

Groups and resources

Lib Ed groups

Leicester 0455-209029
Nottingham 0949-60306
Bristol 0272-41380

Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement

BM GYM, London WC1N 3XX
01-317 9690

Gay Youth Help Service

37 Rosenthal House, 45 Rushey Green, London SE6 4AR
01-698 2857

Lesbian and Gay Workers in Education

BM Gayteacher, London, WC1N 3XX

Forest School Camps

Lorna English (Secretary), 110 Burbage Road, London SE24 9HD
(A radical organisation that arranges camps for children - it's very decentralised)

Woodcraft Folk

13 Ritherton Road, London SW17
01-672 6031
(kind of non-sexist, non-militarist scouts and brownies)

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.)

Feminist Library

Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2N 6PA.
01-930 0715

New University

24 South Road, Hockley, Birmingham B18
021-551 1679
(An alternative education project)

Riff Raff Poets

c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

International Association for the Child's Right to Play

Paul Soames, UK Branch Secretary IPA, Contact-a-Family, 15 Strutton Ground, London SW1P 2HP

Special listing

Belgrade Theatre in Education

Belgrade Theatre, Corporation Street, Coventry, CV1 1gs
(festival of 25 years of TIE planned for 1990)

Crucible Theatre TIE Company

Norfolk Street, Sheffield 1

Roundabout Theatre Group

Nottingham Playhouse, Wellington Circus, Nottingham, NG1 5AF

Theatr Powys

The Drama Centre, Tremont Road, Llandindrod Wells, Powys, LD1 5EB

Leavers Experimental Arts Project

Legard Works, Legard Road, Highbury, London N5 1DE.
01-226 8025

Black and In Care

20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN
01-226 7102

Association for Curriculum Development

PO Box 563, London N16 8XD.
(An independent teachers network involved in innovative curriculum development, working to combat racism and sexism, challenge propaganda and produce learning materials which promote equality.)

Shocking Pink

Young Women's Magazine Collective, c/o 55 Acre Lane, Brixton, London SW2

Anarchist Student

c/o Mr E Grigg, Christchurch College, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU
(British student publication)

Peace Education Project

Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh St., London WC1.
01-387 5501

Housmans Mail Order

5 Caledonian Road, London N1
(Suppliers of a wide range of libertarian literature by post; send for their catalogue of titles)

Teachers for Animal Rights

c/o Wanda Dejlidko, Lynwood Rd, London SW 17

All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism

Panther House, Room 216, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1.

Education Otherwise

25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs.
(For everyone who practices or supports the right of children to learn without schooling)

Campaign against Military Research on Campus (CAMROC)

190 Burdett Road, London E3 4AA
01-980 2455

New Education Directory

15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1DB
0272-735091

Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project

Wyvil Rd. School, Wyvil Rd., London SW8.
01-627 2662

Blackcurrent Free School

c/o 54 Craven Street, Northampton.

Sands School

48 East Street, Ashburton, Devon

Lewisham Free School

120 Algernon Road, Lewisham, London, SE13 7AW
01-690 9122

Kilquhanity House School

Castle Douglas, Kircudbrightshire, Scotland.

White Lion Free School

57 White Lion Street, London N1

Kirkdale Free School

c/o 10 Dallas Road, London SE26 6JP
01-699 4938

Children's Legal Centre

20 Compton Terrace, London N1.
01-359 6251

International

LIFeducation Network

PO Moolooah, 24553 Australia
(Education for life, about life, for the whole life)

National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools

RDI Box 378, Glenmore, PA 19343, USA
tel: (215) 458 5138

Free Schule Frankfurt

Vogelweidstrasse 3, Frankfurt, Fed. Rep. of Germany

Foundation of Education with Production

PO Box 20906, Gaborone, Botswana
(Education for social change)

ANKUR

J-21, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi 110016, India
tel: 661473
(Society for alternatives in education)

Tamariki Free School

Woolston, Christ Church, New Zealand

SAC (Syndikalisterna)

Svenvagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm, Sweden
tel: 08-34-35-59

Le CERISE

77 rue des Haies, 75020 Paris, France
(Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Innovation Sociale et Educative, which publishes the journal, "Zero de Conduite")

Centro Studi Libertari

via Rovetta 27, 20127 Milano, Italia.
(Libertarian study centre and archive, publishes the journal "Volonta")

Circule-Air

Agence Informations Enfance, 29 rue Davy, 75017 Paris, France.
tel: (1) 42-28-71-64
(A French based alternative educational magazine and organisation.)

Assn. Nationale pour l'Education Nouvelle

1 rue des Nefliers, 31400 Toulouse, France
tel: 61-52-45-10

Edizioni Anarchismo

Casello Postale 61, 95100 Catania, Italy

CNT-AIT-Ensenyament

Calle Unio 16, 1-1, Barcelona 08001, Spain
tel: 301-06-12

Familial, Day Nursery Kindergarten School

PO Box 2009, Kathmandu, Nepal

KRUT (Kritisk UtbildningsTidskrift)

Torpedverkstaden, Skeppsholmen, S111 49 Stockholm
(Critical Journal of Education)

Jiyu No Mori Gakuen

Hanno, Saitama, Japan
(Biggest free school in Japan)

New Zealand Lib Ed Group

c/o Richard Bolstad, 14 Sullivan Avenue, Christchurch 2, New Zealand

Grupo Impulso Libertario

CC984, 2000 Rosario, Republic of Argentina



A magazine for the liberation of learning

Black children in care
Suffering a social disservice

Sexual harassment in school
Young women reveal their daily experience

The good, the bad and the ugly
A tale of two state schools

Learning from the sixties

There's more to those days than nostalgia, you know



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PLUS LIBBY, THINK ALOUD, & CRINGE HILL

Cover photo: CRISPIN HUGHES / Photo Co-op

So now we know ... It's official ... The most serious problem facing state schools is violent and disruptive behaviour by pupils.

How do we know it? Mainly because the gutter tabloid press has been able to pick up on the messages by the teachers' and headteachers' unions, and because after a series of much publicised incidents, Lord Elton is to an investigation into this so-called worrying 'development'.

What is being ignored, of course, is the research carried out by the Children's Legal Centre which reveals that there has been no increase at all of violent and disruptive behaviour in schools.

So why the hype, we might ask? The answer is relatively simple. For the unions, it provides an opportunity to 'bash the kids' yet again and avoid a confrontation with the government about how the new Education Act will effect the lives of children and young people. For the press, it provides an explanation for any youth dissent – children are basically out of control and it all emanates from school.

It is not surprising that children are, and have always been, disruptive and sometimes violent at school because schools are inherently violent institutions.

The teacher unions were hardly at the forefront in the campaign against corporal punishment. Nor do we hear the press campaigning against the daily abuse of children and young people in schools, from bullying despots who get a huge kick out of exercising their adult power over children, who don't have the same physical and verbal confidence.

If Lord Elton wants to do anything worthwhile, let him examine the violent teaching profession. Let him take a long hard look at the new legislation that is going to make schools even more prison like. Let him consider why it is that the attendance rate in some schools is now lower than it was in 1888.

More than unwelcome attention

Celia Kitzinger describes the responses to her questionnaire on unfairness in school in which young women reported sexual harassment or abuse.

MORE THAN one thousand young women responded to my questionnaire asking for descriptions of "something unfair that happened at school", and about 5% described incidents of sexual harassment or abuse. Some of these incidents involved male pupils – boys who grab them or feel them up in the corridors, make sexual innuendos and obscene gestures, taunt them about menstruation, peer through peepholes when they shower after games, or – in a couple of cases – attempt to rape them. But most instances they describe involve male teachers in what are seen as flagrant abuses of authority.

Intimidation

Girls said teachers stood too close, were overfriendly, paid them compliments that made their skin crawl, gave them excessive amounts of attention, made dirty jokes or off-colour references in class, used sex-education materials for their own dubious purposes, made innuendos and comments about their clothing and hairstyle, and appraising remarks ("in a slimy voice") while staring at parts of the girls' bodies ("My word, you're a big girl, Angela"). Some girls described male teachers hanging around them at lunch and breaktimes, or following them home.

A fourteen year old described how a teacher waited after school in the social studies room: "He exposed himself to me. I ran out of the room, with this teacher trying

SHIRLEY STRIKES BACK



to kiss me. I told my mum and she had a word with this teacher. He still gives me funny looks. I felt very upset. I think that they should fire this teacher for what he is."

Often girls do not report these incidents – out of embarrassment, for fear of reprisal, or because they are intimidated by the procedures involved. When they do report them, they are frequently told that the incident is a product of their feverish imaginations, that they are trying to get the

man concerned into trouble, that they must have asked for it, or that it is merely trivial – nothing to make a fuss about.

Reprimands

One seventeen year old said that she complained to the headmaster after she and her friends were called "tarts" by a teacher. He "did not understand why we were so annoyed, believing that we were making trouble and causing bad feeling between the male teacher and ourselves".

One girl (quoted in *The Guardian*, 16th Feb. 1988) reported a teacher who passed her a love letter during an O-level exam and was told "A young woman of your age should be flattered". Another who complained of excessive attention was reprimanded for "encouraging" him, ("Well, if you will dress like that, what do you expect?").

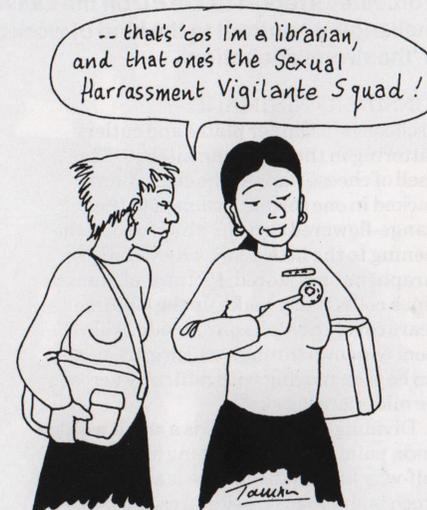
A sixteen year old who had been seduced by her teacher and was having an "affair" with him said: "Although I was very explicit when I told my story to the Headmistress, giving exact times, dates and places, I felt that she did not believe me, or at least found it convenient not to. Like my parents, she was obsessed with the idea of 'scandal'."

Closing of the ranks

Even when other staff in the same school are concerned about what is going on, they may feel powerless to do anything about it. One woman teacher described how several



girls in her school had, on separate occasions, reported a male teacher asking them, "Would you like to see my willy?" – he then produced a photograph of his suggestively named cat. "Everybody knows he does this sort of thing, and nobody's going to do anything about it", she said. "If you pursue this sort of thing", added another teacher, "you get closing of the ranks. It's easier to disbelieve the individual than to deal with the public recriminations".



When I initially reported this research (at a meeting of the *British Psychological Society*), the media had a field-day describing my work as a "shock survey" about "classroom casanovas" and "sexy sirs in classroom frolics".

Serious question

Now that the voyeuristic titillation has died down, the serious question remains: what can we do? Here are my suggestions:

- We need to raise awareness of this issue on PGCE and in-service courses.
- Schools should have guidelines on sexual harassment, defining it and setting out the complaints procedure to be followed. This should be made available to all pupils and discussed with them.
- The complaints procedure should be carefully designed so as to be independent and supportive.
- Girls should be offered the space, time and, most importantly, the language in which to talk about sexual harassment with each other and with women teachers – a school women's group? assertiveness training?
- We should continue to work towards structural changes in schools that will make them less authoritarian and, in particular, to eradicate male power so that the abuses that follow from it will also be eliminated.

Celia Kitzinger would appreciate feedback and suggestions from readers, as well as any information or experience you may have about sexual harassment in school. Write to her, in confidence, at the School of Education, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RF.

In on the act

The days when young people only experienced drama as either a participant or a viewer at the annual school play are thankfully long gone. Currently there are a wide variety of approaches to drama being used with young people. Jason Worcester's report to *Lib ED* on the Leavers' Experimental Arts Project provides an interesting and potentially challenging contrast to the kind of work being done in schools described by James Hennessy, an advocate of the concept of 'theatre as education'.

CONSIDER THIS IMAGE:

A school hall. Dinner plates and cutlery clattering in the adjoining kitchen. The smell of cheese flan. Audio equipment stacked in one corner, just next to the orange-flowered curtain which covers the opening to the little room where the Gym paraphernalia is stored. Pictures of animals which collectively make up the Chinese Years cover the walls on one side. Above them windows through which grey clouds can be seen moving with difficulty across the mid-morning sky.

Dividing the floor area is a small wooden fence, painted white, running along the half-way line. In the middle is set a gate which is shut. On one side are six 7-year-olds standing guard. On the other side the other members of their class are discovering the secret art of 19th century poaching. A woman dressed as a villager of 150 years ago is leaning over the gate signalling to the smaller group to come over and talk to her.

What does this image mean? It is probably better to consider it as one of thousands, much in the same way as you would if you were asked to study a single frame of a movie film. It is frozen, on pause in the 'projector'.

The image has a history informing it – what images will follow? As a watcher (and as a listener, because there is a sound-track) you could interpret, speculate, and if you were to draw the conclusion that that was a single moment contained in a theatre event at this school, you'd be right.

Forces of darkness

Theatre productions have been presented in schools for many years. They still are despite the forces of darkness (Section 28 is merely the tip of the censorship iceberg). Theatre in schools is variously described as: Children's Theatre, Puppet Theatre, Young People's Theatre (YPT), Theatre-in-Education (TIE). The Arts Council of Great Britain has a collective term: TYP, Theatre for Young People, some of which is performed in schools.

The issue which needs constantly to be addressed is: Why? Why is it important for children to come into contact with live theatre inside their schools? Is it just for its entertainment value, or does it have another function?

Re-consider the image again. Now, step inside the frame. You are now inside the school hall. You have also been transformed into a 7-year-old and you stand on one side of the white fence with five of your classmates. The image is very different for you now. You have an intimate grasp of its history.

You know the villager on the other side who wants to talk to you. Her name is Jane. You know she is starving, in desperate need for food for herself and her sister Alice. You understand why the majority of your classmates behind her are so willing to be taught how to poach. You know why you are standing guard.

Story-book

Sam, the gamekeeper, has asked you to help him look after Lord Ainsworth's land. You know him and understand that it is important to protect the game on the estate. You have been thinking, on and off, more or less, at the same time what's happening is not real. It's a story. For goodness sake, Sam's dog, Jolly, is really an actor crawling on all fours wearing a dog mask.

This actor was the first member of the Company you met when he came into your classroom and showed you the masks that were to be used in the play. He even showed you the story-book; in it were pictures of all the characters in the story.

The image is unfrozen, the pause button released. You and your class-mates look at Jane, then at each other. Would you, should

you go up to her? Whatever your group decides Jane asks: "Will you open the gate and let us onto Lord Ainsworth's land so that we can trap a hare?"

Freeze this image.

At this moment your thoughts are competing with each other, not because they are confused but because you have a need to arrive at a decision. You are emotionally committed to the process you've experienced, not the question per se. You want to make a response not just because an adult (dressed up in funny clothes) is asking you.

You look at your class-mates, they are looking to the group as well. You look at Jane again, and in her eyes you see a life-experience which you understand. You look behind you to see, hear, if there is any sign of Sam and Jolly's return. You then hear Jane's quiet voice again. "Will you help us?"

The image is frozen again.

You are at a crucial point of discovery. A discovery about yourself. Usually the answers that you give to questions from adults are ones you hope will bring you credit – that is what you have been taught answers are for. But his time the answer that you give depends on what you feel is



Power to the people. Sure, but some have more power than others.

right and what you think should happen next.

The example used above is from an active-involvement TIE programme called "The Poachers Secret", first produced by Pit Prop Theatre of Wigan five years ago. This form of theatre, not always targeted for young people in schools, has clear advantages over performance-based theatre. Mainly that, instead of watching and listening to the play, the audience are enabled to step, physically, into it; to actively participate in the story and experience a greater involvement in the theatrical process and in what happens to the characters within the story.

The story (the play) the Company has prepared has a beginning, a middle and an end. The audience cannot change this story – in essence. The story is the thread which holds all the other elements together; that must be secure because within the story the opportunities for discovery are endless – for all involved, including the actors!

Collective activity

Theatre is a collective activity between audience and actor(s); a contractual complicity has to be established before theatre can be created. The actor endows him/herself with qualities of someone else, endows the theatre space with qualities of some other time and space. The audience must be conscious of this duality, and this combination transforms real time into drama time, the result is a Theatre event.

When an audience is actively involved in the Theatre event everything is heightened. They meet characters, bonds are formed through the sharing of a common humanity and the audience discovers for *itself* meanings and truths by experiencing, with the characters, what happens to them in a direct relationship to the story. This act of discovery is a creative act on the part of the audience and through expectation and speculation of the future, a awesome learning opportunities can present themselves.

Learning

What is learnt? Leaving aside the issues, concepts, ideas and information contained in the fabric of the story, a significant 'learning area' is that after the theatre event is over the process of discovery may continue, generating a need to make more discoveries concerning other experiences in real time, real life experiences. And, maybe, this method could reveal meanings and truths about themselves and the world that they live in.

The pause button is released. Would you open the gate?



Whither freedom.

Youth scene

THE LEAVERS Experimental Arts Project (LEAP) is the result of a number of pilot schemes initiated by the Quaker arts organisation, the Leavers. It addresses two concerns: unemployment and conflict in all its forms throughout society.

LEAP is open to any unwaged person aged 18 to 25, including people with disabilities. No previous experience of drama or theatre is required. It is a volunteer project and participants remain on benefit as LEAP ensures that they remain available for work.

A professional director is hired for the thirteen weeks duration of each project. The first seven weeks are spent training, devising and writing. After preview performances, the piece and its accompanying participatory workshop are toured for two weeks in London and three weeks in the Regions. Venues include youth and community centres, schools, colleges, probation day centres and prisons.

Subject matter varies, but always examines an area of conflict. LEAP1 used

"The Pressure Game" to explore peer group and society's expectations of teenagers. LEAP2's "Snappy Families" looked at conflict within the home. In "Looks – or, why didn't the Ugly Duckling turn into a duck?", LEAP3 investigated the difficulties that physical appearance can provoke.

The current LEAP have just completed a tour that has included venues in Scotland, Manchester and Liverpool. "Man with Wet Eyes" is the story of the life, trial and execution of Andrew Zondo, a young South African who was driven to commit an act of violence because of the pressure of Apartheid.

As always, the intention has been to inform and to engage the audience in a discussion of the issues through the medium of drama and particularly the workshop element. This allows personal growth both on the part of the participants in the project and audience members, as diverse as 14 year olds in youth clubs and the inmates of a category B prison.

'68 – '88 What went right?

Roy Carr-Hill was an inveterate revolutionary tourist in the 1960s: Amsterdam with the Provos in 1962 and 1963; Berkeley with the Free Speech Movement in 1966 and 1967; Paris and Prague in 1968; he retired in 1969. Here he expresses his anger at the dismissal of the sixties by many on the left.

THERE HAVE been many nostalgic reviews of 1968. Retired 'revolutionaries' reminisce about their youthful – and macho – frolics. Comfortable muppies all, they recall that the students were the spoiled children of the affluent liberal parents, their 'movement' that of a privileged section of the youth, who, when they were thwarted, turned to 'terrorism'.

"Today, un soixante-huitard (a 'sixty-eightier') means a nostalgic bourgeois, somewhere in his late thirties or early forties, still mourning his lost adolescent ideals. It can also stand for a colossal bore, to whom nothing else has ever happened." Mans Gaillant, *Paris Notebooks*.

What led to '68? What was it all about? What has been its long term affect? Does it mean anything today? Why is it so disparaged?

Vietnam

The conventional view points to the growing protests, first by American students and then others, against the folly and excess of the US role in the Vietnam War.

Conor O'Brien remarks that rather than being against privilege, the movement began in America, protesting "... against the abolition of the privilege to be exempt from the draft." Twenty years ago, James Jupp recorded:

"The whole Western world is experiencing a phenomenon which had its origins in the United States, the creation of an autonomous 'youth culture'. The basic features of this culture are: that it rejects the adult world; that it is confined effectively to those between puberty and thirty; that it creates its own leaders and symbols; that it demands 'liberation'; that it requires less and less adult co-operation for its sub-society to function; that it frightens the adult world to death, and that it is basically harmless despite a dangerous and even self-destructive aspect."

But this still misses the essential of the European Movement and the connections with flower power in California.

The 'generation gap' of the 1960s was not a media creation – that came later. There were different interests obviously in the States, but also in many European countries

where the Second World War still cast its shadow over France and Germany. Angry at their parents who could not account for their role either as collaborators or as soldiers for Nazism, angry at the apparently inexorable decline into a Third World War, they had also profited from rapid material improvements. Remember Macmillan in 1962, "You've never had it so good".

Conventional economists understood at least part of the problem. Mishan wrote in 1973:

"... the momentum of economic growth in the wealthier countries ... can be sustained only by the unremitting efforts of industry to create dissatisfactions with existing possessions and to promote unbridled covetousness and greed."

Understanding that generation's feeling of helplessness about the war machine and the onward march of conspicuous consumption, and their growing realisation of the futility of most material 'improvements', will perhaps help today's reader to appreciate those very popular, but seemingly incomprehensible, slogans of '68: "Be realistic, demand the impossible", and "Put imagination in power". They were not arbitrary scribbles, which happened to fit the mood; they grew out of a body of theory that had been developing around Europe since the War as a way of understanding the failures of Stalinism and the successful progress of capitalism.

Art and life

The International Situationists (IS) had grown out of Dadaism and Surrealism. Instead of producing ever more abstract art, they were trying to re-integrate art with life. Surrealists were wrong to separate surreal art differently from everyday life; instead fantasy had to become part of daily life. But to do that we not only have to bring art back to its social basis but to change daily life. Artistic activity then becomes the way of encouraging participation in the world (Herbert Read).

The IS saw present life as being reduced to survival. Consumption and survival were to be assured by a Welfare State which permitted only one kind of existence. Increased production, despite a wide variety of resources and riches, only leads to the transformation of the world into an economic world. Increased riches lead only

to an 'augmented survival' with no improvement in quality. Package holidays meant that tourism had begun to imitate the circulation of commodities, including even 'revolutionary' tourism to Cuba for a fortnight.

Society of the Spectacle

It was only in the 19th century industrialised societies, when commodities first began to circulate extensively, that they began to be treated as objects, and not as the consequence of a social process of production. In the consumption societies of the late 20th century, all human relations become reduced to a set of stereotypes presented by images in advertising and television: hence the 'society of the spectacle'. To alienated production is added alienated consumption. The consumer becomes consumer of illusions of value.

It is not the consumption which is itself alienated, but the conditioned choice and the ideology which leads them. What is the point of guaranteeing one's own survival (by working hard on a paid job) if one dies of boredom? What should be done with a nature shaped by man and organised in terms of profit? Instead, play and poetry are to play a crucial role.

Students

The IS saw the student as the most alienated category: their belief in their own autonomy was illusory and they built their survival into a lifestyle. Now where have I heard that word? This was in marked contrast to the much more popular views of Marcuse and others, who had reserved for youth an active and possibly priority role in the revolutionary process, rather than simply being trainee adults.

LeFebvre, in 1962, also argued that youth suffers the sharpest possible division between his life and its representation: reeds (refusing jobs but accepting goods), provos (insurgents but falling into reformism) and, finally, students who question all society but who can do nothing about it. I bet that rings a bell.

The end of the world

At the end of May 1968, De Gaulle arranged for the army to distribute stocks of petrol so that the French bourgeoisie could take their well-earned Whitsun weekend

after a month's frustration at being unable to work. En masse, they fled Paris; and like lemmings they all returned on the Monday afternoon. Walking towards the Latin Quarter, I met an elderly acquaintance of about 75. He was sitting watching motorists who had abandoned their cars during the eight hour traffic jam to adjourn to the nearest cafe or play cards with their confreres.

My friend, who had experienced both (European) World Wars, had lived through more or less continuous post-war crises in France: collaborators, the instability of the Third Republic, the chaos of the Algerian War and the OAS, and, of course, the '68 events. He was categorical. "The end of the world", he said.

Personal politics

In the period since the Second World War, in contrast to the previous 100 years, the (substantial) gains in productivity had been consumed rather than exchanged for a shorter working week. '68, in fact, marked the end of a relative consensus over the correct balance between the accumulation of material artefacts and improvements in social conditions which had reigned more or less since the Luddites. Of course, '68 failed in its immediate objectives. Moreover, '68 was not fun for many. It was lonely, lost generation: many were made miserable by the drug culture and free sex. But it sowed the seeds of personal politics.

In *Back to the Future*, Stuart Hall wrote:

"... '68 is the birthplace of the politics of health, of the politics of the body, of the politics of the family, the politics of sexuality, the politics which is not made only in the name of somebody else's liberation, but it's made in the name of your own liberation – so that it redraws the boundary of the political itself – it redefines the political itself."

The retreat of the State began in 1968, as well. The anti-authoritarian impulses brought down old cultures. It was also a movement against the new dictatorship of consumerism and technology.

Revolt

Today the 'consensus' view is that they/ we lost. The 1968 generation, so the story goes, because they were privileged, took for granted that 'the economic problem' was solved. But the two oil crises of the 1970s brought them back to earth and libertarianism has become more about individual success in an unfettered economy, rather than about the individual with an unfettered spirit.

There is today a pervasive sense that nothing can be done and therefore that there is no point in trying. We are victims of circumstance.

In 1968, voluntarism was the watchword: "Everything is possible" (Jacques). The slogan, "Find the beach under the cobbles" (free translation of "Sous les pavés – la plage") meant revolt, tear up the cobblestones again, take to the barricades, ... for pleasure.

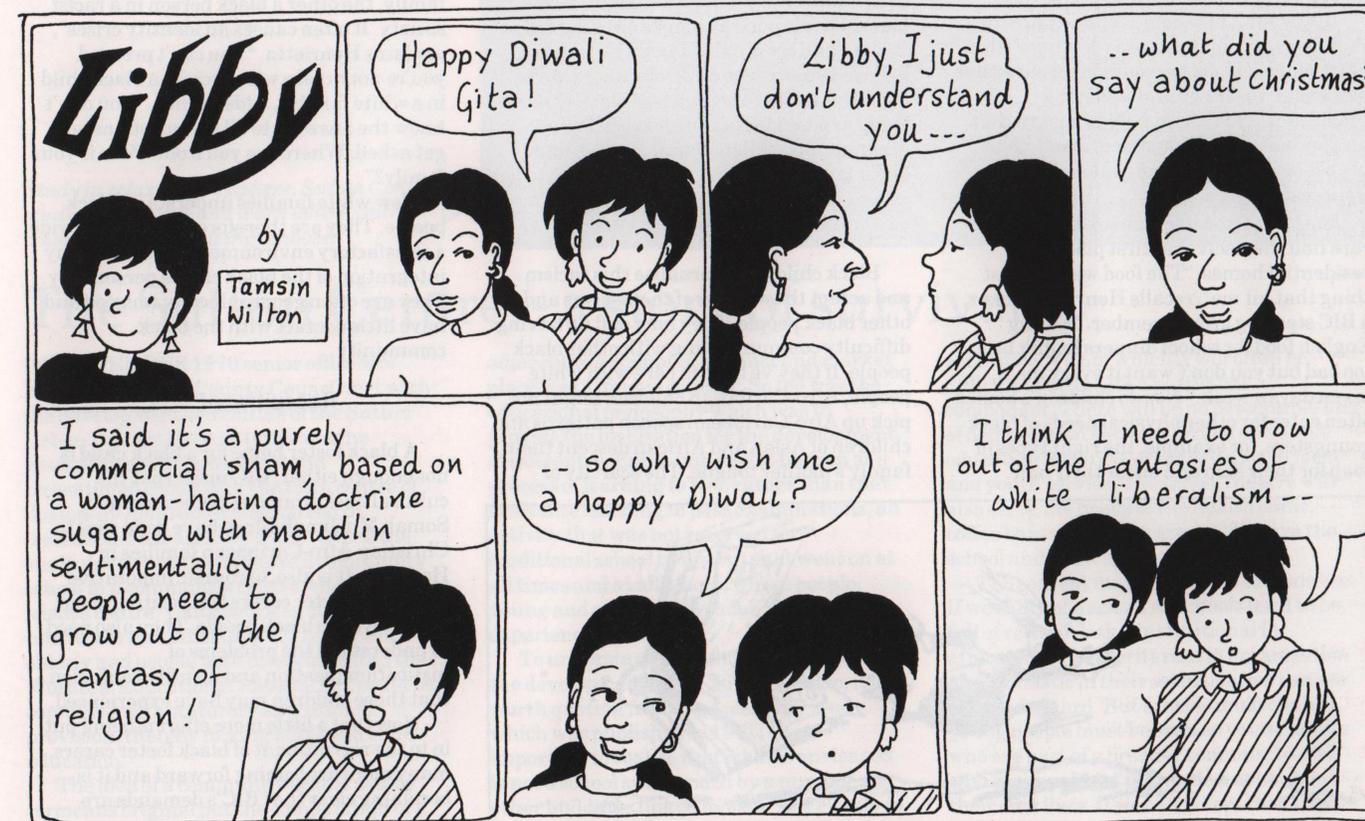
The libertarianism of 1968 was rooted in a sense of material well-being. That, whatever you did, things would basically be OK. In contrast, the individualism of the 1980s is about standing on your own two feet. Corporate Victorian Thatcherite Marxism wants the State to function smoothly to contain misery.

Achievements

The principal achievements of the sixties are still there, in our laws, and in our cultural life, where there is a freedom of ideas, language and imagery which would have been unimaginable and indeed, illegal in 1958.

The social legislation of the sixties was about permitting you to do things if you wanted to do them, not about stopping you from doing them, or making you do what you did not want to do. The Obscene Publications Act of 1959 began to free the written word; capital punishment was abolished in 1965; the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 permitted homosexual acts in private between consenting adults; abortion was legalised in the same year; divorce laws were eased in 1969.

Today we have to remind ourselves that the political culture of the sixties is the major target of the present breed of Tories. They are right to fear an opposition which understands the importance of imaginative thinking, the power of ideas, and the rediscovery of effective communication.



Social disservice

Every year thousands of children are taken 'into care', either placed with foster carers or put into local authority residential 'homes'. Black and In Care, an independent organisation which works with black young people in this situation, believes that the present childcare system in Britain is racist.

IN A CRAMPED and busy office, above the Children's Legal Centre in Islington, a small group of volunteers run Black and In Care (BIC), a group which aims to improve the lot of young black people in care. They're all in care or ex-care themselves so they can draw heavily on personal experience of the system. They believe that black children suffer at all stages, referral, in placement and when they come out of the care system.

"There are a disproportionate number of black children in care," says Perlita Harris, one of BIC's workers, "Social Services don't really understand black family structures and the way they work." It is quite common, and considered responsible practice, in both Asian and Caribbean families for older children to do chores and look after younger ones whilst parents are out. Many white social workers simply can't differentiate between child labour for latch-key kids and care responsibility at home.

Needs

Teachers are quick to call in Social Services when they have 'discipline' problems with black pupils. They jump to the conclusion that it's due to some disturbance in their home background. Some schools have particularly bad records for referring black children, BIC assert.

BIC want it to become common practice that, in every childcare case dealing with a black child, a black person is involved either as a social worker or professional consultant. This would help to ensure that an appropriate assessment is made, thus preventing children being taken into care unnecessarily.

Most young people that are taken into care find themselves at first placed in residential homes. "The food was the first thing that hit me", recalls Henrietta Coker, a BIC steering group member. "Eating English food for school dinners hadn't been too bad but you don't want it every meal, seven days a week." Nor do children's homes often cater for other physical needs of black youngsters, for example, the right types of soap for their skin and oil for their hair.

Once in these institutions, black youngsters find themselves increasingly under both overt and covert pressure to reject their culture. Local authorities rarely encourage young Asians to maintain their religion. In fact, white residential social workers have been known to encourage Muslim girls to reject what they, the white social workers, see as an oppressive culture.

Racist taunts

Jason Francis, who works for the National Association of Young People in Care (NAYPIC), explained why he rejected his culture when in care in Hampshire. "It was during the riots. Everything that was portrayed on TV said that black people were bad. I'd even have my (white) friends coming up to me saying, 'Look at those black people - they shouldn't be in the country. Oh, you're alright,' they'd say to me, 'you're different.' Because I wasn't with my culture."

Jason wasn't let off so easily by the locals in the white Hampshire town. "The care workers didn't recognise the problems I'd face outside the home, they never dealt with the racist taunts I suffered." The police once turned up at the children's home when a burglar had been described as black. "It didn't matter what he looked like, he was black. People portray homes as being full of thieves and criminals." Luckily the police believed Jason. The BIC volunteers have heard many more accounts of black children being exposed to racism and racist assumptions whilst in care, in ways that black families would never allow them to be.

Language

Black children internalise this racism and accept these views of themselves and of other black people. They may end up having difficulty communicating with other black people. If they've been in care with white people, Afro-Caribbean children might not pick up Afro-Caribbean speech patterns and children of Asian and African descent their family's mother tongue. The scarcity of

black workers in these institutions means that they are unlikely to meet many positive role models.

This all contributes to black youngsters growing up in a state of confusion. "You've been socialised into white culture, but white people won't accept you as white," explains Perlita, "you're very unaware of black issues and you don't have access to your own community. You don't know the survival skills that you need to cope with a racist society and the shit you are going to get."

Residential care can be improved by employing more black workers and by creating a more positive environment for black children. For example, by purchasing suitable toiletries, books and magazines by and for blacks and incorporating food from different cultures onto the menu. Both residential and field social workers need to be trained in racism awareness and the cultural heritage of the children in their 'care'.

Awareness

But the trend is for young people in care to be placed with foster carers. This has meant that many black children have been placed with white families. "It's like being two people, one a child within a colour blind family, the other a black person in a racist society. It often causes an identity crisis", explains Henrietta. "You can't pretend you're not in care when you're a black child in a white family", adds Perlita, "You don't know the answers to all the questions you get asked: Where are you from? Who is your family?"

Few white families understand black people. They are therefore unable to provide a satisfactory environment for the healthy integration of the black child's personality. They are often geographically isolated and have little contact with the black community.

Recruitment

A black foster home for a black child is not enough either. BIC insist that the cultural background must be matched. Somali Muslim children have been sent to Christian Afro-Caribbean families in Hackney. It is also, of course, imperative that black foster carers feel positive about themselves as black people. They also need to understand the problems of institutionalisation and identity confusion that these children may have experienced.

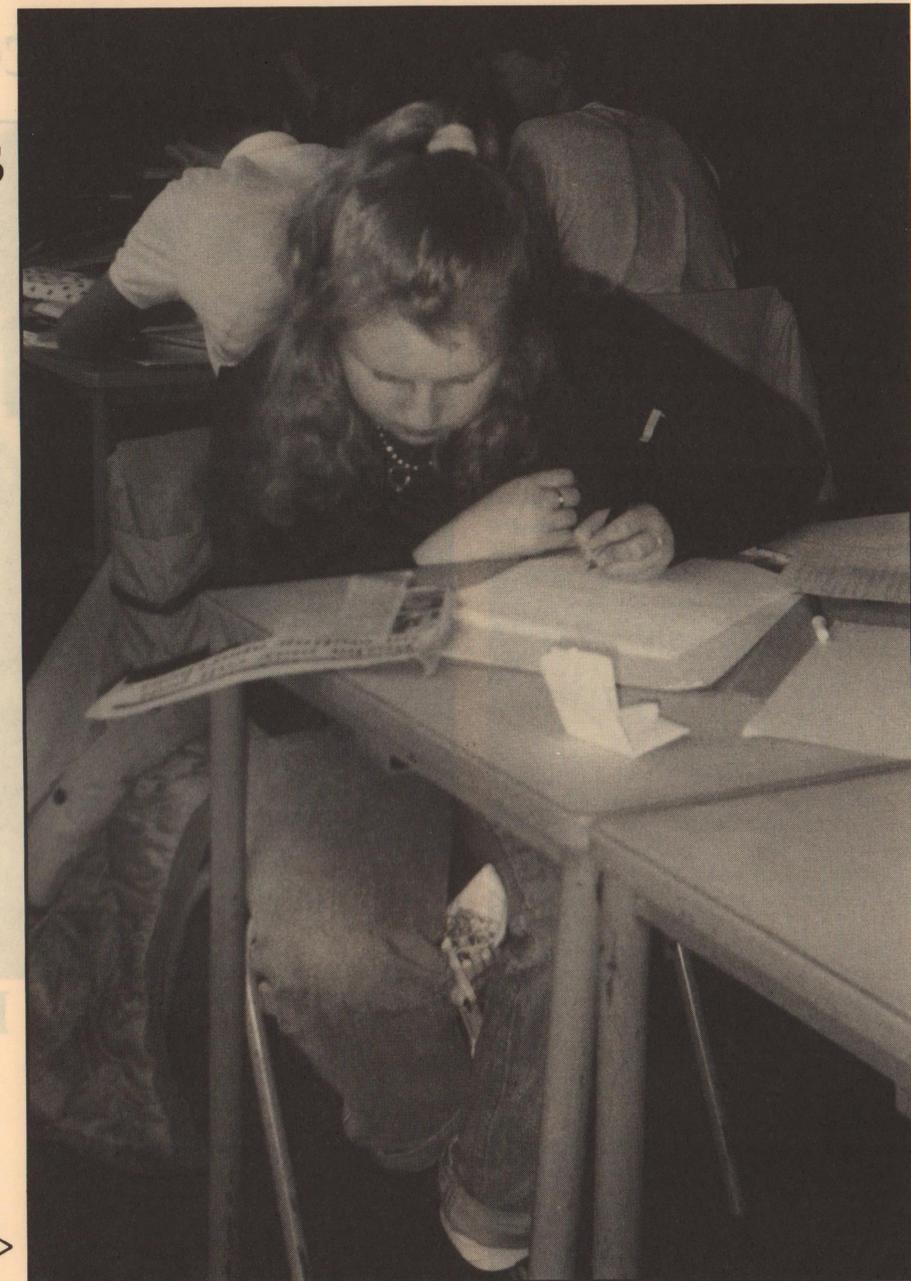
Now that a little more effort is being put in to the recruitment of black foster carers, many more are coming forward and it is becoming clear that BIC's demands are quite attainable.



A tale of two schools

Lib ED looks at the survival of the Sutton Centre and its radical philosophy of community education. The history of the Centre has been littered with controversy but provides a stark contrast to that of its Leicestershire neighbour, Countesthorpe College. Here the unhappy saga of the destruction of Europe's most progressive state school is finally drawing to a close.

Study in relaxed atmosphere. Sutton Centre students can work and learn where, with whom and with what they choose.



The Sutton Centre - a story of survival

IN SEPTEMBER 1970 senior officers of Nottinghamshire County Council met with the development committee of the Sutton Urban District Council to discuss the possibility of an educational and recreational complex in the town centre of Sutton-in-Ashfield. It was agreed to commission a feasibility study. Out of the study developed the notion of a community school in a community centre where a leisure centre, youth services, teachers' centre, careers office, day centre for the elderly and people with disabilities and the Workers' Educational Association, could be combined with statutory educational provision, thereby mixing adult and child education.

The idea of a community school was by no means original but the combination of a school in a leisure and amenity centre

adjacent to a shopping precinct and market place was a unique concept. So too was the educational philosophy which was to provide the inspiration for the development of the centre. Education was to be seen as a process of learning to live, rather than that of an elite learning to pass examinations; an activity that was not reserved for traditional school hours but that went on at all times and at all places; where people, young and old, could broaden their experience.

To understand the ethos that lay behind the development of the Sutton Centre, it is worth quoting from the feasibility study which was published in 1971: "It is important to realise that what is envisaged is not a school surrounded by a number of other buildings linked more or less closely to it, but an organically integrated unit, freely

accessible, within which it will often be difficult to delineate a particular component. There will be no perceptible line of demarcation between school and adult education facilities, or between sixth form and youth service. The school theatre will also serve the needs of the health clinic, coffee bars and dining areas will serve the school and adult community alike.

The concept may be difficult to visualise. If we think of a school as schools used to be, full of rows of desks, institutional in atmosphere, authoritarian in organisation and monastic in their seclusion, we can see no way forward. But schools must change, young people must be seen as young adults who are part of a broader community and who are capable of taking decisions about their own lives. If we can accept this, then the Sutton Centre will become a reality."

Learning for the whole community

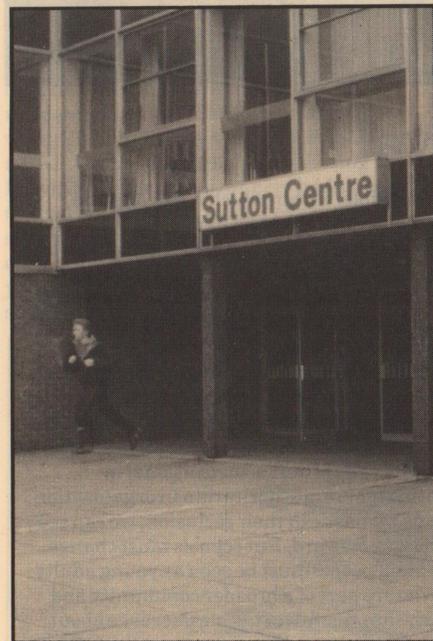
THE CENTRE did indeed become a reality and opened in September 1973. It found it difficult to integrate all areas of provision given that there was not complete agreement about philosophy and practice. For example, there was conflict between those involved in the recreational provision and those in the school, the former seeking traditional forms of management and control.

However, with workers in the school, the youth service and the day centre committed to developing an authoritarian-free environment where people young and old could work together, parts of the centre thrived in its early years and survived the most severe public examination. What has survived and how survival was ensured in the aftermath of the onslaught on progressive education is worthy of attention.

What community?

SUTTON is a town of 43,000 people situated 14 miles north of Nottingham. Its industries are traditionally based on coal mining and hosiery, although in recent years newer industries such as plastics and light engineering have become established.

Prior to 1970, Sutton lacked facilities for recreation, cultural pursuits and social activities. That there was nothing for young people to do was a frequent complaint, but adults also suffered from the dearth of facilities. The building of the Idlewells Shopping Precinct, incorporating a Civic Hall and library, and the construction of a swimming pool, went some way to addressing the problem, but the opening of the Sutton Centre was the most significant.



One of the Centre's many escape routes.



Meeting for a chat in the day centre.

THE JOINT recreation and social facilities include a community theatre, sports hall, indoor bowls hall, ice rink, squash courts and dining and bar facilities. The public use of these facilities is administered by the Ashfield District Council, who own the Centre jointly with Nottinghamshire County Council.

In the case of the dining rooms, theatre, sports hall and ice rink, the school has priority use between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm on weekdays in school term time, whilst at other times the priority is for public use. The bowls hall and squash courts are designated for public use at all times.

The recreation centre is well used by the community, but it is by no means fully integrated with the whole of the Sutton Centre. It is managed separately, and has no real commitment to the original general ethos.

In many ways it is like a traditional sports centre, but its proximity to the other areas of provision is important for the Centre as a whole, which seems to have "given up" on trying to convince the recreation management of the need for a non-authoritarian approach, and simply makes use of the facilities available. Relations between the recreation centre and most other parts of the Centre appear strained.

The Centre provides Sutton with a

Leisure and learning

second 11 to 18 comprehensive school. There is also provision for adult education both in terms of space and extra staff time. Adult education includes "pay as you learn" classes, family sessions and use of workshop sessions as well as the more normal adult classes. Currently there are over 2000 adult education students, 85 of them join the school students for classes.

As far as the daytime school provision is concerned, all subjects are taught in large blocks. There are basically two periods a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, making a ten session week in all. Most subjects are taught in one session a week. However, there are also eleventh sessions which are voluntary two hour periods each evening from 6.30 to 8.30 pm, and it is at these times that the community school concept can be seen at work. Often there will be children, parents and grandparents all working and learning together.

This structure apart, the curriculum in the school is actually quite prescriptive. There is a common curriculum including sport and leisure, humanities, community studies and personal guidance, languages, English and drama, creative arts, music, design, science and maths. However, what strikes you most about the school is the attendance rate, over 90%.

There are no petty school rules and

students have free access to the building at all times. Students at the school feel it is very much their school. One has a definite sense of teachers being, in some senses, no more than peripheral.

The day centre was originally intended for the elderly and people with disabilities. The use of the centre by such people has remained constant and there is an enormous commitment to the original ideas of the Sutton Centre by both users and workers in the day centre. People with disabilities speak affectionately of school students and teachers, who they claim have learned over a period of time not to abuse or patronise them. The day centre is also fully integrated into the Sutton Centre complex with participation by the elderly and those with disabilities in community theatre, eleventh sessions and recreational activities.

Over the years, the day centre has developed considerably with offices for the Ashfield Careers Advisory Service, the Probation Service and Social Services having been made available. Also the Centre has actually been developed to flow into the shopping precinct, embracing at the same time the neighbouring health clinic and old people's flats, encouraging members of the community to make full use of its space.

Stresses, struggles and survival

ON MONDAY 17 October 1977, a teacher at the Sutton Centre began a lesson by asking the question "Why do people swear?" Eight days later a parents' action group had been formed and was seeking support for a petition entitled thus: "We the undersigned deplore teaching pupils at Sutton Centre the meaning of swear words and slang words. We feel that this can only result in increased use of these words by pupils and a decrease in moral standards."

The local and, eventually, national press launched a monumental attack on the school. In Sutton there had always been an uneasiness about the centre. Young people had free access to the building, they called adults by their first names, they were confident and more importantly, the school did not do O-levels. In an attempt to avoid any discussion of students according to academic ability the school followed CSE courses.

The parents' action group never numbered more than 31, but it won the ear of the local Tory group. Within weeks it was announced that there would be an independent inquiry into the school. The school's union NUT group immediately responded. As a result of their pressure, the local education authority (LEA) was forced to initiate a full inspection of the school rather than an independent inquiry, although the authority did reserve the right to set up an inquiry in the future.

An inspection did take place and eventually an inquiry. Both cleared the school of the charge of "bad education". The inspectors reported that the young people at the school were "great". They saw them as "cheerful, cheeky, helpful and happy". Their main concern was about the lack of O-level provision.

The story of the struggle against the parents' action group is a long one, but what is clear is that it was won as a result of staff solidarity and organisation much like the first battle at Countesthorpe College, won in 1973 (see *Lib ED*, vol 2, no 1). However, it had all been too much for Stuart Wilson, the headteacher, who announced his resignation at the beginning of 1978, midway through the crisis.

The new head was to be Tom King, with two headships behind him. By many he was seen as the LEA's man, someone who would take the Sutton Centre off the radical map and stabilise the school.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. Although King was worried about the lack of O-level provision, A.S. Neill had been and still is the greatest influence on him. He worked to preserve the special challenge that the Sutton Centre was making to the educational establishment. Moreover, he worked to maintain the

community initiative, where young people could come without fear and where they could learn alongside a variety of different age groups.

There was an uneasy period from 1978 to 1980 when King was regarded with suspicion and hostility by the school staff. He was seen as a Rhodes Boyson figure who would slowly dismantle the existing structure and educational provision. But again, this was an incorrect perception, for King did very little of that.

There were eventually several curriculum changes and O-levels were introduced (although the latter had by 1979 become County Council policy anyway). What King actually did was to retain the child-centered approach that had developed at the Centre and carry out a vigorous public relations policy that involved the whole of the Centre, users and workers alike.



If you walk into the Sutton Centre today, you have to be impressed by its diversity and friendliness. In the school, it is clear that the students, young and old, believe in a system that befriends and encourages them and are aware that they have access to a school that remains fundamentally different from most others.

Staff at the Centre have held to a belief in challenging the educational establishment. In this sense, they have demonstrated that a radical educational initiative can exist in a time of reaction. They have shown "an affirming flame" as one teacher at the centre put it.

Whilst it is impossible to talk in terms of the Sutton Centre being a purely libertarian initiative, it has so much to commend it. Tom King, staff and students alike deserve some sort of recognition for the way in which they have refused to depart from the original ethos of the school and centre.

Countesthorpe – the final act

AT THE END of last term, Chris Evans, the headteacher at Countesthorpe College finally resigned to take up a new post at a school on the Isle of Wight. A flight across the ocean, or something like it, had long been predicted and is widely believed to have been arranged by the LEA in order to get themselves off the hook upon which their support for this man had impaled them.

Evans' passing is worthy of notice for this journal on two counts: first because it brings to a close the history of an important progressive experiment and second because it is a useful case-study of victimisation... victimisation that in this case happily backfired.

Under Evans' stewardship one of the most democratic and progressive schools in Europe was successfully transformed into one of the most hierarchical, undemocratic and patriarchal schools in Leicestershire. Not only was the democratic 'moot' abolished, for more than three years there has not been a staff meeting!

Instead of appointments being made democratically, they became the responsibility of a 'clique' known as the Executive. And, of the last 17 appointments in the college to Scale 4 or above, only one went to a woman (the mechanism for this seems to have been the head's one-to-one interview with all candidates).

Evans' achievement in smashing a democratic school, which had probably the strongest NUT group in Leicestershire, should not be underestimated. His undoing began, however, through a certain overconfidence. First of all, what seemed a rather minor affair. An equal opportunities post (EOP), which had been advertised as a 'management' position, was given to a probationer and denied to an experienced teacher with a specialist knowledge in the field.

In his debriefing letter, the head claimed that the unsuccessful candidate was unsuitable for management, knew little of EOPs and was not much good as a teacher. The teacher concerned, Lorna Chessum, took out a grievance against Evans on the grounds that she had been denied the post because of his prejudice.

This grievance has since seen its first birthday come and go. The lengths to which the school governors, the LEA and County Hall have gone to obstruct the working of their own grievance procedure, supposed to be a quick and efficient mechanism to resolve disputes, defy belief. It required a major effort, including a solicitor's letter and representations from Labour County Councillors to even secure a hearing.

When this eventually occurred, a 'new' reason for her not getting the EOPs post was produced, completely out of the blue. Now it transpired that the post was a new kind of 'non-management' management post wholly suited to a probationer but far too junior and menial for her. It will be remembered that her debriefing letter from Evans had told a somewhat different story.

Two deputy heads and a senior teacher

were brought in to testify that this new reason was the reason and had always been the reason. They gave their testimony in camera but two of them were fortunately overheard, during the hearing, creeping back to the head to tell him what questions they had been asked and what answers they had given. The unfortunate senior teacher was actually reprimanded by Evans because one of his answers was 'unhelpful'.

Complaints about this blatant collusion, which they admitted took place, were unavailing at the time and have proven unavailing since. The governors fell over themselves to accept the head's new story.

While these events were unfolding, two confidential letters from Evans to an LEA official were leaked to the NUT. These letters provided conclusive documentary evidence of a conspiracy to victimise another teacher, John Shotton.

In the first letter Evans claimed that Shotton had "tried in the past to wage NUT campaigns about me...". He suggested that he would be willing to provoke Shotton into doing something else which, presumably,



Inside Countesthorpe

would enable the authority to discipline his staff member.

Then in the second, he asked whether "there's any way of John Shotton", who was on secondment at the time, "being part of a random sample of teachers on secondment..." to be investigated. He suggested, in this letter, that Shotton was not doing what he should be during his year away from the school.

It is absolutely clear that if these letters had not been leaked then some sort of attempt was imminent to secure either John Shotton's forced resignation or his dismissal.

But Evans had been caught red-faced and red-handed. If a mere classroom teacher had been involved in such unprofessional conduct no one can have any doubt as to the consequences; serious disciplinary charges would have followed.

But headteachers are, of course, a different breed!

The conspiracy against John Shotton caused outrage throughout Leicestershire where, in the aftermath of the teachers' dispute, many teachers felt themselves to be suddenly at risk and were left wondering if they were the subject of similar correspondence.

The NUT Divisional Council called for Evans to be suspended pending disciplinary proceedings and for the LEA to give assurances that its officers would not in future condone such behaviour. The LEA refused to respond. Instead John Shotton's case against Evans disappeared into the grievance procedure where presumably the LEA hoped to bury it.

John Shotton's hearing, however, was more productive than Lorna Chessum's. Here, Evans could not contain himself and insisted on making it clear that he wanted Shotton out of his school at any cost, while at the same time denying victimisation. In the circumstances, the governors felt obliged to make some critical observations on Evans' conduct. But they refused to publish the results of the hearing. Moreover, Evans was not required to so much as apologise for his conduct or to give any undertakings not to victimise John Shotton in the future.

While the LEA had managed to protect their 'boy' from any disciplinary action, they had received a severe battering in the process. The Evans scandal featured in both the local and the trade press and coverage was universally unfavourable to the head.

Evans himself found his whole style of management now being called into question in the College. An NUT report on equal opportunities demonstrated a pattern of systematic discrimination against women in appointments to senior positions and this had a shattering impact on both the school management and the LEA, who did their best to belittle the report but now seem determined to promote women.

Additionally, a petition, signed by all save a handful of the staff, called for regular staff meetings. Evans refused.

As the pressure was maintained, it was clear that Evans' days were numbered. He was too much of an embarrassment. All that was in doubt was how he would go. Some thought secondment, some thought administration, some that he would leave teaching altogether. Instead he applied for and was appointed to the headship of a school on the Isle of Wight. In a confidential letter to staff and governors, Evans has since felt obliged to deny that his leaving has anything to do with the two grievances!

What conclusions can we draw from this unhappy saga. First what stands out is the grim determination with which the LEA stood solidly behind Evans. They have shown a willingness to condone the most blatant victimisation and then protect the culprit. Second the determination of NUT members not to let them get away with it, a determination that Evans will surely be regretting as he sets sail on his journey into a well-deserved exile.

Lessons for literacy

Lalita Ramdas describes the experiences of ANKUR, an alternative education project based in New Delhi. ANKUR works mainly with children, young people and women in urban slum areas. The organisation's objectives are to make learning more fun, creative and relevant; to create awareness about fundamental issues, values and attitudes; to build a vision of a New Society; to build people's organisations; to empower women; and to create linkages with like-minded individuals and groups. ANKUR, which means 'seedling' in Hindi, receives funding from the Indian government and various western aid organisations.

THE PHENOMENON of Colonialism and the rise of Capitalism along with the Industrial Revolution in the West was responsible for some of the major developmental imbalances in the modern world.

Large parts of Asia, Africa and South America were ruthlessly exploited for their raw materials, cheap labour and accumulation of wealth by various European Colonial powers. Despite Independence struggles in the early twentieth century, these still continue to reel under the cumulative impact of mass poverty, hunger, unemployment and ill-health. And there is also a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite.

Literacy programmes have traditionally played a major role in educational planning in India where the overall illiteracy rate is above 60%, and female illiteracy over 80%. Governmental and Voluntary Agency participation has been harnessed from time to time in the battle against mass illiteracy. While the overall percentage of literacy has undoubtedly improved slightly in the last 40 years, in absolute terms the problem



remains monumental in its dimensions. We shall have the dubious distinction of facing the twenty first century with over half the world's illiterate population - around 500 million adults.

In 1977-78 the Government of India planned and launched what was intended to be a major national level offensive against mass illiteracy in the country. The target was to make 100 million adults literate, and there was a massive mobilisation of resources - both human and material. Today, after nearly ten years of effort, some limited success in small pockets and a lot of frustration, groups like ours have learnt certain hard lessons and come to a number of sobering realisations.

Literacy by itself had no meaning or relevance for those with whom we worked -

those on the fringe of urban life - dehumanised by the physical and material existence endemic in urban poverty situations. In rural areas the experience was similar. The national level evaluation of the Adult Education Programme by the government has only confirmed our findings.

Literacy inputs were combined with various economic and income generation programmes - attempts to impart functional skills. But with no surety or guarantee of regular employment these projects worked perfunctorily for a while - within weeks the initial enrolment figures of 30 learners at a centre would dwindle to less than ten.

Women attended our literacy classes only for as long as it took them to find work, anything that would help to augment a meagre monthly kitty. They bluntly told our teachers to go away, or stick to teaching children how to read and write. Learning how to sign their names or write the alphabet would not help to fill empty bellies.

And so it was that we stopped worrying about literacy as an end in itself, or as being central to our work. We began to work together with the people in trying to understand their difficulties; learning together to analyse the problems and understand the root causes; then planning how we could, together, find answers and, above all, take action.

Building community awareness on issues such as sanitation and health; housing rights and coping with evictions; dealing with police harassment - these became central to our work. Since we worked mainly with women, most of our literacy centres began to discuss the problems of women in the family and her status in the community; enable them to build up support groups locally; took out demonstrations against dowry, rape and other social issues.

Just getting women to come out of their homes so as to be able to meet and take collective decisions became important. Learning about legal rights and information about divorce, marriage, inheritance, minimum wages - this then was real literacy - and it certainly gave women a sense of power. If in the course of all this, there was the occasional demand to actually learn skills of reading and writing and number work, this too would feature in the programme. Above all we were learning that it is the people who must determine their priorities and needs - not the programmers in their Ivory Towers. And our role must be to facilitate the building up

of people's organisations.

Slowly many of us working in the field have witnessed the awakening of a sense of indignation in the people, and awareness of their rights and their dues; and where they have been able to take courage in their hands, come together and collectively been able to question authority and to demand justice, that has been the measure of success! We have seen how this has invited reprisals, threats and often violence - both from vested interests, or by arms of the state. But we can see no alternative to this as being the real process of learning - which is in short, literacy for empowerment.

A crusade for literacy will have to be considered a political project first and not



Learning can be built from sharing and working together. Two scenes from an ANKUR group.

merely an educational one. to use the words of Paulo Freire:

"This kind of Crusade or Campaign is not a pedagogical programme with political implications; but rather, it is a political project with pedagogical implications."

We have seen that no education is or can be politically 'neutral'. You are either *for* or *against* certain power interests in society; and you have a certain vision of what kind of society you want. Therefore, when we are working with and enabling people to challenge and change unjust laws, unfair relations in the family, or exploitative situations at work, we too were taking a 'political' stand for a certain educational kind of praxis.

Translated into terms of literacy it would mean using value-loaded words such as *freedom, justice, struggle, exploitation* as opposed to relatively value-free ones like *apple or ball*, in the lessons we designed. Therefore the production and distribution of primers and learning materials with the appropriate content would be central to any such programme. Needless to say this often means coming into conflict with the established educational channels of the state.

Above all it is clear that a relationship of equality, participation and mutual respect for each other is a basic pre-requisite for any work in the area of Adult Education and Literacy. It is this, and only this alone, which could reinforce the democratic processes and further empower people.

Young people and the law

THE Children's Legal Centre (CLC) has recently been very active, lobbying on the current Education reform bill. Its passage through Parliament has been marked by continual growth in its extent and accumulation of powers in the hands of the Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker.

The most objectionable parts of the Bill have remained in place, but the CLC has helped to secure some small changes. For example, grant maintained (opted-out) schools will have the same duties towards pupils with special educational needs that other maintained schools already have; the appeals procedures for these schools regarding admissions and exclusions will be subject to the jurisdiction of the Council on Tribunals, which will help to ensure they are conducted properly and the rules of natural justice apply; and also access to the legally required complaints procedures in these schools will not be limited to parents.

They continue to work on aspects of the National Curriculum, which will substantially reduce the choice available to older pupils over their courses of study. The CLC advocates minimising its harmful effects by making it more flexible. They are

also opposing attempts by some Tory backbenchers to make religious education and worship 'predominantly Christian'.

Other lobbying has focussed on the rights of special needs children and integration. An amendment to ensure children who require speech therapy actually receive it looks as if it might obtain a government concession of some kind.

An amendment to extend the ban on corporal punishment in state schools to independent schools has unfortunately failed. The Centre, together with the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP), was instrumental in persuading first the Lords and then the Commons to abolish beatings in state schools two years ago.

The CLC's staff of seven run a free advice and information service on all aspects of children's law and produce legal guides and other publications, besides their role of monitoring and lobbying national and local policy-makers.

A CLC information sheet details the new laws on suspension and exclusion from school, contained in the Education (No 2) Act 1986 and which come into force in the

period up to September 1989. It argues that local education authorities should ensure that there are full rights of appeal against all exclusions, that these incorporate an independent element, and that the excluded pupil should be allowed to be present and be heard.

Over the past few months the CLC has been contacted by several school students who have been refused permission to wear political badges at school (most often CND or animal rights badges) or to start political groups (usually CND). This is a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights which guarantees the right of freedom of expression to everyone regardless of age. Making the students aware of this 'legalistic' argument seems to have helped them in some cases to get the restriction removed.

The government is proposing to introduce regulations at the start of next year to give parents *not* pupils the right to see school files. The CLC has argued in response to the Department of Education and Science consultation that this right needs to be extended to pupils themselves.

Playgrounds of resistance

SUHAIR sat in the playground of her school, closed down by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), to heat water over a candle. Around her a group of eight and nine year old children watched the science experiment on the boiling point of water. Suhair is just one of many teachers who have volunteered to continue educating children during the 'intifada', the uprising, in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. "I like teaching in the open air, I use the environment to bring information to the students. I enjoy this new experience very much. I've been teaching for some years and it is an opportunity to learn new ways of education," Suhair says.

The 800 schools, colleges and universities in the occupied territories have been closed almost continuously since the uprising began nearly a year ago. The Israeli authorities believed that this would help to undermine the resistance of the Palestinians, they have even closed the nurseries and infant schools.

The Palestinians are determined that their children should carry on learning. Education Committees have set up clandestine classes in the backyards of mosques and churches, private gardens and even in the fields. "We shall not accept the closure of our schools. The children have the right to learn", says Hanan Ashrawi, a teacher from Bir Zeit University.

The children learn Arabic, English, Maths, Science and Palestinian History (a subject banned in the state run schools). "At school we have more subjects to study but here we learn more," explains nine year old Bassam, "we like it and prefer it even."

Forty percent of the 300,000 school students attend classes arranged by the Education Committees, the majority of them in the West Bank cities of Nablus and Ramallah. Khalil Mahshi, a headmaster of one of the closed schools says, "The method of teaching and learning in the clandestine schools is much more open and free than in the old static conventional schools. These are based on teachers and exams." The children like it too. "It's different and very informal", says one, "Some students who never before had the courage to speak in the classroom feel able to express themselves now."

The Education Committees operate alongside committees for agriculture, health, food distribution and ones to organise legal defence for Palestinians brought before the Israeli courts. Other committees have been organising the resistance against the IDF and for the self-defence of the inhabitants. Hanan Ashrawi explains, "The uprising is not just a matter of throwing stones at the Israeli soldiers. It has, in essence, created a structure for a new Palestinian society which is both popular and democratic."

translated from Arabic



Alternative school roundup

ALTERNATIVE schools on the increase. From Summerhill and Kilquhanity, Britain's two longest surviving free schools the news is all positive with both initiatives showing an extraordinary capacity to survive in the most hostile of educational climates.

At Rowen House too numbers are up. At Kirkdale and White Lion, however, the situation is less secure with Kirkdale experiencing some financial difficulties and White Lion having to cope with the dismantling of ILEA and facing the expiry of the lease on its building this winter. Workers at both schools though seem determined to see the initiatives continue.

What is most encouraging on the alternative school scene is the emergence of new initiatives. The Lewisham Free School campaign is continuing to lobby for a free school in Lewisham and in Northampton moves are afoot to open a free school called the Blackcurrent free school.

At Ashburton in Devon a new independent progressive school has opened for children aged 11 to 16. Sands School is firmly established in the progressive tradition with children and staff calling each other by their first names and genuinely sharing responsibility for the organisation of the school through a weekly school meeting. With the demise of Dartington Hall it is good to hear of a determination to keep the old libertarian

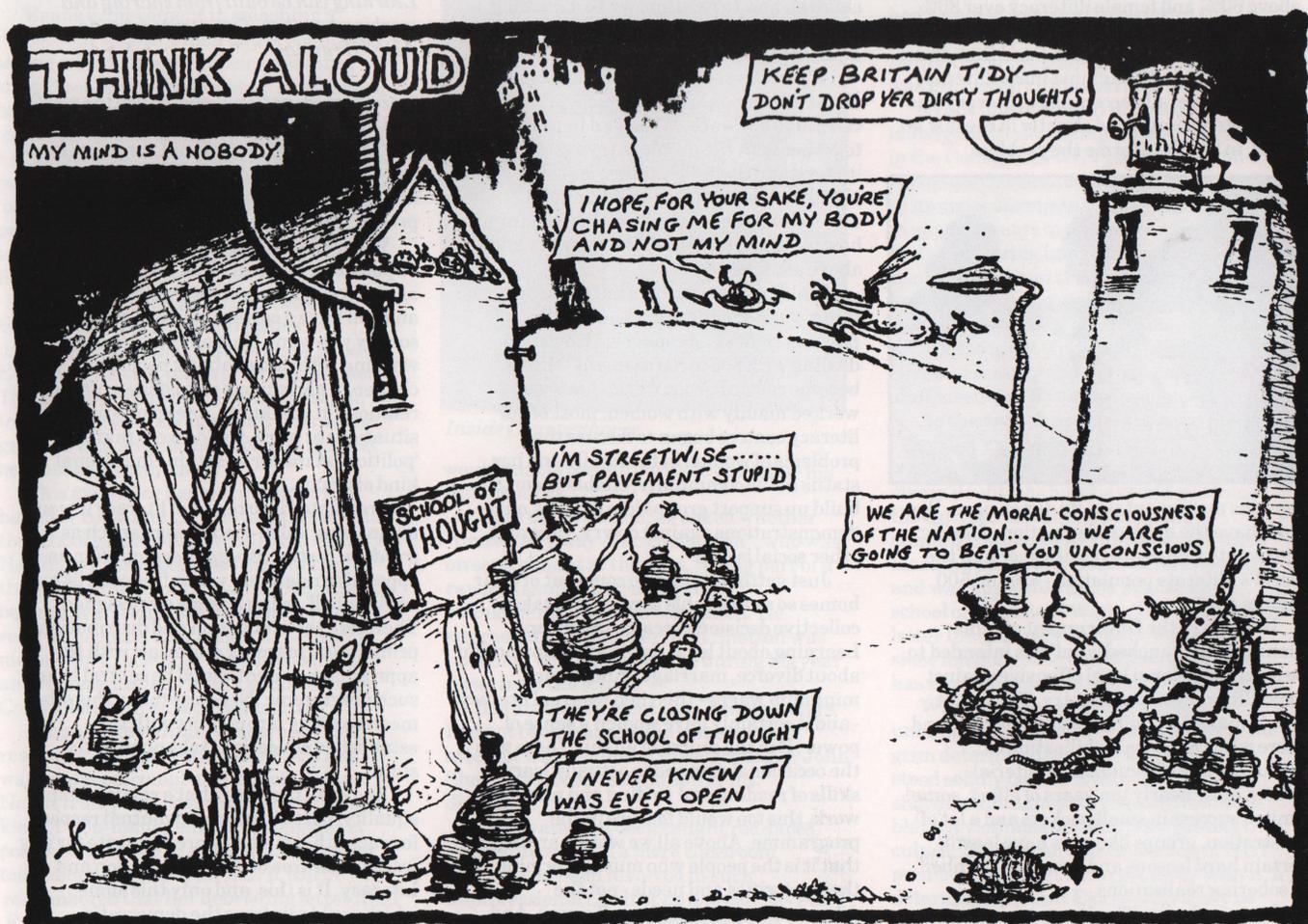
ideas alive.

At Monkton Wyld Court, Charmouth in Dorset, which housed a progressive school from 1940 until 1982 when the school was forced to close after an inspection, a kindergarden has now opened in the new community. Plans are being made to open an alternative day school in September 1988.

A brief survey of the present state of the alternative school movement would be incomplete without mention of the Humen Scale Movement.

At Hartland in Devon the Small School continues and, recently, two new schools have begun. At Aigburth in Liverpool, under the direction of Marie Fillingham, the Oaktree School is opening officially in September 1988. The building in Sefton Park is already used informally by prospective pupils and their families. At Ticknall in South Derbyshire, Dame Catherine's School opened in September 1987 taking pupils from 4 to 16.

The Rudolf Steiner Schools movement continues to expand. So the state of the alternative school movement in Britain seems as strong as it has been since the late 1960's. This, in many ways, should not be surprising given the direction that state education is moving. *Lib ED* looks forward to receiving news from all these initiatives and any more we have not yet heard of.



An incomplete tale

Teacher Militancy

A book by Roger Seifert
Falmer Press, pp289, £9.95

THE DEFEAT of the teacher unions in 1987 and the attempt by the NUT leadership to make any revival of militancy impossible makes Roger Seifert's history of teacher strikes since 1896 a book of considerable interest.

Seifert's is very much an academic study, but nevertheless he is admirably forthright in his support of teachers' right to strike. "Strikes by teachers in their own defence have", he writes, "been with us for nearly 100 years, and I cannot see a time when they will not be necessary."

But while Seifert's intentions are good, his book is unfortunately only of limited use to teacher trade unionists hoping to weather current storms. First the good news. Seifert provides an excellent account of teacher militancy in the years before and immediately after the First World War, a period when it was very much part of the Great Labour Unrest that only came to an end with the defeat of the General Strike in 1926.

His account of the rash of defensive post-war local disputes post war is particularly useful: Southampton schools closed for fourteen weeks in 1922, Lowestoft schools closed for eleven months in 1923-4 and so on. It might well be the case that we are entering into a similar period, with national agreements being undermined and conflict becoming more localised. Seifert's historical account shows that, even in these circumstances, determination and organisation can triumph over the most reactionary authorities.

Less satisfactory is his account of disputes since the late 1960s. First of all, Seifert's account of the great national disputes of 1968-70 and 1985-6 is written very much from the vantage point of Hamilton House, from the perspective of the national leadership, so that it inevitably becomes an account of negotiations rather than of strikes.

This is true particularly of the recent dispute which was in large part characterised by the initiative that was exercised at a local level by divisions, associations and schools. Seifert seems totally oblivious of this development, and yet it was local initiatives that in many areas turned the NUT leaderships 'token' strikes into real action.

In Leicestershire, for example, the half day strike every month was, in many schools, used in twenty minute or so packets, to achieve a completely disproportionate impact. My own school was closed to students for seven consecutive

days in the first month of this action. Then the NUT group imposed first three days a week closure, relaxed somewhat to two days full and one day partial closure later on. All this from half a day a month! And my school was by no means the most militant. Seifert's account gives no hint of this sort of action.

Any account of this dispute, to be historically valid, has got to bring to the fore local experience. In parts of London, in Leicestershire, in Bradford and other areas, the dispute was waged with a degree of militancy to which Seifert does not begin to do justice. He has completely missed the central dynamic of the conflict, so that, for this reader, and I'm sure for many others, his account bears little or no relation to what we actually experienced.

Of course, the reverse of this coin is found in those areas where the dispute remained at a tokenistic level. Any serious account has to encompass the experience of both the militant and non-militant areas, but in either case what is required is a local perspective.

The other weakness of Seifert's account is political. He rejects absolutely the old Rank and File critique of union bureaucracy as an obstacle to, and enemy of, teacher militancy. Indeed, he seems to regard the NUT's leadership's conduct of the recent dispute as giving the lie to such 'ultra-left' criticisms. This is a mistake.

First of all, Seifert understates the amount of pressure from classroom teachers that was necessary to make the NUT leadership fight. Then he completely fails to comprehend their efforts to keep the action at the 'token' level. And, lastly, how does he explain the leadership's conduct since the end of the dispute?

Seifert actually ends his text with a forecast of more militancy to come: "The future also holds the promise of national disputes caused by a further fall in relative pay, a greater deterioration in conditions... Teachers strike and will continue to do so." But not if the NUT leadership can help it! Since the end of the dispute, the leadership has, with considerable relief, grasped hold of the NEW REALISM, which, of course, looks remarkably like the OLD TREACHERY.

The re-launch of the union, re-organisation, even the new emblem (a supplicant skeletal hand superimposed on the white flag of surrender) are not part of a necessary retreat after a hard-fought but honourable defeat. Instead they are part of a resolve never to go to war again. The union is to become an educational pressure group. Of course, it won't work. What this government has in mind for teachers will eventually force them, once again, to defend themselves, but the NUT leadership are determined to make such a fight-back as difficult as possible.

Behind the Scenes

Photographs and in-service activities for exploring the hidden curriculum.
available from: Development Education Council, Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LE

THIS photopack is versatile and visually stimulating. It is a rich source of ideas for structuring activities to identify, confront and develop strategies to resolve individual and institutional prejudice. It indicates a sensitive awareness of its limitations and the problems created when tackling such emotive themes.

However, it inspires that sneaking feeling that those most receptive to its vigorous, up-front approach are those already perceptive and prepared to self-monitor in such key issues

Slambash Wangs of a Compo Gormer

A book by Robert Leeson
Collins, £6.95

ROBERT LEESON is the author of some twenty books for children and young people, all of them unashamedly anti-racist and anti-sexist. Many of them celebrate the lives and adventures of ordinary kids, boys and girls, black and white, who go to comprehensive schools and live on council estates. Slambash Wangs celebrates the life of one such lad, Arnold Radleigh, but with a difference.

Arnold is a gormless daydreamer who escapes from the unrewarding environment of Denfield Comprehensive into his own imaginary "swords and sorcery" world, the world of Klaptonia. Then one day dream becomes reality and Arnold finds himself exchanged for his identical twin, Himsir Dornal, the heroic Replic of Klaptonia.

The book chronicles Arnold's desperate attempts to survive on Klaptonia and Dornal's equally desperate attempts to survive on Planet "Dirt". The story is told with considerable skill; it is both tremendously exciting and extremely funny. Leeson beautifully sends up both the traditional school story and the more recent staple of children's reading, heroic fantasy. A must!

The Hounds of the Morrigan

A novel by Pat O'Shea
Puffin, £2.95

THE HOUNDS has already achieved something of the status of a classic. It chronicles the brave efforts of Pidge and his younger sister, Bridget, at thwarting the Morrigan's attempt to regain her power over people and plunge the world into conflict and bloodshed. The story is cast in the form of a comic epic that takes its protagonists through a magical alternative Ireland, pursued by the Morrigan's hounds.

While some of O'Shea's writing is marvellous and the satire is always delightfully pointed, taken as a whole the book doesn't work, at least for this reader. O'Shea doesn't take evil seriously enough for my liking. After all the Morrigan has obviously succeeded.

Get sussed

The New Bill

A video made by the Children's Legal Centre
available from: Concord Film Council Ltd, 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9BJ. 26 mins. £30 (or £10 hire)

THE POLICE and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 came into force on January 1st 1986. The video is based on young people's experiences with the police and attempts to inform young people of their rights under this act. It does this by combining drama, music and legal advice.

The characters in the video are aged between 14 and 16, although the police act applies to everyone aged 10 upwards. The informative value of the video is beneficial to all young people, but the style and presentation seem to be aiming more towards a younger range.

The story starts in an amusement arcade with Dez and his friends. Whilst playing on a new machine (The New Bill), Dez is zapped away and, to the astonishment of his friends, finds himself confronted by the police, who are looking for "a black youth" in connection with a robbery.

His friends, back in the arcade, watch through the video machine and use a button marked 'LAWYER' to gain legal advice through the various stages of Dez's stop and search, arrest, questioning, remand and release.

The video comes with a six-page leaflet which contains a background to the video, the story-line, and also some good discussion-points about the video and



experiences with the police. Sadly, though, none of these discussion-points tackle race.

For example, Dez, being black, is confronted by two white policemen and given advice by a white lawyer. The video does not seem to attempt any discussion of the racist implications.

The music in the video is provided by Tippa Irie, who raps out a rather long song in the middle of the video called "Everybody must live as one".

As a whole, the video has many good points for discussion and a lot of constructive legal advice.

Loadsamoney

Business Studies: An Introduction

A textbook by David Dyer and Ian Chambers
Longman, pp248

IN SCHOOL after school, a new ethos is beginning to invade the curriculum: the Thatcherite ethos of Business Studies. This is very much part of the present Government's counter-revolution in education. Humanities, Sociology, Social Studies, or whatever, is in the process of being eliminated and replaced by a new subject more in keeping with the values of our beloved Prime Minister. Out go those subjects that are politically suspect and in comes a more appropriate neutral and unbiased subject that all right thinking men and women are bound to welcome.

As one Government minister has so eloquently put it, "In the sixties the prevailing philosophy was 'I care therefore I am'. This did the country untold damage. But now a new philosophy rules: 'I consume therefore I am.'" Business Studies is merely

a convenient way of getting this philosophy taught in schools.

What then of this particular textbook? Dyer and Chambers do their best to present a bland 'Capitalism with a Human Face' to their readers. They briefly discuss nationalised industry, welfare provision and trade unions just to show how open and broadminded the subject is. But the bulk of the volume is given over to looking at the world as a market place. The book is a veritable celebration of market forces. This effectively prohibits those questions that teachers should be raising about economic life.

The assumptions upon which the subject is actually based are only one side of an argument about Capitalism. The other side of the argument is unheard and excluded, presumably because it is politically 'biased'.

Of course, the book tries to be fair. It looks at this market world from the point of view of both bosses and workers (after all, not everyone can be a boss!). However, the very assumptions of the subject serve to reduce the workers to little more than ventriloquists' dummies, miming the

concerns of the boss for 'their business'.

Moreover, as one would expect, what is presented as economic life in this book bears no relation whatsoever with what actually goes on in the real world. Space allows for only one example: such an elementary matter as the Thatcher Government's massive redistribution of wealth in favour of the rich goes unmentioned. Presumably this is a 'political' question and therefore outside the authors' brief.

And, of course, it bears little relation to what actually goes on in schools where periodically the corridors will be haunted by Arthur Daleys and Del Boys, offering to wash staff cars on the cheap and selling a range of junk products. The spiv is the new role model that teachers are expected to project.

What we are seeing is an attempted ideological counter-revolution in our schools. It is being mediated by wretched collaborators like Dyer and Chambers who are doing their best to disguise something inherently pernicious as something to do with education. Such people are contemptible and so is their book.

Death on the rock

7.10 am It was a cold autumn morning. The rain had stopped half an hour earlier, leaving the playground slick and shiny. We sat in our unmarked command vehicle waiting for the targets to appear.

Our stakeout was based on hard intelligence. Three teachers, members of an Active Service Unit of the proscribed terrorist organisation, the ILEA, would be delivering a carload of *Jenny lives with Eric and Ernie* to the rundown Gibraltar Street Comprehensive. We had orders to waste the scum. The word from BIG MOTHER was – 'no prisoners'.

7.40 The car drove into the playground. It was an old battered Ford covered in NUT stickers. The targets got out. Two men and one woman. 'Get ready, lads', I growled. We pulled our novelty condoms over our heads, taking care to get the eye, mouth and nose holes in the right place. 'Go! Go! Go!' Leaping from the vehicle, we ran over to the vermin, waving our shooters.

The teachers were raising their hands as we opened fire. The woman was spun round and crashed against the side of the car. My target crumpled up on the tarmac, a bullet in his stomach. I walked over to him and stood on his chest. 'What's going on? The inspection's not 'til next week', he coughed through bubbles of blood. I emptied my shooter into the scumbag's head.

'Get the crowbar.' We forced open the car boot. 'Shit!' It was empty. What a cock up!

9.30 In accordance with the SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS (PRISONERS REMISSION) ACT, I visited Wandsworth Gaol. Prisoners could now secure years off their sentences if they contracted to do up to eighteen months service as a teacher. In this way we hoped to be able to bring much needed experience of the real world into the classroom, make lessons more relevant and continue our unrelenting struggle to raise standards. I must confess, though, that I always found this particular duty most unsavoury.

When I arrived, the prisoners had occupied one wing of the gaol and barricaded themselves in. I could see some of them clambering about on the roof. They were unfurling a banner: CRIME PAYS, TEACHING DOESN'T. According to the Governor, the men feel that once they have paid their debt to society, they're entitled to start out with a clean sheet and not be treated like pariahs. I had to agree with them.

2.40 pm Visited the religious studies department of the Nigel Lawson Comprehensive. The advanced pre-doles were working on a module dealing with BIG MOTHER's contribution to the



development of the Protestant Ethic. I looked at some of their work.

One weasel-faced adolescent with a bad case of acne had written some interesting essays examining the relevance of religion to modern society: PROPERTY VALUES IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND – A COMMUNIST FRONT, THE SANCTITY OF GREED. His arguments were remarkably subtle: "God must love the rich, or he wouldn't have given them so much money and then they'd be as badly off as the poor" and "Grinding the faces of the poor is the Christian way because God has obviously got it in for them or they'd be rich like everyone else." This kid was obviously going places. With such a sharp critical mind I could see that he would soon be making a significant contribution to modern Conservative thought.

I looked at the name at the top of his folder: OLIVER LETWIND – a name to remember! "Hey, kid", I said. "What are you going to do if you grow up?" "Well", he squeaked, "I was rather hoping I could advise BIG MOTHER on educational policy. I think I'd be jolly good at that. I've got bags of absolutely crackpot ideas." There wasn't much wrong with an education system that could produce kids like young Oliver. It was occasions like this that made me proud to be part of the team. It made all the cheating, lying, deceit and double-dealing worthwhile.

8.55 I sat in front of the television waiting for the BBC News. In my hand an invitation for drinks and a video at No. 10. All the lads had got one. And could we please wear the same clothes we had worn that morning? BIG MOTHER wanted to be able to experience the full ambience of the war against teacher subversives. We were privileged. This hadn't happened since the SAS lads sorted the Iranian Embassy siege all those years ago.

The News started. Boss Baker was making a statement: "This morning, elite members of the Curriculum Police intercepted three terrorist teachers at the Gibraltar Street Comprehensive. They called on them to surrender, but the teachers made threatening movements. Acting under the powers vested in them by CLAUSE 28, the police officers were forced to open fire and the three teachers were all killed. Later a carload of copies of *Jenny Lives with Eric and Ernie* was found abandoned in Manchester. I'm sure all parents are grateful for the courage and dedication of our fine Curriculum Police. And lastly a message for teachers everywhere: LET THIS BE A FINAL WARNING SCUM! KEEP YOUR NOSES CLEAN AND GET ON WITH YOUR MARKING!"

Good old Boss Baker! What a performer! Now for Downing Street. Where on earth did I put my novelty condom?

Barriers to freedom

Dear Lib ED

Nigel Wright describes the recent debate at White Lion Street Free School as between those who want "more of the same" and those who feel changes are necessary (*Lib ED 6*). This debate no longer exists since kids, parents and workers are unanimous in their dissatisfaction with the school and are faced with the realisation that the school will close if radical changes aren't made.

I was one of the new workers taken on at White Lion in September. As a team of new workers we inherited all the problems which the school had been trying to tackle with the added disruption and instability amongst the kids which inevitably arose from the sudden loss of all previous staff.

The problems at White Lion have been portrayed as very much a dispute between adults over the principles of the school. In a way this has masked the real problem which is that the reality of day to day school life falls far short of the original libertarian intentions, which include democratic decision-making and seeking the non-violent resolution of conflicts.

Since September we have had to cope with: bullying to the point of some kids feeling too frightened to continue attending the school; destruction of the building on such a large scale that the school van is being sold to cover the cost of repairs; theft of money and school equipment, including the computer, music equipment, woodwork tools and the photo-copier, so that many activities are no longer viable; and harassment by pupils of passers-by and local residents so that official complaints have been made.

This behaviour comes from a group of older children who have formed themselves into a sort of mafia, terrorising other pupils and workers. Because the older children have failed to take on the responsibility of running the school and abide by commonly agreed rules, the workers have found themselves forced into taking an increasingly authoritarian role.

Not surprisingly, four of the original eight workers (including myself) have resigned. Those still involved with the school are reluctant to exclude any children from the school, however disruptive. Instead they have decided to compromise

much that is fundamental to the school, such as participation in all decision-making by the kids and voluntary learning activities, as a temporary measure to cope with current problems.

I feel that at the moment, White Lion is taking on too much. It is a nursery, a junior school and what is effectively a disruptive unit all rolled into one, whilst at the same time attempting to work within the context of a democratic free school. In my opinion, these functions cannot operate happily side by side. Children as young as three are witness to older kids hurling food about, smashing windows, intimidating each other and setting off fireworks.

All free schools have to surmount the problems of establishing a power-sharing, non-authoritarian democracy without enforcing it in an authoritarian way, and to introduce the non-violent resolution of conflicts passively. When the dominant ethos of the school is such that the word of the most dominant aggressor goes, as at White Lion, who is going to listen to a gullible middle-class hippie who is trying to tell you otherwise?

The workers may have found in their lives that people listened to their arguments but this has not been so for many of the kids. At 15 and 16 years old they are understandably not prepared to take the risk and lose their place in the pecking order and so the 'physical strength and aggressiveness gets you to the top' message is passed on through the school.

White Lion is not essentially a therapeutic environment. There is no space to run around and let off steam. There is no stable structure to protect vulnerable children. The workers are not equipped with the skills necessary to cope with the learning and behavioural problems which exist amongst some of the kids. Many kids are getting nothing positive from the school whilst at the same time depriving others from a learning experience which, without their influence, could be extremely positive.

In trying to cope with a situation which has grown out of control, workers and parents are taking measures which undermine the basic libertarian principles of the school.

The school has consistently avoided the

exclusion of any children from the local area who wish to attend, seeing this as fundamental to the school's egalitarian objectives. However, it may be arrogant and unrealistic to assume that the school is the best option for all kids. It would be tragic for White Lion to close because this kind of alternative is important in state education, but I feel it needs some barriers to keep out the destruction of the prevailing ideology of oppression, inequality, racism and sexism which it has set out to be an alternative to.

Jane Wallace

former worker at White Lion

RRResistance

Dear Lib ED

Calling all parents who are prepared to say: we will not allow our children to be tested a 7, 11 and fourteen. Why don't we have an organisation? Why don't we have a network? (buzz word) How many of us will it need to screw up the system? Would they dare try and prosecute us? Who are we? Parents against testing? The De-testers?

It is time to resist this business – testing will tie the hands of progressive teachers, it will change the curriculum into chunks of testable crap, it will squeeze out the non-testable parts of the curriculum, it will cause teachers and parents to undervalue non-testable features of education like co-operation, courage, and compassion, it will set child against child, teacher against teacher and school against school, it will mean a return to water-tight selection system for schools based on a narrow culturally fixed, class-fixed testing system.

We will see our favourite teachers apologizing to us at parents' meetings saying, "Well I had to do a bit of grammar this week because it comes up in the tests and it's only fair on the children." I was 'coached' for the 11 plus on that basis and all it did was squeeze out anything remotely creative or liberal in my schooling.

Any parent prepared to withdraw their child from the tests please get in touch and we'll write a leaflet, create a network etc.

Write to:

Michael Rosen, 49 Parkholme Road, London E8 3AQ.

We're always delighted to get your letters. Please send them to: Lib ED, The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Leicester, LE17 5HL

CRINGE HILL

