

Groups and Resources

Lib ED contacts
Bristol 0117 977 8453

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

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

Letterbox Library
Unit 2D, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road,
London, N1 3QP
0171 226 1633
(Specialises in non-sexist and multi-cultural
books for children. For details of their free
catalogue, write or phone)

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

Woodcraft Folk
13 Ritherton Road, London, SW17
0181 672 6031
(A kind of non-sexist, non-militarist scouts
and brownies)

Education Otherwise
36 Kinross Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 7EF
Helpline: 0192 688 6828
(For everyone who practices or supports the
right of children to learn without schooling)

**Campaign Against Military Research On
Campus (CAMROC)**
190 Burdett Road, London, E3 4AA
0181 980 2455

Bad Attitude
121 Railton Road, Brixton, London
(A radical women's newspaper intent on
overthrowing civilisation as we know it. A
sub to this new magazine costs £5)

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

Bread'n'Roses/Tenants Corner
46a Oval Mansions, Vauxhall Street, London,
SE11
0171 582 7286
(housing & education centre run by tenants)

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

Children's Legal Centre
20 Compton Terrace, London, N1 2UN
0171 359 6251

**National Association for Young People
in Care**
20 Compton Terrace, London, N1 2UN
0171 284 4793

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

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

Hummingbird Multicultural Resources
24 Ashley Hill, Bristol, BS6 4JG
0117 954 1946
(publish mail order catalogue of books and
other resources)

Kate Sharpley Library
BM Hurricane, London, WC1 3XX
(archival centre covering class struggle
anarchist tradition)

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

A K Distribution
22 Lutton Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9PE
(Suppliers of a wide range of libertarian
literature by post: send for their catalogue of
titles)

Global Futures Project
Institute of Education, University of London,
10 Woburn Square, London, WC1H 0NS

Kilquhanity House School
Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland

Blackcurrent Otherwise Project
24 St Michaels Avenue, Northampton, NN1
4JQ

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

Summerhill School
Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY

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

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

**We don't have room here for a
comprehensive list of all schools,
groups and resources available.
For that see our handbook,
Freedom in Education - A d-i-y
guide, advertised on page 11**

International

Global Free School
525-3 Imazu-Machi Takasago-Cho,
Takasago City, Japan

Nonami Children's Village
28-341 Nonami, Tenpaku-cho, Nagoya City,
Japan

**National Coalition of Alternative
Community Schools**
58 Schoolhouse Rd, Summertown,
TN38483, USA
tel: 615 964-3670

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

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

ANKUR
D-183, Lajpath Nagar, New Delhi, India
tel: 634259
(Society for alternatives in education)

Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Vidyalaya
Sawai Ram Singh Road, Jaipur-302 004,
India

Tamariki Free School
Woolston, Christchurch, New Zealand

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

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

Grupo Impulso Libertario
CC984, 2000 Rosario, Argentina

Graine d'Ecole
La Paillerie, Avenue de Bardenac, 33600
PESSAC, France

Les Enfants d'Abord
c/o Nicole et Michel TERILLON, La
Souche, 42940 CHATELNEUF, France
tel: 77 76 84 70

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

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

Acrobatic Arts Community School
PO Box 1101, Wodonga 3690, Australia

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

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

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

Asociacion Antipatriarcal
Apartado Correos 52018, Madrid, Spain

Free Schools in Vienna
Verein Wiener Alternativschulen,
Hofmuhlgasse 2, A-1060 Wien, PO Box 172,
Austria

Lib ED

No.26 Spring 1995 £1

A magazine for the liberation
of learning

RELIGION IN SCHOOL
Critical teaching in Higher Education
A Massachusetts' Free School
Criminal Injustice in Britain

Libertarian EDUCATION

A magazine for the liberation of learning

Vol 2 No 26 Spring 1995

In this issue...

RELIGION IN SCHOOL

- 3 **AUTHORITY FROM ON HIGH**
Vicars in school - patriarchy rules says Pat Hill.
- 4 **BIRTHRIGHT AND POTTAGE ALARMISM**
Sinister motives lie behind moves to re-establish Christian worship in school.
- 6 **HIGHER EDUCATION**
Some practical proposals for critical teaching to combat the prostitution of education to the demands of commercialised industry.
- 8 **SCHOOL OF INTEREST**
Lib ED visits Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts.
- 10 **CRIMINAL INJUSTICE**
A group of young people discuss the so-called Criminal Justice Act.
- 11 **DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE**
How to keep up or catch up with *Lib ED* magazine.
- 13 **CURRICULUM COP**
... meets his new boss.
- 14 **REVIEWS**
- 15 **LETTERS**
We always welcome your letters.
- 16 **CONTACTS**
Including groups and organisations, now updated.

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EDITORIAL

Choice for who?

CHOICE HAS been one of the main themes of the government. It is, of course, one of the corner-stones of a free market economy. The trouble is everybody is in favour of choice. It is like being in favour of more apple pie and ice cream. We are in favour of more choice (and more apple pie and ice cream). Children should be able to go to free schools, to be educated at home, at Steiner schools, wherever. In fact it should be children that have the choice, and not just parents.

But of course with choice things are not that simple. Such choices are only real when the proper funding is available to make them realistic. They are also only realistic if those choices are freely available to everybody, not just a privileged few.

And the government has no real intention of offering real choice, otherwise it would not be bringing in the National Curriculum. It is more concerned with ensuring that middle class parents can send their children to that nice ex-grammar school on the other side of town and so avoid paying those expensive school fees.

The government, while making pious promises, will not even provide funding for the options which it supposedly believes in. While it struggles to convince people that it really believes that the route towards a successful economy is by improving the education of the population, it refuses to link this to the amount of money it gives to education.

When it grudgingly gives a miserly 2.5 percent pay increase to teachers, and then refuses to fund this, it somehow thinks that the punters will for some reason blame the local authorities, as they have in the past.

Unfortunately we are all too aware where the power really lies. The Tories have been systematically destroying all possible centres of opposition for years. So for a government in which nobody ever seems to be responsible for anything, especially errors and disasters, there is no possible escape from ultimate responsibility now.

At the same time it almost beggars belief when a government that has spent most of its time likening teachers to a cross between Rasputin and Lucretia Borgia then decides that their image needs tidying up and calls in some PR friends to help them.

With help like this, perhaps we should be looking around for some enemies.

WRITE TO US AT:
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BRISTOL
BS4 2AG

RELIGION

Authority from on high

The recent furore about the place, and future, of religious assembly, predominantly Christian, has brought back some memories for Pat Hill. She has also been talking to some school kids about what significance religion has in their lives, and what they think about "School Christianity".

WHEN I WAS FIRST at school I didn't give much attention to RE although I liked the stories. I also quite enjoyed assemblies because I like singing; singing hymns was better than the boring maths lesson we might be doing afterwards. In common with many adolescents, I went through a religious phase and this was when I began to resent the compulsory form of worship in school assembly.

I'm an atheist now but when I was 15 my religious faith was a personal commitment; making it compulsory through attendance at school religious assembly completely invalidated it, and I got into a bit of trouble because I wouldn't do assembly; the teachers didn't like it when in my new religious fervour I refused to go to assembly, because I thought the whole thing was not what it appeared to be, but a hypocritical sham.

Nearly 25 years ago, when Penguin published a series of interesting radical 'educational' books (Ah! those were the days!), *The Observer* ran an essay competition for 'schoolchildren'. Edward Blishen then edited these essays into a precious little book, which is entirely composed of that rare thing, feedback from the receivers of schooling. Blishen here sums up the response of students to Religious Education.

"There was not one voice raised in defence of religious instruction ... or the religious aspect of school assemblies. The religious assembly was widely resented, both because it required apparent assent in a field where there was much dissent or doubt, and also because it was so often an affair of 'familiar soporific droning'. In fact, they felt frustrated; they wanted very much to consider the nature of religious experience, to be helped in their search for a philosophy ... It is not escape from this serious field the children are seeking; it is some better and worthier way into it."

I've had conversations with teenagers and pre-teens recently to find out whether things have changed in the last quarter-century, and some of the comments are not so different from those in Blishen's book.

We live in an area where many of the schools are still C of E and vicars are much in evidence on the governing



bodies, almost always as chairmen. A local authority governor of one of these schools recently asked what was being done about multi-cultural education in the isolated rural school. "Why?" asked the vicar-chairman of the board of governors. "Are we expecting a visit from our coloured brethren?" Yet another vicar-chairman of governors in a nearby comprehensive school was reported by a fellow governor to have spluttered red-faced: "Children need to have the sin beaten out of them!" I have to admit that this happened about six years ago, but perhaps such incidents should not be too easily forgotten, and that man is still on the board of governors, though no longer chairman.

My most recent encounter with those who bring the true gospel into our schools happened around three years ago when I was teaching in a comprehensive school. A Committed Christian teacher shocked everyone in an otherwise reasonably humane and caring staff room by spewing out his purple-faced hatred of kids. "They don't want to learn, these kids, they don't have any backbone, they're little swine." I could go on, but you probably get the drift. This man really did not like kids at all. He'd been teaching for several years, and was about to leave in order to train for ordination into the priesthood.

When I was a governor of nearby rural school, the chairman of the

governors was also a vicar, patriarchal, complacent, smug, patronising and very eager to do deals with the local education committee during reorganisation, so that the number of Church Schools in the area would not decrease when some of the first schools closed.

Two successive head teachers appointed at one of these Church Schools were lay preachers. The most recent made his mark very quickly, establishing himself as a staunch upholder of traditional values and discipline, shouting at the kids, droning on in assembly about morals, telling parables about animals which pupils at the school find 'boring' and 'patronising' (I've spoken to a fairly representative cross-section of students and one teacher). Most of the kids switch off when this "chairman of the bored" really gets going; they know at some level that what he is really doing is re-establishing his power and authority three times a week, demonstrating that he has a mandate to bore them with little religious fables, demonstrating so that the kids can be in not doubt about the nature of patriarchal Power and Authority - God the Father coming to the aid of a Ministry of Education which has failed in its secular attempts to impose authority from on high. That's what Religion in schools is all about, isn't it?

I spoke to several school pupils, most of whom had been to or are now attending a Church school in a rural area. My questions were specifically about school assembly, where hymns were sung and the Christian message plugged.

The first, spontaneous, response when **all** of the kids were asked what they thought of Religious Assembly was 'boring'. When I asked what they thought would happen if the Assemblies were optional (silly question!) I was met with blank stares. What does 'optional' mean, they wanted to know. That anything in school should be optional is a concept so foreign that they didn't know how to deal with it. When few of them did manage to stretch their imaginations and picture a school where they might have a choice, the consensus was that none of them would go to morning assembly, religious or not.

Vicars in school - patriarchy rules, OK.

Birthright and pottage alarmism

Huw Thomas believes that the concern expressed by the DfE about religious education is not motivated by religious conviction, but by more sinister motives.

IN 1144 ENGLAND experienced a spate of racist riots. The victims were Jews. The riots were fuelled by tales of barbaric practices and ritual murder within the Jewish community. One of the most celebrated victims was the child "St William of Norwich", a twelve year old whose mutilated body was venerated as that of a victim of barbaric Jewish practices. The stories were actually made up and propagated within the church as a way of dealing with the Jews, to whom the church was heavily in debt (*The Offshore Islanders*, Paul Johnson, Penguin, 1972). Not only is this ugly little story a classic example of the racism that riddles British history, but it also presents us with an interesting parallel with our own time. An establishment in trouble appeals to religious sentiments and racist fears and saves its neck by creating a scapegoat. Classic history, if not part of the 75% British history now compulsory in state schools!

This use of religion is echoed in remarks like that of Tory M.P. Harry Greenaway who believes:

"We will never cure soccer and other social violence unless we get proper religious education in schools" (quoted in *Junior Education*, Nov 85)

The establishment is often prone to use religion as a justification for racial violence or as a cure-all for social evils. The most famous quasi-religious diversion of modern times being the great "back to basics" fiasco epitomised by the alarmist rantings of the likes of Michael Portillo:

"If crown, parliament and church are not respected, neither will be law, judges or policemen, nor bosses, managers or foremen" (quoted in *Socialist Review*, Feb 1994)

Clearly there are people in high places who have a deep concern about the religious education of children. The Department for Education seems very concerned and its stipulations on the subject have been widely reported. What I would question is the extent to which such a concern is motivated by religious conviction as opposed to other, more sinister motives. I would also suggest that the religion used in this exercise is not the Christianity of Jesus but some Tory perversion of it.

A lot of the changes in education are justified by the horror stories put about concerning bad teachers! They have been an essential plank of the Government's 'reforms', those evil subversives who are ruining our little ones. The stories in the tabloid press are not quite as alarming as that of St William but the idea is still the same. In the pamphlet *The Crisis in Religious Education* (Burn and Hart, 1988) Baroness Cox rang the bells loud and clear:

"We are in danger of selling our birthright for a mess of pottage"

"Many of our children are in schools where ... teaching about Christianity has either been diluted to a multi-faith relativism or has become little more than a secularised discussion of social and political issues"

Ding dong ding dong ding!

And so in step the DfE, with the instruction that from now on religious education must:

"Reflect the fact that religious traditions in the country are in the main Christian"

... and that assemblies must:

"... be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character". (DfE. Circular 1/94, Jan 94)

My first reaction is to wonder whether the arithmetic is quite right. Church membership in the U.K. currently stands at just over four million. It's nowhere near the majority of the country. (*U.K. Christian Handbook 94-95*, C.R.A., 1993).

Those figures stand alongside the 300,000 Sikhs, 400,000 Jews and nearly 2 million Muslims who make up the wider worshipping community. So what's all this about a Christian country? Bigoted assumptions like those of Caroline Cox with her birthright and pottage alarmism are based on estimates that up to 60% of the population, on being admitted to hospital and asked:

"Religion?",

... answer:

"Oooh ... er ... er ... Church of England, I suppose" (J. Paxman, Friends in High Places, Penguin, 1990).

What we're into here isn't religion. It's diversion.

The problem in education is being made out to be the moral and spiritual confusion we will deluge our young people with unless we react against it. A handy scapegoat with which those responsible for the current mess can divert some of the blame. Racism is one of the oldest diversions in the book—we're back to St. William all over again.

The agenda surfaced a little in a recent BBC interview with Conservative M.P. Olga Maitland. On *The Week in Westminster* she got very alarmed about the teaching of things like gender issues creeping into the classroom:

"I am concerned that there seems to be a determined effort to push out religious education or turn it into some other kind of topic ... multiculturalism, for instance".

She recounted a trip to a classroom in London where only one child could recite the Lord's Prayer. At this point another interviewee did point out that most of the class were Bangladeshi. Olga's point was that: "We are a Christian country" and she countered with the assertion that:

"After all, our children are being taught an awful lot about Islam".

Now I am alarmed by phrases like:

"In danger of selling our birthright"

... and:

"Our children ..."

The them and us language rests in this reactionary backlash against an education rooted in and drawing on our multicultural communities.

At this point I place my cards on the table. I am a Christian believer. I read the words of Jesus and base my life on his teaching. I meet and share this experience with other sisters and brothers at my local Anglican Church—so it's all quite mainstream and pretty straight forward. I feel that perspective adds a real cutting edge to my criticism of the exploitation of that faith that I outline above. I don't just question their motives on educational or political grounds. My Christian faith leads me to attack the idea of Christian faith assumed in the agenda of the Right.

The idea that Christianity can be a formal established faith has no place in the New Testament. Olga Maitland's desire to see children made to recite the Lord's Prayer flies in the face of Jesus' idea of prayer being private and meaningful:

"When you pray, go to your room and close the door ... don't heap up meaningless words ..." (Gospel of Matthew. Chapter 6).

A quick reading of the Gospels shows a Jesus who taught that faith was a lively, developing experience, not some dud formality. The simple fact is that you cannot impose Christian worship. To do so isn't just offensive to kids in an assembly hall who have other, or no religious beliefs. It is also an offence to the Jesus who wanted people's faith to develop freely from within, not get imposed on them. How else do you account for a teacher who rarely explained his parables but instead left listeners to draw their own conclusion? Or a teacher who says:

"Why don't you judge for yourselves the right thing to do" (Gospel of Luke. Chapter 12)

Christians are clear that their faith is not fixed and formal. It's an ongoing experience. Is it any wonder inspectors are declaring that the demand for a daily act of predominantly Christian worship is probably unworkable?

I also find the "them and us"

language particularly unhelpful. There is an ongoing debate within Christianity, as there is in all religions, about the nature of our relationship together as participants in the whole religious community. Each religion will draw an identity from something its adherents find unique within it. But the days have passed when the Christian community resolutely held that everyone else was wrong and doomed. Tolerance and dialogue are now held as a way forward far more in keeping with the spirit of a founder who declared:

"Whoever is not against us is for us" (Gospel of Luke. Chapter 9)

It's a far cry from the intolerant alarmism that's been allowed to foster a syllabus that encourages the exclusive assertion of one faith as predominant.

Belief isn't about them and us. It's about all of us.

So I end up questioning the motives involved in the establishment's use of the Religious Education debate and also the extent to which the religion used matches the Christianity of Jesus. I find the language and ideas being used are powerful and I am reminded of William Godwin, the libertarian, who in 1793 in his *Political Justice* warned:

"The project of national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government. This is an alliance of a more formidable nature than the old and much contested alliance of Church and state. Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambiguous an agent, it behoves us to consider well what it is that we do. Government will not fail to employ it to strengthen its hands and perpetuate its institutions"

Give Government power over education and it will be like giving it power over religion, that's Godwin's warning. Let it grab education and religion and that will be power indeed!



Command curriculum

How can we combat the prostitution of education to the demands of commerce and industry? Chris Atton makes some practical proposals for critical teaching.

THE INTRODUCTION of mercantilism into higher education under the thin disguise of 'enterprise' is now complete. E.P. Thompson's dystopian vision of "the business university" has come to pass throughout the UK, with every vice-chancellor "not so much an academic organiser and arbitrator as the managing director of a business enterprise".

The language of commerce now dominates throughout higher education: 'Enterprise' is now used to describe departments and courses of study; courses are managed, rather than taught; franchising is high on every university's shopping list for "income generation".

"Many vice-chancellors rather like the unaccustomed opportunity to exercise power," declared Christopher Price, principal of Leeds Metropolitan University. "Some academics, who have always been natural barrow boys, prefer hustling for cash to enlarging knowledge."

At the forefront of such progress are the 'new' universities. These have always been concerned with the applications of research and development, and have always had links with local businesses, so it is no surprise that they should take the lead in transforming themselves into the Research and Development departments of commerce and industry.

Mission

Since its assumption of university status two years ago, my own institution has worked towards this goal with a vengeance.

This is most evident in its annual reports (as we have seen), particularly in the language used to define the university's 'mission', which is "to serve the needs of industry and commerce in the broadest sense". It considers its students as just another part of "the educational resource", whose "fitness for purpose" is judged by their ability to succeed in the free market.

The close relationship the university has with industry and commerce means that courses are tailored to meet employers' demands or, as the university has it, to "address employers' real needs". Students are "encouraged" to undertake degree projects agreed between the university and local employers.

How can we combat the effects of

this "command curriculum"? In his book *Critical Teaching And Everyday Life*, Ira Shor stresses the crucial role of dialogue in the classroom. In building on the work of Paolo Freire, Shor identifies "a political economy of schooling", comprising three processes:

1. Learning through dialogue
2. Critical literacy as the foundation for studying any discipline
3. Teaching modes that challenge the social limits of thought and action

By doing away with such symbols of control as the lectern, the teacher's desk, the teacher's monopoly over the instruments of communication (the lone voice, the blackboard) students can be encouraged to take part more in their own learning, to be self-educating in a non-authoritarian environment.

Critical Teaching

I have tried to apply these principles to the teaching I do with first year science undergraduates, to stimulate the students to learn in their own ways and to challenge the dominant paradigms of education and scientific objectivity.

The course in which these activities take place is an Information Studies module that is common to a number of science courses. When I began teaching on the course two years ago it was essentially a guide to the library, focusing on the minutiae of classification schemes and cataloguing rules.

Consequently most students found it tedious and irrelevant, since it did not directly help them to find information for their studies; neither did it help them to understand the information when they had found it. It was clear that the students wanted a more general course, looking at how information is presented, how it is stored and located, and how to interpret and present it. In short, how to cope with information.

In taking account of what the students wanted to learn, and how they wanted to learn it, one of the first changes I made was to the session on taking notes in lectures. Students were clearly confused about the differing approaches taken by lecturers in presenting information. The quality of

lecturing varied greatly: some of the worst lecturers used overheads and handouts that had clearly not been updated for many years. The students were often resentful that they would not be allowed to get away with handing in work as poorly presented as some of the lecturers'.

After looking briefly at the principles of effective communication, I asked the students for examples of 'bad practice' they had experienced. Then, rather than giving the students a dry, 'objective' analysis of the situation, I attempted to replicate in the class all the faults of the various lecturers. I used as my topic a mini-lecture on the arms trade I had given previously to a local group of the World Development Movement. I assumed no prior knowledge of the subject, and encouraged the students to interrupt me as I went, and to insist on clarification.

This sparked a long discussion about how lecturers managed "to get away with it". The students then identified for themselves ways in which they might - as a group - improve matters (using the formal approach of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee had had only limited success in the past). They identified that they could, with each other's support, challenge lecturers "in the act" during the class itself.

Challenging authority

However, it was clear that even given mutual support, the students had little experience of challenging authority. Indeed, they felt it was easier to put up with the status quo "for the sake of a quiet life", even if that meant duplicating work in lectures by going to the library and reading up on the subject which they had just been supposedly taught.

It was proving difficult to convince the students that they had a right to insist on effective teaching (or rather, to insist that their learning was effective).

The students were able to look critically enough at the work of their lecturers, but they lacked the confidence to contest it in public. To give them experience at this, and to show them that you didn't have to be an expert to criticise the experts, I devised two activities. The first is classroom-based and makes an

easily-resourced introduction to the work. The second requires more time and more research, more independent study and the resources of a substantial library.

The Seven Propaganda Devices

In *The Fine Art of Propaganda*, Alfred and Elizabeth Lee identified seven devices commonly used by professional propagandists to persuade their audience that they have a monopoly on the truth. As we know, the techniques of propagandists rely more on deceit and falsehood, but for many students, brought up on an uncritical diet of stage-managed television news and action movies, it is often difficult to distinguish between truth and lies.

This exercise tries to get them to look critically at how people in power use language to deceive us. It does not require any advanced linguistic skills, just a little time to reflect and discuss.

The seven devices are:

1. Name calling: giving the idea a bad name, without examining the evidence.
2. Glittering generality: associating something with a "virtue word". The reverse of "name calling".
3. Card stacking: the selective use of facts, falsehoods and distractions to show the idea in the worst possible light.
4. Band wagon: convincing members of an audience that they're all in agreement.
5. Testimonial: having a respected (or hated) person say that an idea is good (or bad).
6. Plain folks: convincing an audience that your ideas are good because they are "of the people", "plain", "common sense".
7. Transfer: carrying the approval (or disapproval) of one thing to another to make the latter acceptable (or unacceptable). Example: using racism to justify a war for economic reasons.

Give small groups of students a speech or an article by a prominent political, religious or business person. Each group goes through the article marking the occurrence of the devices and, where possible, explaining how the device works. The whole class can then discuss their findings.

Strip the Experts

This is based on Brian Martin's fine little book *Strip the Experts*, a do-it-yourself guide to dealing with

so-called 'expert opinion' and the interests it serves. I choose a few topics that are current and that from previous work with the students I know there is some interest in.

At present these might include the Criminal Justice Bill and the London Greenpeace "McLibel" trial. The issues of student grants and student accommodation are always topical. In small groups the students examine one of these topics, pooling what they already know about it and planning how they will find out more. They then begin investigating the topic, looking out especially for 'expert opinion'. Let experts include scientists, industrialists, politicians, academics: in short, anyone who claims a superior or specialised knowledge of a subject and who is in a position of power.

Following the structure of Brian Martin's book, I recommend that the students examine the work of the experts under the following categories:

1. Challenge the facts: are there any mistakes? Any counterexamples?
2. Challenge assumptions: are they wrong? Do they matter?
3. Discredit the experts: have they ever been wrong? Are their credentials relevant? Do they have a vested interest?
4. Discredit expertise: is the expert the best judge? What about the public? Is expertise absolute, or only provisional? How objective is it?

What might otherwise be a dull research project is given interest and excitement, since the students are out to disprove people who are in authority. They come to look critically at all the information they are given, whether it is in textbooks, newspapers or lecture notes. Using the above framework, the students not only gain confidence in presenting arguments and doing research, they also come to realise that their opinions are just as important as anyone else's. Indeed, in educational institutions their opinions should come first all the time. They seldom do, of course.

At the end of these activities, the students typically identify the find that they have learned that:

"Their opinions can be just as important as those of the experts, especially in matters that directly affect them."

"Don't believe everything you read (or hear)."

"You have a right to be heard."

"Experts are often in it for themselves, not to help other people."

"Just because someone knows a lot, it doesn't mean to say that they're right."

I have sometimes concluded these sessions with a discussion on the issues raised earlier in this article: on "the business university" and education at the service of commerce and industry. This has been the most difficult part of the course for many students, since it entails some contradictions. They are studying primarily to get "a good job" and don't want to get known as troublemakers by challenging the status quo.

But at the same time their research into expertise as shown them how an elite can shape public opinion and public policy. This has left them wanting to challenge the status quo.

Neither I nor the students can hope to solve that contradiction during an hour in a classroom, but I would like to think that - unlike the teaching I used to practice (hierarchical, one-way, authoritarian and 'expert') - activities such as these will help the students to think more freely about what they're doing and why they're doing it.

Chris Atton is a Subject Librarian with responsibility for science at Napier University, Edinburgh. He has a special interest in censorship and freedom of information, and has written extensively on these subjects. He is currently writing a book to encourage and help other librarians in acquiring alternative literature for their libraries.

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Turn schooling on its head

David Gribble has just returned from a visit to Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts, which is as yet shamefully little known in this country. It represents one of the most astonishing new ideas in the history of education.

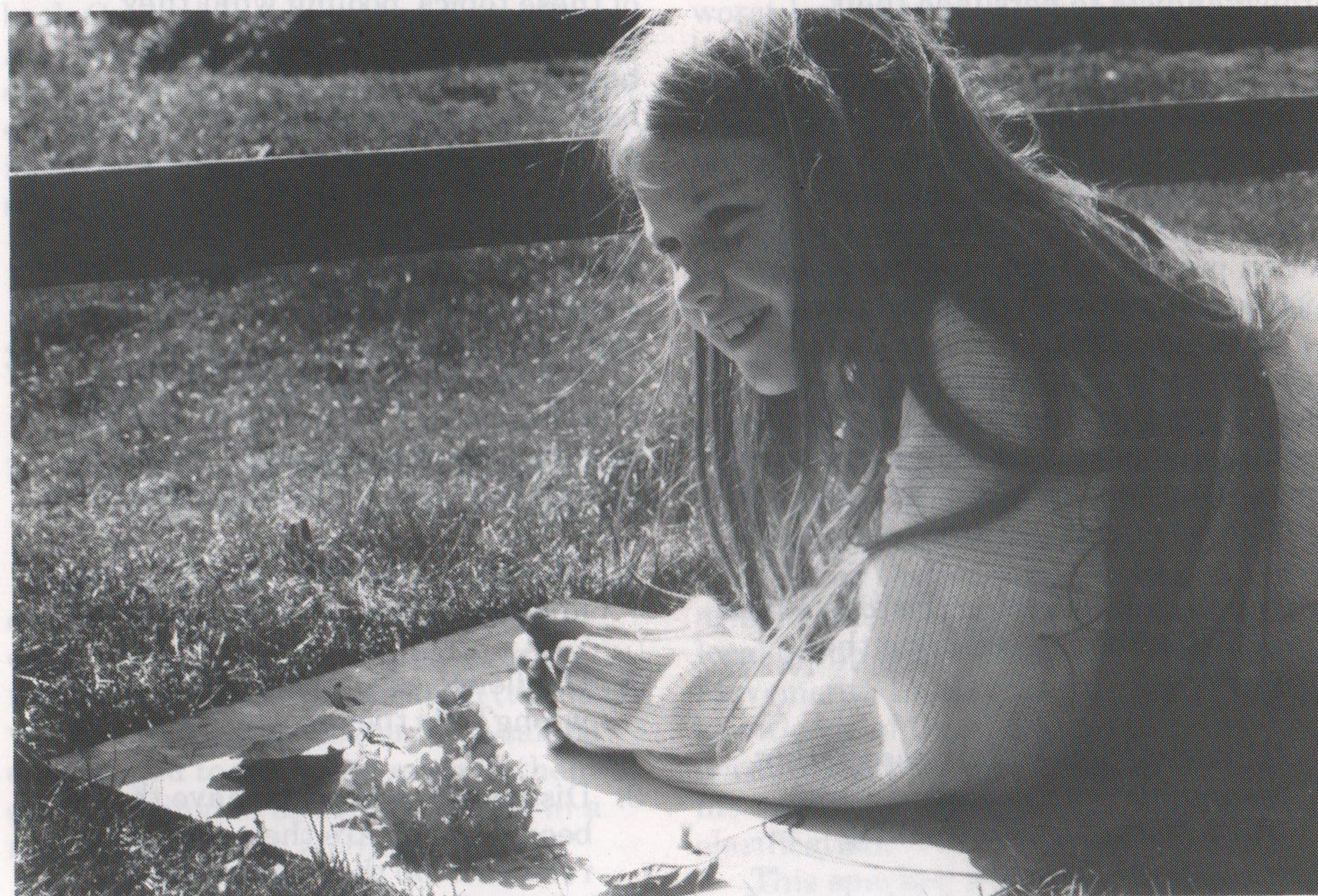
AFTER twenty-five years of development, Sudbury Valley School, with a hundred and fifty students aged between four and nineteen, is now an established success. A number of new schools are being created in its image, including Cascade Valley School and Natchaug Democratic School in the United States, and Byron Bay School in Australia. It is high time it was better known in Europe.

Dan Greenberg, one of the founders of the school, has written a number of books about it, including *Free at Last* and *The Sudbury Valley School Experience*. I had read most of them before I visited the school, so I had some idea of what to expect, but it was not until the fourth day of my visit that I began to make sense of the place.

Before I went I knew that the school had no curriculum and no fixed classes. If a student wants to study something with help from a staff member, it is the student's responsibility to arrange it. I had also read that many visitors to the school think they have arrived in a break time, and are surprised to find that the apparent break time never comes to an end. It is one thing to read about it, and to laugh patronisingly about the foolish visitors who cannot appreciate what is going on, but it is quite another to find oneself present in the school, and sharing those ignorant visitors' astonishment.

The main school building has no particularly large rooms. It is an old house, by American standards, and I imagine a large family used to live there. It is now furnished as a number of different-sized sitting-rooms, with sofas and easy chairs, tables and bookshelves. There is also a kitchen, an office, an art room, a dark-room, a tiny laboratory, a play-room and a meeting-room, which also serves as a small gymnasium. There are eighteen rooms in all, but some of them can only hold five or six people at a time. None of them are classrooms. A hundred yards from the main building is the barn, half of which is a large space for big meetings, parties and performances, while the other half contains the school computer centre and two soundproof music rooms.

Not only are there no lessons, but the staff members are surprisingly inconspicuous. There are about eight staff on duty at any time, so even if they were spread about in separate



rooms, most of the rooms would have no adults in them.

During the school meeting, which few students attend, all the staff are concentrated in one room. Nearly all the time I was there the young children in the play-room were playing on their own, the boys in the computer centre were on their own; only the art room was staffed. Everywhere children were hanging out, talking. A few were reading or writing, some played chess, one juggled continuously, some played four-square, some slept.

There were occasional well attended karate classes in the meeting-room. I saw three girls skinning a squirrel in the science lab, a tiny room where there was barely room for the four of us and the staff member who was supervising the use of her dissecting tools; she would have liked to have taught the girls some biology, but they were only interested in taxidermy. I saw another three girls having a basic French lesson; they were near the beginning of the course, and the staff member who was teaching them was not expecting them to persevere beyond the first few chapters.

Everyone seemed friendly and contented. It was peaceful. But considering the fact that there were a hundred and fifty students at the school, it seemed to me that amazingly little was happening that couldn't have happened just as well as home. I was quite wrong.

As I said, it took me four days to find a meaning to what was going on. I don't think my interpretation is necessarily one the school itself would offer; perhaps no two people see Sudbury Valley in quite the same way.

My enlightenment came from two sources - the nature of the Sudbury Valley Diploma, and conversations with students about how they arranged lessons when they needed them.

The diploma is awarded to students who can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the school community that they are ready to go out and lead a responsible life in the outside world. This criterion ought obviously to be the main objective of all education; the exam results which obsess most of the educational world have little relevance to life outside school.

Many of the students I spoke to who had wanted particular lessons had arranged them from home after school; these included dance, drama and music. I spoke to artists who did their art work at home, writers who wrote at home and a computer programmer who did his programming at home. When you are a student at Sudbury it is easier to study at home than at school, so though you may collect books from the school library and discuss what you are doing with a member of staff, home is usually where you do your actual work.

And then it came to me. What matters most about school, about any school, even a repressive one, is not the

lessons but the free time.

What children and adolescents want to do more than anything else is to learn to get on well with other people; they want to find out how to communicate and co-operate, on the one hand, and to establish their own separate identities on the other. The only way to do this is by constant interaction.

These lessons, that young people so badly want to learn, are exactly the lessons that society most need them to learn. Yet every time children are made to sit quietly in rows and listen to some adult telling them something, they are being prevented from learning how to relate to each other. Every time they are set work that they have not themselves chosen to do, they are being prevented from finding their own true interests. Lessons and a curriculum are not merely irrelevant, they actually interrupt the educational process.

I remembered my own school experience. The most important things I had learnt in between lessons. It was between lessons that we had discussed family and religion and paradox and mathematics. It was between lessons that I had written stories, poems and songs; it was between lessons that I had experimented with the piano and rehearsed plays with my friends. It was only between lessons that we had ever had any opportunity to talk to the teachers.

During my first three days at Sudbury I had thought that I had seen very little that couldn't have been happening at home, but in fact I had seen a tremendously important thing that couldn't possibly have happened at home - a hundred and fifty young people learning from each other how to make sense of human relationships. You can read and write and study perfectly well at home, but you cannot explore your developing views of the world with other young people, and

without adult interruption.

If the ultimate objective of a school is to send ex-students out into the world ready and able to lead responsible and useful lives, then lessons are not an aspect of education that matters. Break-time is the time

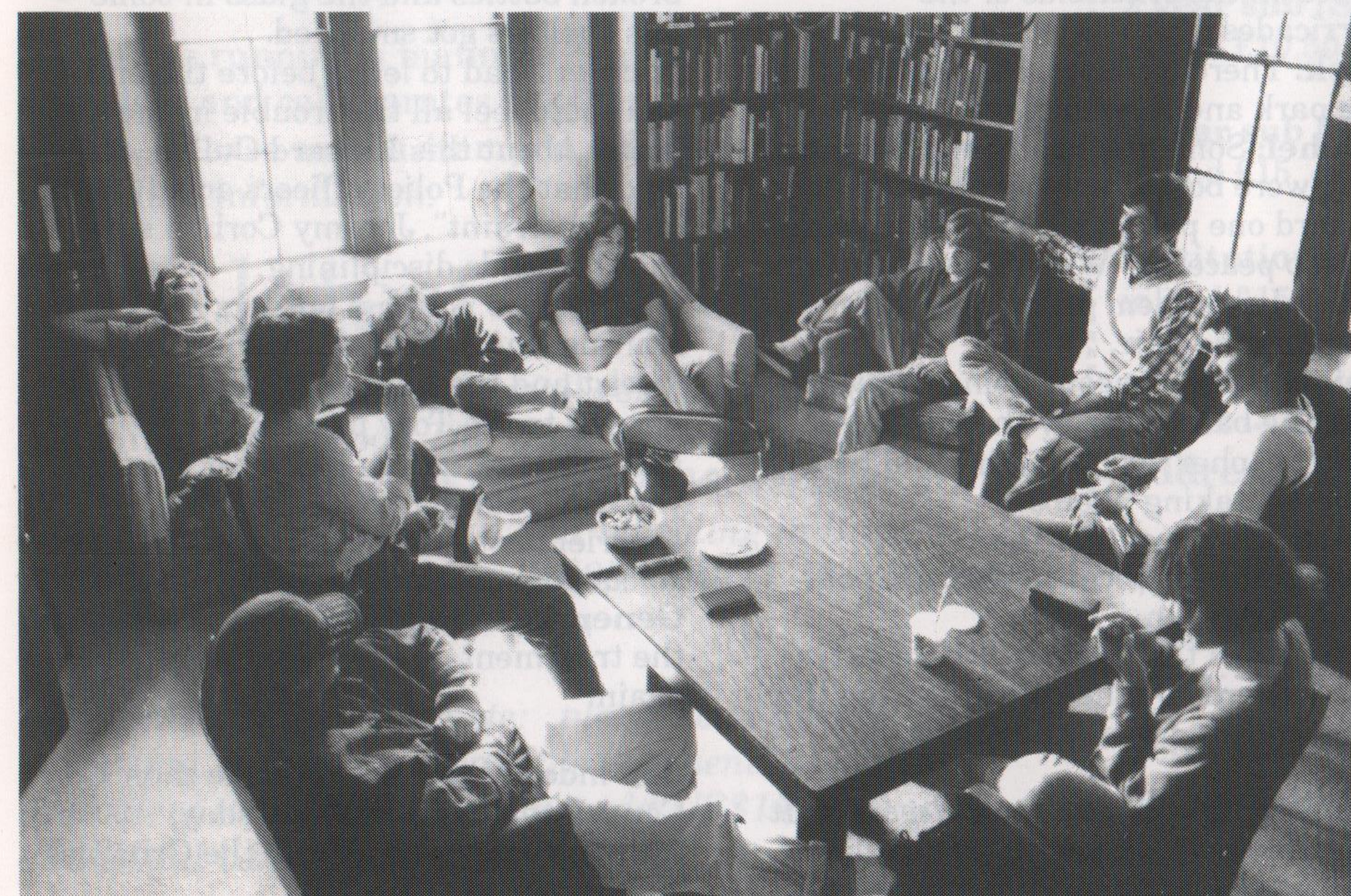


that matters, because it is in break that you organise your own life, talk, make friends, talk, play games, talk, settle disputes, follow up personal interests, arrange for extra help or tutorial discussion, and talk. You don't need lessons at school, all you need is break.

That, as I see it, is the Sudbury Valley position, and as a logical consequence, the school has scrapped organised classes.

When the experiment was first tried, it was so far from conventional practice that it was truly heroic. Now it has been proved successful in its own terms for over twenty-five years, and on top of that almost 80% of its students have gone on to further education, it no longer seems heroic but only reasonable. Even so, it still turns conventional practice on its head. Is there any chance that as the school becomes better known in this country, more people will be won over by its reasonableness?

Dan Greenberg's books are obtainable from the Sudbury Valley School Press, 2 Winch Street, Framingham, Massachusetts MA 01701.



Criminal injustice

A group of teenagers (13 to 17 years old), some of whom had been on the Anti Criminal Justice Bill Demonstration on 9th October 1994 in London, had a lot to tell us ...

Lib Ed: What was this demonstration about? What is so bad about the CJB?

Various: Well, it's the right to silence, freedom of assembly ...

Nicole: If more than TWO people get together for a rave they can be arrested. **Kate:** They have made it into criminal trespass.

Alex and Kate: If a group of more than eleven people are together walking it can be declared illegal.

Nicole: What about a football match, or a birthday party?

Voice: We often have about twenty people hanging about when we meet up on the street.

Jake: Well, we'd all be arrested.

Paul: I think you are not allowed more than five people together.

Nicole: I think that there's been a change in the House of Lords to the Bill. But it's been passed and that some will be put into effect from next week and some waits until March.

Alex: Some of the police say that they cannot put it into effect.

Raggie: People will not be able to go Hunt sabbing

Alex: That's what the stuff about Criminal Trespass in the Bill is about. They're also going to introduce floating prisons.

Raggie: What if you're seasick?

Kate: Well the idea is that you cannot escape.

Rachel: They will be able to even arrest you on your way to festivals. It is just a way to control people.

It is ironic that you cannot go to a peaceful demonstration at Stonehenge when there is an army base nearby.

Kate: The CJB is taking away our Civil Liberties.

Nicole: Some of its provisions are counter to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Rachel: Instead of building houses they are just using the new law to turn out people out of their homes.

Kate: I saw a poster that says that the Bill is targeting young people. One thing is certain. They won't be charging people coming out of Covent Garden with being an illegal assembly, when they will if people have been to a rock concert. The whole thing is completely hypocritical.

Voice: This law is aimed at travellers.

Lib Ed: There are only reckoned to be 1500 travellers in the country.

Alex: My cousin is a traveller ...

Nicole: It takes away your right to be free, because the police have a right to

arrest "on reasonable suspicion" that you are going to a Rave.

Kate: It is quite obvious that the police cannot handle the power that they have got already

Voice: It just legalises what the police have been doing for years.

Raggie: They'll be introducing Death Camps next.

Alex: I don't think we've got that far!

Kate and Rachel: We went to the demonstration last Wednesday at Westminster as well. We'd been told that we were allowed to lobby MPs about the CJB. But we were forced to walk a long way round by the police.

There were two thousand five hundred riot police. They sent us in a completely roundabout way. Then there were riot police and police on horseback. We had to walk in single file. The police were trapping us all into one small area, so a lot of people left. They had police dogs on one side and riot police on the other. Then they closed down the tube stations so we had to walk over to Waterloo station (about a couple of miles away), and even there the police hassled us. We never got to see our MP. We went to hear Tony Benn and some travellers talking, then we just had to stand for a long time waiting.

Lib Ed: What did you see?

Jack: There was some fighting.

Nick: Some dudes got on top of a cop car ... The police did not like this; but the police discipline was really breaking down ... I asked a pig if we could go through and he said there were more police on the other side of the barricades.

Jack: There were two P.A. systems on the park and the police charged.

Rachel: Some police at first said that they were bored: they wanted the fight. I heard one policeman say "I'm bored, it's too peaceful." When they went into action I saw them dragging people along by the hair.

Voice: I saw someone being thrown over the barricades by the police. A photographer was being hit and he was not even taking photos.

Voice: They went for the photographers because they did not want to be seen.

Kate: Even the *Independent* reporter was battered by the police, so even the *Independent* came out against the police.

Nicole: Did you read the *Telegraph*? It made my blood boil with its headline saying that two thousand anarchist

thugs had organised the demonstration.

Paul: My sister said that they all circled round ready to charge.

Nick: They were really stirring up everyone's feelings.

Kate: Yes. It was really good marching along with 100000 people peacefully; but there in the side street there they all were, the streets were full of police officers and vans.

I think that there were plants in the crowd to stir things up.

Nicole: I saw a bloke arrested - but when no-one took any interest they let him go. I think he was a plant and that it was a mock arrest to stir people up.

Kate: They circled around the Public Address system so that it was impossible for people to disperse. Then they told people to disperse, which they could not do, then they charged.

Nick: There was a helicopter overhead and it was meant to be telling people to disperse: but nobody could hear any sort of announcement from it. Its presence just aggravated the whole situation.

Alex: I'd like to know who was in charge (**Kate:** Richard Cullen) and whether he knew what was happening.

Nicole: They were there to cause trouble. All you could see was huge numbers of police - with those new truncheons. It was very scary. Why were they doing this?

Paul: It sounds more like a war than enforcement.

Nick: Some people were smashing things. In some places it was just broken bottles and the glass in some bus shelters got smashed.

Nicole: I had to leave before the end - you could feel all the trouble in the air.

Kate: About this Richard Cullen - he said that the Police officers acted "with quiet restraint". Jeremy Corbyn says that he needs disciplining.

Nicole: The political borders are shifting; the Tories are moving towards fascist and the Labour Party are moving to the Tory positions.

Lib Ed: How do you feel after this? Do you feel intimidated by these experiences so that you never want to go on a demonstration again?

General response: We feel so angry at the treatment. We are definitely going again.

And indeed they were outside their City Council the following Thursday, lobbying councillors about the Criminal Justice Act.

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

For the Liberation of Learning

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

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

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

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

Lib ED magazine

The main *Lib ED* publication is now an annual large format magazine/journal. In addition *Lib ED* publishes a regular (at present 2 a year) newsletter to keep readers up to date with the latest developments. Subscribers will receive all of these.

Conferences

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

The latest books

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

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

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FREEDOM IN EDUCATION is a practical handbook full of ideas on how to make learning more relevant and enjoyable:

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A history of education

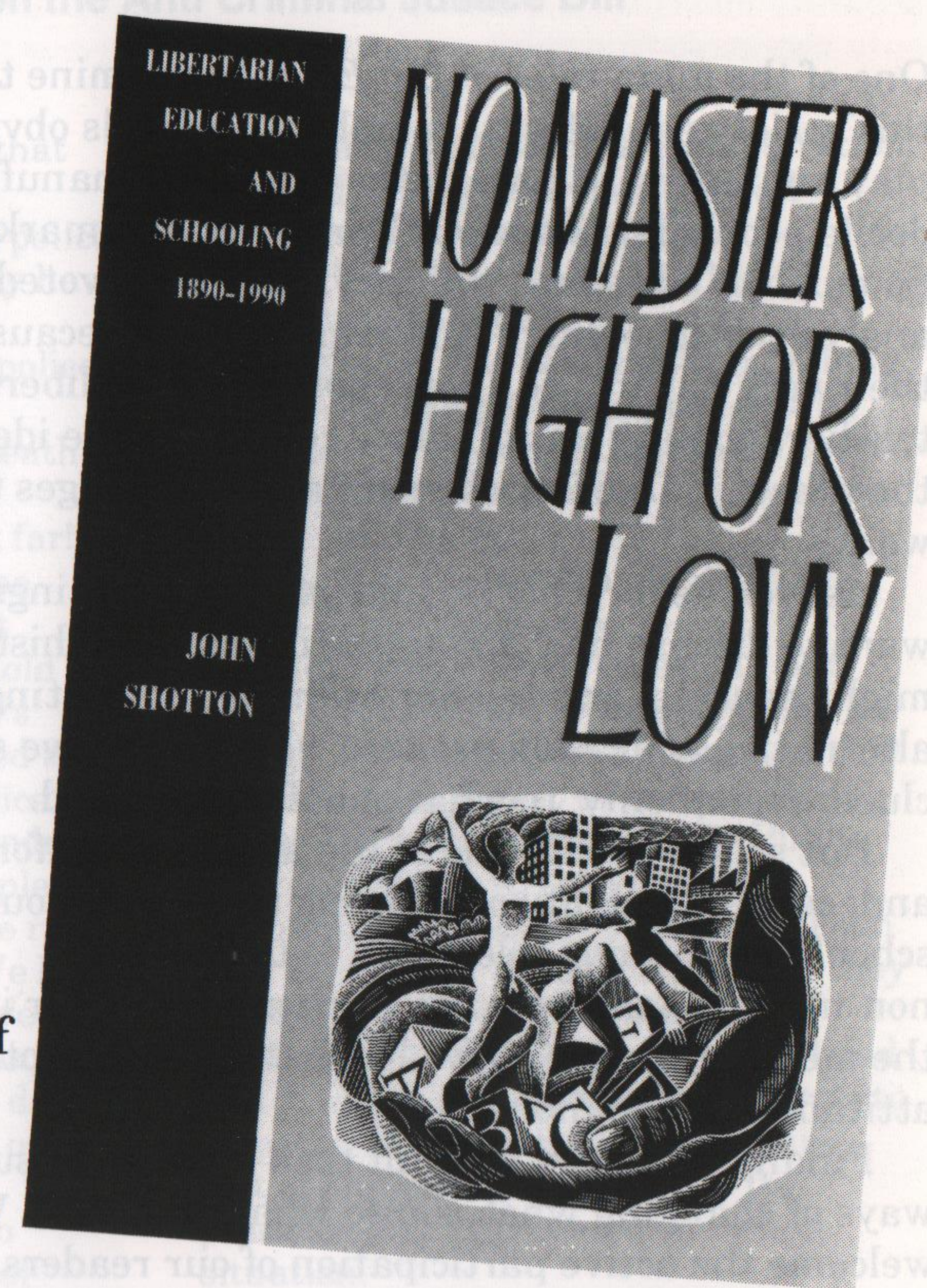
The path to a compulsory education system, the emergence of selective schooling, and the fight for comprehensive education in Britain are all issues that have been charted by educational historians. What they have missed is the history of the dissenting tradition, one that questions the whole notion of a state system. John Shotton, in *No Master High or Low* has attempted to rectify that situation.

Colin Ward writes in the introduction:

"He makes no claim that cannot be backed up by evidence, and he looks especially for the evidence provided by children rather than by propagandists. He draws us into unexplored territory and reminds us that experiment is the oxygen of education."

As the debate about educational standards and uniformity intensifies, John Shotton's book suggests that libertarian experiments have a successful track record. If you haven't purchased this important book, send for it today.

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The Shepherd is my lord

8.30 Arrive at the Department for Education. Still unable to get into the toilets where John Patten has been barricaded ever since the Major fired him. Some days he says he will come out as soon as his hair is ready, other days he demands a plane to Disneyland, but most of the time there's just inconsolable sobbing. Sad. It's easy to see why everyone thought he was such a useless ponce. Where do they find them? Sometimes I think there must be a dud Tory factory somewhere turning them out.

That's my subversive thought for the day out of the way. Now let's get down to doing good.

8.35 I examine proposals for the exciting vocational qualifications we've introduced to replace the discredited NVQ and GNVQ: the CWT (Complete Waste of Time) and the more advanced CUWT (Complete and Utter Waste of Time). These will revolutionise training in Britain, ensuring that when it comes to cheap unskilled sweated labour, we lead the world. Look out the Philippines, here we come.

9.00 Finalise the arrangements for the privatisation of drugs education in schools. The competition for the contract was extremely stiff, indeed cut-throat would not be a too inaccurate description. We received bids from SPLIFF INTERNATIONAL, a European consortium based in Maastricht and strongly supported by Ted Heath; from WINSTON AND THE POSSE INC., a Caribbean based company strongly backed by members of the Royal Family; from WORLD OF CRACK, an American multinational which had Lady Thatcher advising it; and lastly the British based company, BIG MONTY ENTERPRISES.

Of course, BIG MONTY won the contract. The other bidders were either too European, involved with the Thatcher dynasty, or were (to be frank) black. BIG MONTY on the other hand gave lucrative consultancies to a clutch of Tory MPs and promised directorships to a number of ministers once they retire. That's the way to do business in today's get-up-and-go Britain.

I have discussed the plans with Big Monty himself. In every school he plans to appoint a particularly forceful teacher usually from the PE department to be in charge of the drugs education. This key figure will be known as THE PUSHY. He or she will then appoint a number of other teachers who will deal with students who have drug problems face to face.

They will somewhat appropriately be known as THE DEALERS. He reckons that, in his own words, he "will have the drug scene sewn up by Christmas".

Throughout our enlightening chat, Big Monty and his personal assistants, Natasha and Celeste, continue to 'snort' lines of a particularly powerful snuff. It certainly cleared my head.

11.30 Visit the Lord Archer City Technology College which specialises in Literature and Business Studies. Much of the money for this institution was put up by Anglia Television. I sit in on a class learning to write trash fiction. It's astonishing how much difficulty some of the more able students have in actually achieving the profound level of absolute mediocrity required. Still they all persevere. After all, that's where the money is.

Afterwards the teacher tells me that Lord Archer's latest collection of short stories, UMPTEEN KIPPERS, was actually ghost written for him by a fourth year slow learners class one wet Thursday afternoon when games was cancelled. Amazing. That's what I thought when I read the book, Jeffrey at his best.

Next a business studies class where students are practising spotting shares that are just about to dramatically increase in value. As is well known Lord Archer has a fine nose for this sort of thing himself. This lesson really does replicate the real world of business. Apparently the students who do best are those who cheat!

Their teacher tells me that later on this term they will be working from Ernest Saunders' classic business studies text I FOUGHT THE LAW AND THE MONEY WON. The class will spend at least a couple of lessons learning how to fake senile dementia. A vital attribute for the modern businessman.

1.00 Attend a DEMOS* lunchtime think-in where the most exciting minds of the hour dispense enlightenment along with good food and wine. Today Roger Scrotum turns his fierce intellect on the essence of modern conservatism. "What people have got to realise", he says, "is that old-fashioned voting is a thing of the past. Nowadays the only sure way to influence government policy is to make a donation to Conservative Party funds, offer directorships to ex-Ministers, award consultancies to senior Tory MPs. This is what the poor and the unemployed should do, for instance. If the rich can do it, then so can they. After all, there

are enough of them." We all laugh. He goes on: "If they all got together and contributed a pound each that would be enough for a hefty donation to Party funds with plenty left over to divide among individual MPs. Then we'd see something done about poverty and unemployment."

"Let me give you a concrete example though: the tobacco companies give huge sums to the Party so cigarette advertising is still not banned despite all the evidence relating to cancer deaths. But let us consider for a moment how much money people with cancer donated to the Party. Not a lot." We all laugh. "All they do is whine and moan. The problem is not that they haven't got the money. They haven't got the drive, the initiative. To sum up: the unemployed, the poor, people with cancer, they are all losers. It's as simple as that."

This superb summation of the Conservative case is warmly applauded. I return to the DfE intellectually renewed.

3.00 Meeting with Boss Shepherd to discuss her TV appearance this evening. It is a trifle unnerving having a Secretary of State who farts, belches, spits and scratches herself at meetings, but she is full of dynamism. Her colourful language conceals a heartfelt concern for the well-being of the nation's children.

"What the f*** have you useless f***** been playing at all these f***** years", she asks. "Selection should have f***** well been brought back in f***** years ago. Well now the f***** gloves are coming off and any f***** who gets in the f***** way is going to get well and truly f*****. Now f*** off out of it while I prepare my f***** speech." At last the Department has a leader. It's as if Lady Thatcher has been reincarnated.

6.00 Watch Boss Shepherd perform at the TV studios: "I promise all parents and teachers a period of calm, stability and consolidation. We intend to listen and consult as widely as possible. Our watchwords are choice and excellence for all our children."

As she says afterwards: "If the f***** fall for that b***** they deserve to be f*****."

***DEMOS** - think tank started by *Marxism Today* remnants that takes money from big business, has a mutual love affair with Tony Blair, and flirts with the Tory Right.

The Neglected Works of Leon

Wo sind die elefanten (Where are the elephants?)

A CD or cassette by Leon Rosselson (CFC002)

Guess what they're selling at the happiness counter

A CD or cassette by Leon Rosselson (CFC003)

Bringing the news from nowhere

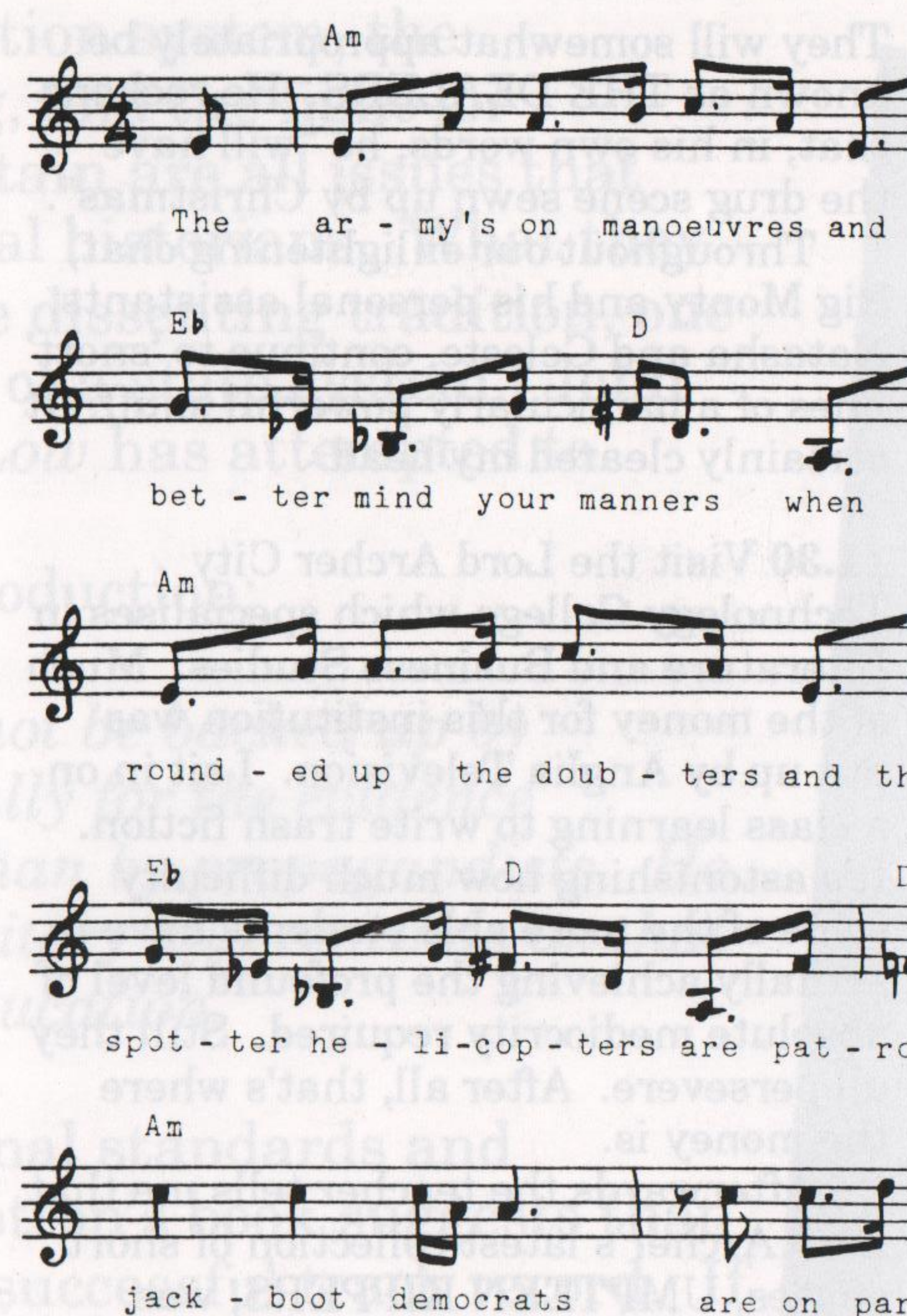
A songbook by Leon Rosselson
Published by Fuse Records, £14.95

I'VE JUST REALISED that my friends and I have been listening to Leon Rosselson's music for nearly twenty years. Luckily rehearsing never dims the effect of the combination of music and poetry.

Why are they not more popular? Leon suggests that the British have never latched on to the form of the chanson or lied, and that this could be a reason why he is not a huge seller. I do not agree completely. The problem for many listeners is that, in some ways, many of his songs pose a deep challenge to what they have been brought up to believe in, or to what they think they believe in. This can be quite unsettling. The truth about society is quite hurtful. It can be taken in small pieces, in things such as Ralph McTell's *Streets of London* that allow quite comfortable individualistic explanations. But his songs, especially taken over the span of LP or CD, do not allow for a cosy reassuring view of the world. Even the children's songs have their own challenges. It is this witty, cognate and challenging approach to life and problems that this central to his songs, and that is what many anarchist and libertarian left people enjoy about them. The problem is that they are rather thin on the ground! People in the Socialist Workers Party probably find the challenges disturbing as well, because to them the words express the idea that what they are doing may not be quite right, and they are made aware of this.

For those who are familiar with his work he is one of the most significant political songwriters of the second half of the twentieth century. Those who listen want his words to be heard and understood by all who have ears.

Leon himself acknowledges the practical difficulties he has with regard to pigeonholing in record shops. He says that there is no label that fits his work. He is often filed under "folk", but although the Diggers song is sung in folk clubs all round Britain, he is not a folk singer in the traditional sense.



Further, his is not the sort of music to be reviewed in folk magazines. The *Guardian* newspaper, which is the sort of paper where one might expect to see reviews of his records now concentrates on rock music and has no reviewer for folk. Thus it is difficult for a sympathetic audience to find out what he is doing. In July 1993 the *Guardian* reviewed his compilation book of the songs he has written, but it did not mention the records and the publication information only gave the price with Fuse, the name of Rosselson's own publishing company, in brackets hardly likely to increase sales very much.

Rosselson's latest CD *Wo sind die Elefanten?* (Where are the Elephants?) is highly accomplished. Personally this reviewer was disappointed with track 2, *The Poet, the Wife and the Monkey*, which is an attack on the personal lifestyle of Leo Ferre, the popular French singer. In spite of Ferre's strange personal life, his penchant for Rolls Royce cars and high living, he made no secret of his anarchist sympathies, as well as being a great singer. The song entertains enough and it must be admitted that its strange tale is entertaining. I just felt that there are more appropriate targets than this. Otherwise there is not a dud amongst the ten he has presented. *Where's the enemy?* has him back to his vein of rollicking satire, and leaves you feeling cheerful that one day the world could positively turn upside down. Everybody should buy this disc. If you feel that Rosselson's voice is

occasionally somewhat weak, then sing along with it and enjoy.

Guess what they're selling at the happiness counter, is a compilation of 19 tracks that have been issued before, but are now brought together. *The Battle Hymn of the New Socialist Party* with its chorus of: "We'll sing the red flag once a year" (to the tune of *The Red Flag*) dates back over twenty years. I checked it against the original recording and he has hardly had to rewrite it to make it bang up to date: "It's one step forward. Two steps back ..." The Labour Party does not change and deserves his scorn.

Bringing the News from Nowhere mentioned above, is the Leon Rosselson Song Book. With over 300 pages of words and music this is a chronicle of 70s to the 90s and well illustrated with black and white photographs. Open it at random, the words fizz off the page:

"We are the press. The great free press. Guardians of the national interest. We express all that is best in the ordinary decent law abiding British public. Yes."

Ballad of a Spycatcher actually made the top ten, to Leon's surprise and did not result in a prosecution, during the ridiculous period when the soontobeforgotten book by Peter Wright was banned in Britain.

"But of all the strange things I'll relate. The strangest thing to me is that this doggerel I'm singing contravenes the rule of three. For nanny (GOD BLESS NANNY!) thinks it wouldn't do for you to know about the naughty things that grown up people do."

No more quotations as the whole book is quotable.

Rosselson is considering turning his back on song writing. It does not earn much, and his last tour in Canada was billed as a farewell. His new career is as a successful writer of children's books. "What it has in common with song writing is that you need to have great economy of style", he says.

Write your children's books, Leon, and we'll review them when you send them to us, but do not give up writing songs. Everything you write in that medium will endure far into the next century and beyond.

All Leon Rosselson's books and records can be obtained from Fuse Records. 28 Park Chase. Wembley Park. Middlesex. HA9 8EH.

State School Network

Dear fellow *Lib ED* readers,

I'M WRITING to put out an idea I have about wanting to set up a national network/campaigning organisation for change in the state school system, and for support for how to get on, and/or survive when you're in it.

It seems to me that there is a network for support and information for people out of school, and there are people in, or (with the resources to be) setting up alternative schools, and these people get to share their ideas about children's needs and education, and put them into action, within those frameworks.

But for children and parents who are in the state school system who want to be different from how they are, or anyone else who wants to contribute to making the state school system more loving and sane, there is no forum.

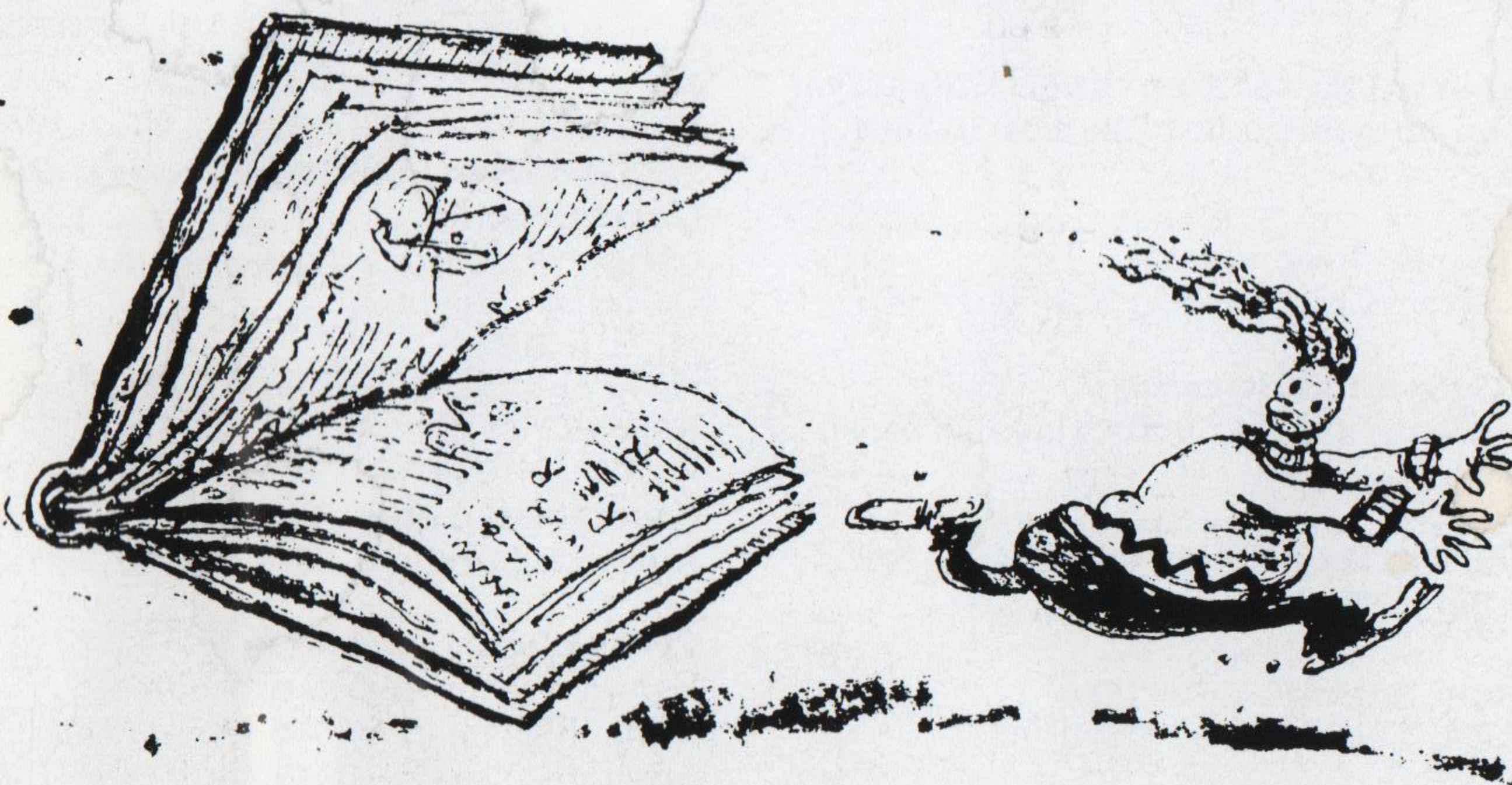
I think it is important to work to show the whole of this (our?) society our values and ideas and experience of radical and holistic education (and living!), and create change in society to meet all of our shared and different needs.

I'm not sure how, practically, to go about setting this up. I can't commit a lot of energy to hold it together myself as I am parenting alone, living in economic poverty, and am involved in other political work.

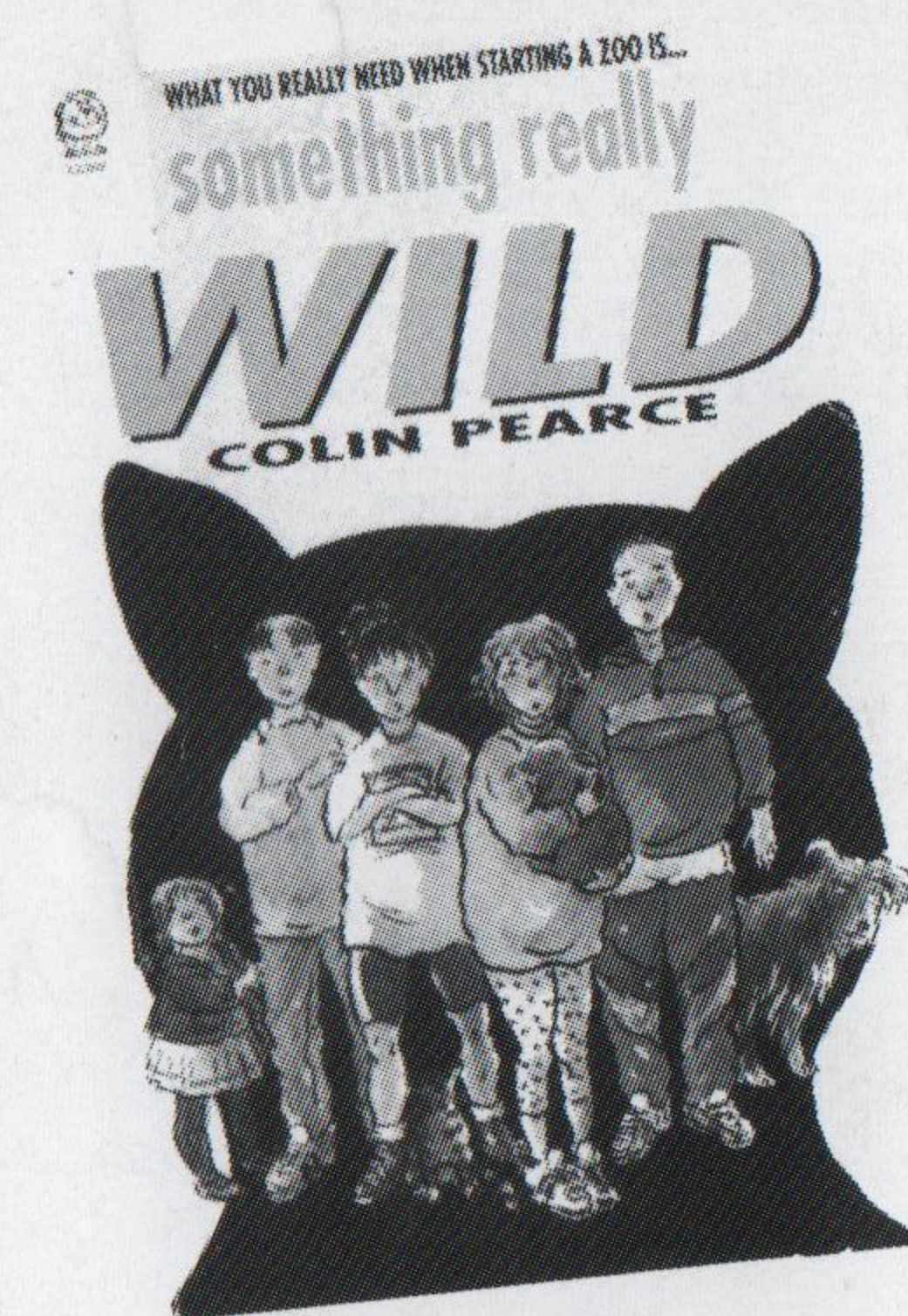
But people could write and together we can work out how to do it. Perhaps the next *Lib ED* conference could provide some gathering space for it?

I look forward to hearing from people. With love and hope,

Shanthie
clo Lib ED



Adventure and cunning



Something Really Wild

A book by Colin Pearce
Published by Lions, £2.99.

FIRST to introduce the main characters: Emily aged 12, Jamie aged 13, Lara aged about 13, Harry aged about 15, Sean aged 16 and Ellen aged 5. The animal characters are Emily's adopted cat Scab, Emily's rabbit Sounds, Jamie's dog Feather and all the

animals they collect for their zoo.

Most of the action takes place in Emily's back garden in the school holidays.

Emily has just moved into the area and when she explores her back garden she finds a gang of friends (see characters).

They get together a zoo because they are bored and out of money. They collect animals which they find all over the place.

When Ellen finds a panther they have got to get it to Longleat Wildlife Park. When they get to Longleat they have to avoid the park keepers but get surrounded by workers who make the panther leap over the fence into the park. Scab follows and gets lost but is then found by a joyful Emily just when the school holidays are ending.

I think that this story is excellent for children about age 8. It is full of adventure and cunning, sometimes funny, sometimes just a tiny bit scary. This book is suitable for readers who love animals. It's good that the children are doing things for themselves and it's good that the bully gets beaten in the end.

Samuel Morris

What a mess!

Who Rules Our Schools

A book by Mike Baker
Published by Hodder and Stoughton, £8.99

STATE EDUCATION is in a mess. State teachers are caught up in that mess. Mike Baker's book tries to understand that mess. It's an examination of the political developments in state education. Baker hasn't watched these developments from the sidelines. As an education

journalist and a school governor Baker is doing a balancing act. He is someone who has talked with the policy makers while being on the receiving end of their policies. That balance gives his book particular insight. Baker has a thorough dig back into the historical background of present policy, with some illuminating findings (find out how the Black Papers came out by accident!). He's also sifted through the deluge of interviews and autobiographies turned out by Thatcher and co. to provide background to their "Educational reforms". He also looks at the impact those 'reforms' have had on real schools and real teachers. The picture is of a growing centralisation of control - in the name of parental choice. This is the end result of successive Conservative administrations ineffectively opposed by a Labour Party whose only real contribution to this debate, under Jim Callaghan, was to set the centralisation ball rolling. (Baker gives a fair view of the more active opposition put up by the NUT).

It's a book that presents the mess and describes how we got into it. As such it could be a contribution to the arduous task of finding our way out of this mess. But it doesn't exactly leave you feeling optimistic.