

The Scottish Child

Summer 1988

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Editor

Derek Rodger

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Rosemary Milne

Editorial Group

Stewart Asquith
Graham Atherton
Paul Carter
Colin Chalmers
Marion Flett
Mark Ogle
Sheila Ramsay
Malcolm Shaffer

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

Registered office: The Scottish Child, 17 Napier Road, Edinburgh EH10 5AZ. Telephone: 031 229 2161.

Also at: The Scottish Child, 1 Melrose Street, Glasgow G4 9BJ Telephone 041 333 9305

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

New Series Volume 2 Number 2

ISSN 0950-4174

Letters and articles to The Editor, The Scottish Child, 17 Napier Road, Edinburgh EH10 5AZ.

Subscriptions

Annual Rates: Individuals £6.00; Institutions £10.00; Overseas airmail £10.00

Cheques should be made payable to The Scottish Child.

Advertising

Rates available from the above addresses

Typesetting & Printing

Unit Two Print Origination
Castlebrae Business Centre
Peffer Place
Edinburgh EH16 4BB
Tel. 031 859 6611

Cover Logo

Courtesy of The Wishing Well Appeal for the Redevelopment of Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital

Back Cover Photo

Stewart Asquith

Design

Colin Chalmers

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the value on children — vehicles of consumption? — the value of the early years.

Growing from Strength to Strength!

As announced in the last issue, **The Scottish Child** is now an independent voice in the cultural and political context that we live in. Among the internal changes, Rosemary Milne has taken on Executive Editorship, to look after our blossoming business affairs. The editorship has been taken by the writer.

The continuing priority of the magazine will be to look questioningly at every aspect of the growth opportunities for the young in contemporary Scotland. This will not prevent us, as in this issue, of exposing any obstacles to growth.

These are priorities shared by a growing number of new readers to whom, welcome! To those who have not yet joined the magazine's expanding band of supporters, see inside.

Derek Rodger

It was 20 years ago today...

NOSTALGIA

Being born in 1950 and therefore being the magical age of 18 in 1968 I've been wallowing in nostalgia recently. There's been plenty of opportunity to do so with the plethora of retrospective documentaries that have been bombarding our T.V. screens. Even acknowledging the importance of world events in that year and the lasting impact of some of the social upheavals, there seems to be a disproportionate need to reinforce the myth of the year that we almost changed the world. Maybe we need to remind ourselves that being young ought to be a time of hope and all things being possible.

Imagining what it must be

like to be 18 today a comparison comes to mind

In 1968...

Being young was important.

Being young was joyful.

The young had more money than ever before and therefore more choice of what to spend it on.

This resulted in an identifiable youth culture.

The effect of the Robbins Report was bringing an expansion in higher education.

There was low youth unemployment.

Being young felt powerful

Being young was being revolutionary

18 year olds got the vote.

The world needed to be changed and we were going to

change it.

Anything and everything was possible.

Okay, I said I was talking about myths, but we believed the myth which certainly influenced what being young felt like.

In 1988... (admittedly through the eyes of an ancient 38 year old)

Being young is being on the receiving end of some of the most restrictive of new legislation.

From the autumn 16 and 17 year olds will not be entitled to income support — they are expected to take up a place on a Y.T.S. or stay in full-time education.

Many school leavers do not get proper jobs.

Many young people have very

little money — they do not have choice of the range of consumer goods that is tantalisingly held out to them

The new housing benefit regulations mean there will be no deduction in rent rebates for non-dependents aged 18-24 years who are on income support.

The poll tax will place severe financial pressure on some families forcing young people to leave home.

An increasing number of young people are homeless.

Further education is contracting.

Being young is about having to fight for your rights.

Who was it who said you can't halt progress?

Sheila Ramsay

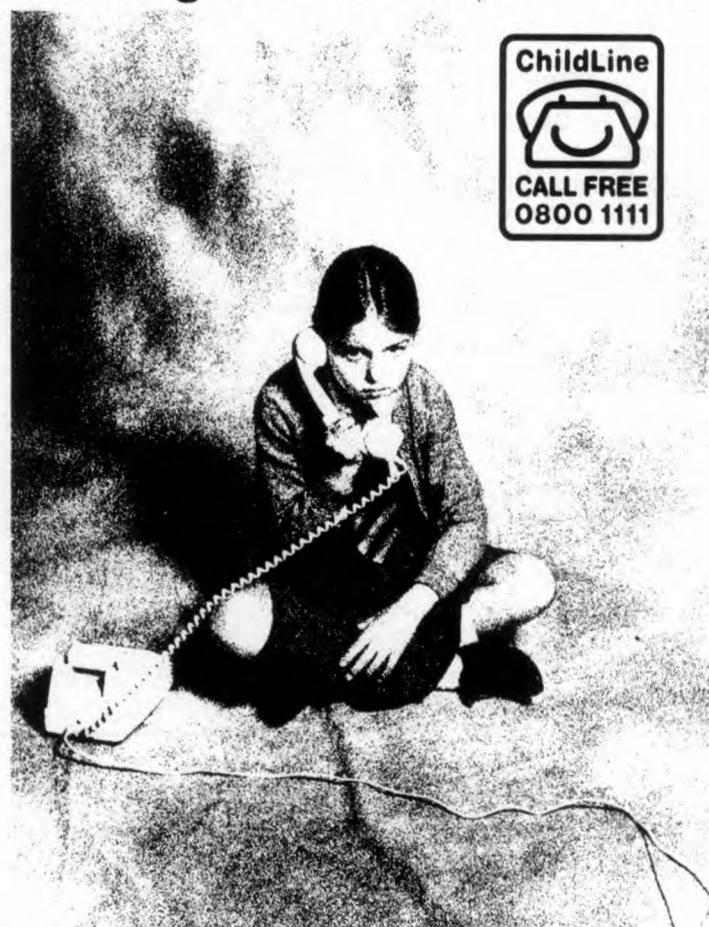
CHILDLINE

The little girl sits cross-legged with a phone at her ear. Imagine a city a bit smaller than Stirling full of telephones each with a sad-eyed child sitting beside it. That gives you some idea of the numbers of children who have contacted Childline between October 1986 and March 1988. 32,920 in all.

Childline, a huge and impressive operation — probably the best known of all the recent newly created agencies which have sprung into existence in response to this now-acknowledged problem.

Women do the work. Out of 100 volunteers at Childline, only 10 are men. The numbers of men are rising, but slowly.

In applications to the Children's Panel in Scotland women have always tended to outstrip men in numbers. Conscious efforts have to be made to find "good" men. "Good men" are always given star-ratings. Is a "good man" worth more than a "good woman" because of his scarcity value.... or something else? A "bad girl", a wild, misbehaving girl, conversely, is often said to be much worse than a "bad



boy" and the categorisation of women-offenders as "disturbed" is a widely attested phenomenon both historically and to this day. Women who

slash their wrists and dig holes in their arms are felt as dangerous, unbalanced. Has anyone ever stopped to think that to slash one's wrists and

tear one's flesh might be, if not a sane response, at least one which gives due weight to the desperation of incarceration, separation from one's children, loss of one's partner, disgrace? The wounded animal screaming in the trap is silenced with a blow from the butt of a gun. The doctor carries his pills for much the same purpose.

Judge Marjory Fields in her paper at Stirling University's recent conference on the Social and Legal Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, referred to research of the 50s which "blamed sexual abuse on provocative girls who initiated sexual relationships with their fathers and other male adults in the household..."

1950s research maybe, but when in the 1980s 25,000 of the calls to Childline are from girls under 18, we can be pretty sure that the old seducer Eve is still alive and well in the minds of many thousands of men.

Women on the one hand point the accusing finger at the powerful, abusing male; men on the other say "it's not my fault — she made me do it". Childline confirms that this is still the case. Now what shall we do?

Rosemary Milne



Early Times

MEDIA

When mechanical engineer, Barry Weightman realised that his twelve year old daughter was interested in newspapers, he felt he had to do something about it. The broadsheets, she found not user-friendly, the tabloids...well, over-familiar!

A few discussions with some journalist friends, and a visit to the bank manager later, saw the launch in January this year of the children's newspaper, **Early Times**.

"It's modelled on a quality paper," explained editor, Nicky Smith. The influence of **The Independent** seems clear. At one stage in the planning, they actually considered naming it **The Dependent**.

The target group of readers is the 8 to 14 group. "We're finding though that we're being read by a lot of people a bit older than that as well."

Looking through the pages of **Early Times**, it's not hard to see why it's enjoyed instant success. Expecting an initial circulation of 20,000, the plan was to reach 50,000 by the end of the first year. That figure was achieved in the first week and it's being growing ever since. By issue 15, they were able to drop their price to 38p, and expect a further growth as a result.

As well as the items you might expect in a publication for the young — puzzles, crosswords, recipes, problem page, sport, chess etc., there seems not an issue in home and

world news that the paper will not tackle. The John McCarthy kidnap, the DHSS changes, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan have all featured as news items. There is a balance with a lot of their young readers' writing, as well as interviews with politicians, writers and media personalities.

The paper seems to be achieving that precarious balance in writing for the young of being acceptable to all ages, not least the parents who probably have to put up the money for it. Schools and libraries are also taking out orders. The style, in a manner which shames the great bulk of the "adult" press, treats its readers with respect. The printing is in a big point size, the writing is straightforward and

direct, but the paper does not talk down to its readers.

It leaves not a few of its big brothers and sisters in the shade.

In Scotland, according to Nicky Smith, **Early Times** is going "incredibly well". Going by their postbag, Scotland seems to be one of their stronger distribution areas.

Advertising policy is, for a commercial publication, at the very least unconventional. "We didn't want too many adverts. We didn't want to get into the Saturday morning ITV thing of saturating kids with My Little Pony ads and such like," said Nicky Smith.

For readers (and their parents), next to the arrival of the paper itself, that might be the best of **Early Times**. ■

Credit to the Family or the Government?

BENEFITS

Recently the government has advertised the new family credit benefit on the television. This would be a good thing if the advert was not so misleading.

It does not correctly that the new scheme is generally more generous than the FIS scheme it replaced and that twice as

many people will be eligible. It fails to mention however that many claimants will lose 85p from their housing benefit for every £1 extra they get on family credit, nor that claimants can no longer get free school meals (as FIS claimants could). Further it fails to note that some claimants now must claim family credit rather than income support. People buying their

own homes can often be worse off as a result for family credit does not meet mortgage costs whereas income support does.

As a result of the selective use of facts a cynical observer might well assume that the advert is more about promoting the governments image than encouraging take-up of benefit. Why, for example, are they not

advertising the new housing benefit and income support schemes? Is this because less positive facts can be quoted about them? Why also did the government not advertise supplementary benefit weekly additions and one off grants before they were abolished? This was an area rich for take-up of benefit. ■

Diane Kennedy

The Yorkhill Initiative — Medical Examinations

SEXUAL ABUSE

Cleveland, in the form of the long awaited report, should by the time you read this, be with us again. If the whole affair, and the attendant publicity, leads to changes in the provision of services for children, then the wait will have been worth it. There appears to be little doubt that such changes are required.

The question of the medical examination of children alleged to have been sexually abused, for example, is one which has concerned practitioners. Sensitive carried out, these examinations can be an important early stage in the treatment process itself. Insensitively handled — and most of us, unfortunately, can think of examples — they can subject children to further intrusive experiences.

The difficult question of medical examinations in child sexual abuse cases has been a focus of concern and debate within the Royal Hospital for Sick Children (R.H.S.C.) at Yorkhill in Glasgow for almost two years now. In September of this year a pilot project is to be launched — The Yorkhill Initiative — which aims to improve services for children.

Difficulties surrounding medical examinations have been apparent to all agencies for some time. Examinations have often taken place in police

stations and there is a dearth of women police surgeons. Often due to other pressures, little discretion has been exercised in the timing and need for examinations. Children have consequently been subject to repeated medical examinations.

Extensive discussions have taken place between the Child Sexual Abuse Group in the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry, paediatricians within the

An important outcome of this long process of consultation has been a joint training undertaking. The Chief Medical Officer of Strathclyde Police has provided training on the collection of forensic evidence to a group of ten paediatricians within R.H.S.C. Already the benefits of this joint understanding are being felt in current practice.

Requests for medical examinations are now referred

Child Abuse, together with social work, fiscal's department, Police, Reporters and Nursing Services set the scene for the Yorkhill Initiative to go public.

The Initiative aims to build on existing practice, and to go further and influence case management at the investigation stage. It is proposed that on receiving a referral of alleged sexual abuse, police and social work staff will make contact and plan the investigation together, in a manner consistent with the statutory requirements of each agency.

The Initiative aims to reduce the trauma associated with medical examinations, to eliminate the need for repeated examinations, and by the sharing of child statements, to reduce the need for repeated interviewing of children by police and social work staff. The service will be on offer 24 hours per day, every day of the year. A monitoring component is built in with a view to gauging the impact on practice, and implications for practice, in other parts of Glasgow and further afield.

The scheme has its problems. Not the least of these is the premium on accommodation in a busy accident and emergency department. Ultimately however, the success of the Initiative will depend on the continued commitment of agencies to collaborate openly and fully.

Colin Findlay



hospitals, and senior representatives of social work, procurators fiscal, and Reporter's Departments.

Thoughts have abounded, for example, on the respective roles of police surgeons viz-a-viz paediatricians. A vigorous commitment has emerged to the idea that the children's hospital in a major city in the United Kingdom should be working towards the demonstration of model practice.

to one of the group of ten doctors, who then arranges, in cases where it is warranted, for a joint examination with a police surgeon to be carried out in the hospital.

For fear of not meeting the demand that would be generated, the service, up until now, has not been publicised. However a recent meeting of the Yorkhill group with representatives of the Glasgow Area Review Committee on

TRAVEL

Shortly after returning from a trip to Ecuador I took a bus to work — not something I do often, but my car was out of action — and had the opportunity to gaze at street life in Edinburgh from the vantage point of the bus.

Now everyone knows that strange and unaccustomed sights are to be expected abroad and particularly so in South America, but I was struck by the strangeness of what I saw in Edinburgh. I had been travelling for some weeks and, I suppose, had grown used to that

heightened state of observation which comes from being in unfamiliar surroundings, and so when I saw children being transported in prams and push chairs it was as if I had never noticed it before. Because in Ecuador there was not a push chair, pram or baby buggy to be seen!

There are possibly economic reasons for this — it is a very poor country — and perhaps the uneven pavements (where there are any) may be a factor, but everywhere I went I saw infants carried. The Indians carried them in a blanket on

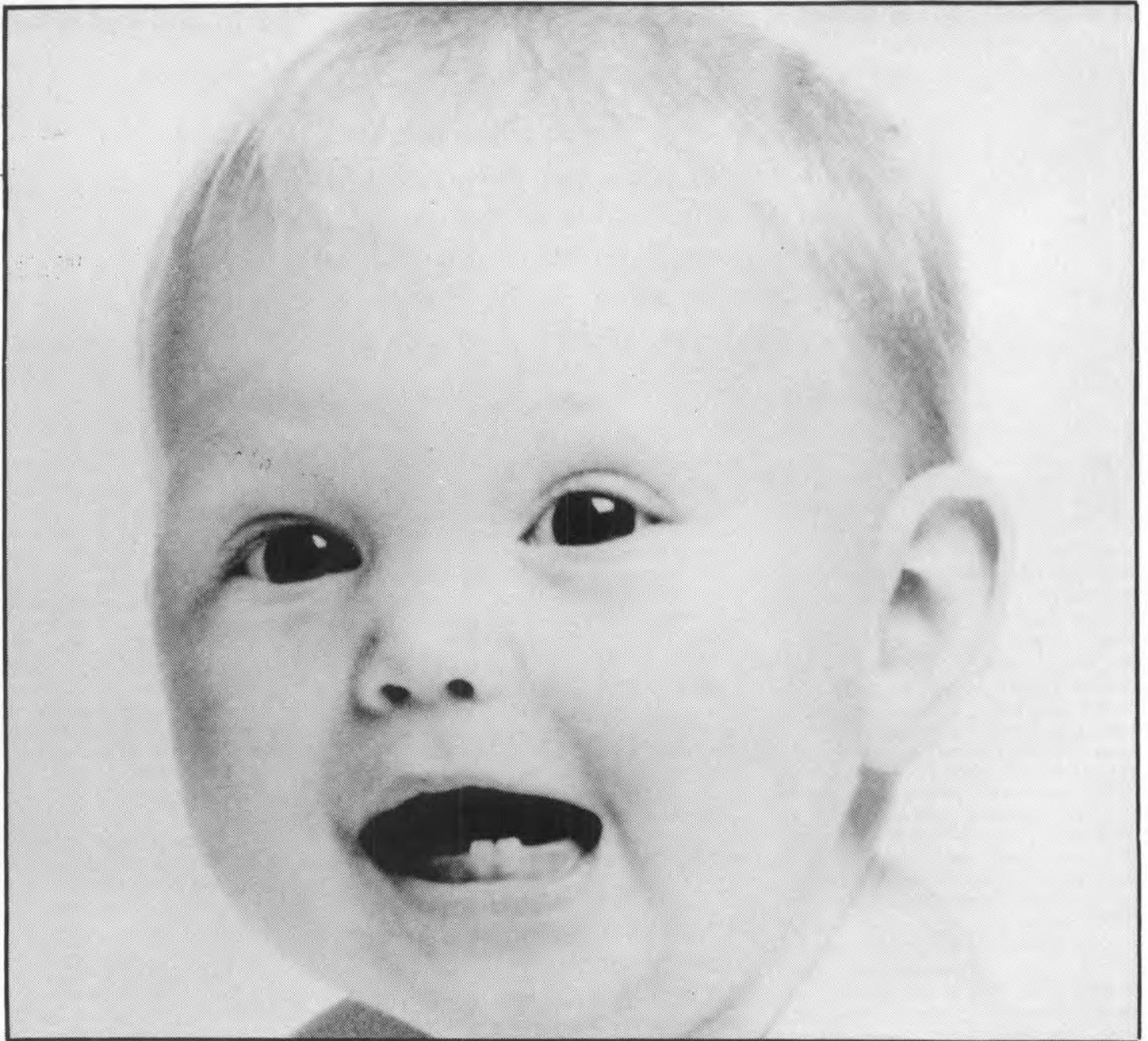
their backs — an image we might be familiar with — but even the city people (mostly of Spanish origin) carried their small children close to them. It seemed to me to be more a state of mind than the state of the roads.

Why is it, I wondered, that we distance our young, holding them literally at arm's length in a contraption which quite often means that they cannot even see who is pushing them? While I was away I rarely heard that cry which demands attention and which most people will have heard at some time here.

To be sure, they did cry sometimes, but Ecuador, in common with other Latin American countries, has an overwhelming presence of young children and yet there was little evidence of the kind of discontented wail heard frequently in crowded supermarkets and stores in this country.

If it is socially acceptable to hold our children at a distance, perhaps this reflects our society's attitudes to children — as objects to be held apart from us.

Lindsay Lewis



Freezing for the Drill

DENTAL HEALTH

Fear of the dentist can be bad for your health. Some people, it seems will avoid the dentist's chair at all cost. Even suffering years of pain, or suffering the agonies of pulling their own teeth.

The British Dental Health Foundation is a national trust working to the betterment of dental health standards. Its Midlands branch recently set up a telephone hotline for those requiring dental help, but perhaps too afraid to open up wide in the dental surgery.

The lines have been busy. Ian Robertson, Midlands branch

Secretary of the Foundation reckons they have had 1500 calls from people with severe dental phobias.

"Most of our callers are people who desperately want to go to the dentist. Many have walked past, intending to go in, or even made an appointment but failed to keep it. They have gone through hell for years."

It is very common, they have found, for people's fears to go back to schooldays. "Some," Ian Robertson finds, "were held down in the chair. That is almost criminal and one would not wish to think it were happening now. Dentists are taught a little more psychology nowadays."

Although people might give as

their reason for fearing the dentist, that they don't like needles, or the pain, Ian Robertson feels the most common underlying reason may be "the psychological aspect of lying there and not being in control."

Standards of dental health in Scotland among the young tend to be much worse than in England & Wales. Hugh Mathewson, secretary of the dentist's professional body (British Dental Association) in Scotland said the figures for tooth decay in Scotland "are ten years behind standards down south."

On 1983 figures, 35% of 14 year olds living in England & Wales had some tooth decay. In Scotland, the figure was close on

60%.

During the British Dental Health Foundation's Smile Week in May a series of helplines were set up around the country, in order to "bridge the gap" in communication between dentists and patients.

Readers of *The Scottish Child* who tried to reach the Scottish numbers in this campaign may have been disappointed. One was in Thurso. The other (for one hour per day only during Smile week) was in Aberdeen.

The year round Birmingham number, for those who may be avoiding the dentist because of undue anxiety is 021-554-6789. It is staffed 9.30a.m. to 4.00p.m. weekdays.

MOTHERING THE CRISIS

The changes in Social Security, Housing Benefit, and the introduction of the Social Fund have put the pressure on the poor. The soon to be levied flat rate "poll tax", and such plans as compulsory "job training" for young people seem to tighten the screw. **Derek Rodger** looks at the reasons underlying the lack of effective opposition.

A flash of insight, in of all places, the dentist's chair! Or electrically reclining treatment couch as it now is.

Quite a job on in there. The years take their toll. Mind, attempting to overcome the matter of pain, wanders on to thoughts of birth. Birth?

Not so surprising when you think of it. I'm lying horizontal, practically on the assistant's knees. She is young and attractive. (What happens to dental assistants as they grow old?) He, the surgeon, in short sleeved apron, is hard at work. Lighting of the oral cavity is by ceiling hung strobe bulbs. The patient wears dark glasses which seem to blur at the edges. It seems for all the world, the concerned male and female faces concentrated on the process of extraction, like the first view from the top of the birth canal.

A solid thirty minutes of this fantasy, and the job is done. I'm gently and electrically set from the horizontal to the sitting position. She wipes my mouth with a tissue. There has been blood.

A rush to get there that morning, a hurried shave, patchy stubble meant what would have been a perfunctory wipe turned second by second into a kind of bed-bath, a sponge down after the trauma of delivery. Thoughts to draw back. No she's already started. Bits of tissue get stuck on stubble. It takes longer and longer. She was at work on my face, I swear, or I confess, for a full 30 seconds.

What's it like for an otherwise competent forty year old man to have his face wiped like a newborn, by a sexually attractive woman? Well, let's face it, no fibbing. It was socially awkward but at the same time, kind of nice. It made me feel sort of cared for. Dependent even.

Dependency, of course, in any shape of form, in the current political climate is OUT! Targetting is IN. The bond-forming proclivities of infants, straight from their passage down the birth canal,

might even become politically suspect in modern day Britain.

The "cossetting" and "feather-bedding", just two of the pejoratives to dismiss the dependency forming welfare state, will no longer be. The state's nurturing mothering resources, we are told by minister upon male minister, as well as Edwina Currie, will be targetted on those in REAL need.

So it seems like every news report, every paper in recent months in attempting to keep ahead of the targetting, has refound poverty. Pages of copy on how the economy is racing, how the consumers are booming, have been replaced by volumes of the new hardship brought about by changes in social security.

"Dependency in any shape or form, in the current political climate is OUT!"

The effects are legion. Supplementary Benefit is now Income Support, and support in the view of many is stretching it. Family Income Supplement has become Family Credit. Single payments to claimants for special needs have been abolished, replaced by the universally condemned Social Fund. Even Tory-voting pensioners with savings or assets over £6000 were to have had their housing benefit abolished. In a later act of compassion (or was it political expediency?), this limit has been increased to £8000.

Big Nurse

What, one Tory high-flyer was asked in the late seventies, would be necessary to successfully promote monetarist policies in Great Britain? His humorous and tentative offer of "water cannon", as an answer, is kind of dated now. The Thatcher government's methods have been far more subtle. And effective! The successful selling of authoritarian policies has

allowed "that woman", as she is most commonly referred to north of Watford, not only to wipe our collective gobs, but to give us all a firm slap over the chops as well for good measure. This is mothering of the Big Nurse variety.

Judging by the voting patterns at the last election, a lot of us, even in Scotland, have to admit that it's kind of nice, in a way. Seductive. Mother is after all saying that she knows best. And weak unemployed people like layabout spiky-haired kids are going to have to learn that they can't depend on their dole forever.

The social costs of this malevolent type of authoritarianism are of course there for all to see. In Scotland no less, indeed often more so, with the emphatic exception of Northern Ireland, than anywhere else.

Unemployment figures in Scotland are the equal of the worst regions of the north of England. All the other indices of poverty, and social sickness are common parlance. Patches of life expectancy, and infant mortality rates barely hang on to first world standards. Incidence of heart disease, levels of dental health, and the incidence of mental illness don't suggest well-being either. And then there's the prison population.

Charity

"I just don't know," gasped the avuncular and slightly exhausted looking Terry Wogan towards the end of last winter's BBC Children in Need telethon, "how much more we can ask you to give!"

The new Social Fund officers are obliged by the regulations to ask claimants for special loans, if they've tried the local Salvation Army or charity thrift shop. The security screens are in place in most DHSS offices in anticipation of the response. The charities and voluntary groups around the country are in for a time of carrying an even greater load than they had thought imaginable.

The appeal, — a lot of politics now takes on the language of marketing — the



BIG NURSE MOTHERING.

appeal of fund-raising events like the annual pre-Christmas BBC telethon, is that unlike dirty boring old politics, everyone can join in. From Anneka Rice flirting and teasing her way round the country trying, as last year, at eight hours notice to put on an ice spectacular on the River Thames to a full orchestral accompaniment...to Joe Bloggs doing a sponsored pickled egg eating stint, everybody can join in. A good bit more so, and with more FUN (note buzz-word, and infantilising of audience) than your average branch meeting.

And no matter how bizarre the charity stunt, no matter how lewd the attraction, the end of helping the less well off seems to justify the means. It's all in a good cause.

And with government approval! A recent exhortation by Education Minister, Kenneth Baker, followed up by similar pronouncements by Big Nurse herself, urged those who have done well out of tax cuts to privately up their donations to charities. The privatisation of public support.

Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd in a *New Statesman* article in May, warned that august journal not to knock "the English tradition of voluntary service". The WRVS, he quipped, has worn rather better than some of the woolly hatted, bureaucratic socialist traditions of that paper. Hurd and the right, in attacking the centralist faults of state services, hit the raw nerve of left organisational inflexibility. This is a feature of public life which in Scotland, in housing and education to name but two examples, we have wide experience of. The funding of services though, is another matter.

So where, asks the uncomprehending foreign visitor, is the opposition? Good question. I'm glad you asked that, replies the conscience-stricken Scot in the manner of the politician stuck for words.

The Bophuthatswana Factor

Well, the Secretary of State has now joined the rest of the Scottish public in openly stating his shelving of any notion of devolution. The press is not amused. Murray Ritchie, one of the *Glasgow Herald's* more progressive and able elements, has labelled Malcolm Rifkind, the Lucas Mangope of Scotland.

Mr Mangope, you will recall is the puppet president of Bophuthatswana, overthrown by a popular coup a few months back. Only to be reinstated in the presidential chair as quickly as the South African army could get there.

Mr Ritchie in a recent follow up piece in April betrays a certain bitterness that no one else seems to see things his way. The fact is that the colonialisation argument applied to Scotland, has not a few shortcomings. The trouble with political science is that the scientists can be swayed by the evidence. This type of over-reliance on the facts has been shown to decay the mind.

There are undeniable facts. The number of non-Scots in leading positions in public



ALL IN A GOOD CAUSE.

life is one. The composition of the Scottish group of M.P.s could be said to be another. The infantile tactics of this increasingly frustrated band, Dennis spying strangers, Alex staging a budget day walk-out, and Ron damaging the mace seem to be yet another. If mummy won't let you watch T.V. after your bedtime, then you just get VERY angry.

Echoing the marginalising of minority groups everywhere, the tabloids have not been slow to exploit the stereotype of the whinging, erratic, undependable Scot. Like babies really. Give him another sook at his whisky bottle.

A mere glance though, at colonial settings elsewhere throws up the shortcomings of Ritchie's analysis. Frantz Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* for example, describes the Algerian population in the fifties as unwilling prisoners of the French regime. People resisted going even to a French doctor when they were ill. While similar resistances can be seen among some levels of Scottish society, the aspiring middle classes have no qualms whatever, indeed they are enthusiastic colluders with the "oppressor". They have been for close on three hundred years now. Collusion with the advantages of the English/British empire is well ingrained in the Scottish psyche. Retired Scots living on their fat pensions from the Hong Kong police or some such "posting" litter many

a lounge bar.

While in fifties Algeria, the man and woman of ability and vision would be manning resistance radio transmitters, and chairing underground meetings, their counterpart in eighties Scotland will be advancing his career with Standard Life, and conspicuously spending his week-ends windsurfing. If it's a colonial situation we are in, dependent on a foreign power, then too many Scots have been doing rather well out of it to want to change. Dependency you see, can be good for you!

"The successful selling of authoritarian policies has allowed "that woman".... to give us all a firm slap over the chops."

Taken by their own line of reasoning, *The Glasgow Herald* set up with Strathclyde University, a study day this Spring. They called it "Governing Scotland in the 90's", and fixed up an impressive list of big shot contributors from all the parties, as well as business and the

universities. Days before the event, when only a dozen people had signed up for it, the event had to be cancelled.

It would be wrong however to conclude though, as some backward elements in the Conservative party have done, that there is no interest in the subject. Even before the football team gets near the annual England match, there is compelling interest in how Scotland is governed, and how some of us are so poor. We might though have to dig a bit deeper to tap into the seam.

A final thought. Previously, the official poverty level in the country has been measured by the level of basic social security. Those living on basic benefit have been regarded as poor. From now, that is no more. You might still be living on basic benefit, but that doesn't mean any longer that you are necessarily poor — officially.

Already incensed by the 19 changes in the method of calculating unemployment during the lifetime of the present government, poverty pressure groups are further alarmed. Chris Pond of the Low Pay Unit said, "They are abolishing the official estimates of the numbers in poverty,...in a way which makes it impossible to make any real assessment of the effects of the social security changes."

A case of what you don't know, won't hurt you?



THE ADULT NEWSPAPER THAT CARES ABOUT CHILDREN!

THE SCOTSMAN covers the social issues of the day, every day.

As an intelligent family newspaper, it takes a special interest in the problems and pleasures of childhood.

LIFESTYLE deals with all aspects of educating and caring for children, from baby care to teenage counselling.

The regular EDUCATION section highlights the issues affecting children in the classroom.

RAW TALENT is the page written by teenagers for teenagers — while all the new medical trends are reflected in HEALTH.

Even the FASHION Pages extend to the youngest members of the family.

For anyone bringing up or working with children in Scotland, THE SCOTSMAN is more than a newspaper.

It is a sympathetic and reliable source of essential information.



TOMORROW'S SCOTSMAN — IT'S LOOKING GOOD

BREAKING THE MONOLITH

Ronald Young, Strathclyde Regional Councillor and Labour group secretary addresses the thorny question of how politics can change people's lives in Scotland for the better. He talks to Rosemary Milne.

"How can we talk about change if we cannot find a language in which to describe it? That seems to me to be the problem — to find the words."

We are talking, Ronald Young and I, about government, politics, people, structures. He, as a Regional councillor in Strathclyde, in the centre of one of Britain's largest local authorities; me a recent incomer into that west of Scotland scene, mesmerised by what I find: the hugeness of the Region, its all-pervasiveness, its dynamism, its control.

What is to be learnt about trends in politics from Strathclyde? It is after all, an "old-style" centralised local authority, so it seemed, to this observer at least, unlikely to foster the sort of change which might eventually lead to its own demise.

"But", the response comes, "change doesn't only come from inside. The government is clearly in the business of breaking up local authorities. Think of Scottish Homes, School Boards, FE Colleges... Labour opposes this tooth and nail — not just because trade union interests are under attack but because such measures (however marginally some people will benefit), will patently hit at those on lower incomes.

"But the organisational issues involved, are quite different. We have to face the fact that local authority monopoly provision has failed. That indeed was the essence of

Strathclyde Region's critique in its 1976 deprivation strategy, and it was made even more explicit in its review of 1982. Initiatives have had to fight inch by inch against the conservatism of bureaucratic and professional forces within local government.

"What after all has brought changes out of the Education Authorities — such as better community use of schools, parental involvement, adult education etc? Not the

"...it's asking a lot of politicians and officials to change the system which has put us where we are."

EIS. Not local politicians. Rather the combined might of falling school rolls and the challenge of the Manpower Services Commission."

Ronald Young has been secretary of the Labour group in Strathclyde Regional Council for 14 years. During most of that time he has been working on new policies and structures to encourage community initiatives. The most dynamic developments — Strathclyde Community Business, to cite but one — are those where public and private money combine to create projects

in which the local authority acts as an enabler, no longer as a controller.

To adopt such a role seems to demand considerable political maturity?

"Yes that's it in a nutshell. It demands maturity, restraint, a willingness to relinquish power. But it's asking a lot of politicians and officials to change the system which has put us where we are.

"So, the pace of change is slow and I for one find that deeply frustrating. Approaches like the American Model Cities Program try to build positive discrimination in favour of specific areas into existing services. They insist on a more coordinated approach to the problems of these areas. In so doing, they challenge the fundamental organising principles of urban government — *uniformity of service division, functional service management and political and departmental hierarchies of control*. Opposition to change may take the form of hostile resistance but a more subtle and probably more widespread response is to absorb the threat — to defuse, dilute and redirect the energies of the change-bringers."

We are talking now about "dependency" — not as seen from the angle currently much spoken of by those in power, but the dependency of the *powerful* on the *powerless*. This word dependency seems to sum up the contemporary political problem. We have to



RONALD YOUNG....REVERSING CENTRALISED CONTROL.

be able to talk about dependency as a *virtue* if we are to be able to get to grips with the difficulties which face us. Perhaps we'd better talk about *interdependency* — that much-needed glue which binds society together into a civilised whole.

“The pattern of centralised control, is an increasing feature of life for those on low incomes. To reverse this we shall have to find new attitudes to learning, which promote a non-hierarchical model and lead to the formation of networks of knowledge and support.

“If pluralism is the order of the day, there is another group besides politicians which urgently needs to consider its own position. Professionals. They are faced with some stark choices. Unless they reappraise their values at this stage, then to put it bluntly, they're dead. Consider professionals within the helping agencies — how do they respond to the privatisation trend? How can they redefine what they offer in a way that doesn't throw the baby out with the bathwater? Do they embrace the profit-motive? Some do. But those who do so risk losing a key ingredient in their professional credibility and in their self-definitions. What all of us who have an interest in such things must do is to seek an alternative model which avoids both the pitfalls of self-interest and the paternalism of the old-style welfare system.

“We could begin by recognising that there are diverse interests involved, each with their own legitimacy: producer-interests, consumer-interests. Each must make a place for the other. The political “trick” is to invent structures which can cope with these pressures better than any pre-existing model has. Such structures must *force dialogue* on a more equal footing than we have been accustomed to see. Britain's record is not good in this respect. For instance, we have to look to Europe and America to find a fruitful mixing of the roles of central and local government. It doesn't happen here.

“In America a much more business-like approach is evident in the style of social projects. Here, we view the two as contradictory and community development has tended to operate on a “small realities, large hopes” basis. Why in Britain does it take local and central government almost a year to approve local submissions for Urban Programme funding? Why has the SDA Board actually reduced delegation to local Initiatives? Why is tax law not changed to encourage the private sector to invest in local Foundations (on the American pattern) for community development?

“The Chicago Foundations, for instance, have \$170 million a year to distribute. Why do we have to rely on Japanese, American, and European rather than Scottish banks for the Parkhead Forge development? Why — in its hostility to local authority “misuse” by a few Councils of contract compliance — does the government shoot itself in the foot and make illegal the “local labour clauses” that are part and parcel of US affirmative action?...”

Why it might reasonably be concluded, does our politics fail to produce the answers? ■

CHILDREN IN NEED

The "privatisation" of services to children and families — and the rise of the profile of charities — is nowhere better exemplified than in the scale of the BBC's **Children In Need** appeal. Appeals Organiser for Scotland, **Joyce Snell** talks to **The Scottish Child** about her work in between appeals.

Not many of the multi-million audience who watch the annual Children in Need T.V. marathon are aware that there is nothing new in the idea. The BBC has been running its pre-Christmas charity appeal since 1927.

What is new in the eighties is the scale of the whole operation. What was at one time a discreet ten minute morning radio message to kindly send your donations, if you please, is now a tele-marathon which for a day every November seems to absorb the entire nation.

The returns also are on a different plane these days. Up till 1979, the biggest return in any one year was £70,000. Last year's appeal topped nearly £14,000,000. The Scottish public's contribution alone was £711,000 on the night.

This year, Scotland's allocation of the total Children in Need budget is £1.3 million.

So what happens to the money and who benefits? Application forms are available from four regional centres throughout Britain, including one at BBC Scotland in Glasgow. Scottish appeals organiser, Joyce Snell (one of a team of two full-time administrators) took time in her small office at Queen Margaret Drive to say that life in between the annual appeals is rather busy. "We are known as the "rush" department around here!" she quipped.

"The appeal helps children under 16," she explained, "who have a need. They might be children who have a physical or sensory handicap, or who have a psychological or behaviour disorder. It also helps those who are deprived of a normal life, perhaps because they are in care or in hospital, or because they live in an area where there is general deprivation

HELP
Pudsey Bear
SUPPORT
BBC CHILDREN IN NEED



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or stress."

And no amount seems too small. A network of local distributors throughout Scotland dispense small grants (up to £75) to applicants on behalf of individual children. Children or their relatives cannot apply direct. An application for these small grants must be made through a third party — like a doctor or a social worker.

Organisations which may apply must give direct help to children, and have specific programme that will meet a local need. Funds for salaries though, and anything which, it is

thought, relieves a statutory body of its duty, are not considered by the Scottish Appeals Advisory Committee.

A typical beneficiary of the appeal might be a local group or organisation providing holidays for children, or play facilities. Equipment for handicapped children is another common target for funds.

"As well as the sheer volume of applications to process," she explained, Joyce Snell reflecting on the demands of her job, mentioned "the stress of knowing that the needs at the other end of the phone are often pretty big."

"We know that we can't even begin to meet some of the demands from people. Their needs are real, but at the end of the day we can only do what we can."

It sounds tough having to say no.

Grants are allocated to organisations by the Scottish Appeals Advisory Committee. The total amount available each year is divided throughout the U.K. on the basis of child population figures. Grants are paid out once a year only, usually between April and July.

Repeated grant applications are acceptable, but success, given the volume of need, cannot be guaranteed. Those running projects for children cannot depend on money from year to year. ■

Donations throughout the year can be made by post to: BBC Children in Need Appeal, National Girobank, P.O. Box 200, Liverpool, L69 3HW, or over the counter at post offices, banks and building societies.

On a Good Day...

Today was a pretty good day. The fitted kitchen has now been fitted, and the house is less of an accident waiting to happen to a toddler. The soft tone phone means that I don't jump out of my skin every time the phone rings. The fridge freezer, the food blender, the microwave oven — miracle meals in minutes!

I'm auditioning with a well known washing machine company tomorrow. The kitchen is continually whirring and bleeping. All this is meant to "lower the stress level" in our lives. With two adolescent girls, a toddler, a dog and a cat in a top floor flat where three people play musical instruments, and everyone likes loud music and loud arguments, the only time left to write is in the dark small hours after the last 1200 r.p.m. Hoover logic spin has died away.

As I said, today was a good day, mainly because every one managed to enjoy themselves without getting on each others nerves. I started writing an article, tore it up, and am writing this instead. I was attempting to write about adolescent girls, how mystifying their priorities are, how hilarious and infuriating they can be. I find it really hard to understand how anyone can spend half an hour on the phone to a friend three doors away, and then go round to see them for a talk. 80% of the phone calls coming into and out of this house concern Miriam and Rachel. Rachel, particularly is relentlessly sociable. Her week's engagements are as complicated as a politician's. Orchestra, Choir — Badminton, — boyfriend, — cinema, — girlfriend, — out to stay the night at Jenny's, — Joanna to stay the night here. How does she manage it all?

I would blow a gasket after a day living at her pace. No wonder occasionally she comes in at 8 pm, washes, brushes her teeth, and is in bed and asleep by 8.30, and doesn't wake until 8 the next morning.

The other day she and some friends went to a Disco en masse. For six hours the flat was full of noisy girls trying on different types of eye liner. They sallied forth at 7 pm to meet the opposition, off across the Meadows and into town, all laughter and bright clothes and perfume. They seem to acquire boy friends and get rid off them with bewildering speed.

THIS DIARY

Monday: "Duncan and I are going about together." Wednesday: "Oh, Duncan and I are stale news." Friday: "I've dumped Duncan". Dump before you are dumped seems to be the cardinal rule. It seem a fair enough preparation for 'adult' relationships.

Anyway, after the disco I understood more fully why every room in the house should have a mirror. And I'm trying to keep more of a straight face about the whole tormented subject of clothes, despite over hearing such gems as: Rachel: "Do you always wear designer?" Tony: "I never wear anything else."

Although I'm a very irritable and rather boorish man who tends to swat at the fragile provisional selves that flutter about the home like butterflies for a day or two, I must admit that I enjoy the feeling of the whole place being on the move. "The hope, the new ships." Its important that the ambience should be relaxed and springy enough for a good launch.

Yes, so today was a good day, quieter than normal, with only one friend each visiting, camped in separate rooms, energy only to eat and quarrel. Sometimes you'd think they were a different species, 12½ and 14. Nevertheless it was just about peaceful co-existence all round. The negotiations were quite amicable too. They took my baby daughter to the swings so Deborah and I could have some time to ourselves. They enjoy dressing her up as well, usually in hats and belted tea shirts so she wanders around the house looking like a medieval dwarf. The Microwave bleeped up a meal of baked tatties in convenient minutes. There were only two changes of clothing each during the day, and we all had a good dance in the living room. I forgot my hectoring tones. "You treat this place like a hotel," "Phone calls cost money" and other assorted cliches were not heard in the home today.

I'm always both amused and annoyed by the degree of tasteful disdain with which my outbursts are greeted. Quite often they actually start laughing. My bark is supposed to be worse than my bite. They don't take me too seriously, of course. They're far too busy.

Mark Ogle



LOOKING BACK

Heatherdown

It is summer in 1952, and Mr Toppin has us penned in, even though the bell has gone for morning break. We are in Latin class and Mr Toppin is trying to give us a sense of occasion. "This is the speech of Calgacus to his troops before the battle of Graupian Hill in A.D. 84. Calgacus is the name Tacitus gives the Scottish general. "Hodie pro patria adhuc libera...."

Cockburn? "Today...."

"Today you will fight for a country still free against the Romans...."

"Good. Patrium vestram in dextris vestris portatis? You carry your country in your right hand...."

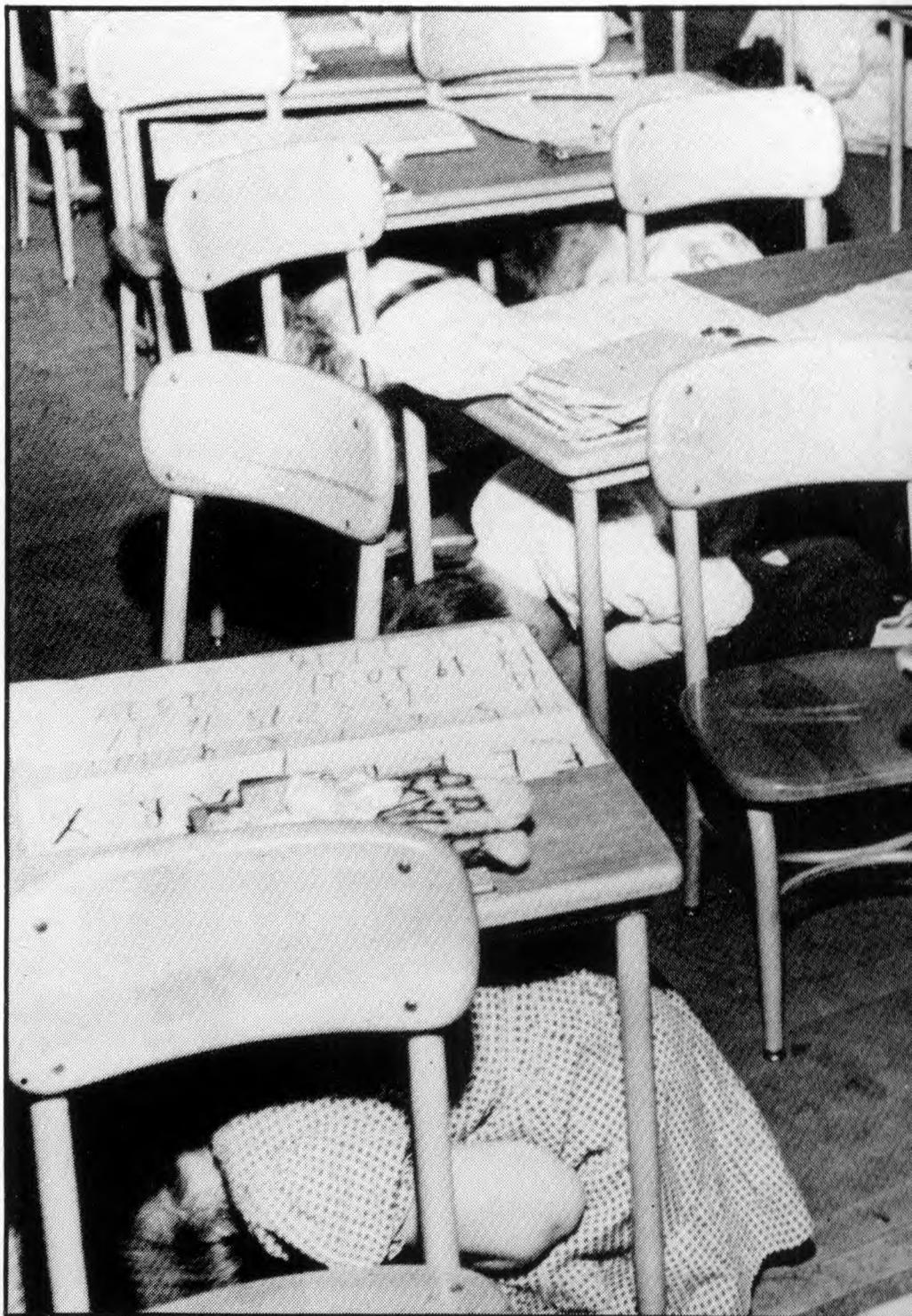
Wilding (*Latin Course for Schools — Part One*) left of us in no doubt, in his simplified and polite version of Tacitus, that the Roman victory at Mons Graupius was a good thing. Ten thousand Scots fell that day, the blood of kerns flowing in the heather near Inverness, not so far from where I was born. The Romans slaughtered till their arms were tired. Night, as Tacitus put it, was jubilant with triumph and plunder. The Scots, scattering amid the grief of men and women, abandoned their homes and set them on fire. The day after, bleak and wet, disclosed more fully the lineaments of triumph: silence everywhere, lonely hills, houses smouldering to heaven.

Resolute to favour Roman imperialism over British nationalism, Wilding suppressed the eloquence of Calgacus's appeal to his troops, as conceived by Tacitus. I looked it up in the Loeb translation: "Here at the world's end, on its last inch of liberty, we have lived unmolested to this day...."

Calgacus gestures down the hill to where the Romans — in actual fact Provençal French, Spaniards and Italians — stand with their German auxiliaries: "Harriers of the world, now that earth fails their all-devastating hands — they probe even the sea: if their enemy have wealth, they have greed; if he be poor, they are ambitious; East nor West has glutted them; alone of mankind they behold with the same passion of concupiscence waste and want alike. To plunder, butcher, steal, these things they misname empire: they make a desolation and they call it peace.

Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant. They make a desolation and they call it peace. The phrase has echoed down the ages as the tersest condemnation of Rome. Nothing of this in Wilding.

Those were the days in the early 1950s when the British Empire was falling rapidly apart. On Sundays boys at Heatherdown had to write a weekly letter home ("Dear Mummy and Daddy, I am very well. How are you...") and many of the envelopes at our school were addressed to army posts in Kenya, Malaya, Aden, Cyprus and other outposts of shrivelling empire. At school I would



'THEY MAKE A DESOLATION'

Writer and journalist, **Alexander Cockburn**, widely known virul

Latin text, and recounts the mixed feelings arising fr

hear grim tales of the Kenyan Mau Mau and then go home to hear my father consider such events in a very different way.

Both my father and I, forty years apart, studied classics. A significant proportion of this study was spent considering the birth and practice of democracy in Athens

in the fifth century B.C. It seemed to be the consensus of our teachers that between fifth-century Athens, the senate under the Roman Republic and nineteenth century Westminster, nothing much of interest by way of political experiment had occurred, and that the virtues and glories of ancient Greece and modern Britain were essentially the same.



Glenalmond the fear was not really of bullying or homosexual assault so much as whether one's parents would make public spectacles of themselves on their periodic visits to the school, which was 10 miles across the moors from the nearest point of civilisation (Perth).

Once my father had to rush north from London on the night train to conduct vital negotiations with the headmaster on whether — in view of my imminent expulsion — my brother would be permitted to enter the establishment. I waited by the front gate. Down the driveway came the cab and in it the hunched and gloomy figure of my father. He extended his leg to alight and I at once perceived that he was wearing no socks. Socks are essential to dignified comportment. I protested forcibly and my father, himself terrified at the thought of the impending meeting with the headmaster babbled an explanation.

It was not convincing. He had, he said, found himself sharing a sleeping compartment with a Sikh who was wearing a magnificent turban. He and the Sikh had "taken a few drinks." Later, perched on his top berth, he had watched in the mirror on the opposite wall as the Sikh, in the bottom berth, slowly unwound his turban. He was aware, said my father as we walked towards the headmaster's office, that by spying on the Sikh's turban-doffing, he was breaching ancient taboos. But he could not resist further inspection.

Just when it became apparent that the handsome young fellow in a turban was — without turban — a very old Sikh indeed, their eyes met in the mirror. "I passed," said my father, "a night of terror, tossing to and fro and waiting the Sikh's inevitable revenge. I awoke at Perth station from an uneasy doze. The Sikh was gone. His reprisal? The theft of my socks."

It was a fine try, and as I watched my father hitch his pants down over his naked ankles before stepping into the headmaster's study, I felt — not for the first time — the powerful urge to become a journalist, since only a journalist (such as my father) could have conceived such a preposterous story at a moment's notice and within moments recounted it with such vibrant conviction. ■

AND THEY CALL IT PEACE'

ent critic of American foreign policy, casts a critical eye over a school
m his father's visit to his school at Glenalmond.

The Sikh's Revenge

John le Carre had a spirited blast about England in last Sunday's *New York Times Magazine*. He flailed away without mercy, pinning much of the blame on the educational system, notably preparatory and public schools to which the

prospective elite are despatched and in which, if one believes le Carre and the immense quantity of writers who have expressed themselves on the same topic, the wretched denizens suffer the tortures of the damned.

I suppose he is right. I must say I rather liked my preparatory school near Ascot. At

Heatherdown first appeared in Grand Street, The Sikh's Revenge in Village Voice. Both are included in Alexander Cockburn's collection *Corruptions of Empire* published by Verso, which will be available in paperback in September.

RAGS AND RICHES!

A dramatised version of Jessie Kesson's story 'The White Bird Passes' was presented as part of Glasgow's Mayfest. Stewart Asquith attended the opening night and spoke to Jessie Kesson whose other works include the novels **The Glitter of Mica** and **Another Time, Another Place**, as well as numerous short stories. Originally from Elgin, she now lives in London.

There is at the same time a degree of arrogance and impertinence that allows us to assume that an hour or two of talking qualifies us to write about someone else's life. Having said that, Jessie Kesson gives up much of herself in and through her writing. No more so than in the deeply moving and lyrical story based on her own childhood — **The White Bird Passes**.

It is a celebration of the dangers and joys, and the magic of childhood, and a highly evocative portrayal of the humour, love and defiance that carry a young girl from the innocence of childhood to adolescence — the passing of the white bird.

It is a book full of insights into the experiences of a child and her relationships with the world around her, and though Jessie Kesson would deny ever "giving lessons or propaganda," there is much we can learn from her.

It is a story of her own childhood. Attempts to interview her about her childhood, as mine certainly were, will be met by a gentle rebuff and expression of despair at having to go over it again. If you want to know about her childhood it is 'The White Bird Passes'. In her own words, her experience of interviews going over and over the same ground (**The White Bird Passes** was written 30 years ago and relates to a period in her life 60 or so years ago) is that "the white bird has almost become an albatross".

Set initially in the Elgin of the 1920s and later in Skene, Aberdeenshire, the book provides a wealth of observations not only into the world of a young girl, but also more generally of the social conditions of the time in North East Scotland. A hallmark of Jessie Kesson's work must surely be her ability to locate her characters in the times in which they live — a rare skill, and one which allows us to appreciate the nature of childhood experiences. By any account, Jessie Kesson, or Janie McVean as the main character is called, grew up in physical conditions and surroundings that could only be called poor, at least on the face of it. Yet there is neither any sense of moralising nor self pity about her childhood. Nor is it portrayed as a struggle for survival in the face of adverse conditions. Hard it might have been, but the world of Janie McVean was one rich in the experiences given to her by the others around her in the close community of Our Lady's Lane. The love shown to her by her mother though, was arguably the formative factor.

Her mother may have been the subject of the censure of small town Scottish morality, and the target of continued threats from the local authorities or Poor Law Guardians, but what shines through is the power of the love between mother and daughter. Liza McVean brings up her daughter on her own with no man around, and ostracised from her family for the obvious misdemeanour. What Douglas Dunn refers to in the introduction to the new edition of the book as 'understandable indignation' at Janie's 'deplorable background' blinded those concerned to

the richness and warmth of this nurturing relationship.

Janie McVean is a character open to all the experiences the world can offer, and as Jessie Kesson herself believes 'the child sees everything. It takes in everything.' A deceptively simple statement but one which conveys her belief in the potential of the child to see and learn.

The experiences of Janie McVean were those of a girl brought up in a world of women. There is no suggestion that they are the victims of men — they have too much spark and fire for that. But it is a world where the boundaries are set largely by men — it's the time of the national strike; Liza and others in Our Lady's Lane are, again to use Douglas Dunn, 'sexual entrepreneurs'; the Trustees deciding Janie's fate on leaving the children's home where she spent several years are all men; and that most powerful expression of moral judgement — silence — is the prerogative of Janie's grandfather.

The book as does the play, races from scene to scene and it's when you meet Jessie Kesson that it becomes obvious that this is not some literary device. Far from it — it reflects her own openness and eagerness as a child to take in as much of the world as she could devour, despite the cost this inevitably incurred. Her view seems to be one of the child having great powers of observation and expression.

"Children are natural poets. We're a' poets when we're young."

'And of course, there's a' the excitement, a kid loves life — ye see everythin.'

and,

'Children are natural poets. We're a' poets when we're young.'

Improvements in living standards haven't been made without costs, and for Jessie Kesson the saddest thing has been the loss of the kind of childhood she experienced. Not to suggest the improvements in social conditions are thought by her to be a bad thing. Not that, but that the kind of world into which we are introducing children might not be a fruitful one.

'What saddens me most is that the bairns are growing up far too fast now. They're losing their childhood. The wee quines o' ten are now young teenagers — they get perms. They go to discos. They've seriously got boyfriends.'

The word 'magic', appears often in her talk.

'They miss oot sae much. Even in my poor childhood, we had the magic.'

And children as poets? There's an expression of despair and sadness when she points out that instead of such rhymes as

'She is handsome, she is pretty,
She is the girl of the golden city...'
children are now subjected to, and so



repeat, such rhyming masterpieces as 'Beanz, meanz Heinz.' Street culture is replaced by T.V. culture.

Nor is schooling exempt from similar concerns, particularly of the theft of childhood.

'The only safe, really childhood period a bairn does have is before ye go tae school. Ye're safe, ye're in the cocoon o'everybody that loves ye dearly and keeping ye frae harm, an' reads ye bed time stories. But its when ye gae tae school that the cruelty starts.'

At the end of *The White Bird Passes*, Janie McVean is unable to go on with her education, at least in a formal sense. But what if she had gone on to university? What if Jessie Kesson had gone on to take a degree? Might it not have robbed her of some of her magic? Might she have lost a lot more than she gained? This she recognises herself, as others have, and illustrates it by quoting from one of her early poems *The Scarlet Goon*.

'Gin' I hae worn a scarlet goon,
Whit wid I ken?
Mair or less than I ken noo,
Livin' among men who'd never heard o'
Aristotle...'

My alma mater's jist the size o' a' the fowk I ken...'

But though she never did go to

university, Jessie Kesson did get her scarlet goon having been given honorary degrees from two Scottish universities. Whatever the obstacles were or may have seemed to be at the time, Jessie Kesson was never inhibited from writing. Janie McVean can express defiantly at the end of the book that whatever may be in store for her as a result of the decision of the Board of Trustees to place her into service (where else should a young woman of her time seek employment?), in her own mind, her future is clear to her if to no one else.

"...bairns are growing up far too fast now. They're losing their childhood."

'I don't want to dust and polish.
And I don't want to work on a farm. I want to write poetry. Great poetry. As great as Shakespeare.'

Even if we allow children to express themselves, we have to be ready to hear them, to truly hear what they have to say. The adult ear sometimes has great difficulty in tuning in to children. She recalled a story against her own difficulty on hearing children sometimes — in a poem written during a case conference in a List D school she worked in.

'F _____ off, she said
Dismissing me and my suggestions
With a defiant glare.
That crinkled to a smile of small surprise
when in anger I wrote
F _____ to where?'

Jessie Kesson is an honest woman. Honest enough to express disapproval of the kind of interview our talk started out to be. But for that gentle rebuff, I might not have met the woman I did. Her ability as a writer makes us feel what she writes. We don't just read Janie McVean's story, we feel it with her. We enter her world, rich and imaginative and full of characters each making their own contribution to Janie's journey. A bit like speaking to Jessie Kesson herself. She has also in the past been honest enough to describe the dreadful conditions under which children 'in care' had to live. A recent showing on TV of her play about incest, *'You never slept in mine'* is testimony to her willingness to write about any subject if it moves her.

Jessie Kesson doesn't write propaganda and neither in her writing nor through her conversation would she claim to be giving lessons. That's not her style or purpose.

The insight and sensitivity she gave voice to in the world of Janie McVean provides perhaps, something for us all to learn. ■

POWER RELATIONS

In this article, the first in our series **How do You Do It?** — where those who work with people tell how it's done **Clare Devine**, a Senior Social Worker with the RSSPCC describes her work. Based in the Overnewton Centre in Glasgow, working increasingly with sexually abused children and their families, she uses a framework which challenges power and gender relations in the wider society.

In her very moving book **Cry Hard and Swim**, Jacqueline Spring attempts as a woman, wife and mother to come to terms with her sexual abuse as a child. She talks of the importance of her social worker, whose professed strengths were as "not a psychiatrist, not even a psychiatric social worker," but as a social worker as an ordinary person.

Jacqueline Spring found great strength from the realisation that her social worker was an ordinary person. This reminded me of a tutor of mine. He said that, "social work is the art of being ordinary in extraordinary situations." One of the most extraordinary situations in which we social workers find ourselves is that in which children are sexually abused in their own families. The kind of situation where things have gone badly wrong with children, families, and sexuality.

I am not an expert in working with sexually abused children. For the past nine years my colleagues and I have worked with physically abused children, children "at risk" of abuse, and their families. Over the past year, in response to the growing awareness of needs, we have been changing focus to working with sexually abused children and their families.

I know that our feelings of anxiety

arising from such change are shared by colleagues elsewhere. Workers somehow feel that the skills and knowledge that they have in helping vulnerable parents and children generally are not relevant to working with children who have been sexually abused.

Some of us feel deskilled, lacking in knowledge, and overwhelmed.

"Power relations within the institution of the family reflect those between men, women and children in the wider society."

But change, as well as bringing insecurity, uncertainty and anxiety, brings the possibility of new learning, new growth. As with children and their parents, it is not change itself which is the issue — after all, life itself is change — but how that change can be managed. We at the Overnewton Centre have had to identify

what we have learned already in helping physically abused children. We have tried to identify how much of that is transferable to the work with the sexually abused. We have also tried to define the extra dimension that the sexual component brings.

A Framework

We have not, in our work with families and children, been keen to be seen as "rescuers". Rather, we've been concerned to establish where possible working relationships with parents so that caring within the family and within the community can be provided.

Our aim has been to formulate with parents and children, the least detrimental alternative for the child.

But what framework for understanding child abuse can we bring to our work? Research has emphasised that there is no single origin of child abuse. It is most often the result of inter-related factors in each case.

We have learned that the medical model is not a useful one for understanding the complex phenomenon of child abuse. Child abuse is not an illness to be diagnosed, treated, and cured. Practical experience confirms that abused children



and their families are not a homogeneous group.

Henry Kempe has described three main components to each family situation in which assaults have occurred. These are the child, the parents, and the stressful circumstances they are living in. We have found this a useful starting point. Because each case is different — different children, different families, different stresses — we have offered families a range of different methods depending on what has been useful to them. The method used — family therapy, family individual or marital interviews, joint work with parents and child, and/or play sessions — should meet the needs of the people you are working with.

With sexual abuse, research tells us that in the majority of cases the abuser is a male member of the child's own household or close male kin. Abusers are almost always male. Perpetrators often deny the abuse and can be supported in this by their spouse. There is secrecy associated with child sexual abuse and it is often deep-seated. Children are subjected to severe threats to prevent them disclosing.

Children rarely lie about being sexually abused, although they may deny that it

happened to maintain the family secret. It is probable that girls are abused more often than boys, although some children of both sexes are abused at a very early age. The majority of victims are pre-pubertal.

"...patterns of socialisation in our society which lead men to see children as objects to possess and use, and to believe that they are not responsible for their own behaviour, particularly their sexual behaviour."

Studies of adults indicate the likelihood of long-term damage.

Definitions of child sexual abuse imply the abuse of power by a trusted adult over a dependent child. Therefore, the abuse of power, the betrayal of trust and responsibility, and the inability of children

to consent are important themes in the definition. Sexual abuse is not carried out by a few sick people. It is carried out in families by fathers and step-fathers who appear respectable to the world. Thus child sexual abuse is not a deviant act by a few abnormal people, but the result of patterns of socialisation in our society which lead men to see children as objects to possess and use, and to believe that they are not responsible for their own behaviour, particularly their sexual behaviour.

This process socialises children and women to learn from an early age to please, service, and protect men. Power relations within the institution of the family reflect those between men, women and children in the wider society.

As a working hypothesis then, the perpetrator has to be seen as being responsible and in control of his behaviour, and fully understanding the meaning of his actions. Children are never responsible for the abuse.

By analysing the role of mothers within our society this approach can explain why many children blame their mothers for not protecting them, and why some mothers remain silent and/or blame their daughters. Any intervention therefore, has to address

working with the perpetrator, the child, and the mother from this basis.

We have learned too from experience that it is important to bring principles of openness, honesty, consistency, and trustworthiness to our work. Our ability to use authority constructively has been important, as has been the need to be explicit about our powers, duties and responsibilities. How much more important in working with sexually abused children, for workers not to abuse the child's trust nor take it for granted, and to be open and honest about our powers. Abused children have already been exploited by unequal power relations. As workers we have to take care that by our actions, we do not repeat that exploitation and thus further diminish and undermine the child in whose life we intervene.

The Child

Child sexual abuse, unlike physical abuse, is not easy to identify as there are often no obvious physical signs. It is very often the child herself who can tell us about it, and it is therefore important for us to be open to children who want to tell, and to believe them once they do. It is also important not to hold them responsible for the abuse. Any intervention has to be child-centred and we have to understand the whole child in her/his family context. The principle of helping

"We cannot take away children's experiences from them, but we can help them make sense of those experiences."

the child in the context of the family is, of course, a key principle of the Children's Hearing system.

Children who are abused have a variety of difficulties which are often displayed through their behaviour. Sexually abused children have the added difficulty of being sexualised and can demonstrate this in their action and gestures. This can make us very uncomfortable in working with the child, and it is a particular issue for residential workers and foster parents who require considerable support to understand and help the sexually abused child.

Getting close to children in uncertain and unhappy circumstances is stressful for workers and the temptation is to avoid it. Helping children can be a painful and long-term process. From our experience, if children are helped to live with and deal with the reality of their lives, and to give expression to the feelings they have, then they can grow and develop. We cannot take away children's experiences from them, but we can help them make sense of those experiences.

If children are in care, they have to be helped to maintain contact with their parents in a safe and consistent way. That may mean contact with the perpetrator depending on the child's needs and view

on the matter. We do not help children by spiriting away significant people in their lives.

This does not mean that all families should be kept together. It does mean that separation is a significant experience for children and has to be managed constructively and in a way that makes sense to the child. The pain and conflict of disruption has to be minimised.

Working with parents

Children cannot be helped in isolation and in order to assess risk, we have to assess parents' abilities to care for and protect their child. There is of course, an inherent tension in developing working relationships with parents. On the one hand you are supporting them in the task of parenting, while on the other, you may be offering services to protect the child. This involves us in making judgements about their capacity for "good enough parenting".

It is therefore important to be clear about our reasons for being involved, being explicit to parents about concerns. This involvement of parents in a cooperative as opposed to an adversarial way is also an important principle of the Children's Hearing system.

But with sexual abuse, it is not quite as simple as this. Given the working hypothesis described above, I believe we need to approach the non-abusing parent (the mother) differently from the perpetrator (the father figure). We are aware that some mothers immediately believe their child, others take time to face the reality. Others attempt to deal with the abuse in the family, hoping it will cease. Some mothers deny that the abuse has happened, and finally reject the child. It is vital that where possible, we attempt to forge an alliance with mothers to help them help their child. It is important that we do not, by our involvement, undermine or disable them.

Many mothers have been abused themselves, and sometimes it is only when their child's abuse has been disclosed, that they are able to disclose. Women who have been abused have much to learn about taking control of their own lives, and our task is to help them take care and control of their child's life as well.

At the Overnewton Centre, we are just beginning to work with perpetrators. We are aware that one of the major differences between physical and sexual abuse is that with the latter, perpetrators are likely to find themselves in the criminal justice system. A major difficulty in working with perpetrators is the high level of denial that operates. They are often prepared to perjure themselves rather than take responsibility for their actions.

With the physical abuse of children, those parents who continue to deny responsibility for the injury were in our experience, the ones least likely to care for the child. If men are unable to accept responsibility for their actions, then they cannot be placed in positions of responsibility in relation to children. It is

not the child's responsibility to protect herself. It is unrealistic to expect mothers to protect children from a father who will not take responsibility for his behaviour.

Management and Support

Studies of professionals involved in cases of child sexual abuse show their opinions differing according to the nature of their organisation's involvement. They also demonstrate the potential for conflict.

Workers have to be able to deal with such conflicts openly and squarely. Conflict in families can be mirrored in conflict between workers, and workers have to be clear about where the conflict really belongs.

Given the potential for conflict within and between organisations, it would seem that our responses to child sexual abuse can be a crystallisation of power relations and gender issues prevalent in the wider society. Our organisations reflect these. It is the men who are most likely to be in positions of power as policy makers and managers; whilst the women are the carers working with children and families directly.

Working with children and families who are in conflict touches workers. Trying to be ordinary in extraordinary circumstances brings its stresses. Jacqueline Spring in talking about herself and her social worker reflects this.

"We do not help children by spiriting away significant people in their lives."

"Everyone is bruised inside, everyone has to struggle, needs help from others to reflect their innate goodness, despite the pain of the struggle. Everyone needs loving encouragement, not just me. She (the social worker) would not label me "ill" nor allow anyone else to do so, particularly myself. If I was ill, then so was the rest of humankind. But I was not ill, I was just extremely and justifiably angry, and afraid to be so directly."

That justifiable anger is also felt by workers as they listen to children and mothers talk about the horror of what has happened to them. Being ourselves ordinary people, we can feel overwhelmed by such anger and other feelings. In helping people to make sense of harrowing experiences, we need help ourselves sometimes to face our own feelings. It is only by confronting and working with our own feelings and reactions that we can be ordinary in extraordinary circumstances.

This article is based on a paper entitled "Families, Children and Sexuality" presented at the first Anglo-Scottish National Children's Bureau conference held in Peebles in March. The conference was called "Family Fortunes - Adapting Services for Children in Changing Families".

The full text of this paper can be obtained from the author at Overnewton Centre, 52 Lumsden Street, Glasgow G3 8RH.

Unlocking the Doors

**INSIDERS — Women's
Experience of Prison**
by Una Padel and Prue
Stevenson (Virago £4.95)

Sheila Ramsay

This is a collection of stories of individual women who have served a prison sentence. In most of the cases we are painted a picture of their backgrounds and lives in the outside world from which they are removed, and confronted with the experience of imprisonment.

A recurring strand in the backgrounds of many of the women is a childhood lacking consistent and loving relationships. The actual circumstances may vary but, in most cases, their early lives had not provided the kind of dependable security we need in order to grow into independent and internally secure adults. Many of the women had been in care as children and the familiar story of exchanging one institution for one another throughout their childhood, adolescence and eventual adulthood unfolds along a depressingly predictable path.

The prisons which the women pass through (usually at least two per sentence) vary from open prisons to the maximum security wing at Durham and include Holloway's infamous C1 psychiatric wing and Rampton Special Hospital. Although the harshness of the regimes may vary, an important aspect of the prison ethos is pervasive throughout the system.

This is the total removal of any responsibility that a prisoner carries for her own life. There are no decisions to be reached, no choices to be made, just an enforced total dependence on the institution. When this is linked to what feels like an arbitrary set of rules, whose existence a prisoner often only discovers when she breaks one; then the only way left for any expression of individuality is through a loud scream of protest. Often this is made through a seemingly pointless act of defiance, tragically often through a self-destructive act. But at least these are ways of saying "I'm here, I exist".

For many of the women in this book the actual experience of being in prison is one of the easier aspects of the sentence. Much more painful is the constant anxiety and preoccupation with the outside world and the fate of their own children. Often they are cared for by various members of the extended family, but this produces its own tensions and they, in their turn, frequently spend periods in care. The knowledge of the growing distance between themselves and their children is, for the women, a sentence in itself.



In some of the stories, the women are pregnant when sentenced and their babies spend the first months of their lives in prison. Whilst the mother and baby units described might be more comfortable than the rest of the prison, the all-pervading institution is ever-present reaching out to the lives of the new-born — no demand feeding, spontaneous play or comforting cuddles in the middle of the night. The cliché about the family serving the sentence as well as the prisoner becomes literally true. Starting life with two prison

officers standing outside the delivery room gives a new symbolic meaning to the concept of original sin.

As I progressed through reading the women's stories, I became aware of experiencing feelings I hadn't expected — that my reactions to the book were becoming quite complex.

Whilst accepting what is at best, the futility and, at worst, the brutality of imprisonment, I was becoming increasingly irritated and impatient with the women themselves. Their inability to take hold of the chaos of their lives, their often made and often broken resolutions, their self-centred unthinking actions were putting me in touch with angry punitive feelings that were as unwelcome as they were unexpected. The book became very difficult and painful reading.

It became important for me to understand the effect the book was having, not just for myself but a key into some of the wider issues. Part of it may well be guilt, that so many of the women had been in care and as "carers" we had so patently failed to compensate for the damage previously inflicted — in fact in some cases had reinforced that damage. But part of it was yet again being confronted with the experience that deprived, neglected and abused children do not grow up into adults who evoke our sympathy. More often they continue to demand what they were never given — and those demands are sometimes too great for us to meet. Our inadequacy fuels our anger and rejection.

A frequent cry from the women is for someone to listen to them — a belief that if there had been someone to listen, someone for them to talk to, then they wouldn't have needed to explode, to have smashed up the cell, to have cut themselves. So the question is why wasn't there anyone to listen? Is what they want to say to us too difficult for us to hear?

If I own these feelings, then I cannot dissociate myself from the prison system, pretend it's nothing to do with me and simply deplore the actions of unfeeling and sadistic "screws". Prison may make it easier for all of us to keep some things locked up. Maybe the service this book provides is to unlock some of the doors. ■

BABY FEEDING

The recent **Third Report on Infant Feeding** points to the predominance of bottle feeding in Scotland. Mothers here seem particularly reluctant to breast feed. **Betty Thomson** and **Lydia Lunnon Wood** look at why.

Another survey of infant feeding again shows that the incidence of breast feeding in Scotland is still considerably lower than in England and Wales. (48% initiating breast feeding in Scotland; 65% south of the border) Why, when the advantages of breast milk are so widely known, should the figures for Scotland be so much lower?

Historically, it is not unusual for women not to want to breast feed. Our modern young first-time mum who "disnae fancy it" has her equivalent in earlier times when those with options chose wet nurses, because they felt it was too much of a tie,

or would spoil the figure or sexual image. The modern experience is to use an infant formula milk, rather than another woman.

As the Report on Infant Feeding states, modern infant formulae are very good breastmilk substitutes, and adequately nourish the majority of our infants. However the equation is by no means balanced.

Generally professionals round the country in ante-natal education stress the plus of breast feeding for mother and child. It is "designer milk" tailored for individual

babies in composition and quantity. Anti-infective components are in colostrum and milk, and there is a lower incidence of allergic conditions in the breast fed.

Among the advantages of breast feeding to the mother are a good degree of contraceptive protection (whilst the baby is exclusively breastfed!); loss of up to 4kg of fat store; and the considerable saving in hard cash!

So! Why doesn't everybody breast feed?

As every set of figures show, we have a



large group of "failed" breast feeders. While it is perhaps not fair to say that the motivation of this group was in doubt, they must nevertheless exert a negative influence on those they meet.

Perhaps as strong a negative influence on potential breast feeders are the professionals themselves. While a great deal is known about the physiology of breast feeding, the dissemination of this information is clearly inadequate. How many health professionals will have access to and read this report? We fear not enough.

Profound ignorance based on out-of-date ideas and personal experience does undermine the efforts of those of us who wish to promote breast feeding. At present there is limited encouragement for rooming in by the mother if baby has to stay in hospital. There is often inadequate support for breast feeding mothers, exemplified by the routine of complementary feeding with formula and/or glucose solution. This kind of thoughtlessness is counterproductive to mothers who do want to succeed.

The unhappy saga continues into the community, where those who failed before

reinforce the message of some ill-informed professionals.

Surveys demonstrate that members of social class 1, women with higher education, who are over age 25, and who live in London and the South East are most likely to choose, persevere with, and succeed at breast feeding. Presumably such women read the relevant literature, are more likely to attend ante-natal classes, and within their circle of family and acquaintances will know breast feeding mothers. Their peer group pressure is almost certainly positive. During

REVIEWS

► lactation their ability to articulate difficulties and utilise resource people means they are more likely to succeed.

The counter arguments apply to women in lower social classes (of which there are proportionately more in Scotland). Less than one third of working class women attend ante-natal classes. Decisions tend to be made on the basis of group experience. Anecdotal evidence can be accepted unquestioningly. More to the point, many working class women have never seen a baby breast fed. Within their families, probably great grandmother was the last person to do it. The ignorance about the mechanics of breast feeding, and the behaviour of their breast fed infant is often profound, for instance, concerning pattern of feeding, bowel movements, etc.

Housing too has to be an important factor. Whereas with the woman in social class 1 living in the South East of

England, housing conditions usually provide privacy, in Scotland historically overcrowding is a feature. In 1951, and we are talking about generational patterns here, 15.5% of Scots lived more than two to a room. In England it was 2.1%. Sharing with fathers and adolescent brothers decreases privacy.

Education about breast feeding should begin in school when it is a less emotive issue. It could perhaps be part of a course on parenting, and many health visitors and midwives would certainly be willing to participate, or support teachers in this.

At present, in exploring the topic with pregnant women, care not to damage relationships by forcefulness is an important requirement. There is a genuine fear of being tagged "second rate", or "a failure" if they refuse breast feeding. In pregnancy, many women are preoccupied with the prospect of labour, and are

unreceptive to breast feeding advice.

While the National Childbirth Trust (N.C.T.) use counsellors in their largely middle class groups, it is to be hoped that the same could be provided for more diverse groups, including more working class mums. The help they can give deserves to be more widely welcomed by the professionals.

With an eye to exploring how professionals' attitudes to breast feeding are a factor in advice-giving, in Grampian Region, a Breast Feeding Group are soon to survey G.P.s, hospital and community midwives, and Health Visitors. Determining present practices and professional attitudes, it is hoped, will lead to training which improves consistency of practice and advice. The next generation will drink their fill of the benefits.

Present Day Practice in Infant Feeding. Third Report. Pub. HMSO Price £5.95. ■

Mothering in the Loo

The Baby Care Symbol is attached to the windows of shop and office premises that meet minimum standards of facility for young children and their parents. The Baby Care sticker campaign was devised by, among others, members of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), the voluntary charity concerned with education for parenthood.

You might not have seen too many Baby Care stickers in public places. They are "awarded" if a shop or public office provides a comfortable place for nursing mothers, or a changing room, or exceptionally a customer creche.

"The place to feed has to be separate from the ladies loo," explained a spokeswoman for the Trust. Awards have been patchy. "It's as if society expects new mothers to hide away for the first few years," she said, "and not cause anyone any fuss and bother."

All the larger branches of Mothercare and Boots now have a feeding/changing room, and NCT members in Aberdeen and Stirling have been able to award Symbols to many of the big stores. There are areas of resistance, however. Marks and Spencer's for example, seem especially obstructive in providing a room for nursing mothers.

The NCT, in existence for over thirty years, has just over 40 trained breast feeding counsellors in Scotland. Given that even mothers who want to breast feed will

give up without knowledge and support, this seems a paltry resource for the whole of Scotland.

"You can see that it's very much a class thing," according to the chair of NCT's

Page three has a lot to answer for, according to Frankie Taylor. Herself a breast feeding counsellor, she finds that breasts are seen as sexual objects only. Mothers find that people are shocked and horrified if they breastfeed in public (even discreetly).

There is a deeper reason though, she feels to do with women's attitudes to their own bodies. "With bottle feeding, mothers seem to feel assured if they can see how much baby's taken. With milk from the breast, it's as if with many mothers they become anxious that baby's not getting enough."

"In a technological age, people seem conditioned not to trust their own bodies — or their babies' bodies. Baby soon lets you know if he's not getting enough."

The decision, whether bottle or breast, seems to be a matter of attitude. One mother who recently had her baby in the maternity ward at Bangour in West Lothian found that she was the only one out of ten in the ward who was trying to breastfeed. Under pressure like that, there seems little incentive to persevere.

"A lactation sister in each maternity ward in the country might make an impact," said Frankie Taylor. "But that of course comes down to money."

Derek Rodger

Information on your nearest NCT branch in Scotland from: Barbara Gillespie, Regional Co-ordinator, 6 Eskhill, Penicuik, Midlothian. ■



THE NATIONAL
BABY CARE SYMBOL.

Scottish Region, Frankie Taylor. A recent survey in middle class Linlithgow revealed that 75% of new mums were breastfeeding. In neighbouring Whitburn, bottle feeding exceeded that proportion.



Spider Law!

CAMPAIGN PACK ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING (Youth Homelessness Group) HOME GROUND — A SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING NEEDS IN MUIRHOUSE, EDINBURGH (Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless, £2)

Colin Chalmers

It is perhaps symptomatic of the morality of the present government, or 'regime' as Mrs Thatcher has started calling it, that young people's welfare is considered so unimportant. In a society geared to encouraging those who are well off to grab all they can, the idea that society might actually owe the next generation the means to build lives for themselves is no doubt considered slightly eccentric. We should stand on our own two feet. If we are rich we deserve to be richer. Greed is good. The slogans of finance capital justify the impoverishment of communities, families and large sections of the next generation.

Cuts in social security, jobs and housing have had a disproportionate impact on young people and have led to the creation of a growing army of unemployed young people coming out of school into a society that, quite realistically, they see as offering them nothing. Increased unemployment through voluntary redundancies, or through companies not taking on new staff, has led to a massive increase in real teenage unemployment since 1979. In the same

period young people's benefits have been cut 14 times. Tensions within families with unemployed sons and daughters have forced many young people to leave home with nowhere else to go. Increased youth unemployment and the lack of decent housing for young people has inevitably led to a rise in youth homelessness. In the heart of high-spend Britain a sizeable proportion of teenagers see themselves as dispossessed, with little hope and no way of changing the way they are treated.

It all sounds pretty grim. And as with the problems of the 'third world' there is a very real temptation to ignore the problem because it is too difficult to deal with. We may be concerned, but what can we do?

The psychologist Dorothy Rowe, talking about the fear of nuclear war, points to the dangers of seeing *social* processes as being so out of our control that we deny them, and in so doing give up our ability to change things. It is a very real danger. The fratricidal violence and self-destructive behaviour of many homeless young people show us the effects of such hopelessness.

But denial of the problem, and the inability to do anything effective that goes along with that, can take another form. Many organisations campaigning on behalf of young homeless people believe that it is possible to significantly improve things by reasoning alone. These two publications, precisely because they are thorough and well argued documents, show the limits of this viewpoint.

The **Young Homelessness Group Campaign Pack** is full of phrases such as 'the needs of young people must be recognised', 'all housing policies must meet the housing needs of young people'

and 'people should not be discriminated against'. **Home Ground**, a well researched survey of the housing needs of young people in a deprived council estate in Edinburgh, ends up with a series of recommendations to central and local government and other bodies that have little hope of being carried out in the present political climate.

Now I'm sure if you asked any of the people involved in these, and similar, publications whether they thought there was the slightest chance of the present government increasing benefits, building homes and all the rest, they would agree there is not. Everyone knows the score, but the habits of consensus politics die hard. The proposals, resolutions, and lobbying continue as if sweet reason will win the day.

Youth homelessness, and all the related problems facing large sections of young people in Scotland today — unemployment, cuts in benefit, the introduction of compulsory YTS, and all the rest — are political problems. And politics is about power, not just well-reasoned argument. What is missing from so much of the campaigning work on these issues is the recognition that those in power will only change their policies if they are forced to by a mobilisation of those who suffer from those policies. To make the central aim of *campaigning* work the attempt to convince those in power to change their ways is doomed to failure.

To take a not too distant analogy, any counsellor of sexual abuse will tell you that the first step in overcoming the effects of such abuse is turning self-doubt and depression into anger, getting in touch with your own power and becoming able to challenge the seemingly omnipotent power of the abuser.

I'm reminded of a **Channel 4** late night chat show about youth homelessness a few months ago where, amongst others, Sheila McKechnie the chairperson of **Shelter** and Spider, a homeless young Scot living in London, took on a Tory MP on the subject. Sheila McKechnie had all the arguments, all the figures, but it was Spider, inarticulate and angry, who stole the show. Did the well argued proposals have any more effect than the gut fury, borne of bitter experience in the street? I doubt it.

Perhaps it's about time that welfare and rights workers gave up the idea that there can be a return to the seemingly rational welfarism of the 50s and 60s — it won't happen. For all their apparent cynicism, the young people who face poverty and homelessness in Scotland today are probably much more aware of the political realities under our present 'regime' than those of us brought up in relative prosperity.

The time might come when our young people will find their voice. So enraged will they be, that it may not be in a language we understand.

THE SCOTTISH CHILD AND THE LAW

Chinks of Light

We hope that this column will have demonstrated over the period of its existence the rather slow and conservative manner in which Scottish Law evolves. The Scottish Child Law Review is now underway, which will hopefully bring in some much needed changes, which will of course be featured in "The Scottish Child". In the meantime, however, it is good to note that this year has brought several chinks of light which will improve practice in Scottish child care.

In the winter issue we featured the case of *B v Kennedy*, which highlighted the difficulties of referring a child under the age of twelve who is the victim of an offence of lewd and libidinous practices to a Children's Hearing. The Scottish Office have reacted with commendable alacrity in adding a clause to the Criminal Justice Bill which is currently before Parliament. This will bring such offences specifically within the orbit of Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, which will result in a straightforward ground for referring children under twelve who are the victims of lewd and libidinous practices to a Children's Hearing.

Civil Evidence

There is another Bill currently before Parliament which will have even greater implications for practice. The Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill follows on from proposals by the Scottish Law Commission in the general area of civil law. Amongst its fairly radical proposals is that the rule requiring that corroboration in civil proceedings should be abolished. Civil proceedings are specifically defined as to include applications arising out of Children's Hearings for proof of grounds for referral, except where it is alleged that an offence has been committed by a child. Implementation of this rule may affect in particular, cases where the only evidence presented is the statement of the child herself, which has not previously allowed the Reporter to proceed. This may also cut down on the number of

witnesses whose time has to be wasted in appearing in Court.

The Bill goes on to deal with another sacred cow of the law — hearsay. The Bill provides that evidence shall not be excluded solely on the grounds that it is hearsay. If this is literally interpreted, statements made by children can be admitted without requiring direct evidence. Similarly, records of statements made by previous workers in a case can now be used even if the particular workers cannot be traced to give evidence.

It is to be hoped that these Bills pass speedily through Parliament without revision or obstruction as they will vastly improve the law's ability to protect vulnerable children.

Hearsay Difficulties

Some of the difficulties currently faced arising out of the current law on hearsay are demonstrated in the case of *W v Kennedy*, a Stated Case decided before the Court of Session of 6 January 1988. This was a case where it was alleged that a girl had been the victim of offences under the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1975 committed against her by her brother. One crucial piece of evidence was the statement made by the girl herself and this of course would be sufficient in itself under the new Civil Evidence Bill abolishing corroboration. However, at present corroboration of her evidence is required and this was produced as a statement allegedly made by the brother to the Police. An objection was made by the Solicitor for the parents as to the admissibility of this statement in Court. The Court, on appeal, upheld the admissibility of the statement and what was particularly relevant was the rationale of the Court in explaining the interpretation — Lord Sutherland stated — "Proceedings in front of the Sheriff are self contained civil proceedings *sui generis* in which it must be borne in mind at all times that the principal purpose is to ascertain what is to be done in the interests of the child. In our opinion it would be quite wrong for the

subjective to be thwarted by the application of rigid rules of evidence or procedure just because such rigidity may be appropriate in other kinds of proceedings".

This is an example of an increasing awareness, stated by the Court of Session of the nature of Children's Hearing proceedings and the nature of the cases which come before it, and it is hoped that these words and practices will percolate through the entire system in the interpretation of law. Evidential and procedural safeguards are an important and necessary part of the system and nothing of what has been said is meant to diminish their relevance. The Court of Session's words, however, give clear indication to Sheriffs and Reporters that rules be interpreted so as to allow the law to operate truly for the best interests of the child.

Kearney

These columns have been evidence to the increasing volume of case and statutory law relating to the Children's Hearing System. In previous issues we have bemoaned the absence of a comprehensive textbook dealing with Scottish Child Law and it is therefore with great enthusiasm that we welcome the publication of "Children's Hearings and The Sheriff Court" by Sheriff Brian Kearney, published by Butterworth at £38.00.

This is essentially a book for practice, dealing not with philosophical deliberations concerning the Children's Hearing System but rather providing a factual commentary on all stages of a Children's Hearing. It will be an invaluable reference for Reporters, Social Workers and Solicitors, and has the great merit of being very clear and readable, whilst providing the necessary detailed information, in an easily accessible form. It is to be hoped that the author can keep this publication updated to take account of changes in the law, especially arising out of the Child Law Review.

Children as Witnesses — RSSPCC discussion paper

The RSSPCC Legal Committee, chaired by Lord Milligan, issued their discussion paper on "Children as Witnesses" earlier this year. This is a concise and thoughtful document on a subject which is likely to be increasingly with us. On the subject of training, the committee's view is that training needs to be considered for groups who have not until now been seen as requiring specialist skills in the questioning of children.

"For Procurators Fiscal...the main source of training is in fact "on the job experience". Similarly, we understand that this is the situation for Sheriffs. Would it not be appropriate therefore, to consider now the provision of training opportunities for these groups also and for the provision of written information on children and interview techniques which could be of assistance?"

(Discussion Paper — obtainable from RSSPCC, Melville House, 41 Polwarth Terrace, Edinburgh EH11 1NU).

Scottish Child Law Centre

Finally, it is a pleasure to welcome the coming into being of The Scottish Child Law Centre. It is an accumulation of efforts started by the Scottish Child Law Group in the early 1980s which sought to provide better provision of information on Child Law in Scotland. Out of that group came two separate projects, one of them "The Scottish Child" and the other the Scottish Child Law Centre and it is good, therefore, that these two projects will retain close links through the appointment of Rosemary Milne as one of the Directors of the Scottish Child Law Centre. While "The Scottish Child" will retain its independence, we hope not least in these pages to draw upon the expertise which the Scottish Child Law Centre accumulates in all matters relating to the promotion and development of the best possible legal provision for children in Scotland. ■

Malcolm Schaffer

School Boards Bill Upstaged by "Opting Out" Amendment

The School Boards (Scotland) Bill, now in its Commons committee stage, looked set for a quiet passage after the government dropped its contentious proposals to give the new boards "ceiling" powers over school expenditure and staffing.

Quiet, until leaked letters from Number Ten, and a Tory backbench amendment raised the spectre of schools in Scotland, and not just those in England and Wales, "opting out" of local authority control.

Suspensions that school boards are less to do with enhancing parental involvement, and more to do with the dismemberment of public education appear to be borne out by ministerial statements that "if there is evidence of a real and substantial demand for opting out, we would not stand in the way." Although opting out is not on the Scottish Office's current agenda, critics are already saying that "magnet" schools are providing the government with the evidence it needs. Paisley Grammar for example, is now likely to be relieved from closure by the Secretary of State under amended regulations. Jordanhill College School is now funded by central government after Strathclyde Region refused to allow it to "opt into" local authority control. And a *Scotsman* opinion poll shows a surprising 31% of parents supporting "opting out".

Ratrace

The worry is that the amelioration of social class inequalities in educational opportunity, brought about by comprehensive provision in Scotland, could go into reverse if opting out becomes a reintroduction of social selection through the back door.

Schools which opt out, the reasoning goes, are most likely to be those serving predominantly middle class areas, and thus more favoured in the meritocratic rat-race. Education authorities bent on applying negative discrimination or even closing "snob schools" could soon find their policies being frustrated by the



Secretary of State agreeing to pick up the tab as parents decide to opt out. Underlying this scenario of course, is the great ideological divide about whether unfettered parental demand through the laws of the market place should determine educational provision, or whether the "wider community" should do so through the ballot box.

Paradoxically, the "opting out" issue now appears to have let the Opposition off the hook. The opposition parties might

otherwise have found themselves in the rather awkward position of opposing a bill, which in its watered down version encourages parental involvement. Who after all, could be against that?

Another riposte comes in the shape of the proposed composition of the new boards. Although it has been clear from the start that the boards would have a parental majority, the membership of only one staff representative on the 7-9 member boards (for schools up

to 1000 pupils) has been seen as a ministerial slap in the face for the teaching profession. The principle of "home-school partnership" is seen, with this type of ratio of parent-teacher representation, to have been compromised. Will the impending consultations on the draft regulations for the boards result in another round of ministerial backpedalling?

Powers

The Bill itself contains few surprises. As already outlined in these columns, board approval will be required for school expenditure on books and equipment. Boards will be under a duty to promote home-school links. Education authorities will be able to delegate other functions to the boards, but delegated controls over matters such as the curriculum, employment of staff, appointment of headteachers, and school admissions are specifically excluded. Headteachers will sit on the boards but will not vote. Heads will have to provide the board with an annual report (including a report on attainment levels) and policy statements on the curriculum, pupil assessment, discipline, school rules and uniform. The boards will have to report to parents from time to time and agree to meet parents if requested to do so. They will be able to apply to the education authority for additional functions and to appeal to the Secretary of State if necessary, after balloting parents.

Criticisms of the Bill so far have been centred mainly on the costs of setting up the boards — one for nearly every school, involving around 25,000 members in all. The government's costing of £5 million is thought to be a serious underestimate, but the government claims that critics have failed to take into account the substantial savings from the abolition of the schools councils.

However it now looks as if the School Boards Bill will be a mere bagatelle compared with the next round of education legislation, likely to be shaped around parental choice. ■

Graham Atherton

LETTERS



Sport as Displacement

Dear Editor,

Regarding your sporting hero feature in the last issue, aren't these radio phone-in programmes interesting? People call in and have long and intricate discussions, and it's plain that quite a high degree of thought and analysis has gone into it. People know a tremendous amount — all sorts of complicated details and

enter into far-reaching discussion about whether the manager made the right decision yesterday, or something.

These are ordinary people, not professionals, who are applying their intelligence and analytic skills, and accumulating a lot of knowledge and, for all I know, understanding. On the other hand, when you hear people talk on these phone-ins or talk shows about international or domestic affairs, it's at a level of superficiality that's beyond belief.

Among the contributors in this issue.....

Graham Atherton is senior researcher at the Scottish Consumer Council.

Colin Chalmers works with the Stopover project for homeless young people in Edinburgh.

Alexander Cockburn is a writer and journalist living in America. He writes

regularly in this country in the **New Statesman**.

Colin Findlay is a social work practice teacher in the Department of Child & Family Psychiatry at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Yorkhill, Glasgow.

Diane Kennedy is a rights worker in Dunfermline.

Lindsay Lewis lives in

When you think of it, this concentration on such topics as sports makes a lot of sense. The way our system is set up, there is virtually nothing people can do anyway to influence the real world. They might as well live in a fantasy world, and that's in fact what they do. They are using their common sense and intellectual skills, but in an area which has no meaning. It probably thrives because it has no meaning, as a displacement from the serious problems which one cannot influence, because the power happens to lie elsewhere.

The unemployed youth in the housing scheme who wants to use his mind isn't going to waste his time on political affairs, because that's useless. He can't do anything about it anyhow, and he might learn unpleasant things and get into trouble. So he might as well do it where it's fun, and not threatening — professional football or something like that. But mental skills are being used and the understanding is there.

One of the functions that things like professional sports play in our society and others is to offer an area to deflect people's attention from things that matter, so that the people in power can do what matters without public interference.

Noam Chowdir
Glasgow

Sporting Heroes in the Borders

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the articles on Scottish football and Scottish culture.

Professional football, like pop music, is, I suppose, seen by many young men as one

way of escape from the restricted life of the big cities.

What happens in the Borders where the Rugby Union code dominates the scene? Is this the result of sports policy in schools or does the amateur game derive its strength from a culture which is less aggressively money-minded, less irrationally partisan and generally more benign and cooperative than that of the big cities? A culture too, where anonymity is almost an impossibility? Are there similarities between the Borders and South Wales where Rugby Union is the game? (56 000 spectators watched the Welsh Cup Final)

In the end, it seems to me that we all seek recognition as individuals and our task is to devise social structures which allow for the development of individual talents, which also recognise our interdependence. Small is beautiful. Would Borders farmers with their broken noses and cracked ribs stand up for this proposition on behalf of their children?

Sidney Hill

Burn House,
Middlebie,
Lockerbie,
Dumfriesshire

Nurseries

Dear Editor,

I have been trying to find out more about the historical development of nursery schools and education for the under-5s in Scotland.

I would be interested to hear from any of your readers who have information on this topic.

Lorna Goudie

Spinney Lane Nursery
Spinney Lane
Edinburgh 17

Edinburgh and has recently returned from a trip to South America.

Rosemary Milne has recently taken up a Directorship with the Scottish Child Law Centre in Glasgow.

Mark Ogle works part-time and looks after his baby daughter.

Sheila Ramsay works in a child care team in

Strathclyde Social Work Department.

Malcolm Schaffer is divisional reporter with Lothian Children's Panel.

Betty Thomson is a health visitor in Elgin.

Lydia Lunnon Wood is a midwifery sister at the Maryhill maternity unit in Elgin.

The Scottish Child

The Growing Child

The possibilities arising from the recent independence of **The Scottish Child** are exciting. As the credits on the contents page make clear, changes are afoot. Since the Spring issue, a new company has been set up, which will now publish the magazine.

The Scottish Child Limited is set up as a limited company, run as a co-operative. The cooperative model has a number of advantages. It makes the company less prone to takeover, and in times of increasing centralised control of public and private affairs,

it affords company members a large measure of participative control over our business.

The magazine will continue to present an independent, and hopefully stronger voice on children's affairs in the Scottish cultural and political context. We aim to expand (regular readers will have noticed the increased size), and from September we plan to publish bi-monthly.

Such ambition requires support. In the last few months, as a result of a modest leaflet campaign, we have been greatly encouraged by a sizeable increase in the

magazine's subscription level. There is a clear demand for a magazine of this type. To produce the magazine more regularly and to continue to improve our coverage, we need further support.

Currently we are holding discussions on several fronts with interests in business, public life and the voluntary sector on sponsorship and advertising. The strength of the magazine though, will derive from its readers. Only through the critical participation of our readers will the editorial aims of **The Scottish Child** thrive. We

need to hear from you!

We also of course, need your money. A subscription will ensure YOU of your regular personal copy, plastic wrapped and delivered by mail to your home. Your subscription will ensure US of the means to grow.

If you've not already done so, complete the attached form. Or take advantage of our **SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER** on the insert in this issue. Complete the bankers order form on the insert, and your subscription will cost you only £5.00. ■



STEWART ASQUITH

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