

## 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**  
PO Box 7420 London, N9 9SG  
Helpline: 01891 518303  
(For everyone who practices or supports the  
right of children to learn without schooling)

**Campaign Against Military Research On  
Campus (CAMROC)**  
c/o Student CND, 162 Holloway Road,  
London, N7  
0171 607 3616  
e-mail: ycnd@gn.apc.org

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

**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)

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

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

**End Physical Punishment of Children  
(EPOCH)**  
77 Holloway Road, London, N7  
0171 700 0627  
(A national organisation which aims to end  
physical punishment of children by parents  
and other carers)

**A K Distribution**  
33 Tower Street, Edinburgh, EH6 7BN  
0131 555 5165  
(Suppliers of a wide range of libertarian  
literature by post: send for their catalogue of  
titles)

**Global Futures Project**  
Institute of Education, University of London,  
20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0NS

**Kilquhanity House School**  
Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland

**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)

**Anti-bullying Campaign**  
6 Borough High Street, London SE1  
0171 378 1446

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

**1 in 12 Club**  
21-21 Albion Street, Bradford, West  
Yorkshire, BD1 2TT  
(a club for the unemployed and low-waged,  
run on anarchist principles)

**Brambles Housing Co-operative**  
82 Andover Street, Sheffield, S3 9EG  
(home education in a co-operative setting)

**World University Service**  
20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN  
0171 288 4600  
(promotes education for international  
development; also runs refugee advice line on  
0171 288 4603)

**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

**Connect**  
12 Brooke Street, Northcote 3070, Victoria,  
AUSTRALIA  
00 613 9489 9052, fax: 00 613 9344 8256  
(newsletter of youth participation in  
education)

**Netzwerk**  
Schweglerstrasse 43/4, 1150 Vienna,  
AUSTRIA  
00 43 1 983 3440  
(network of alternative schools in Austria)

**Dansk Friskoleforening**  
Prices Havevej 11, DK 5600 Faaborg,  
DENMARK  
00 45 62 613013  
(an association which represents 195 free  
primary and lower secondary schools)

**The Pestalozzi School**  
Casilla 17/11/06370, Quito, ECUADOR

**L'ANEN**  
1, Rue des Nefliers, 31400 Toulouse,  
FRANCE  
00 33 61 554488  
(national association for the development of  
new education)

**Possible**  
Agence Information Enfance, 29 Rue Davy,  
75017 Paris, FRANCE  
00 33 1 42 287164, fax: 00 33 1 42 266012  
(publishes an annual guide to alternative  
education in France)

**Bundesverband der Freien  
Alternativeschulen**  
Wiemelhauser Strasse 270, 44799 Bochum,  
GERMANY  
00 49 234 72648, fax: 00 49 234 76053

**Mirambika**  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Aurobind Marg,  
New Delhi 110016, INDIA

**Democratic School of Hadera**  
Schunat Brandess, Hadera, ISRAEL  
00 972 6 337448, fax: 00 972 6 344146

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

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

**Tamariki Free School**  
83 Rutherford Street, Box 19-506,  
Christchurch, NEW ZEALAND

**Young Voices**  
Norwegian People's Aid  
PO Box 8844 Youngstorget, 0028 Oslo,  
NORWAY  
(helps children and young people to express  
their concerns to people in power)

**Aula Libre**  
Apolo 88, 22520 Fraga, SPAIN  
(libertarian pedagogical magazine)

**SAC (Syndikalisterna)**  
Svenvagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm, Sweden  
00 46 8 343559

**Jurg Jegge,**  
Alte Brücke 4, 8427 Rorbas,  
SWITZERLAND  
(runs an apprenticeship scheme for those  
who find it hard to get started)

**AERO,**  
417 Roslyn Heights, New York, NY 11577,  
USA  
00 1 516 621 2195, fax: 00 1 516 625 3257

**Sudbury Valley School,**  
2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701,  
USA

# Lib ED

No.27 Summer 1996 £1

A magazine for the liberation of learning



**FOCUS ON  
UNIVERSITIES**  
Managing Minds to  
Meet a Market Demand

**F-OFFSTED**  
Revenge of the  
Woodlouse

**DRUGS**  
... for fidgety schoolkids



# Libertarian EDUCATION

A magazine for the liberation of learning

Vol 2 No 27 Summer 1996

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EDITORIAL

## New Lib ED

WE MOVE IN fast changing times, and *Lib ED* has always been at the forefront of modern trends. To demonstrate our commitment to being in the vanguard of new ideas on education, you will notice, from this issue, a change in *Lib ED*.

From now on we will be known as *New Lib ED*, and with this change of name comes, not a change of policy, but a re-definition of our policies.

In the past, we have always stood fast for certain things: a flexible curriculum, the democratic rights of young people, an opposition to corporal punishment, a support for children being educated at home or in the state system, for example

Now has come the time to re-define, to clarify, these commitments. We will still be in favour of a curriculum; a National Curriculum. We will still demand rights for young people; the right to wear school uniforms, to take exams, to sit in rows. We are still opposed to punishing children; when it endangers their lives. We will still support those who do not wish their children to be educated in any school; particularly by supporting more options for the middle and upper classes to educate their children separately (and we will set an example ourselves).

There is no inconsistency in this approach. By adopting a new image (*New Lib ED*, New Labour) we can win more people over to our ideas. And once they are convinced of our honesty and safety, and all those other warm things that you feel when you watch *Terry and June*, they will come to realise that the policies of *New Lib ED* are not just window dressing in front of scary radical ideas, hidden in the depths of the shop.

No, there is no window dressing, there is no window, in fact, there is no shop. Actually, there is nothing. And it's all such a shame really.

WRITE TO US AT:  
Phoenix House  
170 Wells Road  
BRISTOL  
BS4 2AG

DRUGS

## Drugs for fidgety kids

### ADD and the Medicalisation of Schooling

SCHOOL CHILDREN, as young as 6 years of age, are being given drugs for attention deficit disorder, with/without hyperactivity, (ADD/ADH). This is a recent "discovery" hot from the USA and Australia. In those countries, psychiatrists and paediatricians reckon that up to 8% of children, usually boys, suffer from ADD, and so are prescribed Ritalin. The drug Ritalin is made by the industrial pharmaceutical giant Ciba/Geigy. Diagnosis is made by ticking a checklist of behaviours, often after only a discussion with parents, not even by actual observations of the child. Such checklists contain items such as:

- often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat,
- has difficulty remaining in seat when asked,
- is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli,
- has difficulty playing quietly, (I kid you not!)

So a situation, no doubt created by school, can now be described as a disease or a syndrome. Most children can sit quietly for at least 20 minutes, when watching a favourite T.V. programme, but fidget and wriggle during assembly or a maths lesson or whatever they do not like, and this then can be described as ADD.

However the drug does not, apparently, work on its own, but merely makes the child receptive to teaching, according to the manufacturers. But this does not stop medics from prescribing the drug without telling the school. To my knowledge, one child was prescribed Ritalin by a Harley Street consultant without either informing the child's school or his local doctor. In fact, in this case, the child became depressed and had to come off it. Depression is one side effect of Ritalin.

A group of Headteachers in Sussex, have been worried both by the numbers and the variety of children being described as having ADD, and by the prescription of drugs to very young children. Children under 6 years old have been prescribed Ritalin, despite the makers warning that it should only be given to children over 6 years of age.

There will, of course, be a very few children with serious behaviour disorders and hyperactivity, but they are likely to be only a tiny minority, and not likely to be a big money spinner for doctors or drug companies.

ADD looks all set to be the new "syndrome" to explain the problems of unwilling or restless school children.

Just as "dyslexia" has been used to explain the failure of the school system to teach children to read, children are going to be described as suffering from ADD, in the future, if they can't sit still, or they shout out. "Dyslexia" has spawned quite a few lucrative industries, with parents willing to pay for dyslexia tests at Dyslexia Institutes, or coloured lenses and tests for "scotopic sensitivity" at the Irlen Institute. Behaviour is a good area for psychiatrists and paediatricians to expand into, as it is a wonderfully vague area with no clear precise definitions, and lots of scope for simple solutions and opportunities to blame the child; so much easier and more satisfying than blaming the school system.

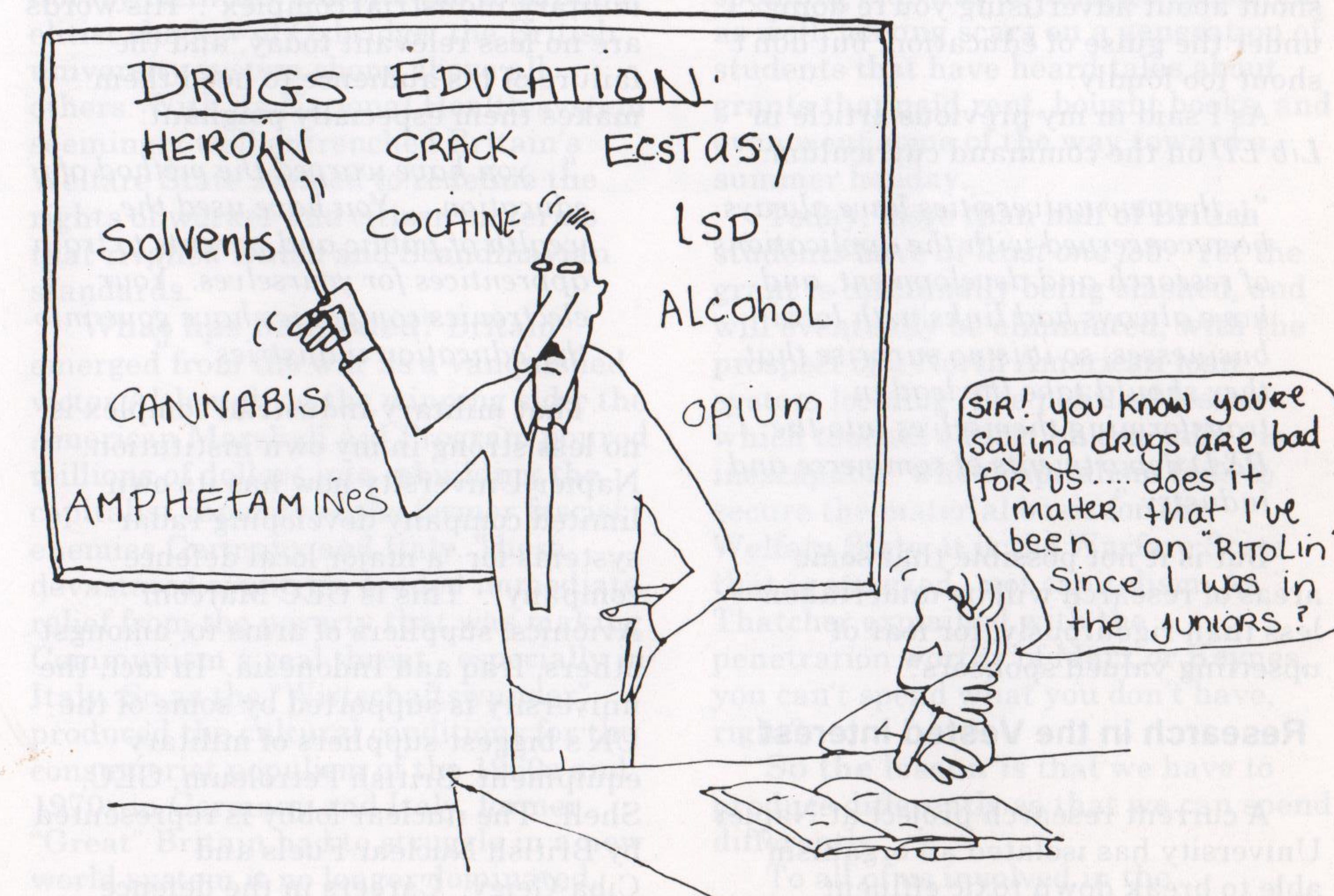
The radio has now had features about this so-called disorder, which have been largely uncritical, and articles are now appearing regularly in the press, this demonstrates that the term ADD, has now arrived in Britain, to all our costs.

Since this article was begun a number of items have appeared in the media about ADD. They seem to fall into two groups.

There are those which sensationalistically report the "discovery" of this new syndrome, and feature, if they are on television, parents in a house or flat, half

destroyed by a wayward young person. The parents are shown thanking their lucky stars for the peace that the drug has brought them. The problem with this approach is that half a glance usually tells you that the reasons for the destructive behaviours are not "Attention Deficit Disorder", but something else. With one it looks like an undiagnosed autistic problem; with others it looks as though we may be looking at a dysfunctional family that is giving confusing signals about codes of behaviour to the child. There are parents who, understandably do not wish to take on board diagnoses with which they are not comfortable, and ADD carries the message that it is not their fault, and that the problem is a relatively mild one which can be cured by a single drug. There are even college students who try to get exemption certificates on the grounds that they are "ADD sufferers": the response of one lecturer was "What he means is that he's a pain in the bum; and I agree that far!"

Luckily the other type of programme or article looks, in a manner similar to this article, at the fact that Ritalin is a dangerous drug for young people which is being handed out quite irresponsibly by a number of medical practitioners to "cure" a condition whose real existence is highly doubtful.





# Managing Minds to Meet a Market Demand

Chris Atton concludes his two part article on the Enterprise culture in Higher Education

WHEN HIGHER EDUCATION is promoted as "a powerful exchange mechanism for transferring enhanced earning capacity into industry through improved technology and human resources", what further proof is needed that the domination of higher education by the business interest is now complete? The quote comes from Napier University's annual report for 1992, but it is not an uncommon concept.

In recent years we have witnessed the rise of corporate sponsorship in education. The US now has its Burger King academies, devoted to what one executive has called "developing minds for a market demand". In the UK another fast food multinational, McDonalds, has found support from the Industrial Society for its management courses for headteachers and its work experience courses for pupils (in spite of its poor record on employment rights).

At the heart of such corporate sponsorship is an unheard of bid for product placement and market penetration, but London Greenpeace's favourite multinational is opting for a softly, softly approach (as is the English way): "I think [advertising] is likely to be a turn-off if it is too blatant", admitted the company's manager of educational services. Notice that he says "too blatant". It's acceptable to shout about advertising you're doing under the guise of education, but don't shout too loudly.

As I said in my previous article in *Lib ED* on the command curriculum:

*"... the new universities 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 R&D departments of commerce and industry."*

But is it not possible that some areas of research will be undertaken less than rigorously, for fear of upsetting valued sponsors?

## Research in the Vested Interest

A current research project at Napier University has isolated an organism able to break down toxic effluent discharged into seas and rivers by the petrochemical industry in Scotland.

Which is good news for Exxon, one of the university's multinational sponsors and one of the many oil companies "comparable in strength and wealth to national governments". Not so good news for the rest of us, who must live with the by-products of Exxon in our houses and on our streets day after day. I don't see any comparable projects looking at the other end of the petrochemical equation: motor vehicle pollution. (The nearest I can find is one assessing traffic vibration on 100-year-old hedges. This aims not at reducing traffic, but minimising disruption to traffic flow - "welcome news for taxpayers and road users".)

At the very least the research must take place within the "petrochemical paradigm". This insists that there is no alternative to the products of the petrochemical industry, that no reduction in the volume of products can be considered and therefore that there shall be no reduction in petrochemical effluent. The research must therefore focus on how to neutralise this effluent, not on how to prevent it nor on how to reduce the necessity for it.

## Education as Weapons Training

Twenty-five years ago, Paul Goodman delivered his "message to the military industrial complex". His words are no less relevant today, and the failure of his audience to heed them makes them especially poignant:

*"... you have warped the method of education ... You have used the wealth of public and parents to train apprentices for yourselves. Your electronics companies have gone into the 'education industries' ..."*

That military-industrial complex is no less strong in my own institution. Napier University now has its own limited company developing radar systems for "a major local defence company". This is GEC Marconi Avionics, suppliers of arms to, amongst others, Iraq and Indonesia. In fact, the university is supported by some of the UK's biggest suppliers of military equipment: British Petroleum, GEC, Shell. The nuclear lobby is represented by British Nuclear Fuels and Ciba-Geigy. Careers in the defence industry are actively promoted in the university's course documents; a recent

advert for a post at a "Centre of Excellence in Naval Warfare Technologies" is displayed as a fine example of the value of an education at Napier University.

Equally troubling is the membership of avowedly anti-environmental groups that many of them enjoy: Ciba-Geigy, Exxon and IBM all fund the US-based New Right pressure group Accuracy in Media, which also has links with the Moonies. Exxon and Shell fund the Heritage Foundation, which supports an increased nuclear arsenal for the US. Its board members have included neo-Nazis, viewing the environmental movement as "extremist".

## Empowerment

Where in all of this is the student? We lose sight of students as people as soon as we talk about them as "educational resources", "as their own economic resource". This seems at odds with the current fashion in higher education about the empowerment of the individual. Empowerment is a word of the moment, taken up by the Right and by the business elite to promote the special relationships that individuals now have to economic and political power.

It is through "empowerment" that the power-brokers, whether industrialists, government ministers, civil servants, educators or managers, invest special groups with special powers and privileges. As citizens, for instance, we have bestowed on us a tightly circumscribed set of privileges or promises, enshrined in "citizens' charters". These are paraded as citizens' rights, as if they were the last word in social justice.

The "empowerment" that takes place in higher education typically involves the introduction of such "transferable skills" as critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and communication. These are promoted in the service of the business interest, as "enterprise skills", not as education for citizenship, but for success in the market place. It makes more commercial sense to develop such skills in students not for freedom's sake, not to make them effective citizens, but for the sake of economic planning, for the sake of an ideology that would make us all consumers.

# Political illiteracy and the writing on the wall: the crisis of British universities in the 1990s

**Social democracy and its unions have failed. We need new organisations to challenge the power of the capitalist state. A member of the Education Workers Network (EWN) describes the experience of the Sussex Solidarity Network which attempted to unite different university workers.**

IN THE IMMEDIATE post-World War II period, the Welfare State seemed to establish itself as an unshakeable pillar of Western European democracy. Contrary to American barbarism, which demanded a high price for every public service apart from primary school education, European society seemed to be looking toward a progressive future. This future was framed in terms of rights: for the most part, citizenship now meant unconditional health care, housing benefit, and a number of other important reforms, including the right to a university education regardless of a person's class background. Where the North America model linked the privilege of education (and thereby effective citizenship) with the ability to pay, in Europe university education became a right.

In Britain education was exemplary: where other countries in Europe reduced fees to almost nothing but required students to come up with their own maintenance (requiring almost all to stay local), British students received grants that allowed them to travel to any corner of the Isles and receive a first rate education which included small classes and excellent library facilities. Despite the continued elitist shadow of Oxbridge, the British university system shone above all others. With its National Health system seemingly well entrenched Britain's Welfare State seemed to redefine the rights of worker and citizen on terms that rivalled Dutch and Scandinavian standards.

What has happened? Britain emerged from the war as a vanquished victor. Although on the winning side, the American Marshall Aid Program poured millions of dollars into rebuilding the capitalist capacity of the former fascist enemies Germany and Italy. These devastated countries needed immediate relief from the poverty that was making Communism a real threat - especially in Italy. So as the "Wirtschaftswunder" produced the cultural conditions for the consumerist populism of the 1960s and 1970s in Germany and Italy, former "Great" Britain had to struggle in a new world system it no longer dominated.

Throughout this period Britain remained committed to defending tenets

of Social Democracy and welfare economics: this entailed a considerable degree of State ownership and planning, some income redistribution, and continued support for national health and education. Though Britain's growth did not match that of its wartime enemies, living standards did rise, which legitimised the mediating role of the unions in securing all workers a decent standard of living.

Catastrophically for socialism, however, the unions failed to consider what would happen if capitalism could no longer secure the profits that the unions would then be in charge of redistributing. Unions could claim to get workers a fair stake under capitalism, but they had no alternative to it. This did not present too many problems as long as the conditions of the prosperous sixties were projected to continue into the seventies and eighties, as most mainstream economists claimed.

When growth rates slowed and manufacturing competitiveness declined drastically in the late 1970s, the political bomb that was Thatcherism exploded, emitting radioactive monetarism in all directions. Slowly but surely, the fall-out of comprehensive spending cuts has devastated education as well, leaving scars on a generation of students that have heard tales about grants that paid rent, bought books, and even went some of the way toward a summer holiday.

Today, more than half of British students have *at least one job*. Yet the grant is continually being slashed, and will eventually be eliminated, with the prospect of a North American loan system looming. The political lesson - which touches education crucially - is inescapable: when capitalism fails to secure the material basis for the Welfare State, it is the Welfare State that is attacked - not capitalism. As Thatcher explained with the penetration worthy of Marx or Keynes, you can't spend what you don't have, right?

So the lesson is that we have to produce differently so that we can spend differently.

To all of us involved in the educational process this means challenging existing institutions and



creating a united force capable of challenging the decisional power of the State. In matters where educators, students and office workers have local knowledge and relevant daily experience, why should they not also have power to collectively decide how to organise their lives? It seems too much democracy is unhealthy for parliamentary democracy.

In the midst of the semesterisation debate, the Sussex Solidarity Network drafted a number of proposals, one of which was the following:

1994..As students and workers we are lucky to have grants and jobs as the Tories enter their fifteenth glorious year in power. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the quickest way to lose these things is to take their existence for granted. This would mean living only as a student or worker, when in fact we are all people with wildly varying interests and talents. Yet how many of us are given the chance to express these interests and talents in our present routines? Does this all really come down to paying the rent now, with the hopes of a "career" or better prospects in the future? Or maybe its simply paying the rent. But no, we all realise there is a lot more. The question is, how do we go about striving for it?

Our separation into various trade unions, NUS, AUT, UNISON, and NUPE is a reflection of the needs of the current political and economic system - not of our needs. In order for us to begin to articulate our needs, we require new institutions capable of giving expression to our shared social existence beyond categories like student, cleaner, lecturer, secretary, porter, etc. The existing unions have not only served to maintain existing divisions, they are steadily losing their ability to even defend the economic gains of the past.



Meanwhile, at a time that demands innovative thinking and new directions, the existing political parties are doing no better. Regardless of their orientation as right or left wing, they seldom challenge the old assumptions that professional politicians should defend us as individual students, cleaners, lecturers, secretaries, porters, etc. We are calling those very divisions into question.

To start this process, the Sussex Solidarity Network sees dialogue between all people in any way connected with the university as vital. To begin with, this means coming along to share your views and to have a chat and a laugh. This is really important...We don't think much of existing hierarchies and bureaucracies, so you don't have to worry about being lectured by careerists or managers!

What a number of us had in mind was an organisation that united currently dispersed educational workers. However, we also insisted that the organisation move beyond questions of salaries and grants to address

questions like: what in fact is education? What kind of wider scale social changes will be necessary so that all people can really control their lives collectively, and what role does education play in this process? Should we be absorbing "facts" or developing our critical faculties? if so, in what direction?

Thus we were aiming at something that combined both trade union with New Social Movement demands, realising that the latter were bound to fail without some solid material foundation. Though the Network eventually lost momentum, it did so for very positive reasons: it attracted people with such a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, that it became impossible to follow a coherent set of goals. But we preferred to let this be the case rather than lose the utopian dimension of the project.

Anybody interested in this type of organisation is encouraged to contact the: **Education Workers Network**, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

## The Upside Down University

A teacher pleads for his university to be turned the right way up again.

AS A LECTURER I have a strong feeling that the top-heavy management structures have overturned the university with the result that everybody is looking in the wrong direction. All the managers seem to be looking upwards to see where to jump next. All the lecturers are forced to look up by the managers demanding their attention but they also have to look down because they remembered they have some students there.

There is no feeling that the management is serving the needs of lecturers to run courses to teach students. No encouragement, no support, in fact

often the opposite. Consultation is a thing of the past. Bureaucracy assurance procedures rule. Top management are looking outwards to catch the latest fashions such as 'modularity', 'mission writing', 'learning outcomes' and 'appraisal'. Why haven't they been trained in crap detection?

The 'student experience' is far from being enhanced by all this activity, the stress and anger felt by lecturers is detrimental to teaching. I have enjoyed teaching for fifteen years until the university turned into a thatcherite manufacturing industry with all the

business jargon and management structures. In its haste to toe the invisible line of educational fashion it forgot why it was there in the first place.

It is still not too late, I hope, to forget the fashions, forget pandering to indecisive students with all purpose, multi-modular accumulators and stop creating expensive self-perpetuating bureaucracy that swirls in the upper atmosphere with no benefits for teaching. Instead concentrate on supporting, valuing and appreciating the lecturers before they all leave and help them to run the best courses in the country.

## Revenge of the Woodlouse

9.00 A brilliant day. The crack task force, F-OFFSTED, set up by Boss Shepherd, has inflicted a decisive defeat on the teacher scum. Under its dynamic teacher, Mad Dog Chris Woodlouse, teams of curriculum cops have spread misery and despair in staff rooms throughout the land.

Wherever schools aren't selective, wherever children don't sit in rows, wherever they aren't streamed, wherever they don't learn facts and where they are allowed to speak in class, Woodlouse and his stormtroopers have brought retribution. One can only gasp in admiration at the ruthlessly vengeful way that Mad Dog has savaged the teacher shirkers.

Why does he hate them so much? One rumour going around HQ is that it is because when he was a teacher himself he couldn't actually control a class and his colleagues used to call him hurtful names like "useless" and "dick-head".

Whatever the deep psychological explanation, it has produced a man whose sole purpose is to destroy the last vestiges of progressive education, restore the 11-plus and humiliate teachers everywhere. Who would ever have believed that "F-OFFSTED Inspection" would one day be given as "cause of death". We have them on the run.

9.55 Woodlouse comes into the office and we have a good laugh about his inspection of the John Prescott Comprehensive. Three suicides, two nervous breakdowns and a staff room in tears ... and they got a good report! God, it makes me wish I was a field operative, with blood on my toecaps, again, but I have to leave the rough stuff to younger men.

He gives me his latest report showing that selective grammar schools get better results than comprehensives with a mixed ability intake. This is devastating. It fully vindicates the Major's belief that if we make all schools selective then they will all get outstanding exam results. I must admit to a nagging doubt about the logic of this argument, but I can't put my finger on it.

Anyway, quibbles aside, this latest report is as important as his earlier one proving that larger classes produced better results. What amazed me about this was the way it only applied to kids



*f-offsted*

at state schools! According to Chris, this was probably genetic, derived from the way the poor used to huddle together to keep warm. But who really cares! It's all bollocks anyway, a cunning distraction, a smokescreen to cover up education cuts and legitimise the sacking of thousands of teachers.

I do have one disagreement with Chris, however. His proposal to sack incompetent teachers seems a bit over the top. The old method of promoting them to deputy head seemed to work well enough to me. I think we have to beware of change for the sake of change.

12.30 Spent lunchtime looking over proposals to privatise the schools' career service. So far we have had three bids from foreign firms, Cybertron Electronics of Korea, New World Information Systems of Texas and Zaibatsu Nanotech of Tokyo, and two British firms, Big Issue Incorporated and Burger King.

Boss Shepherd has ruled out a foreign bid because it would fill our young people's heads with false hopes and expectations. Instead, she has come down in favour of Burger King. As she wittily put it, working for Burger

King is the only thing more demoralising than being homeless!

2.20 In the House of Commons for the debate over the notorious Harwoman affair. It is really amusing to see Harriet Harwoman being rubbished for sending her son to a selective state school by Tory Ministers and MPs who send their own kids to public school. Of course, party politics aside, one has to sympathise with Harwoman really.

Her problem was that there actually are plenty of comprehensives where nice middle class children with nice middle class parents get good exam results. The trouble was that if she sent her precious son to one of those schools he would have to mix with rough working class kids, many of them black.

This was too much of a sacrifice to have to ask any Labour frontbencher to make. Instead, what she wanted was a course set for Oxbridge and membership of the 21st century's ruling class. As she remarked to Boss Shepherd privately: "I only wish I'd had the nerve to send him to Eton like his dad wanted".

3.50 Well New Labour got a right drubbing. Not even Blunkett's dog believed the crap he was coming out with. The euphoria is likely to be short-lived. It still seems that the Government is doomed. One can only thank God for Big Mother's Doomsday Option!

Many, many years ago when the likelihood of a Labour victory still seemed inconceivable, she had the vision, the foresight, to take precautions against any eventuality and initiate Operation Stupid Grin. A heroic Young Conservative was persuaded to give up a promising career as a pop star and go undercover on a deep penetration mission inside the Labour Party. He endured many years of suffering and torment, mixing with poor people and trade unionists.

Even today you can still see him shudder when he comes into contact with these types. Still, breeding saw him through. What is astonishing is that at no time was it actually necessary for him to hide his right-wing views or tone down his admiration for Big Mother! Today, we all know the result. even if New Labour win the next general election, our man will be in power and we will still be in control!



# Living democracy or talking about democratic schools?

## Can the Hadera Group Conferences practice what they preach?

The Hadera Group of Democratic Schools was formed after a large international conference organised by the Adam Institute in Jerusalem in May 1993. The Adam Institute is dedicated to peace between Arab and Jew, and the conference was called "Education for Democracy in a Multicultural Society". Almost all participants seemed to be administrators, philosophers or professors of education, so afterwards the Democratic School of Hadera held a small two-day conference for the few who were actually involved in schools. That meant people from Sands School in England, Sudbury Valley School and the Barbara Taylor School in the United States and the Freie Gesamtschule from Vienna.

This smaller conference was so successful, and the participants felt that they learnt so much from each other, that it was agreed that the event should take place every year. In 1994 it was held at Sands, and in 1995 in Vienna, where there were well over a hundred participants from seven different countries.

The group has no official organisation. The host schools for each conference have decided for themselves who they want to invite, and have not only made no charge but also provided free board and lodging and a day or two of site-seeing. There have been no lectures and few guided workshops: the main part of each conference so far has been a loose series of discussion groups, on topics suggested by the participants from day to day. Theoretically as many students as staff have taken part. Pat Hill was there.

LAST YEAR I went to the third democratic schools conference in Vienna, as Lib ED collective representative, travelling to the conference with one teacher and three student delegates from Sands school. The students, Bonnie, Matt W and Matt B gave their impressions of the conference. They agreed that the things they most enjoyed and learned from were:

- Meeting people from other cultures and finding out about the way they live and their politics; you can get stuck in your own culture.
- Talking to students from other schools about what they like to do, where they like to go.
- Going to Lotte's house and talking to Lotte (who helped organise the conference).
- Doing things with the other kids.

They also agreed that the one thing which they found least interesting and enjoyable was the Big Meeting: "Big meetings were boring, people didn't listen to each other, but interrupted and made sure they 'got their bit in'". In reply to the question "... what would you do differently next time?", they said: "Tell people to shut up when they were getting boring. Not go to any big meetings."

We talked about some of the students' general impressions and opinions. Here are some of them:

**Matt B:** "It was so boring at meetings. Lots of people were jibbering bollocks."  
**Me:** "Everybody?"

**Matt B:** "No, mostly three men. They talked all the time. They talked at you. They didn't listen to other people, just waited 'til the last person had finished talking and then got their bit in. They only asked you about what they were interested in, like how old we were, and how old we were when we started to read. Some of the issues could have been interesting but they were made boring by just a few of the adults, all waiting to say their bit. None of the adults were listening, so we went round in circles with nobody listening to anybody else."

**Matt W:** "The best meetings were the small informal ones outside in the

courtyard. Up to about 10 people worked best. Otherwise too many people were waiting to speak, and most of them didn't get the chance to. Towards the end of the conference, one big chaotic meeting was good because it was the only meeting where people were thinking about what other people said. It was more fun because people got angry with each other. This was the only meeting where kids came out and said much except: "I come from this school, this is how the school works, etc. etc."

**Me:** "What could have made these meetings less boring?"

**All:** "Don't know. Maybe these sort of meetings are usually boring for kids anyway. One thing we tried was only speaking when you have the keys. It was too organised, it didn't work."  
**Matt W:** "I think the teachers found the meetings interesting because they got to say what they thought, but they didn't hear what the other thought. Through talking to students from Hadera school, we realised how big England is compared to Israel. Hadera school is approved by the government and has won prizes and got funding. If you go to a democratic school in Israel you learn how to mediate, which is a useful skill for the military, so Hadera is seen by people who are not necessarily directly connected to the school as a democratic school breeding leaders, with negotiating skills. Sands, on the other hand, has a proportion of kids who have rejected mainstream school, and is thought of by some as a 'drop-out' school."

**Matt B:** "We wanted to jump up at some of the meetings and shout 'shut up you boring farts.' Don't really know why we didn't - we could have done."

**Matt W:** "Maybe if I could do it differently I'd go earlier, be involved in the planning of the conference and suggest ways of running things. It wasn't run properly because one person was responsible for too much. We would have been able to influence the agenda, we would have been nearer the power base. Someone from Israel felt that Sands people opted out, they didn't take much part in the conference. Hadera kids thought the meetings boring too, but went along - 'We're going along and being bored, so why

shouldn't you?" I felt this sort of pressure from the Hadera group. At some point I decided not to be bored, but felt patronised a lot especially at the first meetings, when people said "what do you think?" as if I had to be prompted to speak, and we felt 'put on the spot', as if we had to say something clever. Another question was "What do you think makes a good teacher?" I didn't want to answer that one!"

### Not a democratic process

It seems to me from these comments that the students did not experience the conference itself as a democratic process, and my experience echoes theirs, though I don't think I found the content of some of the discussions quite so boring as they did.

The main problems seemed to arise in big meetings where those practised in styles of verbal dominance held the floor for a disproportionate amount of time. Some of the delegates were ex-head teachers, who had to tell people within the first five minutes of meeting them that this had been, or still was, their role.

So the delegates sense of status relative to each other was established fairly quickly. Generally speaking those with the highest status, or whose self-perception told them that they had high status, spoke most and listened least. Recorded behaviour at a meeting last year, at Sands school, showed that these 'high status' men spoke for 75% of the time and seemed unaware of the fact that those less practised in the art of rhetoric were being marginalised. This was true at Vienna too, though here it was noticed and brought to the attention of the meeting.

### Control of the dominant group

Like the students, I felt that what was being discussed - not necessarily the topics, more the style and content - was very much under the control of the dominant group at both the democratic schools conferences I went to, and, like them I also felt 'muted' and at first intimidated.

On the whole I agreed with much of the content of what was being said, but frustrated at the way dominant speakers were acting - debating, arguing, making statements - seeming to regard the other delegates as their audience. Rarely did the dominant group ask for feedback - rather, they tended to have public debate with each other, with the subordinate group acting as audience.

By doing this, the dominant group were (albeit unwittingly) sabotaging the democratic process.

Away from the meetings in Vienna, I enjoyed just being there, having informal conversations with teachers and students. This style of

communication gave more opportunities for equal interchanges of ideas and experiences, and the students particularly felt more confident of being heard and taken seriously than they did in larger, chaired meetings.

### Changing dynamics

However, the people most at ease, most vocal at large group meetings often were the ones who were least at ease with the conversational style adopted in small groups. Some students noticed that even in these smaller groups the dynamics were changed by the presence of one person more practised in giving information than in listening.

Some of these people were good speakers, and entertaining, but they did effectively silence others - especially younger students, who were rather overpowered by them.

Many of the school students at the conference said they felt patronised at the way they were sometimes 'included' in the conversations, that given space to do so, they may have generated discussions which were entirely student-centred, not centred around the topics which adults felt merited discussion (this is what I mean by new terms of reference). And it has to be said that most of these 'dominant' adults were men.

### Similar frustrations

In conversation with other women I found that many of them felt similar frustrations to myself and the students. There were times when, like the students, I felt like telling the "boring old farts" to shut up.

But the "big meeting" is an arena of debate which has been defined and occupied by the dominant group for so long, an arena adopted from hierarchical institutions and largely unchallenged by students as an effective democratic tool.

It's hard for those who feel marginalised in such an arena to articulate their frustrations at the time they are experiencing them, and in a way which might actually change the behaviour of the 'space-hoggers'. I hope that when the next conference is at the planning stage, the problems I've written about are considered and attention given to possible ways of making more students feel more included and listened to.

### Chaotic meeting

The "chaotic meeting" mentioned by Matt W is a good example of conflict being brought out into the open, in a way which exposed inherent inequalities. This meeting happened at the end of the conference. It would be interesting to see how such a meeting

nearer the beginning would have had an impact on the rest of the conference.

A female teacher from Hadera was heard to remark at the time of the meeting; "This for me is where the conference begins."

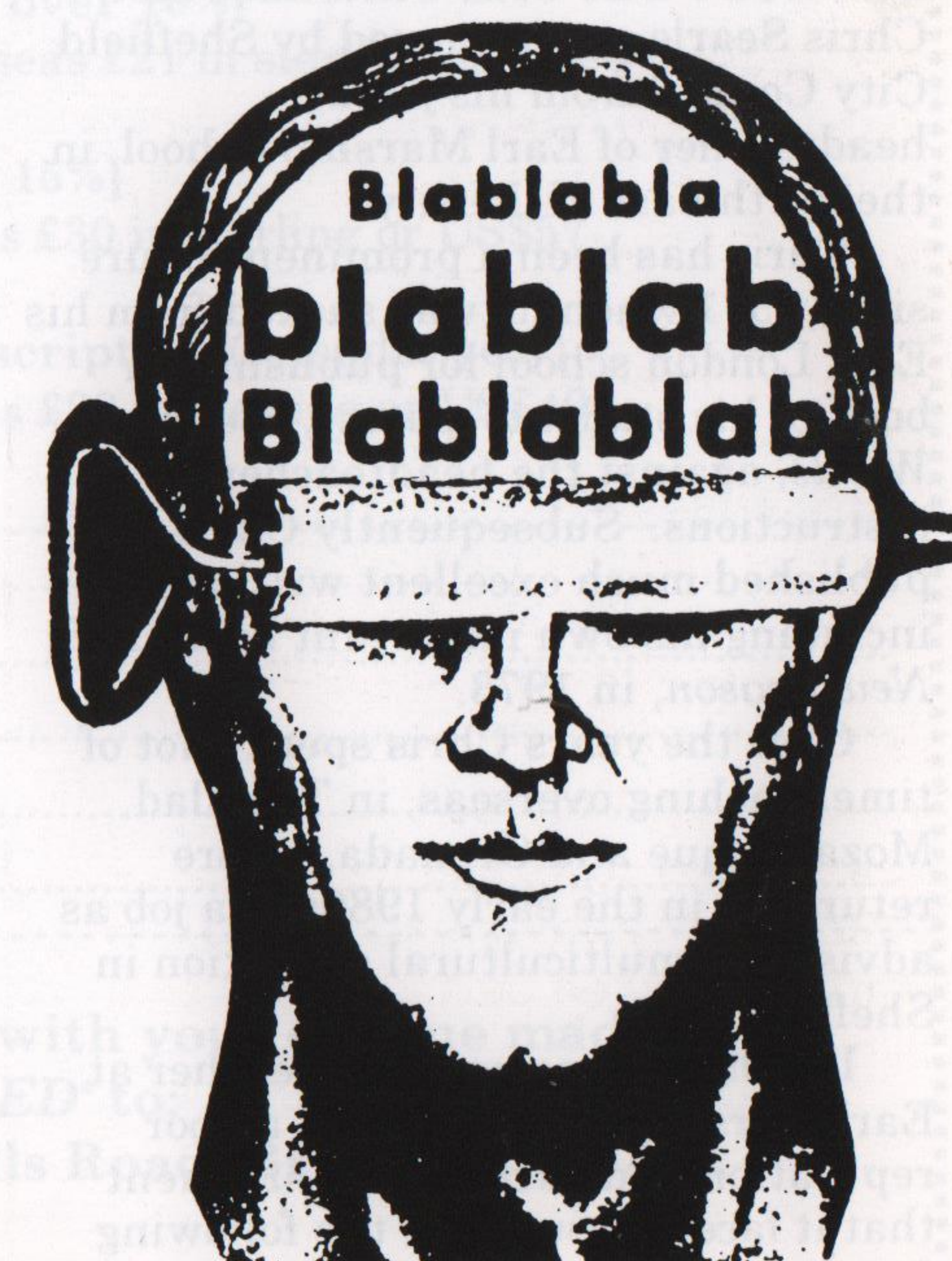
It's significant that all three students I spoke to found this the most enjoyable meeting, where they felt actively involved.

### Looking inwards, not spouting outwards

Perhaps some of the most vociferous and articulate advocates of democratic schooling need to look inwards as well as spouting outwards, to look at their process and relationship behaviour and consider whether they are evolving, on a personal and interactive level, ways of living democracy.

Many of their gurus and advocates have developed admirable libertarian ideals, and have made valuable contributions to the field, but maybe they should consider whether in their interpersonal relationships with children, parents and teachers, they act in a truly democratic manner?

Perhaps the next conference should begin by asking people to consider these questions, and perhaps the delegates (including myself) who have experienced conferences as non-democratic processes need to learn how to challenge effectively what is happening at the time, and ask themselves what role they play in colluding with the process, and why.





# Nellie Dick (1893-1995)

**What Does Education Mean  
It Means To Bring Out  
It Doesn't Mean To Pour In**

NELLIE DICK was born Naomi Ploschansky on the 15th May, 1893, in a village near Kiev in the Ukraine. Her father chose to emigrate rather than live in the Jewish pale. Nellie was less than a year old when the family, having first lived in Whitechapel, then Leeds and Glasgow, finally settled in the East End of London.

The social milieu that she grew up in and absorbed was, by her own admission, to have a profound and lasting influence upon the young Nellie. At the age of thirteen she revived a tradition of youth activity associated with the Jewish Worker's movement in the East End of London.

The number of children involved in Nellie's social group grew substantially, so much so that in 1907 The Worker's Friend Club and Institute agreed to take it over, fund it and accommodate it at Jubilee Street. It is then that some resemblance to a school could be observed.

The reality of state education for many children in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a system that was inadequate, authoritarian, coercive and non-secular. Based on her own experience of school, Nellie objected to a

system which she believed operated with the intention of indoctrinating children with the dominant order of the day: "... education is the drawing of knowledge, not the filling up."

Nellie was a pioneer in the alternative education movement, having first started, taught in, and run schools in the East End of London from 1907-1917, Nellie was then to emigrate to the USA, where she was initially closely connected to the Modern School Movement before moving on to run her own schools from 1917-1958.

Nellie was somebody who had tried to practice education in a certain way, but had never made a philosophy of it. She only ever considered herself as a educator, a pedagogue who deeply believed that the individual talents of children should be nurtured and that education should reject regimentation and physical coercion. Throughout her life she believed in a system of education that provided an integral system of education that catered for, and cultivated the whole individual. For Nellie, education should encourage a humanistic outlook, a collective spirit, an attitude of tolerance and a creative mind. Crucial components in Nellie's



schools were freedom and enjoyment.

Throughout the years, Nellie maintained her interest in libertarian education. She never lost contact with her former students, many of whom are senior citizens themselves now. An indication of the deep and lasting affection they had for Nellie are the regular Modern School reunions held every year, with Nellie as a rule the guest of honour.

Talking to Nellie in February 1995, at the age of 102, although somewhat frail physically and with failing sight, her unshakeable fortitude of spirit and the libertarian educational tenets she upheld for some ninety years were still evident.

In this time of crisis in education, for those of us who have been directly or indirectly touched and affected by Nellie's profound love and respect for children, she will be sadly missed.

Barbara Leeds

**Nellie Dick, pioneer in alternative education.  
Died on October 31st, 1995 aged 102.**

## Chris Searle Pushed Out

SHORTLY BEFORE Christmas last, Chris Searle was removed by Sheffield City Council from his job as headteacher of Earl Marshal School, in the north-east of the city.

Chris has been a prominent figure since 1971 when he was sacked from his East London school for publishing a book of his students' poetry, *Stepney Words*, against the headteacher's instructions. Subsequently Chris published much excellent writing, including his own important book, *This New Season*, in 1973.

Over the years Chris spent a lot of time teaching overseas, in Trinidad, Mozambique and Grenada, before returning in the early 1980s to a job as advisor on multicultural education in Sheffield.

In 1990 he became headteacher at Earl Marshal School. It had a poor reputation and such a low enrolment that it faced closure. In the following five years Chris did much to improve

the school. But he never sold out from his educational principles and over the years made enemies. Even his supporters were doubtful whether his talents were best suited to the role of headteacher.

There were three issues on which Chris made a particular stand. Firstly, he refused to exclude troublesome students. Secondly, he felt the National Curriculum was a pitiful imposition and was inadequate for the students of Earl Marshal who come from an impressive range of cultural backgrounds, including large Somali, Yemeni, Pakistani and Caribbean communities. Thirdly, Chris was determined that his spirit of internationalism should be reflected within the school.

Chris had the full support of the school's Governing Body, which represents all the local communities. To get rid of him, the Council had also to take away the delegated

management powers of the Governors. This move has caused offence in Sheffield's black communities, who feel that the Council has said: "You're black, so you don't know how to run a school."

Sheffield Council's view is that the school was failing its students, and point to the poor examination results. The Council contend that if they hadn't taken drastic action, the Government might have stepped in as they did in the case of Hackney Downs School. But it seems that other agendas were at work in this case.

Chris has always refused to view children as objects to be acted upon, and recognises the potential in everybody. For him, children are people with rights who deserve as much respect as other citizens. In ruling circles today such a viewpoint is not popular.

We hope to publish an interview with Chris Searle in the next issue of *LibED*.

Nigel Wright

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.

## A do-it-yourself guide

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

- ideas for liberating lessons (with details of resources);
- information about the alternatives to formal education, such as home education and the Education Otherwise network;
- a comprehensive contact list of groups and organisations with real learning at heart - for adults as well as children;
- an extensive booklist;
- how to contact schools where freedom is taken seriously, in Britain and around the world.

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# A history of education

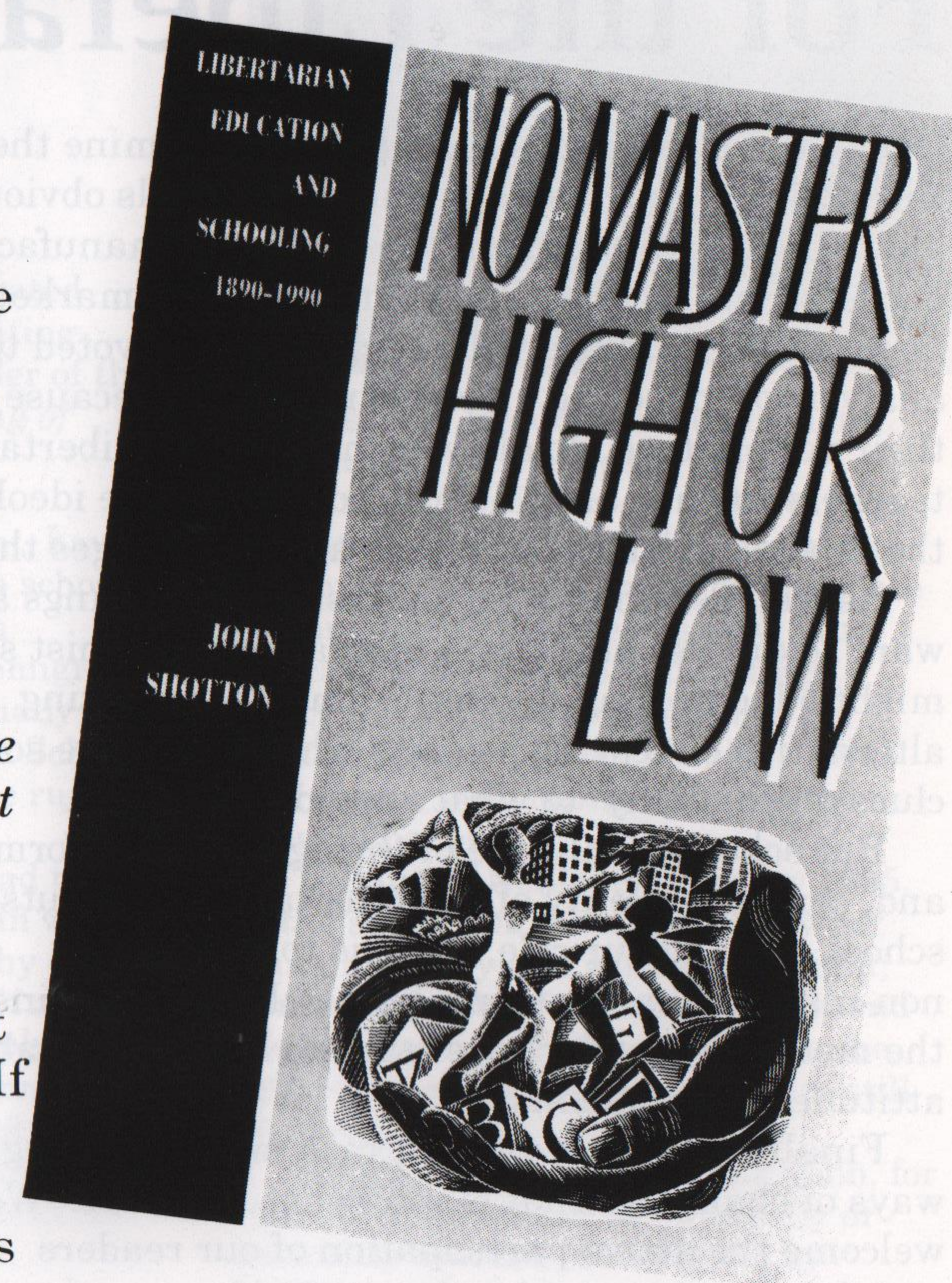
The path to a compulsory education system, the emergence of selective schooling, and the fight for comprehensive education in Britain are all issues that have been charted by educational historians. What they have missed is the history of the dissenting tradition, one that questions the whole notion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

Colin Ward writes in the introduction:

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

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

Available direct from *Lib ED*, price £7.95 (US\$21) plus 85p (US\$7) postage and packing.



## Back Issues Offer

Now in its 27th year, *Lib ED* is the only chronicle of practical and theoretical developments in radical education — if you've just caught up with us, catch up with what you've missed. Each back issue is yours for £1.30 (inc. p&p) (*Lib ED* 17/18 is £2, 23/24 is £4) but for only £15 you can have the complete set of back issues in print. At present that's Volume 2, numbers 7 and 9 to 25. We can also supply photocopies of articles published in all out-of-print issues of *Libertarian Teacher/Education/Lib ED*. Please send an sae for full details. (Overseas friends, please send an additional £4 to cover higher postage)

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# Name calling

## Racism in Children's Lives - A Study of Mainly-White Primary Schools

A book by Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher

Published by Routledge, 204pp

THE WORDS "racism" and "racist" are semantically overloaded terms which are used to describe a wide range of attitudes, behaviour and practices which are embedded in British culture.

While to some, racism describes an overt ideology based on pseudo-scientific theories of biological difference and hierarchy, at the other end of the spectrum "racist" is used to describe people who are born within a racist culture and are seen to benefit from it whether they agree with the values and beliefs of that culture or not. This is often expressed as "all whites are racist".

Our language is inadequate, but the task of recognising, understanding and consciously opposing racism in society is a project which is as important today as it has ever been. Most people have little opportunity to examine and assess values and beliefs of the culture into which they are born. On many issues, including racialised difference, most people maintain a variety of inconsistent and sometimes incompatible beliefs. Consciousness is fragmented. Racist attitudes are expressed in one context and not in another.

While working as a teacher in a large mainly white comprehensive school during the 1980s, I was constantly faced with the complexities of racism in one form or another in the life of the school. Two young women, I'll call them Jane and Sue, were close friends. Jane was white while Sue had dark skin. They "fell out" over a relatively minor incident which rapidly became nasty and destroyed their hitherto long-lasting and close friendship.

The conflict escalated dramatically one morning when we found the girls' toilets liberally decorated with racist graffiti directed at Sue. In discussions with Jane, who freely admitted writing the abuse, she claimed that she had wanted to hurt Sue and felt justified in using any available weapons to inflict emotional wounds. Sue retaliated with graffiti, including hurtful personal, but not racist, remarks. Jane felt aggrieved and unfairly treated when I singled out her racism as being different in kind from other insults.

My arguments that racist ideologies in society at large were relevant cut no ice with Jane. I was forced to reflect



hard on the proper way to deal with such incidents. Whereas in the past Jane has argued vociferously against racism with other white students, she was now using racist abuse. The matter was never successfully resolved and the relationship between the girls was not repaired while they remained at school, although years later they did resume

their friendship.

Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher's book *Racism in Children's Lives* provides a framework which makes sense of incidents such as these. As Troyna and Hatcher write "... racist beliefs cannot be simply read off from incidents of racist name-calling, any more that racist beliefs automatically generate racist name-calling".

As the authors show, friendships between members of different racialised groups have too often been regarded as evidence of the absence of racism. Teachers do not always see the variety of ways in which racism is manifested in the culture of children. This book explores a number of forms of racism, but focuses on racist name-calling. The authors write:

*"Society makes available to children a powerfully charged vocabulary of racist terms, but their use while trading on the negative meanings that they bear does not necessarily imply a commitment to the racist ideologies from which they derive."*

This study is a valuable contribution to our understanding of aspects of racism in schools, particularly the role of racist name-calling. It will help teachers to deal with this constant feature of school life with uncompromising opposition but also with sensitivity.

Lorna Chessum

## Rebels and misfits

### The Obtuse Experiment

A novel by Malcolm Rose

Published by Ad Lib, £4.99

A SHIPLOAD of problem children are sent off on an education cruise to Norway by a right-wing government determined to do something about juvenile delinquency. Something is going on here. All is not what it seems.

Malcolm Rose has written an excellent political thriller with science fiction elements. He pits the heroes of Splinter Group, Cell Block G and their mysterious alien ally, Mel, against the murderous machinations of the Minister of Education, Mr Sternhell, a Michael Howard clone, but without the idiot smirk.

The schoolkids are well-realised bunch of rebels and misfits. Their various skills (theft, computer hacking, etc.) enable them to save Mel's life when he catches distemper, and to later on save themselves from

the government's attempt at mass murder. Charlton, Gail, Graham, Mike, Toni, Peter and Gabby are all recognisable characters that the reader finds it easy to get involved with.

Even their teacher, Trevor Beever, a man without ambition (he becomes a deputy head at the end!) is sympathetically presented. Rose handles his large cast of characters with confidence and skill.

What of the plot? Too far-fetched I hear you say. A government plot to kill off 350 problem kids ... not even a complete bastard like Kenneth Clarke when he was in charge at the DfE would have done that. Maybe, maybe not. Regardless of that, however, the notion is a legitimate storyline for a political thriller and, of course, serves as a metaphor for the way that a growing number of such kids are effectively written off in real life. An excellent read.



# Learning from a brutal murder

## Destroying the Baby in Themselves Why Did the Two Boys Kill James Bulger?

A book by David Jackson  
Mushroom Publications, 10-12  
Heathcote Street, Nottingham, NG1 3AA  
ISBN 0 907123 31 7  
£3.50

FOR THOSE who, like myself, felt troubled by the simplistic analysis of the actions of the two ten-year-old boys who murdered James Bulger, this book is a welcome exploration of the complex factors in the boys' lives which may have contributed to the chain of actions which led up to the horrific acts committed.

The police, media, psychiatry and both political parties seemed intent on demonising the boys, without examining in depth the causes of what they did. Various reasons have been put forward for the boys' crime; from the right wing condemnation of the break-up of the family to the left wing blaming of conservative policies, rising unemployment and the erosion of social services.

The gendered aspect of the crime was largely ignored. "Evil freaks of nature" was the phrase used by the judiciary to explain the boys' action, yet in this book we are given examples of violent, masculinised crimes by young boys in recent times, which indicate that the boys are not freaks, but a horrifying and extreme case of an increasingly common phenomenon.

Our attention is drawn to the need to develop a "gendered awareness of the making of boys, men and masculinity". Only one writer at the time, Angela Phillips in the *Guardian*, tried to address the actions of Jon Venables and Robert Thompson as the behaviour of ten-year-old boys; elsewhere they have been referred to as "children, young people, child criminals."

We should, as Jackson suggests, refrain from using such generic terms, but rather concentrate on:

*"... a gendered awareness of the making of boys, men and masculinity ... Adequate explanations of their actions can only come out through an account that faces up to the complex interweaving of social, cultural and psychic structures in the boys' lives."*

He stresses the need to look at forces and factors at work, at home, school, and in the ways that the boys experienced the outside world through, for example, the media and video games, which:

*"... fed and developed their patterns of fantasy and unconscious desire."*

The judiciary pronounced that, at their C of E school, the boys had been "taught right from wrong", but what were the boys actually learning from their life experiences? Jackson's detailed investigation into the boys' lives both at home and school reveals what they might have been learning from a world in which constant regulation and surveillance, particularly school, along with academic failure, made them feel powerless and bossed around. At home they were at the bottom of the pecking order. They lived in a culture where they learnt from their environment and from fantasy video games, that "adult authority had a gendered aspect - in a world where adult men were expected to exercise a commanding authority over women and children."

At school they defied authority by roaming around the classroom or truanting. By truanting they escaped from territory which clearly belonged to those in authority, and found their own, in the largely female-occupied space of the shopping mall. At home they were either ignored, disciplined or babied. It is unsurprising that they felt the need not to become 'good' and passive, but to "carve out new identities in a different framework offering status and respect." The images of idealised masculinity which they saw around them and that the media provide must, as Jackson says, have had a "thrilling appeal." They had to be bully or be bullied.

*"... emotionally immature boys often vacillate between anxious, clingy behaviour and hysterical aggressive outbursts. They are aware of their vulnerability and respond by displaying hyper-masculine behaviour ... a desperate longing to gain power and invulnerability through peer group acceptance."*

The causal link between videos such as *Child's Play*, widely thought to be a significant factor influencing the boys' behaviour, is refuted here: "They don't cause violence but feed the fantasies which are already there." The ten-year-olds longed to be invulnerable, to be the idealised version of manhood which would give them power to get their own back on adults and older boys who had humiliated them. The trouble was that Jon and Robert converted their fantasies into reality.

Judges, media, teachers, fathers and police demonstrate their reluctance to face non-linear elements in their own

lives; an ability to acknowledge their own vulnerability. So they refuse to look at the complexities of the case, as this would open them up to facing their own complexities, and unresolved or repressed fantasies. We have to look, Jackson says, at the psychological/social roots of gender identification for boys and men.

*"In trying to fiercely masculinise themselves, within the enticing ideals of traditional, heterosexual masculinity, they attempted to forge a more commanding and potent sense of themselves. They did this through 3 major activities: their attempts to invade and re-frame the largely feminised space of the shopping mall at Bootle, through truanting, the conquering of James' body through a sexualised, symbolic rape, and finally the fantasy of mastering their own anxieties and fears about their own babyishness by violently projecting them onto James Bulger."*

Physical assertion over others is an important way for the poor, working class boys to re-assert hurt masculine pride: "They grew taller as they displaced their fears onto James' weak body." They became Super-Heroes. But unlike the conquered weak beings of their fantasies and video games, James kept getting up. Very disturbed boys like Jon and Robert feed their fantasies on computer games and Stallone films where killing is an easy and casual act; enemies are knocked down and stay down.

The fact that they could not make James stay down may have compounded their feelings as failing boys, causing an escalating rage which led to the brutal murder. They were trying to kill the baby in themselves, "... the hatred of their own vulnerability, their own babyishness, became so strong that it is punished, killed off through the body of another." (Suzanne Moore, *the Guardian*)

For how could they become one of the lads, strong as steel, masterful and dominating if they could still feel a need inside them to be babied and safe?

*"In the 'hang the bastards' climate of the mid-90s authoritarian Britain the real concern is getting skewed. Many people aren't listening to the complex and contradictory voices of other boys who are similarly frightened in their baffled struggles to become masculine ... they would prefer the quick fix solutions that release some of their bottled-up anger*

and pain.

*It was the daily social practices of being brought up in an aggressive, male-dominated family, bullying, being bullied, having to face the pressures of the male peer group, learning to dump their pain and hurt onto other people, building fantasy heroes like Rambo and learning to emotionally detach yourself as a boy from the reality of other people's lives that socially produced the two boys who killed James Bulger. We need to face up to the ways we have concealed the gendering process. ... the awkward and painful fact is that our culture and society have produced two boys who have killed in order to become masculine."*

The book ends with a list of suggested programmes of preventative work for boys and men, which might counter the messages, so seductive to 'inadequate' boys, about idealised heroic masculinity.

Through clubs, colleges, schools and community education programmes, Jackson suggests we should challenge the traditional message that "boys will be boys." We should be addressing much more seriously sexual harassment in schools, bullying and language insults. There should be fathering programmes on how to bring up sons, learning which encompasses gender awareness, and critical, anti-sexist media work.

*"If we're going to do something solid and lasting about James' death then we have to start connecting all boys who are trying to name and confirm themselves through 'acting hard' with why Jon and Robert did what they did. Although the James Bulger case was an exaggeratedly horrific version of this crisis of masculine identities, it wasn't a one-off or an accidental 'freak' of nature. It was also about the damaging struggle to become masculine in this culture - a culture where heterosexual boys are brought up to consider it 'natural' that sexual relations with a girl can be reduced to brutal coercive language of 'I'm going to do it to you.'"*

This is a crucially important book which explains a great deal about one of the most urgent problems of our time. It took away some of the feelings of helplessness and despair engendered by the Bulger case, without supplying simplistic answers. It's a book for teachers, parents, youth workers, police, judges, magistrates, mothers, fathers, victims of violent relationships. It's a book for people who are interested in understanding, not judging, because understanding is the first step to change.

# Warbly wobbly

## IWW Songbook (36th edition)

A book by IWW British Isles, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 1WB  
£4.00 inc postage



IF YOU LOOK UP the Industrial Workers of the World on the Encarta CD-ROM you read about its history being an industrial union that had millions of members, and that it no longer exists.

Well it does, small it may be, with a few tens of paid-up members in Britain, and less than one thousand in the USA. That member ship is active and publishes books, pamphlets, articles - and the latest edition of their songbook.

It is much improved in its content, including some more contemporary material than before. Leon Rosselson's *Digger's Song* is included as well as the great songs of Joe Hill. The great improvement is the fact that the melody line and chord symbols are included for each song. Before it would baldly state: "Tune: Bjornstedt", or some such, which left the would-be left winger singer baffled. Now anybody with a rudimentary knowledge of music can tune up and play out within a few

minutes. Well done IWW.

As a postscript, Britain's state Radio 4 did a flyer for a weekend of political song being held in Sheffield. Joe Hill's songs were featured as being the main attraction. The interviewer/editor presented him as a person who wrote songs because of his hard life out there in the backwoods of North America around the turn of the century. The IWW received no mention, nor did the trumped-up arrest and judicial murder of Hill, perhaps that would be too strong meat for the British audience, or they might get ideas.

# Rejects

## The Terrace. An Educational Experiment in a State School

A book by Michael Duane.  
Freedom Press, £2.50

THE TERRACE is building in what was once the mining village of Conisbrough. Here, in 1973-1975, in each of the first two years after the school-leaving age was raised from fifteen to sixteen, an alternative education was provided for fifteen boys who were children that the local Northcliffe Comprehensive School staff least wished to see for an extra year. At the end of the first year a transcript of a discussion with the group was given to twenty London teachers experienced in secondary schools and Further Education, and they were asked to grade each of the boys as average, above average or below average in intelligence. Not a single teacher placed a single boy below average.

The experiment plainly demonstrated a way of helping children who find themselves rejected by conventional education. "Schools, by devising curricula unrelated to life, by setting academic standards of performance that are meaningless I terms of the work of the local

community, by rating the majority as failures and, in terms of class sizes and personal relationships, treating the majority as a 'mob', create the expectation within (such children) that they are failures and deserve little out of life." At The Terrace they learnt that they were successes and deserved just as much out of life as anybody else.

Michael Duane lists his methods of study early in this short book, and he obviously collected much more information than could possibly be included. Unfortunately he has not edited it coherently. Here there is a list of activities undertaken during the year, there are comments from a very few parents and teachers, here are carefully analysed extracts from a single conversation with one particular student. Much of what Michael Duane says is important, but somehow it does not carry weight.

However, the work done at The Terrace ought to be widely imitated. Anybody interested in offering an alternative to children for whom school is an irrelevance or, worse still, a humiliation, needs to know what happened there. It is recorded in this book, and for that reason the book deserves attention.