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October/November 1992

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Glasgow women

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A daughter's  
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by

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Scottish Child is a non-profit making co-operative involved in publishing, training and event organisation that promotes an understanding of the importance of children and childhood in society

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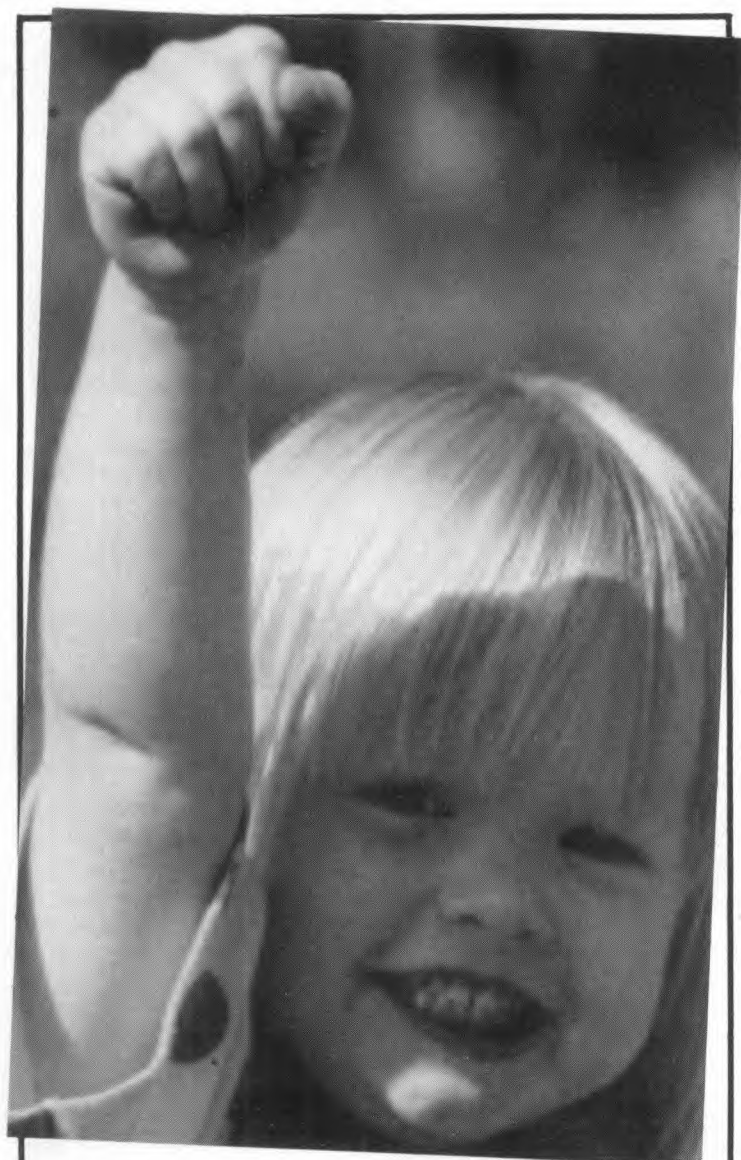
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## SUSTAINABLE CONTACT

between children in care and their families

21 October 1992, Crieff Hydro Hotel, Perthshire

The aim of the conference is to increase knowledge about:  
\*The management and the practice of sustainable contact.  
\*Integrating child protection and family contact.  
\*The exceptional circumstances that make contact untenable.

The speakers are drawn from social work, the law and children's panels in Scotland and there is also a speaker from the USA. In addition, there will be a range of workshops allowing for further discussion of specific topics.

The Fee for the day is £59 to BAAF members and £72 to non-members. Programme and booking information from Alice Ednie, BAAF Scottish Centre.



## Needed, More Than Ever

We should be under no illusions about the problems our country, and our children, will face over the next few years - the economic picture is pretty bleak. Media attention over the government's recent attempts to save the pound have concentrated on the problems that will be caused for home owners and small businesses, and recent government activity seems designed to try to protect these groups from the worst of the recession; but the inevitable impact of our economy's downward spiral on basic services for the poor will be immense.

Perhaps it is not surprising that this aspect of the economic crisis has not been highlighted. The poor - over a quarter of children in Strathclyde live in families dependent on Income Support - have been having their income, services and hopes cut back for years. But it is the poor who will suffer most from the drastic cuts in public spending that are just around the corner.

Already, many basic services have been cut to the bone. Organisations in the social work and welfare field spend much of their time nowadays telling people who come to them for help that there is nothing they can do. It is the slow, bit-by-bit cutting of services that really hurts - schools are unable to offer the decent educational opportunities to their pupils that they are keen to provide; social workers have to refuse help to families who need it; advice agencies increasingly have to tell people that they have no advice, because there are no resources.

We have to face up to this situation. Many people working with children in education, social work, the voluntary sector and elsewhere are desperately keen to do a worthwhile job, because they know the job needs doing. But faced with a situation where services are not meeting the needs of those they are meant to provide for, there is always the temptation to 'cope' with your own wee bit, help the few you can and see the task of fighting cuts and lack of provision as just too big to take on.

But there is another choice. We can refuse to accept the 'logic' of those who tell us that teenagers must go homeless, children cannot have adequate childcare and families must live in poverty - and decide instead to support each other in highlighting the human costs of the 'savings' that we are told are so necessary. We can work together to challenge the idea that 'there is no alternative' to living in a look-after-number-one society where those at the bottom of the heap go to the wall. We can choose to put our faith in the future of *all* our children - and fight tooth and nail to make that future a worthwhile one.

●

This is a bumper issue of SCOTTISH CHILD to celebrate our fourth birthday. We have a special seven page NEW VOICES, NEW WRITING section on schooldays, where schoolchildren, past and present, write about the experience of going to school. We have a host of birthday greetings from organisations, groups and individuals showing their support for SCOTTISH CHILD. And of course we have articles and regular features where we look at issues affecting childhood, look at the

experience of growing up in Scotland and listen to young people talking about their experiences.

Looking back over our four years as an independent magazine we feel that we can be proud of our achievements. We have published a magazine that is widely recognised as a valuable resource by many people working and living with children and young people in Scotland. We have given voice to those who, in the normal way of things, do not get a chance to tell a wide readership about their experiences. Crucially, we have done this as an independent magazine, supported by readers and friends who see the importance of keeping alive such a publication.

We have been involved in other activities too. We helped organise the SELF-DETERMINATION AND POWER event in Glasgow in 1990, where three hundred people, including Noam Chomsky from the United States, came together for two days to discuss how we can, collectively, take more charge over our lives. We organised the TEARS AND PROTEST event in Edinburgh last year, where a wide range of people, from unemployed teenagers to professors, got together to discuss the way we express, or don't express, our emotions and how we can learn to improve the world we live in. And we have organised workshops and seminars on subjects such as child sexual abuse, child punishment and gender - issues central to the lives of many Scottish children and adults.

We have also produced other publications. HOMELESS VOICES, published in conjunction with hostels for the young homeless throughout Scotland, gave a unique opportunity for Scotland's homeless teenagers to have their say, even when they said things that were highly critical of those who are paid to help them. We published INSIDE: RETHINKING SCOTLAND'S PRISONS by Prison Governor Andrew Coyle, a ground-breaking book that questioned many of our assumptions about an issue that could be said to define a society's morality - the way it punishes people. And we have published calendars - the new one for 1993 is featured in this issue - that celebrate the vitality and liveliness of children growing up in Scotland.

Which brings us, on SCOTTISH CHILD's fourth birthday, to a special plea for this publication. If this magazine has achieved anything over its last four years, it has been able to provide a voice for many of those people who care about Scotland's children - including quite a few Scottish children themselves - and who want to make things better in the future. As the economy nose-dives, and more basic services start becoming 'unsustainable', the existence of an independent magazine that provides a forum for these voices will be needed more than ever.

But we cannot continue without support. We have no funding, no grants, no salaries - what we have is you, our readers. Without your financial support we will be unable to continue to publish in the years ahead. If you value what we do, and if you want to see the only magazine that celebrates and stands up for Scottish children continuing to publish throughout the years ahead, please give us your help. It's needed now more than ever.

*Colin Chalmers*

## Opposition Grows to Pioneering Project's Closure

### PLAY

Over a hundred people crowded into a public meeting in an Edinburgh school last month to show their opposition to the threatened closure of a pioneering children's resource project.

The **Training and Development Project** of **Lothian Play Forum**, which has been in existence for seven years, has earned itself a reputation as one of the most valuable resources in Scotland for those working with under 12s. The project offers play workers a wide range of courses from practical, skills-based courses to 'issue-based' ones, such as 'Responding to Bullying' and 'Working with Children with Difficult Behaviour' - courses that are always heavily oversubscribed. In the last year alone the project has run 46 training events attended by 670 people and dealt with over 1,800 enquiries to its resource centre.

The success the project has had in responding to the training needs of play workers - volunteer and professional, statutory and voluntary sector - was clear from the support it received at the public meeting. Many of those at the meeting spoke of the unique service offered by the project, a point emphasised by the fact that it receives training requests from workers as far away as Central Region and Fife. The project has also received over a hundred letters of support from a wide range of groups and individuals working

with children throughout Lothian calling for it not to be cut.

The decision to dissolve the **Training and Development Project** was taken at a meeting of Lothian Regional Council Education Committee on 12th August. The Committee decided to dissolve the project, which had been receiving £101,480 a year in urban aid money, and at the same time increase **Lothian Play Forum's** budget by £82,250 as well as granting £10,600 to **ACT**, an untested Community Education training consortium with no experience of giving training to children's workers.

There are serious question marks over how the new arrangement will be able deliver anything like the quality of training offered by the **Training and Development Project** - and in purely financial terms this decision will mean a cut in children's services in Lothian of £8,630. Despite this, the Education Committee are insisting no cut is being made. Indeed the decision to dissolve the **Training and Development Project** is described in a press release from the Education Department as one which "agreed that the valuable work of the Training and Development project run by Lothian Play Forum should be allowed to continue".

The double-think doesn't end there. One of the more bizarre aspects of this particular cutting of a successful project has been the support the cut has had from the executive committee of **Lothian Play Forum** - the organisation that

runs the **Training and Development Project**. Their reading of the situation has been very similar to that of the Education Committee - after agreeing to their decision to "dissolve" the project they brought out a leaflet headlined "Your training and resources are not being axed".

The backing given by office bearers on **Lothian Play Forum's** executive committee to the decision to cut the project was the source of much bewilderment at the public meeting. So why did these office bearers accept the council's recommendations so readily? The answer, according to the committee's chairperson Angela Valentine, is that they were happy with what was being offered. "We thought that maintaining the project in some form was the best deal we could get. We got other funding which we had fought desperately for as an organisation". As well as chairing **Lothian Play Forum's** executive, Angela Valentine is a member of the executive committee of **ACT** - the organisation that has received over £10,000 from the new deal.

The truth is that **Lothian Play Forum** has fought hard in the past for funding - and that is one of the reasons why its quick capitulation to cuts in children's services in this case has caused so much astonishment and anger. As one speaker at the public meeting put it, "I just don't understand why such a marvellous, working organisation should be let go without a fight."

One factor influencing the decision by **Lothian Play Forum's**

executive to accept this cut is certainly a level of resentment amongst those executive committee members who have worked unpaid for the forum for a long time towards the younger, professionally trained staff of the Project. "I think a number of us feel we are just being pushed aside," executive committee member Chris McGavin told **Scottish Child**. "The way the public meeting was called and run was insulting to the executive. Many of us have worked very hard as volunteers, putting in our own time, effort and skills." Some supporters of the executive committee who attended the public meeting objected to the fact that many of the people at the meeting "had never been involved before" - it was even suggested that those who supported the **Training and Development Project's** continued existence, the overwhelming majority of those present, were "only interested in their own jobs".

Despite the Education Committee's decision, the **Training and Development Project**, and the many groups who support its work, are determined to ensure that the project continues to exist - and that children in Lothian and elsewhere continue to benefit from its work. And a lot of other groups will be keeping a keen eye on the fight against the decision to "dissolve" this project - as Cathy McCulloch puts it, "If they can do this to one of the most successful voluntary organisations around, what can't they do?"

Stephen Naysmith



Colin Chalmers





## A Big Bucks Business

### FASHION

The phenomenom of the training shoe as teenage icon stomps on. Not any old training shoes you understand - the socially correct, peer group approved training shoes. They have all but entirely displaced the more conventional footwear, in all its variations, that youngsters used to wear.

It has become critical to many children and teenagers that they are seen to be wearing designer or brand-name trainers. Not to do so is to risk losing credibility with their friends. News reports from America tell us that youngsters there are being held up on the streets for their trainers. In some cases they have been killed for their footwear.

Who will explode the mystique which surrounds trainers and explain the baffling grip which the wearing of accepted brand-names trainers is exerting, particularly in the case of young boys? Better yet, who can justify the prices charged for these primary symbols of

teenage high conformity?

Many children are now wearing trainers on their feet all day, every day. In many cases their footwear will be the most expensive item they are wearing - probably more expensive than any footwear worn by their parents. A good quality pair of adult's leather shoes can be had for £40 these days. In stark contrast, this is likely to be the starting price for children's trainers in a sports shop. And at this bottom-of-the-range price they are not likely to be leather. Many pairs of trainers have price tags of £100 plus.

Not that this is any deterrent to sales. On a recent Saturday afternoon I visited seven city centre outlets specialising in trainers with my fourteen year old looking to buy a pair. The search for the Holy Grail would have been easier.

In the last shop we finally settled on a pair. They were brand-named and cost £40, a seasonal reduction from £50. The choice of this particular pair represented a choice between style (his) and budget (mine). The label announced that they were made in Taiwan from

synthetic materials.

Clearly not everyone shopping for trainers feels constrained to compromise on brand-name, style or price. The shop where I parted with my money was jumping with crowds of youngsters, mainly boys, all critically examining the racks and racks of - to me - similar looking trainers, conferring seriously with each other and eventually trying on their potential choices. All this to the strain (and I do mean strain) of the loudest background music I have ever suffered.

In order to speed up the already frantic trying-and-buying process the perky assistants wore walkie-talkies connecting them directly to the stockroom. "Ricky, check for such-a-brand size 6, please".

I stood in the long queue at the cashpoint and saw peaky-faced youngsters hand over sometimes more than £100 for a pair of trainers. I would be willing to bet that they will never be used in any sporting activity.

Before we started our trek around the sports shops we had visited - at my insistence - some of the big

chainstores. The style and quality of their trainers seemed to me to be at least as good as anything available in the sports shops. But there was one *huge* difference - the price. The chainstores' prices were around half the *starting* prices of the sports shops. The cheapest pairs were about £15; the most expensive around £25.

I defied my son to spot the difference. He insisted there were differences. More tellingly, he ended by saying that nobody, but nobody, wears trainers bought from chainstores. This is no doubt surprising news to chainstore managers.

I entertain a suspicion that these chainstore trainers may well be supplied by the same manufacturers who supply the brand-name icons to the sports shops. Anything goes if the bucks are big enough; and as anyone, youngster or parent, caught up in the trainer phenomenom knows - the bucks in this business are very big indeed.

Anne-Marie Kane

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## FILMHOUSE

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### French Film Festival

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Starting in October, CELLULOID SINATRA, a season of Sinatra's films being shown in beautiful quality prints on the big screen. Including THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE, YOUNG AT HEART, HIGH SOCIETY, ON THE TOWN, THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM. Also in October the premiere of a new print of TAXI DRIVER. Not to be missed!

For full details of these and dozens of other films showing at Filmhouse in October and November, pick up the free monthly programme brochure available from Filmhouse or from over 300 venues (libraries, galleries, cafes, bars, theatres etc.) in Edinburgh and Lothian Region.

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**Children and Families in Rural Areas: Responding to Change,** 12 Nov, Dryburgh Abbey Hotel, St. Boswells. Conference examining the impact of social and economic changes affecting rural families, preceded on 11th by programme of visits. Speakers include Peter Moss, Dermot Grimson, Sandy Cameron and Jon Harris. Members: £39.50 (day)/£89.50 (residential)

**Protecting Children - Cleveland to Orkney: More lessons to learn?** 23 Nov, Central Hotel, Glasgow. Speakers include Lord Clyde, Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, and Lord Fraser. £87.50

For further information contact Sharon Keane, SCAFA, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh. Tel: (031)228 8484





What does a four year old child have for a birthday celebration?

When it's SCOTTISH CHILD the answer's a **birthday lecture** rather than a birthday party. We are lucky enough to have got Dorothy Rowe, the well-known Australian psychologist and author of several best-selling books, to give the lecture.

The lecture will be entitled **WHAT MAKES A HAPPY SCOTTISH CHILD?** and will take place on 10th November in Edinburgh. Dorothy Rowe is well known for her writings and talks on depression, happiness and managing our lives in the modern world, so it should be an interesting evening. If you want to book a place you can write to SCOTTISH CHILD - more details are in the advert in this issue.

## IN BRIEF

The **Women's Environmental Network** has put together a **Green Baby Pack** as a way of helping people find out more about the issues involved in **environmental parenting**. It costs £7.50, and includes an *Earthwise* re-usable, fitted cotton nappy, liner and wrap, a *Body Shop* comfort pillow, and various other goodies which would cost over £25 to buy in the shops. The limited edition pack has proved very popular, especially as a gift for new parents. It is only one of a range of interesting initiatives from the network. To find out more contact you can write to Sue Tibbals, Information Officer, Women's Environmental Network,

Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA or phone the group on 071-354 8823.

Birthdays mean **presents** - and as part of the celebrations for **Scottish Child's** fourth birthday we are, in our usual generous way, actually giving presents away!

For a start we have five of the aforementioned **Green Baby Packs** waiting for readers to claim - the first five readers to send us postcards asking for them will get a pack each. Remember to give us the weight of your baby, so we send you the right size of nappy.

If your little ones are out of nappies, then they're probably fans

of **The Singing Kettle**, Scotland's most famous children's entertainers, and could be interested in our other birthday treat - **The Singing Kettle** have kindly given us three copies of their cassette to pass on to **Scottish Child** readers. To have a chance of winning one, all you have to do is send us a postcard with your name and address and answer the following question - what are the names of the members of **The Singing Kettle** and where will they be appearing this Christmas?

Best of luck, and don't delay!

Most of us find ourselves hooked on **soaps** at one time or another - the cast can seem so familiar and real that we feel we have to know what is happening to them all the time. Sometimes when actors or actresses are 'killed off' so they can be written out of a series, their departure is experienced as a real loss by their fans.

If you have ever wondered how this illusion of real life is so successfully created, then the **Brookside Weekend** on 7th and 8th November at the Edinburgh Filmhouse could offer you some interesting insights. Two or three members of the cast, plus a film crew and writing/production workers, will be demonstrating just how a scene is put together. They will be attempting to demystify the complicated process that making a series such as **Brookside** actually involves - starting with the preliminary discussion of the script and setting of camera angles, right through the rehearsals, filming and editing to the final product.

Media studies teachers and students are very welcome but the organisers stress that the event is *not* a workshop. You do not need any particular film skills to come along just an interest in soap opera or, as media people call it, 'continuous drama'. For further details and tickets you can contact Shiona Wood, the Edinburgh Filmhouse's education officer, on 031-228 6382.

This year's Edinburgh International **Film Festival** was a much slimmed down affair compared with past events, but there were still a good number of interesting films on show. Continuing with an idea that was started last year, one strand of the festival was devoted to young

people's cinema - films, from around the world, made for children and young people. These included **Subterranean Secrets**, a much-praised Swedish film about two boys confined to hospital who plan to end world starvation by raiding



a vast cache of food stored in catacombs below the hospital in case of war! It's a film with a lot of serious themes running through it that has been well received on the international film circuit.

Not many Scottish films, of course - the Scottish film industry is so starved of cash you wonder how anything gets made at all sometimes. One gem though, is Margaret Tait's **Blue, Black, Permanent** - a film set in Edinburgh and Orkney in the present time, the 50s and the 30s. The film traces Barbara Kelday's attempts as an adult to come to terms with the death of her mother when she was nine. That might make the film sound a bit morbid, but it's not - it's more of a reaching out across generations to find connections in a rather disconnected world. The film is full of magical moments and down to earth humanity, and gives a taste of the sort of films Scotland could be making if the money men would let them get made a bit more often. There's also a fleeting glimpse of a **Scottish Child** in the film - so keep your eyes peeled!

That is if you get a chance to see it. We were unable to find release dates for either of these films; and as far as TV showings go, Channel 4, who helped fund the production, hope to show **Blue, Black, Permanent** 'by late next year at the earliest'. I wonder how many **Terminator** sequels we'll have had by then?

# TALKING DRUGS



Adult views of teenage drug use vary from the blandly ignorant to the hysterical - much the same range of attitudes that's found amongst teenagers themselves in fact. **Colin Chalmers** went to a youth club in Glasgow to talk to a group of teenagers about drugs - and find out why they take them.

We are sitting in a community centre in a Glasgow housing scheme talking about drugs. But for the four teenagers I'm with - two are 16, two 17 - the view that the words 'drugs' and 'problem' are inexorably linked is not one they would share. They know about drugs, they take drugs and they have their own views about drugs: as Martin puts it, to general nods of agreement, "Drugs are excellent."

We start off by discussing what sort of drugs they take. "Cannabis, ecstasy, acid, sulph - bevvie and all sometimes," says Andy. "Magic mushies are good too. You go and pick them yourselves, they cost you fuck all and you can't get done for picking them. Mushies are the business."

The drug they use the most, though, is cannabis. "Cannabis is permanent," says Tommy, "there's dealers on every street, except for the quiet ones. You get some streets with a couple of dealers. Every night there's cannabis. It's different at the weekend, some people get steaming, some people get full of sulph. But cannabis is a daily thing."

"We sit outside a close," Martin explains, "we don't sit in our house. We sit out in the street listening to some sounds. You listen to Bob Marley music when you're puffing cannabis. You listen to techno when you're on sulph and ecstasy. Cannabis it's Happy Mondays, Stone Roses."

For Craig, it's a sociable drug - and compares favourably with alcohol. "You're dead friendly with cannabis, because you're sharing it. If you take hash you're not getting violent. But see if you're drinking wine, you're going out and wanting to fight everybody."

Andy agrees. "I think drink is worse than hash. You don't get in as bad a state with a joint as you do with a couple of drinks. A couple of drinks and you want to fight everybody. Hash takes your paranoia away, it makes you friendly."

So what about the drug craze that has been sweeping the nation over the last few years - ecstasy? Various described as 'the best drug in the world' and 'an evil facing our children', what do these young people think of it?

In fact only two of the group have tried it - but there isn't a bad word from anyone for the drug, or the rave scene it is so closely associated with. "Ecstasy's brilliant," says Andy. "See the first time I took it, I was waiting on the bus to go to this rave and the E was coming up on me and I was going 'Oh no, I'm going to miss this bus and not get in' - I was just dead nervous. But see once you get in and hear the music, it's brilliant. See when you're on sulph or ecces you can't stop talking because you're dead hyper, so you talk to everybody. People that you'd be fighting with on drink are sitting smoke a joint with you on ecstasy."

"We go to a nightclub on a Saturday," adds

Martin, "there's dancing, techno-music. Everybody there's taking E. It gives you energy to dance about."

But what about the problems you hear of - there are some people who have died from taking ecstasy, aren't there? "I've never known anybody to die from it," says Craig, "or even be in hospital from it. People die on ecstasy because they're jumping about and they die of exhaustion."

"I can't think of anything bad about ecstasy or raves," continues Andy, reiterating the whole group's view on how their favoured drugs compare with drink. "See the fighting you get at raves, it's with people who are drunk. We go to - on a Saturday, everybody's up dancing, full of ecces and all that, minding their own business, talking away to people. Then you get these people staggering in drunk, getting a pint, turning round and going 'Who are you looking at?'. You go 'I wasn't looking at you' and they fling a pint in your face."

Apart from cannabis, the drug that these teenagers were keenest on seemed to be 'sulph' - amphetamine. "There's nothing bad about speed, I take it," says Martin. "I wouldn't say it's addictive."

"It's good for the weekend," says Craig, "it's a brilliant feeling, sulph. A pure rush. We can't afford coke at, what, £50 a gram so we just take sulph at a tenner a gram."



## Learning to be Realistic

Many of us who grew up in the sixties and seventies are well acquainted with youth cultures where drug taking played a big part. All-night parties, open air concerts, getting drunk or 'out of your head' on drugs were experiences many of us indulged in. So did we learn anything from our experiences that would help us respond to the needs of this generation of young people? How different are the risks today?

A lot of the substances available today are just the same as those that were around in the sixties and seventies. Alcohol is still widely used, as is cannabis. Solvents - glue, aerosols and so on - are nothing new. Over the counter drugs which have been available for some time - tranquilisers for instance - are still around, as are drugs like LSD (acid), amphetamines (speed, sulphate) and heroin (smack).

It's also worth remembering that the some of the drugs most commonly used in our society are often, somehow, not thought of as drugs at all. Alcohol, for instance, often avoids the stigma attached to being a 'drug' even though it is certainly responsible for more violence and social problems than any other drug available in our society. Tobacco is highly addictive and is widely acknowledged as the single greatest cause of preventable disease in Britain - but again a lot of people would be shocked to hear it described as a drug. And as for coffee and tea...

There are, however, some new developments in the youth drug scene. One of the most obvious ones is the growth in the use of ecstasy - 'E' - a synthetic stimulant based on amphetamine that gives the user a lot of energy, tends to make the user feel very happy and friendly and is associated with techno-music and the rave scene. Other synthetic drugs such as Ketamine, an anaesthetic with psychedelic properties, are starting to be widely used. There is now a large market for prescribed drugs, such as opiate-based painkillers, that are used illicitly in a way that was not so common in the past. Clear evidence is also emerging that experimental and recreational drug use has become more commonplace over the last twenty years - and that the age at which young people start using drugs and alcohol in this way is getting younger.

The psychological and physiological effects of the drugs themselves are widely known - but one has to ask just how

helpful this information is when measuring the risks involved.

The risks to health associated with, for example, cannabis use, especially if not used with tobacco, would appear less than those associated with alcohol. The risks associated with drug use are often less to do with the substance itself and more to do with other factors affecting use.

One of these factors is that a lot of drugs young people take are illegal. This can result in young people getting criminal records and in some cases facing heavy penalties, including imprisonment, that will have long-term effects on a young person's life. The fact that illegal drugs can obviously only be obtained through an illegal network of dealing and distribution strongly influenced by profiteering can leave young people vulnerable to being exploited or, more importantly, placed at risk physically by disputes with dealers.

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**Mairi Nye**, a training  
organiser at the Drugs  
Training Project based at  
Stirling University, calls for  
some level-headedness in  
the debate about young  
people's drug use.

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Such disputes often arise over the quantity or quality of the drugs that are sold - some tablets sold as ecstasy, for example, have been found to be aspirin or dog-worming tablets. In other instances tablets have contained ketamine, heroin or morphine with obvious health risks to the buyer who is unaware of what he or she is taking.

Many other risks associated with drug use by young people are no different to those associated with taking alcohol. The danger of overdosing, unsafe sexual practices or getting involved in violent situations are common to both. Indeed the evidence is that alcohol use is more likely to lead young people to be at risk from these dangers than drug use - Accident and Emergency Units in most major hospitals see far more injuries and overdoses in young people relating to alcohol than to any other drug.

However society seems a lot more willing to tolerate the risks associated

with alcohol and tobacco - the hysteria and media outrage is reserved for young people who take other drugs. One interesting development associated with the growth of the rave scene and the use of ecstasy - alcohol is not usually a part of this scene at all - is that young ecstasy users see their drug as much more acceptable than the alcohol use of their parents and others. Using 'E' at the weekend to dance and feel 'at one' with those around you is seen as far healthier than sitting in smokey bars getting pissed and becoming violent both inside and outside the home.

It is important when looking at young people's drug use to understand what the pay-offs of taking drugs are for them. Some common reasons given by young people for taking drugs are that "It's exciting", "I like the feeling", "It relieves the boredom" or that "It stops the pain". For many young people, the fact that adults find drug-taking and its associated activities to be unacceptable is another pay-off. As young people get older, many will prefer to take alcohol rather than other drugs, as one of the pay-offs of making this change is greater acceptability by the adult world.

Just like the rest of us, young people make choices about what drugs they use based on the risks and pay-offs they associate with different drugs - we should be honest enough to accept that such choices are not only made by young people. Many adults who are perfectly aware of the dangers of smoking tobacco continue to do so. Excessive drinking and use of tranquilisers to alleviate stress are not uncommon in the lives of those adults responsible for censoring and controlling young people's drug use. Young people cannot help but see the hypocrisy of this.

Young people need and want to make sense of the world they live in, to gain a sense of freedom, control and pleasure within it, and to experience a sense of belonging. And many young people these days, unlike those of us who were adolescents in the sixties, see no end to their deprivation and isolation caused by unemployment, poor housing and social decay. The reasons they give for their drug use are real. Rather than going down the road of waging a 'War on Drugs' which criminalises more and more young people and doesn't work anyway we need to find ways of offering young people pay-offs that will offer real hope - especially to those whose drug use "stops the pain". ■

They all take sulph, they all like it, and despite saying that there's nothing bad about it, they are aware of some of its drawbacks and dangers. "You risk taking a heart attack coming up on it and coming down off it," says Martin, contradicting himself more than a bit. Andy describes how "you wake up the morning after sulph and your face is pure skinny. It sucks in your face."

So isn't it addictive and quite dangerous if you take it a lot? "For some people, aye, who take it every day," answers Tommy, "Some

people go over the score and depend on it."

Everyone here drinks a bit, but they see drinking as so associated with violence and aggression that they prefer drugs that are, as they keep saying, "more sociable." They all smoke tobacco, but like most smokers, they don't really like doing it.

Andy talks about his experience of smoking tobacco, "I've been smoking fags for a year. I thought it would be dead easy to stop and I tried and I still can't stop it. See when you smoke joints, that gets you into the fags because of the

tobacco in the joints. I was smoking hash and I wasn't smoking fags and I was choked for a joint and a fag was the next best thing, it took it away a wee bit. So I got into fags."

If this group is anything to go by, the idea that teenagers who take drugs are willing to take anything is way off mark. Maybe there are some teenagers who will take anything that's going, but this lot - in much the same way as most adults - have fairly clear ideas about what drugs they take and what drugs they don't. And when it come to heroin, they don't.

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## "Most people start once they hit secondary, eleven and up really"

▶ "See with some drugs," says Martin, "like jacking up smack, if one of your mates took them you'd stick the knife in him for it. See if I was a junky he'd stab me, and if he was a junky I'd stab him. We hate junkies. They tan your houses, they tan their ma's houses because they're strung out and need it.

"It's mainly older folk that are junkies, nineteen and older. Some people do it and say 'I'll try it again, I won't get hooked on it' and that's them. See smack, see if you were to smoke the kit, it's too good. I wouldn't even sit in a room with somebody smoking it. They're just bad guys."

Andy agrees. "I wouldn't take smack - I don't like junkies and I don't like needles. I just wouldn't associate with a needle. I wouldn't puff kit either because that gets you started and it gets heavy and you start stealing off your pals.

"I know a guy who's seventeen who started smoking smack and now he's a junkie. He had an OD a couple of weeks ago. That's why you don't start smoking smack."

These young people's disapproval of heroin is widely shared by older people in the area; but their positive attitude to cannabis is also, perhaps surprisingly, shared by many adults. "My uncle smokes dope," says Craig, "and a few of my aunts smoke dope. But my ma doesn't and she doesn't know I do."

"I've got five uncles that smoke dope," adds Andy, "and three aunts and my ma. Everybody smokes dope here, nobody bothers about it, dope's alright. Even the polis smoke dope. They bust you then they keep it."

We go on to discuss why they think it is that so many young people take drugs. The suggestion that it has something to do with teenage rebellion gets blank looks of incomprehension - the main reason seems to be sheer boredom.

"You take drugs," says Tommy, "because there's fuck all to do. You're sitting in a close, everybody's twiddling their thumbs, so we get a bit of hash, sit back and relax. You get the giggles, bring someone's tape deck out onto the close and just sit there. You get away from it, because you can't handle it, so you say 'fuck this' and skin up a joint."

"If you're full of ecce," continues Andy, "and you go to the dancing, you're not going to think about things because you're too busy enjoying yourself."

But if it's just boredom, I ask, how come so many rich people, who could do lots of other things, still take drugs? Martin replies that "Most rich people don't need drugs - they do it out of choice. They've got their big swimming pools and all that, they do it because they want to. We have to do it."

There is not a lot to do if you're young, poor and live in a big city scheme. "I'd like to do hang-gliding," says Craig, "things like that, but it costs too much money. You can't get the money for things like that. There's youth clubs, you get a game of TT and a game of pool, you

don't get hang-gliding. Once a year you get something like that."

The discussion moves on to how people get money to buy drugs. There's shoplifting, and stealing and selling car stereos - and there is dealing drugs.

"You end up dealing drugs so you've got the money to buy drugs," says Craig. "If you become a drug supplier you can afford it. I was dealing sulph when I was fifteen and I'm still dealing it now. I do it because I need the money for drugs. See if I buy an ounce of sulph, I get that for £90, £100. I'd get 28 grams of sulph out of that, that would give me back £280 and I'll have made a lot of money out of it. That's how you get money.

"Sulph will go like that on a Friday and Saturday because everybody wants it for the weekend, for the dancing. It doesn't really go during the week, but Friday and Saturday it just goes like that."

Certainly if what these young people are saying is anything to go by, there is no shortage of people wanting to buy and sell drugs around their area. "As soon as you walk into a disco," says Andy, "all these people come up to you selling sulph and ecces, and jellies for when you're coming down off your sulph. You can get ecstasy mixed with sulph, ecstasy mixed with coke, anything mixed with anything. You have to watch out though. Sometimes the dealers rip you off with shitty dope, mix it with stuff so they're getting more out of it, making more money. The person who's just buying it gets less. They mix the sulph with glucose or Askit. Some people are selling wee pills and they're just selling painkillers and ripping people off."

So when do kids start taking drugs - I'm beginning to get the impression that these kids have been doing it for quite a while and that you don't need to be too old to get into it.

"Most people start once they hit secondary," says Martin, "eleven and up really. My wee cousin, he was ten, he was going to put a ring into a dealer for a bit of dope, he wanted some dope and he didn't have any money. You give him something personal that you need, you're giving it to him to watch for you, so that he knows you're going to bring the money up the next day."

"There's only one thing I don't want," adds Tommy, suddenly a bit angry, "I don't want my wee sister falling up and down the stairs taking daft tabs and things like that, magic mushies. I wouldn't mind her smoking dope when she grows up a bit but I wouldn't want her to do anything else."

So, to get back to dealing, would Craig sell drugs to kids that were younger than himself?

"Anyone under thirteen I wouldn't sell to. I'd sell a thirteen year old a wee bit of hash if he was grown up. If he was a wee daft wain running about playing soldiers I wouldn't. If they knew what the score was I would."

By now I'm wondering if they know anyone who doesn't take drugs. "Aye, but we don't associate with them," says Martin. "There are

some dafties who stay in at night and do their homework. There used to be one guy who hung about with us, he was a wee dotty guy. He was a real sap, he didn't do nothing. It's not like we're all legless, but we're all getting stoned and he says something stupid about homework."

With the talk increasingly making me wonder if there is anything these teenagers are interested in except taking drugs, I ask them if there is. Everyone gets a bit indignant. "We go to YRC meetings, Militant meetings," says Andy. "They're anti-drugs in a way, but we're not in the Militant. You're not allowed to deal in the Militant. If somebody's in the Militant and they're dealing drugs they'll get chucked out because that's bad for papers. But we always go to their meetings to see what's happening.

"We went to a camp with them with lots of meetings about racism, police harassment, drugs, everything. The drugs debate was good. There was a daftie there, he was from the Socialist Workers Party, and he says 'I think everything should be legalised.' Everything. He was talking about glue-sniffing and all that. He said if everything was legalised you wouldn't have a problem with it. But there's a problem with smack. There shouldn't be any of that, because that just brings loads of junkies that are just going to make the streets unsafe to walk about. Cannabis should be made legal though. It should be decriminalised anyway."

Craig agrees, but isn't sure about other drugs, even ones he takes. "Sulph, I don't know. It's good to take but I don't think it should be legal."

Tommy thinks that, whatever the legal position of drugs, teenagers will keep taking them - and new ones will keep appearing. "Everything changes, doesn't it? You get a drug then somebody'll make up a drug that's better so everybody'll go into that. Then you'll get a drug after that that's even better. Like sulph was good then ecces came out and you say 'sulph is shite' and you start taking the ecces. It's much better. Ketamine's come out now, I've not had it but I know folk who have. It's like ecstasy but it's better. They come out with something better all the time."

The drugs may change, but the background to teenage drug use seems all too familiar. The drugs are around, there's not much else to do and they offer fun in a rather funless world. It would be wrong to see this group of teenagers as in some way typical of teenagers throughout Scotland in their attitudes to drugs, but that's the whole point - there is no 'typical' teenage view on the subject. Sure, there are teenagers who don't take drugs - just as there are children, not yet teenagers, who are experimenting with drugs that these teenagers would consider quite dangerous. The fact is that a lot of teenagers will try drugs at some time or other. Ex-teenagers could do a lot worse than accept that fact - and try to minimise the risks they face when they do. ■

*The names of the teenagers taking part in this discussion have been changed.*



## THE LOCAL OPTION

Fund-raising and government money has helped some children with cerebral palsy to attend the world-famous Peto Institute in Budapest - but are more local initiatives being ignored? **Rosemary Chesson** calls for a rethink.

Two major initiatives in the 1990s have widened the choice of Scottish parents of children with cerebral palsy: financial assistance for children to attend the Peto Institute in Budapest and the opening of a The Craighalbert Centre in Cumbernauld for children in Scotland with motor disorders.

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The 1989 Children Act empowered local authorities to provide funding for parents of handicapped children who wished to take their child abroad for treatment. Many authorities responded by making such funds available, sometimes as much as several thousand pounds per family per year. This development has

certainly enabled many families to gain from the techniques of conductive education as practised at the Peto Institute.

Sending British children to the Peto Institute dates back a long way. The first British child attended there in 1947, shortly after it was founded, and since then there has been a steady



# 'For most families with children with cerebral palsy the existence of a local group or resource is likely to continue to be the major source of support'

flow of children. In the latter half of the 1980s however, there was a rapid increase in numbers, stimulated by media accounts of individual 'successes'. Such children were often supported by local fund-raising, reflecting public awareness of conductive education. But there are now long delays between application and attendance - children may be on a waiting list for up to two years before being offered a place.

There are concerns too about a decline in the standard of practice, because of the high demands being placed on the Institute. For example there have been complaints regarding overcrowded classrooms and low numbers of qualified conductors. The latter, it is claimed, has come about because of 'poaching' by western European countries.

These may turn out to be temporary difficulties once the situation is eased by completion of the International Centre for Conductive Education, based on the Peto site in Budapest and created in response to overseas demand for treatment. The British government has given £5 million towards this centre and places will be available for 31 British children - about 10% of the total intake to the Centre. Even so it seems unlikely that demand will ever be met in full - of 1000 new applications received by the Peto Institute by mid-November 1990 from foreign families, at least half were British.

It must also be borne in mind that not all the families of children with cerebral palsy will want to travel to Budapest. In a recent survey of parents of young children with cerebral palsy attending a pre-school assessment and treatment centre, half were adamant that they would not consider the alternative of going to the Peto Institute.

There is, arguably, less need for parents to leave the country now that the Craighalbert Centre has been established. This, Scotland's own initiative, opened on its Cumbernauld site in October 1991 following the government's commitment of £2.5 million for its establishment and a pledge to meet 60% of its running costs. Local authorities are responsible for placing children there and for the payment of the child's fees.

Initially the centre will cater for children aged two to seven years. Dr Jernqvist, the Director of Craighalbert, is clear that "ideally the work should start when it is first recognised that the baby is not developing normally and long before the parents and the baby himself have begun to think and act according to a model of problems and failure".

Most children are expected to attend on a daily basis, although housing will be available. It is intended in the future that the centre will be able to offer blocks of education for children living some distance from the centre. The centre's philosophy will be based on conductive education as developed by Andras Peto, but, as the Centre's brochure for parents explains, the

education will also draw on 'the best of Scottish educational practice'.

On the face of it this is an outstanding development in provision for increased numbers of children with special needs in Scotland. The Cumbernauld site was chosen because the centre would be within an hour's drive of half the population of Scotland. In this respect it is difficult to argue with the choice of location, although parents in the north of Scotland are likely to feel that the Centre is too distant to make much impact on their situation. The plan to offer intensive blocks of education at Cumbernauld is likely to prove only a partial solution to the problem of distance for these families.

A further difficulty is the relatively low number of places available both at the Craighalbert Centre (estimated at about 40) and at the Peto Institute. The limit on numbers may mean that the government's high cost initiatives will not have a major impact on the lives of many of those who could benefit. For most families with children with cerebral palsy the existence of a local group or resource is likely to continue to be the major source of support. The numbers of children and parents helped by local initiatives far exceeds the combined number of children travelling to Budapest or Birmingham's Foundation for Conductive Education, or likely to attend the new Spastics Society Centre in London.

In view of this, it is surprising that both central and local government have given such strong financial backing to the setting up of these international and national facilities for children with cerebral palsy rather than to local ones. The policy is also at odds with the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act's emphasis on the local community - the promotion of joint initiatives between health, social work and education.

Even more worrying is the fact that there has been little by way of support for new local initiatives, or indeed for the funding of pre-existing early education groups, as such groups are often known. These frequently remain dependent on funding by voluntary agencies. For example the Scottish Council for Spastics' Westerlea School in Edinburgh pays for therapists' time in its early education unit in addition to providing accommodation and meeting maintenance costs. In 1990 the estimated cost per child was £1000 per year.

Even though locally based early education groups appear to be meeting mothers' needs and are seen by therapists to develop parents' handling skills, they have attracted little attention from educationalists, health care professionals or researchers. There has been no government review of their work. Nevertheless, their popularity with parents remains indisputable. Both at Westerlea and Corseford in Paisley there was a steady rise in numbers once groups became established and known locally.

Another interesting development in relation to local groups has been where they have been set up. Early education groups tended at the outset to be set up in Spastics Society schools where there was a pre-existing commitment to conductive education. Now they are to be found in a wide variety of settings, including developmental/pre-school assessment centres and children's hospitals.

A study carried out recently at a pre-school assessment and treatment centre in Aberdeen found that parents supported without exception a proposal to establish an early education group. The latter was seen to offer support, encouragement and reassurance and a means of reducing 'guilt'. The time commitment in attending a group of this sort can be very high for a parent: two to three hours twice or three times a week. In spite of this nine hours of attendance per week with travelling time in addition, mothers in the survey were convinced they would attend. Even a mother of triplets said she would make every attempt to be present, believing that her own mother would be prepared to 'step in and look after the other children'. Indeed at Westerlea up to 1991, of the 46 parents who had attended the group since it was founded in 1986 only one - a father - has dropped out.

In early education groups the influence of conductive education is often most apparent in room furnishing equipment and in programme organisation and content. Both schools and groups have felt able to adapt the 'pure' form of conductive education to methods they have developed independently. As Westerlea School's brochure explains, "We have noted and incorporated those aspects of conductive education we feel are in the best interests of each child and have retained many features we have been developing here at Westerlea over the years which we believe are more useful to our children".

The picture is therefore quite mixed. There are certainly some exciting new possibilities opening up on the national and international scene for Scottish children with cerebral palsy. But these developments have to be set alongside a worrying trend of not supporting new local initiatives. As local education resources are lost, parents in Scotland may be left with little alternative but to apply for admission to the Peto Institute or the Craighalbert Centre if they want to make use of the principles of the Peto Institute.

This need not be the case. By recognising the importance of maintaining and developing local resources for children with cerebral palsy we will be able to make conductive education available to the widest possible number of children. Real choice for the parents of children with cerebral palsy will be maximised by maintaining, supporting and increasing provision where it is most useful - locally. ■



# A Question of Class

The divide between poor and well-off families in Scotland is as real as ever - so what are our schools doing to give pupils from working class families an even break? **David Hughes**, a practising teacher, argues that many teachers and schools are trying to ensure equal opportunities for all - but that more needs to be done to end discrimination against the poor.

'Scotland is a classless society, it's just that some are more classless than others'. This old adage sums up for me the contradiction between the myth and the reality. People like to believe that Scotland is an egalitarian society

but in fact it is class-ridden - and the education system is no exception. A person's accent, dress, occupation, background, school and address are all used by others to make judgements.

This was brought home to me when I was sent to a school in my home town on teaching practice. On arrival, I was met in the corridor by the assistant headteacher. Knowing I was local, he assumed that I had attended the school



# 'There is strong resistance to recognising that class is a factor in pupils' educational experience'

because I had a degree; his school was the High School and as far as he knew no other schools in the area ever sent pupils to university. He was embarrassed, he said, because he could not remember me. I had to point out that there was no reason why he should since I had gone to one of the other secondary schools.

There is strong resistance to recognising that class is a factor in pupils' educational experience and this is one reason why investigation into its effects is long overdue. This investigation will be uncomfortable, but has to be undertaken if we want to do the best for all pupils in the comprehensive system.

The way I define different classes is probably not as rigorous as an academic researcher would, but I think it is useful. Broadly speaking, I would consider parents to be middle class if they are employed in professional or white collar work and working class if they are employed in manual work. I would include unemployed people in the latter category. Working class people are not only generally paid less than middle class people, they also experience less financial security, have more health problems and worse housing conditions. Children of working class parents still perform less well in school than their middle class counterparts and this is why I believe teachers who are concerned about equality should be looking at ways in which these children can be helped to fulfil their educational potential.

Although I have now moved to a new post, for most of my teaching career I taught in a large comprehensive school in a sizeable town in central Scotland. It had been, before comprehensivisation, the town's senior secondary school. After the Parent's Charter, it received a large number of placing requests, initially from parents who had been pupils when it was the senior secondary. It also received placing requests from another secondary school in the town with a declining school population and a collapsing roll.

The school had a high level of success in national examinations and in pupils going on to higher education. As well as the fact that most pupils wore uniform, parents were attracted by the extra-curricular activities on offer, including success in debating competitions. The roll of the school has remained high over the last decade, standing at 1,250 at one time and never falling below 1,100. This is obviously the profile of what many people would regard as a highly successful school. But was it also successful in achieving equal outcomes for children of different social backgrounds?

Since comprehensivisation, the school has five associated primary schools. One served an area of social deprivation, two an area of mixed council and private houses, one (the

most middle class) an area of private houses and one, the largest, an area of council and former SSHA houses built between 1973 and 1978. Each of these primaries had its own identity and, even at secondary school, pupils retained a loyalty to their original school and a sense of how they were different from those who attended the others. For instance, according to the pupils who attended the predominantly working class schools, the middle class primary school pupils 'fancied themselves'. Although staff in all the primary schools did a good job in providing a sound education for all their pupils, a hierarchy of worth still existed in the eyes of the local community. There were placing requests from parents living in the area of the primary serving the purpose-built housing scheme to the middle class primary school. This school used the same colour uniform as the secondary school and in the days before comprehensivisation it had very strong links with the senior secondary, sending most of its pupils there. It was certainly the case that judgements of academic worth based on historical precedent rather than present day circumstances were still alive.

In the early days of comprehensivisation, the secondary school had had a hard time adjusting and some teachers seemed to interact better with the pupils of the middle class primary - the blazers were the same, they spoke the same language, their parents had similar values to their own. The poorest pupils stood out and some staff continued to regard them as non-academic. Today, it is probably still the case that some staff have higher expectations of pupils from the middle class primary school. It is also the case that these pupils continue to dominate the credit/general Standard grade classes and achieve higher examination results. It is worth looking closely at aspects of school life which maintain the division between working class and middle class pupils.

In Scottish society judgements continue to be made on the basis of the language and accent which people use. This was highlighted a while ago when, in a letter to a national newspaper, the writer questioned the intellectual ability of the then SNP MP Jim Sillars because he referred to the Prime Minister as 'feart'. The underlying assumption that a regional dialect implies diminished intellectual capacity seems to me to be highly significant. Teachers in the secondary school I've mentioned shared this assumption, insisting that standard English should be used not only in writing but also in speaking. I believe that since language is all about communication, if pupils are able to communicate effectively using their own dialect and accent then they should be encouraged to do so. Not all homes use received pronunciation

and it is wrong to insist on it if this leaves some pupils feeling inferior. Pupils should be encouraged to express themselves and if this is in their own language then well and good. In written language, it is important that spelling and punctuation rules are observed, but here, too, it is important that pupils retain their own voice. It is when pupils feel unable to express themselves in school, or feel a wide gap between the values of the home and those of the school, that disenchantment and alienation are likely to set in.

Innovations in the curriculum have not benefitted all pupils equally. One of the justifications for Standard grade was that it would help socially disadvantaged pupils by providing a common examination system and preventing pupils being split into sheep and goats early in their secondary school careers. It was also designed to place more emphasis on course work and less on the final examination.

Although this new emphasis on critical thought rather than the mindless regurgitation of facts is justified in educational terms, there is also the matter of resources. Investigation work requires visits to libraries, interviews with relevant agencies and parental support. Design projects benefit from better materials and assistance from parents. Pupils from supportive and well-resourced homes are provided with home computers, another useful tool. It is expected that much of the content of Standard grade courses will be studied by pupils at home while teachers concentrate on helping pupils develop the necessary skills in class. Pupils undoubtedly develop confidence by learning the techniques of discussion, debate and analysis, but the emphasis on homework in Standard grade can be discriminatory. Space and time as well as peace and quiet are required to carry it out. At Higher grade too, fieldwork and formal extended essays require a great deal of work to be done at home. Better educated parents will be able to help their children because they know what is needed and feel able to ask the school if necessary. In addition, more and more courses involve field trips as supplements to course-work and, where there is a charge, working class pupils could be disadvantaged.

Clearly, a number of dilemmas are posed here. It would not make sense to abandon the course-work element of Standard grade because some pupils receive greater parental assistance than others. Nor would it be justified to ban all school trips because some pupils find it difficult to participate. What is required is a recognition that simply announcing that an equal opportunities policy exists is not enough. The effort required to achieve exam success by a working class pupil may be far greater than that

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# 'Most teachers have a strong belief in equal educational opportunity for all'

required by a middle class pupil. In view of this, teachers should ensure that working class pupils receive every possible encouragement and where it is known that practical problems exist, such as lack of study space at home, the school should try to make this available during the lunch break and after school.

The present government has placed great emphasis on the involvement of parents in their children's education through such measures as the right to choice of school and the right to become involved in the management of schools through school boards. However perhaps more thought should be given to whether all parents are equally able to become involved, and if not, what are the barriers which stand in their way.

Parents' evenings are traditionally one of the central ways in which schools communicate vital information to parents about their child's progress. However, they are not necessarily a comfortable experience for all. When people smarten up and arrive in cars - as they are surely entitled to do - they put at a disadvantage those who cannot dress up or who don't have a car. Some feel threatened and don't come to the meeting. Some shift workers or evening workers cannot manage evening meetings, and single parents, usually women, may have problems getting babysitters. Pupils who are not living with their parents for whatever reason may have no one to visit the school and enquire about their progress, thus missing out yet again on personal contact and encouragement.

Each of the five associated primaries I mentioned earlier has a school board and a parent teacher association (PTA), yet the secondary school's school board and PTA consist almost exclusively of parents from the predominantly middle class primary school. Those who do come forward to help deserve thanks for their time, energy and good work - but there is a problem that not all sections of the community are represented.

Clearly, as with homework and school trips, dilemmas exist. It would be absurd to say that all parents' evenings should be cancelled because some parents find it difficult or intimidating to attend. However, if parental support and involvement is beneficial - and I think it is essential - then ways of involving all parents must be sought. Otherwise some pupils are disadvantaged.

We must ask ourselves why some parents can respond to their child's primary school, yet feel ill at ease or threatened by the secondary. Part of the answer may be that parents who attended junior secondary schools before comprehensivisation felt failures within their secondary schools. For these parents, returning to school for parents' evenings may bring back painful memories. Schools must be aware of these feelings, treating parents with respect at all times and making the occasions as informal and welcoming as possible. For parents who cannot attend at the

specified time, there should be greater flexibility of access to teachers.

Just as language is important in communicating effectively with pupils, the use of educational jargon is alienating for many parents. Standard grade spawned its own language (key elements, learning outcomes, extended grade related material and so on). Scotvec introduced more jargon and now revised Highers have followed suit. The 5-14 programme brings with it another set of terminology, often using different language for exactly the same concepts. If teachers are feeling perplexed, you can be sure that parents are too. At a time when education is meant to be becoming more accessible to parents, many are being put off by the jargon used. Unless schools are able to explain what they are doing in terms which everyone can understand, they are likely to confuse all but the most confident and articulate parents.

It might be concluded from all this that schools and teachers are discriminating against working class pupils and their parents - but this would only be a partial view. My experience is that most teachers do their level best to get the most out of and for all pupils. Let me give some examples. The secondary school I mentioned earlier has adopted a number of strategies to help overcome the effects of a disadvantaged background. It has developed straightforward and accessible policies in more easily understood language and these are communicated to parents of pupils in P7, S2 and S4. An equal opportunities policy looking at teaching and learning has been developed which staff accept and incorporate into their work. Homework policy lays down what is expected with a view to reducing the difference between home backgrounds. At my present school, I encourage pupils to use the facilities and resources of the Department at lunch, after school and at intervals between lessons to ensure greater equality of access to teaching materials. Effective bidding for TVEI funding has been used to purchase computing equipment which means that all pupils have access to word processing and desktop publishing facilities in school rather than relying on what individual parents can afford to make available.

As well as matters to do with resourcing, a better understanding of teaching and learning is essential in narrowing the achievement gap between working class and middle class children. Standard grade courses, despite the dangers mentioned earlier, are designed to develop the pupil's ability to research, discuss, analyse and reach conclusions rather than regurgitate facts. By providing a common examination for all, Standard grade has the potential to narrow class divisions. In terms of boosting the confidence of working class pupils, personal and social development courses which enable them to reflect and come to a better understanding of their own experiences are very valuable. Pupil councils, which teach pupils that their views are

valued by the institution, are also important. And when social problems do arise, additional support from guidance staff may prevent pupils from turning their anger and confusion against the school.

Throughout schools in Scotland, more thought is being given to communicating effectively with parents. For instance, more detailed reports let parents and pupils know more about their progress. Instead of a mark, an attitude grade and a one line comment, a full set of information is provided. This report contains information about what is being assessed and is written in plain language, encouraging parents and pupils to comment on progress. Of course, as mentioned earlier, there is always the danger that action to improve communication with parents reaches middle class parents more effectively than working class parents - it is important that what is happening is constantly reviewed.

We have a comprehensive system of education and a staff who are by and large committed to it, and the gap between the educational achievement of working class and middle class pupils has certainly narrowed since the introduction of this system. But we do not have a commitment to the adequate resourcing of comprehensive education by our paymasters, the government. Pupil-centred learning in much smaller classes is essential to compensate for social disadvantage and this would take a massive injection of cash into the system. There is also a need for capital expenditure on school buildings, so that pupils who perhaps live in a materially deprived environment are not also being educated in run-down and depressing buildings.

Most teachers have a strong belief in equal educational opportunity for all - but we also need a national commitment to eliminating the effects on pupils of a disadvantaged background. There is a danger that educating as many children as rapidly and cheaply as possible will take precedence over the richness of children's educational experience. Although most people accept that public services need to be accountable for the money spent on them, we should value education for itself and not purely in market force terms. As one former pupil put it, when asked the purpose of school, 'It's to get the best for you'. Those in charge of comprehensive education should be prepared to invest generously in our children's future to get the best for all of them. ■

*This is an edited version of a paper delivered at a conference organised by the Educational Institute for Scotland and expresses the personal views of the author. The conference papers, which bring together research and practice-based thinking on aspects of inequality in schools are collected in **Class, Race and Gender in Schools - A New Agenda for Policy and Practice in Scottish Education** published by the Scottish Council for Research in Education last month and available from SCRE, 15 St. John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8JR.*



# GLASGOW'S CHILD

**Alison Bell** previews **Scottish Child's** calendar for 1993.

20 **Scottish Child** October/November 1992





# LDREN

Glasgow's Children, The **Scottish Child** Calendar for 1993 features twelve photographs - three of them shown here - of children growing up in the 1990s in the East End of Glasgow. All the photographs were taken over the past 18 months by **Wellhouse Women's Art Group**.

The group, who are based in Easterhouse, first came together in 1986 when their own children were starting nursery and they were offered a chance to try their hand at some crafts and painting. More recently their efforts have been concentrated on printmaking and taking photographs. **Scottish Child** asked them how coming together as a group, and in particular learning to take and develop photographs, has

affected their lives.

"You know how to recognise one of the group," says Marie Hopkins, a founder member, "she's the one coming down the road with three bags of messages, two kids and a camera round her neck. Next thing you know she'll drop the bags and be up on a climbing frame taking pictures of something that's going on. That's what it's like - once you get into the habit of looking you see lots of interesting things to photograph that you might never have noticed before."

It's not just about finding a good subject though. "One of the most difficult things we've had to learn about photography," continues

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► Annette, another member of the group, "is that to get the right photograph you usually have to take more than one shot. If you're used to taking snapshots that can seem to be a terrible waste of film". The group are well aware of the pressures of making ends meet and producing art work - a frequent obstacle they come across in their work is managing to afford film and photographic paper to keep working with!

Nonetheless all the group identify mutual encouragement and support as much as fund raising as the key to making it possible for them to do art work, publish books and even organise

exhibitions. The work of **Wellhouse Women's Art Group** has been recently seen in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Gallery and Street Level Gallery. Their photography exhibition has also toured a number of community venues throughout the city. "People are often bowled over when they see our work," says Jane Kelly of the group. "Maybe they think it's strange that a group of housewives from Easterhouse are into art. We think that's perfectly natural, we all really enjoy ourselves. We still haven't got used to all the attention though."

**Wellhouse Women's Art Group** still meets

every week and is open to new members from the Greater Easterhouse Area. Anyone interested in joining should contact Marie Hopkins at Wellhouse Women's Art Group, Easterhouse Youth Centre Wellhouse Crescent, Glasgow or phone the group on 041-771 5529.

**Glasgow's Children** is available for £6.95 (plus £1 p&p) from Scottish Child, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT. If you want to send the calendar to someone as a gift, just send us a greetings card with your cheque and we'll post the calendar out with the card. Orders can be placed now for delivery in time for Christmas. ■

## The Perfect Teacher

The perfect teacher should be able to put things over to his or her pupils without it seeming as if they were talking to a five year old. This would have to be one of the most important factors in all of the perfect teacher's qualities. The teacher would also have to know their subject not just good but excellently.

A perfect teacher should never shout or be aggressive or abusive towards a pupil if he or she makes a mistake. Instead the teacher should calmly explain to the pupil what they have done wrong and what they should have done.

The teacher should be an excellent listener, always willing to help a pupil who is having difficulty. A good teacher would have to have a sense of humour so they could understand when a pupil is having a joke and when they are being cheeky and disruptive.

I also believe that a teacher would have to be dedicated to their work. I think that if they were not dedicated many would leave from hassle by some pupils.

In the piece of writing I have done I have shown what I believe would make a perfect teacher. Overall I think the perfect teacher should be understanding and able to talk easily to the pupils. I have covered everything I believe the perfect teacher should be, but unfortunately, I don't think anyone who teaches possesses all the qualities I have mentioned.

**Christopher Brown**  
Third Year  
Our Lady's High School, Broxburn

## My School

I think school is pretty good but sometimes it gets boring because when I get up in the morning I think "Oh no." It gets better and better but half way through the day it gets worse and worse. Through the years you start to get used to it and it gets better but sometimes there is this one or two people that dog school because they cannot handle it. I don't like school sometimes because I think when I get to school in the morning I think something is going to happen to me but nothing does.

I think that we should have campaigns in the school to make the school a better place inside - and outside school too. I think we could start by getting a youth club started after school and some common rooms so people can study after school and some sports clubs too, like swimming, football, badminton, even rugby. We could get some sports for girls not just boys, like netball, a girls' football team if any of them are interested, and perhaps we could have a girls' room for themselves, and a boys' room for themselves.

**Graeme Donaldson**  
First year  
Drumchapel High School, Glasgow  
24 Scottish Child October/November 1992

## First Year Impressions

At the start of the first day we stood and watched open mouthed as pupils older and supposedly calmer than any of us charged through the door. For people who didn't enjoy school they all seemed anxious to get in, or was that just the weather? Eventually we arrived at the games hall and were split into classes. Then we went to our classes and met our teachers.

Oh no!

I say that because I had heard lots of stories about the wicked teachers who teach at the school. Luckily that's just another myth that

goes with secondary life. In fact, I think I have been pretty well blessed, as far as teachers go anyway.

As that first day came to an end I realised that all of my worries were stupid (although I still hadn't found the toilets) and since then I have enjoyed every minute of school life. Well, almost every minute anyway!

**Tom Hall**  
First year  
Preston Lodge High School, Prestonpans

## First Year Impressions

My first day at Preston Lodge was spent exaggerating my mental capability to my teacher. At intervals I often grinned unnecessarily to the 5th and 6th year students to show I was a nice wee laddie and they would not want to beat me up behind the bike sheds after school! In return the large delinquents stroked their tattooed fists and curled their upper lip as if to make a silent but sinister warning.

I have to admit, the first few days of secondary education were spent looking up to all the

figures of authority.

Being still ignorant of the geography of the establishment, I reacted to the bell by simply tagging along with a more knowledgeable classmate who did know where to go in this labyrinth of corridors, exits and entrances.

**Jonny Stark**  
First year  
Preston Lodge High School, Prestonpans

## My School

I think Drumchapel High is quite good because I've made new friends. I think Drumchapel High has got too many people in it. My favourite subject is PE because we get football. I hate music because it takes a while for the period to finish. My favourite time is going home. I hate coming to school in the morning because I am

tired. I wish we started at 10.30am and finished at 3.00pm. I wish we got 3 days holiday at the weekend. I wish we got longer playtimes.

**Chris Best**  
First year  
Drumchapel High School, Glasgow

## Bullying - A Short Story

I used to walk to school with Jennifer every day. We would get to the school gates and Susan and her gang would be there. They would sneer and laugh at me and Jennifer, but mainly Jennifer. They would kick her sometimes when she was on her own. They just couldn't leave her alone.

Jennifer was quiet and a good-natured person. She would never try to stir up trouble and she was the *ideal friend*.

One day Jennifer was walking home by herself, because I was off sick. As she was coming round the corner of the road suddenly Susan and her gang jumped on her. They kicked and slapped, nipped and bit her. Jennifer was in an awful mess. When she got home her face was covered in blood. Even when it was cleaned up it was a mess.

Jennifer never went to school for two days. When she came back she was quieter than usual. Susan just laughed. The next day Jennifer didn't turn up at school nor the day after that. At that point I knew something was wrong. After school I went to Jennifer's house. Her mum

answered and said she was upstairs. I went up. I opened the door. Jennifer was sitting on the floor with the blades of two razors. She was crying. She had tried to slash her wrists. I gave her a cuddle and comforted her.

We talked and she told me that the last two days had been murder. She had stopped crying and we sat and talked.

The next day Jennifer left school early. After school I went to see her. As I opened the door I saw Jennifer lying on the floor with an empty paracetamol bottle at her side. She had killed herself. I shouted on her mum. We both cuddled her and cried. I'll never forgive Susan for what she did. I hope she's happy now!

**Nicola Connolly**  
Second year  
Our Lady's High School, Broxburn

*Thanks to the teachers who helped us collect this material - Gavin Pixton, Sally Smith, Mike Falconer and Cathy Weir.*



This month, we are publishing a seven page **new voices, new writing** special about schooldays. We start on these pages with some short pieces written by pupils from schools around Scotland; over the page we have a short story by **Alison Kermack**; then three shorter pieces by Alison; and finally a short story from **Marion Arnott**.

## The Slaying of Mrs Peters

*Prestonpans, 17th June 1967, 11.58 pm*

Darkness lay upon Prestonpans. Everywhere was silent except for the rain which bounced off the pavements and the trees which rustled in the wind. People had long since retired home for the only things that roamed the streets were the stray cats looking for bins to raid.

Suddenly a screech of brakes was heard and a car skidded around the corner. It raced down the road spraying rain water behind it.

A police siren sounded and another car appeared hotly in pursuit.

"I knew we couldn't knock off a jewellery store and get away with it. We'll get caught for sure. Let me off round this corner with my share of the stuff."

The car halted and a dark figure darted into the bushes before the car roared off again. The man lay still watching the road until once again a car passed.

"That's got rid of the coppers," he said.

He looked around nervously, unsure of where he was, before seeing a building not far away, which he could hide in for the night. He ran to it, being careful not to be spotted. He shone a torch on the sign outside: "Preston Lodge High School," he read aloud.

He smashed a window before disappearing inside.

*Preston Lodge High School, 16th June 1992, 9.10am*

The bell rang.

"Leave the hall quietly," bellowed Mr Jones with authority.

Row by row the pupils left assembly, proceeding to their first class of the day. Neil Thompson and Steven Renton trudged slowly towards their English classroom. They entered last and took their seats at the back of the class. Mrs Peters, their English teacher, walked into the classroom and announced what work had to be done.

"Today we are going to write short stories about the night the old Preston Lodge High School burnt down."

She handed out paper, then the pupils started their task. Neil Thompson put up his hand.

"What is it Neil?" enquired Mrs Peters.

"On what date did the fire happen?"

Mrs Peters flicked through her papers. "The night of the 17th of June, 1967," she answered.

The school day ended quickly, and the pupils hurried out of the building anxious to get home. Mrs Peters sat alone in her classroom. Suddenly there was a noise behind the door.

"Who's there?" asked Mrs Peters.

Nothing happened. She started back on her work. Another noise was heard. Mrs Peters got up and walked over to the door cautiously, before tentatively clasping the door handle and pulling it open.

"Aargh!" she screamed hysterically.

The screaming suddenly stopped and an eerie silence echoed around the corridors.

*Preston Lodge High School, 17th June 1992, 8.38am*

Neil ducked under the police barrier surrounding the school.

"Where is the best place for a murderer to hide in the school?" he said aloud.

"The boiler room," he exclaimed.

He made his way down to the boiler room. It was a dark, damp place filled with small gaps of light and cobwebs. Steam rose, clouding up the musty air. Shadows seemed to loom everywhere, although the only sounds were the creaking of pipes, hissing steam and drips of water which splashed off the concrete floor. His footsteps tapped loudly, giving him the feeling he was being followed. He turned around, startled for a second before realising his imagination was running riot. He turned again.

"Aargh!" he screamed.

In front of him was a hideous creature whose flesh was burnt and scarred. Its red eyes glowed and its teeth, sharp as nails, shone like the moon.

"Who are you?" murmured Neil, his voice filled with fear. He stood still, somewhat unable to move. "What are you?"

"I was once human, but now I am charred and burnt. I have suffered for 25 years. Today I shall be released as long as no-one sees my face," said the ghost, with anger.

"Is that why you killed Mrs Peters?" asked Neil.

"Yes, and you must suffer the same fate or I will never be released."

The ghost lunged towards him, but Neil stepped out of the way and darted out of the room into the smoke. He ran up the steel steps as he heard the ghost behind him. He ran through the corridors with his pulse racing and his mind full of thoughts. As he ran he heard the footsteps get nearer, but he dared not look back.

"Only 2 minutes," said the ghost, "only 2 minutes."

Neil jumped down the flights of stairs with the ghost just metres behind him. He dived into a classroom and locked the door, while panting heavily. He ran to the back of the classroom and cringed in the corner. The door was kicked open and the ghost's glare fixed on Neil. The ghost slowly crept forward looking at him with those eyes. Neil's face was riddled with fear. The ghost's charred hand reached out for his throat when there was an almighty eruption.

The floor started cracking open and a red, fiery glow reached up from within the gap. Fire raged upwards, surging around the ghost's body like snakes and soon it was dragged down through the cracks until it disappeared from view. The floor closed up and everything went silent.

Neil gave a sigh of relief before standing up. As he was walking out of the room, he noticed a bag in the middle of the floor. He picked it up. Inside were rings, necklaces and jewellery. He handed over the jewellery to the police but he did not tell them of his experience, for it was obvious, nobody would believe him.

The murderer of Mrs Peters was never found.

**Alan McEwan**

**Second year**

**Preston Lodge High School, Prestonpans**

## Exams and Pressure

The main reason for going to school, people believe, is to pass your exams. All the work you do in 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years is to help you pass your exams. Even this piece of writing could be part of my exam.

Every 15 to 16 year old across the country will take their exams in the month of May. This one month could affect the rest of their life. In

one month they will take exams in everything from English to PE, from Drama to Physics.

The pressure that is on these youths is tremendous. Pressure from family, friends and teachers makes it more difficult for these pupils to concentrate.

The pupils studying for the exams find it hard to do the hours every week which are necessary

to improve their chances of getting a better mark in their exams. So if you know someone who is taking their exams, try to remember there's more to them than just remembering the answers.

**Michael Roarty**

**Third year**

**Our Lady's High School, Broxburn**

# Schooldays



# Bully John B

Aya bastard!

The ball had smacked him straight in the pus, caught him a cracker right between the eyes. He'd just been standing there minding his own, doing nothing to nobody, and the next thing he was bent over with the pain and his nose nipping him like nanty. Somebody was asking for it. He straightened up with his hand over his face and looked about for the blame. A wee primary four laddy in a Hearts strip was stood open-mouthed watching him.

You, you wee shite.

The laddy looked a bit scared standing there, his legs awful skinny inside they big socks. He mightn't have meant it right enough, it mightn't've been deliberate you couldn't tell... Ach, like shite it wasn't. His pals over at the other side of the playground were howling laughing and yelling Jelly Belly John, Jelly Belly John. Wee nyaffs. They were always getting at him. And him with a sore face and this wee laddy grinning at him, thinking he would

get away with it. It wasn't like that though. You didn't get away with fuck all. He gritted his teeth and tanked off across the playground after the wee guy, roaring at him.

Course soon as the chase was on everything else stopped. They all stopped their stupid wee kids games which he wouldn't bother his arse with if you paid him so they needn't think they were smart no letting him play. They were all wanting in on his game but. Dancing around and shouting at him and giving him a skite as he went past. Him mind, no wee laddy. He was going to stop and get them back but he had to get the wee guy too. And he was a nippy wee bugger. He kept dodging in and out of folk, grabbing onto them and spinning round, laughing at John from behind their backs cause he was a crap runner and couldn't keep up. All his pals kept jumping in and all, getting their kill at him like usual, poking him and skipping backwards till he turned round, then running off shouting Jelly Belly on the loose! If he could

just get a hold of one of them. He hated them. He hated them like he hated at school dinners when he got made to eat cabbage even when he was gagging on it. More. More like the teacher when she called him J.B. and smiled at the rest of the class cause while she was pretending to mean his initials she also meant Jelly Belly which they all knew and she knew except she wasn't caring because he was supposed to be a bully or something meaning he picked on folk weer than him except he didn't and she did like she was always picking on him.

He was puggled out and his head was hot and bursting with something thumping inside. He stopped in a corner under the shelter, sweating buckets, trying to breath normal. They made a circle round him and none of them looked as knackered as he was. They were still in breath and laughing at him and running up one at a time and pushing him and having just a big carry on.

I'll have the lot of yous, I'm telling you, I'm really going to get yous.





# Jack

**Alison Kermack**

He just couldn't make them see. To make them... understand. To see how. How they couldn't. They were just no to treat him that way. There was something just not right. They weren't right to be like that to him. Rotten wee shites. The shites. He hadn't done nothing.

You're all shites. Get away from me. You're all full of shite.

They couldn't hear him. They were that loud with calling him names and nobody could hear him. Nobody was even listening.

This sharp kind of pain shot right up his spine where one of the lassies had stuck the boot in from behind and when he turned round she was off screaming like he was a monster. There was a roaring in his head which was coming out his mouth which was impossible to stop and he couldn't stop. The wee guy with the Hearts strip was there in front of him and jumping up and down scratching his oxters and likely making gorilla noises except he couldn't hear for the roaring. He didn't really move towards the

laddy, just kind of swung his arm out and felt the guy's nose going squashy under his fist and then the both of them falling and landing with him on top of the laddy and blood on his shirt. And it was just him and the laddy cause everyone else was away somewhere and the laddy was greeting his eyes out.

You were asking for it you wee shite which was all he could really say in the circumstances but except it had been a bit of an accident in the way that he hadn't really been meaning it at all exactly.

The laddy started bawling louder cause of miss what's her face that did the dinners coming out the school with a big pack of kids round her. She didn't say nothing, just grabbed John's arm at the top so as it hurt and pulled him up on his feet. Stupid cow.

You're no allowed to hurt me. I'll get you done, you're no allowed.

She was allowed but. She didn't care. She thought it didn't matter cause probably cause he deserved it.

You're a stupid cow.

She gripped him really harder and her face got red but she still never said anything, just took him to the headmistress's office.

The headmistress was having a lunch meeting and he was to sit on the seat and wait.

He swung his legs a bit.

The walls were a sort of sickly colour or like when you had the skitters. He got up and had a look at the papers on the desk but none had his name on. She even had a wee sink in here which was a bit daft. How did she have a wee sink? Maybe she peed in it if she couldn't be arsed going to the loo.

There was a calendar on her desk with a clicky bit for changing the day. He clicked it round to make it the morn so the headmistress wouldn't be coming to speak to him. Maybe he could click it round for years and years so he would be grown up and not going to school and having people be horrible to him.

He could hear her shoes in the corridor and went and sat back in the seat. They walls were starting to give him the boke.

He had an idea.

When she came in the door behind him he shut one of his eyes and turned round. She walked past him and sat down at her desk.

Is something wrong with your eye John?

Well it was just this wee laddy went and kicked a ball in my face and it hurt my eye. I can't see properly out it. It's still sore.

She gave one of they big heavy sighs sort of to show she wasn't believing him probably.

I don't recall Mrs Davies saying anything about a sore eye when she brought you in John.

Well it wasn't sore straight away to begin with but it's sore now and I can't hardly see. I can't see properly even a wee bit.

She wasn't listening again.

However I do remember you feigning a similar affliction on a previous occasion. It's not the first time I've had to speak to you about this is it?

He didn't answer her with it no being a real question and also how there wasn't any use. He

stopped pretending his eye was hurt though. He was feeling a bit daft about it by now. But his head really was sore. Something was still thumping inside and he couldn't hear properly what she was saying. No that he was about to tell her. There was no point. They never believed things they couldn't see.

I don't know if there's any point talking to you John, it doesn't seem to make any difference. I've tried being reasonable with you, it's not as if I've been unreasonable. I've explained exactly why it is you can't go around hitting and kicking as you please. You're bigger and stronger than anyone else in this school and liable to cause some of the other children physical damage. I have a responsibility towards my pupils and to their parents. Can you imagine how I feel having to send James home with a bloody nose? Do you ever take the time to try and imagine how other people are feeling?

He didn't know what she was on about. She was always talking like this. No really horrible or nothing, she wasn't really being nasty. But just so he couldn't properly understand about what she was saying. And she never knew the real truth of what happened. She just wanted to talk to him and then he could go. She was always just a wee bit horrible and then he could leave.

I've thought very carefully about this John, and I can only come up with one solution.

She was always saying that stuff the headmistress, about how she thought carefully and that. She was always on at him to think carefully and all. He didn't know what she was talking about. He didn't know how to think carefully with all the other kids and the teacher and everybody calling him Jelly Belly and acting like he was a monster or something. Nobody called her Jelly Belly. He didn't see how he could think like her.

I'm going to have to send a letter home to your parents. I want them to come up and see me so we can discuss your future here.

He didn't say anything.

She was stopped talking now and watching him but he didn't say anything. She was probably waiting to see if he was going to greet. He didn't want to greet cause probably she was hoping he would but he was going to anyway, he couldn't help it. His da would leather him when he got the letter. No for fighting or nothing which was O.K. His da thought it was good to fight so as no to let folk get away with fuck all but he went rade if he had to go up to the school. He was going to chuck a benny when he got the letter. It was horrible when his da went mental. Worse than the teacher calling him J.B. Worse than the other kids no letting him play with them. He was bawling now and behaving like a right guff but he couldn't stop it. It was horrible.

I hope you don't think crocodile tears are going to affect my decision John. It's a bit late for tears and regrets now. It's time you were back in class.

He didn't know what she was on about. He didn't know what he was supposed to do. He just sat there greeting, making a fool of hisself. ■

# happy birthday!



**RSSPCC** sends all good wishes to  
Scottish Child on your 4th birthday  
41 Polwarth Terrace, Edinburgh  
Tel: 031-337 8539

## SCOTTISH INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS

21 ELMBANK STREET,  
GLASGOW G2 4PE  
TEL: 041-204 3365

56 ALBANY STREET,  
EDINBURGH  
TEL: 031-556 0924

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Promoting Education in the Community  
**WE WISH SCOTTISH CHILD A HAPPY  
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West Coates House, 90 Haymarket Terr,  
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**Happy Birthday to  
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71 Gairbraird Avenue,  
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## ALL GOOD WISHES

### **National Foster Care Association**

*working in partnership  
for foster care.*

25 Elmbank Street, Glasgow G2 4PB  
Tel: 041-248 5566

Happy 4th Birthday from the **Paisley  
Children's Centre**, Stow Street, Paisley.

Special Birthday Greetings from our 'Tid',  
**Department of Education, Lothian  
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Wishing your venture continued success  
from **Crozier, Philpott, Platt and Niblett.**

Best Wishes for the year ahead from  
**Sister Consolata**, Good Shepherd  
Centre, Bishopton.

Happy Birthday to Scottish Child with  
our best wishes from  
**Family Conciliation Scotland.**

All the best on your 4th birthday from **Jim  
and Peggy Kyle.**

Congratulations on another successful  
year from **Ballikinrain School**, Balfon.

Best Wishes from **NCH Scotland** for your  
4th birthday.

Best Wishes for the future from the  
**Strathclyde Stepfamily Association.**

Birthday good wishes from  
**Mrs. E. Erskine.**

Wishing Scottish Child all the best on its  
4th birthday,  
**Ruth Anderson & Co.**

With our best wishes, **Tessa Ransford**,  
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A birthday gift for Scottish Child from,  
**Child Guidance Clinic and Adolescent  
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## STEPPING STONES IN SCOTLAND

-providing opportunities for young  
families through 10 community-based  
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wishes **SCOTTISH CHILD** a happy 4th  
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Stepping Stones in Scotland, 14 Elliot Place,  
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## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

.....

*from all of us in the*  
**Western Isles Children's  
Panel**

## **Birthday good wishes from Friends of Scottish Child...**

**John Aitkenhead**, Castle Douglas  
**Morag Aitkenhead**, Castle Douglas  
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**Young Families Now Project**, Aberdeen  
**Who Cares? Scotland**  
**William Wolfe**, Edinburgh  
**Frances Young**, Livingston  
  
**plus anonymous Friends**



# 3 PIECES BY ALISON KERMACK

## SALTIRE

when ah wiz it skule  
thur wiz loatsy flagz  
oan thi frunty wur  
Text Books

anna olwaze thot  
it wiz thi teechur  
hud pit a cross  
throo thi scoattish wun

## Respecting Literature in Schools

thur books  
ur offy  
hardty reed

thay hate yi  
ti brake  
thi spine

if thay catch yi  
thay pull it  
ooty yur hans  
an hammur thi hard edj  
doon oan yur heed

yi hufty sit strate  
wi it oapin  
nae mairin 30°  
peerin inty thi shaddy  
it thi sentir  
trine tay make oot  
whit it sayz

## THE YELLY GROOP

Kerry sat rite forwudz wi hur chayr tiltin taywordz the desk annur angkulz roon the frunt legs soze she didny slip. She lentur hole wayt oan the desk, hur ize mebbly 10 centymeturz fi the paypur annur left arrum crookt aw proatektif roon the joatter.

It wiz maths so yi kid yooz a pensul which wiz gid kiz then yi kid rub oot yir mistayks an the teechur didny ken yid mayd thum. An sheed neerly finshd exurcize 7B awreddy. She loked uppit the big cloak oan the waw an seen it hud oany taykn 12 minnits. That wiz ded gid fir sumdy in the yelly groop.

At the bakky the book that had ansurz yi wur allowd tay luke it sept thay didny gi yi the wurkin. Kerry loked an foond she oany hud 2 rite. She sayd a swayr wurd oot lowd by mistayk an then loked ower hur shooder tay check the teechur wizny neer. The teechur wiz bihynd hur desk.

She hudty coapy a bit an yooz the rubbur a loat an cheet oan summy thum by no showin the wurkin bit it oany took 10 mayr minnits tay git thum aw rite. Mebbly the teechur wid gi hur a 'good'. She pickd uppur joatter an joynd the endy the kyoo tay gittit markt.

When hur turn caym the teechur loked it the book furra cupply sekkins. "I don't like this work AT ALL, Kerry," she sez. "Go back and write it out again."

Kerry wokd back tayur desk wi theez wobblin bitsy wottur innur ize. She didny wont thum follin so she tryd tay stoap rimembrin about the furst day. Thatz when sheed wentan spilt the paynt an it hud went oan the teechurs nyoo froak. Thatz how the teechur didny lykur. Thatz how she olwaze hudty day hur wurk agayn. Thatz how she hudty stay in the yelly groop.



# An Exchange of Views

Patsy knew wearing her Runrig t-shirt was a mistake when she saw the headteacher's eyebrow lift slightly at the sight of it. Mrs. Powell, with glossy black wings of hair swept along the side of her head, was wearing a sensationally well-tailored suit with shoulder pads which actually stayed in place and was obviously an adherent of the principles of power dressing. Patsy felt herself dwindling under the aggression of the other woman's elegance.

"Ah, David's mummy. I've been expecting you." Mrs. Powell extended her hand and pressed Patsy's lightly. "Please step this way into my office."

Patsy's trainers squeaked an accompaniment to the confident click of Mrs. Powell's heels on the parquet floor. She'd have walked on tiptoe had not the school janitor fixed her with a hard gaze from his post under the sign which proclaimed *Welcome to Greenwood Primary School*. He always stood there while the

headteacher interviewed parents, effortlessly projecting an air of silent menace to encourage the stropy ones not to be Difficult.

There was a curious effect of underwater gloom in the headteacher's office, caused by the dusty sunlight struggling to penetrate the heavy sea-green curtains at the windows. Patsy, looking at David standing in front of the big desk, hoped that it was this that accounted for his sickly palor.

Her heart twisted painfully as she took in the trying-to-be-brave set of his shoulders and the hopelessness of his bowed head. She willed him to look up at her, but though she sensed that he knew her eyes were on him, he kept his head down, apparently absorbed in a study of the toes of his shoes. It was serious trouble if he was even cutting himself off from her: the kind of trouble mummy wouldn't like.

Her mind flicked rapidly through the catalogue of unforgiveable crimes committed

by seven year-olds. Theft? Vandalism? Arson? Flashing at girls? God forbid, flashing at a teacher? Mrs. Powell halted her flight of fancy before she reached murder.

"Do sit down". The words were polite, the tone peremptory, and for an instant Patsy hesitated, unsure whether the instruction was for her or David. Then, flushed and resentful at her own silliness and the headteacher's rudeness, she slid into the chair positioned several feet from Mrs. Powell's desk.

The truly damnable thing about teachers was that they all seemed to have the knack of catching her off guard and conjuring up the nervous child she'd been before. They had only one way of speaking, and that was the way they spoke to the children: commanding, imperious and *standing no nonsense from the likes of you, my girl*.

Thoroughly rattled, Patsy crossed her legs and sent her handbag tumbling to the floor. She





## Marion Arnott

scrambled after it and its contents, taking her time in the hope that the fiery blush creeping up from her collarbone would subside before she had to show her face above desk level.

Mrs. Powell sat pointedly waiting, composed and cool, showing only the slightest irritation as she glanced at her watch. Patsy looked up at David. He was staring straight ahead of him now, an expression very like horrified contempt stamped across his features. Patsy winced. She would probably be an embarrassment to him for the rest of his life. She accidentally caught Mrs. Powell's eye as she settled back into her chair and winced again. If only the bell would ring for home time and let her out of here.

Mrs. Powell lifted a folder and extracted a sheet of paper from it. "This is a report on a very nasty incident which took place in the playground at lunchtime on Monday. I regret to inform you that David was involved in it."

Patsy, fascinated by the melodious lowness

of Mrs. Powell's voice, gazed absently at a plant pot on the desk and braced herself for the worst, but there was only silence. She realised that the other woman was waiting for something. An echo from the past drifted sickeningly into her mind. *Look at me when I'm talking to you, girl.* She allowed herself a small defiance of teachers past and present and continued to stare at the dusty geranium for a few moments more before looking Mrs. Powell full in the face.

"David has committed a most serious assault on another boy. He was caught red-handed by the janitor kicking the boy in the ribs as he lay helpless on the ground. He had to be forcibly restrained from doing him real damage."

Patsy blinked in astonishment. She turned sideways and studied her son. His head was down again, exposing the willow slenderness of the nape of his neck. He was the smallest boy in his class, known for the dreamy gentleness of his ways. This was the boy the men in the family wanted to toughen up for fear he turned effeminate. Foolishly, she blurted out her doubts. Mrs. Powell's mouth turned up at the corners in the semblance of a smile.

"It's a wise mother who knows her own child..." She crooked her finger at David, and there was a hint of Siberian winter in her tone as she spoke to him. "Come closer, David. Don't drag your feet like that. Stand where mummy can see you. Now, what have you to say for yourself?"

"It's true, mumi. I was kicking him". The confession was muffled but evidently satisfactory to Mrs. Powell who leaned back in her chair.

Patsy supposed that the headteacher thought she could afford to relax now that she had mother and son exactly where she wanted them. David and Patsy stared at one another in mutual misery.

"It is vital for David to learn that we do not do that sort of thing at Greenwood. Indeed we must learn that that sort of behaviour is unacceptable anywhere. I'm sure you agree."

Under the compulsion of Mrs. Powell's lustrous grey eyes and the practised reasonableness of that hypnotic voice, Patsy found herself nodding.

"I'm so glad you see it our way. We try very hard to provide a safe and happy environment for children. Anti-social behaviour is not tolerated here. However it is so much easier to deal with disruptive elements when parents such as yourself are prepared to support us and work with us towards the goal of producing children with well-rounded and well-adjusted personalities."

Mrs. Powell smiled warmly. It made Patsy squirm. She was being rewarded for going along with Mrs. Powell. Blessed are the well-rounded and well-adjusted for they shall be approved of.

She looked over at David. He stood sullen and mute and very alone. He couldn't have

understood much of what had been said, which was fortunate, but ridiculous when the interview was all about him. Without warning, he lifted his head and glared at her. She saw blind fury in his eyes.

It was like taking an arrow in her chest. He glowered steadily at her and then at Mrs. Powell, bestowing the same compound of anger and resentment on them both. So he had understood that much at least: they were united against him. Guilt made her angry. What did he expect? He couldn't go around kicking people's lights in and expect her to defend him. But still she felt the Judas taint. She could have said something in his favour. Anti-social was putting it a bit strongly. He'd never been in trouble before. He'd always had good reports from his teachers. She wished she'd said something, anything, just so that he didn't feel alone.

Mrs. Powell rose and came round to the front of her desk. She perched on the edge, looking incongruously glamorous, and beckoned David nearer. Reluctantly, David edged forward, jamming his fists into his pockets. Mrs. Powell bent down, suddenly swooping low until her face was level with his. Patsy saw him tense and felt an answering rigidity throughout her body. David was still glowering, and Mrs. Powell laid her hands on his shoulders and brought her face even closer. She was bending his will to hers, forcing the defiance out of him.

Patsy teetered on the verge of hysterical empathy with her son. She could not have been more shocked if the headteacher had struck him. She was reminded of a big black bird of prey with a lamb in its claws. She saw David go limp and then drop his eyes. After a moment, Mrs. Powell released him and, amazingly, when she spoke it was in the same melodious voice as before.

"David, since you cannot be trusted to behave like a civilised child in the playground, for the next two weeks you will sit in my office throughout the lunch hour and not be allowed to play with the other children. You will bring your maths workbook and pass the time usefully."

She straightened up and smiled charmingly at Patsy. "I'm so glad we had this little chat. Communication between home and school is so important for the children who are the concern of us all, and for the furtherance of mutual understanding". She looked at her watch. "My goodness, look at the time". With a surge of relief, Patsy realised she was about to be dismissed.

Mrs. Powell was shepherding her towards the door, talking all the while. "It has been a pleasure to meet you and if you have any further problems with David I hope that you will remember that my door is always open to parents. I do welcome an exchange of views and the opportunity to get to know all you mums." ■



## The Unhappy Princess

### FAMILY SECRETS

Patti Davis

Sidgwick & Jackson £14.99

Colin Chalmers

It's election time once again in the United States - and 'family values' are high on the political agenda. It's a phrase much beloved of the political right in America, one that is used to attack single parent families, gays, abortion rights, whatever - and, in the process, define the chosen way of life of middle America as God's way. The right way.

Ronald Reagan is still the darling of middle America. Bush is tainted with economic ills; politicians in general are mistrusted; but Reagan remains a symbol of wholesomeness for many members of America's 'contented classes'. What this book, written by Ronald Reagan's daughter, reveals is just how hypocritical and hollow Ronald Reagan's 'wholesomeness' and concern for 'family values' actually was.

Patti Davis, or Patti Reagan as she was before she changed her name, was told she had been a bad girl from before she was even born. Her mother would tell her how she was born two months prematurely, hooked her fingers onto her mother's ribs (sic) while in the womb and

had to be put into an incubator for two months.

As Patti Davis points out, however, there is a more realistic explanation for the date of her birth (she was born seven months after her parents were married) - that she was conceived two months before her parents were married. But pre-marital sex being one of the big Don't-Dos of American Family Values, another explanation had to be found. And so the story of the clinging, difficult child was born along with Patti - she was to be the scapegoat for the hypocrisy at the heart of this unhappy family. The denying, hypocritical parents blaming the difficult child for all their problems - it was a scenario that was to be replayed throughout Patti's childhood.

Patti first remembers being hit by her mother when she was eight. It escalated to become a weekly, sometimes daily, event. Her mother would hit her across the face, leaving marks - signs, for Patti, of at least some parental contact.

Patti would constantly be told what a difficult child she was - and never be listened to when she complained about her own difficulties. Once, when her father was again telling her off for being so difficult, she asked "Well, why does she hit me?" Her father told her "Patti, that never happened."

One typical attack was after Patti's mother found some lipstick in Patti's drawer.

"What is this?" she asked.

"Someone gave it to me."

"Who?"

"I don't remember." I wasn't going to drag anyone else into this madness.

"I told you that you were not to wear lipstick," she said, moving closer to me.

"I'm not wearing it. Why did you look in my drawer?"

"I was putting away your socks."

"It wasn't in that drawer," I snapped back.

"Are you calling me a liar?" my mother asked, her voice still controlled, her eyes boring into me.

"All I said was that it wasn't in with my socks."

I knew what was coming; I watched her hand draw back as if in slow motion, and I clenched my jaw because I'd learned that it hurt less that way. I only blinked at the moment of impact.

By the time my father came home, the redness had faded from my cheek, and the story had been changed.

The world of an abused child is not just one where the child is attacked by adults - it is one in which the child is unable to get anyone to listen to her. Once a family friend of the Reagans saw Patti's mother hitting Patti - blow after blow on her head and ears. In a response that might go some way to explaining why there are so many 'gates' in the US, the friend told Nancy "Don't ever do that in front of me again". The problem wasn't that Nancy Reagan hit her daughter - it was that she made the mistake of doing it in front of another adult.

It isn't the violence, however, that really



sticks in Patti's mind. This book gives account after account of how Patti was consistently blamed for her mother's disturbed state of mind and the antagonism between mother and daughter that resulted. "How are you going to feel when they're lowering your mother into the ground?" her grandmother once asked her as a child, "she's my daughter and you're killing her. I'll never forgive you for that. I don't like you very much right now. I love you because you're my granddaughter, but I don't like you." Her grandfather had his tuppence worth too: "Emotions can kill someone, you know. And if you don't start behaving, we could lose her".

It was Ronald Reagan, her father and Leader of the Free World for most of the 1980s, who most consistently denied Patti's suffering - and blamed her for her mothers' problems. He told Patti how her mother, "might have a nervous breakdown. And it could be fatal. Now she doesn't know I'm telling you this, but I can't sit back and let you destroy her health."

The pretence, denial and sheer blindness to this girl's suffering did not, of course, come to an end when Patti grew up. When she tried to tell her father about the suffering she experienced during her childhood later on, her father, by now Governor of California, simply denied it. "What the hell is it with you? Why do you make these things up about your mother? She is the most loving, caring person in the world, and you've caused her nothing but unhappiness. She has never done these things you are accusing her of. All she's ever wanted is to have a happy family and to be a mother." At one point Patti was sent to a psychiatrist, but she soon found out that the psychiatrist was telling her parents what she was saying in her sessions. The daughter in this family was never exactly encouraged to be independent. Not surprisingly, Patti reports that her parents are not happy about this book.

Patti Davis spends much of this book trying to understand and explain her parents' behaviour. Indeed she is all too ready to absolve her parents of their responsibility for how they treated her - she calls it 'understanding' and 'forgiving' them. Despite the fact that her parents continue to deny that Patti ever was abused, Patti bends over backwards to make excuses for their behaviour.

She explains, for instance, how her father had an alcoholic father - certainly going some way to explaining his emotional blankness, his cutting off from the pain around him. But many people who suffer in their childhood are able to surmount that suffering by facing it, standing up to those who have inflicted it and avoid inflicting suffering on others. Not Ronald Reagan.

In his autobiography, he described an incident with his own father from his childhood: "I bent over him, smelling the sharp odor of whiskey from the speakeasy. I got a fistful of his overcoat. Opening the door, I managed to drag him inside and get him to bed. In a few days, he was the bluff, hearty man I knew and loved and will always remember." He has chosen not to feel, to deny the pain - and Patti was one of the people who suffered for this denial.

Nancy Reagan, meanwhile, comes across as an even more vain, selfish, abusive and thoroughly unlikeable human being. Patti remembers a childhood visit to the Philippines

where Patti saw, for the first time, enormous poverty. She asked her mother "Don't you feel guilty about how we live when you see this?" "Of course not," replied her mother, 'turning to me with an expression that mocked my concern'.

Nancy Reagan's most famous political activity was the 'Just Say No!' anti-drugs campaign. While she ran it she was addicted to tranquilizers. She was part of 'the Miltown generation' - Miltown being a tranquilizer widely prescribed to American housewives in the fifties and early sixties. The fact that Nancy Reagan could be so identified with anti-drugs campaigning while herself being dependent on drugs and keeping the fact secret is just one example of the hypocrisy that permeated this family - and the political elite into which the Reagans were welcomed.

Any story about a cold, abusive family will be a sad one - but what gives this story added poignancy, of course, is the fact that Ronald Reagan was President of the United States for eight years. Not any old President either - one of the most popular Presidents in American history, the one who stood up for 'simple, American family values' and 'made America great again'. The truth, in fact, is that Ronald Reagan was just an old-fashioned bigot.

There are some fascinating, and at times frightening, insights in this book into just how reactionary Ronald Reagan actually was. He thought that President John Kennedy was "very socialist and, you know, that's the first step to Communism". When President Kennedy was assassinated, Patti remembers hoping that her parents would be upset, like all the other parents at school. They weren't. Ronald Reagan's only reaction to the TV coverage was to say about Jackie Kennedy, a few hours after her husband had been killed, "Couldn't she have changed her suit? There's blood all over it."

He was a racist too. Commenting on a mixed couple Patti saw, he told her that, "Those things just don't work. It's not just their skin colour - it goes deeper than that. Relationships between the races just don't work out". Except for servants, of course; the only black people Patti remembers in her childhood home were servants and maids.

Reagan's views on Vietnam were, in keeping with the rest of his thoughts, pretty straightforward. During one discussion at the Reagan household during the Vietnam war, a friend of Patti's who was in the Marines, gave his view that "The government isn't backing us up. We should be wiping out all those gooks".

"Well, that's true," my father answered. "That's what I've been hollering about all along. I wish all these flag-burners and Communist sympathizers would stop spreading lies and propaganda."

"Why don't we just nuke 'em?" Ron (Patti's brother) piped up. He was twelve.

"That wouldn't be a bad idea," my father agreed.

But it's neither the abuse within the family or the reactionary politics of Ronald Reagan that is the most fascinating thing about this book - it is the parallels between the Reagan household and Reagan's America that are so marked.

Reagan is remembered by those who admire him as the President who stood up for school prayer and the American flag, not for the fact

that during his Presidency those in poverty in the US increased by nearly a third - there was grand talk about loyalty and honour as the real issues were ignored and those without power were made to suffer. It was just the same at home. Patti recalls that, as far as her mother was concerned, 'You could break your leg in five places, but if you said "Shit" she'd forget about the leg and chastise you for using profanity'. She goes on to describe the 'Alice-down-the-rabbit-hole' aspect to our family. Things were always the wrong size. Little skirmishes took on major proportions, and big dramas were tossed aside over dinner'. More than a few parallels there with the US electoral system.

Patti recalls attending a speech her father gave in 1964 in support of Barry Goldwater's Presidential campaign. In the speech he said,

"We can preserve for our children this, the last hope of man on earth, or we can sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children, and our children's children, say of us, we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done."

Patti was confused 'Was my father suggesting that the only hope for man on earth was Barry Goldwater? And where did the thousand years of darkness come in?' For Reagan, that speech was a first step towards his eventual nomination by the Republican Party for President - and for the rest of us it was a foretaste of the meaningless mumbo-jumbo that led Ronald Reagan, the man whose daughter remembers him as 'an absence', to be praised by the US's ruling circles as the 'Great Communicator'.

As she grew up, Patti rebelled against her parents, attending some anti-nuclear events. She started taking amphetamines, then cocaine, and selling pounds of grass to pay for therapy that her parents couldn't control. Grass 'eased the fears that were gnawing at me' - and as her father was being elected President of the United States in 1980, Patti was smoking a joint in a side street off Sunset Boulevard.

This is a sad book about a sad family. But while Patti Davis exposes the hollowness and hypocrisy that lies at the heart of her own family she fails to understand the importance for the rest of us of having people like this rule our lives. She shows little insight into the connections between her parents' attitude to her as a daughter and their attitude to the world as President and First Lady.

Describing the experience of walking around the White House after her father had become President, Patti Davis writes, 'I was struck by the realisation that this was a perfect house for my father - removed, up on a hill, protected by fences and guards... It was a perfect house for my mother, too, because it's a confined environment and her influence could easily be felt everywhere.'

But of course the White House is not a 'confined environment' at all - it is the military and political headquarters of the most powerful nation in the world. The fact that someone as hollow and bigoted as this book reveals Ronald Reagan to be could be allowed to be in charge there, and is still seen by many as a champion of all that is best about America, raises more than a few worries about the political system - and the society - that was so keen to have him as its figurehead.

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## Learning to Work with Sexual Abuse

### CAN YOU HEAR ME?

**Helen Happer, Maureen Sanders and Janice Thomson**  
**Jordanhill College of Education/Overnewton Centre**  
**£35**

**Jean Raeburn**

*'If we can entertain the possibility that sexual abuse exists then we are more likely to recognise a hurt child.'*

**Can You Hear Me?** is a training pack designed to raise awareness of child sexual abuse. It is the result of a collaborative venture between Jordanhill College Division of Social Work and the Overnewton Centre, home of the RSSPCC's child sexual abuse project.

The material, which includes video as an integral part, is designed as a one-day training programme for use with those whose work brings them into contact with children - teachers, social workers, health visitors, foster parents and residential care workers. It is suggested that the material may also provide an introduction to a longer course for more experienced workers - those working more explicitly with children who have been sexually abused.

The pack is visually very attractive. Set in an enormous video-style box with a cover design which is both eye-catching and effective - a brightly-coloured child's painting on a black

background - it is impossible not to want to open the box! Inside is a video, trainer's guide with course notes and a collection of assorted papers, including acetates and handouts for copying. The course notes are colour coded - blue for trainers' instructions, yellow for activities, and so on. The language is simple and understandable.

The outline programme includes a range of useful exercises which build from icebreakers on values and attitudes, through definitions and consequences of sexual abuse, to listening to children. This is likely to provide a helpful introduction and overview for those looking at the subject for the first time. It is slightly limited in provision of knowledge; emphasis, instead, is on sharing of views. This is not necessarily a problem since a knowledgeable and skilled trainer will feed in information appropriately.

However no comment is made about the experience and skills which may be necessary in leading a workshop of this kind. Perhaps it is assumed. In one section headed 'Preparing Yourself to Train' reference is made to background reading prior to the event. Two booklists are provided and four books are marked as 'essential reading'. At least one other is referred to in the text. At best, the messages about experience are mixed. For example, under 'Preparing the Venue' very basic detailed advice is given about the suitability of rooms, chairs, etc. This assumption of little knowledge contrasts markedly with unsupported instructions further on to 'take into account gender, race, roles'. Even a skilled trainer might well have looked for a little guidance here.

The inclusion of a video tape obviously

enhances any training package. This video contains three clips. The first is of a multi-disciplinary group of professionals remembering their first experiences of 'discovery' along with their feelings and response. This is interspersed with comments from the general public. The second is a two minute cartoon of a 'shrinking child' whose parents manage neither to hear him or notice him visibly shrink before their eyes. It is likely to serve as a good-humoured prompt to group discussion.

The third, and perhaps most useful clip, includes comments from adult survivors of sexual abuse about their experience and what happened when they tried to tell.

The video is well made and interesting, although I wonder how useful the first clip is given that the activity following seems to move people on rather than encourage either response to or use of the video material. It could be argued that the training group might more usefully take part in a similar discussion themselves rather than observe others doing so.

This is my slight dissatisfaction with the package - the tape does not interact as well with the programme as it ought to. The most noticeable example of this is in activity 5 which immediately follows section 2 of the tape but sets a task linked to section 3 - not yet viewed.

This is, though, a problem in the compilation of the material rather than in the material itself. However, it would be easy to overlook this mismatch in preparing to lead the work. Nonetheless, the pack is very competitively priced at only £35 and is likely to be useful to a whole range of practitioners and will be well worth a little perseverance in preparation. ■

### Among the contributors in this issue...

**Marion Arnott** lives in Paisley; *An Exchange of Views* is her first published story. **Theresa Casey** is a playworker and volunteer co-ordinator at Scotland Yard Adventure Centre in Edinburgh. **Rosemary Chesson** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Professions Allied to Medicine at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. **David Hughes** teaches at Alva Academy and is a member of Central Region's advisory committee on equal opportunities. **Anne-Marie Kane** lives in Glasgow. **Alison Kermack** hails from Edinburgh and now lives in Orkney. **Stephen Naysmith** is a freelance journalist. **Mairi Nye** is a training organiser at the Drugs Training Project of the University of Stirling. **Jean Raeburn** is training organiser for Lothian, Borders and the Western Isles Children's Panel at the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Continuing Education.



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# LETTERS

## Highlighting the Abuse of Women

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express our thanks for your editorial titled *Do We Really Give a Damn?* in the August/September 1992 issue of **Scottish Child**.

We were very pleased that you chose to highlight the abuse of women, and to do so in such a hard-hitting way. The lack of adequate resources has been a constant theme throughout the existence of Women's Aid in Scotland, and it is very demoralising and frustrating to still

have to argue for reasonable, secure funding 20 years on.

As you point out in your editorial, we are very far short of the number of refuge spaces we require to meet current demand. We are campaigning for more spaces, and need to have 733 now, as recommended by **COSLA** in their *Report on Women and Violence* published in November 1991, rather than the 256 we actually have.

As for what those people who *do* give a damn can do, may I make

some suggestions? They could give money, either to their local Women's Aid group or to **Scottish Women's Aid**. We (SWA) need to raise £72,000 this year to meet the shortfall in funding for the national office, which is a very heavy burden on top of already over-stretched resources. If we do not meet our fundraising target, the future of the national office will be in serious jeopardy. People could also write letters to their MPs, councillors, the Scottish Office, etc., expressing their support and asking for more

resources to be made available. Women could offer to do unpaid work for their local Women's aid group.

Once again, thank you for raising the issue of abuse of women in the home. I hope this is a topic which can be returned to in the future through the pages of **Scottish Child**.

**Lesley Irving**  
National Worker, Scottish Women's Aid  
Edinburgh

## A Child's Right to Childcare

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the article *Working Miracles* (**Scottish Child** August/September 1992) and appreciated the historical information on women at work. However, I do feel that we will not achieve change unless the rights of each individual are appreciated - with children at the top of the list.

The best type of childcare is one in which the child gains the most benefit. Instead of campaigning for 'women's rights to childcare' we should tackle the issue from the child's perspective. It is the *child's*

*right to childcare*, not the adult's right on their behalf. Adults feel they have a right to work and for most of us there is a financial necessity to do so. However it is shortsighted to cite childcare as being the only reason why women do not have equal access to employment.

The article was written about 'women, work and childcare in Scotland' - a valid combination, but we shouldn't be persuaded that this is the only viewpoint. Men, too, could rightly complain about the lack of opportunity to take an active part in their child's life due

to unsympathetic employers, economic necessity, inappropriate school hours, etc. Whilst women are willing to shoulder the total responsibility for childcare, we exclude men from the debate and possibly sell our children short on their own rights.

Childcare is a shared responsibility between parents, family and the community as a whole. Children are our most valuable asset and we should all work to ensure that the best is offered to them - which includes opening the door to men and

appreciating the value of those who care for our children.

**Jackie Barrett**  
Laurencekirk,  
Kincardineshire

**Scottish Child welcomes readers' letters. Please send them to The Editor, Scottish Child, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT or fax them to us on 031-226 3778. We sometimes cut letters for length.**

## We Spend All Our Adult Lives Trying To Recreate Our Childhood

**Coburn & Naughton**



A group of children arrive at the centre and immediately the place comes to life. I will have spent the last hour or so with the other workers setting out equipment and materials and discussing the session, so that when the kids arrive they can get straight down to the business of playing. Often the children come tearing off their minibus and into the playground like a wee whirlwind, diving straight on to bikes, trikes and rollerskates. Others will be more tentative and will start exploring more shyly and quietly.

Since the playground is for children and young people with special needs, I work with kids with a wide range of abilities - and ages, from four years up to 16 or 17. Every time kids come to play it's different, but more because of their personalities than because of their special needs.

Some of the children I work with will need a bit of extra help - with getting around, using equipment or with understanding. Others need extra motivation and encouragement to play or have different ways of communicating. I try not to make assumptions about what a child can or cannot do, or what she will want to do.

For some kids being at the playground is a chance to let off steam and use up excess energy. For others it's a chance to explore new surroundings, try new activities or test themselves. I have to allow kids to take risks in their play, so that they can find out about themselves, even if deep down I want to step in and help. For me, one of the most difficult things about being a playworker is knowing when to step back and leave the children to do it for themselves.

Different activities will present different challenges to children, and there may be times when kids will need lots of praise and encouragement. Exploring with a child can be gentle and soothing - touching and smelling plants, looking for snails or listening to the wind in the trees. Whatever the activity, it should be led by the



Colin Chalmers

## **The Playworker**

**Theresa Casey talks about her work at Scotland Yard Adventure Centre in Edinburgh.**

child, so I try to pick up on what they want to do and take it at their pace. This may mean helping a child on and off the bedswing over and over again until she is confident enough to stay on herself - or it can mean zapping around from one thing to another!

When a session is going well it's great to see huge smiles, the determination on a child's face of trying something a bit scary or enraptured concentration over an activity.

The contact with so many children is great and I often receive lots of warmth and affection back. Seeing kids coming back over a long stretch of time means I can see how they are developing and learning and gaining confidence. Sometimes it's the wee steps forward that are the most rewarding. The kids constantly teach you new things - how much they have to contribute and their different perspectives on the world.

A day's playing can be full of surprises - having given the children the freedom to make their own choices, you have to be ready

for the unexpected. An attempt at going down the chute on a tricycle; kids taking over as playworkers and insisting on the workers being children; painting session where the paint is on everything but the paper - walls, other people, themselves; turning the bedswing into a pirate ship; or generally subverting organised activities!

Inevitably there are times that aren't so good. There can be arguments over whose turn it is to use something or untangling children who have come to blows. If I'm in a positive frame of mind I see this as learning about sharing and co-operation, but at other times, when I've just had enough, I could cheerfully strangle them!

As a playworker I may be the target of a child's anger or frustration and while it's not great to have a child screaming at you or trying to wrestle with you, it's part of the job and you have to go on to deal with it constructively.

The most common problem I have, though, is simply not being able to give a child my full attention because it's stretched between all

sorts of other things. Someone about to fall off a bike, a grazed knee needing patched up, someone else shouting "Look at me, look at me!", another child needing help and the phone ringing all at once! It can be really frustrating to feel I've let a child down because I've got a hundred other things on my mind.

First thing everyday is the morning check round the playground for vandalism and debris from the unofficial overnight visitors - broken glass or cigarette ends that need cleaning up. It's really disheartening to come in first thing in the morning and find deliberate damage to the play equipment or to something the children have made. Doing instant repairs and patching up is part of the job too.

While working with the kids is the major part of the day, there's a lot more going on behind the scenes. It's essentially teamwork - there's Alison, the other full-time playworker, and a large group of volunteers. Alison and I work closely together to plan future projects, training and development of the playground. However the day can also include lots of tidying up, maintenance, gardening, keeping records, making contact with new groups. We may be involved in installing play equipment, digging out new areas. Since I'm also responsible for the team of volunteer workers, I recruit, organise training and, I hope, give support to the volunteers team. This is a major part of my work and their contribution is essential.

Sometimes we have special projects, like the sculpture project we ran recently. This involved volunteers, kids with and without special needs and workers carving, painting and building a new landmark for our playground. It also involved scrounging a lot of materials and tools - asking for things for nothing is something you quickly have to get used to! But it's certainly worth it when you see those smiles and hear kids laughing, playing on and *really* enjoying themselves. ■





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# CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Helen Happer, Maureen Sanders and Janice Thomson

This training material and video are the result of a collaborative venture between Jordanhill College Division of Social Work and the RSSPCC Overnewton Centre. It is designed to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and to answer common questions such as:



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