

## Groups and Resources

### Lib ED contacts

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

### 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

Unit 2D, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP  
071-226 1633  
(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

36 Kinross Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 7EF  
Helpline: 0926 886828  
(For everyone who practices or supports the right of children to learn without schooling)

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

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

### Bad Attitude

121 Railton Road, Brixton, London  
(A radical women's newspaper intent on overthrowing civilisation as we know it. A sub to this new magazine costs £5)

### 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)

### 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)

### Kate Sharpley Library

BM Hurricane, London WC1 3XX  
(archival centre covering class struggle anarchist tradition)

### National Association for Young People in Care

20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN  
071-284 4793

### 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)

### A K Distribution

22 Luton Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9PE  
(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

### Blackcurrent Otherwise Project

24 St Michaels Avenue, Northampton, NN1 4JQ

### Education Workers Network

PO Box 110, Liverpool, L69 8DP  
(anarcho-syndicalist organisation for education workers)

### Summerhill School

Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY

### Sands School

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

**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 17**

## International

### Global Free School

525-3 Imazu-Machi Takasago-Cho, Takasago City, Japan

### Nonami Children's Village

28-341 Nonami, Tenpaku-cho, Nagoya City, Japan

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

### Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Vidyalyaya

Sawai Ram Singh Road, Jaipur-302 004, India

### Tamariki Free School

Woolston, Christchurch, New Zealand

### SAC (Syndikalisterna)

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

### Familial, Day Nursery Kindergarten

PO Box 2009, Kathmandu, Nepal

### Grupo Impulso Libertario

CC984, 2000 Rosario, Argentina

### Graine d'Ecole

La Paillerie, Avenue de Bardenac, 33600 PESSAC, France

### Les Enfants d'Abord

c/o Nicole et Michel TERILLON, La Souche, 42940 CHATELNEUF, France  
tel: 77 76 84 70

### 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

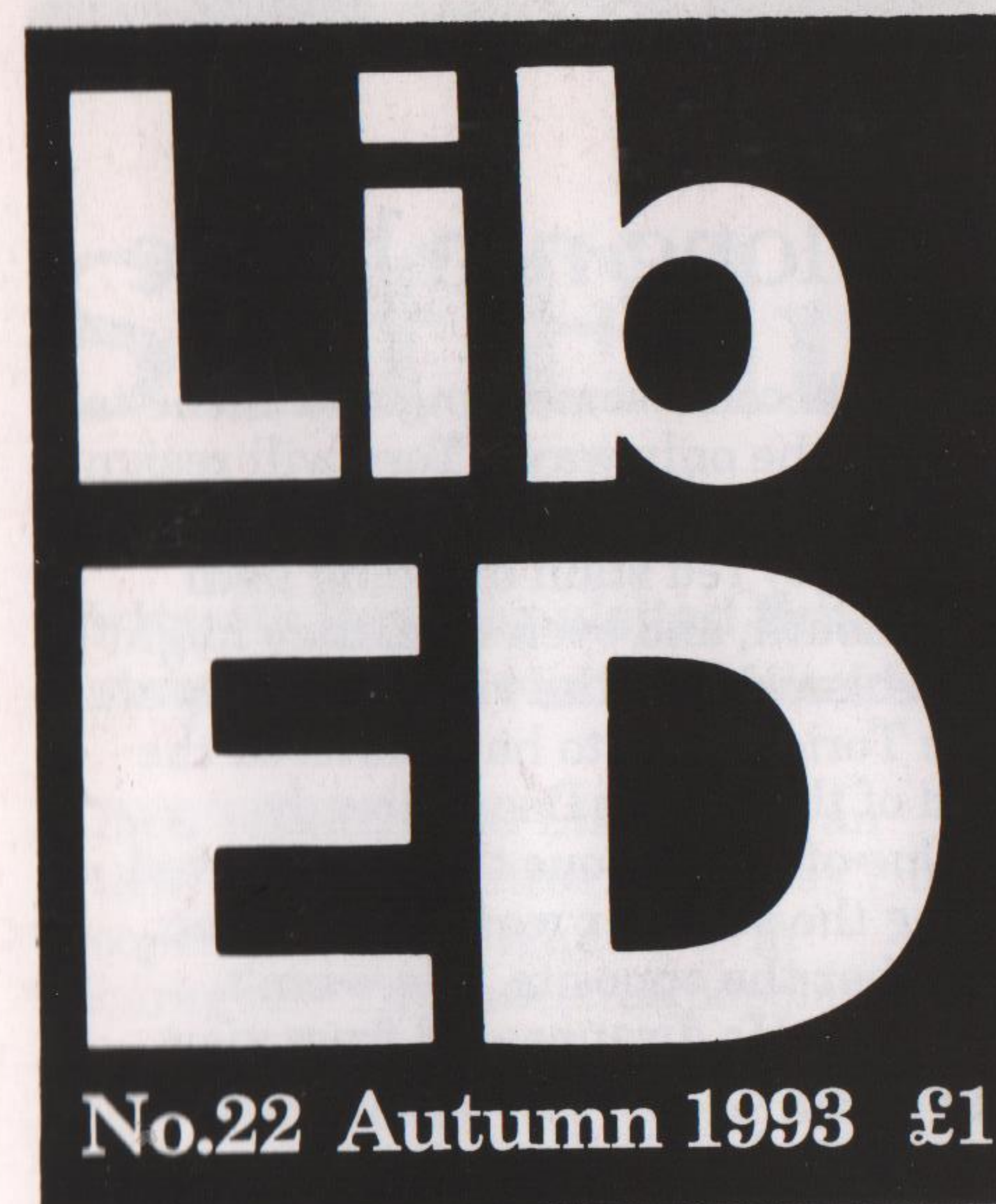
c/Roger de Lluria, 123 pral, 08037 Barcelona, Spain  
tel: 215-7625  
(They publish "Alternative Teacher" in English.)

### Asociacion Antipatriarcal

Apartado Correos 52018, Madrid, Spain

### Free Schools in Vienna

Verein Wiener Alternativschulen, Hofmuhlgasse 2, A-1060 Wien, PO Box 172, Austria



12091  
A magazine for the liberation of learning



## Bob-A-Job

*Future employment prospects for Britain's young people continue to plummet*

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

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## The long run home

IT HAS become something of a cliché to say that the only way a Tory will resign is if they caught with a bloodless virgin and a nasty red stain dripping from their mouth, and even then they might try to blame it on the virgin. However, some Tories seem to have entered the Land of the Living Dead already.

One of the curious things observed during the summer was John Patten. Or rather the opposite. He wasn't observed. He disappeared from view, apparently into a black hole from which he appeared unlikely to re-appear, unless it was to tell us that he needed to spend more time with his family.

According to reports Patten was absent due to illness, specifically viral gastro-enteritis. This peculiar disease is apparently stress-related (perhaps a variety of what is commonly called, "the shits"), stress resulting from the un-ending series of climb-downs over testing and the national curriculum that he has been forced to concede.

One of the undercurrents to this process has been the idea that Patten is "too clever by half", that Patten is a remote intellectual getting his come-uppance. And indeed there is some justification in this. Patten is probably the most intelligent member of the Cabinet, a Don no less, but his actions have shown him to be an incompetent manager, incapable of consultation, and with no coherent view of what is really going on in schools.

This attitude is not uncommon in Britain. The British have always been sceptical of intellectuals, and with good reason as the educated have always been separated from the "unwashed" by the class system. This is all the more prevalent today. The upper and middle classes buy their way out of the impoverished state system. The upwardly mobile are now being encouraged to do the same in the form of direct grant schools.

This opting-out notionally gains educational advantages for the privileged, thereby reinforcing the idea that they are the natural leaders of the country.

However, the advantage to be gained is less one of education and more of improved access to privileged positions of power and work later in life. It is still the case today that more than 50% of senior Whitehall appointments go to Oxbridge graduates. However, we can see in our crumbling surroundings that the education of our 'natural' leaders in no way makes them effective managers.

WRITE TO US AT:  
Phoenix House  
170 Wells Road  
BRISTOL  
BS4 2AG

# Self Education in Nicaragua

Enriqueta Ramirez visited Britain in April 1993 and told us about how women in Wasala, some distance from Matagalpa in the North of Nicaragua are using their own education to arm themselves against repression.

SOME YEARS AGO *Lib ED* ran an article about "Maestros Populares", or "peoples learning organisers" in Nicaragua. The maestros populares were people who could read and who would try to set up local cooperative learning groups.

Enquiries since as to what had happened to this idea have met with gloomy responses. People from and visitors to Nicaragua have shrugged their shoulders when asked about the system and replied "We don't know ... the moneys run out ... the disruption since the elections ... the contras ..."

However there are still some thriving projects and initiatives that give encouragement to the ideas of a genuinely participatory education in the country.

Enriqueta Ramirez herself is from the Dominican Republic but has been living and working in Nicaragua since the early 1980s. During the early years of the Sandinista revolution she was involved in the massive literacy campaign. Recently she has been working with a women's organisation called the Grupo Venancia in Wasala. She has an inspiring air of middle aged confidence and enthusiasm for the work she is helping to enable.

Wasala is in an area that has little money from coffee, cocoa, cattle and wood exploitation. It has large scale problems not least from the ex-Contras who have settled there, the level of post war violence and the economic problems that stem from the fact of it being a remote mountain zone some three hours from Matagalpa by bus, followed by six hours on horseback. All the women were illiterate but were not able to even participate in the famous Sandinista literacy programme. Neo-liberalism has led to the plundering of the forest for export: this has led local people to start planting trees for their firewood. What they have done also is to redesign cooking stoves to be more efficient and emit less smoke which gets in their eyes in their small one roomed accommodation. They have also planted closer to their homes so that they do not have so far to go for wood.

These collectives of women have also taken action to improve local drinking water and run a literacy programme based on women and health. These

have matured into women's study groups.

They start with where women are: thus last year they looked at "Women and the Bible", starting with "What is the Bible to you?" After that they moved on to the question of what it is to be a woman. The initial way of doing this was to start by drawing themselves; moving on to draw their own bodies in detail so that each woman would get to



know and understand their own body. They followed this by drawing themselves in clothes and looking at the positive and negative aspects of themselves. It was important to emphasise positive aspects as a way to raise their self esteem and self evaluation as women.

It was at this stage that they were able to start talking about topics such as violence and jealousy that really touch their lives.

Having looked at themselves and their problems they were able to come up with their own ideas of what they wanted: answers to the problems of land, economy and violence.

Violence is a harsh reality to these women. In that area, from October to March there had been one violently killed woman every week due to jealousy, rape or politics. The women demonstrated in Matagalpa and managed to pressurise the government into instituting a Commission of Enquiry into Violence against Women - because most acts of violence are being committed on women, and what is more

they are being committed with impunity.

The causes of the violence are economic and political. The local Contra were never disarmed and the redistribution of land in the area was never properly undertaken for the simple reason that it was a dangerous war zone. The cooperatives have some land that the Contra are trying to seize from them. The Banks will not give them credit as a cooperative, and local military structures are very much alive.

Men's reactions locally to the Women's Study Groups have been mixed. Many have said that women should not study these things. However there is apparently some support and there is even a men's group in Managua (capital of Nicaragua) that is starting to work on the idea of masculinity, starting with the idea of reclaiming repressed emotions, such as are embodied in the notion that "Men don't cry".

The criticism has been made that the Sandinista revolution did nothing to change women's lives, which is why many may have voted for Violetta Chamorro's right wing UNO Party during the elections that tipped the Sandinistas out of power. Enriqueta responds to this by saying that she herself is a Sandinista and that a cultural revolution takes a long time to get going, especially as most social processes were put off "hasta ... (until) the end of the war".

Answering the suggestion that the Sandinistas have drifted to the right she says that the struggle is within the Sandinista Party. When they went to the leadership with demands they were given a five point agenda worked out for them by men: "It was necessary to respectfully oppose that" she says.

There is evidence of hard and useful work in the women's groups based on the women's real experiences. She says that the work has its basis in the ideas of Paulo Freire: "You take action, you reflect, and then take further action." It is an educational project based in the political, economic, cultural and physical environment that addresses real needs. Certainly the local book on herbal medicines, the journals of the discussion groups and the literacy book "In Our Own Words" produced by the Women's Group are inspirational achievements.

# Chocolate, Crisps and Coke

Sarah Loutfi dines out

ON ENTERING the school canteen, I look along the rows of trays laid out on the metal hot plates. Chips, beans, more chips, pizzas, soft drinks and sweets. Not a lot of choice for the healthy eater. At the back of the canteen there are two machines, at which crowds of pupils gather to purchase more sweets, more soft drinks, more chocolate, to last them until they get home.

The effect all this sugar, fat and grease has on a healthy body of a child, is one thought I do not relish. About a month ago, an Ulster girl nearly died of scurvy because her diet consisted of only chocolate, crisps and coke.

So why, with the increase of young people becoming affected by diabetes,

hyperactivity and allergies, don't schools provide their pupils with meals that are nutritious and healthy? The answer is simple. Fast foods, soft drinks and sweets are advertised glamorously as good food on television, therefore every aspect of the unhealthy system must be enforced into schools. It is far more profitable for a school to sell junk food expensively, than for it to sell good food cheaply. In our school, the canteen is crowded, dirty, expensive and unhygienic. Myths of the 'school kitchen rat' did not originate from nowhere.

Perhaps what is needed is for schools to think more about the students than about dangerous money making schemes. Kids serve a twelve

year sentence from the age of 5, spending most of their time at school. Therefore it is vital, in order to remain healthy, for them to eat, drink and live healthily. The atmosphere, conditions, food and hygiene in most schools are a long way away from supplying these important necessities.

Many outside companies invest in schools by providing school canteens with their products. Companies are more likely to sell food that will have a market ie: junk. This makes canteen selection very limited, and the meals are often unbalanced. No fresh fruit, or vegetables are provided in many schools, making the diets of many of today's school children very far from healthy.

# Megadrive mania

Eddie Newsinger says that whenever anything exciting comes along some grown-ups just have to find some way to spoil it.

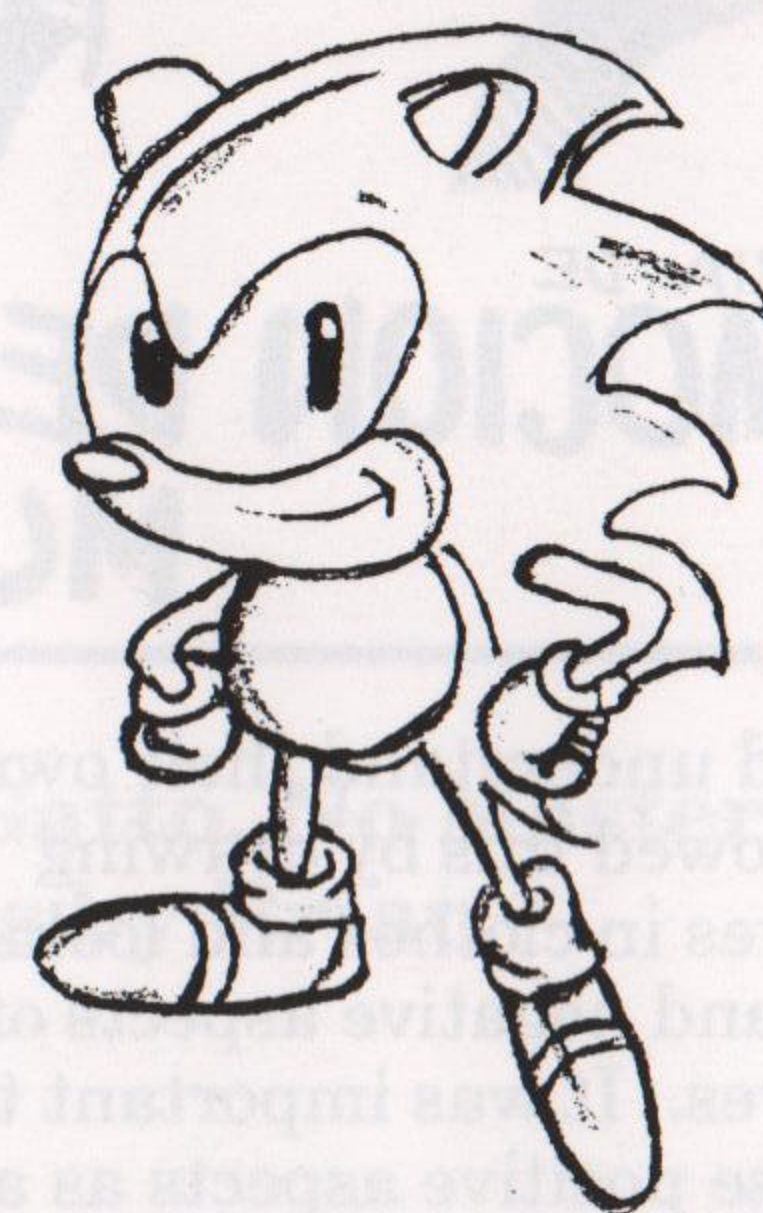
LAST CHRISTMAS computer games accounted for more than half of all toy sales. The two biggest video game producers, Sega and Nintendo, are reported to have sold around 3 million games systems each. The most popular Sega game, Sonic the Hedgehog, has sold 3.8 million copies and earned £130 million. The new Sonic Two game had advanced sales of 750,000. This shows how popular these games are.

Some experts think that kids are showing signs of addiction to computer games. Kids are spending most of their time playing these games when they should be doing other things like reading encyclopaedias and being basically boring. Whenever something exciting happens some grown-ups just have to find some way to spoil it.

Cary Cooper, a Professor, claims that most kids who watch video games a lot copy what they see. This is a load of rubbish. Games are for having fun. They are completely unrealistic. They are just moving pictures like out of a comic book. All you do is press buttons. Kids don't just copy everything they see. We're not stupid.

I'm going to tell you about three of the most popular games for the Sega Megadrive: Sonic Two, Echo the Dolphin and Streets of Rage Two.

Sonic Two is about a blue spiky hedgehog (he doesn't look anything like



a hedgehog but never mind). He has a friend called Two Tails who you've probably guessed has two tails. He is a fox. They have to go through loads of levels, rescuing animals and stopping the evil Robotnik from turning the world into a huge junkyard.

The game is about saving the environment. As you can see, the most popular best selling game is completely the opposite from beating up bad guys.

The graphics are tremendous, especially the Sonic character itself. The backgrounds are very detailed and look very good. The animation is as smooth and user-friendly as a good cartoon. I would give this game 94%.

Echo the Dolphin has been one of the most popular games this year. Echo's family are whisked away by a huge storm; Echo escapes and then has to rescue them. The sheer quality of the

animation in this game shows exactly how a dolphin moves. It's not just an exciting game but involves various skills such as using your brain to solve problems and, of course, hand and eye co-ordination. The problems that you have to solve are so difficult that my dad couldn't get off the first level. Again the graphics are wicked and most grown-ups are amazed at how good they are. I think one of the reasons the game is so popular is that it appeals to girls and boys. I would give this game 94%.

The last game is Streets of Rage Two. This is a beat-them-up game. You can pick from four characters with various different moves. They have to battle their way through the various levels, fighting the Level Guardians. This is a very violent game but the violence is completely unrealistic and any kid that tried to copy it would find it impossible. Some of the things they do are ridiculous, but it is only a game. The game has four settings that make it harder and the hardest setting is impossible to complete. I would give this game 93%.

The problem with these games is they're too flipping expensive. You could walk off with these games at £40 a piece but they only cost £10 to make. Sega must be making money hand over fist. Still you should get a couple of months play out of them.

# Future tracks

THE DEATH of Robert Westall in April 1993 deprives us of one of the most important postwar writers of children's and juvenile fiction. Beginning with *The Machine Gunners*, Westall produced a succession of outstanding novels, that includes *The Scarecrows*, *Blitzcat*, *Urn Burial* and *Futuretrack 5*. He ranged from naturalistic stories to ghost stories, from cat stories to science fiction. Here we shall remember his contribution by looking at one particular novel, *Futuretrack 5*, a novel that first appeared in 1983 and was very much a response to mass unemployment and Thatcherism.

The novel is set in a future Britain where the Establishment has successfully crushed the working class, replacing their labour power with robots and confining them to inner city ghettos. Outside the ghettos, the upper class Est live a privileged life of luxury and ease, protected by the Ghurka paramils; inside the Unems live short brutal lives characterised by poverty, malnutrition and violent crime.

The story opens with Henry Kitson, head boy at an Est boarding school, falling foul of the authorities because of his failure to conform. Instead of graduating into the Est elite, he finds

himself appointed as a Technician, one of the key personnel who operate and programme the system. Eventually, he defects and escapes into Unem territory.

Much of the rest of the novel is concerned with his dangerous quest to find out why the country is run the way it is, together with his relationship with the Unem motorbike champion, Keri. What Kitson discovers is that the Unems are in the process of being exterminated. Their reproduction is being chemically interfered with so that they have a sharply declining birth rate and their environment is being made as inhospitable as possible so that they die of disease, starvation, neglect and violent crime. Life expectancy for the Unems is falling.

Some semblance of hope is on offer however: the Futuretracks. There are a number of government sponsored avenues to fame and fortune: prostitution, fighting, sport, gambling and entertainment. These are intended to separate out the more energetic Unems so they don't become a threat. Any resistance is crushed by the Paramils and their psychopters.

All this, the novel makes clear, is a deliberate, calculated revenge for what the working class, Scargill and the

miners, the car workers, did in the 1970s.

Once extinct the Unems will be replaced by a docile, contented rural working class that is being specially bred on what amount to reservations with their social and cultural behaviour closely monitored by Est anthropologists. They will be the domestic servants and retainers for the Est gentry.

The novel is on one level an exciting adventure story but on another it is a savage, bitter attack on Tory policies in the early 1980s and today. Westall's anger regularly boils to the surface.

One quite justified criticism often made of Westall is his failure to create active female characters and his celebration of a very traditional masculinity. Certainly he was aware of this criticism and in this novel, in the shape of Keri, tried to meet it. The effort is only partially successful: first of all, despite her toughness, Keri is very much a stereotypical figure and secondly, Kitson quickly becomes the dominant partner with her just tagging along.

Despite this critical reservation, Robert Westall was a fine novelist who will be sadly missed.

# Back Issues Offer

Now in its 25th 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 £1.30 (inc. p&p) (*Lib EDs* 7 and 9 to 14 are £1 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 7 and 9 to 21. We can also supply photocopies of articles published in all out-of-print issues of *Libertarian Teacher/Education/Lib ED*. Please send an sae for full details. (*Overseas friends, please send an additional £4 to cover higher postage*)

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| 20    | Summerhill on Channel4 TV, Grades for Gullibility, Illich and Anarchism part III (£1.30)                  |
| 21    | Woodcraft Folk special feature, Testing in schools (£1.30)  |

## Don't miss the new Lib ED...

The next issue of *Lib ED* will be in a new style with more than 48 pages. It will be the first publication in a new annual programme consisting of one larger journal/magazine and two newsletters. The newsletters will only be available to subscribers. Our ordinary year's sub costs £4 (inland), £8 (overseas in sterling), or US\$16 (otherwise), and represent considerable savings on the cover price. See below for other attractive packages too. To ensure that you don't miss any of the future issues we suggest that you fill in the subscription form, write a cheque and post it to us TODAY!

IN THE BUMPER edition to be published in December there will be a special focus on play with articles on theme parks, playgrounds, child-led play, play in the early years and more. Other items will include a discussion of what libertarian education is and a feature on learning about the Holocaust.

### 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, 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).

### PUBLISHING INFO

Libertarian Education is a publisher of a small selection of books including *Free School: The White Lion Experience* by Nigel Wright (£3.95/US\$9) and *No Master High or Low: Libertarian Education and Schooling 1890-1990* by John Shotton (£7.95/US\$15). If ordering by post, please add 85p/US\$3 for postage and packing.

### A do-it-yourself guide

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

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- 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 (US\$9) plus 85p(US\$3) towards postage and packing.

Overseas friends please note: please send a bank draft in sterling.

### A history

The path to a compulsory education system, the emergence of selective schooling, and the fight for comprehensive education in Britain are all issues that have been charted by educational historians. What they have missed is the history of the dissenting tradition, one that questions the whole notion of a state system. John Shotton, in *No Master High or Low* has attempted to rectify that situation.

Colin Ward writes in the introduction: "He makes no claim that cannot be backed up by evidence, and he looks especially for the evidence provided by children rather than by propagandists. He draws us into unexplored territory and reminds us that experiment is the oxygen of education."

As the debate about educational standards and uniformity intensifies, John Shotton's book suggests that libertarian experiments have a successful track record. If you haven't purchased this important book, send for it today.

### CONFERENCE '94

The next *Lib ED* conference will be held on Saturday 14 May 1994, so make a date in your diary now!

The venue will be the Friends' Meeting House in Queens Road, Leicester and the day's events will start at 10.30am.

For further details, please write to the *Lib ED* address marking your envelope *CONFERENCE '94*.

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*Much of the focus on Education has been on the National Curriculum, and on English teaching in particular. Here we bring together a series of articles which explore the issues.*

## Standard English: 'it be dysfunctional'; or 'it's f\*cked'

### Linguistic imperialism reaches English playgrounds.

AT LAST it's official: teachers are to be encouraged to intervene at all times if they hear children using non-standard forms of English in the playground or anywhere else. And not only that, but half of the country seems to be celebrating this call for excessive pedantry and linguistic imperialism without having any recourse to linguistic or social fact.

The reasons for the government to call for this standardisation of language are sinister, even conspiratorial: as with anything else in John Major's classless society, appearances account for everything. If we all speak the same, we can pretend that we all have the same equality of opportunity, wealth and health, the same culture and social aspirations; and, as in Orwell's 1984, we can accept a sanitised and standardised view of history and society.

Most people learn to speak their mother tongue with reasonable fluency by the age of about five. This language will be very similar to that of their family, peer group and community. It will be absolutely sufficient for the needs of that speech community. If it is inadequate to deal with a new situation, it will develop by adopting from other speech communities or by developing its own words or systems.

It is a historical accident that Standard English (S.E.) happens to have developed from the dialect spoken in the Northern Home Counties of Southern England. It is, however, no accident that the standard is that of the middle and upper classes, since it is they who define the standard in the first place.

S.E. is linguistically neither superior nor inferior to any other dialect of English, but there exist a lot of social value judgements which are attached to language and these tend to favour the powerful and wealthy.

Language tends to be something which we all have strong feelings about because it is something very closely

bound up with who we are, how we communicate with others and how we are perceived. Any form of punishment has the potential to damage and to cause insecurity; to tell someone that their language (and therefore their family, their peers and community) is inadequate or simply 'wrong' is essentially to criticise that person for being who they are.

Such attitudes may completely turn someone off any activities associated with language-use (reading, writing, speaking to anyone but the closest of acquaintances), thus perpetuating trends of educational failure for speakers of a non-standard variety (particularly working class and Black people).

To have complete control over your own language and the confidence to use it is to have control over your environment. Feelings of personal power and confidence are central to our abilities to learn and to improve and change our personal situations. If we feel powerful, we can change the world.

Some people do have language and communication problems, but very few of these are physiological. For the most part they are created by a lack of self-confidence or psychological insecurity caused by other people and the values of society.

Who's the slovenly/lazy/ignorant etc. speaker now?

Claims that S.E. is in some way more expressive than a non-standard variety are obviously unfounded, as a quick look at the title of this piece will reveal. It is just more common to see S.E. using more formal vocabulary in print!

So what about claims that S.E. is historically more correct? Consider the sentence 'I heated the soup up.' Any speaker of S.E. would have no problem with this, and might even claim that 'I het the soup up' was incorrect. However, the latter is an older form of English which still exists in some

varieties. S.E. has diverged, regularising the verb, and has only retained the 'het up' form with regard to moods and anger.

And then of course there are those hoary old chestnuts about pronunciation and remaining faithful to the written form (concerning accent rather than dialect). I don't think we need to go into these here, except to ask: "If 'h-dropping' is wrong, how do you (and the Queen) pronounce the word 'hour'? And what about the consonant at the end of that word? (Do you even have a consonant there in most contexts?)"

In New York English, 'r-dropping' is as socially stigmatised as 'h-dropping' in the UK simply because of the speech communities associated with this feature. The writing system of English is an accepted representation of speech, and has developed certain features of its own. It is not 'the English language' any more than that dialect called S.E. is.

But if we accept that all language is equal, won't we have problems understanding each other?

No. Newspapers, books, T.V. and radio provide us with a standard which it may be useful to be able to use and understand. People in Newcastle, Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Cardiff and London seem to watch Neighbours, John Wayne films and The News without any problems of comprehension.

If we need it, we learn it quickly, enough as we did with our first language(s). It is surely more important to have confidence and mastery in our own first language and then to build on

## Authors spurn school list

**W**E are writers whose names or works have been put on the new English National Curriculum lists.

We would like to dissociate ourselves from these lists for the following reasons:

1) In a democratic society, the distribution of literature is informed by open debate. This enables readers to engage with the arguments recommending or disapproving of any given work. However, this list comes without any critical commentary and yet it is armed with commands that our books should be read. We reject this authoritarian approach to reading.

2) The compilers, though acting as literary arbiters, are largely anonymous and inaccessible, so distancing themselves from open debate.

3) These lists will not contribute to teachers' understanding and enthusiasm for literature as their choice of books in schools would largely be a consequence of obeying orders from on high.

4) No matter how flexible these lists may seem to be, they dictate a view of what a

national literary heritage ought to be. They are unrepresentative of many cultural traditions that have prevailed in the past or are important today. In any case, we reject the attempt to use literature to express notions of a national heritage when writing has always consisted of a mosaic of international traditions and forms.

5) If we are "approved" authors, then by implication, other writers are "not approved". We do not wish to be part of such a blanket, uncritical rejection of fellow writers.

6a) These lists are part of the new education policy which involves: i) a crude enforcement of spoken and written standard English, which incidentally, was tried before the last war and failed then.

ii) testing at 7,11, and 14 in order to stream children and select them for the new grammar schools. This approach has also been tried in the past and was seen to reject and fail the majority of children.

iii) testing, streaming and selection as a means by which large numbers of children receive less attention and fewer resources.

6b) We resent the fact that our work has been co-opted for these policies.

7) If authors and works are to be recommended to teachers — or for that matter rejected — then there are other ways of doing so, more in spirit with literature itself. There is, at present, a public and open discussion about books for children being conducted in universities, conferences, seminars, critical works, journals, associations and parent organisations. If money is to be spent on aiding the reading of books in schools, then it would be much better directed at encouraging what is already in place, assisting the circulation of information and raising the profile of all literature written expressly for, or simply suitable for, young people of all ages.

Joan Aiken, Antonia Barber, Jill Bennett, Ruth Brown, Helen Cresswell, Kevin Crossley-Holland, Michael Foreman, Leon Garfield, Grace Hallworth, Gene Kemp, Clive King, Michelle Magorian, Beverly Naidoo, Brian Patten, Henry Pluckrose, Michael Rosen, Ian Serailier, Catherine Storr.

Letter in the Guardian

that as and when we need to, than to be judged, criticised, graded and marked as soon as we get to school (and often before) against an arbitrarily imposed standard.

Language is constantly changing, although the English spoken in Britain has slowed down its change as mass literacy has increased. The written form

will always be more conservative than the spoken, but both are changing all the time. Essentially there is nothing that we can do to stop language changing, but we can adopt more positive attitudes to our own and other people's modes of expression.

As they say in Standard French: Vive la différence!

## A taste of his own medicine

John Patten, the Secretary of State for Education, is much concerned about the state of English teaching in the country. His own English, however, does not appear to be as good as it should be. David Gribble delivers his conclusive verdict. If he is really serious about standards, then he ought to resign.

JOHN PATTEN wrote an article about religious education in *The Tablet* (10 October 1992) of which these are the final two paragraphs:

*But many parents may themselves have no particular belief. And at some schools, parents of the children at the school may between them hold a lot of different religious beliefs. So schools need to try to acknowledge them all. And in all cases, schools need to communicate to parents what their ethos involves, and to ask parents' support for what the school is trying to do in this area.*

*I recognise that this is not always easy, and it must be a failing of previous generations that some parents seem to want to ignore their own responsibilities with regard to the moral education of their children. We should aim through education to try to correct these failings and so to fulfil the wider challenge provided by the Education Reform Act, that education must promote the spiritual and moral development not just of pupils but of society as well. In the end, our excellent and hard-pressed teachers sometimes have to pick up the moral pieces. We should be grateful to them for trying.*

These paragraphs contain errors that would cost Patten a great many marks in an English test.

- 1: All four sentences in the first paragraph begin with co-ordinating conjunctions. If the full-stops are removed the whole paragraph can be made into one awkward sentence, but the "but" at the beginning remains an error even then.
- 2: Consider the phrase "At some schools, parents of the children at the school." It should presumably read "Parents of the children at some schools."
- 3: "A lot of" is unexpectedly colloquial for an article of this type.
- 4: "In all cases" seems a curious choice of phrase - in all cases of what? I think "always" is what Patten intended.
- 5: Schools do not need to explain what their ethos involves, they need to explain what it is.
- 6: Instead of the clumsy phrase "what the school is trying to do in this area" Patten should have written "it".
- 7: The word "this" at the beginning of the second paragraph has no clear antecedent. I at first thought it must refer to communicating the school's ethos, as asking for the parents' support could hardly be seen as difficult. I finally realised that what Patten probably meant was enlisting the parents' support, an activity that is not mentioned at all.
- 8: Patten seems to use the word "failing" to mean "consequence of a failure." It does not mean this.
- 9: In the first sentence of the second paragraph the words "seem to want to" and the word "own" are redundant, as are the words "to try" in the next sentence.
- 10: In this sentence Patten again uses the word "failing", this time in the plural. He seems to be referring to the failure of parents to take responsibility for their children's moral education, but perhaps I have misunderstood him.
- 11: It is not possible to correct a failing (or a failure) of a previous generation; all you can do is compensate for it. What Patten actually means in this sentence is far from clear.
- 12: When Patten reaches the word "challenge" he makes three distinct errors. You do not fulfil a challenge, you meet it; the Education Reform Act does not provide a challenge, it presents one; you cannot have a challenge that something should happen, you have a challenge to make something happen.
- 13: What does "In the end" mean, in the second-last sentence?
- 14: "Pick up the moral pieces" is a loose metaphor. What he appears

to mean is "take up the task of inculcating moral values where parents have failed." This amendment also clarifies the dubious "sometimes" earlier in the sentence.

15: In the last sentence the words "should be" implies that in fact we are not grateful. Patten means "are".

16: "For trying" at the end of the sentence is either redundant or insulting. It is clear from the tone of the passage that it was not intended to be the latter.

I worked with an English advisory teacher to produce this clearer version of what Patten apparently wanted to say:

*Parents of the children at some schools may hold a wide range of religious beliefs, including even the belief that religion is of no importance. Schools must be aware of this. Each school will have to explain its particular ethos to parents, and ask them to support it.*

*I recognise that it is not always easy to win parents' support. Previous generations may have failed to teach some of them about their responsibility for the moral education of their children.*

*We should aim to remind them of this responsibility, and so meet the Education Reform Act's wider challenge, which is to promote the spiritual and moral development not only of our school-children but also of our society.*

*At present our excellent and hard-pressed teachers have to take up the task of inculcating moral values when parents have failed. We are grateful to them.*

If Patten were fourteen years old I would not feel any indignation at his mistakes, but he has had a university education, he has taught at a university, he is the Secretary of State for Education and he keeps complaining about falling standards in English. Either standards matter or they don't. He can't have it both ways. If they matter he ought to resign.

## HONEST JOHN'S CLASSLESS SOCIETY... A Chemistry lab in the N.E. of England



# The indecent haste of Patten's revolution

Does the National Curriculum discriminate against working class children? Teacher Ian Roberts argues that it does.

IN AN ARTICLE in *The Independent* (5/4/93), writing no doubt from one of the ivory towers that pass for ministerial offices these days, John Patten referred to the "now universal support for the National Curriculum".

One almost has to admire the sheer arrogance and cynicism of such a remark. Perhaps Patten had not read the *Sunday Times* only the day before in which Professor Brian Cox (in the past a supporter and formulator of Conservative educational reforms) unequivocally stated that "The National Curriculum Council must be completely rejected".

Perhaps, too, Patten had forgotten how his own Inspectorate were regularly expressing "serious doubts" about his masterplan.

Be it amnesia or myopia, Patten's article ignored the current boycotting by teachers' unions of the Standard Attainment Tests on which the whole project hangs - a boycott supported, mark, by headteachers' organisations which are hardly a leftwing force for the counterculture.

Then, of course, there have been the protests by parents' groups - but as these have been dubbed by Patten as "neanderthals" one can understand how their inarticulate gruntings might have slipped his mind.

## 1,400 targets

Whatever else it may be, the National Curriculum with its 1,400 classroom targets, is a mess of breathtakingly convoluted proportions.

In English for example, there are ten Levels (replacing the GCSE grades) each of which include half a dozen or so criteria - but that's just for writing. Then there are speaking, listening, reading, spelling, grammar and presentation - all with their own Levels and attendant criteria.

The head of department at the school where I work, a diligent soul, tried to condense and assimilate it all and came up with a handy little checklist of 122 points for his staff to refer to when marking each assignment. Far from gathering a "now universal support", John Patten is about as popular in Britain as is his namesake Chris in China.

But is it just because of the indecent haste of Patten's revolution? In many schools coursework is, in the space of one year, being slashed from 100% to 20%. Or is it the hopelessly overdue arrival of materials, the dismal efforts to clarify the labyrinthine assessment procedures, or the unworkable extra workload heaped onto confused teachers?

All of these factors, yes - but there is something else.

It is becoming increasingly plain that in the subject of English, the National Curriculum is likely to produce a sinister effect, come the results of the first exams in 1994, with the switch from grades to Levels.

The English curriculum cannot be practically applied without at best, setting classes or, at worst, streaming them rather than teaching children in mixed ability groups. How else can the division of students into the Higher and Foundation categories for examination be achieved?

Samples of students' writing circulated to English departments around the country grimly demonstrate that work formerly deemed to be neat, reasonably well organised and technically competent as well as imaginative is no longer to be adjudged a solid 'D', far less a potential 'C' grade, but a Level 5 - or the equivalent of a grade 'F'.

The Higher tier exam operates at a base Level 6 and whilst Levels 6 and 7 - supposedly equivalent to grades 'C' 'D' and 'E' - might initially appear to widen the Higher band and increase the numbers of students attaining prestigious results, it soon becomes obvious after consulting the multifarious criteria that exactly the reverse is more likely to happen.

In fact, the National Curriculum, certainly in the subject of English, seems designed - under all its rhetoric and bureaucratic complexity - to radically cull the amount of students achieving 'C' grade or above.

From now on it looks as if conspicuous virtues in students' writing may have to be ignored whilst petty vices are savagely penalised.

At its craziest it will produce outlandish anomalies: a mature student at my school last year for instance, who

earned an A-Level grade 'A', would now struggle - due to a few spelling and punctuation errors and a failure to present joined-up handwriting - to end up with a National Curriculum Foundation Level 5!

As a consequence, the National Curriculum will restrict the flow of young people into A-Level and degree education.

This brings me to an issue which has preoccupied teachers of English for many years. When, they kept asking, would the archaic A-Level exams be reorganised in a way that would relevantly reflect the changes wrought over the rest of the curriculum?

## Quantum leap

Instead of being a natural, logical progression, sixth-form education was all too often a quantum leap across a great gulf of academic expectation.

Where GCSE involved a healthy variety of written and oral skills both creative and formal, A-Level offered little or no scope for personal, creative or oral expression.

In fact, A-Level English might as well be retitled Writing Essays About Books By Mainly Dead People Usually From Oxbridge.

The National Curriculum represents a daring attempt by the government to resolve this dichotomy: instead of adapting A-Levels, it is bringing the whole curriculum into line with the antiquated, elitist preconceptions of the traditional A-Level structure!

The Tories refuse to acknowledge the enormous changes in the lifestyle and leisure-patterns of children which have occurred over the last twenty years. These changes have altered the way children perceive and practise reading and writing skills.

The Tories prefer to blame 'falling standards' on schools - or rather state schools because the National Curriculum is not, in any true sense of the phrase, 'national'. It does not apply to the private sector of the education service in That Nice Mr. Major's Classless Society.

It is clearly the intention of this government to reduce the qualifications and expectations of young working-class people.

# One, two, three ... testing, testing, testing.

9.00 Rush into Boss Patten's office with news of the NUT's ballot result on boycotting the tests and catch him practising Churchillian poses in front of the full length mirror he has had installed. Most embarrassing.

I tell the Boss the bad news and he throws a tantrum.

"Why me! Why me!", he sobs. "Kent Clarke told me I could do what I liked at Education and no one could stop me. I can still remember his exact words: teachers are so dumb that if you piss on them they think its raining. And now I'm ruined. Bloody teachers! I hate them! I hate them! I hate them!" He stamps his foot and flounces around the room.

I can't say I blame him. The trouble with teachers is they're so unpredictable. Take English teachers. You can cut their pay, worsen their conditions, lie about them on television and generally shit on them from a great height. But interfere with their bloody poetry and all hell breaks loose!

"Now everyone's attacking me," he moans on, "even the *Daily Telegraph* says I'm not good enough for the job. They ask here how I got to become an Oxford don after only getting a mediocre 2-2. It says that I was a champion brown-noser."

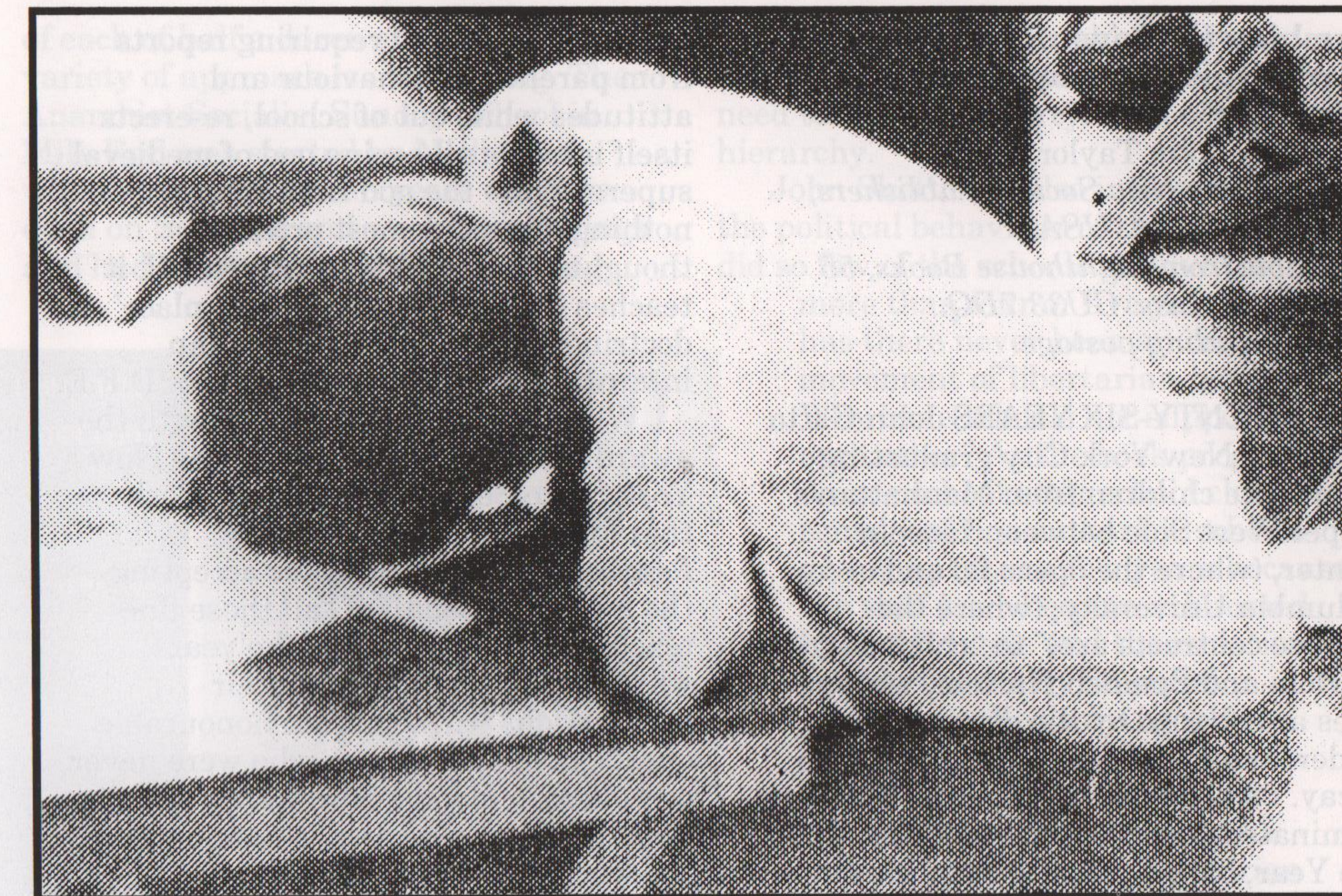
The Boss sobs and blows his nose into his handkerchief leaving a large brown stain.

"Well I'm going on TV tonight. I shall confound my opponents with some new initiatives. You wait and see."

"Don't worry Boss," I tell him, "we're all right behind you."

10.00 I begin sorting out likely applicants for Boss Patten's job ready for the forthcoming reshuffle. First in the pile is David Mellor. Dynamic, intelligent, close personal friend of the Major. Hmmm, supposed to have sexual magnetism. That would certainly be an asset with the nation's mums, although personally I imagine having sex with him would be like fucking a pig. Chelsea strip or not! Knows sod all about education. A definite possibility.

Next, Virginia Lobotomy. She has certainly proven herself one of the regime's most accomplished liars, no mean achievement when you consider the competition. Nevertheless the strain of presiding over the destruction of the NHS, of being responsible for so much pain and suffering, has taken its toll. She has become increasingly shrill



and repetitive. Her whole performance has been coarsened and her credibility is definitely on the wane. She's a bit dubious on illegitimate pregnancies as well.

What of the others?

Michael Bordello: he wants to privatise all the schools. Who would want to buy them, I ask you?

Michael Heseltine: he wants to close all the schools down and import children from abroad.

And then there's Kent Clarke. Ah! There's a note on his file: NOT TO BE TRUSTED WITH ANY MONEY.

12.00 Meeting with Sir Ron Hearing-Aid, the stooge brought in by the Boss to try and con the teachers. I tell him what findings the Boss wants his independent enquiry to come up with. The poor old sod doesn't know what he's in for. Only stupid rats jump onto sinking ships.

1.00 Relax with the latest issue of CLASSROOM WAR. If you believe these anarchist scum the Government can't do anything right. Still there's an amusing joke: What is the difference between a rat and a deputy head? One lives in the sewers, is ridden with disease and eats shit while the other is some kind of lovable, harmless rodent!

6.00 The Boss is being interviewed on the news. He has on his usual Cheshire Prat grin completely oblivious to the tide of shit that is lapping around his chin.

"But surely, Minister," he is being asked, "if three out of ten school-leavers can't read, this is a massive indictment of government education policy over the last fourteen years."

"Good Lord, no," he replies, "those figures aren't really true, we made them up."

"Will this year's tests take place?" he is asked.

"Yes, indeed. The tests are perfectly sound and will go ahead as planned no matter what. We will not let a few hundred thousand teacher extremists stop us raising standards. Parents are right behind me on this, at least my own are. Moreover as a gesture of goodwill we are changing the tests next year so that all the problems we have had with them can be ironed out.

Not, of course, that there is anything wrong with them this year that really requires changing. On top of that Sir Ron Hearing-Aid who knows nothing at all about education is conducting an independent enquiry which will soon recommend the changes that I decided on this morning. And, of course, most important, my career is on the line on this one."

Surely not even the British people can fall for this load of bollocks!

NEXT ISSUE: Sir Norman Fowler becomes Secretary of State for Education and Group 4 wins the contract for school security. This is just a coincidence and not the slightest bit corrupt. Massive rise in truancy occurs overnight.

# Teaching children to know their place

## Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling

A book by John Taylor Gatto.  
Published by New Society Publishers,  
Philadelphia PA, USA.  
Available from Lighthouse Books, 55  
Mint Road, Liss. GU33 7DQ.  
£5.95 including postage.

FOR TWENTY-SIX YEARS John Gatto taught in New York City graduating from "elite children from Manhattan's Upper West Side between Lincoln Center, (where the opera is) and Columbia University, (where the defense contracts are)" to "children from Harlem and Spanish Harlem, whose lives are shaped by the dangerous undercurrents of the industrial city in decay." At the end of this period he was nominated New York State Teacher of the Year, before retiring from the state system to continue his work and ideas with the Albany Free School.

The book consists of four essays preceded by a biographical note and an introductory (essay entitled *The Seven-Lesson Schoolteacher*, his) summary, under seven headings, of the functions of the teacher in state schools. This summary is the armature on which the rest of the book is shaped.

Gatto claims that school has nothing to do with teaching children to think for themselves, to develop curiosity or the power to sustain effort. School creates confusion and indifference in children by its system of breaking up the day into fixed periods and by interrupting whatever is going on by a bell; saying, in effect, that however interesting the lesson or the teacher, nothing matters except getting to another place, with another teacher, for another lesson, because that is what is required by administration.

School creates emotional and intellectual dependence by giving to the teacher the arbitrary power to say 'right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'bad' about behaviour and work, whereas free children can find these things out for themselves through the consequences that follow. A child who makes a rabbit-hutch that lets in the rain, does not have to be told that the hutch does not work, but he is now more ready to listen to advice on how to make it properly.

School makes the self-esteem of the pupil dependent on behaving in ways that conform to the school's demands, and by exercising constant surveillance

even to the point of requiring reports from parents on behaviour and attitudes while out of school, re-erects itself into the all-seeing god of medieval superstition - the god from whom nothing, even our most private thoughts, can be hidden. Above all, it teaches children to 'know their place' - a doctrine recently discovered in an internal memorandum of our own D.F.E.

When Gatto was presented with the award on 31 January 1990 by the New York State Senate he made a speech that forms the first essay, *The Psychopathic School*. After accepting the award on behalf of "all those fine teachers I've known over the years who've struggled to make their transactions with children honourable ones, ("men and women who were never complacent, always questioning, always wrestling to define and re-define what the word 'education' should mean")."

He went on to point out, within the following three paragraphs, that "Our nation ranks at the bottom of nineteen industrial nations in reading, writing and arithmetic ... (The world's narcotic economy is based upon our consumption of this commodity ... and schools are an important sales outlet) ... Our teenage suicide rate is the highest in the world, and suicidal kids are rich kids for the most part ..." "Using school as a sorting mechanism, we appear to be on the way to creating a caste system, complete with untouchables who wander through subway trains begging and who sleep upon the streets."

"The home-schooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and a half million young people are being educated entirely by their own parents ... the education press reported ... that children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten years ahead of their formally trained peers in their ability to think ... Schools are intended to produce ... human beings whose behaviour can be predicted and controlled."

Gatto calculates that, out of 112 waking hours children spend 55 in watching TV, 30 in school, 8 in travelling to and from school, 10 in eating and doing homework (this is the USA). "We arrive at a net amount of private time for each child of 9 hours a week" a vivid reminder of the extent to which we condition children to accept any authority that chooses to call itself such. Thus we create, according to Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich, a population that, given the economic circumstances, could fall victim, as

Germany did, to a political psychopath.

The core of Gatto's argument is that school, by occupying so much of the child's time, actually prevents it from becoming a real person, prevents families from being the real educators, in terms of human values, and, as a result, prevents families from forming real communities bound together by ties of friendship, affection and love; communities which (by the work they do together and the mutual services they render one another,) are the real educators of the young, by shaping their practical, intellectual and moral skills.

This theme is expressed in the essay 'The Green Monongahela'. "In Monongahela by that river everyone was my teacher. Daily, it seemed to a boy, one of the mile-long trains would stop in town to take on water and coal or for some mysterious reason; the brakeman and engineer would step among the snot-nosed kids and spin railroad yarns, let us run in and out of the boxcars, over and under flatcars, tankcars, coalcars ... (Once a year, maybe, we got taken into the caboose that reeked of stale beer to be offered a bologna on white bread sandwich). The anonymous men lectured, advised and inspired the boys of Monongahela - it was as much their job as driving the trains."

To anarchist readers Gatto's condemnation of state institutions is familiar. What is refreshing is to see them expressed by an American teacher from his own experience and against the background of his own boyhood in a real community. As more and more people all over the world are born and live in huge towns and cities; as the State extends its tentacles everywhere, even into the very stuff of our thoughts, fewer and fewer of us can experience what it is to live in a community, in a condition of direct mutual dependence and day-to-day practical love, that only a real community can provide.

"Monopoly schooling is the major cause of our loss of national and individual identity. (It has institutionalised the division of social classes and acted as an agent of caste - repugnant to our founding myths and to the reality of our founding period. Its strength arises from many quarters, the antichild, antifamily stream of history for one - but) it draws its greatest power from being a natural adjunct to the kind of commercial economy we have that requires permanently dissatisfied customers."

# Every school has its own special character

## No Master High Or Low

A book by John Shotton  
*Libertarian Education*, 291 pp, £7.95.

I FOUND *No Master High or Low* an extraordinarily interesting book. I have already read it twice. This is most surprising, because it is a book about the history of education, a subject which I usually find so dry as to be almost unreadable.

What makes it such an exception? First it is not a history of mainstream education, but of libertarian alternatives, which immediately establishes a dramatic conflict; the fate of each venture is another episode in the story. Secondly it is well-written and includes a delightful number of unfamiliar but telling quotations from the various protagonists. Thirdly it is tightly constructed; the interest never flags, in spite of the fact that forty-seven initiatives are described individually in only 273 pages.

The construction is formal. Between the introduction and conclusion there are five separate sections, each with its own introduction and conclusion. These sections deal with the anarchist Sunday Schools and international modern schools on the Ferrer model, independent progressive schools, schools for the unschoolable, libertarian ventures in state schools, and the free schools of the early seventies. I was delighted to find that of these five sections only one dealt with fee-paying independent schools, and that of the forty-seven schools mentioned only nine fall into this category. John Shotton has given ample evidence to disprove the allegation that libertarian education is fine for the children of liberal middle-class parents but inappropriate for anyone else. In fact it is even more important for underprivileged children, because the experience is entirely new to them.

The curious fact emerges that the state will only fund libertarian education for you when you have proved that you are rebellious and irresponsible. The idea that only the irresponsible rebels should be allowed to decide how their schools should be run is not only perverse in itself, but also unfair on those who are easy-going enough to accept the status quo.

Within each section is a description

of each of half a dozen schools. The variety of approach is astonishing. The Anarchist-Socialist Sunday School in Mile End was started by Nellie Dick when she was fourteen years old, was open on Sundays and weekday evenings and had adults and children learning

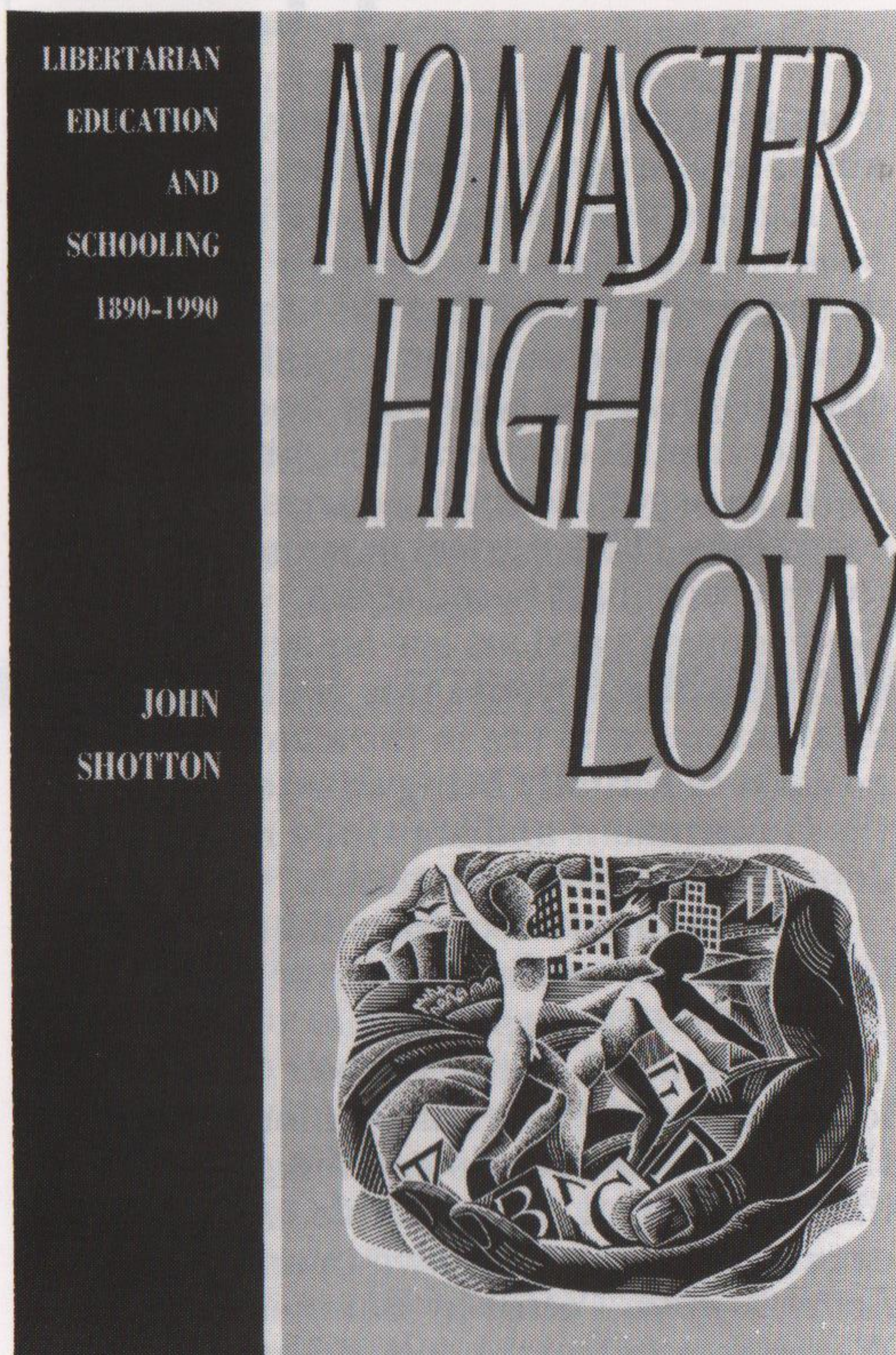
children, a desire to enable them to learn what they themselves feel they need to learn, and a rejection of hierarchy.

John Shotton is also interested in the political behaviour of the staff. Why did so few of the schools survive for more than four or five years? Why has there never been an organised movement of libertarian teaching? Why have schools not supported each other? As the book progresses we see school after school closed by some superior authority, schools giving up after a few years because the staff have become exhausted by the struggle and the isolation, schools beaten by financial problems, schools dying when a single charismatic figure leaves. Mutual support, learning from each other's experiences and a national profile for a libertarian movement might have saved many of them.

I have taught in libertarian schools for most of my life, and I know a few sad answers. Teachers in libertarian schools are interested in children and not politics; they give their entire lives to their own pupils, and they have no time for conferences or political action. Each school jealously guards its own individuality, and believes that it has a unique way of handling problems which must not be contaminated by influences from outside. Always slightly

unsure of themselves, schools need to look down on others in order to boost their own self-esteem. When your life is devoted to breaking down the desire to conform, the idea of joining a movement is anathema. Trusting, child-focused and lacking in confidence, libertarian teachers are bad at defending themselves.

However, the book shows that there is a fresh assault on authoritarian ideals roughly every twenty years. We are due for one about now. In the last section of the book there is an example of each of four of John Shotton's categories from the late eighties - Blackcurrent, a school based in a housing cooperative, Sands, a fee-paying independent school, Lady Jane Grey Primary School and Bath Place School Unit for children excluded from the system. Let's hope that this time we can keep things moving. It will be a good start for all of us to read this book.



alongside each other. Summerhill is a co-educational fee-paying boarding school, where lessons are voluntary and such regulations as exist are devised and implemented by a weekly school meeting of children and staff. Rowen House School is a boarding school for girls under stress, who are generally paid for by the local authority; problems are dealt with by the Moot, a school meeting which takes place at the beginning of each day. The girls are encouraged to make contacts with the local community, whereas Summerhill is much more inward-looking. Barrowfield Community School was started at the request of a tenants' association, with the help of Jordanhill College; children and parents worked together to decide what the school should be like, but one of the things they decided they had to do was play the O-level and A-level game, and play it well. Every school described has its own special character. What they have in common is a genuine respect for

# Fighting back

## SOS: Save Our Schools

A book by Brian Simon and Clyde Chitty  
Published by Lawrence and Wishart

## Education Answers Back

A book edited by Brian Simon and Clyde Chitty  
Published by Lawrence and Wishart

TWO PUBLICATIONS from Brian Simon and Clyde Chitty: the first *Save Our Schools* is their own broadside against Tory education policy while the second, *Education Answers Back*, is a collection of speeches, articles and correspondence along the same lines.

In *Save our Schools*, they mount a devastating attack centred around the Tory assault on local government and local education authorities and their increasingly open intention to reintroduce selection. They chart the development of the attack on LEAs from the City Technology College initiative to opting out into Grant Maintained status. This, they argue, is motivated by a commitment to restructuring the education system along market lines with each school functioning as a small business. The crucial difference, of course, is that those schools perceived to be successful will be in a position to select their customers/students rather than the other way round.

Alongside this replacement of local democracy by market forces is a parallel policy which involves bringing schools under tighter central control. Such control it has become increasingly clear is at the whim of the Secretary of State who might vary from a slime like Baker to a bullyboy like Clarke to a fop like Patten but all sharing that peculiar Tory combination of ignorance and arrogance.

This powerful indictment is accompanied by a sister volume, *Education Answers Back*, very much a mixed collection. There are some interesting articles and speeches, some of them from disenchanted and repentant Thatcherites (one especially good article is Caroline Gipp's *Policy-Making and the Use and Misuse of Evidence*) and amusingly enough extracts from the semi-literate speeches that Patten and Major made at the 1992 Tory Conference.

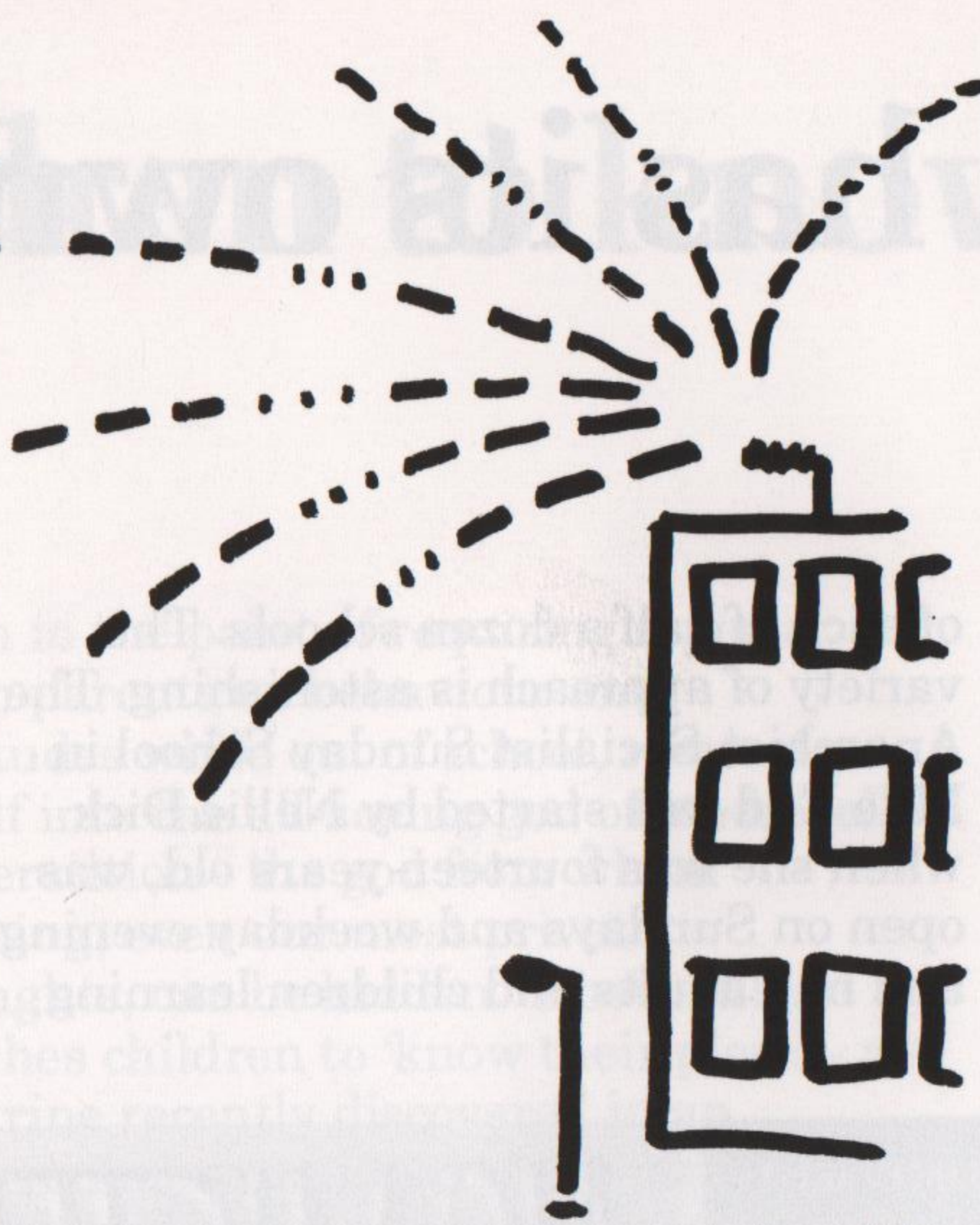
Nevertheless, despite the undoubted virtues of both volumes, there is something missing. The problem is quite simple, Simon and Chitty see the only way to defeat the government as involving uniting a broad front of opponents that extends to disenchanted Tories. What they neglect, of course, is the role of the teachers and their trade unions. To bring them into the broad

front in any other than a minor role will alienate prospective Tory allies.

It is for this reason that we have a book entitled *Save Our Schools* which does not take up the fact that the Government's assault on education has crucially involved depriving teachers of a fundamental democratic right, the right to negotiate their salaries and conditions. This neglect is wrong for two reasons: first because the Government's actions are an outrage, and, secondly, because it is teachers and their unions who are in the strategic position of actually being able to defeat the Government and hopefully ruin John Patten's political career.

This failure to recognise the importance of teacher unions reflects a capitulation by people on the 'respectable' left to the Tories' ideological attack on trade unionism, to their portraying it as something illegitimate and unacceptable. A good example of this was shown in an *Open Letter to John Patten* by Baroness Warnock, a fellow thinker of Simon and Chitty, that appeared in *The Guardian* on 22 April 1993. Here she criticises Patten, but cannot resist commenting quite incredibly for a Labour peer that teachers have provided some justification for Patten's view that they are 'the enemies of education', that they have 'from time to time behaved extremely provocatively' and expressing sympathy with his view that teachers 'cannot both be aggressively unionised and at the same time treated as a responsible professional body'. Such sentiments are really unforgivable. They are no better than scabbing.

Leaving aside the iffy credentials of someone who has opted to join the ermine vermin in the House of Lords for the moment, who does her ladyship think defeated Patten over testing? Was it her eloquence in the chamber perhaps? Or was it the 'provocative' lead given by the NAS? The teachers' boycott has done more damage to this Government than any number of speeches or for that matter any number of books.



## Worthless

### Education and Politics in the 1990s

A book by Dennis Lawton  
Published by the Falmer Press

LAWTON, an educational liberal, is concerned throughout this mealy-mouthed volume to find some basis for constructing a new consensus out of Tory education policy, to find some basis upon which clever people like him can get back into the business of advising the Government. As this book shows, he has actually made the mistake of believing that Major was going to abandon Thatcherism for a more consensual approach to education policy. He could not have been more wrong.

## Sex

### Love, Sex and Power in Later Life

A book by Tony Gibson  
Freedom Press, £3.50

GIBSON, who has been publishing in *Freedom* magazine since the 1940s, looks at the often overlooked fact that older people have emotional and sexual needs.

This is not a book about deterioration in sexual plumbing but a wide ranging volume that considers the political importance of the ever increasing number of 'third age' people in our society.

## Small stone

### Against Selection - open the gates to learning

A leaflet published by the National Union of Teachers

THIS leaflet is in favour of comprehensive schools. Grant Maintained Schools, City Technology Colleges and Local Management of Schools are seen as introducing selection of children at age 11 years and as BAD. We agree.

It is worthy, but in the context of the Tory government's massive publicity for its half-baked ideas, it is a painfully small stone to cast.

# A tale of two styles

## Wake up Charlie Dragon!

A picture story book written by Brenda Smith and illustrated by Cherry Denman  
Hippo Books, £2.25

## Tyrone the Horrible Tyrone the Dirty Rotten Cheat

Two picture story books by Hans Wilhelm  
Hippo Books, £2.99

THESE THREE volumes show two very different approaches to picture story books for young children. First, *Wake up Charlie Dragon!* This is very much in the sugary school of children's books. Pretty pastel Charlie Dragon is fast asleep in a pretty pastel world, sleeping through all the efforts of his pretty pastel friends to wake him up. He misses Christmas, Easter, the summer holidays, Halloween, even his own birthday. But he wakes up on 5 November for Bonfire Night, and then crams all the year's celebrations into



one. He is so tired at the end of it all that he goes to sleep again. Neat story, but the illustrations are so nice and tasteful that the total effect is positively sick making. Not recommended.

Very different are the two Tyrone volumes, *Tyrone the Horrible* and *Tyrone the Dirty Rotten Cheat*. These two marvellous picture story books tell of the adventures of the world's first bully/anti-hero.

Tyrone (unlike Charlie Dragon) is an absolute monster, continually bullying and taking advantage of the other

young dinosaurs. He particularly picks on young Boland, stealing his sandwiches, treading on his tail and making him cry.

In one hilarious scene Boland tries to make friends with Tyrone by buying him an ice cream, only for the next page to show him standing disconsolate with the cornet stick on his head: "Boland could hear Tyrone's laughter for a long time echoing through the forest." Next Boland tries to stand up to the bully because, of course, all bullies are cowards at heart.

The next page shows his friends helping to bandage his injuries. This is real life interpreted for young children, a survival manual for infants!

And, of course, Tyrone always comes unstuck in the end, either outwitted by Boland or dropping himself in the muck.

The Tyrone books are superb, excellently illustrated and come highly recommended. But is Tyrone a bully or a rebel against bourgeois conventions; the debate goes on!

## LETTERS

## Out in the sticks

Dear Lib ED,

I read with great interest the recent article on the Woodcraft Folk in *Libertarian Education* (21) and also John Shotton's account of the Forest School in his *No Master, High or Low* (1993).

The impression given is that both the Woodcraft Folk and the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry movement were simply off-shoots of Baden-Powell's Boy Scout organization, and reflected its authoritarian politics, and that the "Edwardian green movement" emerged only after the end of the First World War.

What is completely missing in these accounts is the important influence of the naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, a man who is very much "hidden from history".

Seton was not only the inspiration behind both of the woodcraft movements but his ideas on outdoor education, initiated at the turn of the century, were deviously appropriated by Baden-Powell himself - without acknowledgement.

And Baden-Powell used Seton's ideas for purposes quite alien to those of the naturalist, namely, to bolster social imperialism.

Seton was thus not only one of the founders of the ecology movement, much more so than the doyen of the deep ecologists, John Muir, but also the founder of the woodcraft movement, and the impetus of the latter was essentially libertarian and ecological.

Seton, way ahead of his time, advocated in his nature camps "self government" by the children, opposed militarism, patriotism and the authoritarian emphasis of the Scouts, and was essentially a socialist, as well as being a staunch defender of American Indian culture.

Seton was not what you might call a political animal - he was an artistic-naturalist - but he was a close friend of James Mavor, who taught economics at Toronto University at the end of the 19th century, and who had been one of the founder members of the Socialist League.

And in 1897 Seton had met and had discussed socialism with Kropotkin when he had visited Canada.

Seton had an important influence on the likes of Westlake, Paul and Rutter, as well as on John Hargrave, the founder of the Kibbo Kift Kindred - although Seton later repudiated Hargrave who, like Baden-Powell, was a crypto-fascist. Seton was a pioneer and a libertarian educationalist - but one who worked outside of the school system.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Morris

## Surprise!

Dear Lib ED,

I am surprised at the tone of your review of several new works by the Marxist educational historian Brian Simon (Spring 1993).

Of course there is a very powerful sense in which Brian Simon is the best that we, anybody on the left, have got. In this sense Simon needs to be defended from the right.

But surely there is space in *Lib ED* to note that Simon concentrates far too much on education from above and far too little on the kind of educational struggles from below which I hope *Lib ED* still stands for.

Finally while it is true that *Rethinking Radical Education*, a book which is alleged to be in honour of Brian Simon, does address issues of race and sex which Simon agrees he has ignored matters are not so simple. The emphasis on race and sex in the book is not tied to a class approach to education but is seen as an alternative to it.

Simon is not enough. But he needs to be defended too from his 'friends' in what was the Communist Party before they write him out of educational history altogether.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Flett