

## Groups and Resources

### Lib ED contacts

Bristol 0272-778453  
Nottingham 0949-60306 (distribution and subs)

### Education Now

PO Box 186, Ticknall, Derbyshire

### Buktu Resource Project

136 Grosvenor Road, Bristol BS2 8YA

### Liberation Network of People with Disabilities

c/o Townsend House, Green Lanes, Marshfield, Chippenham, Wilts.

### National Union of Students

461 Holloway Road, London N7  
071-272 8900

### Letterbox Library

8 Bradbury Street, London N16 8JN  
071-254 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  
081-672 6031

(A kind of non-sexist, non-militarist scouts and brownies)

### Education Otherwise

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

### The Children's Home-Based Education Association

14 Basil Avenue, Armthorpe, Doncaster, DN3 2AT  
0302-833596

### Campaign Against Military Research On Campus (CAMROC)

190 Burdett Road, London E3 4AA  
081-980 2455

### New Education Directory

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

### Shocking Pink

Young Women's Magazine Collective, 121 Railton Road, Brixton, London  
(A 4 issue sub to this excellent magazine costs £2.40)

### 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  
071-582 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)

### Children's Legal Centre

20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN  
071-359 6251

### Hummingbird Multicultural Resources

24 Ashley Hill, Bristol BS6 4JG  
0272-541946  
(publish mail order catalogue of books and other resources)

### Advisory Centre for Education

18 Victoria Park Square, London E2  
081-980 4596

### Minority Rights Group

29 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG  
071-930 6659

### 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)

### Z to A Project (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  
071-226 7102

### 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  
071-388 6191

### Lesbian and Gay Workers in Education

BM Gayteacher, London WC1N 3XX

### A K Distribution

3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, FK8 2RD  
(Suppliers of a wide range of libertarian literature by post: send for their catalogue of titles)

### Global Futures Project

Institute of Education, University of London, 10 Woburn Square, London, WC1H 0NS

### Kilquhanity House School

Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland

### University of the Third Age

Wren Street, London WC1  
071-833 4747  
(Self-help learning groups for older people)

### Blackcurrent Otherwise Project

24 St Michaels Avenue, Northampton, NN1 4JQ

### Skool Bus Project

24 Clive Street, Hereford, HR1 2SB

### Summerhill School

Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY

### Feminist Library

5/5a Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1

**We don't have room here for a comprehensive list of all schools, groups and resources available.**

**For that see our handbook, *Freedom in Education - A d-i-y guide*, advertised on page 16.**

## International

### The Children's Village School

Tombol, Wangdong, Amphoe, Muang, Kanchanaburi, 71190, Thailand

### National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools

58 Schoolhouse Rd, Summertown, TN38483, USA  
tel:615 964-3670

### 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 Delhi 110016, India  
tel:661473  
(Society for alternatives in education)

### Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Vidyalaya

Sawai Ram Singh Road, Jaipur-302 004, India

### 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

### Grupo Impulso Libertario

CC984, 2000 Rosario, Argentina

### 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.)

### De Weide Free School

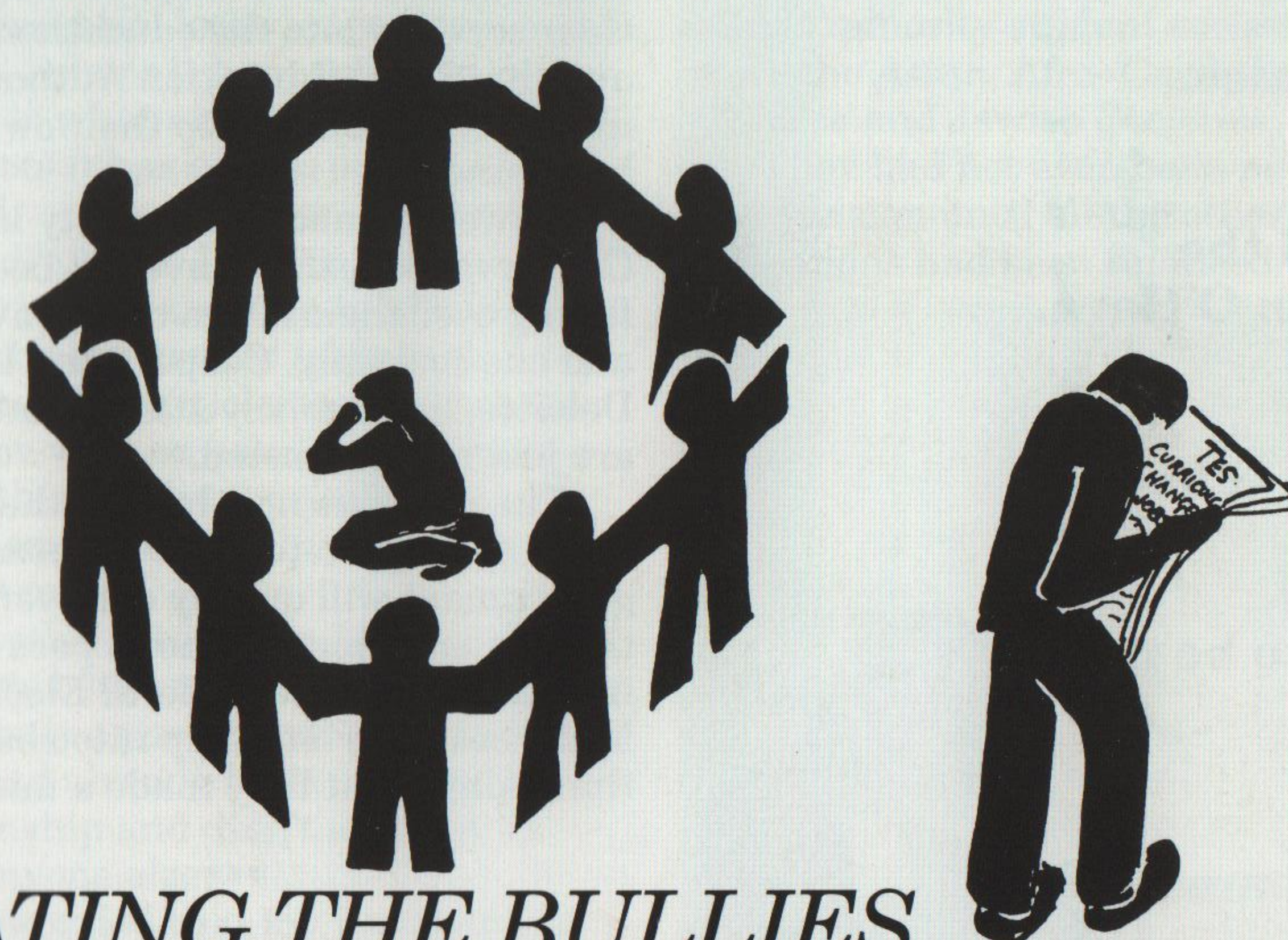
Sevekootstraat 67, Erpe-mere, Nr. Aalst, Belgium

### Free Schools in Vienna

c/o Davidgasse 6/15, 1100 Vienna, Austria

# Lib ED

No.19 Summer 1992 £1

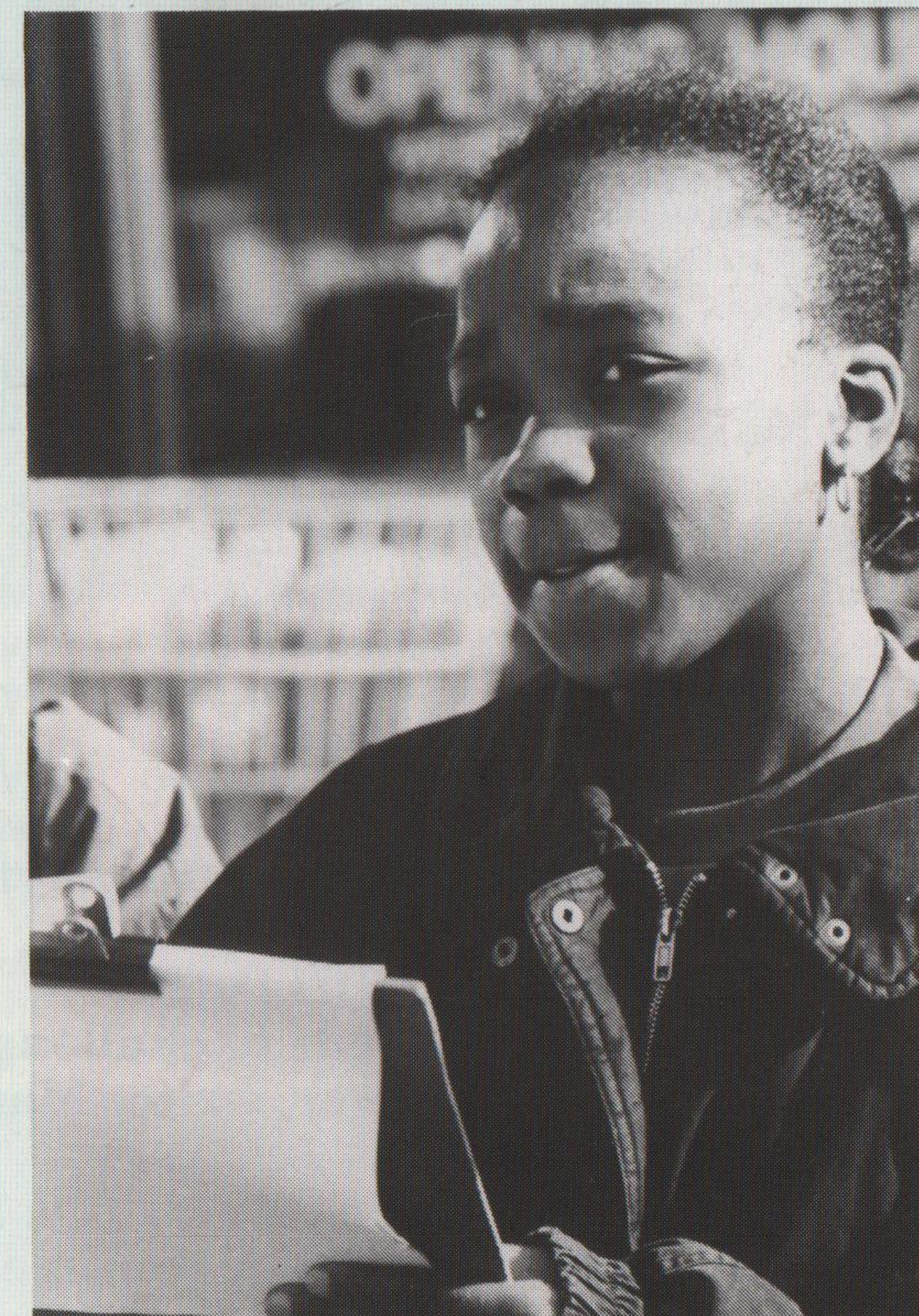


**BEATING THE BULLIES**  
*How teachers should look at their own behaviour and attitudes*



**POLYPREJUDICE: Racism in the ivory towers of higher education**

A magazine for the liberation of learning



**PULL OUT SPECIAL**  
*Give your school a green audit*

**PLUS:**  
*Policies to fight the abuse of children, Gays and Lesbians in the classroom, News, Reviews, Comment.*



# Libertarian EDUCATION

A magazine for the liberation of learning

Vol 2 No 19 Summer 1992

## In this issue...

- 3 **RACISM**  
revealed in one of Britain's polytechnics.
- 5 **THE ABUSE OF CHILDREN**  
A school policy needs to challenge all the inequalities of power, writes Maureen O'Hara.
- 7 **SCHOOL OPPRESSION**  
Sarah Loutfi tells of her treatment in school.
- 8 **BULLYING**  
Pat Jenkins says teachers still need to be made aware of the problem.
- 10 **ILlich AND ANARCHY**  
Deschooling theory meets anarcho-communism.
- 11 **GREENING YOUR SCHOOL**  
A pull-out feature on how to conduct an environmental audit.
- 15 **CURRICULUM COP**  
Kenneth Clarke proposes The Education Like It Was When I Was A Boy Act.
- 16 **DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE**  
How to keep up or catch up with *Lib ED* magazine.
- 18 **REVIEWS**  
Six pages of reviews.
- 23 **LETTERS**  
You write to us.
- 24 **CONTACTS**  
Including groups and organisations.

Lib ED magazine is collectively written (unless otherwise stated) and edited by the Libertarian Education Collective: Andrew, Bo, Clive, George, John, Michael, and Richard. We can be contacted at Phoenix House, 170 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2AG.

DISTRIBUTION: A Distribution, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1. (tel: 081-558 7732) PRINTING: Impress, 18 Stafford Street, Bedminster, Bristol (tel: 0272-231549)

Contributions to the magazine or to the Libertarian Education Network should be sent to the editorial address. ISSN 0267-8500.

CONTACT PHONE NUMBERS: 0272-778453, 0949-60306 (subscriptions and distribution).

## EDITORIAL

### The City takes account

SOMETIMES things do not quite go according to plan ...

In our last issue we reported the impending privatisation of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. Despite an outcry from just about anybody who has an opinion, the government has been busy forcing the Bill through Parliament.

However things have not been going as smoothly as the government would like. They had been hoping that large business consultancies more noted for their services in the City, would expand their services into the educational field, and that Local Education Authority inspectors would set up their own businesses.

However, much as the City loves the Conservatives, they have not been falling over themselves to get involved, and one company, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, has publicly stated that they are just not interested.

The rumours now have it that, such is the opposition to these proposals, the government will quietly discover that there is not enough time to pass them into law before the General Election. Much better to let it slip into obscurity than admit that they made a mistake ...

\*\*\*

NOT that the Inspectorate is all sweetness and light. It has come to our notice that, while they have been ready to investigate controversial state schools, most recently Culloden Primary in Tower Hamlets, at a drop of the Ministers hat, they have been singularly reticent in looking into the private sector.

In 1990 only four non-state schools were inspected: Summerhill and three 'alternative' Small Schools. Not exactly a random sample.

Yet, in recent years, inspections of private schools have often been scathing of inadequate facilities, uninspiring teaching and even poor exam results. Even posh Wells Cathedral School was criticised in 1989 for lacking a coherent framework for the curriculum.

It is difficult to suppress the thought that it couldn't happen to a nicer group of people. But the problem is that the privilege that goes with attending public schools is ensured as much through the Old School Tie as by GCSE.

#### PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS:

Phoenix House  
170 Wells Road  
BRISTOL  
BS4 2AG

## IVORY TOWERS

### Polyprejudice

What I have written about here is based on interviews about the prejudice that twelve Black and Asian women undergraduates have encountered while studying at the Polytechnic where I work. As you will realise when you read this, the characters and the institution unfortunately have to remain anonymous.

WHEN I first started out with the idea of writing this article I thought that I had set myself an easy task. Firstly, I felt that being of a different race, being a woman and being young had equipped me with essential knowledge about prejudice - where it happens, how it happens, to what extent it happens and what effects it has on you once it has happened.

Secondly, since I have always defined my own existence in terms of my race and my gender I felt that researching this article wasn't about to provide me with any surprises about either of these. I have to say, the outcome couldn't have been further from the truth.

The twelve interviews lasted somewhere between 45 minutes and two hours. I only approached students with whom I had already built up some kind of relationship and didn't attempt to contact anyone else.

I was worried that my position as a member of the teaching staff could potentially be an exploitative one for those that didn't know me. Those who were my own students though, knew that they could say no and that would be the end of the matter. As it turned out, however, nobody refused.

Some people wanted to have a group discussion, others wanted to talk on their own. For some the victimisation was a matter for public attention, for others it was a matter for private grief.

Some came in with stories spilling out, others had hardly ever interpreted their experiences in terms of racial or sexual discrimination. Some saw racism as being entrenched in society at large and in the structure and being of academia, others saw it as being the actions of "an ignorant few".

Some talked and cried and shared their grief, others laughed or showed no emotions at all. Some reacted to discrimination with anger and a determination to change things, others felt it was best to "just get on" and pretend it wasn't happening.

But the one unifying theme for them all was that discrimination was a fact of everyday life. A fact that affected them in their tutorials, in assessments, in their living space, in their social life and most staggering of all, in their Students' Union (SU).

One of the women who I interviewed told me about her experience with the SU. In this financial year, she told me, the SU Finance Committee had not allocated any money at all to the four ethnic minority student societies. These were the Asian, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese and Jewish Societies.

They had not even been notified of the decision until all the other allocations had been finalised. The

white students intimidating and would they have asked them to move upstairs and sit in a room with a shut door?"

I telephoned the SU to get confirmation of the final decision but I was passed around from telephone to telephone, with nobody being the person who knew anything about it. I also asked about the Students' Union Equal Opportunities policy and procedures. Two people hadn't heard of any such



Are the smiles just for the prospectus?

Rugby Club, by comparison, was said to have been allocated somewhere in the region of £3,000 which allowed them to hire luxury coaches for all away matches.

Some members of the Afro-Caribbean Society, along with a few other people had tried to organise a protest but there wasn't much support from other students. They did demand a review meeting, however, and this was agreed to take place with one or two representatives from each society.

On the day, about ten to fifteen other students had also gone along to the SU to make their voices known and to support the others. Some members of the Committee came out of the meeting and asked the students to move upstairs as they found their presence intimidating.

"Why? What was it they thought we were going to do?", she asked, "Did they think that because we were all black we were going to burst into the room and rob them all or something? Would they have found the presence of a group of

policy and a third informed me that it was on the agenda, but wasn't sure exactly what was on the agenda.

With or without a policy, the SU in this establishment is not only not taking positive action to combat prejudice but it seems to be involved in discrimination of its own.

As far as tutorials were concerned, the most frequent form of discrimination seemed to be tutors ignoring Black or Asian students. For example, some tutors will make absolutely no eye contact, not even when students walk into the room for the first time.

One tutor was said to position herself such that she faced the group of white students to the exclusion of the three Asian students who always sit to her right. The student who told me about this admitted that the three of them will sit there in tutorial after tutorial playing noughts and crosses, hangman and any other pen and paper game they could think of because they had become so bored with being ignored



all the time.

The tutor has either not noticed this or doesn't care even if she has.

Some tutors will ask a question like, "What do you all think about...", then proceed to go round the room asking individuals what they think.

One tutor repeatedly and quite obviously misses out the Asian women in the group and makes absolutely no attempt to involve them in any discussions the group has. One of these students said that she would never volunteer opinions or information now, even if she knows the answer to a particular question. The distressing fact is that she will no longer participate in other tutorials even if the tutor is supportive and encouraging.

The same tutor will ask the most difficult questions of the Black students and will give them no time to answer. If the exact answer he wants is not given or if there is a misunderstanding, he will put them down in some way by making a flippant or derogatory comment, such as "oh never mind, you obviously haven't done the work" even when it was clear that they had.

### Same question

He will ask the same question of a white student but if they have a problem he will spend tutorial time on that student in order to find out what the difficulty is, often adding, "please come and see me about this afterwards if you need to".

No such offer has ever been made to the Black or Asian women in his groups.

My own experience as a tutor has demonstrated another source of discrimination - that from other students. In a group that I have been teaching for eight weeks, we recently had the situation where almost every time a particular Black woman spoke she would get two white male students giggling, mocking or outright laughing at her with remarks such as "Where did you get that idea from?"

The first time it happened, I was so shocked I didn't know how to react. But it happened again within a matter of minutes and this time I made it quite clear that I would not tolerate such behaviour in my tutorials. One of them apologised to the Black student and I was struck by how sincere he seemed in his apology. It was as though he had never realised what he was doing and when confronted directly he saw his own prejudice for the first time.

In another group, we were discussing race and discrimination in the professions and one white student referred to Black people as "foreigners, like the Canadians, Americans or Italians in this country".

When I pointed out to him that Black people are not "foreigners" he paused, thought for a bit, blushed then tried to continue with the argument

with the words "yeh, but anyway...". I wondered if he meant, "yeh, but anyway, that's not important".

There are students here who will not speak to Black students even if they are standing with the same group of people. There is racist graffiti etched into the desks in the library.

### Students' Union

The Students' Union 'Freshers Pack' makes no reference to the needs of Black or Asian students. The social events organised by students in the department rarely have many Asian students attending, the late-night Bar and Disco, the three-legged pub crawl and such like don't seem to be meeting the needs of some Black or Asian women but events never change.

Perhaps one of the hardest areas to identify and discuss discrimination is in assessments. Many of the students who talked to me were sure they had gained a lower mark than they deserved because of the colour of their skin.

Red pens ran through whole essays with hardly any comments at the end. It is very hard to *prove* this without taking essays from white students and comparing the two. One tutor, however, is quite blatant about his racism. He had asked all those who had failed to stay behind at the end of a tutorial.

My interviewee said that to her amazement, the white students got up and left the room one by one and those remaining were either Black or Asian women. It seemed that he had failed almost every one who wasn't white.

In the end of term staff meeting I noticed that of the 28 students who had been brought to the attention of the meeting for not being satisfactory, well over half were Asian or Black. "It's just one of those things", someone said.

### Bob Marley

One of the funniest stories I have ever heard about was recounted to me by a friend I was at University with. In the first year of her music degree she was set an assignment as part of her end of term assessment. She was asked to research a 20th century composer, perform one of their pieces and present a paper on their life. This student, a genius at 17 had been a *classically* trained concert pianist but knew nothing of 20th century composers.

In her naivete, she sought help from her tutor. She explained to him that she had a problem finding someone to research only to be met with the response "Perhaps you'd like to do Bob Marley, dear?" Insulted? She was.

She was angry that he presumed her knowledge of the subject matter was less due to the colour of her skin. She was insulted that he suggested Bob Marley without even asking if she liked Reggae! As a result of this episode and

some others, she felt very nervous in subsequent performances.

It was clear to her that some tutors saw her as being different to the rest of the group. They either expected less of her ("made allowances") or demanded more ("I had to be excellent to compensate for being Black"). His ignorance made me laugh but I also remember crying with outrage.

This Polytechnic, along with many other institutions, seems to be totally blind to all of this. I talked to the person in charge of Equal Opportunities for one and a half hours and together we ascertained that in the last year there had only been two allegations made against members of staff and both of those were for "not very serious sexual harassment".

The policy in operation at the moment was decided upon earlier on in the year but has not been publicised amongst students or members of staff. Although they have planned some publicity for this year, "We don't want to push it too much, you see. All that'll happen is that you'll get lots of people coming forward to make allegations that just aren't true".

### Logic

I think I understand the logic. If we don't make the procedure too widely known, then the people who persist and make it through to the office must have genuine grievances. But if we let everyone know about it and lots of students come forward then they'd be lying because racism and discrimination just aren't that widespread, are they?

In any case, we have over 600 staff, thousands of students and only one person in charge of investigating allegations. How would they cope?

What came out of all the discussions I had with students was a positive, determined group of people who now want to meet on a regular basis to discuss what is happening to them in the department.

Finding a room that we could use was a problem in itself. I was accused of separatism, causing trouble where there wasn't any and acting in a manner prejudicial to the teaching establishment. One person was sympathetic and asked no questions once I had explained briefly what we wanted the room for.

For the women students, it seems now that racism and discrimination have been named, they feel empowered enough to start challenging it in any way they feel they can. For me, it has been an educational and a highly inspirational experience.

There I was, seeing all the smiling faces day after day and thinking it was only happening to me. One of the most important lessons I have learnt is to never presume I know what others are going through.

# Links in the chains

**Child abuse, in whatever form, is an abuse of power. A school policy aimed at supporting children and young people who have been abused is likely to succeed only to the extent that the school as an institution and its individual teachers, are willing to understand and challenge *all* the inequalities of power which affect the lives of young people, writes Maureen O'Hara.**

A SCHOOL policy about child abuse does not exist in isolation from the total school environment or from the world outside the school. It is only likely to work in an atmosphere where students can have some trust in the willingness of teachers not only to believe them when they talk about abuse, but to support them in a way which is respectful both to themselves and to the communities of which they are a part.

Creating such an atmosphere within a school depends on the willingness of teachers to take seriously and challenge power inequalities based on gender, race, class, differences in ability and on sexuality.

The very existence of the educational system as it is currently constructed is premised on equalities based on age. Some of these inequalities may be unavoidable in the case of very young children, but many of them are socially constructed to the detriment of young people. Dealing with child abuse means all adults looking honestly at all the ways in which we exercise power over children.

Within a school inequalities of power and status exist between students, between students and staff and between staff themselves. All of these relationships are crucial to the way in which the school as an institution deals with the abuse of its students, inside or outside school.

Through the Children's Legal Centre legal advice service I have come across several instances of teachers closing ranks against students who have reported sexual abuse by a teacher. This seems to be a common occurrence in institutions which supposedly exist to serve children whether they be schools, children's homes or other residential establishments.

Brent is one of the first authorities to explicitly recognise the possibility of its staff sexually abusing children in schools, to lay down policies for dealing with such abuse and to give guidance to teachers as to what action to take if an alleged perpetrator is the headteacher or the teacher designated to deal with child abuse within that particular school.

Brent's policy makes provision for the suspension of alleged abusers while investigations take place, unlike the majority of local education authorities, who still expect children and young people to continue to have contact with

teachers against whom they've alleged abuse.

Such explicit recognition of the abuse of children by professionals is still relatively rare amongst professionals. The power which attaches to professional status and the potential for abuse of that power needs to be explicitly recognised and challenged if we are serious about trying to protect

*All cases of racism, sexism, discrimination against children with physical or learning difficulties, whether institutional or individual, are emotionally abusive.*

children from abuse.

Brent's policy is also unusual in recognising that:-

"All cases of racism, sexism, discrimination against children with physical or learning disabilities, whether institutional or individual, are emotionally abusive."

I would add that discrimination against children because of their class background and against young people who are lesbian or gay is also emotionally abusive.

The school's attitude to verbal or physical abuse towards students by staff or between students is crucial to developing an effective school policy for dealing with child abuse in a wider context. Sexual and racist harassment and assaults between students are widespread in some secondary schools.

Children with disabilities in

mainstream schools may also be particularly targeted for abuse, as may young lesbian and gay men.

If students feel that the school takes such abuse seriously and that teachers are genuinely committed to challenging and stopping it, then they are more likely to trust teachers' ability and willingness to protect them from abuse which may be taking place outside school. This trust is more likely to develop if students are given the opportunity to actively participate in developing school policies for dealing with harassment and assault which is school related.

It is the students in schools who really know what is going on in the playground, the school toilets, in the corridors when there are no teachers present, and on their journeys to and from school. It is those students who, if given the opportunity, are most likely to be on the receiving end of harassment and assault who are most likely to find effective ways of dealing with it.

The more student participation there is in the development of policies on abusive behaviour within the school the more effective those policies will be. Anti-racist and anti-sexist school policies, or 'equal opportunities' policies of any kind imposed from above by teachers with no input from students probably mean very little to the students themselves.

They cannot be expected to trust such policies if they deal only in abstractions and do not take seriously the question of every student's basic right to physical safety in school and on their way there.

I have worked in a school where some black pupils felt very angry with some teachers who raised issues of racism in the classroom in ways which the students felt left them more vulnerable to racist harassment outside it - harassment which they rightly felt was not taken seriously enough by most of the teachers or by the school as an institution.

The senior management at that particular school refused to accept any responsibility for dealing with racist assaults which took place outside school hours and off the school premises even though it was well known which students were responsible for them. That school was in an authority which is often regarded as an innovator of anti-racist educational policies - and



illustrates well the difference between policy and practice which exists in so many schools.

Brent has been looking at the issue of sexual assault by students in schools and may develop policy on dealing with such assaults. Again, most LEAs have not begun to address this issue despite increasing evidence of sexual assault against children by their male peers.

Another element in a policy aimed at seriously challenging all forms of abusive behaviour in schools is the setting up of an effective procedure which students can use to protect themselves against abusive behaviour by teachers or other staff which falls short of actual or sexual assault (since I'm assuming there are already procedures for dealing with assault).

Sexual harassment of female students by male staff, for example, is in my experience, very widespread in

## Sexual harassment of female students by male staff is very widespread in schools.

schools especially in its more subtle forms. So is sexual harassment of female teachers.

Most schools have no clear and effective mechanisms for dealing with this, or for dealing with complaints by students of the more subtle forms of racism or other abusive behaviour.

An article by Ann Whitbread entitled *Female Teachers Are Women First - Sexual Harassment In Schools* describes an incident where boys being sent to senior male teachers for sexual harassment of a female teacher were told: "If we can't do it - you can't do it". I wonder what students in that school would have felt about seeking the support of the school in protecting them from sexual abuse.

Beyond the right to physical safety is the right of children to be treated with respect and allowed dignity. Physical assaults against children by teachers were outlawed in state schools in Britain only as recently as 1986 (the law actually coming into effect in 1987). The maintenance of discipline through physical intimidation and humiliation of children is still common in many schools.

I witnessed these methods of control in all the schools I taught in, and I would argue that lack of respect for children's physical and emotional integrity is generally characteristic of

relationships between adults and children.

All children are oppressed as children, and some are additionally oppressed because of their membership of other groups. If children feel that their communities are disrespected by teachers they are unlikely to seek teachers' support in dealing with abuse, particularly if the perpetrator is a member of their community.

Class and racist stereotyping, and particularly the idea that child abuse is more prevalent in some communities than in others makes it more difficult for some children to escape abuse. Such stereotyping is still common amongst professionals despite overwhelming evidence that sexual abuse is universal and occurs in equal proportions in all social groups, cutting across economic, racial, regional and other divisions.

It is vital that teachers and all professionals working with children are aware of this and that stereotyping in all its forms is challenged as part of the process of developing policies for dealing with abuse.

Few education authorities have talked about class inequalities in their policy documents about equal opportunities. I suspect that this is not simply because the cultural aspects of class oppression can be difficult to describe and theorise about.

There are many very concrete forms of class oppression being perpetuated in schools, one of the most obvious forms of which is the attitude of many teachers to working class speech patterns and to regional accents. I still have vivid memories of my accent being imitated by a teacher in front of the rest of my class at Grammar School, and saw many examples of that kind of ridicule of children's speech whilst working as a teacher.

How do we expect children to communicate with teachers about their experiences of abuse when the forms of communication which are most natural to them are constantly demeaned in school? Respect for children's means of communication is, as all good teachers know, vital to their sense of self respect - and the issue is in many ways similar whether it involves a child's accent in English, their mother-tongue when it is not English, or the different forms of communication used by children with certain disabilities.

The issue of effective communication between children and adults is particularly crucial in dealing with the abuse of children with disabilities, as Margaret Kennedy, founder of **Keep Deaf Children Safe**, has pointed out. In an article in *Childright*, published by the CLC, she writes about being consulted about a deaf-blind girl who had been sexually abused. "I asked, 'Who do you suspect?' Reply, 'One of the teachers'. I asked, 'Who is the interpreter?' Reply, 'One of the

teachers."

Such an event would not be possible if the abuse of children with disabilities, which research carried out by Margaret and others suggests is extremely widespread, were taken seriously by adults.

The reluctance of many adults to recognise the sexual abuse of children with disabilities is part of a general reluctance to place sexual abuse in the context of power inequalities. Children with disabilities are often particularly vulnerable because of their specific difficulties in 'telling' adults about the abuse and being taken seriously when they try to do so.

Taking the abuse of children with disabilities seriously means re-examining many of our attitudes towards disability. One of these is the still common assumption that public masturbation by children with certain disabilities is due to lack of understanding of social norms rather than a possible response to having been sexually abused, as would tend to be assumed in the case of a child who is not disabled.

Teachers and other professionals

## There are many concrete forms of class oppression being perpetuated in schools.

also need to be aware of the ways in which a young person's sexuality may affect their decisions to seek support in dealing with abuse. They need to recognise that the messages a school gives to students about its attitudes to lesbian and gay sexuality will crucially affect those decisions.

Adult lesbian survivors of sexual abuse are frequently told by professionals that their sexuality is a 'reaction' to having been abused by men. Gay men may be told essentially the same thing which shows the absurdity of such arguments as explanations for the development of lesbian or gay sexuality.

Few professionals have considered it necessary to find explanations as to why their clients are heterosexual -- heterosexuality is taken to be natural while lesbianism and homosexuality are assumed to be socially constructed.

Young lesbians and gay men who know they will meet this kind of prejudice, and who feel that their safety in school will be threatened if they are open about their sexuality are unlikely to seek the support of the school in dealing with abuse.

Within most sex education curricula lesbianism and homosexuality are marginalised, regarded as deviant or simply ignored. People who have been trying to challenge this have in many cases gone into retreat in response to Section 28 and the general backlash which accompanied it.

Many teachers are frightened of presenting lesbianism and homosexuality positively because of possible negative reactions from parents, and the existence of anti-gay legislation fuels those fears. I am aware from personal experience that raising these issues in schools is extremely difficult, in many ways particularly so for lesbian and gay teachers.

If we take seriously the right of young people to protection from sexual exploitation then we have to take seriously their right to information about sexuality and to define their sexuality for themselves, as long as that definition does not involve the abuse or exploitation of others.

Much current sex education fails to meet the needs of young women, as it equates sexuality with heterosexual intercourse and generally ignores the realities of female sexuality. For example, it is still rare to find a sex education programme which gives any significance to the existence of the

clitoris or which looks at women's sexuality outside of the context of reproduction.

In general sex education in schools does not address the existence of sexual

## Sex education in schools does not address the existence of sexual coercion and exploitation.

coercion and exploitation in a way which would equip young people to challenge the existence of such exploitation and to construct sexual relationships based on equality and mutual consent.

This goes back to the issues raised earlier about schools dealing with harassment and assault against students and placing such assaults in the wider context of the sexual abuse of children and of sexual violence in all its

forms.

Many professionals behave as if the sexual abuse of children exists separately from other forms of sexual violence and coercion and from inequalities of power in the culture as a whole. We will work much more effectively with and on behalf of children and young people if we recognise the links between the different forms of oppression which are part of the daily experience of all of us.

### Further reading:

Whitbread, Ann, **Female Teachers are Women First: Sexual Harrassment at Work** in Spender and Sarah (eds), *Learning to Lose, Sexism and Education*, Women's Press 1980

Kennedy, Margaret, **Child Abuse -- disabled children suffer too** in *Childright* no. 60, October 1989

Myles et al, **Taught not Caught: Strategies for Sex Education**, Learning Development Aids, 1985

O'Hara, Maureen, **Developing a Feminist Policy on Child Sexual Abuse** in *Family Secrets: Child Sexual Abuse*, *Feminist Review* no. 28, Spring 1988

# School oppression

Sarah Loutfi writes about her treatment at school.

I AM a 13 year old student at Saffron Walden County High School in Essex. I shall relate to you my experiences of the unfair treatment I have had to endure as a result of my views and principles.

Our school produces a quarterly magazine called *High Note* which is supposed to be for the pupils in the school to write in and express their views about the school and other issues. I asked the school if they would publish an article on the Birmingham Six if I wrote one for them. They answered yes. I wrote the piece which used NO bad language or false facts, and yet I was told it was too 'offensive' to be included.

In order for me to get the article in I had to battle with the senior management and various other members of the staff for about a week. It was finally entered, but they had cut it and changed some of the words. I had to go during MY lunchtime and MY spare time after school to go and print it out. All other articles are printed for the authors by the newspaper team.

It is in our school uniform that a blazer must be worn whilst walking around the school. I chose however not to wear the blazer as it was uncomfortable and inconvenient. I was

stopped in the corridor and dragged into a little room in the Senior Tutor's office. I was ordered to put the garment on. I refused and at this I was told I would lose my school time both in school and out of it. The teacher who was shouting at me said, "As long as you are under MY authority and in MY year you WILL wear your blazer". Whilst in this room I was intimidated and degraded. It didn't end there. I was standing outside my form room with my friends and another year group when the same member of staff forced me to remove my black jumper. I did this and he snatched the jumper from me. The black jumper is part of the school uniform, not only that but it was extremely cold. That act was humiliating and intimidating. The teacher had absolutely no right to take the jumper from me.

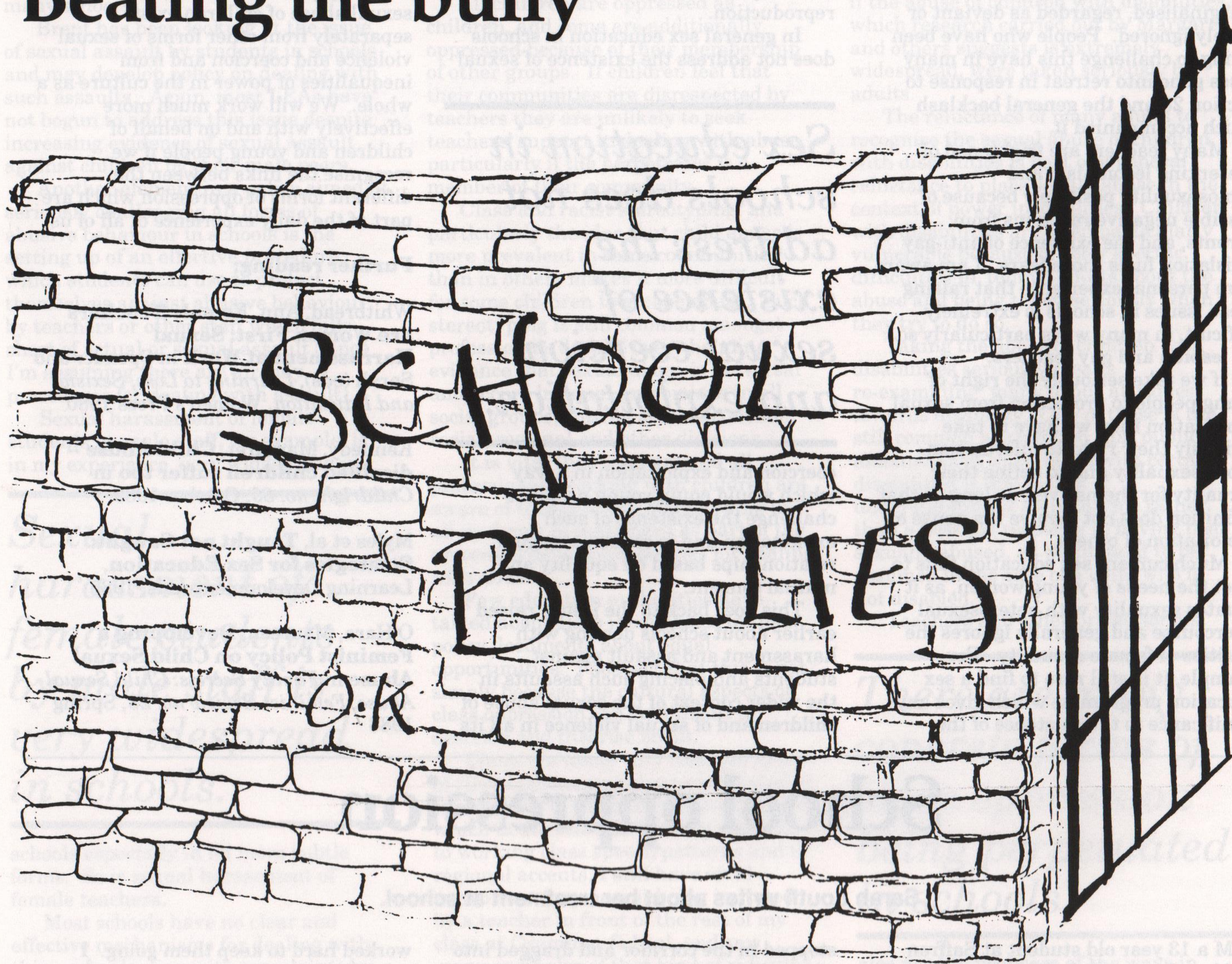
The school has held a ballot and now it is proceeding to try and 'opt-out' of local authority control. In protest to this I refused to play in the school orchestra, windband, windgroup, choir or any other school activity on the grounds that I would not represent a school which was going to opt-out. I was a main player in all of these groups and I respected very deeply the teacher who

worked hard to keep them going. I asked however for my principles to be respected. They weren't. I was shouted at by a member of the music staff who said I shouldn't let politics get in the way of my music. The behaviour of that particular music teacher has been disgraceful. I only joined the music groups to please that teacher and yet for all the work I did for her and the music department - which even she admits is a great amount - she could not understand that my principles mean more to me than anything at school.

I don't enjoy school. I am intimidated, degraded and embarrassed in front of my friends and teachers. I work extremely hard at school and I always achieve "great standards" in my work. It is not just me who suffers but everyone who has principles and sticks to them. The events I have recalled are only a few of many events that have contributed to my wanting to stay at home and my unwillingness to go to school. I have not and I shall continue not to put up with the insulting and oppressive manner in which I am addressed. This behaviour cannot be allowed to continue in schools. To stick to your principles is not a sin.



# Beating the bully



Bullying has been in the news over the past two to three years. Public concern has created a market and publishing companies have responded with teaching packages for children. But, asks Pat Jenkins, is it children who need their consciousness raising or is it teachers and other school staff who need to become more aware of the problem?

PASTORAL care has in the past been given little prominence in teacher training courses and teachers' understanding of school life comes largely from their own memories of success. These two things alone might explain why victims are so often pathologised as personal failures.

Most teachers underestimate both the frequency and severity of bullying especially in secondary schools and many teachers do not want to know.

"Don't tell tales. How old are you 14 or 4?" was one teacher's response to Sally, aged 14. She later stopped attending and was referred to a special Emotionally and Behaviourally Disturbed (EBD) Unit because of truancy.

In spite of increasing evidence that bullying is a major problem, researchers

find that many teachers deny it. They remain in their comfortable ignorance while subject content is their main focus and the whole child ignored.

Bullying continues to be one of those uncomfortable areas along with domestic violence, child abuse and adolescent violence in the home. And as with reporting rape, the insensitivity shown by professionals and further public humiliation can be more damaging than the original incident.

In December 1990 I conducted a questionnaire survey of 15 and 16 year olds in a Warwickshire comprehensive school and received over ninety percent response. I followed this with open ended interviews with self selected interviewees of both school and post school age up to 75, including victims,

bullies and teachers.

I was astounded by the violent emotions demonstrated in response. Several people contacted me wanting to talk about things they had kept inside them for decades. Some adults believed they had not yet resolved the problems and personality changes forced on them by being a victim or even witnessing bullying at school.

"My whole life, what I felt I could or couldn't do, my confidence and entire personality changed at that point and I have never got back to who I was", stated Jess, aged 30.

As with other research on school bullying I got a picture of two entirely different places - the staff's account of school life being quite divorced from pupils' experiences. Pupils are only too

aware of what goes on.

The results of my survey confirmed other research and showed that 51% of girls and 68% of boys had been bullied, 30% of both sexes had been bullied over the age of 14 and 7% had found it so bad that on occasion they had not been able to go to school. 88% of the survey had witnessed bullying. 59% of those witnesses found it very worrying and 22% were frightened by it.

Witnesses are also victims, they know how easily the focus of attack can turn should they not collude with the scapegoating. Each unresolved incident further disempowers all involved as they live within the climate of fear and learned helplessness.

The survey demonstrated quite clearly that victims do not trust teachers, some of whom behave as bullies themselves with loud shouting, name calling, sarcasm and so on.

"When my mum went up the school, the headmaster called me in and my teacher was there. He kept asking me why hadn't I told him but he bullied me too, and laughed when the others called me names. He just wanted to look good in front of my mum and the headmaster so I didn't say anything just looked down. I expect they thought I was a right idiot, nothing changed" explained John aged 13.

Sixteen year old students quickly identified bullying as being about power and status.

School all too often reinforces those stereotypes of male dominance, racial inferiorities, physical superiority and ageism which forms an ideal climate for the bully.

Teachers often collude with the most dominant members of a group (conveniently confusing domination with leadership), as part of unacknowledged negotiations in order to maintain the illusion of teacher control.

The structure and ethos of many schools encourage this as teachers themselves are in danger of intimidation and cannot afford to appear 'weak' before senior staff and colleagues. So teachers pay attention to the 'powerful' and scapegoat or ignore the 'weak'.

Eighteen year old Matthew asked, "Are you telling me they don't tell you to do that when you learn to be a teacher? That's how most new teachers get on and they think they are really democratic or something for doing it, you know making friends with the real hard cases to keep the rest of us in order."

Contrary to popular opinion victims don't differ much from other children before the scapegoating starts. Then they are forced into a downward spiral of insecurity and isolation as they change their behaviour to try and avoid areas of contact.

Similarly there is no evidence that

adult victims of violent crime were vulnerable before the event. But trauma symptoms are retrospectively ascribed to the basic personality of the victim by many observers. It is always reassuring to think that they were asking for it in some way to allay fears that it might happen to you.

This reinforces the belief which many victims already hold and which bullies want to encourage, that it is their own fault they are being bullied. There is a danger that commercial child protection packs will reinforce this myth.

Instead of adequate training, addressing a complex problem, schools often rely on commercial packages for Personal and Social Education (PSE) tutorials. These encourage the belief that it is within the child's competence to resist abuse if he/she wishes, for example they often suggest that getting friends together to counter or deter the victimisation. This encourages the formulation of gangs and allows the school to abdicate responsibility.

One result of this can be seen in the gang rivalry in some schools where anti-racism has not been given serious support. It also altogether misses the point that victims are isolated as a result of bullying and a circle of

supportive friends is precisely what they do not have. The suggestion only further reinforces their sense of inadequacy.

"I was told that I shouldn't go where they might get me. It's like they think I don't have a right to walk along to the arcade or go to sports after school or something as if I'm not good enough to join in with other normal people." Jason, aged 15, told me.

The term 'provocative victim' is often misused when an individual only wants to assert their rights and maintain their own self esteem. There are obvious analogies with victims of sexual harassment who are said to be 'asking for it'.

Both victims and witnesses are often asked to examine their practices, narrow their choice of activities, accept curfews and generally shrink their horizons.

This is unacceptable. School staff need to examine their 'unwitting' role in group dynamics and the many dimensions of power play. Schools need to address their contribution to abusive interaction.

*Pat Jenkins currently teaches in an EBD Unit for 16 year old students.*





# Illich and anarchy

Clive Baldwin continues his examination of Ivan Illich's ideas in relation to anarchism. Here he compares and contrasts these ideas with those of the anarcho-communists Peter Kropotkin and Emma Goldman.

ANARCHO-COMMUNISTS Kropotkin and Goldman, like the individualist Stirner featured in the last issue, viewed the State and its institutions detrimental to individual initiative:

"We see in it ... (the State) ... the Institution, developed in the history of human societies to prevent the direct association among men, to shackle the development of local and individual initiative, to crush existing liberties, to prevent their new blossoming - all this in order to subject the masses to the will of the minorities"<sup>1</sup>

In this the anarcho-communists differ little from the individualists. They did, however, attempt to address the individual/society dichotomy which the latter did not. Novak spells this out clearly:

"Anarchist communism views the individual as essentially a social being who can achieve full development only in society, while society can benefit only when its members are free ..."<sup>2</sup>

For them, the problem lay, not in the political ideology of those in power, but in the existence of the State and its institutions which throughout their historical development had been created and used for repressive purposes. (c.f. Kropotkin, op cit, p52; and Goldman, in Krimerman 1966, p105). The solution, however, lay not in the individualism of Stirner but in social and collective action, living and institutions. For any revolution to be successful new relationships between persons and new institutions were necessary (c.f. Kropotkin, op cit, p54).

This revolution in institutions was, for Goldman, to be paralleled by a revolution in values and attitudes. For her, a revolution in institutions was not adequate as institutions rest upon values and thus any revolution would need to be accompanied by such a change in values. If it did not, it would fail.

This dual nature of revolution - the individual and society - is adequately addressed in Illich's writings. If we look at the four elements outlined above - the stifling of individual initiative, institutionalisation being the problem rather than political ideology, that the solution lies in the creation of other forms of institutions and that the revolution must take place on both an individual and societal level - we find

that Illich addresses these throughout his work. In *Tools for Conviviality* he openly states that the "progressive homogenisation of personalities and personal relationships cannot be stemmed without a retooling of society" (p28) and time and again he refers to the stultifying effects of compulsory schooling and medicine (*Deschooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*). Indeed, taken as a whole, his works are centrally addressed to the individual who is increasingly alienated due to the encroachment of institutions into more aspects of everyday life.

The second point is one of Illich's most fundamental and the one for which he is often heavily criticised. Bowles and Gintis make the point that Illich concentrates on consumer relationships at the expense of production relationships<sup>3</sup> and thus does not address the facts that such relationships are determined by the economy and that human nature itself is created through those relationships. They thus conclude that Illich's critique in fact upholds the status quo. However, it is difficult to see how this argument can be maintained. Time and again Illich condemns present day economic institutions, arguing that convivial institutions are necessary for people to develop to their potential. He makes calls for participatory action to counter the increasing institutionalisation of society and makes frequent reference to the social creation of the individual:

"Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning, to the degree that he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his self-image."<sup>4</sup>

For those who still doubt, it is only necessary to look at his more recent works such as *ABC: The Alphabetisation of the Popular Mind*.

The way out of this crisis of institutionalisation is one of individual and collective action. In a variety of places (e.g. *The Right to Useful Unemployment* and *Disabling Professions*) he calls for participatory politics, participatory justice or even participatory socialism. It is interesting

to note, however, that in more recent writings his view of political action is less energetic (eg *Health as One's Own Responsibility: No Thank You!*).

Yet, with Goldman, Illich recognises that there must also be a concurrent revolution in values. Institutionalised, consumer society has destroyed what he calls "vernacular values" and "the commons" (for example the art of suffering or the art of dying) and while he does not advocate a return to those values (indeed he would say that it is impossible to return to them) he calls us to create just those values in a modern society.

In his much more recent work he looks back at writings such as *Deschooling Society* and suggests that at that time he did not adequately appreciate the values and assumptions on which schooling was built. At that time, while calling for a renewal of values, he still accepted the assumption of "homo educandus", that people still required a process called education. In a later article he calls for research into the history of this assumption, and thus a deeper renewal of such values. He has moved from analysing institutions to analysing the history of the mindsets that allowed those institutions to become acceptable.

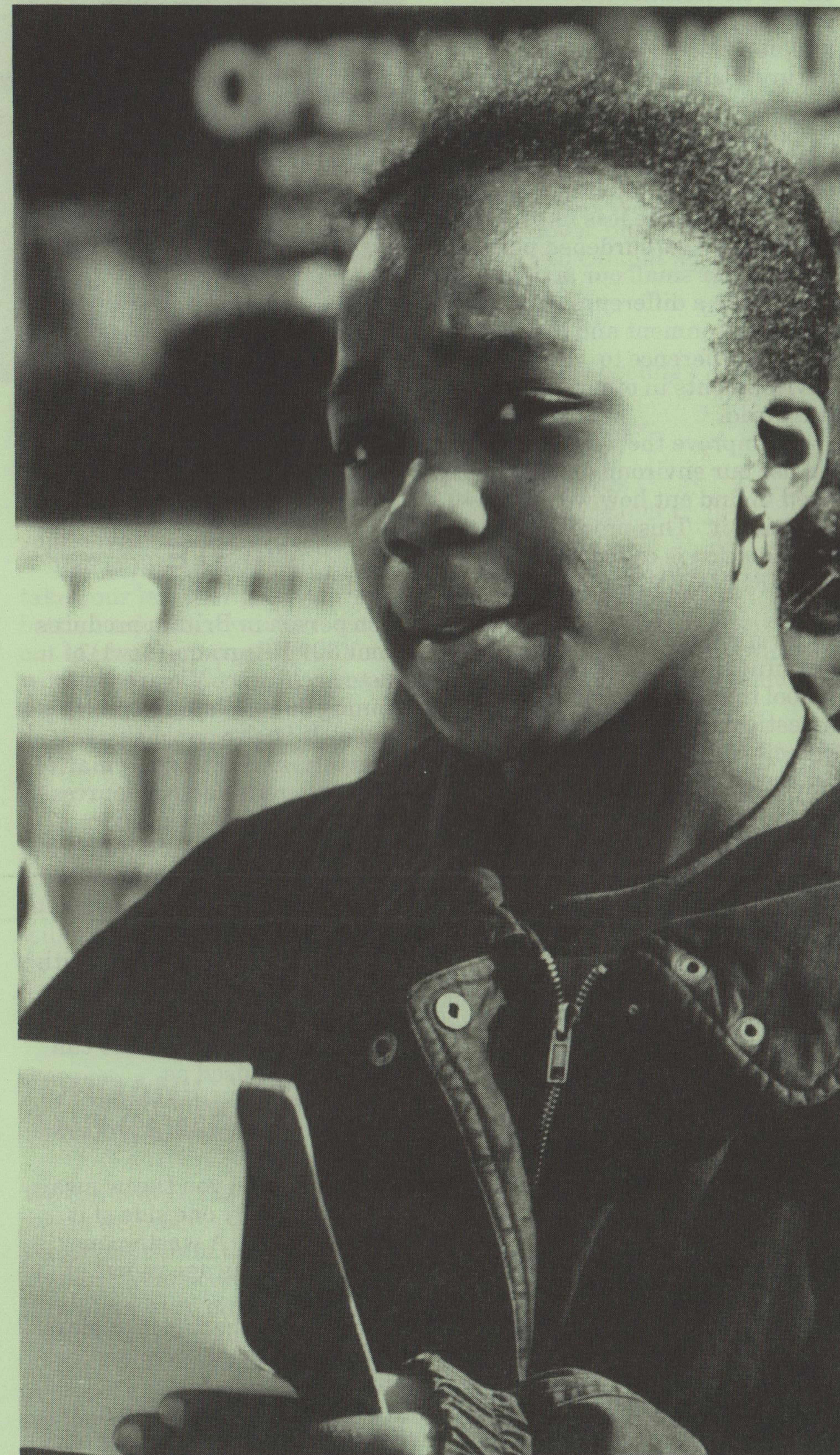
Thus we have seen how Illich manifests great similarities with the anarcho-communism of Kropotkin and Goldman. His links with the anarchist tradition, however, extend further. In the next article I will attempt to draw out the similarities between Illich's work and that of the Situationists, the *Society of the Spectacle*.

\*\*\*

## Footnotes

1. Kropotkin, P., *The State: Its Historic Role*, p52, Freedom Press, London 1969.
2. Novak, D., *The Place of anarchism in the History of Political Thought* quoted in *Patterns of Anarchy* eds. Krimerman, L.I. and Perry, L., p114, Doubleday, New York 1966.
3. Bowles, S. and Gintis, H., *Towards a Political Economy of Education: a radical critique of Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society* in *Harvard Educational Review*, 42 (1), 1972, pp70-96.
4. Illich, I., *Tools for Conviviality*, p34, Fontana, London 1979.

# Greening your school



At the 'Fast Forward to Freedom' Conference organised by *Lib ED* in November 1991, one workshop examined ways in which schools can be made more 'green'. It came up with an outline plan for an environmental audit which could be carried by young people. Here, Ruth Coleman examines the issues and sets down some guiding principles.

Photographs by Jeff Brewster.



# Greening your school

## AN ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

All living things have an effect on the environment, but only people affect it with the speed and at a scale which upsets the natural balance of the earth's resources.

Some of our actions are more harmful than others, and many of our actions could be changed so that they have less impact on an already overburdened planet.

However small our actions they make a difference to our local environment and can even make a difference to environments in other parts of the world.

To improve the way in which we use our environment, we need to find out how we are affecting it. This process of examination is called an ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

First it's necessary to examine the benefits to the school that might result from an investigation, for example, the school's use of fuel, may be reduced. Then:

- Look at the different areas of activity ranging from energy consumption to grounds upkeep and improvement. In each area record how things are done NOW.
- Record any statutory or legislative requirements within each area, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act.
- Think about the IDEAL ways to do things in each area of activity and list them.
- Many of the things listed as the ideal ways to do things may be too ambitious. Decide which things on the ideal list could be done and which could not. These are options for



**ACTION.** Work out when each one could be achieved, perhaps in the short and longer term.

## WASTE

Each person in Britain produces about 300 Kilograms (6cwt) of waste each year. We are running out of places to put this refuse. It is also expensive to transport, and is wasting many of our non-renewable resources.

How much is produced in your school? You could weigh it over several weeks to find out.

It is better to use things again before sending them off for recycling or replacing them with new items. Here are some suggestions:

Plastic lemonade bottles can be cut off and used as mini-greenhouses for young seedlings which need a protected atmosphere.

How often do you throw away paper when only one side of it has been used? A waste-paper tray could encourage re-use of paper.

Can any of the fabric or glass used in the school serve another purpose?

If you recycle your paper, you may need to sort it out into piles

- white, computer and coloured. Is there a recycling group who can collect these for you, or do you need to make arrangements to deliver it to a paper bank yourselves?

You will probably have to take your left over glass to the bottle bank when you have run out of ideas for re-using it. You will probably find one in a large supermarket car park. If you don't know where to find a bottle bank or collection service telephone your local council.

Various organisations offer money in return for aluminium collected. To find out which of your cans are aluminium you will need a magnet. If the cans do not stick to the magnet they are aluminium and worth returning.

## ORGANIC WASTE AND COMPOSTING

We can reduce the amount of waste we produce by separating the organic from the inorganic. Organic waste can be turned into compost to enrich planting areas in the school grounds.

Recycling organic waste into compost also helps to preserve lowland raised bog peat. At present this is widely used for

horticultural purposes and means that many important wildlife habitats are being lost.

A survey of the school should show what your kitchen staff do with left-overs from lunch. What do other people do with waste food, for instance, tea bags?

Anything which rots down quite quickly is composted through the action of micro-organisms, bacteria and worms.

It is best to have two compost heaps so that while one is rotting down, one is being used. Things you can put on a compost heap are:

Tea bags  
Vegetable peelings  
Leaves  
Grass cuttings  
Stale bread  
Dead flowers  
Vacuum cleaner bags

You should not put scraps of meat in the heap because it may attract rats. Woody twigs from plants should not be used either - they take too long to rot down.

## SCHOOL GROUNDS

Apart from some concrete areas and those specially left and marked for sports, many school grounds are covered with mown grass. Like this, they do not offer a very inviting home for wildlife. Flowers particularly, do not like the many chemicals often used in the grounds to keep weeds away.

Could anything be done around your building to create habitats for wildlife? Find out about meadows, wetlands, ponds, butterfly gardens, mini-beast piles.

If you find some new ways to manage your school's grounds you will probably like the changes too. It is more interesting to look at butterflies and trees than a green carpet. It

is important to look after the new areas you create, even though they will only need a little attention. There are several organisations who will give you money towards setting up new nature areas. They will also give you advice about how to look after them.

## THE JOURNEY TO SCHOOL

Motorised movement is damaging the environment. It pollutes, contributes to the greenhouse effect and uses more land and materials as each new road is built.

Bus, railway, light railway, community transport, taxi, cycling and walking are less harmful to the environment.

How do you travel to school? Is there another option? Devise a way to work out how everyone in the school gets there each day. What other options do they have, and why don't they take them?

What would need to happen before more people switched to environmentally appropriate forms of transport? What could be done to improve the use of transport on school journeys as

Further information may be obtained from:

**Learning Through Landscapes**  
Third Floor, Technology House,  
Victoria Road, Winchester SO23 7DU.

**Friends of the Earth**  
26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ.

**Bristol Energy Centre**  
101 Philip Street, Bedminster,  
Bristol BS3 4DR.

**Worldwide Fund for Nature**  
Panda House, Weyside Park,  
Catteshall Lane, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1WR.

**Centre for Environmental Education**  
School of Education, University of  
Reading, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ



the situation is now? Is car sharing already widely practised by parents and staff? Is there a safe cycling route to school from where you live? How could you go about creating one?

## PURCHASING

Schools are major purchasers and consumers of goods and services. Methods used to produce goods such as stationary, furniture and cleaning materials can often have a bad environmental impact. Non-renewable resources are often used in, for example the construction of new buildings and their landscapes.

Schools are becoming more responsible for how they spend their budgets. This means they must think about the best value for money. This does not mean that the best products for the environment are always the most expensive.

Where does the school buy its stationery, furniture and cleaning materials at present? What effect do these products have on the environment when they are made and when they are used?

Are the suppliers trying to meet the demand for products which are kinder to the environment? Are they at competitive prices?

These products may include recycled paper, biodegradable cleaning products, low energy light bulbs, furniture not made from tropical hardwoods, products which do not contain CFCs.

## ENERGY

Most of the energy we use comes from non-renewable sources. Once it has been used it cannot be replaced. Our increasing demand for energy results in air pollution, global warming, the loss of land for open-cast mining and the risk of radio-activity.



About 30% of energy produced heats buildings. Up to 40% of this could be saved by more efficient use. Imagine the difference a single low energy light bulb in each school could make. Even greater savings could be made in other areas of energy use, as new low energy appliances and more appropriate heating systems replace worn out ones.

Devise a way to check how efficient your school's use of energy is at present. You will need to see if windows are double-glazed and making use of the sun. Are doors, walls and roofs insulated? Are temperatures too high and how careful are people about closing doors and windows and switching off unneeded lights?

Is there a pattern to the school's fuel bills? It may be possible to take action to reduce fuel bills by increased efficiency. Try drawing up a plan.

## CLEANING AND DETERGENTS

It is important to have our schools cleaned properly to prevent germs spreading. However we often use products which contain unnecessarily strong chemicals or we use too

much of them. Bleach is particularly harmful. These cleaning products are usually flushed away through the drainage system, much of it being released into rivers and seas where fish and other marine life suffer.

There is now a wide range of products which do not use such chemicals and are therefore much better for the environment though they may not be as cheap.

## EDUCATION

How much of your work at school is about the environment? As a cross-curricular theme, Environmental Education is in danger of being fore-shadowed by more prominent National Curriculum subject areas.

Desirable changes would include giving teachers more time to spend on Environmental Education, making awards and being involved in local environmental projects.

Fostering care and concern for green futures should be firmly on every school's agenda. Through taking more measures to reduce negative environmental impact, we will all learn more about our position in the eco-system, and our spiritual relationship within it.

# Like when I was boy

**9.00 am** Spent morning on the major new education reform legislation arising out of the report of the Clarke Committee on teaching methods in primary schools. Every other attempt to get these people back to basics, to rote learning, sitting the children in rows and using slates had failed, so the Boss set up a high powered committee to look into the damage done over all these years by the notorious Plowden Report.

A handpicked team, Uncle Albert Clarke and Auntie Doris, Cousin Reg and the twins, and young Bob Clarke spent most of an afternoon at the Ken Livingstone Primary. The result was a devastating exposé of the scandal that passes for Primary education in Britain today. At last the Boss had the ammunition for a new reform package, a package that the teachers could not possibly sabotage.

Two major new measures are being proposed: **THE TEACHERS HAVE GOT TO DO WHAT I FUCKING WELL TELL THEM ACT** and **THE EDUCATION LIKE IT WAS WHEN I WAS A BOY ACT**. These two pieces of legislation will counter-revolutionise primary education once and for all. The clock is being put back in a big way.

**11.00 am** Met the Boss to discuss exams. He was in an expansive mood. "There's nothing like having a plan work", he chortled. "We let the teachers wear themselves out developing coursework assessments and then as soon as they're up and running, we abolish them! What a laugh, eh! The stupid sods fall for it every time." I join in the general merriment.

"And there's still more to come", the Boss continues, "changing the National Curriculum at the last minute is one of the best wheezes I've ever had. Let's see them try to cope with that. And the bastards just take it. I haven't had so much fun since I stalled on the haemophiliacs' AIDS claim."

We turn to other matters. The Boss has noticed an astonishing link between schools' exam results and the numbers of free school meals they provide. "I'm amazed no-one has ever noticed it before," he says. "What have all those trendy sociologists been doing all these years? The Dependency Culture has been doing down hundreds of thousands of kids and they've all missed it. The only way to improve exam results is to break the link and abolish free school meals!" He tells me to draft the appropriate legislation.

**1.00 pm** Visit the Desert Storm Technology College. This was set up following a memo from THE MAJOR asking all departments to consider how best to take advantage of the peace dividend.

We came up with the idea of redeploying redundant forces personnel, on enhanced salaries of course, into schools. The College is the result. It is the first school to run on modern counter-insurgency lines.

We meet the headteacher, Field Marshall Kitson at the heavily sandbagged and guarded school gates and he escorts us up the drive to the main buildings.

"It's all a matter of hearts and balls",



he says. "If you've got them by the balls, their hearts will follow. Once we've managed to convince the pupils that ours is the winning side then we'll be able to isolate the subversives and proceed to eliminate them with our superior firepower. It never fails. We'll soon have the school as safe as Northern Ireland."

As we approach the main buildings, the gym explodes in a great ball of flame and we come under heavy sniper fire. Running crouched down, we make it to the underground staff room. Here we are shown a number of pupils being interrogated. The screaming really grates on the nerves.

Our tour around a number of classrooms is not a great success. Corporal 'Basher' Smith, the Head of English was shot down right in front of us by a crazed sixth former who was dragged off shouting, "A DECENT EDUCATION OR DEATH!" I know which is more likely with Boss Clarke in charge.

"I thought you said you were winning", I remarked to the Field Marshal.

"Well you've got to appreciate the problems we face," he replied. "We're fighting with one hand tied behind our backs here. What we really need is detention without trial, the OK to use undercover shoot to kill squads and the introduction of capital punishment. That way we'll soon have the school under control." I give the go ahead, but I'm not altogether convinced. None of the other schools in Surrey seem to have these problems.

**4.00 pm** The Boss has held a press conference this afternoon and issued a policy statement. **HE IS PLANNING TO PRIVATISE THE CURRICULUM POLICE!** When he was questioned about the move he actually said that most of us were only failed teachers anyway and that it was our fault that the education service was in such a terrible mess! I can hardly believe it.

After all we've done for the Government, this is how they treat us. We've gone along with all their crackpot schemes without one word of complaint; we've covered up the most monumental incompetence; we've helped return education to the stone age. And now they are going to shit on us as if we were ... well, as if we were teachers. And this is being done by a man with about as much interest in education as Neil Kinnock has in socialism. The fat bastard has a Milky Way

attitude towards education, it's something he fits in between meals. Well he's gone too far this time. The profession has got to stand up and be counted. I'll get straight on to the Socialist Teachers Alliance...

**Next issue:** The Curriculum Police visit the Robert Maxwell Floating Technology College. This remarkable institution is financed entirely by the Daily Mirror Pension Fund and is unique because it is actually established on board a yacht. When the Police arrive, the College has disappeared from its berth, leaving only a large turd floating face down in the sea.

### An Apology:

The editor has cut from this instalment of Curriculum Cop a section where a working party of experts produces a report on music in the curriculum which is then changed and rewritten by a BP Executive. It was felt that this was just too incredible.



## A do-it-yourself guide to the liberation of learning

**FREEDOM IN EDUCATION** is a practical handbook full of ideas on how to make learning more relevant and enjoyable:

ideas for liberating lessons (with details of resources) in mathematics, craft, design technology, environmental and futures education, music and games;

information about the alternatives to formal education, such as home education and the Education Otherwise network;

a comprehensive contact list of groups and organisations with real learning at heart -- for adults as well as children;

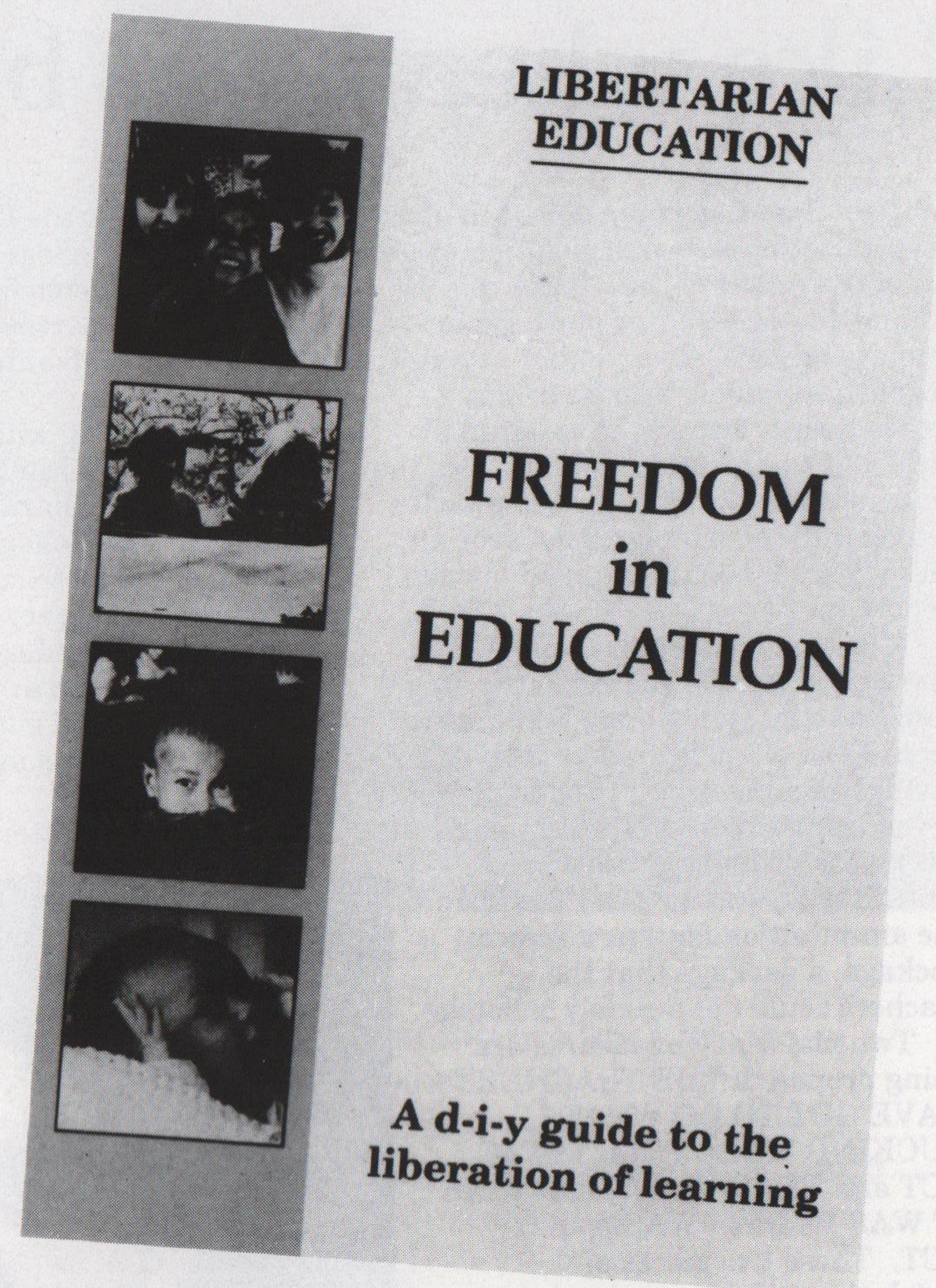
an extensive booklist;

how to contact schools where freedom is taken seriously, in Britain and around the world.

**FREEDOM IN EDUCATION -- A do-it-yourself guide to the liberation of learning** is a must for everyone interested in education in its broadest sense.

Available direct from Libertarian Education, price £3.95 for each copy plus 85p towards post and packing.

**Libertarian Education, Phoenix House,  
170 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2AG.**



## Back Issues Offer

Now in its 24th year, *Lib ED* is the only chronicle of practical and theoretical developments in radical education -- if you've just caught up with us, catch up with what you've missed. Each back issue is yours for £1 (inc. p&p) (*Lib ED*s 15 and 16 are £1.30, and 17/18 is £2) but for only £10 you can have the complete set of back issues in print. At present that's Volume 2, numbers 4 to 18. We can also supply photocopies of articles published in all out-of-print issues of *Libertarian Teacher/Education/Lib ED*. Please send a stamped addressed envelope for full details.

Cheques to: **Lib ED, Phoenix House, 170 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2AG.**

Please rush me a complete set of back issues (£10).

Please rush me back issues.....(£1, £1.30, £2 each)

I enclose a cheque for .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

.....

- 4 Steiner Schools, The Politics of Mathematics, Black Teachers Speak Out, Nicaragua and Literacy.
- 5 Education at Home, Learning about Sex, Classroom Police, Workers' Education.
- 6 A School for Children under Stress, Why Black Children need Black Homes, Glue Sniffing.
- 7 SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUE, High Tech in Education, Nellie Dick: A Free School Pioneer.
- 8 ISSUE ON HEALTH, SEX AND SEXUALITY.
- 9 Black Children in Care, 1968-88: What went Right, A Progressive Comprehensive. Theatre in Education.
- 10 Alternative schools in the USA, Racism and Schooling, The devaluation of Play, Science.
- 11 SPECIAL ISSUE ON CHILDREN, SCHOOLING AND THE STATE.
- 12 AIDS: Fear and loathing in the playground, Three alternative schools.
- 13 A free school celebrates its fiftieth birthday, Comic satire on society
- 14 Kirkdale free school, Learning about the planet, The Buktu Training and Resource Centre
- 15 SPECIAL: Visions of the future: Young people tell us about their hopes and aspirations (£1.30)
- 16 Self government at Summerhill, The National Curriculum, Youth theatre (£1.30)
- 17/18 SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE: Children and War. A small school in Derbyshire (£2)

## Don't miss the next issue...

The next issue of *Lib ED* will be published in June. Features are planned on The Children Act and Camping for children. Why not subscribe to ensure that you don't miss this or any of the following issues. Our ordinary year's sub costs £4 (inland), £8 (overseas in sterling), or US\$16 (otherwise). But see below for other attractive packages. Fill in the subscription form, write a cheque and post it to us TODAY!

### Join the Network

The *Lib ED* network is an informal network of people with an interest in libertarian education. By joining you will get even more information on what is going on in Britain and around the world than we can fit into the magazine. Network members receive the following:

**National Contact List** -- a listing of individuals in the network, so that people can get in touch with each other.

**A regular bulletin** -- published in March, July and November to keep you in touch between issues of *Lib ED* magazine. This always includes ...

**An Information Exchange** -- news, articles, plans for the next issue of the magazine, a listing of meetings and conference dates, and so on, provided by members of the network.

**Access to an Information Service** -- *Lib ED* has a huge amount of information on the libertarian education movement. Network members are welcome to write or phone for information.

A Network subscription costs £8 (inland), £12 (overseas in sterling) or \$26 (otherwise).

### SPREAD THE WORD

We don't have a large scale system to distribute *Lib ED* around the world. We rely very much on a small network of SUPPORTERS who take the magazine to conferences, meetings and into bookshops.

So why not join them and become a SUPPORTER. We will send you, as well as your subscription copy, the network bulletins and an extra 5 copies of each issue which you can pass onto friends and colleagues (you could even sell them!) In this way, we hope that more and more people will be encouraged to subscribe.

It could change a lot of people's attitudes to education.

A Supporter's subscription costs £20 (inland), £30 (overseas in sterling), \$55 (otherwise).

### Special offer!

All SUPPORTERS will receive a copy of *Free School: The White Lion Experience* by Nigel Wright ABSOLUTELY FREE OF CHARGE!

### Bundles

If you can't afford a Supporter's subscription, but would still like to help us, we can supply you with copies of the magazine to sell. Send us 70p a copy (minimum 3 copies) and we will post them to you. (Cash in advance only, unfortunately) If you live outside Britain please get in touch with us to discuss terms.

### PUBLISHING INFO

Libertarian Education is a publisher of a small selection of books including *Free School: The White Lion Experience* by Nigel Wright and *No Master High or Low: Libertarian Education and Schooling 1890-1990* by John Shotton.

Overseas subscribers please note: we will accept the equivalent in any overseas banknotes, otherwise please send a bank draft in sterling.

### HUMAN SCALE EDUCATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EDUCATION AS IF PEOPLE MATTER  
4-5 APRIL 1992 DARTINGTON HALL, DEVON

Speakers: Colin Ward, Roger Cole, Guy Claxton

Workshops: minischooling  
teacher survival  
parents in partnership  
human scale vales in large scale schools  
democratic learning  
Small School / Dame Catherine's

£65 - including accommodation, meals and Conference fee

For more information and booking form contact:  
Human Scale Education, 96 Carlingcott, Near Bath, BA2  
8AW. Tel: 0761-433733

## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Please renew / start my sub to *Lib ED* from issue ☐

I enclose payment for (please circle)...

Ordinary subscription £4 / £6 / \$16

Network subscription £8 / £12 / \$26

Supporter's subscription £20 / £30 / \$55

Institutional subscription £10 / £15 / \$30

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

.....

Send this form to:

**Lib ED, 170 Wells Road, Bristol,  
BS4 2AG.**



## Something special

### Nothing Special

A book by Michelle Mason  
published by Working Press, 85 St Agnes  
Place, Kennington, London SE11 4BB.

THIS IS a lovely book for children aged five to twelve-ish about an imaginary, fully integrated primary school. The story-teller is an eight year old girl in an electric wheelchair who describes her school and her friends.

It's a very important book, mainly because there is nothing else like it - that I've seen anyway. All the other books that I've seen about disabled children have been sentimental, patronising and completely apolitical.

In contrast this one is positive and inspirational. Nothing in the book seems impossible, even within the present society. In fact the author says that everything in the book is happening in some school somewhere, just not yet all in any one school.

All that is needed is some extra resources and loads more respect (a tall order?) The line drawings are great too -- unsentimental, realistic and interesting.

In short I can't praise the book highly enough -- it's not just about treating children with obvious disabilities as human beings but about recognising that all children have

unique qualities, strengths, difficulties and differences.

It's about respecting them enough to offer them the education and help that will enable them to fulfil their dreams and achieve their own goals.

Read it. Get it into all schools and libraries.

Heather Parker

Also reviewed by Lani Parker aged 10:

IT'S brilliant. I thought that because she said she was doing really well and wasn't feeling all sorry for herself.

The school that she went to was



really good because there were lots of disabled and non-disabled kids there and they were able to communicate with each other - it didn't matter what their disability was.

I like the way that some of the teachers were disabled too. I am disabled and have read lots of other books about disabled people which are pointless, but this one wasn't like that.

It was nice to take it to my school because I go to an ordinary school and for them to see what a good book it is and for them to realise that disabled people aren't just pointless like so many books seem to say. I like the pictures because they are interesting and she has lots of wild things on her wheelchair. The people in my school liked it. I would love to go to that school -- it would be wicked!

For more information contact:  
The Integration Alliance, c/o 4a  
Dafforne Road, Tooting, London, SW17  
8TZ.

# NO MASTER HIGH OR LOW



LIBERTARIAN  
EDUCATION  
AND  
SCHOOLING  
1890-1990

JOHN  
SHOTTON

Published by and available from: Libertarian Education, 170 Wells Road,  
Bristol, BS4 2AG. ISBN 0 951 3997 3 X  
£7.95 + 85p p&p. Trade distribution by Turnaround.

## Street murders

### Brazil: War on Children

A book by Gilberto Dimenstein  
Latin America Bureau, £4.99

HISTORY is over and a New World Order is in the process of being established. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the triumph of the United States, Capitalism now rules the world unchallenged. Its triumph is celebrated by its apologists who point to the prosperity of the West compared with the poverty of the former Communist bloc. According to these people embracing the market brings wealth, prosperity and the good life.

This was, of course, always so much crap. The recessions in Britain and America have already dampened down this triumphism, but even before this there were a whole host of capitalist countries in the so-called Third World that could tell a different story about market forces. Gilberto Dimenstein's grim book throws a light on one aspect of life in one of the largest of the world's capitalist countries, on the murderous war that is being waged against the street children of Brazil.

Rocha's introduction sets the scene:

"Poverty in Brazil is growing. Never has there been such a concentration of income. The richest ten per cent of Brazil, 150 million people, own over half the national income. The poorest ten per cent receive less than one per cent."

He goes on to describe the effect of this inequality on Brazil's children. There are an estimated 25 million children living in dire poverty in Brazil and of these between seven and eight million survive on the streets. Only a minority of them are totally alone - orphaned, abandoned, without any contact with their parents. Most maintain some contact with their families but, nevertheless have to survive on their own because their parents cannot feed them. On the streets, home is a doorway or a bench, the steps of the railway station or a hot-air duct outside a restaurant.

These millions of street children survive either by begging or petty crime. Their criminal activity usually consists of thieving but they are also sometimes involved in prostitution and the drug rackets. Danger comes from two directions. First of all children have been caught in the crossfire between rival gangs fighting to control the drugs trade. This is horrific enough but secondly there is the danger posed by vigilantes. The shopkeepers in many of Brazil's cities pay vigilantes to protect

their businesses. This has resulted in the beating, torture and murder of large numbers of youngsters, petty thieves or even just suspected petty thieves. Many of the vigilantes are off-duty or retired policemen and they have been able to kill with very little hindrance.

Between March and August 1990 in the cities of Recife, Rio and Sao Paulo, 457 children and adolescents were murdered. The situation is much the same across the whole country. This is more young people than were killed in Yugoslavia or Lebanon in a similar period. For the children of the poor, Brazil is a war zone. Dimenstein provides a horrific catalogue of murder:

"Alexandre da Silva was just nine years old in January 1987. He was raped early one morning in Carias railway station. His body was found later with several bullet wounds to the head. Roberto Dias Carvaltio was thirteen that same year. He was found dead in the street with bullet wounds in his back. A few months later, Carlos Catita, eleven years old, was found in Nilo Pecanha Avenue, Rio, his hands and legs tied together. His body was full of bullet holes ... In Sao Bernado, in 1987, a group of justiceiros picked up six boys between the ages of twelve and sixteen and mowed them down ..."

Moreover, quite often the culprits were known but their police connections were sufficient to protect them.

Dimenstein goes on to describe how in Pernambuco, TV Viva, a video production company, run by the Luiz Freire Centre, an organisation linked to the human rights movement, made a film about the killing of children by the death squads. The video took a year and a half to make. When the film was ready, TV Viva had to include a final sequence noting the murder of some of the children who appeared in the video.

He describes how a number of police officers were named as being involved in the killings but this was edited out for fear of reprisals against the film makers. Journalists who have not been so careful have indeed been killed on a number of occasions.

This is a side of Capitalism's success story that the western media would prefer to ignore. A country where inequality and poverty force millions of children to live on the streets and where life is so cheap that petty crime merits rape, torture and death. This is market forces with a vengeance. Gilberto Dimenstein's courage in listening to the street children and telling their story is to be wholeheartedly applauded.

## Small is...

### Small Schools

An Education Now special report  
edited by Philip Toogood  
Education Now Books, pp36, £5.00

THE EFFICIENCY of a small school approach along with the "small is beautiful" line are two of the arguments presented in this book. But perhaps the most interesting issue explored is how small schools can survive and defend themselves against attack by grouping together in clusters or pyramids or federations.

## Quote unquote

### Unfashionably Unfascist?

A book of quotations on education  
compiled by Roland Meighan  
Educational Heretics Press, pp46, £5

WHO said: "What good fortune for people in power that people do not think"? Answer: Adolf Hitler.

Mark Twain declared: "I never allowed schooling to interfere with my education."

"We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought," said Bertrand Russell.

Three examples from this book which if you like quotations and still like to think about education must be for you.

## Terrorists

### Terrorizing the Neighborhood

A book by Noam Chomsky  
AK Press, pp64, £3.95

SUBTITLED American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era, Noam Chomsky illustrates the United States' willingness to stop at nothing for control of the world's wealth.

Written in a rigorous but accessible style, this book serves as a short introduction and primer to this major thinker's work on US foreign affairs, its causes, effects and the interests it serves, both at home and abroad.

Chomsky argues that in the guise of protecting and promoting the ideals of democracy, freedom and justice, the United States is actually sustaining a status quo where the "Third World" subsidises US consumption with raw materials and cheap labour.

Essential reading.



# Dinna dinna dinna dinna ...

## The Many Lives of the Batman

A book edited by Roberta E Pearson and William Uricchio  
Routledge/BFI Publishing, £11.95

A MILLIONAIRE playboy who drives up in an outlandish costume and then goes out at night to police the streets and protect middle class America, regularly clashing with large numbers of recognisably working class criminals as well as a host of more exotic villains conjured up from America's consumerist nightmares ... this is the Batman, one of America's major comic book heroes. Or, at least, as the essays in this book argue, it is one of the Batmen because in fact the character has been incarnated in a number of different ways over the years.

Batman first appeared in Detective Comics in May 1939, the creation of Bob Kane and Bill Finger. He was very much a ruling class vigilante, conceived with a much grimmer outlook than that other DC crime fighter, Superman. Batman was a creature of the night, Superman of the day.

The original Batman was popular throughout the 1940s but then came under sustained attack in part of the campaign to clean up America's comics, spearheaded by Frederic Wertheim. Batman was 'accused' by this 'expert' of being a homosexual (!) because of his suspicious relationship with young Robin.

The dark world that Batman had inhabited was brightened up and his criminal opponents became less dangerous and menacing. Great effort was also put into demonstrating that both he and Robin were decent heterosexuals. America could relax.

This Batman for the Eisenhower era inevitably came under attack in the 1960s not in the comics themselves but on television. The popular TV series of the late 1960s enthusiastically sent the character up and, according to its admirers constituted a minor masterpiece of camp.

More recently however, there has been a return to the ethos of the original Batman but now dealing with the even grimmer world of the 1980s. After the success of Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* story, an obsessive, almost psychotic Batman emerged, influencing the very successful recent film and changing the character of the comics once again. So popular has the *Dark Knight* version proved, that a third monthly Batman title, aimed at older readers, *Legends of the Dark Knight*, was launched.

This latest incarnation is itself a complex phenomenon. There is of course the core element of the Batman as a

ruling class vigilante, a crime fighter who ignores the offences of the rich and powerful and instead punishes street crime and a host of exotic super criminals.

Nevertheless while this is still broadly true, some awareness of Batman's blindness to this criminality has crept into the comics, particularly those written by British comic writer Alan Grant. In one recent story the teenage vigilante, Anarky, criticises Batman for ignoring social injustice and corporate crime. Similarly other stories by other writers have shown Batman taking on rogue Oliver North-type government agencies and operatives. It remains to be seen whether this social and political awareness will be allowed to develop any further. Probably not, although it must be acknowledged that it has in some other DC titles.

More usual has been the psychological and cultural exploration of the Batman Persona, the search for what motivates him, for the demons that drive him on, for what he has come to symbolise and represent. This was carried to its extreme in the graphic novel, *Arkham Asylum*, written by Grant Morrison with artwork by Dave McKean. Even here though Morrison was not allowed to go as far as he wanted. Masturbation, he was told, was not something Batman could be associated with.

What of this collection of articles and interviews. Inevitably they vary in quality. Of particular interest, however are the contributions by Bill Boichel, *Batman: Commodity or Myth*, Eileen Meehan, *Holy Commodity Fetish*, *Batman: The Political Economy of a Commercial Intertext*, Andy Medhurst, *Batman, Deviance and Camp* and the editor's own *I'm Not Foiled By That Cheap Disguise*. The very different interviews with DC's Dennis O'Neil and with Frank Miller, a dissident if ever there was one, are also useful.

What is lacking? Well, first of all the focus is too much on the various graphic novel, the TV series and the film rather than on the actual comic and the stories they tell month in and month out. Secondly, the contributors don't relate the stories closely enough to American society. Comic book stories like Batman in America or Judge Dredd in Britain are stories about their respective societies, about their hopes and fears, dreams and nightmares. Thirdly, there is no contribution on the role of the super villain in the comics. These are half the reason for their success.

This collection is certainly not the last word on Batman but it is a very useful start to the discussion.

## Energy

### My Science Book of Energy

A book by Neil Ardley  
Dorling Kindersley, pp29, £4.99hb

PRACTICAL investigations into energy are offered in this book designed for children aged around seven to ten. Each section focuses on one aspect of energy and suggests simple and safe experiments. It is not all that original in itself but the design is very clear and children from lots of different ethnic backgrounds are pictured carrying out the activities.

## Wild things

### The Animal Atlas

A pictorial atlas of world wildlife written by Barbara Taylor and illustrated by Kenneth Lilly  
Dorling Kindersley, pp64, £10.99hb

PICTURES, maps, diagrams, photographs and written information abound in this beautiful large format atlas. At eleven pounds it might seem a lot to spend on just one book, but a child interested in animals could spend hours and hours submerged in it.

## Yuuech

### I Want My Potty

A dual language story by Tony Ross  
Magi Publications, pp24, £6.99

MY two year old daughter loves this account of royal potty training, who knows why? Perhaps she's a monarchist and feels isolated in an anarchist household. Perhaps she agrees with the little princess that nappies are yuuech. Perhaps she just likes the very funny pictures. The story is told in both English and Spanish but other pairs of languages are available.

## At last

### In A Minute

A book for young readers by Tony Bradman and Eileen Browne  
Little Mammoth, £2.99

JO eventually gets to the swings and slide with her pal, despite her parents willingness to be sidetracked by their friends, a demonstration by health workers, ducks and a carnival parade. The story is beautifully illustrated, some might say going over the top in reflecting a right-on multi-ethnic community, but why not? Very few books give other than a white anglo-saxon protestant image of society so an alternative vision is very welcome. You can get it from the Letterbox Library bookclub.

# Daughter of the revolution

## The Revolutionary's Daughter

A novel by Gwen Grant  
Heinemann, £8.95

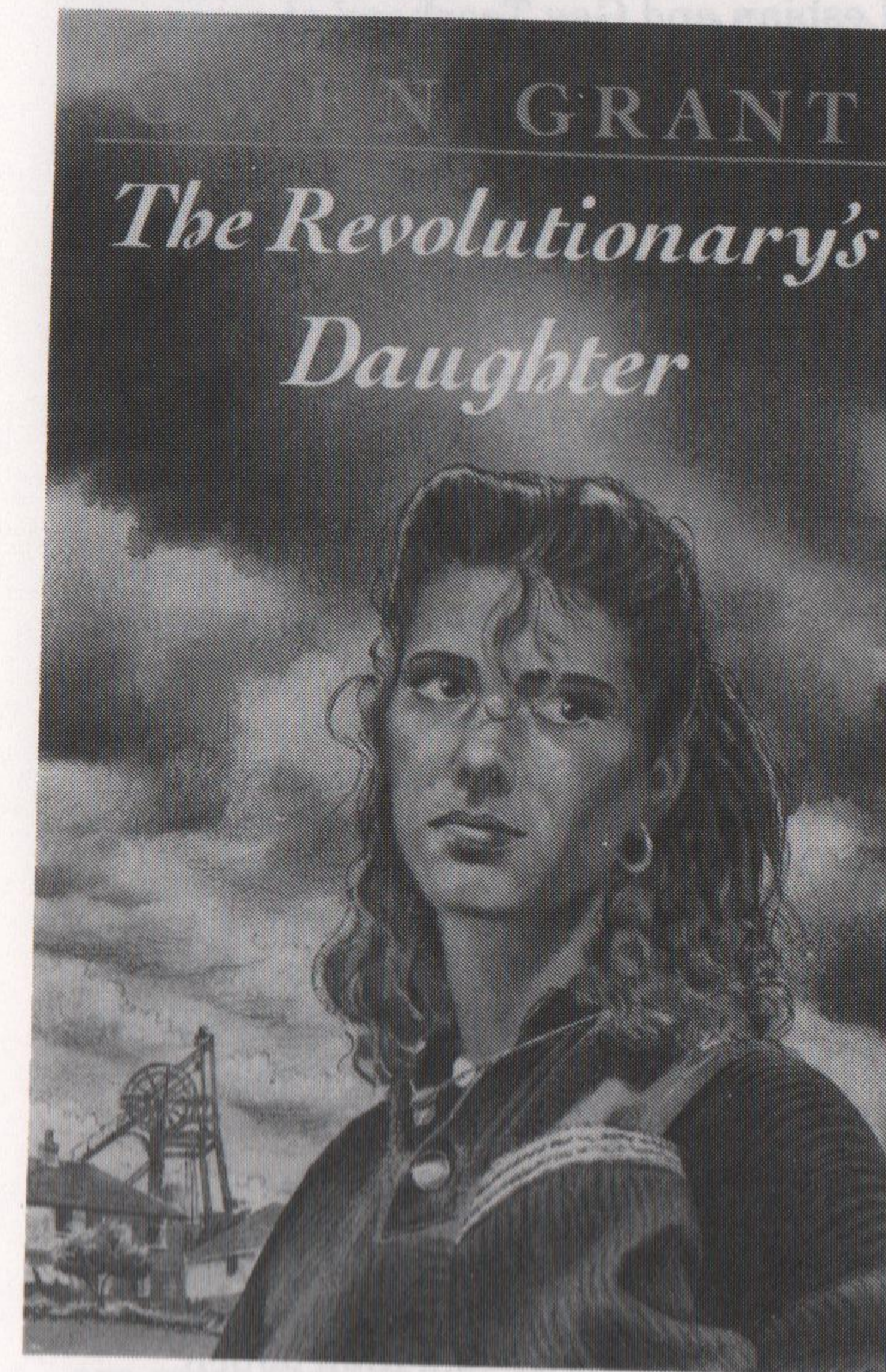
GWEN Grant is the author of a number of excellent children's novels, of which probably the best known are *Private - Keep Out*, *Knock and Wait* and *One Way Only*. These are marvellous comic explorations of gender and class written from the idiosyncratic point of view of a rebellious young Nottingham girl who is always getting into and out of scrapes. Now in *The Revolutionary's Daughter* she has tackled a more sombre subject: the effect of a marriage break-up on teenage Violette against the backdrop of the 1984-85 miner's strike. How successful is she?

Violette's mum, Janis has become heavily involved in supporting the strike and is a member of a women's theatre group attempting to keep up morale and to publicise the miners' cause. This is the occasion although not the cause of the marriage breaking up, it would have happened anyway.

The novel recounts Violette's confused efforts to come to terms with her mother's assertion of independence, with her walking out and apparently putting the interests of strangers before those of her family. When, in a very powerful episode, she is the victim of a sexual attack, Violette feels unable to turn to either of her parents and has to try and cope on her own. Grant's writing here is powerful, compelling, shocking:

"Scrabbling in her bag until she

found a comb, she combed her hair over and over and over. Wiped her face and neck and ears with a tissue and dropped the tissue beneath her feet. More and



more tissues until her skin hurt. She was glad to see them bleed. Then she bit them, licked them, spat on her hands and rubbed her sore lips until spit and blood dried under her fingers."

Violette feels betrayed and abandoned at a time when her own life is difficult but eventually she comes to

terms with, indeed becomes proud of, the fact that she is 'the revolutionary's daughter'.

As far as the exploration of Violette's feelings is concerned, the novel is very successful. Where it falls down is with regard to her mother, Janis. Grant makes quite clear that her marriage was finishing anyway, that Janis could no longer accept the limitations and restraints that it imposed on her. The repeated failure of mother and daughter to successfully explain their feelings to each other is very nicely handled.

Less successful though is the account of Janis's commitment to the miner's cause. At the start of the novel, the story is placed very firmly in the context of the strike. the streets are filled with police:

"For weeks it went on, with terrible scenes all over the country. Scenes of horror and shame. Mounted police charging men and women, leaning from their saddles and smacking out with their long-handled truncheons ..."

As the story develops however, the actual strike fades more and more into the background, takes place more and more off stage. the portrayal of the Janis character, for whom commitment to the strike is so important, is weakened by this subdued treatment. The result is that Violette appears less as 'the revolutionary's daughter' and more as just her mother's daughter.

This is a commendable, worthwhile book but this I'm left feeling that Gwen Grant could have done it much better.

## Ghosts and demons

### The Promise

A novel by Robert Westall  
MacMillan, £7.95

*THE PROMISE* is a ghost story set on Tyneside during the early years of the second world war.

Young Bob Bickerstaffe develops a romantic attachment for the sickly Valerie Monkton but then when she eventually dies, the relationship continues. Valerie wants his company in the dark and comes back for him, while Bob for his part, finds the prospect almost irresistible. The story is told against the background of the Blitz.

As one expects with Westall, the story is beautifully written and is a delight to read. It is a minor classic in its way. The character of young Bickerstaffe is sympathetically developed and his relationship with the dying Valerie is handled with great

sensitivity. From this point of view, the book can be highly recommended.

There is one problem however. Westall's account of gender relations. The story is told from a quite uncompromising male viewpoint and makes no serious attempt to comprehend the way that girls experience relationships of life in general. Not that Bob is a raving male chauvinist. Far from it. Nevertheless the absence is still a problem.

On one level, the embarrassment that Bob experiences with regard to his feelings for Valerie is nicely handled and his fear that his school enemies will discover their relationship is convincing.

When he comes to resolve the plot however, Westall quite disappointingly has Bob play the man and make a determined stand. He saves himself with the realisation that he is stronger than Valerie and can dominate the

relationship if he wants:

"I knew that once dead I'd be stronger than she was. I'd soon show her who was the boss. I'd make her sorry for all she'd done. She'd cry, then she'd do what I said."

Bob doesn't die however and Valerie goes off into the dark with the ghost of a bomber pilot. She has a flirty look on her face as she goes.

This view of women as inconstant vampires is an authentic male view that demands treatment in fiction but Westall's apparent endorsement of it and concomitant failure to explore Valerie's experience leaves a question mark over the novel. This is a problem with Robert Westall's other fictional explorations of gender relations as well.

Let me end by saying that *The Promise* is too good to be summed up by this failing but it does coarsen it.



## An issue for every teacher

### Lesbians and Gays in School

NUT Guidance on Lesbian and Gay Issues in Education  
National Union of Teachers, July 1991

WHAT do you mean, you haven't seen this pamphlet? It quite clearly says on the cover that it's "An Issue for Every Teacher". You mean you haven't had Union meetings about homophobia, and considered how you support lesbian and gay teachers, kids and parents? No lesbian and gay section in the school library yet? What, no posters from lesbian and gay counselling services in the corridors? You haven't organised your INSET days on lesbian and gay issues yet? Well, I am surprised.

No, of course, I'm not. I hadn't seen this pamphlet, and neither had my school union reps of this term or last, until *Lib ED* sent me a copy for review. (The Union say one copy of the leaflet was mailed to all schools at the end of the summer term 1991.) If you haven't got a copy, contact the NUT and get one - it's good. If we are to take it seriously, it's dynamite.

The pamphlet starts with the statement: "There are lesbians and gays in every school community." A simple acknowledgement of that fact by everyone would be a major advance. Since it isn't, as the NUT point out, marginalisation at best, and hysteria at worst, is the reality we live with.

The pamphlet points out the support that has come from HMI documents in tackling lesbian and gay issues with students, and the legal irrelevance of the evil Section 28 of the Local Government Act. Teachers are not prevented, by law, or DES circulars, from tackling homophobia. This leaflet gives detailed and clear-headed guidance on how we can treat lesbians and gays as if they existed, and take some steps towards equality. It looks at both primary and secondary phases, considers pastoral support, the curriculum, equal opportunities policies, and has an action plan to put into operation at the personal, school and local association level. (Although the existence of lesbian and gay parents gets forgotten after the first paragraph.) So why, if it's so good, did I begin this review so facetiously?

I do not underestimate or want to denigrate the incredible time, energy and personal sacrifice that a lot of lesbians and gays within the NUT have put into getting the Union to this point; I suspect a lot of unhappy compromises, editing or even censorship in the final draft. But there are two big 'BUT's'.

Firstly, within the pamphlet itself, there is no mention of 'coming out' - a concept fundamental to understanding

what it is to be lesbian or gay. The nearest it approaches is the advice "Don't"! I need to quote the section on 'Lesbian and Gay Teachers' at some length:

"In discussion on these issues, teachers may be asked whether they are lesbian and gay themselves. Whilst choice of response is clearly a personal matter, the advice of the Union is that ordinarily personal sexuality is not a matter for discussion with pupils. If asked directly, in principle the best course of action for a teacher on this or any other question concerning personal sexuality is to draw the questioner into more general consideration of relationships, stressing that caring relationships with responsible attitudes take place between lesbian and gay people as well as heterosexuals. Teachers should keep firmly in mind their role in educating against prejudice rather than engaging in discussions about their personal sexuality."

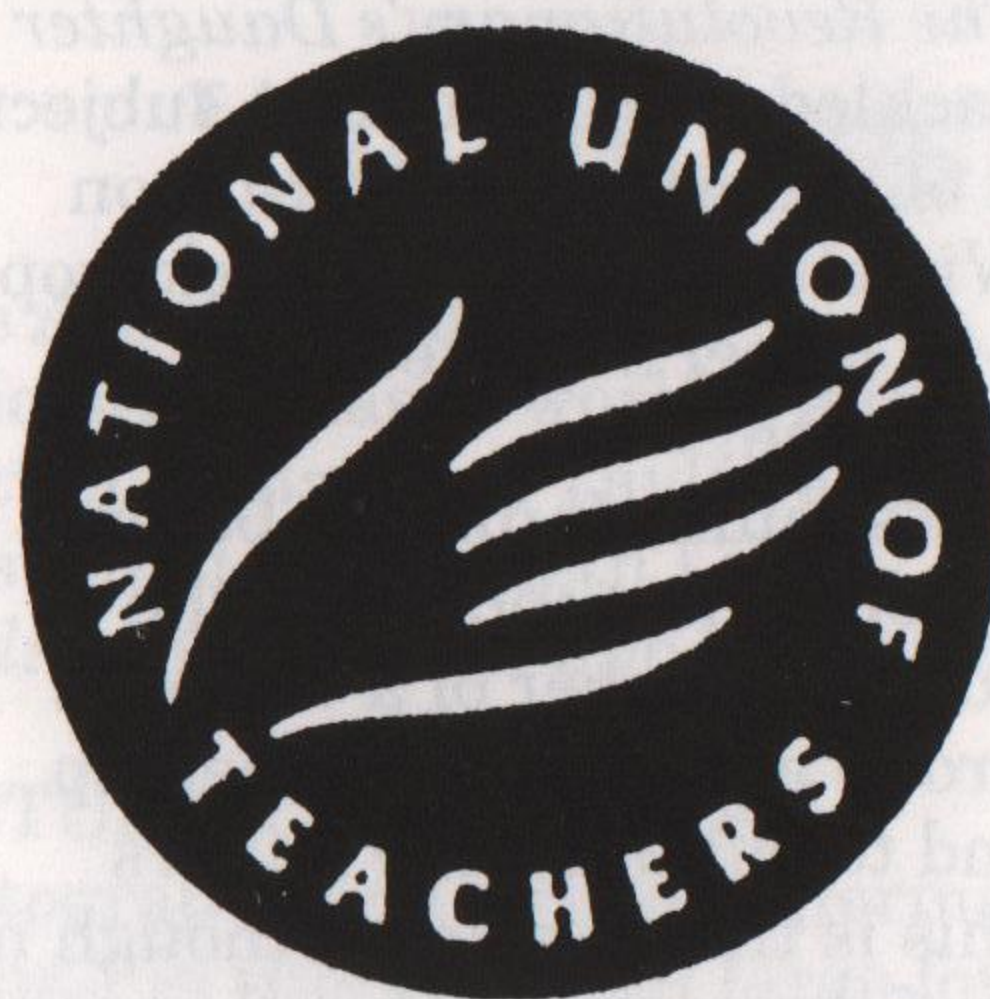
I find it hard to believe that any lesbian or gay teacher would put their name to this paragraph. Let's ignore the arch and nanny-like tone which sounds more like a DES circular than a campaigning union. Let's ignore the naivety which suggests that "Are you a puf, Sir?" can be answered with the niceties of stressing "caring relationships with responsible attitudes" (and what the hell does that mean?) Let's put a kind gloss on the information that if a teacher's lesbian or gay status does become known to pupils it would be wise to inform the head or a senior staff member so that the teacher can rely on their support... Any such leaflet needs to warn lesbian and gay teachers (and alert their colleagues) to the dangers in coming out (and I speak from painful experience as an out gay teacher), and it might be useful to suggest some (real) tactics for avoiding the issue. But this paragraph is supporting a policy of oppression.

What is ignored here (and ignored by all those people who accuse us of 'ramming it down their throats'), is the way that sexuality, or rather straight sexuality, is flaunted everywhere in schools. If personal sexuality is not a matter for discussion with pupils, then "Are you a lesbian, Miss?" is no different to the question "Are you married, Miss" Women, and men, teachers wear rings as a public declaration of their heterosexuality. Many women teachers, in the words of a friend of mine at a disciplinary hearing for coming out, "change their name to that of the man they have sex with."

To suggest that some of us should

not reveal our sexuality is to imply that it is shameful, that we should collude with the conspiracy of silence that allows the myths, lies and harassment to continue. I don't want a union that tells me to get back in the closet - I want it to hold the door open for me.

Which brings me to the second 'But'. Lesbians and Gays in Schools is half a step forward on a very long road. How many people have even seen it, let alone discussed it in their union meeting?



How many reps have filed it, lost it, thrown it away in disgust, or merely thought, "we haven't any of them on our staff so it's not relevant"? If it's a issue for every teacher, why hasn't every teacher got one? This pamphlet will change very little, unless the NUT is prepared to campaign actively on this equal opportunities issue. It could start by being prepared to support out lesbian and gay teachers, and working out how it can allow those thousands of its members who fear losing their jobs or chance of promotion to be who they are.

The recommendations in Lesbians and Gays in Schools are fine. Perhaps the NUT should research in July 1992 how many schools have acted on how many of them. And when they find the answer isn't far from zero, they could then start thinking about how to put policy into practice.

I suspect the real Union line is that it's an issue, but not that big an issue. One final quotation: "There can be no doubt that the very painful experiences which many young lesbian, gay and bisexual people can sometimes result in under-performance at school and even in truancy and school refusal."

One final fact, not referred to in this pamphlet: the Samaritans report that five thousand young people attempt suicide each year because of worries about their sexuality. Some succeed.

Wes Webb

The pamphlet *Lesbians and Gays in School* is available free to members from the Equal Opps Unit, NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD, tel: 071-388-6191.

## From a child's point of view

### Not In Front of the Children: Subversive Children's Literature

A book by Alison Lurie  
Cardinal, £4.99

THE TITLE of Alison Lurie's book is really a bit misleading. While it does indeed discuss 'subversive children's literature' in an excellent first chapter, most of the book is really concerned with looking at a number of authors of children's literature whom she considers to have been subversive, to have written books that look at the world from a child's point of view.

Nevertheless it is still a splendid volume; informative, enthusiastic, always entertaining and a delight to read.

Lurie distinguishes two types of children's literature: the improving kind written down to children by adults who know what is good for them and

"another sort of children's literature ... like *Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women*, *Peter Pan* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* ... These were the sacred texts of childhood whose authors had not forgotten what it was like to be a child. To read them was to feel a shock of recognition, a rush of liberating

energy."

She goes on to provide a series of account of individual authors, looking at both their lives and work: Kate Greenaway, Mrs Clifford, Ford Madox Ford, Beatrix Potter, E Nesbit, James Barrie, Frances Hodgson Burnett, AA Milne, JRR Tolkien, TH White, Richard Adams and William Mayne.

There is an enormous amount to be learned from her portraits and they are written in a marvelously entertaining style. Let us look briefly at her discussion of one author: Beatrix Potter.

Potter, Lurie informs us, ninety years ago escaped from prison with the aid of a rabbit, that is, was able to escape from the oppressive tyranny of her Victorian parents by creating Peter Rabbit whose success made her independent and set her free.

She argues very convincingly that in her books Potter "broke completely with the traditional pattern of the animal tale or fable which had always been used to point an improving moral."

Behind a misleading facade of conventional morality, she actually tells her young readers:

"that disobedience and exploration are more fun than good behaviour and

not really all that dangerous whatever mother may say".

Children, she argues, have no problem at all in locating where Potter's sympathies really lie, with Peter Rabbit, Tom Kitten, the Bad Mice, Squirrel Nutkin and the rest of the troublemakers.

Lurie argues that Potter own experiences and feelings inform *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* and *The Tale of Pigling Bland* in a very direct way.

They signify her own rebellion against her appalling parents and escape to an independent existence at Hill Top Farm in the Lake District.

There are also excellent discussions of folk tales and of the impact of fairy stores on modern fiction. This chapter includes a fascinating discussion of *Portnoy's Complaint* as a fairy story.

My only criticism is that I would have liked some discussion of subversive children's literature on a more thematic basis as well as looking at individual authors. More discussion of issues of class, gender and race would have been welcome.

Despite this complaint, the book is essential reading for anyone interested in children's literature and at £4.99 is remarkable value.

## A striking issue

Dear *Lib ED*

This Spring sees the second round of national curriculum tests (Standard Assessment Tests or SATs) for seven year olds. Also, and perhaps more significantly, the 8th and 9th of June will see the first round of SATs for 14 year olds. SATs are an unacceptable attack on the civil liberties of school students who are being forced to take these tests without any choice in the matter. The success of the SAT boycott campaign in Scotland and the experience of the anti-poll tax campaign show that SATs can be opposed effectively and ultimately defeated by ordinary people refusing to co-operate with them. For these reasons I have written a motion which I plan to submit to a general meeting of my Student's Union, calling on it to:

- encourage and support all school teachers and school students who are boycotting SATs and to campaign for others to do the same;
- call a 2 day school strike on the 8th and 9th of June, to coincide with the

SATs for 14 year olds and to ask all students and teachers to join the strike whether they are in primary, secondary or higher education;

- organise demonstrations / alternative activities for the strikers on the 8th and 9th of June and to encourage as many students and teachers as possible to attend them;

- call on York Trade Union Council and other local Students Unions, as well as local school students and teachers, to support the school strike and demonstrations and to become involved in their organisation;

- call on National Union of Students (NUS) National Executive, NUS areas and other Student Unions to organise an All Britain school strike on 8th and 9th of June.

Please give your support to the SAT Boycott / School Strike Campaign and encourage your members / subscribers / readers to help locally to make sure that this campaign is a success. If you have any questions or suggestions, please write to me.

Yours in solidarity  
David Ball  
Derwent College, University of York  
Heslington, York, YO1 5DD

**The Lib ED Collective feel that they need to point out that it would be very unwise for any teacher to take action on their own without the backing of their Trade Union. At present it seems very unlikely that support would be forthcoming from any of the major unions at national level. Individual teachers who strike could find themselves disciplined and most likely sacked for their action. However, if we had a strong syndicalist union in this country things could be very different.**

## Correction

In issue 17/18 of *Lib ED* we published a letter by Maurice Frank under the headline **Prisoners of Conscience**. Unfortunately we misread his original. In the second sentence of the first paragraph a section should read "they allowed me to join despite my denial in writing that" instead of the published "they denied, in writing, that" referring to Amnesty International. We apologise for this error.