

# The Scottish Child

EDUCATION/LAW/CARE/HEALTH/PLAY/New Series Volume 1/Number 3/Autumn 1987



**WORKING WITH THE  
DEAF-BLIND CHILD**

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless



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# LOVE IS STILL NOT ENOUGH

The treatment needs of children and adolescents with  
serious difficulties in growing up

## Speakers

### Dr Bruno Bettelheim

Dr Bettelheim has kindly agreed to make a special journey and presentation. His career as an author, psychologist, psychoanalyst and child psychotherapist is respected world-wide. There has been an enthusiastic reaction to major feature programmes about his life and work on BBC and Channel 4 television this year. At this presentation he will focus specifically on the issues of treatment for very disturbed children.

### Prof Sydney Brandon

Prof Brandon currently holds the Chair of Psychiatry at the University of Leicester. He will discuss how societies attitude to the family have developed and how this has effected the families psychological development and health. He will focus on current perceptions of the family and its consequences in particular for child abuse.

### Mr Maurice Bridgeland

Child Psychotherapist and author of *Pioneer Work with Maladjusted Children*, which looks at the historical perspective of treatment. Maurice Bridgeland was Headmaster of Frensham Heights School.

## Applications

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Banqueting Hall Civic Centre Newcastle upon Tyne

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10.15 am - 4.30 pm

450 capacity

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(it is hoped to make available sponsorships for bona fide students)

## Alone in an empty room

Writing in **Scots — The Mither Tongue**, Billy Kay says this about the speaking of Scots in school

"It came as an extreme shock to discover that speaking the everyday language of home in the classroom was regarded as giving cheek to the teacher. The dialect was permitted once a year when the Burns Federation was giving out its certificates or the school was organising a Burns Supper. The rest of the time you would be belted for using his (Burns') language within the school."

It seems reasonable to ask what damage might be done to a child's self-esteem if words that came naturally to his lips were brutally outlawed by his teacher, in anything but a "performing situation". And it seems reasonable to suggest, as Kay does, that this experience replicated across a nation might indeed render generations of Scottish pupils mute — silent observers of angry, powerful adults they learn to emulate.

In quite another context, an Edinburgh councillor was reported recently to have said that she had to go home and take a bath after watching only half of Iain Heggie's play **A Wholly Healthy Glasgow** at the Edinburgh Festival — a play, as viewers will see on television next year, stuffed out with four-letter words in all possible permutations. The play, which I saw, and the lady's reactions to it, seemed to me to be two sides of the same coin, common currency in a society which on both sides, whether speaking in Scots or English, is gripped by purient obsessions — sexuality, a dirty, daring, sinful subject.

We are accustomed of course, in a society where the tabloid press exploits sexuality to sell newspapers, where small children suffer abuse at the hands of

loved and trusted adults and politicians leap to fame on sexual intrigue, to the idea that sex equals dirt and scandal. Meanwhile we hardly seem to notice other shapings of our understandings — the private discussions of professionals, the soft and ceaseless fall of discussion papers, policy documents, circulars, upon the desks of social workers, teachers, health officials, reporters, all written in the same joyless officialese, the nadir of the printed word.

Meditating on these features of our social life, the current issue of **The Scottish Child** has brought together a range of styles of writing and experience, built around the theme of "communication". At one end of the spectrum Gillian Morbey and Karen Thiess-Tait, working in partnership with the deaf-blind, and Bruno Bettelheim's observations —

"Perfection is not within the grasp of ordinary human beings. Efforts to attain it typically interfere with that lenient response to the imperfections of others, including those of one's child, which alone make good human relations possible." (**A Good Enough Parent**)

At the other, Alan Hunter, 16 years old, working alone in an empty classroom.

Which of the two ends of that spectrum would come closest to the experience of most Scottish children.....?

So what shall we do? Shall we evade the issue yet again — blame the child? Call up the guid auld days? Wallow in self-denigration? Take a cleansing bath and hope the problem goes away? Disappear passively under a drift of Whitehall- Scottish Office memos? Wrangle over professional procedures, protocol? Or shall we find a new way of talking about, of tackling these responsibilities we have? History is against us but we must try.

Rosemary Milne

### Editor

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

### Editorial Group

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

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

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

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

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

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# WORKING WITH THE DEAF-BLIND CHILD

What is colour to a blind person? Can 'red' be the smooth skin of a tomato when it is also the rough warmth of a dressing gown, the heat in my cheeks when they tease me, the scent of a rose? What is red?

**Karen Thiess-Tait** and **Gillian Morbey** explain the need for adults to use all their ingenuity and attentiveness to help a deaf-blind child to learn, urging us to see the child as an equal partner in the dialogue and to be more aware of the world as they experience it. Then, from his recently published autobiography 'Under the Eye of the Clock', **Christopher Nolan**, severely paralysed from birth, describes his "head-pointer" triumph with the typewriter, shared with his mother, Nora, and his teacher, Eva.

Occasionally we hear or read fascinating and inspiring stories about the accomplishments of people who are either deaf or blind. These are the tales of admirable and courageous individuals who have overcome this disability.

Deaf-blindness is profoundly disabling and far more difficult to overcome. The problem is not simply one of deafness plus blindness, nor is it solely one of communication or perception. It encompasses all of these and more. The deaf-blind are multi-sensory deprived: they are unable to use their distance senses of vision and hearing to receive non-distorted information. They may be unable to communicate intelligibly with those around them and, with their severely restricted perception of the world, lack the ability to anticipate future events or the results of their actions. In addition many of these individuals have medical problems which slow down their general development so that they may be mislabelled as retarded or emotionally disturbed. The deaf-blind may be forced to develop unique learning styles to compensate for their multiple handicaps and often have extreme difficulty in establishing or maintaining interpersonal relationships.

The gathering or absorbing of information happens quite naturally

for most non-handicapped children. Exposure to a variety of people, situations and environments provides the child with a constant bombardment of the senses. Mum, childminder, nursery worker — any of these may ramble on to the child with a wealth of inconsequential but vital information. So from the very earliest stages of infancy the able-bodied child gradually learns to make sense of his environment and the people in it.

Consider, then, the problems for the deaf-blind child — not for him the haphazard, coincidental amassing of knowledge. The adults in the deaf-blind child's life must seize any and all opportunities to bring language to the child — whether by speech, sign, gesture, co-actively taking the child through the activity or explanation. Those who are with the child must also not allow the child's limited expressive abilities to inhibit the language they are feeding to him. Total communication, using all possible additional signs and helps must be attempted, to inform the child about his environment, who is in it and what is happening. This training across a broad range of situations will help increase the likelihood of expanding the child's language functions and make it possible for him to generalise his skills, transferring his understandings

from the concrete to the abstract.

Even when the child is given the individual attention of one adult it is important that the teacher uses every experience to develop the communication skills. The multi-sensory deprived child must be assisted to perceive accurately the results of his basic attempts at communication, and unless the child's language is based in experience it can become mere expression without meaning: endless repetition in a closed world. We must keep in mind that limited experience leads to limited understanding. With the broadening of experience and the increased understanding of the "cause and effect" basis of communication comes the child's ability to anticipate his actions and those of others. This broadening of experience leads also to the awakening of curiosity — an important external motivator.

What is important for us to realise as professionals is that language cannot be presented in a restricted manner — every part of the day, every humdrum task can be put to good use: a child can practice counting just as easily while preparing to set the table as he can counting blocks. Learning colours can be part of dressing or making a salad — red tomatoes, green peppers — blue socks, a soft grey jersey.



For the deaf-blind language is based upon concrete experience — activities that the individual enjoys and the dialogue that grows from these activities. Only with this constant input will the deaf-blind person gradually learn to make sense of his environment and the role he and others play within it.

Karen Thiess-Tait.

All too often we consider and measure communication within formal definitions of accepted literacy: speaking, reading and writing. But a kick, a nod, a smile, a temper tantrum, a cry ... are all ways by which a child might communicate. While we accept and readily understand gestures with able-bodied people we often label a handicapped child as "aggressive" without considering the communication implications of "difficult" behaviour. And when body language is used by a child with handicaps, do we read it correctly, accept and respond to it as it is offered, or do we decide albeit unconsciously sometimes, that he doesn't really understand, "he can't be smiling at the joke", "he couldn't have knocked his dinner over deliberately..."?

Do we realise too, how often we still impinge completely on the child with handicaps? How often do we give them enough time to respond? How often do we revert to the "push me pull you" methods? Dinner is ready. But did we take time to sign, draw and teach a child that dinner is on its way, or did we just let dinner appear? We feed a child rather than let him feed himself. Why? Because it's quicker!

If once we can begin to accept that communication can and does operate on all levels and that the handicapped child is a valid partner in that process of communication, it becomes possible to address some practical issues. How do we motivate a child to communicate? How do we teach a child who is deaf-blind and perhaps mentally handicapped? The methods we use must result in "appropriate" communication, understandable by the largest number of people.

If we can begin by accepting a temper tantrum as a means of communication, we can go on from this and say also that it would be better if a 16 year-old could find other ways than this of expressing his frustration or disappointment. So our task becomes one of finding means of helping the child to communicate strong emotions in a way that is more acceptable, more easily understood,

more constructive and therefore in every respect more personally satisfying to the child himself.

Perhaps the first essential in teaching a child with severe learning difficulties is to bring organisation and meaning to chaos and isolation. Daily routines can help so that a child is always given breakfast within a certain time-span; clothes are put on in the same order; after dressing there is always a period of soft play...

By establishing routine a child's fear may be reduced and he may learn to anticipate. The communication can be further enhanced by "cueing": a sock becomes the sign for dressing, a bean bag the sign for soft play. We can use smell as an additional reinforcer: the bean-bag always has the same smell but we can add to this by the teacher wearing the same scent.

It is important to err on the side of "we just don't know" and therefore all opportunities should be used to the full.

### **'The deaf-blind language is based upon concrete experience — activities that the individual enjoys and the dialogue that grows from these activities'**

Bathtime. Consider the two approaches.

Method 1: We approach a child quickly with no warning undress him, take him to an echoing bathroom, place him in hot water and cover him in a slimy substance (soap).

Method 2: We approach gently, we identify ourselves to the child through cue and scent, we give a "touch" sign for bath, say bath and take him to a well-lit, warm bathroom. We run the water (perhaps the child can hear it?), let the child touch, smell the soap, talc, cream.

Which of us would choose method 1 if we had the power to choose method 2?

To draw the points together we can say

- 1 Communication works on all levels and is a two-way process
- 2 We must give a child time to understand and respond
- 3 We must be sensitive to the child's needs by trying to put ourselves in his position, even though we understand the impossibility of this.

4 We must have respect for our partner in the communication process

5 We must use all means to communicate

6 It must be fun. The child will then wish to communicate.

Gillian Morbey

"Nora sat watching. Spasms ripped through Joseph's body. Sweat stood out on his face. He was trying to let his mother see what he was capable of. She was not impressed. He could see that despite his ordeal. The phone rang and Eva suggested that Nora would take over from her and hold Joseph's head. The spasms held him rigid but within a couple of minutes he felt himself relaxing. Nora waited, her son's chin cupped in her hands. Then he stretched and brought his pointer down and typed the letter "e". Swinging his pointer right he then typed another letter and another one and another. Eva finished speaking on the telephone and Nora, while still cupping Joseph's chin, turned and said, "Eva, I know what you're talking about — Joseph is going for the keys himself — I could actually feel him stretching for them." Eva, his courageous teacher, clenched her fist and brought it down with a bang on the table. "So I was right, I was afraid to say anything, I had to be sure," she said as she broadly smiled.

Joseph sat looking at his women saviours. They chatted about their discovery while he nodded in happy unbelievable bewilderment. He felt himself float reliably on gossamer wings. He hungered no more. He giggled nervously before he even bespoke his thanks. He cheered all the way up the corridor, said goodbye to dear Eva and giggled and cheered up into Nora's face all the way home.

Feeble Joseph was just eleven years old, but before long he would be taking on Nora, schooling her to see what he could see, instructing her to steady his head for him while he typed beauty from within, beauty of secret knowledge so secretly hidden and so nearly lost forever (Christopher Nolan, *Under the Eye of the Clock*).

*Karen Thiess-Tait is one of the few qualified teachers of the deaf-blind in Britain, and is a teacher of the blind. She is currently working as Senior Tutor at Overbridge Continuing Education Centre in Glasgow. Gillian Morbey is the Scottish Officer of SENSE (the national deaf-blind and Rubella association).*



# IN THE FAMILY WAY

Girls who get 'into trouble' are treated very differently from boys. **Julie Warren**, the Co-ordinator of the Muirhouse Social Education Centre in Edinburgh, looks at the way girls are treated in the Scottish system.

There is a newish piece of jargonese in the language of juvenile justice and welfare — "unintended consequences". These are the (bad) results of overlooking, or ignoring, how (good) intentions are carried out and what their eventual outcomes are. The intent in the Scottish system for dealing with children and young people in trouble is to meet their developmental needs, and, through the offices of welfare professionals, to take appropriate measures 'in their best interests'. However, when looked at from the point of view of the girls, this process seems to be awash with sex stereotyping, not to say sexism. More by default than design perhaps, but it seems that child care for girls reverts to the principle that a woman's place is, and always will be, in the home.

In its attitudes towards and treatment of girls, the Scottish system has little to distinguish it from other juvenile justice and welfare systems in the developed West. This became abundantly clear to me 18 months ago at an international conference in Florence on the treatment of girls by European

juvenile justice and welfare systems. (1) This quite unique and prestigious affair, held in frescoed halls with simultaneous translation in three languages, was the Italian government's contribution to the International Year of Youth and the conference organiser had had some difficulty persuading them that it should focus on girls. True to the history of youth policy-making and services generally, the Italian officials assumed that all issues concerning girls had long since been resolved and were otherwise unimportant.

The atmosphere of the conference, however, belies its inauspicious and ambivalent origins. For the participants — criminologists, sociologists and the odd social worker like me — were mostly women and had both a personal and professional commitment to their subject. What emerged from the series of research presentations, concerning systems of childcare and juvenile justice widely diverse in other respects, was a consistent theme of girls as 'The Second Sex'; their needs and treatment obscured from view by research, policy planning and

practice which consistently, though not always explicitly, took as its starting point the needs and treatment of boys. Through this history of neglect little has been done to correct the 19th century image of the delinquent girl as a thoroughly abnormal, unfeminine and sexually promiscuous half-wit. First formulated by the founding father of criminology, Lombroso, this image shadows much of our thinking in child-care and juvenile justice today.

According to the classic formulation of female delinquency, the girl's greatest need is for protection from herself, from her maladaptive social and particularly sexual relationships. She lacks the innate ability to control herself and therefore must be controlled, or protected, by others. It is in her own interest that she be re-educated into appropriate, female behaviour which is chaste, obedient, caring of others and in all ways suitable for a future role as traditional wife and mother.

It is unlikely that anyone involved in the Children's Hearing System and Scottish child-care agencies would

subscribe to Lombroso's singularly derogatory and sexist views. Few would openly identify with his aim of restraining wayward girls in a domestic straightjacket. Yet the *intention* to do otherwise may not be enough. We must look to what the systems we are part of actually do to see how far we have come towards a twentieth century approach to the needs of girls.

Fewer than a quarter of all referrals to the CHS concern girls yet these are more likely to go to a hearing and more likely to attract a supervision

### **'We are failing to meet the needs of girls other than in the domestic context'.**

requirement than those of boys. The majority of boys' referrals, as is well known, are on offence grounds. According to studies which report young peoples' own accounts of their offending there is little to choose between the two sexes, so clearly some discrimination on sex grounds is occurring at the point of referral by referring agencies. (2) At first sight this may be seen to benefit the girls. It certainly brings fewer girls to the gateway of the CHS. However, the 'benefit' is double edged. Referrals on offence grounds are less likely to go to a hearing than non-offence cases, for the CHS is above all a protective system. It aims to meet needs not mete out punishment. And where welfare considerations are paramount, girls are more likely to have a hearing called than boys. They are also more likely to leave the hearing with a supervision order in force, and it is more likely than for boys to be a residential order. Like its European and North American counterparts, the CHS shows a greater tendency to intervene with its protective and supervisory measure with girls than boys.(3)

At the same time, these measures take a very limited form. Far fewer girls than boys on home supervision are referred to peer-oriented groupwork schemes (Intermediate Treatment) in the community. Their supervision is more likely to take the form of traditional social casework with the family. Girls on residential supervision are considerably less often placed in residential schools than in children's homes, where for boys it is the opposite. Again this could be seen as representing a more lenient approach to girls. However, the difference between a children's

home and a residential school lies not only in the scale of the institution, but also in its primary purpose. The task of the children's home is a quasi-family one. It aims to provide a quality of material and emotional care that the resident has missed or is missing from her/his own family. The schools on the other hand have a broader range of facilities to match their broader remit of meeting educational, social and even vocational needs of their pupils. The preferential use of children's homes for girls on residential supervision, and family social work for home supervision symbolises, perhaps, not so much leniency (both are intrusive and controlling in their way) as a view of the girl as primarily a domestic creature — less needful of friends, a varied social life, employable skills, than a sound family-type context.

The ultimate FAMILY placement is foster care, care and supervision by a carefully selected 'normal' family in the community. The current emphasis in the child-care system generally on this type of placement over that in an institution is increasing its use for boys and girls, particularly adolescents. For girls though, who enter care almost as frequently as boys under so-called Voluntary Provisions, foster care is and has been for the last decade the single most frequently used type of placement. It is more common than either an institutional one or care and supervision at home.(4)

To summarise the situation in Scotland, girls are less likely to be referred to the Reporter in the first place but when they are they attract a higher degree of intervention than boys. In the child-care system as a whole, girls are more likely than boys to be in care away from their own homes (58% of girls in 1984 and 53.5% of boys), the majority of them with individual foster families (33.1% of girls, 22.2% of boys). The theme of domesticity — their place in one family or another — dominates their treatment.

Whatever the individuals who make up the Scottish child-care system intend, the outcomes of their decision-making begin to look very much like Lombroso's prescription. We are failing to address the needs of girls other than in the domestic context. The treatment they receive prepares them for one aspect of life, family life, and one role; first as daughter then, for want of alternative role models, opportunities, skill development and encouragement, as wife and mother. Moreover particularly

where adolescent girls are concerned, we are probably still hooked on the girl's sexuality. The CHS referral ground 'Moral Danger' has been almost exclusively reserved for girls and official anxiety is at its highest when faced with a sexually active girl. Hearing and other background records frequently refer to this aspect of a girl's personal relationships — absent in boys' reports — together with comments on her physical appearance and general 'feminine' demeanour. When the agency I work in offers sex education as part of its service, referrals of girls come flooding in. The category of 'sexual delinquent' is with us still, and is firmly female despite the fact that when asked, boys admit to considerably more 'promiscuity' than girls.(5) In response to an official, but unspoken, fear of girls getting "in the (wrong) family way" they are directed into the right one.

The fear of girls' sexuality, of their deviation from prescribed norms of conduct proper to femininity and the female role, clouds the issues and dulls our vision of what else girls can do, be and aspire to. Where 'Lombroso rules' girls of any age are treated as precious infants; the help and supervision they receive fosters not their autonomy and human potential, but their dependence and limitations. If this consequence is unintended then clearly there needs to be a serious rethink of not only the nature of the services girls are fed into but also the criteria on which we assess the need for intervention in the first place. There is no better starting point for this rethink than the hallowed intention of meeting the girl's needs in *her* best interests. She may be 'at risk' (of

### **'official anxiety is at its highest when faced with a sexually active girl.'**

exploitation or abuse by men?) and need to be protected. But we must be clear that the risk is a tangible one and not some vague fear, for it is in that area of subjectivity that the most questionable and unjust assumptions about the female sex lurk. The protection must be such as to free her from guilt about circumstances for which she was not responsible. At the same time, it must respect the ultimate responsibility she has for her own life by helping her develop the social skills and knowledge she needs to take care responsibly of herself.



This is particularly crucial for adolescent girls — an increasing proportion of the 'in care' population — for whom protection suited to younger children can be infantilising, stultifying and counterproductive. As much as their male peers, girls need adventure, discovery, and broad horizons to look over. They need satisfying and creative personal relationships, particularly friendships, from which they get as much as they give. They need to discover the scope and limitations of their own capacities in a range of social activities. They need the physical and emotional space to discover themselves.

We need to reconsider whether 'the family way' is really the best way to meet these needs. What does the girl learn in a family, or quasi-family setting, that she cannot learn as well, or perhaps even better, in a peer-group setting? Why are family settings preferred for work with girls in care? Our treatment of girls is more often than not taken for granted, being part of that body of knowledge that 'everybody knows'. But it is surely

**'As much as their male peers, girls need adventure, discovery, and broad horizons to look over.'**

time we looked again into that common knowledge and became much more explicit and systematic about the reasons why and ways in which we respond to the vulnerability and/or antisocial behaviour of girls in trouble. Unless intervention is approached systematically with careful monitoring of criteria and outcomes, then unintended consequences call the tune.

#### References.

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4. Warren, J. Girls and the Scottish Child-Care System, *Viewpoint: Ideas Exchange*, No. 42, ITRC, Glasgow.
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# DABBLING IN PROFITABLE FUTURES

## An Interview with Bruno Bettelheim

Bruno Bettelheim, recently retired as Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Chicago, is one of the world's leading child psychologists. Born in Vienna in 1903, he trained there as a psychiatrist. He was imprisoned by the Nazis in concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald — an experience that caused him to revise earlier approaches to problems of the mind. In middle age he moved to North America where he achieved considerable recognition for his work with disturbed children. Having published many books and having lectured widely, he was in London recently to promote his latest work **A Good Enough Parent**. He talked to Derek Rodger for **The Scottish Child**.

As we walked upstairs to his son's flat, he told me that he'd just got in himself from the airport. Tel-Aviv. An international conference on children in a technological age. 'Kids sitting at computers,' he explained. A load of nonsense he felt. 'What can young children get out of computers? If they can't play, it means nothing to them. So what can I do for you?' ... Down to business.

Was he aware of current British preoccupations? Something about child abuse in the news, he volunteered. We were in the midst of the July media avalanche on the Cleveland child sex abuse controversy, together with the Manchester police authority's scouring of Saddleworth Moor for twenty-five year old child corpses. The main thing to realise is that the sexual abuse of children is as old as the world itself. He couldn't talk of the specifics of the British situation, but... a psychoanalytic perspective would suggest a voyeuristic

motive — the same as with pornography. Maybe on a general societal level we can't order our own sexual relations so we put the burden onto children.

As for responding to specific incidents of child abuse, he didn't know about foster homes in this country, but in North American institutions things can be pretty bad. So bringing in the forces of law-and-order should maybe be the last thing to do.

You see, he expanded, the emotional damage is as great if not greater than the physical sexual intrusion. And of course on the child's part there will always be great ambivalence about the parent as protector being taken away as a consequence of the child's word. Instead of heavy-handedness, we need to educate people to become good enough parents. And that's not going to happen overnight — people can't grow out of their skins. You have

to be talking about change over several generations.

So bringing in the police, and professional passions being raised, and a sensational press really didn't do much good that he could see. These abusing parents were still the parents. You could really only work to limit the damage.

'But look...' He was objecting to this line of enquiry.

'I didn't write this book because of preoccupations about sickness or child abuse. I wrote it for parents who are interested in and capable of becoming good enough.' Mistreatment of children is not confined to the poor. It doesn't follow either from wealth and opportunity that people are happy. In the Los Angeles area (where he now lives), people in general enjoy standards of wealth better than anywhere. They suffer still from unhappiness and doubt. Life is impersonal and isolating. You could say they are the victims of their



Bruno Bettelheim Photo: Derek Rodger

own success. They want their children to be successful. Achievement is everything.

'But kids just want to be themselves — they just want to play — and they should be allowed to.' It's important to play, unstructured, with adult supervision but without adult interference. How else can a child get a sense of himself if he doesn't get the chance to be himself? But adults in a technology-dominated, achievement-oriented society always seem to want to overstructure. 'Now is the time for schoolwork, time for homework, time for music lessons, time for reading, time for team games. By the time kids come to college, many of them are burnt out. They can't be themselves because they've never been allowed to be. If you don't read any other section of the book,' he implored, 'read the section on play.'

Well that was interesting. That was just the section this reviewer, when preparing for the interview, had

skipped. Too frivolous looking for my adult 'achievement-oriented' mind?

Maybe.

'Going to school at age 6 or 7 as they do in America is another thing.

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**'Now is the time for schoolwork, time for homework, time for music lessons, time for reading, time for team games. By the time kids come to college many of them are burnt out. They can't be themselves because they've never been allowed to be.'**

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It's far too young. Too young for all this number and language work. It's really all to do with pushing children on. If kindergarten is about play, then that's different — parents need a

break too. But when people are talking about early education, they really mean early cramming."

And supermarkets. Mothers spend time shopping and the kids have to go with them.

I said I call it factory shopping.

'That's just it. The technology takes over. Kids want to touch. They can't touch. Kids want to interact. Nobody speaks to them. Kids want to be with their mum. Mum's attention is taken up by the rows of merchandise, and typically — mum loses her child in the crowd.'

'When I was little,' he explained, and we were time-machined back to Austro-Hungary under the monarchy in the years before World War I. Little Bruno would go with his mum, holding her hand, into each separate shop for the bread, meat, the fish etc. Every one entailed personal attention, a conversation, local gossip. They might, his eyes twinkling here, even talk about politics! Think how much

more parents and their children get out of that style of shopping.

Well, now that you mention it, I can't recall myself ever having had a political discussion with a supermarket check-out assistant. By that stage my kids are usually climbing the walls and I want OUT.

What did he think a psychoanalytic perspective can contribute to today's parents? A spontaneous and immediate answer here. 'An awareness of the existence and power of the unconscious.'

He elaborated. Unconscious motives determine behaviour, and they can with effort be used. Parents can get into trouble if we attempt to operate only with what's conscious. Take this striving for success — get good grades, get a degree, be a social success, get a good career — that's the conscious part. The unconscious and often unaddressed agenda is that if my child is indeed successful I'll lose him — and I'll lose my status as a protective, valued parent because he'll be gone.

The potential of parents as

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**'Kids just want to be themselves — they just want to play —and they should be allowed to.'**

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individuals ourselves is also released in a positive sense through addressing unconscious material. We relive our own childhood through our children. So we can learn about ourselves. A mother (he talks about her in the book) came to him for advice about her son's panic attacks when taken into the city on shopping trips. He would have massive tantrums on the street, dig his heels in and refuse to move. Very distressing. Mother was invited to talk about her own experiences. And what came out was a long repressed episode when she had been lost as a child in the city. Consequent feelings towards her own parents had been left unresolved for decades. So when her own little boy was walking along a busy street, mum was unconsciously passing on her own fears and anxieties — thus literally rooting him to the spot. By working all this out, and becoming more at one with her own motives, the mother was able to relax more on trips to the city and the tantrums vanished.

Doesn't this, I wondered, take us back though to the question of what life is like for those parents who are denied opportunities for self-

reflection? Like those who have to bring up their children in cramped conditions, in poverty, in unemployment or in jobs where they are not themselves valued — those members of what has been described, in the buzz word of the moment, as the 'underclass'?

He now hesitated. Then he supposed that in a way psychoanalysis was something of a luxury — it is time-consuming and expensive. We're talking about a modern problem, he felt — food and shelter have to be attended to before the emotional life — you can't do therapy with a starving man. Psychoanalytic theory can do some things for some people, but it can't change the world.

So what about when things do break down in families and children do have to be cared for in institutions? I didn't notice anything in *A Good Enough Parent* about how institutional parents could operate.

'Look...'. He was objecting again. He'd written books about responses to disturbed children. This one's about parenting which aspires to be good enough, since not even 'experts' can be perfect.

Yes I had noticed that against the grain of conventions on the authority and distance of the 'expert', he actually describes in great insightful detail his own not always flattering experiences as a child.

This is vitally important he felt. Nobody's perfect.

We were fooling around now — playing really you could say — with photographs and conversation. A photographer (from another newspaper) had arrived and was talking about his baby son — 'what should I do if...?' he asked.

Just enjoy him, said Bruno Bettelheim. Play with him. Let him dabble around.

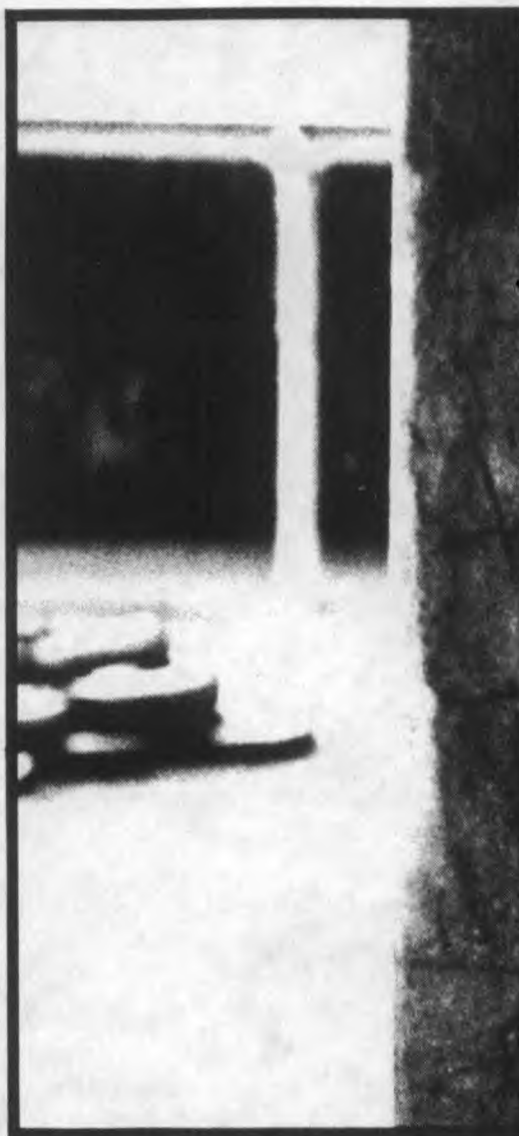
That's the best investment you can make in anyone's future.

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#### Correction

In Douglas Wilson's article 'Change by Consent' in the last issue of *The Scottish Child* the sentence that began — 'of course this is partly true...' should have read 'I...would argue that there is common ground...'.

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I wanna go home  
I don't want to stay  
give up education  
as a bad mistake...

(The Headmaster Ritual, from *Meat is Murder*,  
The Smiths)

In primary seven our teacher was also deputy-head of the school, hence she did not devote as much time to us, (the class), as other teachers. A part-time teacher was brought in to take us Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and our (still) main teacher took us on Mondays and Fridays. This led to an unsettled atmosphere, especially on the eve of the substitute teacher's days. Our class became troublesome and got a school-wide reputation for it. The majority of the class was involved in this misbehaviour, needless to say, some more involved than others. A particular threesome, including myself, was nearly always to blame. We, (in retrospect), were probably ahead of the rest of the class, intelligence-wise, as we always done extremely well in tests and, (when we put our minds to it), in general classwork. This could and probably did lead to our two



Alan Hunter Photo: Richard Milne

# LOOKING BACK

Alan Hunter gives the first in a series of childhood reminiscences. Readers are invited to submit short articles to the editor about significant events, people, etc in their childhood.

teachers becoming distressed at our obvious waste of talent.

Our school lives definitely changed after an incident just before our Easter holidays when the three of us were called into our deputy-head teacher's office — an ominous sign at the best of times. She then said she was going to forget all our

wrongdoings etc and give us a chance to redeem ourselves and get away from the pressure of school for a while. She pointed out that we could go on an arranged holiday at a bargain cost and made it clear that this offer was not going out to anybody else in the school.

This was not only extremely patronising but also highly embarrassing, even to us so young. We had no hesitation at all but to promptly turn the offer down. This clearly caused a very strange atmosphere between us and the teacher and indeed the rest of the class (who didn't know about the "holiday"). Our teacher started to speak to us in an embarrassed sort of way and this continued until the end of our primary days.

After this incident we did somehow start to behave and get on with our work, although I don't think it was connected with the offer. It made us realise, or indeed made us think, that the teacher thought our misdoings were a bigger problem to her than we had ever semi-realised. I personally feel that we got down to our work because we

got bored with all the hassles of trouble. It wasn't that we didn't enjoy it but just that we couldn't accept the cruel punishments (at least we thought so), like being banned from the football team — which had a disastrous effect on the results they got — and things like having our break-times taken away by making us sit in the janitor's 3 feet by 4 grey-walled, stiff wooden-chaired office. Some punishments were also a form of amusement, like the famed "LINES". They merely provided us with the challenge of finding a way to re-produce one line 200 times. Or writing in huge letters and saying we ran out of paper.

At the start of my secondary school, I found it a good opportunity to restart as it were, and do a lot of good work. In my first year I done very well indeed and in my second year I was put in high classes, bar arithmetic which I've always found unnecessary, even though it isn't.

After doing very well I then stopped working virtually altogether and I found myself once more in a lot of trouble. Strangely enough, this cannot be put down to changes in the people I was friendly with because I didn't change friends.

One aspect that I did not dislike about schoolwork at that time was the tests. I found them a kind of "show-these-teachers" thing, where by doing nothing in class and frequently not attending classes, I could still do very well academically. I achieved this fully. In one particular class I was excluded from the classroom permanently. This meant I done all the work (or supposed to) on my own in an empty classroom. So, in practice I was no longer involved in the teaching of this class. The teacher, who had a childlike vendetta against me, was more than a little annoyed I suspect when the class test results were read aloud in class and it turned out that I had achieved significantly higher marks than anyone IN his class. This made me happy to say the least.

I continued to truant and began to get very annoyed at everything to do with school. Halfway through fourth year I stopped attending altogether.

Alan Hunter is 17 years old and after a period of unemployment will be attending college in Edinburgh this autumn where he hopes to do Highers as a prelude to a course in a specialised subject.

# PARENT-TO-PARENT, TAYSIDE

## Information on Support for Parents of Handicapped Children

"There seemed to be a conspiracy of silence — everyone seemed to know except us".

"I just wished someone would take time to sit down and talk to me".

"I would have liked a parent visitor, someone who had been through a similar experience, right at the beginning when everyone was feeling sorry for me but useless because of embarrassment".

These comments by parents of handicapped children express the feelings of isolation and helplessness often experienced at the early stages in hospital after diagnosis. The Parent to Parent Tayside project is a self-help initiative designed to help parents overcome these feelings. Local parents, who themselves have a child with special needs/handicap, will offer their time and experience to support families who would welcome such help.

**Background** The ideas for the project were generated at a SCAFA conference on Early Counselling in Edinburgh in 1985, which was attended by a number of workers in Tayside. The White Top Foundation funded my post of part-time Development Officer, and a secretary. We started with a steering group of people from different professions and parents from throughout the Region. My job was to work with the steering group in exploring the field of handicap in Tayside and identifying the ways in which the services for parents of children with special needs could be better met. A study conference in November 1986, which many parents attended, highlighted the wide variation in services in different areas, and it was this conference which identified the need for a Parent to Parent project and training for the parents involved.

In the past, there has been some conflict between professionals and self-help groups, partly due to the fact that support services are organised according to professions and institutions, whereas self-help groups propose a care system that starts from a holistic approach to the problem, ie the problem as people experience it. The World Health Organisation has shown a particular interest in the development of self-help groups in the past few years. The Tayside

project draws upon the thinking of the International Information Centre on Self-Help and Health. I would therefore like to emphasise the summary of the 1981 Leuvan workshop which stated that,

"Participants in self-help groups and activities benefit emotionally, socially, physically and mentally by coming together with others to share and work out a way of solving, alleviating or living with a particular problem".

**Aims of the Project** The Parent to Parent Tayside scheme will start to operate from 1st September and is for any family in Tayside or North East Fife with a young child who has special needs, no matter what the disability.

Its aims are:-

- To offer contact with other parents in a similar situation.

- To offer emotional and practical support on a one-to-one basis, both at the early stages in hospital and later in the home.

- To help parents find information on local voluntary and statutory services.

- To increase public and professional awareness of the value and importance of self help.

**How it will Work** Parent contacts are volunteers who themselves have children with special needs. All volunteers will attend an additional course of preparation and will receive on-going training to meet the special needs in their work as parent contacts. All volunteers will meet on a regular basis to exchange information and provide mutual support. One training course, involving local professionals as well as the SCAFA Training Officer and myself, has already taken place. It ran for nine sessions in the evenings and involved fourteen parents, all of whom lasted the course. The training was tough and experiential, focussing on listening skills as well as more practical matters. Another course is being planned. The scheme is not about professional counselling; this will be undertaken by others who have a professional responsibility for the families and children concerned. We also recognised early on that there will be many other tasks which the Parent to Parent scheme will involve in addition to the "contact role", so

that all parents will be able to contribute in one way or another even if they do not wish to undertake the training course.

The scheme will have a co-ordinator, who will receive the initial referrals and ensure that communication with referral agencies is maintained. The co-ordinator will also be responsible for assessing the needs of parents referred, allocating parent contacts, organising initial training and arranging regular group meetings to discuss difficulties and coping strategies. In addition, the steering group will become the management committee and continue to represent parents, voluntary agencies, social work, health and education.

**The Future** The initial agreement that the scheme was complementary to existing services and not an alternative to them has proved to be one of the important factors in the wide ranging support that has been achieved. Another critical factor was the involvement of many people in the training programme. For example, the staff at Ninewells Hospital were involved both in the planning and in the training sessions, and this has now become a reciprocal arrangement in that the parents' viewpoint has become a component of both health visitor and medical student training in the area.

At present, we are negotiating with the Regional Authority to explore ways of continuing the work after Trust Fund money runs out next February, and the Parent to Parent scheme itself is considering whether it might best be independent or attached to some other agency.

This model, along with one or two others, will be further explored at SCAFA conferences in Pitlochry on 19 November and in Glasgow on 26 November.

If you would like to know more about the scheme, please contact me at the address below.

Grethe Thomson  
Development Officer/Parent to Parent Co-ordinator,  
SCAFA, Wallacetown Health Centre,  
Lyon Street,  
Dundee.

Telephone: (0382) 459608 Ext 25

# A PUT-UP JOB

Well, it happened! And on the principle that it's always best to get your worst fears out of the way first, it's maybe just as well. But funny, it was not.

Weeks after moving to rural Argyll, 'what would happen if one of us was seriously ill or injured?' took on all too real proportions. A cycle run with my 9 year-old daughter — a steep gravelly incline — she is screaming in fright (in retrospect always a good sign — conscious and breathing) as blood is gushing from a head wound caused by her collision with the unyielding road. Three miles from home, 25 from the nearest casualty ward, and not a human soul in sight.

'Just you wait outside!' said the doctor an hour and a half later in Dunoon hospital. Having managed to stop the bleeding, cart her back home, fend off mum's panic-reaction accusatory questions — how fast were you allowing her to go?; having negotiated at speed the single-track B836 without murdering a single caravaner, and standing there in my blood-stained T-shirt and baggy sweat pants, and feeling just a touch shocked and bad about the whole thing, I said,

'No. I'll stay with her.'

'Come on now. We don't want another casualty, ha, ha,' he humoured.

His hand then reached persuasively to my arm. He squared up his not inconsiderable frame, looked me straight in the eye and demanded, 'Come on now!' This in a tone which was half command and half 'leave this to us'. From whence it came, in the state I was in, I know not. Whether it was the steely stare, or whether it was the words, 'John Bowlby, separation and loss; you should read him,' I'm not sure either. The effect was the desired one. He let me stay.

Not before he'd given me his opinion of this particular authority though. Yer man, at the sharp end of health care, the front line commander on that afternoon of emergency medical services to the south Cowal peninsula had an instant view.

'A load of rubbish that stuff,' he retorted.

A dozen paper stitches and an anti-tetanus later, having buried a passing thought that maybe he wanted me out of the way to establish better if this was a genuine bike accident or whether, in the current climate, I'd battered or abused her, I was feeling a bit calmer.

'I suppose,' I ventured chattily seeking reassurance, 'it always looks worse than it actually is when there's all that blood about?'

As the goal opened up in front of him, he fired home the equaliser here.

## THIS DIARY

'To the layman, it does,' he informed me.

One all.

Not a bad result, I suppose on an away ground when your pre-match preparation's been a bit wobbly.

But then professionals, as well as parents, have been in for a hard time of it in recent months. This Diary cannot justifiably allow the Cleveland child abuse tragedy and debacle to pass unremarked. Nor its implications in the Scottish context.

The *Glasgow Herald* in an editorial of 26th June, saw the problem very much in terms of procedures.

'In Scotland, social work procedures appear to be much tighter, thus largely avoiding cases of this sort' — where children are actually murdered. Neither social workers nor children can win, the *Herald* opines, 'until a new approach with widely agreed procedures is thrashed out for all the caring services.' The *Herald* also wants teachers included.

I don't suppose we've ever been very good at open discussion of sex in Scotland. Maybe Scottish teachers should not be singled out for hesitancy here either. As long as the whole question is restricted to getting the procedures right, and purveying the myth that since we have our panel system, this sort of thing can't happen here, then we successfully avoid looking at the uncomfortable fact that all this abuse is actually going on. In Scotland, Cleveland, and elsewhere in "Maggie's Britain," if big is best, the weak — be they trade unions, immigrant workers, hippy convoys, unemployed punks, or three year olds being buggered by their step-fathers — shall perish.

Stuart Bell, Labour M.P. for Middlesbrough at one stage indicted his local Labour-controlled social services people for exaggerating the scale of the abuse. 'A put-up job' to get more funding was how he described it. Mr Bell, interestingly applauded by the more reactionary elements in the Conservative Party for his contributions to the affair, sides with the traditional authorities of police and parents. Professionals are seen as interfering where they shouldn't, and children, of course, don't have votes. Sexual politics in the doughty North East, as in Scotland, is something that's just a figment of the London Labour loony left imagination after all!

Just who's been the victim and who's the perpetrator of a put-up job is perhaps open to question. Stuart Bell keeps the traditional authorities in place, children continue to get abused, the *Glasgow Herald* and others want tighter procedures. Any signs of life yet, beyond midnight parliamentary games from the Scots Labour contingent? Any glimpse of the light of understanding in traditional Labour or new right Tory circles that sexual relations just might be a mirror of the power set-up in Thatcher's Britain.

Just who, Mr Bell, do you think is on the receiving end of the put-up job..?

Derek Rodger

# REVIEWS

## Knickers to You!

Female Sexualisation

— a collective work of memory

Frigga Haug et al

Verso £24.95 and £8.95

Reviewed by Derek Rodger

'Girls must wear skirts; trousers are on no account allowed!'

'Bathing caps for swimming, girls!'

'It's nice to see the girls looking so nice in their frilly dresses.'

Overheard recently, these snippets surprise really no one. Just as there are expectations of what boys should be like to be masculine, little girls are brought up in a pre-ordained set of expectations. There is a view though, that little girls suffer less an encouragement to femininity, and more a bombardment of rigid rules as to developing womanly ways.

This recent study of female socialisation certainly takes this stance. Groups of women from different walks of life were asked to recollect in discussion and writing, their experiences of becoming female.

Hair, obligatory bathing caps notwithstanding, seemed to play a significant part for some.

'I realised for the first time how fashionable my hair had become,' wrote one woman recollecting a teenage visit to the hairdresser's. 'Long and curly, it attracted everyone's attention.'

Another remembered neighbours in her street saying, 'Such a shame it had to be the boy and not the girl that had naturally curly hair. It doesn't matter so much for a boy, but the girl could have been saved so much work and money when she got older.'

Experiences of hair-grips, bows, ribbons, slides and clasps are recounted, usually in terms of pain

and control. A high clear forehead, girls are told, in contrast to its low-brow opposite, is a sign of intelligence. Spoken only in whispered tones is the prohibited notion of entangling curls at age 10 or 11, fear that 'girls start to be interested in boys much too early these days.'

The body too is surrounded by codes of the acceptable — 'I must, I must increase my bust'; and the unacceptable. 'After I stopped

The agonies of conforming to an ideal are legion. 'Having a tummy becomes an immoral act.' Descriptions of the secret 'pencil test' for sagging breasts; and accounts of complex calculations of waist, chest and hip proportions collated with height and weight complete a picture of slavish obeisance to a belief in an acceptable female form.

It doesn't stop there though. Women talk of their study of the secret science of 'wardrobe engineering' — nothing to do with design furniture, everything to do with the possibilities of optical illusion. And knickers evoke the unspeakable, that which is not to be seen, the area, 'down there'.

There is a world of a difference in meaning between long white underpants or drawers (usually able to be pulled up under the armpits and distinctly non-sexual), knickers (status secret and ambiguous), and panties (clearly sexual). Mothers were reported as trying to pretend that underwear has no significance beyond hygiene. Daughters it seems yearn for the day that 'adult' underwear and tights can be worn.

Yet why the torture and guilt, the anxiety and the double standards? 'My mother would always quote, as if in sympathy with my plain looks — beauty is only skin deep. In the next breath she'd order — Stand up straight; you'll never get a husband slouched like that!'

Girls have a lot of complex and contradictory messages to make sense of.

Is hair sexual insofar as it can ensnare men in its tresses and curls? Is height a problem only when it reaches beyond the point of inferiority to the average make? Does tallness or strength in women challenge an unspoken assumption about the strength and protectiveness of males?

Protest abounds. Short hair, Afro cuts, punk styles and at the



growing and my height had stabilised at 5'11', my father suggested an operation he'd read about for shortening the thigh-bone. The muscles and the other bits and pieces would then grow back of their own accord. The legs would be treated one after the other rather than together. You could repeat the operation so that in the end you'd be a good four inches shorter. He would have liked to have spared me the pain of being too tall.'



extreme, shaved heads are not now uncommon. Some women talked of wearing mini-skirts in terms of protest. Because legs can be sexually attractive, showing them seemed to be 'a symbol of equal opportunity and sexual freedom,' despite the sexual investment they embody. The same could be said of wearing jeans and sitting with your knees apart.

But there is a thin line between the protest 'Afro' and the permed femininity of tumbling tousled curls. There is dangerous territory between 'looking your best' and looking like easy meat. And this is something which your average-looking bloke isn't confronted with. Women and girls talk about their bodies more in terms of inadequacy and guilt. The guilt trip has to start when the feeling occurs that my legs, my figure, my looks are not up to standard. A secondary layer of guilt is then cemented on when shortcomings have to be concealed by the trickery and deception of cosmetics and clothes.

Advertisers and the media do seem successful in touching women's self-perception. A recent fashion article in one of the 'qualities', in the course of 500 words used such telling phrases as 'a much classier profile', 'sassy sparkles', 'trusty classics' for 'glamorous first nights'. And this was about second hand bargains at an Oxfam shop! It could be that the notion of female 'elegance' and 'classy profiles' are a counterpoint to the image of men's workaday sweat and toil and dirt on the stock market and factory floor, or for that matter the angst of the dole queue. It is a configuration which may leave both sexes with a sense of failure to live up to expectations.

The experience of a 'liberated' mother is perhaps the most telling of all. 'Day and night,' her daughter wrote for a school essay on motherhood, 'you scrub the floor on your knees; your tired hands darn our worn-out socks by the dim light of an old lamp; hands hacked by the eternal washing up, etc, etc'. This provoked an outraged rebuke from the mother, a college lecturer, pointing out the wall-to-wall carpeting, the dish-washing machine and her job. The response from the daughter was immediate and spontaneous, in a tone of matter of fact honesty — 'I can't write that — that's not what real mothers do!'

# The Agony of the Teenage Hypochondriac

The Diary of a Teenage Health Freak

Aidan McFarlane and Ann McPherson

Oxford University Press £2.50 paperback

Reviewed by Paul Carter

Adrian Mole is a familiar name to most children. Now he is joined by Peter Payne, the creation of two doctors, Aidan Macfarlane, a child health doctor and Ann McPherson, a general practitioner in Oxford.

Peter's diary starts when he is 14 years one month. His hobbies include teasing his younger sister and worrying about himself. He has a mother who "noses into his private life all the time", a father who is a pest controller, two sisters and a cat.

The book starts with a review by Adrian Mole. He is clearly relieved to find Peter has copied a chart of lengths of penises from one of his father's books and that, by having a sneaky read of his sister's diary he has discovered a lot about periods and a bit about PMT. Both diarists believe this affects their mothers. "At last," Mole writes, "a book for Hypochondriacs and sophisticated teenagers like myself!"

Sometimes Peter cannot sleep for thinking about his girlfriend; once he gets up to hear his elder sister telling his mum she's worried she may be pregnant. He listens to the conversation for a while then retires, more insomniac than ever. At other times Peter's sleep is disturbed by his parents arguing — "discussions" his mother calls it. Like some of his friends whose parents have been divorced, Peter



worries at first when the arguments seem to be his fault.

He gets bad sunburn on holiday in France. Show-off younger sister translates the notice on the campsite (advice on safe sunbathing). Whilst recovering from his burns, Peter rummages through his medical dictionary and completes a questionnaire he's been given at school on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.

(The result is more readable and informative than any government literature). After being corrected about curing pubic lice by burning them with a lighter, and a couple of classic misunderstandings on contraception, he scores a "well done" from his teacher.

Whether through Agony Aunts, information leaflets, teachers or his mum, Peter collects answers to the questions teenagers (and adults) are mostly too proud to ask (or too embarrassed to answer). He gets onto topics from acne, dieting, glue-sniffing, sprains and sea-sickness to wanking and warts. Once or twice the authors nearly lose the book's momentum as the information content gets a bit turgid. Even Peter had enough of reading his elder sister's "Topic on Alcohol" — "Can't see why she got an A for this". Very occasionally too they seem to fudge the issue — perhaps too cautious to avoid the risks of controversy or of making the reader better informed than his or her doctor? These are the exceptions. For the most part the information is spot on — by whatever subterfuge it is woven into the text — and the best traditions of teenage diarists are upheld.

## Family Law in Scotland

Family Law in Scotland

J. M. Thomson

Butterworth £15.95

Reviewed by Alison Newman, Divisional Reporter, Lothian Regional Children's Panel

I wish this book had been available in 1978 when I was the "student studying Scottish Family Law as part of an under-graduate Law Degree" to whom Professor Thomson refers in his preface. It would from many a blunder have freed us! It would also by now have been out of date, for, as we are reminded in the introduction, one of the most remarkable features of contemporary Scottish Family Law is that much of the Law is of very recent origin.

For a book aimed at an under-graduate law student audience to be reviewed in *The Scottish Child* suggests that the book has a wider

reference than its primary audience. The author indeed makes clear in his preface that he hopes the book will be of use to the legal practitioner in Scotland, to Social Workers and to academics coming from outwith the Scottish context.

In its division of topics the book initially follows traditional legal ground, from getting married, the consequences of getting married on person and property, both movable and heritable, and then the consequences of getting unmarried by divorce. Professor Thomson deals at length with the new provisions for financial provision on divorce and with complications of ownership of the matrimonial home, Exclusion Orders and so forth.

These topics occupy the first 130 pages of the book — the remaining 90 pages are devoted to various aspects of the law concerning

children. This considerable weight attached to the law on children is in itself a welcome development.

The chapters on "Parents and Children" and "Children's Rights and Duties" cover largely traditional private law areas such as pupils and minors, tutors and curators, delict, aliment, legitimacy and illegitimacy. It is in the organisation of chapters 10 and 11 that Professor Thomson breaks radically new ground in his consideration of parental rights. Colours are clearly nailed to the mast in the introduction to the chapter:

"but within these parameters (parameters of the criminal law and the law of compulsory care) Scots Law gives parents the right to choose a child's religion, the right to decide how a child should be educated, the right to discipline the child, the right to consent to medical treatment on his or her

behalf and the right to determine generally the place and manner in which the child's time is spent. These parental rights are given to parents to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities towards their child. As a child gains in maturity, increasingly a child will wish to make important decisions in relation to such matters as medical treatment for him or herself. Accordingly it is submitted that the nature of a parental right alters as the child matures: beginning with the right to take decisions on the child's behalf, it will become, in time, a right merely to give advice to the child, and eventually, when the child gains sufficient maturity, even that right will cease.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the nature and extent of parental right. We shall consider a) who is entitled to exercise parental rights, b) the duration of parental rights and c) how parental rights must be exercised, illustrating the principles involved by considering several of the more important parental rights. It must, however, be emphasised at the outset, that this is one of the most controversial areas of contemporary family law and many of the issues to be discussed have not been subject to recent authoritative decisions in the Scottish Courts."

More extended discussions follows of each of the rights to which the author refers and there is a particularly useful section on the consent to medical treatment which makes clear the Scottish position, which has always differed from that in England and discusses Gillick in a Scottish context. I note in passing, however, that the footnote on page 167 which suggests that where parents refuse medical treatment because of their particular religious belief, that the child be removed to a place of safety and the local authority assume parental rights, is potentially misleading. It has been clear for a number of years that in an emergency situation doctors must simply decide whether or not treatment is required. There is a Health Service Circular on the topic and social work procedures could only apply, if at all, in non urgent situations. The suggestions that social work is the usual route is not borne out in the experience of the reviewer.

The focus in the following chapter on disputes about parental

rights on the welfare principle is again a refreshing one and it is interesting that disputed custody in divorce is subsumed in the general discussion about disputes about parental rights and is not thought to require separate treatment. It is useful, particularly for lawyers setting out in practice, to be clear that the Court in the vast majority of cases will be leaving alone the status quo for the children and that in effect, the children of divorcing parents have their future determined by those parents and not by third parties in the vast majority of cases. It might have been useful to have a reference here to the growth of Conciliation Services.

How pleasing it is to find "Children in Need of Care" in a book on family law. Previously, the provisions for state intervention in the lives of children, whether on a voluntary basis on a compulsory one through the Children's Hearing System, would be likely to be found in welfare law, criminology or criminal law, if they were covered in legal education at all. To find the topic placed firmly in the context of other legal provisions for children and their proper care and upbringing is very much to be welcomed.

Inevitably, in a book of this scope, the treatment of the subject is relatively brief and skeletal. There is always a balance to be struck between general description and procedural detail in accounts of this kind and this account comes down on the side of detail. I wonder if even law students could benefit from a more lively picture of the system in action, for example some information about who Panel Members are, how they are trained and operate, the setting of Children's Hearings, who is there and how Hearings conduct their business.

Some errors have crept in here. The footnote on page 214 tells us that "the Chairman may, however, tell them of the substance of the report if it is not against the child's interests to do so". The provision of the Children's Hearing Rule 19(3) is that the Chairman *shall* inform the child and his parent of the substance of the report.....if it appears to him that it is material to the manner in which the case of the child should be disposed of and that its disclosure would not be detrimental to the interests of

the child". Treatment of the grounds under Section 32 is potentially confusing — the numbering of the sections in the book begins following the numbering of the sub-sections in the Act and then departs from it as Sections (dd) become note (e) and the sequence is thereafter broken. There is an uneasy movement in and out of direct quotation (unacknowledged) from the Act and without a copy of the amended statute in one's hands it is not easy to see what is verbatim from the statute and what is comment. There is also reference in note (j) to a child being referred to a Hearing because he has absconded from a place of safety or the control of the person under whom he had been placed by a Supervision Requirement. That seems an elliptical way of compressing two sections of the Act dealing with children already in process. As many commentators have done in the past, I think Professor Thomson fails to convey the significance in the work of the Children's Hearings of the review Hearing and the power for review and variation of Supervision Requirements.

Is this the book for the non-legal reader of *The Scottish Child*? I expect readers unfamiliar with legal textbooks would find the legal apparatus of this book difficult — even simple legal terminology which is familiar to the practitioner can defeat the non-lawyer; would the non-layer for example always know who a "pursuer" and a "defender" are or what it means to "alienate property"? Lawyers' legal tags, untranslated, tables of cases and statutes, and the very particular way in which lawyers use quotations from case law to exemplify general statements of law are potentially confusing and off-putting. I suspect that the specialist in adoption work or compulsory care proceedings requires more information than is here and that non-lawyers need more guidance about evidence and procedure. That said, this book does provide a clear account of areas of law which have not been available in accessible book form before. Many of the arguments which Professor Thomson advances, particularly in relation to children and parents and the vexed concept of parental rights as well as in his introductory essay, which is a masterpiece of brevity and clarity, are worthy of a wide audience.

# THE SCOTTISH CHILD AND THE LAW

## Safeguarders in the Children's Hearing System

Early issues of *The Scottish Child*, e.g. issues 4 and 6 of the first series, reviewed the coming into operation of Safeguarders within the Children's Hearing System. Indications were given by the Scottish Office that there would be research done into the first 12 months of the operation of the system and on a report on this was given at a recent Safeguarders' Seminar on 16 June 1987 by Dr. Joseph Curran of the Central Research Unit of the Scottish Office.

Dr. Curran reports that at July 1987 there were about 105 Safeguarders in Scotland. About one half were practising solicitors, a quarter had a social work qualification and about one in seven had been members of the Children's Panel. Invariably practice differed between Regions on selection and appointment of Safeguarders. For instance, somewhere in the region of 100 appointments were made by Sheriffs in the first 12 months of the operation of Safeguarders, in all but 6 cases on grounds involving alleged child abuse or child neglect i.e. applications in terms of Section 32(2) (c) (d) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act

1968. 64 of these appointments were in Strathclyde and 21 in Grampian, whereas only 2 were appointed in Lothian and 4 in Tayside. Interestingly enough, in the second 12 months of the scheme's operation, there were up to April 1987, 24 Court appointments in Strathclyde and 7 in Grampian, perhaps indicating a drop once the novelty of the system has worn off and the realities of what the Safeguarders' role encompasses have been learned.

In a similar period, i.e. in the first 12 months of the operation of the scheme, there were 48 appointments by Children's Hearings. Again, a large percentage, 56% were care and protection cases. 15% involved cases where parental rights were held by the local authority. There was an almost equal balance between male and female children, which is interesting when one reflects that almost three quarters of the children referred to Children's Hearings are boys. So far as one can tell, the numbers appointed per Region do not differ as widely as between Sheriff Courts and different Regions.

Impressions gained from Hearing Members who have sat on Hearings appointing Safeguarders or who have been on subsequent Hearings where the results of the Safeguarders' report has been considered, generally appear positive in terms of the supply of information, reactions gained from the family and in some cases, the appropriateness of the recommendation.

In terms of looking at the reasons why Safeguarders were appointed in individual cases, it would appear that about one in six involved cases where tensions existed between parents and the Social Work Department over such matters as access to the child. One in nine cases involved what can only be described as complex cases, that is cases where a decision is difficult to reach and further information is thus sought. Perhaps appointing a Safeguarder is almost being used as an alternative to seeking a further assessment.

Safeguarders have also been interviewed by Dr. Curran. While differing opinions possibly occur in many aspects of their work, there appears a strong view for Safeguarders meeting together

to be able to talk about their work and exchange experiences, which perhaps was identified as being the most appropriate and useful form of training. Considerable difference of practice occurs in relation to access of the Safeguarders' report. Some Safeguarders give this to the family, some to the Social Worker and some to no-one other than to the Reporter and Panel Members. A number are concerned that the important parties to the Hearing might attend without any knowledge of what the Safeguarders' view was.

Safeguarders view their role as important in their ability to be independent of any departmental views, free of the tensions in relationships between Social Work Department, child and parents, but some confusion remains as to their role, particularly in establishing a good relationship with a child.

In due time Dr. Curran will be supplying a fuller paper which will be circulated to all relevant agencies and will be the subject of further comment by *The Scottish Child*.

Malcolm Schaffer.

## The Reporting of Children Alleged to have Committed Offences

We referred in the last issue of *The Scottish Child* to the large number of children who are still reported in the first instance to the Procurator Fiscal in relation to offences alleged to have been

committed by them. In particular we commented upon the need for the Lord Advocate's Circular, which lists the categories of offences where the Police are obliged to refer to the Procurator Fiscal

in the first instance, to be reviewed.

It is therefore pleasing to be able to report that this is in fact taking place with effect from 3 August 1987. The Lord Advocate has now issued a

new direction specifically for the attention of Chief Constables in relation to which reports are submitted to the Procurator Fiscal in the first instance and this cuts down drastically on the

previously listed categories.

These have now been restricted to three.

1) Serious offences which require prosecution and indictment such as murder, rape, assault and robbery involving firearms or fireraising involving considerable damage.

It is appropriate that these remain cases where prosecution can at least be considered where such cases may require considerations of public interest which outweigh those of the interests of the child, which of course is the predominant feature of the Hearing System.

2) Offences alleged to have been committed by children 15 years or over where in the event of conviction, disqualification from driving can be considered.

Here there is a change in so far as the Circular previously referred to Road Traffic Act offences committed by children 14 years or over. There may be cases involving children over the age of 15 who commit offences involving stealing cars or

other Road Traffic Act offences where it is appropriate to impose a period of disqualification which might still be in force when the child has qualified by reaching the lawful age of being able to drive. In these cases, public interest might demand that prosecution is appropriate. In practice, this is rarely the case and the raising of the age limit is therefore welcomed.

3) A child over the age of 16 but still on supervision can still be referred for prosecution by the Procurator Fiscal in either the Sheriff or District Court.

In line with current practice and policy, this is also probably appropriate although further consideration needs to be given to the disposal for children between the ages of 16 and 18 who are in trouble and this may be encompassed within the coming Child Care Law Review.

There should now be a considerable reduction in the number of children referred in the first instance to the Procurator Fiscal. In

particular, those charged with an offence which involves the possible forfeiture of a weapon, those co-accused with an adult and those who have attained the age of 15 years 9 months but are not yet 16 can now be referred in the first instance to the Reporter.

Complications could continue and a lot will depend upon the links which are established between the Police, Reporter and Procurator Fiscal. There will be occasions where the Reporter may need to consult the Fiscal as to whether it is more appropriate for the Fiscal to handle the matter — e.g. when a child is about to be 16 and the Reporter does not have sufficient time to deal appropriately with the case or where a child is co-accused with an adult, both are denying the offence and there is a large number of child or elderly witnesses. In those circumstances, perhaps there is a duty to the witnesses to prevent them being called out twice, to consider allowing the trial of the offence to be dealt with jointly.

However, these

circumstances will hopefully arise infrequently. There may not be a dramatic effect in the numbers of children dealt with at the end of the day by Reporters or Children's Hearings. The majority of referrals made to the Procurator Fiscal in the first instance have ended up with the Reporter in any case. It will, however, provide for a quicker disposal for the children alleged to have committed offences and thus answer some of the criticisms made in the recent work by SASD *Speedy Justice for Children* (also reviewed in an earlier issue of *The Scottish Child*).

This new Circular is thus welcomed. Much as *The Scottish Child* would like to claim the credit, in fact impetus has come rather more from Crown Office and from Regional Reporters who have argued for such change. That this change has come about is a mark of the confidence which is increasingly to be found in legal circles in the operation of the Children's Hearing System.

Malcolm Schaffer.

## LETTERS

### Another Language — Another View of the World

The conversation reproduced in *Talking Shop* in the Summer Issue of *The Scottish Child* makes interesting, if salutary, reading. The views expressed in this conversation regarding the bilingual education of children in the Western Isles, I understand to be those of parents of children who are being, or have been, educated within the Bilingual Education Project and we, as 'educators' would do well to listen to them. What at first reading might be taken as strong criticism of the Bilingual Project itself is, on reflection,

a criticism of the educators' failure to communicate to parents what the Project is all about. It is not that those who are and were involved in the Project do not have communication as one of their primary aims — 'to inform parents and the community and seek to involve them in the project' (Murray and Morrison, *Bilingual Primary Education in the Western Isles Scotland 1984*) Meetings have taken place between officers of the Council and parents in Knock and Stornoway in Lewis, Paible in North Uist

and Stoneybridge in South Uist to discuss the possibility of establishing Gaelic Medium Units in Primary Schools in those areas. Very often, however, communication to educators means, 'we talk and you listen!' It is interesting that the recent *Independent Evaluation of the Western Isles' Bilingual Education Project* (MacIntyre and Mitchell, 1987) should make just this criticism in an otherwise favourable Report: "Little sustained effort had been made however, to inform them (i.e. the parents) about Project ideas, and even

less had been done to involve them in the work of the schools."

Several discussion points came up in *The Scottish Child* "conversation," — the main ones being compulsion, work opportunity and disadvantage. Taking compulsion first; there is an element of compulsion in all education in that parents are required by law to have their children educated and local authorities are required to provide that education and strive to provide the best education

possible. When the Western Isles Islands Council adopted a bilingual Education Policy in 1975 it did so to enable the children within the area to make the best possible use of the two languages in current use. —Gaelic and English — and was indeed ahead of the prestigious Bullock Report (HMSO 1975) which found that "while the advantages and importance of bilingualism, both for education and for society, were increasingly being recognised in Europe and the USA, Britain was being left behind." The Report goes on to say, "In a linguistically — conscious nation in the modern world we should see it (bilingualism) as an asset, as something to be nurtured, and one of the agencies which should nurture it is the school." And the National Union of Teachers, *Mother tongue Teaching*, 1982, says it all — "To value language and culture is to value the child."

Of constant concern to parents are the opportunities for employment available to our children. Island children have, unfortunately, had to leave home early and in great numbers to find these opportunities, but wherever we live, few of us find employment on our own doorsteps. However, since the

introduction of the bilingual project in the Western Isles, more jobs have been created and islanders have actually been returning to their homeland. And as the Project has expanded more job opportunities have been created — many of them in areas outwith the education system, in local authority services, social services, broadcasting, publishing, etc; again generating opportunities for spin-off in leisure, recreation, shops and so on.

The question of *disadvantage* is one that occurs frequently within the Gaelic/English context, as if English were the only language through which education and by implication 'advancement' can be achieved. I can remember a policeman from the islands being in our house in Glasgow and telling my mother and father that they should not be speaking Gaelic to my brother and myself — it would keep us back in later life. That was why he himself had never got promotion. Precocious child that I was, I wondered if the dribble of egg yolk which had hardened down the front of his tunic might not have been the cause of his non-advancement rather than his

ability to speak Gaelic — both the sergeant and inspector on his shift were Gaelic speakers and his own uncle had retired with the rank of Chief Superintendent and had never abandoned his mother tongue! Again research into bilingualism has proved that those traditional fears are groundless, and indeed demonstrates that, rather than having a damaging effect on English proficiency, the mother tongue can actually help in the acquisition of a second language, "whilst also being a positive force in all-round intellectual development" (Report by the Education Officer to ILEA Education Committee, 1982). The Independent Report on Bilingualism in the Western Isles, already referred to, also comes to the conclusion, that, "the evidence provides reassurance, if it is still needed, that the maintenance and development of children's spoken Gaelic can be promoted, without any detectable cost to the concurrent development of their spoken English."

The facts therefore speak for themselves. However as professional educators, whose job it is to assemble, read or produce these facts, we seem to be fairly adept at keeping

them to ourselves. If parents are to have confidence in our policies we must have proper discussion with them, listen to their views and answer their questions. The bilingual policy of the Western Isles Island Council is a courageous and outward-looking policy, giving the children of the islands an opportunity to view the world through two windows. It is also a policy being adopted to a limited extent by Strathclyde, where the Glasgow Education Division has established the enormously successful Gaelic/English bilingual unit in Sir John Maxwell School.

David Houlton and Richard Willey in their Schools Council Publication maintain, "By encouraging children towards bilingualism, where mother tongue and English are used with equal competence, the school will be helping them to make a full contribution to this changing world. They will then become a valuable resource for the whole society."

This is the situation in the Western Isles. Spread the word!

Chrissie Bannerman, Lecturer, Jordanhill and St. Andrews Colleges of Education.

## Trends in Referrals to the Reporter

In the last edition of *The Scottish Child*, Russell Forrest, on the basis of the 1986 Annual Report of the Children's Hearing System in Lothian Region, poses the "vital" question "we learn from Alan Finlayson, Lothian Regional Reporter to the Children's Hearings of a sharp drop in the number of offence only grounds of referral matched by an upsurge in cases involving abuse and neglect of children. In the circumstances in which we find ourselves (those of spiritual poverty) this change in the pattern of referrals leaves open the vital question of where the former majority of offender referrals has gone".

Sad to relate these offence referrals are still within the system, although not in such numbers as was previously the position. The same Annual Report shows that as at May 1975 there were 4136 referrals to Reporters in Lothian on the basis that the children had committed offences and that at May 1986 the relevant figure was 2736.

Neither the 1986 Report nor its predecessors claim that this reduction which has been a gradual one over a period of 11 years is attributable directly to the Children's Hearing System. Indeed, in Annual Reports I have emphasised that the incidence of referrals is

affected by a number of factors including reporting practice by the Police, detection rate and perhaps most significantly, the number of children in the population in the 14-15 year age band, still the prime ages for referral to Reporters. Perhaps some comfort can be gained from examination of the nature of offence referrals, which to an extent is only an impressionistic evaluation, that the level of gravity of offences committed by children has similarly tended to reduce over the years. Happily that "impression" is one shared by the Procurator Fiscal's office discussions as with Fiscals in cases jointly reported by the Police to the Procurator

Fiscal and Reporter has shown — which cases should include all crimes of gravity.

In accepting, however, that the 2736 offence referrals still form the bulk of the total year's referrals to Reporters of 3896, the 1986 Report comments on the Reporter's practice of non-intervention and no further action disposals. The 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act makes it clear that Reporters must only refer cases to a Children's Hearing where they believe that compulsory measures of care are necessary. We would contend that as is written in the report "Reporters' investigations, however, indicate that a substantial

number of these young people appear not to be in need of compulsory measures of care, are dealt with on that basis and are never heard of by us again".

That "basis" includes over the years an extension of Reporters' practice of individual and direct communication with children and parents, including on many occasions, seeking their views before any initial decision is taken.

I suspect that Russell Forrest and I would share a concern that the value placed on children by society is not as high as we or readers of *The Scottish Child* would wish. So far as referrals to the Reporter are concerned, whilst in many cases we are satisfied that the parents can and do exercise effective measures of care, supervision and control over their own children, we can become depressed at the apparently drab existences which many of these youngsters tend to have. Kilbrandon, from whom Russell quotes so fully, did envisage that on many occasions Reporters could divert children who were not

in need of compulsory measures of care to a network of support agencies which could enrich the children's lives. Sadly, these aims have not been realised and we deal daily with cases of youngsters who it would appear could find stimulation from activity based programmes run by adults that they respect. Scotland continues to suffer from a dearth of such programmes and the recent industrial action in schools has led to an unfortunate diminution of sporting and other activities which were previously enjoyed by so many. One could even speculate that the apparent drabness of children's lives may lead to a reversal of the trend of offence referrals in the future.

What the 1986 Report attempted to exemplify was that over the years there had been a move from thinking of the Hearing System as being an extension of the Criminal Courts for youngsters who offended and did a bit extra on the side. It seems now that there is a recognition that the system has been established to

consider children who may be in need of compulsory measures of care for the various other categories contained in Section 32 of the 1968 Act. In particular, referrals to the Reporter of child neglect and abuse cases have virtually doubled in the same 11 year period referred to earlier. In contrast to offence referrals it is difficult in most such cases for Reporters to consider that parents can deal adequately with the problems themselves, leading to a substantial proportion of such cases being referred to a Children's Hearing. Such referrals tend to engender much more procedural and investigative work for Reporters and a considerable increase in the number of such Hearings for Hearing Members. Place of Safety Hearings are common, referrals on such grounds lead to more references to Court for proof, on average tend to result in more Review Hearings being held and all told, work emanating from such referrals is much more of the day-to-day diet for Hearing Members than was the case in the early years of the system.

As is readily recognised, the increase in such referrals is not evidence of an increase in child neglect and abuse throughout Lothian or indeed Scotland, since Lothian's experience is mirrored in other Regions. Rather it is evidence that professionals working in the field and society at large are becoming much more aware of the incidence of child abuse and neglect, as is exemplified by the increased awareness and referral rate of sexual abuse cases. It is also I would suggest evidence that the Hearing System is a forum in which such problems can be properly and constructively addressed and in referring yet again to Kilbrandon, a recognition that where problems are identified in the development of a child, that intervention in the child's life is more likely to be effective when help can be provided at an early stage, as opposed to waiting until the child comes to the notice by way of an overt act committed whilst over the age of criminal responsibility.

Alan Finlayson, Regional Reporter,  
Lothian Children's Panel.

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# NEXT ISSUE MAIN ARTICLE ON CHILD ABUSE IN SCOTLAND WINTER 1987

# LOOKING BACK

*[The page contains multiple columns of handwritten text, which appears to be bleed-through from the reverse side. The visible words include:]*

- I must not try
- in class.
- to act clever
- clever