

READ ALL ABOUT IT

"A child is born into the world blindly expecting everything. That expectation is biological myth. And the child is soon disabused of his milky notions. What the child didn't know of course was there was someone around for a few thousand years before he got here. And these people have left him a slum in Bradford or a high-rise tenement in London. And his mother works and his father works if they've managed to be lucky, because they need the money, so they're never around to bring up their children. They are alienated from their own flesh. And if they haven't jobs they are alienated from the society around them and therefore from themselves because you can't hold your head up if someone isn't making a profit out of you. And the tensions of the parents are visited on the children. And before the child starts school he'll know all about violence. And the school will make excuses for it or ignore it. Because this society cannot exist without violence. For this is the age where we have bombs that kill people but save property. And property is profit. And to get profit you need people who will blindly follow the design blueprint and turn out H-Bombs in California or plastic garden gnomes in Ilford. And where the vicious circle starts no one knows but it runs through the home and next stop is the school. And if anyone tries to break out of the circle that person will get sacked. You must not open childrens' eyes. Teacher's job is sewing them together. And wipe away the blood if not the tears. And the handful of cynical men who meet behind gun guarded doors from Torquay to Tokio know they have a whole army of wolves in sheep's clothing, in classrooms and colleges, churches and boardrooms all dressed up in neon smiles, wreathed in silly wigs and regimental stripes sitting on the pot marked 'morals of the nation', ready to do down any individual who wants to tell kids what really went wrong with their milky notions, the idiot dream still locked and buried in indestructible containers at the bottom of their hearts. And if a teacher dares throw down a grappling iron and tries to winch the secret out from the ocean floor he will be stabbed in the back by a wolf in sheep's clothing. Well not stabbed. Sacked. That's not half as messy. Because sir is winning, having invented the game and no one is going to be allowed to blow the final whistle on sir. Oh no sir, yes sir, six teachers sacked sir. And along the streets the children drift kicking tin cans and broken bottles. And who can blame them when one day they pick the bottle up. Because all there is to feed on is violence, and nothing else to do but pick at scars. Sir is winning and the milky notions curdle in the heavy air. But the game isn't over yet Sir. Not by a long chalk."

Shane Connaughton

This should have been the last speech in the play 'Sir is Winning' but it was removed by the National Theatre. The play featured the situation at William Tyndale School in London where six teachers were suspended and later sacked.

Lib Ed

a magazine for the liberation of learning

30p



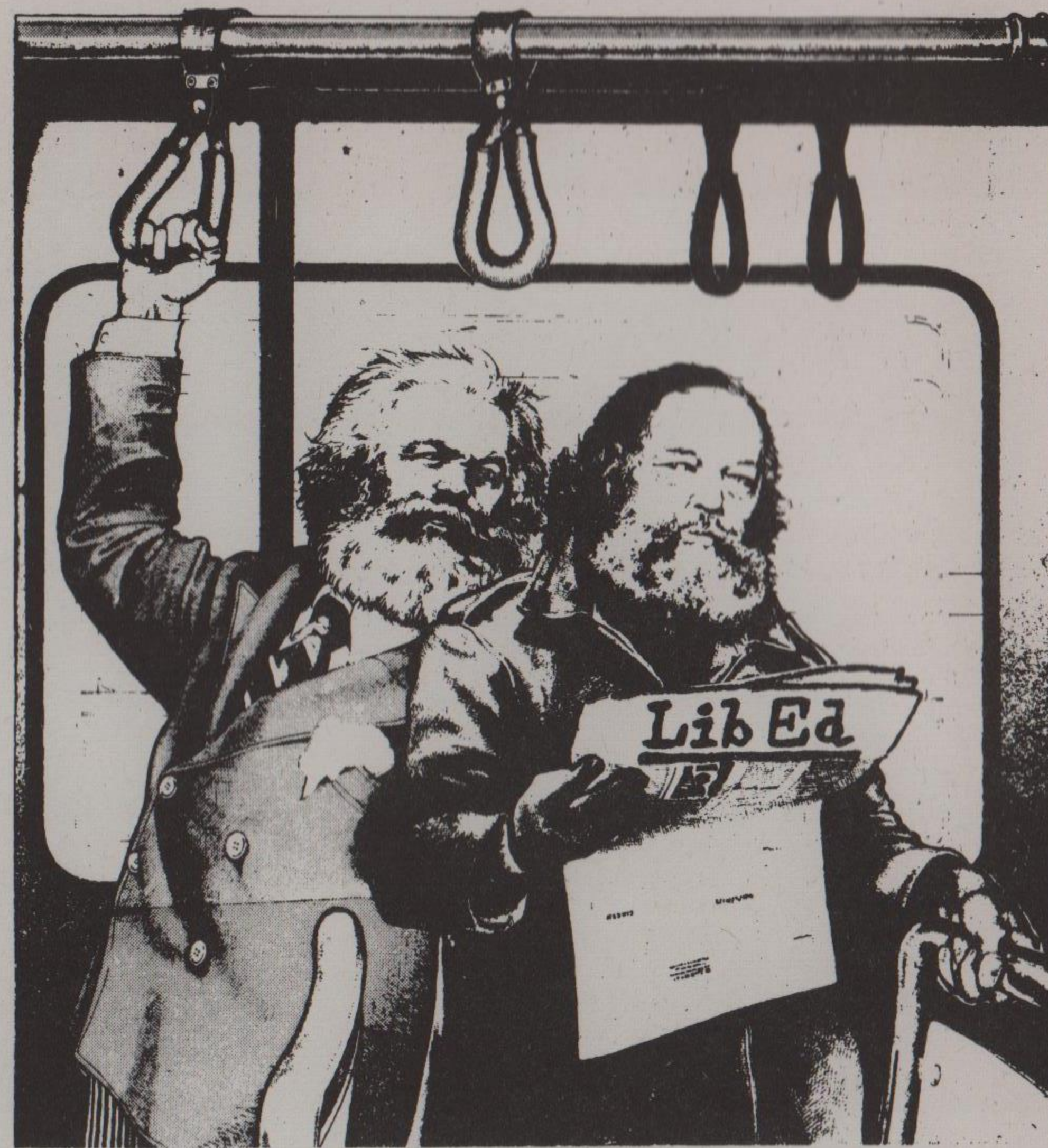
Freire - Holland - Deschooling
NUSS - Disability

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Summer 1979

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Two things recently got us thinking, and talking, about what we mean by de-schooling. The first was the much publicised case of the 'hermit' father, who kept his seven children at home, prevented them from reading books written in the past twenty years, and banned TV. The other was the arrival of the Iowa article, printed in this issue. Two cases of children not attending schools—could either be called 'deschooling'?

We began with the pros and cons of school attendance. There is no doubt that the school system is a powerful tool in inculcating the idea of the rightness and inevitability of authoritarian relationships; to say that young people are socialised in school is true enough, but as the Iowa article points out, socialisation is not a neutral force, and the social relationships which our schools teach, notably dominance and submission, play an important part in maintaining the status quo.

The use of the school system by the ruling class as a means of social control has been portrayed by libertarian thinkers from Godwin to Goodman, and

a picture of schools as expropriators of education has been powerfully and accurately painted by Illich. However it is obvious that schools are not one hundred per cent successful in inculcating submissiveness, and Paul Willis' book *Learning to Labour* shows how working class students may understand, albeit partially, the social forces at work on them, and develop a counter-school culture. It would be absurd to over-estimate this understanding, or to claim it as, in itself, a force for change, and its machismo and racism has already been commented on in *Lib Ed* 26, but it remains true that the experience of school can give to some people the chance to develop a critical response to authority.

This possible side effect scarcely makes up, in the opinion of most libertarians, for the ill effects which school has on most students, and our initial reaction on hearing of parents withdrawing their children from school is approval. Just how wrong that reaction can be is shown by the recent 'hermit' case mentioned above, and by one of the families featured in the *Open Door*

access tv programme by *Education Otherwise*. In both cases we see children withdrawn from school without their consent by authoritarian parents who then school them more fiercely than schools do! No chance for them to develop a counter-school culture, they suffer social isolation plus the worst of schooling.

The most interesting aspect of the Sheffield case is the extravagant claim made by the authorities for the beneficial effects of school. These children, although gifted, had great gaps of ignorance, and did not know how to play. Their only chance of salvation, it was suggested, was school. This fanciful picture of all schools encouraging play and social awareness, and giving a balanced education will, no doubt, come as a surprise to many readers. It is clear that this father is being punished, not for being dictatorial towards his children—is that not the right and proper role for parents?—but for questioning the school system. Our revulsion at his actions should not conceal this.

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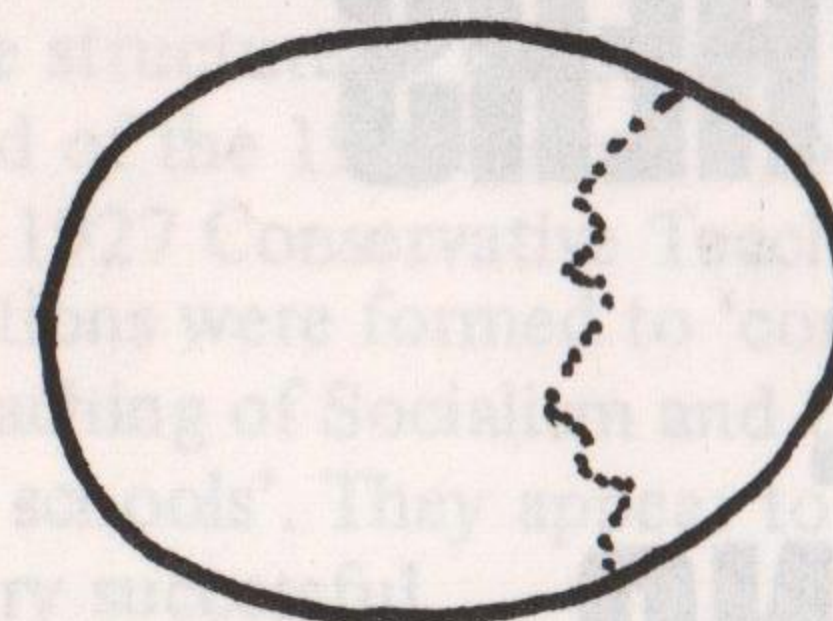
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DESCHOOLING?

One thing is clear: in our society we are very confused about children and childhood. We value *having* children, but it is doubtful that we highly value children; and once we have them, we are very confused about what to do with them.

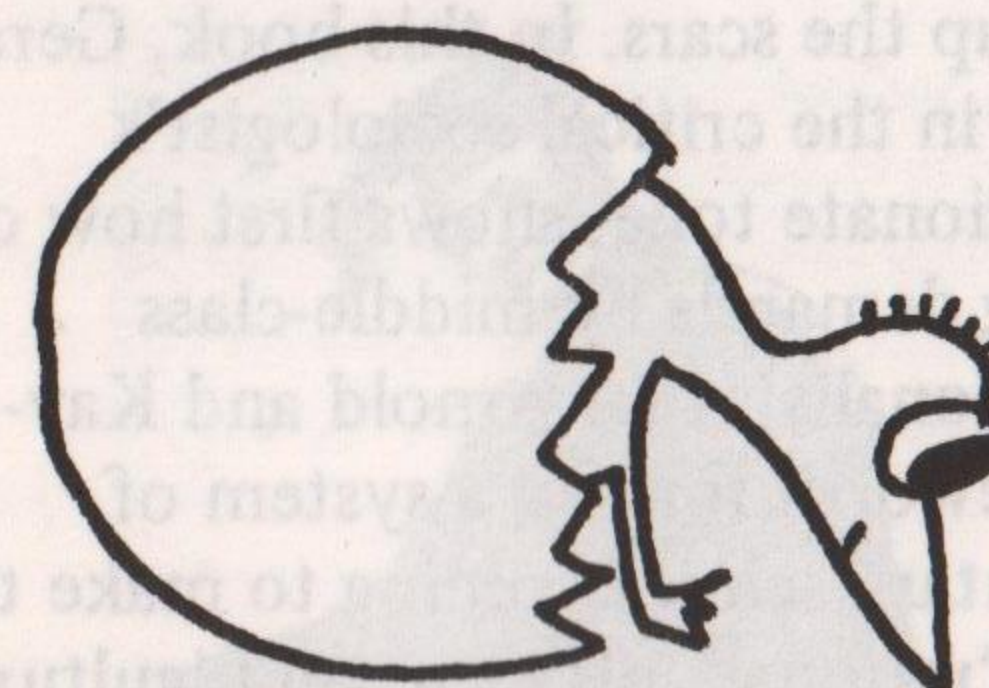
Our confusions have serious practical consequences, and they are manifold. We do not know how to think about children, and our children do not know how to think about themselves. We prize freedom, and in our confusion about freedom we fail to help children acquire discipline, while forcing them to become educated. We do not understand education and consequently the more resources we spend on it the more dubious are the results. We



condemn the 'indoctrination' of Russian children, while compelling our own children to sit through years of 'citizenship training'. Conservatives preach freedom and individuality while simultaneously supporting institutions which radically restrict both. We translate the most humane advances in the social sciences into ever more sophisticated means of control; and our most progressive attempts at child-rearing and 'free' schools often result in confused and disturbed children incapable of the disciplined self-learning we sought for them.

I could continue. But it would be folly for me, in a short article, to attempt to comment intelligently or helpfully on all these or related problems we have with children and childhood. What I can do is share with you some of my thoughts and experiences about childhood and education from our year-long confrontation with the educational system in Iowa. Let me begin with some background.

When we moved to Iowa last fall we continued to educate our seven-year-old son Erik outside the school system. Iowa law recognizes private instruction as one legitimate mode of education (the others being public schools and private schools), and we found another person in Decorah, Ann Edgerton, also keeping her daughter Lisa out of school.



It did not take long for us to realize that Iowa law is subject to interpretation.

In September the local superintendent of schools found out about Ann's situation and tried to threaten her into capitulation. We were forced to go through lengthy legal proceedings which led to us being prosecuted at the magistrates court.

Our situation is not unique in America today. Across the country parents are educating, or attempting to educate, their children outside of schools. Like us, many are embroiled in hard and expensive legal battles. This 'new wave' of educational experimentation, often called 'de-schooling', grows out of the belief that,

given the present system of compulsory schooling, schools remain schools no matter how many alterations are made in them. One way of viewing the de-schooling of our children is as a 'counter-experiment'; given the failings and inadequacies of our present 'standard educational experiment', we are experimenting with an alternative mode. Our 'results' to date are very exciting to us. Our children not only are learning easily and well the positive content typically learned in schools, and not learning the many negative things schools 'teach', but they are learning with great depth, joy and genuine self-interest.

Criticisms of schools are coming from all quarters. Conservatives think they are too lax (free?) and engender decadence (sex and drugs); graduates are suing schools for malpractice; parents complain about schools taking over their lives; the media and some government committees report the increases in vandalism and personal crime in schools; academics bemoan an illiterate generation, and critics like Kozol, Silberman, Cole, Grier, Herndon, Kohl, Holt, Illich, Dennison and Goodman have entered stinging indictments of most aspects of our schooling process. I will not repeat their criticisms, nor will I argue my disagreements with them here. My narrowed attention will focus on three central confusions we have encountered across social, educational, economic, and geographical boundaries of our society: confusions about *socialization*, *certification*, and *motivation*. In the process, I hope to inform you some about Erik's education.



The extremity of response to our case, both in terms of emotions and numbers, has been remarkable. People have written to us from all over Iowa expressing strong feelings about schools and about us. Decorah is still gossiping about why we're doing what we are ("Erik is retarded." "He is a genius." "They are fanatics."), and, after nine months, it is still such a controversial issue that the local newspaper editor does not feel comfortable doing a feature article on it.

People often press us on the issue of our right to 'force' our children to be different. This is not an easy issue, but to put the issue in these one-sided terms is not helpful. We always have to decide what to do with our children. To send children to school is to 'force them to be the same'. Regardless of what we do, we must choose. We believe one reason we have met resistance not only from the officials in the system, but also from parents, is that our actions remind them of their own ignored responsibilities. Furthermore, given the common knowledge that schools are in many ways not only pedagogical failures, but actually are harmful to children, many parents feel guilty about their own inactivity with regard to their children's education.

'SOCIALIZATION'

When we tell people about how our children are being educated, the almost universal response is, 'Well, I'm sure you can

handle the academics, but what about *socialization*?' A great deal is packed into this amazing response. One has to wonder how people can justify schools, let alone compulsory schools, if it is so automatic that it is easy for people to at least duplicate the academic accomplishments of schools. Furthermore, if there is a problem of socialization for our children resulting from their not being with their peers for seven hours of the day, that problem is caused by the other children being forced to be in school. But why this ubiquitous concern for socialization?

Socialization is the process of learning how to be sociable. It happens when people are together socializing, and it is a fairly inevitable result of growing up, unless a child is severely isolated. The issue, then, is not socialization, but *good* socialization. Does *good* socialization happen at/through schools? Do the ageism, competition and quietude of schools, the separation of children from the ongoing activities of their communities and families, the second-hand learning of schools, the long bus rides, the dominance of learning activities by a few 'certified' adults, and the mass classes and playgrounds produce *good* socialization? Children actually spend little time being sociable in any significant way during a typical school day (co-operative learning is called 'cheating'), and much of the socialization is fiercely competitive and controlled. One person put our complaint this way: 'Schools turn children into kids'. They take responsible, capable persons and turn them into negative gangs which are over-and-against the system and each other. We expect and force children to be kids (brats), and thus they become.

The socialization our children experience is different from what other children experience during school hours, but it is not significantly different at other times. Our children play regularly with other children outside of school. They regularly encounter a variety of persons in a variety of real life contexts and socialize with them. We contend that this is better socialization than the typical school-bound child receives.

FEAR OF CHILDREN

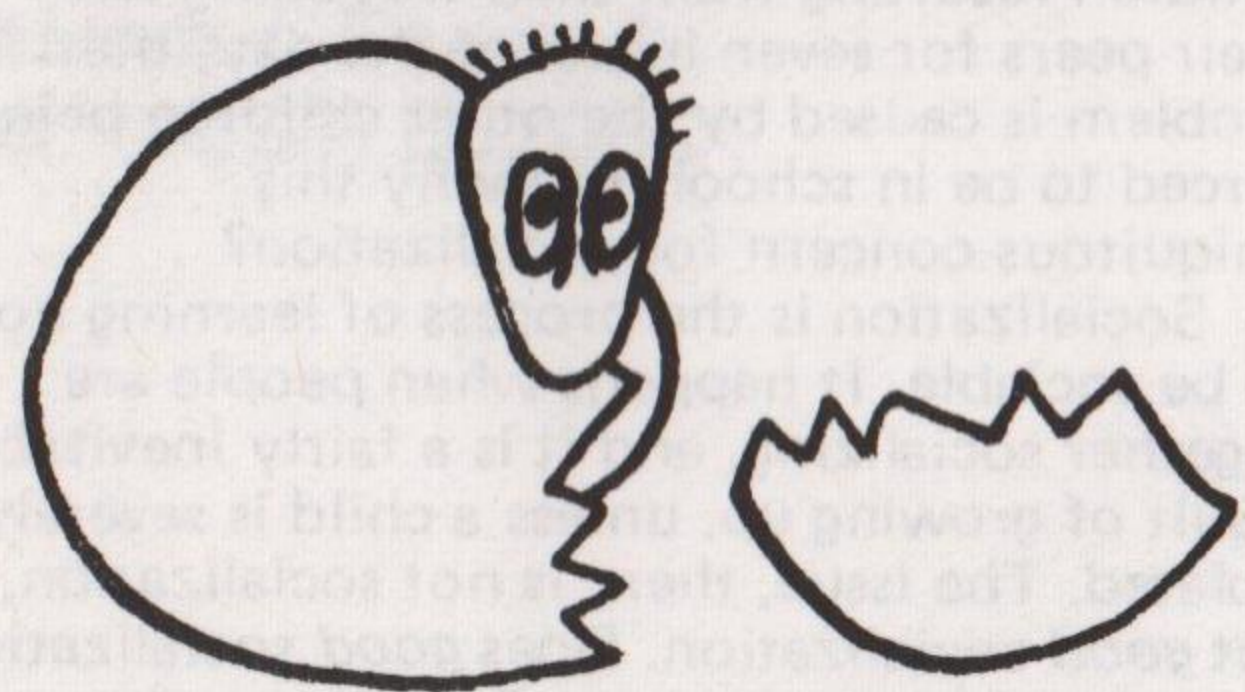
Underneath the surface of this concern runs a fear—a fear of children couched in terms of fear *for* children. We are afraid of what children will become if we do not force them to learn, to conform, to become 'prepared for adulthood'. A number of traditions converge on this point. In the Protestant tradition children are devils needing shaping; we established compulsory public schools to 'melt' the late 19th and 20th century immigrants into our 'pot'; we created schools to condition children to be able to tolerate adult jobs as factory workers, and the Liberal tradition argues for the best liberal education for every child.



This fear of/for children is based on biological reality—human offspring *learn* most of their distinctively human traits—but it is also rooted in great confusion. Children are not inactive, nor are they anti-social. They want to be like us, and they work hard to be so, succeeding to an incredible extent, given a chance. Several recent developments in

continued

educational theory have come (back) to this fact. Some educators now contend that the *best* way to help a child learn to read (do math, study nature, converse intelligently, etc.) is to expose her/him to significant models who manifest the desired behaviour. Translated, this means that if you read with enthusiasm as a central part of your life, your children will be readers (if you relate closely to them).



The fear, then, is about ourselves: Adults are afraid of what children will find if they look to them (as parents, friends, neighbours) as models. Consequently, we train and hire specialists in child care and education (schooling) to make up for (hide) our inadequacies. Of course, we all lack various skills, knowledge, good habits, etc. and others can provide our children with better models in certain ways than we can. That is not the issue. The issue is that we find it necessary to have schools do so much of what we could provide ourselves, and we force people to avail themselves of these services.

We often talk to people who say, 'Well, you can do that because you've been to college, but I couldn't. . .'. We felt the same sense of inadequacy two years ago; but as a result of our experiences, our views are greatly changed. We believe most people could teach a child most anything, if they set their minds to it. We simultaneously overrate and under-rate ourselves; children do the learning, and they give us all kinds of messages about when they want our help and what kind of help they want. But we can provide our children with the help they need when they need it, either directly ourselves, or by helping them find the needed resources. Just as children do not become socialized in a vacuum. Our communities are filled with resources, including masses of potential teachers who have never exercised/developed their abilities to educate because they are not *certified*.

In my research on schools I have found no studies which show a positive correlation between certification and teaching ability. Becoming certified may enhance a person's



ability to manage a classroom, make lesson plans, or understand school administration, but there seems to be no evidence that 'teacher training' makes people good teachers.

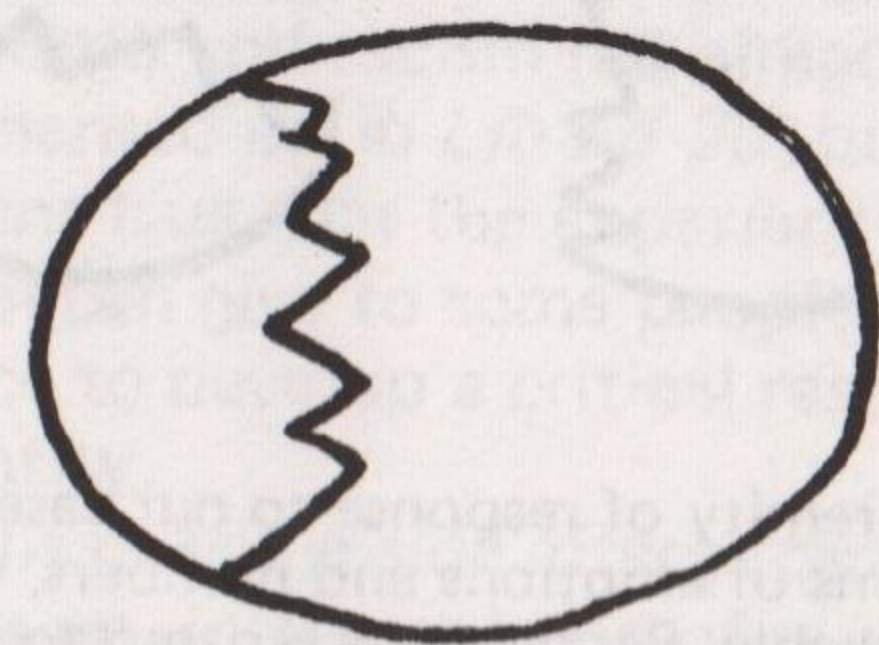
WHAT WILL MOTIVATE THEM?

Our experiences have led us to some conclusions about the beliefs people have about the *motivation structure* of children. We are asked repeatedly how children will learn anything if they are not compelled to do so. Our experiences with our children show that they want to learn, and to a great extent, they want to know what we want them to know. When there has been a 'motivation problem' it has

resulted from *our* expecting things of them of which they were incapable or which did not fit their educational development. For example, Erik showed no great interest in formal math during his sixth year. In his seventh year he reached a point where he was able and interested in arithmetic, and in a few months he learned the basic arithmetical functions, basic set theory, a great deal about number logic and quite a bit of algebra and geometry. His learning verifies several educational truths for us: People learn best when they're interested in something, when it is practical for their lives, and when there are others around who share their interest and/or are willing to help.

Through education as it is generally practiced in America, people develop an 'extrinsic motivation structure', one based on rewards extrinsic to the activity. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of this institutional legacy in molding the contours of our culture. We learn something not because of the intrinsic rewards of the learning, but because of the extrinsic rewards we will receive (good grades, a diploma, praise, etc.); we do jobs not because of the intrinsic values inherent in doing a job well, but because of the extrinsic values gained from doing the job (money, usually); we even are nice to people mainly because of extrinsic rewards. It is very difficult to see clearly, let alone to understand, an alternative to this motivation structure. Most people in our culture believe that humans are 'basically greedy', which is another way of talking about our extrinsic motivation structure.

Anthropologists have a difficult time understanding and describing cultures which have alternative motivation structures. But it is not impossible to understand or change one's motivation structure. Many people are discovering the intrinsic values of people, things, and experiences, and are being increasingly motivated by these values. If we are to change from a consumptive, competitive, destructive and harsh culture to a more humane and ecological one, we must change our basic way of relating to the world, and we believe that an important way to begin this cultural alteration is to take children out of schools.



A POWERFUL SYSTEM, BUT . . .

It is difficult to overemphasize the power of the educational system in our country today. The system has slapped us, and many people like ourselves, with little effort, and it takes a courageous (and unusual) judge to go contrary to this power. Few people have the personal resources it takes to fight such a large and complex system. Yet this system is extremely vulnerable. From both the local board and the DPI staff we heard concerns about the 'land-slide' which would occur if we were allowed to educate our son outside the system ('Let one child out of the door and they'll all run away.') And at our second hearing before the DPI the state superintendent spent more than an hour asking us for our recommendations on how they might improve/save an obviously faltering institution. It may sound naive, but our experience has convinced us that this institution is run by ordinary people who are very insecure in their power (someone who really has power doesn't have to brandish it).

Some leftists, as well as the average Americans, oppose de-schooling, claiming that it is Romantic idealism. Actually, de-schooling is both very American and very radical. Its roots are in the positive anarchist tradition—the tradition of people doing for themselves

by working together. It is a radically egalitarian philosophy in that it recognizes that everyone is a teacher just as everyone is a learner, but it also sees through the false egalitarianism which ignores real differences of interest, ability, and knowledge between people. Non-schooling is a very old human tradition: most cultures have not had compulsory education for most of human history. The next few years will be very telling concerning the future of de-schooling. People in the schooling system are beginning to realize how radically different our society would be if compulsory schooling were eliminated, and they are running scared.

Bob and Linda Sessions

MOST TEACHERS STILL BORING reveals London academic

'Teachers, Ideology and Control; A Study in Urban Education' by Gerald Grace. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £4.95 paperback.

Popular education in Britain came into being overdue and deformed, and subsequent attempts at reform have failed to cover up the scars. In this book, Gerald Grace, in the critical sociologist's dispassionate tone, shows first how conflicting demands by middle-class educationalists like Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth formed a system of elementary schools aiming to make their pupils 'rational', efficient and 'cultured'—that is, they were to reject socialism, produce as much as the Prussian working class, and love both poetry and the class system. At the same time, a new, highly schooled workforce came into existence, the elementary school teachers, educators of the people. In order that these men and women should accept the individualism of their masters, and not the collectivism of their working-class background, astute principals, like Derwent Coleridge of St. Mark's Training

College, saw that career-structures had to be created for them. Others perceived the dangers of allowing these agents of symbolic control the autonomy implied by making teaching a profession, and ensured that the training colleges kept their students free from doubt as to the value of the curriculum, of control, even of knowledge itself as those institutions conceived of them. They turned them out confident in their role of purveyors to the working class of a superior culture. Some teachers in the early 20th century tried to counter dominant conceptions of their role, first through the NUT, then in the Teachers' Labour League, which tried to interest the Labour Party in curriculum as well as the structure of education, but by the end of the 1920s, such efforts had failed. In 1927 Conservative Teachers' Associations were formed to 'combat the teaching of Socialism and Communism in schools'. They appear to have been very successful.

Grace asks how far things have changed. He surveys current ideological debate about education, ranging from Rhodes Boyson to Chris Searle, 'Libertarian Teacher' being dealt with somewhere in the middle (political exponents of the middle ground take note). His treatment of the anarchist critique of schooling can be described as fair, except in jumbling up Illich, and Gintis's criticisms of him, with more truly radical libertarians. It can be patronising though, viz. "The messages of libertarianism . . . have nevertheless captured the imagination of some young teachers . . ." (p.92). He is surely correct, if hardly guilty of a fresh insight, in observing that "While it is difficult to imagine the libertarian ideology can make a very great impact on bureaucratised urban school systems which are firmly established, it remains an active, fertile and provocative source of alternatives to



the conventional wisdom . . ." Or to put it another way, anarchists may not be able to take over county hall, but they can write some good slogans.

The ideological debate has widened considerably since Derwent Coleridge's day—some teachers have even read Marx—but how far is the practice, and even more the critical practice of schooling affected? To find out, Grace studied the ideas a number of teachers, labelled by the heads of 10 London comprehensives as 'good', had about their role. A moment's reflection on what sort of people this is likely to involve should dampen any expectations and avoid disappointment when you read the transcribed interview material. There are a few liberals, even a Marxist English teacher, and one head even believed in the existence of the class struggle, but then he'd read Engels when doing History at university. Most of the teachers interviewed, though, believed in discipline, loyalty, tough-mindedness, organization and sundry other apparently unchanging pedagogic virtues, all these being considered efficacious for pupils suffering, so the teachers say, from more cultural deprivation than Bernstein could ever dream of.

Thus, while controls are far more subtle than before, the major ones being 'professionalism', examination boards and what are referred to as 'situational constraints', few teachers identified by heads as good are touched by radical debate, and many take firm stands against teachers who 'want to destroy things (like speech day)', 'dress like the 6th years in all the modern gear', who are 'airy-fairy waffly people' and who join 'way out and rather militant groups' (like *Rank and File* or *IS*). Such radicals as there are—and there are of course more than Kay-Shuttleworth could have tolerated—are in junior positions and are vulnerable to criticism from their

superiors. So despite the lack of the explicit controls of the 19th century, both at training college and in schools where payment was by results, teacher autonomy is still very much constrained. Grace concludes that "Such controls may have currently no very clear, conscious or unitary origin, but their existence serves a conservative function. The particular irony of the situation is that members of an occupational group who are, by their own rhetoric, engaged in explaining the world . . . are to an important extent precluded from doing this in relation to their own situation". In particular, they do not see their function as in any way political, since they have come to view the mixing of politics with education as unprofessional, and so perceive their role in isolation from any social and political context. The business of teaching, especially its content are seen in a similarly unproblematic way.

Grace believes that in-service training can further a critical stance, and so legitimizes the Open University course for which this book is intended as a reader. If enough teachers undertake critical reading, they *may* come to challenge dominant constructs of the good teacher and of knowledge. But he is aware too that ideology alone is not enough to achieve a widespread radicalisation of teachers, and that changes in the work situation such as redundancy or greater accountability are also a precondition. While headteachers may have preserved for the nation, or at least its youth, attitudes and ideas appropriate to the educational climate of the 19th century, the education system as a whole has been liberal, and its weakly centralized pattern of authority has enabled teachers to be beguiled by the notion of professionalism, with its promise of control over one's labour, and to ignore their lack of any real autonomy and their utter powerlessness as individuals. As teachers become increasingly proletarianized, their appeals for admission to the status of full members of the bourgeoisie, along with lawyers, doctors and other 'professionals' become all the more strident.

Perhaps a short, sharp dose of something really unpleasant will, for once, have some effect. Grace's book shows it will have to be very sharp.

J.M.C.

On the contrary...

WE ARE ALL BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

Sexuality & Disability

Friends: "You will never sexually satisfy a woman!" "Have you considered using a prostitute—they are quite used to dealing with men with peculiar sexual problems!" "Have you thought about a gay relationship?" Doctor: "Try this cream—it should deaden the glans of the penis." "Ah, well, if that didn't work I don't know what to suggest. Strange though, that cream usually works very well as a local anaesthetic!"

"You know it never ceases to amaze me how rigid people's views are about handicapped people. I happened to be talking to someone a few days ago about a friend of mine who lived with me in K... House. I was saying that she was having a year off because she'd had a bit of an upset when this bloke she was going out with decided he didn't want to see her any more. At this, the person I was talking to said "But I thought everyone in K... House was in wheelchairs... It surprised me even more because the person was only 21 years old. I could have understood it from someone older, and also she is a nurse and her husband a social worker! What hope is there if people you expect to be enlightened say things like that?"

"We are discreet and careful about making contact, and always respect the disabled gay's wishes, as disabled people are vulnerable and often do not wish their homosexuality known to parents, friends or staff. They fear an adverse and unpleasant reaction to the knowledge, and then, being disabled, might not be able to move out of what had become an unfriendly or unhappy environment... One member sadly seems to have retreated further since she was first in touch with us; she now fears relatives may open her mail when she is ill, so now stipulates that 'lesbian' and 'gay' are not mentioned in letters... [then there is] this fallacy that disabled people are never fully grown up... for instance we have found that even a social worker could not understand why a disabled woman wanted to leave home and set up in her own flat;... the truth that she was gay and hoped eventually to share her life with another would have been beyond comprehension... when another member in her late forties mentioned to her social worker that she was gay the immediate response was to offer her 'cure treatment'."

"One thing that I am not is dead from the chest down. There is more to feeling than being able to feel the prick of a pin... I believe that once you've come to terms with your disability, by that I mean that it has ceased to be the dominant problem, then your desires, hopes, ambitions, emotions, frustrations are exactly the same as everyone else's and it seems that it is at this point that the disability starts becoming a problem for other people—prejudice. Yet it always seems as though the problem comes full circle and is placed squarely upon the disabled person's shoulders for after all it is their fault that they are handicapped."

This article is written from the viewpoint of disabled people whose sexual desires and emotions are just like everybody else. We would like to be accepted or rejected on the basis of our personalities and not by our disability. We do not want nor feel ourselves to be something "special" nor are we interested in emotional "blackmail trips" to make you feel "sorry" for us!

What we would like to see though, especially in schools, is a greater emphasis on the importance of an individual's personality, to help counteract the emphasis in the mass media on one's appearance or "image". This is because, in spite of all the efforts of feminists and Men Against Sexism groups we still live in a very sex orientated society in which the possession of certain physical features are considered essential if you are going to have a successful sex and love life.

The pressure to measure yourself against these physical standards is very high in peer groups, especially as it is reinforced daily by the media and the practical experiences of the members of the group. Thus if you are considered to be an "attractive or handsome" person, in spite of how you may feel yourself about your appearance, you become aware at an early age that your physical looks can be put to "good use". It also becomes equally clear that if you are "ugly, plain or disabled" it will be that much more difficult to get a mate, especially if you too have absorbed the values of the media and only want to go out with the "beautiful" or the "handsome".

What needs to be emphasized is that we are all potentially beautiful and lovable, irrespective of our physical appearance or mental condition. We all have positive and creative traits that if stimulated and developed can turn us

into people whose company is sought after and with whom it is a pleasure to spend a few hours, days, or one's entire life. It then becomes irrelevant whether we are beautiful, ugly, handsome or plain and equally whether we are able bodied or disabled. The only thing that matters is our own unique personality, individuality and creativity.

Of course as disabled people we will have our own special physical and/or mental problems and some of us will have difficulty adjusting to the restriction or limitation of our sexual abilities, especially if we have become disabled after enjoying a "normal" sex life. But these are problems that can easily be overcome with a little sensitivity and understanding or ideally with compassion (not to be confused with pity!) and good old fashioned love.

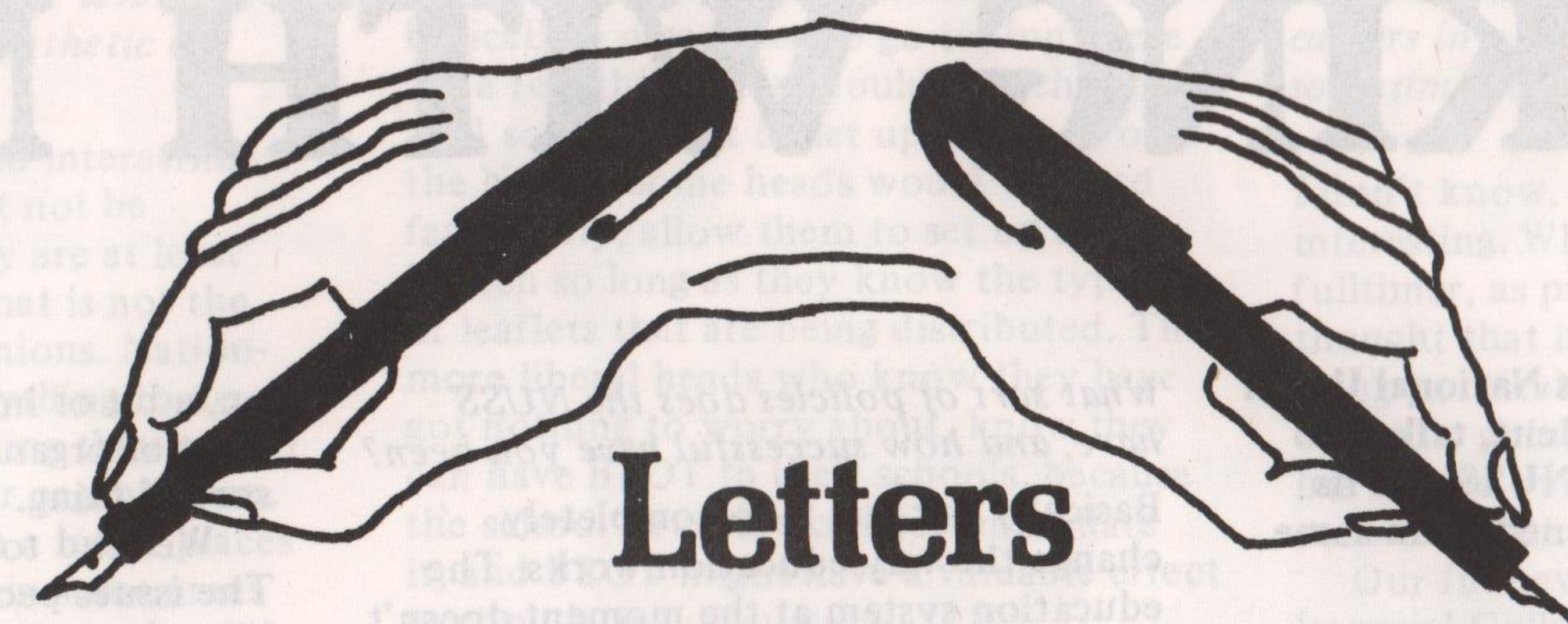
What needs to be avoided though is the ghetto existence of so many disabled groups and all the walls that are built up to avoid being hurt by "outsiders". In many relationships there are obvious advantages if one's partner or friends don't have the same disability as oneself. To help achieve this we need to break down the prejudice and social ostracism that some disabled groups suffer from, so that social mixing across all "barriers" can take place on the basis of shared mutual interests and not simply because of a particular disability.

"deaf always with all deafs people why because all deafs people is hate to hearing people because hearing people always pick on deaf and always talking about and laughter on sign language deaf and hearing people always to deaf is DUMMY and MUTE so deaf don't like called DUMMY & MUTE & DUMB... This morning I went go to bus stop so one boy & girls is backwards & mental and 4 people is laughter & cheeky words on backwards & mental people but I have very angry with 4 people because I feeling sorry for backward & mental people. I said "NOT LAUGHTER" to 4 people.

"... most people find wheelchairs cumbersome things but to me it is my legs so therefore it only becomes awkward when it is a problem for other people, 'feeling awkward' vibrations are very quickly picked up, then you know it's either time to take a positive 'I'm in charge' line, or just admit defeat and leave. This is why I think outside electric chairs are so marvelous because control over yourself is extended that much further and it is this control over life which is so important and yet is a reality for so few disabled people..."

DISABILITIES UNLIMITED, 22 Dane Road, Margate, Kent CT9 2AA. Tel: Thanet (0843) 25902.

Many thanks to the following for their help and support with this article: Judy (tetraplegic), Loraine (severely deaf), Elsa of GEMMA (paraplegic), Ian (partial paraplegic), Paddy of N.U.D. (deaf), Leila and son Frank (blind with slight brain damage), and all our able bodied friends, including Pennie, Greg and Davy.



Dear Lib Ed,

Your article 'beginning to discover' (Lib Ed 26) attempts to prompt discussion on sexuality and sex roles and this letter was prompted by talking to a member of your collective at the first Men Against Sexism conference in Manchester this April.

Firstly, a few words about that. The Men's movement arouses a lot of suspicion in the Women's movement and any 'oppressor' who takes an interest in the mode of his oppression, in this case sexism, deserves to have his motives and actions carefully scrutinised. The dilemma facing the Men's movement at the moment is do we concentrate on the sexism within ourselves or are we confident enough to become a political organisation with issues to fight. The conference didn't make any decisions, maybe we were all too wary about setting up a hierarchical male model for ourselves, surely the type of organisation we hope to overthrow.

How does the individual tackle sexism? The order of preference so far established seems to be self, friends and work. The area of work brings me to the second part of this letter and it is to let you know about an organisation just formed in London which is trying to take some action against sexism in education. It's called CASSOE (Campaign against sexism and sexual oppression in education) and is open to anyone who wishes to CASSOE; teachers, kids, parents and anyone else who is interested.

I can't write much about what it has done so far, a conference, an open meeting, a few workshops and a newsletter is all that has happened. However, I feel the potential is enormous. At the conference, many isolated teachers gained a lot of strength from knowing that they weren't alone in their individual day to day battles with the sexism of colleagues, pupils and authorities in schools. So far workshops have met on gays in the unions, parents, primary and secondary education.

We meet again in May and I hope some of us can write an article for the next edition of Lib Ed. Meanwhile here is the address for anyone interested in the organisation. Please send stamps or donations as we have only just started.

CASSOE,
7 Pickwick Court,
London SE9 4SA

all the best,
Love,
Mel.

PS. I wrote this without consulting anyone else in CASSOE. I wish to emphasise that the link I have made in the letter between the Men's movement and CASSOE is purely personal as I am a member of both. The original conference that CASSOE sprang out of was sponsored by various London NUT branches, Gay groups, Lesbian Left, Rank and File, Spare Rib and many more, but was not sponsored by any men's groups.

Dear Lib Ed,

I'm returning 5 Lib Eds you recently sent me. I'm keeping one and enclose 26p's worth of postage stamps. Hope that's OK.

Why am I returning the others? Well, because I feel more and more distant from the political content and thinking behind Lib Ed and the Libertarians. I wouldn't feel right selling them.

There are many reasons—it's based upon various ideas almost like a morality and sets out from the ideas rather than from a situation kids and teachers and parents find themselves in vis-a-vis education and schooling and how they struggle with it on a day to day basis. It has its roots in a post-1968 student movement divorced from working class culture and struggle (less so in France but it's still there); it has a middle class imposition about it all, like a serious students mag. which is probably reflected in its readership. Take the Asian hostel article in the last issue. I found it interesting, but also lacking in any sense of critical awareness. It was like the goodies and baddies all over again. A total defence of the hostel and the woman in it under the guise of choice for the individual (i.e. to get married—what a lot of liberalism!) and a total attack upon the traditional patriarchs of the Asian community. It lacked sensitivity and political awareness all round.

As if it's freedom for women in western styles and not the Asian community. Some Asian women talking on the telly recently talked against the restrictions of their husbands and fathers, but said also that they didn't want the life of western women, sold in consumerism, pranced in false smiles, slaves in the factories and isolated at home. Don't get me wrong. It's great that Asian women are coming out and fighting back, but it's all part of an ongoing process—that of working people struggling against the various forms of exploitation and repressiveness of British capitalist society. You get a very different sort of picture when placing an issue in, supposedly, no political, social and economic context from one in which you do. And it doesn't have to be boring, even though I know a lot of lefty stuff is.

Otherwise let's all carry on talking about tea, coffee, zinc, ores, bananas, etc. etc and how marvellous and needy they all are, and forget about the bases on which we get them by occupying vast areas of other countries by vast multi-nationals, exploiting workers over there with starvation wages and terrible conditions and housing, destroying their land, their culture, etc. etc. So let's not get like the commercials next time we drink a cup of tea. A cup of tea? YOU MEAN, NEXT TIME YOU DO ANYTHING, EVEN THINK—WE DO IT ON THE BACKS OF OTHERS.

And I tend to think that only the organised working class and peasants in the third world are going to liberate themselves from our wealth and we can all help by telling folk what's happening out there (e.g. Zimbabwe) and being active in support groups and telling kids at school.

And it's on this basis that racism has emerged and developed within this country, and that immigration and controls are here and

attacks upon their communities, and thus their own solutions. And so too with women and gays.

But these movements, as the ones with kids and parents and schooling will only be defended and eventually revolutionised by the development of the organised working class on all these socialist fronts. Big words, I know, but there's little space here to elaborate.

Suffice it to say, in education, which is embedded with the mask of repression (i.e. capitalist socialisation), and so performed and supported by the vast majority of teachers, the only hope for any fundamental changes in education is going to be initially the older school students and parents.

We've already seen the growth of an independent schools students union emerging. It's still in its infancy, much of it middle class led and facing incredible difficult problems organising itself.

But an independent, socialist working class parents movement has yet to emerge, although there have been some hopeful struggles.

I could go on and on about these things, but I won't now.

Perhaps I should try to write something a bit more comprehensively about some of these things and send it to you. No promises, but I'll try.

Take care and keep struggling,

Manuel Moreno
Nottingham



TALKING WITH NUSS

John Munford, this year's National Union of School Students president, talked to Graham Wade about the NUSS and its paper BLOT, already banned from some schools.

How many members do you have at the moment?

Our membership figure for last July was 10,000, but we have grown slightly and expect this July's figure to be over 10,000. We are based mainly in cities, because it is obviously easier if people have other schools close by. We've a lot of members in London (about 2,000) as well as in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds and Manchester. And we are beginning to get something together in Birmingham. In fact we are pretty well spread over the whole country, which means we can be fairly thin in places!

We have about 250 groups that are actually doing anything. Out of these, I'd imagine there are about 80 or 90 that are doing worthwhile things: selling BLOTs, getting things together, trying to change their schools.

Only 40% of our members are in political organisations: liberals, communists, far left groups, we've even had Tories—which is very good, because we want it to be that sort of broad organisation. The vast majority of our members know very little about political parties, they have just got it sussed out what they want to see happening in their schools. I think that it is a very healthy situation because we don't want to be just an organisation with a political axe to grind. We want to be an organisation run by schools students, one to actually cater for their needs.

Until this year, the majority of our activists were middle class, older secondary school students. It is quite obvious why: if middle class kids coming from a liberal background, where they are actually treated like human beings, go to a school where they are shat upon, and they have the articulation to deal with it then they will get involved with NUSS. That is very much what I went through. The important thing is that the sort of people we are involving aren't alienating the other people NUSS has got to get over to.

The average age of our activists has dropped by about 2 years this year, to between 14 and 15. This means we are involving kids of 11 years, which is an enormous step forward, because we used to be a group of just 6th formers. I also think we are involving a lot more working class kids, blacks and girls. In fact our two full-timers next year may well be women.

What sort of policies does the NUSS have, and how successful have you been?

Basically our aim is to completely change the way education works. The education system at the moment doesn't seem to be based on catering for people's needs, or developing people's talents. It seems to be very closely linked to maintaining the status quo, and very closely linked to fulfilling the needs of industry. We want to create a system which is democratic, in that school students, their teachers and their parents can control what actually goes on in schools. We want to eliminate petty rules. We are constantly being told that we live in a democracy, so we want to learn how to use democratic structures, so let's start by making our own schools democratic.



SOMEDAY the SCISSORS will be recognized as the SYMBOL of our educational system!

We are too small to make much impact on a national scale, and we decided to ditch national campaigning at our last national conference. However, having said that there are issues like racism, sexism and youth unemployment that we try to cover, particularly in BLOT. We support School Kids Against the Nazis who produce a paper, and we've got NUSS people in that, so we feel that is the organisation to fight racism. Generally though, racism is an easy issue to get involved in. It's easy for white kids to say we want to combat racism. We've got one enemy in the National Front, and one aim in wanting a multicultural community. Things like Rock Against Racism gigs are fun and very successful in helping the movement against racism. The success of the ANL in mobilising 80,000 young people on the streets is incredible. A Rock Against Sexism movement has been started, which is fairly progressive, and through it we try to show up sexism and help people to combat it.

Youth unemployment is a problem of immense importance, but all our small organisation can do is support the Campaign Against Youth Unemployment, and hopefully in future issues of BLOT we can have an article on how to sign

on, a bit of information on the dole, and a list of organisations to contact. That sort of thing.

We tend to concentrate on local issues. The issues people can actually relate to, like corporal punishment, school uniforms, being slung out at breaktime, and ageist issues: kids being patronised by older people.

In Pimlico we had a very successful action at the beginning of the year. School students refused to wear school uniform. The result of that protest was that the school authorities have agreed to phase out uniform, and there will be no more uniformed people coming in next year.

Some women school students in Devon protested and got the school to spend £250 on cricket and football equipment so that girls can play games that have traditionally been associated with the boys at the school. Also the girls have been allowed to wear trousers.

We have seen quite a lot of activity in Barnet. There was a protest and Danny Ashton went to school wearing a skirt. Unfortunately that wasn't successful in terms of actually winning that particular point, but it was very successful in building up NUSS at that school.

We were in action at the NUT conference this year. People from Leeds and Humberside picketed outside, gave out leaflets about corporal punishment and sold BLOT. It may be coincidence but it appears to have been quite successful as the NUT decided to have a debate about corporal punishment in schools.

We made quite a few steps forward with the Department of Education and Science. We've had meetings on corporal punishment and kept up quite a bit of correspondence. Our relationships are quite friendly at the moment, despite BLOT.



I don't want to tick off the minutes on my rough book anymore. Even that gets boring after two years. The eyelids start drooping and the hands go up in front of the faces to hide the gently lolling heads. Here we go again — the bell rings — slow plodding by those of us who've been here more than a year.

from BLOT 3

What about your acceptance level? You say the DES is quite sympathetic but the NUT is not.

It is quite an awkward and interesting situation. The DES might not be favourable to us, but they are at least prepared to talk to us. That is not the case with the teachers' unions. Nationally they do not want anything to do with us. They do everything they can to destroy and get rid of our organisation. Locally, teachers in quite a lot of places support NUSS, although in some areas it is banned. They accept that school students should get together and have a say in how schools are run. So there is quite a contradiction: nationally everybody except the teaching unions support us, but locally teachers support us and the LEAs want to ban us, as in Humberside.

Head teachers have an incredibly aggressive attitude towards us, and are doing absolutely everything in their power to completely obliterate us: banning NUSS in schools, victimising kids who all they do is sell BLOT, like Neil Gardner in Luton who got expelled for selling BLOT. That's the sign of the ridiculous powers still vested in head teachers, which can be completely abused under the 1944 Education Act.

We are still very much an organisation faced with hundreds of contradictions, both within itself and in its attitudes to the outside. We are very schizophrenic, we play very respectable with the DES and argue very much on their terms, but at the same time producing BLOT, going to a school, having exactly the same arguments, with exactly the same issues but just having different tactics for dealing with it.

What are your tactics? How do you deal with victimisation for instance?

Basically it is a question of being involved. It is unfortunate when we do not know what is being planned, because when we do, we can advise them on the right course of action to take, based on our past unfortunate experiences.

We've got on to MPs in the past, I've written to Shirley Williams, and informed the local press. The press is a very powerful weapon. Virtually all publicity for NUSS is good, we don't have to worry. Heads do have to worry about their school being shown in anything other than a perfect light. But it can be used in the wrong way and can force heads into a far more intransigent position than they would otherwise be forced into. The one thing we are powerful in is propaganda. That's why the response to BLOT has been a success.

Our hands are pretty tied, and there is no point in denying that. So we try and advise people as to what is likely to happen, to adopt the right tactics and then rarely do people get victimised.

In some schools the best thing to do is to form a group of 3 or 4, go to the

head teacher, say that the school is basically a nice place to go to, but there are a few things you would like changed. And so you want to set up a branch of the NUSS. Some heads would respond favourably, allow them to set up a branch so long as they know the type of leaflets that are being distributed. The more liberal heads who know they have got nothing to worry about, know they can have BLOT in their schools, because the school structure can accommodate it, and BLOT might have a valuable effect in stimulating discussion.

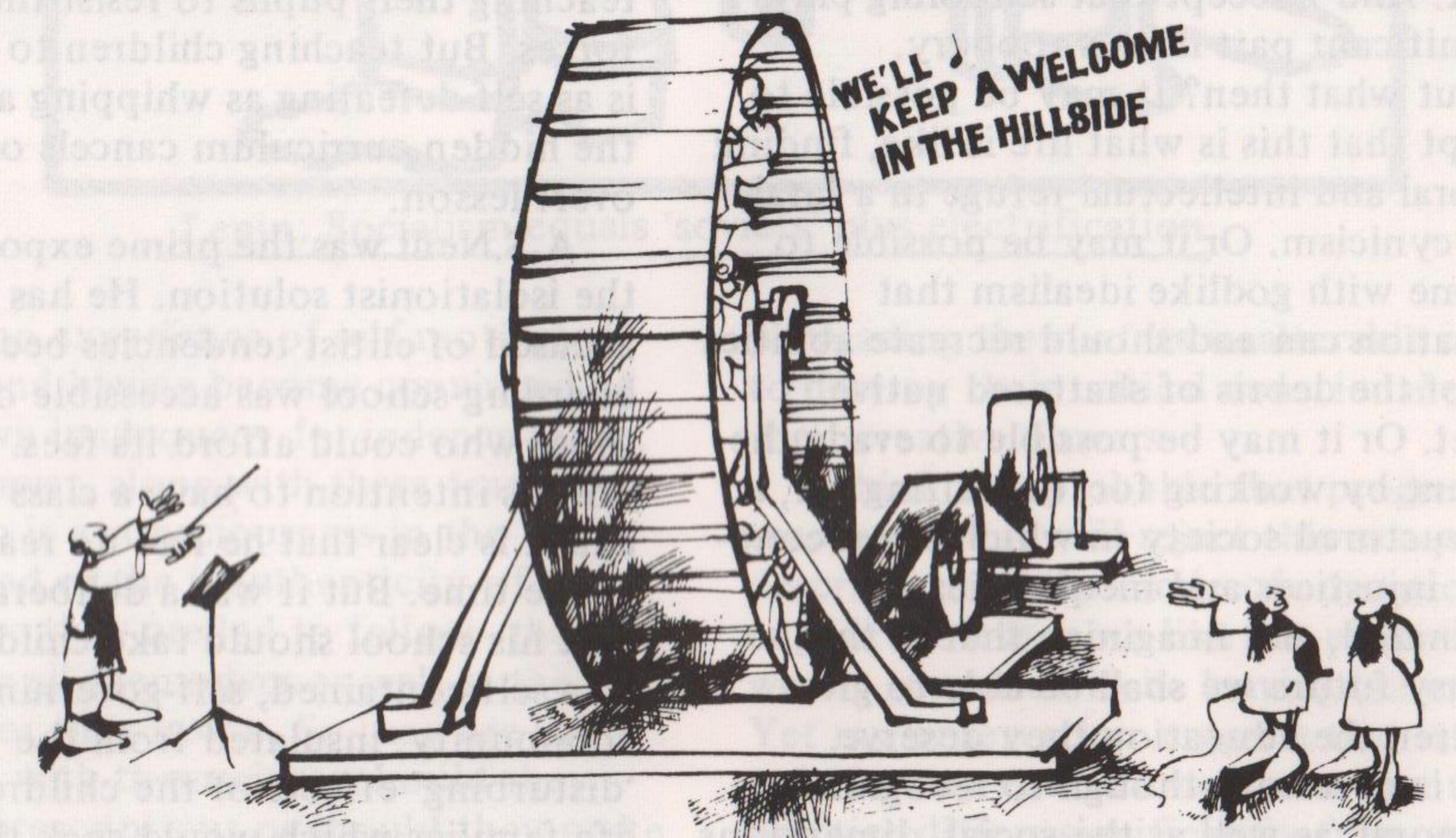
In other schools it won't work like this, and school students do not think they can openly sell BLOT, but at the same time want to use BLOT to get through to the school machine. We don't want it to be a wishy washy useless organ. So there are problems there.

Another way is to do things under the counter, denying being associated with NUSS. But forming together with

Is the NUSS a stepping stone for future careers in politics, as the NUS is sometimes considered?

I don't know. That whole topic is very interesting. When I decided to stand as a fulltimer, as president of NUSS I actually thought that if I was going to do anything political in the future, this is certainly going to help. And I think it has helped because it gives you experience of fighting the establishment.

Our first ever president is now the Imperial College Student Union president, and we have had a lot of people who were active in NUSS a couple of years ago, and now you will meet them at NUS conferences as delegates of some sort or other. However this year we have changed our structure to a large extent and we are very much less into pretending that we are some sort of budding training ground, like a junior NUS.



"Of course it's always been one of our basic premises that a happy treadmill is an efficient treadmill."

petitions (we have a duplicator, so we can run off petitions) and tell the heads how you feel that way. Then take BLOT to school, and introduce NUSS and say what it's about. That strategy has had the most success.

What would you say are the main problems school students have to face?

I know people who have got enormous problems—they want to get A levels—they want to study but can't afford to. I feel that the problems of people younger than that are even closer to reality. I mean kids of 13/14 in NUSS have to worry about letters going to their houses with NUSS stamped on the envelope, about how their parents react to that, about what time they get in at night, about having no money to spend, about getting involved in anything vaguely political, about being beaten up at school, about their clothes. They can't even go out of school at lunchtime. There are plenty of kids who have to shiver for 5 years out in the playground, and can't even go to the toilet at lunchtimes! These are real problems.

NUSS has published 3 issues of their paper BLOT. Despite sales of 8000 it is not self-supporting, and has been subsidized by the Gulbenkian Foundation. Issue 2 was criticised by the NUT and the Sun as pornographic, and the language used as foul. We think their reply is worth printing.

The recent widespread and often vitriolic criticism of BLOT is typical of the smug attitude of the Popular or Gutter press. It is totally hypocritical of patronising rags like the Sun to attack 'obscene' language when they print pictures and articles which reduce women to mere sex objects.

The advice on sexual matters in BLOT was worthy and most sensible. It was only 'offensive' because it was written in the language of school students, the language of the playground. Any prude who had their petty sensibilities shocked by BLOT would have a fit if they spent even a short time in any school! BLOT's Gulbenkian grant has now run out, and they are desperate for money. You can contact them at NUSS, 302 Pentonville Rd., London N1.

Decodifying Freire

Our self-mystifying culture discourages simplicity, confusing it often with the merely simplistic. So Rousseau's startling cry, 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains' is apt to be dismissed as a romantic over-simplification. Yet that is my starting point: I am accepting the obvious, that children are born with qualities and powers that they quickly lose, and that they and we are the poorer for it. And I accept that schooling plays a significant part in this robbery.

But what then? It may be possible to accept that this is what life is like, finding a moral and intellectual refuge in a fatalistic cynicism. Or it may be possible to assume with godlike idealism that education can and should recreate abilities out of the debris of shattered native talent. Or it may be possible to evade the present by working for, or waiting for, a re-structured society in which the second-layer injustices and inequalities are eliminated, and imagining that in this fantasy future we shall be able to give children the education they deserve.

It is necessary though to recognize the moral, as well as the social, dimensions of the problem: that children have a right to freedom. To deprive anyone of freedom is to dehumanize them, because freedom is an essential condition by which we may realize our humanity. Against this is the social reality that simply to leave children to enjoy their freedom may be to leave them prey to other institutionalized forces of enslavement. Historically, there have been two courses of action adopted by those who faced this catch. Some have felt it best to 'teach them to be free': others have constructed a freedom-reserve, protected from the moral and social press-gangs of the world. Rousseau recommended both courses simultaneously. No child would have been more isolated than Emile, even from other children: and few would have had more intensive teaching. The result is that the freedom which Rousseau is credited with having imagined for his pupil would have been, in Rousseau's own words, only the appearance of freedom. Emile was to be a puppet on his tutor's strings, and no child would have grown up more truly enslaved: 'I grant him the appearance of independence', Rousseau wrote of his finished product; 'but he was never in more complete subjection, for his obedience is the result of his will. So long as I could not make the master of

his will I remained the master of his person; I did not take a step from him. Now I sometimes leave him to himself, because I always govern him'.

Politically motivated educators, such as the Spanish anarchist Ferrer and, it seems, the Black Power teachers in US ghetto schools, have tried to educate children for freedom by themselves identifying the forces of oppression and teaching their pupils to resist these forces. But teaching children to be free is as self-defeating as whipping a bully: the hidden curriculum cancels out the overt lesson.

A.S.Neill was the prime exponent of the isolationist solution. He has been accused of elitist tendencies because his boarding-school was accessible only to those who could afford its fees. It was not his intention to have a class school, and it is clear that he had no real choice at the time. But it was a deliberate policy that his school should take children away to a self-contained, self-governing community, insulated from the 'disturbing' effects of the children's anti-life families which would suck them into neurotic relationships and pressure them with guilt-laden authoritarian moral training.

There is much to be learned from the Summerhill demonstration, and from Neill's insistent and basic questioning, and in its historical context this policy of isolation was certainly justifiable. But it is not a solution which many of those who accept his more fundamental premises now feel it correct to adopt. There is a host of reasons for this: modern free-schoolers are more interested in working with the economically poorer sections of society for whom boarding-schools are not feasible, and probably not attractive; they may be conscious of some authoritarian assumptions implicit in the act of taking children to be educated away from such a home community—assumptions which are not necessarily made in removing children from a middle-class non-community; or again, society has developed in such a way that children, and adolescents particularly, are much more aware of, and more a part of, the economic and cultural community—the mass media have played a part in this, and the mass media too make isolation more difficult in any case; further, urban society, for all its evils, has its own educative potential, and whilst

periods of rural retreat have attractive pay-offs and regenerative possibilities, long years of removal would be felt to be irrelevant, artificial and alienating.

So the problem remains: what kind of functional relationship can an adult aim at with a group of adolescents which preserves both their freedom and their relationship with their native community, and what kind of theoretical framework might s/he work within? To pose the problem as one of relationships rather than of institutions is deliberately to assert this as the proper base of educational activity. If an institution is necessary it should grow to fit the relationship.

It is to seek help with this problem that I want to examine the work of Paulo Freire. He has worked primarily with the oppressed peasantry of Latin America and at first sight this seems too dissimilar from the situation of the adolescent in an urban Western society. But I want to suggest analogies and to consider to what extent Freire's analysis and his solutions are adaptable to this First World, the world from which we all grow in our common humanity.

The oppressed and their oppressors

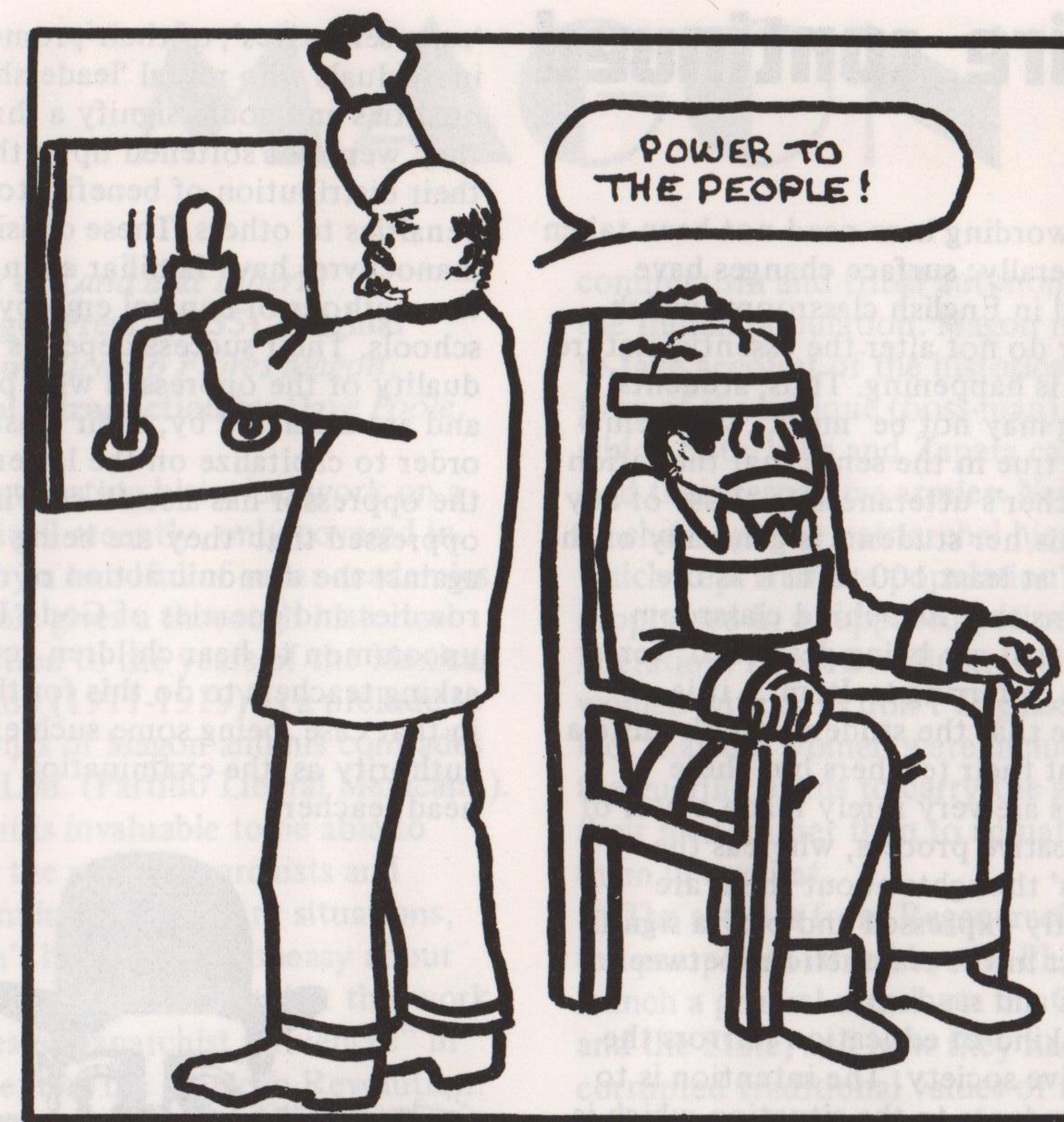
The fundamental social phenomenon of the Third World from which Freire proceeds is a situation of oppression. This takes the form of a more or less violent exploitation of labour and its familiar attendant poverty. But while never disregarding such material consequences, Freire is more concerned to analyse the broader cultural aspects of this situation. Oppression is a process of dehumanization, he asserts, a denial of man's vocation, and the struggle for liberation is a struggle for humanization, for affirming men as persons, re-asserting their dignity and creativity. Dehumanization reduces men to things for the possession of the oppressors and for their use in pursuing their purposes. Following Fromm, Freire describes the basic consciousness which underpins this relationship as 'necrophilic'.

In his more simple language, Neill described the same phenomenon as an 'anti-life society' which, fearing the spontaneity and creativity that is characteristic of humanized living attaches itself to rules that proscribe, and to forms which prescribe mechanistically acceptable and valued behaviour. And

because children, particularly as infants and again as adolescents, are most apt to follow their pro-life urges, these are the people who are most stringently controlled by the anti-life forces. In opposition to this dehumanizing upbringing Neill placed freedom, the anti-thesis of control, as the essence of the pro-life schooling he constructed. For such a school to work he maintained that the adults must be firmly 'on the child's side', with more than an implication that normally the adult is on the other side, against the child. This view of children being under oppression is the first point from which I am constructing an analogy with the situation that Freire writes about.

A closer examination of his analysis of the oppressed and their oppressors makes this analogy increasingly plausible. One of the most significant characteristics of the oppressed is their ambiguity: whilst chafing against their masters they also tend to identify with them and feel a strong attraction towards their way of life. For them, 'to be a man is to be an oppressor. This is their model of humanity.' Unconsciously they 'adhere' to him, they 'house' him; at a certain stage in their existential experience they are 'so submerged in their reality' that it is impossible for them to objectify either themselves or their oppressors. This internalization is so deep that when they do begin to surface, viewing their situation with comparative objectivity, they do not believe in the possibility of its transformation. They feel themselves still dominated by, and dependent upon, the oppressor housed within them, and they accept his view of them as ignorant, good-for-nothing, lazy and unproductive. This lack of confidence in themselves contrasts with their 'diffuse, magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor', and they tend to adopt a fatalistic resignation to their status.

Where this is true, it means that the oppressed may not aspire to liberation: rather, they may try to emulate the oppressor and, for instance, they may prefer to dominate their comrades, or groups of them, rather than seek a constructive solidarity. This fear of freedom is characteristic of the necrophilic society. Naturally the oppressor fears the freedom of the oppressed since this would threaten his domination. But more than this, freedom is alien to his way of life—in the process of dehumanizing others he becomes dehumanized himself. His relationship with the oppressed is based on the imposition of his 'needs', and leads the oppressed not only to follow the prescribed behaviour but to acquire a consciousness that is conditioned by, and conforms to, the prescriber's consciousness. So for the oppressed to eject their internalized image of the oppressor would threaten them with the need for autonomous decision and responsibility: they fear such freedom,



Lenin: Socialism equals 'soviets' plus electrification

having no experience of self-motivated action and having become convinced of their own inadequacy for independence.

However, along with these fears of freedom is a consciousness in the oppressed of the inauthenticity of the existence they are led to follow—they are after all themselves as well as the oppressor they house. So they are in conflict with themselves: should they follow prescriptions or should they make their own choices? should they remain spectators or become actors? Freire insists that it is only they, the oppressed, who can resolve this conflict, and that they can do so only by acts of transformation, based on a critical consciousness of their situation, of the world they inhabit. 'Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift', he writes—an echo of the words of A.S.Neill's great teacher, Homer Lane: 'Freedom cannot be given: it is taken.'

The preservation of oppression

It is against this background that Freire approaches 'the pedagogy of the oppressed', contrasting it with 'the banking concept' of education, as he calls the model adopted by the oppressors in maintaining their domination. In this model it is the teacher's job to make deposits in his/her students who are, as it were, his/her bank account. Education becomes a narration by the teacher whose words, in an 'alienated and alienating verbosity' represent reality as static, compartmentalized and predictable. The teacher's narration is 'knowledge' which the students, as ignorant and empty things, are given. The teacher is supposed to regulate the way in which the world 'enters into' the students and, by

persuading them of its unalterable nature, to destroy their critical consciousness and their creative powers.

I think it is probable that progressive teachers today will reject this as a proper description of the mode of education they engage in: it is more like the education we are supposed to be leaving behind. Yet my observation suggests that it is only in very exceptional cases that actual practice differs significantly from this model. Freire summarizes the banking concept by giving ten of its characteristic features which make a convenient checklist against which to match the average classroom:

1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.
4. The teacher talks and the students listen—meekly.
5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his/her choice, and the students comply.
7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
8. The teacher chooses the programme content and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.
9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his/her own professional authority, which s/he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

The wording here need not been taken quite literally: surface changes have occurred in English classrooms which however do not alter the essential nature of what is happening. Thus, students' listening may not be 'meek', yet Item 4 remains true in the sense that the ration of a teacher's utterances to those of any one of his/her students is generally of the order of at least 100 to 1. It is the intentions that lie behind classroom activity that are being described: for instance, referring to Item 3, it is probable that the students think quite a lot about their teachers but these thoughts are very rarely made a part of the educative process, whereas the teachers' thoughts about them are frequently expressed and play a significant part in the transactions between teachers and students.

This kind of education mirrors the oppressive society. The intention is to adapt students to the situation which is to dominate them by putting them into the role of passive learners of a fixed reality who are being 'helped' to fit into the world as it represented to them, and those who refuse this 'help'—the misfits—are thought of as educational failures. The students are regarded, and must come to regard themselves, not as conscious beings capable of acting on the world, but as 'possessors of consciousness' capable only of receiving 'knowledge' and acting in the world. Verbalistic lessons, reading requirements, the methods for evaluating "knowledge", the distance between the teacher and the taught, the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking.

The tactics of cultural domination

Education, then, is seen as an important part of the conquest of consciousness. Freire describes in some detail the tactics of this conquest as he saw them operating in Brazil both within and outside educational institutions. His descriptions translate into the culture of our schools with only minor adaptations of detail. He classifies these tactics under four heads. The first is the process of depositing myths about the world in the dispossessed—an attempt, in a sense, to destroy the world, or at least a true consciousness of it, so that it is put beyond the reach of objective consideration. Freire lists a score or so of such myths. Some of them fit into our context with little or no change, whilst others need shifting into parallel terms. It is an interesting way of considering the experience of our school students to see how these myths adapt.

The second tactic Freire calls 'divide and rule': he speaks of the way in which the dominant classes interfere with the unions, favouring the more manageable

'representatives'; of their promotion of individuals who reveal 'leadership' qualities and could signify a threat if they were not softened up in this way; of their distribution of benefits to some and penalties to others. These divisive manoeuvres have familiar counterparts in the methods of control employed in schools. Their success depends on the duality of the oppressed who both resist, and are attracted by, their masters. In order to capitalize on the latter sentiment, the oppressor has also to convince the oppressed that 'they are being "defended" against the demonic action of marginals, rowdies and enemies of God'. It is not uncommon to hear children actually asking teachers to do this for them—God, in that case, being some such external authority as 'the examination' or 'the head teacher'.



Both of these tactics so far mentioned are forms of manipulation, but Freire reserves this term specifically for two particular procedures: the use of the myth which spells out to the people the possibility of their own ascent, and secondly, the infusion of authentic types of 'organization' for the people. Both require for success the acceptance of the myth that the dominant elites are working for the good of the people, and in our own context schools are represented as places which open limitless prospects for those who work hard and obey the rules, co-operating with the teachers who are there to help the progress of each individual. With this persuasion too it is possible for a school to organize children into its own structure so that the impression is given that they are vicariously in partnership with those who work for their welfare. More authentic organizations than school councils and year committees, such as the SAU or even the NUSS, have not been welcomed by the schools. The failure of these unions to attract much support from school students bears witness partly to their lack of belief in

their own power to transform the world, partly to their fear of taking action which would demonstrate both to themselves and to others an ejection of the oppressor within and an opposition to the oppressor without, and partly to the success of the tactics of manipulation. Many have been inoculated with the adult appetite for success and believe that their school will help them to achieve it or are convinced that their failure is due to their own inadequacies.

The fourth tactic of domination Freire calls 'cultural invasion', and this is the most significant from my present point of view. The following excerpt from *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, although written in relation to a very different situation, seems quite closely to describe the cycle of our own educational process.

'In this phenomenon the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, and ignoring the potential of the latter, they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression. Whether urbane or harsh, cultural invasion is always an act of violence. As in all the modalities of antidiological* action the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process: those they invade are the objects. The invaders mould; those they invade are moulded. The invaders choose; those they invade follow that choice—or are expected to follow it. The invaders act; those they invade have only the illusion of acting, through the action of the invaders.

Cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards and the goals of the invaders. In their passion to dominate, to mould others to their patterns and their way of life, the invaders desire to know how those they have invaded apprehend reality—but only so that they can dominate the latter more effectively.

For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority . . . [so that] they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders. The values of the latter thereby become the pattern for the former. The more . . . those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them.

Cultural invasion is on the one hand an instrument of domination, and on the other, the result of domination . . . For example, a rigid and oppressive social structure necessarily influences the institutions of child-rearing and education . . . If the conditions which penetrate the home are authoritarian, rigid and dominating, the home will increase the climate of oppression . . . The home atmosphere is continued in the school, where the students soon discover (as in the home) that in order to achieve some satisfaction they must adapt to the precepts which have been set from above. One of these precepts is not to think. Internalizing parental authority through the rigid relationship structures emphasized by the school, these young people tend, when they become professionals, to repeat the rigid patterns in which they were miseducated . . . They are almost unshakably convinced that it is their mission to "give" the people their knowledge and techniques . . . Their

programmes of action include their own objectives, their own convictions, and their own preoccupations. They do not listen to the people but instead plan to teach them how to "cast off their laziness which creates underdevelopment" . . . They regard as equally absurd the affirmation that one must consult the people when organizing the programme content of educational action. They feel the ignorance of the people is so complete that they are unfit for anything except to receive the teaching of the professionals.

When, however . . . those who have been invaded begin to reject this invasion . . . the professionals, in order to justify their failure, say that the members of the invaded group are "inferior" because they are "ingrates", "shiftless", "diseased", or "of mixed blood".

Well-intentioned professionals (those who use invasion not as deliberate ideology but as the expression of their own upbringing) eventually discover that certain of their educational failures must be ascribed . . . to the violence of their own act of invasion. Those who make this discovery face a difficult alternative: they feel the need to renounce invasion, but patterns of domination are so entrenched within them that this renunciation would become a threat to their own identities.

In considering the match of this description with what one knows of the contemporary scene, it is difficult to be sure how far our cultural invasion is succeeding. Certainly there are signs of resistance: the majority of adolescents seem for a time very consciously to avoid 'walking, dressing and talking' like their invaders. But few manage to survive with their own authentic style of living: most content themselves with rather impotent gestures of revolt.

In the last paragraph of the above quotation Freire points towards the problem for teachers posed at the beginning of this essay. To examine his approach to this problem it is necessary to look at the model of education which he sets up in contrast to the 'banking concept'.

Ray Hemmings

* *The pedagogy of the oppressed is essentially a partnership for liberation, and because dialogue amongst those engaged in it is its essential medium, Freire describes this kind of education as 'dialogical'.*



Ray Hemmings discusses this further in the second part of this article, to be published in Lib Ed 28.

A review of *Land and Liberty* (Cienfuegos Press, £2.35). Original writings of Ricardo Flores Magon. Historical introduction by Dave Poole.

A very interesting historical work on a period, until recently, only covered in English by a handful of super-academics. Dave Poole gives a thorough historical introduction to the years of the Mexican Revolution (1911-1919) as a prelude to the writings of Magon and his comrades in the P.L.M. (Partido Liberal Mexicano). Clearly, it is invaluable to be able to estimate the role of anarchists and anarchism in revolutionary situations, but I can't help but feel uneasy about the historical significance that this work attributes to "anarchist influences" in the context of the Mexican Revolution. The PLM itself never seems to have had more than a handful of active supporters; whilst the two main military protagonists in the revolutionary camp—Villa and Zapata, never adopted an anarchist position.

The PLM needs analysing on two levels before we can go on to examine anarchist influences in the mainstream of the revolutionary struggle. Firstly the nature of the PLM revolutionary ideology, and secondly the effect it had, if any, on the course of the revolution in Mexico.

Ricardo Magon founded the revolutionary journal "Regeneracion" in 1900 with his brother Jesus and Camillo Arriaga, who had initiated the formation of Liberal Clubs throughout the country: Arriaga was to split from the Regeneracion group in 1904 on account of Magon's increasingly anti-government stand. Forced into exile in the USA, Regeneracion (now the journal of the newly formed PLM) propagandised for a popular revolution with the motto of "Land and Liberty", whilst publicising the machinations of the power-politicians in Mexico City. As far as I can gather from the selection of Magon's writings published in this book, he defined social revolution as being the seizure and communalisation of the tribal lands, which had been usurped by the large estate owners. In this sense, Magon's philosophy was very limited in its exposition of anarchism, as he equated the seizure of the means of production (the land) with social revolution. Forms of post-revolutionary social organisation are not discussed—the only impression being given is that Magon envisaged a return to the golden age of rural

communism and tribal autonomy for the Indian population. Magon refused to take account of the historical tradition of the cacique (boss-man) through which both Villa and Zapata came to lead their respective armies. Neither did he challenge the patriarchal hierarchy which kept half the population suppressed in a supposed period of liberation. Evocative illustrations of women with guns don't disguise the fact that the women were included in the guerilla bands to carry the guns for their men, rather than to actually use them in combat.

The articles from Regeneracion, and the pamphlets issued by the PLM, launch a general attack on the Church and the State, and how they had corrupted traditional values of rural communism, but fell far short of what anarchists and libertarians today would understand as a social revolution (?). On an organisational level, Magon relied on a "foco" theory similar to Guevara's whilst justifying this from the works of Darwin:

"if life has not taught us that the new has to be fought for by the few, then it has not taught us anything" (p.58)

Even taking such a limited definition of anarchism as that offered by Magon, it seems ridiculous to suppose that Zapata was any more an anarchist because he adopted the PLM's slogan of "Land and Liberty". Zapata's revolutionary unit was the mobilised pueblo but no revolutionary critique was made of the hierarchies within the pueblo. Indeed, communal ownership of the land and destruction of the powers of the Church and the State would have benefitted the Mexican peasant but neither the PLM nor the Mexican Revolution in general posed a more basic questioning of the authoritarianism and chauvinism of the pueblo itself.

I wonder, at times, exactly what libertarians are supposed to gather from revolutionary examples which only go half way—perhaps just that we shouldn't rely on myths or heroes. I would like to see books like this adopt a more critical approach to the material they present, as the nature of an anarchist revolution has changed since the beginning of the century and both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary forms of social organisation must be criticised from an anarchist viewpoint.

Alan Tooke

FREINET IN HOLLAND

In the Netherlands, education is provided either by the state or by individuals or groups of individuals (private or independent education). The latter can also be subsidised by the state, if it is satisfied that certain standards are maintained. The larger part of private education consists of denominational schools, whose governing bodies can run their schools according to their own beliefs. In addition there are 'neutral' schools and many of these are the 'Free Schools' organised on the basis of Rudolf Steiner's principles.

Until recently, it was expected that public education should maintain a generally 'open' stance, by which teachers would refrain from taking up positions critical of different attitudes and pupils' own beliefs. In the last ten years or so it has become clear that education is not possible without the formation of opinions on the part of pupils, and that the state schools, too, should be concerned with all kinds of social questions and matters of conviction, so that all manner of value-judgements should be discussed. Those seeking radical change in education then go on to point out that teaching should take as its starting point the pupils' own experience and that education should not exclusively aim to prepare pupils for state-imposed final exams. For pupils to control their own development and learning is at present a utopian dream, its realisation hindered by social forces which make schools instruments for the allocation of social positions. There are, then, no schools in Holland which are

able to experiment with schooling on the basis of a radical freedom in the process of learning. 'Neutral' schools are prevented from so doing by the need to fulfil certain criteria in order to receive their state subsidies, and in the process become isolated, elitist or both. This was seen to be the case in the 1960s when many parents, particularly those in the communes established at the time, created anti-authoritarian creches for 2½-6 year olds. When the time came for them to go to primary school, parents found it difficult to place them in anything resembling an anti-authoritarian one. Generally, radical reformers, who in the '60s and '70s formed militant groups with leftist views of society (neo-Marxist, neo-anarchist, radical-socialist), became convinced that it was more important to be critical from within the state schools themselves. There they remain isolated, but in a different way than in their own socialist schools.

In common with that in other Western countries, education in the Netherlands is becoming increasingly technocratic in character, more centralist, with more and more research directed towards quantification as the hold of educationalists, with their own jargon and quasi-scientific methods, becomes firmer. Educational reform is in the first place emancipation from these new forms of repression by which the teacher is turned into a puppet, afraid any longer to form his or her own insights and put them into practice in the classroom.

During recent years, the government

has spent a lot of money on educational reforms, and much thought has been given to the education of the workers' children*. Reforms in secondary education lag behind those in primary education. Examinations cause much pressure on both pupils and teachers, and parents are mainly interested in their children acquiring certificates, and not with questions of motivation. Some schools have turned to integrated, project-based studies. About 10% of schools have introduced such methods, which continue to arouse opposition, even from some left-wing teachers, based on the fear that gaps will emerge in the children's basic training since the children will only learn what they want to.

Through these developments, in all schools, there has arisen a lively debate on the relationship of education to society. Three currents of thought can be distinguished:—

- i) The largest group of teachers who, while admitting that both schools and society have their faults, they are by and large on the right path.
- ii) A second group holds that education is apolitical and cannot change society. They seek to emphasise as far as possible the development of the child as an individual.
- iii) A group comprising 10-15% of teachers in some estimates which maintains that society is fundamentally flawed and that the existing system of schooling plays a supporting role in hiding the reality from our view.

The 'identity' of these three main currents cannot be easily summed up; the last group contains many subdivisions, from dogmatic marxists to the *School-is-dead* movement. The Dutch Freinet-movement has its place in this group and I shall go into its activities in more detail.

There are six Freinet schools in Holland as well as some Protestant schools claiming to adhere to Freinet's principles, though it is doubtful if this is the case. Altogether, these two groups of schools include 200 teachers. Celestine Freinet (1896-1966) was the only teacher in a school at Bar-sur-Loup

Note

* I am involved in such a project in Utrecht in which we try to bring about good communications between school, home and the neighbourhood. We want to bring about a situation in which schooling and educational processes are carried out according to initiatives arising from the bottom upwards.

(Alpes Maritimes, France). There, he found children uninterested in what the school had to offer. The surroundings were uncongenial, facilities few, and classes overfull. Freinet saw that the failure of such education was due to its irrelevance. Breaking with traditional models, he took the children out of school and taught in the way advocated by Paul Goodman in the '60s, taking the children to people and things, letting them discuss them, write about them, interview them, read, correspond. In short, they made reports and papers based on concrete experiences. Learning was combined with play in using the printing press for duplication of reports and contact was made with local farmers in helping them to set up co-operatives. School could thus become a living part of the social, economic, material and political totality within which the child has to live. His ideas reached Brittany, and so there grew up the first link between schools, which remains an important aspect of Freinet education.

ICEM (Institut de Cooperation de l'Ecole Moderne) was set up and produced its own newspaper, 'Educateur Proletarien'. In 1928 Freinet was moved to Saint-Paul de Vence in Provence because of his supposed communist sympathies. In 1932 he was accused of spying for the Soviet Union, and he was dismissed by the government. In 1935, against his principles he opened a private school near St. Paul which was part of an agricultural cooperative. Later, it became clear to him that parents should participate in their children's education and that the school should be a militant one, co-operating with trade unions and other political organisations.

As a thinker, Freinet was too independent to feel himself at home in a dogmatic party or a dogmatic marxism. He made it well known that he was no theoretician and that he had little time for specialists in the exegesis of Marx and Engels. He arrived at a number of formulations developed from his own experience—work and play as the keystone of all learning, removal of the barrier between work as a necessary evil and play as the occupation of leisure time, abolition of the division between mental and manual labour, ending the school's isolation from its surroundings and an assumption that the starting point should be the experience of the child.

The French Freinet movement experienced a boom after the second World War and now has a membership of 25,000. In 1968, a conference was held at Pau to examine the relationship between education, politics and society. A manifesto was drafted containing a number of theses which must be subscribed to for membership of ICEM. But the intention was not indoctrination, and members are left free in their political choice whilst working for a society without war, racism, all forms of discrimination or exploitation. This then is the

movement's standpoint; education is the development of knowledge, not the imposition of it; tomorrow's school is a working school; rather than changing teaching techniques, schools should re-examine critically their place in society.

After 1950, Freinet's ideas became widespread in Holland, mainly through the propagation of new methods in education (printing-presses, correspondence, agricultural activities) but neglecting the social vision behind it. In the '70's a new group of teachers and educationalists, the Dutch Freinet Movement, was founded by Frans Versuis and Leo Romijn, leaders of one of the Freinet schools in Delft. While it attracted support from many people, it was attacked by the government and local councils, parents, local residents and other teachers. The pupils at the Freinet school in Delft are the children of parents who choose the school for three main reasons—it seeks to be militant, has greater possibilities for dealing with children with particular difficulties or is simply nearer their homes. Conservative parents unconcerned with politics have placed their children elsewhere. But there will always be other parents who would prefer their children to become critical rather than obtaining certificates and a secure future. This is a great dilemma in the Western countries, where the school system rests on a diploma monopoly to which there is no alternative.

It is important that parents begin to realise that education which bases itself on a centrally directed, traditional acquirement of knowledge does not in any way contribute to independent thinking or the creative motivation necessary to alter the status quo. Instead, it merely fosters apathy and acquiescence so that things remain unchanged. Schools are the bulwarks of a capitalistic theory of education which, under the cloak of promoting the emancipation of the working class, foster in reality adaptation to a pattern of behaviour and values belonging to a productive system geared to the making of profit, a system which can only mean the destruction of our culture. Our education, Freinet says, is a case of merchants and speculators. Parents, teachers and students need to form an educational and cultural front which prepares for a society in which people themselves can decide on how they want to live, think and learn.

Freinet does not care much about anti-authoritarian visions, such as those developed during the war by Wilhelm Reich, Otto Ruhle, Homer Lane and A.S. Neill and later Ivan Illich. This is partly due to the belief that they are liberal and anti-political. The writings of Siegfried Bernfeld and Paul Goodman may serve to correct this view. A new foundation will certainly have to be given to the central place of work in Freinet now that we have to come to terms with another labour-ethos, again under capitalistic conditions, and with a

different view of unemployment. We see work chiefly in terms of the process of production, but there is ample work which is being performed unpaid under existing arrangements and which can take over the function of paid work in chasing away boredom and raising self-esteem.

How to combine the demolition of the power of money with the provision of the means for our existence asks for more radical changes in society. Education should take up that matter and the Freinet movement certainly provides a platform; in its Manifesto it states that children should be able to live in a world of peace, not one of war, racism, exploitation and discrimination. Not in an inhospitable desert, but in the real world.

Simon Radius

We hope to be able to follow this article with a more detailed description of the way Freinet schools operate today.



Review

Ivan Illich and his antics, by Peter Lund price 75p

Don't be put off by the title: it came about as a result of the printer's misreading of Peter Lund's handwriting. The most important part of this 50-page booklet is a very useful bibliography of Illich's extensive writings about education and of those of his critics (transformed into 'antics' in the title) and others who have written around the de-schooling theme. It's not just a list of books and articles, but each is given a brief summary and a quotation or two to give the flavour. I think this is going to be a great help to anyone who is studying Illich's ideas—at least, those of them about schools. I'm not so sure of the other thirty pages which attempt to summarize these ideas and then to suggest their relevance to British schools. For what it is, it is well done; but it suffers the occupational complaint of any reader's digest—indigestion. Like this notice, for instance.

Ray Hemmings



strong words

Finding A Voice, Asian Women In Britain: written by Amrit Wilson and published by Virago at £2.50.

Amrit Wilson's book opens with a translation of a Bengali poem:

Shut up tight in a cheap tin trunk
hidden under a mountain of musty
mattresses and torn quilts
cast away in the kitchen's corner,
it moans — the prisoner
... Life is nothing only tears.

The 'it' in the poem refers to a sari, but the sentiment expressed could equally apply to the lives of many of the Asian women who speak throughout the book. For *Finding A Voice* is, in essence, a compilation of the statements of Asian women. Whether they are Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, Bengali, Indian or Pakistani they all face the same crisis which Amrit Wilson describes most powerfully.

This crisis can be reduced to two factors — sexism and racism. Asian culture is patriarchal. The inferiority of women is written into the Koran and the Muslim concept of 'Izzat', self-respect or more crudely male ego, dominates the culture. Asian women, whatever their religion, are all seen as producers of labour power, ie. sons. Daughters are crosses to bear, it is the sons who are the source of family pride. It is the duty of the wife to serve and please the husband in all aspects of life. Daughters are to be protected, for their 'reputation' determines their chances of a good marriage. Any wayward or less vigilant parents may soon find the wrath of the community brought down on them.

The British society these women live in is clearly racist. Their children have to suffer the often glaring racism of the education system and they, themselves, are the most poorly paid, exploited and despised members of the labour force. In order to enter this country they may be interrogated, forced to submit to sexual examination or even imprisoned. Once settled they and their families may find themselves attacked in the street, fire bombed in their homes

and verbally abused everywhere they go.

Asian women find themselves at the bottom of every social hierarchy and this book describes it all in horrendous and depressing detail. But it is not one long pessimistic catalogue of misery; it is also stimulating and offers a challenge to all white anti-racists and feminists in this country.

The role of the Anti-Nazi League for instance is implicitly questioned in this statement of Amrit Wilson's: "In Britain the most brutal and wide-ranging racism which occurs day after day is not the work of fascist minority parties, but of Her Majesty's Government."

The fight against the N.F. is of course important, but not to the exclusion of any other form of action. Our time might be better used by actively opposing the brutal system of detention centres or the blatantly racist Immigration Laws than picketing the Christmas Party of the local National Front as happened in Leicester recently. The racism of the Labour Government, most recently displayed in the Green Paper on Nationality, is ingenuously wished away by Trotskyist and rank and file socialists who support the *Socialist Campaign For A Labour Victory*. The contradiction involved in fighting the National Front on the one hand and supporting the Labour Government on the other is impossible to resolve. Racism in the politics of the Labour Government is not a sideline; it is crucial to their thinking.

Nor can the trade union movement rest peacefully on its fine statements about the cruel disease of racialism. George Bromley, the T&GWU negotiator in the Imperial Typewriters strike of '74, said "... they have to learn to fit in with our ways you know. We haven't got to fit in with theirs." Among many grievances the Asian workers had at that time was the fact that Imperial employed 1100 Asian workers and had only one Asian shop steward. Bromley stated "... they have no legitimate grievances".

During the more recent Grunwicks dispute 4 Asian members of the strike committee went on hunger strike.

The response of their union APEX was to immediately suspend them and withdraw their strike pay.

The feminist movement too needs to examine its response to the crisis facing its Asian sisters. It frequently seems tied up in conferences and consciousness raising without considering the relevance of its philosophy to the day to day grind of sweat shop work and family life. The occasional article of solidarity appears in Spare Rib, but we should all ask ourselves what we are doing, if anything, in support. Even personal contact, just simple friendship, with our Asian sisters is not very apparent.

Clearly, however, the battle will have to be fought by the Asian women themselves and there are some hopeful signs that the struggle is beginning. Increased industrial consciousness is one as Imperial Typewriters and Grunwicks showed. Shardha says "In the past when I used to get less money in my wage packet I used to start crying at once. I didn't know what else to do. I told the foreman "Next time I won't cry, I'll make you cry".

The younger generation of women too are beginning to reject a lot of the repressive regime of their fathers as Anita Bhalla's article in the last issue highlighted

The formation of Bengali self-defence groups in the East End of London show that Asians in this country will not suffer racism indefinitely.

But there are also many depressing signs. George Ward still refuses to recognise the right of his workers at Grunwicks to join a union. Immigration procedures are forever being tightened up. Alex Lyon, former Minister with Special Responsibility for Immigration was sacked soon after Callaghan became P.M. Lyon was not particularly liberal in his interpretation of immigration laws, but he did call himself a 'friend of black people' and that apparently was too much.

The increasingly reactionary

NUT/MAS

CONFERENCE REPORT

For those of you who did not notice, the English and Welsh National Union of Teachers held its Annual Easter Conference at Scarborough this year.

The N.U.T. has 74% women members and on the platform were a lot of men. There were also three women. One of these was a clerk, whose job it was to pass 'speaker's cards' to the President of the Union (a pleasant man named Jim Murphy who, surprisingly, conducted debates according to the rules). The other two women were the President's and Secretary's wives, whose jobs were to hand bunches of flowers to people.

The Executive showed their attitude to women through their remarks when asked to Refer Back (i.e. rewrite) the section on Maternity Provision in the Executive Report. The demand from the membership was for increased Maternity and Paternity leave: 'There is no mention of WEDLOCK in the amendment!' thundered Peter Griffin, implying that the Exec. would like Maternity provision for married members only.

On increased Paternity leave the same man tried to bring the debate down to the 'nudge-nudge' level by saying: 'One cannot help fearing that the continuous attendance at school of a man teacher, could lead to a suspicion of impotency.'

Another member of the Exec., Alf Budd, who apparently hopes to become president of the union said: 'I've heard of a licence to kill, but this seems to be a licence to continuous fecundity.' Needless to say this contributed greatly to the women's cause and later the Conference passed a motion which went some way towards establishing a positive policy on women's rights. Not that anything will be done about it any more than the N.U.T. has succeeded in making class sizes smaller.

strong words

application of the Muslim religion to secular affairs in such countries as Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia only re-inforces the belief in the total subjection of women to men in those countries. And it is having an effect on Muslim women in this country. Recently girls at a Leicester comprehensive school have started attending in Purdah.

There is no sign either that the new generation of Asian males will be any less conformist or sexist than their fathers. Even the Asian demonstrations against the N.F. presence in Brick Lane, East London have been exclusively composed of men — the women presumably staying at home preparing for their return.

This is the traditional role of Asian women — passive, silent and obedient. *Finding A Voice* is one small rejection of that tradition. Hopefully there will soon be many more.

J.W.

The hierarchy of the Union was greatly upset by the appearance of a delegation from the N.U.S.S. (National Union of School Students) from Leeds and Bradford. The posted banners around the entrance to the stately glass and wrought iron Spa Concert Hall where the conference was taking place and shouted loudly: 'End school uniform', 'Ban corporal punishment', 'Recognise NUSS now.' A middle aged, corpulent, red faced Conference Organiser, bursting with ire, his eyes practically thrusting through his spectacles came out and berated them. He yelled that if they sold their magazines, *Blot* and *Revolution*, they would be locked up. The school students stood their ground. A copy of *Blot* fell open on the ground — the word FUCKING leapt out of a headline: 'People do not use language like this!' screamed the Nut man. He stalked back into the hall, threatening to set the police on the students — but they never came.

These punk, articulate students just stood their ground and put their case reasonably, while the Executive Member's impotent rage and threatening gestures put the fast gathering crowd on their side. Demurely clad in their maroon

uniform skirts, local, middle class fourth and fifth form girls handed out motion amendment leaflets to delegates. Perfect school children made to measure for the teachers' conference.

What was I doing there? What is a libertarian doing acting as a representative at a conference like this. I look upon it tactically — in a similar way to offering qualified support to liberal schools and teachers against very rigid authoritarian ones. Although I despise the union for its hierarchical structure, its feebleness when it comes to a fight with the employers, etc. ... etc. ... the unpleasant fact of life is that it is the least unacceptable of the teachers unions politically and the only one which offers any responsibility for any broad left organisation of teachers, especially those on the lowest pay.

One encouraging sign — the Socialist Worker Party dominated Teachers Rank and File was working jointly with the International Marxist Group's Socialist Teachers Alliance. Is it delusory to hope for the formation of a genuine rank and file organisation of left wing teachers again?

P D Gogg



MEN AGAINST SEXISM
Conference — Manchester

The Executive showing their interest in the debate on racialism.

After the initial false start, the conference eventually got underway over the weekend of April 6th, with 300 men attending. The initial bureaucracy, queuing for this and that, was tedious and the first session with my home group very painful. We were rather thrust upon each other in an attempt to break the ice, however, sheer impact was not enough! The theory behind these home groups was to allow small groups of men to get together, make friends and have some 'place' to go between workshops and over meals etc. Like most great theories, the practice was a little harder to achieve. To be fair, some groups got it together better than others, they played 'trust games', and other such things to break down traditional masculinity, and generally speaking it was eventually a success.

Choosing which one of the many workshops to go to was a problem. To mention some, they were on rape, celibacy, sexism in the left, bisexuality, Jewish men, body massage, producing a MAS newsletter, men in science, magic/spirituality, sexism in institutions/work places, working class men and sexism, fatherhood, and how gays relate to other men. My first workshop was on Warmth, Safety and Celibacy. The conversation was very slow starting and I did

begin to wonder what the hell I had let myself in for. Then one of the men summed up the proceedings thus "I've come to a workshop on Warmth, Safety and Celibacy, but I feel cold, exposed and extremely frustrated!" From then on the conversation improved. Unfortunately, we overran our time and a conference official found it necessary to smash the deep conversation we were in. We assembled later but unfortunately the damage had been done.

The other workshops I attended were less intense because you were not so personally involved, but more about group activity against sexism, but nevertheless equally rewarding. As was the chit chat between workshops and over meals. It was so refreshing being amongst men who were not interested in proving their masculinity and who felt free enough to express their feelings physically as well as verbally.

At one stage or another we all revealed our motives for going: these ranged from the gay man who felt oppressed by women, to the hetro man who had a rude awakening by the feminist movement. It is a stark reality that the women have organised themselves and the men have felt it necessary to react to the women's lead.

EDITORIAL continued

The Iowa case is obviously very different. Here, consciously libertarian parents, with a critique of school we endorse, educate their child outside school. Still we hesitate to describe this experiment as deschooling, or even a step towards it.

For most families, the option of school withdrawal does not exist, for example where both parents work outside the home. Also, we have seen the attitude of the authorities in cases where the parent-educator has a teaching or professional background—it is difficult to imagine working class parents being allowed this option. Our main reason for rejecting 'deschooling by stealth' as a solution, however, is not based on these practical difficulties, but on our concept of deschooling itself.

Deschooling is a process concerning change in the whole of society, not just with the position of a few individuals, nor with one institution alone, the school. We have been taught that school alone brings us education, the church salvation, the courts justice, the police civil order, the army peace and capitalism wealth and freedom. Only in a society which has rejected this mystification, redefining education, freedom and the rest, does deschooling the school make sense. We neither believe that our society can be transformed by replacing institutions by convivial structures one by one, nor do we accept that in a capitalist economy, where work, education and leisure are compartmentalised, would the abolition of compulsory schooling be a benefit.

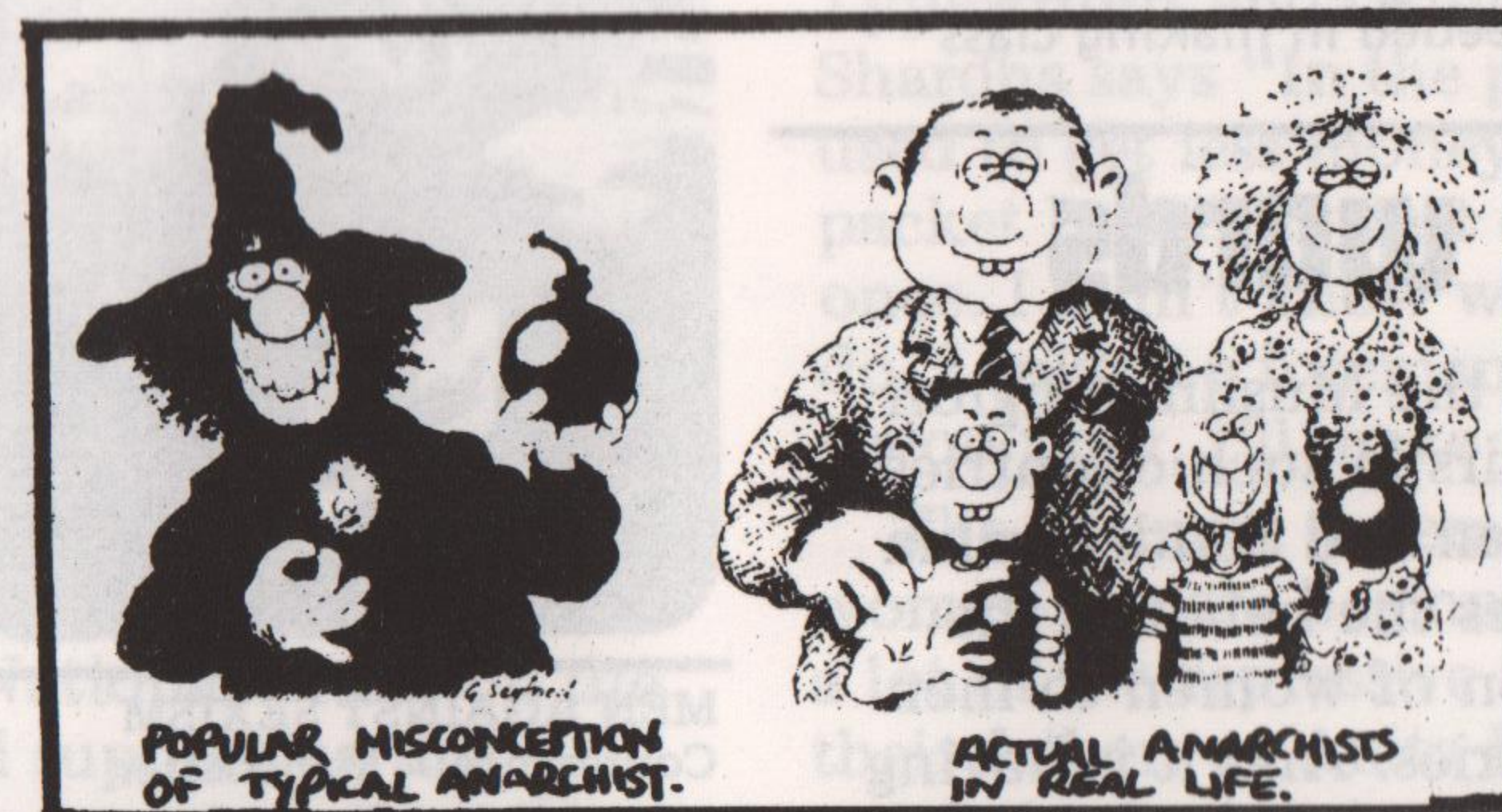
Raising a banner saying 'Anarchy Now!' is easy enough, but in itself achieves nothing. We can't pretend to offer the 'way forward', but we can at least point out some dead ends. It is clearly pointless to expect any activity within a school to contribute towards deschooling. There are good enough reasons for libertarians to work inside

the school system—schools are where most children are, you can challenge the students' expectations of 'The Teacher' and so on—but in the context of the school the libertarian can only be a super-liberal, or perhaps a liberal-with-a-class-analysis. We have explained above why we believe the withdrawal of individual children, although perhaps in the interest of those children, is not in itself a contribution to deschooling, and the danger of free schools being absorbed into the school system as truant centres/dustbins is well-known, though we recognise the value of free schools as indicators of the possibilities and problems of non-institutional learning, as well as their obvious benefits to their school-members.

If we want to point out projects which both shed light on how a self-managed socialist society might educate, and which in themselves contribute towards achieving that society, we need to look in another direction entirely. Learning exchanges, poster and video workshops, community presses, socialist and feminist centres, unemployed education groups all offer examples of radical non-institutional education. There is the obvious danger in all these cases of decline into a coy self-absorption, and of course none of these projects will in itself bring about the millennium.

It is an aspect of the dominant ideology that education and schooling are synonymous; it is the job of libertarians to break with this false identification.

Garry Whitby



This is a personal view of the conference and is not meant to represent the Men's Movement or any other.

Mas cont.

The plenary to round up the proceedings discussed setting up a newsletter, how the conference should be reported, the photographs taken etc etc, which I found extremely tedious and rather took the edge off my feelings of elation. Some of the summing up comments made, I felt, were ones I would have expected to hear at the beginning of the conference, when we did not have the benefit of a weekend's discussion. Like, when some sexist idiot did not think women could have organised a conference as well as the men (!), and when one concerned man felt bad about the women who worked in the canteen to provide our meals. A fine time, when he's about to leave.

One thing that should have come out of the conference, and to me it did, was that there is more to being non-sexist than men doing the traditional female chores — and it is about time that the pseudo non-sexists look a little deeper into the subject and come out from behind their masculine barricade, and try to understand how they oppress women. They would then realise that they are not exposing themselves to ridicule from the so called he-man or she-woman, and they would learn a lot from other men's experiences and the deeper, inground implications of sexism.

This was my first men's conference and after the initial tedium and embarrassment of having to meet other men in such a strange atmosphere, I really enjoyed myself, I gained a lot from it, I met some really interesting men, (and some right idiots) and look forward to the next conference. See you there!

AGITPROP

CISSY (Campaign to Inhibit Sexual Stereotyping in the Young) have brought out a guide to non-sexist children's picture books. 40p + 15p post form Cissy, 177 Gleneldon Rd London SW 16.

APOLOGY

We did not credit the quotations used in the interview with Anita Bhalla (Lib Ed 26). They were all from Amrit Wison's 'Finding A Voice'-Virago, 2.50, reviewed in this issue. An excerpt from Martin Hoyles' new anthology 'Changing Childhood' Writers & Readers, 3.25 has already appeared in LibEd 25. The book is out now and will be reviewed in the next issue. Essays by Engels, Shulamith Firestone, Freud and Lacan, poems by Brecht and Blake, photos by Peter Fuller. Excellent. Buy it.

'Garthdee Farm' 60p, is a well-illustrated non-sexist children's book about life on this city farm. More about the farm in the next issue. Get it from Garthdee Farm, Garthdee, Aberdeen, or PDC. Anarchist Summer Camp in Northern Jutland (Denmark) from 2nd-15th July. Details from Anarkistisk Syndikalistisk Bogcafe, Studies strade 18, 1455 Copenhagen, Denmark. 'A Directory of Radical and Community Print'—75p from Print Support Service, 52, Acre Lane, SW2, lists publishers, printers, designers & typesetters.

disability

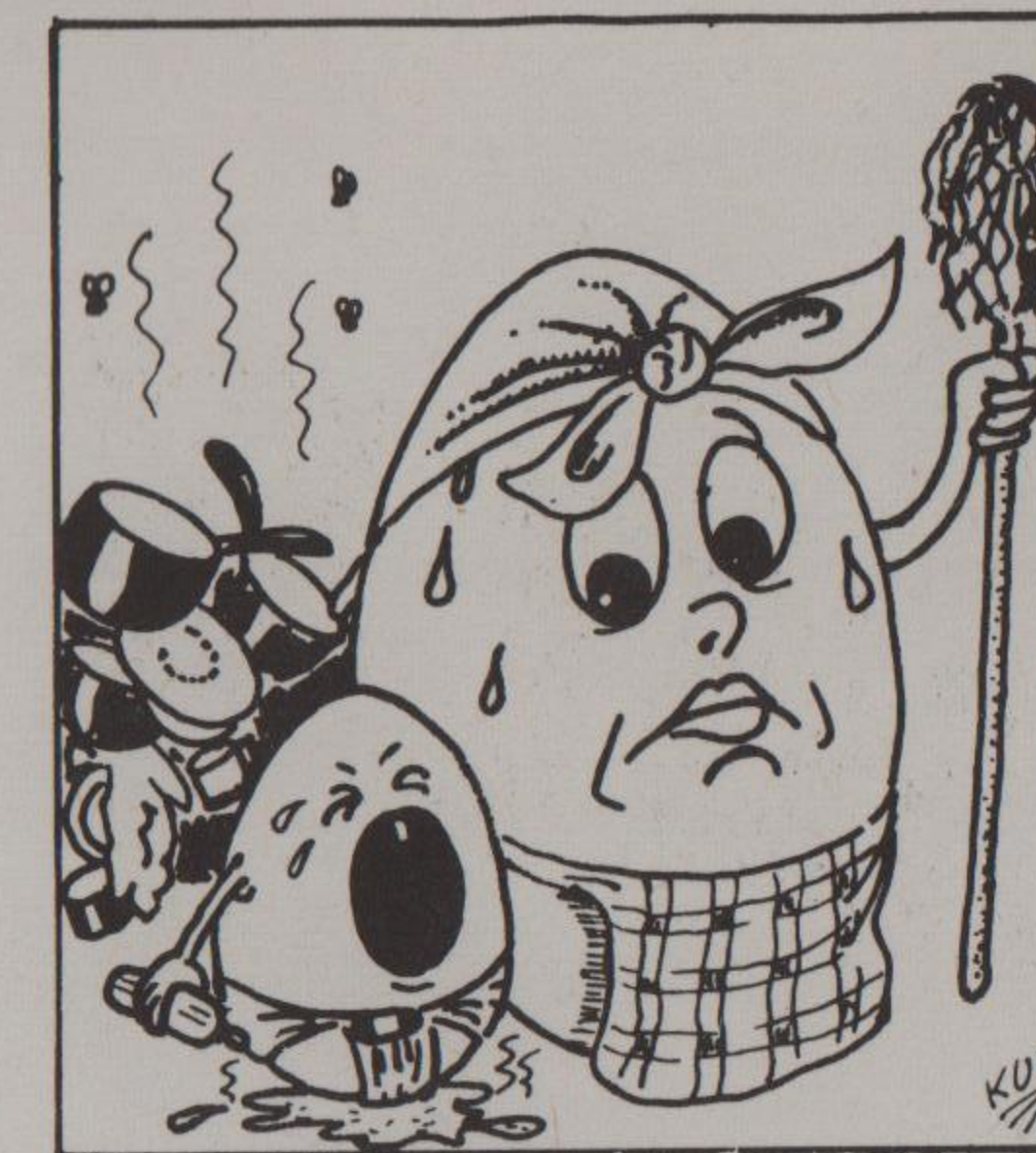
Organisations: Sexual Problems of the Disabled (SPOD), Brook House, 2-16 Torrington Place, London WC1E 7HN. Tel: 01 637 4712. GEMMA, BM Box 5700, London WC1V 6XX. (self help group for disabled lesbians). National Union of the Deaf, 32 Little Ealing Lane, London W5 4EA. Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB. Tel: 01637 5400.

Kilworthy House Trust is an independent coeducational Therapeutic Community for 20 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 who have social, emotional and learning difficulties, and most of them are referred by their Social Services Dept. or their Local Education Authority. They are at present looking for adults with experience &/or qualifications in organic gardening, conventional/alternative mechanics, maths &/or science, or english to join 17 adult members of the community in a residential position of commitment. Experience in special schools or residential social work would therefore be an advantage but is not essential. Further information from Kilworthy House, phone Tavistock (0822) 2610.

Kirkdale School is very short of materials, and would be grateful if people could let them have anything—especially paper, card etc. They are at 186 Kirkdale, London SE26.

BLAIR PEACH

We mourn the death of Blair Peach, killed on April 23 in Southall by the Special Patrol Group.



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set of six stickers produced by Australian comrades

'The Education of the Future'—Pluto 3.95 is an introduction to the theory and practice of socialist education. Examines Owen, Soviet education, and the contemporary Freinet and Tvint movements.

Fairy Story Collective 53 Sandown Lane Liverpool L15 4NU are rewriting fairy stories to rid them of their sexist bias. So far published are Red Riding Hood and The Prince and the Swineherd. 30p each inc. postage. More on the collective in the next issue.

Latest in Black Bears series of anarchist feminist pamphlets is Carol Ehrlich's 'Socialism, Anarchism, Feminism'—30p, an essay which is also included in the excellent but overpriced anthology 'Reinventing Anarchy'—Routledge, 5.95, edited by Carol & Howard Ehrlich.

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