

Groups and Resources

Lib ED contacts
tel: 0117 977 8453
e-mail: editors@libed.demon.co.uk

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)

Parent Network
Room 2, Winchester House, Kennington Park, 11 Cranmer Road, London SW9 6EJ
(Parent-Link is for all parents which offers practical new ways of dealing with the ups and downs of family life)

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

Home Education Advisory Service
PO Box 98, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AN
e-mail: 100752.1061@compuserve.com
(Practical help and support)

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

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)

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

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

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
0136 45 3666

Travellers' School
PO Box 36, Grantham, Lincs., NG31 6EZ
01426 218424 (co-ordinator's pager)

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

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
(Promotes education for international development; also runs refugee advice line on 0171 288 4603)

Scottish Civil Liberty Trust
146 Holland Street, Glasgow, G2 4NG
0141 332 5960
(Provides legal information and has published a series of leaflets aimed at young people in Scotland)

We don't have room here for a comprehensive list of all schools, groups and resources available. For that see our new up-dated handbook, to be published soon.

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 17/11/6679, 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 Informations 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

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

Tamariki Free School
86 St John's Street, Christchurch 6, NEW ZEALAND
e-mail: tamariki@clear.net.nz

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)

The Hope Flowers School
Al Amal, The Hope Flowers School, POB 732, Bethlehem, PALESTINE

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

SAC (Syndikalisterna)
Senvagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm, SWEDEN
00 46 8 343559

Jurg Jegge
Stiftung Martplatz, Postfach, 8427 Rorbas, 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.29 Autumn 1998 £1

RACISM
Black children's
experience of
British education

**FLOWERS
OF HOPE**
A Palestinian
school in
Bethlehem

**MARXISTS
OUT**
How universities
are being cleansed



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Cover photo: student of the Pestalozzi School, Ecuador, featured in Real Education by David Gribble, see page 7.

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, 157 Wells Road, Bristol, BS4 2BU.

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Tigers and cages

"I'm not in favour of people being in cages. On the other hand I think people should be in cages if there's a sabre-toothed tiger wandering about outside and if they go out the tiger will kill them. So sometimes there's a justification for cages. That doesn't mean cages are good things. State power is a good example of a necessary cage. There are some sabre-toothed tigers outside; they are called transnational corporations which are among the most tyrannical institutions that human society has devised. And there is a cage, namely the state, which to some extent is under popular control."

Noam Chomsky, in Red Pepper, Aug '98, p.16.

AS LIBERTARIANS we are caught in a dilemma: we oppose the state as a tool of authority and oppression, and yet we find ourselves supporting it where we perceive it to be defending us from some even more repressive power.

As libertarians interested in education we find the dilemma accentuated. The majority of formal education happens under the control of the state, and we find ourselves both opposing it and supporting it.

Naturally we oppose and expose abuses and malpractice within the state system, with its national curriculum, its league tables, its market-driven logic, its in-built 'failure' rates and its pull towards uniformity. And yet within the state system there is a large amount of good practice. Many teachers and educators work actively to develop relationships with students based on mutual respect, seek to counter racism, sexism, oppression and hopelessness or strive to enable even the least able of their students to fulfil their potential.

LIB ED always seeks to highlight ways in which people both inside and outside the state system are individually and collectively creating opportunities for each person to thrive and develop. The state system is deeply flawed and often highly oppressive, but it is not to be condemned in its entirety. We support individuals and groups who continue to work from the inside for the destruction of the cage that is the state, but we must also support the system when it offers the tools to confront (or perhaps simply by-pass) the sabre-toothed tigers in the free market that lurk menacingly outside.

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Black in Britain

While black people have lived in this country for centuries, it was after World War Two when West Indians began migrating to Britain to fill labour shortages in industry and services that the education of black children in British schools became an issue for national debate. LORNA CHESSUM discusses the experience of black children in schools in Leicester in the 1960s and how Leicester's Education Authority responded.

EDUCATION IS an endurance test for many white children in British schools, but African/Caribbean children get an even worse deal. They are even more likely to be denied their basic right to the chance to gain some qualifications, which would at least provide some justification for all those years of being pushed around. African/Caribbean boys are four times as likely to be permanently excluded from school as whites, and are fifty per cent more likely to leave school without any kind of qualification.

Editha Drew arrived in Leicester from Dominica in 1962, leaving behind happy memories of the Caribbean.

Bathing in the river with friends, having a picnic, cooking outdoors and there was no planning Houses in the Caribbean all had verandas. They were wooden houses. That was my idea of a house.

She started school at Moat Girls' School in Leicester.

In a way it was terrible. It put me right back. ... The West Indian children were seen as dunces who didn't know anything. ... Children from the Caribbean had already passed what we were given to do. If we said we had done this we were

told 'Sit down, you haven't reached that stage yet.' We were put in a class by age rather than by standard. I found that when I came here I forgot everything I had learnt. My mum would have helped me but she was working in an elastic factory and didn't have time to help me. The first day at school we did subtraction in the morning and I thought 'This work is for seven-year-olds. I can do this.' Back home we had dictation where the teacher would read from a book. ... We would have homework every night and you got lines if you didn't do it. Here there was no encouragement. It demoralised me. ... There was one West Indian girl who had arrived before me. She didn't know what I knew. She latched on to me. ... Plus the Asian children who didn't know a word of English. A lot of time was spent with them. No Indian child could speak English. African/Caribbean children got forgotten. There was a few Caribbean kids then. We got on all right together. We went around together. And the white kids. We were all friends. One white girl stuck to me, the others took the mick - she was at a lower level than the other white kids.

Editha Drew left Moat two years later when she was fifteen.

Oscar Frank, who is now an established performance poet, spent his childhood in Barbuda.

In a sense I am more fortunate than my brothers and sisters ... because I experienced the culture and way of life (of Barbuda) before I came to England. My experience in Barbuda was close to nature ... the innocence. I used to till the land, cultivate vegetables, keep goats and sheep. I went to the school in Barbuda. ... There was only one. There is one of everything. There were only 1200 people ... one village and most people live in one area ... All the tall buildings [coming up the hill of St. Saviour's Road, in Leicester, I thought it looked grim and dismal. In the Caribbean it was all open spaces and the beach.

Oscar Frank went to Moat Boys' in 1965. He was already fourteen so he only stayed eight months. He was

... disappointed when I went to school ... mainly because I was into education in Barbuda. I was one of the top boys. I won prizes. I came to England and was put into a class ...



The struggle to enable young African/Caribbeans to realise their educational potential remains

a couple of weeks later I realised the status of the class ... I was put back four or five years. It was a very damaging experience from an educational point of view. There were a lot of Indians coming in ... we were all herded into one class or group. There was always some degree of racism. In our class of about thirty there were twenty Asian kids, about five English and five West Indians. So we were in a minority ... there was friction ... between West Indians and Asians too but it was not that unpleasant. There was lots of flack but we gave it back ... We all became friends eventually.

Settling in Leicester

The origin of Leicester's African/Caribbean community (as is the case for Britain's African/Caribbean community as a whole) lay in the Second World War. Around 10,000 men and women worked in the armed forces in Britain and some stayed on afterwards. By 1952 Leicester had a small but stable community of people, mostly from Jamaica and Antigua. Antiguan became the largest single group of African/Caribbeans in Leicester. The second largest is Jamaican. Later they were joined by people from many other Caribbean islands. They came to work in Leicester's industries which were chronically short of workers; accommodation was also available in large and smaller terraced houses in the Highfields district of Leicester near the city centre. White people were moving away from here to the suburbs and beyond. There were other groups of immigrants too. There were Polish, Ukrainian and Italian communities as well as Asians, who in the 1950s were mostly from India. Established Jewish and Irish communities already existed in Leicester and in the 1960s and 1970s were joined by East African Asians, and later still by Chinese and more recently Vietnamese people. Leicester now has the largest proportion of 'ethnic minority' residents in any city in the UK outside London.

While the African/Caribbean community is predominantly working class, many West Indian migrants had professional qualifications. One such person was Clifton Robinson. He had served in the RAF from 1944 - 1949 and formed one of the group of original pioneers of Leicester's African/Caribbean community. He gained two scholarships: one from the RAF to do a degree in Educational Psychology at Birmingham University and one as a Colonial Scholar to train to become a teacher. After teaching for a year in Jamaica, he returned to Rugby in Leicestershire to join his wife and son. While working on the production of

turbines in a Rugby factory, Robinson applied for a teaching post. He was told the post had been filled. Three weeks later the job was still being advertised and Robinson applied again.

I didn't put that I was from Jamaica ... They invited me for interview. I told them that I was the same person who had been told (previously) that the job was filled. I knew the MP who was Labour and I passed the information on to him ... but there were no legal procedures ... nothing could happen about it ... they offered me the job, but I didn't take it.

Robinson subsequently applied for a teaching post in Leicester and gained a job at Mellor Street School in 1951 where he worked until 1961. Later he was to become, he believes, the first black head teacher of a school in Britain - Upland Junior School in Highfields. But many more qualified teachers were unable to get teaching posts and took manual jobs, and Robinson remained one of a handful of black teachers to work in Leicester schools.

Black children as a problem

The British government and local authorities were well aware of the nature of immigration into and out of Great Britain in the 1950s. The cabinet discussed the issue of black and Asian migration on thirty-seven occasions between 1950 and 1961. But no attempt was made to plan for the arrival and settlement of newcomers. West Indian migrants met horrendous levels of ignorance, prejudice and racial discrimination which the central and local authorities did nothing to combat.

Part of the explanation for this can be seen in recently released cabinet minutes of the period which show that members of the government shared many of the racist attitudes encountered by migrants. It is important, however, to add that racism was not monolithic. Many white people in Leicester were helpful and understanding towards West Indians. There was, for instance, the white taxi-driver at Leicester station who, on hearing that his passengers had not been met by relatives as expected, drove round and round Leicester to the houses of any black people he knew until he found his passengers' family.

When black children began to arrive in Leicester schools the Leicester Education authority at first did nothing. The policy adopted was that nothing needed to be done as long as numbers were small. When in the first half of the 1960s numbers in school began to increase the education authority responded to pressure. It accepted the refusal of some heads to accept additional black children. Many were denied their basic rights by having to wait months for places in schools.

However the response of the LEA was also informed by a racist perspective. There were three outstanding features of the response of Leicester City council to the arrival of West Indian children in schools. First, black and Asian children were grouped together in a racialised category called 'immigrant'. This was in spite of the fact that the vast majority of immigrants in Britain were and always have been white. Second, immigrants defined by the authority and its agents as West Indians and Asians were seen as a problem. Part of this problem consisted of the need to keep the numbers of such children in each school low. The needs of the children themselves were not considered. The third aspect of the LEA's response to the arrival of Caribbeans in schools was to view the culture of the newcomers as inferior to that of the society which they were joining. Implicit in the reports and discussions of the authority was an assimilationist perspective which saw the task of the education system as achieving a cultural adaptation by West Indian children. Further, aspects of the culture of these children were seen as responsible for low attainment in schools.

These three aspects of the LEA's response were normally conflated to become a perspective which proved resistant to contrary evidence from the research which the authority commissioned and which was presented to the various committees making decisions. The LEA insisted, in line with government policy, that the numbers of 'immigrants' in each school should be kept low. The focus on numbers created the impression of overcrowding and lack of resources.

Numbers

In fact the numbers of 'immigrant' children in Leicester schools rose less between 1944 and 1974 than the national average. Ten per cent of children born in 1947 in Leicester had moved away before the age of fourteen.

The age group born in Leicester in 1955 was reduced by twenty per cent in 1961 but by 1970, when these children were fourteen years old, they had been joined by an additional 486 children as a result of immigration, making this cohort ninety-two per cent the size of the group in the year of birth.

Class sizes were low compared with today. For example, in 1965 most classes in the two Moat Schools, which had the largest proportion of black and Asian children, were between 22 and 30 with only two classes in Moat boys in years one and three being over thirty. Yet fourteen boys and six girls who lived in the catchment area were denied school places. Other schools also had ample room but declined to take more 'immigrant' pupils.

Not only were children denied their right to an education, but once in school racism and ignorance pervaded the approach to their education. Even well-meaning liberal teachers often lacked understanding of West Indian culture which was seen as inferior and held to be responsible for problems and the lack of educational attainment.

Language

The view that the culture of 'immigrant' children was a problem to the educational system at first centred on the issue of language. Non-English-speaking children provided a focus for concerns that were actually wider than the technical and administrative difficulties posed for teachers and pupils in classrooms where communication was difficult. The first special group for teaching English to immigrant children was set up at Moat Boys' School in 1957.

The imposition of the racist category 'immigrant' to describe West Indian and South Asian migrants impaired the ability of the LEA officers and teachers to recognise important differences between groups. While some children of South Asian origin were non-English-speakers, West Indian children spoke Creole or Patois but would have been familiar with English. They had been taught in an English education system using English texts and with English-speaking teachers. Clifton Robinson, who made a study of West Indian children in Leicester schools in 1964, wrote

English is the vernacular in the West Indies, there are however a multiplicity of dialects and encunciations between the various islands. Added to this is the use of English patois (again varying from island to island), pronunciation, colloquial phrases, special vocabularies, etc., all of which often make it difficult or at times impossible to understand the West Indian. This difficulty is not restricted to the English listener. West Indians also find it difficult to understand other West Indians, much in the same way as some English people may find it difficult to understand some Welsh, Scottish or Cockney people. It takes a trained ear to distinguish, for example, the speech of Jamaicans and Barbadians or Windward Islanders from Antiguan or Trinidadians. Since immigrants from Dominica and St. Lucia are now also coming to Leicester, added difficulties are likely to arise, as they are mainly bilingual, speaking the local French patois as well as English with a most pronounced foreign accent.

While clearly problems of communication posed difficulties in the

classroom, the negative assessment of children's linguistic abilities, and extrapolation of this to abilities in general, can only be seen as based on prejudice. In a different context, for example in that of learning European languages, bilingualism is viewed in a highly positive light. The arrival of bilingual children from Dominica and St. Lucia in Leicester schools demonstrates that the problem lay in the social position of West Indians as a group. The knowledge of the bilingual West Indian child was defined as ignorance and the ignorance of the white English teacher was defended as knowledge.

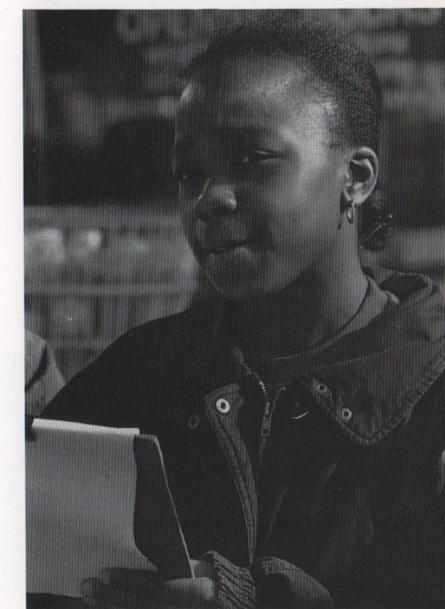
In fact evidence collected for the LEA in 1964 on all Leicester schools showed no relationship between the percentage of black and Asian children and the number of non-English-speaking children. Yet still the focus of discussion was the number of immigrants who could not speak English. Furthermore there was evidence from schools in Leicester that inability to speak English on arrival could not be held responsible for low achievement. The Leicester Mercury contained regular reports in the 1960s of examination success by pupils, who had arrived in Leicester speaking no English only a few years before, sitting and passing public examinations at sixteen. Other cultural differences were used to explain the low attainment of West Indian children, for example the nature of the family. An interesting example of the plasticity of racism was the view held by some white teachers that black parents were too disciplinarian. For white working class children it is often lack of discipline that is seen as a cause of low achievement.

Saturday School

By the early 1970s many West Indians were aware that English schools were failing to meet their needs. B. Coard's short but devastating piece, 'How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal in the English education system,' was published in 1971. Leicester's African/Caribbean community responded by setting up the Saturday School for black children in an effort to counter the damaging effects of the system on the achievement of black children. At the same time the LEA, like others in Britain, was beginning to make some moves towards what became known as the multi-cultural approach. There is not space here to offer a critique of multi-culturalism, but suffice it so say that it remains an inadequate response to the needs and the rights of children, both black and white, in communities like Leicester with diverse communities and cultures. The memories provided by Caribbean people of their childhood in Leicester schools mirror the policy decision of the LEA to

which the children were subject. This is illustrated in the quotes which opened this piece. It is a shameful tribute to the resilience of racism in British society that in general discourse 'immigrant' still means black or brown.

However it has now been joined by another racialised category - 'ethnic minority'. Mindful of the fact that about half of the black and Asian people living in this country were born here, many people, particularly those in public life such as journalists and officials, use the term 'ethnic minority'



League tables have made things worse

to describe black and Asian people. But this term too is racialised. Somehow white minorities, such as those of the Polish and Irish communities in Leicester, are not included when the term 'ethnic minority' is used. Indeed sometimes the term is reduced to the even more nonsensical 'ethnics'. Somehow white people are deemed not to have any ethnicity.

From the 1950s onwards, the policy of the government and the local authorities in Leicester towards black and Asian immigrants was informed by a racist view which denied basic educational rights to black and Asian children. The modification of this approach through the 1980s and up to today has failed to address the rights of both black and white children to a proper understanding of racism in society which would provide a more appropriate education for a multi-cultural community such as that of Leicester. Indeed, in recent years government policy, setting school against school, sacrificing the needs of children to league tables, has made things worse for black kids. The struggle to combat racism and to enable young African/Caribbeans to realise their educational potential remains.

Still a poacher

Chris Searle is a teacher. And like LIB ED, he is a product of the educational radicalism of the 1960s. In 1971 he became a national figure when he was sacked for disobeying his headteacher and publishing a volume of his students' poetry - *Stepney Words*. Nineteen years later, Chris became a headteacher himself - of Earl Marshal School in Sheffield. Just another case of poacher turned gamekeeper, you might have thought: just another ageing radical selling out. You'd have been wrong, reports NIGEL WRIGHT.

"MY POSITIONS haven't changed much in 30 years" asserts Chris. "Read *Classrooms of Resistance*. I still believe in all that." And indeed, if you do read *Classrooms of Resistance*, published in 1975 - or even better, *This New Season* (Calder and Boyars 1973) - you will find eloquently expressed the views which led eventually, in 1995, to Chris being removed from the headship of Earl Marshal by Sheffield Education Authority.

Why did Chris decide to become a head-teacher in 1990? "I was an L.E.A. Advisor when this headship came up. I applied because of the area and the community and wanted to work with those people. It wasn't really a career move. I'd never been a senior teacher - I'd always been on the wrong side of headteachers. I wasn't keen on being a manager and didn't want to stay around all that long. The school was under threat and I wanted to help make sure it didn't close." The school, with substantial Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali and Afro-Caribbean communities, was located in the most economically deprived area of Sheffield, and was under threat of closure because of falling enrolments. Chris's first task was to save the school by reversing the decline in student numbers. In this he was strikingly effective. There was to be no more talk of closing the school for eight years.

Despite this success, Chris started making enemies on three fronts: first, his refusal to exclude troublesome students; second, his dislike of the National Curriculum; and third, his commitment to an active internationalism within the school.

The exclusion of students deemed 'troublesome' raises issues which Chris has always felt strongly about. As he argued in *This New Season*: "The problem' is seen as the pupils and their

lives, not the state or nature of society and the schools." This belief that individual pupils are too easily scapegoated for the school's failure to address their needs is something Chris returns to again and again. He points out, in a brilliant article in *Forum* (Vol 39, No. 1, 1997 - read it everyone!) how the young are nowadays increasingly being blamed for the ills of society. The

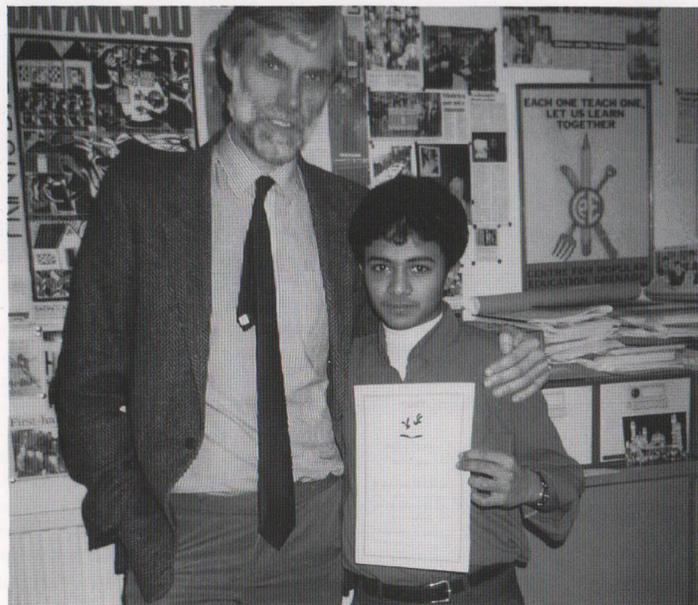
original sin is always valuable in justifying repressive treatment meted out to children.

As a headteacher, Chris steadfastly refused to expel difficult students. In his view, the school's job is to include everybody; the teacher's job to involve and stimulate every child. But within the school a well-organised faction - centred on the NASUWT - saw

exclusions as the answer to the school's problems. Chris concedes that he could have used his power as a headteacher to crush this opposition; he chose not to, hoping to rely on reason and persuasion. On his side was the excellent governing body; but in the long run even their support was not enough.

Two of the early influences on Chris's thinking about education were Frantz Fanon and Paolo Freire. Chris uses to this day Fanon's term *actional education*, which he defines as "an experience where people break down the walls between them and fight together to preserve, expand and discover what is theirs, to affirm their class, their neighbourhood, their world, and their own sense of belonging to one another."

(*This New Season* p.49). It is easy to see how incompatible this is with the government's National Curriculum. For Chris, as for Freire and Fanon, education is all about changing the world. The National Curriculum is quite the reverse: it is about preserving the world from change; it is about filling up empty jugs with dead knowledge out of a book. Moreover, the National Curriculum was designed, in Chris's view, with white middle-class children in mind. There's not much in it for white working-class children, and even less for the child just arrived in Sheffield from war-ravaged Yemen or Somalia. And yet, when the OFSTED Inspectors came to Earl Marshal in



Chris Searle with one of his Earl Marshal students

failures of schools are attributed, not to structures, methods, the curriculum, nor even to the teachers, but to the children themselves. In the last decade or two there has been a vast increase in the number of children excluded (whether suspended or expelled) from schools. This was exacerbated by the 1988 Education Act - with all its paraphernalia of tests and league tables - which encouraged a school to get rid of pupils who seemed to be draining its resources or dragging down its reputation. Chris sees the murder of James Bulger in 1993 by two eleven-year-olds as a significant point: it permitted a revival of the idea that children are evil. The old notion of

1995, what they wanted to talk about was the National Curriculum. In Chris's words "The inspectors devalued the school's ethos because it was seeking to affirm the experience, history, languages and faiths of its constituents. Over 80 per cent of Earl Marshal's students are from black, arrivant families from countries once colonised by Britain where, for the main part, religions other than Christianity are dominant. And yet the school's ethos was described as lacking balance', with insufficient emphasis upon European civilisation."

When Chris talks about such things, you gradually become aware that, behind his outward calm, he feels extremely angry about such things. It isn't just that the National Curriculum is such a damned insult to many sections of our population. It's much worse than that: its effect is to *disable* them, to actually prevent them getting from their schooling what they need to break the chains that bind them.

At Earl Marshal, some teachers shared Chris's ideas, and worked hard to put them into effective practice. Others decidedly did not, and in Chris's view tried to sabotage agreed policies. I have to say that when I visited the school in 1993, this division was very noticeable in the staffroom. What was not known then was that the reactionary elements within the staff were actively seeking support outside the school.

The third strand of Chris's thinking, which was as evident at Earl Marshal as it had been 25 years earlier, was his

dedication to internationalism. Chris is an internationalist in practice - he has worked as a teacher in Tobago, Mozambique and Grenada. And as a teacher of English, he never ceased to refer to the experiences of people around the world, as well as to their literature. As a headteacher, he wanted his students to be aware of what was happening around the world. And not just be aware: Chris wanted them to *do* something about it. Hence Earl Marshal was often conspicuously involved in campaigning, money raising, and spreading information.

Earl Marshal school has the misfortune to be next to the parliamentary constituency of David Blunkett. It was to him that Chris's opponents went for support. Not for Blunkett any of this stuff about actional education or respect for individuals. Busy building up his credibility with middle-England voters, all he wanted to know was: what are the examination results like? Well, not too good if you want to know. Blunkett lobbied for the removal of Chris Searle. And in the end, he got his way. No doubt there were many who never wanted to see an avowed radical like Chris become a headteacher. The Education Authority professed concern that Earl Marshal was a failing school' which the Tories might want to create a storm about in the run-up to the general election. Would you vote for a party whose education spokesman had ignored a failing school' in his own backyard?

Chris was removed, without warning, at the end of term, just before

Christmas 1995. The Governors, who supported him, were also suspended. The LEA nominated an acting headteacher, with the National Curriculum coming out of his ears. A former member of the OFSTED team which had been so critical of Chris Searle, he was charged, in January 1996, with reversing Chris's policies and putting the school back on its feet'. A new head was appointed in early 1997.

And now's the chance for *Lib Ed* readers to have a jolly good laugh. Since Chris's removal, the school appears to have gone into decline and now (January 1998) Sheffield LEA is once again proposing to close it down.

At least, you would have a jolly good laugh if it wasn't for the fact that real children go to that school. Children who already face the daily burden of poverty, racism, unemployment, poor housing, lack of life prospects. That's if they've been lucky. If they've been unlucky, they will additionally be trying to recover from the trauma of civil war in their own country.

At issue is what kind of schooling would serve the interests of such children. Chris Searle has joined a proud list of headteachers - including E.F.O'Neill, Michael Duane, R.F. Mackenzie, Philip Toogood - who have lost their jobs because they insisted an alternative approach is needed. We need to interrupt all the talk we hear about raising standards by asking "Whose standards?" and "For whose benefit?" Although Chris Searle has been removed as a head-teacher, they'll never stop him asking these questions.

NEW BOOK

REAL EDUCATION: varieties of freedom

REAL EDUCATION by David Gribble describes schools in Britain, Ecuador, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the USA. Students vary from the children of carefully selected fee-paying parents to educational rejects and the children of families in extreme poverty. Locations include inner city Harlem, an Ashram in Delhi, an office block in Tokyo and an Alpine valley.

The variety is astonishing, yet each of these schools shows that children do better when they are allowed to think for themselves. From an educational point of view it is significant that this theme emerges from so many different cultures.

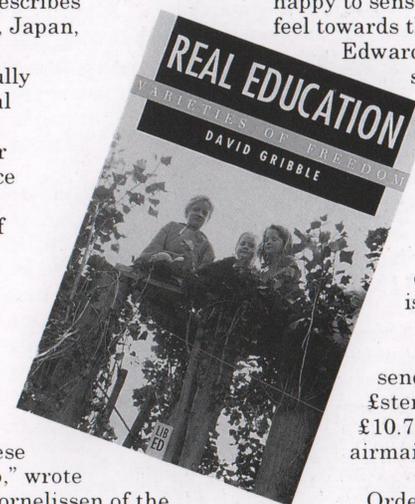
David has already received a strong, positive international response. "Your interpretation of Japanese free schools and Japanese culture is deep," wrote Kageki Asakura from Tokyo. Matthijs Cornelissen of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India, commented, "I was

happy to sense the love and respect which you so obviously feel towards the young people you interviewed." Pat Edwards of Tamariki Free School, New Zealand, said, "You caught the feel of the school really well." Sidney Solomon, a New York publisher, described the book as a "beautiful piece of work (which) deserves a wide audience."

In REAL EDUCATION David Gribble provides evidence that discipline, curriculum and tests are irrelevant to a child's development and that the central issues are care, respect and freedom.

REAL EDUCATION can be purchased by sending £10 for delivery to a UK address or a £sterling cheque or International Money Order for £10.74 (plus £3 if you wish to receive the book by airmail) for delivery to a non UK address.

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LIB ED, 157 Wells Rd, Bristol, BS4 2BU, Britain.



The economic cleansing of economics

FRED LEE and SANDRA HARLEY describe how unfashionable thinking in economics is being further attacked by the establishment through funding.

THE RESEARCH Assessment Exercise carried out by the Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFC) for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland and their predecessors was established as an institutional mechanism to provide the Government with a rationale for distributing research funds among university departments of a given subject area. Central to the exercise is the subject assessment panel made up of pre-eminent peers who rate the research excellence of a department and thereby determine the amount of research monies it will get. Perhaps not initially intended to affect the areas of research carried out by British academics, the assessment panels in fact have that capability through their control of the allocation of research monies.

Economics can be divided into a mainstream, called neoclassical economics, and a non-mainstream, which broadly consists of Marxian, Post-Keynesian, Institutional and Sraffian economics. The difference between the two lies in their social conception of the economy and the analytical tools used to analyze the economy. Neoclassical economics have an asocial and ahistorical conception of the economy and of market interaction, while their analytical tools consist of supply and demand curves.

Non-mainstream economics have a social and historical conception of the economy and view market interaction in terms of power, exploitation, and social interplay. The first exercise seemed to have little impact on economists and their research. However, by the time of the 1989 RAE, the so-called "Diamond List" of core mainstream economic journals had been drawn up and there was a strong belief amongst economists that this list was used by the assessors to inform their judgement of the quality of research in economics departments in British universities. Attempts were made to extend this list for use in the 1992 RAE.

At the 1994 Royal Economic Society Annual Conference the chairman of the economics panel for the 1992 RAE claimed that the assessors did not discriminate against non-mainstream

research and that the research assessment exercise should not be used by economics departments to do so. He added that he did not believe British economists would actively discriminate against non-mainstream economists and their research.

However, at the same conference a flyer appeared which announced that one old university was in the market for nine economists who would raise its economics department research profile in mainstream economics. Advertisements for posts in other institutions similarly specified that applicants must be working within mainstream economics and linked this explicitly to either maintaining or improving their ranking in the assessment exercise.

Therefore, as a result of the RAE, economics departments were in their hiring practices discriminating positively towards mainstream economists and their research as a way to maintain and/or enhance their rating in the next research assessment exercise.

Central to the assessment exercise is the peer review system, which can be defined as a system by which the intellectual excellence of a piece of research is judged by a committee or panel of researchers working in, or close to, the field in question.

According to researchers on peer review, for the system to work it is necessary that each member of the panel be pre-eminent in the specialism(s) which they have to evaluate; that the pre-eminent panel members be selected from across the relevant academic community; that the actual method of selection is open, democratic, and involves as much of the academic community as possible; and that the panel be open to unorthodox and interdisciplinary research.

Since the RAE utilizes the peer review system, the HEFC based the selection of panel members on pre-eminence in research and on the range of specialised expertise needed to cover the spread of research in the subject area to be assessed; however, they were not concerned whether or not the methods of selection of the

panel-peers were open and democratic or whether the peers might have an interest in the outcome of their deliberations.

The process by which economists were selected for the economic panels for the 1989, 1992, and 1996 RAE was not open or democratic in that the majority of economists had little say in the selection process. In particular, the panellists were selected by the HEFC and its predecessors, the Royal Economic Society in conjunction with the heads of economic departments, and by the chair of the economics panel. All in all, less than 10% of British economists had any real say in the selection of the panels; moreover, the selection of nearly a third of the panel members was done without any consultation whatsoever.

Although the main criterion for panel selection was pre-eminence in research, nearly a third of the nineteen panel members in the three RAE had published on average fewer than three articles over a twenty-five year period and hence did not fulfil the criterion of pre-eminence in research. As for the subject coverage criteria for panel selection, after closely examining the journal publication records of the panel members, it can be concluded that none of the assessment panels covered all of mainstream economics as represented by the core mainstream journals.

Furthermore, our examination revealed the near absence of publications in non-mainstream economic journals by members of all three panels (except for the lone Post-Keynesian economist on the 1996 assessment panel), which suggests that the panel members did not have the expertise or knowledge to judge the quality of non-mainstream economics submissions.

The consequence of this is found in our survey of the publication submissions of half of the fifty-eight economics departments which entered the 1992 RAE. Of the twenty-nine departments, seven were 5-rated, eight were 4-rated, eleven were 3-rated, and three were 2-rated. The survey revealed that out of the thousand journal publications submitted to the RAE,

twenty-five were in non-mainstream core journals. In addition, the survey showed that four of those publications were in three 5-rated departments, none were in 4-rated departments, fourteen were in eight 3-rated departments, and seven were in two 2-rated departments. Thus it appears that if a department publication submission included a significant proportion of publications in core non-mainstream journals, it would most likely receive a 2 or 3 rating.

The combination of peer review and the RAE has produced an institutional arrangement in the form of an economics panel which, because of its control over funding, has the power to affect the type of economic research carried out by British economists.

Since the selection process ensured that the members of the economics panels were nearly all mainstream economists, the message that the panels sent out was that research in mainstream economics and publications in core mainstream journals were what was necessary for university economics departments to maintain or increase their research funding.

This message was reinforced by the evaluation of research submitted to them and the ranking of departments. Consequently, since the 1992 RAE economic departments have taken steps in the areas of recruitment policy and the direction of both departmental and individual work to emphasise mainstream research and de-emphasise and discriminate against non-mainstream research.

We undertook a questionnaire survey of British economists regarding the RAE. The findings of the survey showed that there has been a noticeable shift towards a mainstream recruitment policy, with a concurrent positive disinclination to recruit non-mainstream economists. Advertisements for posts ranging from lectureships to chairs predominantly favoured mainstream economists while departments' criteria for making appointments narrowed to publications in core mainstream journals. This resulted in interviews where candidates were directly asked in which core mainstream journals they intended to publish. It also meant that non-mainstream economists on probation or temporary contracts were coerced into doing mainstream research.

Thus the impact of the RAE on hiring has been to reduce the employment possibilities of non-mainstream economists in British university economics departments and to "pressure" those departments most open to non-mainstream economists to hire mainstream economists as well. Furthermore, the survey revealed that large numbers of British economists felt themselves directly affected by the



Economics students denied areas of study

economics panels' apparent view that national and international research excellence was restricted to mainstream economics and publishing in core mainstream journals.

The real threat of financial sanction by the economics panel has, in the light of the declining financial support for universities and research, driven British economic departments to discriminate against non-mainstream research and the hiring of non-mainstream economists as well as to restrict if not eliminate the teaching of non-mainstream economics to students.

This cleansing process clearly gained steam after the 1992 RAE and has been accentuated by the results of the 1996 RAE. The ongoing discrimination against non-mainstream economists and their research has resulted in few young non-mainstream economists obtaining university teaching and research positions.

As a consequence, within ten years or so, the number of non-mainstream economists in British university economics departments will decline significantly. Such a decline will result in the virtual disappearance of non-mainstream economists from the

vast majority of economic departments, with the remainder ageing and increasingly invisible.

From the beginning, it has been apparent that the research assessment exercises represent a thrust towards managerialism in UK higher education, with increased competition amongst institutional providers in quasi-markets and the introduction of 'performance indicators' to judge quality and determine funding. The fact that this has been achieved under cover of peer review is of no consolation as it ignores intellectual authority relations.

The RAEs give those dominant within a discipline the power not only to define quality but also to ensure that only that type of research is done which fits in with their often narrow definition of excellence. Whilst this is most obvious in a paradigm-bound social science such as economics, preliminary analysis of new research findings conducted by Sandra Harley in other disciplines would indicate that similar processes may be at work.

This article first appeared in *Radical Philosophy* 85, September/October 1997, and is reprinted here with permission.

Flowers of hope

LIB ED finds out about Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem from HUSSEIN ISSA.

HOPE FLOWERS is a Palestinian school in Bethlehem, in the West Bank. Al Amal, the nursery class, was founded in 1984, and the school has grown with its first pupils. By 1996 there were 350 children there.

Hope Flowers provides education in peace and democracy. Every week each class has a lesson on the topic, appropriate for its age; it may be about practising kindness to animals, or negative stereotyping, or it may involve dialogue with Israelis. Boys and girls sit together in the same classes. Israeli volunteers come to the school to teach Hebrew. There are field trips for children and their mothers to safe places in Israel that support attempts to increase knowledge and reduce fear between the peoples, such as the School for Peace at Neve Shalom. Hope Flowers is twinned with the Democratic School of Hadera. There are elections within the school for various committees. All this is unique in the West Bank.

Neither the Palestinian Ministry of Education nor the Israeli authorities give the school any financial support. Jews, Muslims and Christians from many different countries help with donations, and parents pay the equivalent of \$300 a year.

The school has no political or religious affiliation. Both Christian and Muslim families attend, and it is hoped that there will eventually be Jewish children there as well. In 1996 the school began bi-monthly workshops on peace education for adults, which were the first in the West Bank open to both Palestinians and Israelis.

What follows is an extract from an open letter from Hussein Issa, the founder and director of the school. It was written in September 1997.

Recently, horrible terrorist acts were carried out in Jerusalem, killing and wounding hundreds of innocent people. We wholeheartedly condemn this terror performed by Moslem extremists. Following these acts, the government of Israel instituted collective punishment on the entire Palestinian community. The severity of this punishment was well beyond anything we experienced in the past, including the violent days of the Intifada. A strict closure was imposed. We were surrounded by Israeli military who prevented not only entrance to Israel, but also

communications between Palestinian towns and villages. The closure prevented people from going after their daily business, such as work and shopping. Sick people could not get to the hospital. The economic situation became disastrous. The closure had a disastrous effect on the school. The political instability and depressed economy have created enormous pressures. The students' parents have not been able to earn money for many weeks. Nearly half of the parents decided to move their children to government schools. The remaining students cannot afford to pay the school fees, but the running costs are as high as usual.

An article in the *Jerusalem Report* stated that the Israeli army had placed a barrier on the road leading to the school, so no one could get in. Hussein Issa himself climbed a mountain and walked through a forest to reach the school, only to discover that the army would not allow a supplier to deliver a tank of water. The school term had to start a week later than planned.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education disapproves of employing Jewish teachers and volunteers, and has on occasion threatened to close the school down. The Israelis simply stop the supply of water.

"I just wanted to cry," said Issa. "I preach tolerance. I teach Hebrew. But I'm getting hit from all sides."

In 1996 there were 350 students, and 500 were expected last autumn. There are now only 168 children in the school. Nevertheless, the work for peace continues.

The most difficult part of teaching Palestinian children about peace is reconciling what they learn at school with what they experience in their daily lives. After the terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and the Israeli response to them Issa had many meetings and discussions with the older students. Responses to the crisis varied widely. Some were afraid that a new cycle of violence had started, some were determined to resist violence in spite of the disappointment of unfulfilled hopes; some were utterly pessimistic, some were simply relieved that they themselves had not been injured; some



rejected the teachers' pacifism in favour of different opinions held at home.

Issa's reaction was to explain the national and social problems, to discuss peace and justice, to try to improve the relationships between students within the school, to increase the number of meetings with Israelis and to join with Israelis for co-operative activities such as games and joint art projects. In a November newsletter he described an extra-ordinary outing:

On November first, the students, teachers and volunteers of Hope Flowers Secondary School took a field trip to Artas Village, where we visited together a Catholic Church and Palestinian Folklore Centre. It was a most successful day; the atmosphere was both positive and inspiring. There were young Israelis recently out of the military walking with, talking with and discussing with young Palestinians, both teachers and students.

Even in the current climate, Hussein Issa is able to have young Palestinians talking positively and inspiringly with Israelis recently out of the military. His education for peace is succeeding to a degree that would have seemed impossible. "Winter is approaching," he says in the same November newsletter, "and we need funds for heating the classrooms as well as to finish the building in order to prevent water from coming inside. ... Due to the absence of expected tuition fees we are presently having difficulty covering our running costs. ... Unfortunately the school is experiencing tremendous financial difficulties as a result of the closures. We wish only to meet our goals of spreading peace education to our students. Please help us to carry on our work so that Palestinians and Israelis learn to live together in peace."

Contributions can be transferred directly to the Hope Flowers School, AC 118451, Mercantile Discount Bank, Bethlehem, West Bank, via Israel.

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 we try to publish 3 a year) magazine to keep readers up to date with the latest developments.

Conferences

As well as running a bi-annual 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 *Real Education - varieties of freedom* by David Gribble (£8.95/US\$23), *Free School: The White Lion Experience* by Nigel Wright (£4.95/US\$14) 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 £1.05 for p&pw within Britain or 20% of order total (minimum £1.05) for overseas surface delivery plus £3/US\$5 for airmail, if required..

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 quoted, but add US\$14 to cover additional bank charges we incur.

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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.

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A history of education

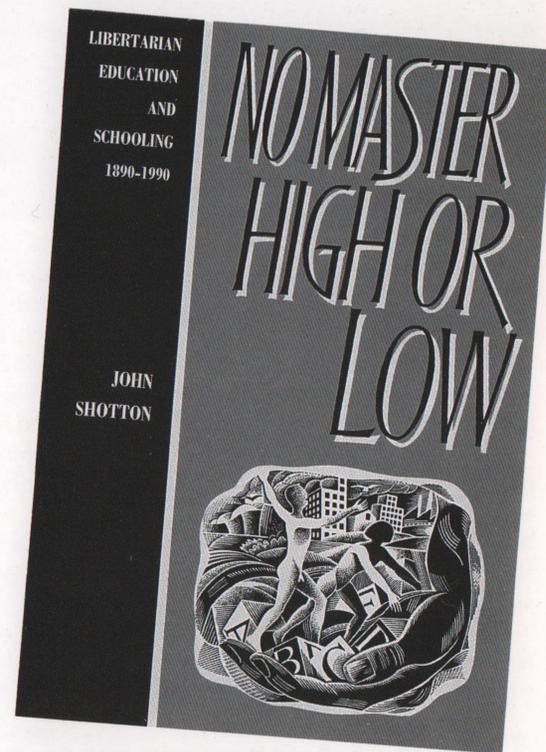
The path to a compulsory education system, the emergence of selective schooling, and the fight for comprehensive education in Britain are all issues that have been charted by educational historians. What they have missed is the history of the dissenting tradition, one that questions the whole notion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

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Back Issues Offer

Now in its 27th 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 the issues from Volume 2 listed on the right. 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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Street kids

Children for social change: Education for citizenship of street and working children in Brazil.
A book by Anthony Swift
Educational Heretics Press

IN HIS INTRODUCTION Anthony Swift contrasts the tendency of British teachers to exclude troublesome children from their schols with the efforts of the Brazilian street educators to draw excluded children back into society. "Being loved, valued and included," he says, "the children are able to become critically aware of the processes that consign them and their families, among 32 million fellow Brazilians, to live in poverty. Instead of being made victims of these processes, or of recreating them, many become, in various ways, protagonists for social change." Excluded British children, by contrast, are driven to crime or despair.

The book describes the work of the Republic of Emmaus in Belem, a large port in northern Brazil. As well as working with children actually in the streets, the group offers employment and occupational training and runs, among other things, a news agency specialising in children's rights, a children's legal defence centre and a school. In a country where children are routinely harassed by the police and are often killed by self-appointed squads that believe themselves to be usefully ridding the streets of a nuisance, these activities require courage and dedication.

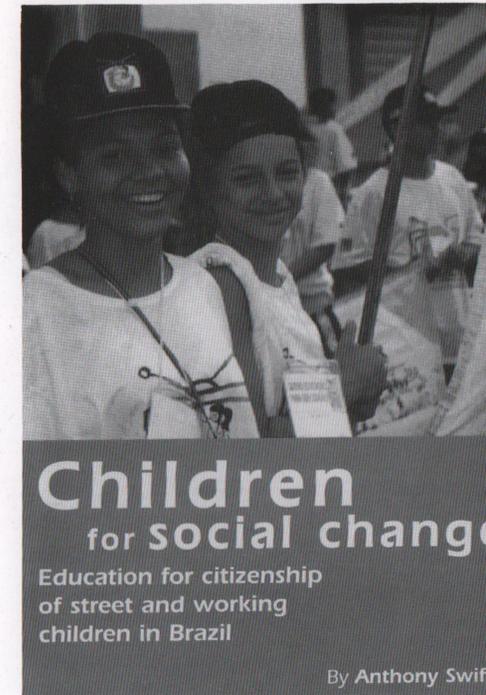
In Brazil there is now a National Movement of Street Boys and Girls, but its work has received very little international attention. For that reason this book is particularly important. Anthony Swift has wisely chosen to illustrate what is being done by describing in detail only one group, the

A Volcano in My Tummy
A resource book by Eliane Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney
New Society Publishers, pp80, £10
Available (post free) from Jon Carpenter, Spendlove Centre, Charlbury, OX7 3PQ.

THIS EXCEPTIONAL book provides new and creative approaches to handling anger.

It is full of accessible resources aimed at helping 6 to 15 year olds handle their anger so that they can live successfully, healthily, happily and non-violently, with motivation, without fear and with good relationships. It is full of stories, and easy-to-use games

Republic of Emmaus. His primary aim in writing the book was to introduce the Brazilian experience to front-line workers with poor community children in other countries. He shows how Paolo Freire's ideas can be put into practice with children as well as with adults, and he hopes his subject matter "also has relevance to the host of people who



... are trying to recover some sense of community and individual purpose following the vandalism of the Thatcher-Reagan era."

As the Republic of Emmaus developed, the adult workers discovered that the best method was not to organise and instruct, but to support and offer opportunities. An educational experience has developed in which both

and exercises designed to encourage children to see their anger and deal constructively with it.

A Volcano in My Tummy includes sections on key concepts, building a child's self esteem, what adults can do when a child is angry, developing an anger management programme, troubleshooting, and a special section for teachers that integrates the resource with other curriculum areas. Exercises are clearly described, indicating appropriate age levels, teaching strategies, materials and procedures to follow, with worksheets for the children's use. All are easily adapted for use by teachers, parents or other carers.

adult and child learn to exercise citizenship. Anthony Swift confesses to finding this transformation hard to grasp, and he spends too many pages in describing the administrative and political manoeuvres that he finds easier to record. I would have liked to have read more about the way trust can transform a glue-sniffing pickpocket into a responsible student. He tells us that it happens, and I believe him, but that is not enough.

Towards the end of the book an incident is described in which children at the school, with some difficulty, managed to call a staff meeting to discuss the deterioration in teaching practice. Graça Trapasso, the co-ordinator of the Republic, commented "Sometimes the adults are ahead, and sometimes it's the children." There are also a few anecdotes about children taking over responsibility for particular activities and running them successfully, but the central theme of the book is not the responsibility and independence of children who have been rescued from a life of destitution; it is the way a movement can be organised to convert destitute children into useful citizens.

Rousseau said that it was impossible to educate both the man and the citizen. The subtitle of the book tells us that it is about "education for citizenship," but Anthony Swift has given us just enough information to suspect that the Republic of Emmaus is not so much concerned with future citizens as with present-day children.

He does occasionally refer to love and respect, but he does not give enough emphasis to these central issues. Nevertheless, the subject-matter of the book is important, its message is optimistic and it is well worth reading.

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Reactionary instincts

9.10 We have a problem. Boss Blunkett is to announce that his guide dog, The Rottweiler Woodhead, is to get a 40% plus pay rise. Considering how we have shit on classroom teachers over pay, this might seem at first to be unadvised.

In fact it is a carefully planned blow aimed at teacher morale. The more demoralised teachers are the more we will be able to walk all over them. Nevertheless, the pay rise does involve certain problems of presentation. Woodhead is, after all, a pretty unsavoury beast, cordially detested by all who have been unfortunate enough to cross his path. Like most dogs, he has an inordinate regard for his own anus, but as long as the Boss believes that his anus is the fount of educational wisdom, we are stuck with him.

The junior minister, Margaret Bodge, joins us. She is arguably the most stupid of all the New Labour MPs (which is saying something!) And so is

“A large donation to Party funds and you can have a peerage and an education authority ...

an obvious choice for an Education post. Bodge was charged with drawing up an action plan to address teacher shortages and improve recruitment. In the absence of increased resources, she inevitably had recourse to the old Tory *Bumper Book of Right-Wing Stunts*.

So much of New Labour policy comes from this tome. She urges that we announce her dramatic proposals the same time as we announce Woodhead's rise. Shorter holidays, longer hours and low pay rises should certainly finish off teacher morale.

Market forces, they will have to learn, only apply at the top! As Big Tony announced at the general election, New Labour's refrain is **FUCK EDUCATION! FUCK EDUCATION! FUCK EDUCATION!**

11.47 Summoned into the Boss's office. He is listening to old Labour Party Conference recordings of himself pledging equity and justice in education policy.

“And we will not, absolutely and definitely not, and I want to emphasise this, most categorically not, introduce

charges for Higher Education. You have my word as a Socialist.” He roars with laughter, nearly falling off his chair, completely drowning out the applause from the New Labourites. Woodhead is so excited he urinates on the carpet.

“The art of politics,” he tells me, “is to say one thing and then do the exact opposite in power. It never fails. Promise to increase access to Higher Education for mature students as a matter of priority and then price the bastards out of it with fees. What a scream. It's criminal really. And Joe Public just can't believe that anyone could be so diabolically two-faced. Well they ain't seen nothing yet, eh Woodhead.”

The faithful rottweiler barks deliriously and then goes back to licking its genitals.

“What about these criteria for Super Teachers?” the Boss asks me.

“Well Boss,” I reply, “the criteria we've come up with for promotion to ‘Blunkite’ status, as we call it, are pretty straight forward. First, candidates must have blue eyes, a brown nose and a forked tongue. This is absolutely essential. They must be able to travel a corridor on their bellies at a reasonable speed while leaving a shiny trail. They must not be able to say ‘No’ to their superiors or ‘Yes’ to their subordinates. They must be regarded with contempt by their colleagues. It is essential that they can fit a broom handle up their arse so they can sweep up as they go about their business. And, of course, teaching ability is not required. The most important criteria, naturally, is that they are nominated by their head teacher.”

“Sounds a bit like a deputy head,” the Boss remarks.

“Well, there are only so many ways to grovel, Boss”, I reply.

“Fair enough. Oh, and give Woodhead a bowl of his favourite Teacher Chunks on your way out.”

3.20 A meeting to discuss our plans to privatise State Education. “Now this,” the Boss says, “is a nettle that Big Mother Thatcher refused to grasp. There were too many lefties in her Cabinet. Fortunately Big Tony does not have that problem so we can go further down the road to the privatisation of just about everything. As Big Tony always says: ‘If your rich friends can't

make money out of it, it isn't worth doing.’ We are planning to offer selected companies a package deal. A large enough donation to Party funds and you can have a peerage and an education authority. A smaller donation and it's a knighthood and a couple of comprehensives, while for the small businessman a modest donation will secure an OBE and the local primary school. How far have we got then?”

“Well Boss, we have a number of franchises up and running although there have been some teething problems. Richard Branson's *Virgin Schools* never seem to open on time and always close late. On top of that, the older pupils don't like the Virgin uniforms for some reason.

“There have been problems with malnutrition and scurvy in the MacDonald Burger Schools and teachers are objecting to their Ronald MacDonald dress code.

“Triumphantly successful are the News International Soaraway Sun Schools. The inspiration of Chairman Rupert has produced revolutionary results. The Page Three readers are

... for the small businessman, a modest donation will secure an OBE and the local primary school”

tremendously popular, literacy levels are down to the average *Sun* reader level and prejudice and pig ignorance is on the rise. Geography has been turned from a boring academic subject into a popular success story. The renaming of countries, Frogland, Dagoland, Krautland etc has been the key here.”

“Great,” says the Boss, “another triumph for Big Tony and the Third Way. Before long the New Labour ethos will be taught in every school, celebrating the party of business: **LOVE THE RICH! MONEY BUYS INFLUENCE! GET WEALTH!** And **FUCK OFF POOR PEOPLE!** These are the slogans of the future.”

Woodhead dumps a steaming mass of ordure on the carpet.

“If I were younger, I would keep fighting”

SHIN-ICHIRO HORI remembers his friend JOHN AITKENHEAD who died earlier this year.

KILQUHANITY HOUSE was a tiny boarding school near Castle Douglas in the south of Scotland. It was in the early stage of World War II, in 1940, that John Aitkenhead started it with his wife Morag and a few staff members.

Though almost everyone tried to persuade him to wait until the war was over, he could not wait. He was definitely determined to start it just because it was the war. Wartime is the days of hate, therefore he had to have a school imbued with love. Wartime is the days of destruction, therefore a school for creation. Wartime is the days of nationalism, therefore an international school.

John was a Scot and a man of belief. He did not hesitate to take in pupils and staff members even from Germany and Italy.

He also refused to be called up. Luckily he escaped imprisonment by a judges vote of three to two. It was by no means because they appreciated his ideas of education, but because the school was regarded as a good place for evacuation for the boys and girls from big cities. He was ambushed and pilloried by the local people who hated his pacifist attitudes.

Among his friends, only AS Neill encouraged him, “Start right now, before freedom goes west.” John was proud to have Killy (the school) called “the Summerhill in Scotland”. In fact, the two schools had many principles in common, including: self-government; importance of creative work; addressing by first names; no religion; co-education; and internationalism.

The main difference lay in the approach to lessons. First, John put more stress on learning by doing in Dewey's sense, so farming became one of the essential parts of Killy. Secondly, he came to modify the perfect voluntary

lessons at Summerhill into what might be called semi-voluntary ones. He saw some critical stages for certain skills.

For the first five years, the school had nearly one hundred students, but

small. Despite many difficulties, it enjoyed rather peaceful years until in 1996 they had a full government inspection after a thirty-nine year interval. The inspectors report had a massive number of orders and recommendations, concerning both buildings and curriculum. Apart from the physical side, John could not stand the orders on learning and activities. ‘Useful work’, for instance, could not be counted among educational activities. However, it was a vital part of the school.

“If I were younger, I would keep fighting”, John said when we met in October last year. It was the schools last anniversary. He definitely refused to give in and to have the school taken over by anyone who might compromise in the future. He died this July after eighty-eight years of constant fight against traditional education.

I visited Kilquhanity in 1972 for the first time. While he was driving me back to Dumfries station, he asked me with a lovely smile, “I am thirty years younger than Neill. You are thirty years younger than I. Neill started a school. So did I. How about you?”

I replied, “Of course I will by all means.”

I did. Now we have four free schools in Japan, which, by the way, has the strictest ministry of education in the world. It could be claimed that our schools are as radical as Kilquhanity, though recognised as efficient. John and Morag visited us twice and were pleased to see their sister schools on the opposite side of the earth.

I believe that John Aitkenhead was as great an educator as AS Neill and that his ideas and works should be known to many more people. The school was closed, but its spirit will keep going vividly in our schools at least.



Creative work at Killy

the Aitkenheads did not receive any salary. John used to smile wryly when he described what happened when the war was over. He was proud that his ideas were getting recognised gradually. However, almost all the kids went back to schools near home, a proof that the parents had sent their children for the safety, not for the education itself.

The school was always poor, but never had more than fifty kids due to John's belief that schools should be