

Groups and Resources

Lib ED contacts
Bristol 0117 977 8453

Travellers School
PO Box 36, Grantham, Lincs, NG31 6EZ.

National Union of Students
461 Holloway Road, London, N7
0171 272 8900

Letterbox Library
Unit 2D, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road,
London, N1 3QP
0171 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
0181 672 6031
(A kind of non-sexist, non-militarist scouts and brownies)

Education Otherwise
PO Box 7420 London, N9 9SG
Helpline: 01891 518303
(For everyone who practices or supports the right of children to learn without schooling)

Campaign Against Military Research On Campus (CAMROC)
c/o Student CND, 162 Holloway Road, London, N7
0171 607 3616
e-mail: ycnd@gn.apc.org

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)

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)

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)

End Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH)
77 Holloway Road, London, N7
0171 700 0627
(A national organisation which aims to end physical punishment of children by parents and other carers)

A K Distribution
33 Tower Street, Edinburgh, EH6 7BN
0131 555 5165
(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,
20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0NS

Kilquhanity House School
Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland

Education Workers Network
PO Box 110, Liverpool, L69 8DP
(anarcho-sindicalist organisation for education workers)

Summerhill School
Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY

Sands School
48 East Street, Ashburton, Devon, TQ13 7AX
0136 45 3666

Underground Power
340 Great Western Street, Rusholme,
Manchester, M14 4DS
fax: 0161 248 9310
e-mail: UndergndPwr@gn.apc.org
(an organisation run by and for young people)

Anti-bullying Campaign
6 Borough High Street, London SE1
0171 378 1446

Feminist Library
5/50 Westimster Bridge Road, London, SE1
0171 928 7789

1 in 12 Club
21-21 Albion Street, Bradford, West
Yorkshire, BD1 2TT
(a club for the unemployed and low-waged,
run on anarchist principles)

Brambles Housing Co-operative
82 Andover Street, Sheffield, S3 9EG
(home education in a co-operative setting)

World University Service
20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN
0171 288 4600
(promotes education for international
development; also runs refugee advice line on
0171 288 4603)

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 13.

International

Connect
12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070, Victoria,
AUSTRALIA
00 613 9489 9052, fax: 00 613 9344 8256
(newsletter of youth participation in
education)

Netzwerk
Schweglerstrasse 43/4, 1150 Vienna,
AUSTRIA
00 43 1 983 3440
(network of alternative schools in Austria)

Dansk Friskoleforening
Prices Havevej 11, DK 5600 Faaborg,
DENMARK
00 45 62 613013
(an association which represents 195 free
primary and lower secondary schools)

The Pestalozzi School
Casilla 17/11/06370, Quito, ECUADOR

L'ANEN
1, Rue des Nefliers, 31400 Toulouse,
FRANCE
00 33 61 554488
(national association for the development of
new education)

Possible
Agence Information Enfance, 29 Rue Davy,
75017 Paris, FRANCE
00 33 1 42 287164, fax: 00 33 1 42 266012
(publishes an annual guide to alternative
education in France)

**Bundesverband der Freien
Alternativeschulen**
Wiemelhauser Strasse 270, 44799 Bochum,
GERMANY
00 49 234 72648, fax: 00 49 234 76053

Mirambika
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Aurobind Marg,
New Delhi 110016, INDIA

Democratic School of Hadera
Schunat Brandess, Hadera, ISRAEL
00 972 6 337448, fax: 00 972 6 344146

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

Tokyo Shure
1-9-19 Kisimachi, Kia, Tokyo 114, JAPAN
00 81 3 5993 5588

Tamariki Free School
83 Rutherford Street, Box 19-506,
Christchurch, NEW ZEALAND

Young Voices
Norwegian People's Aid
PO Box 8844 Youngstorget, 0028 Oslo,
NORWAY
(helps children and young people to express
their concerns to people in power)

Aula Libre
Apt. 88, 22520 Fraga, SPAIN
(libertarian pedagogical magazine)

SAC (Syndikalisterna)
Svenvagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm, Sweden
00 46 8 343559

Jurg Jegge,
Alte Brucke 4, 8427 Rorbass,
SWITZERLAND
(runs an apprenticeship scheme for those
who find it hard to get started)

AERO,
417 Roslyn Heights, New York, NY 11577,
USA
00 1 516 621 2195, fax: 00 1 516 625 3257

Sudbury Valley School,
2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701,
USA

Lib ED

No.28 Summer 1997 £1

A magazine for the liberation of learning

12034 L
THE REFUGEE GAME
where playing gets serious



CHILDREN
... remind us of truths that we try to
ignore

WOMEN'S ROOMS
boys put out

AN ORDINARY SCHOOL
... breaks extraordinary ground

JAPAN
a school for freedom

In this issue...

- 3** **OPPRESSION OF CHILDREN**
We don't even notice it.
- 4** **FREE SCHOOL PIONEER**
... in the land of the rising fun.
- 6** **ROOM FOR WOMEN**
Boys put out.
- 8** **JUNIOR SCHOOL**
... with superior ideas.
- 10** **THE REFUGEE GAME**
But was it a game?
- 12** **CURRICULUM COP**
... meets the new Secretary of State
- 13** **DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE**
How to keep up or catch up with *Lib ED* magazine.
- 15** **REVIEWS**
- 16** **CONTACTS**
Including groups and organisations, now updated.

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

DISTRIBUTION: AK Distribution, Tower Street, Edinburgh, EH6 7BN (tel: 0131-555-5165) PRINTING: Impress, 18 Stafford Street, Bedminster, Bristol (tel: 0117-923-1549)

Contributions to the magazine should be sent to the editorial address.
ISSN 0267-8500.

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 0117-977-8453.

One step forward ...

THE END of an era, the stunning defeat of the Conservatives on May 1st (why did John Major choose the International Day of Labour for he election, did he know something we didn't?), ought to offer the chance of a new start in for education in this country.

After 18 years of malign reactionary twaddle, the bogus promotion of "traditional teaching methods", of school league tables, of examinations in infant and junior schools, of Chris Woodhead and Melanie Phillips, all of this should at least be on its way through the window by now, if not out of it already, cascading to the rubbish bin of history below.

And yet we now see the possibility that this golden opportunity may not be grasped. Labour have astonished many with the energy with which they have "hit the ground running", and yet in education they seem to have too few ideas, and too little inclination to think further than the next Budget, let alone venture outside of an agenda set by a completely discredited Conservative Party.

More disturbingly the rhetoric about "failing schools" and "hit squads" has been reinforced, further alienating the teaching profession (even the heads are objecting now).

While "education, education, education" may be at the forefront of Tony Blair's mission, there is no evidence yet that there will be any more resources to be given to education other than those derived from spurious "co-operative initiatives with local businesses", and idea that Central Office would look at with beatific affection.

Blair and Blunkett used the cliché that the future lies with our children to good effect during the election. Is it too much to hope that there will be some content behind the rhetoric?

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

An unnoticed oppression

Probably the largest oppressed minority in this country is children. We take the oppression so much for granted that we do not even notice it, writes David Gribble.

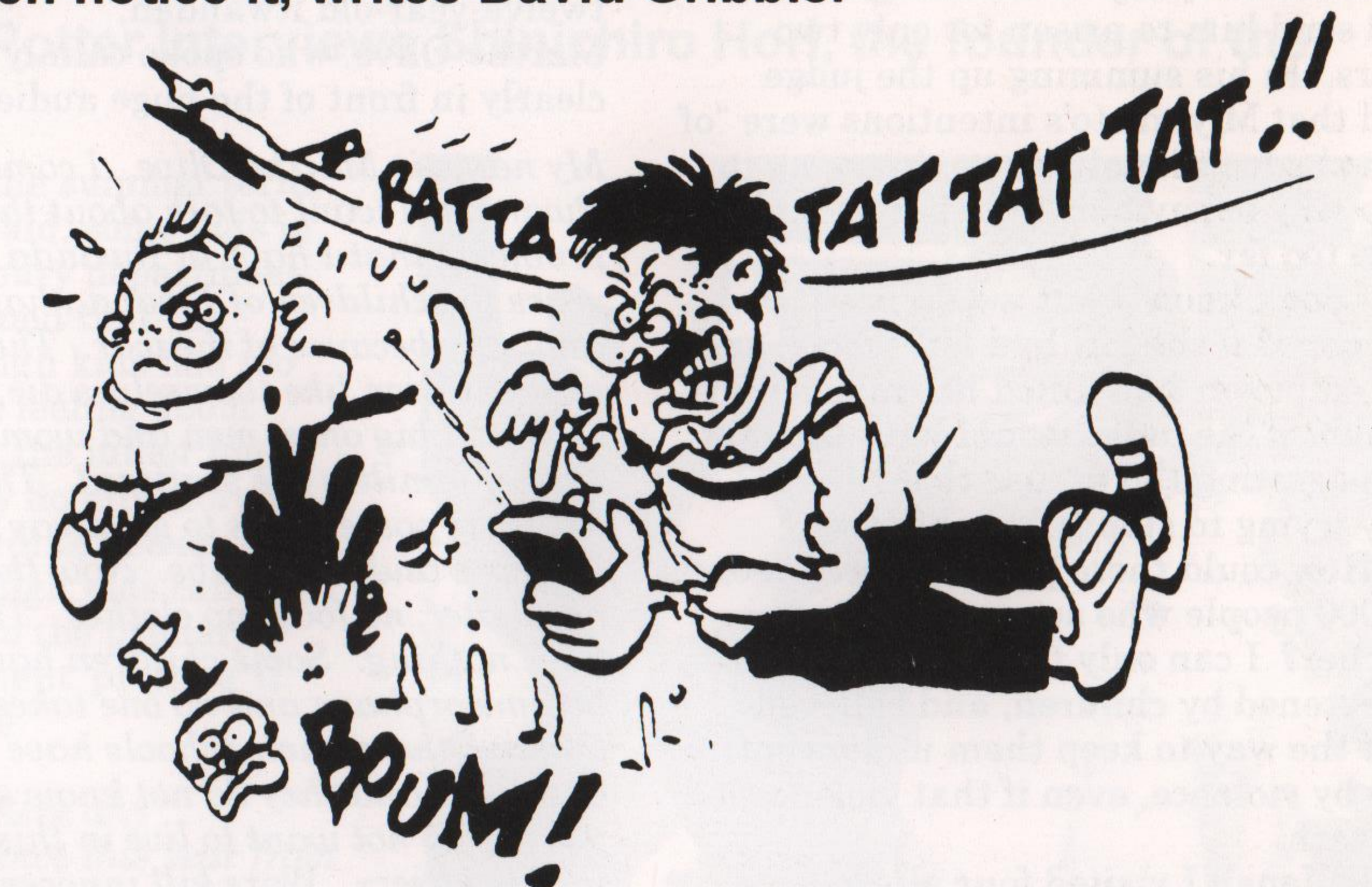
SUPPOSE THAT you and all the adults living near you were told that for nine months of every year for the next eleven years you would all have to wear a uniform, and spend all your working time doing your best to complete identical tasks which appear to have no practical significance. You would think you were living under an insane dictatorship, yet that is the fate that awaits almost all our five-year-olds.

Children are frequently excluded, and not only from public houses and betting shops. There are quite ordinary shops that will admit children only two at a time, and there are hotels and restaurants that will not admit children at all. It is not unusual to see children and animals bracketed together, as in the notice "All children and dogs to be kept under control".

Children are blamed for their behaviour far more fiercely than adults. The boys in the Bulger case were branded as evil, and people wrote to the papers about the wickedness of the present-day child. They failed to notice that one reason that they had been so astonished by the incident was that murders by children are so exceedingly rare. The NSPCC estimates that in Britain a young child is killed by its own parents or carers every other day, and others have made much higher estimates. This suggests an enormous amount of violence that does not result in death. If children have seen such violent behaviour in supposedly responsible adults, in their own homes, how can they be blamed if they imitate it? Why are they not continually praised for imitating it so seldom?

The United Nations Convention on Children's Rights curiously enough gives further proof of our disgraceful attitude to children. Almost all the rights conferred are also conferred by the Charter of Human Rights. Children have to have them conferred separately, because, by implication, children are not even human. One of the few rights that belongs specifically to children is the right to have a name; think what it means for a child to be nameless.

I have spent most of my life teaching in schools which try to treat children properly. This means, for instance, schools where children and adults are on equal terms; the mutual use of first names is only a superficial indication of this relationship. It means schools where children and adults make decisions together, including decisions



about the appointment of staff, the curriculum and problems of behaviour; it means schools where lessons are voluntary; it means schools where there is no system of discipline because children naturally understand about right and wrong, and every instance of anti-social behaviour needs to be seen as a mistake which must be considered individually.

Since retiring three years ago I have been visiting such schools around the world, and last autumn I went to Japan. The attitude to young children in Japan is absolutely different to ours; the Buddhist belief is that children can do no wrong, and to English eyes young children are simply spoiled. As soon as they get to school, though, the world is turned upside down, and their lives are far more fiercely controlled than the lives of their British contemporaries.

While I was there this article appeared in an English-language newspaper:

TEACHER FACES HARD LABOUR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON TRIAL

FUKUOKA (Kyodo) Prosecutors demanded Thursday that a 50-year-old high school teacher on trial for killing a 16-year-old female student through corporal punishment be sentenced to three years hard labor.

Defendant Akira Miyamoto inflicted corporal punishment on Tomomi Jinouchi, of Kinki University Women's High School in Iizuka, Fukuoka Prefecture, in a fit of anger, a prosecutor told the Fukuoka District Court.

Miyamoto is accused of striking the girl

on the head and shoulders, causing her head to hit a concrete pole. She died of an acute skull fracture.

A harsh sentence should be imposed because the public would interpret leniency as the judiciary's condoning corporal punishment, the prosecution said.

The teacher's counsel called for a suspended sentence, arguing that it was a sad accident that occurred because Miyamoto was over-zealous in his devotion to his students' education. The defense also said that Miyamoto should not be singled out as the only teacher to strike pupils as a punishment.

The prosecution closed its case by saying Miyamoto conveniently interpreted the law banning corporal punishment as being just a principle, and frequently practised such punishment on his students in the belief that it was necessary for their education.

In their final argument, the defense said that half of the nation's high schools use corporal punishment. The defense claimed that the violence Miyamoto perpetrated was not very severe and stressed that the girl's death was accidental.

Near the end of Thursday's hearing, Miyamoto tearfully apologised for his actions, saying they could never be permissible.

According to the indictment, Miyamoto struck Junouchi on July 17 after she refused to leave his classroom during a book-keeping test she was not supposed to take.

The defense submitted to the court

Thursday an appeal for a lenient sentence containing about 75,000 signatures. The court is scheduled to hand down a ruling Dec. 25.

Eventually Miyamoto was found guilty of "inflicting grievous bodily harm leading to death", and in spite of the prosecution's demand for a three-year sentence the judge decided to be lenient and send him to prison for only two years. In his summing up the judge said that Miyamoto's intentions were "of a good educational nature, in trying to stop silly behaviour" but that he had gone too far.

I don't know what would have happened if the girl had left school, and her employer had killed her in his office. I doubt if the judge would have thought of suggesting the excuse that he was only trying to stop silly behaviour.

How could there possibly have been 75,000 people who supported the teacher? I can only think that they felt threatened by children, and believed that the way to keep them under control was by violence, even if that violence led to death.

In Japan I visited four alternative schools, and in each of them I felt entirely at home. Each school has its individual character, but any of them might perfectly well have existed in Europe or the United States. To differing degrees they all offered examples of informal relationships, shared responsibility, voluntary lessons and absence of systematic discipline. I found this extremely reassuring. If the Japanese, starting from such a very different culture, are working towards the same picture of an ideal education as we are, that suggests strongly that we are all moving in the right direction.

From what I have written so far it might be thought that the reason for treating children with respect and consideration is that it is simply humane and just to do so. There is another reason, which our ordinary, fundamental lack of respect for the young makes it difficult for us to see. It is that children understand many things in a way that adults have been taught to forget.

The Voice of the Children was an organisation based in Norway which arranged "Children's Hearings", where children were given the opportunity to express their concerns to the leaders of their country. At the first hearing in Norway the adults responding to the children's questions included Gro Harlem Brundtland (who was at that time leader of the opposition), and the equivalents of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the chairman of the CBI and the deputy-chairman of the TUC. The politicians had to speak clearly and simply, and if they attempted to waffle the children simply asked them to explain. The questions raised were not unusual, but the way they were

discussed was exemplary.

In 1992 there was a global children's conference on the environment in Rio. Children came from twenty different countries, and among the adult panel was Al Gore, soon to become Vice-President of the United States. This was the contribution of a twelve-year-old Rwandan, Marthe-Olive, who spoke calmly and clearly in front of the huge audience:

My name is Marthe Olive. I come from Rwanda. I want to talk about the problems that I have in Rwanda. For years the children of Rwanda have been unhappy because of the war. They have seen children like themselves die, little ones and big ones, men and women. Lots of families are scattered. They have left their possessions to get away from the guns and the bombs. Now they have no shelter, no food, no clothes. They have nothing. Some children have become orphans and no one takes care of them. Others, their schools have been destroyed and they do not know where to go. We do not want to live in this war, in this misery. Wars kill innocent people, they spread disorder and hatred. They slow down development. Children do not like war. Those in Rwanda want the war to end very soon so that people can live in peace. Thank you.

This speech was translated from French into Portuguese by a professional translator. He began in the expressionless way interpreters speak, occasionally hesitating over a choice of word, sounding like a student doing a translation exercise, and then suddenly he was overcome by the meaning of what he was saying, and he was unable to go on. When the audience appreciated his emotion they applauded, and he went on a little before having to stop again, and then finished the last couple of sentences with an incoherent rush ending in tears.

What I think had happened was when he had suddenly understood what he was saying, all his adult rationalisation and detachment had been swept away. Everybody knows that what Marthe-Olive said is true, but we usually manage not to think about it. We reduce war to a political concept, or a historical concept, and we do not allow ourselves to consider the concrete reality, probably because we cannot bear to. The interpreter found that speaking Marthe-Olive's words forced him to consider the truth, and he wept.

We must listen to children not merely because it is their right to be heard, but also because they remind us of truths that we have taught ourselves to ignore.

David Gribble's book on the schools he has been visiting around the world will be published in 1998 by Lib ED.

TO BE granted status by the Ministry of Education is momentous for two reasons. First, the mere recognition of a school by the Ministry implies much more than it would, say, in Britain. In Japan, where emphasis is very much more on private as well as state-provided education, there are rigorous standards in many areas that must be fulfilled before approval is given. And without this approval, the would-be school does not in effect exist at all as far as the powers-that-be are concerned. In a society where conformity of purposes and ends is paramount, any time spent at a non-recognised school is seen as time wasted for most people.

The second important point concerning the arrival of Kinokuni into Japanese school life is that of its very nature and philosophy. This has attracted a great deal of attention both inside and outside Japan but is worth re-iterating briefly.

Kinokuni, the brainchild of Neill's most recent translator, Shinichiro Hori, is a modified model of Summerhill School. This means that the basic reason for its existence is Summerhill, and Kinokuni attempts to follow Neillian philosophy in its fundamentals. Therefore, Kinokuni is a boarding school of roughly similar size to Summerhill, where children live, work and play together in an atmosphere of equality and freedom.

There is no attempt to force children to 'learn' and they are free to develop as individuals at their own pace. Consequently, as at Summerhill, there are voluntary lessons and a form of self-government enforced through a weekly General Meeting. Where it differs from the Summerhill model is in the addition of Deweyan ideas of learning through experience and in its emphasis on the importance of project and outdoor activities. As a primary school, the range of ages is also much smaller and younger than at Summerhill and, up to now, the entire intake of children has been of one nationality - Japanese - though the school is ready and willing to accept pupils of any background or race.

Now that the school has successfully completed its first two years and is now approaching the end of its third, there have been two developments of some significance. Shinichiro Hori has given up his job as professor of education at Osaka City University to concentrate more fully on the school. He began the third year at Kinokuni in 1994 as its full-time headmaster. Secondly, the school has expanded to include a new junior school department in a new building specially erected for this purpose adjacent to the primary department.

During this third year the school has a total of 97 pupils, about the maximum intake possible. Encouragingly, all of

Land of the Rising Fun

Kinokuni's Children's Village has been operating as an independent school within the Japanese system of education since 1992. It is the first of its kind to be granted this status by the Ministry of Education. Here John Potter interviews Shinichiro Hori, the founder of the school.

the children who graduated from the primary level stayed at Kinokuni and all 15 of them went on to form the first year of Kinokuni Junior High.

This year has also seen the publication of a new book by Shinichiro Hori. Entitled simply *Kinokuni Kodomono Mura* (Kinokuni Children's Village), it tells the story of the creation of his school from the time of his first discovery of Neill and Summerhill to his departure this year from the university where he had spent all of his previous working life.

The end of his academic career has not meant the end of Hori as an educational thinker and speaker however, as he has continued to fit in lectures and talks at various organisations in Japan where he is often asked to convey his ideas on child-rearing, on his school, on experiential learning, and on A S Neill. In addition he has somehow found the time to embark on the mammoth task of re-translating into Japanese five of Neill's books at the request of his publisher. Despite all of this he found time to answer some more questions concerning life now at Kinokuni.

JP: How is the General Meeting conducted now?

SH: Every Friday at 11.45 we gather in the hall. Two chairpersons and one scribe lead the meeting. Everyone has one vote. If anyone has anything to discuss it is written on a sheet on the wall. At the moment our meeting should be called a parliament rather than a court. Only two or three kids have been brought up so far for offences against others during the first two years and a half.

JP: The meetings have improved quite a lot though haven't they?

SH: Yes. The kids have come to realise that they can decide things themselves (even if with adults help) which have much to do with their own lives. The staff are also more used to the system and have become more efficient. As far as the whole community is concerned, kids are getting more and more able to live together without invading other people's rights.

JP: How has the opening of the junior high department affected the atmosphere at the school?

SH: In the summer term, I am afraid, some kids in the primary department complained that the junior high kids had too strong a feeling about being in the junior high. But they do mix more in the boarding houses. Junior high kids can belong to the primary department 'projects' if they like.

JP: Is there any interference this year from outside forces such as the Ministry of Education or Kinokuni parents?

SH: None at all.

JP: What do you expect will happen to the junior high kids when they leave. Will they fit into 'normal' schools again?

SH: I expect, or rather wish, that the 15 kids will take 15 different courses when they leave. Some pupils ask me to prepare them for senior high school, to which I say "definitely NO!" Some have declared that they will prepare themselves for the outside senior high, even if we do not offer any special menu.

JP: Have there been any other important changes this year?

SH: A very important change has been in the practical side. Kids used to learn the basic skills within their own age groups but now they do it as part of a 'project' with the project teachers. The former system was only introduced as a compromise with those staff members who we eventually asked to leave two years ago.

JP: Do you have any non-attenders at class this year?

SH: Yes, two who are usually away from basic skills and three others who come to the staff room quite often. Within some of the classrooms one or two are apt to refuse to learn basic skills. (Sometimes as resistance against parents who cram futile stuff at home!) However, the number is decreasing.

JP: Do you think there has been any change of thinking in Japanese



education in the short time since you began Kinokuni in 1992?

SH: Yes, the flood of television and newspaper reporters and visitors to the school is proof in itself that we are having some effect. I have heard that some non-recognised free schools in Japan may feel that we are not properly 'free'. They are probably jealous of us. We do not mind at all. We are 'the school' not a 'free school'. Our kids are not forced to go to class. Anyway, it cannot be the proof of a 'free school' or a 'good school' to be able to say that there are many non-attenders. Rather it might prove that the staff are not qualified as efficient adults who can prepare activities to excite and occupy the children's minds.

JP: Do you see Kinokuni as part of a trio of schools along with Summerhill and Kilquhanity or do you think of it as quite separate?

SH: When we visited Summerhill and Kilquhanity, as well as two other schools, this autumn, I became sure (and pleased) that we are running along the same lines towards happier schools. We are not, and must not, be separated.

JP: On a personal note, how do you feel now that you have left your university job and are working full-time at Kinokuni?

SH: I am leading a busier but happier

life. No complaints, no fears, no daydreams at all.

The media, as Hori mentions, have certainly continued to give a considerable amount of attention to Kinokuni. Since April 1994 the school has been featured five times on Japanese television. John and Morag Aitkenhead from Kilquhanity in Scotland have visited. It has also been the subject of a television documentary in South Korea and has been visited by Korean educationalist Eun-San Kim - herself a leading writer and promoter of Neillian ideas. And more recently there has been some attention from the home of Summerhill itself as the Sunday Telegraph visited the school for an article in October and during the same month, BBC Radio 5 did a brief spot on Kinokuni in which I was interviewed by telephone from Japan. (Unfortunately, as it was broadcast at 4.15 am it is unlikely that many were listening!)

Above all, the kind of attention which has been given to the school in Japan has been generally kind and very positive. This contrasts with the savage attacks suffered in recent times by Summerhill at the hands of the British media. It may all say more about the innocent notions of freedom held by the Japanese who have not linked the concept with any of the fearful consequences dreamed of by the cynical Brits.

By Western standards Kinokuni Children's Village may not be the most radical school in the history of education, but in Japan, where rigidity and conformity still rule the day, it is something of a revelation. Shinichiro Hori's pioneer work is of the greatest significance and could well help to shape the way in which future schools develop in the Japan of the next century.

References

Hori, Shinichiro. *Kinokuni Kodomo no Mura. (Kinokuni Children's Village) Tokyo, Bronze Shinsha, 1994*

Petre, Jonathan. *Pupil's room free at Japan's 'Lord of the Flies' school, Sunday Telegraph (London), 16 October 1994.*

Potter, John. *Radical Alternatives in Japanese Education: Kinokuni Children's Village and A S Neill. Unpublished thesis. Antioch University, 1993.*

Potter, John. *A Yen for Freedom. Lib Ed 23-24, Spring 1994.*

Potter, John. *Kinokuni: Summerhill's Modified Model. Friends of Summerhill Trust Journal No. 10, Summer 1994.*

Boys put out

Sands is a small independent democratic school in Devon. The constitution of the school is similar to that of other alternative 'progressive' independent schools, in that power is shared, students and staff have equal voice at school meetings. Some meetings are business like affairs, 'boring' or of interest to a minority of students. Others are about contentious issues and are noisy and chaotic. The meeting described here is in the second category.

ONE OF THE OLDER girl students (Anne, aged 16), thought that it would be a good idea for the sixth form room, which was not being used much, to become a women's room. This request for female space exposed gender issues in a way which the school had not experienced before. What follows is a record of the meeting made by a female member of staff. I think it is important to be aware of the gender, and sometimes the ages of the students and staff as they speak, because it does have a bearing on the way individuals view the issue of a male-free zone. The words used by the protagonists in the debate are unaltered, as I believe some of the language used reveals sexist and/or patriarchal attitudes and hidden agendas.

When the request for a women's room was made, raucous laughter broke out. This recurred throughout the meeting.

Barry(19) shouted: *'This is incredibly sexist!'*

Carol(13): *'There is not enough space in the school to give this space.'*

Dan(Teacher, school administrator): *'I want to know what the rationale is behind this.'*

Ellen(female,16): *'The need should be enough.'*

Anne: *'It's an escape'*

Barry: *'That's pathetic!'*

Frank (male, teacher): *'We need to know the reason why you need it.'*

Someone then made a remark about the war games room, almost exclusively used by male students.

Barry: *'Anybody can go into the war games room.'*

Gina(16): *'Bollocks, they can't. War games is a male dominated game.'*

Boys: *'Rubbish!'*

Gina: *'Yes it is, I've tried to play.'*

Boys: *'You weren't serious.'*

Hal(16): *'Why don't you use (the female teacher's) room for girlie talk?'*

Jan(teacher, female): *'Why is it O.K. for the 6th form room to be exclusive but a women's room can't be?'*

Carol: *'I don't think we should split up into any more groups.'*

Larry (adult visiting the school): *'We are trying to have a non-discriminating society. This [the request for a women's room] is a discriminatory statement which should not be happening at Sands.'*

Gina: *'But women have specific needs and they need a space where they can be heard, where they can support each other.'*

Mike (teacher): *'This is a very complex issue. It needs to be brought to tutorial groups. It is valid, but people are not listening properly.'*

Barry: *'Everyone should be equal in this school. Things should be said at the meeting. We need to bring it out.'*

Nick: *'Why does there have to be a room? Why can't they talk at the bottom of the garden?'*

Dan: *'People have not given a rationale. It sounds like an exciting idea but it has been shouted down.'*

Carol: *'Use the space that was being built at the bottom of the garden.'*

Pam (Student): *'No, that house is part of our science project. If they want to meet without men they should not have a special room.'*

The meeting ended abruptly when a male teacher proposed that the women's room be granted to them for an experimental period. This was agreed to. During the week following the meeting heated discussions took place in all areas of the school. The issue was brought back to an unusually well-attended school meeting after the

experimental period, and it was voted that the experiment should continue. Some of the people (male and female) who had originally opposed the idea of a women's room listened to the views of others, reflected, discussed and changed their minds. One girl who had never spoken at school meeting before, did so for the first time after using the women's space. She said it gave her more confidence.

After the room had been in use for some time, I interviewed some of the students asking them what the whole issue had meant for them, and what they had experienced and learned from it. Only female students responded to the invitation to talk about the women's room, though I had asked students of both sexes to be interviewed.

'For me the deepest discussions we've had at Sands have been as the result of the women's room, and it's been of interest to the whole school, not just the girls.'

'There was bad feeling at the meeting, and afterwards for a while, and I think this was mainly because of misunderstandings. Lots of people were negative because they felt uncomfortable.'

'There could be a man's room. They could ask for one.'

'The room isn't used much because of fear of offending men. We feel responsible for the men's feelings.'

'I was against it in the beginning. But it's not about excluding men.'

'Frank (teacher) is upset because it is splitting up groups. He's really offended. He didn't listen to the discussion. He decided not to listen.'

'We feel listened to in here, it's good getting women together, It's worth keeping even if it only helps one person. Most of the girls are for it, to have private chats, it brings us closer together.'

'I don't get so pissed off because I can escape from the boys. The boys went up the tree-house and said "This is the boys' room".'

'The boys seemed to dominate in everyday things - not always, but I feel slightly more confident about challenging them now. Sue used to be very quiet but she's not any more.'

'It's a place where we can be ourselves, we felt we weren't allowed to in the main part of the school. I was against it at the beginning, then I thought about it and it seemed to be a place where girls were more able to get to know each other, and that's what happened.'

'I got to know some of the older girls better, but I hardly come in now.'

'The fuss has died down a bit, but sometimes it's a quiet room to be. We

were silly in the room sometimes, There were quiet times and noisy times. It was good to be able to tell the boys to leave.'

I suggest that the learning experience around the 'women's room' issue was so uncomfortable for the dominant group at the school that it had to be ridiculed and dismissed. What is not apparent from the transcript of the meeting is the fact that intimidating body language was used, particularly by an older boy who stood up and shouted at the girl who had requested a women's room. Some of the men made it known that they were hurt - giving the girls a guilt trip and implying that they were making unreasonable demands. Yet it seems to me that the girls at Sands wanted something quite reasonable, and were using their voice at the school meeting with a clarity and confidence which came from knowing what they needed. It was mostly older males at the school who saw their request for private space as a threat, and were unable to view the issue in any other terms than that of their own exclusion.

The reference to 'groups' and 'splitting off' was made several times during the meeting, yet roughly half the members of the school are female - hardly a group, more a category; the provision of a women's room could be seen as adding to the range of experiences available to this particular category. The girl who put the item on the agenda was visibly shaken at the end of the meeting and said she felt "as if a volcano had exploded in [her] face." She said that she was glad she hadn't anticipated the animosity she faced when she raised the issue, because, if she had, she would not have had the courage to do it.

In 'freer' atmospheres of education, it can take longer for girls to realise their true situation. Many of the older girls act as a civilising influence within the school, and their withdrawal from this role into their own space might result in the boys running wild, or having to learn to civilise themselves.

Some of the younger girls who had recently transferred from state school said that they felt freer to be themselves than at their previous schools. They were not expected to exhibit 'feminine' behaviour in order to gain favourable treatment. They did feel more equal. But equality here seems to be confused with 'sameness'. Recent research into child-centred education has indicated that it carries with it an assumption that focusing on the child makes it impossible to discriminate against a particular category. This results in differences between the two sexes being discounted - the gender of the person being educated is made irrelevant.

My own view is that the girls who persevered in their request for a room in the face of hostility, had developed a sense of their own educational needs

and were defining the sort of experience they wanted for themselves. Sands could regard this as an indication of their success as a democratic school. However, some teachers seemed threatened by the fact that some girls were taking the control of part of their educational experience out of the hands of the teachers and putting it into the hands of the students.

'Let's do it as an experiment.' when suggested in the context of the women's room request, indicates clearly to me that the people in a position to support the idea are not committed to it and either expect or want it to fail. The school is not a laboratory, and the granting of space was not set up as an experiment, monitored or evaluated. It was experiential learning, and could have been evaluated as such. One teacher said that in her opinion it was one of the most important things which had happened at the school since it opened. The experiment 'failed' in the sense that the room is now used for another purpose, but in another sense it was a success - the room did not need to exist but the issue had always existed and needed to be aired. It had enormous value as a consciousness-raising exercise and almost everyone in the school learned from it.

My own daughters were at the school when this was happening. They've learned a lesson which was not on the official curriculum. They've realised what a struggle it will be for them to create space for themselves which has not been defined and granted by men. All institutions are patriarchal; Sands school provided them with the opportunity not only to recognise this but also to begin to consider the difficulties they might meet and the strategies they might develop to challenge patriarchal attitudes.



Doing something about it

On the face of it Highfield Junior School near Plymouth appears to be a very ordinary state school. However, as David Gribble reports, all is not as it seems.

"AT MY LAST SCHOOL I had about one friend in the whole school," said Emily, "and here nearly everyone's my friend."

"What happened when you got picked on at there, and what happens here?"

"Here I got a mediator, a house captain or a class rep and they'll do something about it, but there if you told anyone they wouldn't do anything about it."

"Not even the teachers?"

"No. Because I got picked on for eighteen months non-stop. My Mum went to see my class teacher and the head teacher and they done nothing, and then, when I went to see the head teacher there because I was getting hit by the boys he said 'Turn around and say boo, that'll scare them.'"

"What happened when you came here?"

"I didn't get picked on at all, never got picked on."

"What would happen if somebody got picked on?"

"The teachers would come over, and if they can't sort out the problem, then the mediators'd sort it out."

"Can you tell me what the mediators do?"

"It's people who ask you what happened and they listen to two people's stories and they sort it out."

This conversation took place at Highfield Junior School on the Efford estate on the outskirts of Plymouth. Mediators are children. If the teachers can't sort things out, the mediators do.

There are 125 children in the school, divided into four classes. Year 6 has 38 in one class. The building is large, with a good theatre/gymnasium, a library, an art room, and a home base with kitchen and cooking facilities.

However, 65% of the children have special needs, and 60% have free meals. The public house opposite the school had to be closed for months because of the violence of its clientèle. The children usually arrive with limited vocabularies, and in spite of living in Plymouth within sight of Dartmoor, some of them will never have visited either the moor or the sea.

Five years ago the school was a teacher's nightmare. At the end of Lorna Farrington's first week as head teacher she had been threatened in her office by both children and parents, and she was confronted daily with aggressive, anti-social outbursts. Now the children are contented, busy and

co-operative. They decide on their own class rules, they settle their own disputes and they have a school council which, among many other achievements, has arranged for children to take part in the selection of new staff.

"Have you had anything to do with getting new teachers?" I asked.

"Yeah. We've got two new teachers, Mr. Nigro and Miss Attwell."

"Did you help choose them?"

"Mr. Nigro came by himself [because he was on an exchange with one of the English teachers] and Miss Attwell we had to choose."

"So how did you help to choose her?"

"We done this. We voted for two people, two people in our class came and went to ask 'em questions about what they are doing for our school and if they come and join us and ..."

"So we had to vote and we voted for Miss Attwell."

"And so she came?"

"Yeah."

The lack of stimulus in the children's home lives is addressed by a superb range of out of school activities, including canoeing, abseiling, swimming, rock-climbing, skate-boarding, sleeping all night at school and occasional weeks camping or even going to France.

In the school prospectus there is a whole page headed "Behaviour expectations and management." It begins:

We firmly believe that all children have a right to learn without interference and disruption.

We firmly believe that all teachers have the right to teach without disruption.

It seems plain that "we" includes the children, and it was this shared belief, coupled with co-operative decision-making and some determined setting of boundaries that produced the transformation of the school.

One of the techniques for involving the children in the control of their own lives is Circle Time. The whole class sits on the floor in a circle, and there are a few ground rules established, of which the most important is: "Don't talk while someone else is talking." Because I was visiting the school at the beginning of September I was lucky enough to see Year 3, the newcomers, having their first ever circle time called specifically to cope with a problem. Heather Landers, the teacher, played a

major role which would be reduced later in the year when the children were used to the system, but even so the amount of openness and participation was impressive.

Paul, Mrs. Landers explained, was unhappy about coming to school. She asked him to explain why. Simon, a boy from the class above, was picking on him all the time, he said. Ross remarked that he had asked Paul if he wanted to play, and was praised by Mrs. Landers, who asked Paul how that had made him feel. "A bit happy," said Paul. Kaleisha commented that it was naughty to pick on people.

After a brief digression to deal with a problem raised by someone else, Mrs. Landers brought the discussion back to Paul, and asked for ideas as to what should be done.

Colin said Paul should be helped, and Brett suggested seeing what Simon had to say about it, so Brett was sent off to fetch Simon from his class. When he arrived, Mrs. Landers welcomed him and told him what the problem was. What did he want to say? "I'm sorry," he said. And was it true that he had been jumping on Paul and pushing him around? "Yes." For both these answers he was praised. There was more discussion, after which Tracey said she felt happy, Richard said he knew Simon and liked him, Brett agreed with Richard and Gary said "I thought what Simon said was nice."

Mrs. Landers asked what should be done, and after various suggestions Paul and Simon went outside with Brett to decide what they wanted themselves. Within a minute or two they were back, with Paul silent but radiant. They had agreed to make friends.

The school has a system involving names on the blackboard and white cards for bad behaviour, and house points and badges for good behaviour. None of this played any part in the solution to Paul's problem. It had been achieved, not by punishment or reward, but by attention, concern and the public expression of goodwill.

"They don't sort out problems in other schools," said Sean, from Year 6. "We sort them out here." Not they, we.

I was also present at a school council meeting, the first of the year, chaired by Mrs. Farrington herself. There was no feeling of awe at her presence, and early in the meeting she raised the question of relinquishing the chair. The children preferred her to continue chairing because, as someone observed, she was good at it, but she told me later that she expected children to take over the chair later in the year.

Towards the end of the meeting the



children from Year 5 reported that the visiting American teacher was having problems with some of the boys in his class, which made it difficult for the rest of them to work. Mrs. Farrington suggested at first that this was a class matter, not suitable for the School Council, but the children insisted. It was agreed that the children should discuss the situation with the teacher themselves, and then report back to her. The children were completely confident about their ability to handle this. Mrs. Farrington told me afterwards that she knew that as soon as the issue was publicly discussed the miscreants would find their behaviour was disapproved of by the great majority of the class, and that this realisation alone was likely to make them begin to moderate their behaviour.

Also at the meeting was a proposal, from Mrs. Farrington, that the School Council should have a budget of its own, to spend as it thought fit. The widening of responsibilities continues.

All this does not mean, however, that the school is informal. Although most of the time the teachers are full of approval and understanding, they are capable of being decidedly sharp when anyone steps out of line. Such traditional rules as no jewellery, no running in the corridors, no visits to the lavatory during class time, calling adults Miss and Sir, everyone into the playground in break and lining up to go to assembly are all enforced.

I have the impression that over the five years since Mrs. Farrington's arrival the school has achieved even more than it realises. The atmosphere is now such that the children's natural concern for one another and their interest in the world about them have become more significant than the rules and the curriculum. The uninhibited

happiness on the children's faces in some of the photographs in the school prospectus shows a self-respect that is impossible for children who have been simply trained to obedience. They have been given the opportunity to explore their own ideas of right and wrong, and they know they will be listened to when they have problems.

"Have you ever been to have something mediated?" I asked Robert.

"Yes, lots of things, fights and like - just bullying, really."

"You getting bullied, or you bullying somebody else?"

"It's - most of each, really. When sometimes it's you bullying them but you don't even know it, and then it's them bullying you."

You can bully people without even knowing it, but when you see what you are doing, you don't want to go on.

One of the class rules in Year 6 is that you must always follow adults' instructions. "What would you do," I asked, "if an adult told you to do something stupid?"

"Won't do it."

"Question it."

"We won't do it in case there is - if it's stupid we just like tell sir it's stupid stuff, so we - er ..."

"So you're able to say that?"

"Yes."

A little later I commented that in most schools children don't talk to grown-ups like ordinary people because they are scared of them.

"We're not like that."

"Is it all right with all your teachers too?" I asked.

"Yes, but it wasn't like that when we was little."

"Yes, we used to be afraid of people coming in."

"Yes. We don't mind because we are the best in the world."



Refugee folk

A game designed to "stimulate young people into thinking about insecurity, uncertainty and deprivation which refugees frequently face in the real world" was played out at the Woodcraft Folk International Camp. But can these issues be turned into a game? *LIB ED* reports.

THE THEME of the Woodcraft Folk International Camp of '95 was "A Right to a Home", and this was the reason that some of the organisers for the teenage groups (known as "Venturers" from about 13 years old to 16 and "District Fellows" usually 16 years and upwards) came up with the idea of a simulation based on young people acting out the roles of refugees. There were participants at the camp from countries where being a refugee is not an abstract experience, such as Peru, Guatemala, Spain and Western Sahara, where there has been a vicious war of oppression by Morocco against the Sahawaris for years.

The camp was initially organised into five "towns", each made up of about ten "villages". Each village had tents pitched in a circle for about 100 people. The game began with the Venturer age group, about five hundred young people, being exiled from their villages for 24 hours. They carried a cross, triangle, square or circle painted on their faces, and they were told that they had to find a village with a similar symbol who would give them shelter and food for the night. The villages did not display their symbol. The refugees had to find out through careful questioning whether they would be welcome or not.

Villages were left to select their own criteria for admission and treatment of the "refugees". Some made the refugees do jobs, such as food preparation or cleaning the toilets.

Some had an entrance test and some welcomed anyone regardless of symbol up to the amount of food they had available. In addition there were young people taking the role of Border Guards, who made things difficult for the "refugees" and some who were menacing "militias", a few who represented UN officials or Red Cross. The Camp Radio was used to keep a discreet check that nobody was genuinely going missing!

The game was not easy, and there were problems at every stage. I set out here some of the problems, which it is easier to do than to comment on the success of the simulation which will also be addressed.

The game was "designed to stimulate venturers into thinking about the issues of insecurity, uncertainty and deprivation which refugees frequently face in the real world" as the camp newsletter, the *Pony Express* put

it before the start. The *Pony Express* went on to point out that some people were already saying that it was inappropriate to turn the terror of a refugees experience into a game in the safe environs of camp"

Dave Crawshaw and Richard Kirkwood who had been the original conceivers of the ideas were undeterred, as were the other leaders involved in planning. It was felt that some of the objections arose out of a linguistic aversion to the word "game".

At 2 pm the teenagers were expelled from their villages. They were allowed to take a sleeping bag, a bottle of water, and a bit of money.

The game rapidly developed into a whole camp experience; in fact it had before the start, because most villages consulted with all their members when setting the criteria for admission of the "refugees". Younger Folk took on the roles of messengers, welcoming parties or camp guards, depending on the decisions that were made by the villages. Tables were set up with people sitting behind them looking bureaucratic, welcoming or unfriendly according to the assumed ethos of the village. Notices were drawn bearing messages such as ALL REFUGEES SHOULD QUEUE HERE, or NO ADMITTANCE TO STRANGERS WITHOUT PERMISSION, or WELCOME!

It was not easy for the "refugees". Some young people got really upset by the behaviour of the "militias" who looted the few belongings they were allowed to carry with them. Accusations of enjoying the arbitrary power of being thugs were made.

Some "villages" imposed stringent entry requirements. In some cases these were competitive. One village put their refugees through a humiliating time by pushing them into a tent in the heat of the afternoon to wait while they decided their fate. This caused outrage amongst some adults who felt that it was "going too far", and possibly encouraging young people to enjoy subjecting others to torture. The response was that there was actually no harm done, and that you only had to look at the television to see that refugees in Bosnia were, in reality, subjected to far, far worse than that.

Some people who were on other business than the "game" instinctively took on roles. On being told by border

guards that he was not allowed to drive his car through a certain field an adult was heard to explode: "Look here my man, I am a representative of her Britannic Majesty. Let me through now or you and your government will take the consequences!" Somewhat to his dismay he was immediately waved through.

As a participant I was pleased to be part of a village that decided to treat the "refugees" more or less fairly. It was decided not to be "shapist", in other words to discriminate according to the symbols on their faces, but to work on a first come first served basis up to the amount of food available. However there were games to participate in as criteria for entry. We were the group who did not award entry to the winners of the games. As a result we had guests for the night from Murcia in Spain, Wales and Manchester. In camp terms this was good because we made new acquaintances. I was pleased that we treated the people well with cups of tea and food provided.

In the evening there was a massive, but discreet checking up exercise to ensure that all the young people had found somewhere to take them in - we did not want any real casualties! The leaders anxiously listened to *Radio Woodcraft* to find out what had become of their charges and at that stage I think it began to take on more of an air of reality for the adults as, prompted by sentiment, or perhaps of possible lawsuits if something really had gone wrong, they sat in the fading light with heads bowed to the loudspeaker as the lists of names or groups crackled through the ether ...

Some villages treated their guests very well. Indeed some young people having found a group who took life easily and cooked well and plentifully, did not want to return to their own villages. They were given good tents, extra blankets and very light rota duties. Others were given cramped accommodation, not much food and made to empty the toilet buckets, or other onerous chores.

At the end of the temporary exile the villages said farewell to their "refugees" in different ways. Some pushed them out, but in many new friendships had formed. There was a growing awareness that for some the experience had been emotional, if not traumatic. The group of fifteen year old Spanish



Refugees setting out with their belongings

girls from Murcia talked to me about the Spanish Civil War, and about how their grandparents families had been murderously split between Franco supporters and Republicans.

The family traumas of sixty years previously had been partially awakened by the experience. At the end of the period of exile their new village sang a song of farewell and good luck, written specially by a creative leader, and there were some tears of mixed relief and confusion as they trailed off to their own villages carrying the symbolic few items.

There was possibly too much debriefing. Leaders in the host village were keen to involve the younger Pioneers and Elbins in the whole experience and they had already taken part as "camp guards", "interrogators" and messengers. Many villages held Council Circles to discuss the whole event. The "refugees" were then requested to come to another meeting and listen to what some real refugees had to say about their experiences. Many of the young people opted out of this. They had done the experience, talked about it once at length, and were now expected to drag over it again

The "refugee", from Western Sahara, was positive and complimentary about the experience; however he emphasized quietly that it came nowhere near his own experiences of flight and fear.

Reaction to the game raged

furiously, especially in the columns of *Pony Express*. Even as the "refugees" returned to their own villages conflicting ideas were being expressed about the success of the event - with perhaps the majority expressing their general support for the game.

What began for venturers as something of a prank rapidly acquired a sharper edge, the experience for some "refugees" was much harder than they expected. One adult said "A refugee experiences fear. People in this camp don't."

The next day public controversy raged about the "Game". Bakhtiar from Village 28 was outraged that the Venturers had been given permission to go to a Disco that had been booked, and which its organisers had found could not be postponed. "If the aim was to acquire an understanding of the plight of refugees, we failed", he blazed in *Pony Express*: "How about having a rape simulation game for the next International camp, so men could have an understanding of this subject. If you think this suggestion is outrageous as I think it is, maybe you understand that we could not get away with yesterday's refugee joke."

Other letters from young people claimed that the militias and border guards had treated people unreasonably. Another, interestingly, asked why the "refugees" had been so

passive. These tended to vindicate Crawshaw's and Kirkwood's reply that "the game should be judged against its original objectives:

Did the game succeed in raising awareness of refugee issues? *Yes we believe it did.*

Did it raise other issues? *Again yes! We believe it has raised important issues about the use and abuse of power. We should use these issues more widely, and try to understand the dangerous addiction that power can present.*

And that is where I stand too. The "Refugee simulation game" was risky in some ways, but when debriefing a group of young people from an industrial suburb of Manchester, I asked them what they thought about the game. "Well, before this I'd seen refugees on the television, and sort of felt they were a bunch of dossers, just looking for the easy life. Now I've got a sort of idea about what they go through. I'll never hear the word refugee in the same way again." All the group agreed.

It was a great experiment in cooperative free learning. Some opted out, some played dirty, but every one of the nearly 5000 people at the Woodcraft Folk International Camp of 1995 will have been affected and educated at some level by this event which engaged everyone there.

Down Woodhead

9.00 am The red flags are hung out, the pictures of Margaret Thatcher and John Major have been burned in the yard and we are all calling each other "comrade". The new Commissar for Education, Comrade Blunkett, should be arriving any minute. We are all tremendously excited. This is a new dawn. At last the long night of Tory reaction is over and we can look forward to a new egalitarian age as we start along the road to socialism and justice. NEW LABOUR, NEW BRITAIN, NEW CURRICULUM POLICE.

9.10 am The Mercedes pulls up and Comrade Blunkett gets out, accompanied by his faithful Rottweiler guide dog, Woodhead. We all cheer and sing the "Red Flag" as he makes his way up the steps and into the building.

"What the fuck's going on?" says the Boss. "Are all of you bastards members of Militant or what? Any more of this commie rubbish and I'll set Woodhead on you. There'll be no more "Red Flag" while David Blunkett's in charge. It's "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the Queen" all the way, and you bastards had best not forget it. No wonder education has gone down the pan." He is white with rage. We seem to have misjudged the significance of the change of government!

10.30 am My first meeting with Comrade ... oops, I mean Boss Blunkett. As I go into his office Woodhead sniffs around me, growling, his eyes bloodshot, his mouth dripping saliva. The bloody dog looks rabid to me, but I keep the thought to myself. "Don't mind Woodhead," says the Boss jovially, "It's just his way. He can smell a socialist or a teacher at five hundred yards. It's the red meat diet that does it."

"Now about that fiasco this morning. It's obvious none of you lot bothered to read our manifesto. We are New Labour, Thatcher's Labour, dedicated to creating a Britain safe for millionaires to live in. New Labour is now the party

of the rich, the workers' flag is old hat and the global market is our new international. We are here to punish the poor and reward the wealthy in order to make a Better Britain. So I want no more of that leftie bollocks or it'll be feeding time for Woodhead here!"

The dog, obviously excited at the mention of feeding time, pees on the carpet.

12.00 am The Boss has given me his policy document, part of strategy of hitting the ground running teachers over. The new approach consists of cosmetic changes to the old regime, but keeping the central strategic thrust: unrelenting war on progressive teaching and the teaching profession and continued emphasis on standards to cover up cuts in funding. A lot of people are in for a real shock once the euphoria of getting rid of the Tories has passed.

First priority is to publicly pillory some 'failing' schools to show that he means business. The Boss wants maximum demoralisation of staff, kids and governors, a real kick in the teeth when they least expect it. I glance over the hit list I prepared earlier for Boss Shepherd. There's the Roy Hattersley Comp, the Aneurian Bevan Primary, the Harold Wilson Community College, all long overdue for the chop.

I take the list into the Boss. Woodhead is trying to mount the sofa! "Down, Woodhead! Down, boy!" The Boss smiles benevolently. "He's a frisky bugger. It's the red meat diet." He waves me in. "Sit down," he tells me. This is easier said than done. I manage to squeeze onto the corner of the groaning sofa. "I've decided to set up a committee on standards," the Boss tells me. "I'm putting Woodhead here on it and a poodle called Brighthouse to provide some balance. Now every time teachers are made redundant or a school falls down, I shall want regular press releases on our campaign to raise standards and on the committee's

progress. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Boss." As I leave the room, Woodhead climaxes.

2.00 pm Representatives from the NUT arrive to meet the Boss. He keeps them waiting for over an hour. They do their best to ignore the TEACHERS BEWARE! Poster pinned to his door. At last they are ushered in, the Boss has had all the chairs taken out of the room so they have to stand. Woodhead is chained to the radiator.

"Congratulations Minister," says Red Doug McAvoy. "The whole teaching profession is right behind the new government. We look forward to decades of co-operation as we strive together to raise standards and quip Britain with a skilled, highly educated workforce. Tony Blair's exciting vision has ..." His words are drowned out by Woodhead's barking.

"Don't give me all that flannel," says the Boss. "I know all about you workshy scum with your ME, your early retirement and your long holidays. Next thing you'll be wanting a bloody pay rise as well. Well you've got another think coming. The gloves are coming off. You've had eighteen years of clover under the Tories, well now there are going to be a few changes. How does a ban on teachers' industrial action sound, because it's coming ..."

There is a screeching, rending noise as the radiator is pulled away from the wall and a crazed Woodhead throws himself on the NUT delegation. "Put that teacher down, Woodhead," the Boss shouts above the screams.

NEXT ISSUE: Heir to the throne, Prince Tampax, condemns trendy teachers and urges the young unemployed to model themselves on him - get a phenomenally rich mum, go to Cambridge despite being especially thick, never do a proper days work, and pontificate on things you know fuck-all about.

For over twenty five years, *Lib ED* has been actively promoting freedom in education by publishing books, pamphlets and magazines and organising meetings, conferences and other events.

For the Liberation of Learning

One of the main roles of *Lib ED* is to examine the way this society educates its members. Schools obviously play an important part in the process of manufacturing docile people for the shop-floor, office and market-place. So much of our space will inevitably be devoted to analysis of schooling. However, schools, because of their very nature, do allow some scope for libertarian teachers to have an influence counter to the ideology of the school. *Lib ED* publicises and encourages this work.

As well as forming an analysis of how things are, we want to discuss how a non-patriarchal anarchist society might educate, and to offer examples of existing alternative education projects which may give some clues, even if only to what should be avoided.

But school is only one of the agents of conformity, and, certainly plenty of learning takes place outside of school. Part of our role, then, is to look at non-institutional learning, particularly at, for instance, the media, from which we learn to have 'acceptable' attitudes and opinions.

Finally, the most difficult task must be to suggest ways of changing what is into what might be. We welcome the active participation of our readers.

Lib ED magazine

Lib ED publishes a regular (at present 3 a year) magazine/journal to keep readers up to date with the latest developments in education. Subscribers will receive all of these.

Conferences

As well as running a biannual conference, *Lib ED* organises and collaborates in other meetings and events. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope for up-to-date information.

The latest books

Lib ED is a publisher of a small selection of books including *Free School: The White Lion Experience* by Nigel Wright (£3.95/US\$12) and *No Master High or Low: Libertarian education and schooling in Britain 1890-1990* by John Shotton (£7.95/US\$21). If ordering by post add 85p (US\$7) for p&p.

Overseas friends please note: please send a bank draft in sterling. If this is not possible then send a cheque equivalent to the US\$ price, but add US\$14 to cover additional bank charges.

A do-it-yourself guide

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);
- 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.

Available direct from *Lib ED*, price £3.95 (US\$12) for each copy plus 85p (US\$7) towards post and packing.

Subscribe Now and Save Money!

Please start my sub to *Lib ED* from the current issue I enclose payment for (please circle) ...

1 year sub [SAVE 5%]
inland £5.50, overseas £11 in sterling or US\$29

2 year sub [SAVE over 10%]
inland £10.50, overseas £21 in sterling or US\$44

3 year sub [SAVE 15%]
inland £15, overseas £30 in sterling or US\$57

Institutional subscription (calendar year)
inland £15, overseas £23 in sterling or US\$46

Name

Address

Postcode

Send this form with your cheque made payable to 'Lib ED' to:
Lib ED, 170 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2AG, England.



A history of education

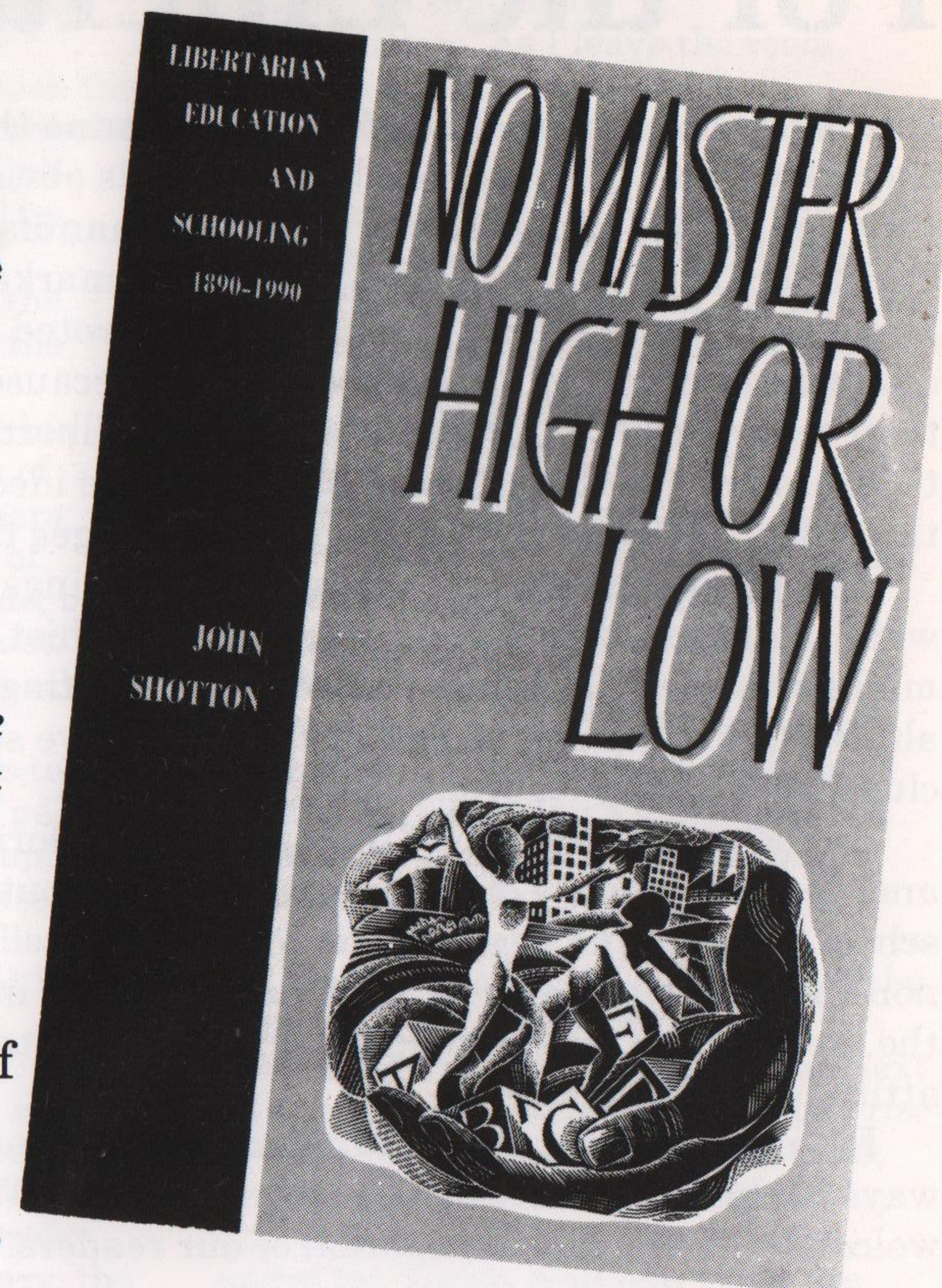
The path to a compulsory education system, the emergence of selective schooling, and the fight for comprehensive education in Britain are all issues that have been charted by educational historians. What they have missed is the history of the dissenting tradition, one that questions the whole notion 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.

Available direct from *Lib ED*, price £7.95 (US\$21) plus 85p (US\$7) postage and packing.



Back Issues Offer

Now in its 28th 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 ED*17/18 is £2, 23/24 is £4) but for only £15 you can have the complete set of back issues in print. At present that's those listed here. 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*)

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

Please rush me a complete set of back issues (£15).

Please rush me back issues.....(£1.30, £2, £4 each)

I enclose a cheque for

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....

.....

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 7 | SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUE, High Tech in Education, Nellie Dick: Free School Pioneer. |
| 9 | Black Children in Care, 1968-88: What went Right, A Progressive Comprehensive. Theatre. |
| 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. |
| 15 | SPECIAL: Visions of the future: Young people tell us about their hopes and aspirations. |
| 16 | Self government at Summerhill, The National Curriculum, Youth theatre. |
| 17/18 | SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE: Children and War. Derbyshire small school, Illich and Anarchy (£2) |
| 19 | Racism at the Poly, Beating the bullies, Greening your school, Illich and Anarchy part II. |
| 20 | Summerhill on Channel4 TV, Grades for Gullibility, Illich and Anarchism part III |
| 21 | Woodcraft Folk special feature, Testing in schools |
| 22 | English Curriculum Special |
| 23/24 | NEW STYLE 64 page issue on PLAY. (£4) |
| 26 | Religion in School, Higher Education. |
| 27 | Focus on universities, drugs and ADD |

Debating the unspeakable

The Animal Debate
a video pack
from Team Video, 105 Canalot, 222
Kensal Road, London W10 5BN
£35.50

THE ANIMAL DEBATE resource pack offers questions designed for students between 13 and 18. The video was shown to people at the lower end of this range at Sands School, and their reactions were video-recorded. The flier advertising the pack was presumably prepared later than the pack itself, and it wisely recommends it only for 15 - 18 year olds. Nevertheless, many of the comments from Sands remain relevant.

There are three sections to the pack, one on fox-hunting, one on animal experiments and one on factory farming. In each forty-minute section a group of six students is filmed interviewing relevant people, first hearing one side of the argument and then hearing the other.

The Sands students found this format unsatisfactory, for two reasons. Firstly they felt that the students in the video were merely asking pre-prepared questions, and not following up their own concerns or even taking part in a coherent dialogue, and secondly they were disappointed that the arguments for and against were presented consecutively, instead of being interwoven. However, their main objection to the whole video was that it consisted almost entirely of talk, and they wanted to see what actually

happened when a fox is killed or when animals are slaughtered; if they were to discuss vivisection they wanted to see what it actually involves.

Nevertheless the section on fox-hunting was much enjoyed, and provoked vigorous discussion. Particular points from the video were discussed or dismissed, several people related personal experiences and someone offered to arrange a day following a hunt during the next season. Although the general feeling was strongly pro-fox, there was dissatisfaction that the film seem biased against the hunters; both sides, it was felt, should have been fairly represented. The most striking sequence was from a film made by The League Against Cruel Sports; it showed a fox being dragged from a hole by a terrier which had its teeth buried in the fox's face.

This was mentioned over and over again in the discussion at Sands, and two girls in particular felt that they should have seen more of the horrors of the hunt, even though, as one said, it makes you cry, and, as the other said, it makes your heart ache.

The group found the vivisection section too boring to watch (you saw no



experiments in progress), but they were more adequately interested by the section on factory and organic farming. This may be partly due to their age, but adults who have watched the video agree with their general criticisms.

The video was not designed to be watched straight through in three sessions, but is subdivided into shorter interviews and visits; a teacher who wanted to use each of these as a basis for a separate piece of work might find this useful, and a student who had made a personal choice to follow up questions about animal rights would certainly find some of the material interesting. The biggest hit at Sands, though, was definitely the introductory music.

Philosophers play with themselves

The Liberation Debate
Edited by Michael Leahy and Dan Cohn-Sherbok
Routledge
£13.99

THIS BOOK IS DIVIDED into six sections, dealing with Women's Liberation, Black Liberation, Gay Liberation, Children's Liberation, Animal Liberation and Liberation Theology. In each section there is an essay supporting the liberation in question, a counter-argument and a brief reply. This seems to give the advantage to the liberationists. However, the book ends with a fifteen-page afterword which is naively and transparently reactionary.

The contributors are philosophers or theologians. They amuse themselves by discussing the meanings of words and rephrasing each other's arguments to make them sound ridiculous. Nevertheless, to start with I found the

confrontational arrangement of the book stimulating.

Then I read the section on children's liberation. The concept is well-defended in an abstract argument, but condemned on curiously slim evidence. This consists of the failure of a group of parents in the 18th century who tried to follow Rousseau's methods and two more modern examples which appear to be fictitious - a boy called Sean who won't work at school because he wants to be a racing driver, and a nameless girl of 14 who becomes pregnant, refuses to have an abortion and runs away from home. Explicitly on the strength of these examples the afterword pronounces "Children's liberation is a blueprint for disaster. A nation that was misguided enough to put it into practice would, in a generation or so, be inhabited by morons."

Astonished by this apparent ignorance of all the successful

experiments in children's liberation, from the Little Commonwealth, Summerhill and the Peckham Centre to Sudbury Valley, Countesthorpe College and the Voice of the Children, I looked at the bibliography. Of the twenty-five authors listed I had heard of only three - Illich, Rousseau and Locke. Thinking I must be uncommonly ignorant, I compared the bibliography with those in other relevant books, but I found only two more matches. These philosophers clearly live in a world of their own.

The other more reactionary sections of the book show the same extraordinary unawareness of modern developments. The authors have not observed evidence and formed opinions, they have formed opinions first and then either ignored or tried to discredit evidence that does not support them. Most philosophy can be described as an intellectual effort to justify intuition; much of this book is merely an intellectual effort to justify prejudice.