Scottish Child

April/May 1990 £1.20

"Careless Talk"

Scottish Child

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Scottish Child is an independent magazine published by Scottish Child Limited.

Registered Office: Scottish Child, 4 Garrioch Drive, Glasgow G20 8RP.
Also at Scottish Child, 347a Pilton Avenue, Edinburgh EH5 2LE. Telephone: 031 552 0472.

The aims of the company are the publication and dissemination of information about children in Scotland and related activities.

ISSN 0950-4174

Letters and articles to The Editor, 4 Garrioch Drive, Glasgow G20 8RP.

Subscriptions U.K. Annual Rates: Individuals £8.00; Institutions £12.00. Cheques should be made payable to Scottish Child. Overseas airmail: Individuals – Europe £15.00; Rest of the world £20.00. Institutions all countries £30.00. Overseas subscriptions are payable by sterling International Money Order or Bankers Draft.

Advertising
Rates available from the above addresses.

Typesetting and Printing
Bookworm, Gayfield Square, Edinburgh.
Impress, Eskbank, Dalkeith.

Cover Photo
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Design
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Behave Yourself!

CLASSROOM CONTROL

"Just who do you think you are?" (LOUD)

"Eh?" (LOUDER)

"Eeeeiiih?" (LOUDER still and twisting the vowel)

A large male Modern Studies (no joking!) teacher has just started a lesson introducing life in the Soviet Union, in a way which would put Stalin's most avidly repressive KGB officers in the shade. This is not just repression of the population of 4th year students, it is positive psychological torture.

"You're just the same as your brother," teach spits out. "A waste of time. A waste of space!" You can practically smell the poison in the air. And this is supposed to be inviting discussion!

Recognise the scene? The sad fact is that most **Scottish Child** readers will have no problem digging up another half a dozen similar school anecdotes each. But the above scenario, just to put your mind at rest, dear reader, is fiction. It is part of a series of video recordings where the students and staff of Grovepark High School, Greenock acted out ordinary classroom situations like the one above. Fortunately not all reach the same desperate conclusion.

The videos are part of a teacher training pack, **Preventing Disruption – a classroom management approach**, devised in the Renfrew Division of Strathclyde, and now adopted region-wide in all secondary schools this session.

"Teaching," the accompanying study notes assert, "can be a very stressful job." The training pack is designed to tackle at least one source of the pressure – pupil misbehaviour.

Senior Education Officer, Archie Morton, talking from the Glasgow division office, stressed the positive motives in the pack's development, which included piloting over 18 months in Renfrew schools. "When different teaching styles are used today – just look at the high degree of verbal assessment in some Standard Grade courses – the way you manage a class becomes an issue."

The initiative has nothing to do with panic responses to indiscipline, Archie Morton expanded, nor with teacher evaluation, but is an attempt to encourage teachers to take part in their own professional development through a measure of group support.

The source material does have an unmistakably behaviouristic flavour. Like behavioural methods everywhere, these can read like control methods straight from the pages of 1960s American sociology textbooks – *"As in society, the consistent enforcement of a fair and necessary framework of rules and routines is essential to the maintenance of order."* Others could come from the mouths of the archetypical U.S. backed Central or South American dictator putting off the elections indefinitely until things have settled down – *"Discussion about rules and routines is probably best postponed until the teacher has firmly established a basic framework."*

Some of the teachers' study notes are behaviourally banal – *"the skilful use of rewards and punishments is perhaps the teacher's most powerful way of influencing pupil behaviour in the classroom."* Others, given recent world-wide popular upheavals, are downright untruths – *"the majority of people behave in ways which avoid negative consequences."*

To be fair, the writers of this material do stress the context. What seems highly encouraging too, is the way the pack has started to be used in some Strathclyde schools. One Glasgow Deputy Head Teacher described five teacher groups in her school meeting regularly to work through discussion.

"We have created the forum for freer discussion. Problems are shared, and different perspectives of individual pupils are gained," she said.

Issues new to teachers, who traditionally work in varying degrees of hierarchically managed institutions, have arisen. Group confidentiality for one. It seems clear from soundings that the very process of setting up discussion groups initiated by **Preventing Disruption** generates questioning too, about how decisions are made on policy. It may be that the biggest factor in reducing pupil disruption will be the way that teachers themselves feel acknowledged and valued. Not exceptionally, but as a matter of course through the way the systems they occupy are managed.

Certainly senior management are aware of the wider implications. Speaking to **Scottish Child**, Strathclyde Education Director, Frank Pignatelli commended the material as "one of the most impressive pieces of curriculum development undertaken in recent years." He agreed the pack does pose considerable challenges. Classroom teachers will be challenged by it, he feels. But so too will headteachers be pushed "in terms of how they enable teachers to benefit from the various activities which are designed to challenge existing practices and promote attitudinal change."

And whatever the reservations about the theoretical drift of the pack's written content, the video material is good. Staff and pupils at Grovepark High School must have had great fun making three hours of completed tapes which rehearse all possible combinations of how to prevent disruption, as well as how to positively invite it. One science teacher gives an introduction to a first year class on what to do in the science lab. Demonstrating the giving of negative messages, she warns, in as authoritarian a tone as she can muster, about 'big trouble', if pupils don't obey the safety regulations. You can tell in her eyes that she doesn't mean it. As her later positive messages sequence confirms, she manages because she likes kids. ■

Derek Rodger

Hiroshima, Twice a Week

IMPERIALISM

TV ads are a pretty useful indicator of the fears and aspirations around at any time – they have to tap into our deeply ingrained, if not always conscious, feelings to work.

A recent ad for Volkswagen cars is a fascinating example. It shows a child being taken by her father through the dangers of a New York street into the safety of a Volkswagen where mum is waiting. Powerful images, through the child's eyes, of chaos, threat and danger, all relieved by the safety of a car to be cocooned in. If 80s advertising was all about getting ahead and beating the competition, then in the 90s it's all about 'caring', the value of families, the more tender things in life. But it's all based – and these ads address our deep-seated knowledge of it – on privilege and exclusion in a world where poverty and horror are the norm.

We all know about the 'third world', the 'developing countries'. But we also have an amazing ability to somehow not really think about it. Maybe it's just too much to take in – we run away from the realities of the world we live in and begin to live in a cocooned fantasy. So maybe it's worth reminding ourselves sometimes just what life is like for the majority of human beings.

40,000 children die every day in the poor countries of the world through preventable diseases such as chronic diarrhoea, measles, diptheria and tuberculosis. Cuba's leader Fidel Castro has said, "It's as if a bomb similar to the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were dropped every three days on the poor children of the world".

Nothing can be done about it? Think again. Frank Judd, Oxfam's director, has pointed out that a $50m investment, "equivalent to the cost of a modest commercial building in New York City", could cut child deaths from the effects of diarrhoea by 2 million. You could eradicate smallpox throughout the world for the cost of two frigates.

So is it that we – the rich countries – aren't doing enough to help the 'developing' countries? Well that's not quite the full story either. In fact the truth is we're sucking them dry. Since 1982 third world debt has meant a net gain to the industrial countries of $300 billion – a figure that really is difficult to comprehend, but is the equivalent to 4 Marshall Plans used to rebuild western Europe after the 1939-45 war – except this is poor countries giving to the rich.

In fact the poor countries of the world are not 'developing' countries at all. They can't develop because the rich countries control the markets, own the banks and point the guns. It's not that we don't help enough, it's more that our relative riches are dependent on their poverty.

Restating these facts may not change the world, but reminding ourselves of these global realities may help us avoid some of the tempting illusions offered to us in the Britain of the 1990s. Like the idea that the world is one big happy family now. Like the illusion of a prosperous west ready to export its successful – Hiroshima twice a week – economic system to the east. As the IMF and the World Bank start imposing their 'conditions' on eastern European countries, who in turn are already dropping subsidies on basic foodstuffs to millions of families, it might be worth considering the carnage such 'conditions' have wrought on the poor in South America and Africa. We might even be able to face up to the need to change a few things – instead of running into our Volkswagens to hide from it all. ■

Colin Chalmers

Serious Substances

ALLERGY

Most of us are familiar with the term, allergy. Generally speaking we envisage allergies as minor irritants which cause the sufferers discomfort when they make contact with a particular substance.

Yet increasing medical evidence suggests that a wide range of illnesses, including serious and chronically disabling ones, may be attributed to allergy.

In a detailed paper written by Fabienne Smith, Scottish representative of the voluntary organisation, Action Against Allergy, physical symptoms resulting from an allergic reaction are claimed to range from the 'classic' responses such as asthma, eczema and hay fever to things less often regarded as allergic responses – fainting fits, excessive bleeding and arthritis.

Mental and behavioual problems can inelude hyperactivity in children, autism and thought disorders.

The question of allergy may be far more serious than generally understood. Fabienne Smith, herself housebound for the last eight years with extensive food allergies, claims that the medical profession has in the past been dismissive of people with allergy symptoms, putting their reactions down to being 'all in the mind'.

"There are a few doctors who are beginning to understand the problem," she said. "But Scotland as a whole is bad and Edinburgh in particvular is simply in the stone age as far as allergy treatment is concerned."

So, what is allergy? In simple terms it is the capacity to be harmed by substances that most people find harmless. Everyday allergens can include foods such as milk, cheese and eggs, chemicals like gas and petrol, even housedust and animal hair. Some people have contact allergies to plants fabrics and metals, and it is possible to have an allergy to sunlight, heat or cold.

Allergies can run in families. This does not mean that specific reactions are inherited, but the general tendency is to be more susceptible. In reality, children can inherit a substandard immune system. It may just take a trigger to set off the symptoms.

Action Againsty Allergy exists to introduce the notion of 'Clinical Ecology' to the world of medicine and to the wider public.

Clinical Ecologists work from the standpoint that certain individuals have adverse reactions to various substances in their environment. The idea is to pinpoint the foods or chemicals responsible and avoid them. The methods employed are so simple that they can be carried out at home under medical supervision. Only the most severe cases require hospital treatment.

Action Against Allergy claim that if Clinical Ecology units were set up in every district hospital and the subject taught to medical practitioners and students, the National Health Service would save in excess of £1000 million.

Members of AAA receive a personal information service, a postal book service and information about people in the same area suffering from allergies so that self-help groups can be formed. ■

Joe Owens

Action Against Allergy can be contacted through Fabienne Smith, 53 Manor Place, Edinburgh EH3 7EG Tel. 031 225 7503.

SAFETY

Dangerous roads, in time-honoured tradition, are seen as something that foreigners have. Yet according to the Public Accounts Committee, Scotland's record on child pedestrian accidents is the worst in Europe.

Excitable Italians, or jumpy Japanese have nothing on Scottish drivers, it seems, when it comes to road deaths. Research carried out for the Scottish Development Department last year, and published in the **Must Do Better** report, revealed that Scottish children between the ages of 6 and 9 stand nearly 4 times the chance of being killed on the roads than their Italian or Japanese counterparts. And double the chance of a French child.

Casualty rates too, for children killed or seriously injured, are 66% higher north of the border than in England and Wales.

"It may be," suggested Scottish Manager of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Paul Richardson, "that because roads are generally less congested in Scotland, traffic is faster." With around 58,000 speeding charges brought against Scottish drivers last year, he may have a point.

Julia Morris

Must Do Better!

"Traditions of tenemental housing too may play a part. Flats and tenements in Scottish cities and towns have brought about the tradition of playing in the street. It might have been relatively safe a generation ago to have street games, but with modern taffic volume, the figures show just how dangerous it is."

Scottish parents may appear to have a greater expectation, based perhaps on their own experience, that the kids will 'go out to play'. But the evidence points perhaps to a deeper malaise.

The **Must Do Better** research followed up 400 road accident victims, and actually observed directly and through video recordings, over 10,000 examples of road behaviour. Nearly a fifth of six year olds observed were seen to be crossing the road on their own with no parent or other carer in sight. This was the case too for 4% of the 4 – 5 year olds. Of the 5000 children who were with a parent, only 10% were observed giving any instruction whatsoever.

When non-road accident figures are taken into account, it doesn't appear either that care and supervision are confined to the home. Figures which include deaths and serious injury from accidents in the home, show Scottish rates coming out worst in Europe. Whether on the roads, or at home, Scottish parenting habits may need scrutinising to the extent that children can be left to be inependent before they may be ready – with sometimes tragic consequences.

Charities like the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, through public information and education programmes aim to generate safety consciousness. RoSPA publish a catalogue of useful educational display and promotional materials. Government too is currently engaged in a Scottish Road Safety Year 1990 campaign, involving t.v. advertising and other activities, in drawing attention to our high road accident rate. ■

Derek Rodger

John Stark

Fighting Abuse

LEGAL ADVICE

Years of experience have taught the workers at **Women's Aid** the kinds of problems women face when they leave a violent partner. There is a constant demand for the help they can give – on average 37 new women move into a refuge somewhere in Scotland every week and about 43 are turned away for lack of space. Fifteen years after the Parliamentary Select Committee on Violence within the Family, Scotland still has rather less than half the recommended number of refuge places.

Margaret Taylor, worker at **Scottish Women's Aid**, explains how broken bones, bruises and fear are not the only burdens that women carry away with them from their violent partner. "Women who arrive at refuges often feel deeply ashamed. They have taken on the responsibility for the violence that they suffer. A violent man will often tell a woman over and over again that it's her fault – never mind that in the next breath he's threatening to kill her, knock her teeth out or get her put away".

"Refuges are the cornerstone of everything we provide.. A safe place where a woman can gather the information and the strength she needs to plan for the future".

Getting into a refuge is the first very important step. Once there a woman has to tackle a whole range of problems, including legal questions. What are her tenancy rights? How can she make sure she gets help with payments for her children? Does she want a divorce? Can she stop a violent partner from offering intimidation and threats?

As part of their general advice and support service, **Women's Aid** have brought out ten legal advice leaflets covering these and several other questions. They deal in a brief but readable form with the legal difficulties facing women who have been abused physically, mentally or sexually by the men they live with. Because they are so clearly and attractively laid out the leaflets should be a great help not only to abused women but also in social work offices, advice centres, schools, libraries, hospitals and other public places.

The full list of the topics covered can be obtained from **Scottish Women's Aid, 11 St Colme Street, Edinburgh EH3 6AG** where you can also buy the leaflets at 5p each or the full pack in a plastic folder for £2.50.

Rosemary Milne

Learning for People Work

TRAINING

Voluntary organisations these days provide a high level of direct services, and government is happy – although it makes a stamp of never sounding it – to come up with funding free of the responsibility of running them.

There are some signs though, that even this arrangement is not quite ideologically sound enough in the constant quest for 'cost-effectiveness'. One such charitable body, the Glasgow-based ITRC is half-way through a two year programme of total funding withdrawal. They are to become self-financing in the market place.

Clumsily named it may have been, ITRC (Intermediate Treatment Resource Centre) has been funded for nearly a decade to promote and foster alternative community based responses to young people at risk. They have encouraged local authorities and other voluntary organisations Scotland-wide to direct their services towards preventitive supportive approaches to youngsters and their families. Many regional authorities have now adopted youth strategies, and run at least some community-based groupwork programmes. Although other community care factors have been influential, Scotland's residential List D school population is now a fraction of what it was a decade ago. So what portents for ITRC, (and other future organisations?) surviving in the market place? ITRC may be better equipped than most. As a policy development body, they have always been geared up to meet training needs of those such as youth workers, social workers and teachers faced with learning new approaches to people work.

Staff numbers have been reduced to four, but by using external expertise they are able to run an extensive programme of training courses.

"ITRC has had close links with the field," explained Howie Armstrong, "so that led us to be aware of training needs." A small independent organisation he feels is ideally placed to meet the training needs of those working in schools, social work, community work, housing and health.

"Traditional college approaches might not have had the capability to involve workers in learning which itself challenges attitudes to difficult young people."

Most courses run by ITRC have a strong experiential component. "We do not," Howie Amstrong wanted to emphasise, "see training as being about individuals who have huge knowledge gaps. Our line is that in most cases skills and attitudes are available in the workers themselves."

Their experiential groupwork courses are perhaps the most popular. More than anything else they help to "blow open the myth that you can operate as a professional without looking at the person."

Their funding situation has appeared to strengthen the commitment of the people at ITRC to succeed. Although they have a training partnership with one regional authority, and have just completed a whole 'training audit' for the social work department of another, it will be interesting to see the relationship with bigger bodies work out. "We're committed to this type of work," said Howie Armstrong with resolve, "and ITRC are determined to retain our range of services." ■

Derek Rodger

IN BRIEF

Within the next month a national **Personal Child Health Record** is to be launched by the government. If properly used, it could acknowledge and empower parents as the main record holder for their child's health and development.

The record is to be held by the parent (or guardian) who will be responsible for its confidentiality. This new record will replace much of the duplication of records at present held by Child Health clinics, health visitors, GPs and hospitals.

Like many similar personal health records used successfully in other countries, there are sections for medical conditions, examinations at birth and at other stages, immunisation history, growth charts, and for recording dentist, doctor and hospital visits. New sections for school age children are planned and the record will become the property of the child at age 16.

There is space for parents to enter their child's firsts. There are short sections too to back up discussion on topics such as feeding, immunisation, common problems and reminders on accident prevention.

With parents holding their children's records, a full information-sharing partnership should develop between parents and professionals – a significant step towards improving child health care. It is to be hoped that the new personal child health record will be adopted by all Health Boards in Scotland. ■

Multi-racial education, as the authors of the Burnage Report – the school in Manchester where an Asian boy was murdered by another pupil – bear out, is easier said than done. Management of recent Glasgow racial incidents in schools point up the difficulty for schools in encouraging a multi-racial approach.

A start has been made however, and this month, a new **Anti-Racist Workpack** is planned for publication, which tries to address the practicalities for staff in education. The pack contains materials and suggestions on how a multi-racial approach can be developed from the start with the under-5s. Its significance of course extends beyond that stage.

The project was commissioned from Save the Children Fund in conjunction with Strathclyde Community Relations Council by Strathclyde Region. And for the last two years, approaches have been developed through research at four main pre-five centres in Glasgow – Darnley Street Family Centre, Pollock Children's Centre, and Ashley Street and Renfrew Street Nurseries.

Scottish Child plan to review this material in the next issue, but details about the availability of the pack and the accompanying background report are obtained from Save the Children Fund, Templeton Street, Glasgow G40 1DA. Tel 041 554 8822. ■

While on the subject of participative arts, a new 'participative exhibition' **The Art Machine** is in planning and will get underway in Glasgow's newly refurbished McLellan Galleries from 2nd June.

The event, according to Museum Keeper Deborah Haase, "is designed for young people of all ages. Works can be handled, climbed on, and moved. Glasgow Museums are running this in conjunction with Leicestershire's Triangle Arts Project, and staff will be on hand to encourage active involvement in the use of video cameras, computer terminals, and activities using paper, textiles, sand, LEGO and Meccano.

The Art Machine will run till the end of August. ■

Inter-racial matters of another, but related type are the focus of interest in a new book published by SEAD (Scottish Education and Action for Development). 'Supping with the Devil' is the title of a survey of Scotland's **apartheid** connection.

"By highlighting Scotland's links with South Africa, naming companies, organisations and individuals," say SEAD, "who explicitly and explicitly condone apartheid, it will enable people in Scotland to target their actions effectively to help end apartheid."

With the debate over sanctions (debate? – it's only the British government that seems to be in favour of withdrawing them!) likely to continue, 'Supping with the Devil', while recognising the grounds for optimism in Southern Africa, argues for no illusions about the lack of firm commitments to end apartheid.

"To relieve pressure at this point," says a statement by South African opposition leaders, "would be an historic and strategic mistake, a tragedy for our country."

For information, contact SEAD Campaigns Ltd, 29 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh Tel 031 667 0129/0. ■

Random Tandem? . . . The above pic was taken at the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh . . . and yes, the photographer is a student there too.

A collection of **photographs**, the result of a photography project at the school, is planned to be exhibited soon in the Arts is Magic exhibition in Glasgow's St Andrews College on May 30th and 31st.

"The aim of the course ," explained school part-time P.E. teacher and photography tutor, Margarette Burns-Finalyson, "was to introduce interested students with residual vision to the practice of photography. It was also seen as important in countering stereotyped images of what blind people can or cannot do." They are planning too, to have an opening in the school. Further details from Margarette at the Royal Blind School, Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh Tel 031 667 1100. ■

"Careless Talk"

Colin Chalmers looks at how institutional care highlights some of society's attitudes to children.

Care. It's a word to conjure with. You get put in it, get taken into it, because someone reckons you are not getting enough of it. A word which, in its institutional sense, has often meant the complete opposite of what it means in its general sense. A word much-touted and misused. A word in need of reclaiming.

Take Peter's experience of 'care'. Listen to his story. It is not, as most people who have worked in the care system will tell you, unusual.

"I was put in a children's home when I was 5 years old. I was only in the first one for 2 days as the staff couldn't handle me, they said I was a 'wasted case'.

"So I was moved to ----, which is a big, frightening building. The man in charge took me under his arm and always took me to the clothes store to fit me out with clothes. But the other staff were pure nasty. They would slap me about. I ran away, but I had nowhere to go, so I soon got caught. They said they "didn't want an ungrateful person like me". So I got moved to -----. The staff there were just as bad. They made me wear a nappy because I wet the bed. And if the nappy was wet, they'd hit me.

"One evening we had liver for tea and I wouldn't eat it, so they rammed it down my throat. I was sick and I swore so they made me eat boot polish. Then I started hurting myself to get attention. I'd stab myself with darts, stick fish hooks in my fingers. Each time I got punished. One punishment was making me stand facing a wall, any wall, for 10 hours. They even put me on a behaviour chart, which was full of black stars.

"They tried to foster me off with foster parents, but that didn't last long, they started hitting me. Then the Social Work let me go home, but my step-dad kept hitting me and I was fighting with my brother and sister so that didn't last long.

"So I was put in the Assessment Centre where I got hit every day and locked up. I never ran away because I had nowhere to go. I hated everyone in the world, nobody knew what was going on in my head. It was hard, nobody helped me, and they won't help me now."

Children are beaten, abused, confined, tortured and humiliated by institutions whose purpose is supposedly the care of these children. It happens all the time. And ▶

'One punishment was making me stand facing a wall, any wall, for 10 hours. They even put me on a behaviour chart, which was full of black stars'

Child Care Under Review in Fife

Do you remember it? – 'anal dilatation' – an everyday term in 1988, as common on newscasts and in press interviews as 'poll tax' and 'greenhouse effect' in 1990.

The Cleveland Enquiry.

Do we remember it? Well, of course we do.

Two years from now will we be able to say the same about the Fife Social Work Enquiry? As things stand at present it seems improbable.

Unlike Cleveland, the Fife Enquiry, ordered by the Secretary of State last year and being conducted under the chairmanship of Sheriff Kearney is not open to the public. Unlike Cleveland the Enquiry came about not because of the over-zealous REMOVAL of children from home, but because, it is alleged, children were KEPT IN or RETURNED TO family situations which put their safety at risk.

"We want to avoid a Scottish Cleveland," it was said as the Fife Enquiry got underway last summer. In the curb on press reporting at least, the powers-that-be can claim some success. The Scottish public, whole sections of which are affected either directly or indirectly by the Fife issues, are either unaware of the Enquiry or ignorant as to its terms of reference.

As with all closed enquiries, the consequence is that any comments on the matter are necessarily based partly on speculation and hearsay.

But it makes it a matter of some urgency to try nevertheless to say something about what lies behind the crisis that led to the Enquiry – to win the debate back for the public and to establish that, certain differences notwithstanding, the parallels between Cleveland and Fife seem disturbingly close.

Allan Bowman, the Director of Social Work in Fife joined the department five years ago with a commitment to set up comprehensive 'care in the community' services. This meant the development of foster care, day centres and other community options, and moving away from a reliance on old-style children's homes and residential schools which had formed the backbone of Fife's child-care resources.

Despite the high profile given to the 'Fife plan', there was nothing very revolutionary about these changes. Research has shown that taking a child away from an unhappy or dangerous home situation into care produces its own set of problems – one of which is the difficulty of ever settling the child back home if the separation becomes too long. There are practical examples to follow too. Abroad, and notably in the Scandinavian countries, there is a well-established pattern of offering families access to a wide range of community facilities on a voluntary basis.

What is disturbing about Fife is not the policies themselves, but, in the view of many, the centralised, authoritarian, openly confrontational way in which they were implemented.

From the outset, it must have been clear that a wholesale shift in resources was unlikely to come about without resistance, negotiation and compromise. This is because decisions about where a child at risk is to live are not solely an internal social work responsibility, but sometimes require the cooperation of the children's hearing system, and occasionally that of the education department. As it turned out, it was the children's hearing members who finally forced a Scottish Office investigation into what was going on in Fife, after concerns were expressed about the implementation of hearing decisions by the social workers responsible.

No doubt Sheriff Kearney has been taking some of these cases apart piece by piece. But it would be a mistake to see the crisis as simply one of a social work/children's panel power struggle.

A formal enquiry has been taking place in recent months of child care practice in Fife. Conducted in private, it has not received even a small fraction of the attention accorded to other enquiries. **Rosemary Milne** considers the issues.

Firm departmental guidelines were laid down for the management of child care cases by social workers. The ideological bedrock of those guidelines was the belief – based on research by David Thorpe and others at Lancaster University – that bringing a child into care should be avoided at all costs. Where a child comes into care, the social worker's efforts should be aimed at reuniting the child with his or her family as soon as possible.

In spite of the 'absolutism' implicit in this policy, the department has consistently stated that its social workers are free to exercise their own professional judgement within its overall framework.

We have become well-used to politicians who keep control at the centre while insisting on the autonomy of the agents of their policies. It has become the standard form of government management of local authority power in the last ten years. It is instructive however, to see it put to work WITHIN a local authority department, but Fife is by no means unique in this respect. It is undoubtedly indicative of the difficulty of holding a 'care' role in this era, that the bureaucratic care systems have increasingly used strong-arm tactics against their own workers. But these are the wider issues. More immediately the question that must be asked is how childrens's needs are met in Fife if the overriding concern at every level is to AVOID certain outcomes, based not on the circumstances of a particular child but on a pre-existing set of beliefs about the nature and effect of 'institutional care'.

What price the needs of the child as the first priority if his social worker is balancing those against her own need to worry about whether her 'in-care' figures will meet with departmental approval at the end of the month?

Social workers anywhere in Britain might have problems working in such a system. In Scotland it was almost bound to come to grief because its ideology and its methods were so much at odds with those of the hearing system. Conflict was possible over a whole range of issues – that residential care is helpful for some children; that decisions will be reached by a process of 'full and frank' discussion; and that a child has a right to help related to his or her INDIVIDUAL needs. And so it proved. It must be obvious that children for whom compulsory measures of care are being considered are almost by definition children whose needs have always taken second or third place to everyone else's. They could be forgiven, if in Fife, they thought that the adults were behaving true to form.

The fact that in Cleveland and Fife the safety and welfare of children was the trigger for an enquiry is interesting. But not so much for what it reveals about our heightened concern for children nowadays, as for what it confirms about their powerlessness. In each case children could be seen as having been 'hijacked' to prove or disprove a set of theories and then pushed to the front line in the war between rivalrous bureaucracies. The Fife enquiry is due to report later this year. But do we have to set up these expensive and prolonged rituals? We could stop pretending now that child care, and child care only, is the issue. Perhaps if we could confront our insecurities and differences face on, the authoritarianism of the eighties would at last be challenged effectively and constructively.

It's not too much to hope that such honesty would allow the admission of mutual dependency. Think of the consequences then – a happy outcome which the the children could also share. ■

in the child care system, as in families, these acts of adults are often denied, seen as exceptional, sometimes even justified. Maybe Peter deserved to be hit. We don't know the full story. Maybe he is lying. Some people actually think these things. Some people talk like this all the time.

Alice Miller, a writer on child abuse, has tried to understand this deeply ingrained refusal to listen to the child. She writes that,

"It is difficult to understand, especially when we consider that we were once all children ourselves. I can explain it only by suggesting that unequivocal advocacy of the child represents a threat to most adults. For when it becomes possible for children to speak out and confront us with their experiences, which were once ours as well, we become painfully aware of the loss of our own powers of perception, our sensibilities, feelings, and memories. Only if the child is forced to be silent are we able to deny our pain, and we can again believe what we were told as children: that it was necessary, valuable, and right for us to make the emotional sacrifices demanded of us in the name of traditional child-rearing. As a consequence of the adult's arrogant attitude towards the child's feelings, the child is trained to be accommodating, but his or her true voice is silenced. Another arrogant and blind adult is the result."

(**Pictures of a Childhood**, U.S. edition)

The care system is not inherently bad, to be shunned, a world apart from the rest of society – it concentrates and institutionalises more general attitudes to children. The care of children is not considered a high status job, just as in the family it's not considered a job at all. People eat, sleep, argue, laugh and cry in care, just as in any other child care arrangement. "Tell them there was good as well as bad", one young woman told me, who had been through hell and back in children's homes. And of course there is.

Contrary to the fantasies of Our Waining Leader in Downing Street, it is not just the poor little orphan who gives her flowers at a yearly photo opportunity who is missing out on mum, dad and a sibling or two. Women, and sometimes men, manage to bring up children on their own, in shared accommodation, with changes of all sorts. What sets institutional care apart is that the networks of unpaid childcare that are available for most children have dried up, and the state has become involved.

Children entering care are almost always from working class backgrounds, predominantly from that 'poorer third' of society that has become so familar in western countries. They've all suffered loss, been abused, neglected or deprived. But the way some people talk about children in care, you would think they were the only people in the world who had suffered these completely normal and everyday occurrences. Sometimes they have suffered more, but not always, and it is worth remembering that they did not come into the care system just because of such events, but because there was nowhere else to go.

The insistence of too many of the adults working in the child-care system that their work is all about the **children's** pain, never the **adult's** pain from their own childhood,

'Real care is about being open to others and ourselves, not 'control"

often leads to a sort of careless talk about how to 'do' child care – the problem's out there. It can feel safer that way, thinking it's **them** that have the difficulties – and the case notes to prove it – not us. But there's a cost for this failure to be honest about one's own feelings, and – as Alice Miller has pointed out – that cost is paid by the child.

Recently I made a serious attempt to get some part-time work in children's homes. I wrote to the headquarters of a Social Work Department, knowing there was a severe shortage of relief staff for their residential units, and assuming I should apply in this way. I heard nothing for weeks, despite having 4 years experience of residential work with teenagers and a social work qualification. I was eventually told I was not being accepted for interview that month, but I could reapply.

Meanwhile friends who did relief work in children's homes told me that there was another way of getting part-time work, to phone the homes directly. So I phoned one – and was asked if I wanted to work that evening. No checks, nothing. I said I would want an interview before considering working there and was told that 'there was a lot of disruption in the place, and some violence, so they didn't have time for interviews'. Was it the children at this unit who were responsible for the 'disruption'? Or did the problem not lie more with the staff, so overstretched that they 'didn't have time for interviews'? And the local government department that allowed such an irresponsible de-facto selection procedure to exist?

Perhaps it should not surprise us that the care system does not always provide the care it should. To point to the enormously valuable, and largely unrecognised, work done by many child care workers does not make abuses of power in these institutions any more acceptable.

If we were able to take a view of child care more firmly based on the needs of the child – in reality, as well as rhetoric – we would be able to accept that some children, at some time, need to be away from their home. We would also recognise that children's homes and foster homes need to be places where children are listened to. That real care is about being open to others and ourselves, not 'control'.

This is not always the case, not simply because those working in these places are under-paid, over-stretched and under-trained, but also because often it is too hard, too painful, to open up and hear the voice of a hurt child. For individual staff, for the units they work in, for those who manage the child-care services. As Michelle Monro of **Who Cares? Scotland**, the organisation of young people brought up in care, wrote last year in **Scottish Child**,

"Each young person in care needs help to work through his/her pain, anger and frustration – not only about the problems and experiences which brought them into care, but also to help them cope with the difficulties of everyday living once they are there. This places tremendous demands on residential staff who can be stretched to the maximum."

Working with vulnerable children, who may express their pain in ways that bring up difficult feelings, is not easy. It may do us well to admit that, and try to face those feelings together instead of trying to hide from them alone. ■

CHILDCARE
URGENT NEED FOR THE

Services to the under-5s in Britain do not stand comparison with other countries. What's the answer? Workplace nurseries? Tax concessions in the private sector? Public nurseries and family centres? Childminding? Yes . . . but the task, argues Marion Flett, runs deeper.

A young working class woman gains a place as a mature student on a full time course to study for a qualification and pursue her chosen career. Her youngest child is aged 3, but that is no problem because there is a nursery at the college.

She finds though, that the unsubsidised nursery fees are too high to pay out of her student grant. She then turns to the local Social Work Department family centre nearby. It used to provide day care mainly for single parents, but is now open to families in the community. Or so she thought.

After a long wait, and endless discussion, she is told that her child cannot have a place because 'she does not need it'. Of course, if she were having 'problems' with her child that would be different. A common enough experience in the public sector.

The situation in the much hyped private workplace arena is perhaps best indicated by a recent **Observer** article which quoted a young woman who commutes to her job in the City for one hour each way every day. She takes her baby to a nursery near her office.

"Like other parents she regularly collects J and returns with him to the office to work late . . . there are no objections." Her employer was quoted that he "**doesn't mind**".

So who is kidding who? Just whose needs, it might be pertinent to ask in the quickening debate about childcare for the nineties, are being met? Without wishing to appear to be precious about children, does it seem appropriate for an eighteen month old toddler, as in this case, to be going to the office "regularly" in the evening in these circumstances? How does his mother concentrate? What does he do? When do they eventually get back home?

And where is the employer in all this? **His** problem is conveniently solved. At what cost though, to the individuals concerned?

The woman student, it turned out, went on her course and now struggles across town

Fiona Lindsay

NINETIES

to a subsidised nursery run by a voluntary organisation. She juggles times and transport to fit in with her classes, as they do not provide full day care.

It is on women that the double burden, of being a wage earning contributor **and** a carer for young children, falls. And in circumstances like these, the only way that women can carry these twin responsibilities, is to let employers off the hook by neglecting their own needs as human beings and mothers. A good picture of the world to give the children? The message seems clear. Childcare is available if you can afford to pay in money and effort, or if you are willing to label yourself or your child as a problem.

Childcare, as we enter the nineties with the projected demographic 'time bomb' of labour shortages predicted for mid-decade, is at last, or 'at least' on the agenda. But the response to the demand for consistent good quality facilities continues to lag behind demand in Scotland and throughout the rest of Britain.

Yet in the last decade, creche provision at meetings, conferences and workshops, has improved. Creche provision is now addressed as a central part of the programme of most public events – parents and especially mothers cannot participate in public life without it.

Truth is, these advances, limited thought they are, have come about through the efforts of women themselves, driven to the point of desperation by the attitudes of public service providers to both women and children. Women's networks, operating at an informal local level, as well as Women's Committees have done much to highlight the need for organising childcare properly.

So if creche provision has come about largely through the efforts of women themselves, what prognosis can be made for the ▶

Publicly Funded Childcare Services in E.E.C States

	For Children aged 3 – 5
France	95% in pre-primary schooling 8 hours a day
Belgium	95% in pre-primary schooling 5 – 6 hours a day
Italy	88% in pre-primary schooling most over 7 hours a day
Denmark	87% of 3 – 6 year olds in kindergartens, pre-school and school age centres
Ireland	52% nearly all in early primary schooling
United Kingdom	44% in pre-primary schooling, early primary schooling and nurseries; 40 – 45% attend playcentre 5 -6 hours a week

Source: P. Moss CHILCARE AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY Report of the European Childcare Network CEC 1988

ITALY

Young parents in Milan face the same problems of high living costs, shortage of housing, the need for two incomes, and the costs and distances involved in travel to work. Italy is perceived as a very 'family-minded' country – whereas the national birth rate is 1.4%,(in Milan only 0.9%) an indicator perhaps of the potential costs of raising children.

The city of Milan provides day-care places for approximately 12% of all children aged 0 – 3. And still they have a waiting list of 2000. This means that places are probably needed for about 20%. Maternity leave provision means that most mothers can choose to stay at home till children are nearly one year old and public service employees have job protection until the child is 3. But 90% of children aged from 3 – 6 attend the Scuola Materna where the programme is very similar to that of our own nursery schools – with the notable difference that it is integrated into an extended day for those who want it. Even at that, Milan does not enjoy the best provision in Italy. ■

FRANCE

France provides a model of childcare provision from which we could learn much. ACEP (Association Collectif Enfant-Parent) is an organisation set up to support parent-run day-care centres.

If a group of parents come together and constitute themselves into a formal body to run a day-care centre, they can obtain one-third funding from the government, and a further third from the local authority. The parents are then responsible for raising the remaining third. This model thus combines public and private resources.

These parent-run centres are usually small, catering for a maximum sixteen children with three staff, with parents helping out on a voluntary basis if work commitments allow. For those parents who can't, they can participate in management or help with repairs and maintenance. Thus there is no pressure to 'involve' parents – it is *their* centre. They don't have to help the staff to mix the paints; they appoint the staff. ■

UN CONVENTION
- SEMINAR ON THE RIGHTS OF SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN

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- Participation
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Fiona Lindsay

level and quality of childcare in the coming years?

Much of the problem seems to lie on the context in which the care is offered. The reality is that at either end of the financial continuum, parents have little opportunity to obtain good quality childcare, where and when it is needed unless through informal childminding arrangements.

For those who can afford to pay, it is true that there is an increasing variety of nursery provision – in private nurseries including at workplaces. Yet despite all the attention to the increase in workplace nurseries, and the introduction of the childminding vouchers scheme which allows employers to contribute, there is not a lot of evidence of employers rushing to take up the challenge in Scotland.

There are, it is true, a number of interesting initiatives – Edinburgh District Council's workplace nursery; Aberdeen University's Rocking Horse Nursery; and intitiatives have been made by Fife and Strathclyde Regions to work in conjunction with private employers. But whether subsidised or not, workplace nurseries can provide at best only a partial answer to childcare needs.

So what is wrong? Why is it that in this country we are apparently unable to resolve the problems of facing up to our communal responsibility for young children?

Part of the problem seems to lie in the fusion in our culture of childcare and child protection. The portrayal of bringing up children as a high risk moral imperative sets a tone which can't be helpful. The increase in reported cases of child abuse for example; the publicity given to policy and practice matters in the tragic circumstances of cases of child death; the publicity campaigns pointing up the dangers to children from 'strangers' – all of this activity presents the adult world preposterously as a dangerous context from which children need protection.

"Childcare is available if you can afford to pay . . . or if you are willing to label yourself or your child as a problem."

It is this rather grotesque depiction of adult child relations which works itself out in the management of such child care arrangements that do exist in the public sector. The replacement by local authorities of day care centres by Family Centres means that they can suffer from the childcare/child protection confusion. The purpose of Family Centres and the role of their staffs seem to suffer from a deal of vagueness – family therapy, health clinic, a type of community centre? And mothers often report feeling pressured to 'be involved', when what they want is good quality childcare.

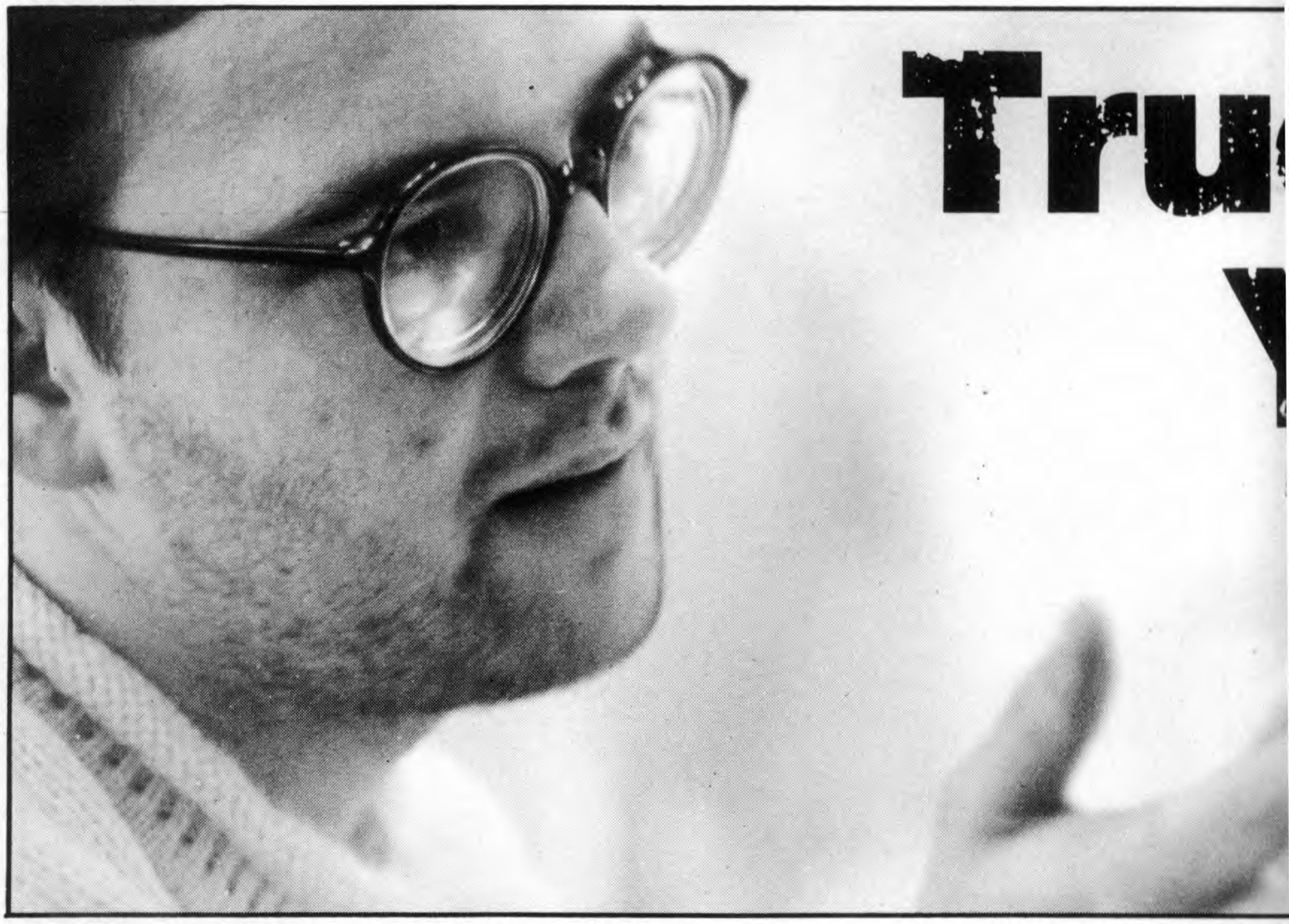
Maybe a look at the European experience would allow a fresh look at our own situation in this country. In Europe we find different methods of providing childcare through a mix of public and private financing without value judgement being made on 'needs'. That of course, demands a far higher level of provision in both quality and quantity.

Exploring some of these alternative models could allow us to develop the notion of networks of caring in the community. Creating a context in which a rich variety of services could flourish, would better meet the real needs of children and parents.

Certainly we can no longer pretend that the old education/child care split has any meaning except an administrative one. We need nursery provision that aims to meet the needs of the whole child in a context that also allows their mothers to thrive as human beings.

Which probably means giving greater value to the place of children in our society as a whole, in ways which genuinely acknowledge their needs. We already have a recognition of both private and public responsibility in our taxation and benefits systems, in health and in education. Families too, do not operate in isolation. ■

Scottish Child will run items across the whole range of services to the under-5s in subsequent issues. Comments and letters welcome.



Tru

Pat Kane of pop band **Hue and Cry** is singer-songwriter and more . . . he branches out into journalism, commentary and politics. Last month he was elected as Glasgow University's new rector. **Gordon Rennie** investigates the man behind the myth.

What do pop-stars look like outside the rarified atmosphere of a TV studio or away from the cooly calculated spontaneity of a live concert appearance? Pat Kane of successful Glasgow band, Hue and Cry, on a dreary Saturday morning in Edinburgh's Waverley station, belies the image of his Top of the Pops personna. His disguise of anorak, knapsack, stubble and Sony Walkman all conspire to make him look like the typical Intercity flotsam of any railway station.

In town for an afternoon concert, his innocuous-looking knapsack could have held a slip-on pop-star identity. When he talked to **Scottish Child**, it was as his mild-mannered alter-ego, Partick Kane, the political activist, newspaper columnist and free thinker.

Kane and Hue and Cry, the band he formed with his brother Gregory after graduating from Glasgow University, stands out in the current pop music climate, where the charts are awash with vacuous dance music, and where the term 'pop star' can now include any soap star, page three model, or any other kind of tabloid fodder or fifteen minute celebrity.

Hue and Cry come from a different tradition, with the two brothers from Coatbridge trying to create music with a serious manifesto that will still go down well on the dance floor of the school disco. They have succeeded, and in a business notorious for it ficklcness, have been having hits for the last three years.

Pat Kane has more to say to his audience and to the world than "Look at me!" or "Buy my records!" He sees his own rise to fame as a chance to use his easy access to the media to actually say something of content about politics, culture, economics, sexism, or any other topic that he publicly sounds off about.

"To me it's a chance to do some good, to spread a wee bit of emancipation." Kane and his forthright views do seem to pop up everywhere – in his regular column in **The Scotsman**, in the recently defunct Scottish music magazine **Cut**, on late night t.v. chat shows, in rentaquote pieces in **Scotland on Sunday** balancing alongside such luminaries as Wallace Mercer and Ross Harper. Kane has ceased to be just another pop star and has become a Scottish media figure in his own right.

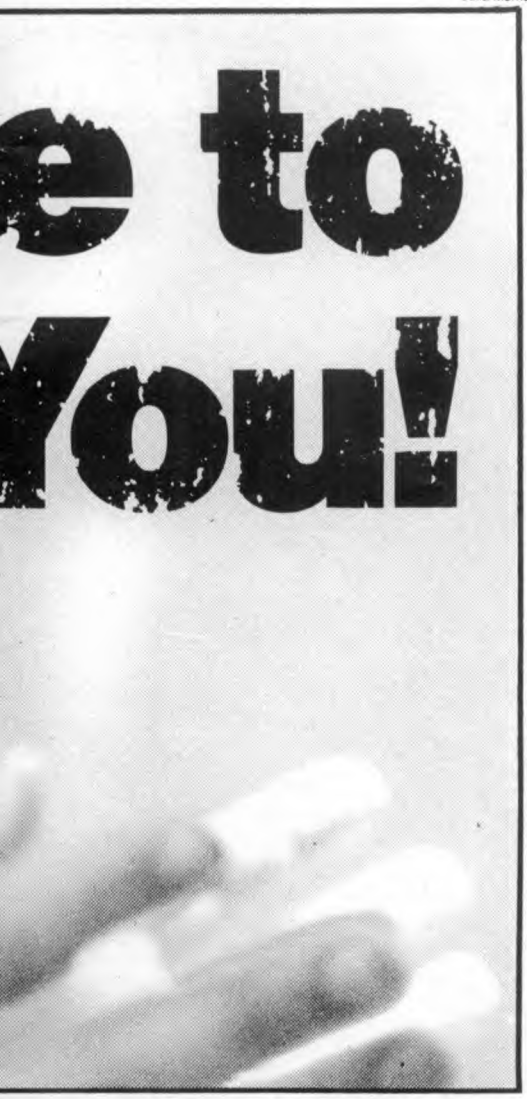
Rectorship of Glasgow University strengthens comparisons with Edinburgh media-person Rector, Muriel Gray. To him it is simply "a desire to defend the system I was a product of, a system that is under attack. The truth is that if you're a pop star Rector of Glasgow University, you can perhaps defend Scottish education in a way that some boring politician or academic couldn't – because you'd be more widely broadcast." "I always wanted to be a writer," he explains, "before I wanted to be a musician while my brother Gregory is a practica musician dreaming of creating the perfec sound." This certainly accounts for Hue and Cry's own individual musical identity – a sophisticated mix of black American sou and jazz with the classic sound of their parents' collection of 50s crooners which the brothers grew up with.

When Pat Kane sings he sounds like a hybrid of Frank Sinatra and Jimmy Maxton mellow West Side meets militant Clydeside. He himself admits that this is an unlikely mix of influences. "Sinatra must be one of the most evil men in America, but the beauty of his voice still astounds me."

Despite such American influences, Kane still argues that Hue and Cry have a specifi Scottish dimension to their music. "English music critics have picked up on the fact tha so many Scottish bands are influenced by American music, whether it's soul or the kind of country and western that the Proclaimers espouse.

"These are amazing artforms with which to express yourself, reveal yourself, be honest with yourself, which is very much part of Scottish culture. There is a strong expressive and soulful aspect to the Scottish character in that the Scots are concerned

Julia Morris



with confession, direct speech, being honest with each other. When you sing soul, you also assume the audience shares your emotions and the conventions you work from. It is a music which is very involved in the community which surrounds it."

Soul of course is also the music of an underdog culture, just as country and western is about the concerns of ordinary working people – jobs, marriage, money, etc. Given Kane's argument, it isn't difficult to see why the two musics are so popular in Scotland.

Pat Kane attaches much importance to his own Scottishness and lives in Glasgow's West End with his wife and baby daughter. Before that he was Greenock's own pop star in residence. So pop star globe-trotting seems to have little appeal to him?

"The record company want me to be this bland international product which superficially engages with a whole range of other cultures. I stay in Scotland because I feel I can strike up a real dialogue with this culture and with my Scottish audience. I'm happy to have my art relate to audiences which share my frame of reference. I refuse to approach the world as a Coca-Cola paradise or global market to be conquered by successive Hue and Cry world tours."

Hue and Cry are currently riding out a strong critical backlash, much of it provoked by Kane's activities (and views?) away from the group and related to old feuds with the music press left over from his stint as writer for NME. He has been reviled of late for his defiant socialist stand, for being a pop star with brains, for setting up as a social commentator, for being a typical whinging Scot, for being too priggish and taking himself too seriously.

He admits that some of his highbrow activities are an attempt to atone to himself for the humiliations he had to go through to get success – allowing himself to be sold as a product by the publiciity mill of the pop industry; the mindless interviews and inane photo sessions for teenage pin-up magazines, the embarrassing appearances on children's t.v. programmes.

"It is all so unavoidable. At the major record company level that Hue and Cry operate on, you have to accept dirt on your hands if you want any success at all. Things like writing a column, since I can completely control everything I say, are ways I feel I can be pure of this. I can only do that in music when I play live or record a new song. All the rest of it is bullshit."

The band's success has allowed Pat Kane to branch out to other things. A brief foray into political campaigning during the Govan by-election left him with a nasty taste in the mouth, particularly over Jim Sillars subsequent antics. "I thought he was a man of vision but he really lacks an awareness of cultural sophistication. By writing for **The Sun** he is appealing to the worst aspects of the working class."

Becoming a father has given him a new perspective although he still worries that he is something of a cliche of the New Man. He feels though that it is no bad thing that men are now expected to share and care. He intends to do more writing but thinks his tenure at **The Scotsman** might end soon.

He feels at this stage in his career he has lived up to his own ambitions in the celebrity status/own conscience conflict. "If I ever become a pop star I've got to use it for something else than being a pop star," scribbled a typically earnest young Patrick Kane on the back of a text book in his undergraduate days. "I discovered the book the other day, and was amazed at just how true to that idea I've been over the last few years." ■

Concert Conflict

(What a hue and cry! What a hurricane!)

Written after an argument about queueing
for 7 hours in Glasgow to see Hue and Cry

Go with Lisa's mum at a reasonable time
to stand at the back is not a crime.
You'll still be able to hear the show
No matter how late you go.

I said, but mother my point of view
is that if you are standing you have to queue.
I want to see Patrick and Gregory Kane,
not thousands of heads, all drenched in rain.

Stand for hours in rain and gales?
I see you've gone right off the rails.
Someone of your intelligence
should know how to listen to common sense.

I said, I want to catch Greg's talented grin,
Let Pat's strong lyrics soak into my skin.
Safe at the front. Where none can bother me.
Not caught in any mass of thuggish misogyny.

With disapproving eyes her glare did linger,
in front of my nose that wise white finger.
Pointing sharp in my direction
said, you'll bring back that ear infection.

I know it isn't going to be sunny
but if I can't see of hear them, what's value for money?
I want to see Pat's concentration
as he sings to us of Grace and urban alienation.

She said, Okay it's up to you.
Be healthy and radiant or ill and blue.
What are you wearing? I know I'm a nag.
But how about wearing a black rubbish bag?

Putting it bluntly, one has a choice
in how one can hear that powerful voice,
stand like a distant satelite
or have Citizen Kane up close for a night!

Anon

How we define human freedom, and the nature of knowledge affects our education system, and our attitude to government. For all peoples, it can be even more important . . . in the context of world power balances, a matter of life and death in fact. In these extracts from an important new essay, **James Kelman** evaluates the significance of Noam Chomsky's contribution to a Common Sense understanding.

TAKING

seven extracts from an essay on

NOAM CHOMSKY AND THE PH

1

In 1982 polls indicated that 70% of the U.S. population believed the Vietnam War to have been 'fundamentally wrong and immoral', whereas 'virtually none of the really educated class or articulate intelligentsia ever took that position'. Thus in the face of more than two decades of relentless media propaganda on behalf of the ruling group the great majority of ordinary people had the wit and the will to judge it for themselves. It is absolutely central to Chomsky's thesis that 'there is no body of theory or significant body of relevant information, beyond the comprehension of the layman, which makes policy immune from criticism'. Everybody can know and everybody can judge. Unless we are mentally ill or in some other way mentally disadvantaged all of us have the analytic skills and intelligence to attempt an understanding of the world. It is just not good enough to be 'bad at mathematics'; the skills demanded of an elderly person playing several cards of bingo simultaneously or for studying the form of a big sprint handicap in the heavy going at Ayr Racetrack; the skills demanded to get to the supermarket and do a weekly shopping on a limited budget, on behalf of a large family of young children – all such skills are there to be developed and applied to any subject whatsoever, including subjects like a country's foreign policy, or nearer home, the correlation between cuts in welfare and infant mortality; between cuts in welfare and suicide; cuts in welfare and death from hypothermia; cuts in welfare and local crime and violence; cuts in welfare and drug abuse, alcohol abuse, gambling abuse, prostitution, madness.

No matter the subject under scrutiny certain factors remain the same; we apply our reasoning devices and these devices are interdisciplinary. We apply them in physics, in astronomy, in horse racing, in joinery, in the creation of art. Logic is a reasoning device; so too is mathematics. They are activities. We engage in them to find solutions to problems all the time. They are also skills; they can be refined and improved. By approaching different kinds of problems we apply our reasoning skills in different kinds of ways. We start reflecting on how we use them and see how other folk are faring; we make comparisons and connections, construct theories. This is why poets can discuss methodology with people involved in sculpting marble or rigging up electrical circuits. If we are restricted to one subject only then our ability to reason may stagnate; it will become difficult to reflect on what other folk are doing when they are engaged on subjects not directly related to our own; we will forego the opportunity of keeping an eye on 'the experts'.

I first became aware of Chomsky's work while at university as a mature student but my reading was confined to what he was doing in linguistics and I did not persist – I did not find the technicalities of the subject especially interesting, nor do I find them especially so at the present time. One of his earliest works was published in Holland when he was 29 years of age; its title was **Syntactic Structures** and it 'revolutionised the scientific study of language'.

2

But an understanding of Chomsky's linguistics theory is not at all necessary to appreciate Chomsky's demonstration that an argument used by the U.S. Congress in 1984 with regard to 'the right to bomb Nicaragua' could be adopted by the U.S.S.R. with regard to 'the right to bomb Denmark'.

There again but it is good to know things. I want to know about physics. By knowing about physics people have split 'the atom'. Most people do not know what an 'atom' actually is yet by splitting 'it' the world could be destroyed. The worlds of Nagasaki and Hiroshima have already been destroyed, an event described by the 33rd President of the United States of America as the 'greatest thing in history'. I want to know why the most powerful figure on earth can say that, and if there is any connection between it and the fact that by the end of World War Two the nation of which he is supposed to have been boss owned 50% of the planet's wealth with but 6% of the planet's population. And of that 6% or some 220 million folk, about 90% would have owned next to nothing at all; in other words, if we take the 6% and divide it by 100 and multiply that by 90, and so on, we see that

CHARGE

Marc Riboud

Peace March, Washington D.C., 1967

ILOSOPHY OF COMMON SENSE

0.6% of the world's population owned half of its entire wealth and material resources back in 1945. I wonder what the figures are now.

Chomsky's boyhood in New York had been spent hanging around his uncle's newsstand at 72nd Street and Broadway –

which was a sort of radical centre . . . in part Jewish working class . . . Communists . . . very much involved in the politics of the Depression . . . all night discussions and arguments . . . Freud, Marx, the Budapest String Quartet, literature . . . (From adolescence he was) deeply interested . . . in radical politics with an anarchist or left-wing (anti-Leninist) Marxist flavour, and even more deeply interested in Zionist affairs and activities – or what was then called 'Zionist', though the same ideas and concerns are now called 'anti-Zionist'. (He) was interested in socialist binationalist options for Palestine, and in the kibbutzim and the whole cooperative labour system that had been developed in the Jewish settlement there . . . but had never been able to come close to the Zionist youth groups that shared these interests because they were either Stalinist or Trotskyite and (he) had always been strongly anti-Bolshevik.

His father had been a linguist and from the age of 12 he was put to an experimental, progressive school. His years at college and university were also non-conformist. He came under the influence of the philosopher and mathematician Nelson Goodman, and Zelig Harris too, one of the foremost names in linguistics although Chomsky has said that 'it was really his sympathy with Harris's political views that led him to work as an undergraduate' in the subject. Apparently Harris used to conduct his lectures in a cafe and continue them during the evening back in his flat. These details can be decisive; so called background information is often the difference between taking us into the work of somebody or not, although the way most present-day education systems operate we are to study the work and leave the somebody out of it.

3

Chomsky says he has no particular method of investigation at all. What he does is 'look hard at a serious problem and try to get some ideas as to what might be the explanation for it, meanwhile keeping an open mind about all sorts of other possibilities.'

Such a statement might sound surprising, almost like an exercise in mystification, as though he is trying to make what he has achieved accessible, but the route by which he travelled inaccessible. This is common amongst professionals and 'experts' generally. The outcomes usually leave the destination as mysterious as the route. It is a serious problem. Whole areas of experience and knowledge are being hived off from ordinary men and women and children. Society is controlled by those who are 'paid to know', the specialists. In recent years the most famous international expert on global affairs has probably been Henry Kissinger, someone whose downright 'ignorance and foolishness' Chomsky describes as a 'phenomenon'. Nevertheless, when sponsored by the might of the U.S. military, the power exercised by such a person is life or death – as in Angola for example, where he 'tried to foment and sustain a civil war simply to convince the Russians that the American tiger could still bite'. Human suffering is of no account and the economic cost is next to irrelevant since in political affairs of state such costs, 'are always public' anyway; only the 'profits are private'. All talk of morality as a value is naive. If morality does exist it is to be regarded as a separate field of endeavour, like experimental physics or mechanical engineering or opera. Even genocide is consigned to the realm of tactics and becomes 'wrong' only when its 'effects are debatable and are likely to provoke hostile reactions in world capitals.'

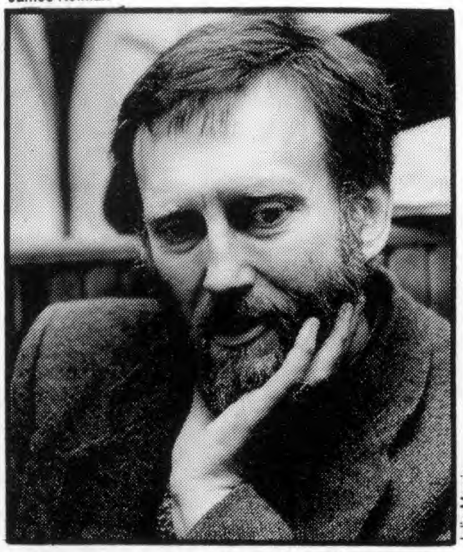
But at its official level international reaction is fairly predictable. It depends on who is doing what and to whom, and the profit involved. In 1974 the country of East Timor, with a population less than that of Glasgow, was attempting to determine its own existence. Like Angola this was after the horrors of Portuguese fascist colonisation. Four years later a quarter of its people had been massacred after an invasion by Indonesia, 90% of whose military supplies came directly from the U.S.A.:

but while (they were) the major foreign participant in the slaughter, the others tried to profit as they could and kept their silence. In Canada, the major Western investor in Indonesia, the government and the press were silent. (While in France) **Le Monde** *reported in 1978 that the French government would sell arms to Indonesia while abstaining from any U.N. discussion of the invasion and in general doing nothing to place 'Indonesia in an embarrassing position'.*

This is only one instance from an enormous number cited by Chomsky. But after a time statistics dull the senses, including those concerned with wholesale slaughter, as he reminds us:

You see what they mean when you look more closely at the refugees reports: for example, a report from a few people who succeeded in escaping from a village in Quiche province (Guatemala) where the government troops came in, rounded up the population and put them in the town building. They took all the men out and decapitated them. Then they raped and killed the women. Then they took the children and killed them by bashing their heads with rocks.

James Kelman



Julia Morris

Reports of atrocities by refugees are difficult to cope with. We are not used to such testimony, not unless, perhaps, the refugees are in flight from the same ideological enemy as ourselves.

If Chomsky has a specialist subject then it might be argued that it is not linguistics, nor the philosophy of language, rather it is U.S. global policy, with particular reference to the dissemination of all related knowledge. When he says he has no 'method of investigation' we would be as well asking what the term could refer to. Is having a 'method of investigation' the same thing as having a system of rules and procedures worked out in advance so that we know how to proceed in problem solving? Should we be thinking of 'induction' or 'deduction', or 'dialectics' or 'structuralism'? Maybe by 'method' some people just mean they prefer working with a fresh pot of tea at the ready, a packet of cigarettes within reach and soft music in the background. They might even be referring to a preference for observation and experimentation as opposed to sitting about chatting and thinking aloud, in the style of some old Greek philosophers (and some contemporary ones as well, not just from Greece).

What seems clear is that restricting yourself to one particular method will just make life more difficult. Everything and anything should be available including intuition. Einstein was a staunch believer in intuition. Without such a reasoning device a great many scientific advances would not occur. It is the ability people have to soar above the boundaries of one field and land not in another field but in a street.

In his introduction to Chomsky's work in linguistics John Lyons suggests that it is necessary to meet him 'on his own ground'. This can imply the need to embark on a concentrated study of linguistics or the philosophy of language. But an insight into the formal problems confronted by Chomsky may be possible without that. It may also be possible to see where these formal problems impinge on matters of more obvious political concern.

Rousseau is an important thinker for Chomsky. It was what he perceived as the strength of the will to self determination that led him to propose 'the struggle for freedom (as) an essential human attribute.' Rousseau also concluded that

the uprising that ends by strangling a sultan is as lawful an act as those by which he disposed, the day before, of the lives and goods of his subjects.

The sultan has no inherent rights. Beyond civil society there is an authority to which he is as subject as the retinue of men who helped him dress for breakfast that morning. This authority does not derive from outwith the realms of humankind. It is not God. It is not superhuman in any form. This is the authority of natural law which inheres in every woman and child and man. Rousseau sent the essay in which that appeared to Voltaire whom he much admired, aside from his atheism which he much detested. But Voltaire did not appreciate the argument at all; he said it made him feel like 'walking on all fours'. He thought the essay was affirming some sort of 'golden age' where primitive folk would be free to be primitive once the shackles of civilisation were burst asunder. But Rousseau's argument is more powerful than that. When he saw 'multitudes of entirely naked savages scorn European voluptuousness and endure hunger, fire, the sword, and death to preserve only their independence', he was seeing a basic premise that had to be true beyond any shadow of doubt; it is

from human nature that the principles of natural right and the foundations of social existence must be deduced . . . the essence of human nature is human freedom and the consciousness of this freedom.

"It is the ability people have to soar above the boundaries of one field and land not in another field but in a street."

Human freedom is so inalienable a right that it can scarcely be described as a 'right' at all, it is the very essence of what it is to be a person.

4

During the revolutionary work of **Syntactic Structures** Chomsky abandoned a purely behaviouristic approach and accepted the primacy of semantics in the study of language . . . . (Semantics involves meanings, the way that people actually **use** language. To start bringing in meaning was very risky since it implied having to get involved with events and activities that take place in the mind. And this is awkward – things that happen in the mind are not readily available to observation – we cannot see into minds.) But once the way in which language is actually used by people is introduced into linguistics the full complexity of the study becomes apparent, for the matter is thrown right back to what Chomsky calls 'Plato's Problem'. This is where

Socrates demonstrates that an untutored slave boy knows the principles of geometry by leading him, through a series of questions, to the discovery of theorems of geometry. This experiment raises a problem that is still with us: How was the slave boy able to find truths of geometry without instruction or information?

In his own attempt at solving the problem of how folk seem to know things they have never before experienced, Plato landed in other worlds and previous existences, along with other thinkers both before and since. An extension of the problem concerns creativity in language – not the creativity of people involved in literary art forms, but the daily creativity of men and women and children as they go about their business:

in normal speech one does not merely repeat what one has heard but produces new linguistic forms – often new in one's own experience or even in the history of the language – and there are no limits to such innovation.

The importance of this fact for any theory of knowledge is underlined by Chomsky. Language is so rich and sophisticated, capable of such an infinite variety of possibilities, that no strictly empirical approach can hope to account for its existence. Once we are engaged in its study at this level we are in at the heart of the study of mind; 'linguistics, psychology and philosophy are no longer to be regarded as separate and autonomous disciplines.' The step that Chomsky takes around this point is very bold, very courageous; it leads him away from the vanguard to contemporary linguistics. In philosophical terms he becomes, like Plato himself, a 'rationalist': somebody who believes there are **a priori** forms of knowledge, i.e. forms of knowledge available to people outwith any experience they may have gained from being in the world.

5

In one of his more illustrious book reviews Chomsky attacked the extreme branch of behaviourism as it appears in the shape of B.F. Skinner and that approach to psychology which seeks to affirm that 'what a person does is fully determined by his genetic endowment and history of reinforcement'. At times Chomsky can barely conceal his contempt: 'It would be hard to conceive of a more striking failure to comprehend even the rudiments of scientific thinking'.

But it is integral to his approach that you should not halt at the point where something is revealed as false: from there you will make further discoveries by asking what social or ideological needs are being served by such a theory? In the case of Skinner style behaviourism this is quite straightforward; in fact the man himself has suggested that 'the control of the population as a whole must be delegated to specialists – to police, priests, owners, teachers, therapists and so on, with their specialised reinforcers and codified contingencies.' A tacit acceptance of this sort of behavioural approach seems a feature of those who exercise a controlling interest in western society. It lies at the core of the dogma of imperialism and the unswerving belief that a colonised people has neither the wit nor the will to determine its own existence. Ev-

ery insurrection becomes the effect of foreign infiltration. There is no such thing as a self-motivating populist movement. Ordinary working people never go on strike except when hypnotised into it by crazed external agitators who have penetrated the shop floor. Within the terms of this argument folk like Arthur Scargill, like Castro, Allende, Mandela, are always puppets of a foreign regime. It is inconceivable that they might create strategies of their own – close to a logical contradiction in fact.

Chomsky offers a great example of this via the case of Ho Chi Minh. For years a variety of western intelligence agencies tried to establish his connection with Moscow but it could never be done. Such a connection could never be discovered. To suggest the connection might not exist would have required a mammoth leap of the imagination, instead of which came the following: *No evidence has yet turned up that Ho Chi Minh is receiving current directives either from Moscow, China, or the Soviet legation in Bangkok . . . It may be assumed that Moscow feels that Ho and his lieutenants have had sufficient training and experience and are sufficiently loyal to be trusted to determine their day-to-day policy without supervision.*

6

In Scotland during the last years of the seventeenth century between a third and a fifth of the people were reported as 'having died or fled' due to the effects of famine. The Darien scheme had just collapsed and the economy was more or less bankrupt. At an intellectual level this was a decade or so after the German thinker Leibnitz and the English thinker Newton – unbeknown to each other – had been locked in the simultaneous creation of differential calculus. Meanwhile in Edinburgh certain premises were still not open to challenge and a 19 year old student by the name of Aikenhead was being executed for having dared to demand 'evidence for the dogma that the moral blindness of natural man can sometimes be overcome by a grace-inspired reading of the bible.' What developed from all this was a fierce debate on the problem of how to reconcile economic expansion with the moral and intellectual consciousness of the population as a whole.

For those unfamiliar with George Davie's work on the Scottish Enlightenment this can appear a rather surprising 'problem'. It may be thought obvious that the greater the technological and economic progress in a country the greater the benefits must accrue to the country as a whole. But in reality such conclusions are only guaranteed in party political broadcasts.

One clearly defined route to economic expansion lies in the production of highly skilled and trained individuals who are to take on specialist employment. This can lead to the demand for an educational system geared precisely to the production of experts. Under the influence of John Locke and others this was happening in England and some north of the border were pushing for the same thing. Andrew Fletcher was not one of them. He argued that an educational system devoted to the production of specialists would result in a situation where none of the educated community would be fit to govern the nation, given that being fit to govern the nation entails the capacity for decision-making in general contexts.

This capacity involves the power of judgement and critical evaluation; it is developed more potently by the ability to see beyond the limits of your own discipline. If the educational system is to thrust groups of people into separate compartments then none will be equipped to take the wide view necessary. No longer does it become possible for the poet to discuss methodology with the sculptors and electricians. Reasoning devices like mathematics, logic and intuition stagnate, this being abetted by the decline in subjects thought to be impractical, e.g. philosophy, the classics, the study of languages and other cultures, these very subjects which encourage a general approach to the world. In this scenario actual knowledge itself becomes at a premium, cut off from those who are not 'specialising'. And gradually the majority of men and women and children become divorced from those areas where 'experts' reign supreme. What remains (in George Davie's words) is not only repugnant but disastrous – *A society spiritually split between overspecialised boffins on the one hand and unthinking proles on the other is not merely repellent from a moral point of view, because of its tolerating or even encouraging the intellectual backwardness of the masses, but at the same time is also inherently an unstable basis for the material progress it seeks to sustain (and) the stultification of the majority (will) affect the mental balance of society as a whole . . .'*

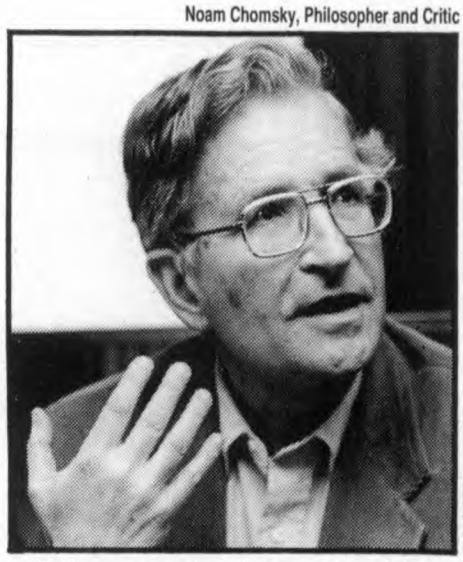
"you should not halt at the point where something is revealed as false: from there you will make further discoveries by asking what social or ideological needs are being served by such a theory?"

. . . At the root of the matter is the segmentation of knowledge, the push for individual disciplines to keep themselves to themselves; and the creation of 'experts', 'keepers of the faith', whether they be in a monastery or members of a government planning department.

7

Chomsky destroys any presuppositions about the relationship between higher education and the ability to think clearly and critically. The educated classes have more access to information than the vast majority of ordinary men and women but it is rarely

Noam Chomsky, Philosopher and Critic



Julia Morris

in their own economic interest to seek it out and see what it amounts to. This does not have to imply a deliberate policy, let alone the existence of a conspiracy –

the intellectual elite is the most heavily indoctrinated (sector of society), for good reasons. It's their role as a secular priesthood to really believe the nonsense they put forth. Other people can repeat it, but it's not that crucial that they believe it because, after all, they are the guardians of the faith. Except for the very rare person who's just an outright liar, it's hard to be a convincing exponent of the faith unless you've internalised it and come to believe it.

. . . I cannot conceive of someone reading Chomsky's work honestly and failing to be moved by it. The basic principle of humankind is freedom, the right to not be tortured, the right to not be raped, the right to not be violated, the right to not be colonised in any way whatsoever. It is an inalienable right; whether it is deduced or whether it has to be discovered in any other way is not of great significance – such questions can only be of **ultimate** interest to those whose ideological position is served by obscuring the issue. Either we do battle on behalf of the basic principle or not. It is not a new one but it remains as dangerous as ever. His writings are banned in some countries and anathema to the ruling minorities of most of the rest. ■

These extracts (totalling approx. 3,700 words) are taken by permission of the author from a longer essay (of around 13,000 words) which appears in full in the current issue of **EDINBURGH REVIEW**, *available from Polygon, 22 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LF.*

A full list of the references for these extracts are contained in the essay itself but it is important to mention **CHOMSKY** by John Lyons; **SOME SPECULATIVE AND CRITICAL PHILOSOPHERS (1600 – 1750)** by P.G.Lucas; **GODEL'S PROOF** Nagel and Newman; **STRUCTURALISM** by Jean Piaget. The three main sources used on Chomsky's work are **THE CHOMSKY READER, LANGUAGE AND PROBLEMS OF KNOWLEDGE, ON POWER AND IDEOLOGY**; on George Davie's work, **THE CRISIS OF THE DEMOCRATIC INTELLECT** and some unpublished essays (three of which are soon to appear in the **DETERMINATIONS** series by Polygon). It is also crucial to mention Tom Leonard's essays and the conversations I've had with him over the past few years.

Outside on the outside

THE SHOE
Gordon Legge
Polygon £7.95

McX – A Romance of the Dour
Todd McEwan
Secker & Warburg £12.95

Derek Rodger

Some characters you wouldn't want to meet on a dark night. You might, if you met a bunch of them on a train, get up and leave. Archie, unemployed, stayed on at school to get Highers, but his dad thought he should have got a trade. Mental, – after every Celtic defeat he would say 'what a nightmare! I was going mental.' And Big Davie, already looking married (he isn't), been going with the same girl since school, on a council 6-month training scheme. All old enough, and conscious of it at twenty four to be called 'mister' by cheeky Heavy Metal fans, they are on a train journey.

They're off late night to Glasgow to catch a boxing bout at the old Apollo theatre. A few pints before the fight, sort of thing. But they're on away territory. 'Welcome to Hun city,' says Archie as he spots 'RANGERS, CHELSEA, NF' graffiti. Even in Glasgow they are outsiders. Outsiders in their own land. Truth is they are outsiders in their own souls.

A Pint of Guinness, a pint of Special, a pint of Carlsberg and six packets of cheese and onion crisps later, a cigarette rolling student (dope city!) in the pub insists on playing Jeff Beck's atavistic **Hi Ho Silver Lining** *ad nauseam*. The barmaid is meanwhile humouring the Radio Clyde DJ on the radio phone-in, trying not to sound sarcastic when he drops the conversational clanger that he always plays it at the end of his gigs.

The liveliest thing about the fight is the audience, including the bouncers – bad guys from **Cannon**, 'for whom there would be no fainting girls to drag out and feel up, and no arrogant pop stars to shove about'. To epitomise the vicariousness of this world of consumer symbols, that this company of young bloods feel they'll never truly own, this is a sattelite beamed transmission from Las Vegas of a Hagler Hearns fight.

Just as you might think of moving your seat, or putting this first novel by Gordon Legge down, you realise that our heroes may not have much going for them, but they do have their marginality. The only thing, Hagler was told, that would make him more of an outsider, would be to shave his head . . . so he shaved his head.

Archie (I'd rather be respected by Marvyn Hagler than by Terry Wogan) is a case in point. He might have a strongly developed sense of small town angst – people like Davie and Terasa actually live in a nice little place at 45 Turnberry Gardens. Archie might feel distant from the parents he still lives with but can't understand. He might be anxious about even walking into a pub – a phobia about the first to arrive. He might twaddle on about football – but like Mental his records seem the most important things in his life. Mental says his records are more important to him even than Celtic. It's just that football's easier to talk about for five hours down the pub. They have conversations about the three best LPs of all time. (Mental – **Astral Weeks**, **Closer** and **For Your Pleasure**; Archie favours classic Motown, T.Rex, and, to the surprise of a lot of people(!), Prince.

Archie might be feckless in love – he once walked past the object of his desire 'blue and yellow' in Edinburgh's Princes Street (we never do get to know her name – Archie cannot bring himself to utter it). He certainly can't do anything about it.

But deep down. Deep deep down, Archie has fire in him. **The Shoe** takes its title from one of Archie's £3.99 black plastic slip-ons, which he shoots like Davie Provan, Davie Cooper or Michel Platini (take your pick!) at the climax to the story in the public bar of **The Cabbage Patch**, into Hun Tesco's balls. It was the Hang Nelson Mandela T-shirt that turned Archie, in a replay of a sectarian school playground fight, into the world's foremost ideologically sound fighting machine. It was a momentary flash, a self-defensive and panic-riven flash, but a flash nevertheless, of spirit.

The Shoe is pervaded too by the presence of a predominating comical metaphor. Dostoyevsky is Archie's friend Richard's pet Doberman. Richard being himself vegetarian, doesn't allow the dog to partake of the flesh. Like his owner and his friends, floating as if aimlessly in a media-high sea of provincial/global powerlessness – no job, no money, no prospects, no politics they can believe in – there's just a chance they themselves won't ever get their teeth into anything.

The women who are the contemporaries of this bunch of feckless manhood seem just a bit more able by comparison. It's not saying much, but it is something. You may disagree with her sentiments, but she puts Mental in his place during an existential rage about morons travelling to Tenerife to get pissed in a poxy disco listening to George fucking Benson!! "Some people," asserts Terasa, "prefer to watch **The Price is Right**, go to Tenerife and dance to George Benson."

If taking strongly presented weak characters to heart is the mark of good writing, this hilarious accurate and enraging first novel of Gordon Legge warms the expectations for the next one.

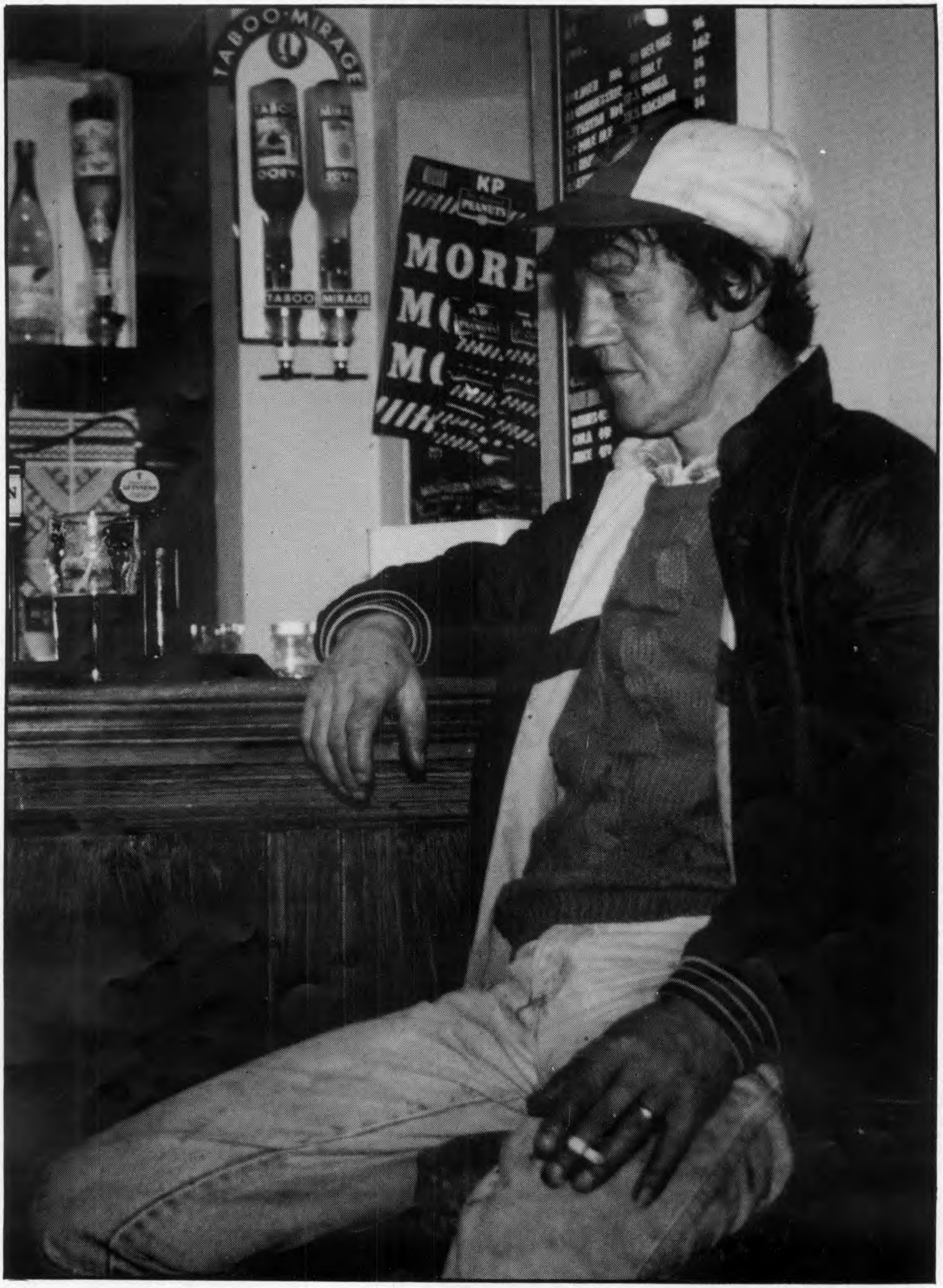
At first glance, Todd McEwan's characters in, **McX – a romance of the dour**, might be Archie, Mental, Davie and Richard twenty years on. Somehow it's more acceptable to be the angry outsider when you're young. The over forties are supposed, in the popular mind, to take on a bit more sense – it's their world, after all. They are the grown-ups.

Whatever the individual development plan, if you live in an unacceptable culture, you don't take any of it on, no matter your age. "I've been thinking," says the waking Mrs McPint as her husband – thick, short, tunny-faced, full of rain, corrosive fats, nicotine, scarring 80/- and a full measure of the schizophrenia of Calvinism – enters with lusting intentions, the marital bed. "I've been thinking. Thatcher was on the telly. She's needin bloody shot."

McX is a weights and measures man. He wears a perennial corduroy suit over his squat little stooped dromedary frame. Because his work takes him into public houses, his clothes stink. He has the look of someone frightened of what is going on to the rear.

He also has ritualistic mannerisms. Two of them. He drags deeply on his cigarette and squints as he blows the smoke out. And he nods, slowly, as if commiserating, at anyone speaking no matter what the tone or the topic. He has a jest which no one finds funny – he *hyper*-pronounces words in his Fife accent, as in *Livepuil* or *a pocket o fogs*.

In truth, McX, although he appears not to know it, has not very much going for him. He seeks solace in the Auld Licht – "there is an erotism about men drinking together". This is his real home. Here everything is arranged in beer-matted rectangles of pleasure – drink, fags, matches, erotic privacy. Or, writes McEwan, "you can be convivial and light your pals' cigarettes with florid ▶



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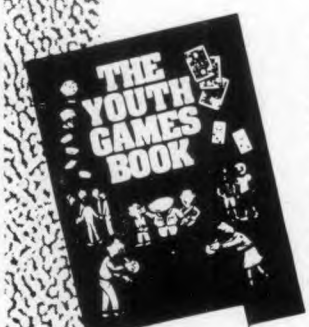

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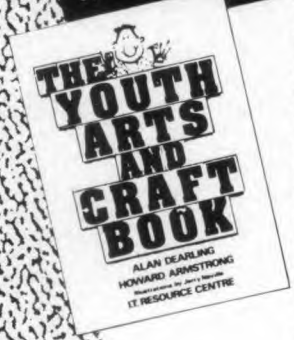

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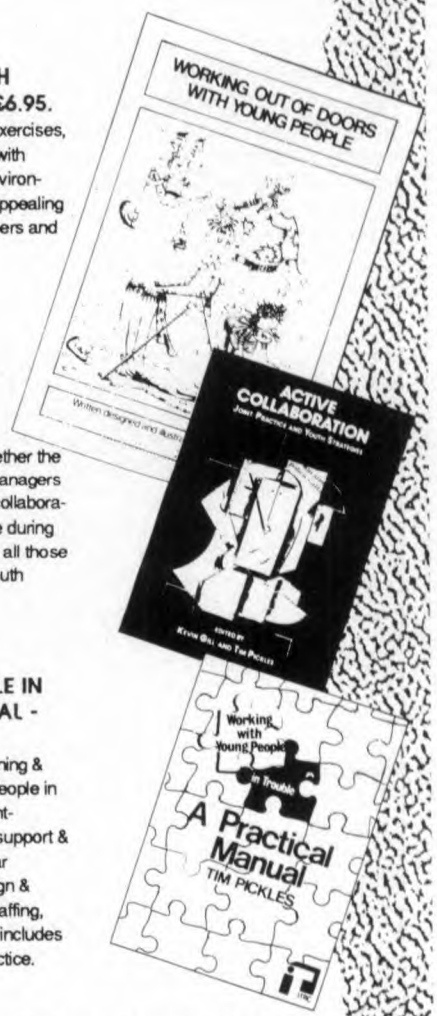

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gestures you learnt from American television." In such relaxed moments, in the pub, McX is in touch with universals, with the great streams of human culture. His demeanour at such times evokes the ancient Egyptian. He stands mummy-like, hands close to his chest, cigarette and pint his crook and flail.

McX has no country – corporations and the government have taken the place of press-gangs and dukes; no culture, save tartanism and tarantism (he shakes a lot); and at the beginning and end of this romance of the dour, no mate.

The problem with writing about the aging outsider is that so easily the whole thing just falls into caricature. Aging bar-flies are after all, living caricatures!

In a multi-layered and haunting book, the author avoids the pitfalls. Caricature leads you, laughing and giggling (I laughed till my eyes watered) into the dour despair of Caledonia. McEwan's writing is made of more than cheap jokes and shallow cartoon characters.

Travelling by bus, McX politely wonders of the driver McOcalypse if he can be set down three streets before the stop at Dog Vennel. McOcalypse stares ahead "into the depths of infinite punishment, he groans, shrieks volcanically: *Some people think this is a bloody taxi service.*"

"But. Although McOcalypse is the crucible of despair and the horror of existence, he is, in the end, a Scotsman. Although it is his Satanic duty to terrify McX and all passengers, neither can he bring himself to refuse his request. McOcalypse is afraid of the bus company and the public: no Scotsman wants an argument unless it is of his own making. So despite being taken to the threshold of this life, McX is set down at Dog Vennel."

Siobhan's make-up and why her heart was moved, if fleetingly, into an affair with this pretty wretched man, with the "inescapable Scottish job and existence and dromedary coat' is at once humorous and tragic.

In real life McEwan (the author, not the character) is an outsider. His last known connections with Scotland were Covenanters. But after a dozen generations in America, he's back. Will **McX**, with its deep understanding and observation of the complaint of Scotland, be well-received? Or will a McEwan be once again banished? Outsiders, so much the life blood, the font of hope for marginal cultures, can be received as just that. They can also, because of painful truths in the message they bear, by hurt silence or indignant anger, be frozen out. Scotland in 1990, according to an S.T.U.C. leaflet promoting a day of 'celebration', is a country 'exploding with talent.' We are a people of 'immense energy, enthusiasm and commitment'. When oppositional voices are so seduced by talking-up hype, danger is, some of our outsiders, as well as our internal exiles, don't stand a chance. ■

death of a father. cancer of the colon. 1951

the yard
long block of wood had taken
shape & is a yacht
hull hollowed
out and decked the mast
was there the keel but not
the rigging or the helm

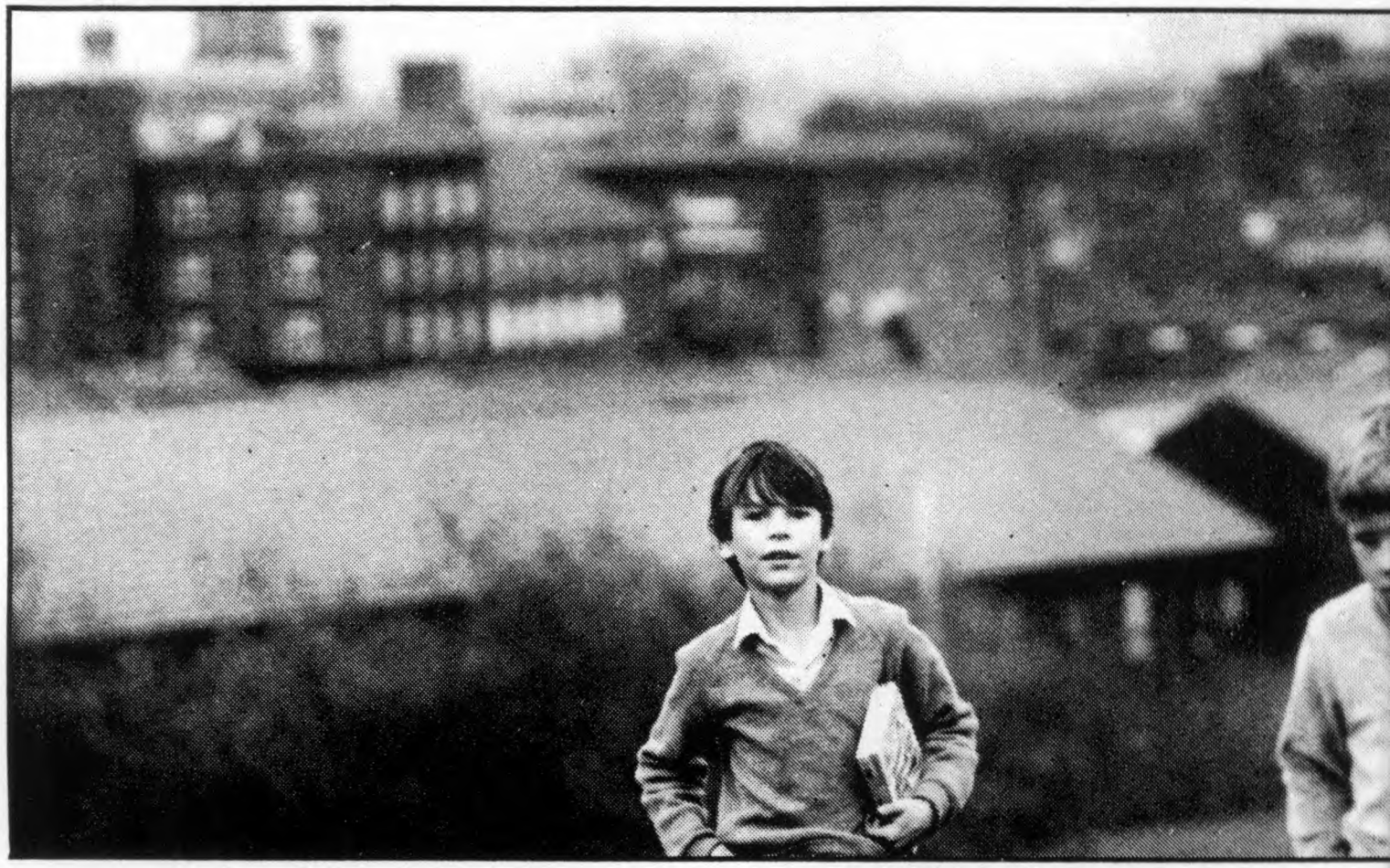
my father was in bed then
waiting for the ambulance
he promised
he would finish
it, when he came back

my father lived on

my father lived on
after he died the hills
didn't change their shape tall masts, the trees
whispered timber, we are
timber look at us dance i saw
the black procession of men bearing
the polished timber box i filled it with stone
my father lived on the waves
waved at me waved me back
from their sport their fingers were light
their voices were glitter he's gone
to challenge the surge of the sea again
they said he'll come back
weeks of hush and hanging
around waiting for clouds to lift
laughter submerged in dark clothing
after the tears, faces of neighbours
wore sombre sunlight
he'll come back said a seagull stretch
-ing a wing on the chimney pot
i went to bed heard the
whisper of waves on the shore i slept
then up school came home made a helm
of a spokeless bicycle wheel had supper
went to bed and
read a book about sailing ships
(my mother wore black for a year)

Aonghas MacNeacail

These poems are from a new collection 'ROCK AND WATER and other poems in English' by the Gaelic poet, Aonghas MacNeacail published this month by Polygon, Price £6.95. They are part of a superbly written sequence, 'Imaginary Wounds' where the poet traces his upbringing against the backdrop of culture and history.



Children In Care

Being taken 'into care' is a familiar term in the popular mind. What does it mean in law? And in practice? Cathy Marr examines current law.

Due to the frequency, prominence and type of media coverage of tragic child abuse cases, the whole concept of 'care' may have come to imply a battered or neglected child, forcibly removed from home. In truth, this is only one area covered by child care legislation.

The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 aims to protect children in a wide variety of situations. In legal terms it is possible to distinguish, in effect, three distinct 'categories' of care. These do not imply differences in the way children will be looked after by a local authority (that is a Regional or Islands Council); nor whether a child's needs will be best met in a foster home, a residential or even secure establishment – these are questions of social policy rather than legal interpretation. But in terms of the Act, there are different routes by which, and reasons why, a child may legally be taken into the care of the local authority.

'Voluntary' care. Each local authority has a duty to receive a child into their care where the child has no parent or guardian, or has been abandoned, or where the parent is either temporarily or permanently unable through illness or other circumstances to care for the child.

This is clearly a very positive provision which can be used in emergency and often short term situations. Imagine the sudden death, disappearance, or illness of a single parent. Care may be needed until the apointment of a legal guardian, the rehabilitation of the parent under pressure, or simply their recovery from ill-health.

It is perhaps significant that voluntary care refers to a child being 'received' into care, which suggests agreement between the parties rather than coercion. This is reinforced by the further provision that, with certain conditions, a child must be returned home at the request of the parent. Of course certain anomalies are suggested – if a parent has abandoned the child and cannot be found, or if a parent is so ill as to be permanently unable to look after the child, then short term measures may be inadequate to meet the needs of the child.

Parental rights, the second 'category' of care may be assumed in respect of a child when that child is already in their care on a voluntary basis. This is a far reaching measure whereby the local authority pass a resolution to the effect that from henceforth the rights and powers of one or both parents in respect of that child, shall vest in them.

The local authority then stands *in loco parentis* and is responsible for all decisions affecting that child's life. Given the serious effects of such a resolution, the parents concerned are given legal rights to challenge the local authority. In which case the authority must prove its case in court.

The grounds on which the local authority may proceed with parental rights include circumstances where the parent has abandoned the child – this would require proof of long term absence; where the parent is incapable of caring for the child due to some permanent disability; where the parent suffers from a mental disorder in terms of Mental Health legislation; or where the parent is unfit to have care of the child either because of habits or mode of life, or because the parent has persistently failed to discharge the obligations of a parent.

Where a parental rights resolution is sought, there is no implicit suggestion that the parent has in any way harmed the child, such as where a parent is chronically ill or disabled. It could be that the parent is in prison, alcoholic, or involved in prostitution. It may the potential harm which is feared rather than past abuse.

Where a local authority does take over the parental rights in respect of a child, this is not irrevocable. The authority itself may rescind the order if it appears that this is in the child's best interests, or a parent may initiate action in the sheriff court.

Compulsory care is probably the most frequently heard about. The Act provides that a child may be in need of compulsoy

measures of care if one of eleven conditions is satisfied. These range from the child being beyond the control of his parent, being exposed to moral danger, having committed an offence, being involved in solvent abuse, or suffering to his or her detriment a lack of parental care.

This could include the popular notions of neglect and abuse. In such circumstances, the Reporter may refer the child to a Children's Hearing which has the power to specify where the child must reside. In other words the child may be removed from home.

Again there are safeguards for the parents. If the child or his parents do not accept the grounds of referral, then before the hearing may proceed, the matter must be referred to the sheriff who will decide on the basis of the available evidence whether the grounds have been established.

It is interesting that several of the grounds stated in the Act may appear to be overlapping. If a child is involved in criminal activities or involved in glue sniffing, it may be that he or she is beyond the control of the parents, or lacking in parental care. But any action must proceed on specific grounds.

A supervision requirement imposed on a child has to be reviewed regularly. Also parents have the right of appeal against a hearing's decision.

There is also an emergency arm to the compulsory care provisions. Where, for example, it is believed that a specific offence has been committed against a child, or the child is thought to be suffering neglect or abuse, then he or she can be moved to a place of safety immediately. The child cannot, however, be detained there for more than a few days and the Reporter must immediately arrange a hearing to consider the case.

It can be seen that the law relating to children in care is complex and possibly confusing. A review of the law is currently under way in Scotland. It will be interesting to consider any ammendments proposed, and whether these will improve on the present arrangements. ■

Cathy Marr writes this regular law column on which we welcome letters.

Compulsory Care: the standard of proof

A child was referred to a children's hearing on various grounds including exposure to moral danger and the commission of a sexual offence against her. Her mother did not accept part of the statement of facts put forward in support of the referral and appealed against it.

The Court decided that the standard of proof in such a case is 'the balance of probabilities' which is the ordinary civil law standard of proof. The point was made in the judgement that in such cases, the alleged offence is unlikely to have been committed publicly and the degree of corroborative evidence available is bound to be less in a case in which there is corroboration by witnesses.

(B v KENNEDY 1987 SLT 765)

Far reaching effects of a parental rights resolution

In a divorce action, at the instance of mother, she sought custody of her children who were in care. The local authority had passed a resolution assuming the parental rights of both parents.

The local authority opposed the application for custody. The application was eventually considered by the House of Lords who decided that by the resolution, the mother had been deprived of all her rights and powers in relation to the children and therefore had no standing to seek custody in a divorce action.

(Beagley v Beagley 1984 SLT (H.L)202)

Compulsory Care: the child has committed an offence

A child was referred to a children's hearing on the grounds that he had committed the offences of wilful fire raising and giving false information to the police with the intent to pervert the course of justice.

The Reporter referred the matter to the Sheriff for a finding as to whether the grounds of referral were established. The Sheriff dismissed the reporter's application as the child was under eight and therefore under the age of criminal responsibility. On appeal the Court of Session agreed with the Sheriff's decision. Accordingly a child under eight cannot be said to be in need of compulsory care because he or she has committed an offence.

(Merrin v S 1987 SLT 193)

Parental Rights: must the mode of life complained of be a voluntary choice?

A local authority passed a resolution assuming parental rights in respect of a child on the grounds that her father was of a mode of life rendering him unfit to care for her. For a long time he had been involved in matrimonial disturbances and without proper accommodation.

A question arose as to whether the unsuitable mode of life founded upon needed to be a matter of voluntary choice. The court decided that it was irrelevant whether the parent was responsible for the unsatisfactory lifestyle or whether it was due to circumstances outwith his control.

(Lothian Regional Council v T 1984 SLT 74)

LETTERS

Julia Morris

Punishment

Dear Editor,

The article in the Feb/March issue on punishment was the important one for me. I was keenly involved in the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties at the time when the corporal punishment in schools issue was getting some headlines, and the Campbells were taking their case to the European court.

Out of it came, for SCCL, the Children's Rights conference, and this satisfied some of my desire to see the wider issues discussed. But in fact they were barely addressed. I look back and recognise my naivety, but it was before I had children of my own and I still believed that if only everyone would just listen to the wisdom of R.F. McKenzie, all would be well . . .

I have now come some way to realising how deeply the individual's 'own sense of worthlessness and wrongness first experienced as a child and never contradicted' lies behind the Scots' attitudes towards education/schools/punishment. It's a subject which constantly arises in one form or another. I fumble for ways to lift or move discussions from the alternatives-to-the-tawse and really do appreciate Rosemary Milne's article.

Lois Aitkenhead
Castle Douglas

Dear Editor,

I was very pleased to read Rosemary Milne's excellent article 'Punishment Lives'.

I too was a participant in the conference in Edinburgh run by the Scottish Child Law Centre last November, which raised the issue – Punishment: should the law be changed? I became impressed by the importance of looking at the issues of whether the ethos of physical punishment in which so many children are brought up is indeed not an unnecessary and damaging experience, which far from socialising, creates the rule of the fist. Can parents not be helped to educate, socialise and control their children in other ways without resorting to the delivery of physical pain?

Peter Newall, Coordinator of EPOCH (the Campaign to End the Physical Punishment of Children in the U.K.) presented convincing evidence on the successful outcomes of campaigns to alter practice by changing legislation regarding physical punishment in a number of other European countries. As we look at the Rights of the Child, the issue of whether adults do indeed have the right to deliver 'moderate chastisement' or whether children have the right to protection from the varying interpretations of what that means, merits discussion, as does the whole important issue of violence in society.

I myself feel keely (to quote the American campaigner) that 'people are not for hitting', and I look forward to the debate proceeding.

Christina Del Priore
Principal Clinical Psychologist
Fraser of Allander Assessment Unit
Royal Hospital for Sick Children
Yorkhill Glasgow

Creches

Dear Editor,

I am writing to inform your readers of a new childcare initiative, the Edinburgh Creche Co-op – a mobile creche service for Edinburgh and the Lothians. We provide everything needed to run a creche (workers, toys, refreshments, baby equipment, etc.); groups using us need only provide a suitable creche room.

Our creches comply with local authority safety guidelines, are fully insured, and we think it's importnant that every creche has a first aid kit, registration forms, an incident book, and at least two trained staff.

Creches should be more than just 'minding' the children with the old box of toys in the corner! The creche co-op offers creative play, including arts and crafts, sand and water play and dressing up. We encourage children to express themselves with paints, puppets and musical instruments.

We set up in December last year and ran the Christmas shoppers creche for Edinburgh District Council Women's Unit. Regular employers include E.D.C. Community Services, the Central Library, and Women Unlimited.

We operate on a sliding scale of charges – our basic rate is £4.00 per hour per worker. For more information just contact us.

Henry Mathias
The Edinburgh Creche Co-op
38, Polwarth Crescent
Edinburgh (031-229 3542).

Poll Tax Ads

Dear Editor,

Before you conclude that your readership is confined to irate Children's Panel Training Organisers threatening to cancel subscriptions because of your personal decision not to pay the poll tax, may we as a group of individuals employed by a child care voluntary organisation express support for your stance.

We, like you, have experienced 10 years of a government whose social legislation has, by any objective standard, cruelly discriminated against the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. We, like you, have decided that more than polite murmurs of disquiet are called for when asked to swallow the callous inequity of the poll tax. We, like you, won't be paying it. As individuals our decision not to pay was not lightly taken. We have arrived at this position in the belief that we are defending the interests of the children and families with whom we work.

Over-identification with the rule of law, irrespective of how that law has been arrived at, can become an excuse for doing nothing, a paralysis of the moral instinct. Passive resistance to bad law is a tradition whose moral credentials will be challenged by Audrey Salters and Helen Millar at their own risk.

Perhaps they should be considering more fundamental questions than whether or not to join the **Scottish Child** subscription non-payment campaign.

Gill Alexander
Gillian Baker
Bruce Britton
Alison Fyfe
Bill Grieve
Hilary Groom
Sarah Kielty
Colin Lumsdaine
Kirsty McAskill
Stephen McCreadie
Lawrence McIntosh
Nikki Ould
Diane Swales
Billy Douglas

Dear Editor,

I notice that both the letters you have printed about the poll tax – and your decision to carry an advert calling for non-payment – have supported paying this tax, and been critical of **Scottish Child** for carrying this advert. Can I redress the balance?

I am not paying the poll tax. I resent the implication in Helen Millar's letter that by making this decision I need to examine my conscience. The poll tax, if it is not stopped in its tracks by non-payment, would mean the virtual destruction of basic local government services like education and social work, as well as increased hardship for working class families.

The poll tax has attacked the poor, and whether some people like it or not, the poor are now attacking the poll tax, in a way that works – they aren't paying it.

The threat, explicit in both your previous letters on the subject, is that unless **Scottish Child** stops running a non-payment advert subscriptions will be dropped. A million Scots are not paying this tax, but, as is the way with these things, no national newspaper or magazine, to my knowledge, supports that stand. I hope that **Scottish Child** will continue to resist the temptation to self-censor in order to maintain sales. You will have a lot of supporters if you do.

Kenny Curtis

SCOTTISH CHILD welcomes readers' letters. Please send letters to The Editor, Scottish Child, 4 Garrioch Drive, Glasgow G20 8RP.

Panels

Dear Editor,

I refer to your recent exchange with a "reasonably well-paid 'academic' " in the last issue.

I would be encouraged if you could avoid the phrase 'come before the Panel'. Children are invited to attend Children's Hearings. The Hearing is both the three Panel members who sit, and the whole duly constituted gathering of necessary persons in the room.

People 'come before' courts. Ours is meant to be a much more respectful forum and the language chosen by Parliament is, deliberately, more gentle.

We seem to crave, sometimes, the wolf in sheep's clothing of the juvenile courts. I was there. There was no reassurance to be derived from superficially authoritative language and remedies were just as hard to come by in those barren old juvenile court rooms.

F.J. Kennedy
Regional Reporter to the Children's Panel
Strathclyde Regional Council

P.S. The Community Charge **is** a political hot potato and one on which our system cannot hope to have a single public opinion.

Colin Chalmers

LETTERS

Critical Approach to Custody

Dear Editor,

Cathy Marr's law column on custody issues (February) gave basic information on the Court's approach to resolving custody disputes. How unfortunate however, particularly within a progressive publication, that she in effect reinforced and perpetuated the traditional view of custody as the prize in a competitive contest between the separating mothers and fathers.

Good parenting is referred to only in the context of who can offer the better parenting, and how one can measure this. Nowhere was there mention of the desirability, importance, or even the possibility of continued good parenting by both parents after separation. Surely it should be worth a fleeting mention that it is normally 'in the best interests of the child' to retain a caring relationship with both parents. Or is that assertion in doubt?

An attempt to clarify the meaning and implications of custody and access would not have been out of place.

It may be that another feature on 'access' is planned to deal with the position of the non-custodial parent, but to divide these two issues only reinforces the present implication that the custodial parent is the only 'real' parent, and that the non-custodial parent is at best 'second-rate', and at worst relegated to a role which no longer allows a true parenting relationship with children.

Joint custody is briefly mentioned by Cathy Marr, but she does not mention the fact that the courts and solicitors are so sceptical of the ability of parents to settle any differences, that awards of joint custody in Scotland are extremely rare indeed. Parents will either be strongly advised against this course of action, or are simply told that the possibility does not exist.

In England and Wales, changes in the legislation through the Children Act actively encourage continued parenting after separation and divorce, and these developments are being welcomed there as a positive contribution to the welfare of children.

The Scottish child, it appears, is to have no such benefit, as any equivalent legislation is not even under consideration.

Cathy Marr concludes that 'in the majority of cases it is true to say that parents agree arrangements for their children's care', but perhaps this statement should be qualified by terms such as 'eventually' or 'however reluctantly'. By no means can it be assumed that resulting arrangements are the best that could be devised, or the best that could be experienced by the children involved. It seems to me that we risk making a difficult family situation even more difficult by limiting the choices open to parents and by preserving an approach which always anticipates conflict, and thereby often causes that expectation to be self-fulfilling.

There are few more contentious issues in family law than how to interpret what is 'in the best interests of the child'. A more critical look at how this is tackled at present would be welcome.

Walter Nicol
Co-ordinator
Strathclyde Family Conciliation Service
1, Melrose Street
Glasgow G4 9BJ

Cathy Marr writes: The proposition that, following divorce, it is normally in the best interests of a child to retain a caring relationship with both parents is not in doubt. That is the ideal. If the article perpetuated the traditional view that custody is the prize in a contest between parents, that is because, legally speaking, that continues sadly to be the case.

In many instances, when parents consult their respective lawyers about divorce and custody, there is already between them a degree of animosity, if not hostility. Parents may even seek an opinion on their prospects of 'winning' what they describe as the custody 'battle'. In such an atmosphere agreement on what is best for the children can be difficult to reach. Where impasse remains, there is resort to the court for a decision.

It is indeed a fact that there are few awards of joint custody but often the parents themselves resist this as an alternative. Even though the benefits of such an arrangement are explained, parents often feel it would not work because of the 'attitude' of their partner.

As was evident in the article 'Splitting Up' run in parallel with mine in the last issue, children will be better served where parents avail themselves of the Family Conciliation Service to help establish a sense of perspective on all sides. Unfortunately not all couples use the service, and the legal process as described continues.

It is argued that counselling or the involvement of an independent third party should be part of any dispute involving children and there are repeated discussions on the need for a family court which would remove family problems from the strictly adverserial legal system. Perhaps the setting up of the Conciliation Service is an important first step.

Among the Contributors in this issue . . .

Andrew Coyle works as Governor of Peterhead Prison.

Marion Flett is Director of Young Families Now – a community based project which promotes educational opportunities for young children and their families in the Torry area of Aberdeen. She is the mother of 3 and has experienced the problems of finding good quality childcare.

James Kelman's latest novel **A Disaffection** is published in paperback this Spring by Picador at £5.99.

Cathy Marr is a solicitor with practical social work experience who has recently become a full-time mother. **Joe Owens** is a freelance writer currently working in Edinburgh.

Sheila Ramsay works in a child care team in Strathclyde Social Work Department.

Gordon Rennie is a freelance writer.

Chomsky – an Opportunity for Personal Re-Appraisal

History suggests that every twenty years or so there are watersheds in the development of man. The decade of the 60s was one such, culminating in the events of 1968. These were formative years for those of us now in our mid-forties. The knowledge that 1989 will in due course be recognised as another watershed, and the reluctant personal realisation that middle age has come prepares the ground for an intellectual stock-taking. What better catalyst for such a re-appraisal than the visit to Scotland of Noam Chomsky, the philosopher/activist who provided a focus in an age when many of us still felt able to look to the United States for examples of how to relate the intellectual enthusiasm and excitement of the decade to what, in our innocence, we sought for in political idealism.

One or two concerned voices were raised at the recent Pearce Institute event that we might be distracted from the main business by a reverence for an iconoclastic guru of another age. Whether or not that fear was legitimate, it certainly was not realised.

But it would be wrong to deny the significance, certainly at a personal level, of Chomsky's presence. It was Kay Carmichael who drew attention to the continuing importance of symbolism for human beings – of the symbolic statue of freedom in Tienamen Square, of candles in Prague and Bucharest, and no doubt, of the destruction of the Berlin wall. Human beings too can carry a symbolism which goes beyond the power of any argument which they might make. Whatever the strength of his argument on any one issue, Noam Chomsky embodies such a symbolism for those of us who have reached a position, a quarter of a century on, at which we should carry out personal and collective re-appraisal.

One meaning of self-determination is the ability to make a decision for oneself without undue external influence. Another is the right of a nation or people to determine its own form of government. Some participants at the Govan event tried to present these as alternatives, usually in the context that we should concern ourselves only with the second. The majority of those present quickly came to terms with the notion that one cannot choose between the personal and the collective. In this case they are complementary concepts and cannot be abstracted one from the other.

I approached the event as a vehicle for clarifying where I stand with respect to the first meaning of self-determination so that I might advance my thinking on the second. Discussions I took part in confirmed my conclusion that self-determination is not in the gift or the control of another person. It cannot be forcibly taken away; it can only be given up.

Such a simple yet complex statement deserves further explanation. One does not begin life as an empty organism; nor throughout the stages of development is one ever free from outside influences. That is not to say that we are the sum total of our experiences, moulded in a plastic fashion by external influences. There is, as Noam Chomsky suggested, a broad parallel between physical growth and the growth of the mind. Individually we can choose to absorb and internalise external influences to a greater or lesser degree. The more we choose to do so, the more we reduce our capacity to self-determine.

This argument is strongest when the individual recognises its existence; weakest when the individual unknowingly surrenders self-determination. That may explain the prominence given by some contributors to the conference debate to what was described as the oppression of our current education system. Chomsky's response to this was one of negative consolation: formal teaching is of little importance to personal development.

Power also has two main meanings. The first is the ability to do something. The second, control or dominion over someone else. What is the connection between these two definitions? Is the first subject to the second? In this context the contemporary version of Hume's argument which Chomsky presented is helpful. The real power of a non-totalitarian government lies in its ability to control opinion, to encourage people to become observers rather than participants.

This leads once more to the view that power, like self-determination, is something which can be given by, but not taken from the individual. Power over oneself can only pass to another if it is surrendered.

But there is an important distinction between power over what a person does and power over the person himself. Each of us is subject to power exercised over us by others to a greater or lesser degree in our daily actions, be this at home, at school or in the workplace; we have no choice in the matter. But this does not necessarily imply that others have power over the individuals we are in ourselves.

While this may seem rather a philosophical distinction to those who feel they have lost control over how they live their lives. Chomsky reminded us that it is not so long ago that slavery was abolished in the western world and we have some considerable way to go, he said, before the need for people to 'rent' themselves to survive is considered just as obscene as sale.

Notwithstanding, the distinction between power over what a person does, and power over him as a person – extreme thought that may be at times – is not a semantic one. It is a distinction which I, and those who work and live in similar environments must never forget in our professional lives. Those of us who exert power in a professional capacity over what other people do must never be seduced into the illusion that this implies power over who the other person is, with the unspoken assumption that we can somehow force the other to change as a person. To be seduced in that way in fact threatens our own self-determination.

In examining self-determination and power, one moves inevitably between personal and collective considerations. The collective context which I brought with me to Govan related not so much to that of Scottish identity, which figured so largely in much of the debate during the two days, but to the international context.

This brings me back to the symbolism that Noam Chomsky's presence had for someone of my era. The events in Eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990 are without modern historical precedent. Self-determination is clearly alive in a civilisation in which a playwright can become president. But my emotion about events in Czechoslovakia centred not on Vaclav Havel, but rather on Alexander Dubcek and his Prague Spring of 1968. The self-determination which for twenty one years had been hidden in the anonymity of a forestry camp appeared again.

And the Czechoslovak people had a new lesson to teach those of us who may be tempted to wear rose tinted backward looking spectacles. They acknowledged Dubcek's achievements and his symbolic importance. But both he and they recognised too that 1989 was not 1968, that his contribution now had to be a different one. The lesson was that self-determination, both personal and collective, is a becoming, not an event. Govan and Chomsky's presence provided many of us with the opportunity to reappraise our personal position with respect to self-determination and power, and to do so not in the context of the 1960s but, ten days into the new decade, in that of the 1990s. ■

Andrew Coyle

Regular diarist Daniel Boyle will be back next issue.

"Self-determination . . . cannot be forcibly taken away; it can only be given up."

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High Walls – High Costs

In the numerous re/pre-views that marked the turn of the decade, the self-centred, materialistic and uncaring 80s are, it appears, giving way to the new, gentler, caring 90s.

Well maybe. The question is, who's going to do the caring? Institutions, so long the places you went, or were sent, for care have been rapidly going out of fashion. Care in the community is the thing for these new caring 90s. So far, if you're prepared to go along with this version of the truth, so good.

There has been genuine and justified anger and shame that those vulnerable (though also unwanted) members of the population who were 'put away' were not always being as well cared for as we would like to have assumed. There is now widespread recognition that institutionalising inflicts its own damage.

However, true to say, not all the motives and values underlying the community care trend are laudable. Darker, insidious, even selfish motives are detectable.

The fact is that even on a practical level some are easier to care for than others. The frail, housebound, old lady and the young abused child attract sympathy that is perhaps not so readily available for the ungrateful demented old man, the aggressive disturbed teenager, or the drug addict. And mental illness, probably because it makes us only too aware of our own potential craziness, still frightens.

It is true too, that most people removed to institutional care are, of course, poor. The wealthy have always been able to buy good professional care in the community. Talk of discouraging dependency, deep in the community care argument, if it robs the individual of the financial wherewithal to be independent, can create huge dependencies. For all of us, in being human, have a need to be physically and emotionally dependent sometimes. A 'caring society' is surely one of mutual interdependence, not of discrete, independent individuals.

A·F·T·E·R·T·H·O·U·G·H·T·S

A return to the values of family life only means a family member (usually a woman) carrying an overwhelming responsibility for the care of an elderly or handicapped relative without the necessary practical, financial and emotional support.

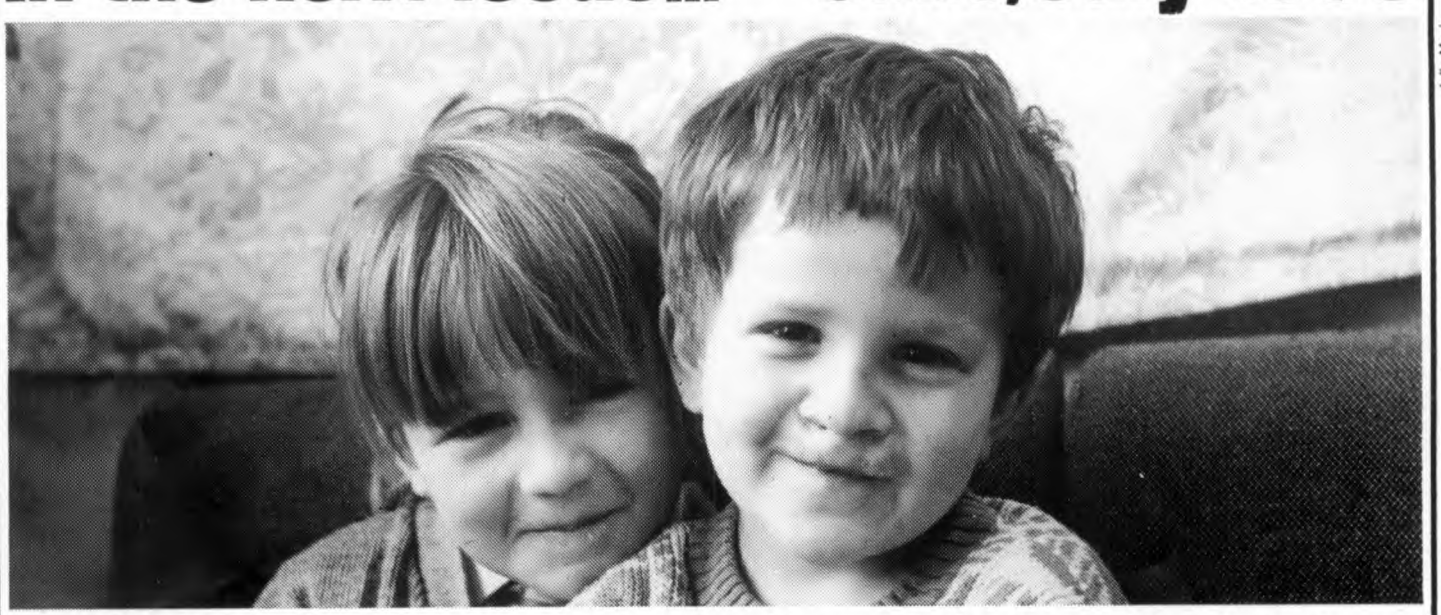
It can also mean unemployed parents living in appalling housing in a bleak peripheral housing scheme feeling guilty because they can't protect their children from the dehumanising effects of their environment. It can mean family members feeling unable to ask for help for their distressing and sometimes frightening mentally ill father or son.

So whilst welcoming the move towards care in the community, let's not kid ourselves. It doesn't mean providing less care. It can mean providing more. It certainly means having to be more creative and sophisticated in how we provide it. It doesn't mean a cheaper service, or one dependent on ability to pay.

And if it's real community care, it's not going to be as easy to offload all responsibility onto the 'caring professions'. The community, much devalued word that it is, when all's said and done, is all of us. The sheltered housing, the aftercare hostels, and the difficult and vulnerable individuals will be, not behind iron gates and high walls, but next door. ■

Sheila Ramsay

In the next issue... June/July 1990



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