

Groups and Resources

Lib ED contacts

Leicester 0455-209029
Nottingham 0949-60306
Bristol 0272-241380

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

Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement
BM GYM, London WC1N 3XX
01-698 2857

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

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

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

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

**Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical
Punishment**
18 Victoria Park Square, London E2
01-980 8523

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

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

**Campaign Against Military Research On
Campus (CAMROC)**
190 Burdett Road, London E3 4AA
01-980 2455

New Education Directory
15 Bellevue, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1DB
0272-735091

Freedom
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
(Monthly anarchist publication)

Black Flag/Black Cross
BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX
(Anarchist paper and prisoners' aid organisation)

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

White Lion Free School
57 White Lion Street, London N1
(Britain's oldest city free school)

Blackcurrent Otherwise Project
132 St James Park Rd., Northampton, NN5 5EL

Kirkdale Free School
c/o 11 Veronica Road, Upper Tooting, London SW17
8QL
01-675 4388

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

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

Anti-Fascist Action
PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7
01-387 2531

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

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

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

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

Peace Education Project
Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh Street, London
WC1
01-387 5501

Housmans Mail Order
5 Caledonian Road, London N1
(Suppliers of a wide range of libertarian literature
by post: send for their catalogue of titles)

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

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

Commonweal Collection
c/o J.B.Priestley Library, University of Bradford,
Bradford BD7 1DP
(A small library designed for anyone interested in
libertarian, anarchist and pacifist ideas)

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

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

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

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

Association for Curriculum Development
PO Box 563, London N16 8XD
(An independent teachers network working to
combat racism and sexism, challenge propaganda
and produce learning materials which promote
equality)

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

Special Listing

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

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

Kidscape
82 Brooke Road, London W1Y 1WG
01-263 8919

International

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

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

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

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

Tamariki Free School
Woolston, Christchurch, New Zealand

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

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

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

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

Le CERISE
77 rue des Haies, 75020 Paris, France
(Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Innovation
Sociale et Educative, which publishes the journal
"Zero de Conduite")

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Incest Survivors
01-422 5100
01-890 4732

Taboo Support Groups for Incest Survivors
PO Box 38, Manchester, M60 1HG

Avon Sexual Abuse, Bristol Centre
0272-354331

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

Lib ED

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A magazine for the liberation of learning

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State*

That sinking feeling...
*Humiliation in the
classroom*

Testing, testing, testing...
How testing kills

Child sexual abuse...
*What teachers can do to
help children*

Newspeak...
*The language of
educational Thatcherism*

Libertarian EDUCATION

A magazine for the liberation of learning

Vol 2 No 11 Summer 1989

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EDITORIAL

AS WE ENTER the final decade of the twentieth century, Britain's children are facing a most uncertain time ahead.

Schools are in crisis due to teacher shortages, the imposition of local financial management and the low morale amongst staff; a Children Bill is going through parliament while a battle rages between those trying to expose the frightening extent of child abuse and those trying to hide it; and Thatcher hypocritically rails against the permissive society whilst elevating in the ranks of the cabinet a minister whose behaviour, even many Conservatives believe, has hardly been exemplary in this field.

We could simply wash our hands of the matter, stand on the sidelines and watch with glee the self destruction of the liberal and not so liberal establishment. But we believe that libertarians have a responsibility to those who have least power to defend themselves.

We cannot sit idly by whilst this society inflicts lasting damage on the hearts and minds of children. As the poet, Miroslav Holub wrote 'under the classroom door / trickles / a thin stream of blood / for here begins / the massacre / of the innocents'.

With this issue, we focus our attention on children, schooling and the State.

95% of children, aged between 5 and 16, attend state schools, or at least are on their registers. But as our article on truancy points out, many of the older age group are voting with their feet, refusing to kowtow to the petty rules and patronising attitudes they experience in school.

Many others are excluded from their 'normal' schools and have either been suspended or sent to 'disruptive units'. An alarming proportion of these are from Afro-caribbean backgrounds. The two who, as we revealed in the last issue of *Lib ED*, had been suspended for the 'offence' of having too short a hairstyle have now been resuspended for wearing training shoes to school!

Despite newspaper headlines truancy has its positive side. It is liberating and often even educating. If the authorities are genuinely concerned to improve the school attendance rates, they will have to

make schools more attractive to young people.

As predicted by a recent *Lib ED* editorial, the Elton Enquiry failed to discover the widespread and escalating violence and disruption in schools that had been claimed by the Professional (sic) Association of Teachers and echoed by other teacher organisations. (For a fuller discussion of teacher unions see page 14)

But why do we hear such claims at all? Having failed to persuade the government that they deserve higher salaries on the basis of their professional status, are teachers now trying to obtain danger money? Or are they trying to justify the imposition of petty rules and the techniques of humiliation that

"Children have a claim upon their sphere of empire and discretion and are entitled their appropriate portion of independence." A curriculum dominated by testing will promote the opposite.

"Standardised achievement tests and the simplistic notion of excellence they embody, sound the death knell of diversity in our schools. They silence a cross-cultural dialogue that has barely begun, not only in the field of education, but in every area of academic, professional and political life.

We live in a society which is becoming increasingly racially and culturally diverse. It is naive and ultimately suicidal to assume that we can solve the problems that

to look forward to other than living in a skip and scratching a living from petty theft or prostitution when they leave school. Or a compulsory extension of schooling on a government training scheme.

In this issue, Bob Franklin argues that children's rights *cannot* be trusted to adults. Young people need to be given the support and encouragement to themselves confront the tyranny of adults.

It is therefore necessary for libertarians to work *with* young people, as teachers in schools, in youth clubs, on adventure playgrounds, wherever - despite the difficulties this inevitably entails.

As a forum, *Lib ED* is open to contributions from everyone, young and old, on these issues.

The massacre of the innocents

many practise on their pupils?

Celia Kitzinger, in 'Sinking through the floor', describes some of the long term damaging effects of humiliation in school. The atmosphere it generates in a classroom cannot be one in which young people feel eager to explore and learn, let alone possibly come to terms with the racism or sexual abuse they may have experienced.

Only in an open classroom, where children feel comfortable and empowered, can Jenny Kitzinger's conclusions on child sexual abuse and the role of the teacher have any possible application.

"...the information, the words and the permission to talk about sexual violence offers a lifeline to abused children. When teachers begin to talk about sexual abuse they are giving some children the chance to challenge sexual exploitation and to seek help." (page 12)

The issue though is not just one of humiliation, child abuse or racism but one of rights. Children are individual beings, with powers of reasoning, sensations of pain and pleasure and principles of morality. Godwin proclaimed (200 years ago),

confront such a society without access to both the perspectives and diverse range of skills and abilities represented in a multi-cultural population.

We simply cannot afford a definition of excellence so narrow that it excludes access to the very sources we need to survive." It could be Britain that the writer, Terry Meier, is discussing. In fact, he is a teacher trainer in the United States.

There, as reported in the *TES*, many schools have started to test children at the age of five in order to exclude the less able. (The initial scores are then depressed to show the school in good light later on!) In Britain this could mean a new boom in special schools, just as some success is taking place in getting children with special needs integrated into mainstream schools with resources to help them.

As Michael Rosen puts more directly in his article 'Testing, testing, testing' (page 9), "Testing kills."

Schools help maintain and reproduce the injustices of the society we live in. An increasing number of children today have little

Stand up for your rights!

In Britain, cruelty to children became a criminal offence in 1889, some 60 years after similar legislation outlawed cruelty to animals. But it was 70 years later that the United Nations issued a Declaration of the Rights of Children, which set out basic entitlements for children and young people, including the right to free education, adequate nutrition, medical care, affection, love and understanding, as well as rights to provide protection against exploitation and discriminatory practices. Later this year, after almost a decade of redrafting, a revised version will be agreed by the signatory nations. Here Bob Franklin, editor of *The Rights of Children*, questions whether children's rights can be entrusted to adults.

THE NEW CONVENTION, like its predecessor, assumes that the protection of children's rights is a matter for adults and, consequently, makes no recommendations about how young people themselves might participate in decisions concerning their future.

In Britain there have been a number of proposals to secure rights for children. Typically they have been paternalistic in style but have rarely attracted sufficient commitment to guarantee they would be actively pursued.

Ombudsperson

In 1969, the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) suggested appointing a children's ombudsperson to initiate child-centred legislation, ensure observance of existing laws to protect young people, as well as publicise and campaign for the rights of children.

At the local level, such work would involve particular cases, mediating in disputes between children and parents or representing young people in court.

In Sweden and Norway this kind of work with children is well established, but the existing national post in these countries needs to be decentralised and replaced by a number of local officers, if the system is to handle more than the current very limited number of cases (763 in the latest report); very much the tip of an iceberg.

More effective

The Children's Legal Centre and to some extent Childline, offer child-initiated work in the British context, but a more effective system could be established using the framework of an existing institution such as Citizens Advice Bureaux.

International Youth Year in 1985 resurrected the idea of a Minister for children similar to the Minister for disabled people. The Minister would coordinate the work of the six government ministries currently providing services for young people.

They could initiate legislation beneficial to young people, fight to secure resources to implement such measures, scrutinise all legislation to

assess its impact on young people, campaign, agitate and publicise the cause of young people and finally become a political focus for young people, their problems and the promotion of their interests.

Challenging

This would be an unenviable and challenging job description, especially if the post was at a junior, non-Cabinet, rank and lacked political 'clout'. The present climate of cuts, moreover, would guarantee insufficient funding, with the Minister becoming a device for rationalising government actions rather than initiating new policies.



1988 saw a related development at local government level, when Leicestershire appointed a children's rights officer.

Awareness and sensitivity

Armed with a PhD and a personal experience of childhood in care, he is not merely an instrument for processing complaints, but intends to promote and develop an awareness and sensitivity to children's rights amongst adults, whether foster parents or professionals working in caring institutions.

International Youth Year triggered other interesting, less paternalistic,

initiatives. On the first parliamentary day of 1985 the youngest MP introduced a Youth Charter to "establish rights and create a framework within which young people can participate more fully in the affairs of their community".

The charter offered three specific proposals. The voting age should be lowered to 16, young people should be represented on a range of local committees, including local education authority committees and police authorities, and, finally, youth councils should be elected.

Manipulation

However, to give young people formal rights without an understanding of how to exercise them may lead to tokenism and the manipulation of young people by more experienced participants. Participation, moreover, must be participation on a genuinely equal footing, and age is only one obstacle to achieving this.

The inequalities doled out by the class structure which can make political participation a sham for any adults, must also be confronted and these problems are more resilient to change.

Such objections are academic. The 'Youth Charter' fell foul of a crowded parliamentary timetable in July 1985, but the City of Birmingham has subsequently established a Youth Council.

Youth Councils

The Birmingham Young People's Council, established in February 1987, has twenty four members (two elected representatives from each of the twelve Parliamentary Constituency Area Youth Councils) aged between 13 and 25 who are subject to an annual election.

The Youth Council's functions are to give children and young people a direct voice in civic affairs, to advise the city council on policies affecting children and young people, to improve the image of young people especially in the media, to liaise with and advise youth organisations, and to serve as representatives of young people in Birmingham at both national and international functions.

The Youth Council's budget is small but it offers a genuine and valuable opportunity for young people to participate in meaningful political decision making and for adults to reflect upon their competences.

UN Convention

A recent and highly publicised mechanism to guarantee the rights of children is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, intended to be a binding document, which will be signed in December 1989. There are however good grounds for initial scepticism about its effectiveness.

The draft convention contains 35 articles, incorporating civil, economic, social and cultural rights ranging from rights to adequate health care, food, clean water, and shelter, to rights of protection against abuse, neglect and exploitation. Political rights, however, are specifically excluded.

A briefing document published by the United Nations claims that "The very status of a child means in principle that he or she has no political rights" This is a matter some might wish to debate!

Contentious

The document identifies three principles on which the convention is based which are similarly contentious: first, children need special safeguards beyond those

provided to adults; second, the best environment for a child's development is within a protective and nurturing family; third, governments and the adult world in general should be committed to acting in the best interests of children. Each of these assumptions may be dealt with in turn.

No special needs

First, it is not clear that children have special needs which set them apart from adults. Indeed one of the defining features of human rights is precisely that they are universal; if they are not applicable to everyone they are irrelevant to everyone. It is not, for example, only children who need 'survival rights', such as health care, food and shelter, since these are essential to life itself and therefore a requirement for everyone.

Rights denied

Moreover, if these goods are 'rights', then currently they are being denied on a scale which is horrifying; they seem to represent commitments which governments cannot guarantee to fulfil.

In reality the provision of such goods and services has less to do with rights than with the political commitments of governments and the structure of the world economic order.

Second, many people genuinely believe that a 'protective' and 'nurturing

family' is not the optimum environment for children's development. Protection may be little more than an acceptable word to mask paternalistic practices, which restrict children's autonomy and is antithetical to the achievement of rights.

Third, while it is not contentious to claim that governments should act 'in the best interests of the child', it is more problematic to establish what those interest might be.

Opinions

Problematic, that is, unless adults adopt the simple procedure of asking children for their opinions and learning to trust and accept their judgements and solutions instead of dismissing them as immature and inexperienced. The redrafted convention seems deaf to such a strategy.

In the end, any protection, as well as expansion, of children's stock of rights should rest with them rather than with well meaning and protective adults who, in their efforts to promote the best interests of the child, may promote precisely the opposite.

Full citizenship

The challenge is to develop political strategies to achieve this which will undoubtedly require more than simply bringing children into 'full' citizenship by giving them the right to vote.



Too big for their boots

Celia Kitzinger looks at a particularly nasty form of classroom control

WHEN PEOPLE are asked to describe their experiences of unfairness at school, the word "humiliation" is used a great deal.

"The teacher humiliated me in front of the whole class"; "She held me up as a bad example and I felt so humiliated"; "Everyone was looking at me and laughing. I wanted to sink through the floor, I felt so humiliated."

When a child is humiliated by a teacher, s/he often neither forgets, nor forgives. Writing about humiliations at school, adults in their forties, fifties and sixties describe their feelings of decades before with great clarity and vividness.

"It comes flooding back as though it were yesterday", "As I write this, I'm still furious!", "When I read of her death in the paper all I could think was 'good, I hope it was a long slow painful one.'" What is humiliation and what makes it hurt so much?

Part of humiliation is being made to feel small or belittled. The word comes from the Latin for "low", and teachers who humiliate often say that the student is "too big for their boots", "needs to be taken down a peg or two", must be "cut down to size" or "learn their place".

... she just picked on me because she wanted to punish somebody ...

Many humiliated people describe a literal loss of status - one student is demoted from A to B stream Maths, another is forced to repeat a year so is taught with girls much younger than herself, a fifth year student is sent, as a punishment, to first year lessons for a week.

Loss of status, and the ability of a teacher to enforce that loss of status, is part of what makes students feel humiliated.

At the core of humiliation is a feeling of powerlessness. In many of the episodes people described to me, the

humiliated person is rendered powerless even over their own bodies.

An eighteen year old student remembers a time six years before when, suffering from a bad throat, she had cleared her throat during an English lesson ("to relieve physical discomfort") and her teacher "had a real

...when I read of her death ... all I could think was 'good' ...

fit on me, and embarrassed and humiliated me, nearly making me cry".

Other accounts of humiliation involve this same theme: not being allowed to use the toilet when required, having shoes confiscated and having to walk around school "a barefoot penitent", being forced to stand on a chair for an hour with menstrual blood "seeping through my underclothes and frock and running down my legs", and having to submit to physical assault by caning.

Teachers in these episodes have demonstrated their ability to exert control, to assert their power, quite arbitrarily over the child.

There is nothing humiliating about deciding to put up with the discomfort and not clear one's throat while listening to music, for example, or choosing to wait for the interval before using the lavatory at the theatre.

What is humiliating is being denied the opportunity to make those choices for oneself - having them imposed on you by somebody else.

The humiliated child is forced to accept that s/he is without power and cannot control her/his own body or influence the course of events in her/his own life. Being punished for something you didn't do is mentioned over and over again as a source of humiliation.

"Innocent victims" - students who stuck to the rules, did what was right and proper, obeyed authority, asked for permission before they deviated even slightly from the prescribed path and still were punished - are particularly liable to report feelings of humiliation.

What could be a more convincing demonstration of their own powerlessness, their own inability to exert any influence over the course of their lives?

"It wasn't me that was talking - she just picked on me because she wanted to punish somebody. It wasn't a very bad punishment and it wasn't the punishment that I minded. It was being punished unfairly that was wrong - it made me feel helpless and humiliated."

The message in humiliation seems to be something like this: "You are so weak and powerless that I can utterly control you, including even the smallest details of your bodily responses - coughing or using the lavatory, the colour of shoes that you wear, the style of skirt you put on. I can insist that you apologise when you believe sincerely that you have done no wrong, and I can punish you for misdeeds that you know that you have not committed. You are powerless - unable to exert control over your own body, or determine even minor aspects of your own life, or make choices in your own interests."

Humiliation is a spectacularly effective method of classroom control, and techniques involving humiliation are explicitly recommended by some teacher training manuals (e.g. R Sprick, *The Solution Book*).

... I wanted to sink through the floor, I felt so humiliated.

Teachers do have very real power over school students, and humiliation is both evidence of that power and a way of reinforcing it. But reading people's descriptions of how it feels to be humiliated at school is enough to make all but the most sadistic change their methods of classroom control.

Celia Kitzinger is collecting descriptions of unfairness at school for a book on this subject. Anybody with any experiences or views to contribute may write to her at: Department of Psychology, North East London Polytechnic, The Green, Romford Road, London E15 4LZ.

Streetwise

What do young people do when they bunk off school?

THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE rate is falling. This is even according to the Department of Education and Science's (DES) own figures. Currently, the attendance rate is hovering around the eighty per cent mark.

But this figure is an average which disguises regional and age disparities and which uses a very narrow definition of non-attendance: absence without notification or explanation for more than five days.

More detailed research in Oxfordshire between 1985 and 1988, using the DES criteria, revealed an attendance rate of only 62% for 14 to 16 year olds. Eleven to 14s turned up 70% of the time whilst for 5 to 11 year olds the attendance was much higher.

Other research, independent of the DES, has revealed a similar national picture. When the definition of truancy is broadened it becomes clear that a significant proportion of 14 to 16 year olds are absenting themselves from particular lessons on a regular, if not permanent, basis. PE languages and maths head the un-popularity poll. This form of non-attendance rarely shows up in most statistics and research.

Also hidden from most available statistics, and certainly all DES ones, are the number of young people registered in units for 'disruptive pupils'. In 1971 there were 32 such units with 480 placements in England and Wales.

By 1970 the figure had risen to 215 units and 3962 placements. In 1986 there were 6529 pupils placed in 415 units. Special schools are also being used to remove 'difficult' children from mainstream schooling and since 1981 there has been an increase in this provision.

All this amounts to clear evidence that state schools are neither attractive to, nor able to accommodate a significant number of young people. This is most apparent for those in their last two years of compulsory schooling.

Usually the problem is laid firmly at the door of the 'non-attender' or 'disruptive pupil'. It might be a problem at home, with adults, with authority. Rarely is it seen as the school's problem or that of the authority figure.

But perhaps the most accurate interpretation of the evidence is not that young people are becoming more problematic but that schools are becoming more alien environments, out of touch with youth culture, ever more regimented and increasingly irrelevant to real needs and happiness.

Young people have very little choice about schooling. Many exercise what

little choice they have using their feet or reverting to long-practiced forms of rebellion: noise, cheek and refusal to work or conform to established patterns

birdwatching, playing snooker, looking after other people's children, working or out playing sports.

It is a double edged sword, for whilst



It's an art, not a crime.

of behaviour and 'standards' of dress.

Knowledge and learning have been valued for their own sake from time immemorial. They still are today, but judgements are clouded by the existence and expansion of the public education system which has led to a confusion between the benefit of learning and the benefit of the institution. Schooling has become equated with learning.

However, it is worth remembering John Willis and Michael Deakins' conclusions to *Johnny Go Home*. They were astonished at Johnny's capacity to survive and to learn. They were convinced that the runaways and school truants they interviewed were perfectly capable of doing more than survive. They could learn and they were happy.

We need to realise that when young people stay away from school or when they display 'inappropriate' behaviour and get themselves excluded, they will not necessarily stay in bed.

The most common complaint from Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs), those charged with returning truants to school, is that they can never find non-attenders at home. It's more common for them to be fishing,

children are liable to be exploited if they're not in school, for example as a source of very cheap labour, who is to say that the activities discovered by the EWOs are not a valid form of learning?

The street culture that is associated with truancy, hanging around listening to music for instance, is only deemed a problem by those who can't see education as existing outside the walls of school buildings.

Street graffiti is an important part of contemporary youth sub-culture. As many of its practitioners claim, "It's an art not a crime."

Society's attitude towards non-attendance at school is built on fear, a fear rooted in a narrow view of education that is school-based and adult controlled. We would do well to recall the words of the late John Holt:

"Let every child be the planner, director and assessor of their own education, to allow and encourage them with the inspiration and guidance of more experienced and expert people and as much help as they ask for, to decide what they learn, when to learn it, how to learn it and how well they are learning it."

To each according to their needs?

Lib Ed looks at state provision of education for people with special needs.

EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN with special needs is a chancy business in this country - what happens to you seems to depend on the type of disability that has been diagnosed and what is available locally.

Until the early 80s, children were often put into Special Schools on the say-so of a Medical Officer whose only experience of education was Roedean or Eton.

It is surely not necessary here to rehearse the arguments about disability and how people with disabilities are made DISABLED by society; enough mainstream writers have done that already.

Denying the problems

But the fact remains that children exist who have problems - a sensory, physical, or learning difficulty - who need special help. It is tempting to deny the problems and suggest that, in a libertarian society, they would just sort themselves out.

However, as many as 2% of the population of children have been suggested as needing some sort of educational provision as a result of severe disability.

Older children, under the current system, are considered for a Statement of Special Educational Need. The idea is that, at the age of about 3, the Schools Psychological Service calls for contributions to this document, which assesses the child's development, and states what its needs are considered to be.

Extra resources

The contributions are made by the parents and all the professionals, whether medics, teachers or social workers who have worked with the child. A summary is written at the front, which usually states a placement for the child and extra resources that will be needed.

In some Local Education Authorities (LEAs) this has been a progressive move for these children. There are several advantages to this system over the previous chaos. If the parents are not satisfied they can reject the statement, or ask for it to be re-drafted.

This means that the whole procedure is open to public scrutiny, unlike before, when placements were dictated very much by provision. For instance, areas that had large numbers of special schools would, by hook or by crook, find the children to fill the places.

That still applies to some extent, because the fabric of the special schools is still there in many cases; so the alternatives within the system are limited.

There are some disadvantages as well. It can often take as long as two years for the statement to be completed, by the time all the bits of paper are collected together and agreement reached.

If a dispute persists, then although the parents can appeal against the statement through the local authority, in the end the right of final appeal is with the Secretary of State for Education...

There is also no provision for looking at what the child her/himself has to say, even at the age of thirteen when the whole statement has to be re-drafted in order to ensure that it is still an accurate description of the situation.

Child's needs

Despite these reservations, it is extraordinary how, on the ground, the system does try to take the feelings and attitudes of the individual child into consideration, where possible. Very often there is no placement locally that really meets the child's needs.

Forgetting for a moment all the implications of the label of Severe Learning Difficulties, it is quite impressive how the better of the SLD schools take the trouble to try to find out what the individual student wants when they reach the age of post-16 education and need to find something different.

At the pre-school level the whole scene is very patchy. Diagnosis and referral is a tricky business with the very young. For example, a child who is showing signs of mild developmental delay one month can be progressing well a few months later.

Well staffed

Some areas are well staffed, with teams of specialist pre-school teachers working hand-in-hand with therapists, paediatricians, other consultants and the community health services such as Health Visitors and Community Medical Officers, as well as supportive social services.

The children may need physio-, occupational and speech therapists and, in many cases, teachers/counsellors; people who can help parents to focus their minds on the child in a positive way, find appropriate playthings and

introduce them to the right level of skill teaching in such areas as dressing, counting, winding up toys.

In the case of children with severe multiple disabilities, a programme slanted towards sensory stimulation and tolerance of being handled may be the starting point.

Some areas have these services, and others, particularly in the Tory-controlled southern counties, have very little indeed.

Complex factors

The provision of services by the state cannot be the whole story. There are many complex factors involved.

Often the parents feel that they are losing their child to the professionals, or that there are so many people banging on their doors with well meaning advice that their lives no longer belong to themselves.

Some areas are aware of this and hold case discussions with key workers who can try to bring coherence to the provision.

While there are many areas where mistakes occur, where families feel upset and where there is a great shortage of therapists, in others the state manages to show a fairly benign face to families with children with a high level of special needs.

The problem is that there may not be enough help available when parents need it, or that they are feeling so unhappy that they begin to look elsewhere.

Confused parents

An approach often tried by grieving confused parents is to look for a 'cure'. "They will be able to do brain grafts won't they..." is one manifestation of this. Another is to look for an alternative therapy that seems to sort out the problem.

Unfortunately, the media pander to the idea of the super curative therapy and leap hungrily and unquestioningly on each newsworthy 'solution' as it comes along.

Faced with a scarcity of realistic and sensible help and advice, hyped by the media and those out for gain, as well as worried about their own ability to cope, parents sometimes turn to 'alternative' therapies.

Some of these therapies are the subject of considerable controversy. In the next issue, *Lib ED* will look at two of them, Conductive Education and the Doman-Delacarto techniques.



The onset of Brain Death (Cath Tate, Photo Co-op)

Testing, testing, testing...

Michael Rosen demolishes some commonly held views on testing.

ALL state schools test children. Soon they will test them even more.

There are many ways of apologising for tests:

- We test the children so that we can find out which children need help.
- We test the children so that the teachers in the educational level above will know what they're getting.
- We test the children so that parents will know how their children are getting on.
- We test the children so that employers will know what they're getting.
- We test the children so that we can stream the children into different ability bands.
- Testing is the fairest way all people with merit can be seen to achieve.

Tests can only test the testable. That is all questions have to be the kind that can produce gradeable answers.

Obviously this means that many kinds of human attributes, skills and abilities that we value and admire are

excluded from tests. For instance, compassion, creativity, courage in the face of brutality, ability to co-operate with other people, intuition and others that readers could come up with.

Tests are biased towards privately accumulated knowledge, competitiveness, written language, English middle and upper class culture.

People who apologise for tests keep saying how they try to compensate for this bias. 'We'll use pictures' and ask children to identify a spade, for example. Where I work in Bethnal Green it wouldn't surprise me if quite a few of the children have never seen a spade.

Children who are bi-lingual get no credit for this ability. Children's culture is overlooked whether it is their knowledge of playground and family lore or mass media things like TV and music.

Now to return to the six apologies I began with. All information that teachers, parents and children need could be supplied with profiling instead of testing. For example, 'This child can do this, has done this, attended this', and so on. These profiles could and should include the child's perceptions of what has been going on as well.

But this is liberal eyewash.

Education is one of the ways in which capitalism reproduces itself. Capitalism needs a stratified society in which people slot into their appropriate roles. Testing is the means by which education delivers up 16 year olds as the various kinds of marketable labour power.

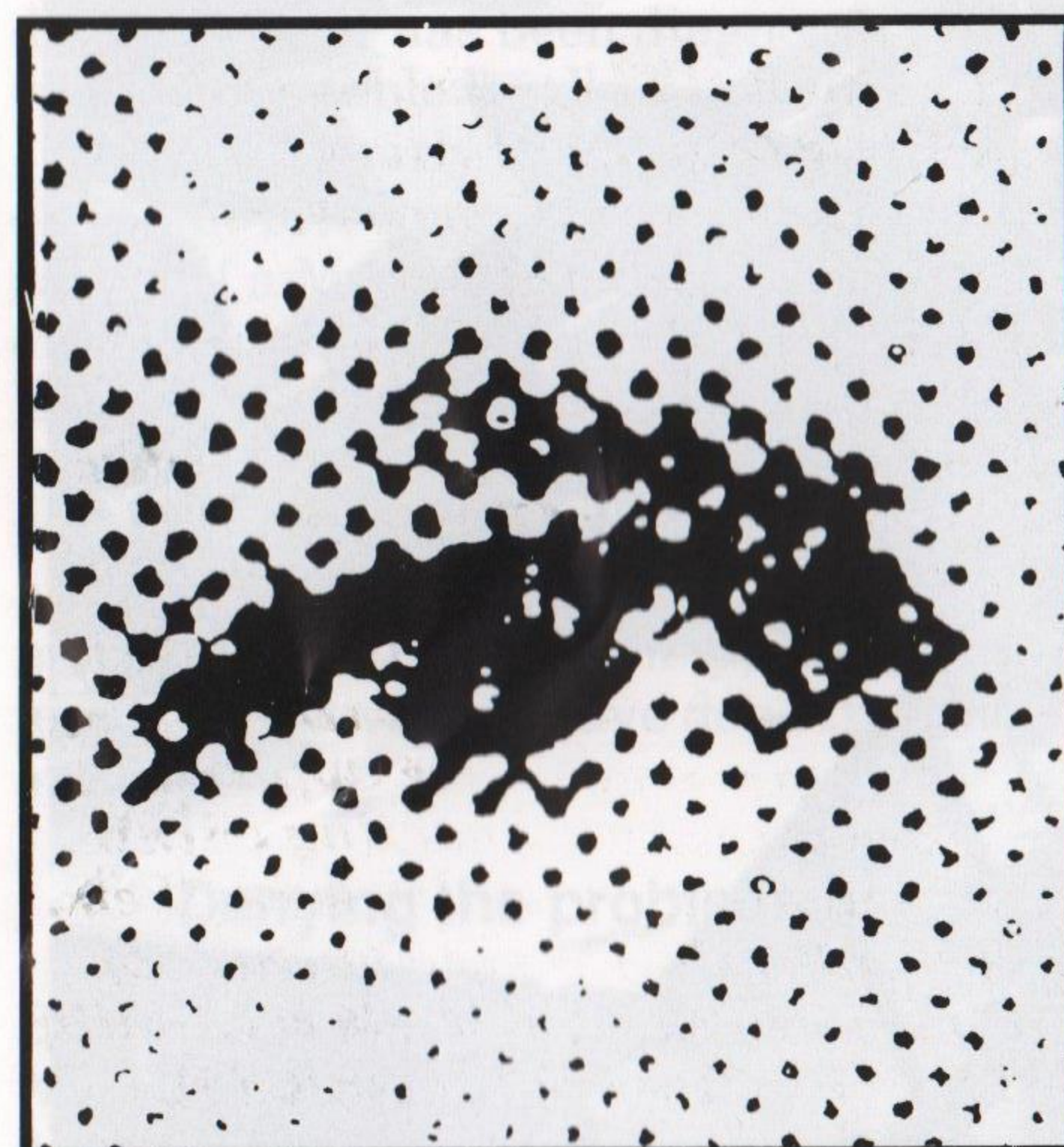
So-called fairness doesn't really come into it because schooling in this country is not designed to enable working class children to become middle class. Middle class children 'succeed' in the educational system, not because of some objective merit but because the system is geared up to them.

Their parents often buy them individual attention in the form of selective schooling, private schooling, individual tuition, and - perhaps more importantly - are able at all stages of schooling to provide academic help... and, of course, afterwards are able to find the right opening. Needless to say, some working class parents are also seduced by these possibilities.

Testing takes up an enormous amount of teacher time and energy and determines the type of education that goes on. It forces teachers to concentrate on individualised knowledge, factual knowledge and acceptable knowledge.

Testing kills.

A primer of educational Thatcherism



ALL THIS Baker talk of greater 'openness, choice, variety, freedom' numbs the listener's active intelligence, and effectively conceals the vicious, pecking order buried beneath the words. If there are to be any adequate alternatives, it is necessary to see beneath this camouflage and make clear what educational Thatcherism really means for us all, at a time when the public system of education in this country is threatened, so damagingly, by the Education 'Reform' Bill.

Parental choice... really means giving privileged parents the right to maintain inequality by choosing comfortable schools rather than run down ones, or to opt out into the Independent sector, leaving the unprivileged even more deprived of resources.

...alternatively choice can mean choice for all rather than for a thrusting, favoured few. 93% of parents already get the school of their first choice, so present arrangements need to be vigorously defended, and then extended.

Opting out of Local Authority control... is really about dismantling the power of the local authorities, preparing the ground for future privatisation, reinforcing the movement towards centralised control and dramatically increasing the dictatorial power of the Secretary of State for education.

Over the years of Carlisle, Joseph and Baker, Thatcherism has set the agenda and defined the terms of the educational debate as in so much else.

The problem is that the New Right has deliberately caused confusion by taking over many of the liberal sounding phrases of the post-war settlement, which has made it difficult for thinking people to question what has become a new orthodoxy.

David Jackson and Geoffrey Jenkins examine Thatcherism's most crucial phrases and key ideas:

...alternatively opting in could mean the undermining of the independent sector, through taking back the public money presently given to private schools through the Assisted Places Scheme and the tax and rate concessions tied to charitable status. Comprehensive schools then might have a chance of working, without being creamed off or drastically under-funded.

Discipline really means introducing an authoritarian relationship between teachers and learners that instils the attitudes needed to run a divided society - i.e. an unthinking respect for authority, obedience and servility.

...alternatively it could mean students and teachers working together so that they can both become more critically aware of their rights and responsibilities within communities.

Standards is really Thatcherism's favourite way of attacking public education, and forcing the opposition onto the defensive. It's important to appreciate that the 'falling standards' catch phrase is not founded on factual evidence.

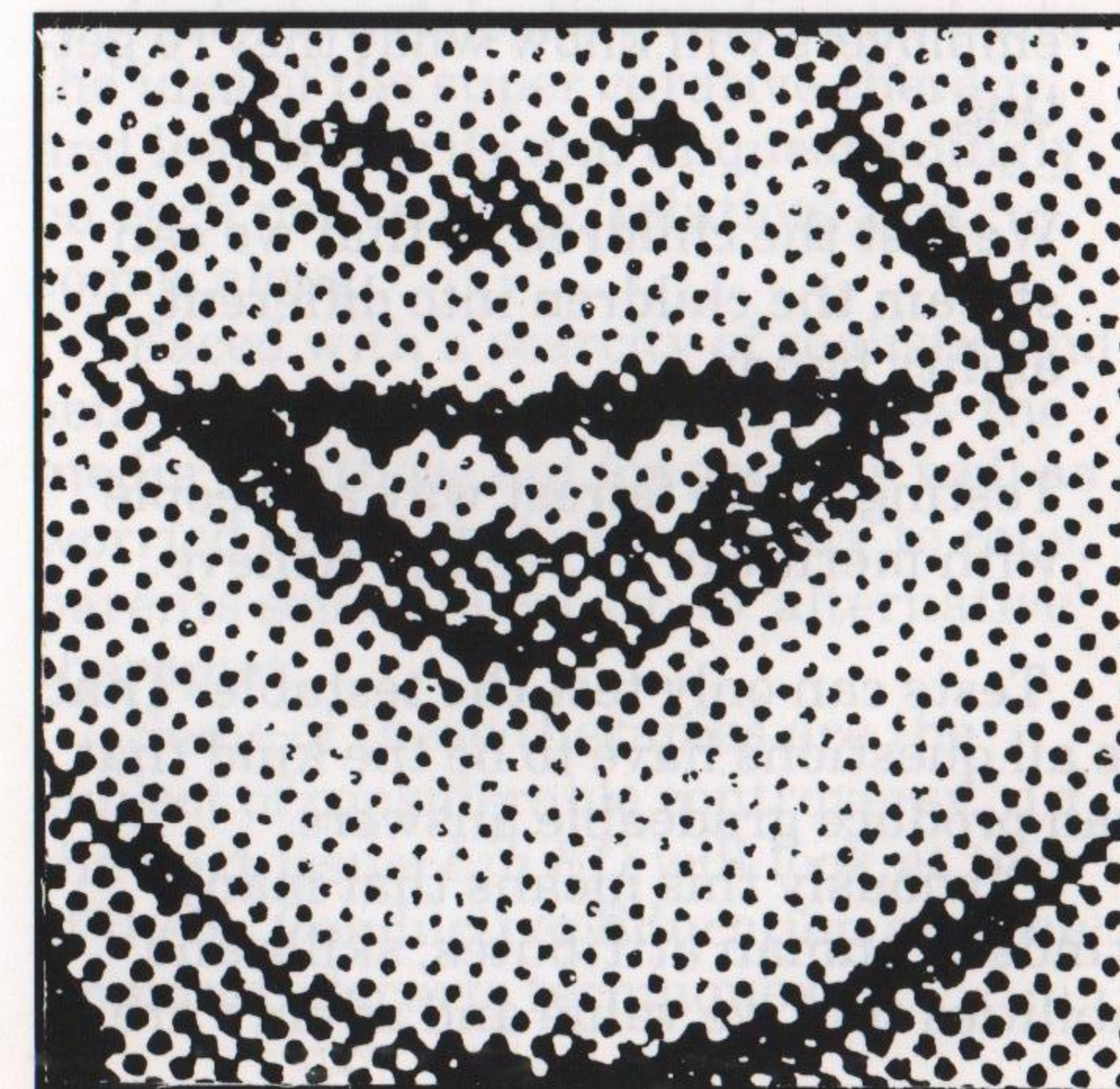
For confirmation of this see the recent D.E.S. statistics; McPherson and Willans' evidence on Scottish Comprehensives in *Sociology*, November 1987; and *Bending the rules* - Brian Simon, Lawrence and Wishart

(1988), where it says that the percentage of the age cohort gaining five or more GCE O Levels at grades A to C has increased by over 45% in the fourteen years between 1970-71 and 1984-85.

Rather, it is an ideological offensive mounted by the New Right on the foundations of State education in this country.

...alternatively we should recognise that raising standards for all school students does not come from an over-emphasis on drills, exercises and tests within a competitive, Grammar school curriculum. It comes from the student being emotionally and intellectually challenged. These kind of challenges come from working with, and critically on, the students' own understandings and resources in situations that are motivating and meaningful to them.

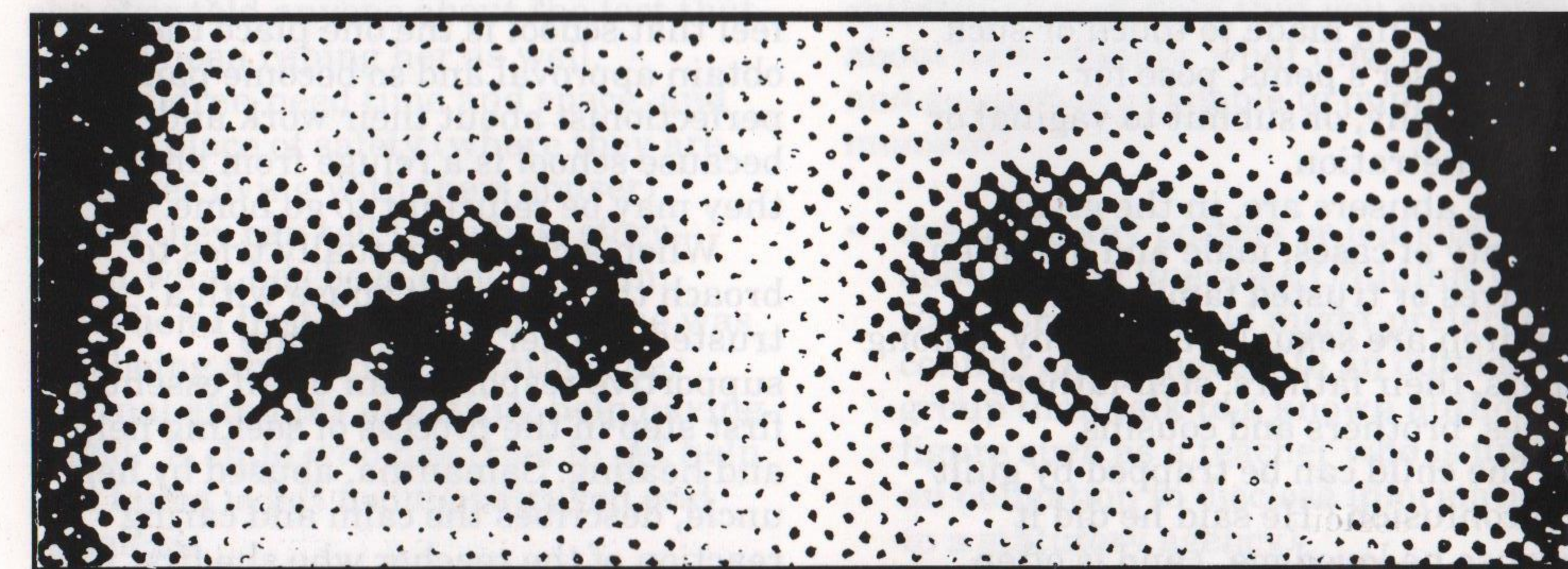
This must start with the students' own terms of reference - their own varieties of language, styles of thinking



and knowing, and their own purposes. Improving standards can then be seen as the students gradually extending their immediate impressions into more fully developed meanings and understandings.

Basic skills really means reducing 'skill' to a technical competence, to be mechanically ticked off in a check-list box. Basic skills, in this sense, become a central part of social discipline.

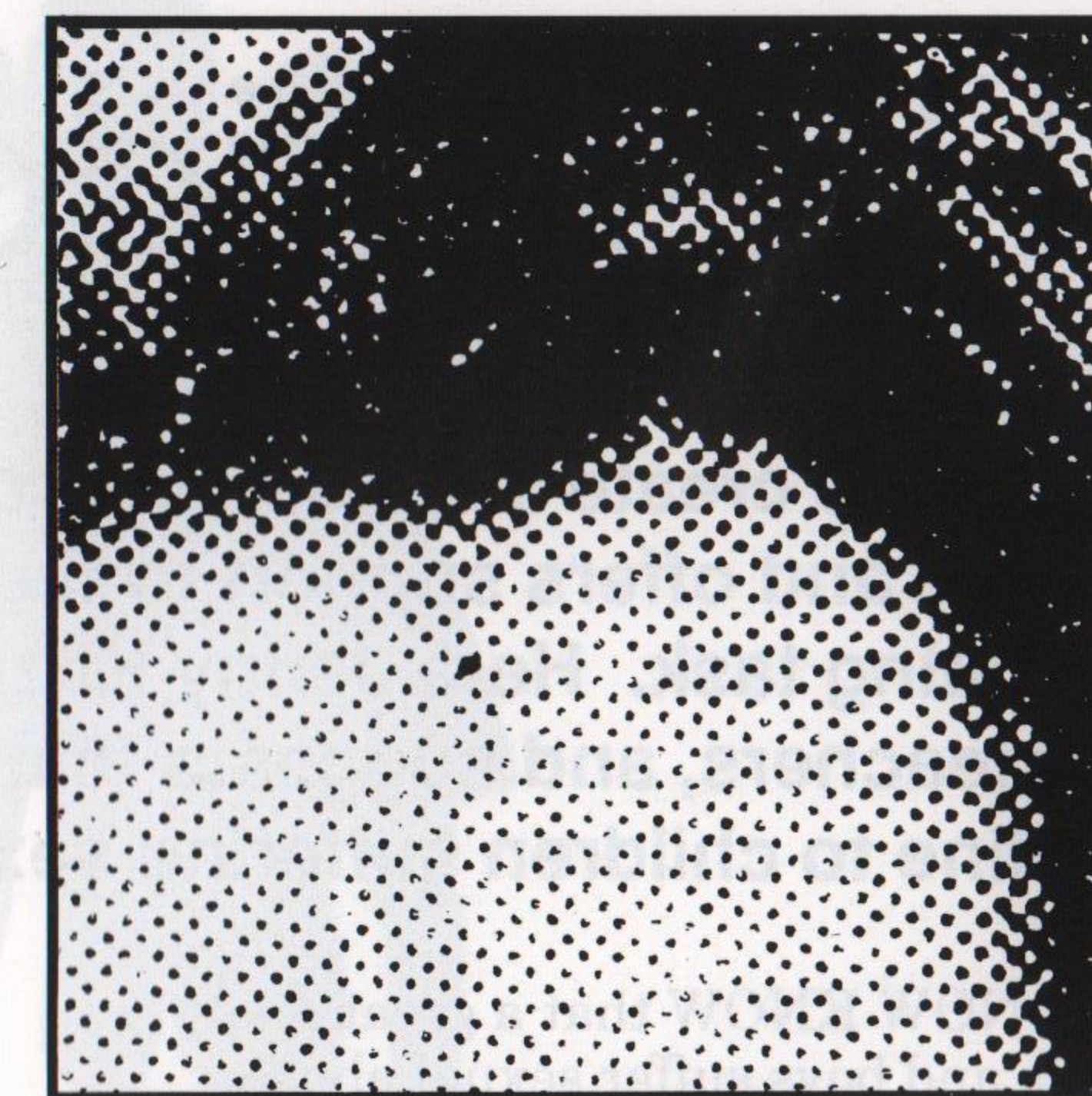
...alternatively skills can be viewed as social as well as technical competences; of being able to ask questions about the seemingly obvious, about seeing the power lines within workplaces, about developing an awareness of what is going on, in whose interests and how you could change things.



Benchmark testing at 7, 11, 14, and 16 really means an intimidatory way of arranging pupils, schools and local authorities into a competitive league table of results. Not for the benefit of the children but to promote the forces of selection and privatisation in the country at large.

...alternatively formative assessment can mean a collaborative mode of profiling (a three-way dialogue between students, parents and teachers) that encourages the student to take up a self-critical responsibility for the quality, direction and pace of her own learning. It can also mean diagnostic tests that highlight remedial treatment for individual pupils rather than the destructive, comparative measurement of benchmark testing.

A relationship between schools and industry really means finding covert ways of socialising disaffected youth into the habits of deference and docility. The main strand in this is the pretense of training for non-existent work.



...alternatively it could mean developing understanding about the true nature of the job market, and introducing fresh ways of achieving collaboration between work places and schools. Such as, students having a

basic right to socially useful work rather than simply fitting in to a 'needs of industry' model. They should be enabled to claim the right to be decision makers in the work place and to learn from initiatives like workers' cooperatives and industrial democracy.

The national curriculum really means grabbing power away from the local authorities to reinforce the move towards a greater, centralised control.

It also means perpetuating elitist, tiered schooling by reinforcing the narrow, traditional subject-base of the foundation curricular structure. This emphasis is geared to the interests of the privileged few at the expense of the majority of average and below average children. The national curriculum is also about social regulation in that it is an attempt by central government to control what children and people should or should not know, and what counts as valid knowledge. It is also an effective way of disciplining dissenting teachers.

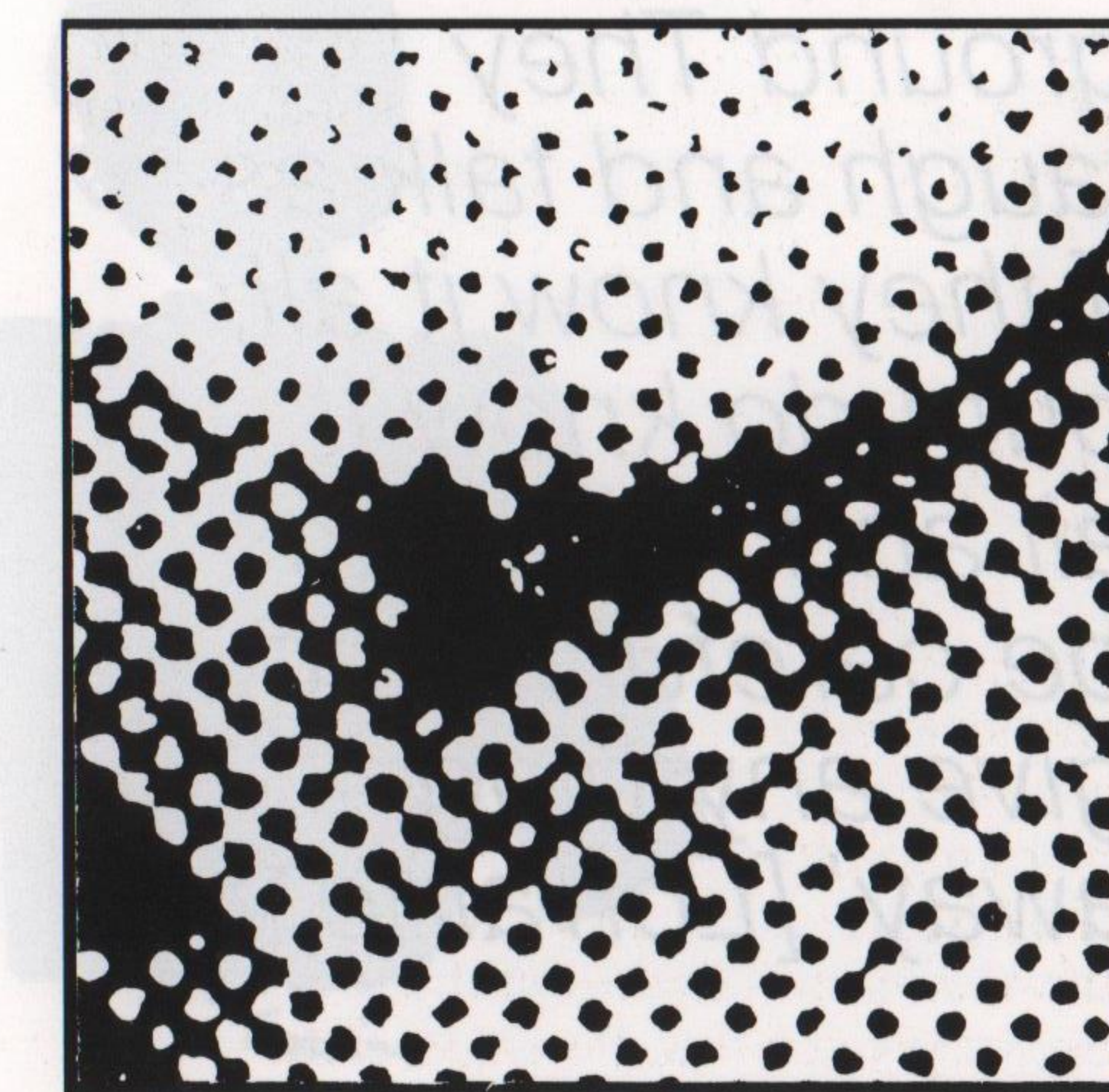
...alternatively it could mean a greater respect for neglected areas of knowledge and experience, and the processes of making knowledge. (Areas like World Studies, Media studies, Social studies,

Environmental studies, Antiracist and anti-sexist initiatives.) It also means an emphasis on 'really useful knowledge' - the socially-critical skills needed to understand what's going on in Britain 1988, and how you can change things through the skills of critical analysis, of seeing beyond the literal surface and purposeful activity in the outside world, rather than merely 'doing subjects' in an outdated Grammar school curriculum.

Educational Thatcherism will continue as a dominating force in the British educational scene as long as it's allowed to go on defining the terms of the main debates. The Baker bill is so threatening because it elevates the 'common sense' of Burton's shareholders into supposedly plausible educational ideals. Its plausibility lies in its critics merely taking up a responsive approach to its proposals, and reacting within the boundaries laid down for them. Ironically, the very seriousness of response in the end lends credibility to the New Right's educational priorities.

The only way out of this maze is to define an alternative terrain for education (perhaps taking up some of the hints offered here), while simultaneously, keeping up the fight against the Baker bill. All opponents of the bill urgently need to see a growth of critical think tanks across the country that are able to create an alternative set of bearings for British education, as well as having popular appeal.

If we want the quality of education to survive for all children, then now is the time to give up our defensive mind-set and start working together to build something for the future. Groups and local authorities (Sheffield has made a start through its radical in-service programme) urgently need to make public their re-thinking processes so that an alternative, educational agenda can have a chance of developing before we're all too late.



These hidden games

'At primary school the other children used to run home at 3 o'clock but I used to say to the teacher, "Do you want anything doing?" I wanted to stay, school was the only place I felt safe.'
[Samantha]

'I was very disturbed at that stage and got into an awful lot of trouble but nobody was asking the right questions.'[Fiona]

'How could I be friends and chat in the playground They laugh and talk as if they know it all, but I do know it all and I have to be careful not to give anything away' [Lorraine*]

Trying to create a school environment which challenges abuse and offers support to the abused child can be a very isolating task. Here Jenny Kitzinger offers practical advice for teachers, and suggests that they can help to provide a lifeline to children suffering sexual violence.

WE NOW KNOW that a great many girls and boys suffer sexual abuse during their childhood. The abuse may be a one-off event or may continue over many years.

It may involve being mauled (an act often called by the deceptively cosy terms of 'fondling' or 'petting'), being made to watch the man masturbate or listen to his sexual fantasies. It may include being made to touch or suck their abuser's penis, pose for pornography, or submit to vaginal or anal penetration.

The abusers are, in the great majority of cases, male and are often relatives or trusted family friends. Children are sexually abused by, among others, their fathers, step-fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins.

The child can be trapped by guilt and confusion ('He said he did it because he loved me') and is often acutely aware of the abuser's all-pervasive power ('I was dependent on him for everything - he controlled when I ate, when I went to bed and whether or not I was allowed out of the house').

Abused children are reluctant to tell anyone their unspeakable secret. They often feel abnormal and isolated from their peers and fear that if their secret were discovered they would be blamed and perhaps punished.

However, as publicity around this issue has increased, more and more children are trying to tell someone about abuse - many of them turn to the school for help.

School staff are also in a good position to notice changes in the child's behaviour, and to respond when a child seems hurt or depressed. In fact, one third of all reports of abuse reach social services via the school.

Unable to verbalise what is happening to them, many children send out non-verbal signs or ask for help in the form of 'attention-seeking behaviour'.

Some abused children deliberately hurt themselves. Others, like Fiona quoted above, express their misery by becoming 'bad' - they may make up stories, steal, bully, and may be labelled as 'sexually provocative' because they have been taught that their only worth

is as sexual objects.

Ironically, such behaviour may alienate teachers and makes them less ready to believe any allegations of sexual abuse made by that child.

Other children become obsessively good and display a kind of 'frozen watchfulness' - an acute attention to adult moods - their survival under abuse has depended on it. They may feel that school is the one place they can obtain approval and so become painfully perfectionist about their work and, because school is a refuge from abuse, they may be reluctant to go home.

When a child eventually tries to broach the subject of abuse with a trusted teacher an immediate supportive response can be an essential first step in the process of seeking help and healing. Samantha, abused by her uncle, describes the calm and caring reaction of the teacher who she first told:

'She was really good. She said, "It isn't your fault, we'll sort it out, we'll get there", and "you're not the only one who's been through this." I'd thought I was the only one and when someone actually tells you that there other kids going through what you are going through it helps so much. And she wasn't firing questions at me all the time, she sort of gave me a question and she let me answer it in my own time... And she talked to me really gently and didn't say things like "what do you mean?"'

The important elements of the teacher's response were that she immediately allied herself with Samantha, assured her that she wasn't to blame, helped her to feel less isolated and gave her time to talk without cross-questioning her.

However, even if an individual member of staff is sympathetic, help for the child can be delayed or thwarted if the school hierarchy is not prepared to deal with the issue or the teacher does not know what to do next.

In Samantha's case the school, in spite of Samantha's pleas, informed her parents but not social services. The

further reading:
Maher P., *Child Abuse: the educational perspective*, Blackwells 1987.
O'Hara M., *Developing a feminist school policy on child sexual abuse*;
Kitzinger J., *Defending innocence: ideologies of childhood*, both *Feminist Review* 28, Spring 1988.



Tammie

result was that Samantha's uncle stopped abusing her. However, her father renewed his threat to kill her if she ever told anyone about the fact that he had been raping her as well.

Children need time and space, and often a place of safety (where they are no longer living with their abuser) before they can tell the whole story about what has been done to them.

When I first met Samantha she was still being abused by her father, her original attempts at getting help having failed. A child who has tried to get help and failed is left feeling betrayed and hopeless.

Some head teachers, clearly concerned about the school's reputation or possible conflict with parents, insist on reinterviewing a child who has confided in a trusted teacher. This often results in the child being intimidated into retracting the allegation.

In one case, a headmaster demanded that the teacher should not "make a fuss" about suspected abuse because "the school governors would take a very dim view of it if we started reporting allegations like this".

Trying to create a school environment which challenges abuse and offers support to the abused can be a very isolating task. It's important to think about what information, support and practical guidance you need.

You might start by getting together with other members of staff, not just teachers but anyone who has contact with the children; the school secretary and the school nurse usually play a crucial role.

You could also think about your school's policy on child sexual abuse (if one exists) and look at other people's discussions about developing school policies in this area.

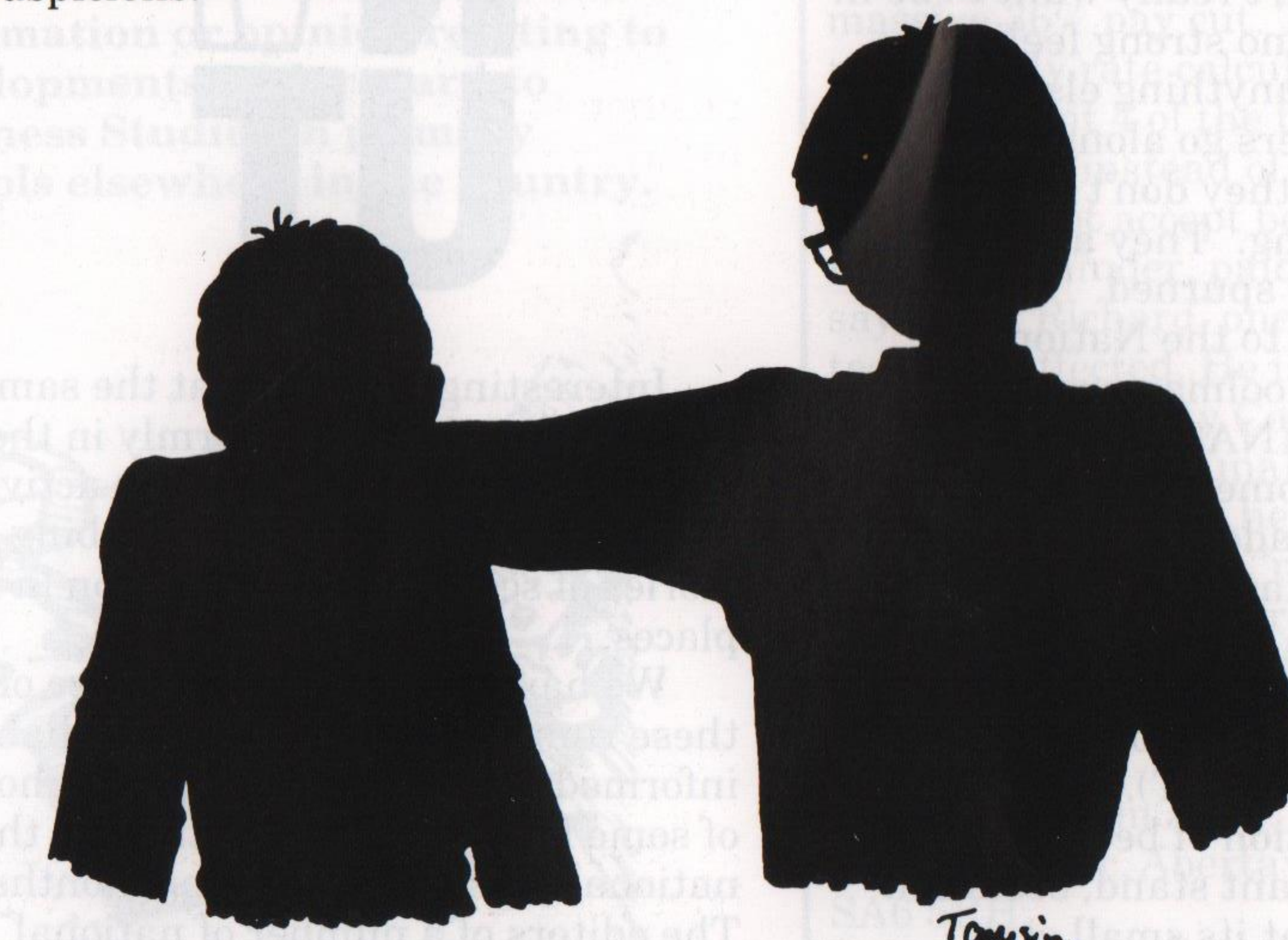
It's also worth obtaining a copy of the procedures for a multi-agency response to child sexual abuse from your local Area Review Committee and you could invite speakers from your

nearest Rape Crisis centre and from Social Services.

There are specific ways of enabling children to seek help that you can think about immediately; what information and support is available to pupils at the moment?

- are there any posters or leaflets about phone lines like Childline or Rape Crisis (a child might prefer to confide anonymously to an outside group than talk to a known authority figure such as a teacher who is under an obligation to disclose information to a statutory agency)
- are there relevant books in the school library?
- if children wanted to talk to you about any problems, when and where would they have a chance?

Many teachers are now taking advantage of training and education programmes, like Kidscape, especially designed for use in schools. These programmes discuss in detail the kind of signs to look out for in an abused child, how to react when a child discloses and how to go about reporting any suspicions.



Tammie

They also give ways of introducing the issue of sexual abuse and begin preventative work with children.

Although there are many problems with some of these packs and definite limitations to what can be done in the classroom such programmes provide a vital resource and suggest ways of thinking about the situation from a child's perspective - what are we telling a child when we describe sexual molestation as 'naughty' or 'bad touch', words usually associated for children with disapproval and being told off?

What are we saying if we want to help them confide in us and ask them to stay behind after class or come to the head teachers' office - situations usually associated with punishment?

Ultimately we have to confront child sexual abuse explicitly - bringing information and discussion into the schools and working directly with students.

Angie was raped by a stranger while on a school trip when she was ten years old. She couldn't bring herself to tell any of the teachers:

'When you don't have words, when you don't have any meaning that you can attach to that sort of behaviour, when there isn't any permission to talk about these things... it was just impossible.'

Having the information, the words, and the permission to talk about sexual violence offers a life line to abused children. When teachers begin to talk about sexual abuse they are giving some children the chance to challenge sexual exploitation and to seek help.

Fiona, who was sexually abused throughout her childhood, sums it up:

'If teachers are open, and the kids see that, then they give the kids a chance because the kids can see that these adults are actually using these words and describing what they know to be the case...'

'Teachers being open about child sexual abuse would give the message that it is not the whole of the adult population that plays these hidden games.'

The state of the unions

Teachers in England and Wales have a choice of four unions. Or is it much of a choice?

THERE IS a marked contrast between the way in which the teachers and education have been treated in Scotland, and the hammering that they have received in England and Wales.

Among the reasons for this difference is that Scottish teachers are overwhelmingly members of one trade union, and that this union, however reluctantly, has been prepared to take industrial action.

In England and Wales, the situation is sadly different. Here teachers are divided between a number of rival unions, and this lack of unity certainly made Baker's job easier. Let us look at these different unions.



For the teacher who is positively anti-union, and who has a secret crush on Kenneth Baker, there is the small but thoroughly pernicious Professional Association of Teachers (PAT).

This organisation's members are generally known as Patsies, or Cowpats. PAT functions as little more than a Thatcherite fifth column in the ranks of the teacher work-force, and its members are shunned and despised. They are not the sort of people one would like to step in accidentally.

Not quite as bad as PAT is the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association (AMMA). This is the union for people who don't really want to be in a union, but have no strong feelings either way, or on anything else either.

AMMA members go along with other unions as long as they don't actually have to do anything. They are to be pitied rather than spurned.

This brings us to the National Association of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers (NAS), a union for men (and some women) who want to belong to a real trade union that will fight for better salaries and conditions.

The NAS often makes militant noises, but this is usually a recruiting tactic to pinch members off the National Union of Teachers (NUT). The NAS is in the happy position of being able to take the odd militant stand, secure in the knowledge that its small size

ensures that it will never be put to the test, and that it can blame this on the NUT.

What about the NUT, then? Many of this union's members also want to belong to a real trade union, but they have seen through the NAS's claim to be one, and so stay in the NUT until one comes along.

It was the NUT that played the most important part in the recent teacher's dispute, although in the last months of that conflict there were already plenty of indications that the leadership had had enough and regretted the whole thing.

It is worth remembering, for example, that Baker's confiscation of five days holiday, the much-loved Baker Days that teachers now suffer, was, in fact, the brainchild of the NUT leadership. They might perhaps be, more appropriately, known as McAvoy's Days.

Since the end of the dispute, and the defeat of the unions, the NUT leadership has embraced the NEW REALISM with a vengeance, and shows every intention of turning the union into little more than an insurance agency and educational pressure group.

The Broad Left faction that dominates the NUT Executive is clearly much more broad than it is left.

Indeed, so contemptible is the NUT's present stance on trade union issues, that it is arguable that at the moment teachers are better off without their negotiating rights because of what the union's leadership would fall over themselves to concede to Baker.



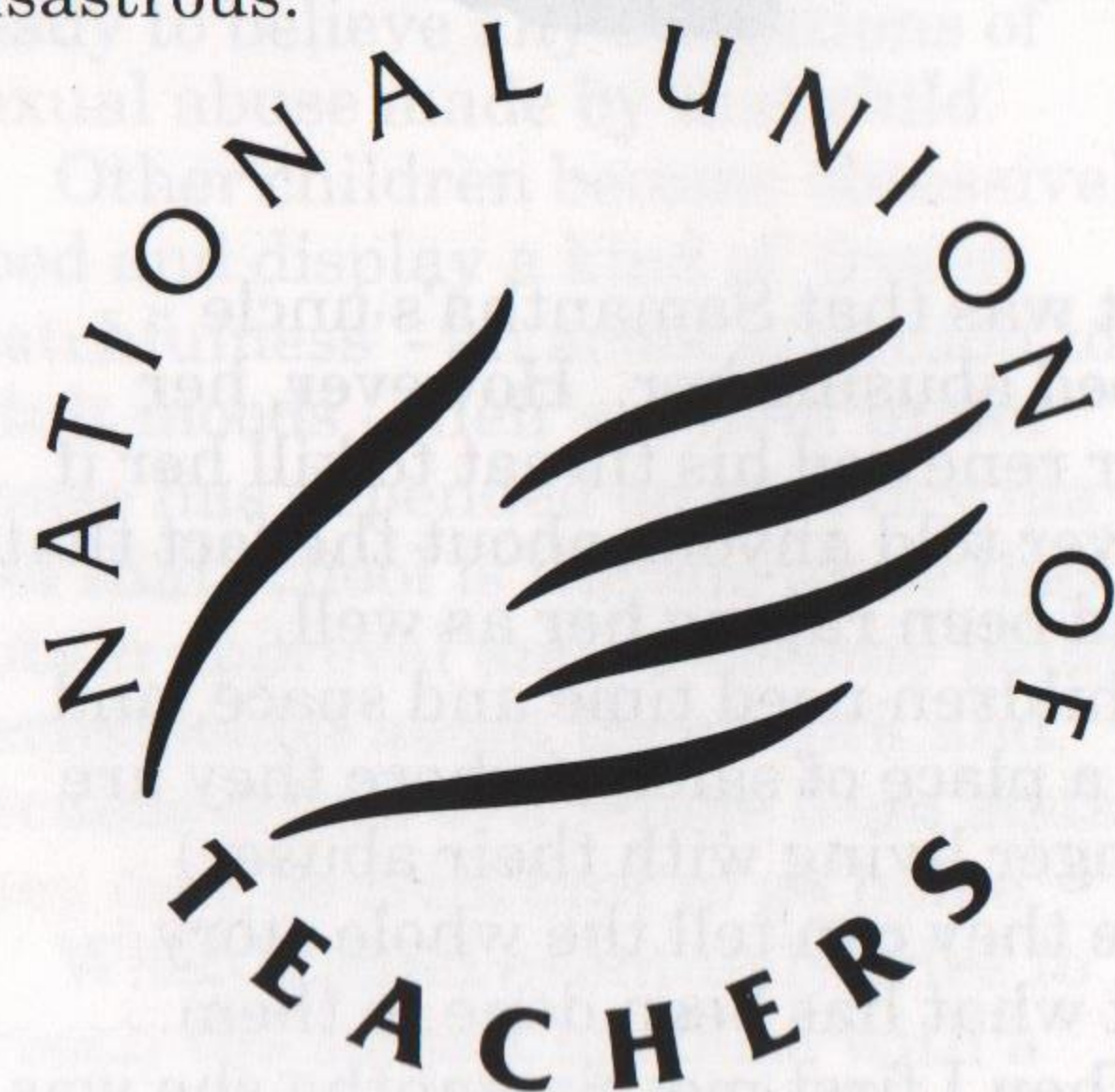
Interestingly enough, at the same time as the NUT seems firmly in the grip of NEW REALISM, union activists are hearing increasingly disturbing stories of scandal and corruption in high places.

We have no proof or otherwise of these rumours, but have been reliably informed that there is every likelihood of some interesting revelations in the national press in the coming months. The editors of a number of national

newspapers are, it seems, torn between 'good headlines' and the risk of damaging the NUT 'moderates'.

All of this is, of course, an absolute tragedy at a time when state education is being put through the wringer and the burden of consequences is falling on the classroom teacher.

Baker's so-called Reform Act might well be an educational bad joke, but it's effects in schools are going to be disastrous.



As far as teachers are concerned, the Government's strategy seems to be to impose a succession of pay cuts... and then to offer union recognition and an above-inflation pay increase, but only in return for shorter holidays and longer hours (probably two weeks less holiday and an hour on the day on the CTC model).

All this will be accompanied by larger classes, an increasing workload, dilution of labour and less job protection than any other group of employees in the country.

There are some hopeful signs. First of all, Baker's attack on teachers has been so successful that it has made the profession an extremely unattractive employment prospect.

The increasingly serious shortage of teachers seems likely to precipitate a virtual collapse of state education in the South East, and is certain to force the Government on the defensive.

It has to be remembered in this context that teacher shortages are not the result of any lack of trained teachers, but of the fact that over 400,000 teachers have escaped from schools.

There is also the fact that, in many schools, union organisation is still intact and capable of mounting a renewed challenge to both the Government and the union leaderships.

In the circumstances, however, it must be said that the need for one strong determined trade union, uniting the great majority of teachers (an NUT-NAS amalgamation?), has never been more urgent.

Catching them young

BUSINESS STUDIES has already successfully established itself, cuckoo-like, within the secondary school curriculum, providing an education in Thatcherism behind a veneer of neutrality and social concern.

As much was to be expected, given both the ruthlessness with which the Tories have imposed their will on schools and the demoralised nature of much of the opposition.

It is still astonishing, however, to find Business Studies and Enterprise Initiatives rearing their ugly heads in the primary school, to find the indoctrination of even the youngest children being carried out quite openly.

Worst example

Certainly, the worst example to come to light so far is at Higham-on-the-Hill CE Primary School in Leicestershire. This establishment must surely qualify for the Baker Award for Tory Schooling. The grisly story is set out in issue No 9 of Leicestershire LEA's glossy in-house magazine, *Leicestershire Education*.

It is offered as an invitation to other primary schools to go down the same road. Both the School Industry Liaison Officer at County Hall and a representative of the Schools Curriculum Industry Partnership were fully involved in helping to commit this particular educational outrage.

Atrocity

They obviously hope to repeat the atrocity elsewhere, turning other primary schools into modern versions of the old 'factory' schools, schools attached to a local firm or firms.

The high point of Capitalist Studies and Exploitation Initiatives at Higham-on-the-Hill was their Mini-Company Week. For a full week, each class worked under pseudo-factory conditions, producing a variety of goods for profit. The youngest children, five-year-olds, formed the Higham Easter Card Co.

"The children slaved diligently at producing over 100 Easter cards on a production line. Factory conditions were imposed with everybody wearing protective hats and aprons, and there was a Managing Director to ensure that targets were met. The children designed, made and sold the cards themselves. They were delighted to receive their wages, one Smartie an hour!"

No this is not an extract from *Curriculum Cop!* This is the real thing; primary education 1989 style in Leicestershire. Readers will have

noticed the need for a Managing Director. Still, at least the wages were better than YTS rates.

Other classes spent the week working under 'factory conditions', producing comics, glove puppets and candles. Now all these activities are useful and beneficial for young children, but at Higham-on-the-Hill they were turned into profit-making exercises, into lessons designed to inculcate the values of the market economy.

Lessons in Thatcherism

Instead of being valid activities in and for themselves, making candles and puppets were turned into lessons in Applied Thatcherism. The children were being taught that market forces are the New Messiah, rather than the Old Mammon.

After Christ has finished cleansing the money-lenders from the Temple, he might care to pay a visit to Higham-on-the-Hill CE Primary School. One can only be grateful that chimneys in that area are too narrow for small bodies to climb up today.

Clearly, what we are seeing is a pernicious attempt to make primary schools the vehicle for overt Tory propaganda, to use them as a means of getting even the youngest children to accept the 'free' market as if it were something natural, something eternal.

This time, however, Baker and his creatures have almost certainly gone too far. It is possible to make a stand.

Many parents are far from convinced that five, six or seven-year-olds should be involved in Business Studies and Enterprise Initiatives, and can be won over to oppose this development.

In Leicestershire, the local NUT is considering a campaign against this step away from the ideal of a humane education.

Lib Ed would welcome news, information or opinion relating to developments with regard to Business Studies in primary schools elsewhere in the country.



A new epoch for children

A NEW organisation, End Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH), was launched in London on April 20th, 1989.

"We hope, through public education and legal reforms, to start a new epoch for children," said Peter Newell, co-ordinator of the organisation, "an epoch without physical punishment. Now that we have ended physical punishment in almost all schools and other institutions, it is time to end it in the home as well."

"Smacking children is a short cut to nowhere", says Penelope Leach, EPOCH's Parent Education Co-ordinator. "As a mother I believe that smacking is wrong. As a psychologist I know that it doesn't help 'discipline' either."

EPOCH believes that ending physical punishment will have many positive effects:

- children can only achieve their full potential when they are recognised as individual people with rights of their own;
- the current acceptance of physical punishment helps to cause more serious child abuse;
- even 'light' physical punishment can unintentionally cause significant injuries to small children;
- children who are hit by their parents learn that violent solutions are acceptable and are more likely in turn to hit their own children. Violence breeds violence.

36% pay cut

SUPPLY TEACHERS in West Glamorgan have been subjected to a massive 36% pay cut. They are now paid a daily rate calculated on the basis of point 4 of the teachers' main salary scale instead of point 11.

"I will not accept being a second rate child minder, paid third rate," says Ioan Richard, one of the thousand teachers affected. He is taking West Glamorgan County Council before a full industrial tribunal at Cardiff claiming that when he works he does equivalent work to a 'regular' teacher and should therefore receive equal pay.

Ioan needs letters from teachers and educationalists supporting his claims.

Contact him at 23, Heol-y-mynydd, Craigechnparc, Abertawe-Swansea, SA6 5RH.

Friend or foe?

Matilda

A book by Roald Dahl
Jonathan Cape, £8.50

IN A RECENT issue of *Children's Literature in Education*, David Rees, himself a fine children's writer, castigated Dahl and most of his works, concluding that "... there must be quite a number of us - teachers, librarians, parents, critics - who wish that some of (his) books had never been written."

Rees is certainly not alone in this view, and this prompts the questions of why it is that the most popular children's writer provokes such a response, and of whether or not such a response is justified.

A short book review is not the place to rehearse such an important discussion, although my own personal view is that the response is not justified, and that what Dahl's critics often seem to find most objectionable is his ability to project a child's view of the world.

This is not to say that I do not find aspects of his work objectionable, but rather that I believe his strengths outweigh his faults. Anyway, enough of this general comment, what about his most recent novel, *Matilda*.

This is the story of a child prodigy, the delightful Matilda, a young girl who is unfortunately the daughter of the most appalling parents. Matilda loves reading (she taught herself!), but her father despises it. At last Matilda begins to revenge herself.

Her revenge has only just begun when she is sent to school, a school ruled by the formidable Miss

Trunchbull, a headmistress whose brutality and violence is without limit. Matilda's recently acquired psychokinetic powers enable her to encompass the destruction of this tyrant.

This is a marvellous novel. The adult characters are all fine additions to Dahl's remarkable gallery of grown-up grotesques, and they all get their just deserts.

It can be argued that Dahl is preaching hatred of parents, and even of adults generally. In fact he is showing the world from a child's point of view, ridiculing and satirising adults for their insensitivity, their arbitrariness.



The result is all very enjoyable. Put bluntly, children like Dahl not just because he is a good novelist, but because he takes their side and gives expression to their view of the world.

This is a remarkable talent, and has to be gratefully acknowledged whatever else is objectionable about his books. Mention must also be made of Quentin Blake's superb illustrations.

Challenging images

Working Now

Photographs and activities for exploring gender roles in the primary classroom
Development Education Centre, Selly Oak Cottages, Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LE, £5.75 +80p p&p.

THIS is a revised and expanded version of a photos/ideas pack that originated in Brent. It helps explore gender role stereotyping through the issue of work.

Many imaginative and stimulating suggestions for groups of younger children are clearly set out. These are designed not only to help them find out about the world of work but also to help them question their findings.

It is careful to point out that it is not just important for young children to build up skills in understanding complex issues, such as these, by looking at the situation close to home. It

also stresses the need to develop a global perspective and concern.

Sixteen black and white A4 size pictures are included. They may be cynically construed as stereotypic anti-stereotypes but the necessity of these images was demonstrated when I showed them to a group of four year olds.

When viewing the photos with the relevant facial or body parts covered, these children unflinchingly decoded the pictures in sexist terms. Builders are men, women always do the sowing and so on.

Such perceptions limit or even negate the worth of the individual. If any serious attempt is to be made to break out of the restrictive cycle, whereby stereotyped imagery reinforces inequality, more of this kind of material is needed.

Crime of Socialism

Groosham Grange

A novel by Anthony Horowitz
Methuen Teens, £1.95

ANY NOVEL which opens with the hero being sent down from a posh public school for the crime of socialism is obviously worth a look at.

Unfortunately, despite some nice touches, Anthony Horowitz's *Groosham Grange* does not live up to its early promise. Instead it becomes a rather ordinary haunted school story.

Satirical Assaults

Attacks of Opinion

A book by Terry Jones
Penguin Plus, £1.99

THIS IS a collection from the regular weekly column that Terry Jones used to write for *Young Guardian*. His savage satirical assaults on the stupidities of the powerful are a delight to re-read.

My personal favourites are his pieces on the *Sun* newspaper, on the Zeebrugge Inquiry, on the Ozone Layer, on One-Person-Operated buses and on Spycatcher.

His "Back to School" piece obviously deserves special mention in these pages. Taking the piss out of our rulers, showing them up for the moral pygmies they are, is a public service and Jones is a fine public servant.

A flexible approach

Flexi-schooling

A book by Roland Meighan
Education Now, pp67, £4.50

IN THIS book, Roland Meighan coherently argues that schools should be turned into learning resource centres, based on the public library rather than the military regimented model that was adopted in the 1870s.

To this end he examines the roles of parent, learner and teacher from a distinctly libertarian perspective, although he seems, for some reason, to prefer the term non-authoritarian.

Human Rights

Writings for Human Rights

A selected bibliography
Minority Rights Group, pp24

THIS is a small publication but it lists over 200 books, mainly by non-governmental organisations. A very useful resource for everybody concerned with promoting human rights.

The magic of Ann Halam

The Daymaker

A novel by Ann Halam
Orchard Books, £7.50

Transformations

A novel by Ann Halam
Orchard Books, £7.95

The Hidden Ones

A novel by Gwyneth Jones
Livewire, £3.50

THE TWO Ann Halam volumes concern the continuing adventures of Zanne, a young covener in the country of Inland, a rural world maintained in balance by means of magic, women's magic.

Inland is a country painstakingly reclaimed from a ruined post-holocaust world, a country that is now in harmony with nature, a harmony that is embodied in the Covenant.

In the first volume, *The Daymaker*, we are introduced to the precocious Zanne, a young girl whose magical abilities and naivety keep getting her into trouble.

She is fascinated by the relics of the industrial technological past, and longs to restore life to the machines that remain, a restoration that would spell the end of Inland.

Moreover, in the wilderness that surrounds Inland, there is a powerful machine lying dormant, a Daymaker, that could provide the energy needed to bring the long dead past back to life. Zanne is drawn to it, tempted to use her magic to revive it, and to hand its power over to the evil Lady Vanan, who rules the wilderness.

Zanne is saved from apostasy, and instead uses her magic to give the ancient machine a covenanted death. From now on her task in life is to give such a death to the surviving Makers that still pose a threat to Inland.

The Daymaker is a beautifully written story, with Zanne emerging as a finely drawn character, discovering herself and coming to understand both her abilities and her responsibilities. An excellent novel by any standard.

The sequel, *Transformations*, is, however, a masterpiece. Zanne is sent

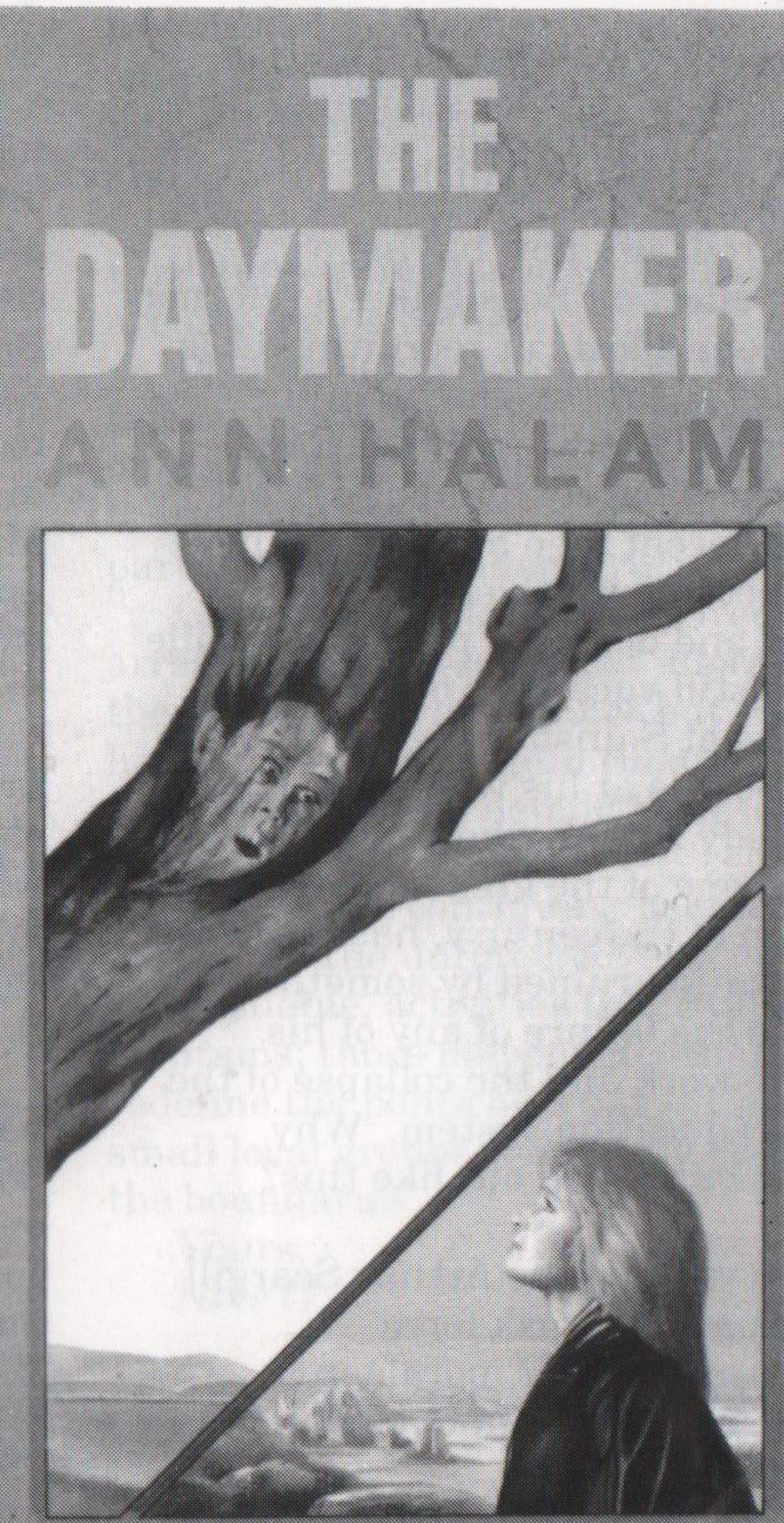
to the mountain settlement of Minith, a grim, authoritarian, puritanical community, that is determined to obstruct her. The novel is an account of her discovery of the terrible reason for this.

On one level, it is an exciting mystery story, but it is told with such sensitivity and understanding as to lift it into a different plane. The quality of the writing often leaves one gasping.

The book deals with an issue that is of immediate concern: "The people of the past were right to be afraid," said Zanne. "They took a terrible power and tried to use it and not use it, to take one part and ignore others. The great forces of being deserve more respect than that: and they have ways of taking what is owed to them."

Transformations is a marvellous literary achievement that cannot be recommended too highly. It puts Halam in the front rank of contemporary children's writers.

Inevitably, the Inland books invite comparison with



Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea trilogy. Such comparisons are rather dangerous, as well as being irresistible!

For my money the adventures of Zanne the covener are far superior. They are novels of classic status and one only hopes that a third volume is on the way.

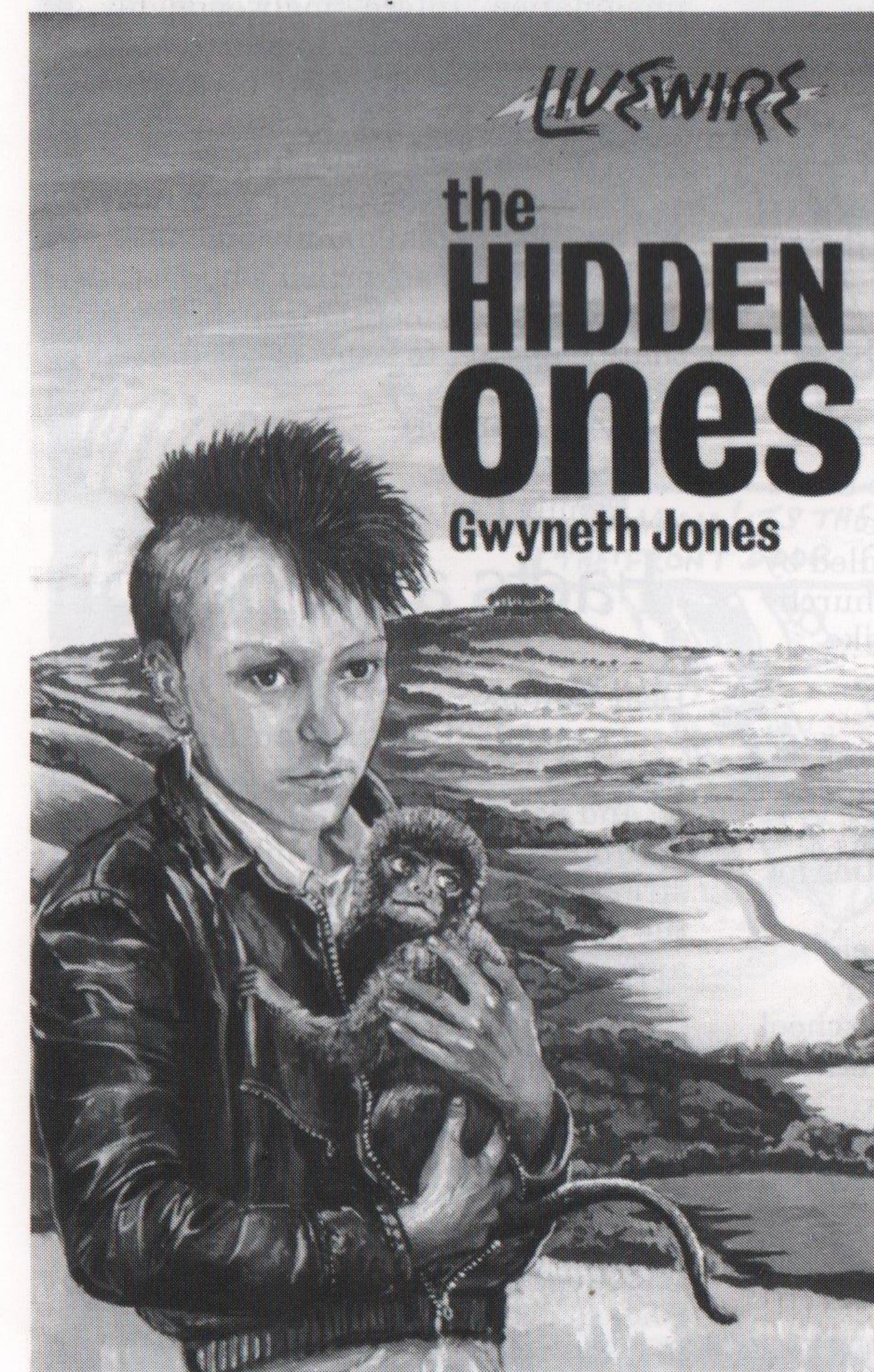
The Hidden Ones appears under Halam's real name, Gwyneth Jones. This is a ferocious story set in contemporary Britain, the story of a young girl who possesses strange mental powers, and of her efforts to come to terms with herself.

Adele's personal struggle is bound up with the fate of Castledene Den, a local wilderness which is to be destroyed by a mining operation. The book is a powerful tale of adolescent rebellion that somehow peters out towards the end.

The plot does not come up to the standard of the writing. There is a failure of political nerve.

Jones has not yet found a way, in her contemporary novels, of allowing her characters to come to terms with themselves without, at the same time, appearing to come to terms with an unjust shitty society.

Despite these criticisms, *The Hidden Ones* is still a novel that is well worth reading.



Diary of a Curriculum Cop

9.00 We are facing a crisis situation with regards to teacher shortage. The great purges of the 1980s, when thousands of teachers were 'disappeared', are now having a crippling effect on Boss Baker's reforms.

All of our efforts at recruiting UQs have failed to fill the gap, even the introduction of unlicensed teachers, some of them barely human, has not worked. Decent men and women just will not become involved in such a degraded and despised profession while there are still vacancies on the check-outs at Sainsbury's.

The Boss is at his wit's end. It will be a tragedy for the whole nation if this fine man, one of the great constructive statesmen of the century, has his career and reputation ruined by something as trifling as the failure of any of his policies to work and the collapse of the country's education system. Why should he be singled out like this?

9.10 I am visiting the Arthur Scargill Comp as part of a task force investigating teacher morale in a desperate attempt to find a solution to the shortage problem.

The staff have been forced to come into the school during one of their holidays, one of the so-called Baker days, that regularly take place in honour of the Boss. As we walk into the staffroom they are all singing the school song: "HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO!"

The head eventually quietsens them down and we listen to their grievances. 'Not enough pay', 'too much marking', 'not enough non-contact time', 'too few resources', 'records of achievement are a waste of time: it takes three weeks to record something the students take twenty minutes to achieve and then nobody ever looks at them anyway', 'classes are too large', 'the school management are incompetent', 'not enough books', 'the school is falling down', 'the head is a school refuser', and on and on.

The meeting ends with another rendition of the school song.

12.00 Over lunch I discuss the meeting with other members of the task force. After some debate we reach a unanimous conclusion: IT'S THE BLOODY UNION'S FAULT. A press release to this effect will be issued later on today.

1.20 An afternoon in the office. The new History syllabus has arrived at last. The Boss appointed a hand-picked team of experts to draw up this crucial document, men and women who have

excelled in every walk of life.

Cecil Rhodes has brought his first hand knowledge of commerce, conquest and race relations in Africa, Field Marshal Earl Haig his insight into the complexities of modern warfare, Arthur Balfour his understanding of Middle Eastern problems which he did so much to create, Geoffrey Archer his involvement in famous libel cases, and Mrs Neville Chamberlain her appreciation of the vital role that women have played behind the scenes in history.

The result of their deliberations has taken many months to appear but what else would one expect when dealing with an assemblage of such strong forceful personalities... especially when they are all dead! This is not at all unusual however.

Also in the post, a proof copy of the new MURDOCH BIBLE FOR SCHOOLS. This publication has been eagerly awaited ever since News International took over Collins, the publishers of the traditional boring Bible.

Now Kelvin Mackenzie has given the good book a tabloid layout with plenty of illustrations, has made it catchy, up-to-date, relevant, saucy!

I have only got time to flick through, glancing at the eye-catching headlines: "TEN THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE COMMANDMENTS", "WHALE SWALLOWS MAN" (a bit far-fetched that one!), "WIN TWO WEEKS IN SODOM AND GOMORRAH - ONLY IN THE SUN", "COME OFF IT MARY -- NATIVITY SCANDAL EXPOSED", "LOONY LEFTIE CLEANS TEMPLE", "WE NAIL GOD -- BY A ROMAN CENTURION".

At last somebody has had the courage to come forward and give us a weapon with which to counter the trendy atheistic communism peddled by those whining scumbags in the Church of England. BIG MOTHER will like this one.

Next issue: Inspired by the success of Red Nose Day, the Secondary Heads Association, together with the DES, sponsor a day of charitable activities for teachers: BROWN NOSE DAY.

Throughout the country teachers will work extra hard, crawl to their superiors, do lunchtime and after-school activities, marking, and a host of other events for nothing. Boss Baker is launching the day under the slogan: MAKE EVERY DAY A BROWN NOSE DAY.

UQ=unqualified teacher

Co-op Games

Hi,

Thanks for the review of our co-operative games. Yes, it is a pity that such games are not more widely available in Britain. We have approached many of the large game companies over the years to produce them overseas for us, but always at the eleventh hour they lose courage and bow out of negotiations. They seem afraid of the concept and continue producing competitive games only.

I want to quibble with some of your review, especially with respect to the comments about *Harvest Time*. Bear in mind that the game is intended for the youngest players and that is why the element of chance is emphasised. This is deliberate on my part, although I didn't make it purely a chance game such as *Snakes and Ladders* is, for example. Children aged 3 or 4 are generally not ready for too much strategy. Furthermore, *Harvest Time* actually does have more strategic play value than is readily apparent and that is why most children play it over and over. If our fan mail from children is any valid indication, this game remains one of the most popular.

However, of the over 60 games in our catalogue, I have designed some for the young that do contain rigorous challenges, with little dependence on chance. Games such as *Max the Cat* and *Granny's House* require logic and imagination. Interestingly enough, most of my customers complain about these two games precisely because they don't allow much chance and are not "easy enough" for their children.

Once again, thanks for your review. We are just a small family business without a large advertising budget, so it is only through mentions such as yours that people get to know we do indeed exist.

Warm regards,
Jim Deacove,
Family Pastimes.

Facts and fiction

Dear Editors,

I can only think that author of "Bees might fly" (*Lib ED 10*) has no conception of, and no experience in, the scientific discipline, and that he cannot, for some strange reason, differentiate between the scientific approach and the approach of some 'scientists'.

Facts, in Science, are Probabilities. The probability that the Sun will continue to rise in the East in our lifetimes is 99.99 recurring per cent - factual enough for me to base my life on. Religion, on the other hand, deals with 'Truths', i.e. statements which may not be challenged, let alone disproved. Science deals with probabilities; Religion deals in 100% certainties.

That is a very important difference - it can mean the difference between life and death.

I dispute the author's statement that "science... dares to grasp even at the meaning of life itself". The "meaning of life" is what one makes of it. I doubt if any scientist could conceive of the discipline revealing "the meaning of life".

Finally, to be brief, there is all the world of difference between the 'faith' of religion and the method of science, which is based upon probabilities. And Ptolemy can be excused because he did not have a very good telescope.

Ernest Cresswell
Maidenhead

1968 and all that

Dear Lib ED,

I am writing in response to Roy Carr-Hill's article in *Lib ED 9*.

Roy mentions the downside of sex and drugs without drawing the necessary conclusions about the position of women in the sixties. Women's bodies fuelled the underground as recreation, object and typists. Drugs like all the

commodifiable elements of the alternative or counter culture become part of the economy.

Roy rejects what he calls the consensus view that we/they lost and that the material basis for the moment of liberation no longer exists. I think that winning and losing are not appropriate means of summing up a period whose resonances may yet strike a new harmony.

But I think it is clear that women, those workers who serviced straight and alternative society and the third world paid an enormous price for a small amount of fun. State and Capital did not pay their share and today unashamedly use the sixties as a bogey to frighten the children and disguise the damaging effects of their own policies.

Tory policies have done more to undermine the family than anything that Richard Neville ever managed. The difference, of course, is that then it was thought that bourgeois morality and the family would wither away as its members became self-actualising autonomous individuals and not as now, miserably thrown back on inadequate resources or thrown together in destructive intimacy.

A most amazing conclusion is reached in the summary section on

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

