

Groups and Resources

Lib ED contacts
Leicester 0455-209029
Bristol 0272-241380
Nottingham 0949-60306 (distribution and subs)

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

Lesbian and Gay Freedom Movement
LGFM, BM Box 207, London WC1N 3XX
(Advice, Penfriends, Liberation!)

Lesbian and Gay Workers in Education
BM Gayteacher, London WC1N 3XX

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

Letterbox Library
8 Bradbury Street, London N16 8JN
01-254 1640
(Specialises in non-sexist and multi-cultural books
for children. For details of their free catalogue, write
or phone)

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

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

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

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

Shocking Pink
Young Women's Magazine Collective, c/o 55 Acre
Lane, Brixton, London SW2
(A 4 issue sub to this excellent magazine costs £2.40)

Anarchist Student/Bete Noire
Box A, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford
(Student magazine)

**All London Teachers Against Racism and
Fascism**
Panther House, Room 216, 38 Mount Pleasant,
London WC1

Bread'n'Roses/Tenants Corner
46a Oval Mansions, Vauxhall St., London SE11
01-582 7286
(housing & education resource centre run by tenants)

Scottish Civil Liberty Trust
146 Holland Street, Glasgow G2 4NG
(Provides legal information and has published a
series of leaflets aimed at young people in Scotland)

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

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

Peace Education Project
Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh Street, 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)

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

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)

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

Black and In Care
20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN
01-226 7102

**International Association for the Child's Right
to Play**
Paul Scames, UK Branch Secretary IPA,
Contact-a-Family, 15 Stratton Ground, London
SW1P 2HP
(formerly the International Play Association -- IPA)

Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project
Wyvil Road School, Wyvil Road, London SW8
01-627 2662

Teachers for Animal Rights
c/o Wanda Dejliko, 29 Lynwood Road, London
SW17 8SB

**End Physical Punishment of Children
(EPOCH)**
PO Box 962, London N22 4UX
(A national organisation which aims to end physical
punishment of children by parents and other carers)

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

Children's Legal Centre
20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN
01-359 6251

Pre-school Playgroups Association
61-63 Kings Cross Road, London, WC1X 9LL
01-833 0991

Intermediate Technology
Myson House, Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3HT
0788 60631

Centre for Alternative Technology
Machynlleth, Powys, Wales

Sands School
48 East Street, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7AX
0364 53666

International

**National Coalition of Alternative Community
Schools**
RDI Box 378, Glenmore, PA 19343, USA
tel:(215) 458 5138

City as School
16 Clarkson Street, New York, NY 10014, USA

Foundation of Education with Production
PO Box 20906, Gaborone, Botswana
(Education for social change)

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

Tamariki Free School
Woolston, Christchurch, New Zealand

New Zealand Lib ED group
c/o Richard Bolstad, 26 Southampton Street,
Christchurch, New Zealand

SAC (Syndikalisterna)
Svenvagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm, Sweden
tel: 08-34-35-59

KRUT (Kritisk UtbildningsTidskrift)
Torpedverkstaden, Skeppsholmen, S111 49
Stockholm, Sweden
(*"Critical Journal of Education"*)

Frankfurt Free School
Vogelweidstrasse 3, Frankfurt, W. Germany

Familial, Day Nursery Kindergarten School
PO Box 2009, Kathmandu, Nepal

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")

Graine d'Ecole
La Paillerie, Avenue de Bardenac, 33600 PESSAC,
France

Circule-Air
Agence Informations Enfance, 29 rue Davy, 75017
Paris, France
tel: (1) 42-28-71-64
(an alternative education organisation and
magazine)

Assn. Nationale pour l'Education Nouvelle
1 rue des Nefliers, 31400 Toulouse, France
tel: 61-52-45-10

Connect
12 Brooke St., Northcote 3070, Victoria, Australia

Acrobatic Arts Community School
PO Box 1101, Wodonga 3690, Australia

Centro Studi Libertari
via Rovetta 27, 20127 Milano, Italy
(Libertarian study centre and archive which
publishes the journal "Volonta")

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

CNT-Federacio d'Ensenyament de Catalunya
c/Roger de Lluria, 123 pral, 08037 Barcelona, Spain
tel: 215-7625 (English spoken Tuesday mornings)
(They publish "Alternative Teacher" (in English),
news for foreign language teachers.)

Jiyu No Mori Gakuen
Hanno, Saitama, Japan
(Japan's biggest free school)

Grupo Impulso Libertario
CC984, 2000 Rosario, Argentina

We don't have room to publish all our contacts
on this page. For a complete list consult our
Do-it-yourself guide.

Special Listing

Age Concern
St Thomas, Liverpool
051-236 4440

University of the Third Age
Wren Street, London WC1
01-833 4747

Terrence Higgins Trust
01-242 1010 (daily Helpline)
01-831 0330 (Mon-Fri 10-6)
(Help and advice for anybody worried about AIDS)

Lib ED

Winter '89 75p

A magazine for the liberation of learning

That
skating
feeling...
out on the
boards

AIDS... fear and loathing in the playground
Health warning... these therapies can damage your child
Interview... Johnny Speight looks back on his schooldays

Libertarian EDUCATION

A magazine for the liberation of learning

Vol 2 No 12 Winter 1989

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EDITORIAL

WHAT ARE the prospects for teachers offering some sort of resistance to the Government's attacks on state education in 1889-90? Good and improving is our forecast. Why?

First of all, it is important to recognise how little success the Tories have had in actually winning teachers over to their side. They have been unable to secure any significant *positive* support for their policies within the profession, successfully alienating even the headteachers' associations.

Their policies have had to be imposed on an unwilling and embittered workforce and have no real legitimacy in the eyes of most teachers. The cynical careerism of those teachers who have jumped onto the Baker bandwagon generally leaves the rest of their colleagues cold.

It certainly does nothing to help the Tories win over the hearts and minds of classroom teachers.

Baker, we should remember, was not just cordially detested for the way that he treated teachers, he was also despised for his shallowness, his insincerity, his straightforward lying and, it must be emphasised, his sheer incompetence.

His vaunted educational counter-revolution has plunged the education system into administrative chaos with teachers and headteachers desperately trying to cope with the problems his half-baked initiatives have created for them. The certain knowledge that Baker's only concern was for his own political advancement hardly proved inspirational.

This particular Emperor could be seen to have no clothes, but teachers didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

What prevented any successful opposition to Baker developing at the time was the fact that in the aftermath of the great miner's strike, of the teachers' dispute and of the last general election, the Government appeared irresistible, as if nothing could stand in its way.

Teachers were demoralised by the impotence that seemed to affect all opposition to the Tories and generally responded with a sullen acquiescence, just going through the motions at school and wherever possible actually getting out. It is this demoralisation that has been seized upon by union leaders like McAvoy of the NUT as a way of justifying the so-called 'new realism', the effective abandonment of any union action in defence of salaries and conditions.

They have made the mistake of confusing this demoralisation with support for their attempt to turn the NUT into the teachers' equivalent of the Royal College of Nursing.

Once teachers begin to recover their confidence, then 'new realism' will be swept away and McAvoy, opportunist

Trouble ahead

that he is, will very quickly be playing a different tune. This time is coming.

Paradoxically, it is the Tories very success at hammering teachers that is going to prove their downfall. The systematic running down of teachers, increasing workloads, deteriorating conditions of service and the effective pay cuts of the last two years have together driven many people out of the profession and put more off entering it.

This has created a situation of teacher shortage that can only get worse. And there is still more to come.

Without any doubt Local Financial Management of schools is going to produce a further deterioration in the conditions of the great majority of

teachers that will make what has come before look relatively minor.

Now we face the prospect of teacher redundancy becoming a regular feature of school life, providing opportunities for victimisation that many heads will leap at.

There will be more and more temporary posts and allowances, 'permanent' allowances will be taken away by Governing Bodies and the increments will be secretly bestowed on the school crawlers and scabs.

Most teachers are only just beginning to realise what they are in for.

But this is all taking place when the Government is in serious difficulties, when it is starting to look as if it can be

beaten.

Moreover Baker, he of the silver tongue, the most accomplished liar in British politics today, has been replaced by colourless John MacGregor, whose only recommendation is his less than brilliant handling of the salmonella in eggs scandal.

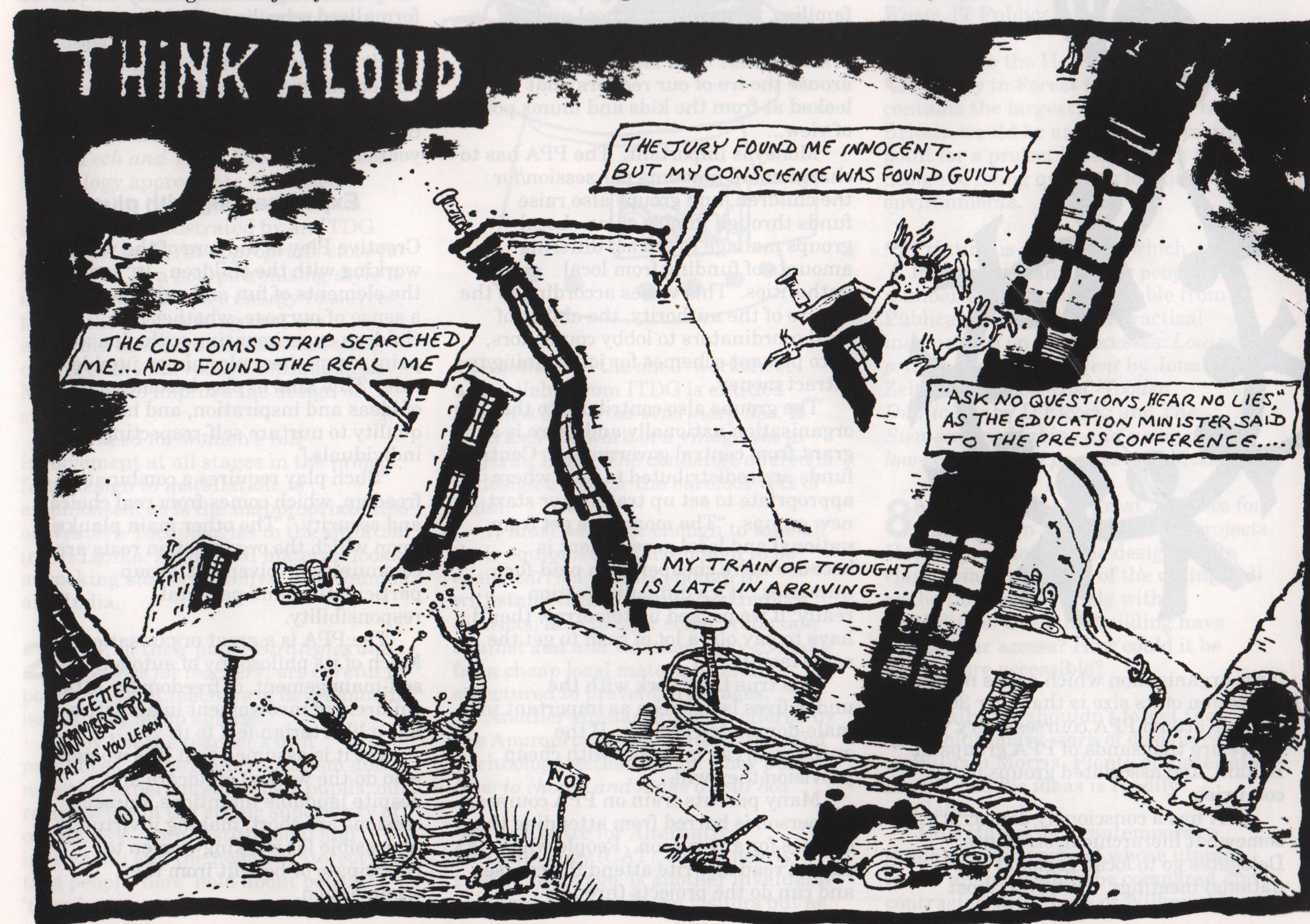
Even a prat like McAvoy should be able to win an argument with this Thatcherite non-entity.

In these circumstances, the anger and resentment that has been building up among teachers could change from individual passive resistance to collective active resistance. There is every likelihood of a fight back.

The only way that the Government can prevent this is by a substantial pay rise next April. This seems very unlikely given the utter contempt that the Conservatives have for teachers and their lack of commitment to state education.

More probable is a pay offer that widens differentials and has strings attached in the form of shorter holidays and a longer working day and ends national agreements. This will not do the job.

The Tories are heading for a fall. Baker has handled MacGregor a time bomb. Classroom teachers have considerable ground to reclaim and many scores to settle.



The best for toddlers

What happens to children before they get into the clutches of the school system? We take a critical look at the Pre-School Playgroups Association (PPA) which aims to be a democratic organisation for children's play.

"OH DAMN, they've missed us out," said Jo, local coordinator for Leicester's PPA, leafing through a *Lib ED* which had an article about a Workers Educational Association centre in Leicester. "You see, we run the most popular and successful classes and we're not even mentioned - perhaps that tells you something about how far this sort of work is valued?"

She then started to talk about the organisation.

The Pre-School Playgroups Association grew out of government inaction. A central government decision in the 60s not to provide nursery education led to a letter in the *Guardian* asking if other parents were interested in setting up groups of their own.

From there it mushroomed into the



large organisation which exists now; an indication of its size is that over 30,000 parents attend PPA courses every year. There are thousands of PPA groups in Britain, and associated groups in 33 countries.

PPA has a consciously democratic, if somewhat hierarchical, structure. Delegates go to local, regional and national meetings. However, most

delegates at national level are people (well, women, although it could be men) who are still involved in groups and know what it is like to clear up the finger paints.

On the other hand grass roots workers acknowledge that many women are excluded from the organisation because they are single parents/working mums who do not have the time to go to meetings, especially ones outside their area.

White and middle class

Thus its leadership may be perceived as being mainly white and middle class. "They're the ones with the time to do it mainly," said Jo rather sadly.

Despite this the PPA does have policies of developing work with families of ethnic minorities, with children with special needs, in prisons and in disadvantaged areas, single parent families, teenagers in school and on MSC schemes and with families in the armed forces. This last category may arouse the ire of our readers - but looked at from the kids and mums point of view...

Money is important. The PPA has to charge small amounts per session for the children, and groups also raise funds through jumble sales. Local groups manage to attract differing amounts of funding from local authorities. This varies according to the nature of the authority, the ability of local coordinators to lobby councillors, or to present schemes for job training to attract money.

The groups also contribute to the organisation nationally and there is a grant from central government. Central funds are redistributed to help where appropriate to set up training or start new groups. "The money we get from national and local government is because we're cheaper than paid-for nurseries. It's a difficult question really; if we packed up tomorrow they'd have to pay out a lot of cash to get the same facility."

It is true that work with the under-fives is not seen as important in a male-dominated society. If the authorities can get away with cheap provision they will.

Many parents train on PPA courses. No person is barred from attending the courses for any reason. People who cannot read or write attend the courses and can do the projects through

pictures, models or other means. There is no exam. Yet the fact of having done a PPA course is widely regarded in caring jobs as having constituted an effective training. What happens to the half million children involved?

Certainly visiting a PPA group is a fun experience. There are usually lots of kids and mums around. Occasionally fathers get involved! A variety of play activities laid out for the children to do.

Sometimes you find facilities for tea and biscuits providing a focus for parents to share ideas and experiences. Compulsion and coercion seem refreshingly absent, after all there are lots of things to do and other children to meet. For many kids this may be their first social grouping outside the house.

The philosophy of the organisation is rooted in play for children under five. In fact, they dispute that schools are good for rising-five-year-old children. In one of their leaflets they point out that early schooling, and especially formalised schooling, produces very great stress in children. This is the result of, amongst other things, lonely and enforced sojourns in the playground, crowded and frightened by confident and noisy giants a couple of years older.

Experimenting with glue

Creative Play is the core of the way of working with the children. It "combines the elements of fun and enjoyment with a sense of purpose, whether it is children experimenting with glue and paint, or mothers planning a jumble sale. This kind of play becomes a source of ideas and inspiration, and has the quality to nurture self-respecting individuals."

"Such play requires a combination of freedom, which comes from real choice, and security." The other main planks upon which the organisation rests are: community involvement, group participation, and parental responsibility.

The PPA is a great organisation. Much of its philosophy of autonomous self-management, of freedom for little children, of involvement in activities has a libertarian feel to it.

Yet it is assumed that it is women who do the work of childcare and, despite laudable intentions, nursery sessions are short, making it virtually impossible for working women to participate or benefit from the organisation.

Ten green battles

Technology is being given more and more emphasis on the timetables of British schoolchildren particularly through the 'new' subject of Craft, Design and Technology (CDT). But that doesn't have to mean more time spent marvelling at nuclear power stations and examining the innards of computers. With a bit of careful research and planning these classes can be turned into hotbeds of revolutionary activity. Here are some ideas...

CDT might seem one of the most staid departments in most schools, but surprisingly it can be the vehicle to introduce global, development and environmental issues into the curriculum. Courses can be developed which explicitly challenge racist and ethnocentric stereotypes, and which challenge the eurocentric view of the world. Sexism and bigoted views of disability can also be tackled.

0 The concepts of intermediate and appropriate technologies is a good starting point for older children. "An 'appropriate technology' is just that - appropriate to all the characteristics of the society. It may well also be an 'intermediate technology', one coming between a lower and a higher technological solution, but this may not necessarily be the case" explains one of the many useful publications from the development education department of the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG).

1 An excellent resource, published jointly by ITDG and the International Women's Tribune Centre, is the *Tech and Tools Book*. Its focus is technology appropriate to women.

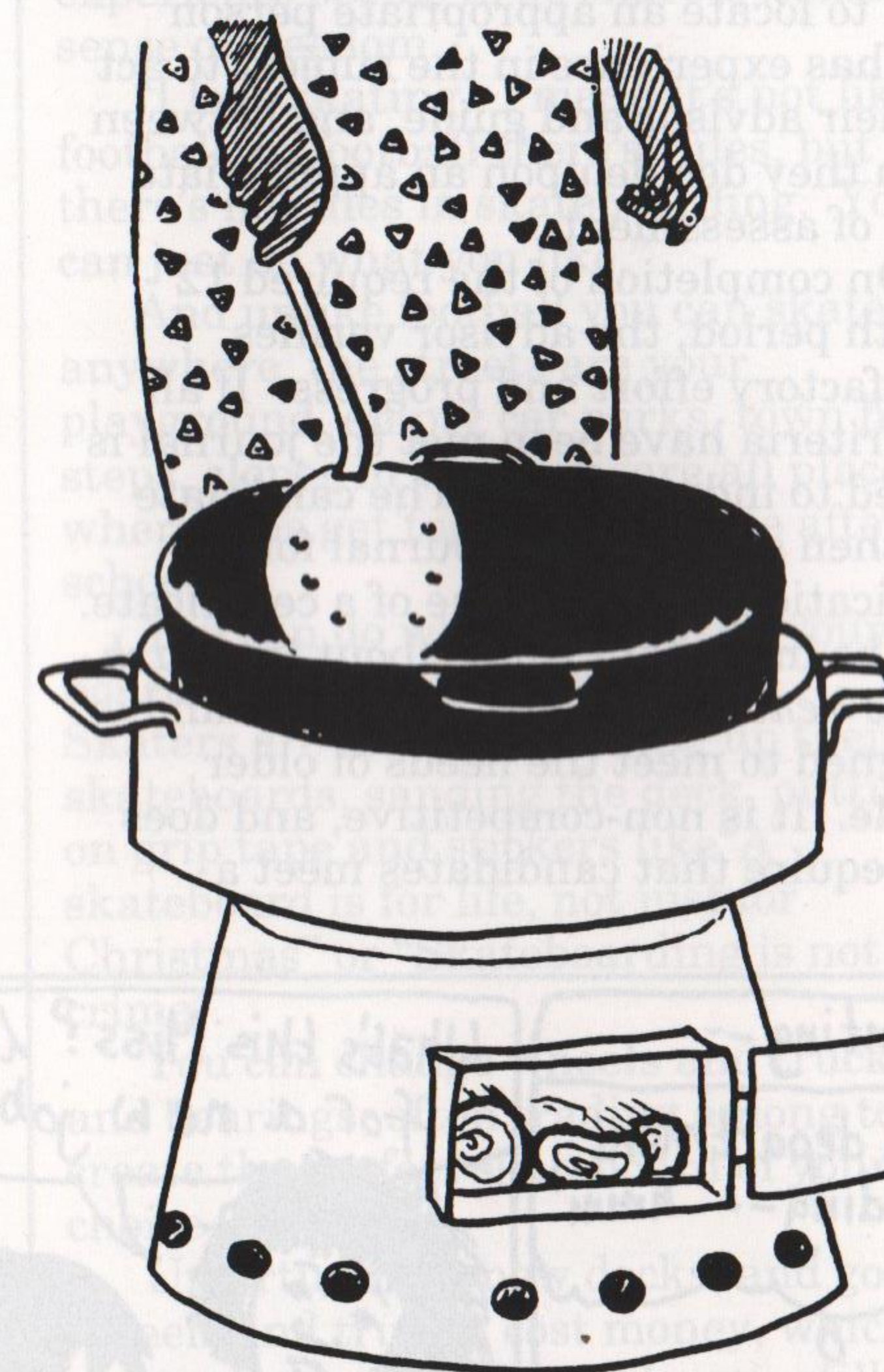
How this book can be utilised in school is well illustrated by an ITDG education pack, *An appropriate stove for Sri Lanka*. In a non-patronising style it examines Sri Lanka's energy resources, the methods of cooking that are available to village families and the efforts of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement to improve the design of stoves.

The need for women's full involvement at all stages in the project, from design to installation, is emphasised, as is the inappropriateness of Western Technologies to the situation in Sri Lanka. Additional material looks at cooking stoves in Kenya, The Gambia and India.

2 ITDG, in their paper *Strategies and guidelines for teachers*, are careful to point out what teachers of development issues may be up against.

They list the teacher's own prejudices; the prejudices, racism and negative experiences of their pupils; our racial belief in the ethnic superiority of our society - both institutional and individual; and the negative stereotypes that people 'here' hold about people 'there'.

A project suggested by ITDG is the design of a delayed-release fishing float. Their leaflet, which unfortunately assumes that the fisher is always a man, sets the problem in the context of Third World fishing communities. However, their material is always careful to emphasise that Third World does not mean third rate and that many parallels can be drawn between situations faced by different groups of people *all* over the world.



3 Another 'off the shelf' worksheet available from ITDG is entitled *Design a blue cross veterinary box*. It describes the work of a village vet in Gujarat, India. The challenge offered is to design a box for the barefoot vets of India.

It must be: large enough to take all their equipment; light enough to be easily carried; sturdy enough to withstand transporting over country districts; able to offer some protection against sun and weather; easy to make from cheap local materials; and structured to prevent breakages.

Another similar project is offered by the Appropriate Health Resources and Technology Action Group. They publish *How to choose and make a cold box*.

4 The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), set up nearly twenty years ago, is another invaluable resource. They welcome visitors but as

it is situated near Machynlleth, Powys, it may mean that a school trip there would only be possible as part of an expedition to the mountains of Wales.

Other similar but smaller projects can be found around Britain, and one of these may be well worth a school visit. The Urban Centre for Appropriate Technology in Bristol, for example.

CAT publishes a number of useful Do-It-Yourself plans which are invaluable for a technology classroom. One describes how you can make a 5 watt wind generator using a cycle wheel and hub dynamo. Another looks at solar power.

5 It has been estimated that were all aluminium cans recycled something like £13 million per year would be generated. Recycling is an ideal topic for a school project, for further information consult the Aluminium Re-cycling Campaign or J Vogler's book *Work from Waste*, IT Publications.

6 A visit to the Horniman Museum and Library in Forest Hill, London, which contains the largest collection of tents in Britain would be an excellent starting point for a project investigating the design of living quarters for different environments.

7 Printing is an activity which fascinates many young people. A number of books are available from IT Publications which give practical instructions on AT processes: *Low cost printing for development* by Jonathan Zeitlyn; *The Low-cost Wooden Duplicator* by D Elcock; and *The Sten-screen: Making and using a low-cost printing process* by I McLaren.

8 A school itself is a great resource for many design and technology projects. How appropriate is the design of the classroom, the design of the dining hall or the library for people with disabilities. Does the building have wheelchair access? How could it be made more accessible?

9 Finally, we shouldn't forget the revolutionary work of designers such as William Morris. Plenty of material on Morris and his ideas is readily available.

Cliff Harper is a contemporary graphic artist, some of whose utopian ideals might usefully be compared and contrasted with those of William Morris.

Old age pupils

For too long we have regarded age as a barrier to learning, being stuck within stereotypes of ageing as deterioration. However, there is plenty of evidence that increasing age does not necessarily mean a decline in ability. Ability can also be improved as one grows older, given the right conditions. Two projects that adopt this positive approach are the *Dark Horse Venture* and the *University of the Third Age*.

THE DARK Horse Venture is a scheme operating in Liverpool for people over 60. It has been described as a sort of Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme for older people, and provides learning activities of a wide variety.

Sponsored by Age Concern, it seeks to provide opportunities for self-discovery in three activity categories: giving and sharing, learning and doing, exploring and exercising.

The first of these is a form of skills exchange. Participants engage in voluntary work, sharing their skills with young people or perhaps qualifying in some practical skill, for example first aid. Thus the skills, knowledge and experience of older people, often lost because of our prejudice against age, is used for the benefit of others.

The second category, learning and doing, might be the area most relevant to what has been discussed above. George Cross decided to produce a book on Liverpool's statues. This will go into the city's archives and hopefully will aid

local studies in schools. Music, languages and writing can all be accredited in the scheme.

The third category includes such things as rambling, walking, dancing and golf. Participation in the scheme is by purchase of a Personal Journal (£5), in which the participants record their progress and achievements. They then need to locate an appropriate person who has experience in the subject to act as their advisor and guide, and between them they decide upon an appropriate form of assessment.

On completion of the required 12 month period, the advisor verifies satisfactory effort and progress. If all the criteria have been met the journal is signed to indicate this. The candidate can then submit their journal for verification and the issue of a certificate.

The important thing about the *Dark Horse Venture* is that it is flexible and is designed to meet the needs of older people. It is non-competitive, and does not require that candidates meet a

'standard', only that they devote a minimum period of time to the activity. It can take account of illness or other circumstances that might mean the loss of continuity in a more traditional programme. Individuals can proceed at their own pace, work is self-assessed, and there is little sense of failure.

There are questions to be asked about the programme. It is very individualistic, and the issuing of certificates is not particularly desirable. The first is probably inevitable once the idea of a Personal Journal has been accepted, though the recording process could be more group-oriented.

The second is perhaps more interesting. It is evident that we live in an over-certified world where, in order to be of value, whatever we learn must be validated by somebody else. However, while we live in the real world it would be wrong to exclude some people from being accredited simply for the sake of ideological purity.

It is often important to people for



their achievements to receive some recognition, and this is what the *Dark Horse Venture* provides.

The *University of the Third Age* was launched in 1972, and provides opportunities for older adults to participate in and develop their own programmes of a broadly educational kind. In essence, *U3A* groups are self-help learning groups, relying on the interests and skills of its members rather than professional educators.

Indeed, some groups call themselves *Lifelong Learning*, to avoid the elitest overtones of 'university'. Groups often meet in members homes, which allows for provision to those who are housebound, and join in an activity that they are interested in. One day a member might be a 'teacher', another a learner. Some assist in producing newsletters or fundraising.

The informal atmosphere encourages participation, and the contribution of individual skills, knowledge and experience. Some areas in Britain have *U3A* coordinators whose job it is to help to set up groups, providing initial skills and resources but not taking over.

Often this is necessary, as people lack the confidence in themselves to 'run' a group, and access to resources is often easier for people already in the established educational arena. For example, *Lifelong Learning* in the North West has organised courses in languages and computing, using the local polytechnic's equipment.

Local groups are often quite active, running groups in a number of subjects -- everything from rambling to German to music appreciation to computing. Costs are kept to a minimum, the usual price of a session being 15-20p for tea and biscuits.

This is a project that is, once more, opening up learning for older adults, though the focus here is on groups and there is no accreditation for what is learnt. The important thing about *U3A* (or *LLL*) is that it is the members that are in control of what is learnt, where it is learnt, how and when. They are truly in control of their own learning.

However, at present, such groups are predominantly middle class and white though *U3A* seems aware of this and is looking for ways to extend its activities so that it is seen as being more relevant to a wider population.

For too long we have regarded age as a barrier to learning, being stuck within stereotypes of ageing as deterioration. It is hoped that projects such as the *Dark Horse Venture* and *U3A* will go some way to negating those stereotypes by providing older people with a stimulating, educational environment in which they can pursue their interests without the hindrances of established educational provision.

It is important that older people feel they can participate in such activities on their own terms.

For life, not just for Christmas

Skateboarding is making a comeback, only this time there's a lot more culture with it... clothes, music, language, attitudes to life. Joanna Woddis, mother of a 'lifer' looks at the attraction and importance of skateboarding.

SKATERS come in lots of shapes and sizes, ranging from middle school kids to twenty-year-old professionals and they skate in lots of different places, from skate parks to big international competitions to ramps built in their own back gardens or simply out in the streets.

But whoever and wherever, if you read the letter pages of skateboarding magazines such as *Rad*, or talk to kids who are into skating, a common experience seems to be shared, namely a sense of freedom.

"I love skating. I mean it's not like football, in football there's rules, but there's no rules in skateboarding. You can just do what you like."

And unlike football you can skate anywhere, the streets are your playground, empty car parks, town hall steps, slopes in the park, are all places where kids get together to skate after school.

You can do what you like on your board and also with your board. Skaters are constantly doing up their skateboards, sanding the deck, putting on grip tape and stickers like "A skateboard is for life, not just for Christmas" or "Skateboarding is not a crime".

You can change wheels and trucks and bearings, often trading among to create the perfect skateboard of your choice.

Unfortunately new decks, and good wheels and trucks, cost money, which means younger skaters who are still at school hassle their parents; it would be sad if consumerism took over and took from the enjoyment of skateboarding.

Skaters clothes also seem to follow the "do your own thing" philosophy ... scruffy jeans and baggy T-shirts with writing on, often names of groups, thrash bands like Family Victims or Suicidal Tendencies, or better known groups such as INXS.

They might wear berets or headscarves reminiscent of CND marchers. But there is also the more sophisticated looking skate gear bought at skateboard shops like Yah Dude in Birmingham, neon coloured bermudas, converse all star shoes, Swatch watches and Vision Streetwear T-shirts.

There is certainly a similarity in the clothes, music and the psychedelic designs on most skateboard decks with the alternative scene of the 70s.

The language used by skaters suggests sub-culture. When your deck

is well used you say it is "thrashed up". The various skateboard moves have names like acid drop, ollie, boner, so that only skaters understand what they are talking about. Skaters meet together to skate, and within their groups pass on knowledge about who is the best street or ramp skater in town,



which are the best wheels and where you can get the cheapest seconds, known as CDs, the latest concave deck...

And this similarity carries through to the anarchistic ideas involved in skating expressed by the magazine *Rad*. "Short for read and destroy. You're reading. Now go out and do it (destroy your preconceptions, shred, rage, tear, blaze...). Open your eyes and your mind. Enjoy life while you can. This is not a practice run. There are no rebates."

A poem from *Rad* conveys how liberating it is to skate and also illustrates that the philosophy behind skateboarding is not imposed on it but comes from the activity itself.

Come with me
And you'll be
In a world of pure imagination
We'll begin
With a spin
In the world of my creation
What you see will defy explanation
If you want to view paradise
Simply look around and view it
Anything you want to do, do it
Want to change the world?
There's nothing to it
There is no life I know to
Compare with pure imagination
Living there you'll be free
If you truly wish to be.

This therapy may damage your child's health

Faced with a scarcity of realistic and sensible help and advice, hyped by the media and those out to gain, and worried about their own ability to cope, parents of children with severe learning difficulties sometimes turn to 'alternative' therapies. But should these therapies carry a health warning? Here we examine two of the most well known, Conductive Education and Doman-Delacarto techniques.

CONDUCTIVE Education has achieved fame in Britain as a result of several laudatory TV programmes and the work of Andrew Sutton, co-editor of the only book on the subject.

It is basically a Hungarian system for encouraging children to learn to walk independently, and to look after their self-care needs well enough to survive in a Hungarian school (because if you cannot walk in Hungary, you get six hours home tuition per week, and cannot partake of the Hungarian education system, even if you want to).

Unfortunately, the media have represented the Peto Institute's 'conductive' system as a "cure all for handicap". The result has been that parents of children with profound disabilities and learning difficulties jump onto planes and fly off to Hungary; only to be rejected as unsuitable for the therapy.

A point made by many working in the field is that this is an area where success is notoriously hard to evaluate. A combination of helped parenting, plentiful physiotherapy and teaching may often produce the same results even if rather more slowly.

A more worrying set of therapies has arisen from the works of Glen and Robert Doman and Carl Delacato. Their ideas are based on views of child development and of the structure of the brain that are rather eccentric.

For a complete demolition job of these theories it is worth reading Robert A Cummins book, *The Neurologically Impaired Child: Doman-Delacato Techniques Reappraised* but sadly this book costs £27.

The book begins, "Magical thinking in Special Education is the art of employing scientific illusions to create new theory and surprising conclusions." It points out that "the transition to an unconventional mode of treatment will often transport the parent into a magical world. It may be a world without negatives, where their child is not only accepted for what he or she can do, but is also given the promise of being 'normal', or even 'superior' to other children, provided that the new programme is adhered to".

One example of the strange 'scientific basis' of Doman-Delacato methods lies in their view of child development. It is suggested that, as

they grow, children's movement patterns follow a path similar to evolution.

First they move like a fish, then with alternating leg and arm movements like an amphibian, then onto all fours like a mammal, and finally onto two legs as a human.

Cummins points out that you only need to look at the ways in which different fish (cod and eels, for instance) or different amphibians (frogs and newts) move, to realise that the analogy as a basis for therapy may be dangerously misleading.

However, Doman-Delacato methods do often trigger off the Mutual Aid principle, elaborated by Peter Kropotkin. Much of the therapy consists of teams of people manipulating the child's body over long periods of time, through what the Domans and Delacato consider to be 'normal' patterns of movement.

It seems like social anarchism in practice, as groups of neighbours, friends, well-wishers and parents cluster around the child and treat it.

However, the treatment takes no account of the child's wishes. In some variants of Doman-Delacato therapy the manipulation is carried on for hours (as many as twelve) every day. Physiotherapists have recounted how they have heard hips dislocating under these treatments.

One device that is used is a "light stimulation box". The infant who may have severe difficulties, including near

blindness, is placed face down on the perspex lid of the box. At a touch of a switch, a naked light bulb flashes, a buzzer shrieks piercingly and the lid shudders and shakes.

The idea is to stimulate the reflex reactions of the child so that it will jump back. But, repeated many times during the day, it seems more like extreme punishment.

Workers with children with severe difficulties recount cases where children with very little sight have been exposed to flash cards for many hours a day.

Harmless, perhaps, but when, after years of this treatment, the child still has no language or controllable movement, and the parents are assured that the child is "reading 38 books", then one wonders who is being led up the garden path - and why?

These therapies cost a great deal of money and many families manage to raise it from local appeals. A family that has spent thousands of pounds of well-wishers' money in the belief that their child will 'get better' will have great difficulty in accepting that they may have been wasting their efforts. Perhaps some alternative therapies should carry a health warning.

As we construct a libertarian way of helping children with disabilities, we can take heart from one feature of Doman-Delacato techniques. They have shown that people will step in to help both directly, with hands on the child, and indirectly, through the raising of money.

Plea for volunteers to help stricken boy

PARENTS of a severely handicapped child are seeking volunteers to give him a chance of a normal life.

of [redacted], was just four weeks old when meningitis left him blind and physically and mentally handicapped. For the five years since, his parents have had to do everything for him.

Now specialists have prescribed a series of exercises to be done for six hours a day that could help him crawl and do other things. But each exercise needs five people to help him.

"We are desperate for volunteers," said his mother Mrs. [redacted], of [redacted]. "We want the best for him. But it is going to need a lot of people."

The exercises have to be done for six hours a day, six days a week. Each needs a person holding his head, each arm and each leg.

By moving his limbs, experts hope the exercises will stimulate undamaged parts of his brain to take over functions.

Fear and loathing in the playground

Tamsin Wilton is one of two researchers employed by the charity AVERT (AIDS Education Research Trust) to research HIV/AIDS education needs in Youth and Community Education (not schools) across England, Scotland and Wales. Here she relates some of her personal experiences but stresses that these are in no way the project findings, nor is it formal, quantifiable research.

THE EXPERIENCE most kids have of AIDS education, where it is tackled at all, is of being sat in front of a video, given a few facts, and allowed ten minutes or so of questions at the end.

The level of awareness of those instructing them varies widely, and some are being positively mis-informed. This is hardly surprising given the dearth of good materials and in-service training available to teachers, trainers and youth workers.

Our brief is to produce a package of participatory group exercises and games to enable young people to assess their information about HIV/AIDS, to begin to distinguish fact from myth, and to integrate the information into their lives.

The participatory approach of the project demands an openness to what young people have to say about their fears, fantasies and uncertainties, and, depressingly, a familiar picture is emerging.

As any discussion of HIV/AIDS involves explicit talk about sex and sexuality, I frequently 'brainstorm' sex vocabulary with new groups, and the inevitable pattern of woman-objectifying, misogynistic, male slang is beginning to lose any purely intellectual interest it once had for me.

One surprise has been how much more girls seem to know than boys about sex! In one youth club, a girls' group covered five sheets of flipchart paper with words about 'sex', whilst the boys' group were struggling to fill half a sheet, despite noisy bragging.

It will come as no surprise to learn that girls are more concerned about relationships than boys, though the majority of boys do seem to be taking the idea of responsibility for safer sex seriously.

I was horrified to realise, through the weeks, that most adolescent girls are quite unaware of the existence of their clitoris. They have been kept in an extraordinary state of ignorance which makes it impossible for them to imagine non-penetrative sex as a vital safer sex option.

Indeed, although the young people I have been working with seem far more adventurous about sexual activity than I was at 15 or 16, the overwhelming impression is obsessively phallicentric; female sexual pleasure is taken into account, certainly, but with pitifully little idea about what such pleasure

might be.

The other area of great concern, though again of depressingly little surprise to anybody, is the vehement and often violently expressed homophobia of young people.

Anybody trying to help young heterosexual men and women come to terms with the implications of AIDS has, first of all, to overcome the lingering conviction that AIDS is the gay plague.

I have been startled by the aggressive outbursts against gay men and lesbians which have been a common response to the question of sexuality. Comments such as "line them up and shoot them!", "they should all be locked up for life" and "if I saw two blokes kissing I'd go right up to them and beat them up" (this last from a girl) indicate the rigidity of prejudice we have to challenge.

The young adults I have worked with hold firm and illogical beliefs about lesbians and gay men. Simultaneously, they are supposed to comprise a tiny minority and be "everywhere". They are believed to be staggeringly promiscuous and at the same time, to find it very difficult to meet prospective partners.

It is dead easy to spot a queer or a lessie, yet, among young men in particular, anybody is open to suspicion if their behaviour deviates from the current peer-group norm by a fraction!

Above all, the idea that lesbian and gay relationships may include affection, caring, or sharing in any activity other than sex is often greeted with disbelief and derision. Groups I have worked with have found it hard to believe in my lesbianism simply because I am visibly human!

Such profound prejudice is a major stumbling-block to effective AIDS education. It results in untold misery for people with AIDS or who are HIV positive. They are burdened with a particularly nasty confusion of other people's fear and loathing at a time when they need loving support.

It causes pain and distress to all lesbians and gay men, making it doubly difficult for young women and men to come to terms with their own gay sexuality, and it distorts the lives of young heterosexuals too.

Educationalists observing school classrooms, teacher-training colleges and government training schemes have observed how young men use young

women as a negative reference group to reinforce their own masculinity, and how, in the absence of girls, boys who are in any way 'different' are labelled queer and by this ascription of pseudo-femininity, used to fulfil the same function.

The label of 'lesbian' is, on the other hand, used against any independent young woman who is, perhaps, tardy in 'growing out of' her closeness to her girl friend and 'maturing' into total dependence on the male approval demanded of her in our culture.



What we begin to see is an artifice, 'homosexuality', used to shore up the foundations of masculinity and of women's subjugation.

The absurdity and illogicality of the beliefs about gays and lesbians outlined above bespeaks a complete ignorance about the reality of gay relationships.

While prejudice, queer-bashing, the threat of losing jobs, friends or the right to bring up children keep lesbians and gay men in the closet, and while the infamous Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act casts its impotent but vicious shadow over any attempts to inform, that complete ignorance will remain unchallenged.

And as long as 'lesbian' and 'gay' are words used by heterosexuals to mean the sort of strange and impossible creatures imagined by young people I've been working with, they will continue to be used, not in any attempt to discover or describe the reality of lesbian and gay existence, but to reinforce the inequalities of heterosexuality.

To allow young people to believe such absurdities is deeply unjust to them and to us all, lesbian, gay or straight.

Johnny Speight looking back

As creator of television's Alf Garnett, Speight is widely regarded as one of the medium's greatest comic writers. He talks about his education and working life with Graham Wade.

"I GOT A FEW clouts and a lot of abuse from the teachers," declares Johnny Speight, summing up his school days in East London during the 1920s and 30s. "I kept my mouth shut and listened, but it all went in one ear and out of the other."

Born in Canning Town in 1921, Speight attended St Helen's Roman Catholic School. Both his parents were of Irish extraction and his father worker as a scaler in the docks, a casual labourer who was as much out of work as in.

"Most of the knowledge they tried to teach wasn't worth retaining - and it probably isn't worth retaining these days either. They were only interested in turning out factory fodder," he remembers.

"All education was for was to get you to speak well enough and understand the language sufficiently to take orders and carry them out. The orders were: pick up that broom and sweep that floor."

"I was lucky that my school was overcrowded, my teachers were halfwits and weren't worth listening to, because I completely escaped their attention - so no one tried to make me a carbon copy

...I got a few clouts and a lot of abuse from the teachers...

of themselves, which most teachers try to do. Unfortunately the top copy is usually not very good in the first place."

Speight is certain he was better off receiving virtually no formal education rather than attending a grammar school or university.

The conception of Till Death Us Do Part and its central character, Alf Garnett, in the mid-1960s, came partly as a result of Speight's dislike of much contemporary television drama at that time, which idealised working class education.

"I was fed up with the portrayal of this fictionalised working class family with a heart of gold. The mother would scrub steps for her son to go to university and the when he came back

they all moved up the social ladder.

That to me was another fucking dream.

"Because if the mother got him to university in real life, he didn't want to talk about his mother - or he'd even make out he hadn't got her. He became a fucking snob. He didn't want to know

... my teachers were halfwits and weren't worth listening too.

about his mother any more."

For Speight, the fact he never went to university doesn't worry him in the slightest.

"There was never anything worth worrying about. It wouldn't have made me a better writer, and probably would have made me a worse one."

So what did he think of a writer like Dennis Potter who went to Oxford University from a working class background?

"He's a very good writer. He didn't try to hide the fact that Oxford made him feel superior. It was a terrible thing because at university he was looked down upon."

"And he didn't fit into his home life anymore. He was a real fucking outsider - he was driven outside. I think that's what made him a great writer. I was outside from the very beginning."

Moving on to discuss other writers, Speight mentions Harold Pinter and John Osborne as among his favourite living authors.

"What Osborne hated is what I hated - the acceptance of terrible middle class values, religious values, ignorant values. They were handed down from above as if on stone. They were restricting values that restricted their own minds. It's what makes people easily governed by governments."

After leaving school at 14, Speight had a long series of short-lived jobs in factories around Canning Town. Most lasted only a few days and he hated them.

His first love was jazz and later he learned to play the drums, earning a

meagre living as a musician.

Many of the themes of Till Death developed from his love of jazz, in particular his anti-racism and sympathy for Jews. "My big heroes were either black or Jewish, because those were the only people who could play jazz the way I liked it. Louis Armstrong was the greatest thing that ever happened."

Then the second world war arrived, Speight was called up.

"I got a letter from the King who wanted me to defend my country. I thought he's got more of it to defend than me. I looked at our 30-foot garden, where a weed wouldn't grow, and felt it wasn't our house that Hitler was after."

He spent the war as a cook, a job he liked as it reduced the chances of him being killed. Once he was arrested and served time in a military detention centre for taking some food home during leave.

It was the discovery of George Bernard Shaw that really opened his eyes after the war. Reading Shaw made Speight believe that the only thing holding him back from being a writer was himself - so he sold his drumkit and bought an old typewriter with a key missing.

Through an old army friend he

... they were only interested in turning out factory fodder...

managed to show some of his gags to Frankie Howerd, who introduced him to his two full-time writers, Eric Sykes and Spike Milligan, whose office Speight soon joined. The rest is history.

Speight describes himself best as an iconoclast. But his success as a television writer has not mellowed his views.

"My writing is not what television executives want. They don't want unpleasant things raised. Their idea of a perfect sitcom is a happy middle class family who go to church regularly and vote for all the right people and are as boring as other people's arses."

AGAINST THE TIDE

The rich tradition of libertarian education in Britain has always yielded a wide variety of schools. Private adventures, free standing alternatives, schools for the unschoolable and experiments inside the state system make up a large part of this unknown educational history.

At a time when the British government's assault on any form of progressive education is in full swing we can take heart from the emergence and consolidation of two new libertarian schools, Blackcurrent Otherwise Project and Sands School. Here *Lib ED* reports on these initiatives. As a timely reminder we also look at a state school much influenced by libertarian ideas which survived for a long period in the most adverse circumstances.

The idiot teacher

E F O'Neill was born in Salford in 1890. He developed a thirst for education from a very young age but found the rote learning and regimentation of school stifling and repressive.

By the time he was sixteen he was a pupil-teacher, with his heart set on becoming a qualified teacher determined to right the educational wrongs he had felt as a school pupil.

Eventually he went to Crewe Training College, where he qualified, and, after periods of time at Saint Luke's School and Saint Oswald's School, both in Salford, he was discovered by Edmond Holmes, co-founder with Beatrice Ensor of the New Ideals in Education group.

This group had been set up in 1914. Out of it grew the New Education Fellowship, which also attracted A S Neill and Dora Russell.

O'Neill spoke at conferences organised by the group in 1917 and 1918, where he talked of the need for children to work at projects and where he questioned the need for a set timetable.

Holmes had been a school inspector, and recommended O'Neill for the headship of Prestolee School in Farnworth in 1918, as he was much impressed by the ideas that O'Neill had brought to the New Ideals group.

Very few of those close to the core of the New Ideals group worked in the State System. O'Neill was one of the few. It was probably for this reason that Holmes admired him.

Holmes' priority was to effect change in state schools, and he found it difficult to relate to many of the private sector interests in the New Ideals group. O'Neill had similar difficulties, and others too.

continued on page 14



Blackcurrent Learning Centre

IT'S A terraced house. *Lib ED's* reporter walked past it twice and asked in a corner shop for the school...

"A school? At the far end of the road on the right." was the reply.

But the school he was referring to was an ordinary state primary school - not the new and exciting development that is taking place a few yards from his front door.

Here, unknown to most of the people in Northampton, is the seed of a project that could grow and transform the ideas everywhere of school without walls.

In the project are Joseph 11, Paul 9, Matthew 8, Geoffrey 8, Reuben 6, Bradley 6, Morris 6, Roland 4, Jake 3, Ingrid 2, Daniel 1, Rosie 4 months, Skye 3 months and thirteen adults.

Two more families are expected to join the project soon, one with three boys and the other with one girl.

They are very firm on the idea that as far as learning goes, there is no difference between people, whether of statutory school age or not.

It is a centre for shared experiences and skills.

What makes it different from some other projects is the fact that it is well thought out from the basic fundamental of accommodation; it is not only a learning project but a housing co-operative that hopes to expand and to become a workers co-operative eventually.

"As well as being primarily concerned with provision of housing for the learning centre and similar educational initiatives, we also hope to promote this form of housing within the local community and further afield, eventually making loans to newly forming co-ops to enable them to buy their first property.

"As a co-op it is as much our concern to encourage a socially useful livelihood for tenants as it is to provide co-operative housing."

Blackcurrent acknowledged the influence and help of *Education Otherwise*, particularly in regard to satisfying the authorities over the legal niceties.

However, what distinguishes it from many other *Education Otherwise* projects is its political basis in anarchist thought, its practical basis in shared property and its declared impetus to expand and be an influence outside the four walls of the establishment.

The pedagogy comes from doing things together. The *Lib ED* reporter,

working within the system, and involuntarily tainted with its ideas and values, wanted to know about the learning of reading, writing and numbers.

"We do number based around practical things: shopping, games and doing a shared tapestry frame. This last had all sorts of maths experiences in it - such as sharing out the threads equally.

"Sometimes we do some sums for a treat," said Emma, holding up page after page of correct calculations done by the kids, "I suppose they'll be useful to show if any inspectors call!"

"Joseph now loves reading. He hated it when he was at ordinary school. He now has time to read and write and go to the library."

Jo was buried deep in a book about computers.

"The other school I went to was not all bad," said Jo, "but I can do what I want here. I was a bit worried about making new friends because we moved house at the same time; but that's coming along now."

Ironically the project seems to take in most of the areas of learning specified in the National Curriculum.

When they went on holiday in Scotland a great deal of learning took place. Matthew casually disposed of *Lib ED's* somewhat crude inquisitorial questions about hydro-electric power, for example.

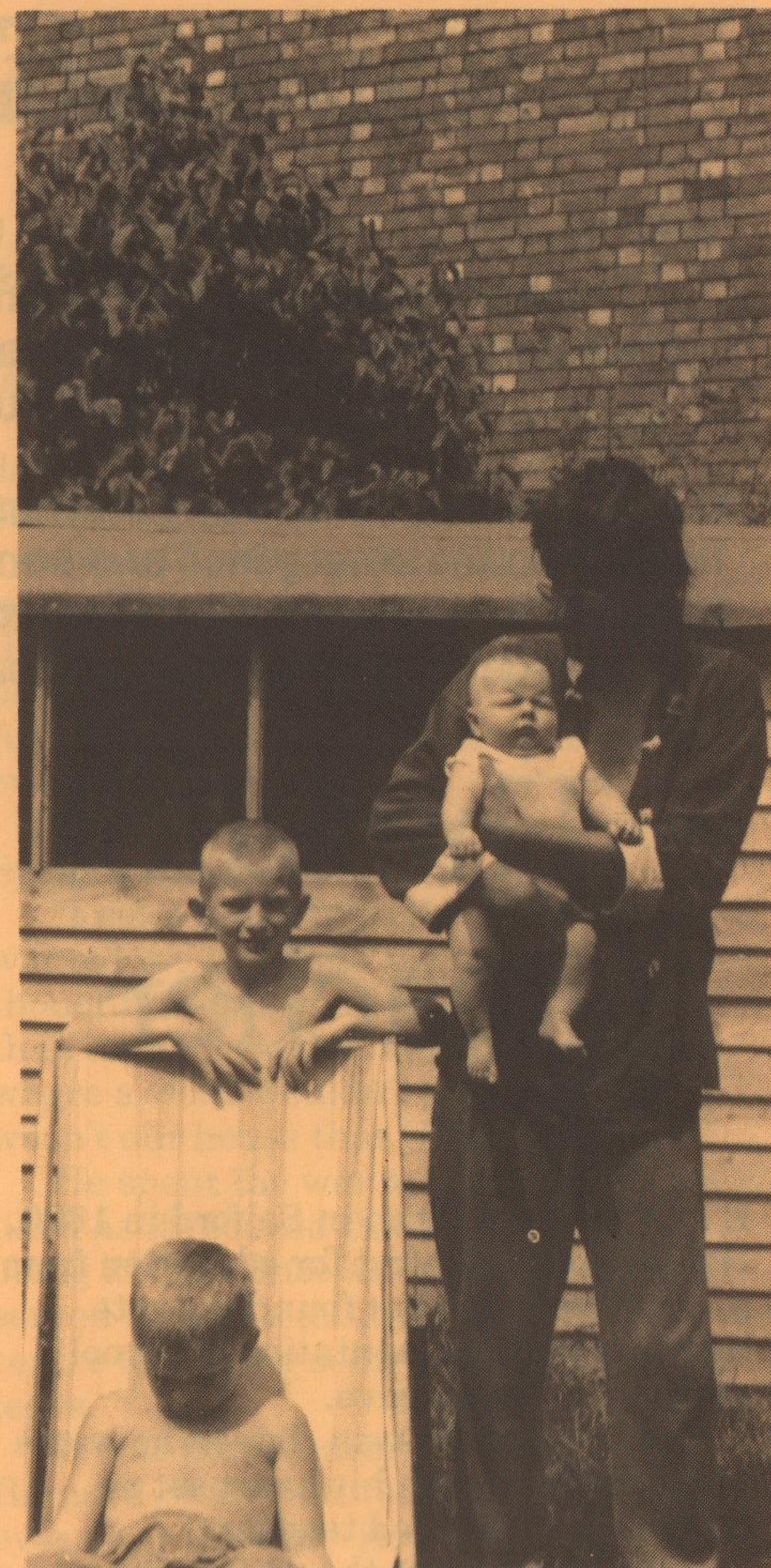
Physical exercise comes from using swimming baths, parks and skateboarding areas. Musical activities are part of life at Blackcurrent, and they are getting a piano soon.

"In Local Education Authority schools the children are not free to come and go as they think reasonable. The imposition of the National Curriculum is bad enough - but it is the testing that I don't want forced on the children," said Emma.

"We are political", say Blackcurrent. The constitution says that they share incomes and put money into loan stock. This takes the profit motive out of the co-op which means that they cannot, individually, make money from it. If the co-op makes money it has to go to make more co-ops.

It is women, children and men earning, sharing and doing things together in co-operation.

If you remove the mortgage motive for work you can really concentrate on living!



Blackcurrent generations

Part of life

HOW many students would talk of their school in the glowing terms that Matthew Marmot uses? "This is the best school in the world! The learning is made fun which I think is important, and the teachers and pupils can talk as friends. The pupils are given responsibility so they become responsible. And as there are no set rules we use common sense in what's allowed and what's not allowed."

Sands school is one of the few private schools that can really call itself progressive. It was set up only two years ago by three teachers who had been together at Dartington Hall School when that was closed by its trustees.

At the time, David Gribble, now 'head' at Sands, wrote in *Lib ED*: "You cannot have a school based on respect for the individual if the ultimate governing system is authoritarian. A school must be run from within, because when you are outside you cannot really see what is going on. To give people authority over an institution is to make them believe that they understand it. Only people inside the school, seeing the many children who succeed without problems, seeing the children with difficulties change and progress, can form any true picture of its merits."

Sands school, situated on the edge of Dartmoor in the small town of Ashburton, has 33 students aged between 11 and 16. There are now a further four part-time and one full-time staff members, in addition to the original three. The fees are £745 a term (1989/90) but they do have schemes to help parents who would not otherwise be able to afford the school.

Jan Bryant, another student, describes it. "Sands is situated in a large building called Greylands. It has grounds which extend to two acres at the back of the building. This includes an astro-turf tennis court, an old chapel, lots of grass, plenty of large trees and a vegetable garden, all of which we look after ourselves."

Every Wednesday, the whole school community of teachers and pupils meets to make decisions about the running of the school.

It was the school meeting that introduced reports and then decided how they would be handled and it is the meeting that makes any rules that may seem to be necessary.

For instance, the school has a policy (decided by the school meeting) that children are allowed to swear but that teachers aren't. A meeting earlier this year discussed this discrepancy:

"I think teachers should be allowed to swear because we swear."

"I usually swear more at things than people."

"I think if students swear at teachers they should be allowed to swear back."

"Is there any point in swearing?" Someone suggested a resolution, that everyone should try and swear a bit less. This was followed by a discussion on the differences between malicious and non-malicious swearing.

"I wouldn't go up to my mum and use the f word. I'd be dead."

"I think we should do as we like. I don't want rules made to stop me doing something."

"Nice people don't do it." "Rubbish!"

The meeting delegates a good deal - financial matters, for instance, or advertising for staff - but staff are only appointed on the advice of the meeting. The meeting, chaired by one of the pupils, has absolute authority and the duty of the head is to make sure the school is run in accordance with the wishes of the meeting.

Once a year the school discusses whether the present head has been fulfilling this function properly.

"I think our school meetings are really good. I like them because we all have a chance to say what we like, and the younger children are treated just like older children," says Aimie Martin.

Each child chooses a tutor from the full-time staff. The children then decide in consultation with their tutor what subjects they will do.

The range of subjects is pretty conventional: English, literature, humanities, French, human biology, integrated science, maths, art, crafts, drama and PE, but there are also plenty of opportunities for other interests.

The younger group are expected to start with a full timetable, but this includes some days when all children have time to work on their own at something which is important to them. The older students prepare for GCSE exams, if they wish.

"We are normally taught in classrooms, but if you have a project of your own you can go wherever you feel is best. This summer I've spent most of my time in the garden writing poems, drawing and writing book reviews." Jeanett Uhrenholt relates.

Nihad Alfulaj sums up Sands, "In this school our work is only part of life and not the be all and end all which is what it's like at most schools. We work at our own levels and up to our own standards. The staff are always willing to help us and they all have trust in us and their lessons are enjoyable."



In Sands artroom

The talk that he delivered to the New Ideals conference in 1917 was entitled "Developments in Self-activity in an Elementary School." It provoked considerable controversy and many questioned the degree of personal autonomy O'Neill was prepared to afford children.

After he took up his post at Prestolee he had little to do with the New Ideals group. This is a shame, for he might have found himself allied with Neill and Russell, and later Bill Curry of Dartington Hall, once they had merged as a faction within the group by the late 1920s.

At Prestolee, O'Neill set about revolutionising the approach in what had been a very traditional Elementary School. He proposed to flush out the old 3Rs of rote, regimentation and regurgitation. As John Watts has noted in the introduction to the book about O'Neill by Gerard Holmes called *The Idiot Teacher*,

"...leap decades, beyond the practise of streaming, beyond mixed-ability grouping, to the logical conclusion that today is still a needle of hope in a haystack of conformity, namely the integrated day with individualised timetables."

Implicitly O'Neill abandoned the banking system of education years before Paulo Freire had even identified it. He refused to accept that children had to have knowledge deposited in them, and he also recognised the very limited extent to which children will work for indefinite and delayed goals.

Education, for O'Neill, had to foster individual growth.

O'Neill, in fact, was able to tolerate the old regime for only twenty four hours. His first day at the school began with orderly queues in the playground, a devout morning assembly, strict scripture and arithmetic lessons, and constant harassment from the school caretaker, a rigid disciplinarian.

Day two saw O'Neill tell the caretaker to keep out of his and the children's way. The morning assembly became a sit-down storytime affair, teachers' blackboards were turned into tables and teachers' scheme books were dispensed with.

The timetable, usually displayed glazed in a handsome frame, was eclipsed by a colour print of the Laughing Cavalier in the same frame. Playtimes were abolished and tea was made available all day for staff and pupils alike.

O'Neill then set about creating a New Order. Children were encouraged to work at what subject they liked, for how long they wished and with whom they chose. Everybody was encouraged to go, to get and later to put away things needed.

The monitorial system was dispensed with. As far as possible, too, children were allowed to become

'property owners', each being supplied with pen, pencil, ink and paints, one of the demands of the 1911-12 school strikers.

For O'Neill it was all or nothing, but these early days were turbulent times as far as relations with the rest of the staff were concerned. Most of the staff were irritated, muddled, hurt, and made to imagine that they were valueless.

However, O'Neill's reforms met with immediate approval from the children and, more importantly, from the relevant authorities.

As far as the latter were concerned, Edmund Holmes was very important because, as an ex-school inspector he wielded a lot of influence. He reported on Prestolee in 1919 thus:

"Mr O'Neill has had effective charge of his new school for only eight months. What he has accomplished in those few months bodes on the miraculous... If I were to characterise in a few words the change that has been effected, I would say that learning by doing has taken the place of learning by swallowing... The child who is learning by swallowing is at best learning the one thing he is required to learn... The child who is learning by doing is learning many things besides the one thing he is supposed to be learning. He is learning to desire, to purpose, to place, to initiate, to execute; he is learning to profit by the experience, to think, to reason, to judge."

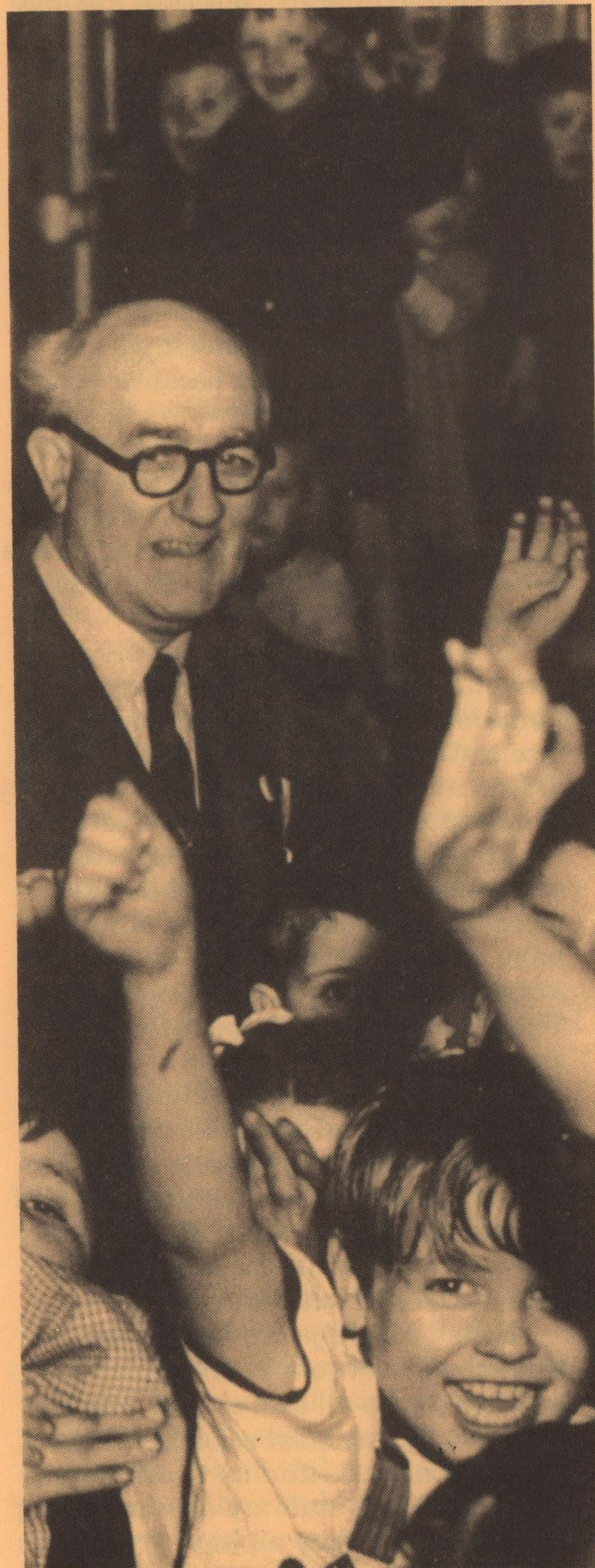
O'Neill remained the head of Prestolee for over thirty years, and whilst he had many conflicts with other staff and with groups outside of the school, he survived every inspection and the closest of scrutinies by the local authority and school governors.

He was able to do this because he demonstrated that his approach worked. He refused to coerce children. He did not obstruct them and he recoiled from the use of extraneous incentives, either rewards or punishments.

There were difficulties and abuses without end - stealing, smoking in closets, rowdyism. But O'Neill exacted every bit of education that he could from any situation and he was able to articulate his philosophy lucidly.

Prestolee was the first state school influenced by a libertarian approach to education. It's intake was predominately working class and it survived for over thirty years. It was able to demonstrate the superiority of a libertarian pedagogy. John Watts captures the school's importance succinctly:

"...Don't let us be told that it can't be done. O'Neill did it, within a local authority, with scanty material resources, with ordinary children, and with the wholehearted support of ordinary parents who saw that even the humblest home could expect its children to be taught with love, respect and pleasure."



O'Neill: not such an idiot

The Cop comes to Knotty Ash

9.10 Arrived at the Ken Dodd Technology College, which had been set up with some spare cash the world's greatest comedian had lying around the house.

We are carrying out spot checks on curriculum content, monitoring the lessons of suspect teachers. I observe a Great British History lesson. The teacher is very, very nervous, just the way I like them. I can smell fear.

"Another great British commercial innovation in the sixteenth century was the slave trade. This was the brainchild of that outstanding British entrepreneur, Sir John Hawkins. The slave trade was introduced to help alleviate the high levels of unemployment that existed in Africa at this time.

Africans were given free passage to the Americas. Once they arrived they were provided with free board and lodging and suitable work. It was an early forerunner of today's YTS schemes. Now, are there any questions?"

"What about the slave revolts?" asked one student.

"These were the work of a handful of unrepresentative, politically motivated agitators. The overwhelming majority of slaves were grateful for the opportunity to work, were content with their conditions and were devoted to their masters."

"Any more questions? No! Good. Now for the rest of the lessons you can take turns reading Chapter Nine, Clive's Liberation of India, in the class copy of the text book."

I call the creep over, "Here, scumbag!"

"Well, I suppose you're happy with that load of garbage", he stammers. "It really hurts to tell the kids such a diabolical pack of lies."

The worm had turned.

"Listen up, you puddle of dog's diarrhoea," I growled, "any more smartass comments like that and your conscience won't be all that's hurting. This course has been passed as OK by Lord Jonathan Clark, BIG MOTHER'S favourite historian, so cut the crap."

I take him into the stock cupboard and massage his kidneys with my Bakerlite Special. GETTING TEACHERS TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY IS LIKE PUSHING A BAKED POTATO UP A GORILLA'S ARSE - YOU HAVE TO

LIKE YOUR JOB!

11.20 I visit the Jesus Christ Superstar Evangelical Comp to sort out a few problems. The head, Bob Torquemada, has had some students burned at the stake again (their parents are making a fuss), and an inter-school war is threatening to break out.

As I walk into the main building I notice that the school motto, JESUS SAVES has been updated to JESUS INVESTS, as I advised after my last visit.

The head is waiting to greet me.

"I hear you're having more trouble with the heretics."

"Afraid so," he replies. "Some of our students have been misled into believing that Our Lord was somehow prejudiced against the rich and sympathetic to the poor. We tried reasoning with them, but in the end tougher measures were necessary.

I'm afraid a handful had to be burned as an example to the rest of the flock. It was all agreed to by the Governing Body though, and we did make a saving on the school's heating bill which is, as you know, a very important consideration under Local Financial Management."

That was what I wanted to hear. Which brought me to the second problem.

"We've had more complaints from the Ayatollah Fundamentalist Girls' School about forcible conversions. They are threatening a jihad if you don't release the students you are holding prisoner. Now obviously the DES doesn't want to get involved in this sort of religious wrangle, but we can offer our services as a mediator."

12.30 A news flash! Boss Baker has been promoted to become Party Chairman, directly responsible to BIG MOTHER herself. THE MAN WHO PUT THE SHIT IN EDUCATIONAL INISHITIVES HAS GONE! I am completely devastated.

It has been such a privilege to work with this great man. No matter how disastrous our policies, no matter how much damage we did to the country's education system, the Boss could always lie his way out of it.

His winning smirk, his false sincerity, his complete lack of principles have allowed us to get away with murder. Now BIG MOTHER obviously feels that the government as a whole needs his special talents. I just pray the

new Boss is as glib a liar as the old. I wipe away a tear.

3.20 Arrive at the Commons to brief the new Boss. I make my way into the Cabinet toilets where Boss Baker had many of his best ideas.

My God! What's going on! A minister is standing at the urinal trying to strangle his penis. "Damn you! You've ruined me, you bastard! You'll pay for this! I could have been a contender!"

"Relax, old chap," says Boss MacGregor, "it's only Cecil Parkinson been passed over again." What a relief.

I brief the Boss on the state of play as regards our unending war against state education and the teaching profession.

"The really big problem is the shortage of teachers," I tell him.

"Shortage of teachers! I didn't know that was a problem. My predecessor always said it was just a scare got up by the unions."

"Well, to be honest, we weren't always altogether frank about this one, Boss."

"I always thought his name was Ken! Still I don't see any real problem. Can't we just abolish the height regulations?"

By now I could tell that the Boss had not yet completely mastered his brief.

"Er, no Boss," I replied. "I've obviously not made myself clear. It's not that there aren't enough tall teachers, it's that there just aren't enough teachers."

"Oh, dear me! What are we going to do?"

I quickly outlined the package of emergency measures we had prepared. "A number of inishitives are in the pipeline. In fact, Boss Baker came up with them in this very cubicle.

We're increasing class size to fifty, abolishing the teacher's right to resign and making the job hereditary, scouring the Third World trouble spots for refugees with teaching qualifications, and secretly closing down state education in various inner cities with large ethnic minority populations.

Hopefully these measures will ease the situation, but we don't think we're out of the wood yet. Boss Baker was always prepared to try anything, although he drew the line at PAYING THOSE TEACHER BASTARDS ANY MORE MONEY!"

"Quite right, old chap. Well, keep in touch, won't you."

Even greyer scenes in Groby

WE HAD hoped to produce a feature article for this issue on the new Lady Jane Grey School in Groby, Leicestershire. In spite of a group of reactionary parents, it seemed to be succeeding in delivering an education that was based on openness and honesty, and, as far as possible, autonomy for children.

That article was not to be - on Monday 18th September the Leicester Mercury ran the 48pt headline "Head quits in boycott school row".

Jim Nind had resigned ostensibly for "personal reasons" because of the "great burden placed on him and his staff" by a child-bashing "parents action group".

"It was not like Jim to do that," said one parent, "if he really wanted to go he would have called a meeting of staff and parents and explained it all."

"He is being crucified for his principles," said a liberal head teacher from the county, who did not want to be named, "the authority may have

blackmailed him to go."

The situation that the faceless bureaucrats at County Hall saw was that, in the space of six months, about twenty children had been moved from the school, some to private education - they would probably have gone anyway.

The bureaucrats were running scared from a right wing Tory county councillor, Mrs Pat Butler, who has a history of crusades against progressive teachers and who had issued a series of smarmy prejudiced statements to the local press.

But County Hall did not see the reality of a school where the staff had the courage to bring love into education.

"The children think the world of Jim. They reciprocate the respect that the teachers give them. The main thing is that the children are happy - and they are learning here," said Sheila Riley, the mother of two girls at the school.

"The majority of the parents are in support of Jim and the staff. We want

the school to continue as before," she added, referring to the concessions that had already been made in response to pressure from traditional parents.

However, while County Hall have listened to the reactionary minority, they have sent nobody to listen to the majority of parents and children, who are crying out for the return of Jim and the rest of the staff.

"They have sent nobody to see us. They just give us the stock reply that they don't know..."

But now the parents and children have petitioned and, amidst a blaze of publicity, have invaded County Hall to make their point of view known.

It is not often that *Lib ED* carries an article in support of a head teacher, the last one was RF Mackenzie in the early seventies. (He was sacked for banning the tawse at Summerhill Academy in Scotland.) But Jim Nind and the rest of Lady Jane Grey's staff certainly deserve all the support we can give.

Power going to heads' heads

THE FIRST stages of Local Financial Management (LMS) are now being implemented in schools. LMS is one of the major 'reforms' of the recent Education Act, and it is designed to make schools more 'accountable' for their own expenditure.

Until now, schools have only been responsible for a relatively small part of their expenditure. The payment of teachers salaries (over 70% of the total) and spending on the maintenance of property and land has come directly from the Local Education Authority (LEA). Schools have only been responsible for books and other consumables.

The new scheme changes all of this. Pilots are already running and the plans for full implementation are being submitted. From April 1990, most schools will be responsible for their whole budget.

The scheme allocates budgets to schools by means of a formula, devised by each LEA, within severe constraints laid down in the legislation. The formula must be based primarily on the numbers and ages of pupils in the school.

Allowances are then made, on a formula basis, for additional needs, for instance if the school is small, or has special educational or social needs. The latter will usually be based upon a standard figure such as the number of pupils taking free school meals.

In calculating the formula no allowance is made for the actual wages of the teachers currently employed. Instead the average wage rate in the local authority is used.

Heads will be forced to become no more than glorified accountants, seeking to cut and trim here and there, effectively doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

Governing bodies will, in addition, have the right to hire and fire staff. This has already caused controversy in Wiltshire, where the first attempted sacking of a staff member has already been defeated.

A union as 'moderate' as the NAS/UWT has estimated that 40,000 teachers will be lost from the state sector through schools cutting down on staff.

This will be especially marked in schools where the staff are 'expensive', that is, paid above the authority average. There will also inevitably be pressure on 'unpopular' (that is, to free market worshipping Tories) subjects, those not covered by the National Curriculum, on 'unproductive' staff or, dare one say it, 'troublemakers'.

Power hungry heads have already started to throw their weight around by unilaterally cutting the responsibility allowances given to some posts. Others have given contracts to cowboy coach companies to provide transport for their schoolchildren.

Middle class ('good') schools have always had the ability to raise additional funds that are now so necessary to the smooth running of a school. The more even hand of the liberal LEA which sought to smooth out such imbalances will now be removed, and the possibility of inner-city 'sink' schools is emerging.

The government has been systematically dismantling the power of all forms of opposition to it. Local authorities have been one such centre of power and this measure is one of many aimed at local government.

Giving schools responsibility for their own finances makes it easier for the government to escape responsibility for the under-funding of state education. You do not need to be particularly Machiavellian to see how the scheme can be taken further.

LMS lays all the ground work for the introduction of a voucher system for education, one of the long term ambitions of the Tories. This will fundamentally change the education system of the country, funding independent schools from state coffers and effectively re-creating the class system in schools.

In a way, it seems a shame that a measure which, in theory at least, is decentralising power, should not be a 'Good Thing'. But in our class society, inequality is an unacceptable consequence of such devolution.

The world beyond

Centre for Alternative Technology
A living demonstration
near Machynlleth, Powys, Wales

THE CENTRE has become an impressive working model of alternative technology in action. Founded on the site of a disused quarry in the early 70s, it offers glimpses into a sustainable lifestyle with enough popular appeal to attract 60,000 visitors a year.

The range of exhibits, freshness of presentation and evidence of patient hard work carried out by dedicated workers and volunteers makes the Centre one of the few organisations which can not only claim truly to be 'green,' but which practiced the theory before successive governments had even contemplated its vote-catching potential.

From modest beginnings and precious little funding, the Centre has fared well without the National Grid and other mains services. Energy conservation is obviously a prime objective, and is produced from renewable resources - mainly water and wind.

Exhibits include many different varieties of manufactured and DIY equipment from all over the world, including windmills, pumps, solar panels, water wheels, turbines, biofuels and photovoltaics. Sewage is recycled, and a number of further experiments in

energy generation and storage are underway.

These elements are incorporated into the low energy, self-build house, the conservation house and some of the staff cottages.

The basic principles of organic gardening are demonstrated in an attractively designed area, including a communal tunnel, and an ecological



display with an accent on wildlife habitat preservation, including a large pond area. Assorted farm animals are also reared. The Centre is now almost self-sufficient.

Some of the most interesting aspects of the Centre are seen in the attention that has been paid to detail and the development of an interactive 'hands-on' approach to scientific explanation. Within the building which houses the public toilets are three small windows in the brickwork which show the three traditional ways by which arches can be

constructed to support the weight above them.

The garden offers a display of several allotments which demonstrate the growing of the same few crops on different soils using various amounts and types of fertilizer. A maze presents the wanderer with a number of options pertaining to a sustainable future for the planet, leading, if inappropriately answered, to a dead end.

The history and development of the Centre are detailed in useful guide-book and outdoor exhibition specifically for the purpose. Other attractions include a children's play area, plants and seeds for sale, a restaurant, visitor accommodation, lecture hall, and a well-stocked comprehensive bookshop.

The Centre runs a number of courses, a mail order service, publishes information sheets and produces exhibitions, organises workshops and gives talks, mainly in the local area.

CAT is easy to find and has reasonably priced entrance fees. It is a registered charity, and its caring and cooperative atmosphere make it a soothing place to spend a few hours in.

Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to visit the Centre when low-flying RAF aeroplanes are not passing provocatively, noisily and aggressively overhead as a grim reminder of the world beyond.

Four space adventures

A Boy Who Reversed Himself
The Green Futures of Tycho
Singularity
House of Stairs
Four novels by William Sleator
Macdonald, all around £2.50

WITH THE simultaneous publication of these four novels, British readers have been introduced to the work of an important American writer of juvenile science fiction, William Sleator.

The Boy Who Reversed Himself is an exciting adventure story set in the 4th dimension. Sleator's description of this world is marvellously convincing:

"Out here in 4 space... we could see inside each other... From one specific angle, Pete looked normal. Then he moved a little, and part of his liver would peek out around the edge, a section of his lungs, and then all the rest. The sight of all those living, slimy, bloody organs - not to mention such substances as flowing mucus and half-digested food - was a lot more intense than a little dead frog in biology class."

Laura and Pete are captured by 4 space creatures and find that they have

inadvertently put our world in great danger. They have to find some way to escape.

In *The Green Futures of Tycho*, the hero of the book, Tycho Tithonius, finds a weird metal egg that turns out to be a time machine. His journeys into the future reveal a succession of increasingly horrific worlds in which his own future self becomes more and more vicious and unbalanced, more and more dangerous. How can he avoid growing up into this monster?

Singularity concerns the conflict between twin brothers and the incredible way that this conflict is resolved when one of them, Harry, spends the night in his late uncle's mysterious Playhouse. This strange building is an exit from another universe and something that looks distinctly unfriendly wants to come through it.

My personal favourite, however, is *House of Stairs*. Five sixteen-year-olds, Lola, Blossom, Peter, Abigail and Oliver are subjected to an inhuman behaviourist experiment. They are placed in the House of Stairs, a place of "constant gnawing hunger... utter

bleakness... an endless succession of days without any comfort or diversion or interest."

They are only fed if they can work out how their unseen tormentors want them to behave. Eventually they realise that food only appears when they are cruel or hurtful to each other. This bleak novel chronicles the courageous refusal of Lola and Peter to dance to this particular tune.

All four of these novels are well written and marvellously inventive, varying in quality from very good to outstanding.

Unlike much science fiction, they have well realised, interesting characters who develop and change as the stories progress and whose relationships with each other are successfully explored. Sleator is a thoughtful writer with something to say.

It is also worth noticing the superb paperback editions of these books that Macdonald have published and at a reasonable price.

Which leaves one question: why on earth, one wonders, haven't these books had more publicity? Don't Macdonald want to sell them?

Childhood politics

The Politics of Childhood

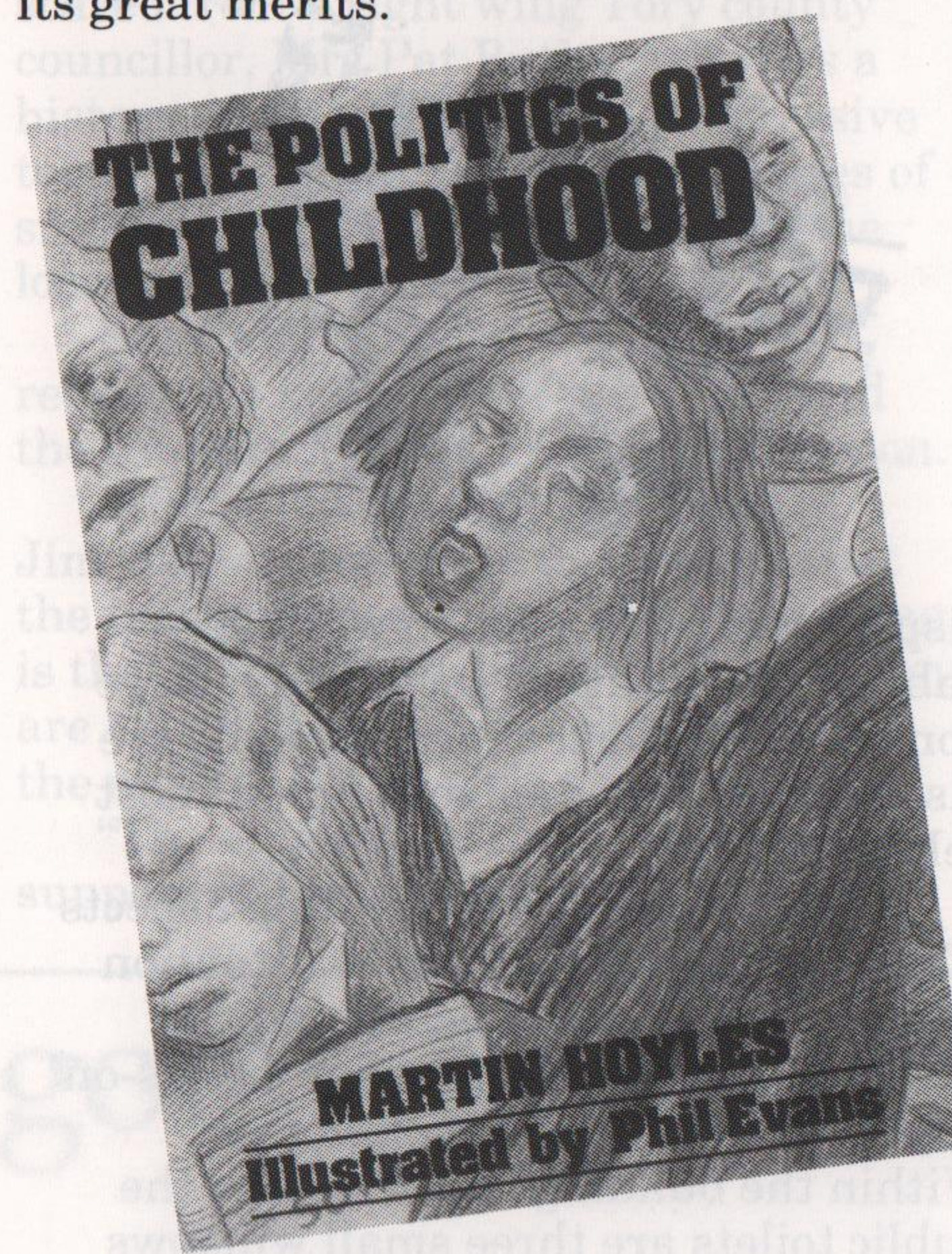
A book by Martin Hoyles, illustrated by Phil Evans
Journeyman, £4.95

ON FIRST reading this book appeared somewhat bitty and quite disappointing. However, on re-reading, its merits were more apparent. Although not saying anything particularly new, Martin Hoyles has done a good job in bringing together a number of areas and building up a hefty challenge to the idea of childhood being a time of innocence and immaturity.

In the opening chapters he challenges the myth of childhood through historical and cross-cultural studies, before going on to show the involvement of children in political action, confronting issues on racism, sexuality, disability and, naturally, schooling.

Where the book is lacking is in the exceedingly short section on other cultures and in the somewhat idiosyncratic bibliography.

The most important point is that the book gives voice to what children have to say. Too often others try to speak for children, not allowing them to articulate their own experience. Martin Hoyles



has not done that. Time and again he allows children to speak for themselves, which brings home the points he wants to make all the more forcefully.

I would recommend this book to anybody interested in the issues around childhood and would ask the reader to forgive its shortcomings in the light of its great merits.

Scenes from the townships

Siyalunga, We're Getting Ready!

A laminated photo book
available in this country from Letterbox Library

VERY FEW books have been produced in South Africa for pre-school and those which are available do not usually reflect the children's own reality. *Siyalunga, We're Getting Ready!* is a laminated photograph book that graphically describes life in the rural townships.

Children live in dire poverty under a repressive system. However, as the photographs show, they are able to create a life for themselves. They use their own imaginations and each other for company to enjoy themselves.

The photographs are without words but there are excellent notes accompanying the book. An excerpt is included here:

"Life of Children in South Africa's rural areas.

40% of the black population live in rural areas - most of them live in 'bantustans', areas designated by the government for black people to live in - the rest live on farms owned by white people.

The so-called bantustans, where many of the photos were taken, are far from really independent of South Africa. They are part of South Africa geographically, economically and historically - they function as a gigantic labour reservoir for the South African economy.

Most of the people living in the bantustans are old people, women and children as most able-bodied men and women have to travel long distances to find work and are away from their families for most of the year.

Apartheid, which means keeping people of different races apart, creates the illusion that the bantustans are self-governed. A black child growing up there may see white people for the first time when s/he leaves his/her home to become a migrant labourer. In fact, everything that affects her/his life is ultimately a creation of a white government."

As well as a visual aid for pre-school children, *Siyalunga* can be used as a teaching resource for school children to provoke discussion and stimulate the child's enquiring mind.

The producer of this work, Environmental and Development Agency (PO Box 62054, Marshalltown 2107, SA), is a small non-governmental organisation working in rural areas of South Africa.

Combatting racism

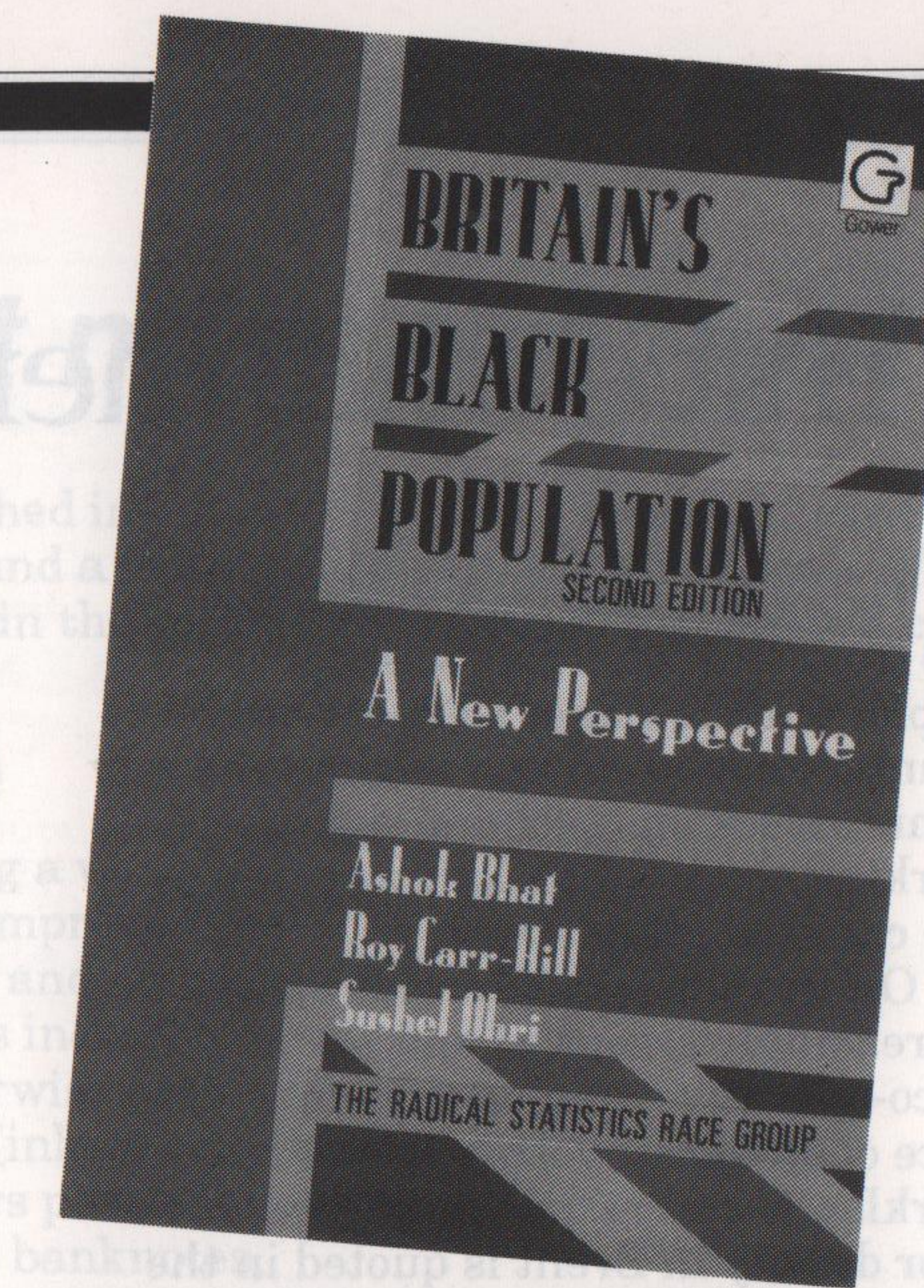
Britain's Black Population

A book from the Radical Statistics Race Group
Gower, pp298, £6.95 pb.

AS Ashok Bhat and Sushei Ohri suggest in the introduction to this comprehensive study of Britain's black population, the first edition of the work, published in 1980, was an academic textbook and its use outside academic institutions or by the black community was limited.

This edition attempts to remedy that deficiency, developing and promoting a black perspective in assessing the current situation facing the black population, and in moving towards solutions which have more support from the black communities themselves.

After the introduction, the book has three sections: Racism and Society, Racism and Welfare and Racism and



the Individual. The development of a black perspective is particularly evident in the first, with strong analyses of the politics of equal opportunity.

The second section contains excellent discussion of the black experience of housing, education, health, and the social services. Section three explores the meaning of racism to individuals as experienced through immigration policies and in the context of Britain's links with South Africa.

Democracy inside school

The Democratic School

A book edited by Clive Harber and Roland Meighan
published by Education Now, pp202, £9.95

THE Democratic School is the latest book from *Education Now*. It is an attempt to present the experience of different schools which have tried to develop democratic forms of organisation and learning in times when these ideas have come under increasing attack.

There are some seventeen contributions. Heads and administrators attempt to describe and analyse the difficulty of pursuing democratic practice in education beyond a particular 'acceptable' point. There are case studies of Madeley Court, Stantonbury, Quinton Kynaston and Countesthorpe College to name but four. In addition the editors try to provide overviews and pull out the lessons from past and present practice.

The book is important because it provides information about initiatives and developments which are easily lost to history. However the overall effect and impact are disappointing. There are few contributions from practising teachers, and it is interesting that the most meaningful and exciting chapters, from Michael Fielding (Stantonbury) and Laura Chessum (Countesthorpe), are from two such people.

When girls speak out

Girls will be grils

A book by Bryn Purdy
Laneill Press, pp133, £5.00

GIRLS will be Grils is a wonderful little book by Bryn Purdy, caretaker in a residential school for girls under stress, Rowan House School (see *Lib ED 6*).

Bryn documents and describes in detail the actual experiences of girls he has seen go through Rowan House School. It is an honest and thoroughly revealing study which identifies the positive but complex virtues of a libertarian education. The book belongs on the shelf of anybody interested in practice and experience.

Not to be missed

Push Me, Pull Me

A novel by Sandra Chick
LiveWire, £2.95

THIS IS a devastating account of thirteen-year-old Cathy's feelings after she is raped by her mother's boyfriend. Sandra Chick lays bare the anger, hurt, misery, vulnerability and rage that Cathy experiences in powerful molten prose that left this male reader uncomfortable and disturbed.

The victimisation that both Cathy and her mother suffer at the hands of Bob, the boyfriend is totally convincing. Will Cathy, wounded as she is, grow up to be a victim like her mum? Or will she become a vulture?

If you don't read another book this year, read this one. A well-deserved winner of the *Other Award*.

Watch out!

Thatcherism goes to College

A book by Matthew Salusbury
Canary Press

SALUSBURY has written a well researched and often quite involved introduction to the Thatcher government's attitude to higher education. He also brings out the double-think and hypocrisy of our 'democratically' elected leaders and their supporters.

The book contains detailed background of the extreme right-wing connections of the Tory Party, particularly its student wing. It also outlines some of the less-than-socialist policies of the Labour Party during the last twenty years.

If I was paranoid I would conclude from the evidence in this book that Thatcherism is merely a small part of an international right-wing conspiracy. But that, of course, would be ridiculous.

What was that?

Did I hear you write?

A book by Michael Rosen
Andre Deutsch, pp200, £5.95

READING this book was an unpleasantly evocative experience for me. I see again my own schoolbooks. The white page, the black writing covered with what seemed to me then, vicious stabs of red.

"Is this English?" looms off the bottom of the page.

I recall the long years of struggle to reconcile the dead writing with the life in my head; the stultifying self-consciousness which even now overwhelms me when I write; and the embarrassment that I still haven't quite worked out when to use colons.

Yes, this book brings it all back.

In a society which places such emphasis on literacy Mr Rosen puts forward a convincing and at times inspirational case answering the question: "Are people who leave school who can but don't read or write really literate?"

He demonstrates how we "learn the conventions of written-mode writing but at... a price... And so young. The end result is a kind of 'meta-language' about

self... It is in this way that the teaching of writing becomes part of a conditioning process. It becomes more important that the writer is 'correct' and behaving according to norms than that he or she should write the truth."

If you understand the meaning, does it matter how it is written? Free experiment with the manipulation and style of the words themselves can reinforce their graphic communication.

The wide variety of entertaining and moving examples of written language in the appendix of this book is proof of such method and encouragement.

The heart of this book is the explicit respect for the culture of the individual and the appreciation of the child's social position as essentially non-powerful. But that seems very fragile compared to the demands for the re-establishment of 'standard English' in the National Curriculum.

Royal Sanction has been given for the return of "bloody English" and so dear reader, any closet capitalists among you take a tip from me, the red ink shares are going to soar. But unfortunately I'm not sure whether there'll be much of a market for Mr Rosen's admirable book.

Of mice and men

If It Moves: A study of the Role of the Deputy Head
Secondary Heads Association, £3

DEPUTY HEADS, so the old joke goes, are mice training to be rats. Well this report from the Secondary Heads Association, based on a survey of 1285 deputies, is more of a protracted whine than a squeak.

The whole weight of the education system, it seems, falls on the shoulders of this fine body of underpaid, overworked latter-day saints who claim to spend limitless hours supporting ungrateful classroom teachers and helping to make their lives more comfortable and relaxed.

The much maligned deputy, far from being the self-serving careerist creep of the staffroom mythology is, in fact, a heroic conscientious super-professional whose watchwords are self-sacrifice and integrity. Pull the other one!

What sort of people actually become deputy heads. Two concerns seem to predominate here. First of all the desire to get out of as much classroom teaching as possible, although many deputies reported feeling guilty about this, and secondly 'ambition'.

Now ambition is a very broad term and can apply to any area of human endeavour. What does it apply to in the case of the average deputy? Essentially deputy heads are ambitious to lose their individuality, to become grey yesmen and women without any independent judgement.

A 'good' deputy, for example, will be able to present arguments in favour of anything the head wants, no matter how stupid, even if it completely contradicts what he or she were required to argue the week before.

Deputy heads can never, repeat never, be trusted. They are the sort of people who signed treaties with the American Indians, indeed if you look closely you can often see their forked tongues flicking from side to side. Their souls are no longer their own. Instead of biographies, they have curriculum vitae.

A recent phenomenon is the 'feminist' deputy head. These are best characterised as equal opportunists. Their commitment to equality for women seems to often consist of the wish to be able to shit on those below them on the same terms as male deputies. Women deputies are just as unsympathetic to the plight of women classroom teachers, and exploit and take advantage of part-time and temporary teachers, almost invariably women, in exactly the same way as their male counterparts. So much for sisterhood!

Today deputies find themselves in the front line, charged with implementing Baker's educational counter-revolution and leading the way in his attack on teachers' rights and working conditions. This apparently is the cause of great stress.

On the one hand, teachers are increasingly resentful and unco-operative, and on the other, the pace of change involves ever-increasing workloads and responsibilities. One poor deputy in Brent is quoted in the report as having to redo the whole timetable only six weeks after it had come into operation, because the authority had made teachers redundant! Shame!

And on top of all this, they have to act as courtiers, singing the praises and flattering the egos of heads, who might range in character and ability from Attila the Hun to Ethelred the Unready, from Al Capone to Arthur Daley. Such is the lot of the poor deputy head.

What really seems to rankle with the deputies that SHA surveyed, however, is that they feel betrayed. After all they bravely rallied to the Government's side in the Tory attack on the teacher unions, many of them actually defecting from the NUT and NAS to join SHA in the process.

Without their help Baker would never have been able to defeat the teachers, and then... they were shat on themselves. Is this a distortion of their attitude? Is it slander on a fine body of highly-principled men and women?

Unfortunately not. The SHA report is amazingly unambiguous and explicit on this matter;

"Even in terms of basic salary deputies are aggrieved that, having kept schools open throughout the period of 'action', they should have been so poorly rewarded in 1988. 'We are the forgotten ones,' was the lament of a Group II deputy..."

Baker might have forgotten them, but the classroom teachers they stabbed in the back haven't. There is nothing quite so pathetic as an unrequited scab.

Here we have this band of Judases betraying their colleagues and then moaning because Baker short-changed them when the pieces of silver were handed out.

Cutting through the whining, this is what the SHA report is all about; deputy heads want more for themselves and sod the classroom teacher. One can have nothing but contempt for these people and can only hope that MacGregor continues to mistake them for toilet rolls.

This report does present SHA with one little problem; after all if deputies do all they claim to do, what on earth are headteachers getting paid for!

*I would like to thank the senior deputy at my own school who lent me his copy of this document. For obvious reasons he would rather remain anonymous, and this can be arranged if a satisfactory agreement can be reached on cover, invigilation...

Grim but gripping tales

The Night Walkers

A book by Otto Coontz
Methuen Teens, £7.95

Brother in the Land

A book by Robert Swindells
Penguin Plus, £1.99

THE TOWN of Covendale is afflicted by a mysterious plague that begins turning its children into nightwalkers, into wild animalistic creatures that are a cross between zombies and vampires. Only Nora and her best friend Maxine and old Mrs Cribbins realise what is going on, but are powerless to prevent it.

As far as the grown-ups are concerned their warnings are the ravings of a senile old woman and over-imaginative children. And all the time the contagion spreads as the nightwalkers claim more victims.

Otto Coontz, a Greenpeace activist as well as an accomplished children's

writer, has written a powerful and atmospheric ecological horror novel. The book is extremely exciting, with love and friendship triumphing where science seems blind and helpless. Highly recommended.

Much more grim is Robert Swindells' story of survival in post-holocaust Britain. A winner of the Other Award, *Brother in the Land* tells of events in the town of Skipleay after the nuclear war has left the world devastated and in ruins.

The mass murder of the sick and injured; cannibalism; concentration camp brutality; the book piles on the horrors relentlessly. This is a world where hope is an illusion and everything has been turned to ashes.

A tremendous political tract as well as a compelling novel, Swindells is to be congratulated for showing the young teenage reader at least some of the real consequences of nuclear war.

Don't miss the next issue...

The Spring '90 issue of *Lib ED* will be published in January. Articles planned include a look at comics, how to introduce environmental issues into the classroom and a feature on a very special school. Why not subscribe to ensure that you don't miss *LIB ED 13*, or the following issues. So fill in the subscription form below, write a cheque and post it to us TODAY!

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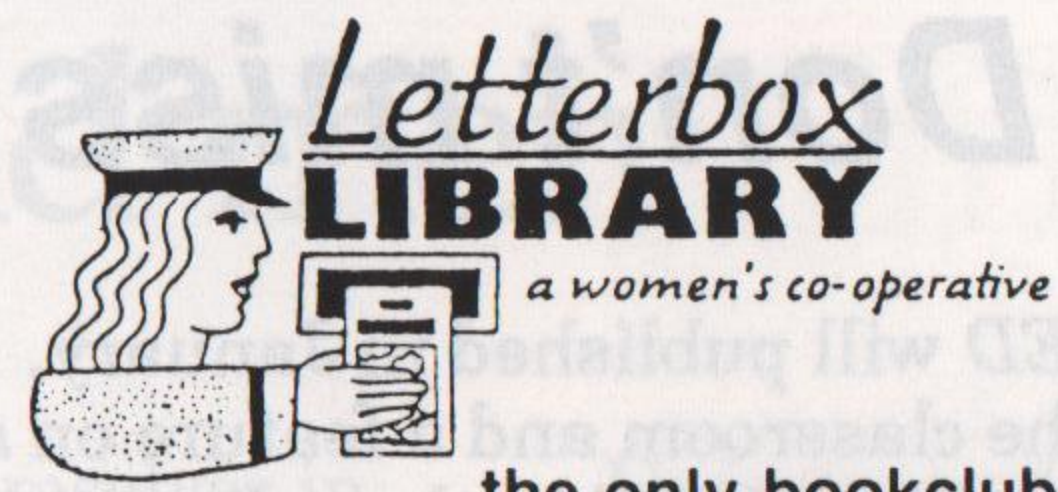
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A cautionary tale

Dear Lib ED,

A cautionary tale about this spirit of playfulness business. In 1972 my infants school, believing play to be the right mode of education at that age, warned us not to be allowed to read until age 7, for fear of emotional traumas.

This repressive garbling of libertarian concerns about pressure drove me into the arms of the traditionalist achievement brigade, to protect my right to read! Via one of their intelligence clubs I fell under the influence of a private school committed to the libertarian sounding ideal of responding flexibly to each other's needs.

They defended their existence on *Education Otherwise's* same principle of parental choice. But the flexibility just meant tailoring traditional discipline to extract maximum qualifications from everyone.

After being worked to death by their homework fanaticism, I misfired on my propaganda value by deliberately failing my A-levels. This can be done in real life unless social image gets a hold over you.

Freedom means neither being

stretched nor held back, and it certainly doesn't mean left ideology education inside the authoritarian system.

Both conservatives breaking children with their patriarchal discipline, and those among the revolutionary left who like to enforce their doctrines by intimidating heretics ("scabs" etc.), well recognise that as well as authoritarian teachers there are authoritarian peer groups. Mine used to mock my free choice not to like physical sport. This is the other worry about playfulness; that it can find fun at other people's expense.

If libertarians want to safeguard individual's free choices from "cool" intolerance, they could have a mutual policy of consciously guaranteeing each other being socially accepted and never laughed at or stigmatised or demeaned, however eccentric or inept; safely playing out their spiritual spontaneities but renouncing the slightest fun at anyone else's expense as the root of war.

Therefore if one individual in a free school or workplace is victimised by all the others, they should all be expelled. To really deal with fear of freedom, an anti-ribald policy should be an essential part of the case for libertarian education.

Heretically yours,
Maurice Frank

White Lion Appeals

Dear Friends

For 17 years White Lion Street Free School has been a living challenge to conventional beliefs about education and in recent years has received full state funding.

However, the unacceptable demands of the national curriculum and the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority mean that the school's days in the state sector are numbered.

White Lion is now faced with the challenge of re-establishing itself as an independent school but an enormous amount of work must be done if this is to be achieved.

White Lion workers are already overstretched so, if the school is to survive into the 1990s, it urgently needs input from energetic and committed people who want to get involved.

Please contact us if you can help.
Manda, telephone 01-833 2780.

Free School
The White Lion Experience
by Nigel Wright
published in October 1989
by Libertarian Education,
ISBN 0-9513997-1-3 £3.95

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Not much fun?

Dear Lib ED,

The recent *Lib ED* review of Dahl's latest novel *Matilda* seems to epitomise the view that Dahl's texts are "merely fun and fiction" and that any attempt by the teacher to open up questions of ideology in the texts with her children is a destructive one.

Teachers must of course recognise that Dahl is the world's top selling writer of children's fiction but they should not uncritically accept his so-called "remarkable talent" nor the claim that he must be good because he seems to get so many children reading.

The reviewer asserts that what Dahl's critics (and they include many classroom teachers) "often seem to find most objectionable is his ability to project a child's view of the world." This is inaccurate. What his critics do, and rightly, is argue that Dahl's own world view, the view he articulates through his texts, is one which is incredibly hurtful to the many children he labels as inferior, categorises as Other, and insults accordingly. The reviewer does accept that Dahl's texts do contain some objectionable aspects, and is probably thinking of the notoriously racist stereotyping upon which *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is constructed. It is however crucial to interrogate the

messages contained in the other Dahl texts which are less widely identified as being a problem.

The article by David Rees which the reviewer refers to is a good starting point. Rees' liberal analysis focuses upon the way in which Dahl insists on holding up for ridicule (and often torture) children who are regarded as ugly. Through this habit of, in Rees' words, "elevating personal prejudices, ordinary likes and dislikes into matters of morality" Dahl encourages young readers to learn a simple equation; ugly means evil, the more ugly the more evil (see *The Twits*). Most teachers would be very concerned about the effects such messages would have on classroom and playground life for the child with a brace, poor skin or wheelchair. The consequences of a teacher uncritically using Dahl texts in the multicultural classroom or the classroom conveying a message of gender equality need to be considered because, as Dawn Gill has recently noted in *Multicultural Teaching*, there are "too many echoes of reality in Dahl's fantasy for it to be funny. It may be too much to claim that the books are conditioning for acceptance of the status quo, but not to raise the question of this possibility would be naive and irresponsible."

The reviewer speaks warmly of *Matilda* as a book with adult characters which "are all fine additions to Dahl's

remarkable gallery of grown-ups and they all get their just deserts." In response to this it is worth looking at the adults on offer in Dahl's *Revoltin' Rhymes* always remembering that it is aimed at the younger end of the primary school. In the book children will find an illustration of the modern day, Snow White drawn by Quentin Blake. She is tall, blonde, busty and dressed in figure hugging jeans and skimpy T-shirt. The seven dwarves are with her, bearded, bespectacled and ugly. They are groping Snow White. One dwarf has his hand between the woman's legs. Attention must also be drawn to one of Dahl's "ingenious and witty" couplets in which the Prince derides the modern Cinderella as a "dirty slut". There doesn't seem any way in which the presence of such a hurtful book in the classroom could be justified.

This response to a book review may initially seem unfair and heavy-handed since, as the reviewer notes "such a short book review is not the place to rehearse such an important discussion." However, in the course of the review one side of the debate is rehearsed; a position is made clear and a judgment delivered. What I have tried to do is to pinpoint some of the main weaknesses on such a common-sensical, pro-Dahl argument.

Best wishes
Julian Hyde

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