

Scottish Child

September 1988 £1



Child Health

'No Training - No Dole'

University - Getting in

Neal Ascherson on

Caring Colonists



HOW
MUCH?

CHILD COMMODITIES

PARENTING IN THE CONSUMER AGE

THE
LIST

**GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH
EVENTS GUIDE**

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FORTNIGHTLY, AT YOUR NEWSAGENT 60p

Scottish Child

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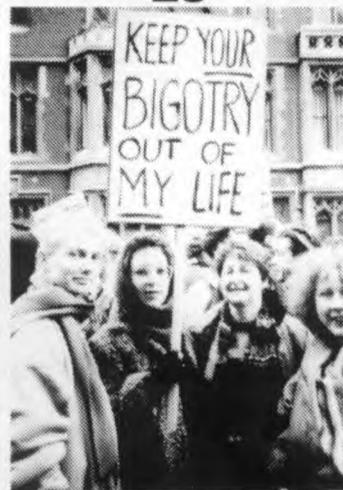
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Whose Child Is This?

News has reached us that many more people have taken the Scottish child to their hearts.

Some have been seen caressing their child in libraries and bookshops; others have been observed staring devotedly at their child in newsagents. On buses and trains, and in other public places, those who care about the Scottish child have been engaging with it, wearing expressions of uninhibited joy.

So much for the good news!

The not so good news is that some reports suggest, and these are confirmed, that while many of you are taking to your **Scottish Child**, the one you're actually reading belongs to someone else! Many of you are not taking home a **Scottish Child** of your own.

Now from our point of view, this is unforgivable. Your **Scottish Child** needs you. What's more it needs your money!

It's not as if the **Scottish Child** can't be found. From this month, the child is freely obtainable at branches of John Menzies and other leading newsagents.

From this month too, it's even more of a joy!

As part of our expansion strategy, the price of the magazine has been REDUCED! Down to £1.00. Subscribers will now receive six issues a year instead of four. And for the same price including postage of £6.00.

Whose child is this?

Why not be sure it's yours?

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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.

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

New Series Volume 2 Number 3

ISSN 0950-4174

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

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Subscriptions

Annual Rates: Individuals £6.00; Institutions £10.00; Overseas airmail £20.00. Cheques should be made payable to The Scottish Child.

Advertising

Rates available from the above addresses.

Typesetting and Printing

Bookworm, Gayfield Square Edinburgh. Impress, Eskbank, Dalkeith.

Front Cover Photo

Stewart Asquith

Design

Colin Chalmers

CONNECTIONS

Dr. Marietta Higgs – the villain of the piece?



A Hue and Cry to Disguise the Facts

CLEVELAND

The furore about the Cleveland child sex abuse scandal has done little to explain the causes of abuse or to help its victims. The terms of the debate precluded this. After all, the "scandal" arose not because of social anger that children were being abused but because social agencies had – however inadequately – tried to deal with the problem.

The motives of those who leapt most readily to attack the doctors and social workers and defend "innocent" families are deeply suspect. Stuart Bell MP, the tabloid press and various right wing politicians have seemed more concerned to deny the existence of abuse than to discuss its causes and cure.

This is not surprising. The family, particularly the rights and powers of fathers, is a potent symbol for reactionaries in Britain. Stuart Bell talks long and

loud of "witchhunted" parents but is silent about the father, who having joined Bell's Parents Support Group, was found to have a history of abuse and to have sexually penetrated both his children. The right wing papers that championed Bell and the parents are the same newspapers that print titillating photographs of scarcely adult young women.

There are indeed powerful factors and interests which destroy family life – but they are not, on the whole, social services departments. What are the facts?

Fact no 1: recent research indicates that as many as one in ten children suffer sexual abuse. It is a major social problem not only in Britain but also in West Germany and the USA. As the vast majority of abusers are men, there are a large number of men abusing children.

Fact no 2 is that these men's power to abuse children is related

to the wider social issue of the lack of women's rights and equality. Often women cannot escape from violent and abusive partners.

Fact no 3 is that if women have few rights, children have none. They are seen as the property of the family, particularly the father. Their problems are rarely socially discussed, they suffer a deteriorating education system, a lack of social care and of young people's organisations.

Fact no 4 is that relations between men, women and children are poisoned by these social inequalities and oppressive relationships which lie at the heart of capitalist society.

Fact no 5 is that sexuality, particularly male sexuality, is deeply affected by this situation. A multi-million pound pornography industry exists to pander to the grosser aspects of male perversity.

Fact no 6 is that cuts in social expenditure have worsened the situation for those most in need – 600 "at risk" children in London have no social work supervision. Where are the refuges to which women can go in an emergency? Or the facilities through which the abuser, not the child, can be removed and the whole family given intensive help? They simply do not exist.

So why no outcry about all this? Why no determined effort to discuss these issues? Why no co-ordinated national effort to start to solve these problems? To provide both rights and resources to make it possible for women and children to live in security? Because, quite simply, it would cost too much in terms of money and social upheaval. Better to keep the status quo in which the family is portrayed as a haven of safety and Britain as a society which cares for its children. ■

Maxine Williams

A Voice in the Wilderness

PRISONS

The recent roof-top protest at Longriggend detention centre near Airdrie focused attention on the plight of young men in Scotland who get entrapped in the prison system. Most of the prisoners at Longriggend are aged between 16 and 21, and they are being held on remand – as yet not found guilty of the crimes they have been charged with. During the incident in July, which involved more than 80 prisoners, riot police were on standby.

Inmates shouted from the roof, torn-up sheets were used as banners, but the prison officers and 150 police called to the scene were unable to work out what the protest was about.

John Renton of the Scottish

Prison Officers Association told the **Scottish Child** that in his view, "there was no protest, it was just an escapade." There would be an internal enquiry, but the incident was "an opportunity to go to the roof when staff were involved in another incident."

Perhaps we will never know what caused this incident at Longriggend, although as Mr. Renton suggests, young men deprived of their freedom when they have not been convicted of any crime, are bound to feel some grievance. But what seems clear from this incident, as with so many seemingly "inexplicable" protests by young prisoners, is those involved are not allowed to tell us about their predicament directly – to tell us in their own words, why they are protesting.

Young people in prison, young people who are homeless, young people faced with unemployment living on paltry benefits, and little chance of a job, all have stories to tell – but no one seems to be listening. It is perhaps not surprising when their protests take on an "unacceptable" form. What other form can their protest take?

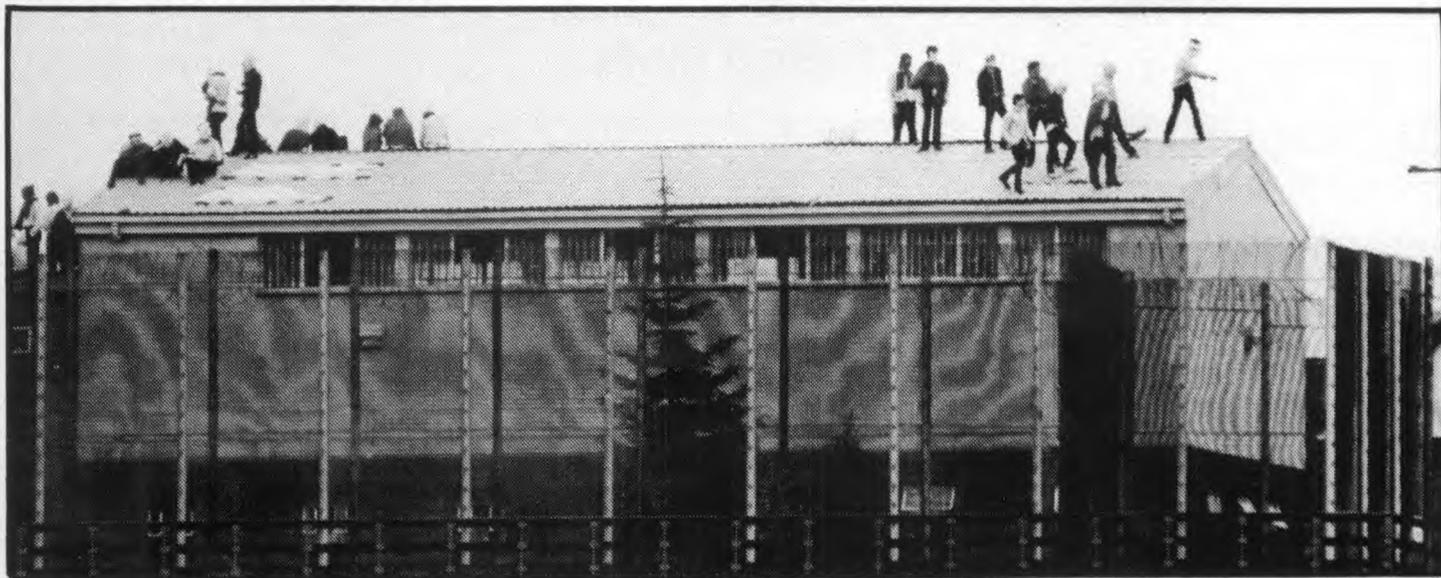
The way in which the Longriggend incident hit the front pages one day and was forgotten the next is perhaps symptomatic of the way young people's protests are dealt with in Scotland. Scottish working class teenagers face a high level of unemployment, increasingly harsh social security regulations, and are more and more excluded from the society they live in – a society they are told, based on a "boom-

ing" economy. It would seem reasonable to assume that such a state of affairs would produce protest. But when there is protest from those suffering the most, it is "inexplicable".

On the morning after the Longriggend incident, Minister of State at the Home Office, Chris Paton said in a radio interview that "the only cause of crime is people being bad". No lack of clarity there, and no lack of exposure for his views.

But perhaps to get to an understanding of such incidents, we have to look beyond the "clarity" of government ministers, and listen to the voice of those young people at the bottom of the heap in our society who are crying in the wilderness.

Colin Chalmers



Shouting from the rooftops at Longriggend

The Scotsman

Payroll Giving

CHARITY

The Payroll Giving scheme, introduced by Chancellor Nigel Lawson in last year's budget, gives tax relief to employees who donate to charities through the workplace, direct from their salaries.

Nearly eighteen months into the scheme, criticised by some as the privatisation of public expenditure, how is it doing? How much public participation in the funding of charitable bodies is actually taking place? In other words, how much money are we donating to the charities of our choice?

If the experience of the Royal

Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSSPCC) is anything to go by, the answer has to be, so far, not a lot.

RSSPCC welcomed the scheme, and set up the means to organise publicity and collection. They employed a full-time Payroll Giving Officer and printed copious amounts of promotional material. They have found though that returns have been so disappointing that they have failed in the first year even to cover their costs. Consequently they have had to cut back on their efforts.

"Payroll giving," according to RSSPCC General Secretary Ar-

thur Wood, "has tremendous potential and is completely in line with the Prime Minister's recent call for the more fortunate members of society to exercise social responsibility towards those in need."

Yet the Society has found that businesses in Scotland are so far unenthusiastic about the scheme, and consequently employees are not informed.

In an open letter to Chancellor Lawson, the RSSPCC make some suggestions for a nation-wide advertising campaign, together with a government sponsored incentive scheme for companies.

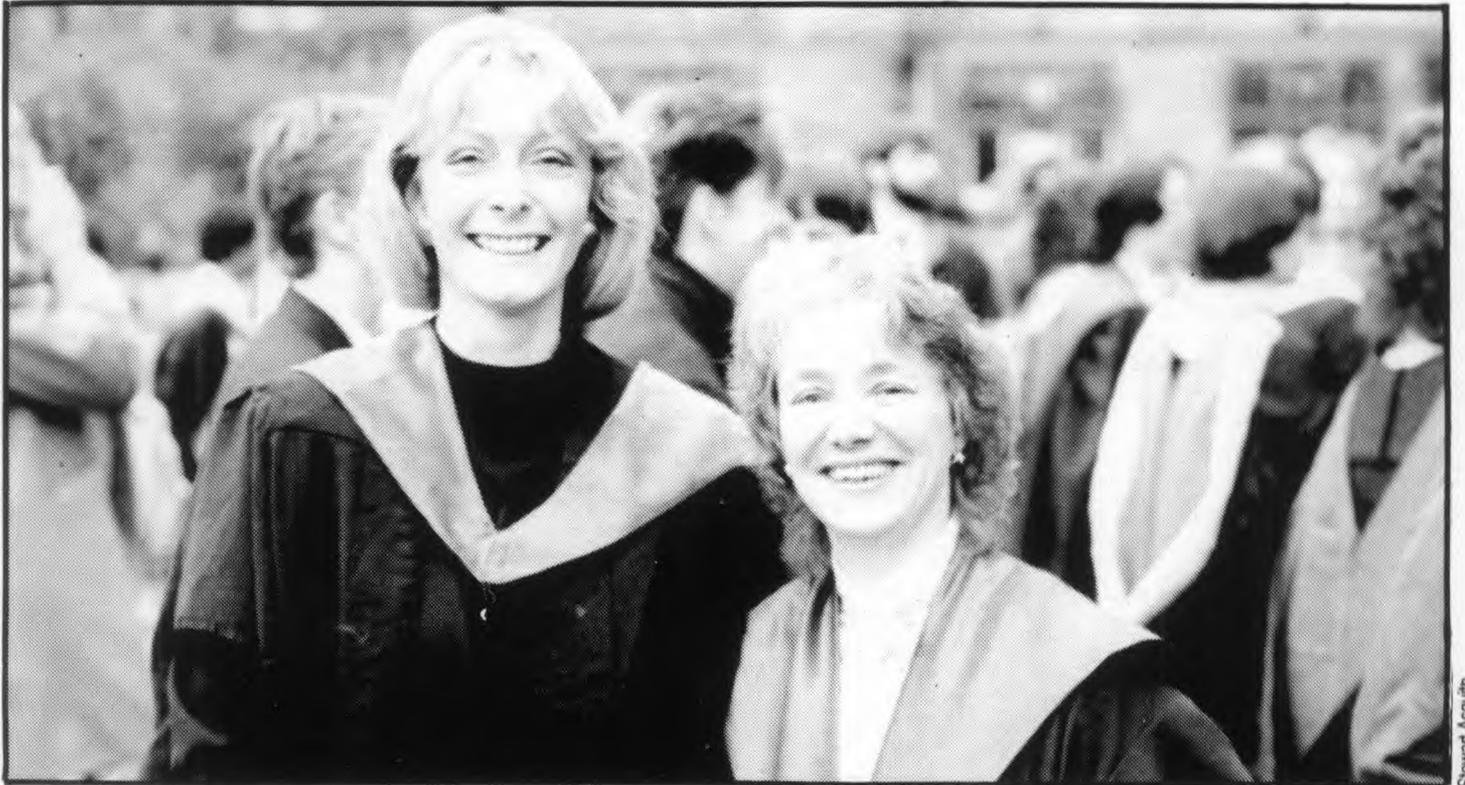
"These suggestions need not be very costly to implement," according to Arthur Wood, reasoning that since the payroll giving scheme is tax deductible, and not much has been given, presumably the government has made fewer tax deductions than budgeted for.

"We hope the Chancellor will respond to our call to save the scheme," said Mr. Wood.

A call for state intervention in the payroll scheme? We await the Chancellor's reply with interest.

Derek Rodger

CONNECTIONS



Stewart Asquith

Shifting Sands

UNIVERSITY ADMISSION

It's September again – a crucial time in the education cycle. In a few week's time, the universities will welcome the influx of new first year students. And in the schools, just back after the summer break, pupils entering their fifth and sixth years will begin to reflect on the courses and universities they will apply to in the coming months. For them, the period from now until December is a key decision making time in their lives.

Undoubtedly for every applicant success or failure in applying for a university place will be felt as a personal gain or disappointment. But the politics of admission to university are part of a much broader picture. Like the rest of society, universities are undergoing radical change, and the politics of admissions have to be seen in relation to government cuts and the principles of social justice and life opportunities that these raise.

Obviously what choices are available will influence a pupil's choice. But what is not so obvious is just what courses will be on offer either next year or indeed in four years time, when the current applicants can expect to be finishing their degrees. The

economic constraints faced by the universities are well documented, but the shifting sands of university funding introduces a fair degree of uncertainty both for university administrators as well as for applicants.

By 1991 for example, the Scottish universities must lose 500 academic jobs according to latest figures. Edinburgh University a year ago operated on the basis of having to lose 110 academic staff by 1991, but announced in June that the figure had to be revised to 170. And there is no guarantee that the cuts will end there.

The cumulative effect of successive cuts is that courses have been withdrawn, and departments have closed.

Once at university the level of grant support is an issue for many students and intending students, as is the possibility of a loan system being introduced. The links between academic attainment and income level are well known. Widening social divisions must have inevitable consequences for educational attainment and opportunities. There have been however, other recent trends which might have implications for the very process of applying to university.

Pupils need information about

courses and places in order to make an informed choice prior to application. And in recognition of this, universities devote considerable resources to get that information across.

The usual practice is for universities to send representatives at no charge to Higher Education Conventions throughout the country to address prospective students and speak in detail to individual queries. In the spirit of privatisation, commercial agencies have now begun to be involved in organising these conventions, and funiversities are being asked to pay for the privilege of putting information across. Even worse from the perspective of those who support the notion of equality of educational opportunity, pupils are being charged for admission to such conventions.

Privatisation has the effect in this sphere, as in others, of benefiting those who can afford to pay in the first place. Visiting universities, attending conventions and open days can be an expensive business, especially if cuts make it impossible for local authorities to fund students adequately to benefit from these. It all costs money, and in the absence of state support, the costs are borne hardest by those who can least afford them, and

whose position in the politics of admission has been determined in part already.

What makes this all the more worrying is that at a time of falling school rolls, in order to raise revenue, universities are being forced to turn their recruitment energies abroad (to America, Malaysia, Europe etc.). While this brings an undoubted cosmopolitan profile to university life, the danger is that we are repeating more of the same. The students from abroad are also those who will be able to afford a university education without the need for state aid.

This is not to suggest that there is deliberate bias in universities' admissions policies. This would be to ignore their efforts to operate within current education policies and economies. But they can't be asked to compensate for the effects of the widening social divisions experienced by applicants.

The decision to apply for particular courses and particular universities is influenced by so many things – income, sex, age, race, religion, etc. The problem now seems to be how to guard against admission to university being determined by the same factors.

Stewart Asquith

PHOTOGRAPHY

One picture is worth a thousand words. Not an argument for abolishing the printed word, but a recognition that pics are important. Magazines like the **Scottish Child** spend a lot of time and money getting the visuals right. The front cover, it is assumed in the trade, if right, attracts readers and sales.

Having ourselves an interest in such matters, what, it has to be asked, is the British Paediatric Association trying to say by choosing the above for the cover of its Jubilee year commemorative book (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), **Child Health in a Changing Society?**

As an image of the child doctor's work, it is, to be kind, hardly flattering.

The doctor's sitting on a higher chair than mother and infant.



Speak to my Agent!

B.P.A.

He's wearing a gold ring on the little finger of his ample hand, which fits well with his general

demeanor of business-suited opulence. Mum, who looks as if she is doing all the work, looks less than

comfortable. And baby looks clearly as if he's not impressed.

Is the siting of the interview beside the fold-away beds designed to give that homely touch, or is that the only corner available?

In many ways the photo represents many people's worst fears about taking their child to the doctor. He is going to tell you from a position of greater authority just what you've been doing wrong. It's going to involve a fairly long wait during which your child completely loses interest, and gets fractious, confirming your inadequacy as a parent. At least the consultation, in a busy crowded ward, is brief. The pain is over quickly.

Now some of the papers within this book argue convincingly that such fears are unjustified. But with a cover photo like this, the very least the British Paediatric Association need is an agent. ■

Derek Rodger

SHOPPING

Shopping can be an ordeal at the best of times. Shopping with young children can be a nightmare! Those of us who require to use a double buggy on regular shopping trips may appear fearless. And in any case sales staff are trained to iron out any problems that may arise. Aren't they?

Consider the events surrounding a recent visit to the John Lewis store in Edinburgh's St. James Centre—2 adults and two children and buggy. It's certainly been a trying business reaching the 2nd floor and there follows the selection and measurement of the required item and settling payment, each of which is conducted at a different point in the department.

Meanwhile, one of the children has climbed out of the buggy and is inspecting the brightly coloured baubly things strung along the counter. Nearby, hovering is a manager (male and pin-striped, must be management).

"Don't touch these, dear" (to her); "She might damage them" (to me). The child is moved on by one of the supervising adults and a bit of difficulty ensues in persuading the child to resume her passive role in the buggy. The manager is still hovering, making sure that the baubly things remain undamaged; the children and adults are struggling to move on to better things. Upon near accomplishment of securing the



Buggied!

children in the buggy, rearranging bags, bottles and frayed nerves, the manager approaches, frowns and announces, "Really madam, you are in the way!"

The response from one of the responsible adults is unsuitable for print or the ears of children!

Earlier this year I was pleased to see that Edinburgh's Princes Street branch of Boots had provided a small unsupervised play area for customers' children. A more recent visit revealed a reorganisation of the department and no play area. Enquiries as to why this happened revealed that there just wasn't the floor space to

accommodate goods and play area. Besides which, it wasn't used much anyway, so sorry, it had to go.

Nearby, it seems that the Jenners store has adopted a similar policy. Until recently their Children's Department had a selection of toys, with a fine Victorian rocking horse as a centrepiece. I was informed by a sales assistant that the floor space was required for stock, so the toys had to go.

I know of one other city centre store that provides a play area for children, the Early Learning Centre. But here the staff seem more concerned with maintaining a

neat and tidy shop than helping to keep their future customers happy and contented.

Gradually, trudging around the shops, you begin to get the feeling that our society doesn't like its children. Outside of the home women with children are received with intolerance and at times, outright hostility. It is as if they have no place and do not belong in public places. In shops and cafes where mostly fiwomen are, toilet facilities are a nightmare for mothers with babies needing nappies changed.

These obstacles are bad enough, but consider absolute rejection! Shop signs which say "No pushchairs or prams" really mean "No Women and Children". I have been asked to leave shops because I have been in breach of such notices. "Not enough room" they say. "Our customers can't walk around properly"; or even "You shouldn't be out on the streets with that thing anyway!"

In some ways the difficulties of access to shops for mothers with children are the same as those for the disabled, but you can't imagine signs saying "No Wheelchairs or Walking Aids". Considering that mothers and children have been around for a long time, isn't it surprising that the outside world has not yet managed to include them in its plans. ■

Janet Dick

THE CHILD AS COMMODITY

PARENTING IN THE CONSUMER AGE

by Joyce McMillan

Being a parent, so I'm told, just isn't what it used to be. Time was when a row of well-scrubbed little faces trooped into family supper, to exercise their newly learned table manners, to quail under any passing scowl of parental disapproval, to lisp "Please may I leave the table?" at the end of the meal, and to glow with joy when the parents offered them the gift of a handmade corn dolly or a wooden hoop with a stick; everyone learned the ten commandments at an early age, and honouring your father and mother – along with God, the Queen, and the local bobby – came as easily as ABC.



How different, how very different, from the reported home life of our average modern family, with loutish kids in trainers and sweaty T-shirts slamming into the house at all hours of the day and night, rummaging in the fridge for TV dinners and cans of Pepsi, slumping in front of the box for hours on end, pausing only to utter raucous demands for cabbage-patch dolls at one end of the age range, and for the latest in revolting clothes and recorded sounds at the other.

Modern kids, we all know have got no respect! They pay more attention to **Neighbours** and **Top of the Pops** than to Mum and Dad, regard the friendly bobby and all the familiar authority-figures of our culture with scepticism and derision, and see their



parents mainly as a source of cash with which to buy the things their peer group demands they should have. In other words, the family is tottering, and with it the whole fabric of society!

The images are exaggerated of course, but there is a grain of truth in there somewhere. Something has happened to make parenting more difficult and problematic in recent decades, and there is no shortage of speculation as to what that something has been. The breakup of the extended family; the rising divorce rate; the rapid pace of social and technological change that renders adult wisdom useless; the anti-authoritarian mood of an age that started in the post-war years with an unprecedented attack on the class structure and has arrived

at the "loadsamoney" free-for-all of a market economy where social clout depends exclusively on cash. The box in the corner as well, with its constant stream of images and adverts, undermining parents' traditional control over what their children knew and what they wanted – this too has shared the blame for the weakening of traditional family structures, the undermining of the old idea of parental authority, and the opening up of the family to the kind of commercial pressures that have otherwise sane parents spending untold wealth on whatever chunks of moulded plastic little Samantha needs to avoid becoming the object of scorn at playgroup. I heard of one little girl coming home in tears because her infant class of pals deemed her **Asterix the Gaul** lunchbox to be a "boy's" box; little

girls, she was told, should have **My Little Pony** ones.

Individual Choice

But I think that something else has happened to the parent-child relationship, something beyond those well-canvassed social pressures, something structural to the relationship and to the power balance within it, something basic and surprisingly little considered.

It is simply this. In the years since 1945, as at no other time in human history, parenthood has come to be regarded as an optional, and therefore a voluntary activity. Up to the time of the Second World War, having kids was perceived as an experience roughly akin to birth and death, a natural

part of life's cycle that very few would avoid. You were born, you grew up, you became a parent; in the coy old phrase, children just "came along".

Parenthood was part of the common lot, and although large families of ten and fifteen might be frowned upon as a sign of sexual excess, by and large the arrival of children within marriage wasn't seen as anyone's fault or anyone's decision. Children were as likely to blame themselves for being born as to blame their parents for having them. The petulant cry of the post-war adolescent – "Why did you have me if you didn't want me?" or "I didn't ask to be born, you know" – would have carried little weight in the days when parents had precious little control over who was born when.

This is the unique burden carried by modern parents; the idea that whatever happens between parent and child, whatever goes wrong, whatever is lacking, whatever is inadequate, it is **all their own fault**. They chose to get into it, and they must cope with it as best they can.

And this implies, of course, an intensely and uniquely individualistic view of parenthood. Working-class labourism, with its recognition that children "came along" and had to be provided for somehow, whatever the inadequacies of their biological parents, gave us the state health and education systems, the district nurse, the cod liver oil and the orange juice of the welfare state. Now the upwardly mobile yuppie culture of the 1980s, with its talk of choice and options and life-styles, has given us something completely different. It is the child as consumer durable, the child as luxury accessory, the child as net earnings loss of £135,000 (or whatever the latest figure is). The child is now the personal expense that must not be entered into unless it can be afforded.

And if the system collapses? If the child is more expensive than anticipated, if it is sick or handicapped or twins, if one of the parents loses earning power for any reason, if one of them unaccountably falls in love with the baby and can't bear to go back to work, or if – most commonly of all – one of the parents simply walks out on the deal, that is to say if life asserts itself in all of its glorious unpredictability, then the parents or the remaining parent will have to carry the can alone.

As Health Minister Mrs. Edwina Currie put it so succinctly, when asked why state nursery provision in Britain is just about the worst in Europe – "I do not think it is the role of the state to relieve parents of their responsibilities." In other words, having children in the 1980s is seen as a strictly private enterprise. The parents make the investment, take the gamble, and live with the blame for everything – and there's bound to be something – that goes wrong.

Straining under the pressure

Under these circumstances, it's hardly surprising that parenting skills begin to crumble at the edges. In taking on the whole responsibility for their children's existence

– rather than blaming God or nature – parents deprive themselves of the natural right to subordinate the child's needs to other considerations from time to time.

"If you couldn't put the child first, you shouldn't have had it," argue the po-faced gurus of lonely parental responsibility. Some – probably most – react to this ethos with guilt, with an overdeveloped sense of responsibility for every knock that life deals their child, and with a superhuman determination to satisfy its every need. And it's easy to see how commercial interests exploit that reaction by creating "needs" for schlock objects like **My Little Ponies** and **Transformers**, which children can easily blackmail their guilt-ridden parents into buying for them.

Some – those who are simply inadequate to meet the excessive demands and the spiritual isolation of modern parenthood – react with aggression, thumping the living daylights out of children whose insatiable needs come to seem like a threat. Some seek power over their children through sexual exploitation. Those who are real high-flyers – who pull off the yuppie parenthood trick, earning enough to keep themselves, their children and their paid child-carers out of trouble and in the pink – react by decking out their children like little status symbols, little animated expressions of themselves and their life-style.

"This is the unique burden carried by modern parents; the idea that whatever happens between parent and child, whatever goes wrong, whatever is lacking, whatever is inadequate, it is all their own fault."

Designer tots

Hence the frightful phenomenon of the 1980s "designer tot", and the kind of attitude quoted in a recent "haute-coiture-for-kids" piece in the **Sunday Times Colour Magazine**. Here an executive mum said, "Marissa's look is an extension of me. Marissa is an extension of everything that's going on, and I want her to look clean, beautiful and immaculate all the time."

What these attitudes to parenting have in common is a kind of excessive investment of the parent in the child, an excessive sense of ownership, of guilt and disappointment where the child is perceived as failing, and of pride where the child is successful. The parent simply takes on too much on him or herself, and very often this excessive sense of responsibility for the child's happiness undermines the normal parental duty of drawing lines and setting sensible limits on the child's behaviour.

Some parents over-react against the pressures to indulgence, and make a point of being "strict", beyond what's necessary

to the kids or convenient to themselves. Others tend to be lax, confused, incapable of setting limits. Very few seem able to develop the knack of good quality parenting, which has to be something to do with regarding each child as someone who needs to be loved, but who can't expect to cause serious inconvenience to those already present without becoming a shade unpopular.

Fraught Relationships

The result is that by the time children reach adolescence, family relationships are often fraught and tense in the extreme. This is because, throughout, the parents have been trying to bring up their kids in a culture which restrains them from considering their children's interests vis-a-vis society and the future. Instead they have been working out their own understandable feelings of insecurity, fear, guilt, vanity etc. about parenting, in a society that places a ridiculous burden of private responsibility on them.

So this private "consumer" model of child-rearing is patently useless in meeting children's need for a loving, decent, well-balanced, humorous upbringing. And it's inadequate because it imposes on parents a completely unrealistic and stress-inducing model of what is happening to them.

We live in a culture that repeatedly tells parents that what they are doing is indulging their own choice to have children, just as they might (alternatively) indulge a wish for a dishwasher, or three holidays a year, and that indulging themselves, they incur certain heavy expenses and obligations that they had better be able to meet!

But as an account of what really goes on in the raising of a child, this is pure nonsense. Of course, the act of conception may be a self-indulgence, and even – for some mad sensualists – the act of giving birth. But whatever the circumstances surrounding a child's birth, parents should not be browbeaten into accepting the idea of child-rearing itself can ever be a private indulgence. On the contrary, as the experience unfolds it becomes clear that it remains what it has always been, an essential and arduous service to the community as a whole, which that community ought to welcome and support to the limit of its means.

For parenthood to have the dignity it deserves, it has to be a task carried out in the sight, and in full consciousness, of the society towards which the child is being raised, and into which it must go and eventually found a family of its own. And it is the support, the presence, and the approval of society which gives parents the confidence and the sense of perspective to raise their children well.

The individualistic model of parenthood, as advocated by a Prime Minister who believes that "there is no society, just individual men and women and their families", simply has nothing useful to say about the social values parents should pass on to their children. It envisages society as a cluster of competitive families like the Ewings of **Dallas**, wolf-packs bound together by the fact that



DOLLY MIXTURES



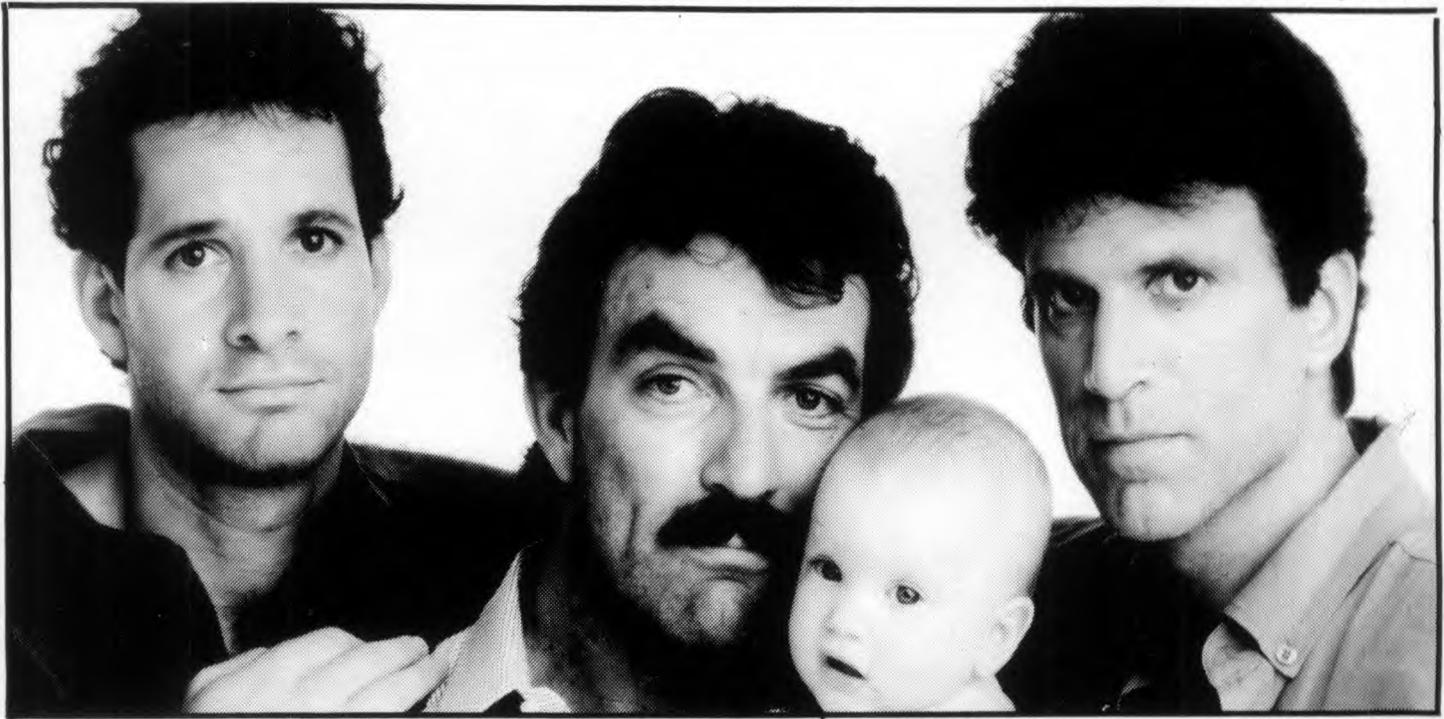
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DOLLY MIXTURES



DOLLY MIXTURES



▶ they hate and mistrust their own kin that crucial bit less than they hate and mistrust everyone else. Small wonder that children reared in such an environment have difficulty with concepts like civic responsibility or moral discrimination.

Tenderness fights back

As it happens, I think that people are already beginning at gut level, to resist and rethink the “consumer durable” notion of parenthood. Babies, as anyone who knows anything about them understands, are creatures of great and mysterious individuality. Once a baby is born, the idea that it was in some way “planned”, as if the parents could have ordered up some other child at will, seems strangely arrogant and absurd. Basically, as the nursery rhymes always suggested, the question “Where did you come from, baby dear?” is unanswerable by biology or psychology. Children come on loan and in trust to their parents, and whatever the law may say, belong only to themselves and to the world.

And strangely enough, as these hard, thrusting, materialistic, work-crazy 1980s have worn on, a whole new genre of films has appeared, re-asserting that essential mystery about where babies come from, and what they do to us when they get here. In every one of these movies – the Diane Keaton comedy *Baby Boom*, the Tom Selleck smash-hit *Three Men and a Baby*, the teen-dream effort *Maybe Baby*, to name but three – the baby appears unbidden, either dumped on the doorstep or via a totally accidental pregnancy, and calls up unexpected reserves of love and tenderness in previously ruthless or self-absorbed characters.

Now of course, it's easy to identify some fairly pernicious messages which these films carry. At their most saccharine they can be seen as part of the dream machine of a culture that continues to seduce and pressurise people into ex-

pensive parenthood, while offering them little support once they've done it.

But I think there's something positive underlying the 80s boom in baby movies – namely a kind of dawning recognition that, contraceptive technology notwithstanding, having children, or at least taking responsibility for them, is not really “optional”. Even if people do not become biological parents – and it's interesting that the character in *Three Men and a Baby* with the strongest feelings towards the child is not its biological father – still, nurturing the next

“The individualistic model of parenthood, as advocated by a Prime Minister who believes that ‘there is no society, just individual men and women and their families’, simply has nothing useful to say about the social values parents should pass on to their children.”

generation, teaching it, protecting it, and rejoicing in its newness, is an essential part of a complete human life, without which people become brittle, two-dimensional, and cynical.

Of course, the mechanisms by which responsibility for children can be spread and eased in our post-modern society are not simple. Families have scattered. There is an expectation that any modern husband and wife team should be willing to tear up its roots and travel hundreds of miles in search of work. It's a very rare child that experiences the kind of successful communal living arrangement imagined in *Three Men and a Baby*. Some of the traditional support struc-

tures too, of the “nanny state” have become discredited.

Nonetheless, it seems clear that in one way or another, democratic institutions – government, local authorities, community groups or whatever – are going to have to resume a more positive role in expressing society's concern for its children than has been possible during the Thatcher years. For if there is one thing the experience of the last decade has proved, it's that a weakening of social support for parenting does not improve the quality of individual parental responsibility. On the contrary it simply makes parents more isolated, more neurotic, more vulnerable and more aggressive.

Of course, if our society has really become no more than a money driven “consumer” culture, in which children are primarily items of family expenditure, and the only social feedback parents need receive is the incessant commercial badgering to BUY, BUY, BUY, then the art of good child-rearing must inevitably be as dead as the idea of civil society itself. But if we retain a sense of society's potential as a structure for the expression of civilised values, of justice, mercy, self-restraint, compassion and non-violent resolution of differences – and I believe most people do across the political spectrum, and despite the fashionable dogma of the unbridled market-place – then as a society we still have values to pass on, and a role to play in helping parents transmit them.

As long as that sense of what society should be survives, then the contradiction at the heart of our current “family policy” must become increasingly obvious; that you cannot encourage or expect parents to pass on a complex tradition of decency, kindness, civic virtue and moral self-restraint by exposing them to an experience of parenthood that is all about loneliness, competition, conspicuous consumption, fear of poverty and failure, and the sink-or-swim morality of a heartless human jungle.

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THIS DIARY

Wish you were here!

Maybe it's only when I start to think seriously about time, that I realise that the difference between a child and an adult is really very slight. When I stand in the ring of Brogar on the mainland of Orkney and realise that the stone I am touching was erected nearly 5000 years ago, my own 40 years, my own little crop of experience seems scant enough, and the distinction between an adult and a child seems immaterial.

Sometimes I wish people would not allow it to make so much difference today. Child-like wonder and enthusiasm is a very real thing to have, and a terrible thing to lose. Being here in Orkney restores that sense of wonder I was in danger of losing. In the complicated city, with its too many messages, why do the adults eyes have that harassed, hunted look? Why do the children so often look bored, and suspicious of what they are encouraged to enjoy?

When I was a child I felt that the world was large and the days were long, and the distances were full of adventure. Now I can feel that again looking out at the clear northern sea, at the sparkling blue morning stretching north to the Faroes and Iceland, and Greenland and the Arctic. I can imagine the Norsemen in their swift ships racing outwards over the ocean, "the whales road", that set no limit to their skill and daring, and I think of Moby Dick and Ahab, and the books that fed my imagination as a child.

It's too easy, when open to wonder, to nature, to innocence and imagination, to start mocking oneself, to speak glibly of sentimentality, or just repeat some second hand catchphrase like "that's not the real world". The real world, presumably is that of T.V. and morbid sensationalism, of traffic and money.

Also there's a danger that I can oversimplify and set up contrasts that are too extreme and absolute - Orcadian pastoralism and beauty against urban blight and ugliness. An understanding of natural creatures and plants, against a diet of soap ope-

ras and video recorders. Of course it's more complex than that. There is a dark side, ignorance and brutal labour, the closed horizons and boredom of rural life.

But I know clearly which life I find more valuable, and I don't think one should shirk making "value judgements" particularly when they concern the influences at work on children. There is such a word as wholesome, and it's not the property of the nonsensical intolerant paranoias of the so-called "moral majority". There is such a word as sanity, and it is presumably what we wish for ourselves and all our children.

This leads me to examine the precise meanings of words like community and society. It is obviously insane to live in a society where you don't know the people who live in the same stair. It is obviously unwholesome to breathe air polluted by exhaust fumes and to live in a flat that makes it impossible to allow your children to run around freely in the open air. A society is sane and wholesome when it is organised appropriately to its environment, when it is ecologically thoughtful, and careful with its resources, and when its individuals believe in its benefits, and co-operate towards ensuring its future. By these criteria the society in which we bring up children is failing.

I suppose what I'm saying is that just as I don't think much of the distinction between adults and children - adults are simply large children with more complex and subtle but basically similar needs, so really I don't accept currently popular notions of progress that rely on the distinction between a primitive (ignorant) past and a sophisticated (knowledgeable, intelligent) present and future. I don't think we're that much different from the stone age family gathered round their hearth at Skara Brae. I feel sure we have the same fundamental emotional and social requirements - to care for others and to be cared for, to have independence, and yet be able to rely on others, to possess and also to give.

In her book *The Farthest Shore* Ursula K. Le Guin speaks of a disease afflicting people, making them shadowy, depriving them of spontaneity, their skill, their joy in

the work of their hands, their individual wit and genius. They have been seduced into forgetting that they are mortal, and they take a drug to encourage them in their sterile arrogance.

In the crowded airport terminals during the holiday season, waiting for the glamorous silver machines to transport them to happiness, wearing the bright mass-produced clothes of the leisure market, to show that now they are not working, now they are on holiday, why do I see again that harassed, hunted, bewildered, cheated look? This is supposed to be magic, but it isn't.

Ultimately there seem to be three major tests of the sanity of a society, and the health of a species. How it rears its young, how it cares for the soil and water, and how it makes sense of death. On all three counts the urban, increasingly militarised, increasingly policed society in which I live and am trying to bring up a child seems insane. We bring up children not to care that their brothers and sisters are dying because of greed. We allow our notions of "economy" and "standards of living" to make deserts out of fertile ground, destroy the forests and pollute the seas. We spend our wealth on missiles, weapons of all sorts, but somehow can't find the money or the invention or the imagination to prevent starvation. Death we simply pretend is not going to happen, and then hide it away when it does. Perhaps we don't believe in a future, perhaps we don't deserve to survive. Perhaps the whales will inherit, if there are any left.

I don't know how the people at Skara Brae, the people whose bones were gathered together at Maes Howe, brought up their children. I'm sure they did many things a modern paediatrician or child psychologist would be horrified by. But standing in the ring at Brogar, looking round at land that has grown wheat and barley for nearly 5000 years, and at the stones the people put up to outlast them, I think they probably knew what they were doing and had more faith in a future for their children than we do now.

Mark Ogle



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TOMORROW'S SCOTSMAN — IT'S LOOKING GOOD

LOOKING BACK

'Internal colonisation' sounds rather Sovietic. It suggests trainloads of red-scarved pioneers setting off from Moscow and Leningrad to settle in distant steppes, the planned movement of populations to occupy virgin lands. But in a quiet, slow, unplanned way, it happens within the United Kingdom.

A few days ago, I went to see a very strange settlement indeed. Croabh Haven was the pioneering scheme of an English company, which set about constructing a new holiday town at a remote spot on the coast of mid-Argyll. A marina was built, a street of houses and shops, causeways joining offshore islands to form a mole (an Iron Age vitrified fort was allegedly dynamited because it got in the way). Then the company went bust.

But this is no mere plonking of cement chalets on a beach. A conscientious yet weird effort had been made 'to respect tradition.' Here, like an outdoors exhibition of Scottish architecture, is a film-set jumble of styles: pan-tiled cottages from the coast towns of Fife, crow-stepped roofs from old tower houses, tenement blocks with stair turrets like the urban 'lands' of Scottish cities. All are colour-washed in contrasting pastel shades. Beyond the folly there opens out the azure of

"When I was a child, the people of Lorne and Knapdale were still partly Gaelic-speaking"

the Firth of Lorne, and beyond that again the mountains of Mull glowing silver with snow.

As I stood there, several English people emerged from a 'vernacular' close and approached, thinking I was the liquidator. They weren't giving in, they said. This place had a future. The first 21 settlers were forming an association. They would fight for Croabh Haven (which they pronounced 'Kroove' to rhyme with 'groove').

If their surroundings were unreal, they certainly were not. There was something authentically, splendidly English about their busy, decent determination to get organised, to refuse to be done out of their rights, to 'see something was done.' If the original population of Argyll had possessed a tenth of that assertive self-confidence, I thought, the story of the land would have been very different.

Over the years that I have known this part of Scotland, there has been population movement and social change which – in the past few decades – became torrential. When I was a child, the people of Lorne and Knapdale were still partly Gaelic-speaking, with a mixture of Lowland small farmers who had settled as sheep farmers in the previous century. The 'big houses' often



A childhood haunt is revisited by Neal

CARING C

contained traditional Highland lairds, or their relations. I knew of two English writers (Orwell was briefly one), and an English insurance agent married to a local girl, and a few Polish ex-soldiers.

Gradually, as car ownership spread and as the narrow roads which connected this beautiful land to the world outside were widened, new people appeared. Some were rich farmers from the South, others were well-off couples from England seeking houses for retirement. Then the young began to move in, full of the ideals of the English 1960s: potters, jewellers, neo-peasants, fish-farmers, craftsmen servicing the new yachting boom, or merely hippies.

There was good in this, but bad as well. Small farmers were driven out of business by the wealth of aggressive incomers. The old had to move into town council housing, because the stock of cottages available for single retired people was snapped up for expensive conversion. Jobs promised on 'leisure developments' hardly materialised, as the contractors brought their own labour. There was the odd drug scandal, but above all a sense of alienation: the feeling that 'our country is leaving us.' Unease about the 'white settlers,' as they were called, contributed to the Scottish National Party victory in Argyll in 1974.

Today half the voices in the hotel where my uncle used to drink a meditative whisky



Craobh Haven for some

Ascherson. He reflects on the changes in

COLONISTS

are English voices – behind the bar as well. I would guess the English incomers now form a majority of the population of the Craignish peninsula, around the yacht harbour and holiday centre at Ardfern. The friendly Englishman who is doing up cottages for summer lets (£140 a week) introduced me to ‘the best dry stone dyke mason in the district’ – a young man from Matlock in Derbyshire.

The settlers have brought a new vigour to the place. They are cheerful, enterprising and very hard-working. They even manufacture and sell their own images of Scotland to tourists from the South, from Celtic brooches and ‘tablet’ fudge to the matchless photographs of Scotland by the English genius Colin Baxter. Small industries like

fish-farming line the shore, squeezing out the boat-moorings of the natives.

But somehow the colonisers remain a colony. Incomers with jobs to offer tend to give them to their own kind, and there are now two largely separate economies – and separate social circuits. Expectations are different. The new people want the level of social service they were accustomed to in the suburbs of Manchester or in the Home Counties, and raise outraged clamour if they don’t get it. The old way of life, sickness and death in mid-Argyll asked for – and got – very little from the State. Too little, in my view. But to endure without complaint, and without dependence, was the Highland ethic.

Another part of that ethic has always been hospitality. Nobody burns holiday cottages there, as they do in Wales, and incomers are made welcome even when the changes they bring are alarming. A culture is being slowly extinguished, but Gaelic was already much too weak in this part of Scotland to evoke anything like the organised resistance of the Welsh Language Society. And the young English colonists in Argyll belong to the ‘caring’ environment-conscious generation. They rebuke one another for scraping the sea-loch floors until there are no scallops left, or for erecting inappropriate houses, or for slighting the prehistoric monuments of the Crinan plain.

There are ironies in all this. Argyll, like most of Scotland, once sent its own colonists all over the world to settle Canada or conquer India, to command black and yellow labourers in tin mines, rubber plantations or tobacco warehouses in Asia and Africa. Of the eight children I played with as a boy, I think none is still in Scotland. Some are in New Zealand, others in Cape Town or Natal. Now the path to their old house is blocked by a Surrey-type ‘Private

“So a modest, remote place slowly turns into a playground, a ‘recreational area’ of ‘outstanding natural beauty.’”

Property’ notice. Their own home territory has become, if not precisely foreign, at least no longer theirs.

So a modest, remote place slowly turns into a playground, a “recreational area” of “outstanding natural beauty.” Tourism is not new here: relays of Victorian steamers once took visitors along the ‘Royal Route’ through the Crinan Canal to Oban. What is new is the idea of a place which exists only to ‘service’ other places, in which inhabitants are redefined as janitors.

The hills remain, and the standing stones, and the grey-lag geese holding their noisy winter parliaments by the sea. But something is lost: a quiet-spoken, reflective, closely related community whose forefathers gave names to every piece of water or stone. In the time of Emperor Severus, a Roman fleet sailed prospecting through the Firth of Lorne. It has taken two thousand years for the Romans to return and settle. ■

‘Caring Colonists’ first appeared in the Observer last year. It is included in Games with Shadows, a collection by Neal Ascherson of various writings and articles, published this year by Radius, and available in paperback at £7.95. This extract is reprinted by permission of the Peters Fraser & Dunlop Group Ltd.



SHE'S LEAVING HOME - BUT WHERE TO?

Why don't you grow up? Stand on your own feet! The young, like everyone else are exhorted to be independent and this month, the Government introduce the 'no training – no dole' rules. How easy are the paths to personal self-reliance? **Alastair Cameron** and **Stewart Black** investigate.

Jenny is seventeen and lives in a shared flat run by Link Housing Association in Edinburgh. She lived with foster parents from the time she was 3, and moved out a year ago. As well as the company of the other occupants, the flat offers Jenny the support of Link housing staff.

Jenny works full-time in a shoe shop. She takes home £43.00 per week. Under the new Housing Benefit rules introduced last April, for every £1.00 she earns over £24.50, 85p must be spent on rent and rates. This leaves her £27.00 to meet the cost of

fuel, food, clothes, laundry, fares, etc. Under such a budget, even a newspaper or a trip to the baths are luxuries.

Jenny is trapped. If she left her job – or even through no fault of hers, the job disappeared – she would be entitled to no Income Support until she is eighteen. Under new rules introduced this month, to have any income at all, she would have to take on a Youth Training Scheme place, and her experience of an earlier YTS leads her to want to avoid that at all costs.

Yet if Jenny refused to take up a training

place, she stands to lose a lot. She loses her eligibility for any other benefit; and consequently, because of her reliance on housing benefit to pay her rent, she loses her flat.

Government Ministers, including Mrs. Thatcher herself, have come to Scotland in recent months pointing out the virtues of the 'enterprise culture'. Young people are included in this call to foster personal independence and self-reliance.

The key symbol, in the modern world, of personal independence is moving away from home. Yet this year, major govern-

ment moves have disadvantaged the capacity of the young for achieving this.

Work

Not surprisingly, the effect of the growth of mass unemployment has been to make things harder for teenagers to get their first job. The growth of special temporary employment programmes introduced by the State has been a notable feature in recent years. Much faith is pinned on these. Last year, Social Services Secretary, John Moore claimed that 'Unemployment for young people need not exist. They have every incentive - including financial - to avoid it.'

This remark, made in the context of a parliamentary debate on the now implemented Social Security Act, was followed by the indication that two-year Youth Training Scheme places would be made available to all who wanted them. Anyone refusing a place will, from this month, be disqualified from benefit. Such is the Government's confidence in the incentives!

Manpower Services Commission figures show that in 1986/87, only 46% of trainees obtained full-time work on leaving a course. 'Labour market destinations', in the MSC's jargon, are arrived at by only about half the people they train.

Money

The Training Allowance for the first year of YTS is £28.50 week. This allowance clearly does not, nor is it claimed to, provide the means to financial independence. Nevertheless, anyone refusing a training place, or voluntarily leaving a training place will lose all benefit entitlement. According to Manpower Services in Scotland, around 15% of young people currently leave training schemes in this way.

The Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee has warned about the damaging effects of recent benefit changes specifically on the young. In their 1988 Annual Report, the committee address the withdrawal of benefit from 16 and 17 year olds: 'This system exposes young people . . . to a risk of destitution.'

But such insensitivity is not new. In recent years, successive changes in Social Security legislation have penalised young people. The 1985 changes in Board & Lodgings allowances were perhaps the most remarkable, and most widely publicised of the government's measures. Ostensibly designed to discourage the alleged 'Costa del dole' phenomenon, and encourage under-26's to move in search of work, they have succeeded only in driving ever increasing numbers into the most exploitative private 'guest houses'.

A Place to Stay

Finding a decent place to stay is a traditional area of disadvantage for young people leaving the parental home. Sooner or later most people yearn to live separately from their parents. On the side of most parents, it has to be said, the desire is mutual and natural.

But for those seeking to 'leave home', the scarcity of suitable affordable housing is a major barrier. House purchase, for most, is simply not a possibility, even for those in work. Public or private renting is the only realistic option.

Council housing is a major resource in Scotland, but to young single people it is effectively unobtainable. For one thing, most of it was designed for families. In Edinburgh for example, where 53% of housing applications are from single people, only 19% of the stock is 2 apartment or less. For another, housing allocations systems and the homelessness legislation operate against single people.

While in some areas of Scotland, renting from a Housing Association represents a young person's best chance of decent housing, Housing Associations account for only 2% of the stock.

The private rented sector offers much easier access and is in fact, the only available option for most. However so much of it is in poor physical condition, exploitative and costly, that it needs to be seen as part of the housing problem, rather than a resource.

Next April will see the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act, which will affect young people's position in all three sectors of the rented market. Amongst its many provisions, the Act seeks to encourage the transfer of housing stock away from District Councils, through a "pick a landlord" scheme for council tenants. It provides a framework for injecting private funds into the Housing Association sector, and introduces a new rents system for private and Housing Association tenants. Under this system, better tenants' rights will be traded for higher rents. Conversely lower rents will mean less security.

The need for profitable investment enshrined in this new legislation is likely to clash with social needs, and the economic rents likely to be charged for new developments may well be beyond the grasp of the young.

The provisions of the Housing Bill clearly miss the mark, if the results of the recent 'Home Ground' survey (reviewed in the June issue of *The Scottish Child*) of young people's housing in the Muirhouse area of Edinburgh are anything to go by.

In Muirhouse, a large sixties scheme in north Edinburgh, 85% of the housing is council owned. The young people we interviewed were overwhelmingly (88%) dependent on state benefits. Two factors stood out from the response: the high demand for council housing (87% saw their housing future with the local authority); and the very unstable nature of respondents' present accommodation (25% had an insecure accommodation arrangement, and a further 55% were likely to move in the near future).

Putting these factors together confirms the disadvantage young people face. Their need is immediate, and yet their chance of council housing is likely to depend on a long wait. The short-term opt-

ions they have are available only if they move off their home ground and if they are prepared to accept the poor conditions in the 'bed & breakfast' market.

While the government has argued that young prospective tenants will be catered for by the new landlords, - private, co-operative, or housing association - this will probably not be the case. Their youth and their poverty will render them unattractive in the market-place.

Fewer Options

Already under the new benefit rules his year, options are closing. Housing Associations running special projects for young people are finding that they cannot take up places - simply because their benefit does not allow them enough to live on. Social workers supporting young people who have left care feel that seeking independent housing is simply setting youngsters up to fail. The "no training, no dole" scheme introduced this month will only aggravate that.

One thing that the Housing (Scotland) Act will ensure is more short term housing in the private sector. But tenants rights will be clearly restricted. Rents, on the basis of increased demand, will rise, but the Act does little to ensure standards. The Government has belatedly recognised the need for local authorities to have more powers to deal with overcrowding, exploitation, and poor physical upkeep. But it sees this as essentially a short term intervention, with market forces preserving standards thereafter.

For more than a generation now, many of Scotland's homeless young people have drifted to London. A report this summer from the Soho Centrepoint shelter and advice agency seems to strike a chord. 'Government economic policies,' comments Centrepoint 'are based on encouraging initiative, independence and labour mobility.' Young people, say Centrepoint largely share these objectives.

We appear to have reached the age though, when housing and social security policies actually prevent the young from helping themselves. Policies in employment, income support and housing seem to have been made separately, and certainly not as part of any wider plan to encourage independence. It is not to the content of ministerial speeches we must look, but rather to the effect of government actions.

Home Ground - a survey of young people's housing needs in Muirhouse, Edinburgh. Pub. by Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless. 1988. Price £2.00 incl p.& p.

No Way Home Pub. by Centrepoint Soho. 1988

*The photo within this article is from a collection by Chris Killip. In **Flagrante** contains 50 black & white photographs of the north of England, and is published by Secker & Warburg at £9.95.*

GETTING OUT THE BIT

Coping with distressed children can be emotionally draining. Glasgow's Notre Dame Child Guidance Clinic uses a psychotherapeutic approach in its work with young children and their parents. How do they do it? Director **Sister Janet Barr** talks to **Derek Rodger**.

●

"The really important thing is to get at the child's perception of what's wrong – how the child feels about things."



Sister Janet

In Janet Barr's office is a large and ancient dolls' house. There are rag dolls lying beside it, and bits and pieces of toys around. There is sense of solidity about this dolls' house and Sister Janet tells me that it's around a hundred years old.

The Notre Dame clinic, taking its name from the religious teaching order of that name, will celebrate its sixtieth birthday in 1991. So the clinic, I venture, is a bit like this old toy – solid, established, respected?

"Whatever we are now," she explains, "it wasn't always that way." The name of the clinic's founder, Sister Marie Hilda, is invoked. "Can you imagine," urges the modern day successor, "how the reading of Freud was looked on in Scotland in the 1930s? And for a Catholic?"

Psychological science applied to human affairs; the recognition of children as having personalities of their own, experiencing developmental stages different from adults; the acceptance of the notion of the unconscious; the readiness to see a child's behaviour in its social and environmental context – the establishment of a clinic following these principles did not attract universal support in the Glasgow of 1931.

We leave the question of the Glasgow and Scotland of the 1980s till later as she tells me the kind of work they still do, departing hardly at all from the founding principles. "We are involved with young children and their parents (the Sisters of

Notre Dame run an adolescent unit up the road – in staff and client composition, both units are nondenominational) and the presenting problems are things like stealing, bed-wetting and soiling, destructive behaviour, hyperactivity, sexual problems, the whole range really.

"We believe that you need usually to look deeper than just at the behaviour. The really important thing is to get at the child's perception of what's wrong – how the child feels about things.

"Of course, with very young children you often can't do that with words." Play has always been an important thing in assessment and treatment. Playing to unblock emotional difficulties, playing to engage the parent and child in work, fulfilling play between mother and child.

"We always look at the child in context." The child, she explains, is never viewed in isolation. Development and behaviour is always in relation to other people, other things – the mother, the father, the marriage, the school, the teacher, the community, the extended family. The child is always engaged in a dynamic interaction with the world. Since some of that interacting takes place on the level of the unconscious, the acceptance of such a framework is labelled in professional parlance, 'psycho-dynamic'.

It requires exhaustive assessment. "It takes us at least six weeks to assess a child. That process alone is often enough quite

therapeutic in itself, and no further involvement is necessary. We check the medical history. We check the family dynamics. We look at what's happening at school. We get an opinion from a consultant psychiatrist. It's important to build up a total picture of the child's environment to use along with the child's own perception, before you decide on a way to proceed.

"We might then, depending on needs, be considering no involvement, or weekly play sessions in the clinic, family therapy, or behaviour management tasks with the mother.

"The really important thing is to fit your response to the child's and family's needs. We're quite eclectic really. Psycho-therapy and behavioural methods can be used in conjunction."

"One thing that has to be said about behavioural methods is that they can give the hard pressed parent a sense of achievement. And unless you can give a parent some degree of success, you can never engage them in any harder longer term work."

This type of approach may be all very well. But what did she say to those who considered such time-consuming work a bit of a luxury. Weren't there more direct, efficient, and speedy methods – the prescribing of medication for instance?

She smiles in acceptance of such a question. "You find that many of the families

who come to us have been round all the other agencies. These are people for whom things just haven't shifted. If there had been a fast easy cheap solution, it would have been tried.

"The other thing is that so often you have to look deeper than the behaviour. There's a child who was referred to us because of school refusal. Now she's going to school. But the fact is she is a sad unhappy girl. Her mother and father have separated, after many changes of life style and setting, between here and abroad. The girl was born subsequent to a previous miscarriage, and this might be an issue for her mother. In order to develop as an individual, and possibly as a mother herself one day, this girl needs a lot of help.

"You see, in this case as far as the presenting problem is concerned, it's solved. The girl is attending school again. But you have to look deeper than just the behaviour. Too often you see the results of emotional deprivation lived out again in people's own children. I find that very sad."

Was this coincidence? In arguing for a recognition of the importance of the emotional life, she'd chosen the example of a silently suffering female child. Was there something here in her experience about gender differences in emotional affairs?

The point was taken, but passed over in correction of any impression that depressed

"Can you imagine how the reading of Freud was looked on in Scotland in the 1930s? And for a Catholic?"

but compliant girls were the clinic's main focus. Twice as many boys as girls come to the clinic. The more acting-out, aggressive nine or ten year old boys, they deal with a lot. Again, she argues, it doesn't do to get unduly taken up with the behaviour.

"I saw this little boy and his mother just this morning. He's only five, although," she chuckles affectionately, "he contends that he's six. He's been described as hyperactive and aggressive, and he is. I mean you can just see that he can be a real wee pest.

"But you see, starting from the assumption that there may be something emotional underlying this, you find that you look deeper. Actually in the case of this little lad, I don't believe there's any underlying emotional disturbance. It might be best to proceed with a focused involvement with the mother - help her to work on her expectations, help her with her management skills. You see sometimes this thing about children being labelled hyperactive may require nothing more than helping mum to be confident about her limits."

Personal intuition plays a big part in Notre Dame staff's work. Being able with very young non-verbal children to gauge that something is wrong, and to assess through facial expression or eye contact or touch, whether the child has an appreciation that something is wrong,

requires does it not, a rare skill? And as all parents will appreciate, rivalries and hierarchies of favour can develop between the adults. How, it seemed important to ask, does Notre Dame clinic manage these things?

A pause. And then a considered pace to: "We work hard at coming to joint decisions. Very hard." One imagines long and difficult staff discussions about how to cope best with baby. One is reminded of the majority of single parenting where there may be no partner to discuss with and be supported by. Sister Janet Barr is pointing out the need for a staff group who are committed to common basic assumptions, and who aren't dictated to by personal and professional rivalries. And it feels right.

The staff group of seven including the Director has always been multi-disciplinary. Of the present group, all are women. With what seems by this time characteristic bluntness, Sister Janet explains that this is because the women applicants at recent job appointments were better than the men! But they span several professions. She herself is an educational psychologist. There are two other psychologists, two social workers, a play therapist and a teacher. She emphasises that the clerical and maintenance staff too have to be viewed as an essential part of the whole clinic team.

It is, she volunteers, of some regret that currently there are no male staff. "A small unit like ours, doesn't have any prospect for career promotion. So perhaps men tend not to be attracted."

She puts down her own personal interest in such work to "a great belief in human nature - a belief in the ability of people to rise above their difficulties." She talks about her own background - "ordinary working-class Glasgow" and her own experience of struggle to reach maturity as formative.

"There's something in me about getting fulfilment out of accompanying people through their lives - sharing their miseries and their triumphs, sharing their humanity."

I get the impression that she derives a sense of closeness to people through her work, and say so.

"Yes. It's a sense of moving with people from confusion and sadness to a sense of wholeness, happiness and health."

"My religious belief has something to do with this as well. A belief in the possibility of the individual to come to a sense of wholeness. There is a religious element too for me, in the sharing of suffering, coming through to resurrection."

How then, as we start to wind up does she define herself in relation to current values?

"I think of myself as apolitical really in a party sense. There is no party that I feel I could support. I feel very strongly though that current values of greed and self-centredness go against notions of humanity, against notions of sharing experience. The current climate gives for isolation. It all mi-

litates against us all looking out for each other.

"There is so much defensiveness around. My own mother suggested after the recent motorway murder, that I shouldn't any longer drive alone on motorways. She actually said I should buy an inflatable figure to put in the passenger seat. I mean where do you stop with that kind of thing?"

"People who work in units like this also have to take the responsibility of standing up and being heard. You can't just keep your head down and pretend. You would be being dishonest to those you seek to help."

Government policies in education and social work, the prevalence of sexual abuse, and this year's DHSS changes ("a lot of our families are oppressed by this kind of thing") come to mind as things she feels she has to campaign about.

Nearer home, might there not be an explanation, cultural or political required, as to why the methods and approaches used to work with children at Notre Dame are not more widely adopted? Multi-disciplinary sharing in work, taking account of the individual's unconscious, in the context of environmental factors are not, I had formed the impression, thick on the ground in Scotland?

"Well that's right. You have to ask why is it that there is a whole structure in England

"Too often you see the results of emotional deprivation lived out again in people's own children."

which provides a psychotherapeutic approach to children and families? Why are there psychotherapist posts in Health Boards in England, and not here? Why is it only now that there is thought being given to providing training for Scottish psychotherapists?"

Answering her own questions, she thinks it's something to do with the disciplines in Scotland "sticking to their own bits". People feel they have to defend their own traditions.

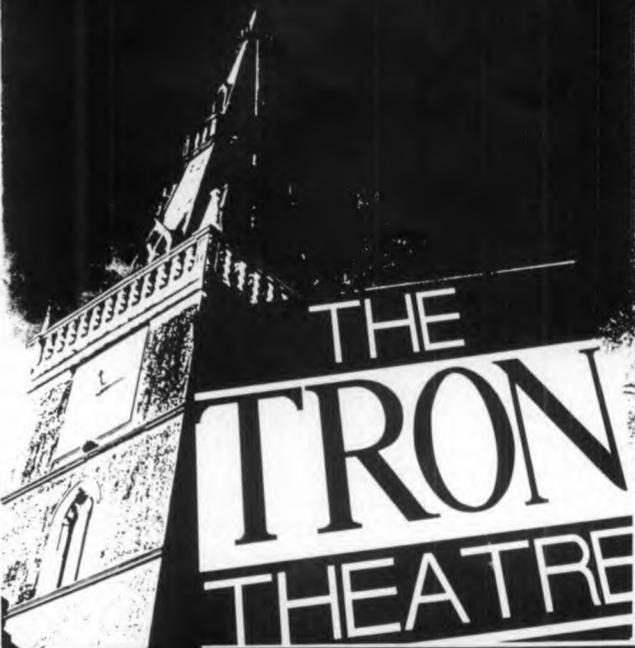
"We're very passionate, we Scots. We have to assert ourselves always - like over injustice. Even in an international order like the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Scottish sisters in the British Province feel at times that we have to assert our identity as Scots, and not English."

We're not sure of our identity, therefore we have to guard it strongly? "That might have something to do with it. Maybe people in Scotland feel they have to defend their own bit, because we're insecure about ourselves. We're a defensive people really."

Copies of Freedom To Grow - Sister Marie Hilda's Vision of Child Guidance pp114, an account of the origins of the Notre Dame clinic are available from Sister Janet Barr at 20, Athole Gardens, Glasgow G12 9BA.

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Mother Beats Daughter!

PUNISHMENT

Anna Mitgutsch

Pub. by Virago. ISBN 0-86068-939-5

Paperback. Price £4.95

Deirdre Robertson

Institutional punishment, its nature and form, is according to Michel Foucault, one of the benchmarks of an age. The slow transfer of the attentions of the punisher, from the inflicting of pain on the body, to controlling the mind represents an increasing desire and need for control over the individual. It is not enough now to carry out the spectacle of the public hanging or flogging to keep the masses in order. The discharge of disciplinary duty has, in the modern age, to be much more thorough. The minds as well as the bodies of each one of us has to be policed.

Although the precise form of discipline and punishment clearly varies between one modern institution and another – the inmate of a prison messing his cell might be treated differently from the member of a nursery group doing the same to the play area . . . might be – at root, the intention is the same. To gain control over each individual's mind and body so that the status quo is preserved.

It was in the summer of last year, yes 1987, that corporal punishment was finally eliminated in state schools in Scotland – a development, which if correspondence columns of newspapers are any guide, is the cause of much regret to some. Those others who have elatedly welcomed the abolition need not really get too excited. The form may have changed; the content is unaltered. It is not as if the whole notion of punishment is circumscribed. Far from it. The position taken by the teachers' organisations for the last half century up until last year's final abolition of the belt was always clear. Yes we approve of the abolition of corporal punishment, – but only when alternative sanctions are in place.

We agree to change as long as things stay the same.

It is not out of facetiousness that analysts compare schools with prisons, hospitals with international conglomerates or religious orders. But the institution that is held responsible for just about everything in the domain of public morality, subject to inordinate levels of attention, is the family.

Emotional Violence

And punishment in the power structure that is the family? Anna Mitgutsch has made a brave attempt at tackling this one. She chooses the more oblique approach that is the novel. She also explores this murky area of human affairs by presenting a narrative history of the female line of one family through three generations of women. The original German title is in fact, *Three Daughters*.

The mother-daughter relationship throws up strong material for a fiction that is coming back into vogue. Anna Mitgutsch's mothers and daughters, with their predisposition to physical and emotional violence give the writer a high octane mix with which to work.

"Was your mother like you?" is the innocent question of Vera's twelve year old girl child as she watches her mother comb her hair. A can of worms is opened. The fictional Vera, in age and circumstances similar to her author/creator, tells the story. It is Vera's sense of the three generations that we hear.

Vera recounts coming home from the

"Vera recalls that her mother boasted to neighbours that 'we never had a defiant stage in this house'."

hospital with her own baby daughter. The baby's father left her. Vera, alone in a hot cramped suburban apartment with diapers, a squalling child, dirty dishes and the feeling that she had been dropped and forgotten by life, cried. She cried for the mother who had terrorised her own childhood. She cried for the mothering that she'd been denied. She cried because she was afraid she'd repeat the damage to her own daughter.

"I was so little when she began to beat me." Vera recalls that her mother boasted to neighbours that "we never had a defiant stage in this house." "Never beat a child when you are angry," she advised her younger sisters. "Just wait," she would say. "In two hours when I get back, you're going to get it: I'll beat the living daylight out of you."

Vera is systematically beaten and punched, terrorised and humiliated, degraded and crushed. Isolated from others, she can only depend on her mother, and accuse herself. Be guilty. For everything. Everything from not being perfectly tidy, to crying when strangers touched the

welts on her body, thus causing her mother "more embarrassment".

Receptacle for Badness

But it is the character of Vera's mother, the perpetrator of this cruelty that takes up most of the attention. Marie was conceived in protest, two days after the birth of her elder sister Friedl. Her father, an archetypal Austrian peasant beast farmer, later impregnated a younger sister. The child Marie was brutalised from the beginning. She was the one child in the family who was seen as the carrier of the shameful gypsy blood. Marie was the source of all trouble, who was plain, who had ideas above her station. Marie it was who was the family receptacle for all that was bad. Her father beat her daily.

And worse, her mother colluded "like a rival sister" in the beatings. On one occasion her father "dragged Marie from the window by her thick red braids and came down on her with his fists and feet until blood ran from her nose and mouth." Then he went back to work. Wash your face, her mother said. You look terrible.

Humiliating lovelessness of Marie's childhood gave way to the guilt-ridden self-loathing of adolescence. Adulthood brought it's bitter experience of a lonely loveless marriage to a weakling, a member of a downed gypsy family. The arrival of baby Vera, itself brought about by forced sex, set the scene for the repeat performance of abuse.

As a chronicle of the roots and causes of familial violence, not much seems left out of this book. Guilt, frustration, rage, hurt, shame – the whole range of emotions attending on fraught mother-daughter relationships are here, and in abundance. The consequences of abuse are too, writ large.

How can Vera explain to her own daughter why her dolls, found in the attic have broken faces? Because they were naughty. Because the child Vera had to learn, like her mother to hate the vulnerable in herself, to punish the dependent parts of existence? Because the dolls, like their owner refused to reach a deadly notion of perfection, someone else's hellish notion of control?

Decency

Punishment works also on another level of understanding. These three troubled generations span the major part of the twentieth century. The political and cultural rootlessness of the demise of Austro-Hungary, the Anschluss secession to Nazi Germany, the post war reconstruction of government and



economy to unprecedented levels of prosperity in the German speaking world – all these events touch the lives of ordinary people. Although they do not determine its course, even a family of backwoods Austrian farmers feel the pressures of history. In the post war period, part of the pain for Vera is to aspire to acceptance by the new middle class of professionals and managers, so that her mother can feel legitimate and “decent”.

The ultimate question though, is Does **Punishment** work? As a novel. Encompassing as it does such subject matter at the extremes of human relationships, over three generations, over the course of twentieth century central European history, the author does not lack material, or in amassing it, ambition.

Her work suffers, perhaps like its characters' lives, from a surfeit of realism. So powerful and so devastatingly realistic is this Anna Mitgutsch's first novel, that it came across to this reviewer as too much like an effort of personal expiatory revenge. So gripped did I feel reading this, it felt like the thrilling daring illicit experience of reading someone else's secret diary. Self indulgent, and sweetly and shamefully guilt inducing.

This novel is weakest, where it requires to be strong. What brought the abused Vera back from the brink? What effort broke the chain of bitter recrimination, self-loathing and child cruelty? Vera's daughter seems to have escaped the consequences of a deadly family chain. Only hints are given why. At times one forgets that this is a novel. It feels more like documentary. The after effect is the same. One can only share in the guilt, and feel the sad frustration of powerlessness to do anything about it.

My guilt? As one educated in a Scottish establishment where the swift opening of a desk drawer meant only one thing, I can without reservation declare my own guilt. The abused child characters' guilt and shame? The author's?

The exposition of violence in the institution of one family, one supposes, rightly or wrongly, justifies this profoundly depressing and enraging work. For art, just like life, that alone is never enough. ■

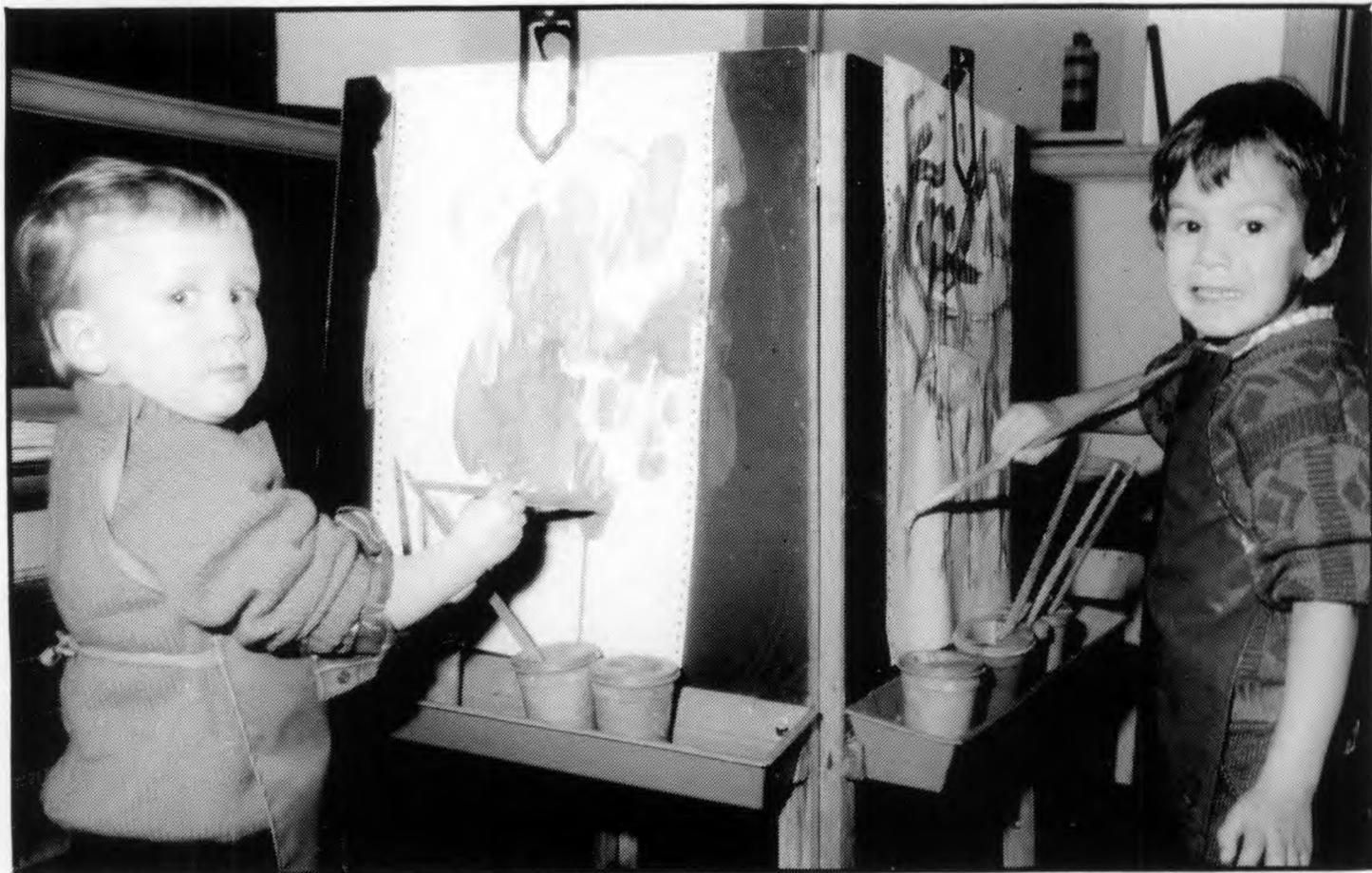
INVERSE

Megluhmaenya

Thu wayn gits unrooli
soe ah boot im up thu crss
Auh yir dadz jist a fashist
sezziz mam
Shiz ryte innuff
Indivijlz thit ur insikyoor
rizort tae megluhmaenya

Alburt Plethora

REVIEWS



Children Under Five: Educational Research and Evidence

Margaret M. Clark

Pub. by Gordon & Breach £15.00

Joyce Watt

There was a brief period in the early 1970s when the education of the under fives was given a high public profile and, more importantly, received major central government backing. It seemed that a new era of unprecedented expansion of under fives provision was about to dawn.

But the "new era" sadly, did not dawn on the scale envisaged due to a variety of factors, most notably economic recession, changing educational priorities and an ever increasing squeeze on local authority spending. But that, of course, is the disillusionment of the eighties. The 1970s, for a short time at least, was an age of optimism.

Part of that optimism was the drive to understand better the needs of young children, the factors affecting their development and how to translate that knowledge into effective provision. In an age of expansion it was seen to be important that policy should be informed by research. Interest in research on the under fives has never been greater than it was in the mid-1970s.

Evidence and Interest

Government departments, research councils, as well as voluntary bodies funded research projects and programmes at unprecedented levels. Only now are we reaping the rich harvest which was sown and nurtured in those years.

Margaret Clark's **Children under five: Educational Research and Evidence** makes the fruits of that harvest available in a highly readable and comprehensive form. It is the outcome of a personal invitation to her in 1985 by the then Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph, "to carry out a critical evaluation of research into the education of the under fives undertaken in recent years." Clearly a daunting task, the result is a thoroughly comprehensive report, meticulous in detail, insightful in judgement. Scottish readers will be pleased to note the prominence she gives to Scottish studies and her analysis of the differences in provision and in terminology north and south of the border.

Areas covered include children's language development, curriculum, child-minding, special needs, long term effects of early education, and future research priorities. It is a useful overview for anyone involved with young children.

As someone involved in research in this field for over twenty years, I was particularly intrigued by how key concepts such as "disadvantage", "special need", and "continuity" were rethought as the research programme proceeded.

Everyone will have their own disappointments. I would have liked more detailed evaluation of some of the projects (although Margaret Clark is refreshingly candid about some of the best known studies), and it would have been interesting to have had some analysis and comparison of different research approaches to similar questions. Also in a study as comprehensive and as detailed as this, it would have been interesting to know to what extent over the last fifteen years we have learned from one another, and to what extent we have been guilty of reinventing the under fives wheel.

But the main purpose of the book was to put on record the huge volume of under fives research done in Britain and to evaluate its possible contribution to future practice and policy. The research documented an impressive record of achievement. The same must be said of Margaret Clark's analysis.

It is however ironic that in 1972 we had a political climate of support and expansion and negligible "research evidence". In 1988 we have a wealth of "research evidence" and, with certain honourable exceptions, little real political interest in the under fives.

Margaret Clark's analysis will be used in many ways. Perhaps one of its most important contributions will be to underline that irony. ■

CHILD HEALTH IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

This year marks the Diamond Jubilee of the founding of the British Paediatric Association. We review a commemorative book which looks at changes in child health over the years.

Paul Carter

It was three years after the first founding of the British Paediatric Association in 1928 that one of the first U.K. Professors of Child Health was appointed in Edinburgh. It is another Edinburgh Child Health Professor, John Forfar, who has edited this book.

What changes have there been since? There is less poverty; the physical health of mothers has improved; the maternal and neonatal death rates have dropped; infectious diseases have almost disappeared as threats to life; and the death rate of children in the previously vulnerable first five years of life has plummeted. Cancers can now frequently be effectively cured, but child abuse, both physical and sexual, is recognised as a blight. Psychological abuse has hardly begun to be tackled. The focus is no longer so much on the survival of our children but on the quality of their lives.

A book then to examine the political and economic factors underlying children's health? A view of our changing society focusing on the well being of the next generation of parents? A consideration of the nation's attitude to the value of the child? Or a consideration of the move from hospital based services to social paediatrics? In these key questions, this book fails to live up to its title.

Not that these aspects don't get a mention. But this book is like much of paediatrics today: a lot of good ideas marred by poor communication and a mixture of reliance on the status quo and personal pre-

judices. The book stands better as a collection of essays by some of the country's leading child health doctors. But there is much repetition, some contradiction, and in the wake of Cleveland every author seems rather to have hoped one of the others would take on the exploration of the difficult issues surrounding child abuse.

To whom is this book addressed? The cover says "to parents (and) professional health care workers". Very few of the authors manage to write consistently in a language that could be followed by parents, and some contributions lapse either into a form of text book synopsis, or a complaint (often completely justified) about the lack of direction and commitment on the future of child health services from our present government.

Professor Meadow's view though, of "Time Past and Present for Children and their Doctors" is a revelation about the changes in hospital services for children. Professor Campbell's review of ethical issues in child health could alone justify the purchase of the book, and all doctors should read the chapter by Bax, Robinson and Gath on "The Reality of Handicap".

Of the other chapters, "Child Health and the Environment" by Golding, Hull and Rutter is my own preference, even though the non-medic may need occasional recourse to a dictionary.

Other messages? Medicine (and not in these cases social and political measures) has improved the outlook for children with rare diseases such as heart defects, cancer, etc. Neonatal units are using up large amounts of health resources - cutting neonatal death rates but without any fall in the rate of handicap. There is some clear thinking discussion about our seeming need to save life at any cost. The chapter on the care of new-born babies, after a questioning start concludes that neonatology is cost effective if the current concept of 'Quality

Adjusted Life Years' is interpreted favourably. The establishment could not face asking whether, in the end, it really has all been worth while.

If government really was committed to prevention, perhaps we would see more initiatives like the one in Edinburgh which, simply by reorganising and decentralising ante-natal services, produced marked reductions both in low birth weight babies, and in the number of babies dying during or soon after birth.

In Scotland we spend more money per person on "health" care than the rest of the U.K. We have higher immunisation rates, but also high rates of smoking and less breast feeding. And we continue to disregard the health of children's teeth, not least by still not fluoridating our water supplies.

Some contributors do mention such political matters. Macfarlane and Mitchell cite "the conservatism of the medical profession" and the "emotional weighting given to certain childhood diseases . . . which are allocated resources out of all proportion to their frequency."

The last word, and if health administrators and politicians are to be encouraged to read this book, should be left to Golding, Hull and Rutter. They conclude: ". . . The way ahead is to generate physically and psychologically balanced and healthy parents, and this can only happen through a change in the current trend of attitudes to the nation's children. Collaboration between the medical and teaching professions, psychologists, and social scientists may help solve some, if not all, the current problems, but it is more likely that the present state of affairs will only improve when society as a whole changes some of its attitudes." ■

Child Health in a Changing Society edited by John O. Forfar. Oxford University Press £9.95 ISBN 0-19-261687-0

WHO AM I?

natural parents, and by artificial insemination, what of the ethics of letting them know?

In the wake of the Warnock Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology, the Family Care organisation have produced a booklet summarising the range of views in Scotland on telling the truth in these matters.

The editors take the view that the balance of opinion among the contributors leans towards a position against concealment and deception.

Yet knowledge here as elsewhere, is power; openness, the province of those secure in themselves. In one of the papers of which this useful booklet comprises, Fred

Stone quotes research which pin-points an underlying issue of protecting the infertile husband's feelings of inadequacy. "What secrecy is protecting is the husband's self-perception . . . that the ability to create children is an indication of his masculinity and worth."

Not the sort of mythology that you can legislate against, at any rate in any way effectively. This booklet comes out against introducing laws which in any way prevent young people - whether born of separated or surrogate parents - from knowing who they really are. ■

Copies available from Family Care, 21 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DN. Price (including postage) £2.50.

TRUTH AND THE CHILD
- a contribution to the debate on
the Warnock Report Pub. Family Care
ISBN 0 9508117 5 0

Derek Rodger

She was as foreign and American as you could imagine. Yet here she was talking elatedly about her visit to her relatives in Barrhead. Her family.

Never having set foot in her "homeland" before, this middle aged lady was clearly on more than a holiday. A kind of psychic mission. Yet for those born of no known

THE SCOTTISH CHILD AND THE LAW

Taking Care with Compensation

It used to be the case that British doctors could observe at a comfortable distance, the courtroom vicissitudes of their colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic. Not so now. Along with the rising flood of Coca-Cola, television soaps and American football, the British have acquired a heightened interest in the court action for damages.

Interestingly though, the publicity given at times to court cases against doctors doesn't seem to lead to an overall lowering of their popularity or status. By and large they retain the support of their patients and the general public. It seems to take a particularly potent set of factors: sex, inter-agency rivalries, an assertive woman doctor and threatened parent power – Cleveland in fact – to see the press in this country really tear its gloves off and get stuck into a doctor. This is exceptional.

The position of social workers, on the other hand, has never been quite so secure. Social work is a recently developed profession. Its professional credibility – at least as regards the care of children – is based on beliefs and theories about child development, the family as a social unit, and the influence of the economy on the functioning of that unit, which have undergone some major revisions over the last thirty years. Medicine too has had some remarkable changes of mind, but whereas shifts in medical practice tend to be seen as "improvements", equivalent changes in social work are often labelled "fashions", and dismissed as subjectivity and whim.

In addition, professional child care has to compete with commonsense understandings. Ordinary people are often unwilling to concede superior knowledge

about children to those who have learnt about such things in books.

Given such a backdrop, what chance a fair-minded approach when someone wishes to bring a complaint against a social worker? The Scottish Child Law Centre has recently brought out a Briefing Paper for those interested to apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on behalf of children who have suffered injury as a result of a crime of violence committed against them. As well as being of interest for the practical guidance it offers in this area, the Briefing Paper is a useful sort of "barometer" in other ways.

Criminal Injuries compensation for children has, in the wake of Cleveland, risen to prominence. The Scottish Child Law Centre has produced a recent briefing paper addressing the subject of financial comforters. Centre Director Rosemary Milne urges caution.

Although the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme has been around for some years, one or two regional social work departments have recently begun to take the idea of applications for compensation seriously enough to give staff time to it on a systematic basis. Even though cases of child abuse may be among the hardest, for a variety of reasons, to take before the Board, the renewed interest in it within social work departments may correlate closely with the upsurge of concern about child sexual abuse.

Looked at from a different angle, the increased prominence given to compensation says something about how the relationship between the legal profession and statutory social work agencies is beginning to change.

In the current climate, decisions by social workers which go

counter to commonly held traditional beliefs about what is right or fair for children will be subject to particular scrutiny. In order to safeguard themselves and their thinking, social workers are likely to become increasingly vigilant about their recording and consultation procedures, since even quite "minor" failings may otherwise be cited as additional supporting evidence for an allegation of professional incompetence or misjudgement.

As is the case for doctors, it may be no bad thing that a service which has wielded such vast power over the lives of families has some of that power turned

back upon itself. But on their side, social workers may also be feeling quite trapped.

They carry out a job which involves them handling the most intractable kinds of human problems. But society seems to give them only grudging credit for having special insights into how to do this. Unlike doctors who enjoy a special status in the public mind, social workers must often play the role of "big baddy" with one or both parents and often with children themselves. Social workers remove children, withhold access from parents, and take over parental rights.

Little wonder that they have some anxieties about the growth of interest in their work among the legal profession, when they can't be sure of a strong constituency of support among their own user group!



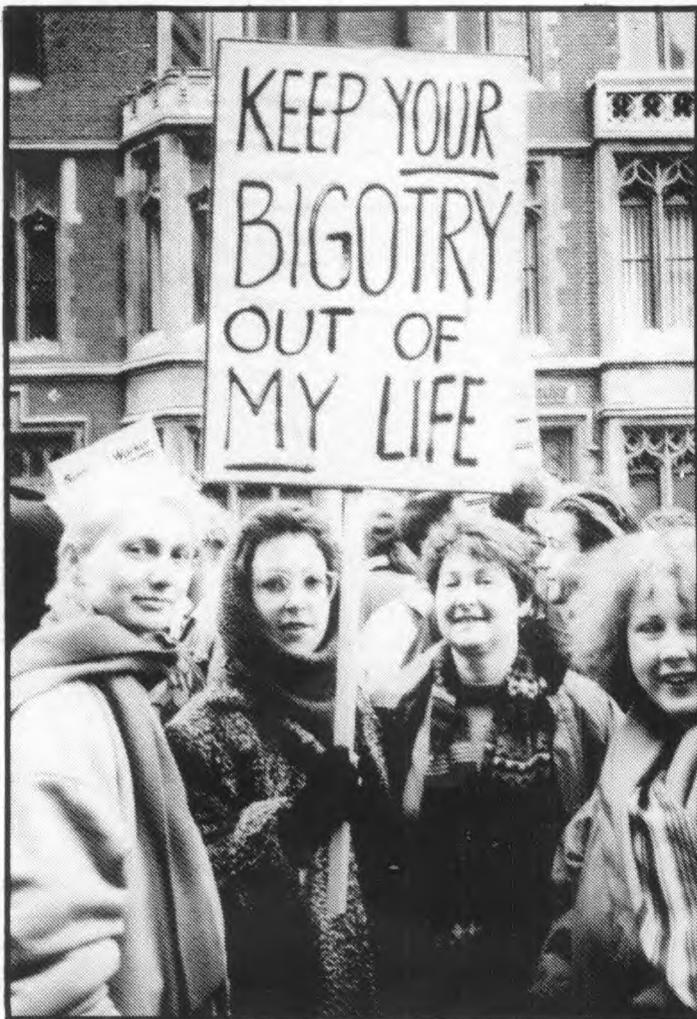
At first sight, none of this may seem relevant to compensation claims. After all a claim for compensation can probably best be initiated by a social worker if it is to go ahead. The intention behind the Scottish Child Law Centre Briefing Paper is certainly to help professionals involved with injured children to make use of this scheme.

But supposing, having weighed all the pros and cons, social work decides not to seek compensation for a child – not because of legal impediments but because a professional judgement is made that the problems it will present for the child are likely to be greater than the probable benefit to be gained. What then? Will others with different priorities be prepared to accept the authority of that social work decision, or will social work itself go "into the dock"?

It depends really on whether there is a measure of agreement about what is meant by that well-worn phrase, "the best interests of the child", or whether those involved are more interested in simply "winning". Winning money, winning the argument, or just winning.

Cleveland has provided more than enough evidence of how badly children were left out of account in all the adult wrangling. So before the lure of compensation gets too strong, perhaps it would be as well if both social workers and lawyers took a look at how each can learn from the other. It might mean that children get a better service, and not one which is the product of the capitulation of one set of beliefs before another. ■

The Scottish Child Law Centre's Briefing Paper is available from 1, Melrose Street, Glasgow G4 9BJ. Enclose a large s.a.e.



Custody Cases – Defending Family Life?

The July decision by an Edinburgh judge to give custody of a 7 year old boy to his father because his mother was a lesbian has highlighted the way in which gays and lone parents are discriminated against in custody cases. (writes Ruth Buckingham)

The boy had been living with his mother since his parents had divorced when he was a year old, and for the last two years with his mother's female lover as well. He was reported to be doing well at school and there was no evidence of the boy suffering from any emotional or behavioural problems.

The basis for the judge's decision seems to rest on two arguments. The first was that the boy would eventually find out "the truth" about his mother's relationship from a school friend if it became neighbourhood knowledge, or that the boy may react unfavourably if the mother explained the situation herself.

This assumes that having gay parents is something one would naturally be ashamed of, and can only add to the

constant fear of gay couples bringing up children, increasing the need for gay mothers to go back into the proverbial closet to avoid having their children taken away. It also assumes that gay parents are incapable of teaching their child sensitivity towards and acceptance of others' sexuality.

Judge Davidson's second argument was that it was important for the boy to have a suitable male in his life, and that without one, long term problems could develop. This has caused outrage amongst lone parents who have a hard enough job bringing up children on their own without being told they are not providing adequate role models for their children.

There were at the time of the 1981 census, 160,000 children living in lone parent families in Scotland. Yet judges feel able to award custody away from mothers because the family set up does not conform to their idea of a proper family. In a society where we are told that family life is held in high esteem, there seems to be a tendency to defend only some forms.

Casenotes by Malcolm Shaffer

Standard of Proof

The debate on the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill, currently passing through Parliament, is reported in the 4 July 1988 edition of *Hansard*. It makes for interesting reading, not least because it does seem to resolve a dilemma exposed in a recent issue of the *Scottish Child*.

This relates to the standard of proof applicable in cases where a person is named as having committed an offence against a child. The Court of Session and one or two Sheriffs before that have expressed some doubt as to whether Parliament intended that the civil standard of proof should apply in such cases.

The usefulness of the debate in Parliament is that it has clarified Parliament's intention. The Minister responsible, Lord James Douglas Hamilton is quoted,

"As the law stands, there are different standards of proof for Children's Hearings and criminal proceedings. With one exception, all the grounds for referral of a child as in need of compulsory measures of care are on a 'balance of probabilities' rather than 'beyond reasonable doubt'. The exception relates to the case of an offence by a child where the test of 'beyond all reasonable doubt' would apply. In all other cases the test would be that of 'the balance of probabilities'. In all other cases the test would be that of "the balance of probabilities"."

"That distinction was not introduced by the Bill – it has existed for almost 20 years. Under the 1968 Act, the standard of proof remains the 'balance of probabilities' and in criminal proceedings it remains 'beyond all reasonable doubt'."

Later on the Minister states, "The child may require measures of care and protection even though the evidence available does not justify a criminal trial. Regrettably there are cases in which there is insufficient evidence for criminal prosecution, but sufficient evidence for steps to be taken to protect the child."

The Minister's comments are welcome in that they appear to resolve appropriately any doubt about correct standards of proof in referrals designed for the protection of the child.

Refusal of Legal Aid to Parent

Lothian Regional Council v R – 4 May 1988

This was an appeal to the Sheriff Principal against a decision freeing two children for adoption.

While the facts of this particular case have no particular implications for Scottish Child Law in general, the issue does require some publicity less it is part of a developing pattern. The parent in this case was refused Legal Aid. This was obviously an issue of great concern to the Sheriff Principal, and his comments are worth repeating.

"I am disturbed to learn," he said, "that Legal Aid was refused in this case. I cannot conceive that a mother could be held not to have a proper cause to resist having her child taken away from her. If emergency certificates are now being refused as a matter of policy, the consequences to the Courts in the way of increased delays are serious. All litigations affecting the welfare of children call for expeditious disposal at all stages and in the past the sensible granting of emergency certificates has enabled urgent Appeals to be heard speedily. If there is now to be built in administrative delay caused by a new policy in regard to emergency certificates, Government intervention may be called for."

Later on in his judgement, the Sheriff Principal states, "I have reached this result with considerable misgivings. I am far from certain that I would reach the same result had Mrs. X been represented. If justice has been done, it has not been seen to be done". Counsel for the applicant remarked that the refusal of Legal Aid for Mrs. X was incomprehensible. I consider it deplorable. The appellant has effectively been denied her right of Appeal.

The Sheriff Principal added that if the Legal Aid authorities had been in full position of the facts, including in this case that the Curator Ad Litem did not report in favour of the children being adopted, and they considered that a mother who had been convicted of no offence did not have a probable cause to appeal against having her children taken away from her permanently, then it seemed that the long tradition of

LETTERS



Screaming in the Kitchen

Dear Editor,

The Summer issue of **The Scottish Child** arrived a few weeks ago, and having just myself had a baby, it was so appropriate. 'Mothering in the Loo' made for particularly interesting reading.

While in Norway people on the whole think nothing of seeing a breast-feeding mother in public, and many more mothers do breast feed, you are certainly not encouraged by hospital staff and health visitors to follow your instincts with

feeding or looking after your baby.

'Just wheel her into the kitchen, and let her scream there - you need your rest.'

I pointed out to the health visitor who said this that there's no way I could rest if I shut my baby screaming in the kitchen.

Looking just a touch superior, she told me that of course she knew you couldn't spoil babies. But. You could get them used to things. give them bad habits!

An international example of discipline them when they're young?

Lynda Whyte Petterson
Hvalstad
Norway

Praises

Dear Editor,

Congratulations!

The Scottish Child arrived this morning with its attractive yellow front cover and the lovely baby on the back (thanks Stewart). I think you should feature photographs of babies as often as you can find space for them, especially where that look is shown being exchanged between infant and care-giver.

Apart from other goodies in this issue, I particularly enjoyed hearing from Jessie Kesson. Her distinctive approach to 'thefts of childhood' was illuminating. Other Scottish

writers and artists should be interviewed.

Already looking forward to the next issue.

With best wishes.

Russell Forrest
Special Educational Services
Lothian

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on the striking new format for **The Scottish Child**, and on the clarity of the reproduction. I hope that the circulation will continue to grow.

Nigel Bruce
Edinburgh

Among the Contributors in this issue...

Stewart Black is a senior researcher with Lothian Social Work Department.

Ruth Buckingham was until recently supervisor at Edinburgh Gingerbread, the organisation of one-parent families.

Paul Carter is a Community Child Health doctor in Aberdeen.

Alastair Cameron is Development Worker with Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless.

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

Janet Dick is the mother of a small child aged two and a half. She often looks after other children.

Joyce McMillan is Scottish theatre

critic of the **Guardian**, and radio columnist of the **Glasgow Herald**, a sometime schoolteacher (failed), and a dedicated aunt to several non-designer tots!

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

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

Deirdre Robertson is a Glasgow

based free-lance writer and journalist.

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

Joyce Watt is in the Department of Education at Aberdeen University

Maxine Williams lives in London and writes for **Fight Racism Fight Imperialism**, the paper of the Revolutionary Communist Group.

providing legal assistance in Scotland to those in need has ended.

He trusted that in the event of the case going further, he hoped that the Court of Session would not be put in a similarly im-

possible position, with an Appellant described as inadequate and of low intellect being left to represent herself.

The Scottish Legal Aid Board state that the general rule about the granting of legal aid is that the

Board must be provided with evidence that the applicant has a "probabilis causa litiganda" - reasonable grounds for bringing a court action - in order to grant an application.

If the decision in this case is part

of a general pattern, and similar difficulties are being experienced with other cases, then clearly some action needs to be taken. In child care cases, it is of no help to anyone if a parent does not get the legal representation to which he or she is entitled.

Controlling It

The T.V. was on but was losing the battle with the book, when the 9 o'clock news appeared on screen. Casually glancing up to see what was happening in the world that I would really rather not know about, I became at once totally riveted by a scene so horrific that I wanted, without thinking, to know more.

Then I heard the accents, then I heard Glenochil, then I discovered it wasn't a major riot, but merely everyday life in A wing.

The usual phrases about "the crisis in Scottish prisons" seemed rather glib and inadequate, but one of the main questions being posed was, Had the Governor Lost Control? Witnessing the scenes, it seemed a somewhat superfluous query, since it seemed blatantly obvious that no one had any kind of control.

But we were being reassured that in fact, the governor and staff were in control of the prison - it was just that the prisoners were refusing to co-operate!

For a minute, I thought it was me. There was something I was missing. Some concept I just hadn't grasped. Nothing else for it - I was forced to take this news seriously. The list of clichés floated round my head - "respect for authority"; "breakdown of authority"; "those in authority"; "who's in control"; "lack of control"; "beyond control"; "why can't you control?".

Authority and control. When I think about these positive and dynamic concepts, I think they've become increasingly kidnapped by those in authority (see what I mean) to mean oppressive, antagonising and static.

I have always found the notion of one person controlling another a rather absurd one. The only person who can control me is me. Right? There may be moments of great emotional stress when I wish to enlist the assistance of others - just in case I can't manage it on my own. But the idea of someone else controlling me is incomprehensible. Which is not to deny that I could be physically overpowered, locked up or whatever. But that's a very superficial form of control - more about power than anything else.

We seem to have major problems with this word "authority". For me, it means personal authority, something we all have, rather than authority over someone else. There is of course the kind of authority that comes from the role we have (teacher, policeman, parent) but how we exercise that brings us back to our personal authority.

What I mean by personal authority is not being dependent on others to tell me what to do; independent thought; a recognition that my actions affect others; a belief that my ideas

have value and so do those of others; not always taking the easy way out; trying to retain my integrity in the way I go about my life; accepting responsibility for my actions.

None of us, of course, manage to hold personal authority all of the time. It's impossible. Which is why authority is such a dynamic concept - the process of trying to exercise it is central to what life is about.

On the other hand, if this is denied, if I am not allowed to recognise and develop and use my personal authority, then the only way it can be expressed is thoughtlessly, irrationally, destructively.

The denial starts when we are children. Most of the ways in which adults interact with children are based on the assumption that children have no personal authority. Yet one of the most frequent demands we make of children is to act responsibly! How can you be responsible if you are not in touch with your personal authority? Schools of course, are wonderful at demanding this - but we can't just blame them. They are after all, only carrying out the process demanded of them.

This is not to suggest that children should be allowed to do what they want, and take all decisions affecting themselves. Personal authority is something that grows and develops and can be difficult. At times we all put a

lot into trying to disown it. Children have a right to expect adults to set boundaries, to hold them safely - not in order to deprive them of their personal authority, but so they can be free to develop it. It is in the process of this development that we learn about accountability (another of those words), which is inseparable from authority.

Which brings me back to Glenochil - a classic example of how, even with prison bars and riot gear and 24 hour lock-downs, you cannot control another person if he doesn't wish to control himself. Prison must be the ultimate denial of personal authority - total dependence, institutionalisation, depersonalisation. How, under these circumstances, can anyone act responsibly and feel accountable? How can it lead to anything but a desperate explosion?

Some people need to be kept in physical security for their own and others safety. Not so they can be deprived of personal authority, but so they can begin to explore and learn its legitimate and productive expression.

"Who controls the prisons?" Is it too much to hope that one day prisoners and officers might answer together, "we all do"?

Sheila Ramsay





DESIGNER TOTS