

Scottish Child

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Big Kids Comics

Coping and Caring

Kelman Interview

Loss

Childhood and

Nationhood



POWER
IN SCHOOLS



6

WRITING

Scotland

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Scottish Child

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CONNECTIONS

4



Healthy, Wealthy and Wise! the NHS White Paper; opportunities for the young in Scotland; and learning how to learn.

THIS DIARY

9

In *The trouble with heroes . . .*, our new diarist, **Daniel Boyle** tells where he's coming from.

SCHOOL POWER

10

We look at two of the factors in the schools equation. **Graham Atherton** discusses the outlook for parents; the E.I.S.'s **Jim Martin** gives the teachers' perspective.

CHILDHOOD & NATIONHOOD

16



Announcing a vital series of events.

LOOKING BACK

18

Mark Ogle looks in *Wounded Places*, at the experience of loss.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

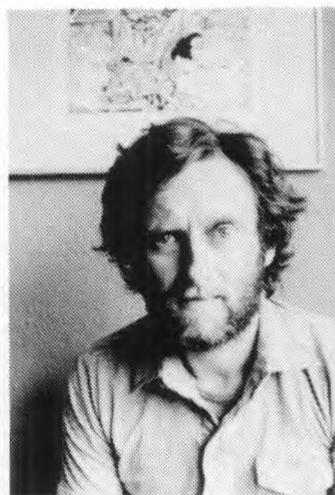
22



Fred Stone talks about *Coping and Caring*.

KELMAN INTERVIEW

24



James Kelman talks to *Scottish Child* about what's really going on.

REVIEWS

26



LAW

31

Andrew Lockyer enters the debate about children absent at Hearings.

LETTERS

32



AFTER-THOUGHTS

35

Because of lack of space, Joyce McMillan's article, reading between the lines of women's magazines, is held over till next issue.

Take your Choice!

CHILD HEALTH

Unless Health Secretary, Kenneth Clark develops the jitters, we are in for the most dramatic changes in the health service since 1948. The government has said they will discuss implementation of the White Paper on the NHS. The principles though, seem set in stone.

Yet most people have not yet appreciated just how radical these changes – it hurts to call them reforms! – will be. The radical nature of the proposals means that we have little past experience on which to base predictions.

Community and preventive services for children rate a bare two or three sentences in the White Paper, but it seems they will be particularly vulnerable to the effects of the changes.

The finding, early rather than late, of children with serious hearing problems for example, improves the quality of their lives. But the screening is costly, as are the extra years of professional help. There may be future savings on education or social work funds, but not for the

Health Board or the GP budget holder who must justify the costs.

Financial pressures on preventive services, already acute in some areas, will undoubtedly increase under a system where budget holders are judged and, it appears likely, paid, according to their success in treating the most patients for the least cost. Strong financial disincentives, both organisational and personal, will operate against these expensive preventive activities.

Another big worry for paediatrics is the danger of the fragmentation of services for children. In recent years there have been slow and painful moves towards integrating community and hospital based services. There seems little doubt that this is good for children, particularly those with long term problems. Such arrangements rely on staff being flexible between sectors – working in one place and being paid by another. But the need for tightly managed and separate budgets in the new system must inevitably make such flexibility difficult to maintain.

But the most far reaching of the proposals is the attempt to

change the underlying philosophy of the National Health Service. At present the system is guided by a professional ethic; in the future it is envisaged that services will be cost-led. Cost rather than quality will be the major factor in decision-making.

Perhaps the most startling omission from the White Paper is that although the Health Service review was set up as a response to the growing chorus of protest about underfunding, funding levels have barely been addressed. It is suggested that increased efficiency will make available additional real resources.

"Recent experience," according to Professor of Health, John Butler at the University of Kent, "prompts a profound scepticism. There may be unused capacity remaining in some parts of the NHS, but cost improvement programmes have been increasingly unable to meet their targets. The widespread closure of beds in 1987 suggests that the real problem has always been a lack of resources as much as any continuing widespread inefficiency."

The government has justified these proposals on the grounds

that they will use resources more efficiently and will provide increased choice for the consumer. People will be able to change their GP more easily – a long overdue reform, but in other ways, choice is likely to diminish. Financial limits may force GPs and Health Boards to limit people's choice of available services on the grounds of cost. Having to travel longer distances for treatment would be among the least of the disadvantages for consumers.

It seems clear that the real intention of the White Paper has little to do with either choice or efficiency. The government wishes to divert attention from the real problem with the NHS: that funding has not kept pace with the demands of demographic change and developments within medicine. But few commentators are in any doubt about the real motive. These proposals will put in place the bureaucracy and information systems which would be necessary for future destruction of a free and universal health care system through privatisation. ■

Stuart Logan





Taking on the Powerful

POVERTY POLITICS

A group of young people in Edinburgh, all of whom have been homeless, have got together to fight youth homelessness and poverty. They have called their group DIRECT YOUTH.

The aims of the group reflect the problems they, and many other young people, face. They want to be able to get furnished accommodation at an affordable rent from the council, they want an end to the work-for-your-dole-money-and-call-it-training forced on them by compulsory YTS and they want an end to age-related benefits. In other words, they want the basics of life and they DON'T want to be discriminated against.

Listening to smiling government ministers telling us how no teenager need be unemployed, you could be forgiven for thinking that only a tiny minority of young people face hardship and homelessness in Britain today. Not so, say DIRECT YOUTH. "There's hundreds of young people sleeping rough in Edinburgh, and don't let anyone tell you different" says Sharleen, a member of the group. "There's just nowhere for young people to go. I'd rather be on the streets – and I have been – than stay one night in some of the bedsits I've

been in".

Each member of the group has a different story to tell. Moving out of social work care with no support; exploitative landlords offering the only accommodation available; being chucked out of home and ending in a downward spiral of depression and poverty, with little help available. Hard drugs, prison and prostitution are the snakes on their obstacle course through life – and there are precious few ladders.

Talking to the members of DIRECT YOUTH you get a sense of the excitement that comes when people get together to do something about the situation they are in. There is little discussion about how to convince other young people that things need to get better, it's taken for granted that they'll know that anyway. "Anyone who's our age and thinks most YTS is good training needs their head examined", says Stevie, "Almost everyone we meet agrees with what we want. The problem isn't convincing people, it's getting them to do something about it".

A problem indeed. Benefits are cut or abolished, youth homelessness grows as housing stocks shrink, yet young people seem remarkably unwilling to do anything about it. Of course some young people are doing very well, but the increasing division between rich and poor is one that is felt

acutely with teenagers. So why aren't there more groups like DIRECT YOUTH?

Toby talks about how he used to get angry, taking it out in ways that often got him in trouble with the police – he sees this as a common thing that young people do. "A lot of young people don't see the point in trying to do anything, so they take out their anger somewhere else".

Young people do, however, show incredible commitment to some things. Gang loyalties, especially with football gangs, are taken very seriously by the young people involved. Ritualised violence, usually against other young people with the same problems as them, is common amongst working class teenagers. But it would be a mistake to see it, as it is often portrayed, as an attack against authority. What is so sad about such fratricidal violence is that it is the very opposite – an expression of rage that DOESN'T challenge authority at all.

Perhaps part of the explanation for young people's reluctance to challenge those in power is the example set by campaigning organisations like Shelter (Scotland) and the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless (SCSH). These groups concentrate their efforts on lobbying politicians and publicising grim statistics, rather

than organising and mobilising those who are under attack. It is a form of campaigning rooted in consensus politics and labourism, and one that has little hope of winning significant concessions from our present government. A preface to a recent SCSH report on benefit cuts stated that 'SCSH sincerely hopes this depressing account of human stories . . . will jolt the decision-makers into action'. Fat chance, and everyone knows it.

DIRECT YOUTH have a big task on their hands in organising young people into a group that fights for their rights – but they're going to have fun doing it. Already they've produced leaflets and posters to get other young people along to their meetings. They are organising a big concert in July in Edinburgh which will hopefully raise funds for more activities. And in simply getting together with each other to challenge injustice they offer an example not only to other young people, but to all those others who have suffered too much, too long. ■

Colin Chalmers

DIRECT YOUTH can be contacted C/O Edinburgh Unemployed Workers' Centre, 1 Cranston Street, Edinburgh, or through Kate Burton on 031-667 2068.



Food for Thought!

BABY FOODS

Cover-up on babyfood blackmail! – so ran the recent headlines covering the convenience babyfoods scare. As with other recent British food scares (eggs, cheese), the concealment of information is nothing new. When the potential victims are the very youngest, an even rawer public nerve is struck.

Some of the reaction to the babyfood scare also has been, to coin a phrase, hard to swallow. One London spokesperson for the Health Visitors' Association was quoted during the scare as saying that there was no reason why mothers (sic) should not liquidize food for their babies. "For some mothers without equipment," it was felt, "tins and jars are the only answer."

Liquidize? Equipment? What, one wonders, did the pre-food mixer generation do to feed their babies? A humble fork, maybe even a tea strainer and a clean pair of hands – surely the only necessary equipment.

One independent multinational report has estimated that a jar of convenience baby

dinner is five times as expensive as the equivalent home-made meal. Manufactured babyfoods contain 'empty' calories in the form of fillers like rice starch.

But the multi-national babyfood giants really do have it made when we are conned into believing their products are the only answer. ■

Lynda White-Peterson

PRISONS

This month, the Strathclyde branch of the Scottish Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders (Sacro) is launching a leaflet campaign advertising their new Family Services.

Strathclyde has its proportionate share of Scotland's high prison population. On any one day, Scottish jails hold an average of over 5000 prisoners. When it is the father who is sent to prison for whatever reason, the family can be left to fend for themselves.

Family Services Development Officer, Margaret McTaggart told **Scottish Child**, "Prisoners' children and families have the same problems as any single parent situation – financial problems, isolation, etc. Only they have to cope with the additional stigma."

The aim of Sacro Strathclyde Family Services is to give support, advice and information to the families of prisoners. Most often this can include information on welfare benefits, on tra-

vel arrangements to prison visiting, including in some cases assistance with the travel. Emotional support is also potentially a big area of need. "Just being able to spend an hour or two listening to a prisoner's wife's efforts to come to terms with her new situation can be a big help," said Margaret McTaggart. "It all comes down often to the 'myth' of the strong woman – no matter what the difficulties, mum's expected to cope."

One woman, already helped by the project, described her plight as being "like a bereave-

ment, . . . only without the sympathy."

The Sacro initiative for families comprises one administrator in addition to Margaret McTaggart. The recruitment of volunteers is central to the support services. Qualities required include understanding, and a sense of humour; and car drivers are very much needed. ■

Further information about volunteering, or any of the project's services from: Sacro Strathclyde, Family Services, 220 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G3 6TX. Tel. 041-332-1763



Appearing Stupid – Being Bright

Every primary school class, and every 1st and 2nd year secondary school class has its 'remedial' pupils. Many are classed as remedial throughout their entire school life. 'Remedial' generally means difficulty with information intake, understanding the material and being able to work with it. Are these children just stupid?

My work at the Edinburgh Centre for Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), and current understanding of brain functioning leads me to believe that information intake is a purely mechanical process and can be taught, i.e. we can learn how to learn.

As the normal brain contains between twelve and fifteen thousand million cells, why are there varying degrees of intelligence? Current wisdom suggests that IQ, is measured by the number of connections between the cells – Dendrites which do not occur automatically but develop as we process new information or experiences and as we use that new data.

Intelligence is not therefore, fixed at birth, but can be upgraded throughout life. Clearly, children who cannot take in information are going to be disadvantaged in the intelligence stakes and appear stupid.

Why then remedial children? I believe it is partly a question of a

achiever in this area begins to suffer loss of confidence and self esteem. Low expectations of others and eventually of himself contribute further to poor scholastic achievement. Finally, tense or over-anxious parents bestow their problems onto their children. And nobody, professor or underachiever, thinks well if

OUT-LINE

Out-Line is a new regular feature, where we open up our columns to readers who have something to say on an aspect of Scotland growing up.

Left Brain (logic) orientated system failing to connect with the Right Brain (dreaming/creative). Some children find themselves in remedial classes because they fail to utilise their natural learning ability. Happily they can now be taught how to learn via an NLP technique, known as the Internal Eye Scan (IES).

As society equates knowledge with intelligence, the under-

they are physically tense or emotionally imbalanced.

Teaching children to learn through the IES technique is relatively easy. Having assessed their lead system via the IES, I can teach my clients to spell 'psychiatrist' in two minutes. They can also spell it backwards! The youngest is six. All are under achievers. Some cannot spell their own names.

Visualisation or hypnosis can

help with the problems of physical tension or emotional imbalance, and a number of my own techniques tackle problems of Left Brain (e.g. telling the time, and numbers), and Right Brain (e.g. reading and imagination). I would suggest that a knowledge of the functioning of the brain would also help spot, understand and combat problem areas generally, at an early stage in their development.

I am very keen to speak to interested groups, especially teachers and parents. One day, the use of these exciting techniques of NLP and psychotherapy as standard practice could be of benefit to the whole community.

For further information on these methods, or about the next teachers' course beginning in September, ring me at the Edinburgh Centre 031 229 8451. ■

Brian Hill

The editor invites readers to make contributions to OUT-LINE. Write or phone your suggestion.



THE ADULT NEWSPAPER THAT CARES ABOUT CHILDREN!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is a sympathetic and reliable source of essential information.



TOMORROW'S SCOTSMAN—IT'S LOOKING GOOD

THIS DIARY

The Trouble with Heroes . . .

All memory of my father began in 1953, when I was five years old. One summer's evening I fell from a dyke and cut my head. It wasn't much of a cut. My grandmother put a plaster on it and I went back to play in the street.

During the night they found me praying. I was delirious. Later I became convulsive. A doctor was called who ordered that I be taken to Greenock Royal Infirmary where blood poisoning was diagnosed. My chances of survival, so I've been told, were not very good.

I don't know how long I was unconscious, but I do remember coming round for one brief moment. And he was there. Alone. He was just sitting there looking at me. And he was crying. I've often thought it odd, that. That my first remembered sight of a man who would always be a hero to me should have been with tears in his eyes. For in the culture that produced us both, real heroes never cried. But he was a hero all right.

So, what was heroic about the man? Well, he was a soldier in the war. And my childhood years were filled with imaginings of him in battle: being heroic in the accepted sense of the word. But he himself put paid to that image when I was about ten.

He'd taken me to see a film. It was called 'Fix Bayonets', and starred Leo Genn. I had watched thinking - he was there! he did that! Later at home I asked him, for the first time, to tell me about the war and what he'd done in it. And he said, 'I kept my head down'.

'But did you not kill anyone?'

'I doubt it. My gun was clogged up with dirt most of the time.'

I said desperately, 'You mean you never even fired it!'

He told me he was in a platoon. He described the weapons they had: so many rifles, so many machine guns, and a Bren gun. He said that the platoon had been lying

beside a railway line. Suddenly a German soldier had been spotted running across the track. He was about 25 yards away when the whole platoon opened up on him.

With my imagination stoked up by the film we had just seen, I had a completely clear picture of the event - with sound. The clatter of the guns. The whine of the bullets. The flashing white-hot tracers. The German soldier being cut down. I stood open-mouthed, waiting for confirmation of the kill.

But my father looked at me and said, 'As far as I know, that soldier's still running.'

I was devastated. I turned to my mother, but all she said was, 'Don't listen to him'.

Later, she and others told me he'd gone into the army with two boys he had known. Both were killed. One of them had died near my father. His chest had been torn away with real bullets. Along the way I was

"I was never able to tell my father what I thought of him".

to learn other things that flatly contradicted the 'head down, and clogged up gun' yarn. But ultimately, it was none of these things that made him a hero in my eyes.

It was the respect I could see other people had for him - most noticeable at family gatherings, weddings, births and funerals. He was not the most sociable of men. While others laughed and joked and talked, he would sit and sip his drink in near silence. They had no contempt for him. He was accepted as quiet, and that was that.

People respected him beyond the family also. Often, having been introduced to someone, I would be asked if I was any relation. There would invariably follow the comment that my father was 'a quiet big bloke', that he 'didn't say much'. And then, after the reflective moment's pause, 'but he's all right'.

It was his stability. It was his commitment to my own and my sisters' well-being. It was

his obvious love for our mother. He was a labourer, unskilled, and so there was never a lot of money. Sometimes when there was none, he would walk to his work and go without his cigarettes. And on those days he walked and went without, he had a two shilling piece in his wallet. But he never spent it. It had been put there by my mother when she gave him the wallet as a wedding present. I've got it now.

I know he hated having to walk, and I know he hated, loathed, the job he was walking to. But he did it just the same. And he did it for us. He was a hero all right.

But there's a problem with heroes. And there's a problem for those who confer that status on them. There is a reluctance to approach the hero in a normal, open manner. To be frank. To reveal emotions. To tell him, for example, that you love him.

I was never able to tell my father what I thought of him. And as you get older, and gain a better understanding of the world he contended with, the appreciation, the respect, in some ways deepens. And the possibility of genuine communication becomes all the more remote. In fact, it's quite possible that the longest conversation I ever had with my father was about the time he fired his gun.

My hero, of course, had a weakness. His was fear of illness. Because it was their job to find and name what he feared, he avoided doctors. By the time in 1978 that he did see one, it was too late. He was moved to hospital. Sometimes he was lucid, sometimes not. He wasn't allowed fluids, and he complained of being parched. One night I took him along some ice cubes wrapped in tin foil.

I let the ice melt, and he dipped a piece of sponge in the water, and held it to his lips. We were alone, and he said three things to me. He said, 'that's great' - in reference to the water. He said, 'I'll have to get out more.' And he said, 'I'll have to decorate the house.' I just sat there watching him. And then I left. He died the next night, in Greenock Royal Infirmary.

Daniel Boyle

POWER IN SCHOOLS



Jim Martin, EIS General Secretary

TEACHING IN THE NEW ORDER

Defenders of tradition, or traditional fall-guys? **Jim Martin**, ending his first year as General Secretary of their biggest union, talks about the standing of Scottish teachers to **Derek Rodger**.

“When people searched their minds,” wrote a commentator on the Scottish educational scene, “for a vignette of the traditional schoolmistress, the result was old-fashioned, middle aged or elderly, sensibly dressed,

angular and grim,
proper and prim,
The Pride of the E.I.S.”

The men, according to the late James Scotland, writing in his *History of Scottish Education*, published in 1969, fared little better.

Narrow, humourless, and authoritarian were the male public projection.

The stories of teachers-we-have-had are legion. James Scotland, a chairman in the late 70s of the General Teaching Council, and an insider critic, digs out the case of a ‘Granny’ Carmichael in Dundee whose care for sex segregation was so strong, that she didn’t allow girls to speak to their brother in school. And a Dr. Wilson . . . “who was heard to laugh only once in six years, when he recounted how Romulus beat his brother’s brains out.”

Putting this traditional perception of teachers by the Scottish public to the General Secretary of the main teachers’ union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (E.I.S.), Jim Martin doesn’t flinch. Instead, he goes further.

“We are seen traditionally in the public eye, as people with a cushy number, and who whinge a lot.”

He says he finds teachers’ reputation understandable. “In order to gain a high standing in the community you have to earn it. We’ve failed to get across our message, – and we’ve managed in Scotland to keep people out of schools.”

Conceding that teachers suffer perhaps, from the difficulty that we’ve all been to school, Jim Martin is strongly of the mind that teachers can’t go on with old attitudes for very much longer.

The reasons for his sense of urgent imperative are not, even in a short discussion, hard to find. He hardly seems to need pushing, but I push. Aren’t the teachers stuck in the current situation of always reacting to the terms set by others, notably the government? Isn’t part of the public perception of teachers to do with the above public attitudes, that teachers, like other union groupings, are out to feather their own nests, to secure their own jobs? Aren’t teachers regarded in the public eye as one of the whingeing public sector groups who’re standing in the way of enterprise progress?

The teachers, or at least the E.I.S. which comprises 80% of them in Scotland, are in Jim Martin’s view, not only aware of current realities and perceptions, “we are getting ourselves into a position to be ahead of them.” He cites the evidence. The E.I.S. initiated a conference held in Glasgow in May on **Education: the challenge of the 90s**. They gathered together nearly 300 delegates from unions, local government, research and industry. The day event was in itself a success in co-operation – they

secured the joint sponsorship of the STUC and the CBI, among others.

"It is hoped that that kind of bridge building will now filter down to local level. It's imperative that we can get back to the keel we were on before in Scottish education, where we had as broad a discussion as possible. What the government has been about, contrary to their public statements, is to restrict access to discussion." He cites too, the number of public meetings round the country in recent months with parents.

In Jim Martin's view, the rhetoric of parental participation through school boards, and through the opting out legislation, really conceals true intent. "When you consider, for instance, that the schools opting out plans were not in the manifesto at the last election, when they were only leaked to the *Glasgow Herald* last summer, and that by this Autumn they will be law; when you look at the fact that now no E.I.S. member is appointed to any consultation body, you get a measure of how this government wants to shift control to the centre."

"We have moved away," he opines, in a pointer to developments quite sinister in their scale, "from a position where administrative devolution to the Scottish Office was based on a wide participation by a range of opinion. The ministers now advise the advisers."

Critical of the Minister at the Scottish Office with responsibility for education, — he says that in his near 12 months in the job, he has met Michael Forsyth to speak to twice — he rejects some press comment of a personality clash between two young and rising political stars, as trite. "It's not about Jim Martin, or Michael Forsyth. It's about the way we can get the government of

schools back to people."

The school boards will not achieve this. They will not create opportunities for the greater involvement of individual parents in their child's education. They will take money, through their allocated running costs, out of education. They will be cumbersome bodies in the running of schools.

Whereas at one time perhaps, the E.I.S. would have exercised a defensive veto, new circumstances demand new responses. "The school boards are going to be there. So we'll encourage our members to get involved, because we hope that the boards can be encouraged to take a wider perspective on educational matters outwith the day to day running of their own school." The

"What the government has been about, contrary to their public statements, is to restrict access to discussion"

government's speeches, Jim Martin feels, arguing for the opting out of schools, deregulation of the multitude of services, the introduction of the poll tax, and the proposals for the N.H.S. are all in fact interchangeable . . . "because they amount to the same thing — undermining local participation, cutting across local government, so that greater control is possible from the centre."

He is critical of the role of the press in all this. Though aware of this quite unsavoury turn in public and political life in Scotland, because they fear

being cut out altogether, the press is compliant. The media in Scotland seem to be happy to turn their attention to situations which mirror the one they can't influence. The press relations, for example, of a certain leading Glasgow football club — a mirror image in its vetoing of certain journalists, its secretive and centralised control of information, and its authoritarian insistence on the following of received wisdoms, of Scottish Office attitudes — seem to be much safer ground.

Jointly sponsoring the recent conference with such as the C.B.I., I suggest might conflict with received wisdoms on the value of education. Vocationalism versus generalism was a long running story in Scottish educational life. "This government talking for industrialists is just like the Labour government talking for trade unions. The truth is they don't represent the complexity of people's views — only the government's own version. The industrialists I speak to don't want me or my members to train youngsters for jobs. The truth is they want education for adaptability. Sure, they want people who are computer friendly, but they want a breadth of skills — the narrower the vocational education, of course, the less adaptable people are. And that's something that teachers and industrialists are able to agree on."

Formerly a teacher of Modern Studies and Economics, he laughingly recounts the valedictory words of his old headmaster at Larbert High School. "You'll not do well at university, Martin — they'll find you out." Maybe they did, he jokes. But you know that in the modern world, Jim Martin plans for the last laugh not to be on the teachers. ■

Schoolsville

Glancing over my shoulder at the past,
I realise the number of students I have taught
is enough to populate a small town.

I can see it nestled in a paper landscape,
chalk dust flurrying down in winter,
nights dark as a blackboard.

The population ages but never graduates.
On hot afternoons they sweat the final in the park
and when its cold they shiver around stoves
reading disorganised essays out loud.
A bell rings on the hour and everybody zigzags
into the streets with their books.

I forgot all their last names first and their
first names last in alphabetical order.
But the boy who always had his hand up
is an alderman and owns the haberdashery.
The girl who signed her papers in lipstick
leans against the drugstore, smoking,
brushing her hair like a machine.

Their grades are sewn into their clothes
like references to Hawthorne.
The A's stroll along with other A's.
The D's honk whenever they pass another D.

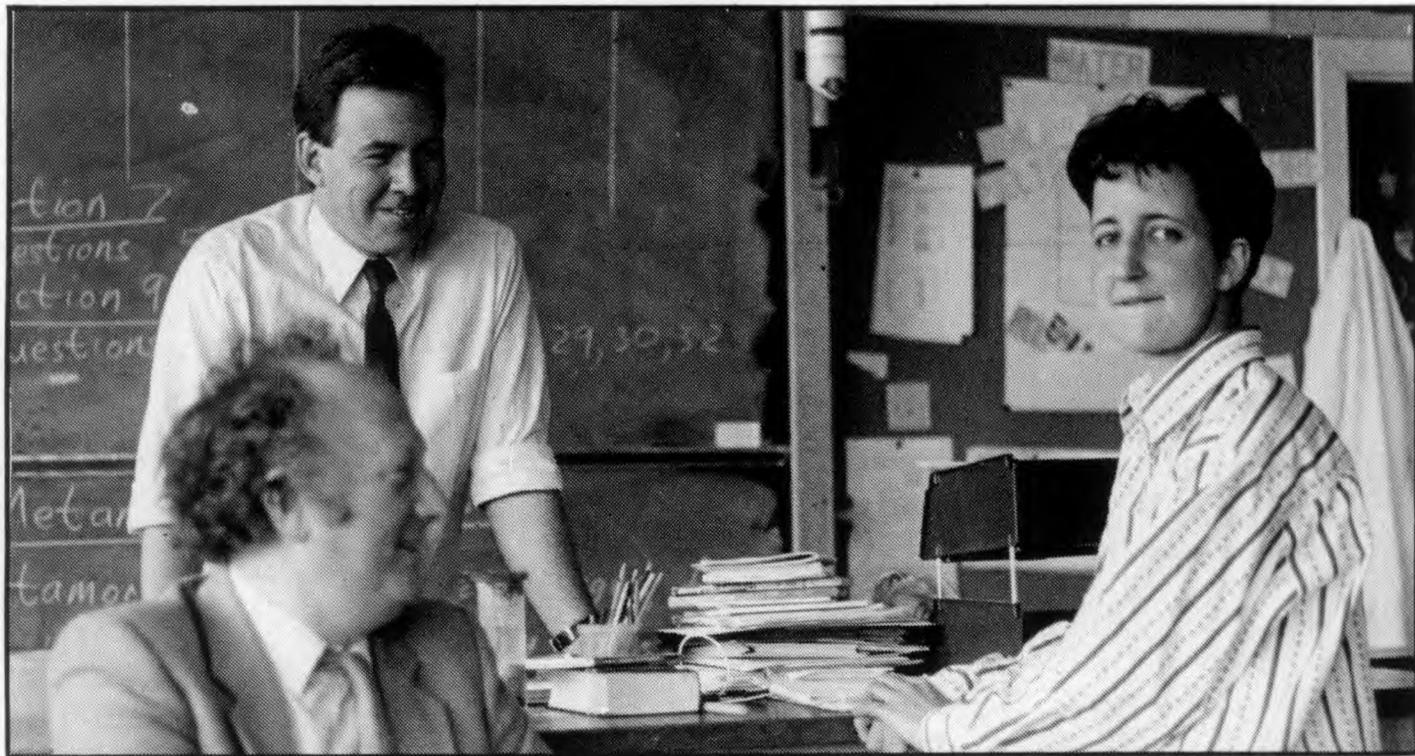
All the creative writing students recline
on the courthouse lawn and play the lute.
Wherever they go, they form a big circle.

Needless to say, I am the mayor.
I live in the white colonial at Maple and Main.
I rarely leave the house. The car deflates
in the driveway. Vines twirl around the porch swing.

Once in a while a student knocks on the door
with a term paper fifteen years late
or a question about Yeats or double spacing.
And sometimes one will appear in a windowpane
to watch me lecturing the wallpaper,
quizzing the chandelier, reprimanding the air.

Billy Collins

POWER IN SCHOOLS



NOBODY'S PUSHOVER

Talking to a threesome of E.I.S. members at a lunchtime in Glasgow's Smithycroft Secondary School, you quickly get an impression of the ever moving world they occupy. In the 20 years Ian McCalman's been in the business, the school leaving age has been raised; the whole certification scheme has been altered and is still changing with the introduction of Standard Grade. The belt's been abolished. Numerous bitter wages and conditions campaigns have been fought, and reams of educational reviews and reports have been digested.

In between bites of salad sandwich, Ian – a learning support teacher (another change!) – explained that the E.I.S. has always had to twin track. “We’re a trade union, and we’ve got to take to do with members interests. At the same time, we’ve got to take a lead with education.”

Even more so now it seems, as the E.I.S. newspaper, the **Scottish Educational Journal** reports on internal conferences on educational matters. The tone now, much to the unconcealed glee of Scottish Office Ministers, is ‘pro-active’.

“Many schools have been alienating institutions, especially to working class parents. Teachers would concede this,” says Ian who’s currently chair of the Glasgow E.I.S. Local Association’s 6500 members. “We’ve

got to continue our efforts to take our message out to parents, and to encourage their involvement.”

School Boards though, are not about that, according to his Modern Studies and Economics colleague, Charlie Dorward. “School Boards will take away our professionalism – inexperienced adults will be introduced to the running of schools and the

“Many schools have been alienating institutions, especially to working class parents”

curriculum.” They contemplate a worst case scenario of a handful of whimsical but motivated parents running a school.

Just as this starts to sound defensive, Charlie explains that in his view, the political motive for introducing School Boards has nothing to do with parental involvement. “It’s to do with taking education out of local authority control.”

Ann Wilson, who at 6 years in teaching Chemistry and Science, is a relative newcomer (only 13% of Scottish teachers are under age 30) shares her colleagues’ perceptions of parents’ wishes. Claiming up to 60% attendance at parents’ evenings, she feels parents are very interested in things

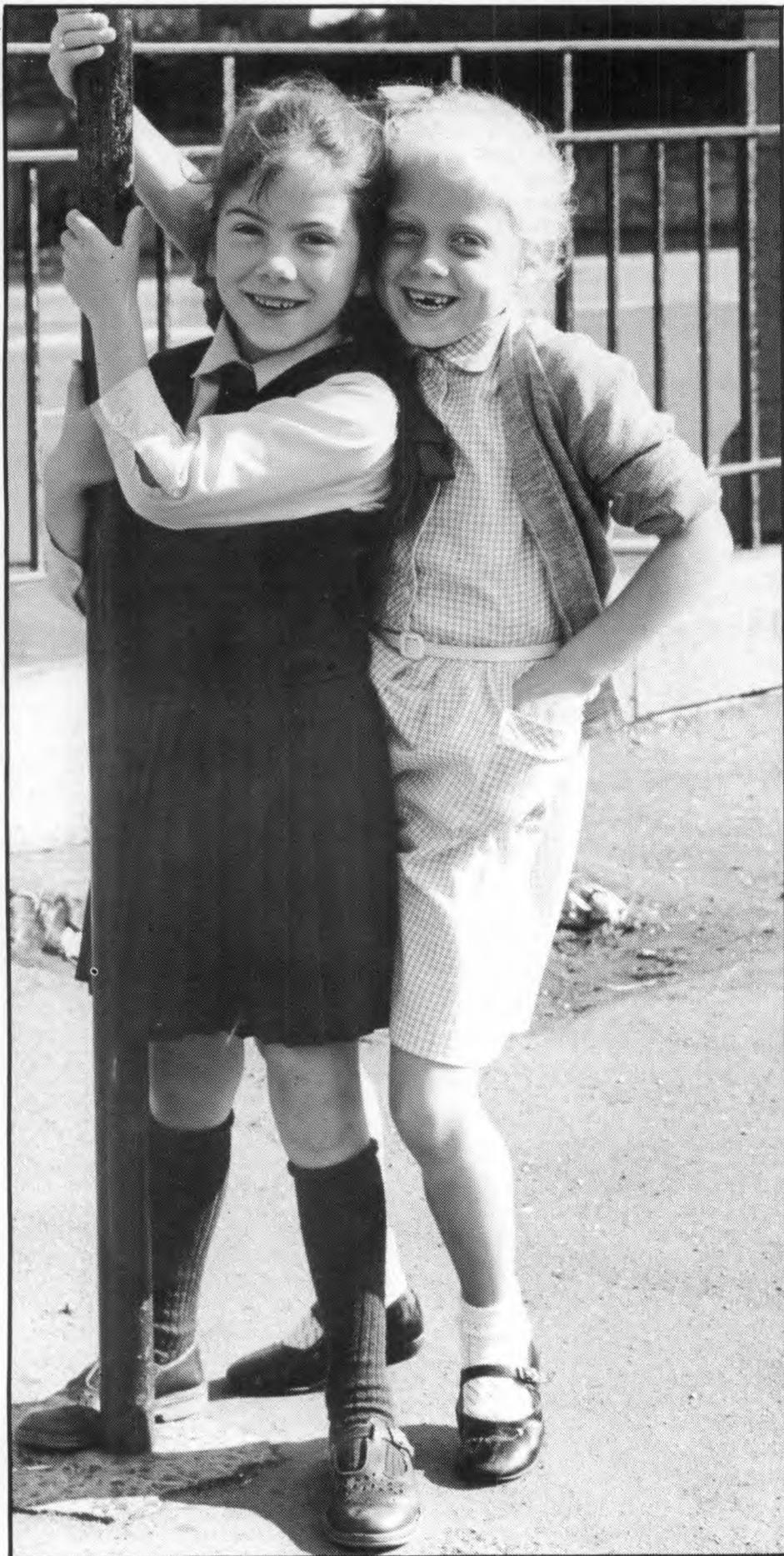
like subject choice, and in any information to do with their own child’s schooling. “But most are not interested in running the school.”

Not just because the clock’s moving inexorably forward to afternoon classes, – kids burst unannounced into the room with minutes to go – the pressures, real or imagined, are evident.

Parents’ desire for discipline and dress standards, the media’s “making a big thing,” in Charlie’s view, “out of delinquency and indiscipline in society – and seeing teachers as in some way responsible”. The government’s unrelenting drive for ‘standards’. Scottish Labour controlled local authorities are not unanimously seen as friends either. “The majority of Labour councillors,” Charlie points out, “must have been disenchanting pupils,” because at some level, he feels, they are anti-teacher.

Watches are looked at, a bell rings, and we all have to move. Last words deny low morale. At one level teachers are more at one with the job than in other recent times; on another level, the impression is that many more are reaching for opportunities of early retirement. “The important thing for the government to hear,” says the union man in Ian McCalman, holding eye contact, “is that the teachers are nobody’s pushover.”

Derek Rodger



PARENTS IN THE MARKET

With the accent on market values and parental choice, **Graham Atherton** wonders if, under the coming schools legislation, parents will be genuinely powerful . . . or just piggies in the middle.

In ways that would have been inconceivable even a decade ago, parents of school age children are now courted by politicians, local authorities, and teachers' leaders. For with school boards due to be up and running by October this year, and 'opted out' self governing schools likely to follow in their wake, parents now find themselves centrestage in the education debate.

The political right has long sought to give parents more influence over schools. The cherished marketplace model, in the belief

POWER IN SCHOOLS

▶ that parents ultimately know what is best for their child, has long advocated transfer of educational purchasing power from education bureaucrats and paternalistic local authorities to parents' pockets.

The 'parents' charter' legislation of 1981, you could say, began this process in Scotland by loosening the rigid 'zoning' of schools by geographic catchment area, operated by the local authorities. Although Scottish Office figures show that only a very small proportion of parents (5%) have been taking advantage of this, the vast majority report sending their child to the school of their choice.

Arguably though, the 'parents charter', and the accompanying assisted places scheme – opening up independent school places to low income families through grants – did not go very far in giving parents much power or influence over the actual running of schools. The schools, with few exceptions, have been under little more pressure than before to 'market' themselves.

The fall in the child population in the 1980s, and the policies of the education authorities to rearrange limited resources to respond to this, have had a far greater impact on which schools stay open and which close down.

It is the Schools Boards (Scotland) Act of 1988 which has brought the issue of parental control to the top of the agenda. School boards, on which parent members will be in a voting majority, can call the headteacher to account by demanding reports on curricular, financial, and other matters, and are to be responsible for approving 'capitation' budgets – the amount spent per head on books and materials.

The boards will also have responsibilities for promoting home-school links – getting parents and teachers to talk to each other. The school board legislation nevertheless falls short of giving parents full control over the running of the school. Although school boards can secure additional delegated powers from the education authority, these powers stop short of giving boards control over the curriculum, assessment, staff appointments, capital finances and other matters.

However, enter the Self Governing Schools (Scotland) Bill, now working its way through parliament. This proposed piece of legislation, whereby schools in Scotland (notwithstanding earlier election pledges to the contrary) are to be allowed to 'opt out' of local authority control, has really brought the issue of parent power to a head. Just as in schools in England and Wales, if a simple voting majority of parents and the Secretary of State agree, a school will be run under the full control of a parent-dominated board of management.

But to claim that the changes, to be brought about by school boards and through self-governing schools, will put parents in the driving seat of educational reform would be simplistic. The planned new face of Scottish education raises, largely as yet unanswered, questions about how things will work in the interest of some, to the detriment of less articulate and less organised others. For this reason, those on the left, while perhaps belatedly berating municipaldom for its paternalism, is championing the cause of local authority provided education, which it claims best promotes the interests of all parents in the wider community. While supporting more parental involvement, the left argues that local authority administration is needed to prevent the possibility of narrower sectional interests getting the upper hand as a result of schools opting out.

Another claim is that these changes will peripheralise power by dissipating it among a loose assortment of school boards, which will be drawn into a competitive vying for local authority resources. At the same time, the changes will centralise power, by transferring the source of funds of opted out schools from the town hall to New St. Andrew's House. One view is that the government has succeeded in hijacking the political vocabulary of the left, through democratic sounding phrases like 'community control' and 'self government' of schools, to disguise both the marginalising and centralising of real power.

It could be though, by way of an alternative prediction, that school boards and self

"to claim that the changes will put parents in the driving seat of educational reform would be simplistic."

governing schools just might raise the political awareness of larger numbers of parents. Far from making do with the widely predicted and traditional fund raising efforts, as parents come face to face with the hard spending decisions, it just could be that schools might be hammering at the door of government demanding more.

And it could be that the new changes might bring about a power shift of fairly major dimensions – from a bureaucratic to a consumerist control of education. To pre-empt opting out, education authorities could find themselves responding to parents as 'clients' of educational services. They could also come under pressure to 'market' their advisory, psychological, and central support services to opted out schools. If it is

seen to break down the bureaucratic structures that are believed in some quarters to have impeded self determination, opting out could well gain momentum.

Traditionally, parents following a market place model have exercised their free choice, if they could afford to, by sending their children to a fee-paying school. Now opting out might take this a stage further by not only overcoming the barriers fee-paying education represents, but also by giving parents control over the educational and financial management of schools.

This represents a level of power which parents could never have hoped to enjoy in the private or public sectors, where it has been a question of take-it-or-leave-it as parents shop around for suitable schools. An opted out school comes closest to a school which a determined enough group of parents can tailor with their own cloth.

At least two major questions remain, however. Will the moves towards a national curriculum and assessment framework applying to education authority schools put a brake on the educational options open to self-governing schools? Secretary for Education, Kenneth Baker has already indicated that even the more autonomous city technology colleges south of the border will have to regard the national curriculum to attract grant aid. If the Scottish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, were to follow suit with opted out schools and city technology academies, this would surely force one to re-evaluate government rhetoric for an education system market led by its consumers.

A second and not unrelated question is still begging an answer. Even if self governing schools are allowed to follow their own educational routes, will this really bring about the level of diversity said to be lacking in present public sector education? Will self government have a special attraction for parents who like the idea of schools, as with certain independent or progressive initiatives, developing their own ethos or identity? Could it be that as far as segregated schooling goes, schools will separate along religious or ethnic lines? Or will opted out schools, in the main, model themselves on 'mainstream' independent schools, to give pupils a vocationally advantageous start in the race for academic and occupational rewards?

At central government level, the thrust of educational policy is towards raising standards in the belief that this will enhance Britain's competitive position in world markets. But now that they are about to have the opportunity to decide how they want schools to be run, parents will have to ask themselves how far they see the all-round development of their children fitting in with the model of schools servicing a modern market economy. ■



The Springthorpe Family

EDUCATING PEOPLE

Phil and Val Springthorpe, from their mid-Argyll home, have 'opted out' of local authority education in perhaps the most dramatic way possible. They have never sent their children to school at all.

"It's something we decided to do from the time Cameron was little," Val told *Scottish Child*. "Talking to other parents, and to the teachers we knew, our concerns about schools became deeper. We worried about the aggression that our friends had reported on their children starting school. We are doubtful as well, about how schools can cater for individuals."

Schoolroom for Cameron(12), Rory(8), and even little Bonny(3), is the living room of the family home. Not that learning is confined to the house. The day before, Rory had been with his dad on a trip to Glasgow. Phil Springthorpe is a freelance photographer – "we just about make a living" – and he often takes the kids on assignments.

"We believe in treating the children as people, just like adults in some ways. Schools, because of their very nature, really aren't very good at that. Kids' whole perspective on adults becomes affected."

It's very important, according to Phil Springthorpe, to start from where the child is at. "But at the very stage when youngsters are in the throws of puberty, they've got to choose subjects for academic study. At the point where the possibilities should be opening up, school closes them down." "Schools create an artificial environment, and kids are herded by age into classes – not much to do with their individual learning; more because of fitting in with the system." He quotes a senior Strathclyde education official's reply on the aims of primary schooling – literacy, numeracy, and anything else is a bonus! – as a terrible indictment, and waste. The Springthorpes find the local authority's attitude to their home teaching policy benignly accepting, and even helpful.

"The primary advisor brings books and materials when required," said Val. "And we use the education resource centre in Lochgilphead to borrow books and equipment and things. Most parents," she feels, "don't even know they can do that."

They are sensitive to the children's needs, that they as parents can't meet. Rory goes to country dancing classes, and accordian. Cameron has a violin teacher and had a

tutor for French, as well as having attended navigation night classes in Oban with his dad. Cameron has also plans this summer to take part in an educational trip, which involves sailing with a group to Ireland, Spain and France. He is raising the money by applying to educational trusts himself.

"This is a copy of the covering letter applying for the course," he began explaining with confidence. He did say that he had friends locally, but the kids at the local primary school teased him a bit.

"They might not thank us for this when they grow up," reflected his dad, "but you can only do what you feel is right yourself."

"And it's not something," interrupted mum, "that everyone would want to do. It's a matter of your priorities." The subject of school boards and self-governing schools received a cool response. "It's not just a question of tinkering with the edges of the school system," Phil said. "What's needed is a radical review of what schools are for – systems or people?"

"Education," in his view, quoting Wilde, "is what you've got, when you've forgotten everything you ever learned." ■



CHILDHOOD & NATIONHOOD

"... Nasty dirty little things, little girls are. Glad I never was one."

"Oh, but surely you must have been a little girl once, Headmistress. Surely you were."

"Not for long anyway," Miss Trunchbull barked, grinning. "I became a woman very quickly."

Just like authoritarian propaganda merchants, and power brokers everywhere, the boorishly autocratic Miss Trunchbull in Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, to suit her power position in the present, has to deny and alter the past. No matter how absurd the claim – Trunchbull's that she was not a child for long – it has to be believed and bolstered, lest the regime at Crunchem Hall should falter.

Contrived, caricatured, and comic book style it may be, the creator of the Trunchbull regime has written trenchantly elsewhere of being himself condemned to an English public school education, and of its irredeemable class bias.

For the joke that is *Matilda*, as all jokes do, contains a number of truths about real-life experience. Not the least of these is the connection between social and political systems and the ways that people relate to each other within them. And high in importance among the form of social relationships – a theme underlying the existence of *Scottish Child* – is the way the young are socialised.

Socialised with how much of a sense of worth, of possibility, and of hope, depends on a number of things. Our history, traditions, cultural and educational values, our religious, philosophical and moral precepts, and our form of government – all set the stage for the growing mind.

In recent months, *Scottish Child* has tried to examine a number of the influences on the rising generation. Our issue on Poverty Politics sought to explore how the experience of poverty for many Scottish families

"We have our personal beginnings, our shared history."

conditions their lives. In the 'thriving enterprise culture', the way that people, including children, are regarded as mere commodities; the perceptions of power encouraged within a state with a prominent monarchy; control of the mass media by multi-national conglomerates – all have been subject to attention in these pages in recent months.

Of course, there are traditions even in the ways that these matters can be looked at. It is important, we feel, not to be hidebound in our discussions by predetermined ways of thinking. Certainly it is a relief that the divide between individual and social determinants of human consciousness is beginning, even in the darkest corners, to be crumbling. It is much more demanding, and a

good deal more exciting, to regard the relation between the individual and the environment as an ever-moving dynamic.

Take the notion of self-determination, for example. Few beyond the most blinkered career politicians would seriously argue that some kind of successful resolution to the efforts of the Constitutional Convention to set up a measure of self-government in Scotland would make us all, at a stroke, self-determined. In spite of the denials of the Miss Trunchbolls of this world, we have our personal beginnings, our shared history. If in Scotland, in Christopher Smout's words, we continue telling the young, through our own actions and attitudes, to "fear what is new, believe the difficult to be impossible, draw back from responsibility, and afford established authority and tradition an exaggerated respect", – then nothing will have really changed.

Constitutional change, without a commensurate growth in the way we perceive the world will not amount to much.

To take the discussion of this dynamic further, *Scottish Child* is planning a series of events. Bringing people together to tackle the complexities of childhood and nationhood will develop the necessary task of addressing the human implications of possible structural change. Should the current manoeuvrings in the political arena (perish the thought!) come to nothing, then such work might even enhance our capacity, individually and collectively, to manage it better in the future. ■

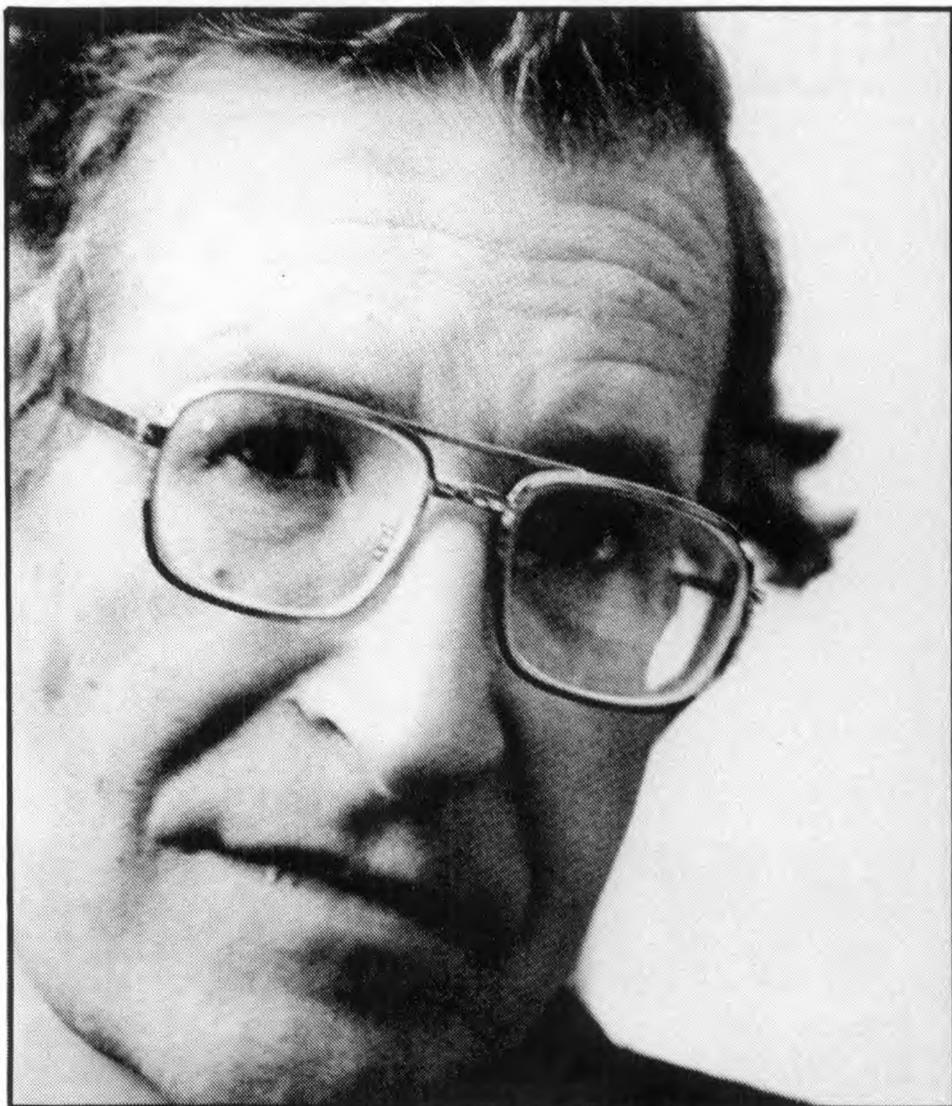
Noam Chomsky in Glasgow

The American academic and critic, Noam Chomsky, will visit Glasgow next January to give an address as part of **Scottish Child's** Childhood and Nationhood series of events.

Noam Chomsky is Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is widely regarded as America's leading radical intellectual (see adjacent Profile). He has agreed to give an address on the theme of **Self determination – a life task and a political task**. Having written and lectured extensively on the implications of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, he will bring, according to **Scottish Child** editor, Derek Rodger, "a fresh perspective, and an international one to the current interest in Scottish life with notions of self-determination."

Chomsky comes with a wealth of observation of the efforts of peoples around the globe to achieve autonomy and self-determination – and the consequences of crossing the interests of bigger and super-power neighbours.

This event, which will take place at a venue in Glasgow on January 10th next year, is likely to attract a good deal of interest from many sectors, both north and south of the border. Further details will be announced in the next issue, and through publicity. ■



Noam Chomsky

Profile – Noam Chomsky

To confront a mind that radically alters our perception of the world is one of life's unsettling yet liberating experiences. So begins editor, James Peck's introduction to **The Chomsky Reader** – a collection of some of Noam Chomsky's most prominent writings, published in Britain last year. The range of interest is formidable. Questions of human intelligence, creativity, the nature of power and terrorism, the role of the U.S. in Vietnam and in Central America today, Chomsky writes with a critical edge and an independence of mind that is not rivalled by many.

Certainly, although himself a member of the academic community – he holds professorship at the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at Massachusetts Institute of Technology – it does not tie him to fall in line with the intellectual establishment. On the contrary.

"What you often find," Chomsky was quoted in a recent interview, "is that intellectuals are the most indoctrinated part of the population – they are the ideological managers, so they have to internalise the propaganda. They have to believe it." His latest book, **The Manufacturing of Consent** attends to the way power, and belief in that power, is won by the most powerful nation on earth.

America's leading dissident – as at least one reviewer has described Chomsky – strikes at the heart of the self-image of the United States establishment view, that America is a benign giant with the interests of freedom at heart. The reality in Chomsky's terms is closer to the position that America, at home and abroad, acts in the interests of its ruling mega-corporation and military elite, and will not stop at subterfuge and force. The consequences reverberate throughout the world. Not surprisingly Chomsky himself has his critics. "Most American commentators stopped debating US foreign policy with Chomsky long ago; answer not the fool according to his folly lest thou be like unto him," began a debate article by John Taft in an issue of **The Listener** this Spring.

Born in 1928, Chomsky grew up in Philadelphia, the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. The young Noam learned Hebrew and from an early age attended a progressive school. He claims it never occurred to him until he went to high school that he was a 'good student' who would get straight 'A's'. Schools, he feels, could be run quite differently, but that a society based on authoritarian hierarchic institutions would not tolerate a creative education for very long.

Having developed an interest in linguistics, by 1957 he had published **Syntactic Structures**, a book that revolutionised the subject. Exploring the roots of human knowledge through language led his mind to politics, where he has contributed ideas through a prolific output of papers, lectures and books ever since. Ever critical of the nature of power in his own context, of the obfuscating role of the media and other professional ideologists, Chomsky is nonetheless a believer in the "commonsense capacities of people". In the modern world, according to Chomsky, it's not that people do not use their commonsense and intellectual skills. They do, but in areas that have no meaning . . . "as a displacement from the serious problems which one cannot influence and affect because the power happens to lie elsewhere."

He has studied the efforts of the peoples of South East Asia, the Middle East and in Central America to strive for autonomy and self-determination. Should they conflict even indirectly with 'America's fifth freedom' – the right to protect its own economic interests – then the reprisals, can be summary and ruthless.

It is in the task of changing the balance of power for the mass of people that Noam Chomsky is determinedly, and to the chagrin of his critics, rationally engaged. ■

WOUNDED PLACES

The commission was the way we cope with loss in our society. But because all other losses are of a secondary order of intensity and meaning, the only way that I can begin to look at it, is to write about the loss of our son, Jonathan.

Mark Ogle

On Friday November 8th, 1985, Jonathan died, suddenly and inexplicably, aged 8 weeks. It was a 'cot death'; the medical term for medical incomprehension is S.I.D.S. – sudden infant death syndrome. He was, to all appearances, thriving. On the last morning of his life he had a very slight, almost unnoticeable snuffle at the back of his nose. At 1.00 p.m. Deborah gave him a bath, and he went to sleep after it. At 3.30 p.m., when she went to check him, he was dead, face down in his cot. I remember the weather well that day. It was very soft and mild and damp. I had taken some schoolchildren on an outing to a glass-making factory. It was the end of the week. Now, looking back at my peaceful, contented amble home across the road from the school where I worked, it seems like another person, or me in another life, walking through the last moments of my ignorance, thinking "Thank God it's

Friday. I'll have time to get to know my son a little more this week-end."

When I arrived at the hospital Deborah was sitting alone in a room holding him. I was told at the door that he was dead. We sat for a long time together, the three of us in that room. We would have sat there all night, refusing to relinquish him. Though his face was pale, he did not look dead. Eventually we were helped to leave the hospital by the sister, and we left him there. I later realised, and realise again now, just how important that time spent holding him and saying goodbye was.

The distance from the hospital to our house is about half a mile, but the walk was the longest and most difficult I had ever taken. It was dark now. I remember crying over and over again, "I can't understand this, I can't understand this!" Deborah's

legs kept buckling; she just wanted to lie down on the pavement and not get up. Some friends passed by in the distance in their car with their children. They all waved cheerfully to us across an abyss of unawareness, thinking we were just out for a stroll.

We reached home. Granny, and Deborah's daughters, Rachel and Miriam, were there. We sat in shock, hardly able to speak, or to move, or to know what to do next. There was breast milk expressed into a feeding bottle, which I poured away and washed down the sink. There were baby clothes, nappies, sleeping suits lying around the house. The doctor came and could do nothing except leave the name of an undertaker. He also left a prescription that would dry up Deborah's breast milk. We went to the late night chemist, returned and lay down together on the bed. The night passed half-sleeping, half-waking, holding each other in agony, the worst night of both our lives. There was no possibility of relief, no way to shift the intensity of the pain, or make it more bearable.

In the week between his death and his funeral there were many things to do, and it seemed important to us both to manage to do them, to confirm that we could continue. Perhaps the shock had an anaesthetic effect that enabled us to function even though profoundly damaged.



There was also an immediate exhaustion, an almost overpowering fatigue, a drag towards total inertia which we struggled to resist. We needed each other in a desperate sort of way that meant we were terrified of being apart, and did everything together; going to the hospital, hearing the results of the post-mortem that explained nothing, making the funeral arrangements. It was very important to remember him, to talk about him, to insist to ourselves that he had lived, had been physically here with us, and so we attempted to recall every detail, and I found that writing helped me.

November 10th 1985 "I loved to see him surface from sleep, snuffly and red, and his tiny mouth open in a huge yawn. When he was fully awake and looking all round him, his head and eyes were never stopping until suddenly he would really see something, like the plant in the kitchen, and then he would stop and gaze and gaze at it until he seemed almost to consume it. I never knew, before him, how ceaselessly an infant squirms and snorts and makes all sorts of noises. Sometimes, because he didn't like his cot, he lay between us in the bed and stared up at us in turn. I could see what a lovely boy he would have become; he had a stillness and calm about him, as well as energy and vigour. The last time I held him properly, he was really trying to stand up, using his legs and pushing himself upright. I can see his face now as I

write two days after his death. I can see how he looked when he had his bath on the kitchen table, and we washed his hair, and the hair was back from his forehead, and he looked like a young man scrubbed and washed and combed for a party. And I remember the wonder we felt as we looked at his body, and how small he was when he first came home; so small my hand completely covered his back."

**"Material values were
pegged
back to their proper level of
unimportance."**

And nature for me was a source of comfort, a healing power that began its work even before he was buried.

November 11th 1985 "First snow of the year; bitterly cold. He is gone and will never know the seasons. October he knew, the most beautiful month for some years, dry and gold and crisp and shining, the shape of leaves against the sky."

As I look back now at the week between his death and his funeral it remains in my mind as a state of extreme pain so intense that I cannot really recall it; a time when I felt so wounded that the affirmation that I

could deal with anything successfully was a vital achievement. Yet also I had to become aware of some of the rituals of loss. I found the hushed tones, the euphemisms, the whole discreetly solemn Dickensian atmosphere of the undertaker's office, complete with tinted glass, dark green house plants, and embossed gothic letter headings, both intensely annoying and blackly humorous. As anger started to surface, I wanted plain words like 'dead', 'buried', 'digging', 'grave'. Instead I heard soft intonations, 'deceased', 'passed away', 'inter', 'opening the ground', 'the lair'.

The main significance of the funeral I found, as one who does not have a clear and certain view of an afterlife was the sense of completion and release that it gave to me still left living here. I walked to a hole in the ground. I saw the small white coffin lowered into it. I read some words over the grave. Deborah and I said goodbye again finally, and then, both physically and symbolically we had to turn away from death, walk away from the grave, and walk back towards our own lives.

I wrote at the time that I felt "as though the current of my life could now start to flow, sluggishly at first, and with many stagnant pauses, back towards life itself." I remember feeling that I was far down an enormous ravine; my dreams were of immensely difficult journeys. But at least I knew I had



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to climb out, and that this task was literally a life and death struggle. I had discovered and experienced a definition of hell; "a state of intolerable agonised consciousness suffered without any possibility of alleviation," but wrote straight afterwards, 11 days after his death on November 19th 1985.

"But if we live, we are bound to change, to struggle painfully towards life again, which requires full attention, full consciousness, and the death pull is strong, present every moment, requiring to be overcome. I never knew before, how hard it is to live, nor how valuable. Any moment of gladness or moment of wonder, or moment of giving, or moment of delight in the beauty of the world that I can snatch from this pain and inertia is more precious and healing than any material gift, than any drug to my mind.

"I am recalling my feelings close to the time of his death so frequently because it seems to me vital to state what I experienced, and what I discovered, in as raw and simple a way as possible, and to resist too easy explanation or allocation of significance."

November 23rd 1985 "Anger, tiredness, emptiness. I am wandering the house because I cannot sit still with myself yet. The crowds in Princes Street make me want to walk fast and silently towards the hills. Grief is no simple matter of tears and exhortations. It is like casting a rope after a ship that has sailed, and watching it fall slackly into the water, and sink uselessly towards me again. And time and again the same gesture, the same forsaken cry; and each time the gesture is smaller, the ship is further away."

November 24th 1985 "I want to see him again so much that I can understand more why people find it necessary to believe in an afterlife. I think I must just leave the question open, because I don't know. . . . I know that the white coffin, the dark earth, his cold decaying body, are limited realities, and that our tears, our anger, our impotence are limited responses. What is not limited is the effect of his life and death upon us, for we are changed by our experience of him, and by our experience of his loss. This change has done and will affect others, and these sequences of change do not have any boundary, though it becomes progressively more difficult to define them in any logical way."

December 3rd 1985 "The days go by and we struggle to maintain our foothold and resist despair, and learn from our pain. The lesson, if there is one, is in the experience and not in any formulation of words."

December 5th "Odd moments he comes back to me, his eyes moving over the white ceiling when he lay quiet after I'd changed his nappy. I find the sturdy little forward rush of toddlers on the pavement painful and yet I want to look. I don't have the same steady ache of physical loss that Deborah feels. I feel more a sombre bleak loneliness, as though the future is a grey soft wall that I must continue to walk into. I'm conscious that I'm travelling on, but when I stop the mist is still all around. I sometimes imagine my own death, and meeting Jonathan again, as though he will travel towards life as I leave it, and we will cross and recognise. I'm not sure what happens to the wound as time

passes. The first wrenching shock is passing. The sadness has no analogy. It is faintly like having to store away presents in a cupboard because there is no one to give them to. And final because these gifts, for this child, must be forever folded away. There may be another child, and then there will be similar gifts, but not the same, because I will not be the same, and what I can give will have changed."

That is the last entry in the journal that I kept immediately after his death. In the weeks and months that followed I found that his loss caused a profound re-ordering of my own priorities. If I had been given the choice, I knew that I would rather be hundreds of thousands of pounds in debt, homeless, in rags, and hold him in my arms. Material values were, in that sense, pegged back to their proper level of unimportance. I discovered that grief, unlike the static, black robed, solemn stereotype I had imagined, was a time of immense turbulence and instability, and that the hardest task was not to run away from my feelings. And yet to keep my balance.

I went back to work very soon after Jonathan died. Looking back, I'm tempted to think that this was a mistake, but at the time it was undoubtedly what I wanted to do. The sudden, untimely, inexplicable death

"how hard to be honest about a painful experience when there is such a natural urge to avoid pain"

of a child is a particularly violent outrage, a particularly intense trauma. We were unprepared. We had no defence. One of the main effects of the trauma was to make everything seem provisional, chancy, uncertain. It quite literally threatened to destroy the basic trust that enables us to function, the basic trust that when we go to sleep, we are going to wake up; the trust that when we go out to the shops, we are going to come back. I could no longer trust appearances, because appearances had, in the most fundamental way, betrayed me.

It was as if I had been walking along a level road, my foot had been raised to take the next step, and suddenly the ground had vanished, and I was falling and did not know where the bottom was. Going back to work was a way, for me, of starting to contribute to the restitution of order and certainty.

I also discovered how various are people's reaction to the death of a baby. There was the lady with her infant in the pushchair who crossed over to the other side of the street whenever she saw us. Sometimes I felt that our misfortune had left us jinxed. I was in the grip of paranoia, sure that some malevolent force was out to destroy me and my family.

And yet also there was the brain damaged, almost uncontrollable boy in my foundation English class who came up to me in the street and clasped my arm tightly, saying nothing, with tears in his eyes.

I learnt that people give what they can, and I found that it was soon important to talk to people who had experienced similar bereavement. Also it was vital to be with people who could listen – who knew how to listen and help me through the essential process of accepting my pain and anger before being able to move on from it. One thing I found particularly hurtful in a secondary sense was the lack of weight given to a man's grief as a parent in our society. It was assumed that although we were both having a difficult time, Deborah, as a woman and a mother must be the one who was really suffering. A few months afterwards I would meet people at work or in the street who would say with the most sincere kindness, "Hello Mark, how's Deborah coping these days?" I very much resented this typecasting of men as somehow on the periphery of emotional life.

Looking back now, in 1989, I know that both my knowledge of my strength, and my knowledge of my frailty spring directly from the experience of his loss. I know now that my sanity, like any human being's, is not a limitless resource. I have to live always with a sense of damage and impairment, and yet paradoxically I feel larger, stronger, more fully sane than before his death.

We now have another child and the fear of loss is always present to me, an everyday companion, whereas before, I never really thought about it. Previously I had conveniently thought of death as an unpleasant event on the distant horizon of life that we moved slowly towards. I now know that it is far more closely interwoven with life than I had realised.

Yet I would say that the drawing of morals, or the learning of lessons is perhaps one of the most dangerously tempting consolations for loss. I was – I am – very suspicious of neat lessons in neat pigeonholes. There is no doubt though that some of the realities of being human were made brutally plain to me by Jonathan's death. How brief our lives are and how important it is not to waste time. How theoretic our knowledge of suffering is until we experience it, and then how difficult it is to truly communicate, how hard to be honest about a painful experience when there is such a natural urge to avoid pain. How much we really need other people; how little we really need things.

The words I write now feel a long way from how I felt then, and this seems right. To begin with I resented the onward momentum of time and my own helpless movement with it. I wanted to cling to his vanished life. I was frustrated by the frailty of memory, and yet I also welcomed time's healing. His loss will always be with Deborah and I. We have not 'got over it'. This article has not been easy to write because it is itself part of the continuing experience of loss. And my words both then and now are doing what I think we all do with loss, attempting some partially successful alchemy upon it. Finally though, it sits there inside us, untransmutably, a raw wounded place beyond all words and explanations that we just have to live with. ■



COPING AND CARING

What determines whether a young child develops well or poorly? In a recent address to Children's Panel members, **Fred Stone** challenges us to look at just what's involved.

Sometimes you get the feeling that it's the poets and novelists that are better at telling us about human affairs than the research workers. One of the hardest lessons I remember learning when confronted with young children was not to be too impressed with what the books have to say about 'normal averages' of development.

Research workers, for example, don't

like to talk about things like love. It's not objective enough. So they talk about 'affectional contact'.

But in looking at the basic needs of a young child in the interests of healthy development, you would need to consider the need for **affection**, and the need for **security**.

It is difficult to define just what we mean when talking about giving a child a sense of security, but a first aspect of it could be a

sense of belonging. Secure children have a clear sense of belonging to a part of something larger than themselves which, if they are fortunate, is a family. And the family (although the child can take a long time before becoming aware of this), belongs to a part of the community, which in turn is part of something larger.

Some of the most marked disruptions of belonging are the result of professional agencies' work with placements which are not very cleverly achieved. In such circumstances, the child never has a chance to belong anywhere. Kellmer Pringle, in her little book, **The Needs of Children**, points out that even for these children it is possible to establish the presence of a continuing figure, an 'aunt', or an 'uncle', someone who keeps contact. Social workers are sometimes asked to take on this role and may suffer enormous stress when promoted or moved, when they know they are abandoning the child's need for a sense of belonging.

A second aspect of this need for security could be how to encourage a child's **feeling of worth.** An aspect of severe emotional deprivation that one almost invariably encounters is that such children have **low self esteem.** They find it hard to believe that they are inherently worthwhile, that they matter to anyone else.

Self-depreciation is how we describe the feelings of children who deep-down feel they are not really worth anything, are not likely to achieve anything, although they may very well put on a facade to hide this feeling. Very useful when you are getting to know a child is to ask what they are really good at. Most ordinary children, once you have established rapport with them will tell you. All children who are developing well, have an innate sense of being good at something. It may be something amusing, insignificant, but they think it's good. And of course, you commend them. Then there is the other child who looks at you blankly and says, 'I don't know.' And doesn't know!

Of course, that raises other questions. How do we give children a sense of worth? How does it happen? I don't think we quite know the answer to that one. It does have something to do with the child identifying with aspects of the grownups who looks after him. It has something to do even with the non-verbal cues – the way in which we respond to children, but not in words.

Children know perfectly well what aspects of their behaviour or their achievements or their schoolwork parents are really thrilled about, though they may never mention it. 'Because we wouldn't want to make them swell-headed,' they say to each other. The child knows perfectly well that father is absolutely delighted if she's playing with Lego. Or the child goes to the bookshelf and takes books down to read – the mother's fond little smile. And you think they don't see it?

The fundamental sense of worth though, comes from something much deeper than an activity or achievement – just being accepted and loved for what they are and not for what they do. Not for being beautiful or

handsome or clever or resourceful or good; just for being themselves. That is acceptance.

A third aspect of security is even more subtle, and that is a sense of **being a separate person**. We actually allow our children, by certain little messages that are hardly able to be observed, the fact that we recognise that each is special and different.

Some children are brought up by intellectually superior parents, who haven't got any intuitive sense, who think that all children should be reared exactly alike, that no distinctions should be made, no disparities, otherwise this will create envy, and so on.

It's all nonsense, of course. The sense of being separate means one is recognised as different and accepted with all the differences. Some children grow up into adults who have a persistent confusion about this. They never really acquire what we call a sense of clear identity.

So much for the needs of a normal healthy child. You would expect someone who's been a clinician to move onto abnormality, and I don't apologise because I think it is very important to consider what circumstances are harmful to a child's early development. I'm going to do this in a way which educationists tell me one should never do, by giving you some wrong answers to the question.

Because one keeps seeing them in newspaper articles and magazines, and hearing about them in little chats to parents, it's as well to deal directly with what I think are misguided explanations about what is significantly harmful to children.

Anxious parents Parents are meant to be anxious. It's one of their main functions. How can you have a protective role to a child that's at the mercy of its environment unless you are highly alert to danger? That means being anxious. Anxiety is not something abnormal. It's part and parcel of biological existence. It's there for the protection of the species and the individual. Frequently the term is used pejoratively, as in the phrase 'over-anxious mums'. Inappropriate anxiety is something else.

Working mothers There is no scientific evidence at all that working mothers create more problems in rearing of children than non-working mothers. In fact, the converse is more true. The woman who is housebound, but doesn't wish to be, creates an environment for the child which is unhealthy because her resentment spills over. She may try to hide it but it doesn't work very well.

The child's position in the family We've all read these articles. You must never be a middle child! Now of course there are attributes that belong to position in the family, some very interesting ones. Some of them are more statistical than psychological.

There's no doubt that eldest children (and I'm an eldest child), quite often, if you're not careful, may turn into supernumerary parents and become little prigs. Of course sometimes eldest children suffer in another way altogether, by being forced into posi-

tions of premature responsibility for which they are not ready. Then you get another kind of resentment building up.

I know that middle children often have a difficult time. Youngest children are said to be the best adjusted – the research findings though are not terribly convincing.

The birth of a sibling How often have we heard that the trouble started with the birth of a younger brother or sister? Just imagine the implications of that nationally! If we were to consider how the family handled the birth of the next child, something significant might emerge. But the actual event itself is hardly an explanation.

So much for the doubtful explanations. Among the more convincing reasons for damage to the early development of children, we would have to mention **persistent marital discord combined with indifference to children**. I would think this is one of the most dangerous situations. Notice the two elements. The parents become so absorbed in their own problems that the children become relatively neglected emotionally.

Apart from the obvious **cruelty, neglect and abuse**, I don't doubt at all that **multiple changing parent figures** are harmful to many children. But not to all children.

And that's the problem with some of this drawing up of general rules. Whenever you

“All children who are developing well have an innate sense of being good at something”

identify fairly confidently something you are sure is detrimental to children's development, you will find young adults, adolescents, friends who have been through just these experiences and have not become a wreck or a disturbed adult. They have survived. They are survivors.

We know very little about survivors, about the protective factors that allow some individuals to cope sufficiently well to be able to survive, even to be strengthened. But the casualty rate is amazingly consistent. It usually works out at something like 20% of children who experience the things we are talking about end up as major casualties. So what saved the other 80%? And can we predict which we are looking at? That's where it becomes very difficult.

Another convincing explanation for some children in the way of damaging experience is **separation from those they are most dependent on and most attached to**. Curiously, there is some evidence that many children can cope better with the death of a parent than the divorce of parents. Perhaps because death has a finality. In spite of the loss of many of the traditional religious and other social conventions about mourning and bereavement, society does have ways of coping with death, and children are part of that.

But divorce and separation? Here the child is seldom sure how permanent things are, or even if they're really happening. And people don't tell them.

But what is it precisely that goes wrong in these situations that might be damaging? What actually causes the damage? Some of these circumstances interfere with the protective role of adults. The children are less protected than they should be.

The children may lack stimuli. And children need stimulation as part of development. The child may be unsure about the limits which are set on behaviour – something that in old-fashioned terminology was called inconsistent discipline. We don't use words like that nowadays. We talk about poor limit setting. Some of these children are not neglected or abused. They are indulged children.

So what about the survivors? What are some of the things that make for a healthy development?

Certainly, having a good start in life helps. And that's not necessarily something to do with social status. I mean that the baby has had a first year of consistent affection and protective care by one person.

Supportive sibship can be an asset too. Many children who are trying to cope with unsupportive parenting are helped by the fact that the brother and sister group is sustained.

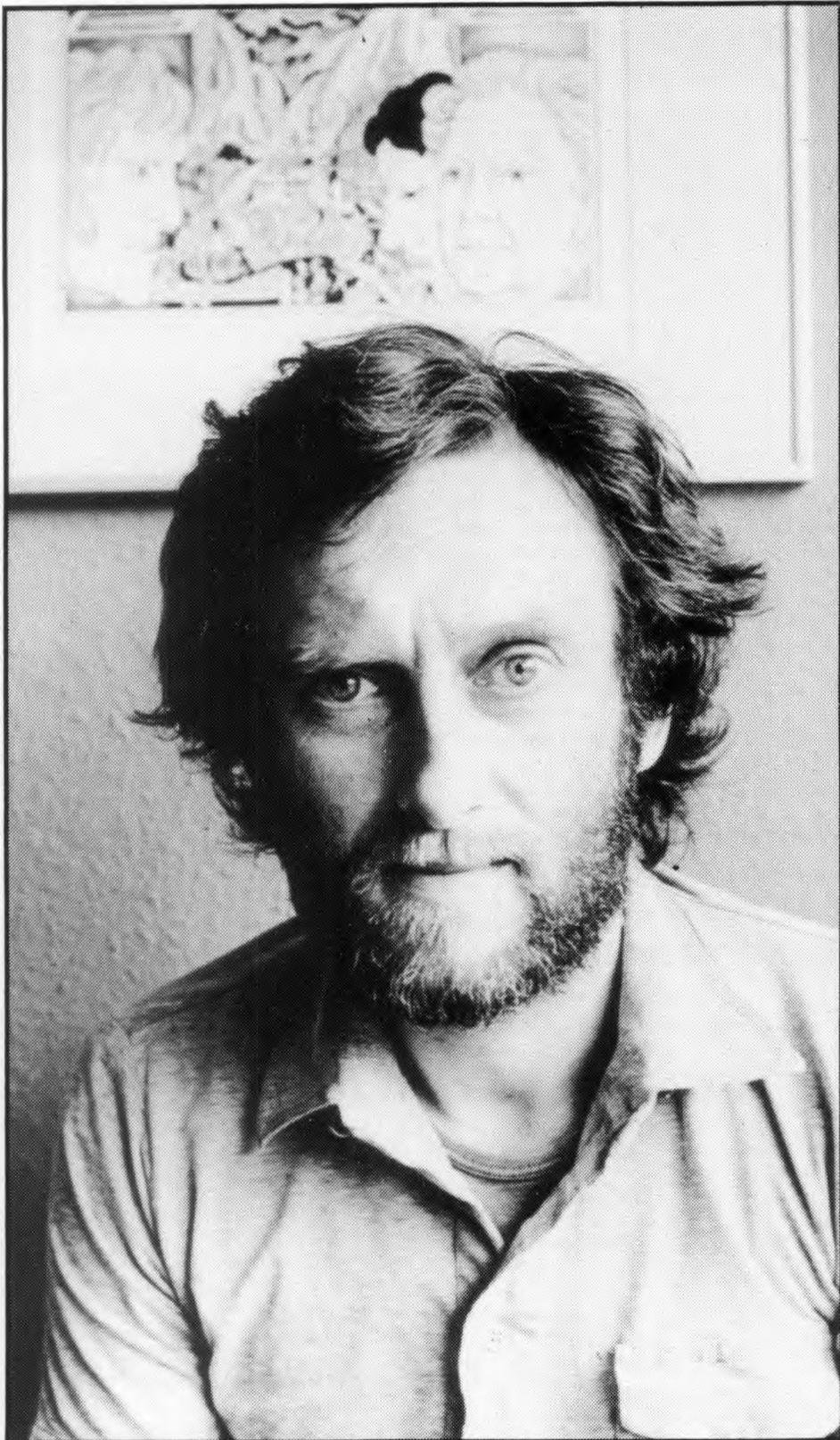
Even where two parents are not available, constant parenting by at least one seems to be important. A child lacking even one steady caring parent-figure really hasn't got much chance at the start. But then – and it may sound like a contradiction – the additional advantage of having alternative parent figures around can be more than useful too. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbours. People to whom the child can turn to for solace when parents have just become 'impossible'.

This seems particularly important for adolescents. Adolescents and grandparents often have a special relationship.

One statistically peculiar fact that should be mentioned is something to do with the protective influence of being female. The statistics we have about childhood emotional disorders point to the fact that four to five times as many boys are referred for help compared with girls. Now that's something we have to look at very carefully before we jump to conclusions.

It might mean for example, that when boys are disturbed, they are much more of a nuisance than when girls are disturbed. And boys do tend to act out their difficulties behaviourally; girls tend to develop symptoms. You don't get quite so upset about a youngster who's got headaches as one who's breaking windows. We may however be dealing with something much more significant. What has been called the 'sleepier effect' – in the case of girls the effects of early deprivation may not appear for many years. They remain latent, emerging in middle to late adolescence, sometimes with the birth of their first child. ■

The full text of this paper, given at the recent Children's Panel Summer School is included in the Summer School Proceedings obtainable from 11 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh.



James Kelman

NO DIRT!

James Kelman tries to write about day-to-day life – disintegrated characters barely coping with the realities of contemporary Scotland. He talks about his packaged reception to Sean Bradley.

The English writer sits in a bar in Edinburgh's Market Street discussing the latest work of fiction by James Kelman. Like most of his colleagues who write in the book pages of the national press, he is full of admiration for the writer and his work. That's London talking.

Literary reputations are made in London. James Kelman's is no exception. The hyperboles were first dished out for him in 1987 on the publication of his collection of short stories, **Greyhound for Breakfast**. The unrestrained use of grand literary comparisons has also been a feature of his third and recently published novel, **A Disaffection**.

Clearly the comparisons with Beckett and others in his class are embarrassing, but these are the ready reckoners of the tired reviewers of fiction. Kelman has little difficulty ignoring them and getting on with his work. But hype, as Kelman reflected in his Glasgow home, has its compensations.

"What it means is that the next time someone like Douglas Dunn is asked what he thinks of James Kelman, he won't be able to pretend he's never heard of him." It also means that he's less likely to be considered a regional writer, which is a problem experienced in places other than Britain. John Steinbeck, for example, is still only of regional significance to some of the literary elite in the United States.

It was in fact, in America that James Kelman found his first publisher as long ago as 1972, with **An old pub near the Angel**. Although Polygon do some editions, Scottish publishers have not featured highly in the many books he has produced since then. In this respect Kelman feels that the Glasgow – Edinburgh divide is still at work.

"All the power and the money is still in Edinburgh – the publishers, the Arts Council. Glasgow has only got writers. And the fact that the writers are geographically confined makes them easier to dismiss, simply as Glasgow writers. Not every writer can be dismissed in this way. But there are other ways of doing it. In the case of Alasdair Gray you simply call him a genius and that's him disposed of. Geniuses require no further scrutiny, no further debate."

The English writer is on his third Laphroaig and warming to his subject. "But wasn't that nice Anne Smith telling us in the **Guardian** that Scottish publishing has been reborn under Thatcherism. She assures us

James Kelman Interviewed

that the 'next generation of Scottish readers is being assiduously cultivated'. That's drink talking.

"The established view of literature," says Kelman, "is class-ridden and always has been. Novels are about people who work out their dramas in drawing rooms. Nothing to do with ordinary people. The idea that a novel can be politically committed is unknown to them."

Kelman had contact and worked over two years with a writers' group in the East End of Glasgow. In the introduction to the collection of works which emerged, *An East End Anthology* (Clydeside Press, 1988), he puts it like this: "In our society we aren't used to thinking of literature as a form of art that might concern the day to day existence of ordinary women and men, whether these

"Novels are about people who work out their dramas in drawing rooms. Nothing to do with ordinary people. The idea that a novel can be politically committed is unknown"

women and men are the subjects of the poetry and stories, or the actual writers themselves. It is something we do not expect.

"And why should we? There is such a barrage of elitist nonsense spoken and written about literature that anything else would be surprising."

Reflecting on his own experiences, he feels that it's easier for prose writers to gain acceptance than poets. "Poets in Scotland, poets like Tom Leonard, have a much more difficult time being accepted. Prose writers don't have the kind of barriers that have grown up around a figure like MacDiarmid to contend with."

It's not surprising that Kelman's art has not been nurtured by a Scottish literary tradition. "My influences have been fairly straightforward, like that of most other Europeans. Joyce, Beckett, the Russians, the American Realists from Whitman to Carlos Williams – those who would not subscribe to the T.S. Eliot notion of literature." It includes much more, and all is opposed to the traditional English literary voice.

The literary voices that visit Patrick Doyle, the main character in *A Disaffection*, were clearly impressed – after a fashion. Isobel Murray writing in the *Scotsman* expressed the initial delight that this latest character of Kelman's could read – . . . but later admitted that some of this reading was beyond her.

And more than Isobel Murray made comment. Before the English writer retired for the night, he remarked, "Kelman seems to wear his reading on his sleeve." The reactions suggest that Kelman is not really creating characters (and therefore literature). They seem to typify the ready reckoner school of metropolitan reviewing.

Kelman knows his character Patrick Doyle very well. He is the incredulous witness to his disintegration in a world he cannot relate to. But Kelman is by no stretch of the imagination, this Doyle.

He won't speak about his characters, preferring that they do so for themselves. I harbour a suspicion that he considers Doyle to be essentially naive, a caring individual, caught like so many in modern life in our setting, in a social and political set up, that he is totally ill-equipped to deal with.

Characters from the fiction of Franz Kafka are among the main literary reference points for Patrick Doyle in his struggle to deal with his most unhappy state. Undoubtedly Kelman uses similar reference points in his own work.

"Kafka was well aware of the 19th century developments in literature, the fighting for cultural-domination. Twenty years before him, writers whose work he knew well were affirming their own culture, writing in Yiddish, a language then considered unsuitable for literature.

"Only a writer of Kafka's stature could write in a sub-clause of a baby lying in a gutter with molten lead running by it. It's in *The Trial*, and Joseph K in his personal torment fails to see it as he walks to one of his hearings. And he is surprised when he is found guilty! Of course he was guilty. He doesn't see what's right in front of his eyes.

"And the modern reader doesn't notice the baby either."

Yet such realism in literature doesn't rest easily in the stomach of many critics and readers. "Why else," asks Kelman, "would realism be called 'dirty' or 'magic', except that they don't know what it is?"

Simulation

The door was opening. Mirs Houston, it was Alison . . . Patrick smiled a moment then frowned. She remained by the door. He walked across. She turned side on to the class, so they wouldn't be able to read her lips. She had very expressive lips, her whole mouth in fact. She tapped him on the arm! and she said very quietly indeed, Are you going to the staffroom at the interval?

Now.

She paused.

I prefer no to.

But you're definitely going for a pint later on?

Eh aye.

I'll see you at the gates then.

Aye.

Then she was out and away, the door clicking itself shut. He stared at it, the door, then about faced to stare at the weans a moment, then he strolled to the desk, gazing at his other side as though examining the large blackboard which occupied most of that wall. He stood by his desk and called: Saepire circumdare?

Silence.

He nodded. He glanced at Catriona.

Is it to do with fencing in?

It is precisely to do with that. Now all of yous, all you wee first yearers, cause that's what you are, wee first yearers. You are here being fenced in by us the teachers at the behest of the government in explicit simulation of your parents viz. the suppressed poor. Repeat after me: We are being fenced in by the teachers

We are being fenced in by the teachers

at the behest of a dictatorship government

at the behest of a dictatorship government

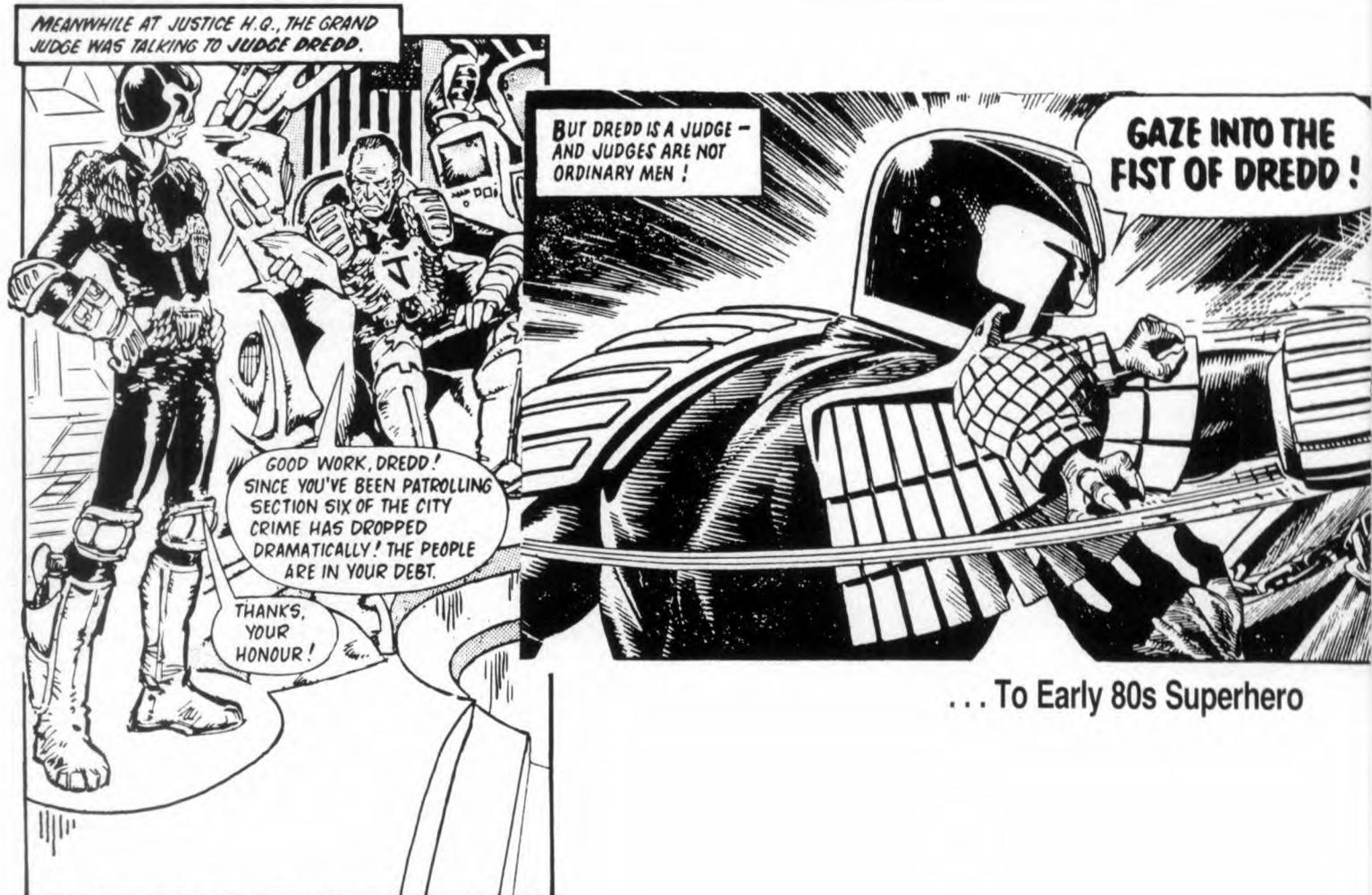
in explicit simulation of our fucking parents the silly bastards

in explicit simulation of our fucking parents the silly bastards

Laughter.

From James Kelman *A DISAFFECTION* published Secker & Warburg 1989 £11.95.

REVIEWS



... To Early 80s Superhero

Judge Dredd – Britain's favourite
Comic Character. In 1977
a Typical Good Guy ...

COMICS AREN'T JUST FOR KIDS!

– so ran the slogan for DC's recent campaign to attract a mature readership to a revitalised comics industry. **Gordon Rennie** investigates.

The coming of age of the comic – together with T.V. the perfect medium for the post-literate generation – is hardly before time. **Superman**, the grand-daddy of all comic strip superheroes, was 50 last year. This year, the far more fashionable **Batman** is celebrating his half-century.

These two oldsters, like the comic genre itself, are wearing remarkably well. Last in vogue in the 1960s, comics are fashionable now. But the comic's popularity seems to have come of age in another sense. Where once the **Dandy** and the **Beano**, the **Wizard** and the **Eagle** appealed to the preadolescent

only, the comic now attracts an older, more sophisticated readership. Strips' story content, features and art all match the new maturity.

Just as they carry reviews of films and books, the British music press carries regular comment on the more interesting comics. Titles such as **2000 A.D.** and **Crisis** use a highly fashionable style of design, akin to youth magazines or record sleeves. Identifying their potential readership as being in the 18 – 24 age group, **Crisis** gave away 100,000 copies inserted inside the ultra-hip **NME** music paper.

"A comic fan these days," says Igor Goldkind, **Crisis** Depute Editor, "is someone who's into various things such as cinema, music etc. They are very aware of what's going on."

Reports from the specialist comic retailers suggest a high proportion of students among the readers. Certainly Goldkind's reader profile – fashionable, intelligent, socially aware, and interested in 'alternative' ideas – fits the identikit picture of the



... Now an Out-and-Out Fascist.

DEMOCRACY IS A CANCER EATING AT THE HEART OF OUR SOCIETY. ANY ACTION WE HAVE TO TAKE TO STAMP IT OUT - HOWEVER REGRETTABLE - IS JUSTIFIED.

modern upwardly mobile student with a conscience. And of course, students, as any bank or building society will tell you, are good investments for the future.

2000 A.D. made a timely debut in 1977, just prior to the huge Star Wars-inspired boom in the science fiction market. Well the 'force' may not have been with us for a number of years, but 2000 A.D. outlasted the trend and still has a weekly circulation of 140,000. A big reason for its success must lie in the comic having 'grown up' along with its original 8 - 12 year old readership. A significant proportion of its present followers are in the 18 - 24 age band, and the comic has adapted its style accordingly.

2000 A.D. resurrected a then comatose British comics industry. NME journalist Steven Wells, a committed original reader, wrote "At last a comic without blind ballerinas, 'interesting' football stories, stale superheroes, boring little rascals, racist Boys-Own battle yarns about a war that finished thirty years ago, or stupid talking cats ... 2000 A.D. was punk rock for comics."

A measure of the title's evolution and growth to maturity over the years can best be seen in the changes in its most successful character, the legendary Judge Dredd. Dredd, a policeman in a huge chaotic city of the future, and Britain's most popular comic character, is the source of a wide range of spin-off merchandise. A major Judge Dredd movie seems likely as Hollywood continues to discover the popularity of comic characters. (The \$40 million dollar *Batman* film is widely expected to be the blockbuster of the year when it's released in August.)

Dredd's rise in popularity charted his evolution from typical action hero at the start in 1977, to unbeatable superhero, to now being the personification of a repressive police state. Dredd's role as a 'hero' was, from the beginning, always ironic - the proto fascist was never far from the surface. Dredd is now unambiguously the villain of the piece, no longer the guardian of the people, but their oppressor.

Interestingly this final radical depiction of the character, as perhaps his name suggests, was how Dredd was first conceived. "When

Dredd started," reflects 2000 A.D. original editor, Pat Mills, "the idea was of a complete bastard who shot people for dropping litter or jaywalking. We couldn't get that kind of thing past the board, so we started up with a kind of watered down version." The look of the strip, including Dredd's uniform of tight leather, chains and sinister helmet was created by a Spanish artist, who drew on the experience of life under Franco for the imagery of Dredd and his city.

A dozen years after the original conception of Dredd was rejected as being too radical a departure from the normal parameters of a British comic, it is indicative of the new maturity of the medium that the real Dredd is now out.

2000 A.D.'s problem - apart from what it will do as the eponymous year inches ever nearer, is that its cops, robots and mutants are essentially juvenile. Fleetway recognised a gap for a more 'now' product, and last year responded with *Crisis*.

Where 2000 A.D. is fantastical and futuristic, *Crisis* is modern and real. *Crisis* has three main stories. One is set in contemporary Northern Ireland. Another is about the adventures of a young shop-lifter in bedsitland. Both are the backdrop for the main strip, *Third World War*. All depict an alternative view of modern Britain, and show that *Crisis*, by traditionally conservative publishing standards, is a brave venture for a British mass-market comic. Nonetheless, its circulation has settled at around the 75,000 mark.

Third World War (Western exploitation, not apocalyptic warfare) runs on themes of anti-capitalism, environmental concerns, and a deep cynicism towards enterprise culture. *Crisis* consciously breaks out of the ghetto of traditional British comic culture. Two of its lead characters are female: Weeny in *Sticky Fingers*, and Eve (who is also black) in *Third World War*. Fleetway have not been slow to pick up on the potential female readership of *Crisis*. (There is a large number of female 2000 A.D. readers.)

One ongoing problem for *Crisis*, in breaking new ground, has been how to convince retailers, that as an adult publication, it should not be stocked alongside comics for children. Fleetway ran a £25,000 promotional campaign to persuade the trade that *Crisis* is part of the same phenomenon as the highly successful *Viz* comic.

Viz, a Newcastle-based independent with modest beginnings, struck a rich vein, and is now produced by a London publisher for a circulation of 400,000. *Viz* depends for its humour on crude satirizing of old-style comics, and current tabloid newspapers. Its adolescent style of crudity - and out and out vulgarity - was very appealing, particularly when set against the style of *Desperate Dan* and other such notions of a bygone age of innocence.

Viz stories are drawn and written as a pastiche of these old unsophisticated characters, and the comic abounds with crude

REVIEWS

take-offs – Postman Plod the Miserable Bastard, Johnny Fartpants, and Buster Gonad and his Enormous Testicles. Of course, to really appreciate the joke, you have to be old enough to recognise the style being lampooned. **Viz** is for sale to adults only, but it is doubtful if children today would respond to its unfamiliar style, seeing humour perhaps only in its crudity.

A range of related **Viz** merchandise is available too. And just to prove that there's money in muck, you too can have a pair of Johnny Fartpants boxer shorts for only £6.50. Hardback collections of vintage **Viz** (**The Big Hard One** volumes 1 and 2; and **The Big Pink Stiff One**) have rudely thrust themselves into the bestseller lists. Significantly, **Viz** is the magazine in the City of London, vastly outselling the old-fashioned **Private Eye**. In the free enterprise culture, Oxbridge undergraduate humour has been replaced by smutty schoolboy humour. **Viz** comic, at its current rate, will be the **Punch** of the 21st century.

Comics, perhaps more than ever before, are big business. Specialist comic shops are doing well. The biggest comics/science fiction distributor, Titan, runs the national **Forbidden Planet** chain of shops. The Glasgow branch, in an expensive city centre location, makes most of its profits from comic sales.

"A comic fan these days is someone who's very aware of what's going on."

The long established Edinburgh Science Fiction Bookshop opened a second shop in 1987. The larger original shop is now devoted entirely to comics, and does a roaring trade.

The appearance of the 'graphic novel' – a more upmarket term than 'comic' – is an attempt to legitimise the idea of selling comics in mainstream bookshops. Graphic novels are expensive quality collections of issues of a comic, clearly intended to go for a place on any respectable bookshelf. Hardback editions of **Dark Knight** and **Watchman** – themselves watershed events in comic history – received huge critical acclaim never before associated with comics and reached the bestseller lists.

However, for every **Crisis** or **Watchman**, there are many more comics which exploit the idea of mature themes for adult readers by simply upping the sex and violence quotient. The reactionary nature of such (typically American) comics begs the question – how much maturity and serious comment can you introduce into a medium which still abounds with flying superheroes in skintight costumes?

The real interest lies in those comics which are able to leave behind male adolescent fixations – the ones that subvert the superhero. It has taken comics 50 years to get over the idea of men in capes. Now they have their growing up to do. ■



JUST TURNED EIGHTEEN... AND I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S HAPPENING. I THOUGHT WE WERE ALL MUCH TOO STREETWISE TODAY.

BUT THEY – THEY'RE SO DEVIANT... SO CUNNING. SOMEHOW THEY'VE CONVINCED EVERYONE THAT WHAT THEY'RE DOING IS RIGHT.

THEY'VE EVEN CONVINCED MY MUM... NOW EVEN SHE'S GOT TO SAYING THAT ALL DISSENT IS SUBVERSIVE AND THAT THE DISSENTERS DESERVE EVERYTHING THEY GET (DESPITE WHAT I TOLD HER ABOUT THE HAMBURGER LADY).

THEY HAD IT EASY OF COURSE. AFTER THE WORLD-WIDE RIOTS OF '86 NO-ONE NEEDED MUCH CONVINCING. EVERYONE WAS SUDDENLY ALL TOO SCARED ABOUT THE THIRD WORLD. PEOPLE AGREED THAT SOMETHING NEEDED TO BE DONE... AND THE TV "EXPLANATIONS" MADE IT DEAD EASY TO PERSUADE EVERYONE THAT THEY HAD GOT IT RIGHT.

HAMBURGER Lady

HEALTH FOR ALL CHILDREN
a programme for child health
surveillance

David M.B. Hall (editor)
Oxford Medical Publications £5.95

Paul Carter

Parents are now well used to the idea of taking their babies and young children along to the clinic or G.P. for periodic checks – for immunisation, for weighing, for a chat with the health visitor, and other mothers.

This is now almost an established way of life. Yet surveys have shown very little agreement between health authorities and boards as to what surveillance should take place, at what age, and by whom. Perhaps surprisingly there is also little evidence that the health of our children is improved by the current programmes, or that significant problems are detected at many of these visits, that would allow disability to be prevented. There has been a growing feeling that too many tests, often of unproven value, are being carried out on perfectly healthy children, whilst the children most in need of the services miss out – those in isolated rural areas, the disorganised (of all social classes), and those who for various reasons resent authority. Indeed, the role of parents – who treat over 80% of childhood illnesses and accidents without consulting any professional – has so far generally been little regarded.

Against this background, a working party of G.P.s, community paediatricians, health visitors and nurses set out to review the current practice in child health surveillance. The report recommends an approach that holds central a partnership with parents. Radical alternatives to the one-to-one consultation are suggested. Interventions that

Treating the Healthy!

actively involve parents, they suggest, may bring about worthwhile long-term changes.

And if parents are to be treated as equal partners in child health care, the report recommends that they should be encouraged to hold the main record of their child's health and development. A further working party is soon to report on this. But already the **Health For All Children** report looks set to have a profound effect on all those working in child health surveillance. The important difference between screening and surveillance is discussed in some detail. Screening applies to a series of tests offered to apparently well children to find those who may have unrecognised problems (e.g. heart disease). Surveillance describes the whole set of activities to oversee the physical, social and emotional health and development of all children. It includes monitoring growth and developmental progress, immunisation and health education.

Screening, looked at in some detail, is considered only of proven value for a few tests. Some screening tests, if done badly, can be harmful and lead to unnecessary worry or inappropriate reassurance – a deaf baby, for instance, who appears to pass a badly done hearing test. They suggest a core programme which includes ages at which weight, height, head circumference, vision and hearing should be checked. Quality services must then be available for children found to have problems.

The most controversial and possibly the most important recommendation the report makes is that screening with repeated developmental examinations should be discontinued. The practice of waiting for a certain age to apply a group of tests should be stopped. Parents will no longer need to train their child anxiously to pile bricks or draw circles to get through on the day! This has never been a good means of identifying a child who needs additional support.

What the report emphasises though, is that professionals must be able to listen to parents' concerns and to nursery teachers and playgroup leaders working with children. Whenever children are seen for surveillance, professionals must be able to observe their behaviour and be continually aware of their developmental progress. For this, they will need to maintain a high level of training, and a thorough knowledge of child development and its normal variations.

So new training will be needed for doctors and health visitors who will no longer be spending time testing the development of hundreds of normal children. This is time that should instead be targeted at those most in need, and be made available for responding to parents seeking advice or help. Help too with the management of behavioural problems needs much greater emphasis.

Although perhaps at first glance, this well written report appears to arrive at a list of what to do, in reality it does much more. But the central points – partnership with parents, health promotion and high quality training for professionals are easily missed by those in a hurry to find its take-home message. It is already being misunderstood by some wishing to maintain the status quo, and being misinterpreted by others keen to use it as an excuse for a cost cutting exercise. This report does provide though, a chance to develop a quality and relevant service for children regardless of their circumstances throughout Scotland and the U.K. It remains to be seen of course, whether any integrated child health services survive the turmoil of the White Paper (see Stuart Logan's article in this issue), and whether the optimism of Clark and Rifkind in their preface – "the prevention of ill-health and the promotion of good health are key features of the government's health policy" – will be realised. ■

Sharing the Learning

key areas of child abuse in the framework of recent Scottish experience – the social context; the state of our current knowledge about sexual abuse; ways of working with abusing families; the physical examination of children and adolescents; the use of expert witnesses; the Children's Hearing System. A number of important questions are asked about joint work between agencies, available resources and training.

90 pages of tantalisingly useful stuff and you get to the end feeling that there's enough sound thinking and interesting work going on in Scotland to justify a book double the length.

The problem with a publication of this kind is often that it is overloaded with jar-

gon and 'care-speak'. But sound editing has eliminated most of that, so that anyone aspiring to work with children could usefully read it.

The sad fact is however, that because of its cost – £7 for a non-BAAF member – and its almost complete invisibility to the public, it will probably only ever be read by a tiny fraction of those who could learn from it. Well, we're used to that aren't we? The history of child care is littered with examples of excellent, little-known pieces of work which fail to achieve the readership they deserve. And that state of affairs is unlikely to alter until there is a better partnership between the writers, the designers and the marketers. Books, just as much as people thrive on inter-disciplinary work. ■

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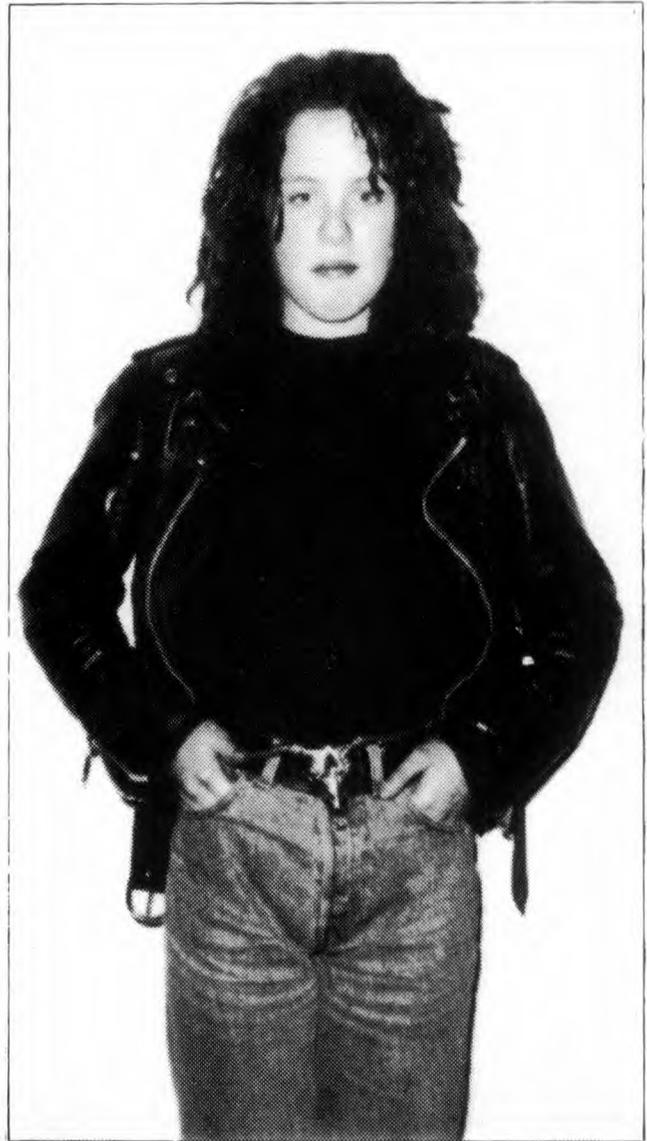
The latest addition to the BAAF Discussion Series is a collection of papers drawn from a symposium 'Update on child abuse', held in Glasgow in 1987.

Ten short chapters and an introduction by the editor, Fred Stone, cover most of the

Jane's twelve going
on twenty.

And just like thou-
sands of other young
girls she's got high
hopes and a vivid
imagination.

But she's much more
vulnerable than she



thinks. To keep her safe and happy takes all
the time, patience, care and love that her
family and friends can give her. Hopefully
that's enough. If it's not, we are all to
blame. The safety and happiness of
every child should be everyone's concern.

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Not Hearing or Not Knowing . . .

Jean Raeburn's assertion, in *Not in Front of the Children* (Scottish Child February), that there is a "growing trend" in the Children's Panel system to have a higher proportion of hearings held with the child not present, is very likely to be correct. Whether this should be a source of concern depends on why this should be so. Is it a matter of attitudes, or of administrative arrangements? Or is a reflection of a changing pattern of referrals to Children's Hearings?

To begin with, we must acknowledge the importance of the increase in care and protection cases coming to hearings in recent years. This has led to more younger children and babies being seen. There is no doubt that the younger the child, the less 'hearing' them (and seeing them) will be regarded as essential.

The number of children under 5 referred to the Reporter has increased fourfold in the last ten years. Nationally there are now nearly 2000 under 5s referred annually, over half of whose cases come to Hearings. These are 13% of all referrals to Hearings. The study of *Children's Hearings' Disposals in Relation to Resources* recently published by the Children's Panel Chairman's Group (available from Social Work Services Group, Edinburgh) gives interesting figures on the shift to care and protection cases. It shows that an almost equal number of Hearings now deal with care and protection as with cases where a child has offended.

The study also points to considerable regional variations in the proportion of care and protection cases and the age pattern of children brought to Hearings. This means that there is a risk in generalising from only partial regional experience.

Jean Raeburn's suggestion that decisions not to have children at a Hearing are frequently taken without due consideration of the proper authority, is a cause for concern. In Strathclyde, the established practice for proceeding with a Hearing in the absence of the child is intended to avoid the situation where the professionals decide the issue. If it is thought that there is good reason to dispense with a child's presence, the case for doing so is put to a 'prior hearing', - that is, to Panel Members assembled to consider other cases. This is to give permission to a child not to attend, or more frequently, for a young child not to be brought to a Hearing.

Andrew Lockyer debates Jean Raeburn's contention in the last issue of *Scottish Child* that Children's Hearings are taking place increasingly without the children.

This arrangement does not, of course, remove the right of the Hearing on the day to insist on the child's presence. It is however, open to the objection that in practice it may prejudice the decision. But it seems less objectionable than requiring all children always to be brought to their actual Hearing before their presence is dispensed with. It is not unknown either, for Hearings to set aside 'dispensations' and adjourn to require a child's attendance.

We have recently discussed with the Regional Reporter, safeguards to prevent this procedure becoming too routinely and uncritically operated, and we have agreed on a number of conditions. These include that a written case should be sought from the Social Work Department if it is they who wish to

absent the child. Age or lack of understanding will not automatically be sufficient reasons. We are clear that a child old enough to express a wish to attend must have the right to do so.

Jean Raeburn recognises that the main reason for excluding children from Hearings is the desire to protect them. She suggests that protecting children from the emotional experience of the Hearing might do more harm than good. Certainly, if the exclusion is to make life easier for Reporters or Panel members, we need to question it.

It should be said that in recent years there have been a small but

Obviously a child's right to be heard has to be weighed against the parent's rights in such a situation. It will be interesting to see whether the balance will tip a little towards the child as a result of the Review's final recommendations.

There is room for honest disagreement about the value of having young children at Hearings. There are differences of view among Panel Members, as well as between them and professionals. Some find it helpful to observe how young children and parents relate together. Some of us are not distracted by girning weans; others cannot concentrate when kids are playing hide and seek under the table. I don't know whether toys in the Hearing room would help.

Certainly we should take the point that children who are old enough to have a notion of what is happening may sometimes be adversely affected by exclusion. Our procedures should permit proper consideration for each individual case, without allowing the decision ever to become one of administrative convenience. The fault I find with *Not in Front of the Children* is the absence of hard facts. This is not to accuse the author of neglecting the data: it is to point out what little there is available. The author's impressions are likely to be as valid as anyone else's.

However, the suggestion that we may be "moving towards a compulsory decision-making forum which routinely decides about a child's future without his or her presence" is, I hope, a considerable exaggeration. My own guess would be that in Strathclyde we have Hearings without children in between 5% and 10% of cases. I for one, would like to know the true figure. ■

More on this subject on the Letters page.



Hearings

Dear Editor,

In her article in February's **Scottish Child**, Jean Raeburn challenges the practice of some reporters in deciding not to cite children to attend hearings in certain circumstances. She argues that a child's presence can only be dispensed with at the instance of the hearing itself and then only if, as the statute states, 'it would be detrimental to the interests of the child to be present'. The same section of the Social Work (Scotland) Act

1968, however, also makes reference specifically to cases where children have been the victim of offences mentioned in schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975. Frequently such children are under 6 years of age and in any event incapable of reading let alone understanding the grounds for referral. Clearly the legislators did not envisage small children being present at hearings.

A distinction therefore has to be drawn between children who have committed offences (i.e. of 8 years or older) and held to be criminally responsible in law and

younger children who may have been the victims of physical or emotional abuse. It might be argued that child offenders between the age of 8 and secondary school age have not sufficient cognitive development to appreciate the criminality of their behaviour but, as the law stands, they are held capable of understanding and hence eligible to be cited to a hearing without exception.

There is an agreed policy in Borders between the Regional Reporter and the Children's Panel that young children (i.e. under the age of 6), are not cited to attend a children's hearing on the general premise that they cannot understand the proceedings. The fact that their behaviour may also be fractious or distracting in some other way to panel members in their decision-making is incidental but not without significance.

Where young children are brought to hearings by their parents there is usually a need for them to be looked after by other carers at some stage. It is not always possible for parents to arrange their own childminders to accompany them and certainly it is not always possible for the social work department to provide help of this kind. It is not unknown for members of the reporter's department to have been called to the rescue!

Hence there are both philosophical and practical reasons for the present arrangements in the Borders. There is in my view no reason why they should not continue thus - subject of course to the overriding discretion of a children's hearing to insist on having a child present in the special circumstances of a particular case. It is one thing to take account of a child's views when he is able to state what they are,

quite another to draw inferences from observations of children's behaviour in a very artificial and, to them unfamiliar setting.

Alastair Sinclair
Reporter to the Children's Panel
Borders Region

What's in a name?

Dear Editor,

I have just read Jean Raeburn's article in your February issue, with which, in the (most part, I concur.

The sentence that really raised a cheer from me was her throwaway line, "Social worker calls mum by her first name and the scene is set for an all too familiar confusion of roles."

I have noted over the past 15 or 20 years an increasing tendency on the part of social workers towards calling clients, whether adult or child, by their forenames. It may be that I am old fashioned, but I have always felt that the first essential of professional relationship was mutual respect, and that to establish that the respect is mutual, the professional had to take care to show it.

To call an adult who is not a friend or a relative by their forename is not, in my book, showing respect for them. If the client is a friend or viewed as a friend, then the relationship is, by definition, not a professional one.

I would go so far as to posit that in calling an adult client by their forename, the social worker is demonstrating the worker's superior position in the relationship.

J.C. Ballard
W. Lothian





Private Care – Feeding on the Run!

Dear Editor,

The under-fives are in the news just now and that's good. It was very heartening to see Marion Flett's article in last month's issue addressing some of the current dilemmas. She is correct in saying that private growth is happening. There are signs that it is in fact mushrooming.

What perturbs the Scottish Pre-School Play Association is that in the drive to meet the increasing demand for pre-five services, it is very easy to lose sight of what is really best for the children. At a recent conference it was stated quite clearly by one representative that community nurseries will be starting as a pilot project in Glasgow city centre where mothers can leave their infants then return at lunchbreak to breastfeed their infants. Whose interest does this serve? It can hardly be the baby's. Nor, as she hurries to and from work, the mother's. It would seem that already the dictates of the workplace are paramount.

Parents need to have a choice in the matter and children deserve the best. For some families this may be nurseries; it may be full-time day care; it may be in the home; or it may be the playgroup where parents share in their child's learning and take part in group decision-making.

For those parents who do want to be members of the community playgroup or toddler group, the decision is made more difficult as they know fees are to be paid and fundraising is required so that the group can survive. In a lot of areas this is an added burden which families cannot afford. More resources are needed to enable playgroups to maintain and improve the services they offer and to increase training opportunities throughout Scotland. If the playgroup movement was adequately funded parents could make a real choice between playgroup and nursery, and they would not have to base that decision on whether to pay or not.

Is it not time that the task of caring for young children was given the status of a worthwhile and valuable occupation? One way of achieving this is to accord recognition through grants, or in income tax calculations to those parents with fully dependent children. Another is to have extended leave from work for parents who want the time to care for their own babies and toddlers. If there was a fair choice between working and being paid adequately for childcare it would be a much simpler decision for a parent to make.

In these ways the needs of children and their parents would not be sacrificed to the demands of the workplace, and some of the present social and economic pressures on parents of very young children would be eased. We cannot allow the needs of the market-place to dictate the policy for young children.

Moira Ferguson
Executive Officer
Scottish Pre-School Play Association

Among the Contributors in this issue...

Graham Atherton is a Senior Researcher with the Scottish Consumer Council in Glasgow. The views in 'Parents in the Market' are his own.

Daniel Boyle lectures in Communication and Media Studies at Dundee College of Further Education. His screenplays, *Leaving* and *A View of Harry Clark* were shown on BBC TV this Spring.

Paul Carter is a community child health doctor in Aberdeen. He is secretary of the Scottish Community Paediatric Group, and is a member of a working party currently looking into the development of a parent-held child health record.

Colin Chalmers until recently worked with homeless young people at the Stopover Project in Edinburgh.

Billy Collins lives and writes in New York State. 'Schoolsville' was originally published by University of Arkansas Press.

Andrew Lockyer is Chairman of Strathclyde Region Children's Panel.

Stuart Logan lectures in paediatric epidemiology and community paediatrics at the Institute of Child Health of London University. His main interest is in the effects of poverty on health.

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

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

Gordon Rennie is a graduate in Film & TV Studies, currently working as an Information Officer at the National Centre for Play in Edinburgh.

Fred Stone is Emeritus Professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at Glasgow University.



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Rite of Passage

Adolescence, as we all know, is the difficult, often enjoyable, sometimes horrendous, frequently maddening (for parents) passage from childhood to adulthood. A child goes in at one end and an adult emerges at the other. It's impossible to say exactly when the transition takes place – in our society there's no ritualised rite of passage, no initiation ceremony when one joins the adult world.

A series of experiences – growing physical maturity, the first boyfriend/girlfriend, going on holiday with friends – mark out the path. But the main landmark, at least for the majority of working class youngsters, has always been leaving school and starting work.

This was more than escaping from the petty rules and regulations and arbitrary authority of the teachers (their equivalent can be found on many shop floors and offices). It meant no longer spending your days surrounded by kids, but being with a mixture of adults from the newly appointed apprentice or

junior to the men and women approaching retirement. It meant instead of being handed pocket money by your parents you could give them some of your own hard earned cash to help support yourself. It meant changing your view of yourself, having more choice in your life, starting to take up the role of adult.

So what happens now? Many young people leave school to nothing. They are placed on a Youth Training Scheme which frequently reproduces the situa-

tion they have just left – being with a group of kids with an adult supervisor doing things they're not very interested in. (I've never yet heard a young person complain about a YTS placement being too hard. Most comments I hear are about not having enough to do, it being too easy, it not being 'real' work.)

Rather than allowing them to contribute, the changes in

benefit regulations and the introduction of the poll tax increase the financial burden of the young person on the family. It's impossible to become any more independent, choices are as narrow as ever – how the hell do you become an adult?

Much has been said about the serious social problems faced by young people – poverty, homelessness, a hopeless looking future. But one of the crucial changes that has been relatively

neglected is the erosion of the passage into adulthood.

What are likely to be the consequences of vast numbers of young people being trapped in a sort of late-adolescent limbo, no longer children but deprived of opportunities to move into their adult role? Adults are supposed to be more independent, most young people want to be more independent, and we all know

that the government wants people to be more independent. But whilst vehemently decrying dependency, government policies demolish the opportunities for independence, while at the same time removing the basic supports.

And this is not to romanticise the past. Many working class youngsters have always ended up in dead-end, monotonous, poorly paid jobs. This has been especially true for girls. But at least the were 'out working', part of the adult world, in the same situation as their workmates of all ages. The rite of passage wasn't brilliant, but at least you could move along it.

So we'd better find a way of giving young people a sense of their emerging adulthood, of confirming their adult status and the authority it carries, even if only enables us to make reasonable demands on their sense of responsibility as citizens. Otherwise, what kind of identity are the young being given – and how will that be expressed in the years to come? ■

Sheila Ramsay

A·F·T·E·R·T·H·O·U·G·H·T·S

IN THE NEXT ISSUE . . . Aug/Sept 1989



Colin Chalmers

This issue has been parents and teachers. Next we hear the voice of young Scots themselves . . . on school, on jobs, on the future, when they TELL IT LIKE IT IS!!!

The SCOTTISH CHILD CARE LAW REVIEW – who owns it? asks Rosemary Milne.

We preview a commemorative centenary conference on the work of RONALD FAIRBAIRN. Ronald who? Just another Scot with a good reputation, who's not widely known in his own land.

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