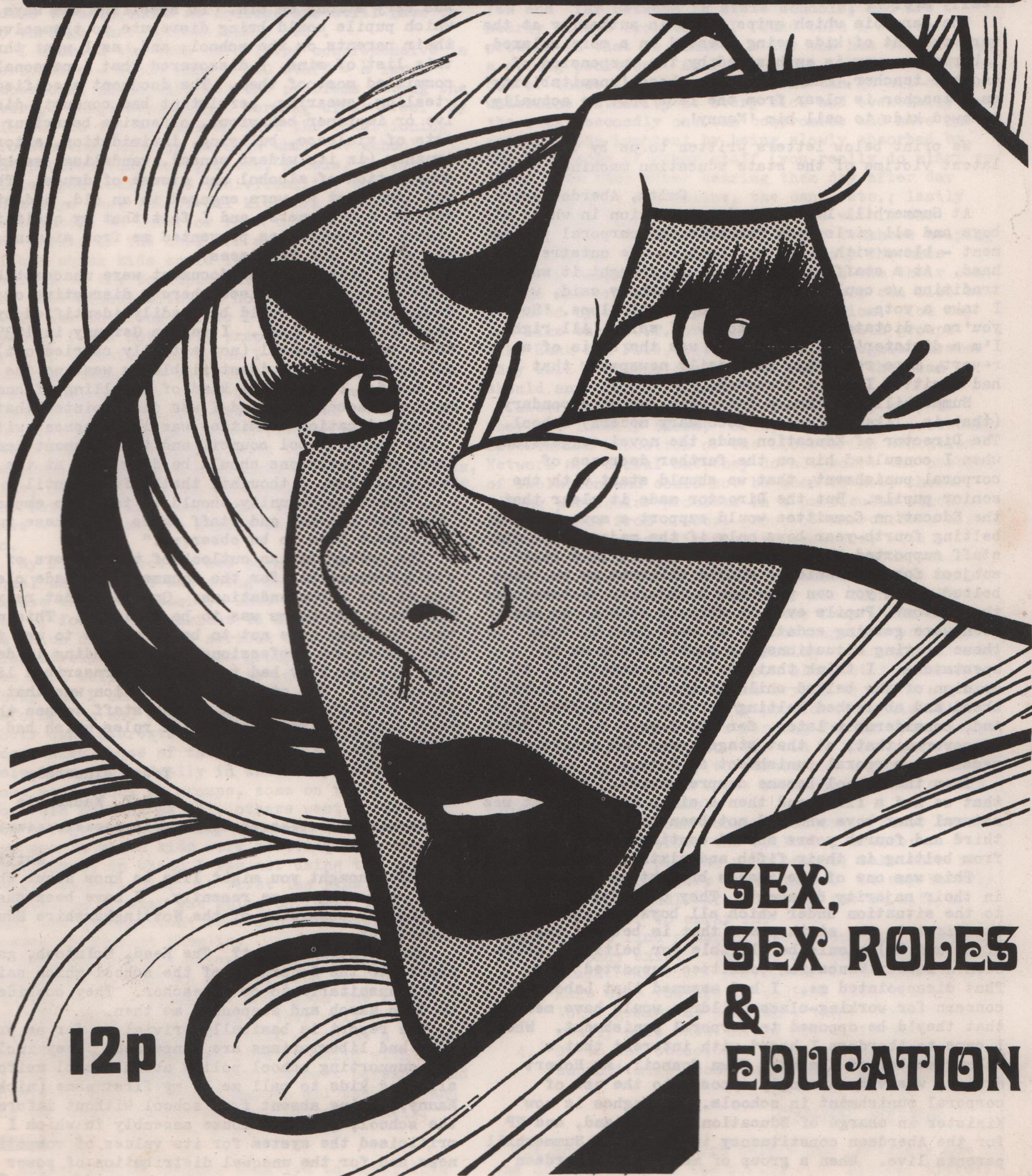


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# LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION 15

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**SEX,  
SEX ROLES  
&  
EDUCATION**



# Too many teachers expect respect and obedience as of right....

This quotation from the Scotsman newspaper (30 Mar 74) in an article drawing attention to the scandal at the Summerhill (not The Summerhill) Academy, where the Aberdeen Education Committee have suspended Robert Mackenzie, the headmaster of the 1200 pupil comprehensive school, helps to remind us just how limited the so-called 'improvements', which everyone tries to reassure us have taken place in state education, really are.

The paranoia which grips those in authority at the very thought of kids being treated in a more relaxed, libertarian way is emphasised by the suspension of another teacher, Manuel Moreno, whose 'unsuitability' as a teacher is clear from the fact that he actually allowed kids to call him 'Manny'.

We print below letters written to us by these latest victims of the state education machine.

Cults, Aberdeenshire.

At Summerhill I inherited a tradition in which all boys and all girls were eligible for corporal punishment - blows with a leather belt on the outstretched hand. At a staff meeting I said I thought it was a tradition we could do without. Somebody said, would I take a vote. I said No - knowing I'd lose. 'So you're a dictator', I was told. I said, 'All right, I'm a dictator'. I think this was the basis of a report, more recently, in a daily newspaper that I had admitted I was a dictator.

Summerhill was then a four-year junior secondary (that is, like an English secondary modern) school. The Director of Education made the novel suggestion, when I consulted him on the further decrease of corporal punishment, that we should start with the senior pupils. But the Director made it clear that the Education Committee would support a move to stop belting fourth-year boys only if the majority of the staff supported the proposal. Now this is a real subject for discussion - should children go on being belted until you can persuade a majority to terminate the custom? Pupils even in primary schools in Aberdeen were getting sedatives to help them to face these belting situations, as participants or as spectators. I think that, in a real democracy, the opinion of the belted children should count. I went ahead and abolished belting for the fourth-year boys. And, considerably later, for third-year boys. (And I discovered that, at that stage, very few pupils were receiving corporal punishment at home.)

Then the school became comprehensive. That meant that we had a fifth and then a sixth year; and it was natural that boys who had not been belted in their third and fourth years should continue to be free from belting in their fifth and sixth years in school.

This was one of the issues brought up by the staff in their majority document. They demanded a return to the situation under which all boys and girls from the first to the sixth year (that is between the ages of 21 and 18) should be eligible for belting. Aberdeen's Labour Education Committee supported them. That disappointed me. I had assumed that Labour's concern for working-class children would have meant that they'd be opposed to corporal punishment. When I came to Aberdeen I heard with interest that a Labour member of Aberdeen Town Council, Mr Robert Hughes, was very strongly opposed to the use of corporal punishment in schools. Mr Hughes is now Minister in charge of Education in Scotland, and MP for the Aberdeen constituency in which the Summerhill parents live. When a group of members of Aberdeen

Education Committee appealed to the Secretary of State for Scotland against my suspension, it was Mr Hughes who replied, saying he could not intervene.

But it was not merely the demand for the wholesale re-introduction of corporal punishment that made me refuse to accept the staff document. The document was very strong on sin. It specified the ways in which pupils could bring disrepute to themselves, their parents or the school; and, as I went through this list of sins, I discovered that I personally had committed most of them. The document specified lying, stealing, swearing, persistent bad conduct, disruptive or improper behaviour, offensive behaviour - e.g. acts of violence, bullying, intimidation, extortion, truancy (in its widest sense), vandalism, smoking, consumption of alcohol and misuse of drugs. Then I realised that we were engaged in an old, old struggle, Pharisees v Sinners, and I felt that my qualities and indeed my sympathies prevented me from signing up on the side of the Pharisees.

Other things in the document were unacceptable. A system was to be devised whereby disruptive or disturbed pupils could be readily identified by all members of the staff. I was in Germany in 1939 when there was a proposal (not actually carried out) that all Jews should be identifiable by wearing the Star of David. I find that kind of labelling of human beings unacceptable and I was disappointed that a Labour education committee was in agreement with it.

We had a school council and the document demanded that its provisions should be discussed at the school council. Now, I thought, that's fine; until I read on, "Every opportunity should be taken to emphasise that Head Teacher and Staff agree with these rules and expect them to be observed."

The authoritarian outlook of the members of the staff responsible for the document was made clear by two of its recommendations. One said that relying on arbitrary sanctions was to be deplored. This meant that teachers were not to be permitted to use their discretion and professional understanding in dealing with pupils; they had to follow a prescribed line of punishment. The other recommendation was that there would be a regular check on the staff to see that they were all implementing the rules which had been laid down.

Yours sincerely

R.F. Mackenzie

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Nottingham.

Just thought you might like to know about what's been happening to me recently. I have been suspended by the sub-committee of the Nottinghamshire Education Department.

What's it all about? The Head, McIntosh, gave a report to the Governors of the school which said that I was unsuitable to be a teacher. They considered it on 20th March and suspended me then.

The report is basically trivial as far as progressives and libertarians are concerned. They include not supporting school policy about school uniform; allowing kids to call me by my first name (nicknamed Manny); being absent from school without informing the school; giving a house assembly in which I criticised the system for its values of competitiveness and for the unequal distribution of power at

cont. pg. 8.



# PERHAPS A PLEA for SEX EDUCATION

Has everybody hang-ups about sex? When, if ever, do they disappear? I have hang-ups about sex; many of my friends (those who talk about IT intelligently anyway) have hang-ups about sex. It has even been suggested that my psychiatrist has hang-ups about sex. Good for him!

My hang-ups are obviously more acute than most people's. Apart from playing doctors and nurses (and that at the ripe old age of 16 when I should have been seriously snogging and shagging. Hold it, though, once during Truth, Dare and Will, I made an abortive attempt at sexual intercourse, which culminated in masturbation on the girl's pubic hair)... apart from that, and once holding hands with a girl, and twice going to the pictures with a girl, and once fondling breasts through clothing, I've had no sexual and love contact with girls or women. I am now 42.

I was in love with a girl at 18, but the love was in no way reciprocated. Perhaps she didn't know I was in love with her. I certainly didn't tell her. I was too scared. Since then I have always been frightened to approach girls from a sexual or love point of view. During the past 18 years, I have taken many girls out to dinner, girls I met at work. Come home, have coffee, and return to our own apartments without kiss, cuddle or cunt.

I wanted love... for close on 30 years I have wanted love; I wanted sex... for close on 30 years I have wanted sex. But I had one big hang-up... I was afraid to ask girls, to show my feelings to girls. I feel I have wasted 30 years, deprived of the best in life: love and sex.

My hang-ups were to a large extent the product of my birth. I was illegitimate, born when my mother was 16. There are now no feelings of recrimination on my part, for, without that birth, there would be no me. I was brought up by my grand-parents... grandparents equalled in their loving relationship by only one other couple I have ever met.

It was difficult for my grandparents to explain things to me. I was told by my grandmother (I will now refer to my grandparents as "mother" and "dad") that she was not my real mother at a fairly young age, and I am informed that I cried. Anything to do with sex was out. When a cow was being served by a bull on the farm, "dad" sent me home. The first time he didn't, I said, "Dad, I better be going home." (It is a fallacy to think that children living in the country know all about human sex. They usually don't relate animals to humans).

Meeting strangers; "What's your name?" "Who's your dad?" "I didn't know your dad had a son." "Who was your mother before she married?" etc. etc. Confusion and violent blushing. This was part of my life. And then came adolescence. Worse confusion. Worse blushing. Understanding combined with inner violent emotions.

All my life there had been a wall dividing my "parents" and me regarding sex. They, understandably in the circumstances, had built it. THEN, one teatime, my "mother" tried to bulldoze that wall down. "Do you," she said, "have sex education at school?" Never was one wall so quickly built to replace another. This time I built it.

Even until comparatively recently, anything sexual has not been talked about to me by any close member of the family. For example, when my half (again illegitimate) sister was having a baby, my aunt wrote to me, "I don't know whether you know or not, but Nigel will soon be having a little baby brother or sister."

Now, even at 42, there is scant communication on this topic.

A wasted 30 years. But hang on. What joys may yet await me. A few months ago I started to visit prostitutes... girls, incidentally, whom I have found charming, helpful and understanding. Not for me the three minute jump (I was incapable of that anyway) but a two hour session of stroking hair, fondling breasts, kissing, sexual intercourse talking and listening.

A good start. What a marvellous thing to find myself doing this for the first time at this age. I am looking forward to a new interest in life. All the prostitutes I have been with have said: "Get yourself a proper girl." This is again a difficulty, as I am interested in younger girls. (Emotionally, I feel as though I am still in adolescence) How do I go about getting one... one with whom I can have a loving relationship?

I have other sexual hang-ups, but enough is enough. I leave you with the question: Would these hang-ups have occurred and remained if I had had a broad sex education both at home and school?

## BILL

Worth looking up in connection with this issue are:-  
ANARCHY SERIES 2 no1 - TOWARDS A RATIONAL BISEXUALITY.  
INK + 7 DAYS (1971-72) esp INK IN LOVE (no29 - last issue)  
POLITICS OF SEXUALITY IN CAPITALISM - Red Collective 15p  
KEITH PATON IN BROTHERS No1 - mens lib NEWSLETTER 8p  
PSYCHOSOURCES (BANTAM £1.50) & OUR BODIES OUR SELVES (£1.50.)





# THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

This article is taken from WOMEN AND EDUCATION newsletter No.3 (14 Clare Road, Levenshulme, Manchester 19). It is based on a talk given by the Women and Education group. The aim of the talk was to introduce as subjects for discussion the parts played by education and the family in the socialisation of women. This article relates to just part of the talk given - get hold of the newsletter to read the rest.

This article sets out to examine the relationship between the education of women and the maintenance of the family as an institution. It falls into two clear sections; firstly the achievement of girls at school, how they fare in general school subjects and why; secondly a look at educational content directed solely at women, its aims, effects and justification. I shall not be paying much attention here to the development during primary and secondary school of sex role differences as a result of teacher prejudice or the effect of sexism in school books. Rather will it be concerned with the actual achievement of girls at school and the conscious policy of educators with regard to women.

Firstly the achievement of girls at school will be examined since the effects of high or low attainment at school will influence their role and status in society for the rest of their life. If we compare the standards achieved by boys and girls in tests of all basic school subjects at age 11, we find that girls reach a higher stand-

ard in all, excelling particularly in verbal reasoning. However at age 15 the boys score higher in non-verbal intelligence and in maths, and are even ahead in reading. It is only in verbal intelligence tests that girls still do score higher.

Why then, is there this overall low performance of girls at age 15? The reason most commonly put forward is the earlier maturity of girls. The idea is that when boys do eventually mature they naturally catch up and overtake the girls. This argument does not hold much water since there is evidence to suggest that early maturing children actually tend to stay on at school later and do better than others.

## CHOICE OF EMPLOYMENT?

The most convincing explanation is simply that between 11 and 15, boys become increasingly aware that what they learn at school will influence their careers, the choice of employment open to them, etc. On the other hand girls see themselves as entering work that requires little specialised training or qualifications and will last only a few years. Thus girls have no motivation towards studying traditional subjects, and in this way their role in the family in later life feeds back to inhibit their performance whilst still at school.

There is also the problem of why girls are poor achievers in maths and science. Fewer girls get good overall GCE certificates because they attain lower pass rates in maths and science subjects. The tendency is for girls to take Biology overwhelmingly if they take a science at all. They clearly avoid for the most part physics or chemistry. There are various reasons which can be suggested for this situation. To begin with  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the schools in Britain are still single-sex and in girls' schools bad science teaching to girls is perpetuated by women teachers who were themselves badly taught. Science facilities in girls' schools tend to be very poor. There is also the possibility that girls are deliberately directed to the more 'human' of the sciences.

Since there are obviously factors militating against girls in single-sex schools it is worth considering comparatively the performance of girls at mixed and single-sex schools. The evidence shows that at co-educational schools, the achievement of girls up to age 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  is as good as that of boys in all subjects save maths. At single-sex schools girls tend to leave school earlier whereas boys do very well in every way at single-sex schools. There is reason to believe that co-educational schools are of advantage in evening out the differences in achievement of boys and girls.

## MOTIVATION?

Some girls who are highly motivated with appropriate backgrounds continue to make progress in the traditional subjects and do not diverge greatly from the pattern followed by boys until university level or later. However at the level of further education further wide differences emerge. Girls are 25% of university students but only 14% of those doing postgraduate work, if we discount those doing teacher training. The female graduates also tend to enter largely the professions of teaching or the social services



professions of teaching or the social services and to remain in the lower echelons of those professions.

The vast majority of girls cease to be highly motivated well before they are 16 and it is then that they cease to follow similar patterns to the boys, and become subject to the type of education the authorities feel is suited to girls. This leads on to the second half of this discussion of women and education which is concerned with examining the attitudes of educators to the kind of educational content that should be directed at girls and will attempt to point out the connections between these attitudes and the role of education in maintaining the family. The two most influential recent reports on secondary education are Crowther and Newsom which will now be examined for the light they throw on this subject.

#### THE CROWTHER REPORT

The Crowther report which was concerned with the education of young people between 15 and 18 was published in 1959. At first sight it looks promising. Whilst outlining the changes taking place in society which should influence educational policy, it stresses the changes in child-rearing patterns and concludes that since child rearing now only involved a brief halt in a woman's career then girls should qualify for a career before they married. This sounds fine but the attitude of the report to the less able girls was quite different. The more able girls, it pointed out, had no time for an education specially suited to their career of women, but the less able did have.

"With the less able girls, however, we think that the schools can and should make more adjustments (not more than all but a handful have yet done) to the fact that marriage now looms much larger and nearer in the pupils' eyes than it has ever done before."

The report concludes that, "the prospect of courtship and marriage should rightly influence the education of the adolescent girl", and proposes a concentration in their education on dress, personal appearance and human relations. This emphasis on human relations as a suitable subject for girls rather than boys occurs again in Newsom and is worth a little attention. Since it cannot be assumed that the female sex is the only one to be involved in human relations, the implication looks rather sinister. It is that girls should become expert in human relations because it is on them in later life that the burden will fall of upholding the institutions of

love, marriage and the family. Expertise in human relations is a woman's role.

The Crowther report is in fact startlingly explicit on the connections it sees between education and the maintenance of the family as an institution.

"If the family is to be as secure in the future as it has been in the past (and we can be content with nothing less) there will have to be a conscious effort to prepare the way for it through the education system, on a much greater scale than has yet been envisaged."

#### THE NEWSOM REPORT

The Newsom report, entitled *Half Our Future*, was published in 1963 and was concerned specifically with average and less-able children. It bases all its proposals on the principles which it proposes should guide choice of educational content. These principles are that education should be vocational, practical and contain the element of choice. The suggestions for girls it can justify on all three counts. The main justification for teaching girls such things as housecraft is that it is what interests the girls and they will only do what interests them. Whether the girls have a real chance to be interested in anything else is not considered. The most disturbing suggestion is that girls in their last year at school should spend a large amount of time running a house or a flat attached to the school but not just part of a domestic science lab. It was to be a properly appointed house or flat in which the girls would give coffee mornings and cook for the rest of the school and look after the neighbourhood children. The chances of these girls or of their children ever being interested in anything else, when their horizons have been thus officially limited, are not high.

Once again the Newsom report lays great stress on the necessity of the girls, not the boys, taking courses in personal relations. Even when the girls are tentatively considered for handicrafts or science courses the bias is unashamedly domestic, e.g. "some girls would gladly join in a domestically-biassed do-it-yourself course." A more disturbing picture is conjured up when science is considered. "For some girls, a course might be based on investigating the nature and qualities of apparatus and materials used in the home." The implication then is that whilst boys took a car engine to pieces, girls should examine vacuum cleaners and food mixers.

Where work is concerned the report also envisaged a quite different role for the girls since they were to be taken to visit shops and offices to get inspiration for employment, whilst the boys visited factories.

Both reports obviously believed in rigid distinctions between the roles of boys and girls at work and in the home and even saw it as the duty of the school to perpetuate these distinctions. The picture of official policy on the education of girls is thoroughly depressing for anyone interested in change. Girls, it seems, are to be trained to perpetuate the institutions of marriage and the family ostensibly because that is all they are interested in, but as we have seen from Crowther, the educators have a deep ideological commitment to marriage themselves. ●

**SHEILA JEFFREYS**





This article is lifted from 'Libertarian Struggle', monthly paper of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists. (£1. for 12 issues - from 14 Lothair Road South, London, N4.)

# SEX EDUCATION

Sex education in schools, where it does exist, almost always comes under the category of biology and is usually taught at a stage of the course sufficiently advanced for at least half of the pupils to have dropped the subject. When it goes beyond the breeding of rabbits and actually implies that humans do it there may also be some discussion of the emotional, psychological and social aspects of sex - but its pretty unusual. The mechanical reproductive facts and the correct terminology are usually covered but the whys and wherefores are ignored. Sex is a natural function but, whereas children are filled to the brim with facts about the digestive system and its effects, they are rarely encouraged to think about that part of their bodies. Also any reproductive information that is presented becomes merely another academic pill to be swallowed (or spat out - according to taste - for it is a well known fact that any curiosity children may have for a subject is killed by its treatment in the classroom.



Why is sex education given such a raw deal? Why is there such a mystique around sexual knowledge? It is obvious that this stems from society's attitudes as a whole to sex and not merely the attitudes that teachers have. Teachers are, after all, also members of society, and reflect societal values as much as any other social group. Hence, even though biology teachers may be called upon to give sex education lessons, those teachers' conditioning may prevent them from doing the job without embarrassment and guilt, thereby causing an unnaturally tense and falsely 'scientific' approach to the subject. Having no special interest in the subject, teachers are no better equipped to give sex education than the rest of prejudiced society.

It is often claimed by anti-sex educationists that sex education encourages experimentation and implants an 'unhealthy' curiosity that would not otherwise have been there. This view does not face up to the reality of the situation - the experimentation is there and it is possible that clear information and

the honest examination of feelings aroused and questions raised may prove of rather more value than moral platitudes to those concerned. People who oppose sex education, advice on contraception, abortion, etc. are working under the bigoted assumption that all children come from nice middle-class backgrounds where sex is not mentioned, seen or heard. Unfortunately for such theorists, children living in poorer homes, perhaps with too few rooms, or perhaps with less in the way of petit-bourgeois behavioural patterns forced upon them, have a much more basic idea of sex - they are aware of its existence, and have experimented with it from an early age. Sex is already part of their lives - what is needed is concrete help to deal with a practical situation, not bourgeois moralising.

## SEX EDUCATION BOOKS

Sex education books are as full of implied conventions as they are of moral platitudes. When not talking of love and marriage; having sex in order to conceive (no other reason); the joys of motherhood (whatever happened to fatherhood?); they imply a dire fate for those (males only of course - nice girls don't) who indulge in 'self-excitement', i.e. masturbation. One book must be quoted to show what harmful and pernicious rubbish is trotted out to vulnerable, impressionable adolescents.

'Treatment by a physician skilled in mental guidance may cure the aberration'.

What sort of hang-ups does this sort of advice lead to?

Such sex education books also present women as victims of society's virgin/whore complex.

'If on the other hand a girl dresses like a lady, and acts like a lady, she will be treated like a lady.'

This implies that all behaviour that stimulates sexual responses from boys is wrong and the fault of the girl for encouraging it, making no mention of the fact that the poor girl is frequently brainwashed by cultural conditioning into believing that the female role demands a 'sexy' physical appearance. She must be sexually attractive or be labelled a 'failure', but she must not actually indulge in the consequences of that attraction or she would be labelled 'whore'.

## STEREOTYPING - INDOCTRINATION

Sex education thus serves only to reinforce even further the sexual role stereotyping by which we are all oppressed - that women are the breeders and men the brains. Even such a so-called progressive sex educationalist as Dr. Martin Cole allows, in the opening seconds of his controversial film 'Growing Up' the statement that 'women give birth to babies and men give birth to ideas'. What sex education fails to teach is that sexual roles are the result of social conditioning and that much of our behaviour, which is supposedly characteristic of our sex, is interchangeable when people are given the freedom to choose for themselves what they are.

It should also be pointed out that while we are all very clearly indoctrinated at school with what sex we are ('little boys don't cry, little girls don't fight', etc.) it is rare indeed that children are given an insight into their own sexuality. If by sex education we mean really knowing about sex, then I doubt if any school sex education course really covers that at all. And that has many implications in this repressed society full of sexual taboos that restrict our thoughts and feelings for each other - removing people's hang-ups about their sexuality would release them from a lot of repressions that make them unfree. ●



# BUTCH or BITCH?

This piece is from an issue of FIRE, a now defunct paper that some comrades in Plymouth used to do.

1

The question of Womens Liberation tends to be left to the professional Womens Libbers - these are the far out ladies with university degrees and vibrant personalities, who can get away with saying fuck and cunt in academic circles. They expound on the sexual/social/economic oppression of women, but are they as liberated as they appear?. They are obviously no longer economically oppressed. Perhaps they have simply exchanged roles; from that of the "oppressed woman" to that of the "Womens Libber".

By satisfying our frustrated desire to express ourselves the female role is partially destroyed, for inherent in it is the suppression of the real desires of women. Incidentally, if this article is not as explicit as it could be it's because I am a woman and have still not escaped from my role.

Most women feel extremely wary of stepping outside the female role, for there is a certain security from having it, i.e. you fit into the social hierarchy (as with being working class, Roman Catholic, hippy, mother, or anything else you can think of).

2

Once the enormity of our repression hits us, some of us step out of our role in society, decide that men are the cause of the emptiness of our existence; -so we start fucking their women. Here again the sexist roles are perpetuated - in trying to escape from the straight ones they end up doing exactly the same - the dominant, butch dyke and her pretty, but unassuming passive girlfriend.

In order to assure themselves of their existence, men perpetuated the male myth by being the conqueror, manically on the lookout for some nice little sexual object to get something on with; as does the butch lesbian, feeling incomplete unless she conforms to the male role. In this half world of myths, populated by the shadows of people, no real love is possible - only the "love" of a slave master for his niggers can exist.

This need to conform to roles which society has laid down on us gives us all a sense of belonging. Yet in our heart of hearts we sense the despair of alienation. It is only by destroying sexism that we can join together as brothers and sisters. Nothing will come of us whilst we remain oppressors and oppressed.

3

Very few women in libertarian groups have broken away from their roles. This isn't helped by the guys involved, who tend to look upon them as slightly inferior. How many libertarian groups

do you know where it is the women who have least to say, make the coffee and do the typing. Because of this segregation the group is not a unit - but a collection of untogether, alienated people, centred around a political ideal, which they are unable to put into practice in their everyday lives.

These are simply microcosms of capitalist society with the same resentment and non-communication, so they descend into the perversion of relationships - which is hierarchy.

4

Whenever a hierarchy exists, whether in the structure of capitalist society or in the male/female relationship, the oppressed become bitter and reactionary. Bitterness is all the more deadly, for it lurks deep within us, below our many facades, like a cancer.

Women have been lying low for so long most of us cannot imagine how to get up. We have apparently acquiesced always in the imperial games and are so perfectly colonised that we are unable to consult ourselves. Because the assumption does not occur to anyone else either. We are afraid to mention ourselves in case it might disturb or divert some important matter he has in hand. We are the assistants, the receivers, the collaborators, dumb, lacking in presumption, not acting consciously upon the external world, much given to masochism. We become sly - never trust a woman, we seek revenge, slighted we are terrible; we are trained for subterfuge, we are natural creatures of the underground. Within us there are great gulches of bitterness, but they do not appear on the surface. Our wrapped up consciousness creeps along the sewers occasionally emerging through a manhole. After death, hag-like spirits roam the earth, the symbols of frustrated unfulfilled desires. But in life our spirits are contained.

The oppressors, no matter how well intentioned and understanding they are, can never experience the bitterness that lies within us.

5

Women are not alone in their misery for the vast majority of working class men must feel as bitter and oppressed as we do, particularly when confronted with upper-middle class, attractive women. They find themselves in a paradoxical situation; they are attracted to the women and yet feel emasculated, they are the oppressed - they don't know what to say and how to say it. The language of silence is born. This is the language of the people who want to communicate, but fail to do so because of the self-assurance of the oppressors (the educated middle-class woman). And so resentment and bitterness builds up. Two people have become alienated from each other.

6

Women are experts in the language of silence, when they ask us our opinion, first there is the paralysis. Their words stick in your throat, their setting caused you to flounder. This is not of course, peculiar to women. It is part of the common condition of the subordinated. In the 1848 revolution in France the people stormed the assembly. A fireman adjusted his helmet and lept onto the rostrum as if it were a roof. The people cheered him and told him to speak. But he stood there dumb, unable to cope with the construction of those who had been his masters for so long. He was dragged down in shame and disgrace.

How many times has this happened to us all? We with our hopes, ideas and desires which have never been aired. There is a new world to be explored beneath the shy smiles, the acquiescence of absurd.



male domination, the make-up or flesh-suffocating clothing our sick society demands.

If you are a woman, look within yourself. You take your own life into your hands. You are free and beautiful.

Whatever is repressive, male oriented, greedy, puritanical, authoritarian - these are your targets. Your power comes from your own self as a woman and it is activated by working in concert with your sisters. You are pledged to free our brothers from oppression and stereotyped sexual roles (whether they like it or not) as well as ourselves.

We must not depend on Germaine Greer and Selma James to do things for us. "Don't worry Mrs...., Germaine's looking after you - she's the expert". Let's not fall into that trap, for everything they stand for will be negated as they are sold back to us as the super-stars to be consumed.

In the final analysis nobody can do anything for you - only you can. Let's talk, read, write, fuck, think more. You are female, untamed, angry, joyous and immortal.

Cast off your shackles and destroy the poverty of your everyday life and the lives of those around you.

● (1973, -February)

TOO MANY TEACHERS EXPECT RESPECT AND OBEDIENCE AS OF RIGHT..... (Contd. from p.2)

work and at school; talking to two suspended girls; having insufficient control over kids inside and outside school; etc.

Basically the complaints are to do with two things:-

- 1) A 5th form strike (demanding the right to choose their own style of dress, a fifth form committee of elected representatives and more relevant and interesting courses) for which I was blamed.
- 2) My general behaviour in the classroom and towards the kids - informal, as libertarian as I can, as non-directive as possible, talking to them about anything, etc.

The first reason is the spark which led him to write the report and the second the basic reason why he did it. It is victimisation.

They'll probably transfer me as they try to do to others but I want to stay. It is a disgrace that they can shove teachers around just because of the dictatorship of the head, etc. A defence committee of parents, teachers and school students has been organised - its good. ●

Cheers

Manuel

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We hope to devote part of the next issue of Libertarian Education to an extended look at the issues raised by these and other examples of the reactionary back-lash among State schools generally - for instance, our local rag reports the introduction of Detention at Countesthorpe College following the recent Inspection at the college (held after a campaign of attacks on the college by a small group of influential parents, backed up by the Leicester Mercury and supported by the local Tory M.P.). It might also be an opportune moment to investigate the current state of the Free School movement. Let us know what you think - send letters, articles, etc to the Libertarian Education Group, 180 Melbourne Road, Leicester. (Tel. 0533 50272) ●

# CHE

The Campaign for Homosexual Equality fights for -

- acceptance of homosexual and bisexual people by society as fully entitled to lead their lives openly
- social and legal equality between all men and women
- reform of laws which deny this equality
- the eradication of the prejudice and hostility faced by the homosexual
- the creation of social meeting places where homosexual men and women and heterosexual men and women may gather in a congenial atmosphere.

This article, which concentrates on CHE educational activity, is extracted from publicity material produced by them. For more details contact:

National Office, 28 Kennedy Street, Manchester M24BG

Education Group - c/o Trevor Locke, 33 Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 3BE.

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MR. BRIAN LOCKLEY was a wise man to get out of the Liberal Party. If homosexuality is all the Young Liberals can come up with to improve our living standards in the future we must make sure they do not find their way on to education committees and local councils or into Parliament.

If the Young Liberals distribute leaflets on this subject outside the schools, and they fall into my boys' hands, I will take it as an act of corruption against my sons. I also guarantee my reaction will be swift.

MICHAEL J. POWELL,  
137, Wicklow Drive, Leicester.

LEICESTER  
MERCURY

(LOCKLEY HAS NOW JOINED  
THE MONDAY CLUB)

Homosexuals, some of whom prefer to be called 'gay', are men and women who are emotionally and physically attracted to others of their own sex. People who respond sexually to members of their own sex do not conform to society's expectations. Many millions are bisexual, responding both to their own and to the opposite sex; and about one person in twenty is predominantly or exclusively homosexual. More and more people are discovering that their nature has both a heterosexual and a homosexual side.

Thus homosexuality is not something apart from heterosexuality - rather it is part of a spectrum of sexual orientation. Society's treatment of homosexuality is rooted in its attitude towards sexuality, social acceptance of which is based upon heterosexual marriage. Within marriage, distinct tasks are assigned to husband and wife, and similarly within society for male and female, whether or not married. These distinct expectations, known as 'gender roles', together with the economic, political and social privilege accorded to the masculine role, make up what has been termed 'sexism'.

The conventional images of male homosexuals as 'pansies' and of female ones as 'butch' reflect the view that homosexual behaviour is a betrayal of the proper gender role. As it happens, the vast major-



ity of homosexual and bisexual people do not fit these images and are ordinary people. Most non-homosexual people have no idea that so many of their friends and relations are gay.

For those who discover that they have homosexual feelings, there is no accepted way in which they can openly develop their nature and meet people of a similar orientation. Some discover the gay ghetto, the underground of special pubs, clubs and other meeting places for homosexuals. For some this has no appeal; many whose needs it satisfies, nevertheless conceal their social life from their family and friends at work. But most gay people live in isolation, frightened and ashamed of their feelings; many rarely or never meet anyone else who is homosexual.

For homosexual or bisexual women, society imposes a double oppression; that of gayness and that of being a woman. CHE, as an organisation for all gay people, is particularly concerned that gay women should join and become involved in the Campaign and that it should be truly responsive to the particular needs of its women members. CHE accordingly supports Women's Liberation, recognising that both movements face a common enemy in the sexism of society.

The Campaign for Homosexual Equality provides a framework within which all women and men - whatever their own sexual preference - can work together to change this situation and end all forms of discrimination against gay people. We want a society in which people of all sexual orientations, heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, have the same freedom to develop and express their personality. And while emphasising the special needs of gay people that must be catered for, we wish to encourage people of different sexualities to integrate freely and to end the gay ghetto situation by removing the causes which have created it. CHE pursues these aims on three main fronts: changing society's attitudes, changing the law and providing social facilities.

#### THIS IS THE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

In September 1973 the CHE education campaign was launched. Its aims were to improve the quality of teaching about homosexuality in our existing educational system, as well as to explore the extent of

discrimination against homosexual teachers and to press for the inclusion of homosexuality into the curricula of educational establishments where it was not yet mentioned. The intention was to use the resources of local groups of CHE.

Everyone was well aware that this area is not the easiest one to work in, but many people felt it an extremely important one. Inevitably a long-term project, it is still encouraging to see what has been achieved in those few months.

CHE has seventy local groups, of which over twenty have participated. Many members of CHE feel that they are learning a great deal from being involved in the education campaign. The campaign will go forward, but it is important that we share our experiences and ideas. There is still a huge amount of apathy and ignorance, not only among heterosexuals, but also within CHE.

This campaign, albeit on a small scale, has begun to break the silence surrounding homosexuality in education. In a long term effort, what we are doing now is of real importance. We can only thank the many people who have helped and urge others to co-operate.

#### DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GAY TEACHERS

It is becoming clear that the official policy of the Department of Education and Science, the Inner London Education Authority and other Education Authorities is that being homosexual is not in itself a reason for dismissal.

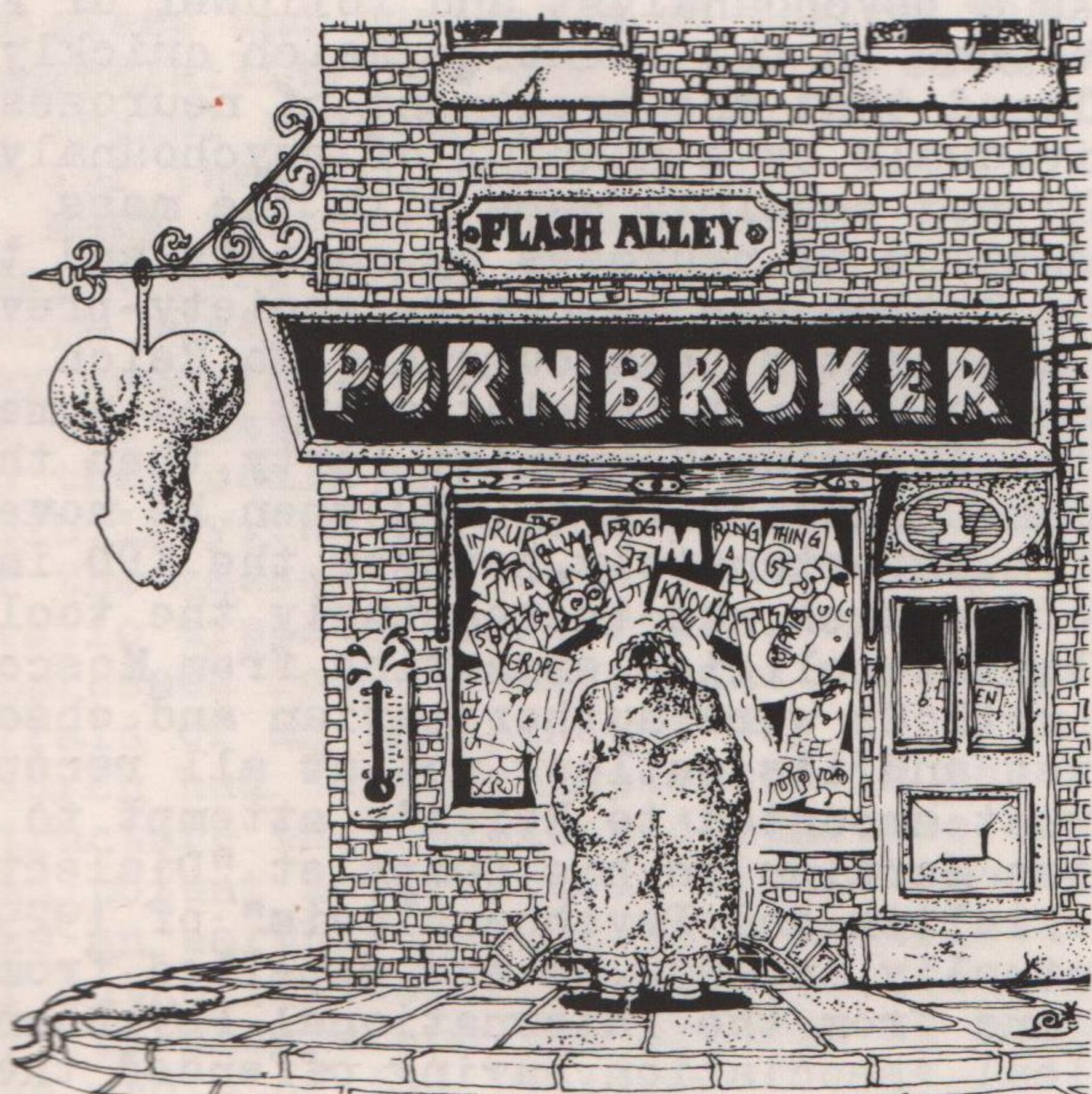
The DES clarified the issue of the legendary 'blacklist' of people banned from teaching in a statement which said that this list included many different cases and that homosexuality was not a reason (in itself) for inclusion on the list, although a conviction in law for homosexual offences was a different matter.

This is a most important area, and what is clear is that although being known as gay may not result in dismissal, many homosexual teachers firmly believe that it would, and still live in fear of losing their jobs. For this reason work is going ahead in approaching teaching unions and other national bodies to gain as much information as possible on the current position. Until more teachers are prepared to be known to be homosexual, however, and are seen to still retain their jobs, it is hard to see how this vicious circle can be broken.

#### TEACHING MATERIALS

Everyone agrees on the lack of available teaching aids in the area of homosexuality. The London Monday group took on the task of writing material suitable for use by teachers with students. First they wrote a 'Question and Answer' leaflet which is aimed at young people, answering questions they ask. The second is a leaflet for teachers including information about homosexuality and a list of sources for further reading. Finally a 'Jackdaw' has been written. This is a kit containing various educational materials discussing in some detail various aspects of homosexuality and presented well in an attractive folder.

Now that the education campaign has built up its own (very modest) financial resources, we can afford to print the first two leaflets. These should be available shortly. The Jackdaw, however, is a more expensive proposition, but we hope to have raised enough money in the Education Campaign fund to go ahead with plans for publishing this in the near future. It would then be available for sale to schools and colleges.





# reich on

## SEX POLITICS & EDUCATION



This article is not intended to be a piece of "objective", bourgeois "criticism", but an account of some of Reich's extraordinarily interesting ideas which hopefully will provide ammunition for those on the educational battlefield and those engaged in the wider class struggle.

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### SOME THEMES

Reich was among the first to explore the connections between sex, politics and education. "The whole process of education suffers from the fact that social adjustment demands repression of natural sexuality, and that this repression makes people ill and anti-social." (The Function of the Orgasm, p.216) But why does society demand this repression? "Sex repression serves the function of keeping humans more easily in a state of submissiveness." It is a "psychic castration." And "education serves the purposes of the social order of any given time." (p.224) A different social order, like that of the Trobriand Islands when Malinowski studied it, does things differently: "Children in the Trobriand Islands know no sex repression and no sexual secrecy. Their sex life is allowed to develop naturally, freely and unhampered through every stage of life, with full satisfaction. The children engage freely in the sexual activities which correspond to their age... The Trobrianders, therefore, are spontaneously clean, orderly, social without compulsion, intelligent and industrious." However, one group of children "who are predestined for a certain type of economically advantageous marriage" are "brought up in sexual abstinence". This makes them submissive. Hence the function of sexual suppression is to lay the foundation "for authoritarian, patriarchal culture and economic slavery" (pp.228-31)

And since children are naturally interested in sex, "the alternative with which we are confronted in the matter of sexual education is thus not: sexuality or abstinence; but: natural and healthy, or perverse and neurotic sexual life." (p.231) So: "The determining factor of the mental health of a population is the condition of its natural love life." (p.229)

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### BIOGRAPHICAL PARAGRAPH

As a psychoanalyst and follower of Freud in Vienna in the twenties, Reich quickly realised that the treatment of neuroses in individuals by a handful of psychoanalysts could not possibly cope with the mass production of neuroses by society, and that the solution was to change society - prevention was better than cure. And so Reich became a Marxist revolutionary and a member of the Austrian Communist Party, then the German Communist Party (KPD) when he moved to Berlin. Unfortunately, however, the KPD in the late twenties was increasingly the tool of Stalinist policies emanating from Moscow. Its methods were authoritarian and obscurantist and its outlook not at all receptive to what amounted to Reich's attempt to revise Marxism in his pamphlet "Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis" of 1929. Eventually, in 1932, he was expelled from the KPD and from the International Psychoanalytical Association, having offended the established orthodoxies in both organisations. To the former, Reich and his comrades

**LITTLE DIGGER**

Brighton Kids own  
paper - formerly called  
"It's Childs Play" - 5p  
The printing outfit -  
2 Gloucester St, B'ton.



were not Marxists, while the latter found his insistence on social and economic matters unacceptable.

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### FASCISM

Perhaps psychological explanations don't sufficiently account for the success of fascism (see, for example, Guerin's book on the subject), but they are certainly very illuminating, especially as they point to the fascist tendencies in all of us.

Between 1930 and 1933 Reich became acquainted with fascism at close quarters. What was the secret of its appeal? Why did German Communists become Nazis? In the kind of economic situation—a desperate crisis of capitalism—that might have been supposed to favour the revolutionary left, why was it instead the extreme right that came to power? Reich urgently sought answers to these questions.



TELL ME MORE  
ABOUT YOUR  
DELUSION OF  
BEING TRAPPED  
IN A CAGE!

"While we were presenting the masses with grandiose historical analyses and economic arguments about the contradictions of imperialism, their innermost feelings were being kindled for Hitler." (What is Class Consciousness, p.18) How was this done? "It was essentially its appeal to an obscure mystical feeling, to an undefined, nebulous but nevertheless extremely powerful longing." (Function of the Orgasm, p.234-235) Although the German people wanted freedom, they were afraid of the responsibility of freedom and consequently voted for Hitler, who promised them absolute, authoritarian leadership. "The masses of people felt helpless and incapable of taking the responsibility for the solution of the chaotic social problems... The Fuhrer... would do it for them." (Orgasm p.235)

Many factors contributed to this feeling. People were tired of democratic discussions which always evaded their personal everyday concerns. Hitler promised them "freedom of the nation" instead of personal freedom, so they could have "freedom" without responsibility. The previous political education of the masses had been in favour of undemocratic types of leadership. Women had been oppressed for centuries and were especially afraid of an independent way of living. The Church had "deeply implanted in the human structure the helpless dependence on an omnipotent supernatural figure", and Hitler was an earthly god. Schools instilled a fear of authority. Workers had been brought up not to understand the process of work and the whole of the process of production, and didn't find it difficult to accept Hitler's

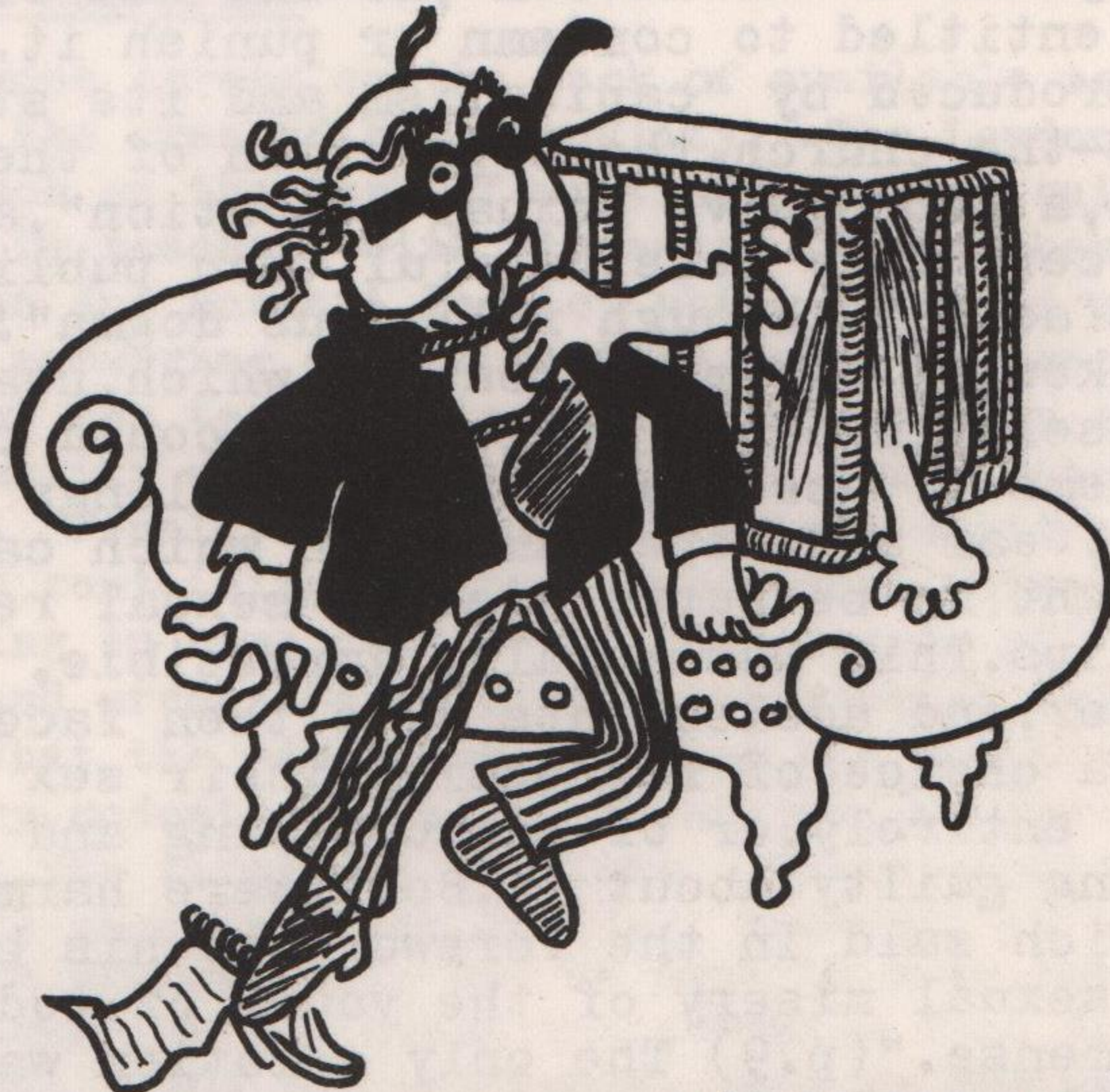
principle of compulsive discipline and work as duty—"it was nothing but the old principle in an accentuated form". The typical German family "created in the children a structure characterised by compulsive duty, renunciation and absolute obedience to authority which Hitler knew so splendidly how to exploit." (Orgasm pp.235-241)

The persecution of the Jews was an appeal to irrationality. "When the Fascist says 'Jew', he means a certain irrational feeling... The 'Jew' has the irrational significance of the 'money-maker', the 'userer', the 'capitalist'. On a deeper level 'Jew' means 'filthy', 'sensual', 'brutally lustful', ... 'castrator', 'slaughterer'... Thus, the ideology of the 'Jews' made it possible to harness the anti-capitalist as well as the anti-sexual attitudes of the masses" (Orgasm p.242)

How could fascist irrationalism be fought? Reich suggests several ways of exposing the pathological nature of racist propaganda and contrasting it with a healthy, natural sexuality. The latter required various practical changes to be effective, for example adequate housing for all, including young people, so that love-making could be undisturbed; the provision of contraceptives; the provision of clinics for the treatment of sexual problems.

But more than this: "What is necessary is work on the human structure, on a broad basis and with the protection of society. In one word, what is necessary is the liberation of natural sexuality in the masses of people and its underwriting by society." (Orgasm, p.245)

This, of course, would require the kind of society enjoyed by the Trobriand Islanders when they were studied by Malinowski, where the children engaged freely "in the sexual activities which correspond to their age." But how could such a society be achieved? In "The Function of the Orgasm", first published in 1942, Reich doesn't say. By that time he had ceased his political activities and was no longer a Marxist revolutionary. Concentrating more on research into "orgone energy", and persecuted nevertheless by the American authorities (he had gone to America later



NOW TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DELUSION  
THAT I'M NOT TRAPPED IN A CAGE.



in the thirties), he developed paranoid symptoms and according to Brinton in "The Irrational in Politics", he was "driven mad at least in part, by the apparently insoluble contradiction: no social revolution without sexual revolution—no sexual revolution without social revolution." (p.19)

In the early thirties, however, Reich's answer to this question had been unequivocal: "there is no other way to the sexual liberation of youth than that of social revolution." (The Sexual Struggle of Youth, p.78)

It is these earlier political writings of Reich, published by Socialist Reproduction, that I now wish to examine.

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#### DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

(1929), is the earliest, and perhaps the least interesting. It is an attempt "to investigate whether, and to what extent, Freudian psychoanalysis is compatible with the historical materialism of Marx and Engels." (p.13) Several years later, according to the introduction, "Reich was to admit that his attempt to synthesise Marx and Freud 'theoretically' was misconceived" I'm not suggesting that failures are uninteresting, but simply that this one didn't excite me. The idea is fascinating, but you probably need to know more about Marx and Freud than I do to fully appreciate the working out of the idea.

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THE SEXUAL STRUGGLE OF YOUTH appeared two years later, in 1931. This is, in part, a sex education manual for young people which really does try to answer the questions that matter. Some of the sections are, naturally enough, dated, and the introduction provides up-to-date information on contraception, abortion and VD. The chapter on homosexuality will offend many gay people, because, according to Reich, homosexuality is usually socially conditioned, and would hardly exist if young people were able to practise heterosexual love-making. Moreover he believed that the satisfaction obtained by homosexuals was less than that obtained by heterosexuals. Still, although homosexuality was a "deviation", no-one was therefore entitled to condemn or punish it. It was produced by "capitalism and its structures—the church, the separation of the sexes, a repressive sexual education", and was "certainly less harmful than public stupefaction through religious dogma"! (51)

Likewise for masturbation which, healthy in itself in early adolescence, could cause problems if associated with "feelings of guilt, fear and repentance," in which case it ought to be superseded by sexual relationships. This was usually impossible, however, and adolescents were then faced with a choice of repressing their sex lives entirely, or of masturbating and feeling guilty about it. Both were harmful. As Reich said in the foreword to his book: "The sexual misery of the youth of today is immense." (p.9) The only solution was to struggle against a society that imposed such misery, and to persuade young people "that their masturbatory conflicts, troubles, sexual deviations, are not their



I BUILT IT JUST FOR YOU, DEAR.

fault nor are they inherited, but are essentially consequences of the bourgeois capitalist social order." (p.29)

This is a theme to which Reich returns again and again throughout the book, and it is this which makes it more than just an early version of today's sex manuals for young people. These latter, however good (or, more usually, bad) they are, conspicuously lack the social dimension that Reich insists on. They take place, as it were, outside society, as though their remarks were universally valid in time and space. (Some, I suppose, are located firmly in middle-class Denmark in the 1970's—but not explicitly.) If it be objected that young people aren't interested in politics, Reich would agree that they "are more concerned with sexual worries than political ones," but would argue that both are "rooted in capitalist society," and that an explanation of the social causes of sexual misery can lead to an attack on the society responsible.

How, precisely, is society responsible for sexual misery? And why does it bother? Why does our society insist on a period of enforced sexual abstinence for adolescents? Why does it repress all sexual activity in the young? Why are our schools so markedly anti-sex ("anti-life" Neill would have said) Why all the fuss? What on earth is everybody so anxious about?

Reich, writing in 1931—but has much changed since then?—said: "From a political standpoint, the family and the school today are the workshops of the bourgeois social order, designed to turn out well-behaved, obedient subjects." The father, with his demand for unquestioning obedience, conditioned the children to accept the authority of the state. And sexuality was repressed because the act of repression used up "a large amount of each individual's psychic energy. This inhibits and drags on the development of activity, understanding and critical faculties," thus producing timid



and submissive individuals who know their (inferior) place in society. (p.65) Sex repression was therefore an essential part of the conditioning process by which people were made to accept-and even applaud-the system which exploited them.

Perhaps it may be objected that things have changed in the last forty years. Young people today are more free to start a sex life; contraceptives are freely available; the pill and Women's Liberation are transforming the sex life of women etc. Certainly things have changed: we are a little closer now to the sexual happiness enjoyed by "primitive" peoples. But how far have these changes gone-and how many people have been affected by them? (A recent pamphlet, "The Politics of Sexuality in Capitalism", Red Collective Pamphlet No.1, explores some of the issues.) For example, we still bring children up in families where many fathers are highly authoritarian, and family and school are still anti-sex. And sex is increasingly sold as a product or otherwise exploited by profit-mongers-which is certainly not what Reich was advocating.



Relationships between people should be free, without coercion by force, money, "morality" or status. It is hard to see how such relationships can be achieved within a system based on force, money, morality and status. But neither can they be achieved in any other authoritarian, hierarchical society. It is the one serious flaw in "The Sexual Struggle of Youth" that Reich, like most Communists at that time, saw the Soviet Union as a kind of earthly paradise, and, specifically, as a sexual utopia where the changes he wanted had already been carried out. But it is only with hindsight that we can now see that he was wrong, especially since it is true that widespread sexual reforms were enacted in Russia after the Revolution. For an account of them, and the subsequent story of how each was revoked, I recommend the second of the two articles in Brinton's excellent pamphlet, "The Irrational in Politics," entitled "The Russian Experience".

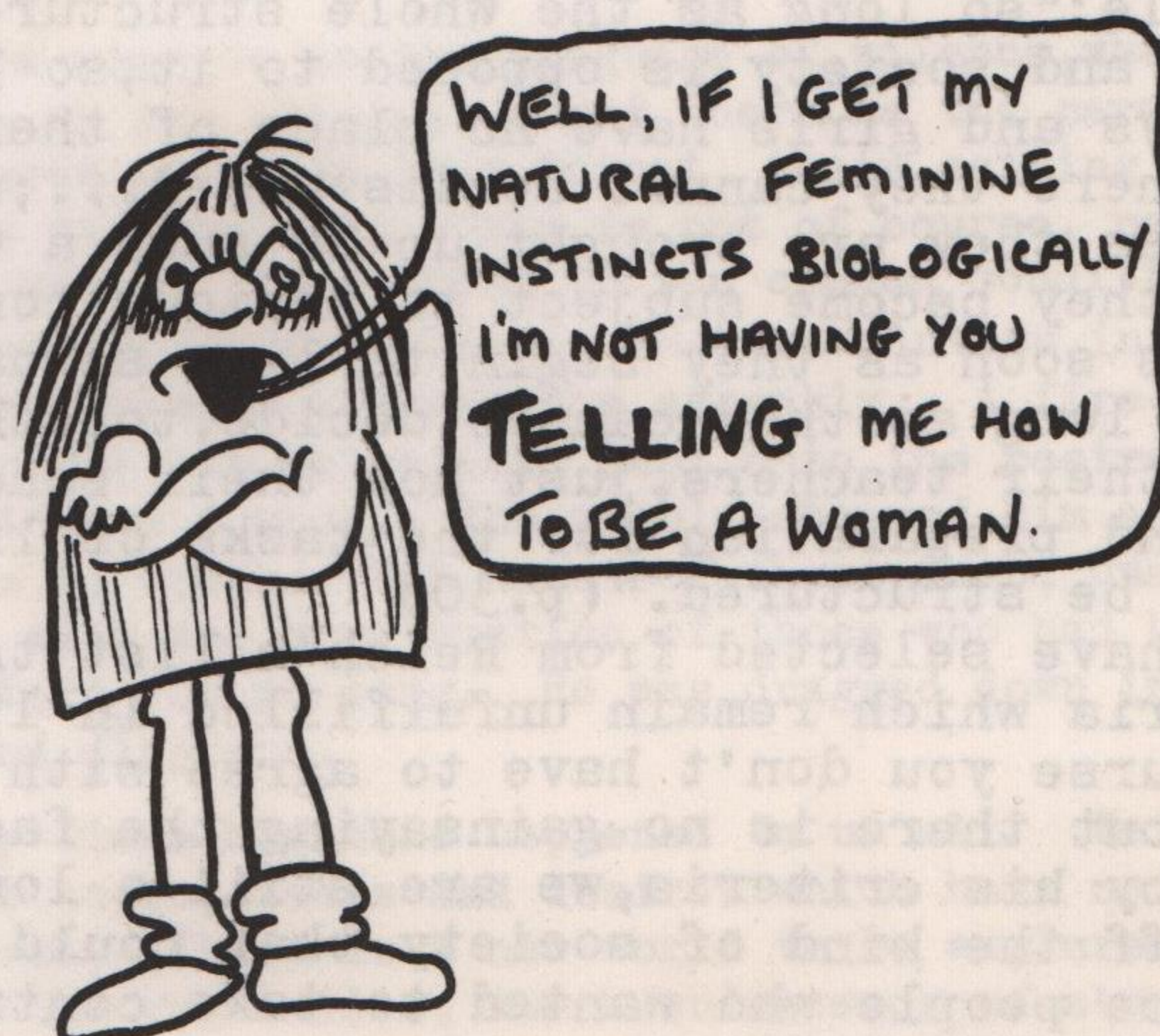
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WHAT IS CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS?, which appeared in 1934, is perhaps the most interesting of Reich's political pamphlets. Expelled from the KPD by this time, he nevertheless continued to regard himself as a Communist; and he now tried to find answers to the question as to why fascism was winning, and why the revolutionary movement was failing. The result was his

major work, "The Mass Psychology of Fascism" and "What is Class Consciousness?" The latter can be criticised for its exaggeration of the role of the revolutionary leadership (see the introduction to this edition, p.11), but otherwise its arguments are equally applicable to the revolutionary movements of today.

Perhaps the greatest virtue of the book is the feeling it conveys of having its feet on the ground, of understanding ordinary people, and of understanding the importance of being able to communicate with ordinary people. "The basic principle of revolutionary politics," Reich says, is "to refer to the masses, constantly, simply and clearly; to express the thoughts of the masses...; to suit one's language to the masses; to democratise and simplify politics and make it accessible to everyone." (p.48) "Excluding the mass from political deliberations and policies is always counter-revolutionary, no matter what the subjective intention." (p.50) And it was one of his criticisms of the KPD leadership that they had done nothing to bridge the gulf between themselves and the mass of the people: "The initial excitement and enthusiasm were killed off at every election meeting because slogans were merely repeated, or... because we had some official giving an hour-long treatise on the financial policy of the bourgeoisie." (p.21) Thus "one of the reasons for the failure of the revolutionary movement is emphatically that the real life of individuals is played out on a different level than the instigators of social revolution believe." (p.15) This real life is made up of "a million different little everyday questions... concern about food, clothing, family relationships, sexual satisfaction... amusements... the difficulties of bringing up children, furnishing a house... the length and utilisation of free time etc etc." (p.22) And people wanted to know how a revolution would affect such things: "what will become of my house, my allotment, my evenings in the pub, my skittles club, my authority over my wife and children, my pension, the factory I'm so proud of?" (p.40)

Without answers to these and similar questions, the revolutionary might as well stay in his armchair, for he will certainly do nothing amongst the people. Reich is not decrying theory and economic analysis etc; he is simply **saying** that such things don't





excite most people, and "we must secure the emotional attachment of the masses." (p.58) And it was certainly no use talking about the 5-year plans in the Soviet Union, because the worker would think something like this: "if socialism is only going to bring us more sacrifice, going-without, deprivation and renunciation, then it doesn't matter to us whether our misery is called socialist or capitalist." (p.24)

To many "Marxists", of course, including, presumably, the KPD leaders, all this was pretty heretical stuff. Class consciousness was concerned with dialectical materialism, not with the "side issues" that Reich was raising. We can perhaps guess the extent of their alarm from a still more heretical statement of Reich's: "We must get into the habit of subjecting every fetishised matter to the glaring light of naive questions, which are notoriously the most testing, the most promising and the most far-reaching." (p.44) So: what is class consciousness?

"Everything that is in contradiction with the bourgeois order, that contains the seeds of revolt, may be regarded as an element of class consciousness; and everything that supports and strengthens the bourgeois order and attaches people to it, as an impediment to class consciousness." (p.25) For example, stealing is not in itself a sign of class consciousness, but the hungry man who steals "shows much more rebellious energy than he who quietly lays his head on the block of capitalism... The fundamental problem for a correct psychological approach is not why a hungry man steals, but why he doesn't steal." (p.25)

Reich would probably have replied to his own question by saying that the man who preferred to starve had thoroughly internalised bourgeois morality, instilled in him by parents and teachers acting as the unwitting agents of the bourgeois state. And the same was true of the more general problem as to why people put up with a system that exploited most of them in the interests of a small minority. Authoritarian upbringing and sexual repression produced submissive people who willingly accepted their servile status. Sexual freedom, on the other hand, would help to produce people who wanted to "take control of their own lives and shape them according to their own volition." (p.30) Sexual freedom didn't exist in the thirties. It couldn't exist unless certain criteria were fulfilled, for example: "so long as the whole structure of state and society is opposed to it; so long as boys and girls have no place of their own where they cannot be disturbed...; so long as they are brought up in such a way that they become subject to serious conflicts as soon as they begin to live sexually; ...so long as they cannot decide, together with their teachers, just how their schooling and preparation for the tasks of life shall be structured." (p.30)

I have selected from Reich's list those criteria which remain unfulfilled in 1974. Of course you don't have to agree with his list, but there is no gainsaying the fact that, by his criteria, we are still a long way off the kind of society that could produce people who wanted to take control of their own lives.



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THE SELECTED SEX-POL ESSAYS 1934-37 are taken from Reich's Sex-Pol magazine which was published in Denmark during those years. The volume includes two essays by Karl Teschitz, a comrade of Reich's at that time; a history of the German Sex-Pol movement by the editorial group of the magazine; and several essays by Reich himself, including "Objections to Mass Psychology" in which he replies to various of his critics.

One of the essays by Teschitz—"From the International Sex-Pol Discussion"—is of particular interest to libertarians, since it consists of points raised by anarchists in several countries, together with Teschitz replies. As he says, "it has always been the anarchists who of all the socialist groups put most emphasis on the liberation and revolutionising of personal life... and who therefore were quick to take up the problem of sexual liberation." (p.107)

One of the questions raised is a crucial one: does sexually liberated necessarily mean revolutionary in other ways? Teschitz replies that you cannot be sexually liberated within the present system, but that the attempt to be so, if you are working class, brings you into conflict with state authority, and thus helps to make you a revolutionary. Perhaps: it's at least worth noting that one of the factors that contributed to the ferment at Nanterre in 1968 was a conflict with the authorities over sexual freedom in halls of residence.

The last essay by Reich has a formidable title—Dialectical Materialist Science against Intellectual Dilettantism in the Socialist Movement—but is again distinguished by its understanding of the actual problems that confront ordinary people. Replying to some critics of the orthodox "Marxist" kind, he asks "if they have ever talked to a working woman about the worries of looking after children during work—or... what to do with children who wet their beds or get on badly at school." Reich then lets loose a flood of questions to drown his critics. "How are women to achieve sexual satisfaction without getting pregnant every time?... How will work be rendered enjoyable and spare time satisfying for the masses of workers? How do they explain the mystique of National Socialism? How will it be possible to build homes for millions of people



so that the children are not wrecked by the grown-ups conflicts and so that couples don't destroy each other with their simultaneous love and hatred?...How will they stop women dying in their tens of thousands from illegal abortions? How will they prevent it from happening that millions of men who don't want a war nevertheless go to war?"(p.130-1)

These questions clearly show the wide-ranging nature of Reich's mind, a mind which was bound to conflict with any narrow-minded orthodoxy. He subjected many fetishes to the "glaring light of naive questions", not because he himself was naive, but because it was the best way to expose the pretensions and the remoteness from the working class of many of those who sought to lead the working class. Because he posed questions which had never occurred to other revolutionaries, because those questions are still relevant today, and because he tried to provide answers for the use of the revolutionary movement, we are all in his debt.

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"THE IRRATIONAL IN POLITICS", the Solidarity pamphlet by Brinton already mentioned, is the best introduction to Reich's early work. So good is it that the temptation to quote huge passages here is almost irresistible - and, so far as I'm concerned, it left me with the feeling that I must read Reich for myself, for a whole new spectrum of ideas was awaiting me. One quote will have to suffice: "Unless revolutionaries are clearly aware of all the resistances they are up against,

how can they hope to break them down? Unless revolutionaries are aware of the resistances (ie the unsuspected influences of the dominant ideology) within themselves how can they hope to get to grips with the problems of others?"(p.19)

This pamphlet and Reich's own work are required reading, as far as I'm concerned, for anybody who is a parent-or a child; or a teacher-or a student; or a revolutionary-or even a reactionary. The latter might see how he came to be so twisted!

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Reich's Political Writings, published by Socialist Reproduction, are: 25p  
Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis  
The Sexual Struggle of Youth 37p  
What is Class Consciousness? 30p  
Selected Sex-Pol Essays 1934-37 40p

Other works mentioned:  
The Irrational in Politics. Solidarity. 15p  
The Politics of Sexuality in Capitalism.  
Red Collective Pamphlet No.1. 15p  
The Function of the Orgasm by Reich.  
Panther 50p

The Mass Psychology of Fascism. Noonday £2

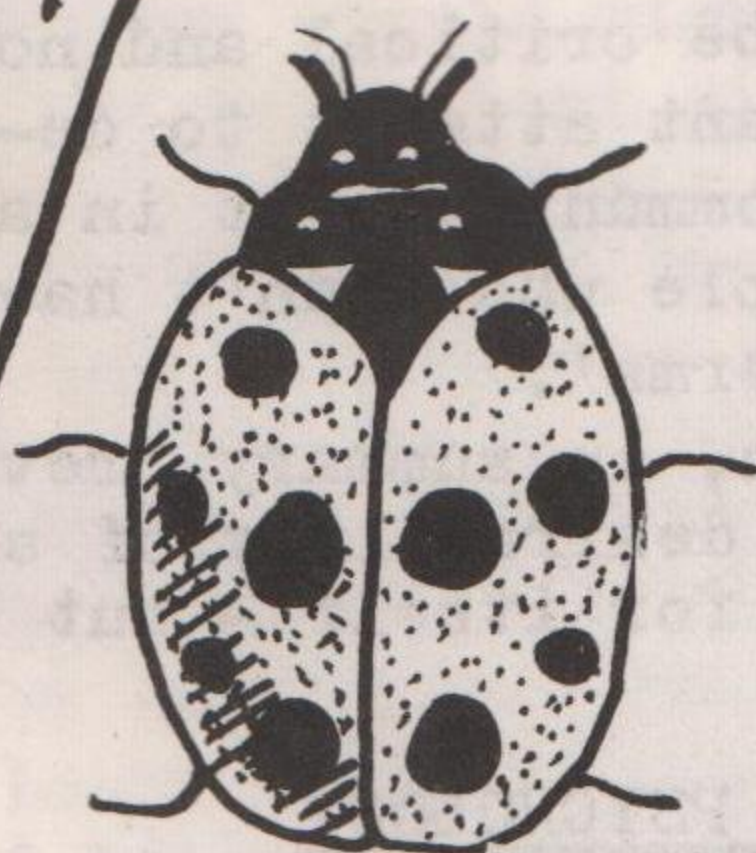
All these, and other works by Reich, are available from us: 1, Wilne St: Leicester.  
Please add postage.

**JOHN BOOTH**

illustrations from  
CASE CON 15 - WOMENS ISSUE. (SPRING 74).

## SEXISM in KIDS BOOKS

DONT THINK I  
LIKE BEING  
A TOOL OF  
BOURGEOIS  
IDEOLOGY



We have now come across some work of a critical nature, some of which has been ongoing for 2 years. The work - from various sources - is centred on the idea of indoctrination, authoritarian conditioning, and stereotyping as manifest in childrens books. Di Humphreys, in a ROADRUNNER supplement some months ago (from which came the ladybirds) wrote about the subject generally, and suggested some remedies.



LADYBIRD, LADYBIRD,  
POOR OPPRESSED  
BUG.  
THEY'RE USING  
YOUR NAME  
TO GIVE SEX-  
ROLES A PUG

The Childrens Rights Workshop have initiated THE CHILDRENS BOOK PROJECT to

"look closely at childrens books as part of the Workshops overall programme to look into the different areas and levels of childrens reality and to report on all that is being done by and for children - and against them".

One area that we have not touched since LIB.ED. production moved to leicester is that of what goes on inside childrens books, whether they be put out by general or ed. publishers. At one end of the scale there is encouragement from knowing that some schools hereabouts have survival  
outs have SURVIVAL SCRAPBOOKS in their libraries, and political theory in the classroom material is not confined to imperialism & capitalism. The other end of the scale probably fulfills all our worst fantasies, and generally centres on fiction.

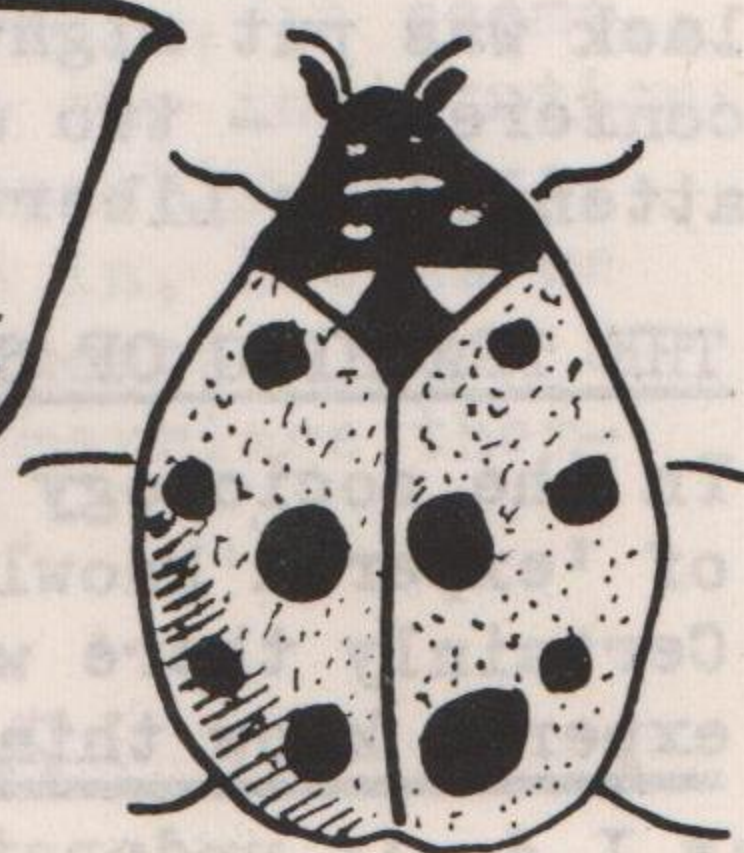
We have mentioned previously the various achievements in publishing childrens own poetry and prose centred on the work of Ken Worple/Chris Searle/Centreprise.

Available from them, or Rising Free are an introductory leaflet titled THE CHILDRENS BOOK PROJECT, and SEXIST STEREOTYPES IN CHILDRENS BOOKS - A List of Principal References & Contacts. (3p each). In preparation is a paper CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING CHILDRENS PICTURE BOOKS. (73 Balfour St London S.E.17)

The Womens Liberation Literature Collective have produced 7 issues of a newsletter NON-SEXIST CHILDRENS BOOKS (between May 72 - March 73). This is a mixture of listings reviews, suggestions etc and comments on the idea, and related occasions e.g. kids books shows. (recent issues from Rising Free, 3p each; or a 50p donation to WLLC at 71 St Annes Lane, Headingley, Leeds 4. tel no 783256.)

Throughout the above, sex stereotyping - by dint of volume - gets most attention, but racism and the protestant/capitalist ethic also get some of theirs.

THIS CALLS  
FOR  
VENGEANCE  
!!!





THIS conference ('The Politics of Education') was held at LSE on 1st February 1974 and was explicitly informal in organisation and style. A flexible agenda (sent beforehand to participants) outlined suitable areas for discussion - "Staff and students - a meaningful distinction", "Higher Education under U.K. Capitalism" and "Class and status in the education system", etc.

The morning and early afternoon were to be spent discussing these issues in two general meetings, while in the late afternoon the assembly would divide into groups each concerned with the teaching of one of the following subjects: psychology; sociology; philosophy; and economics.

The morning's general meeting generated a pleasant atmosphere of agreement and cooperation, based on shared dissatisfaction with the present set-up and some positive ideas for improvement (the latter to be elaborated in the afternoon session).

#### HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER U.K. CAPITALISM

The afternoon session devoted to this topic did not, however, maintain this atmosphere. This was partly due to the different areas of interest of the participants. Although intentionally concerned with higher education, a number of the

wrong. 'False consciousness' provides the basis on which the Marxist can take his didactic stand, his stand of expertise, his stand where he has the key to knowledge which he can let others have - if they sit, listen and fold their arms.....

Again, though the discussion was not explicitly of libertarian thought it was in direct agreement with libertarian ideals. Radicals were felt to have one view of the world, non-radicals another. The problem is to convince people that the radical view is a better view, not that their's is 'false'. Capitalist thinking 'works' - its what it works like that is the problem.

Sociologists were accused of being elitist on two accounts. First that they couch their knowledge in terms which render it incomprehensible to others; and second, that their knowledge was esoteric and did not involve attempts to change society. The non-sociologists present arguably 'won the day' in the sense that the sociologists could reply to the questions adequately amongst themselves, but found great difficulty in expressing it to 'non-experts'. The problem posed for both sides was whether this non-communication was due to the inherent elitism of expert knowledge, or the lack of reading in the subject, or time to explain, which prevented the non-

# THE POLITICS OF

participants were school teachers/teacher-trainees who, understandably, were more interested in the problems of secondary education (especially in London). Most contributions fell into one of these categories, with very little in the way of 'links' between them (a notable exception was the obligatory 'Councils of Action' speech and equally obligatory walk-out by WRP representatives\*). On the one hand people were talking about how students could have more control over their degree-course content and how a cooperative rather than competitive set of values could be established in colleges, while others talked of 'discipline problems', and the real-life relevance of classroom material.

Later on a new division emerged, between the 'revolutionaries' and the 'what-to-do-in-the-meantime?' proponents. This is, of course, an inevitable and insoluble problem for those concerned with education. Can educational practices change society, or must society be changed first? To try to improve school conditions and help the 'low achievers' (e.g. those of working-class background) is 'bourgeois reformism' but to do otherwise is to maintain the status-quo. There were plenty of ideas, but besides appeals to charismatic teachership, there were few practical suggestions. Libertarian ideas were not at all evident through this discussion. This lack was put right in the final part of the conference - two of the discussion groups being attended by Libertarian Education correspondents.

#### THE TEACHING OF SOCIOLOGY

In the sociology group the problem of the status of 'expert' knowledge was thrown into doubt. Certainly there was no truck with notions that experts know things right, and others know them

\* I don't understand this reference - typist.

sociologists from gathering the intent of the sociologists. The two are not altogether divorced surely.

However, it was generally agreed that the critical ability of sociology - its ability to change the world - depended on the sociologist, his choice of theory/method and his manner of communicating his findings. It was also acknowledged that to be critical and non-elitist there must be a constant attempt to de-mystify sociology, to communicate it in a way which did not exclude people who didn't have an expert knowledge of 'terms'.

The discussion, in summary, revolved around the possibility and desirability of sociology not being a subject for itself - but being a subject for people.

#### THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY

This meeting, unlike the other special-subject meetings, did not divide into sub-groups - specialists and laymen - each discussing their own problems. The group remained as one, but in such an aggressive and tense atmosphere that it had to be felt to be believed.

A discussion followed a brief but useful presentation of some of the dangers of idealism inherent in 'constructivist' psychological theories (e.g. those of Piaget, Neisser, Richard Gregory and George Kelly, where people's internal psychological structures are seen to be as important indetermining perceptions or attitudes as what is really 'out there').

These ideas were met, on the one hand, by critical appreciation from those present who were concerned with the misuse of psychological knowledge (e.g. for the 'rehabilitation' of workers and political prisoners, while psychological information on such matters as racial equality or



sex-roles is conveniently suppressed or ignored) and bourgeois psychology's preoccupation with certain kinds of psychological questions which often have implicit in them reactionary values (e.g. 'mental illness' or 'criminality').

There was a different kind of response, however, from a number of authoritarian Marxists present. In a mood of marked anti-intellectualism, they set up a paper model of psychology ('psychologists just say men are rats'!) which they attacked as if were real by practising a simplistic form of political reductionism - psychological levels of explanation are individualistic, and so don't really exist; Marx has said all there is to say about people; if your explanation hasn't got 'class struggle' in it somewhere it must be false!

And then the fighting really began, and gradually descended into individual quarrels, between proponents of either one or even both the above points of view. Quite exciting to be in but not at all constructive. Political points were confused by divisions between authoritarians and non-authoritarians of the left and the various 'liberal' ideas also put forward.

problem, with their world being the schooling world. In a system of education so dedicated to overthrowing libertarian thought it is impossible to be a perfect libertarian; the first major delusion is to think you are or you can be. It is possible, however, to take stands on issues, to infiltrate and subvert in minor ways; in ways it is true that will never of themselves break the system, but in ways which might help to encourage libertarian thought.

The meeting wisely rejected the attempt of Marxists to offer a 'line' on what was to be done, realising that the real point of radical education is to think for yourself. Thinking for yourself is harder than having a 'line' pushed at you which you then regurgitate at the appropriate stimulus like some automaton. Thinking for yourself often leaves you isolated, insecure, unsure. But this only serves to point to the ludicrous system in which this can happen. If no concrete proposals came from this meeting, at least it had the effect of joining people dedicated to radical education and thinking for themselves, and letting them know that they were not alone, that others face the same problems, the same doubts and insecurity. For those who came with

# EDUCATION

a conference  
held at the  
LSE 1.2.74

## MARXIST v. LIBERTARIANS

In the other smaller discussion group in the afternoon the content gravitated to a discussion of the relative merits and failings of Marxist and libertarian views on education. It was pleasing to note how the group refused to let a Marxist brother dominate the proceedings with a didactic monologue about the alternative black schools in Brixton. It wasn't that people had no sympathy with what he was saying, but that they recognised the irony and hypocrisy of claiming that as teachers we haven't the right to preach to kids, whilst letting ourselves be preached to by another adult.

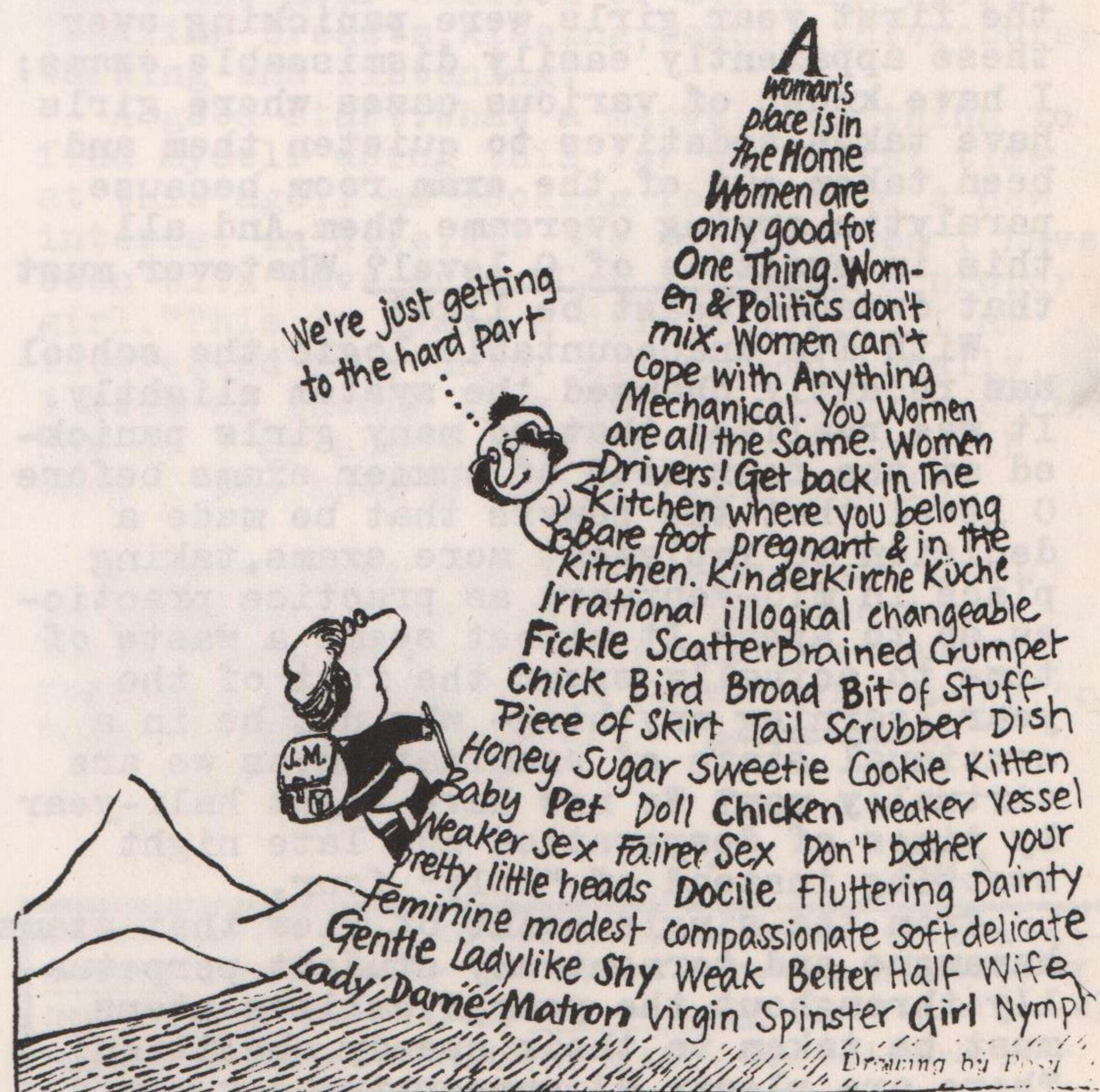
The introspection of the group in this sense showed a welcome acceptance of libertarian thought, though there was no open statement of anarchist principles. The deschooling of society was a premise which seemed to be generally accepted, but the point of the discussion was to find out what teachers who found themselves involved in the system could do to get rid of it. The suggestion that they could get out and perhaps work on the factory system (were the WRP there!?) was seen as a negative reaction but solutions to the problem of action in the schools were not easy to come by.

There was certainly a degree of frustration generated by the failure to offer concrete proposals as to what could be done to break the system from within, but to most libertarians this is not a new problem. Living in a system which stands against everything we believe in, we have to come to grips with our living as an insoluble contradiction until such time as the society can be changed. We cannot achieve freedom on our own, we can only achieve freedom in a social sense - with others. Teachers face the same

problems to discuss the meeting had some benefit even if it didn't provide the answers they sought. For those who came with answers, those who wanted to preach, it was a very unfulfilling day.

Most of the participants didn't want the answers of others, they wanted to find their own answers.

**M. DENSCOMBE and NEIL MERCER**





From Karen Adler, 7 Florence Rd: London W5.

Dear Libertarian Education, I submit this comment in response to your recent edition on exams. I wholeheartedly agree with most of what was said, in fact I believe that there exists exam mania in many schools. I give here a more personalised experience of what exams are all about.

I am 16 years old and in attendance at Godolphin and Latymer School, London.

## EXAMS: A Fair Price to Pay ???

At the present moment I am desperately trying to summon up enough energy for the last five week stint before O levels. I am at a school of a "very high standard"—a single sex voluntary aided grammar where the apple of most girls' eye is a place at Cambridge, which a fairly high proportion get.

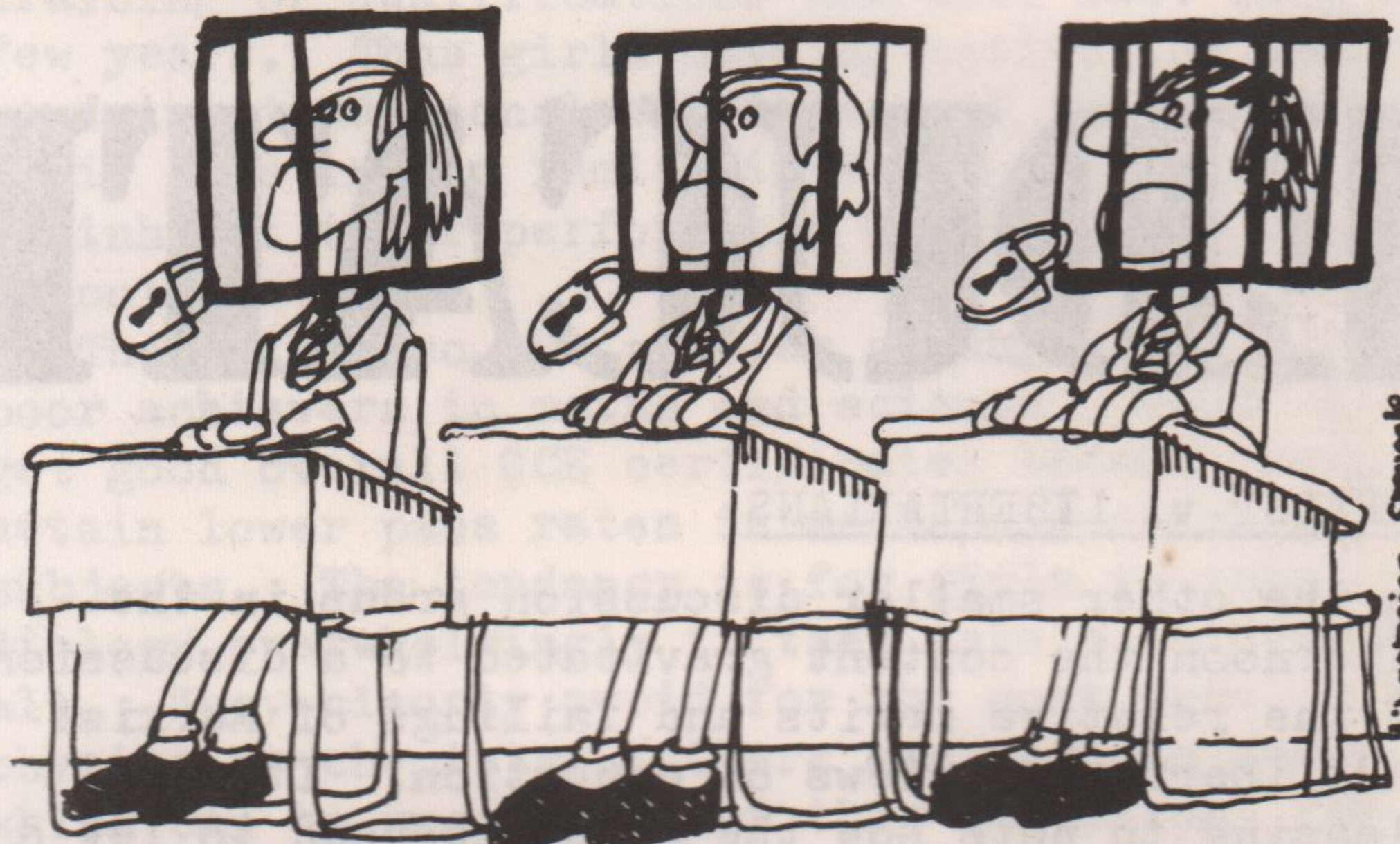
Exams play a very important part in school life, recently even more so! When I wish to, I can pass exams with a fair amount of ease; when I don't wish to, I can also pass. Never have I been able to get into a state of anywhere near hysteria over a school exam. However I am the exception, rather than the norm. When I was in the first year, the school took a week off in the summer for exams; these, we were told were to get us into practice for O level so that we'd be able to take exams easily. Apparently they didn't count anything against us if we failed to achieve good marks (did they however up-grade in the case of good results?). This as we knew then and still know now, although the staff are still trying to fob us off with that excuse, is utter and blatant rubbish. All exams, tests and spot checks are always treated with far more reverence and respect than, say, a good essay that took a couple of weeks to think out. Already in the first year girls were panicking over these apparently easily dismissable exams; I have known of various cases where girls have taken sedatives to quieten them and been taken out of the exam room because paralytic crying overcame them. And all this in practice of O level? Whatever must that dreaded beast be like?

With its unaccountable logic the school has recently changed the system slightly. It was realised that so many girls panicked at the four sets of summer exams before O level that the powers that be made a decision to implement more exams, taking place in mid-February as practice practices, so to speak. It almost seems a waste of time to actually spend the rest of the year learning anything—why not be in a continual state of examination, as we are virtually now? We now have eight half-yearly times of desperation and late night swotting instead of "only" four.

From the single point of view that exams harangue and torment any student perpetually throughout the year, I believe steps must be taken to their speedy abolition. There are plenty of supportive arguments that I could use, but choose not to.

And in their place... why in their place? Why should we be sorted and picked like peas on a conveyor belt? Education is a lifetime of experience, or so I have always believed. Under the exam system, "education" becomes a process of sucking in and spewing out information at required intervals. What I'd like to do is get down to some basic living and learning without the fear of a "pass" or "fail" hanging over my head like a guillotine.

As an assertion of whether I am fit to go on to higher education or not, why not have a system such that if I want to go to a university then let me—why should I have to prove my capability in three hours of frenzied scribbling? (And as an aside, perhaps the immense amount of money spent on public exams each year could be put to better use in inaugurating such a system.) Of course taking exams out of the system would doubtless change the whole educational set-up as it is a mirror of society and reflects, fairly accurately, society's whims. What it all boils down to folks, is revolution.



From VAL HENNESSY, a member of the Brighton Voice collective, in response to our IQ issue. The Educational Psychologist who visited our school to assess 11 yr. old Vicky wrote, amongst all the other condemnation like she's got an IQ of 90 and a reading age of 5 years, 'DURING OUR INTERVIEW VICKY SEEMED VERY APPREHENSIVE AND SHY AND LACKING IN COMMUNICATION. A WITHDRAWN CHILD...'

Good old Vicky! It seems to me she's acted in precisely the way any reasonable person would. Any child is going to act a bit cagey and cautious when she's suddenly called out of the classroom and shoved into a room with a total stranger all phoney smiles and ingratiating middle-class accent. Vicky is sharp enough to know she's there to be judged and it's a natural reaction to keep your mouth shut and try to suss out what's going on. I know I would. O.K. so Vicky has a low IQ (by their standards) and she's emotionally unstable and too dependant on her neurotic Mum and all the rest BUT nowhere does our Ed. Psych. mention that Vicky sings smashing songs with all these little actions she's made up herself. No mention of the fantastic patterns she paints and creates using bits of paper and junk. How can old Ed. Psych. discover about the cakes Vicky makes at home and the way she looks after her little brothers at weekends. HOW CAN HE DISCOVER ANYTHING IMPORTANT ABOUT VICKY DURING A TENSE HALF-HOUR ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW REPORT SESSION?

We libertarian teachers MUST protest about Ed. psychologists manufacturing their little stereotyped reports about children they do not know—they are yet another destructive innovation thrown up by the 'education by assessment' system which our children must endure.



# PROBATIONARY TEACHER

All those entering our system of state education are, during their first year of teaching, classed as 'Probationary Teachers'. I am myself now two-thirds of the way through my probationary year and in writing this article I hope to explain some of the problems that I faced as a 'libertarian' during this period and to suggest some ideas to help those at college who still have to go through their probationary year.

I started the year at a large comprehensive in Derbyshire - 1,500 kids - 100 staff - a large impersonal place with all the problems facing the average large school in a working class area. My aim was to try to work against the conditioning process that kids go through while at school. The process that categorises, labels, fails and kills spontaneity and individuality, the process that says that 70% of all kids are failures and must accept an inferior role in society. I saw the answer as the need for a free environment within which kids could learn freely, and so I decided to try to implement some of the ideas of the free-school within a normal classroom period.

It was not long before I met with problems. Firstly I had not fully prepared myself for the type of situation in which I found myself. Suddenly being put into the role of an authoritarian and, despite one's dislike of such a position, finding that kids insisted on assuming that one was like any other teacher and acting accordingly. Secondly I soon found that I was compromising - the constraints of exams, syllabus, time, numbers, and the difficulty of throwing off the authority and power that the label teacher gave - all seemed to negate what I was trying to do.

My first objective was to give the kids an equal say in what was going on, to let them choose whenever possible what and how they learned. I found this easiest to do with those classes which did not have serious exam commitments (low streams and non-exam groups). This approach can work well - every kid is interested in something and I saw my role as that of a supplier of information and equipment to help the kids pursue their own interests. In addition I added my own ideas when those of the kids ran out and tried to help them individually in what they were doing. Some would work in groups, some on their own, some did nothing at all, others went to the bog for a fag, but generally speaking the situation was one in which kids were reacting to a freer environment in which I was not using the traditional teacher-role. At first the kids were suspicious of what was going on, most think I'm mad, but a consistent free approach eventually seemed to produce results.

All this perhaps gives a slightly misleading impression in that to achieve such a situation demands a lot. Every now and again the kids will let off steam in my lesson - they will react against me as they still think of me as a teacher. Nevertheless I have been able to build with some of the kids a situation that is more personal and involved, BUT it doesn't happen all the time and the situations in between can be really hell.

## COMPLAINTS

Noise from my lessons soon led to complaints

and frequent visits from senior masters. With one class the head insisted on repeatedly coming into the lesson and telling the class to be quiet. This led me to compromise further as I want to get the probationary year out of the way. I now teach half my classes, which are exam forms (O-level and C.S.E.) very little differently from anyone else, and I am slowly concentrating on the lower streams and non-exam classes.

The problems one faces in the state system are many. The greatest is perhaps that of isolation. Unfortunately anarchists/libertarians are relatively few and far between in state schools, and are nearly always isolated. I found this a serious problem in that to achieve a lot one has to build up a strong position. As I see it it is possible to do one of three things. Firstly one can go all-out to undermine authority at every blow and eventually get the sack; secondly one can compromise and have one's actions made impotent by being slowly absorbed by the attitudes of other staff (you really do start to think like them after hearing them day after day demanding more discipline, the cane, etc.; lastly one can try to build up a firm base within the school. This demands firstly other teachers helping and doing the same thing, and secondly the kids actively supporting a freer education via their own groups and organisations. Greater help can also be achieved by being supported by the Union. You may not like the N.U.T. or agree totally with groups like Rank and File, but if you are a regular member they will probably support you against the head should any trouble arise.\*

Libertarian Education groups can only help if they are locally based. Groups like those producing Libertarian Education or the Libertarian Education Network are useful but they do not solve the problem of isolation and could not be used to help those facing particular problems in a particular school. With support from a local group of anarchists; with support from other libertarian teachers; with support from another teacher or two in your school; plus help from the kids and, if possible, the union; you are immensely stronger. Our aim then should be to establish a base for ourselves from which to act, and this can only be done by working in a school, getting to know the kids, building up local contacts, going to union meetings, etc. Also, at the moment, some of us in Nottingham are trying to start a group called 'Free Teachers' - to provide a regular discussion group for teachers working for an alternative within the state system. The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity to relate and discuss possible solutions to the types of problems that continually face us in school.

Finally, for those looking for their first teaching job, I would offer the following advice:

1. Take time picking your school; make sure it's less reactionary than others. It may be only liberal-middle-of-the-road, but it will be easier to exist in.
2. Try to find a school where you know anarchists already exist. This is one thing 'Libertarian Education' could provide more information on.
3. Make sure you are in contact with as many local groups as possible, their support will really help when things get difficult.
4. Go to the occasional Union meeting - its support might come in useful.

**CHRIS ROSE**

\* But don't rely on such help - and certainly not if the head is also in the N.U.T. - Lib.Ed. typist.



The following article has been received since our issues concerning ESN, Special Schooling, etc. Julie Hawthorne sent us a copy of HARD TIMES, the Brent (London) Peoples Paper - from which we have printed verbatim the account of her successful fight on her son's behalf.

## BRENT SPECIAL SCHOOLS: One Kid's Experience

There is little heard about the way Special Schools in Brent work, although comments are made about the large number of West Indian kids that end up there. What can parents do if they think that special education is wrong for their child?

Mrs Hawthorne and her 2 children (aged 10 & 8) lived in a slum in Church Road for 3 years. The landlord would not do repairs and it was due for demolition. The house was infested with snails, cockroaches, and mice. It was damp, plaster falling off the walls and ceiling, loose and missing banisters on the stairs. As the flat was over a barbers (the landlord was a barber) hair from the shop blew into the ground floor kitchen and got into the food.

Mrs Hawthorne told the 'Hard Times':

The children were upset by the conditions. They couldn't sleep, vermin was crawling on the bed. My son had nightmares and began wetting the bed. My daughter had stomach pains and lost her appetite completely. One room was too damp to live in so we all lived in one bedroom. I slept on the settee and the children shared a single bed.

There was no space for play in the house and they could not go out in the streets with houses being pulled down, or standing empty - it was too dangerous.

My son Sherman who is 8 now was affected more than Donna. He couldn't concentrate at school and grew touchy with other children. He wasn't getting enough sleep and would wake up screaming. No wonder he was restless in the day.

Sherman's school sent him to the Child Guidance Centre at Kilburn and I went with him, although I knew that there was nothing wrong with Sherman and that all he needed was a decent secure home, with a garden, if possible. I told the educational psychologist that and even he agreed. So instead of insisting that Sherman went to the Centre for more tests I decided to concentrate on fighting for a decent home. This seemed the only way to solve Sherman's problems.

I had a long struggle before we were rehoused even though our living conditions were disgusting, but we were finally offered a remodernised 3-bedroom flat in Curzon Crescent in June 1973, after 3 years of waiting. You can imagine that we were excited and happy. The flat is next to Roundwood Park and opposite the Adventure Playground. The children can go out and I don't worry. Sherman has a room to himself. At last we had a chance to lead a normal life.

A month after we moved I got a letter from Brent Education Dept saying that Sherman had to start at a school for maladjusted children in September. I was angry and upset. I had always said that Sherman's problems were the result of his bad housing conditions. Anyone living as we did would have been disturbed. Now that we had a nice flat I was sure that Sherman would have that Sherman should have a second chance in the ordinary school. I did not think that he needed special help. I told Brent Education Dept this, but they said it was up to the educational psychologist. When I went to see him he said it was up to the Education Dept. As I wasn't getting any where with Brent, and Sherman was out of school altogether I decided to find out my rights.

I discovered that I could appeal against Brent's decision by writing to:-

Mrs Thatcher, Secretary of State for Education  
D.E.S., Elizabeth House, York Road, London S.E.1

I was asked to provide evidence to support my appeal and the Secretary of State would weigh it against Brent's evidence and decide whether Sherman needed special schooling or not. It was not easy to get evidence without money to pay Psychiatrists, etc, but I was lucky enough to have people to help me.

When Brent found out that I had appealed they were angry and thought I was out to cause trouble. But all I wanted was to see that Sherman had a fair chance and by appealing I was using the proper channels

I did not want to appeal but no one in the Ed. Dept. would listen to my point of view, so I had no choice. They did not even take the trouble to visit Sherman in his new home, nor did they know the conditions at Church Road. They did not know the full story and I had to fight to make them listen. They did not seem to realise that I am his mother and are what happens to him.

After 3 months of arguing and collecting evidence in support of my case, Brent backed down and agreed to give Sherman a second chance in ordinary school, and the appeal was cancelled.

I was grateful to the 2 Brent Councillors who gave me a chance to explain my feelings and to the Headmistress who agreed to take Sherman in her school, but I was very angry with the others who stood by whilst he was pushed around. He was at home for 3 months simply because Brent refused to give him a place in the ordinary school while the appeal was decided. They told me it was the maladjusted school or nothing.

I am concerned about the future of other children whose mothers are not told what is going on and are not lucky enough to find out for themselves. It takes a hell of a lot to fight if you think your child is being pushed in the wrong direction, but I think it is worth it. Very few parents know about special schools, what they are, and what they try to do. I think we should find out more as any of our children could be put in a special school at any time, and we should know exactly what this means and whether it is right for our children.

Although Sherman is now settled in school I would like to know about other parents with similar problems so that by getting together we can find out more and give each other support. ●

If you are interested contact:-

JULIE HAWTHORNE 01 965 2590  
01 965 7305.