



SEXUAL ABUSE THE PAIN OF POWERLESSNESS



2 The Scottish Child Winter 1987

<u>Contents</u> Child Sexual Abuse — the Pa Powerlessness	ain of
This Diary	11
School Boards - The Debate	12
Me and my Therapists	16
Looking Back	18
There Is No Alternative?	20
Reviews	22
The Scottish Child and the Law	26
Letters	27

Editor

Rosemary Milne — Grew up in independently-run schools for 'emotionally disturbed' children and now combines an interest in people and families with her work as a lexicographer. Former panel member, Lothian Regional Children's Panel.

Editorial Group

Graham Atherton — sociologist by training; has been teacher, journalist and academic researcher. Now holds post as Senior Researcher at the Scottish Consumer Council. Has a particular interest in educational issues.

Paul Carter — worked in hospital paediatrics. After 3 years of community health in Sheffield, moved to Aberdeen where he is at present a Community Child Health doctor, involved in the School Health Service, and an honorary lecturer in Child Health.

Colin Chalmers — was born in Glasgow and currently works with the Stopover Project for homeless young people in Edinburgh.

Mark Ogle — has worked as a residential child care officer, gardener, community worker and teacher. Currently he's working part-time and looking after his baby daughter.

Sheila Ramsay — at present and for the past 7 years, Senior Intermediate Treatment Officer, Strathclyde Regional Social Work Department. Previously worked as a residential worker in Thornly Park List D School. Member of Scottish Institute of Human Relations.

Derek Rodger — Has worked variously as a teacher, a social worker, and has campaigned in the sphere of youth homelessness. Currently he is writting a book about the experience of childhood in Scotland and its connectedness with cultural and political values.

Malcolm Schaffer — Divisional Reporter, Lothian Regional Children's Panel; founding editor of The Scottish Child.

The Scottish Child is an independent quarterly magazine published by the Scottish Child and Family Alliance (SCAFA). The views expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of either the editor or SCAFA.

ISSN 0950-4174

All correspondence and articles for submission to The Scottish Child to the editor, 17 Napier Road, Edinburgh EH10 5AZ.

Design: Colin Chalmers



The Least Damaging Alternative

The Cleveland Child Abuse Enquiry is still in progress as this issue of **The Scottish Child** goes to print. Most recently those of us who have still been following it will have read about a psychiatrist at the North Tees hospital who is reputed to believe that the sexually abused children he had seen were "probably enriched by their experience".

Rejecting all the stock reactions such selective reporting seems calculated to induce, the best we can perhaps do with this information is to marvel yet again at how inadequate even the so-called serious daily press is for the airing of matters such as these. And not only the daily press. As was predicted and as Professor Stone now points out, high profile TV coverage Esther-Ranzen-style has not in itself generated the change in attitudes, the resources in personnel and training that work of this sort demands.

But perhaps we have already stopped reading about Cleveland? Remote? Not relevant to Scotland? Not so at all. Uncontested cases may reach the relatively safe haven of a Children's Hearing more rapidly up here than in England but contested cases, and there are contested cases after all, carry the same problems of proof in Scotland as elsewhere. Malcolm Schaffer asks the question for us: how indeed can panel members act in "the best interests of the child" when in a court proof which is made on "the balance of probabilities" the suspected abuser is not named? And what of the person's rights too? At the centre of the Cleveland dispute there are two issues for the parents — to retrieve their children and to clear their names.

We live in confusing times when slogans have an especially seductive appeal. They hold out the promise of security-through-simplicity to the child in each of us. Very difficult to resist when things look fraught with complexity. So, if slogans there must be, one for the guidance of panel members in these and other matters might be to seek "the least damaging alternative" rather than "the best interests" of the child. It seems to fit better with the painstaking work of holding families together, of which Fred Kennedy speaks.

It is difficult, I have found, not to be left with a feeling of deep sadness when preparing an issue which deals with the theme of sexual abuse and difficult not to feel a weary sense of deja vu about the arguments for and against parental involvement in schools, or care "in the community" versus "residential care" for children. The one illustrates all too clearly the poverty of private human relations, the other the inflexibility of bureaucratic orthodoxies. So it's good and heartening to end on a glad note by welcoming Mark Ogle and his diary, the first of a new series, and with him little Elisabeth, his wife Deborah, Miriam and Rachael, the baby buggy, the streets of Edinburgh and the pleasures of fatherhood.

Rosemary Milne

THE PAIN OF POWERLESSNESS At the centre of the tragedy of sexual abuse is a locked-in child. The following 3 articles are just some of the pieces in a fractured picture of abuse and its treatment. Each article stands alone, reflecting the isolation in which abused children live and many carers work. The links could be written by any of us if we would heed the plea of those who come first — the survivors themselves.

AD

In her book, **Cry Hard and Swim** (reviewed in this issue), Jacqueline Spring, an incest survivor, likens herself at one point to a concentration camp victim:

"When I read about those camps, survivors' accounts of what they were like, I realise with a shock that, on some level that is not physical, I have been there. I know about the self-effacement, the secret fantasises of what it would be like not to be small, trivial, powerless, hungry for love. I know about how vital, but how dangerous these fantasies were.

...And most of all I know about the guilt ot it, the strange phenomenon by which the survivors come to accept the situation as normal, to forget any other way of life, to be so ashamed of being human in this animal squalor, that they pretend even to themselves that they are being correctly treated, because they are animals, disobedient, untrustworthy animals."

In the aftermath of the escape from Sobibor, the only truly mass escape by Jews from a concentration camp throughout the Second World War, many of those escapees chose to live close together in Israel and continue to this day to do so.

There are only so many strategies for survival for those who have been tested to the limits of their endurance. Writing may help some, others, like the Incest Survivors' Group in Edinburgh may "live together". More than one will speak of her need for the group where certain things are held in common and where others can help you to face what part of you so desperately wants to deny.

Unlike camp survivors, crammed in a horrible, crawling proximity, most women who have been sexually abused will only have known a sometimes terrifying isolation until they join a group like Incest Survivors. But as they talk together they find they have indeed each "been there". They can weep, soothe and possibly, in time, grow again out of their inner destruction — "a kind of murder", as one says. But if they rage, it's often not for themselves but for each other. The habit of shouldering the blame is well-developed in the abused child. The alternative, to admit the parent's guilt, is almost harder to bear....

"The inner fences, the most jagged wires of all, seal off the clear memory of the pain and humiliation. That is why every member of that family, sexually abused or not, is to some extent a survivor, a survivor of the accident of being born to parents incapable of seeing more than their children's material need, and sometimes not even that. Parents incapable of seeing themselves as guardians of their children while they grow, incapable of admitting this to themselves, to each other, or to any outsider." (Cry Hard and Swim)

Each of them can tell the outsider of the ignorance. the disbelief. the indifference of teachers. doctors. police, social workers. One will tell you how she was examined in a police station by a male police surgeon then interviewed for an hour *in a police cell* by a policewoman "because all the other interview rooms in the station were in use".

They speak of professional interpretations, professional timetables that deny the raw awfulness of what has happened. And the language, the language of the media. It's aloof latinate vocabulary smothers the voice of the suffering victim and lets the public learn of these brutalities in terms which keep the problem at a safe, clinical distance. Each can tell you of the burden of responsibility the child is made to carry by the abusing adult — "It's your fault. You shouldn't have looked at me like that/sat on my lap like that/brushed past me like that..." They'll tell you too of a different kind of guilt — of learning to submit, to "be nice" so as to "get it over with quickly, so that it won't hurt so much or take so long".

The loathesome irresponsibility of the abusing adult makes some victims call for harsher penalties — "Maybe not castration but not just six months with remission because he's over 60 either and an end to these excuses that you hear on behalf of the man — like the one recently where it was reported that he had "an abnormal sex drive", as if that makes what he's done OK".

Others tear their arms, take drugs, drink heavily to defend themselves and others against facing the indefensible.

In answer to the question, "how can we stop this happening?" they'll mention education, they'll beg for more honest treatment by the media, more openness by powerful professionals, they'll suggest groups for abusing men, better facilities in prison so that men who serve a sentence don't just waste that time inside, more groups like theirs to help the sufferers.

But don't ask them for more than that. Their task is to survive, to come to terms in whatever way they can, with or without our help, with what has happened. The rest is up to us. We can, if we choose, continue to talk about 'better procedures to help the abused', continue to treat them as a group with "special needs, out there, not part of us".

Or we can acknowledge that their needs are ours too. Then at last our tears might really flow.

'The inner fences, the most jagged wires of all, seal off the clear memory of the pain and humiliation'



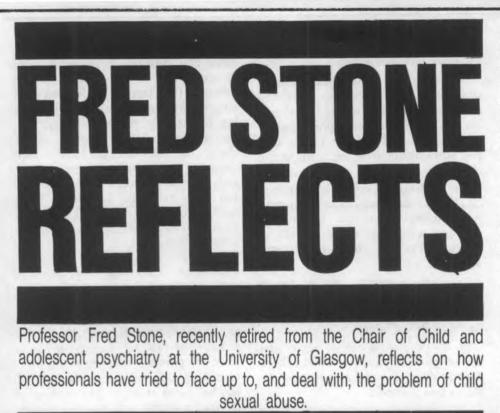
6 The Scottish Child Winter 1987

I had better start by stating my credentials. What authority do I have for expressing opinions about this distressing and confusing subject? I first trained as a paediatrician and then as a children's psychiatrist. During a professional lifetime mostly in Scotland and briefly in Israel, I have acquired a lot of experience in assessing and treating disturbed children and adolescents, supporting and advising their parents, sometimes their foster parents, and often their teachers and others. I can still recall vividly the shocked disbelief when the reality of physical abuse or 'baby-battering', as we called it in the fifties, was forced upon us professionals. Our capacity for 'denial' was tremendous. There was a stage when my job seemed essentially one of detection, making a diagnosis, informing the fiscal, and letting the 'cruelty people' get on with their specialist job of helping the families. With the Social Work Scotland Act the

'The Social Work department inevitably became the scapegoat for upsetting families by being over-protective to children at risk, or negligent if tragedies occurred.'

treatment resource was seen more and more as the social work department, which inevitably became the 'scapegoat' for upsetting families by being 'overprotective' to children considered at risk. or 'negligent' if tragedies occured. Attitudes became highly polarised — the police at one extremity ("All they want is evidence for convictions"), the social workers at the other ("They're only interested in re-uniting families"). Both of these accusations were unfair, being really stereotypes, and yet had a grain of truth in them. And between these extremes were the others, bewildered and confused health-visitors, psychologists, doctors. Gradually, with increasing understanding, respect for each other's skills and humility about one's own (mostly!) agencies and professions began to cooperate and coordinate. It really all happened as an outcome of trust based on personal relationships.

Now thirty years later, there is a new wave of concern, mainly about sexual abuse of adolescents, and children, even very young children, and a realisation that in spite of a generally prosperous economy, numerous children are still the victims of neglect, deprivation, and under-protection, all of which overlap with child abuse.



When I look back over the years, vignettes of puzzling interviews with youngsters come to mind with the realisation that I had failed to understand their communications often presented through drawings, puppets, or sandplay. Dealing with one's own 'denial' about children's sexual abuse is much harder for most of us than denial of physical abuse.

Why is it so hard to find the right time, the words, and the appropriate tone of voice to convey one's concerns to the parents? Of course, the topic is even in this permissive age, inherently embarrassing. Sexual matters, except for the most blunted individuals, are essentially private and delicate. Learning to use the vocabulary for sexual parts and activities in a manner which is low-key, calm, vet unambiguous is difficult even for very experienced workers. I worry about the suitability of colleagues who do not share this unease.

By now many of us have learned that an essential component of good practice is having a support network — that is, ongoing professional relationships with a few trusted colleagues who willingly undertake to provide support on a reciprocal basis. This is quite different from supervision by a senior colleague with management responsibility. Every agency needs to build this support network into its structure if it is to avoid "burn-out" unacceptable rates of distress, sickness, and absenteeism and no professional group is exempt.

Not all that many people have the resilience and aptitude to take on an extended professional role with sexually abusing families. There are several aspects of this work which are potentially extremely stressful. Firstly, role-confusion because of what seem mutually conflicting tasks of confirming the abuse, and therefore acting in a sense as an agent of the law, and at the same time offering help whether described as support, casework or therapy. On reflection this is not so different from how a caring, responsible parent is seen by a young child, so issues are likely to arise around trust, dependency, love and hate.

Moreover, the worker from time to time is likely to suffer pangs of selfquestioning about his or her own motives for this special work commitment. Perhaps this altruism is really voyeurism in disguise? I believe that these and related 'conflicts' in sexabuse workers are universal, and need to be worked through as part of inservice training. This clearly demands supervision skill of a high order.

I doubt very much whether even a very talented individual should be limited exclusively to work with sexual abuse problems for prolonged periods.

Then there is the question of whom we are setting out to help. Is it the abused child? Or the parents? Or just the non-abusing parent? Or the siblings? Or the whole family? The obvious answer, and probably the correct one, is that we need a repertoire of approaches so that we can respond to the needs of a particular case. But no one person, whatever their profession or experience is skilled at working with very young children, older children, adolescents, parents, jointly with parents and children, with whole families — Some or all of whom are fairly normal but very distressed, or profoundly mentally ill, or of deviant personality structure.

More than fifty years of Child Guidance has demonstrated that work with disturbed children and their parents or parent-substitutes frequently needs the resources of a closely-knit team composed of several disciplines, especially social work, psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy, sharing a common frame of reference and mutual respect. It is hardly surprising then that faced with the especially complex problems of abuse, single professionals if they are honest, realise that coping in a solo fashion produces indifferent standards of work. The logical extension of which is that training, essentially

'Dealing with one's own denial about children's sexual abuse is much harder for most of us than denial of physical abuse.'

inservice, has to cross professional boundaries. This is beginning to happen at last, but the growing points are few.

Last week I watched the T.V. programme Childwatch which must have left many viewers as it did the participants, troubled and confused while acknowledging the initiative, courage, and good intentions of Esther Ranzen and her colleagues. What the media has failed to do, at least so far, is to highlight the dilemma of the grassroots worker who has to live with ongoing suspicion about the unprovable case: The health visitor who on her statutory visits detects something amiss in a family, suspects that children are at that information risk, is being concealed. and knows that an insensitive move not only will fail to provide evidence for a court, but probably destroy the prospect of future cooperation. The particular question I am raising is where does the health visitor obtain skilled guidance on how best to proceed? Then repeat the query in respect of the teacher in an infants department, the house parent in a residential home, the minister in a parish

Once upon a time, and not so very long ago, there used in Scotland to be agency called 'The Children's Department'. It makes you think. It is one of the enduring ironies of public life in Scotland that we need to be reminded of our successes, to be told about our strengths. Fred Kennedy feels he needs to do this with energy and conviction and he does.

"We're here and we're available," he insists has to be the message from the Children's Hearing System to other professionals and to the Scottish public. From a man who says that his department is being worked "very hard" by the public concern for child abuse, this may appear at first strange.

Fred Kennedy's concerns go beyond resource questions and the worry of keeping his own considerable house (11,801 chidren referred to the Reporter in Strathclyde last year) in order.

"It is as if the whole legal apparatus in England and Wales is taken up with the prosecution of the perpetrator of child abuse. Therefore all the interest, and it's certainly what the press have dwelt on, is on collecting evidence which will stand up. Concentrating on getting your man can have some unfortunate consequences — like children being made subject to repeated physical examinations, or repeated interviews. In the end the child might not know fact from fiction.

"It's a question of very young abused children becoming tied into adverserial assumptions about how the law should operate." In other words priority given to the prosecution of the culprit may give scant attention to the needs of the child.

"In Scotland, the system is in place to do things differently. The Reporter's responsibility in statute is to take decisions which are in the interests of the child. That's an important asset and we should use it.

"You see, in many cases, as far as establishing the facts is concerned, they are not even challenged. The abuse is conceded by the family."

So the problem is not so much "who are we going to nail?" as "what can be done in these circumstances to meet the child's best interests?"

Fred Kennedy eschews the heavyhanded, automatic reaction to child abusers emanating from some quarters. He cites the work of Doctor Arnon Bentovim of Great Ormond Street and Tavistock Clinic in London. Sitting down and patiently reshaping families of convicted child abusers, talking through the family relationships at length may not be headline grabbing, but in the long run may do more to heal the psychological scarring on the child. In the complex and often confusing relationships pertaining in situations of sex abuse, Fred Kennedy has seen too often the victim being made to carry the additional burden of feeling responsible for the abuser's enforced separation.

In those cases where evidence is required, then the message to sheriffs is "get down from the bench". There is a lot of evidence to suggest that sheriffs are slowly becoming more flexible in proceedings that are required to go to court for proof — a recent sitting in a room with a one-way screen in Yorkhill hospital is an example. The opinion of the legal establishment on these matters seems to him to be divided still.

Previously unsuspected numbers of children subject to sexual abuse seemed



In the light of the Cleveland enquiry, the significance of the Hearing System in dealing with child abuse cases in Scotland has attracted a lot of media attention. The Scottish Child spoke to Fred Kennedy, Strathclyde's Reporter to the Children's Panel, about the different legal system in Scotland.



not to be unrealistic for Scotland. "Last year for the first time," he explained, "supervision requirements made by the Children's Panel in Strathclyde derived from more non-offence grounds than offences."

A good proportion of these nonoffence referrals are for reasons to do with child abuse. "But remember, there is no suggestion of sexual abuse in three-quarters of all abuse cases." That still means a lot of child abuse in Scotland — cruelty, neglect, emotional and physical — and an increasing amount of sexual abuse coming to the eyes of the authorities.

"It's got a lot to do with bully-boy values," he opined when pressed. "It's a power thing, I suppose. A power politics thing, you could say. Large beats small. Strong beats weak. Men beat women. Big men abuse small children.

"Social conditions that people have to cope with are a factor too. A young woman on her own with young children might be desperate for the support that seems to be offered by an unattached

'It's a power thing. Large beats small. Strong beats weak. Men beat women. Big men abuse small children.'

male she meets. She unwittingly encourages a relationship with this guy who might then abuse his position by sexually exploiting the kids. If she's strong, she'll get wind of the situation and do something about it. If she's very needy herself she might have to pretend it's not happening. And so the kids have to suffer."

"And let's not forget what's at stake here," he asserted, we're talking about the desensitising of a human being children grow up under a cloud and so their capacity to make equable human relationships is impaired. That's why it's so important.

"Look at the Esther Rantzen thing, the number of adults who came forward just to tell about abuse in their own past, just to get it off their chests, must be significant."

Young children and teenagers have a complicated set of mixed messges to make sense of, and so for that matter do parents. The confusion over values in modern society makes growing up a difficult process for all.

"It is ironic, is it not, that in the midst of all the current furore over the sexual abuse of children, we may forget two years ago when papers were full of the attempts of Victoria Gillick to legally restrict contraception to under16s. The general mood was Liberty Hall. Even the paedophiles' organisation felt able to push its message, regardless of the emotional consequences on children.

"There's also the mixed messages with the genders. In the public mind, if a fourteen year old girl gets interfered with, that's disgusting. If a woman does the same thing to a boy, some people would say lucky lad!"

"You have to admire parents who just plough on with it." He explained that he admires parents who present their children with their position and then hold onto it against all the confusion, all the flack. The fact is that parents need to be strong in themselves to be able to do this, he conceded and comfortable with their own authority. Parents have to be at one with their own needs, sexual and otherwise.

"People try to get me to say that unemployment is the big factor here, and I can't go along with that as an exclusive cause. I mean unemployment has to make a difference to the way

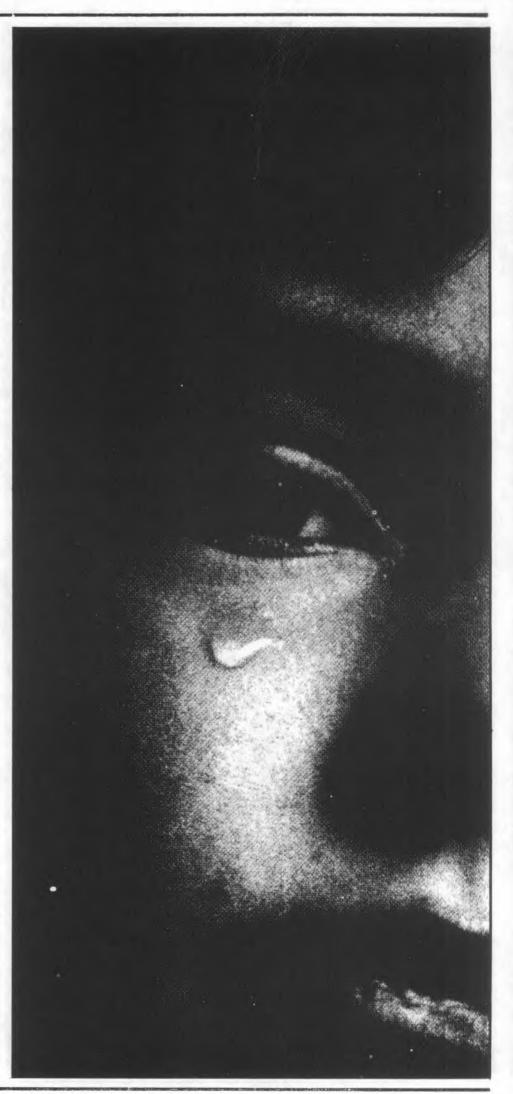
'Parents need to be at one with their own needs, sexual and otherwise.'

people feel about themselves, and to the range of choices they have. On the level of bare statistics, if unemployment has increased fourfold in Strathclyde in the last decade, then referrals to the panel should have increased fourfold. They haven't, nor anything like it."

Life, acording to Fred Kennedy is much too complicated to stand up to simple explanations. "Whether it's sexual abuse of young children, baby battering, young people being incarcerated in Young Offenders Institutions or prisons, it's all part of the same equation. Simple solutions which deal with one aspect of the problem, find that the problem pops up on someone else's doorstep in another form."

He remains optimistic. "The sex abuse issue is like a runaway train now. There's no stopping it. And we are raising our sights. People are coming to the realisation that the sexual abuse of children is not inevitable. There is help."

He is resolute through that you cannot separate out the abuse from everything else that is going on, or not going on for children. "In Scotland we have a legal system that's devised to consider the total needs of the child. We should own up to our success and use it."



Elisabeth and Me

Looking back at the last eight months, I can see that we've both grown, though her pace is infinitely faster than mine. My memories are mainly of physical details, the day-today details of care. At first she was in washable nappies and nappy liners. I remember the care with which I would push the safety pin through the folded cloth below her navel. I remember pricking her skin and soothing her when she screamed in outrage. We were trying, and largely failing, to spoon feed her. She went out every day in the pram with a safety harness, sitting up like a tiny monarch in an open carriage. Now disposable nappies mean that the washing machine hasn't broken down finally yet. She doesn't eat chocolate Milupa or liquidised banana any more: instead, she uses her own fingers to messily shovel away egg and potato and she crows with delight every time she sees the buggy at the bottom of the stairs.

In the first weeks after I started looking after her, the moment I looked for most was after the morning rush hour, when Deborah and her daughters, Rachel and Miriam, had left the house for school and a sudden silence fell, and I felt immensely rich simply to have the whole day to spend together. I think that, after being a teacher I welcomed the privacy, the lack of contact with lots of people, seeing it as a refreshment rather than isolation. Usually, we played together for a while, and then I would give her breakfast and the bottle of breast milk that Deborah expressed for her each morning. Then we might spread the toys and rattles all over the floor or play the piano together before her nap, or she would grab the small casio keyboard, and keep her finger pressed on one note for ages, her face scrunched up with pleasure.

Her sleeping patterns have changed now. It used to be that I would walk up and down the hall with her head on my shoulder until her eyes, which gazed rather suspiciously up at me at first, would grow heavy and close, and her little body would slump into sleep. She knew that walking and holding meant that sleep would come soon, and as soon as she was away I would take her into the bedroom and lie her as quickly and smoothly as possible in her cot. Now when she's tired, she comes to me, hauls herself up on my trouser legs and cries to be put to bed. I simply lie her on a mattress on the floor, lie beside her, and stroke her stomach till she

and and the second s

sleeps, which is usually very quickly. Sometimes if I'm tired myself, I just lie her on my chest and we fall asleep together, oblivious of the racket from the building site across the road.

I've spent a long time trying to start this article about looking after my daughter, Elisabeth. Usually what has prevented me has been having to look after Elisabeth. Now its 7am. on Saturday morning. In order that her mother can get a long lie at the weekend, Elisabeth and I have been turfed out of the bedroom. This is always a very eager time of day for her. Right now her whole body is swaying and bouncing to the rythms of Vivaldi as she sits on the floor trying to tear an empty biscuit packet to pieces.

Elisabeth was six months old when I began looking after her on my own during the day, and Deborah went back to work after maternity leave. She was born nearly ten months after the sudden and unexplained death of our son, Jonathan, aged eight weeks, I had waited a long time for a child, and after Jonathan's birth, I remember feeling



that at last I had been let into an enormous exciting secret that everyone else had hitherto known about. I looked at old ladies coming out of church, raucous football fans, the faces of drinkers in the pubs, thinking "You were once a helpless wee scrap. I know where you've come from now, where we've all come from. I know how it all begins".

It's continually in my mind that Elisabeth would not be alive, that I would not be looking at her now, if Jonathan had not died. There was never any doubt that I should leave work to look after her. Death rearranges priorities very quickly. The moments were too precious and I didn't get to know my son well enough while he was here. We could never take it for granted that she would wake from sleep, or trust her to anyone else during her first year.

Now she is fifteen months old. The apnoea monitor that told us she was breathing while she slept, that blipped like an echo sounder for fourteen months, has just been returned to the Sick Children's Hospital. She is trying to take away the pen that I'm writing with and put it in her mouth, and fitting the pen top on her finger, then hitting it repeatedly on the floor. She is almost walking, almost talking, no longer really an infant.

I started looking after Elisabeth in late February when even in Edinburgh, spring can be glimpsed. Going out of doors together demanded foresight and deftness. She didn't like having to put lots of clothes on and would sometimes cry angrily as I struggled to change her nappy, get an extra sweater over her head, feed her fingers through the infuriatingly narrow sleeves, get a woolly hat tied under her chin, put an outdoor suit on her, make sure I hadn't forgotten money, door keys, the dog's lead, a spare nappy, a spare bottle, some fruit and some rusks. Once down the stairs and out of the door, all problems seemed miraculously to vanish. We were off down the pavement in pram, buggy or backpack, the dog cavorting, the whole town ours to to explore.

I found that having Elisabeth broke down barriers with strangers. People seemed to feel it was safe to smile. Looking after her conferred instant legitimacy on my existence! It was odd to walk down the street with her in the backpack and see people grinning over my shoulder; ever odder when they would stop me and say "what a lovely dog!"

Bad days have happened also, days when I have tried to do too much and Elisabeth has become a noisy squirming parcel to be wrapped up, unwrapped, briskly handled, hurried through her day, with miserable results for both of us. There have been days when I have done too little and fallen victim to the peculiar irritable lassitude that comes from sitting all day in the house, half concentrating on a responsibility, out of synch with her shifting moods. And once I have experienced the intensely upsetting impotence of being unable to soothe her crying.

She is though, a constant joy, and an incalculable consolation, Just recently, I have begun taking her to a Mother and Toddlers group. She starts off on the floor between my feet. She turns, cranes her neck up to check that I'm there, stretches her arms for a cuddle. Then she's back on the floor again, gazing at the bright noisy scene. Suddenly she's off, crawling sturdily towards the building bricks, towards the fascinating babble of language. Its like watching a small boat leave the quay; and it seems wonderful to be left behind, to be around for her to come back to - as she does soon, with her eves full of discoveries that I had almost forgotten.

SCHOOL BOARDS 3 VIEWS OF THE PROPOSALS

The government proposals to establish school boards in Scotland that give parents extended decision making powers in schools could lead to major changes in Scottish Education. Here we offer three views of the proposals: **Julie Collis**, Development Officer with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, argues that changes of attitude will be required by all concerned to make the proposed school boards a real force for change in Scotland; **Judith Gillespie**, a member of Lothian Parents' Action Group, suggests that school boards as envisaged by Michael Forsyth will have the effect of isolating parents and schools; she proposes that other structures will have to be set up to give parents a consultative voice at all levels of the educational debate;

and Graham Atherton gives a personal view of the proposals.

Julie Collis

There can be little doubt that the Government's Consultation Paper School Management and the Role of Parents will form the basis of a new Education Bill for Scotland. The proposal to establish one school board, with executive powers, for schools with over one hundred pupils (SPTC believes every school should have a board, regardless of size), has served to initiate longoverdue public debate on the subject of the role of parents in education. It is no longer possible for the parties involved to pay lip service to parental involvement in the knowledge that change is a long way off. For many years Scottish parents have been expected to play only a passive role in the education of their children and the existing school councils have failed to communicate effectively and have not improved links between home and school. No wonder ma

asking whether school boards will be any more successful than the present school councils.

Teachers, education authorities and some parents fear that school boards may become poplulated by middle class political extremists or that insufficient parents will be willing to serve on the boards. This would be impossible if all the fine words about parental involvement and partnership had already been translated into action. School councils have failed to communicate with parents. parentteacher associations and the wider community. They have failed to foster home-school links and have not encouraged the formation of active parent-teacher associations - perhaps because they were concerned with groups of schools. One school board for each school could change all this but it will take the hard work and commitment of all the parents and teachers in the school to ensure success.

Effective home-school liaison and active PTAs will be crucial to the success of the new boards. The PTA should become a forum for establishing what parents think should happen in their school rather than a group of, admittedly hard working and well-intentioned, fundraisers. The board should report to the PTA and encourage the PTA to submit items for the agenda of board meetings. This two-way communication has not taken place between most school councils and PTAs. It must take place between the new boards and PTAs, otherwise the boards could well become the isolated cliques that so many seem to fear.

Education authorities and teachers claim that parental apathy is rife. I suggest that it suits them to excuse themselves in this way. It enables them to avoid solving the problem of how to consult parents about proposed changes and how to go about getting parents more involved with the school and the education of their children. It is easier to claim that parents are not interested than it is to provide readily understandable information and opportunities for real consultation and meaningful discussion. Parents are interested in what is happening in their child's school. Given that parents and teacher have the required information and training, I believe that school boards can be successful as a way of consulting parents and involving them in educational decisions.

Much has been said and written over the past few months about the structure and functions of the proposed boards. Maybe the consultation exercise will produce a compromise. But it will all be to no avail unless accompanied by significant changes in attitude by all concerned.

PARENTS must accept that they have responsibilities as well as rights in regard to the education of their children. They must abandon their traditionally passive attitudes and spend the time and energy needed to inform themselves about what is happening in their school. They must encourage the involvement of those parents who are less confident than themselves.

TEACHERS must do more than merely acknowledge that parents have a role to play in education. They must welcome the opportunities offered by the new partnership with parents and encourage their colleagues who are less than enthusiastic. They will need to expend more time talking to parents both individually and in groups.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS must expend less effort on fundraising and provide a forum for parents to discuss

educational issues related to their school. They will have to be imaginative and resourceful to make sure that all parents join in the educational activities of the PTA. They must communicate regularly with all parents, with the school board and ask for reports on the activities of the board.

EDUCATION **AUTHORITIES** must convince parents that they really want them to participate in decision-making. More time must be allowed for consultation and full information must be provided in a readily understandable form. They must provide more In-Service training for teachers dealing with subjects such as effective parents communication with and parental involvement at all levels.

'It is easier to claim that parents are not interested than it is to provide readily understandable information and opportunities for real consultation and meaningful discussion.'

GOVERNMENT must accept the responsibility for ensuring that adequate resources are made available for information services and training of board members. The widest possible publicity will be needed to make sure all parents know about the functions of school boards and arrangements for elections. Effective parental participation will not occur without considerable financial investment. But most of all, parents and teachers must make the school board part of school life. School councils were perceived by parents as an extension of bureaucracy. If this happens to school boards, they will fail, just as the present school councils have failed. For the sake of our children's education, we must not allow this to happen.

Judith Gillespie

The Government's proposals on school boards have done a service in so far as they have focused attention on the role of parents in education, but they have done a disservice in so far as they have set up a prescribed model which is too narrow in scope and concentrates almost exclusively on school management.



The Scottish Child Winter 1987 13

Parents are, by definition, involved in education through their children and they therefore view education issues from the starting point of their child. This is often a point for criticism, but, clearly, a primary school parent is most aware of primary education issues, whilst a secondary school parent moves on, with their child, to an understanding of the complexities of secondary school problems.

At present the particular interest of parents is given recognition through parent-teacher conferences. But parents want to be more involved than this. They want to know about the curriculum, teaching methods, discipline problems and education policy in general. They are sensitive to the consequences of a lack of resources: the shortages of books and materials, the difficulties of over-large or composite classes, the appalling state of many resulting from inadequate schools maintainance. Parents see they have a common cause with teachers and would like to develop a partnership for a mutual exchange of ideas and an improvement in educational provision. Whilst they respect teachers' professional judgement, they feel their views are legitimate and should be heard.

This exchange of ideas can be achieved on many levels. There is scope for the development of class/year meetings when teachers can explain their aims and methods, and parents can have a chance to comment.

At the school level it can be developed through the PTA; all schools should be required to have one by law. The PTA should have a right to discuss everything except issues of a confidential nature. The views of parents should be respected and, in the case of dispute, there should be a right of appeal to the education committee.

However, schools should not be isolated and the valuable role of the school -councils, in establishing links between nursery, primary and secondary schools, should be recognised. Problems and interests that are common to all areas of education can be identified in this forum and then promoted. School councils should take on a more positive role in representing the interests of their members to the local education authorities who, for their part, should take more account of the views of school councils.

The Government proposals differ from this model in that they isolate schools from each other and give parents control, rather than a right of consultation, in certain areas. One such area is control of the capitation fee. This would cause no problems if there were enough money to buy everything anyone wanted or needed. However, the present reality is one of scarce resources; decisions have to be made and priorities identified. Although parents have a legitimate right to comment on and discuss these issues. the final decision should rest with the professionals who have a long term view of needs.

Ultimately, most of the problems that parents identify in education are caused

'Ultimately, most of the problems that parents identify in education are caused by lack of resources'

by lack of resources, and resource allocation is in the hands of the Government and local authority. Parental involvement should not, therefore, stop at the local school or even at the school council level. There should be a mechanism for raising educational issues with the local authority and central Government. The former could be facilitated if two parents were co-opted as members of the regional education committee as teacher and church representatives are at present. Further, parental input should go straight to central Government. One of the weaknesses of the present situation is that the existing parental groups represent only a small number of parents, and in a rather haphazard way. It is desirable that, for each region, there should be a clearly identifiable committee of parents. selected from the chairmen of the school councils, who can be the focal point for discussions of educational issues with the Government, but who would see themselves as being at the top of a tiered strucure, with a responsibility to consult and inform all parents.

The Government's proposals involve parents in school management: in allocating already scarce resources, in raising funds to augment those resources, in having to cope with maintenance problems in their schools. and in selecting and deselecting staff. But parents are restricted to being concerned about such problems in their own individual school. In fact, parents' concern starts with individual children. but then spreads throughout the whole system to the very heart of the problem - the resources and policies that the Government imposes. Parents should be heard throughout the system, but they should not run it; rather, they should be





able to inject their views with a genuine expectation that those views will be respected.

Graham Atherton

After years of political and posturing. parental professional involvement in schooling is now being played for real as the government unleashes proposals to replace existing and largely ineffectual school councils by newly-constituted school boards. The overwhelmingly negative response to the proposals - which one headline writer called "Forsyth's Folly" - has been centred on the "ceiling" powers. The boards, as most readers will know, with their voting majority of parents, could in time take over the control of school budgeting and the appointment of staff. Ironically some of the most vocal opposition has come from the sort of parent some critics have feared might "dominate" the new boards.

Overshadowed by this flurry of opposition are proposals which, until the ceiling powers were mooted, were once hotly contested but which now have scarcely attracted comment. Those proposals are to give each school its own school board, in line with provision in most other western European countries, including England and Wales. Indeed the proposals to give the boards certain "floor" functions (home-school liaison, the curriculum, and other school policies) have attracted little excitement either. Where have all the parents who wanted to be consulted, informed or involved more often in what the school is doing suddenly gone to? Raising the roof over the ceiling need not mean that we should not dance on the floor.

True the proposals bear the hallmarks of being put together in a hurry - in a week. I'm told - and require more thinking through. Has the lay majority on the school board any more right or ability to select a headteacher than local councillors have (yes, there are local authorities where headteachers are still selected by councillors)? Is there not a danger of curricular imbalance if the boards are allowed to decide how money should be spent on school books, materials and equipment, even if local authorities cannot always say how much they spend exactly on these items in each school?

The underlying issue, however, is whether parents on school boards can be trusted not only to reflect the varied views of those they are elected to represent, but also whether they are willing to listen and act upon

professional advice as to what is in the best interests of the pupils. The worst scenario would be parents allowing their own politics and prejudices to dictate how schools are run. A more likely outcome, though, is school boards voting on proposals initiated by staff, as in Denmark, where teachers do not sit on the school boards but still wield considerable influence. The complaint up to now is that parents have had too little influence and teachers and officials too much: a balance may need to be struck by giving school boards enough executive power, say over homeschool liaison matters, to avoid peripheral parent participation, but not so much power that it gets in the way of educational partnership and dialogue between parents and professionals.

A major difficulty is that a lot of parents have put implicit trust in a system that has failed the great majority of youngsters who have become bored and disenchanted with their schooling and who all too often leave school unprepared for life ahead. Such afailing is as much rooted in our cultural values as in the educational system itself. The main task therefore lies less in giving parents control over school with very limited resources at their disposal in the first place than in mobilising enough critical awareness among parents - potentially the largest political lobby of all - to vote at local and national elections only for policies with a specific commitment to:

* curriculum and assessment reforms aimed at loosening the stranglehold exerted on schooling, especially at secondary level, by the labour market through the present examination system.

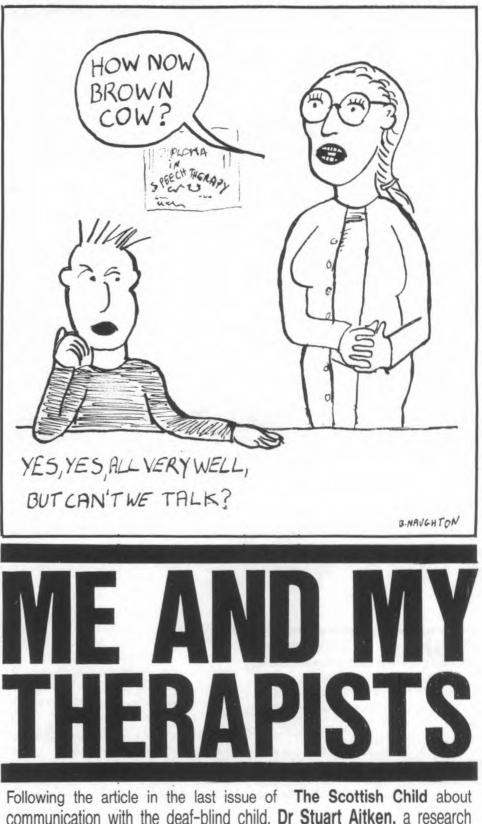
* maximising educational opportunities for all, regardless of age, income, social class, sex ethnic origin, geographical area, etc.

* educational and social integration of all pupils with learning difficulties and other special needs into mainstream schools as far as requisite.

* channelling enough public money into schooling to implement the above policies, including adequate provision of staff, books, equipment, buildings, etc.

A tall order? Not if school boards become active participants in the promotion and development of educational policies at national and regional levels rather than just peripherally at each school, so as to generate a climate of expectation among parents that general and local elections are won or lost on the educational battlefield as much as anywhere else. It was good of you to consider in your last issue some of the problems of communication for people who have multiple impairments. I would like to take things forward from there a little, for you see I too am a child who is trying to knock at the door of you professionals who are coming into contact with me. I have multiple impairments. Did you know that we are one of the few sub-populations whose incidence is actually increasing, and that this is the case not just in Scotland? We will not be going away. In the past, I would usually have been dealt with by the hospital authorities, in fact very often you would never have met me if you worked in education. Of course, all that changed with the passing of the Education Acts of the past fifteen years, but you still aren't really ready to make concerted progress with children like me. I would like to give you a few pointers in this article as to what I see to be some of the things which are getting in the way of you doing a better job with me. You see I'm trying to knock at your door, but you're not really listening. Many of you out there will be saying "But what happened with Chris Nolan is a thing of the past, it could never happen nowadays, not with computers in the classrooom and things like that". Let me tell you that these are not things of the past, they are live issues and they are of concern to me at least. They should be recognised by all in the field of Special Education, who are engaged in improving communicative abilities.

Think first of how communication should be defined. It should be defined "both the information that is as: imparted and information that is detected". Too often those in education and in speech therapy who work with me have lost sight of the other side of that definition - they too have to detect information passed from me (or at least what I am trying to impart, for it can hardly be termed information if those for whom it's intended are not ready to receive it). Their assessment schedules and protocols are often useless here, in fact most of the professionals using these do not even realise that all of these assessment schedules are in fact tied to some or other theory of "communication". They are no more objective in their assessment results than I am in writing this article. I want to see those in the field beginning to look at it from my side. Here of course you will often hear the professionals arguing that they are doing this, saying that they are adopting a 'child-centred' approach. Unfortunately all that this usually entails is them blaming me when their approach fails.



communication with the deaf-blind child, **Dr Stuart Aitken**, a research psychologist with the CALL Centre at the University of Edinburgh and education adviser to Sense-in-Scotland puts the view of a child with multiple impairments faced with multiple therapists and therapies.

Three Therapists A Day

That brings me to another area in which I hope some improvement will come before long. Did you know I have a Music Therapist, and an Occupational Therapist (she is into Sensory Integration, though why I need my senses integrated in order to perceive the world, I don't know). Then I've got a physio who is into Vogta therapy. another into Bobath, and there's talk of them sending me to Hungary to have a go at Conductive Education - I suppose that is to fit in with the Music Therapy. I almost forgot to tell you that the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Development group were in touch (gave

them the BIRD though) and just before that some people in Philadelphia tried to pattern me into Dolman-Delgato - I like Italian food, though unfortunately nobody else knows that I like it. Where on earth they got the idea that, by taking me back to my evolutionary ancestors, they were likely to get developmental progress in a human (for that's what I am), I'll never know. Now I am not going to deny anyone a job, heaven knows times are hard these days (particularly for folk like me - you want to see the legislative discrimination in this respect, but that's another story), but the thing is all this stuff gets in the way of me trying to communicate. Ask my teacher, she has no idea of how it all fits together, in fact she once asked whether any of these therapies had ever been evaluated, but the exponents turned around and argued that speech therapy is just as un-evaluated, so why should they bother. My teacher tries to understand me - at least she does when she is not away on her E.D.Y. course. It was nice to see in the last issue that Chris Nolan's did too, as did those nice people working with the deaf-blind. Speaking of the deaf-blind, that brings me to another problem.

Tunnel Vision

I'll let you into a secret. Did you know that currently there is a heated debate in the field of deaf-blindness, where the journals have been discussing the relative merits of a variety of signing systems. Me and my teacher would like to know (though she doesn't know that I'd like to know) why this discussion is being carried on in that particular field, while there is another, and quite separate, debate going on in the journals directed at those professionals working with people who have a mental

'I'm trying to knock at your door, but you're not really listening'

handicap. These are two independent strands, when it seems to us that the issues are of concern to all thoses within the field. The issues are the same, yet there is an almost complete absence of cross-referencing because of the view that each disability has its own particular group of followers. Demarcation issues don't help me much, for this specialisation of labour just leads to re-inventions of the wheel. It takes me back to my point on the profusion of therapies. For we are now in the age of the specialist, in which an of abundance therapies avail themselves, and a multiplicity awaits us on the horizon. Who is going to take a

grip on this, and chart a way through to come to an appraisal of whether and how any (or none) of these therapies work? Each of them might come by trial and error to similarities in approach, at the same time fragmenting into disarray those areas which have proved of some worth; calling by a different name those aspects which are applicable in some more cogent and coherent framework.

What about my Psychologist, can he not help? I hear you say. He is certainly a nice guy, but the problem is that, like you, my teacher thinks he can help, and know that he hasn't actually had any training in this field. So he's likely to borrow a programme from off the shelves, dust it down and pretend that he's intervening. Word is that they are soon to have a new test on the go, actually it's just a new version of that old cherub, the British Abilities Scales. They still won't know that I've got a visual and a hearing impairment, because none of it is concerned with functional aspects of sensory impairments. The psychologist just says to ask the opthalmologist or the audiologist, but they don't know the first thing about education or how to relay this information in a form that makes sense to those concerned with my education. There is a vital information on this spitting in my Record of Needs but it is locked in a drawer away from the prying eyes of my teacher. Did you know that a study, carried out in Grampian recently, showed that medical personnel thought that the medical information on a child's visual impairment should not be made accessible or divulged to the education personnel, but that it would be fine to have it made available to a health visitor? I'm sure that if I was clever enough I could understand the logic of their argument, because the medics (remember they are the ones who do not understand the educational issues) must somehow know the bits the educationalists need. The teachers (unaware of the specific effects of this kind of visual impairment) carry on using teaching methods that ignore the specific visual impairment. I suppose if all else fails they can always ask the psychologist, as I said he's a nice guy. I suppose it's too much to ask of them to try asking me, but they would have to be prepared to ask the right kind of questions, and in the right kind of way. I would be the first to admit that that will not be easy, but if Chris Nolan could wait eleven years. I too am prepared to be patient.

High-Tech, Low-Effect

I mentioned at the beginning about computers and lots of folk, particularly boffins in the Department of Trade and Industry, think that as new technology presents itself, people like me will be rescued from their disabilities. You see it everywhere, like the Day Centre where they have a computer installed. Some people even know how to work it. They're the worst. Just because they've got their own Amstrad or Atari at home, doesn't mean that they will have the first idea of what I could get from the use of a micro-computer. But I'm jumping ahead of myself again, for that of course is what I've got to look forward to (if I'm lucky) once I leave school. But the picture in school isn't so different in the way they acquire and machines. The use these sound principles of learning and development

"We are now in the age of the specialist, in which an abundance of therapies avail themselves...who is going to appraise whether and how any (or none) of these therapies work."

which might have been acquired through good teaching methods are often trivialised as the new technology gets submerged in a teaching method within which the teacher feels comfortable and unthreatened. Please don't get me wrong, I think the potential of computers for people like me is enormous, but there are two groups of people I'm likely to meet. On the one hand there are those who are the techno-freaks, who will spend two days setting up a system of bells, whistles and rewards that one of B.F. Skinner's pigeons wouldn't have gone near. They think that because I seem not to be a very good learner, that it is easier to model my world on their artificial world of the computer. In fact, it's much more difficult. The other group consits of folk like my teacher, who have been seduced into thinking they have to give up all their skills in order to fit this within my teaching day, or week. Their problem stems from thinking that because a whole lot of clever people were involved in designing the software and hardware, then the result has to be a 'good thing'. What I need, and I am sure I speak for a whole lot of others (at least I would if you would listen out there) is for someone to take a look at me and recognise how to match the potential of the computer's microworld into my own macroworld. Unless you do this, your computer will just be, for me, yet another therapy, and you know already what I think about therapies. How about it out there, take a long hard look and start communicating with me.

YOU DON'T CRY ON YOUR BIRTHDAY'

Have you ever heard the nightingale sing? I have. Its song is one of sadness. Its beauty of voice must reach the angles in heaven, I thought. I had woken early. This is my birthday. I'm eleven years old and it's Sunday I lay thinking of my mother. I fell asleep again and must have had a sad dream. When I awoke my eyes were wet, as were my cheeks. The house was still. Grandfather clock chimed four. Father would soon be going out to feed the animals. Mother would knock on the low cottage roof to tell me it was time to rise. I loved a Sunday. But this was a special day. My birthday.

I would see Mary on her way to church with her parents, holding their hands. She always skipped. When she saw me, she would tell her parents. They would smile. Mary loosened her hand to give me a wave. I waved back once, but father pulled my arm down. I was bold one Sunday. Mary stopped to speak. I put my two arms around my back, and tried to wave my hand to her hoping she would notice. She did. She winked and I smiled. We would have made good friends. I wasn't allowed to go into the village. Our cottage was on the edge of the woods.

I started to cry for no reason. But I did cry. I cried for my mother. I wiped the tears away with the edge of the bedclothes.

Ruth, what are you crying for? I had parents, a home, plenty to eat. And you're a big girl. You don't cry on your birthday.

But I did. I wanted my mother to come up the wooden steps, come into my room. I would have my eyes closed and she would say, "sleeping Ruth?" Then she would come over to the bed and touch my cheek. Maybe, just maybe, she would kiss my cheek, and I would put my arms around her (she was so frilly) and she would say "Happy Birthday, Ruth." Oh, I so very much wanted my mother to love me! I loved her. I listened so hard for her footsteps, but they never came.

We had come home from church, changed our clothes, then had our meal. After the clearing of the table, father pulled the family bible towards him to read. He pointed with his hand for us to sit down. He was reading when a knock came to the door. I looked at them. Even mother looked surprised. No one ever came to our house. No one. I know now what an unhappy family we were. I never heard laughter. Nor did my parents speak to one another. Even with me, mother spoke very little. Sometimes I would catch my father looking at my mother. When he saw me, he walked out of the house.

He made a movement with his hands. Mother rose and I heard the door opening. A voice said, "I'm Annie Fraser. I'm from the church in Inverness. May I see Mr Ross?"



Father hadn't told me to rise so I had to wait. I saw he was very annoyed as my back was towards the door. I didn't see her until my mother said, "Ruth." I turned and saw a small plump woman with cheeks like rosy apples. "This is my daughter. And this is Mr Ross." I noticed she put me first. I went to give her my hand. Instead of shaking hands, she went on her knee and held me close. "What a beautiful child! And her hair. It's the colour of ripe corn." She looked at mother, then held me at arm's length. "You must be very proud of her. You're like two peas in a pod."

Mother told me to go to my room. I said good-bye to the lady.

"Bless you, child." She held me close

to her, then kissed me on the top of my head. I went out of the kitchen, climbed the wooden steps. I was so happy.

No one in the wide world was a happy as I was. Entering the bedroom, I sat down on my stool, took off my slippers from my feet, loosened my hair from its two plaits, then spread it over my shoulders. I knew I was fair, but I never thought I was beautiful. Father would never allow mirrors in the house. He said they were works of the devil.

I lifted my hair onto the top of my head, and smiled with delight. I was like my mother. Two peas in a pod, she had said.

I know I sinned on the Sabbath. I knew it was the Lord's day. But I forgot. I forgot all about the teaching of the Bible. All because a kind lady, on my birthday, had hugged me. The first loving gift I had ever received and from a stranger. But I loved God. Why did he allow my father to be so cruel? I never meant to be wicked. I always tried to be good. Why? Why? Still holding my hair on the top of my head, I started to dance round my tiny room. I had never danced before, but oh yes, I danced on the Lord's day. I sinned. Dropping my hair to my shoulders, I twirled and twirled.

I didn't hear father coming up the stairs. The pain on my shoulders was my father's grip. I had left my door open. Hands gripping me, he called me names, names that the minister said from the pulpit. Wanton, Wanton, he shouted at me. I saw his face. I was full of fear - a face so dark, black, eyes so shiny, he looked like the devil, whose photo I had seen. He pulled me out of the room, pulling me down the stairs, shouting words I didn't understand. Then he threw me at my mother's feet. "Jezabel! Jezabel! I'll have no wanton in this house." Then he grabbed me again, threw me onto a chair and over and over again he called me terrible names. Names I didn't understand. But I knew they were for wickedness and I had been wicked. I sinned. "Woman, get me the scissors!"



I knew he was going to cut my hair. "Mother!" I screamed. "Mother!" But she didn't answer me. I heard her stopping at the table, then walk away. His hand held my head on the table. My eyes saw the Bible. Please, God. Help me. Please. I'm sorry. I won't sin again. Then I heard him say, "Woman, give me the shears." It wasn't until I felt the cold steel on my neck. I knew what he was going to do. I screamed and screamed. He was going to shear me like a sheep.

Somehow I was able to get off that chair, and knock it against him. I crawled on that floor to where my mother was standing. I gripped her ankles so hard. "Mother! Mother! Don't let him shear me. Don't let him shear me," I begged. I kissed her shoes, I pleaded. I told her I would do anything, but don't let him shame me. But she didn't move. My mother didn't move.

He came. He was stronger than me. No matter how I struggled. Wanton, was all he could say. There will be no sinning, no wantons in this house. There was nothing I could do. All my belief in the Bible, all my listening to his goodness — I must have been a very bad girl. I didn't mean to be. Couldn't he have forgiven me? It was my birthday. I believe no more. A cold feeling came over me. I was there and I wasn't. I can't explain how I felt. I waited till he was finished. I_{ij} heard him go out of the kitchen. I stood up, long golden curls falling off me. The floor, the table were covered in my sin. I saw a long golden curl lying on the Bible. I left it there.

I brushed myself as well as I could with hands. My head felt rough and prickly. There was no fear in me now. All fear had left me. I walked over to the door to take my shawl from the nail. Then I turned to that silent woman who had never moved. My mother.

Fife's Director of Social Work has provoked controversy both within his department and among other professional groups by his overhauling of the region's child-care policies. Under new managerial guide-lines social workers are expected to lay plans for children brought into care within clearly specified time limits and the use of residential care as a medium or longterm resources is actively discouraged. One effect of this policy has been to lead to a reduction in the numbers of children's residential units in Fife.

Allan Bowman is a Scot, educated in Perth, at Edinburgh University, where he read politics, and at Robert Gordon's in Aberdeen where he studied social work. Between 1978 and 1985 he worked in the south of England but returned then to Scotland to direct the Social Work Department in Fife.

This much seems straightforward but what does it conceal? What leads a self-confessedly ambitious man who goes away to England at an early stage in his career to return so soon to Scotland? Allan Bowman exudes energy, he is what some would call a "thruster".

suggest that, in view of his reputation as an innovator, we should take as our theme "processes of change" and to set the ball rolling I ask whether radical change may not be constrained in any given place and time by cultural factors which impede or at least modify the scope of one's "reforms"?

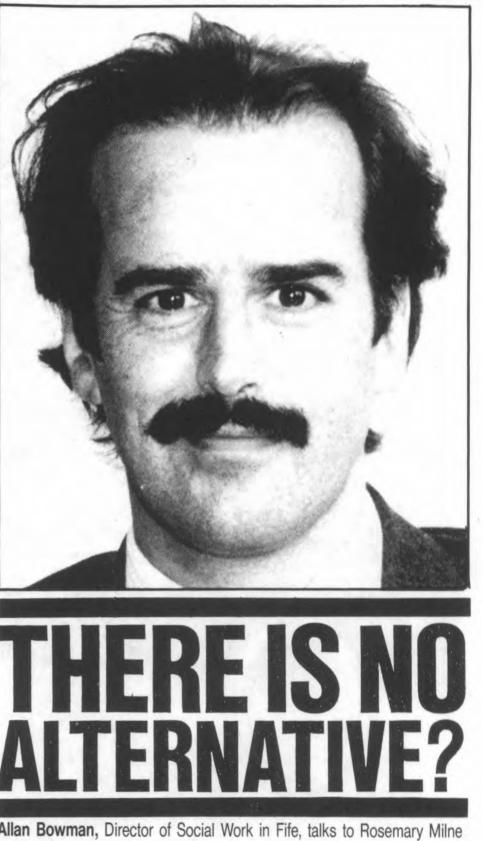
This doesn't evoke a very sympathetic response. This is "special pleading" thinly disguised - of a sort that Allan Bowman thinks his fellow Scots and those whom he calls "proto-Scots" are particularly inclined to.

"I get very impatient with people who say things are different, better up here. The Scots say they don't want English legislation foisted on them but they're quite happy to try and export something like the Hearing System down south".

His belief is that effective change does not make concessions to the small detail of local pride - "the way we do things here". Those who participate in the process of organisational change but inwardly resist it will only bow to the inevitable when they are shown that "there is no alternative". The slogan is not coincidental.

"People do need certainties. They need security. In this respect although I do not share Mrs Thatcher's political views, I think she is right.

Strong leadership is the key. Changes in understandings among staff can be brought about over a longer period of time by in-service development - and maybe those sorts of change are more lasting. But the needs of the public are



Allan Bowman, Director of Social Work in Fife, talks to Rosemary Milne about his theories of change underlying the recent and continuing overhaul of child and family social work in Fife.

too great for us to be able to wait to feel comfortable with whatever changes we propose. Tension is a creative force".

This is high-voltage policy-making. The computer on the desk burps mildly

cannot but admire the sentiments of the man who gives as his "the best stated aim to provide

researched, best evaluated, best developed service in a way that is least stigmatising and disabling for those who use that service". And there seems a lot of sense in the view which says that Service Departments "Social are grappling with the same fundamental issues throughout the UK, irrespective of the differences of local history". Equally, though, one is left with a feeling of real

disquiet faced with such a cavalier disregard for others' understandings and for the concepts of child care as enshrined in the Social Work (Scotland) Act of 1968.

But although some Fifers may feel they are reeling from the shocks of the new or cowed into reluctant submission by the authoritative demands of "research findings" I find myself listening with a depressing sense of familiarity to the response to a question I ask about the role of women in Social Work.

"Women have to be helped to gain greater confidence in putting themselves forward for positions of responsibility in senior management."

His concerns about what he call "informal discrimination against appointing women to higher levels" do not lead him to question the basis on which he runs his department, nor indeed the language in which he frames his thinking.

'People do need certainties. They need security. In this respect, although I do not share Mrs Thatcher's political views, I think she is right.'

Change in this model runs in one direction only - down the slopes of the circular management pyramid. A process of discussion and gradual cosiness education spells and introspection of the least helpful sort. Dissent and resistance can thus be dismissed in the mind of the changemaker with the explanation that "the process of change will be painful for some, however it is carried forward".

But for all the brave talk of selfcriticism and "feedback" on the quality of work there's nothing very new about what's on offer. The bureaucracy survives intact, just borrowing the terminology and methods of the market-place to gain the gloss of 1980s respectability. And the man himself? the purposeful changemaker who will show the Scots a better way? — he needs no introduction in a land which bred John Knox.

Robert Louis Stevenson was keen on the idea of journeying hopefully rather than arriving. But he belongs to a different strand of Scottish history. In Allan Bowman's world where arrivals are what count, you have to learn to live with deadlines not uncertainty...the "deadline" — not so long ago the symbol of convict discipline in American prisons. Makes you think doesn't it?

REVIEWS

Cry Hard and Swim

Cry Hard and Swim
Jacqueline Spring
Virago £4.50
Reviewed by Rosemary Milne

It needs a strong ego and some courage to share the events of one's childhood with an unknown public. We can therefore only guess the effort required by "Jacqueline Spring" to put into print her experiences as an abused, rejected child, one of a prosperous middle-class family of seven children.

"Dearest Mama — is the very first word a lie? I don't know. But I know if I don't use that word you'll be "hurt" so there you have me".

So begins this story, with a sentence which bitterly encapsulates the dilemma of the child who must dance like a marionnette on the ends of strings pulled by powerful parents.

Many figures move through these pages — mother, father, aunts, school friends, a brother David, her own children and husband. All are players in the drama — "murderers", victims, uncomprehending bystanders. One only stands apart and makes the telling of it, then the writing of it possible. Eve, the third Eve in her life, she tells us: the woman who helped her to talk about what had happened to her as a child. who accepted what she told her, didn't judge or blame and waited patiently until the time had come for the telling of it all.

As well as a deeply moving testimony to the author's own inner strengths, to her undoubted gifts as a poet, this book stands therefore as a tribute to those qualities of "withness" in great suffering, when the best of workers might try to do what is described below —

"While encompassing me with her own personal security, her lack of fear, her trust in me, her gentleness and respect, she had not embraced me. She had not so much as held my hand or touched my shoulder, even at my mute request. What this cost her personally I do not know. Her compassion filled the room surrounded the intensity of my agony, but did not touch it. I was left physically alone to feel the experience, to remember, to comprehend and contain it, without distraction, on every level of my being. I was allowed space to receive my self back".

Few of us are privileged to share times such as these. Now, using her courage and $h \epsilon r$ talent, Jacqueline Spring has given everyone the chance to know a little more of what it means to be the emotional and physical loveprop for one's parents. She has written it, now we must read it.



The Scottish Child Winter 1987 21



The	Pink	Triangle:			war	against
		hom	osexu	als		
-	-	Rich	ard P	lant		
	M	lainstream	Publis	shing £	9.95	
	Re	eviewed b	y De	rek Ro	dger	

The conversation started off in a desultory sort of way. He seemed an intelligent kind of chap though and the party was rather a flat event. He volunteered that he was a mathematics teacher. He'd be in his late thirties and he told me he was very strong on discipline. My better instincts told me at this stage to listen politely then withdraw. He was eager to talk though. Discipline led to order; order was necessary to any kind of measured change.

Well there wasn't much else happening so I asked him about change. Did he think for example, that the women's movement had had much of an effect in Scotland? Did he see evidence among his young students of an awareness of sexual politics?

"Scotland," this bright, decent,

professional chap retorted. "has none of this loony left nonsense. We're working class. It's jobs that concern us. Jobs." he repeated in emphasis, making certain he'd fixed my eye. The working class, he explained, have no time for all this London talk — women's rights, antinukes, black sections — all that "guff". And homosexuality? Well he didn't, to be honest, go so far as to to say that we didn't have that here. "But in Scotland," he shook his head, "it's just not an issue."

It was the fixed eye contact and the moral authoritarianism of "jobs" that came to mind, as much as the denial of sexual politics, on reading Richard Plant's powerful work, **The Pink Triangle**.

Beyond the question 'Why?' common to any mention of the Nazi holocaust. Plant has some others of his own. Why has the history of the treatment of homosexuals and other "contragenics" been left largely unwritten? Under an order of moral authoritarianism, when it's raining and the whole world is looking mean, who is the dog that gets

It Could Never

the kicks?

In the perverse order that was the Nazi concentration camps, more even than any other condemned category politicals, criminals, Jews, and Jehovah's Witnesses - it was the homosexuals who came bottom of the ideological heap. Offenders against Nazi antihomosexual laws were distinguished by the wearing of the pink triangle badge on camp uniform. They were treated with suspicion by other inmates -Plant settles for an explanation of the power of folklore. Gays are considered. even under the stress of incarceration. biologically programmed to seek constant sexual satisfaction.

And of course the guards, who exercised the regime of brutality and the Kapos (the trusties among the prisoners) distrusted them also. Eugen Kogon, a survivor of six years in Buchenwald as a political prisoner comments in his **The Theory and Practice of Hell**.

"Homosexual practices were actually very widespread in the camps. The prisoners however, ostracised only those



Happen Here

whom the SS marked with the pink triangle. The fate of the homosexuals in the concentration camps can only be described as ghastly — they were consigned to the lowest caste in camp during the most difficult years."

The cost of low-caste membership? Kapos, when asked to come up with names for "special labour assignments" would volunteer the gays. Homosexuals comprised a high percentage of the work force at Dora Mittelbau, a maze of underground factories producing V-2 rockets. Life in this dark wet subterranean warren, where plaster and cement dust ruined the lungs, was short, death certain.

Homosexuals found themselves also in the front line for the so-called medical experiments. Hormone experiments — castration and injection of male hormones, a refinement of Himmler's directives to send homosexuals to bordellos for "conversion" — killed many. Nazi ideology required research which held the promise of generating an increase in the population of the master race.

Richard Plant got out of Germany in 1933. A first return visit to his home town of Frankfurt twenty years later stuck in his throat. Luxury food shops in streets he could not recognise, offered chocolate cake with whipped cream by an old friend. His mission is part historical - copious research in the headquarters of the International Tracing Service at Arolsen — and part political. Restricting that discussion though to the proportion of gays in the population, as he does, is perhaps not quite the best way of considering the issue of sexuality and politics.

Richard Plant's real motive, and where the real power of his work lies, is in the telling of his own life story of love/friendship. Eric, he never sees again after 1933. Richard flees to university in Switzerland, then America. Eric, like so many other gay men, to excape the purge of the SS, joined the German Navy. Eric's old mother was able to confirm to Plant for the first time twenty years later, that her son was dead. Known as a non-conformist, having been found out listening to an English radio broadcast while on leave, he had been handed over by his Navy Commander to the Gestapo. The details of his execution were not known.

Beyond the history, the politics, the life story and the horror of Plant's work lies something else though. His own thirty page chapter on the mind of SS chief Himmler, - the equivalent of appointing the Yorkshire Ripper to the chair of the Women's Committee -Plant seems to dismis as poppsychology. There is a telling remorse in the words, "in some way or another, every adult beyond a certain age had collaborated with the barbarians." Just as there is an admission of his true feeling when on the train back to Frankfurt as he recollects past friends no longer, he hears in the sing-song of the tracks, 'lucky you, you came through, lucky you,....

Richard Plant writes this book, it seems in large part, out of a sense of guilt. Now, guilt; maybe my mathematical friend would accept that we do have that here!

Mums and Dads and Little Children

Sharing Childcare in Early Parenthood	
Malcolm Hill	
Routledge £29.95	
Reviewed by Marion Flett, Project Director	of
Young Families Now, Department Education, University of Aberdeen	

The focus of this book is an exploration of the arrangements made by parents for sharing care of their young children both within and outside the family. It looks at both individual and group care for the target age-group of three-year olds in two-parent families in both middle and working class areas of Edinburgh.

It deals with patterns and processes of sharing care: social class comparisons in relation to individual and group care; a consideration of families' social networks as well as the influence of their own attitudes, experience and activities on sharing care; and some indication of parents' perceptions of their children's needs and characteristics.

Unfortunately the emphasis on "parents" views raises a methodological problem. The interviews for the study were conducted jointly with parents but there is little reference to the fact that the views expressed by mothers may well be influenced by the father's presence and that of the male interviewer. Thus when parents are mentioned, we are not sure precisely who is meant, and we have very little clue about the degree of consensus within couples. Yet, Hill also acknowledges that it is women who bear the main responsibility for child care both in terms of doing it for themselves and others, but also in terms of organising it.

The major themes are that sharing care is a complicated business, that there is actually far more sharing than is generally assumed and that there is a fair degree of complexity of arrangements even within individual families. By the age of three, the majority of children have experienced some form of shared care and the number of carers involved ranges from two or three to about a dozen, with an ever-widening circle as the child grows older. They have also experienced shared care in "largish, organised, continuing groups" before they entered group care in playgroup or nursery school. Roughly half of the parents wanted more group care for their children before three for its social and educational benefits.

Patterns of sharing care do vary according to social class. but again the picture is complicated, with other factors, including parents own early experience, family and social networks, values in relation to the place of children in society as well as the place of women, all affecting their willingness to share care.

Some of the major implications for sharing care are drawn out. Mothers want good childcare and will go to considerable lengths to piece together appropriate arrangements even when this affects their own situation adversely, for example, in taking a lower status, poorly paid job. Fundamental change will only come about when fathers are enabled or come to want to devote more time to domestic commitments.

Local networks of relatives, friends and neighbours are very important, particularly as just as many families share care of children as share care for their own. Neighbours who are strangers can become friends through sharing care. Informal networks, however, are not a substitute for group care. We need to pay more attention to how groups for children under three are set up and organised. Group care is not simply used for parental convenience. When mothers worked, they had nearly always done so before the child entered playgroup or nursery school and fitted that group into existing arrangements.

Playgroups are seen as service provision rather than as opportunities for involvement. Participation is not so much class-related as dependent on the value placed on a close mother-child relationship. There is a clear demand for expansion of preschool provision and it is more widespread than is commonly assumed.

Finally, working class parents share care less often than middle class parents and their reluctance to accept childcare inside the home from those outside their own network may have implications for strategies of support where there's no family around.

This is a book rich in detail, so rich indeed that Malcolm Hill has made the text very dense and perhaps less accessible to a wider readership. Perhaps the most serious shortcoming is that the author does not give us a picture of the lives of families involved. The book only really comes to life when direct illustrative examples are introduced. This, coupled with a more general discussion of the issues raised. might have helped to say more to other parents, practitioners and policy makers as well as academics. But. at £29.95 there is little chance that many individuals will be able to acquire it. As a source of information for students and others, however, it would be a valuable library resource.



24 The Scottish Child Winter 1987



Democracy in Crisis: The Town Halls respond David Blunkett and Keith Jackson Hogarth Press £6.95 Reviewed by Keith Hayton, Project Manager of The Planning Exchange in Glasgow

At its simplest the thesis this book presents is that since 1979 central government has progessively restricted local government's powers. The result is that democracy in Great Britain is "in crisis" and can only be saved by restoring power to local authorities to allow them to respond imaginatively and sensitively to local issues.

This thesis is supported by details of the various legislative changes that the Conservatives have made, especially in the crucial area of local government finance, and accounts of how a number of authorities particularly Sheffield have developed services to meet local needs.

Blunkett and Jackson argue that central government's actions are undemocratic largely because the Conservative administrations returned since 1979 have received a minority of the votes cast, yet have won a majority of Parliamentary seats. Why this "first past the post" system is a "threat to democracy" at the national level, and yet not at the local, where if anything the system produces even greater electoral distortions, is not explained. This is a serious flaw in a book which purports not to be a "party political tract".

Town Halls under the Tories

The book would seem to be only partly relevant to experience in Scotland. Undoubtedly the Conservatives have used Scotland to test controversial local government legislation prior to its introduction elsewhere in Great Britain. For example rate capping was introduced in the early 1980's and the phased introduction of the poll tax to replace rates is soon to begin. Despite this one must look hard to find signs of the widespread opposition which has characterised the introduction of such changes in England. Thus although Lothian Region made a stand over financial controls in 1980, it received little support from other local authorities and was eventually forced to concede. More recently authorities like Stirling and Edinburgh have tended to stand alone in any struggles with Scottish Office. As one might expect such struggles have achieved little. The result is that now authorities are reduced to making rather empty gestures, such as Edinburgh's recent announcement that it will refuse to collect the poll tax, which in practice mean very little.

Thus although Scottish local government has undoubtedly disliked many of the changes that Scottish Office has made since 1979, it has generally stopped short of any direct action beyond lobbying. Judging by results, this has been relatively ineffective. Whilst, as Blunkett and Jackson show, action in England has been equally ineffective, at least the English authorities have tried. Undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the weak stand of the Scottish authorities is that the natural leader of any campaign, Strathclyde Region, has always stopped short of direct confrontation:

This does not however mean that Strathclyde has not been at the forefront of developments in local authority service provision. On the contrary some extremely imaginative initiatives which have considerable long term potential, have been supported by the Region. In particular I would mention the support given to the community business movement which has now become of major significance in the United Kingdom as a way of helping the longterm unemployed. In Scotland then it would seem that despite increased centralisation, democracy, defined as local government's ability to respond to new social economic problems, is still alive.

Overall Blunkett and Jackson's arguments are not wholly convincing. Local authorities' arguments with central government over centralisation often seem based more on a desire to protect their own interests rather than a wish to promote democracy. The book is clearly not apolitical, as it claims, but is written from the perspective of Labour Party activists. Despite this it is interesting, although I would suspect that in future years its greatest value will be the account it gives of the ratecapping campaign.

THE SCOTTISH CHILD AND THE LAW

The Problem of Evidence in Contested Abuse Cases

What Right of Appeal for Families?

Child we criticised the muddled provisions and over-hasty introduced in the Criminal Justice Bill in England in relation to children being videolinked in their evidence in cases where a criminal prosecution is taking place of abuse. Now the Home Secretary, in a desperate (and unsuccessful) attempt to assuage the scent for blood at the Conservative Party Conference, has suggested that a child's testimony might suffice for

S. v. Kennedy was decided on 27 February 1987 and has just been reported in the Scots Law Times at page 667. It focuses on the ground of referral available to refer a child to a Children's Hearing and the standard of proof required for that proof. Where a child is alleged to have committed an offence, the Reporter is required to prove this beyond all reasonable doubt. which is the criminal standard of proof. In all other referrals, the standard of proof has been assumed as "on the balance of probabilities" - the civil standard of proof.

In this particular case, all the Reporter was trying to prove was that an offence had been committed in respect of the child and this was held to be proved on the balance of probabilities. Therefore, the child stands referred back to a Children's Hearing and it can be said that the decision can be taken, which is in the child's best interests. But how effective is any decisionmaking based on a situation where a child has been proved to have been offended against where the identity of the offender remains unknown? It places panel members in the invidious position of having to take a decision on the basis of incomplete information and as such reduces the effectiveness of their decision-making.

In this particular case, the Sheriff did state in his findings who the offender "probably" was. In doing so the Court of Session ruled that the Sheriff had gone beyond his remit since the grounds of referral merely stated

any other evidence to back this up. This announcement again is suggestive of a hasty response to the problem without time for reasoned thinking about various related matters like the presumption of innocence, the rights of an accused person and in particular the application of such a doctrine within care proceedings.

We are fortunate that the knee-jerk political approach has

In the Spring issue of The Scottish conviction without the need for not been adopted in Scotland and instead the matter is being referred to the Scottish Law for Commission their deliberations.

> Elsewhere in this issue Fred Kennedy has referred to advantages which he perceives the Children's Hearing Systems as having in relation to cases of child sexual abuse, in particular through working to meet the child's best interests.

For that work to take place,

that an offence had been technicality in identifying an appropriate ground upon which to refer a child under the age of twelve who had been the victim of an offence of lewd and libidinous practices. Over the age Section 5 of the Sexual Offences offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure covered by this provision. Until now Reporters have relied upon the case of H M Advocate v. Lee. an old 1923 case which suggests that and offence of lewd and libidinous practices is an offence involving bodily injury. However this has now been disproved by their Lordships in B. v. Kennedy who have construed bodily injury as requiring "physical injury" which is not present in most offences involving lewd and libidinous practices. So Reporters are left trying to protect the child through another ground of referral such as the child being in moral danger or being the victim of an offence under Section 12 of the Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937.

> These points, summarised briefly here, may seem like technicalities to many but they illustrate that the Scottish Chidren's Hearing System is no less governed by the law than any other similar body and that law can sometimes be a mass of complications even in dealing with such an essential issue as the protection of a young child who has been the victim of an

abuse must have been legally established if the Reporter has referred the matter to a Children's Hearing, and while as Fred Kennedy indicates, in a number of cases parents may accept what has taken place. equally in many other cases, (possibly a majority) the matter is in dispute. Two recent stated cases from Strathclyde indicate the legal obstacles which can still be placed in the way of working in a child's best interests.

Malcolm Schaffer

offence of lewd and libidinous practices.

C. v. Kennedy, 28 April 1987. Brief mention should be made of this stated case again arising out of Strathclyde Region, insofar as the Court of Session has addressed itself to an important issue which has been the subject up till now confused and differing of practice, namely the powers of a Sheriff hearing an appeal against a decision of a Children's Hearing. The Sheriff who heard the appeal stated that "this appeal is concerned with matters which Parliament has entrusted to Children's Hearings because of the reliance it places on their special expertise and on the peculiar appropriateness of their procedures for determining such delicate matters as the welfare of children

That being so, a Sheriff should, in my view, be slow to interfere with a decision of a Children's Hearing unless it can be shown that that decision was clearly wrong or proceeded on improper or considerations". irrelevant

In consequence the Sheriff refused to hear any evidence which did not relate to any irregularity in the conduct of the case at a Children's Hearing. The approach was supported by the Court of Session. This will in consequence restrict both the conduct of appeals against decisions of Children's Hearings and the chances of success. No doubt readers would have differeing views as to the desirability of such restirictions. Malcolm Schaffer

committed and did not require proof of the identity of the offender. However, all three judges were very guarded in what their response would have been had the Reporter named an of twelve a child is covered by offender within the grounds. To quote Lord Dunpark, "although (Scotland) Act 1976, which is an this is a civil procedure, I am most reluctant to decide that a Sheriff may find it proved on a (Scotland) Act 1975. Under the balance of probabilities that a age of twelve a child is not named person has committed a criminal offence."

Thus, even in proceedings arising out of Children's Hearings which are concerned with the needs of the allegedly abused child. the courts demonstrate that they cannot totally disregard the rights of the allegedly abusing adult. This leaves Reporters with the dilemma of either referring a child to a hearing on the basis that an offence has been committed against the child without naming the offender and thus being certain of only requiring proof on balance of probabilities but leaving any subsequent Children's Hearing with the problematic decision of deciding how to protect the child from further abuse from an unknown offender, or alternatively referring the child on the basis of a named offender having committed an offence against the child and being required to prove this beyond all reasonable doubt.

B. v. Kennedy was another stated case considered by the Court of Session, this time on 5 June 1987. This highlights a particular problem of legal

LETTERS

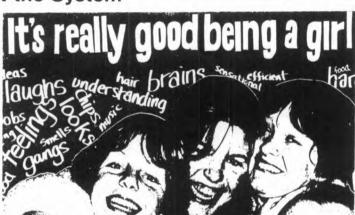
Girls — Up Against the System

Julie Warren's article on the treament of girls with the Scottish juvenile justice and welfare systems ("In the Family Way" **The Scottish Child**,Autumn 1987) is welcome for highlighting the issues and unspoken assumptions lying behind many of the decisions taken by panel members and professional workers.

We need now to move on to looking at how this awareness should translate into our actual practice in working with vulnerable girls.

We do indeed need to be clear that the risk to girls we work with is tangible and not just part of our own anxiety about and judgement of female adolescent sexuality. But for many girls the risk is very real. More girls than boys are sexually abused, most rape victims are female, most victims of domestic violence are women. Girls do not need protecting from themselves but they do need protection from others. What has to change is the form of that protection.

At present this "protection" is usually restrictive, oppressive and condescending and contains little



sense of girls and women as being active agents in protecting themselves.

As a female adult worker I read newspaper articles and police advice leaflets that tell me that for my own protection I should not walk down a street late at night on my own. Should I do this and should I be attacked and raped then certainly sections of the media and even the judiciary would view this as being partly my own fault. especially if I was irresponsible enough to be wearing something more glamorous than jeans (not tight of course) and a bulky sweater.

The general acceptance of the level of oppression implicit in the notion that adult women's freedom has to be curtailed for their own safety becomes an almost unbreakable straitjacket when applied to adolescent girls.

So how do we help girls protect themselves as active, strong and confident people rather than as passive recipients of society's well-meaning but stifling safety blanket?

Most of the vulnerable girls I work with do not behave in the

way they do out of choice — not real informed, considered choice. The notion of considering their own needs, feelings, aspirations is difficult for them as they react and respond to the needs and pressures of others. Before you can act on your own needs you have to be aware of what they are, where they come from, what they could lead to. You have to be aware of the choices open to you, that you have choices. You have to value yourself, know that you matter.

Groupwork seems a particularly appropriate method of working with girls. The kinds of themes raised above are more easily pursued by sharing common experience and making sense of it together. We should build on the positive aspects of teenage girls' culture — the enjoyment of talking to one another, the mutual support and encouragement.

Meanwhile girls continue to be referred to the Children's Hearing System on the grounds of Moral Danger. The danger is often very real, but whose morality is at risk is an interesting question.

Sheila Ramsay

Family Conciliation

The last sentence of Alan Finlayson's article on "Trends in Referrals to the Reporter' (Autumn '87 issue of The Scottish Child), in which he says "where problems are identified in the development of a child, intervention in the child's life is more likely to be effective when help can be provided at an early stage, as opposed to waiting until the child comes to notice by way of an overt act committed whilst over the age of criminal responsibility", prompts me to write to remind your readers of the Family Conciliation Service. As an ex-probation officer who

worked largely in the juvenile courts in England, it became apparent in the course of the preparation of many Social Enquiry Reports, that the vast majority of youngsters who appeared before the court came from broken homes. Although I am not aware of any specific research which relates juvenile offending to the separation and divorce of parents, I am convinced that such a relationship must exist. The lack of security and low self-esteem engendered by young children being subjected to the trauma of a long drawn-out, acrimonious

separation and divorce on the part of their parents, followed by ongoing disaagreement about custody and access arrangements for them, must surely be contributing factors to their subsequent encounters with the law in adolescence.

I therefore see the Family Conciliation Service, with its aims of helping to facilitate the divorce process in such a way that the damage to children by what happens between their parents is minimised, and of helping children to keep a loving relationship with both parents, as one of the most promising preventative systems in operation today. Assisting parents in arriving at agreed arrangements for their children's future, keeping such decisions in their own hands — where they should rightly be —and where appropriate, involving the children in this process, must be better for all concerned than the alternative adversarial legal system.

Ted Cleland Co-ordinator, Scottish Family Conciliation Service (Lothian)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE School Boards debated Changing Social Work in Fife Looking Back Children and Therapists The Scottish Child and the Law Reviews and Regular Features