Scottish Child

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school testing

FAILED

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Scottish Child

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We've Got the Power!

When's a good time to celebrate? Some people thought the government's about-turn on the poll tax was the chance. Others muttered dire warnings that 'it's not gone yet' and that we should 'wait and see'. It's not straightforward, celebrating success in the midst of adversity. One of the difficulties of trying to make the world around you better, and most of us are trying to do that in some way or other, is that it can seem as though no time is the right time to stop and enjoy a sense of achievement.

In this issue SCOTTISH CHILD looks at both sides of that coin - protest and celebration. We report on our TEARS AND PROTEST event, a unique occasion that brought together a wide range of people to think about these, and other, themes. We publish an edited version of Colin Chalmers' introductory speech on 'the containment of protest' where he looks at the problem of how we learn to protest or not, and having started, how we make ourselves effective.

The testing of children in primaries four and seven has been the big popular protest event of the late spring. Is it time to celebrate the demise of that too? We ask some of those involved in the campaign against testing what lessons they think the massive campaign against the government imposed tests holds for the future.

Other kinds of celebration are in the air. After twenty years of the Children's Hearing System, how do we assess its progress so far? Should we be looking at the 'lessons of Orkney' for the Hearing System? That's certainly one way - quite an easy way - of analysing the recent events. But SCOTTISH CHILD doesn't think what happened in Orkney is a 'Hearings problem'. If anything, it was about HEARING CHILDREN (or not), rather than children's hearings. And as for celebrating those twenty years - yes, why not - but lets not wallow in self-satisfaction about a system that has to cope with the results of the poverty facing thousands of families in our country - poverty that is getting worse, not better.

We have poems too, angry poems, that in their own way celebrate life. Not an unreal, whitewashed, don't-let-the-weans-see-that life; but a messy, unhappy, funny and altogether REAL life. Yes, 'this town is full of shite', as one line goes. Let's say it - and let's realise we've got more power than we might have believed to change that.

Killing Kids is Good for Business

BABYMILK

Thousands of babies die every day. They die at the hands of Nestle, the biggest supplier of breast milk substitute to the third world.

Milk substitute kills. Studies in urban Brazil show that bottle fed babies are 14 times more likely to die from diarrhoea and 3 times more likely to die from respiratory infections than breast fed babies. UNICEF estimates that one million babies a year die in poor countries from diarrhoea directly caused by bottle feeding.

Susan Cruz, a Filipina Primary Health Care Worker, left hospital in Baguio City in the Philippines five months ago, with a Nestle baby book and a free sample of Nestle babymilk, Nan. "When I left hospital, every service and product was itemised on the bill. I was charged for each cotton bud they used to clean my baby's eyes and for the single teaspoon of sugar put in the water they gave her, but the Nestle milk - given against my wishes - was absolutely free".

In this way, Nestle, the largest food multinational in the world, continues to lure mothers and babies into the $4 billion baby milk market. "Even a bottle or two in the first days reduces the likelihood of successful breast-feeding by one third", says Dr Richard Jolly, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF.

Nestle have flouted the World Health Organisation (WHO) codes of practice and supply free milk substitutes to hospitals or forget to send the bill. Once home a mother is forced to buy artificial milk which often costs more than 50% of the family income.

The European Commission has failed to support the WHO code on the promotion and selling of breast milk substitutes (perhaps it might have something to do with the European Community being the main supplier of the substitutes).

Without legislation to stop the killing of small children, Baby Milk Action (BMAC) has had to relaunch their boycott Nescafe campaign. Their simple message is that the biggest food multinational in the world is prepared to kill babies for profit: "We can't let them get away with it. Wake up to the facts. Not Nescafe". ■

Oliver Brookes

(BMAC) 6 Regent Terrace, Cambridge, CB2 1AA

Andrew Prentice

Not Just Another Bunch of Strangers

CRECHES

The last item on the agendas of most conference or course organisers is the provision of a creche, something added on at the end to make their event more attractive. Henry, Jane and Seamus founded the Edinburgh Creche Co-op to redress just this sort of unbalanced attitude: delegate the running of your creche to them, they say, and you can get on with running your event.

"We are trying to let people see that a creche should let the kids have a good time", according to Seamus. "While the parents are having a positive discussion the kids should be having a good day as well, and not feel that they have been abandoned to a bunch of strangers who just want to keep them quiet".

You won't find many workers sitting around on chairs at an ECC creche - they will be down on the floor, playing with the children. It is all part of the co-op's philosophy of meeting children at their own level.

"We treat the kids very much as equals", explains Henry, "We ask them what they would like to do in the creche. Obviously we have suggestions of different play activities, but we are open to playing their games as well, like pretend games and being asked to be really daft. Quite often it is a novelty for children to have that".

The co-op are proud of the way that the three full-time, and seventeen part-time, workers can respond to any demand. From a hundred kids playing with a parachute in a field at last summer's Day for Scotland, to long term creches at back-to-work courses. "We provide a unique service", according to Henry - not an idle boast, as they are mobile, have all the toys you could want and can turn up at short notice. All they need is an empty room.

Providing a professional service ensures proper health and safety, realistic children-to-worker ratios and a reasonable wage. But it can be hard work: often they are the first people at an event, have to interact with a bunch of new children all day and then clear up.

But all three obviously get enormous satisfaction out of their work, whether seeing the kids develop over a period of time, or the satisfaction of knowing that they go home happy. "How do I know the kids enjoy it?" asks Jane, "because they don't want to leave at the end". ■

Thom Dibdin

Edinburgh Creche Co-op can be contacted on 031-558 3319

The creche co-op at work Oliver Brookes

Country Life

CHILDCARE

Families living in towns know all about scarce childcare facilities. But try moving outside Scotland's main centres of population and you really begin to understand what scattered and inadequate services mean!

The fact is, as speakers at the recent conference run jointly by The Scottish Child and Family Alliance (SCAFA) and Grampian Regional Council confirmed, that many rural areas are experiencing a rise in population. The rise in numbers far outstrips the availability of childcare services at a time when the need is greater than ever. Poverty is a major problem for many families living in the country, where wages are frequently very low. Those who live in the country now are much less likely than were their predecessors to have the support of an extended family for help with childcare. Added to this is the difficulty of men finding work - women often have to manage a job to supplement the family income as well as looking after the children, while the male partner is away for long periods looking for work.

The SCAFA/GRC conference drew on the research of Dr Julia Palmer into childcare resources in four areas of rural Scotland: Donside and Buckie in Grampian; Rathford Lennox, also in Grampian; the Gairloch area of Highland Region; and Brae and Ollaberry in Shetland. Delegates heard from Kirsten aRogvi about the situation in Denmark which has the highest rate of working mothers of young children in the EC. In 1990 57% of Danish children between 6 months and 2 years old were looked after in public daycare. The figure rose to 67% for 3 to 6 year-olds.

In Scotland, playgroup and nursery places are available for mothers wishing - or having - to work, but they are sometimes more than twenty miles from the child's home, only open for limited periods and usually over-subscribed. The message to the conference from the mothers in the country was unequivocal - provide more and better childcare services for the under school-age child and for the child at school. ■

Rosemary Milne

You Can't Eat Surveys

POVERTY POLITICS

The **Drumchapel Youth Benefit Project**, under threat since it started giving food to homeless local kids, has been given a stay of execution and put on emergency funding while two groups investigate its role.

Greg Gallagher and John Crottie of the Drumchapel Initiative are preparing a report on the scheme while a research group looks into the extent of youth homelessness in Drumchapel.

The **Drumchapel Youth Benefit Project** caters for young people aged 16-18 who 'fall through the net'. They do not get Income Support because they are not old enough - they are supposed to be 'guaranteed' paid training placements, but there are not enough YTS schemes in the area.

The local training centre closed when the new local enterprise companies came into being. It was decided that kids should go to a Maryhill centre instead. Unfortunately the strength of local antagonisms was not appreciated - one was stabbed, another chased along the road. The lesson wasn't learned, and the next time two youngsters from Drumchapel ended up in hospital. This policy has now been dropped and Henry Boot, a Ford plant, now offers the only training avaialble in the area.

The Youth Benefits Project was forced to stop providing food parcels early this year when told that it was illegal for them to feed these young people. Since then the 'Area Management Group' has described the project as a "political hot potato" (rather ironic, when hot potatoes would go down a treat) and its funds are running out.

The people running the project claim the weekend food parcels are necessary to relieve the severe hardship of local youngsters who have left home - but a spokesperson for Strathclyde Regional Council said the project could not spend its money in this way: "They are not allowed to provide regular income maintenance. That would be taking on the role of the DSS".

The project is getting month-to-month funding until the reports are published this month. Meanwhile, £30,000 has been allocated to provide Drumchapel with a sculpture to make the area easier on the eye. £50,000 would keep the Benefit Project running for a year.

John Crottie, of the Area Management Group, says the project brought their problems on themselves: "It has always been on emergency funds, it is a chronic situation. They were a bit silly actually, they started giving out food parcels to get people to come".

The solution, according to Crottie is more bureaucracy: "The real problem is getting people to sit on a management committee. Effectively there's no one giving them any direction". He also suggests that youth homelessness in Drumchapel is not as serious as is claimed: "There's a dearth of information about the real problems of the area and who is tackling them".

Tommy Riley of the **Young People's Benefit Project** doesn't agree that information is what is urgently needed in Drumchapel: "This project is providing youngsters with £12.50 a week. It's not enough for survival in the long term. What do the kids do while all these surveys are going on? If you've got no money and no food there's only one thing you can do - steal".

Derek Turner, Deputy General Secretary of the Scottish Prison Officers' Association agrees that such social conditions make the job of the prisons more difficult: "It is impossible for us to have any input when the social climate outside is as bad as it is. It negates any work that has been achieved". But despite recognising this, the SPOA's do not see their role as taking on these issues: "We have enough difficulty campaigning for better conditions for officers and prisoners". ■

Stephen Naysmith

Tears and Protest

EVENTS

The Tears and Protest event organised by **SCOTTISH CHILD** as part of the third Edinburgh Science Festival was a great success. About 160 people came along and talked about all kinds of things - childhood, school, politics and protest, resistance to the poll tax, men and women's differing attitudes to tears and protest, child abuse, war and the war economy. The sort of things, as one delegate put it, that gets talked about over a pint in a pub on any Saturday in the year. In fact, these subjects were the kinds of thing that come up any time people really talk about themselves and life in general.

The difference was, of course, that instead of these matters being relegated to the status of casual conversation, they were given everyone's full and serious attention. That this opportunity was recognised by many people as uniquely valuable is borne out by the wide range of people who attended in terms of age group and particular interests.

Though the subjects being covered were important, and many of the stories being told were sad, this didn't mean that the atmosphere of the day was sombre. Instead it felt purposeful and upbeat. There were lots of little children around and they, the lovely weather and the good food provided by Alexis and her squad of helpers all helped to create a buzz of energy in the main hall and the discussion groups.

Over 75% of participants on the day were female. The creche was tremendously successful and so over-subscribed on the day that the Bridges Project supplemented with its own creche, to enable some more of the young adults it works with to come along. The Tears and Protest creche was run by the Edinburgh Creche Co-op and partially funded with assistance from the Edinburgh District Council Women's Unit. This, it is worth recording, was **SCOTTISH CHILD's** first ever local authority subsidy! It was invaluable in helping to offset the high cost of taking the Chaplaincy Centre, one of the few venues available on what was a holiday weekend.

There were two main speakers to begin the day's discussion. Kay Carmichael, whose book, **CEREMONIES OF INNOCENCE** was previewed in the December 1990 issue of **SCOTTISH CHILD**, spoke first about the suppression of tears and protest in childhood and its consequences for adulthood. Colin Chalmers, from **SCOTTISH CHILD**, focused on the problems that suppression of protest and the denial of abuse creates at every level, personal and political, national and international (an edited version of the speech, 'the containment of protest' is in this issue).

By the end of the day the main dissatisfaction that was being expressed was that, given the scope of the main talks and the challenging subject matter of the workshops which went on in the afternoon, there just was not enough time to deal with it all. The subject of tears and protest, once examined, appeared to have a Pandora's Box quality, awakening many memories and feelings and touching quite a few raw nerves.

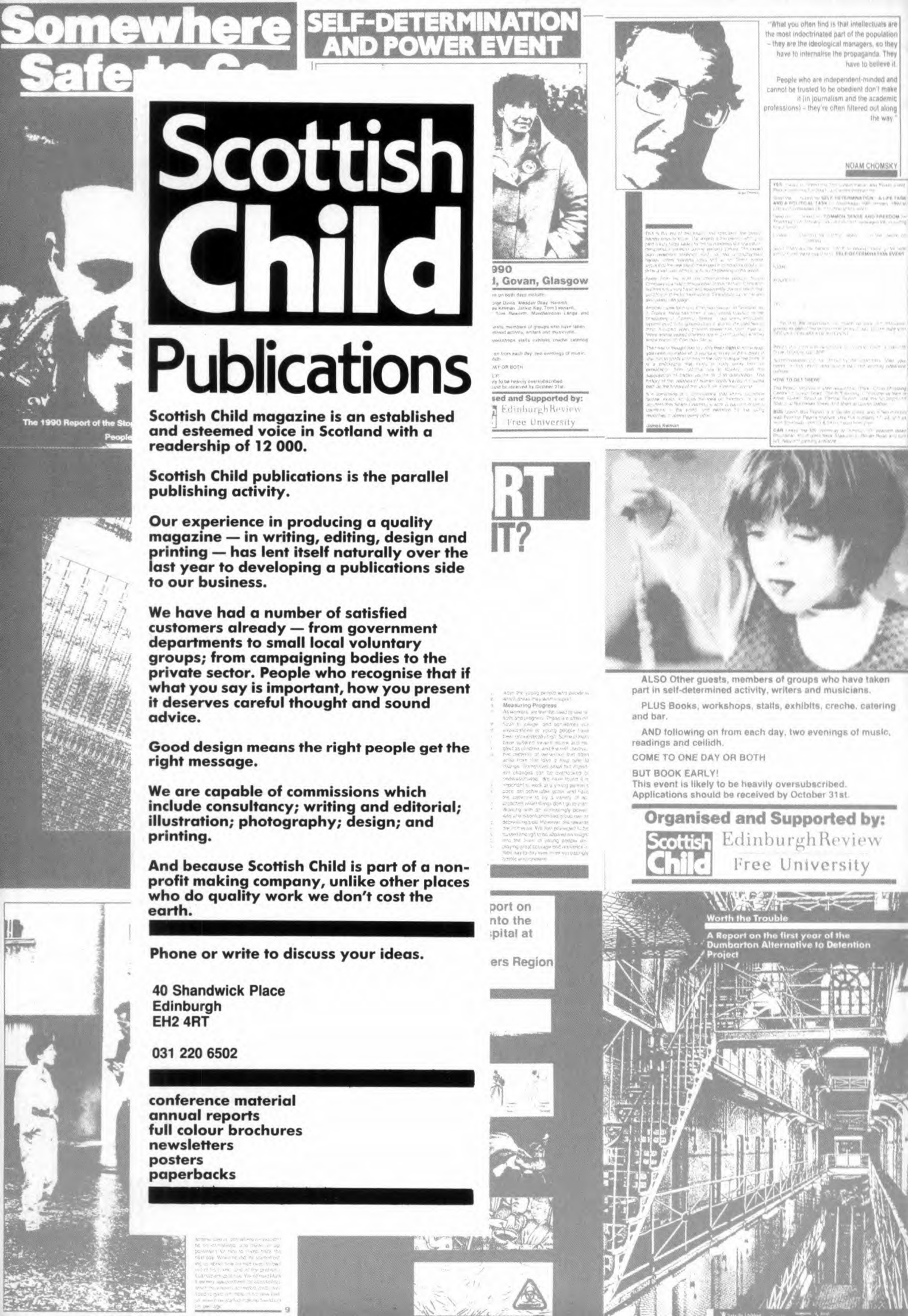
Everyone remembers different things about an event as crowded and varied as Tears and Protest undoubtedly was. What comes to mind, coming together at the evening event: Tom Leonard's burst of anger about the War in the Gulf, Janet Paisley's moving rendering of a poem about sexual abuse (see the new voices, new writing

section this issue), Rachel Grant's Maori song and - earlier in the day - the urgency of discussion in one room while children cavorted next door in fancy dress, the walls pinned with giant pictures. What comes next? is the question that invevitably follows a succesful beginning like the Tears and Protest Event. In this case the answer is a series of one day, small group workshops, on themes people felt needed more time than we could specifically devote to them on the day itself. The first of these are on Friday 31st May, on child punishment and Thursday 13th June, on child sexual abuse. These workshops are open to all interested individuals, professional qualifications or attendance at the original Tears and Protest event are not necessary. The workshops will each be run by two members of the **SCOTTISH CHILD** co-operative. Bookings have begun already.

Tears and Protest was not a 'glossy' or 'star-studded' event. In common with the Self-Determination and Power event in Govan in early 1990, it used the knowledge and resourcefulness of its own group to the full. The result was a day which relied on the energy of all those attending and brought forth insightful discussion and unusual meetings. ■

Alison Bell / Rosemary Milne

all photos Ben Thomson


Somewhere
SELF-DETERMINATION AND POWER EVENT
"What you often find is that intellectuals are the most indoctrinated part of the population – they are the ideological managers, so they have to internalise the propaganda. They have to believe it.
People who are independent-minded and cannot be trusted to be obedient don't make it (in journalism and the academic professions) – they're often filtered out along the way."
NOAM CHOMSKY
Scottish Child
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Scottish Child magazine is an established and esteemed voice in Scotland with a readership of 12 000.
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Our experience in producing a quality magazine — in writing, editing, design and printing — has lent itself naturally over the last year to developing a publications side to our business.
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Worth the Trouble
A Report on the first year of the Dumbarton Alternative to Detention Project

IN BRIEF

The photo above? Well it might not immediately look like one, but it's actually a pub.You may remember in the last issue we mentioned how Edinburgh, along with other local authorities, was keen to encourage a more child friendly attitude to kids in their city's **pubs**, and encouraged them to apply for 'children's certificates' allowing them to let in children in return for providing some basic amenities. There were initially about 100 applications, and the pub above - the Bridge Inn, Ratho - was the first to actually get its certificate. How many others have been successful so far? Well, one, actually. Let's hope Edinburgh gets its child-friendly act together a bit more to suit the 'we care about kids' stickers that seem to be appearing everywhere. ■

"**Team sports**... provide opportunities to develop character, discipline and competitiveness within defined rules - qualities that can be carried into adult life."

Mr Michael Forsyth MP, minister with responsibility for Scottish sport, spoke of the importance of team sport as a learning experience last month when he launched a £400,000 initiative to increase participation in school-aged team games by fostering links between schools, sports clubs and other interested bodies. Links lost in 1986 by the withdrawal of goodwill by teachers after being undervalued and underpaid for years.

Our football contact John Ball spoke out in reaction to Michael Forsyth's view of sport.

"Our team is totally uncompetitive, we see training as divisive and beating a visiting team as totally unacceptable. Any rules are varied according to which side the referee thinks most worthy and we often have an open discussion around his ideas."

Did he see playing football as being a model for how you live?

"Yes definitely, I either play as Gordon Strachan or Andy Goram"

And, where are you in the league?

"We always endeavour to find a place which is totally supportive"

Given Forsyth's views of sport perhaps the success of the his Party in Scotland has a direct relation to our footballing triumphs? ■

Have you ever watched that programme about the 'Scottish media' around Sunday lunchtime? It's usually got people from the (Scottish) **Daily Record** talking to people from the (Scottish) **Daily Express** about what's in the (Scottish) **Sun**. Our plucky little magazine has never had its arm twisted to appear on this programme, but then we're not owned by millionaire businessmen with an interest in 'opinion-forming'. It sometimes seems that money doesn't so much talk in the world of Scottish publishing - it swears. One only has to glance at the latest 'thing' to appear - the **Sunday** Social-workers-are-the-REAL-abusers **Scot** - to realise how awful things have got.

So when we heard that RadicalScotland, an independent magazine that has been able to survive for 51 issues, was going under, we thought it was a bit of shame - you might not have agreed with everything in it, but at least it was there. So we were a bit surprised to find out that the Radical Scotland team had packed it all in for 'positive reasons' - something to do with Scotland's 'much improved daily and weekly press'. Eh?

Yes, seemingly the magazine has 'played an important part in bringing Scotland to the stage where it now is' but things are moving so fast now, the magazine just can't keep up. So what stage are we at? Increasing unemployment, services threatened with drastic cuts, poverty as endemic as ever? Or 'widespread acceptance of our cultural identity' and general support for a self-governed Scotland? It all depends what you think's important, I suppose. ■

One Plus, Strathclyde's only lone parent organisation, has had its survival thrown into doubt after a decision by Glasgow District Council to stop funding the project after 7 years. The District Council argue that it is not within their remit, and are asking Strathclyde Regional Council to foot the bill of £67,000 for the project.

There are an estimated 25,000 one parent families in Glasgow, with 35,000 children, and the **One Plus Childcare Project** is the only project in the city that provides childcare for lone parent groups.

At the moment it is unclear whether the project will be able to secure funding from anywhere to keep it going. Glasgow District Council may give some money for a while, it is unclear if Strathclyde Region will provide the necessary cash and the project have approached the European Social Fund. Whatever the outcome, funding does not look like it will be as secure as it has been in the past, if it is there at all. Like so many projects doing innovative work, instead of being seen as a pilot for more generalised provision of much needed service, it has to struggle just to survive. ■

Oliver Brookes

testing times

After the defeat of the poll tax by popular action, the defeat of primary testing? Rosemary Milne talked to Judith Gillespie of Lothian Parents' Action Group and Raymond Boyle of the Parents' Coalition, following the successful resistance by parents to the government's attempts to introduce testing for primary four and primary seven children.

Both Judith Gillespie and Raymond Boyle seem a little amazed at the strength of the recent campaign by parents. Raymond Boyle is a school board member in a primary school in East Kilbride. In his school the result of the parents' ballot showed a staggering 92% opposed to the testing of their children. In Strathclyde as a whole, which has 53,000 children in the relevant year groups, 41,000 children were withdrawn from testing by their parents. Similar levels of opposition were recorded in all regions in Scotland except Borders and Western Isles which did not allow parents to withdraw their children.

From his work for the Parents' Coalition, Raymond Boyle reports widespread concern about the labelling and streaming of children and the disruptive effect of the testing process on the normal classroom work and atmosphere. Judith Gillespie adds that many parents feel that if testing and the publishing of results gets a hold, it would give further impetus to the creation of a two-tier education service. Many schools have already experienced the adverse effect of 'parental choice'. There is every reason to think that submitting schools to a grading process, based on test results, would sooner or later result in certain schools deciding to opt out. But her words sound a clear warning:

"The government can be in no doubt that testing has met this level of opposition not because a bunch of uninformed adults were led by the nose by a few activists. We have been amazed at the sophistication of parents' arguments against the testing and the energy of the campaign in almost every part of the country."

The tests which were carried out in April are one element of the government's new 5 - 14 programme, a curriculum development programme which will affect pupils from primary 1 to the second year of secondary school. There is little argument in Scotland about curriculum planning from the centre. Scotland has had a form of that for a long time and the Scottish proposals for the 5 - 14 programme are in the form of guidelines rather than instructions.

The controversy centres instead around the tests which were to be used to measure a child's achievement of the learning in each of the nine curriculum 'levels'. The tests were never intended as an absolute measure of a child's ability or skill in a particular area but simply a means of assessing where the child is with respect to the curriculum.

This presented two problems as far as this year's pilot tests were concerned. Firstly the curriculum changes to which the tests are tied have not yet been introduced - a temporary inconvenience which the government seems to have been prepared to overlook in its desire to get the tests underway.

Judith Gillespie explains that the second objection is, from the parents' point of view much more crucial.

"Because the tests were designed to measure a child's performance with respect to the curriculum, it is not easy for a child to go above the teaching level set by the teacher. It is quite possible however, for a child to manage less than the work of a particular level. This can lead to a form of 'streaming out of the weak', which is what has so angered parents. The problem is compounded by the circularity of the scheme: teachers choose the level of test to match the level to which they have been teaching the child. This is based on their own professional judgement of the child's ability as they have observed it in the classroom. You can see why teachers on their side complain that the test results end up being a kind of self-fulfilling prophesy."

These are far from the only criticisms which can be made. There are two tests for every child and each test has four question papers. Children being tested must sit at desks which are well spaced out so that no copying can go on.

The teacher is required to give undivided attention to the children being tested. Children not affected by the test must therefore work on their own while testing is going on. Parents and teachers complain that the model is an unworkable mixture of old-fashioned ideas about formal assessment and modern classroom methods of individualised learning programmes. There seems no doubt that the actual conduct of the tests constitutes a serious and prolonged disruption to normal classroom work.

It seems as though the government may have put the machinery into place for a well-disguised climb-down. The word is that tests are to be retained but for use by the classroom teacher as a means of assessment throughout the year. If that happens, the material, which everyone agrees is generally of a high quality, will be held in a central bank. Gone would be the spectre of 'testing time' - the month when all else has to stop for that; gone also would be the test as a means of categorising or streaming the child. If the amended scheme gets underway, tests would be able to be used as much as an exploratory element in a teacher's programme for a child as a way of marking the completion of a block of work.

So where does this apparently successful campaign by parents go next? Raymond Boyle and Judith Gillespie will be among those working now to create a Scottish School Boards Federation. They can take the plans forward with some confidence after the events of the past months. The levels of opposition were such as to put even the numbers of poll tax non-payers in the shade.

That analogy is not welcomed by Raymond Boyle. He is at pains to point out that Scottish parents have acted within the law in withdrawing their children from testing.

"This was not a politicising campaign. It was the coming together of parents who were afraid for their children's education and future. The parallels with the civil disobedience of non-payment of the poll tax are not well made. The fact is that this campaign was about people working within the framework of the law. We at the Parents' Coalition would never advocate breaking the law. If you do, you lose the argument."

'There seems no doubt that the actual conduct of the tests constitutes a serious and prolonged disruption to normal classroom work'

A few crumbs of comfort and reassurance in those words for the chastened Mr Forsyth. But it's a line of argument which seems hardly credible - would all those parents who withdrew their children from testing not have done so if it had been pronounced illegal? The legal technicality which gives Scottish parents greater say in their child's education than their English counterparts has shielded those adults who have never previously thought of themselves as 'political' from the true nature of what they have been engaged in. It seems very fitting that the issue that got them moving was education - that most political of all activities. ■

UNITED WE STAND?

One headteacher in Strathclyde explains why he is less than happy about the way the recent campaign against testing has been fought and spells out what parental opting out could lead to in the future.

Francis Donaghy leaves you in no doubt that his school's opposition to the testing of children in primary 4 and 7 stemmed from the educational concerns of his staff:

"The first and most important thing that needs to be said is that the tests, as they are conceived, pose a serious threat to teachers' relationships of trust with the children they teach. This is especially so where you have a primary school with children who are having difficulties with learning. Every teacher knows that it's almost impossible to regain the confidence of a child once it has been lost.

"We really have to be very clear about the tests and about how and why they must be resisted. If schools do test and the results are published what kind of a picture of educational standards will they give? It will be inaccurate to say the least. Because teachers - who remember have had no training for this kind of testing - will tend to put children in for only that level of test which they know the child can manage. This will mean that more and more children will get bunched in the middle achievement bands. Teachers will avoid pushing children that bit further.

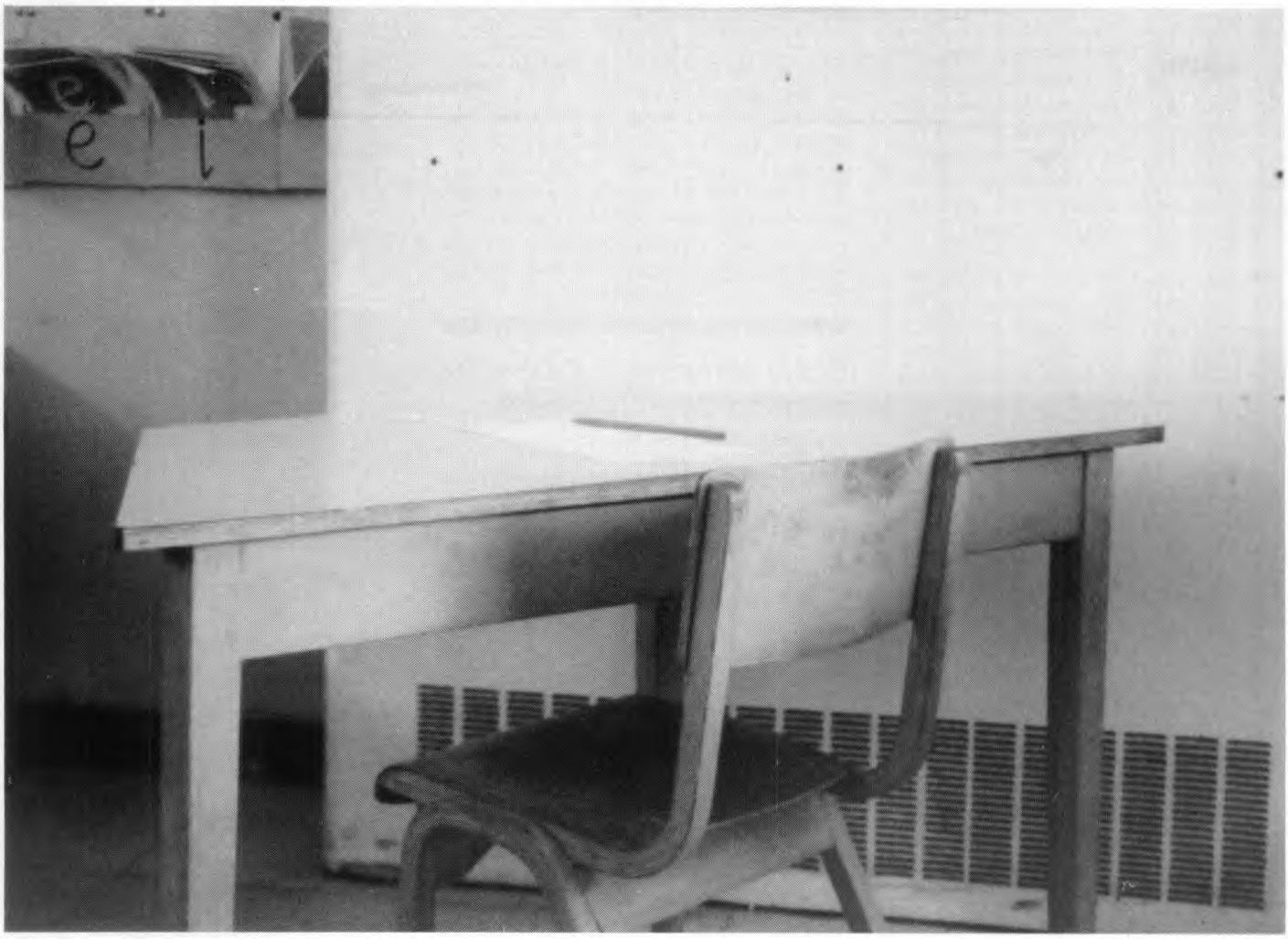
"But it's even worse than that. For example, in the English tests being piloted now only reading and writing skills are assessed. Listening and speaking are not considered. You have to ask yourself how can that have come about in a country which has fought for years to throw off the image of the tongue-tied, inarticulate Scot? The answer is, of course, that it comes about when political considerations are dominating at the expense of education. The conclusion is that just as speaking and listening are off the map in the new order, so will other unquantifiable good aspects of schools when set against the dry data of test results.

"You can go further if you want to look at the present government's plans for education into the next century. It's not new to talk about a 'voucher' system for education - parents being given so many vouchers to spend on their child's education. Supposing that not only did parents use the voucher to 'shop around' for that education but that these vouchers each carried an actual price tag? The parent removing a child from a school would thus remove the child's quota of school income which would transfer with the child to his or her new school? Fantasy? It seems entirely within the overall objectives of the market-driven education system promoted by the Tories in their last manifesto.

"In our school the parental opposition to testing was 100%. But it would have made no difference if that had not been so - the teacher boycott was 100% anyway. We followed the EIS guidelines over testing. And critics of the EIS should note that they ran a campaign based on the educational issues of testing. They could quite justifiably have focused on issues like conditions of service, the absence of in-service training for the tests and the penalties which were threatened against headteachers who failed to complete the tests on time. I am certain that if the tests come in properly these would be matters of great concern to all teachers. But as it happens the issue has been fought out on the educational front, rather than on those other questions.

"Of course, this has partly been because of the strong participation of parents in the fight. But I tend to see this as a mixed blessing. In educational terms, it sets a very dangerous precedent having parents deciding to opt out, as they have done over tests. In effect, that gives parents the power of veto over the curriculum. A much better approach would have been to have parents supporting the stance taken by their school. The educational decision would thus have remained clearly in the hands of the teachers, instead of, as happened, parents and teachers conducting strong campaigns from different bases of support.

"Teachers' satisfaction at the success of the parents' campaign could well be short-lived. It has to be remembered that these were only pilot tests this year. Michael Forsyth will certainly study the nature of the opposition carefully over the next few months. Next year may well see changes that focus on new powers for School Boards. Those could be very seductive to parents who have been active in the present campaign." ■



Colin Chalmers

assessing assessment

In social work, as in education, assessment is the tool that workers use for making sense of the issues they face. So what does 'assessment' really mean - for the assessor and the assessed. Mark Wilson investigates.

Owen, my son, looked at my watch recently. "Daddy", he said pointing to the second-hand, "I used to think that moving hand went past the time. now I know it is the time".

In both education and social work, assessments are often used as a 'snapshot' of a child's situation at a defined time. Social work assessments have always been used to plan work aimed at meeting people's needs. But, as Owen has discovered, by the time we manage to define something, it tends to have changed.

For most of us, television images help us make sense of our world. Social work, particularly work with children suffering or alleged to have suffered abuse, has recently had a high profile on TV. We see aggrieved parents appearing on our screens like stars in a movie. What sense are any of us to make out of the information presented to us? How many of us prefer not to understand the issues because they are too painful to consider? And how do social workers, in the middle of all this, approach the assessment of a child's needs?

Approaches to social work assessment have developed substantially during the last twenty years. In the early days of the Children's Hearing System children were often received into care for an assessment to be conducted in a specialist 'assessment centres'. In many ways we could liken these centres to sophisticated film studios, well staffed with camera crews and with all the focus on the star character performing in a variety of different scenes. All this conveniently staged in artificial settings set up by, and controlled by, the staff.

The final assessment 'production' would be rather similar to a still photograph - an accumulation of consistent information about the star's performance in the set. But information about how the 'star' might act in a more familar, less controlled environment remains unavailable. The information obtained from the 'assessment' reflects, to some extent or other, the way the assessment is set up.

Television news bulletins have recently been depicting issues surrounding the investigation of child abuse in Orkney. The 'professionals' - police, panel members, social workers, journalists - had entered the situation, and their task seemed to be to select and edit in order to make some sense out of the available information. No 'expert' can possibly possess all the information there is about another human being. There is a need to carefully select the information which is going to help take things forward.

Modern approaches to social work assessment recognise that our senses of reality tend to get blunted when we simply watch, listen and interpret. We know this to be true of ourselves when we watch television. Although we learn from the information presented to us on our screens, television gives us no room for the more powerful learning which comes from our successes and failures in real life. When we are just viewers we are submissive pawns who easily start to develop feelings of inferiority and powerlessness.

If assessment is to be a really powerful tool for ensuring children receive the support they need within their home communities, then children and their families have to participate in the process of identifying their own needs, resources and interests. Assessment in the community must aim to be a process of 'experiental learning' for all concerned.

The rewards of assessing 'on location' in the child's home environment can be rich, if it is possible to build an effective relationship between the child, the family and the social worker. But to do this with any clarity the situation must be seen in its appropriate context - we need to learn from local lay people, who can inform us about the features of the environment they know so well.

Such a way of looking at things will affect the way we view 'deviant' behaviour or violent incidents - things appear differently in different contexts. To the army general at battle, the forest hilltop becomes an observation post; the sheltered hillside becomes the location for a weapons store. Aspects of the environment that might otherwise appear delightful seem ominous: trees are camouflage; a hill hides the unseen enemy.

The impossibility of understanding behaviour solely from objective information becomes apparent. And in social work terms the view of the person being assessed - with its elements of reality as well as imagination - can become the source of the real insight sought by the assessor.

'Objective facts' form only one aspect of a social work assessment. When we address human situations, the 'reality' is often of less importance than how it is perceived. We know this instinctively about ourselves, but sometimes seem unwilling to apply the same thinking to others. We have far more information about ourselves and how we respond to different situations than we do about others - we tend to generalise about others. So Jack fell down the hill because he was clumsy, but I fell because it was dark.

Assessment processes, then, can only help us support children in their home communities if they are democratised - turned inside out into an 'open' process. To return to our film analogy, people being assessed and worked with have to be encouraged to become co-operative actors - people who understand and own the selection, direction, editing and criticising functions as well as the acting roles. In fact drama workshops and community video workshops are more useful metaphors than commercial film-making for this - whereas conventional assessment accumulates information and finishes when the plot has been understood by the professionals, more democratised approaches to assessment can lead to an ongoing process of action and reflection, participation and empowerment.

Assessment can and should aim to build upon the resources and insights of the people being assessed, as well as of the assessors. With my son Owen I have seen the importance of recognising a child's perceptions of his world. One challenge facing assessment is to ensure that we do not focus attention solely on private and personal issues which we may not be able to change, whilst ignoring the way in which wider social factors may be altered in order to create opportunities for change. ■

'Assessment processes can only help us support children in their home communities if they are democratised - turned inside out into an 'open' process'

new voices, new writing

This month in our **new voices, new writing** series we publish two poems each by two Scottish women poets - **Janet Paisley** from Falkirk and **Margaret Fulton Cook** from Paisley.

2x2

Sarah: furst he says

Furst he says
staun up when ah come in the room.
Then he says
whey ur you hingin aboot sit doon.
Furst he says
speak when ye're spoken tae.
Then he says
dinnae talk back.
Furst he says
born in a park wur ye shut the door
Then he says
leave the door alane we need sum fresh air.
Furst he says
get a move oan bell's rung
ah'm 'titled tae my break ye're too slow.
Then he says
whaur dae ye think you're gaun
did ah say ye could go?
Furst he says
get that milk drunk ye're makin it last aw day.
Then he says
dinnae gulp there is nae need
tae consume yer milk in that noisy way.
Furst he says
get yer work done
then he says
take that tae the heidie an hurry
then he says
walk dinnae run.
Then when ah taen ma jotter oot
he said WHAT - IS - YOUR - NAME ?
Ah said Sarah.
But he didnae want tae ken.
Ah sais please sir ah need the toilet.
He said WRONG !
Ah sais please sir ah dae.
He said is that what you say - WELL ?
Ah said pleasesirahneedapee.

Ah goat lines
- an ah wet masell.

Janet Paisley

Night life

ma maw goes oot
at night
ma faither does the same
an a stay at hame
an watch oor Jimmy
an wee Katy
she's the wean

a dinny mind it
aw the time
infact sometimes
it's a laugh
like when we dress up
an carry oan
God ye'd think
we wur daft
or when we watch the folk
ower the road
comin oot the pub
they're iways shoutin
ur fightin
an they go inta the chippy
fur some grub
but they iways end up
singin an staggerin
aw o er the place
wae their poke o chips
in their hon
tryin tae stuff them
in their face
sometimes we're awfy fed up
though
an we just sit
an don't talk
an we canny go oot
tae play
cause ma maw
pits oan the lock

anywi we're usually sleepin
when ma maw comes back hame
an then we wake up
CHRIST
it's iways the same
ma faither starts raggin
aboot wan thing
ur another
then he slags ma maws family
no her sisters
an her brother

he disnae like them
much
though they seem aw right
tae me
bit ma faither says
they're full o summit
cawed hypocricy

then he belts ma maw
an she starts tae scream

well maybe you think am silly
bit it's then a start
tae dream
aboot a warm bungalow
an ave a room o ma ane
an ma faithers iways singing
an ma maw
plays wae the wean

noo am no complainin like
an a luv ma maw
an faither
an a know am dead lucky
cause they've really stuck
the gither

but a wish it wis iways
daytime an every thin was
cheery an bright

am eleven noo
bit a must be a big wean

cause secretly

am still feert
o the night

Margaret Fulton Cook

This town is full

of everything you want
and a little bit more
from the Presto store
that pushy pensioners
think, they have a right to

this town is full
of
winter breaks
slipping on snow
cracking your ankle
because the council
can't fix the pavements

full of
the priveleged few
who can't afford
the school dinner queue

this town is full of
whelks from Saltcoats
glowing in the dark

full of
packs of dogs
roaming like casuals
through the schemes

full of
young boys
getting beaten
because police
like to
enforce
law and order

this town is full
of gents toilets
full
of trawling hopefuls
ladies toilets
always closed

this town is full
of purple nosed
winos
in the park
sharing a can
before
it gets dark

full of
expensive flats
common as muck

full of
battered wives
scared to leave home
in the middle
of the night
in case
they get mugged

of packs of casuals
roaming like dogs
through the schemes

full of librium
valium
some
temgesics,
oh
and
a
pan
loaf
please

of graveyards
full
of forgotten folk
buried beneath
empty crisp pokes
carlsberg cans
nail varnish bottles

this town
is full
of shite

this town is full
of doffers
spinners
folk that made school dinners
used to be
steel pressers
work assessors
lots of wee hair dressers
ex
ship builders
spot welders
lots of bewildered school leavers
all wondering

when the shops'll shut

Margaret Fulton Cook

Don't say you love me, Daddy

Don't say you love me, Daddy
then it's all right.
I am your loving daughter
At night I hide in the cracked wall
making myself. Becoming so small
you do not see that body under you
does not belong to me.
You teach grown up things
And I don't understand any of it
except mother is crazy and blind.
That's why you are unkind to her.
Sometimes, from my hiding place,
I sing a tiny song.
Thin as thread in a needle
my voice is not strong enough
to stitch me well.
I'm a monster who can't tell.
Words would make you real
then I'd feel and I don't, I don't.
Can't move, make a sound now
but when you're not around
I burst your eyes on my nails,
prise your tongue out of my mouth,
shred your skin, stick
the kitchen knife into your heart.
I make hate then, to live on,
and you can't take that too
when I hide it inside a deep wall
So just don't say you love me,
Daddy. That's all.

Janet Paisley

the containment of protest

In an opening contribution to Scottish Child's Tears and Protest event (part of the Edinburgh Science Festival), Colin Chalmers raised some of the issues that were to be talked about during the day: the nature of protest, the treatment of children in our society, the need for things to change. This is an edited version of that contribution.

When we talk about protest, I think it's important to understand what context we see it in. The protest I will talk about is protest in the context of fighting oppression. And you don't have to look very far to find oppression in the world. When I woke up this morning I switched on the radio and a Kurdish leader was saying "Has the world lost its humanity?" We have a situation in Kurdistan now where a group of people of about the population of Glasgow is walking through Iraqi hills with the Turkish army, not exactly friends of the Kurdish people, in front of them, and Iraqi helicopter gunships behind them. All this a direct result of a genocidal war against Iraq and years of western-backed attacks on the Kurdish people. And events like this are not so unusual in our world. It's more the norm than we sometimes care to admit.

It's important to ground an understanding of the containment of protest, and on the basis of that how we are able to protest more effectively against oppression, in an understanding of what oppression is. Too often we confuse different forms of protest - candles, fists, crying, shooting and so on - with the content of the protest. Sometimes the form obscures the reality. For instance some of the people holding candles in Poland and other eastern European countries calling for the restoration of capitalism, anti-semitic pogroms and the restoration of monarchies are quite reactionary forces using what seem to be progressive symbols. Sometimes people protest against black people being in this country, or for all number of reactionary causes. That sort of protest, protest to maintain privilege and oppression, is not what we are discussing today. Today we are talking about protest against injustice and oppression.

The Nature of Oppression

Maybe the first thing we have to remember in these grim days is that oppression is contradictory. It is not an iron fist that will always hold down everything so that nothing can change. You could sometimes be forgiven for thinking that the 'new world order' is all tied up with a ribbon on top of it and there's nothing really we can do about anything. Everything's sewn up, and there's no serious opposition. I think it's wrong to draw those conclusions, things crop up in all sorts of ways: protest is part of oppression, and, at some level or other, you can't have one without the other.

We also have to remember that progress is what is natural, what is necessary - not the maintenance of the status quo for ever and ever. The 'free market', we are told, is the pinnacle of human achievement - we have now reached the end of history. The ideas put forward by these characters who write books and look importantly at each other on television are just so banal. These people take each other very seriously and pay each other lots of money to say these things. And it's quite absurd. The idea that it's impossible for us to organise our lives in a way that avoids genocide or starvation, that human society is best organised by a system that puts brickies on the dole while people need houses - it's absurd.

The people who say these things, and their paymasters, are so much in control at the moment, it's perhaps not surprising that these views get such credence. But we need to bear in

mind that progress **will** happen, however much we are told that it cannot. And it will happen because people make it happen.

A third point to remember about oppression is that it only really becomes visible when you fight against it. The more oppression is fought against the clearer it becomes what it is- and what can be done about it.

Oppression in Childhood

The oppression of children in our society is widespread, I think most people here recognise that. It takes many forms: from the common place and largely 'acceptable' forms such as humiliation, neglect or poverty, to grotesque sexual abuse and violence. When the papers were full of the Orkney 'scandal' - the scandal was a perceived infringement of parents' rights - we phoned up **ChildLine Scotland**, who told us that they get on average 500 phone calls every 6 hours, some of them from children asking desperately for any help they can get. 40% of these calls are to do with sexual and physical abuse. So the idea being peddled recently by the press over the Orkney affair- that sexual abuse , isn't widespread- is basically a lie.

But then the first rule of containing protest is that you deny what is obviously the case. That's what our newspapers have done in relation to sexual abuse over the Orkney affair. Without getting into the specific facts concerning these specific families, the idea that sexual abuse is not widespread in Scotland, is being implied in a lot of the coverage of the Orkney situation. If you look at Cleveland and Orkney what you find is that a lot of people think these were scandals about sexual abuse; but that's not the case. What the scandals were about was the fact that people were doing something about alleged sexual abuse. Any social worker will tell you that up and down the country there are thousands of children on at risk registers, thousands of children being abused in all sorts of ways, and nothing is being done about it. No national newspaper has devoted pages of banner headlines to children talking about sexual abuse, in the way that they have done to aggrieved adults accused of abuse. They don't want to know, actually.

Child sexual abuse had become known about because survivors of abuse have come forward to talk about it and demanded to be heard. That is what has put it on the agenda, not the media, not enlightened government or the therapeutic or medical profession - these survivors have challenged the widespread denial of their experience, the denial that contains their protest and allows the abuse to continue.

The way in which the abuse of children is denied and trivialised is a microcosm of the way in which protest is contained generally in society. The processes are the same.

Containing Protest

Firstly, what is happening is denied. When sexual abuse takes place, the first thing the victim is told is 'don't tell anyone, this is our little secret'. Then, going hand in hand with that, is the idea that the oppressor, the abuser, is all powerful - there is nothing that can be done. It's very important for someone who is trying to contain protest to make the person who is being oppressed feel that there is absolutely nothing that can be done to change things: it is inevitable, it would be impossible to live any other way. And then, and this is probably one of the most tragic features of sexual abuse and other forms of child abuse, the victim of the abuse may come to identify with the abuser, and want to defend the abuser.

This can take on quite extreme forms. **EastEnders** recently portrayed this process very accurately, showing how difficult it was for a sexually abused young woman and her mother to face up to the abuse that they know has been going on. This identification with abusers is commonplace, from the worker who slaves his guts out for an employer who couldn't care less about him, to the woman, beaten black and blue by her partner, who feels guilty for what has happened, and turns her anger into depression or some other form of behaviour that does not protest against the abuser, but may hurt herself or someone else. Such identification is not a mistaken idea on the part of the abused - it is actually a form of oppression, one encouraged by many ideas and theories put about by those with an interest in doing so.

Freud and the Denial of Child Abuse

Historically, one of the major events in relation to our thinking about child abuse was Freud's development of his theories about childhood. Many institutions throughout the world are based to some extent or other on Freud's ideas, so it's no academic matter. A science festival seems as good a place as any to put the record straight about what Freud did.

In an early paper, **The Aetiology of Hysteria**, Freud dealt with a number of sexually abused young women who had come to him about their abuse. He was able to draw the link between child abuse and 'hysteria', as he called it - difficulties in adulthood that result from being abused as a child. When he delivered the paper containing these findings he was basically told 'You'll never work in Vienna again'; he was called a dirty yid, and he was attacked for suggesting that decent, middle class Viennese men would do such things to their daughters.

'Child sexual abuse has become known about because survivors of abuse have come forward to talk about it and demanded to be heard'

Freud buckled under this pressure, and all Freud's convoluted theories after this - the oedipus complex, penis envy, childhood sexuality and the rest - are based on a denial of the reality of the oppression that his patients told him about. Rather than accept the evidence of sexual abuse and its effects, Freud denied it - and some of his followers continue to do so to this day.

The Freudian tradition is based on this denial. Only recently have people come forward to challenge it, a challenge largely made possible by the women's movement and the 'coming out' of incest survivors that grew out of it. Alice Miller is one of the clearest and best known exponents of the view that people are affected as adults by things that really did happen to them as children. People don't go mad for no reason. People suffer pain and depression and so on because of real things that happened to them in their childhood.

That may seem an obvious point to make. Indeed, most people, including many who use psychoanalytic and other pedagogical theories know it to be the case, at some level, if for no other reason than that they have been children themselves. But it can be hard and hurtful to face such obvious truths - otherwise why is so much time spent denying them?

Institutions and Protest

We all carry a child within us - that's not a fancy phrase, it's a developmental fact. We have all been children, it's probably the only thing common to us all. If we ignore and attack the child within us that may be angry, suffering unresolved grief or trauma or hurt that we are unable to face up to and resolve, then when we have responsiblities in families or institutions or in our day to day life for dealing with other people's emotions it will be very difficult for us to let other people grow. How can you help people face and work through pain if you can't do it yourself? It simply can't be done.

Many institutions set up with the stated aim of helping and supporting people in distress or need - I'm thinking of hospitals, children's homes and so on - find it very hard to offer real help when confronted with the pain and protest of a child or an adult survivor of unresolved childhood pain.

I worked in a psychiatric hospital for a while, and one of the things I remember from that was how little real healing was encouraged at an institutional level. If healing did take place it was done almost on the sly. You'd pretend to be making a bed so you could get a chance to talk to someone - making the bed was considered more important than talking to people who were sometimes in obvious and extreme distress. I remember one young woman who sat for days saying nothing; I talked to her about how I didn't know what I was meant to be doing on this ward and all this time she didn't say a word. But when she came out of her silence she said it meant so much to her that someone was taking the time to speak to her. All I was doing was following my instinct that it was right to talk to her - but that sort of thinking was not really encouraged at all.

That hospital ward had a thing called a Kardex, they are quite common in residential institutions, where you have all the patients' or residents' names and you write in it what's happened to them that day. One of the commonest things that was written was 'N.M.P.' meaning 'no management problem'. That was the great thing, especially at night. So if you've been depressed for six months and you're still depressed you're no management problem, but if ▶

you start getting in touch with some of the things that have happened to you, the feelings, and start crying about it, well you've become a problem.

One night nurse I worked with took great pride in telling me how he dealt with anyone who got a bit noisy after 9 o'clock when he wanted everyone in bed. What he did was call the doctor, clear the desk and put the to-be-sectioned papers on the desk. If the doctor didn't want to section this patient he'd wait 20 minutes or so, until he knew the doctor was just back in his bed, and he'd call him out again. He said he'd never had to do this more than three times before getting a patient sectioned, in other words taking that patient's liberty away and forceably drugging them. If that's not oppression I don't know what is - and it's certainly the containment of protest.

It's often very difficult for organisations to accept protest. We at **Scottish Child** have been attacked by a number of organisations for supporting the protest of children and others against what are obviously and clearly injustices.

When we brought out **Homeless Voices**, a report where homeless teenagers in Scotland were given the chance to talk about their experiences, one agency supposedly campaigning on behalf of the homeless was quite shocked to hear that we were saying there was a lot of homelessness in their city. A Housing Department phoned us up, very annoyed that their homeless section had been criticised by a teenager in our report, and denying that the teenager had been treated in the way she had said. We suggested that it was surely the case that their department was not able to meet the needs of all the young people who came to them, but this was denied - everyone, seemingly got a 'good service'. Well it must be the only Housing Department in Scotland where young homeless people all get a house - in fact, of course, it simply doesn't happen.

Rather than these workers saying 'things are bad, someone's exposing it, that's what we need more of' why are they colluding with the people, who they often claim to be against, in the mystification and denial of what youth homelessness is about? It's an important question, because it raises the whole issue of where the caring services, social services, campaigning agencies and so on see their role. Are they there to try and make things change? Or are they there as a sort of buffer between the poor, who they are paid, by and large, to help, and the state?

A big dilemma facing social workers and others is that of having on the one hand seemingly unlimited need, and on the other hand people above you in your organisation saying there aren't any resources. What do you do in that situation? Do you say 'sorry, it's your own fault', subtly blaming people for being homeless, for being poor, for being in need. Or do you say 'no, we can't help you and I'm going to tell my boss that I can't pretend to be of use here'.

Recently we published an article where some kids said things that some adults would rather they hadn't said. I asked the person who was complaining why she thought we shouldn't have printed these kids' views and I was told "It's not me. I believe in free speech. It's my management committee". So why are the management committee so upset? "It's not them, it's the councillors, and if they don't please the councillors they won't get their funding". One of the kids in the interviews said that councillors own the place. It doesn't seem to be that far from the truth.

We can get to a stage where every action is self-censored in order to appease authority, because if you offend someone in authority, you could lose your job, lose this, lose that. When you get to that stage you are incapable of independent action, because the fear of rocking the boat has become bigger than the desire to help people, which is probably why you got into the job in the first place.

Political Protest

On the wider political scene we see a pretty horrific situation in the world. One of the most obscene things I saw on television recently was an American soldier in Iraq handing out a few bits of elastoplast to Iraqis and saying "Yes it's a real shame, when we leave they'll have no one else to help them". It seemed to sum up the craziness of the way the world is presented to us. We destroy a nation with brutality beyond any understanding then claim we are helping.

'The idea that it's impossible for us to organise our lives in a way that avoids genocide or starvation... is absurd'

We are hidden from the brutality carried out in our name, not just in Iraq, but throughout the world. Tens of millions of human beings are facing the possibility of imminent starvation in Africa and we hardly hear anything about it. In East Timor a third of the population is wiped out and we hear nothing. And these are not the exceptions in the world, it is countries like Britain, and a handful of other rich, parasitic nations that are the exception throughout the world. We put up with deliberate, systematic terror throughout the world to keep a system, a 'new world order', going as it crutches along from one genocide to another war.

We have to learn how to challenge that effectively - many people want to, but it can be enormously difficult to know what to do. I was at a discussion this week of young people at the Bridges Project (Edinburgh), young people talking about politics and campaigning, and what struck me was their absolute clarity about the situation they face - until they get to the bit about what can be done about it. You get stuck, lose interest, fall into depression or go off on some manic phase of activism till you crack up. We have to look at how we change that.

Learning to Change Things

Challenging some of the ways that protest is contained is one way of starting to do that. We have to challenge the denial of oppression. We have to challenge people who don't want to watch the news and say 'tough, it's real, lets face it'. What is going on in Africa, in Iraq, in most of of the world's poor countries is real. There are teenagers starving on the streets of this city because they are refused Income Support by our government. Sexual abuse is no less prevalent because some Sheriff has made some widely-publicised judgement. It's important to look these things in the face.

Let's remember that the 'scandal' over Cleveland was that people were exposing sexual abuse. That's what the scandal was. And when the politicians and pundits, like Labour MP and part-time pornographer Stuart Bell went for Marietta Higgs and others there was no political organisation there to support those under attack, those who were exposing the reality of widespread sexual abuse. That should not be allowed to happen next time.

We also have to get away from the idea that those who are responsible for oppression are all powerful. When John Major talked about the 'land offensive' on Iraq - a murderous attack on fleeing conscript troops and civilians by gruesome weapons - he was accused by someone of making it sound like walking through a supermarket check-out; one of Major's underlings pointed out that that was exactly what it was meant to sound like. It is meant to sound mundane, inevitable, unchallengable. Well, we beat the poll tax. It wasn't Michael Heseltine, or any parliamentary party that did that, it was what has been described as the 'rag-tag army of non-payers' that beat it, a bunch of ordinary people who decided that this time they weren't going to take it.

I think it's important in Britain today to recognise just how divided our nation is. A third of this country is on or below the poverty line. That section of society has no political voice. The Labour Party says it has the interest of the poor at heart but there is little evidence to back that claim up.

An incident that sticks in my mind was a scene outside a meeting in Edinburgh which Neil Kinnock was addressing. This was at a time, as now, when Labour councils were sending Sheriff Officers round our doors to get our poll tax off us; and there were members of left wing groups outside this meeting shouting "Kinnock, Kinnock give us a lead!" I was immediately reminded of people who have suffered sexual abuse and are unable to get away from identifying with the abuser. What sense does it make to ask the people who are kicking you in the teeth to lead you in fighting the fact that you are getting kicked in the teeth? It's utterly beyond me.

What is needed on a political level in this country, more than anything, is organisation of the poor and those who have no voice. For instance, homeless people in this country are treated like scum. Charity is acceptable, but when people start demanding their rights the boot goes in. Because at the end of the line, after the denial, the appearance of omnipotence, the silencing of protest, if you refuse to accept oppression they use brute force, and they do it time and time again.

We can fight these things. This event shows that people are interested in protesting against what is wrong in the world and want to do it

from the sound basis of their own experiences, their own tears and their own needs.

One of the keys to facing up to anything, whether it's sexual abuse or challenging those in political power, is finding an independent voice, finding some way of giving voice to your feelings independently of those who tell you that you can't do that, it's not worth it, don't worry.

I think it's interesting that it was **Scottish Child**, an unfunded, independent, run-on-a-shoestring operation, that has put on this event. People tell us all the time that if you try to identify with the child, if you try to do anything constructive or imaginative, the large organisations they work within will not support you. They certainly don't support **Scottish Child.**

Scottish Child is a voice for those who want things to change in our lives. That's what we're trying to do, but we can't do it on our own. We need everyone here to subscribe to this magazine, to write for it, to feel it is their magazine. I'm not saying **Scottish Child** is 'the way forward', but we are doing something, and we need your support. Without it, we will go under and be another of Scotland's glorious defeats. Well I'm sick of glorious defeats, I want this to be a success and we need you to make it one.

Alice Miller was pointing to an obvious and yet constantly ignored fact when she said that "Our society is sick as long as it denies the connections between the childhood experience and the later behaviour of the adult. Yes, it is so simple. Many things are much more simple than we think". Today, as we talk about childhood and politics and tears and change, it's a fact worth bearing in mind.

The communist writer Bertold Brecht wrote a poem that in many ways makes a similar point, about the need to demystify, if in a slightly different context. It's called And I Always Thought:

And I always thought: the very simplest words
Must be enough. When I say what things are like
Everyone's heart must be torn to shreds.
That you'll go down if you don't stand up for yourself
Surely you see that?

It is not morbid to want to recognise what 'things are like'; the tragedy is that we allow so much that we know is wrong to go on because we feel we dare not challenge it. We actually stop seeing quite horrific thingsas a problem. Pretending everything is rosy in the garden or under control or nothing to do with us may hide ourselves from some things we would rather not see, but it also shuts us off from the possibility of being able to make things better - and stops us from being able to 'stand up for ourselves' and each other. We can, if we want, make our protest the link between our present and a better future. There are such possibilities. Surely you see that? ■

Colin Chalmers

Prisons on the Move

Inside: Rethinking Scotland's Prisons

Andrew Coyle

Scottish Child £12.95

Drummond Hunter

Rethinking Scotland's Prisons, as its title suggests, is a book about change - and the strategy for change in our troubled prison system is one that is very much worth dwelling on.

"History", it has been said, "is the history not of change, but of resistance to change". So before trying to change things for the better one has to reckon with "the iron law of the status quo".

One way of coping with this 'iron law' is to ensure that change is never more than marginal, an essentially conservative approach. To attempt radical change, on the other hand, is to be confronted by formidable obstacles, which can sometimes be overcome by emphasising the incremental aspects of a fundamental departure from the status quo. If this strategy can be combined with an appeal to history, with the past being called in to redress the balance of the present, that can certainly help make success more likely.

In addition to being a work of considerable scholarship, **Inside: Rethinking Scotland's Prisons** - written appropriately enough from the inside, by the Governor of Shotts prison - is infused by a depth of practical experience that adds greatly to its readability and authority.

The relatively high success rate of a strategy for change that appeals to the past is due to the fact that people are reassured to be given the message that, far from straying into uncharted wastes, they are actually going home, as it were - 'in our end is our beginning'. Andrew Coyle's strategy is a historically orientated one; and what has been at work here is Scottish common-sense philosophy - the principle tenet of this philosophy being that what we spend our lives struggling towards is there behind us, and within us, all the time.

Coyle starts and finishes his book by stressing the significance of the work of William Brebner, the 19th century Scottish prison governor. Of particular relevance to the theme of **Inside** was Brebner's view that while prison cannot rehabilitate - if it is to be effective, rehabilitation has to be carried through and completed by the larger society - nevertheless a start has to be made in prisons, as a **secondary** task. Also attractive to Dr Coyle is the initiative of this humane and kindly man in giving prisoners responsibility for their own rehabilitation, and in getting the Glasgow magistrates to open a House of Refuge as a form of diversion to avoid sending juveniles to prison. Who said that 'diversion' was a recent innovation?

Having disposed both of the paternalistic rehabilitative ideal and its antithesis, the 'justice model', which involves prison staff in resigning themselves to restricted horizons and narrowly legalistic goals, Andrew Coyle starts from where we are now and stresses that the primary task of prisons is to punish by depriving people of their liberty. The next task is to ensure good order under the resulting situation of stress.

Good order does not mean a system of mechanistic bureaucracy, and this book is replete with instances of how maladaptive bureaucratic procedures can be in a semi-professional organisation like the prison service. Presently under discussion is one possible change which could transform the service into an 'executive agency' independent of the Civil Service. This would only be the beginning - in organisational terms, as the prison service becomes increasingly professionalised, it will be essential to conceive of it as an open learning system or 'negotiative arena', which is posited upon a system of self-management within a framework of agreed, overall guidelines.

Particularly objectionable about reactive, bureaucratic structures is their in-built antipathy to overarching goals or strategies. In the last analysis they are 'systems designed by geniuses for idiots'. What we need in prisons, claims the author of **Inside**, is a culture of **leadership**.

Having dealt with custody and order, Andrew Coyle turns to opportunity. The **act** of imprisonment being negative, the **experience** of imprisonment can be put to positive use, in ways unthought of by the May Committee. "What is required", says Coyle, "is a set of principles which will be a modern expression of the argument presented in the early years of the 19th century by William Brebner that prisoners have to be given some responsibility for personal change". This leads to the concept of the 'responsible prisoner' - note, prisoner, not 'inmate'.

So far so good - prisons are on the move! But lurking within the covers and between the lines of **Inside** is a much larger question. "Wherever prisons are built", said Alexander Paterson, "courts will make use of them". So are prisons less a solution to the problem of crime than a part of the problem?

If one goes further back in history than Andrew Coyle does, there are models of different ways of looking at what we choose to label as 'crime'. Criminal justice and penal systems are relatively recent innovations, reflecting the fact that modern, hierarchically orientated and divisive societies **need** criminals in order to ensure their stability. It is through stigmatising the mentally ill and scapegoating criminals that we convince ourselves that we are 100% normal and 100% respectable citizens. We achieve our identities not through, but at the expense of, each other.

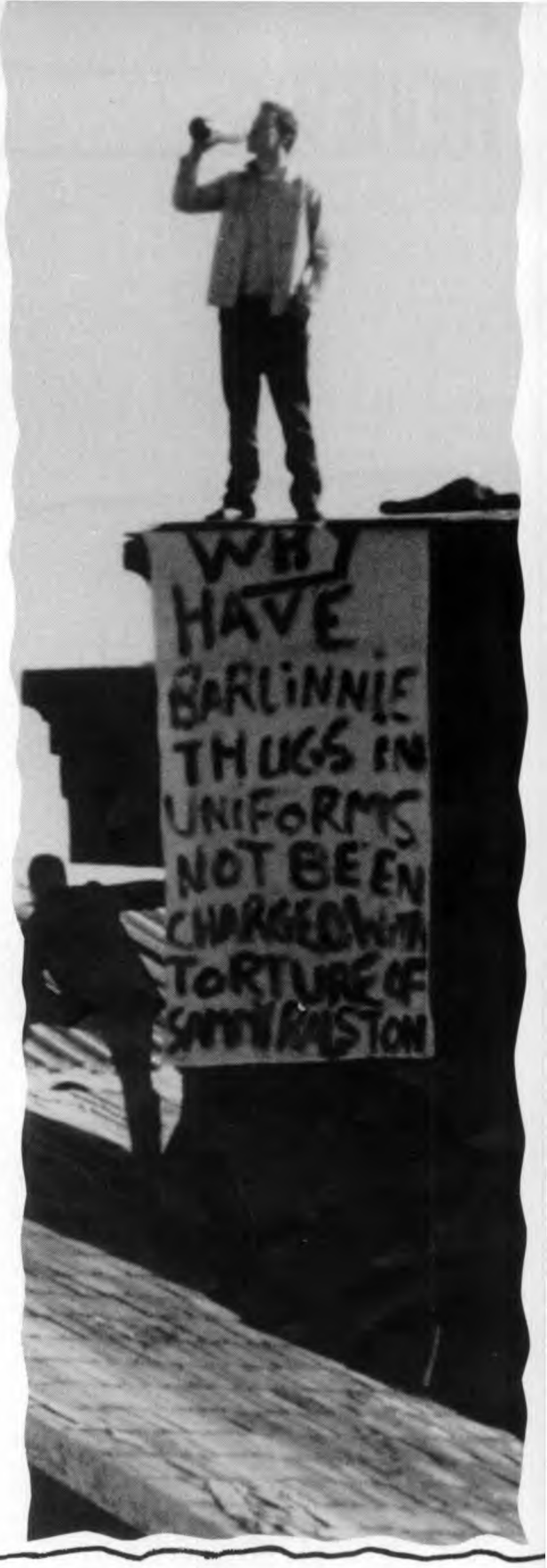
These are challenging ideas to confront, but they are coming increasingly to the fore with alternatives to criminal justice and to imprisonment being considered more actively than ever before. If prisons are now, at last, on the move, it may be time to begin looking beyond prisons and beyond criminal justice. Is **punitive** justice the only way? Or is there such a thing as **problem-solving** justice?

Inside does not attempt to give all the answers, but as a pointer to what the important questions are, it is a book that needs to be read. ■

INSIDE

RETHINKING SCOTLAND'S PRISONS

Andrew Coyle



Prisons in Britain, if they are news at all, are bad news.

With a significance for prisons everywhere, INSIDE: RETHINKING SCOTLAND'S PRISONS asks important questions about the way we lock people up. Andrew Coyle, who has worked in the Scottish Prison Service since 1973, examines the foundations of these troubled institutions and argues that the root of our prisons' instability should be traced not to the prisoners - but to the system in which they are held.

INSIDE...

"...reflects a detailed knowledge of and concern for the Scottish Prison Service. It provides an invaluable aid to all who want to understand how the present-day Service evolved and how the author sees the future."
Peter McKinlay, Director, Scottish Prison Service

"...the first general history of the prisons in Scotland by one of Scotland's leading governors. This book describes current attempts to restore the progressive pioneering approach with which the service began, but which for many years was so conspicuously lost."
Professor Rod Morgan, assessor to the Woolf Committee of Enquiry into Prison Disturbances

ANDREW COYLE joined the Scottish Prison Service as an assistant governor in 1973. He has served in Edinburgh Prison, Polmont Borstal and in Prison Service Headquarters. He was governor of Peterhead Prison from 1988 to 1990. Currently he is governor of central Scotland's custom-built, long-term prison at Shotts.

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A Man in a Man's World

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Bill Grieve

I recently realised that when I come home from work in the evening I was in some way being assessed by my children, particularly my son. Behind the welcomes, my face was being astutely studied to judge my mood and how the day had affected me. Is this going to be a good fun evening, he asks himself, or is he in couch potato mode? Is it a night to be careful about what's said or is it life, the universe and everything - and corridor football?

As far as my son is concerned I disappear out the door in the morning and something mysterious happens to me over the next eight hours or so. He plays no part in what I do when I am away and has no real understanding of what I have been up to, although this could significantly affect the sort of father I am that night. I also noticed there were some things he would do with other members of our family that he wouldn't do with me, like losing his temper. With me there were some moods he didn't tend to show. Why? What did he make of me?

I began to examine the role I had unthinkingly fallen into earlier in life of the absent provider. Where did it come from anyway, this idea that most men's birthright was to disappear for a substantial part of the day to make strangers of their children. Who thought that one up?

I am beginning to notice a curious lack of confidence amongst men about their masculinity. I was struck at a seminar I attended by the response of men when some of the women present started making insulting comments about men in general. Although mainly jocular in tone, similarly crude, stereotypical comments made by men about women at such a meeting would have resulted in uproar. But the men who were there - including myself - joined in the laughter, uneasily, avoiding each others' eyes.

One of the men at this seminar said that he didn't want to work with young men anymore, they were too difficult and immature. Girls, he said, were much more pleasant, responsible, sensitive, human. It was hard to pin down what set my teeth on edge about this statement. I had the same feeling reading a recent piece by Joyce McMillan in Scotland on Sunday called **Time to Reassess Man's Place in the Family,** where she wrote that "If dislocation in the family is ever going to be healed, it can only be through men gradually relearning how to make themselves necessary to women".

My uneasiness began to crystallise into a feeling that men are in a bad way. They, we, are either prisoners of chauvinism, or, having stepped outside, are curiously unable to define ourselves in terms of our masculine identity. Is the only answer to allow ourselves to be reshaped in the image of what women such as Joyce McMillan view masculinity as being? That didn't seem satisfactory to me - it had a passive, 'by default' feel to it. The propensity of some men to actively disown their maleness also bothers me. Discussion of masculinity, attempts to define positive male qualities seem to make them highly uncomfortable.

It was with these intermingled themes of men, fathers and sons in mind, that I came across **Making Decisions about Children: Psychological Questions and Answers** by Rudolph Schaffer, professor of psychology at Strathclyde University. The book is a very useful compendium of research that directly addresses some pretty basic questions: do women make better parents than men? Are children harmed by their parents' divorce? Do children need a parent of each sex? and so on.

So - **do** women make better parents than men?

Not on the evidence so far, it would seem. Schaffer suggests that the popular notion that only women are primed to be interested in children cannot be upheld. Men too are interested in, excited by and attentive to babies and young children - the differences between the sexes that do appear are more likely to be in response to social convention than as an expression of some inborn propensity. He is rightly cautious about making assumptions about the **adequacy** of men in bringing up children, given that the evidence largely rests on self-report studies by fathers, but says that statements about women inevitably being better parents by virtue of their femininity appear be no more than 'facile generalisations'. Sheriffs please note when deciding on custody of children.

Findings seemed to show that children living with the same sex parent were better adjusted than children living with the opposite sex parent. Boys living with their fathers were uniformly found to show more competent social development than girls in father-custody homes; girls living under a mother-custody arrangement were more competent than boys in that type of family. But this was a fairly small sample, exclusively middle class, and fathers awarded custody may well be rather unusual individuals not representative of fathers in general.

One study mentioned in the book suggests that

play tends to be less mature, intellectually and socially, in the first year after divorce. For boys, but not for girls, some of these immature play patterns continued into the second year. The children were also more anxious, guilty and apathetic, and again these differences persisted with the boys. When the mother remarried, there was an increase in behavioural problems amongst the girls but a decrease amongst the boys.

Schaffer concludes from this that boys are more vulnerable to stress than girls and are therefore more vulnerable to the divorce experience than girls. I find this a peculiarly myopic analysis of the findings he cites. It seems to me that there is evidence to suggest that the presence of a father or other significant adult male is important to boys, and I cannot understand why Schaffer appears to downplay this. Given that in the overwhelming majority of divorces mothers get custody, and that a depressingly high proportion of fathers lose touch entirely with their children after divorce (something like half in the first two years), it is at least arguable that the reason for such consistent indications of continuing unhappiness and poor social adjustment in boys following a divorce is the absence of the father. Disappointingly Schaffer restricts his enquiry largely to the effects - none - of father absence on the development of 'sex typed behaviour'.

With evident approval, Professor Schaffer moves on to say that in any case "we are now moving towards a more mixed, androgynous personality make-up and regard this as more in keeping with optimal adjustment in today's society".

This is a statement to which I think I would have taken exception before reading American poet Robert Bly's **Iron John**. Having read this book, I unequivocally **do** take exception to it, and I'm considerably clearer why.

Bly's message is powerfully relevant in a Scottish context. The love unit most damaged by the industrial revolution, he says, is the father-son bond. The traditional way of raising sons, which lasted for thousands of years, involved fathers and sons living in close proximity, while the father taught the son a trade. There is no sense, he is quick to say, in idealising pre-industrial culture; but we know that today many fathers now work many miles from home, and that by the time they return at night the children are often in bed and they themselves are too tired to do active fathering.

Bly says that the most consistent statement he has heard in the men's gatherings he has attended, said in many different ways, is that 'there is not enough father'. Some sons will have 'father-hunger' all their lives. Such hungry sons hang around older men like the homeless do around a soup kitchen. Like the homeless, they feel shame over their condition, and it is a nameless, bitter unexpungeable shame. No matter how much they sympathise with their starving sons, women cannot replace what is missing. The son may later try to get it from a woman his own age, but that doesn't work either.

By the middle of the twentieth century a massive change had taken place in the west: the son could no longer see his father working. The father is often reluctant to tell his son what is really going on at work - if he works in a large, impersonal organisation what is there to say anyway? What the father will often tend to bring home is an irritable, touchy, remote mood springing from powerlessness and despair mingled with shame and the numbness peculiar to those who hate their jobs. This remoteness may also severely damage a daughter's ability to participate good-heartedly in later relationships with men. Much of the rage that some women direct at patriarchy, Bly suggests, stems from a vast disappointment over the lack of teaching from their fathers.

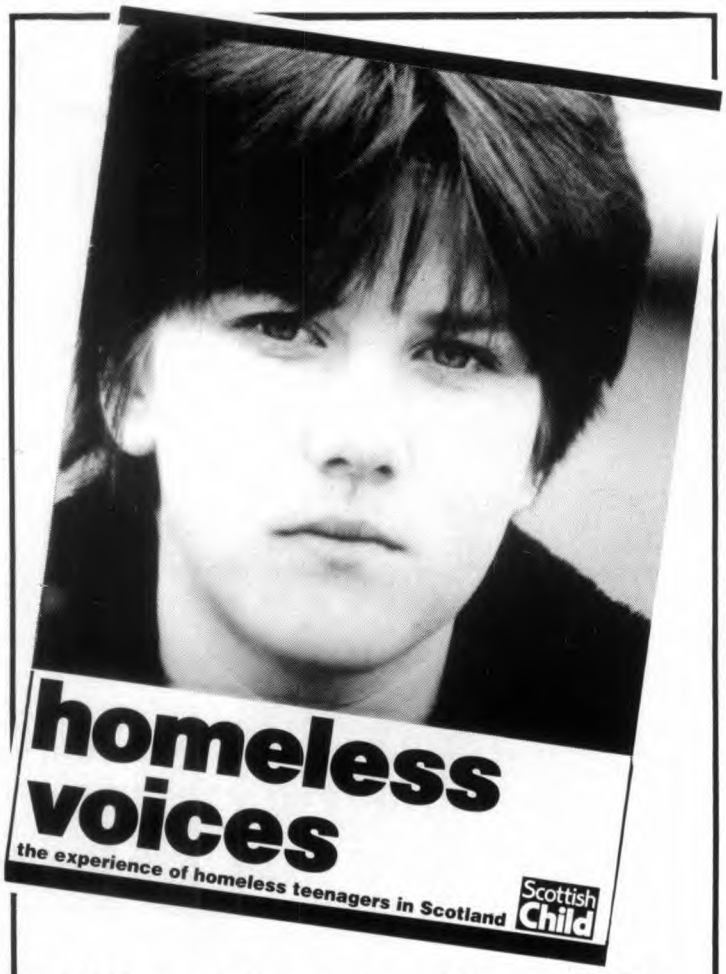
Society as a whole is vastly disappointed by, and distrustful of, fathers. At Bly's men's gatherings, he hears vivid stories of no guidance, no support, no affection and in their place sarcasm, brutality and coldness: 'You'll never be half the man I am'. Other men do not feel anger or blame, on the contrary they feel a strong blood tie to their fathers. Some tell stories of generous, supporting fathers who praised, loved and protected them as best they could. To the first group this sounds like whitewashing of the father - it may not be.

One barrier toward men's healthy reflections on manhood is the currently highly politicised language used to explore gender issues. Men are accused of being chauvinists and condemned as sexists. Such blaming language only creates feelings of guilt and shame amongst those men who listen to it - it is not likely to attract men to work on the issues about which the accuser is complaining.

Getting beyond a blaming model which conceptualises women as the victim of toxic masculinity and men as the oppressors is important. Yale psychologist Helen Lewis says that our society injures the two sexes differently, with men as 'expendable warriors' and women as 'inferior child-bearers'. Good woman / bad man dualism is unhealthy scapegoating unconducive to change or recovery.

And change and recovery are necessary. Everybody is damaged by inherited concepts of masculinity, including men. Men die eight years younger than women in the US today: higher rates of cancer, heart attacks, suicide, car accidents and risk-taking. At the turn of the century the difference was two years.

One other statistic. According to various studies, the average father in the US spends less than ten minutes a day with his children. The more I have read around this subject the more I believe that this statistic represents a disaster for men and children. ■



'It's not because I'm spoilt or I'm immature that I won't go back, it's because I can't live in that house'.

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'The voices of young homeless people in this report bear witness to the real horror of youth homelessness.'
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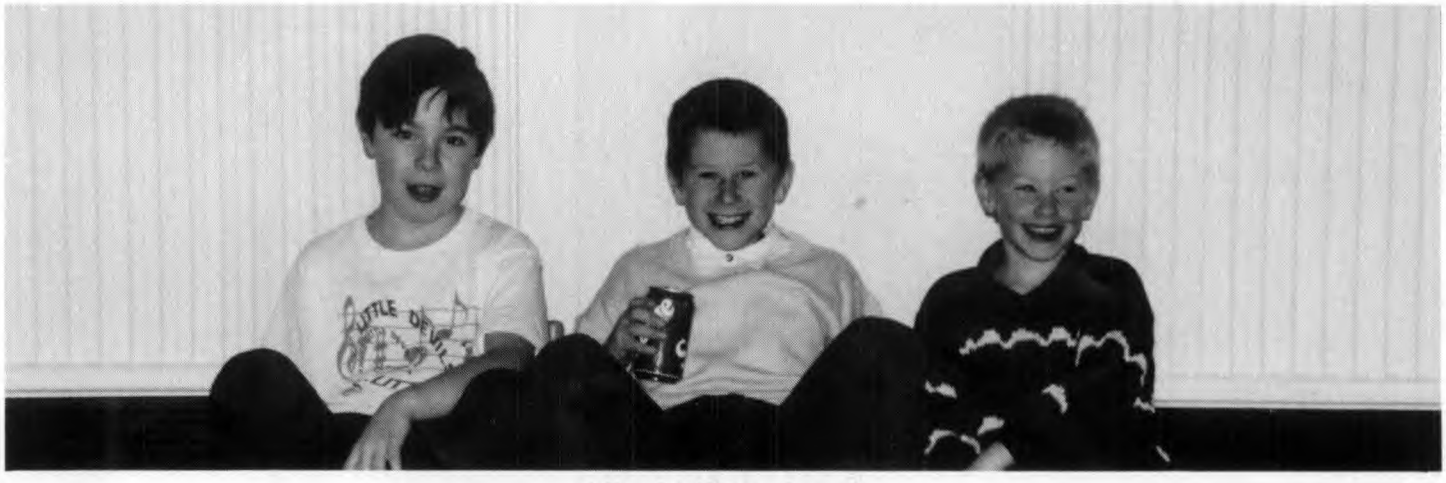

'Only Playing'

LITTLE ANGELS
LITTLE DEVILS
Lothian Play Forum / Pilton Video Project

Jean Raeburn

"Joyful" is the word which instantly springs to mind when reviewing this 15 minute film. The message conveyed is consistent and clear: "adults should listen to children". It is all the more challenging for the sheer delight provoked watching the antics of these primary-age children at play.

The film's intent, however, is to provide more than simple pleasure. It aims to encourage discussion about adults' perceptions of children's ability and about their willingness to participate in equal relationships with adults, based on mutual respect and understanding.

Adults involved in this production deserve 10 out of 10 for having the good sense to hand the floor - or the screen! - over entirely to the children themselves. Their unmediated voices highlight important aspects of day-to-day living. Attitudes to handicap and to racism are outlined by the youngsters in clear, unequivocal terms. Both are seen as being about exclusions and scapegoating, which is, they say "not fair".

The children's voices are interspersed with snippets of games, some of which have two purposes. The first, perhaps not present in all games, is to illustrate a social issue. For example, in the coloured card game, participants bearing a red card move around the room, hugging or shaking hands with each other. They ignore the holder of the green card. The comments which follow illustrate the learning from this sensitising process.

The second purpose, underlying and overlying, is of course, to have fun and these children are clearly having enormous fun! They are boisterous, noisy and enthusiastic and **so** busy.

There are helpful messages for adults, particularly about listening to children. If they did listen, then they would know that when adults "take over" children's games, as opposed to "joining" them, they spoil the fun and interfere with the child's learning - which is of course what "only playing" is all about. If reminders were needed of Bruno Bettelheim's words about the value of play, then it is illustrated here.

The quality and content of this film are excellent. My only real criticism? Like Oliver, I wanted more. The teaching pack, which goes out with the video outlines ways of developing discussion of the issues highlighted in the film. It was made with adults involved with children in a group setting in mind and for them, a useful further development might include outlines, aims and instructions for running similar group play sessions. But, over and above that, it is a film which should be shown on television, so that many more could it see than otherwise are likely to.

Watching it, one is left with a sense of loss for the self-regulated grown-ups of the world who no longer enjoy playful experiences of fun and freedom and uncomplicated physical contact.■

Little Angels - Little Devils hire from
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£2 per day

A Positive Outcome

BLOOD
Janice Galloway
Secker and Warburg £12.99

Rodney Relax

Coming to her work for the first time, you could be forgiven for writing a review of fragmentary impressions. Such is her pace of dialogue and her skill of narrative that never allows the reader to settle: this is a very challenging collection. A sweet and dry cocktail, poured with a caustic wit, but with no cheap gags when the tension gets too much.

'Love in a changing environment', 'it was', 'David', 'Fearless', 'Scenes from Life: Bikers, Dianne, The Community & the Senior Citizen'. In all of these stories she demonstrates, sometimes quite cruelly, how inarticulate we are in dealing with pain, with loss, with the everyday patterns of our lives. We are dealing here with the personal, with the family, the church, with sexual abuse; on every page our lives, neither above nor below nature - no more, no less divine.

This is feminism revealed, where the torn fragments are sewn back together, woven again into reconciliation - how we can surprise ourselves with the strength and acts of solidarity we thought we never had in us. At no time in the narrative does she sink us into melodrama or sentimentality, she realises our emotions are cluttered and distorted enough. The operative notion here is of clearing away, of dusting the cobwebs.

Storytelling is about people's lives - not about inventing them. And here, on every page, are lives, sometimes joyful, sometimes sad, incomprehensible, inconceivable. Which paradoxically gives them their authenticity. Janice Galloway's stories are not very pretty, not cheap titilation - but very real and full of love.

Buy it, borrow it or steal it - by any means possible read this book. I'll finish here with the mystical language of Glasgow:

Fingers for the army
An eye for the Coal Board
A song and a dance for the wean.

Do you dare discover? ■

Oliver Brookes

What is there to Celebrate?

The Children's Hearing System is twenty years-old this May. Rosemary Milne takes a critical look at its record so far and suggests that although the principles stand the test of time, they are often jeopardised by other unaddressed and unresolved tensions in and around the system.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Children's Hearing System. To mark it the Scottish Office is sponsoring two national events and publishing an anniversary brochure. By the time this magazine appears in the newsagents Professor Sanford Fox will have given the first 'Kilbrandon Child Care Lecture' to an invited audience in Glasgow.

If you didn't know about the lecture it may be because the Scottish Office always intended it to be a low-key affair. Or it may be that the events of this spring have taken the gloss off the whole idea of an anniversary year. Either way it's a pity. There is plenty to celebrate about the Hearing System. There are plenty of reasons to advertise the inauguration of a lecture commemorating the thinking of the Kilbrandon Committee and now is as good a time as any to examine the Hearing System's record so far and to lay out a programme of future development.

Paradox is at the heart of the Scottish temperament - so we are often told. The Hearing System has certainly been the victim of this tendency. The press had nothing good to say about it in the early years but changed their tune with a vengeance at the time of the Cleveland enquiry when it became received wisdom that the principles of the Hearing System meant that 'A Cleveland could never happen here'.

The Scottish Office decision to embark on celebrations for an anniversary year is indicative of how confident they were in the system. It suggests moreover that the government had no serious fears that the celebrations would be hijacked for other political purposes - by panel members for instance, wanting to draw attention to the deteriorating conditions of life for many children, especially for children of poor families (by far the largest group referred to reporters and appearing at hearings).

In the mid-1960s Kilbrandon described the setting up of a wide range of inter-agency services around the Children's Hearing System as 'essential'. He realised that a justice system which is based on welfare principles and which requires parents and children to speak about their difficulties on their own behalf rather than through a lawyer, must base its claim to deliver justice on other criteria. Selective intervention in children's lives by the Hearing System would be better tolerated by the public, provided the system was embedded in a structure of welfare services available to all, not just reserved for the child with problems or the family in crisis.

The Kilbrandon committee foresaw that besides helping to prevent problems reaching crisis point, a wide range of supporting services would also make it easier for the reporter to decide which children to refer to the panel.

If Kilbrandon's assessment is still worth anything, we must hope that the confidence of the politicians and civil servants will be proved to have been misplaced and that organisations and individuals will have the courage to use the platform that the anniversary year provides to speak out loudly about the scandalously underfunded health, education and social services.

But the crisis which has recently surfaced through the Orkney child abuse cases was not about resources for the Hearing System. It was about the fundamental question of the place of the child in the Hearing System, in the child care system and, by implication at least, in society at large. No wonder the criticisms have caused dismay. The principles of child and family-centred decision-making are the other main claim of the Hearing System that we 'do things better up here'.

The final word on the Orkney cases is still to be heard. What is important to realise is that there was a crisis in the making for some time prior to Orkney. It was waiting in the wings to happen somewhere or other in Scotland, not because the principles of the system are flawed but because some of the practices which have developed are inconsistent with those principles.

The most obvious example of this inconsistency between principles and practice, as Jean Raeburn pointed out more than a year ago in an article in the February 1989 issue of **Scottish Child**, is the non-attendance of children at hearings. This is not an 'Orkney-only' issue. It has become a widespread practice in many regional panels.

Technically it is the panel chairperson who decides whether a child should attend a hearing. In practice however, as with many administrative aspects of the system, the

someone missing

'The government had no serious fears that the celebrations would be hijacked by panel members wanting to draw attention to the deteriorating conditions of life for many children, especially for children of poor families'

panel members are heavily dependent on the reporter's assessment of the best course of action. Reporters do not decide arbitrarily which child attends and which doesn't. Their advice is based on what the law allows them to do, information from the other professionals in the system, their knowledge of the family and their own beliefs about what is or is not in the child's best interests.

Panel members on their side are ill-equipped to question the reporter's advice and to insist that a child is brought to a hearing. As well as lacking confidence in their reasons for wishing the child to attend, they may simply not know whether the law entitles them to require the child to attend. They may feel they are unable to contradict the reporter's advice because they don't know 'all the facts' and, not knowing all the facts, they worry that they may actually be causing harm to the child by requiring him or her to attend the hearing. However many hearings they do, they never have the familiarity and confidence which comes from working full-time in the system. They have limited opportunities to meet as a panel group and compare notes which might enable them to discover whether others are regularly doing hearings without the child present.

If they stop to think about it, they can see that the powerlessness they experience in relation to the reporters mirrors very closely the powerlessness of families in relation to panel members and other figures of authority.

What is panel members' reaction to this state of affairs? For many it has been to cling on tenaciously to the fiction of their 'independence'. The alternative, 'taking on' their reporter, who looks after them and 'keeps them right on legal matters', is about as difficult as what faces the adolescent who challenges the authority of the father.

Others in the child care system face a similar problem. Although the Hearing System depends for its effective working on developing common goals - i.e. mutual dependencies - among its disparate supporting groups in education, health and social work, in most regions cooperation remains as elusive as ever. This is in spite of a constant outpouring of papers, an apparently endless round of conferences and lectures which emphasise the importance of inter-agency work. The grassroots message from these events is invariably the same. There is a huge gap between the policy statements of regional departments and what actually happens in practice. It is a rare indeed however, that the care and education projects in one area mount a joint campaign to demand that their respective headquarters bring in the kinds of change which are needed if real cooperation is to flourish.

Visitors from abroad still come to see the Hearing System in action. They often comment on the sense of energy and optimism they get when they talk to panel members. That's not surprising. There is something extraordinarily optimistic about a system which gives practical expression to the belief that human conflicts are not the sole province of the expert. But it is political naivety of the most dangerous sort to think that ideals alone will shield a system from decline. It takes ideals **and** hard work to do that.

The system urgently needs new research; it needs a thorough debate about how to introduce representatives into hearings in a way that is consistent with the original principles; and it needs to confront and tackle the power relations inside the system and those between the system and other agencies.

Some people have been saying recently that the Hearing System has lost its way. That seems to suggest that it needs to go **back** to an era when it did things better. Birthdays, of course, are never about going back. As any child will tell you, having birthdays means growing up. Perhaps, at last, at the age of twenty, the Hearing System is ready to do just that. ■

Among the Contributors in this issue...

Alison Bell is a member of **Scottish Child** editorial group.

Margaret Fulton Cook has had poems published in **Gown**, **West Coast**, **Noire**, **Smoke** and other magazines. She is currently on the editorial board of **West Coast**.

Thom Dibdin is a journalist living in Edinburgh.

Bill Grieve is a principal officer for Save the Children in Scotland.

Drummond Hunter is director of the Howard League for Penal Reform (Scotland) and chairman of the Scottish Institute of Human Relations.

Stephen Naysmith is a journalist living in the west of Scotland.

Janet Paisley is a full-time writer living in Falkirk and currently writer in residence at Glasgow South Division Libraries.

Alison Prince is an artist and writer and lives on Arran.

Jean Raeburn is training officer for Lothian, Borders and the Western Isles Children's Panels.

Rodney Relax lives in Dolphinton and writes all the time.

Mark Wilson is a community psychologist working for Strathclyde Social Work Department in Glasgow.

Speaking Out on Child Abuse

Dear Editor,

I would like to congratulate **Scottish Child** for speaking out against the media hysteria which surrounded the 'Orkney Affair'.

I speak as someone who was brought up in an overcrowded tenement flat by an overworked mother and an alcoholic father. Even though it was over twenty years ago, I can still recall my feelings of panic when my father came in from the pub and I would wonder what sort of mood he was in. If I were unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time I would find myself being battered by my father.

As a direct result of these experiences I developed a stutter, lost confidence in myself and became a social as well as an academic failure at school. No one in any position of authority was ever able or willing to 'interfere' in what was after all a 'domestic' situation.

The real tragedy, of course, is that my story is not at all uncommon. There must be thousands of children today going through the same thing.

Looking back, I have no doubt that my experiences as a child have had a destructive impact on my personal development and relationships. But in many respects I have been lucky. I have managed to overcome my stutter and regain some of the confidence I lost in childhood. Thousands of others have not been so lucky.

So what has my story here got to do with the Orkney Affair? Well, after the media hysteria, when it was discovered that social workers had, heaven forbid, possibly made a mistake, it seems to me that a backlash against social workers would be the worst possible outcome for children at risk. Not only will it discourage children from speaking out against their abuse, but social workers themselves will know that if they make a mistake they are liable to be vilified by the media and possibly be 'punished'.

The danger is that social workers will play safe, they will only act when they have 'firm evidence' of wrong doing. This could give social workers a 100% success rate and keep the media happy, but unfortunately it would mean many more children being abused and nothing being done about it. Every other profession makes mistakes, so why should social workers be any different?

If we want to achieve a society where all children are supported, protected and believed in, if we want a society where no child lives in fear of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, then the price we may have to pay for that is the occasional mistake by social workers.

I believe it to be a price worth paying.

Dave Donohoe
Edinburgh

Dear Editor,

Hands Together for Life!, Derek Rodger's editorial on press coverage of alleged child abuse in Orkney (**Scottish Child** April/May 1991) raises some interesting points. Perhaps the most striking is his outrage that children will be silenced by pages of newsprint. Whereas countless generations of children have been seen and not heard, we now find one group of adults portrayed as trying to hush them up while others stand ready to listen to them like never before. What is the hue and cry about?

Rodger suggests it is society's desperation to deny the possibility that sexual abuse takes place in ordinary families. In this he identifies a key factor in the fascination of child sexual abuse. Bad things which happen to ordinary people is

what appeals to the press and appals the public. It could be anyone. Perhaps alarm at what the papers say is valid. Trial by tabloid tends to muddy the waters. The media influences behaviour, but it does not cause it. While some sectors have undoubtedly contributed to the denial process others have been enormously instrumental in bringing the whole issue of child abuse centre stage.

Rodger describes widespread sexual abuse in Scotland as "the known facts". I wonder if he has access to a far larger body of information than the rest of us. What facts are we talking about? Whatever else, "the facts" of sexual abuse don't speak for themselves in any simple and direct way. whereas physical neglect and punishment leave clues for investigators to follow up, sexual abuse, like mental cruelty, lies buried in the mind of the abused. thus the testimony of abused children assumes critical significance. Why is speaking out often the last thing they want to do?

Clearly, for a child or adult being believed and not blamed can be the first step towards living an ordinary life. but the climate of trust for children is affected by adults' self-interest. Disclosure of intimate details to perfect strangers, when everything they say may be taken down and used in evidence, is usually not what they have in mind. Abused children want the abuse to stop but not to lose their families. When being believed brings about as much distress as it takes away we need to take a very hard look at why this is so.

In fact, the Cleveland Inquiry found the gathering of evidence from children often amounted to a further incidence of abuse and stressed that parents' as well as children's rights should be protected. as a result the most radical overhaul of child law in decades will go on the statute book this autumn. Those who have witnessed the frozen watchfullness of abused children will know that a child's trust is shattered by the abusive power of an adult. Trust, like glass, shatters easily. Until we can guarantee that speaking out will not smash their lives, abused children will continue to keep silent

John Richardson
Montrose

Dear Editor,

I always read **Scottish Child** with interest. Its point of view is stimulating, even if I am not always convinced by its argument. However in your last editorial I was left feeling that you were in danger of being 'tarred with the same brush' as the tabloid press.

To quote you: 'If sexual abuse did not take place in Orkney, it would be the only part of Scotland where it did not'. I would suggest that this is a statement that you cannot accurately substantiate.

For myself, I find that the need in the present crises is for interpretation and some reconciling mode. I do not wish social workers or other professionals to be castigated. At the same time I wish to honour the children and the parents and the security and love provided in many homes.

So let us get away from invective, and let us strive to preserve the Children's Hearing System, to support professional workers, and at the same time recognise the areas of privacy and regard within the family. To be sure there are evil practices, but they will not be disposed of by hysterical attitudes. A cool, quiet and calm judgement is what is required, and I'd hope that you would do your best to see that **Scottish Child** does its share to ensure the climate in which this can be carried out. **THIS** will be in the 'best interest of the child'.

Ronald Beasley
Queen Margaret College
Edinburgh

Adoption

Dear Editor,

I read the article by Meg Henderson on adoption and immediately took up my pen and wrote the enclosed. I love my son desperately, but few people can know or understand the continuing emotional demands made by disturbed children on their parents.

The need for professional support is clear but support groups involving other adoptive parents often provide a more realistic way of coping. Knowing one isn't alone, knowing that other parents (and their children) are investing big chunks of their time, energy and emotions in trying to sort out the emotional mess that these children are in, helps to keep you going:

NOT ENOUGH

I'm not your social worker or psychologist
I'm not your counsellor or physiotherapist.
I'm not your judge or your jury
I'm not your jailer or inquisitor.

I'm not your abuser or the playground bully
I'm not your tormentor or your enemy.
I'm not your doctor, nurse or children's home carer
I'm not your speech therapist or learning support teacher.

Often, in the space of an hour, you need me to be
All of these.
You need to hate me, love me, reject me
You need to cling to me, fight me, learn from me, despise me.

But I'm only your adoptive mother
And all you get is me.

Pat Gourcha
Stirling

LETTERS

Tears and Protest

Dear Editor,

Maggie Mellon's enraged response to Kay Carmichael's **Tears and Protest** reveals a prejudice which I find very depressing. Her glib assumptions about Kay's background are of course totally wrong, but that is not the point.

If Kay's work had appeared under another name - say, for the sake of argument, that of James Kelman - would it have incurred the same wrath? It seems unlikely, for Ms. Mellon, with a fine lack of logic, praises Kelman for being 'passionate in his questioning' rather than for any superior practical achievement in the sociological field. It is precisely this passion which she declares to be invalid in the case of a writer (and notably down-to-earth social worker) suspected of middle class origins.

The class war has its old bugle calls which still make the nostrils of the war-horses flare, but more sensible animals droop their ears in terror. Nobody wins wars. More than seventy years ago, the Christmas fraternisation in the trenches of France proved that individual human beings can meet on the common basis of their humanity, in defiance of those who set them against each other.

Our present condition of rapacious capitalism sets person against person, class against class, and deliberately seeks to erode the concern which people feel for each other, for the very reason that such concern transcends the class system. In the light of this, we must examine our attitudes very carefully. There is an urgent need to pool our energy and our abilities. We must not waste them in attacking each other.

Alison Prince
Arran

Early Entry

Dear Editor,

I would like to reply to the letter by Eileen Cook, if only to reassure her that our positions are more in agreement than she appears to think.

I agree with her completely that nursery education is of great value to children. The research evidence on this is unequivocal. Equally, the research evidence on early entry to school is quite clear in that it is not in the interests of children generally to be admitted to school early. Might I recommend to her **Early Entry Children - are they at risk?** in **Alternative Approaches to Children with Behavioural and Emotional Difficulties**, published by S.E.D./Psychological Services, 1987. The conclusion of this piece of research, after commenting on the risks, states that 'we should be looking towards the development of appropriate provision for the under-fives'. Psychologists everywhere would agree with this.

In the region where I work, we have an education committee that has placed nursery education at the top of its list of priorities. Most children who apply will get some measure of provision. While this is not ideal - no children can attend full-time - it is a promising beginning and I have the highest regard for the work done by my colleagues in the nursery sector. As a psychologist, I am fortunate therefore, in usually being able to make nursery provision for those children deemed not to be able to benefit from early entry. The answer to a significant expansion in nursery provision is political, of course.

There are still several issues here which are being confused; early entry to school; lack of nursery provision; poor child-care facilities. This is not to mention the needs of working mothers, with which I remain in sympathy. However it remains incumbent on educationalists to give sound, researched advice on what is best for our children. Thus it is usually in the interests of children to attend nursery school in their pre-school year, as opposed to being granted early entry to school. Like Ms. Cook, I agree that adequate nursery provision would probably take care of the early entry issue. However, we should continue to make assessments on the basis of the needs of the child and not the working mother; to do otherwise would be unprofessional.

Lastly, with regard to her comparison of me with 'politicians and bureaucrats', I am still deciding which one to be angrier about!

Ian McEwan
Senior Educational Psychologist
Dumfries and Galloway

Childcare in the 90s

Dear Editor,

I have welcomed the prominence **Scottish Child** has given to the diversity of issues which surround child care through your series **Childcare - Urgent Need for the 90s**. The series managed to highlight positively the complexity of the area and the breadth of developments which have emerged throughout Scotland in recent years. These have occured despite inherent difficulties which exist in a society which views children as a parental rather than a social responsibility.

I have to agree with many of the editorial comments concerning the importance this society places on children and women, reflected in low levels of services.

Education and Welfare services are increasingly subject to the ideology and the vagaries of market forces. This process is likely to hasten with recent changes in the law.

Legislation is in place for a more powerful role for local authorities in the regulation of day care services. Part X of the Children Act 1989, which is to be implemented here in Scotland in October this year, places additional responsibilities on Local Authorities for the registration, inspection and review of child care for children up to the age of 8 years. While this is to be welcomed in many ways, the pace of these changes and the belated consultation on behalf of central government with local authorities is likely to mean that the regulation of the private and voluntary sectors will take place at the expense of public child care.

This decade will indeed unfold a new and eventful chapter in the shape of child care services in Scotland. It is opportune for this society to continue to directly confront child care issues as a social and economic priority and to achieve the levels of availability that many of our European counterparts now take for granted.

Ros Kirk
Principal Officer
(Children and Families)
Tayside

SCOTTISH CHILD welcomes readers' letters.
Please send them to

The Editor
Scottish Child
40 Shandwick Place
Edinburgh
EH2 4RT

Special Needs

Dear Editor,

Your focus on children and adults with special needs was interesting. It brought the tokenism of the Record of Needs to wider attention.

My eleven year old son is autistic and in voluntary care. He has been in a residential special school for two years since I had a mental breakdown after caring for him at home for nine years.

My son's needs were recorded when he was five. My son was recorded as needing occupational therapy but he has never got any of this therapy. Next to the recommended occupational therapy in his Record of Needs, it says, 'due to the lack of a paediatric occupational therapist in this area, it is impracticable'.

Many of the children at his school had this statement on their Record of Needs and so did children at two other special schools in other parts of the district. Parents wrote letters to the Regional Council, the Health Board and the Education Department. We got nowhere.

On the part of the Record of Needs that parents can put their views, I said I thought my son needed an ongoing behavioural programme because my son's difficult and disruptive behaviour posed a great strain on our family. No behavioural programme was ever given. I suppose I was just a mother and what could I know about my son's needs?

For nine years we all did our best to modify our son's behaviour. He screamed in shops, grabbed anything in sight and pulled his own hair. The public are very good at letting you know what they think. I don't think there was a day that went by without someone saying 'if that was my son, I know what I would do with him...' I was supposed to wallop the living daylights out of a child who was so handicapped he didn't know the meaning of words like good or bad, let alone be able to modify his own behaviour without a great deal of help and understanding. Maybe I should have made some put-down remark, but at these times I was more desperately trying to cope with my son and do the shopping and try to give attention to my daughter, than calmly come out with something appropriate.

The educational psychologist was no help. She told me not to take my son into shops. But with no one willing to look after him for me, I had no choice, and I couldn't afford a childminder. I am left feeling that many professionals just don't understand and appear not to live in the real world.

In the age of community care where residential care for children with special needs is going out of fashion, the community services and supports are grossly inadequate. Parents are expected to be miracle workers, providing the expertise of an army of professionals for their disabled child. The state sits idly by and lets us sink or swim and refuses to throw a lifeline. Yet when parents demand an equal say in what is provided for our own children we are told we are not qualified to make decisions.

It was against the odds to care at home for a child like my son but at least if his needs had been met he just still might be at home. Children like him will continually end up in residential care as long as the Record of Needs is continually kept as a token gesture and not a real attempt at meeting the needs of those with special needs. Also, if parents and carers are ignored and patronised and left to cope alone, they will become burned out like I did, doing no- one any good at all.

Isabel Turner
Peterhead

Oliver Brookes

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The Diary Habit

Yesterday, I wrote the last line of the novel which has been my constant mental companion since the Autumn of last year. I feel odd without it, rather like a battery hen let out of her cage, uncertain on the legs and not sure where to lay the next egg. And before anyone gets excited about how nice it is to be a writer and how nasty to be a battery hen, I apologise in advance. I have given a new home to many of the poor souls (hens, I mean - writers would be impossible) and know exactly how awful it is.

The analogy stands. Writing is a form of self-imprisonment, the shutting of the mind into a long dream which seems more real than waking, and into a waking which is obsessed with technical consideration of the dream. This particular book takes the form of a diary: two diaries, in fact, though neither of the interlocking stories is expressed in actual writing by the protagonist.

Rather as one stares nervously into shop windows after buying something, fearing to see a better bargain offered, so reading other people's work is compulsive but alarming. Everyone seems to be using the diary-type narrative - Janice Galloway, Margaret Forster, Jeanette Winterton and even the norwegian writer, Sissl Lie. Is it a female response to a world which increasingly insists that the only valuable reality is the one which can be measured and counted? It seems a very direct reaction to protest that there are as many realities as there are people, and probably many more, for a single mind can construct countless realities by rearranging the raw material of events.

Whatever the implications, the diary habit remains a very natural way to become a writer, because it is the equivalent of practice for a musician. It is private, a training of the self to do what it can. There is no element of performance, so other people should not shudder at misplayed scales and they should certainly not read diaries.

I feel uneasy about the diaries which children are exhorted to keep as a school exercise. The idea is fundamentally a decent one, allowing children some direct self-expression (and it's dead handy when the teacher is up to the eyes in something else), but the implications are far-reaching. To start with, the teacher has to decide how much honesty she or he can cope with. It's no good assuming that a child's diary will be a jolly account of nice activities. If it is, then the young author is probably doing an automatic editing job, screening out anything unsuitable. My own daughter said, years after leaving school, that her diary had been pure fiction after a teacher remarked that our family sounded a bit weird.

If, on the other hand, the intention is to encourage a no-holds-barred personal chronicle, the results must be anticipated realistically, and the mental loins girded. Writing on somebody's dairy in red biro "You must not play in ruined buildings,it is dangerous" will not stop the playing, but it most certainly will stop the writings. To promote genuine diary-keeping can only work in one of two ways. Either the teacher does not look at it, or the secrecy of the confessional is observed any compromise is a breach of faith.

'Is it really so revolutionary to believe that we all live in a perpetual state of learning, and that this is what makes life interesting?'

Increasingly, I steer clear of the diary approach to any form of participative work. An area of pretending seems to be a necessay thing, allowing the child to preserve personal privacy and giving the teacher more security in the minefield of children's emotional vulnerability. I trod on a mine the other day, running a creative writing workshop with primary six children. One boy had chipped in lots of ideas to the general discussion but jibbed at undertaking a writing-and-drawing expressive exercise, saying he could not understand it. This was very obviously untrue, so I provided him with an alternative which he settled to happily, and made enquiries of his teacher. The boy's mother had died the previous week. His personal feelings were not available for comment.

In future I will provide an imagined person through whom children can speak, each one inventing his or her own. The robust egotist can still opt for the personal statement, but there must be a let-out clause. The child whose own self is under siege can sometimes find refuge in the clown's make-up and the mummer's mask. And once again, after all these years, I recognise that children teach as well as learn.

Personal education, as the jargon has it these days, never stops. In many cases, it never starts. It seems strange that education colleges do not look more seriously at the question of questions of attitude and value, but this, of course, would require students to think about something other than methodology and consider what they are doing and why. Is it really so revolutionary to believe that we all live in a perpetual state of learning, and that this is what makes life interesting?

The opposite attitude was demonstrated with wondeful clarity the other day by John Patten, Minister of State at the Home Office, while talking to 150 fourteen-year-olds. His purpose was to introduce a video called **Think Again**, commissioned by the Association of British Insurers, to be launched during Crime Prevention Week. The film was designed to deter youngsters from breaking into cars and driving them away. Patten said he was 'gob-smacked' (oh dear, trying to be colloquial, I suppose) when a boy asked him if he had ever tried joy-riding when young. "No", he said. "I was too much of a wimp".

It may have been honest, but in the confusion of the moment the Minister revealed his subconscious convictions in all their nakedness. The brave entrepreneur will take any risk, and the self-controlled dissenter is a wimp. Bang goes any educational value the video may have had, at least at that assembly. But then, the British Insurers can always put their prices up. ■

Alison Prince

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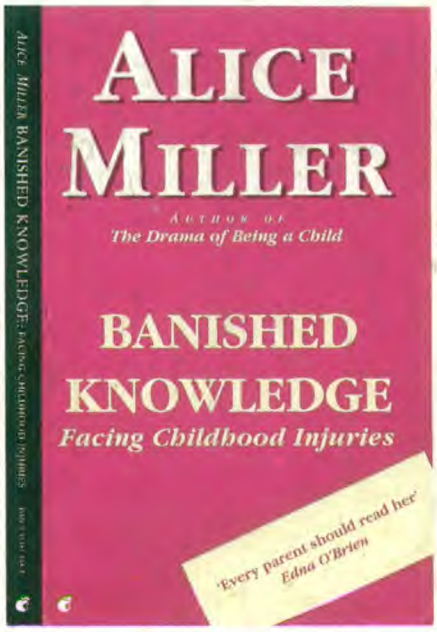

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