural Education, *Multicultural Teaching* vol.2 no.3.

Teachers disciplined

More news on the teachers who struck against Honeyford

In our Spring edition we reported briefly on the situation in Bradford in the aftermath of the Honeyford pay off and specifically on the proposed disciplining by the National Union of Teachers of nineteen teachers from Grange School, Bradford. These teachers courageously and justifiably went against an instruction from the National Executive of the Union not to strike in support of those calling for Honeyford to be sacked. The hearing took place in Doncaster on 25th January 1986 and we publish here, exclusively, the findings of the national disciplinary committee.

The findings of the National Disciplinary Committee

1. We find that all the teachers were in breach of instruction in that they knew of the instruction from the General Secretary not to take part in strike action and that they knew of this before they left school on October 14th, this by their own admission.
2. We note with concern that the regional official did not make contact with the school until he arrived at the school at 1.20pm on October 15th, when at least a phone call could have been made at the beginning of morning school or when instructions had been received from Mr Jarvis.
3. We are concerned at what has been said about the Divisional Association and its reported failure to implement national anti-racist policies and its reported stifling of debate, although we are conscious that we have not heard from the Division in this issue. We recommend that the Executive members and/or National officers should take steps to investigate the situation and to bring about a more united and mutually supportive atmosphere within the Division and we expect the Division to co-operate in this exercise.
4. We are distressed at the position in which these members felt themselves to be. We realise that there are 'proper channels' through which they ought to work in the Union. But it is clear that either they did not know of the channels or felt them to be inadequate.
5. It is clear to us, too, that there is dissatisfaction or stronger about racism and it seems to us that members of the NUT feel that the NUT is open to criticism for inactivity on this issue. We would wish the National Executive to discuss what has been made apparent to us and adopt a more forceful and united stance nationally and in Divisions on the resurgence of racist activities in local communities.
6. We feel the members concerned have already suffered through the disciplinary procedure. We recommend immediate reinstatement without further penalty, but must remind these members of correct union procedures on actions such as strikes and we call on them in future to work within these procedures.

Cover up

Despite the fact that the committee found the teachers 'in breach of instructions' it completely vindicated the Grange teachers and the action they took. At a time when the NUT had virtually completely failed to take action on the Honeyford issue the action of the Grange teachers was both commendable and justified. Interestingly, the executive of the union is now attempting a cover-up, embarrassed by the fact that the findings of the disciplinary committee criticise them and the Bradford Division of the NUT. They have referred the report to a sub-committee of the union's executive calling for paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 to be withdrawn from the report and for future disciplinary committees to avoid 'commenting' on the subject of their enquiries. What kind of a union is it that can spend such time and energy challenging anti-racists rather than racists like Ray Honeyford?

The need to deploy Cruise and Pershing in Europe was stressed not from any over-riding military requirement but from the point of view of the political unity of NATO countries. Most disturbing was the total conviction that NATO could use nuclear weapons first in a war against Russia which would see reason and not retaliate!

Another part of the programme which was received with derision by many of the students was a lecture on the economic failures of the Warsaw Pact nations. NATO were very keen to play down criticism of the West because NATO was only worth it if "we believe in our system". Vietnam was justified on the grounds of "what they've got now". NATO staff were 90% white, male, middle to upper class, a fitting representation of the system they defend.

Many of the students were aware of Peace movement ideas and one or two were convinced nuclear disarmers. We were given free hotel accommodation in the middle of Brussels' red light district with free food and all the beer we could drink. Someone has got a lot of money to waste.

Dining with the devil

A CND student visits NATO in Brussels.

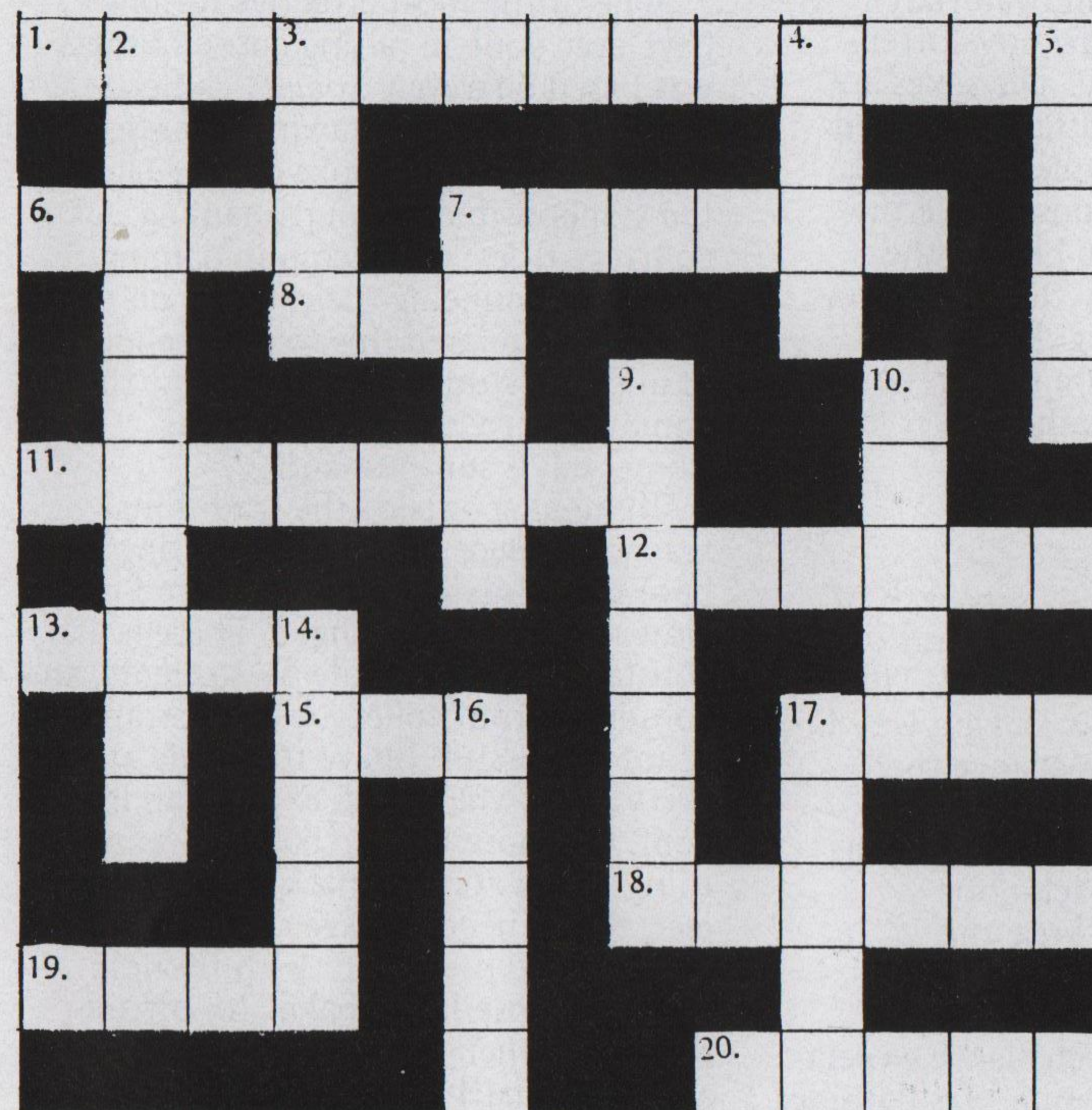
Students from British and European colleges have for many years been treated to free binges in Brussels in return for attendance at NATO propaganda briefings. Recently a member of Leicester CND, Alan Murdie, accepted the British Atlantic Universities Committee invitation and went to visit Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). He reported on the trip in his local CND paper.

"NATO is seriously concerned about the support for anti-nuclear movements. Not only were the slide presentations subtly altered to try to counter these but some of the statements made by the NATO staff were very revealing. "In no way can I take seriously," said a British Colonel, "people who can mention British defence policy and the starving millions in Africa in the same breath." What he failed to explain was why it isn't serious to draw such a link.



Pioneers of freedom

Can you identify the people who established the libertarian tradition in education?



DOWN

2. He would like to deschool society (wouldn't we all!).
3. Ran the 'Little Commonwealth' as a self-governing home and school for 'delinquent' boys and girls, until closed down by the authorities.
4. She founded and ran 'Beacon Hill' as a residential free school, but her husband usually gets the credit (don't they always).
5. The most famous pioneer of free schools in England, Summerhill, the school he founded more than 60 years ago is still going strong.
7. He founded the journal *Libertaire* and the most well-known French libertarian school, 'The Beehive'.
9. An impoverished German schoolteacher, he became well known through his book 'The Ego and His Own'. Marx hated it but his identification of the way we internalise the ideas of others, how they become unexamined 'wheels in our heads' has had a profound effect on how libertarians view education.
10. Sacked by the wonderful Inner London Education Authority for encouraging radical teaching at Rivinghill Comprehensive School.
14. In 'Death at an Early Age' he outlined the institutionalisation of racism in American schools.
16. A big name in libraries, also active in school-based education he wrote in 1928: 'only in a society based on cooperative principles can the ideas of educational reformers be adequately carried into operation.'
17. Responsible for what is said to be the first institution to demonstrate libertarian educational principles in action. He was also a keen advocate of both cycling and birth control. Predictably enough he was eventually sacked.

ACROSS

1. Who wrote in 1783: 'Modern education not only corrupts the heart of our youth, by the rigid slavery to which it condemns them, but also undermines their reason...?'
6. The man who founded Gordonstoun as a not so progressive progressive-school.
7. Working mainly in South America he developed the idea of education as liberation.
8. She ran Summerhill after the death of '5 down'.
11. Dorothy and Leonard ——— set up the Dartington complex as an attempt to revive rural life as an organic whole of which the school was only a part.
12. Well known as a psychologist who considered 'the freedom of the child as the basis of education', she became director of the Malting House School in 1924.
13. Jim and Nellie ——— founded the 'Liverpool Communist School' which in fact operated on anarchist principles.
15. With Bill Murphy he founded the 'Scotland Road Free School'.
17. An anarchist whose view that education is best developed through art has greatly influenced primary school practice.
18. ——— Mackenzie was sacked by Aberdeen's Labour Council in 1974 for putting his libertarian educational ideas into practice.
19. An advocate of, and writer about, 'The Open Classroom'.
20. She was a bit snooty, but had a life long interest in progressive education. She edited the *New Age* journal and helped to set up St.Christopher's School in Letchworth.



Answers

- ACROSS
1. William Godwin. 6. Hahn. 7. Freire. 8. Ena. 11. Elmhirst. 12. Isaacs. 13. Dick. 15. Ord. 17. Read. 18. Robert. 19. Kohl. 20. Ensor.
- DOWN
2. Ivan Illich. 3. Lane. 4. Dora. 5. Neill. 7. Faure. 9. Stimmer. 10. Duane. 14. Kozol. 16. Dewey. 17. Robin.

Role breaking

Janie Whyld suggests techniques for tackling sexism in schools and colleges.

The aim of anti-sexist teaching is to challenge sexist attitudes, particularly those which come from schooling in a patriarchal society. Because patriarchy is based on the premise that the sexes are different and unequal, boys and girls are brought up having different experiences, and suffer from different restrictions. Girls lack confidence to operate independently; boys are encouraged to see women as inferior and therefore cannot relate to women in a satisfying way. Boys need a more positive image of women and they need to get in touch with their feelings. Fortunately, this fits with recent educational trends in personal development.

The sex of the teacher also makes a difference — women teachers need to gain the respect of male students and male teachers should challenge the macho image of men by showing their tender feelings. Teachers need to confront the authoritarian aspect of patriarchy by helping students to take control of their own learning.

Group work

I use group observation to help students develop awareness of their behaviour and its effect on others. Small groups of students are set a problem to solve, lasting about fifteen minutes. A volunteer observer is supplied with a group observation sheet, and records the rate and type of participation for each group member. This is fed back to the group, along with comments on body language and group 'geography'. If appropriate, I follow it with a controlled discussion, or with prepared self-evaluation sheets. Sometimes I re-organise the groups for a second problem, putting the high contributors together. The low contributors, left alone, often prove to be the most efficient problem solvers. I have tried this exercise with a range of groups without a disastrous failure. Usually I find it quite successful

and the students enjoy it. Sometimes it has brought excellent results, with quieter students contributing freely to discussion.

An exercise designed by Kevin Dunn, psychology lecturer at Hildwall Hall College of F.E., shows how boys often undervalue what girls say. The sexes are segregated to face each other and asked to talk in turns for a couple of minutes about any topic they choose while the other group listens. Then he gets the students to say how they felt while they were talking and listening. If the boys discount what the girls are saying, he gets a boy to talk again while the girls role play the boys.

Back door approach

I only use the "head-on" approach of introducing the issue of gender and sexism if the syllabus demands it. This avoids accusations of bias and anyway I do not think that people change their attitudes through being told things. I prefer to challenge gender expectations through a more subtle back-door approach. For instance, I use the unexpected gender in simple statements 'the manager . . . , doctor . . . , union official . . . , she . . . ' or I challenge expectations as in 'A friend of mine was bathing, his baby daughter the other day when . . . ' Wearing badges with slogans also provides questions and discussions on issues which concern me.

Closely associated with role-breaking is expanding the curriculum to relate to women's experience and achievements, which does not have to be done overtly by labelling as 'women's studies'. Whenever I use examples, I make more than half of them relate, without comment, to women; but if it is appropriate to deal with feminism, I do. In an HND course on ideologies and perspectives, my male colleagues have previously limited themselves to the traditional marxist ideologies of feudalism, capital-

ism and socialism. I include the romantic/classical dichotomy, and feminism and patriarchy.

Effective lesson

One of the most effective lessons I have ever done in raising consciousness was based on a *New Society* pullout (16 October 1980) drawing attention to the political implications of language, the symbolism of colours, naming, courtesy titles, ownership in naming, women renouncing their names on marriage. I related this to the feelings of adopted students who had lost their names, and to being described as 'somebody's son/husband'.

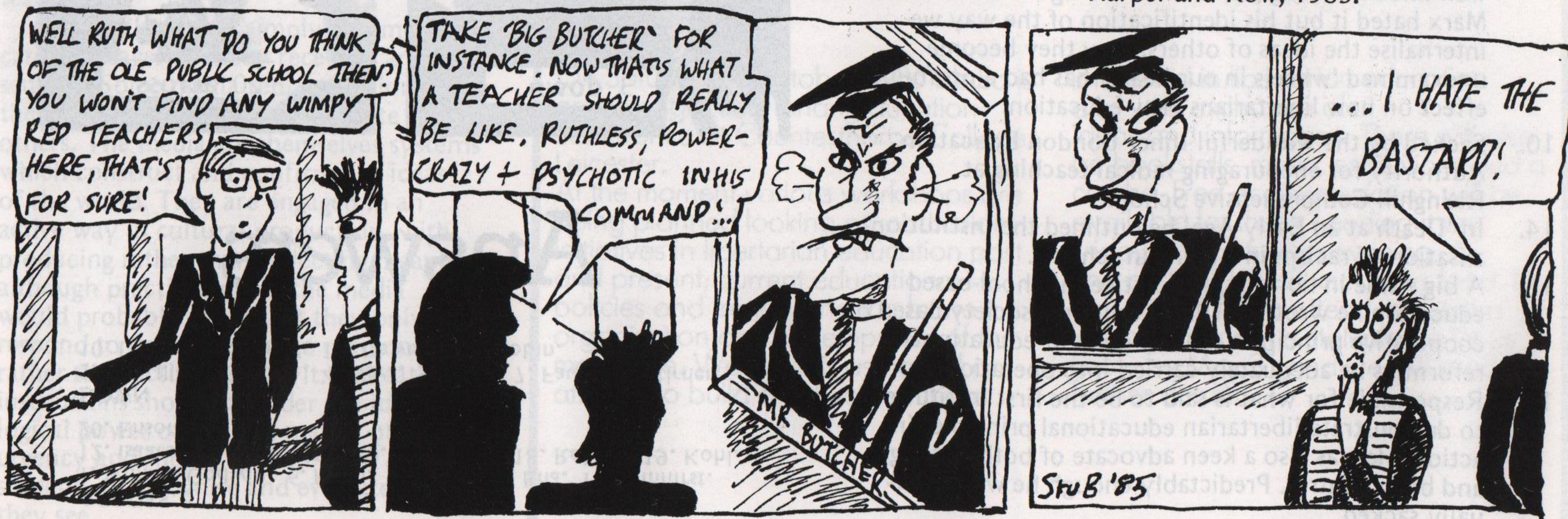
In moving outside the traditional teacher-student patterns of relating I have to ask myself 'How far dare I go? How much dare I change?' There is a constant risk of ridicule by students, and contempt from colleagues, if a strategy is not successful. I have to decide at every stage whether to explore an incident, or ignore it. If I challenge something, like a racist remark or a sexist jeer, then I need to have considered in advance and preferably with friends what response I can make. An off-the-cuff quip when I am threatened rarely achieves what I want it to, because it is most likely to come from some old defensive patterning in me. Don't feel bad about not being able to deal with all offensive behaviour. Save your energy for where it can be used effectively.

Recommended:

Equal Opportunities — what's in it for boys, published by ILEA is a set of worksheets freely available for duplication.

Obedience to Authority by Stanley Milgram introduces concepts of 'role' and 'authoritarianism' and their link with militarism.

Sexism in the Secondary Curriculum edited by Janie Whyld, published by Harper and Row, 1983.



THE SUN SAYS

Tracy Logan is a typical British sixteen year old, leaving school this year. But to Japan, and our other international competitors, she's a big threat. That's because this year she'll be starting 2 years paid skill training on the new VTS. She'll begin her course by trying out several different skills before she chooses the one she'll train for through to the end of the second year. By then, she'll have a skill, a certificate to prove it, and a better chance of getting a job. Our competitors in the Far East and Europe have been training their young people like this for years. It's made them more efficient and more productive and it's helped them take trade away from us. But from now on they're going to have to watch out. Tracy will be spending the next two years learning how to take trade away from them for a change. Along with about 360,000 other ambitious British school leavers.

BRISTOL OBSERVER, FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 1986 NW

MINISTER'S 'YOB'S' WARNING

EDUCATION Minister Chris Patten yesterday hinted at Government action to take more control over the running of schools. He said we risked creating a "yob society" unless we sorted out the way we organised, delivered and paid for education. And he told the Cardiff conference of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association

it was time to consider a radical change, for it was clear that the partnership between the Government and local education authorities was not working. He said questions over education or gamification must be answered soon if we are to avoid stunting our national talents in a way bound to enfeeble our future economic performance.

THE GUARDIAN Tuesday March 4 1986

Young Tebbit is cleared
William Tebbit, 20, geography student son of Tory chairman Norman Tebbit, and 11 other Young Tories at Exeter University have been cleared by a students' union disciplinary tribunal of involvement in alleged irregularities. All 12 were suspended from holding any committee post ing. Yesterday, William Tebbit said he had a bad hangover after a rugby match and had not bothered to go to the hearing. The Conservative Club organised a champagne summer ball last year and the Young Tories were subsequently able to account for only £300, although admitting that £12,000 worth of tickets had been sold. Tebbit had been sold a bad hangover after a rugby match and had not bothered to go to the hearing.

Ultra Left tightens grip on ILEA schools

The Inner London Teachers Association, with about 13,500 members, represents just over half the capital's teachers, and is the largest regional association in the National Union of Teachers. However, fewer than 2,500 members voted in last year's elections. The ILTA has been dominated for the past three years by the Socialist Teachers Alliance, a broad coalition of far-Left teachers, which includes Trotskyists, anarchists and communists. When it was set up in 1976, affiliating groups included International Marxists, Workers League, Workers Power and the Anarchist Workers Group. A more recent addition is the Socialist Workers Party. However, most of its members are now in the Labour Party.

Many London heads view the situation with silent despair. "There are," said one, "quite definitely extreme groups of teachers who are trying to exploit — and in danger of succeeding in doing so — the current anarchy to the point where schools will never be the same again."

In one large mixed comprehensive on the edge of London it is said that the verger to the staffroom, is a black pupil because of allegations of "racism"; militant teachers have scuppered attempts to impose order by shutting their classrooms by pointedly closing their doors; teaching materials have been altered to prevent one-sided views of issues such as disarmament; and teachers opposing the prevailing "fascists" have been shouted down as

DAILY EXPRESS Saturday February 15 1986

Let us teach children to be patriots, says Boyson

By NICK WOOD
Education Correspondent

AN urgent call for classrooms lessons in patriotism was made last night by former Schools Minister Dr Rhodes Boyson.

He warned that unless young people were taught to love their country and its just, democratic traditions we would breed a "destructive generation" threatening society's survival.

Dr Boyson, 60, a former nonsense London headmaster, attacked the progressive vogue for letting children make up their own minds about right and wrong.

He claimed this led them to grow up "without belief, pride or confidence in our society and in themselves." Soccer thugs and the bewildering array of teenage cults were the fruits of upbringings that teach "doubts before beliefs," he told Tories in Warrington, Lancashire.

NEWS

MR NORMAN TEBBIT yesterday accused the Labour Education Authority of driving children to truancy by teaching "anti-sexist, anti-racist, gay, lesbian, CND rubbish" in schools.

Whopping Sun Exclusive

Act of shame

THE attack by young Asian thugs on visiting Tory MP John Carlisle disgraces the name of Bradford University.

This is the city where Asians help to hound headmaster Ray Honeyford out of his job because they disapproved of his opinions on race problems.

A Pakistan-born councillor, Mohammed Rais, has the effrontery to say that Mr Carlisle had been "clearly warned that Bradford was not the sort of city to accept his views quietly."

Who the hell does Mr Rais think he is?

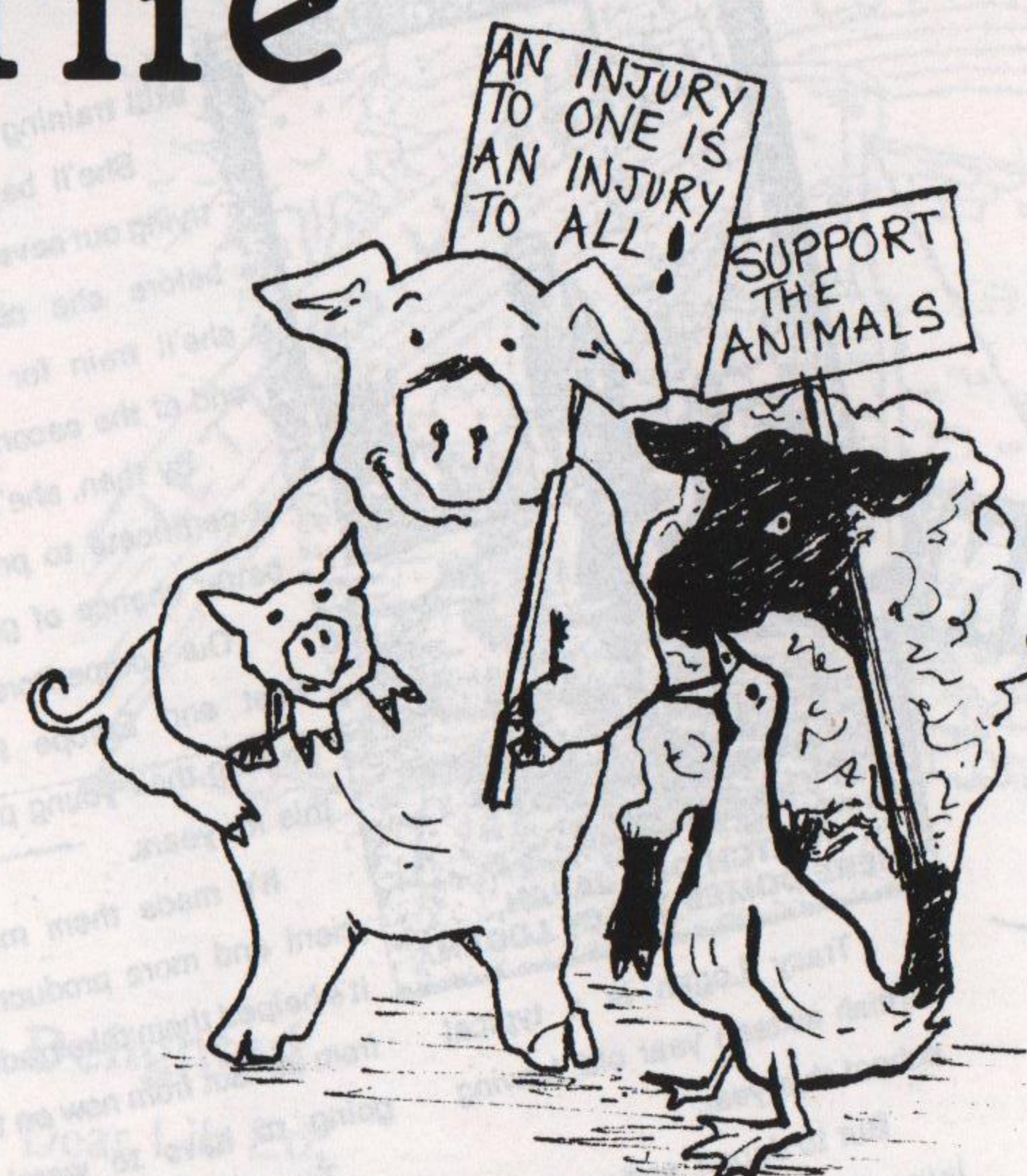
This is a free country where people have enjoyed liberty of speech for almost one thousand years.

If he wants to live in a dictatorship, he should take the first boat back to Pakistan.

Farm strife

Union Farm — a story for children and adults
A book by the Labour Research Department
LRD Publications £1.95

Never mind the story — get the polemic! All is not well at Growmore Farm where Mr Moneybags exploits his animal workers and threatens any deviants with the meat pie factory. Clara, the horse with the raised consciousness, declares, 'We need to be organised, to stop work altogether — we need a union of all the farm animals.' Despite a setback when Crawler the dog acts as informer until events bring him round, the animals eventually unite under the principle, 'an injury to one is an injury to all' and boosted by the success of their picketing establish their right to a union and make plans for their future demands. A nice, realistic touch has Mr Moneybags consoling himself, 'The animals have won this time. But it won't be long before I show them who's boss.' The reader is left to surmise the outcome by questions inviting opinions and related experiences. These provoked some productive discussion among the children (aged 7+)



with whom I shared the story so perhaps it's a carping criticism to wish that the narrative had been less overtly didactic and less in danger of banalising a message which may be simple but never simplistic.

The children thought it all a bit obvious, even silly; a little more judicious literary effort could have been expended to create less stereotypic characters. Also a plot where you feel involved enough

but also free to draw your own conclusion — albeit a right on one! — would have been more entertaining and effective in conveying the important substance of the story. The animals whilst working for better conditions for themselves are never shown to question the ultimate credibility of the system in which they operate. Is there a nasty hint of socialist paternalism lurking in the manure heap? There's a suspicious whiff that if Mr Moneybags and Sons develop a social conscience and benevolently agree to demands all will be well, whilst the animals need never consider that they might work for themselves? Not to mention the unhappy association of animals in the context of farming.

Nevertheless this is an attempt to explore dramatically and in an appealing and accessible way, issues too often ignored on the child and adult's book-shelf. I particularly liked the way each pertinent point in the development of the story is clearly sub-titled and illustrated with a detailed character and humour to implement the text. A worthwhile idea, attractively presented, a shame it wasn't more orientated towards developing an understanding rather than a reiteration of dogma.

School soap

Grange Hill
A BBC television series

As most people know by now Grange Hill is a fictional comprehensive school somewhere in outer London. In two 25-minute episodes each week we observe the intimate details of life in a large state secondary school. And don't parents just hate it. Its reflection of modern kids and their cynicism towards the petty power games played by teachers is deeply disturbing to many adults.

The teachers, though, have come a long way since the caricatures of *The Bash Street Kids*. There's a realistic range of personalities from the old-style authoritarians like Mr Bronson to the more child-centred teachers like Mr Kennedy. Although personally I still miss the loveable neo-libertarian 'Scruffy McGuffie' who now seems to have left the series — maybe he got a job in a free school!

The programmes follow the usual 'soap' formula of several storylines and characters weaving in and out of each episode. Two typical storylines from past series concerned the end of term concert and the school outfitters. In the first, the kids got together, unknown to the staff, to produce a brilliant set of sketches tacked on to the end of the official school concert. The head and local vicar

in the audience blew a fuse. The school outfitter episodes saw the kids effect a ruse to outwit the official school supplier and force him to cut his extortionate profit margins.

In the present series we've seen the emergence of several topical themes: asbestos discovered in the school building, a CND sticker has gone up on the staff-room noticeboard and the teachers have begun to discuss pay — although they don't seem to know that the rest of the teachers in the country have been taking action on this one!

Authoritarianism, especially in the form of the upright, bow-tied Morris Bronson has been a continuing theme. In the most recent series, one kid, Ant Brown, has been seen to particularly challenge the authority and so has focussed the debate on whether it is better to accommodate, confront or ignore authority. Danny Kendall's choice is to ignore it, he just walks out of school whenever he fancies. A subsequent interview with the deputy head went like this:

D.H.: *Why do you keep walking out of school?*

Danny: *Why not?*

D.H.: *Because it's against the rules.*

Danny: *Your rules, not ours.*

D.H.: *The rules are there to ensure the school runs smoothly.*

Danny: *Well you just show me one of your rules that gives kids more freedom.*

Nice one Danny . . .

The value of *Grange Hill* is not as a libertarian model, because with its school uniforms, formal titles for teachers and rigid discipline it's nothing like one, but in that it invites children, as viewers, to recognise and criticise these traditional structures.

The kids themselves are shown as really positive with lots of strong girl characters and a terrific sense of humour. Two aspects of characterisation that are not satisfactory are the portrayal of bullying children and that of Roland. Roland is a stereotyped fat-boy who is greedy and always complaining. A really negative image that can only add to the problems of overweight children. Similarly children who bully are shown as bad people, there's never any attempt to explore their character fully, no possibility offered of them changing. Expulsion is the perennial solution.

Over the years the programme has largely withstood the onslaughts of the 'Mary Whitehouse' brigade whilst at the same time responding positively to its more progressive critics (remedying its initial lack of black characters, for example). It has also maintained its high production values which set it apart from much of the rest of children's programmes with their largely talking heads and egg-boxes and glue techniques. I think it's brilliant, and recommend it for kids of all ages.

A parents' guide

Considering Children — a parents' guide to progressive education
A book by David Gribble,
Dorling Kindersley, pp189, £5.95

Years ago people wrote books on education for the general reader, now it's the preserve of ivory-towered readers. Academics write books for other academics to read. David Gribble's new book is different, it's written for parents considering their child's education. You won't find stuff here about 'semiotic differentials' or 'identification performance vectors' but you will find a classic restatement of the case for freedom in education. David's argument is derived not from the minutiae of research findings but subtly built up from his own experiences and reflections.

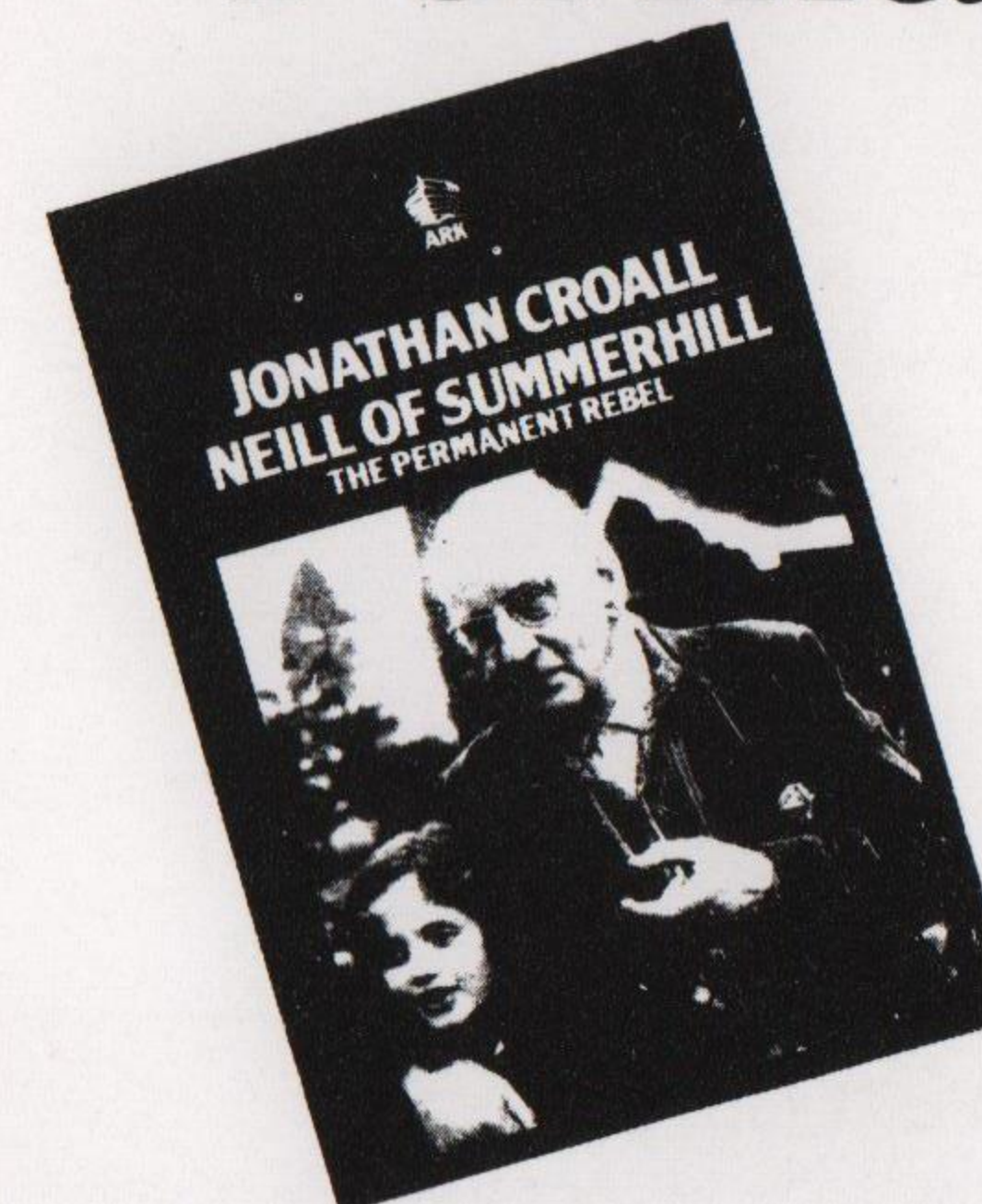
Recalling his first year as a teacher in a traditional school he explains how he became inevitably entrapped in the mesh of fear and oppression. How he was put down by the head and expected to defer to his seniors and how, to his horror, he was inadvertently responsible for having a child physically beaten. But

this is no mere tale of woe, he goes on to describe the alternative. How relationships with children can be different, and are, at progressive schools; how the curriculum can be constructed by the children, rather than the adults; about kids and sex, clothes, play, religion and exams. He moves on to differentiate a little between 'progressives' and includes a chapter on the Leicester comprehensive school, Countesthorpe.

When, towards the end, the children speak for themselves it is brought home to the reader what is at issue . . . or as one child observed: 'At my primary school all the teachers were very superior to us. They were on one side and we were on the other . . .'

The book is illustrated throughout with black and white photographs which though rather badly reproduced, strongly complement the text. The inclusion of a list of recommended schools at the end serves as a final reminder to the reader that this isn't a work of idle romanticism but a book well-rooted in a genuinely liberating theory and practice of education.

Permanent rebel



Neill of Summerhill — the Permanent Rebel
A book by Jonathan Croall
Ark Paperbacks, pp.180, £3.95

Jonathan Croall has written the first complete biography of A.S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill School. It makes fascinating reading and, with sixteen pages of photographs, is very good value.

Neill's childhood was a model of all he was to fight against in later life — sexual repression, beatings, and oppressive religion. As he said 'my interest in freedom began as a protest against the authority of my childhood'. He first began to formulate his ideas on education through his experiences teaching in authoritarian schools in Scotland.

In 1917 Neill met Homer Lane, who

ran the Little Commonwealth, a home for 'delinquent' children, on self-governing lines. Lane also introduced him to the ideas of Freud, and gave him the expression 'on the side of the child' which became the guiding principle of Neill's life. A later influence was Wilhelm Reich, with whom he had a long friendship.

Jonathan Croall has talked to many ex-Summerhill pupils and teachers, and their recollections help build up a picture of Neill's personality. Because of Neill's anti-intellectualism, he had no interest in innovative approaches to the curriculum. His own teaching, of maths and English, was heavily criticised by ex-pupils . . . 'He was the worst maths teacher in the world.'

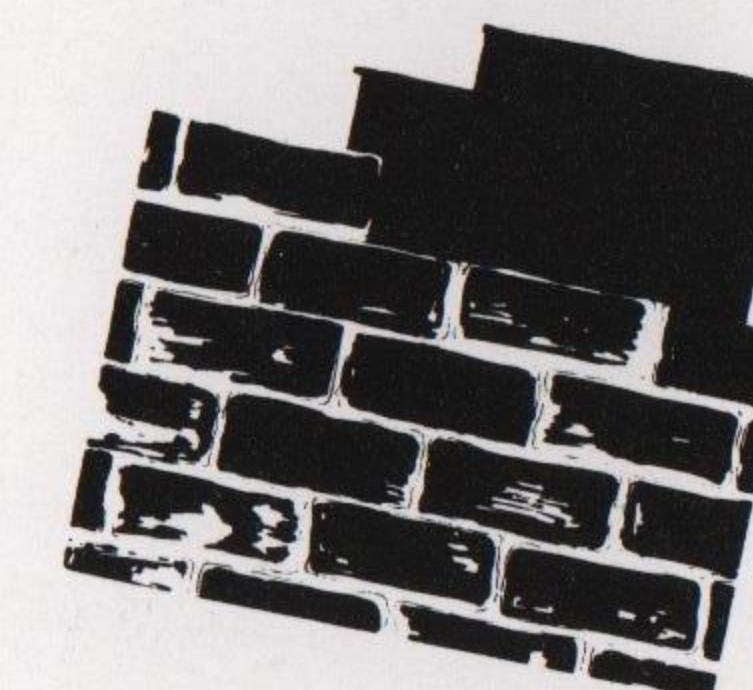
Other negative aspects are his sexism and heterosexism, and his apparent jealousy of teachers who became too popular with the children. But his real aim was for Summerhill to be a happy place for children to develop, and in this he succeeded. Self-government seems to have been genuine (though Neill had more of an influential role than he would admit), and children left Summerhill as caring, confident human beings.

Overall it is the message of Neill's uncompromising stand on behalf of freedom for the child that comes across most clearly in this book.

Progress?

Beyond Progressive Education
A book by Ken Jones,
Macmillan, pp178, £4.95

Beyond
Progressive
Education



Lots of people don't like schools or what they do. As the political Right mounts a concerted attack on education they are obviously getting a lot of popular support. Ken Jones, a leading theorist of the Socialist Teachers Alliance, wonders why. He realises that the left have failed. Their policies have proved inadequate to defend the system and have no chance of initiating a popular transformation of education. He puts this failure down to the limitations of the two major planks of the Left's strategies of 'equal opportunities' and 'progressivism'. Hence the need to go 'Beyond Progressive Education'.

The book makes a brave start in recognising the ascendancy of the Right and its popular appeal but seems less candid in recognising the breathtaking scope of the Left's failure. The truth is that what the Left has offered both the workers (teachers etc) in the education system and the clients (children and parents) has often been little different from that offered by the Right. The most radical curricula and most cooperative working practices have been developed not by left-wing authorities like the ILEA but completely outside the state system in the free schools.

Although Ken Jones does valuable work in tracing the history of groups like the Teachers' Labour League, his failure to adequately identify the Libertarian tradition in education is a major flaw. While his analysis of the limitations of 'equal opportunism' is useful, his consideration of 'progressivism' is hopeless. The book certainly never justifies its title as nowhere does he really consider progressive education as practised at say Summerhill. Significantly he hardly even mentions children.

In the end it seems that Ken's task (and that of others on the non-Libertarian left) is not so much to transform the education system as to gain control over it. As if power and authority are not themselves a problem, only who wields them.