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December 1991 / January 1992 £ 1.50

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to see it then
things would be
done about it.
But people don't
want to see it."**

**Youth Homelessness
in Scotland**



Jock Tamson's Bairns?

What it means to be a Scot



Children's Books

reviewed by children



Alice Miller

child abuse and politics

Wild at Art!

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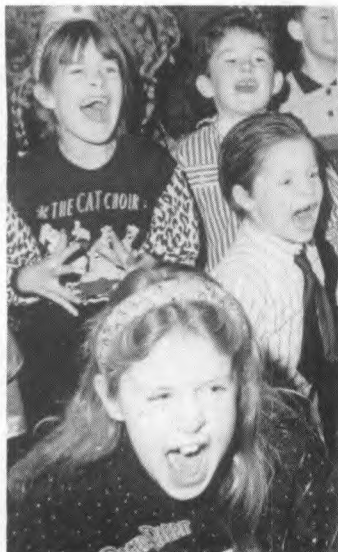


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Christmas time is Panto time - and all over Scotland theatres are delivering the goods. **Alison Bell** reports on what's going on in the theatre as we enter 1992.

Also the problems of knowing too much, language-wise; telling stories in class; and one year on from our publication of **homeless voices** has anyone learnt to listen to what homeless teenagers are saying?

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Scotland the Brave, Auld Lang Syne, biscuit tins and bagpipes - is it possible to talk about Scotland and what it's like to be Scottish without rationality and common sense walking out the door? **Jean Raeburn** does just that.

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Continuing our **Scotland in the World** series, **Elaine** and **Jim Ennis** have been on holiday with the kids - to Denmark, where bike rides do not involve defying death at every corner.

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Kids love painting, there's no doubt about that - they don't even seem that bothered about being 'good' at it until the adults come along. In a special photo-feature about the young artists of the **Langlees Family Centre** in Falkirk, **Pauline McGee** looks at kids, art and adults.

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The Parent's Charter is getting a mixed response - the government just don't seem to be getting their way at all when it comes to convincing people about their plans for educating our children. **Graham Atherton** looks at the proposals and the response.

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A short, seasonal story from **Neil Cooper**.

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There's only really one way of finding out if a children's book is any good and that's by asking some children. We got quite a mixture of answers when we did.



Moving up the age range a bit **Sian Bayne** reviews a book about a place far, far from home where many, many children who have grown too old for their fairy tales go - the streets. **Colin Chalmers** reviews **Alice Miller's** new book and **Kate Day** takes a look at **Barnardos**.

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Children as citizens - **Isabel Willshaw** thinks we should take the idea seriously.

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What do ladders, conferences and needing to be cared for have in common? - our **Anna** is writing about them in her diary!

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LIST

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EVENTS GUIDE

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Who Knows Best?

Sometimes you just can't help wondering what children have to do to get listened to - what hoops they have to jump through in order to get heard by adults. Children often learn, painfully, that adults' own interests take precedence over theirs. The squabble over money that has taken centre-stage in the Orkney enquiry is a particularly unendearing example of this.

Another legal circus, the case of alleged child sexual abuse that recently collapsed at the Old Bailey, illustrated in the starkest way the difficulties children face in getting heard. Here we had a ten-year old girl giving evidence from the dock of the High Court for four days about events going back years. She admitted to being confused about some of her evidence but was adamant about being sexually abused. When the prosecution decided to withdraw the case, the judge described this ten-year old's evidence as 'uncertain, inconsistent and improbable'.

These recent events are not just of concern to those interested in much needed legal reform. They raise a wider issue - who do we listen to as we try to understand the world? In a society where most people have been brought up to believe that our 'elders and betters' know more than we do, it is perhaps not surprising that the habit of assuming that those 'above us' know best is so ingrained.

It sometimes seems as if whose opinion is taken seriously - and whose is not - has got nothing to do with the facts and a lot to do with who's got the power.

Such a state of affairs doesn't bode well for children, of course - their views are only likely to be taken into account when they don't conflict with adults. But the experience of not being taken seriously is not one that is unique to children. Anyone who insists on a point of view that doesn't accord with the powerful, the experts, the ones-who-decide is likely to face a similar reaction - disbelief, anger and the suspicion that you might be slightly mad.

It is sometimes easier to believe soothing myths about the world - 'the poor are always with us', 'doctor knows best', 'your father would never do a thing like that' - rather than face up to uncomfortable facts that others want to deny. It is often very hard to simply acknowledge what you know to be the case; it is never easy challenging those who are used to being believed.

●
Much of this issue of SCOTTISH CHILD touches on the question of whose views are taken seriously, who is deemed to know best. In 'Jock Tamson's Bairns?', Jean Raeburn points out that our history as Scots is two-sided: passive acceptance of our lot very often, yes; but also frequent assertions of our dignity against those who would see themselves as our superiors - and assertions of dignity always go hand-in-hand with a questioning of who really 'knows best'. Writing about children, adults and art Pauline McGee asks us to re-learn from children the knack of being at ease with creativity, instead of pretending that we adults have got it all worked out.

And, in a look at youth homelessness in Scotland, we find that there is still some reluctance to believe young people when they cry out for help - some of the adults they go to still believe that they know best. When we published HOMELESS VOICES a year ago one of the homeless teenagers we interviewed, a 16 year old girl from Glasgow, told us,

"They shouldn't just believe adults, they should believe young people as well. They think adults tell the truth more than young people, and it's not right. Write in your wee magazine thing 'don't just listen to the adults, listen to us as well'."

We've been following that advice in 1991. We'll be following it a lot more in 1992.

Colin Chalmers

MULTI-LINGUALISM

The problems of integrating non-English speaking children into nurseries and schools has been a burning issue over many years. Most areas with large communities of ethnic minority residents have adopted policies for cross-cultural co-operation applicable to preschool level. However very little consideration has been given to children who are from bilingual European backgrounds - as the Celtic minorities in England, and to some extent in the English speaking areas of Wales and Scotland, have known for quite some time.

It is easy for preschoolers to assimilate the language around them. As so much of the communication between two and three year olds is non-verbal they do not need language to make friends. Preschool children are only just learning to express themselves verbally so they will repeat words in any language. They will then use the words they feel most comfortable with and which carry the most meaning for them, regardless of language. The problem which can face the parents of bilingual preschool children is generated by the ease with

which their children pick up another language, possibly rejecting their mother tongue. This is a problem encountered in many parts of Britain by parents whose mother tongue is Gaelic or Welsh.

It is also a problem which will face many European parents who come to live in Britain after the 1992 single market comes into force. In many European firms it is considered vital to your promotion prospects to be able to speak good English. Throughout Europe, English-speaking films are shown with subtitles rather than being dubbed; in France, teenage magazines are produced in English. With such encouragement, anyone choosing to come to Britain to work is more than likely to have a good command of English; and children picking up English words at nursery or playgroup will find that these words are often understood at home.

We have had experience of trying to maintain a Welsh mother tongue for our son both in England and France. When my son was at his playgroup in England it was very difficult to keep a bilingual English/Welsh environment in the home. My son would hear comments such as "Nobody speaks

Welsh here", or the inevitable "Isn't it a dying language?". Many Gaelic speakers encounter similar situations - it is hardly surprising in these circumstances that a child will reject a minority language.

The international workplace nursery that our son attended in France was very different. There the emphasis was not simply on ensuring that the French language was learnt but also on recognising each child's own linguistic achievements. As a result, while in France we had a trilingual son as opposed to the monolingual one we have here in England.

My son was obviously in a rather exceptional situation when we lived in France. But many of the ways in which multilingualism was fostered there could equally well be applied to any nursery or playgroup in this country where there is a child who uses more than one language.

In France, unlike England, our son was never asked to translate words and phrases that his teacher did not understand. He would be told that "Daddy will help us to understand when he comes".

My son was also encouraged to share his use of other languages

with his class at his French nursery. Nursery rhymes can be easily learnt in different languages and tapes can be borrowed for group singing. My son's favourite event at his French nursery was the celebration of a pupil's birthday - 'Happy Birthday!' was sung in all the languages that the child used as well as French. There was great status attached to the number of times the song was sung.

Fostering a multilingual environment at preschool level offers real benefits to children without other languages in their background. It provides an awareness of other languages, a first step towards learning a foreign language at a later date. It also helps parents who are faced with the dilemma of whether to send their child to an English playgroup or nursery. Let us hope that 1992 will see preschool educators prepared to meet the challenge of our multilingual society and provide the best of both worlds.

Ann Barlow

Useful books and publications dealing with multilingualism can be obtained for Multilingual Matters, Bank House, 8a Hill Road, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7HH.





David Allison. All Photography

A Good Night Out

THEATRE

When was the first time you went to a theatre? If you grew up in Scotland, the chances are it was to see a Christmas show. Many of you will have wonderful memories of the excitement of cheering on the goodies and hissing at the baddies. Equally you'll remember your disappointment if the cast were unenthusiastic or Cinderella kept interrupting the jokes to launch into a slushy love song.

If you're trying to decide which show to take children to see it's worth remembering that not everything in a traditional show is designed specifically for children. It can be agonizing to have spent a fortune on a major trip out to the theatre only to find that the children are bored within five minutes or worse - as happened to me - actively heckling the performance. Children are honest viewers.

Scottish Child did a quick survey of the cost of one adult going to this year's performances with two

children. Prices start at about £9 in the case of Wildcat's **The Mysterious Mountain** (Clydebank), a show about a princess who has to learn how to smile. They go up to about £45 for the dear seats at the Edinburgh Playhouse's **Barnum**, a play about a ruthless showman.

So what promise do be the highlights of this year's crop? The traditionalists will find the last-ever panto by the 'Grand Dame' of Scottish Theatre, Stanley Baxter, an event not to be missed - he's appearing in **Cinderella** at the King's Glasgow. More 'big name' productions are **Aladdin** (at the King's in Edinburgh) and Gerard Kelly and Una McLean in **Babes in The Wood** at The MacRobert Theatre near Stirling - this show also features 'Fiona and Dave from **Take the High Road**.' Other traditional shows abound such as **Sleeping Beauty** at the Aberdeen Arts Centre and **Jack and The Beanstalk** at The Tron in Glasgow. My personal favourite of all time, with its wonderful pirates, **Peter Pan** is also given an outing at the Eden Court (Inverness).

If you prefer to see something less traditional there are an increasing number of shows around that will suit you. These often have the advantage of being written specifically with children in mind, though like the older stories they still tend to revolve around the battle between good and evil.

It is often said that heroes in the modern theatre are an endangered species and this is particularly true in **Shinda the Magic Ape** at Edinburgh's Lyceum Theatre. In this play, written for younger children by Stuart Paterson, the hero is a silver-backed mountain gorilla, endowed with "magic powers and a pure heart". From this it looks like a new Christmas genre is emerging in the 1990's - the 'environmentally aware' panto.

There's further evidence of this trend in **Weans in the Wid**, a play for older children by John Binnie for Clyde Unity Theatre (touring various venues including Castlemilk, Knightswood, Dalmarnock, Hamilton, Shotts, Drumchapel, The Netherbow

Theatre in Edinburgh and Wester Hailes). This modern Gretel is a greedy Glaswegian who, when she finds herself homeless, has to learn that there is more to life than videos and chocolate before she can survive in the natural world of the forest.

Promising for anyone taking a child for a first visit to a show is **The Mouse and His Child** at the Theatre Workshop in Edinburgh, adapted from the very popular modern children's story by Russell Hoban. **The Snow Queen** at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow is another show adapted specifically with younger children in mind.

Will any of them stand out as real winners? Only one way to find out - go along. **Scottish Child** is offering pairs of tickets for most of the performances mentioned above to any child who would like to tell us what they think of the night - (tickets are limited to one pair per child) the child can of course, take an adult along with them. Phone Scottish Child for details.

Alison Bell

Keep it Coming!

APPEAL

'**Scottish Child** belongs to its readers' - that's not an empty slogan, it's a statement of the way things are. Scottish Child publishes ideas that belong to everyone, ideas that lots of people are trying to put into practice in their work and at home. Scottish Child needs to survive and grow to nourish the energies and aspirations of people who want to see things change for the better for themselves and for children.

That's why we launched our £10,000 third birthday appeal in the last issue.

The response to the appeal has already been very encouraging. The first response came with a birthday card, from a reader on a low income, enclosing a fiver and wishing us all the best in reaching our target. The launch of our **New Voices New Writing** supplement at the Tron Bar in Glasgow was an enjoyable night for all who attended and raised £200 towards the appeal. Some of the people who were there are keen to put on a similar event in Edinburgh - watch this space.

But there is still a long way to go before we reach our target - and we would be there instantly if only 200 people give £50 to become a **Friend of Scottish Child**. Having friends is very important to children - they help children enlarge

their understanding of the world, allowing them to test out their independence through getting to know new people. In this respect Scottish Child is just like any other child.

Already, people and organisations from across the country have joined up as Friends of Scottish Child. We're getting there - but we need your help. Besides the obvious support we get from the much-needed cash, the magazine gains in other less tangible ways through building an extended group of supporters who identify with Scottish Child's aims and want to see it continue to grow. The recent expansion of our editorial group to include people from a wide variety of backgrounds who are determined that Scottish Child will prosper and grow is part of this process.

If you haven't already thought of becoming a Friend of Scottish Child we hope you will now. And if you have other ideas about how you'd like to get involved in helping us raise money, we'd like to hear from you.

We'll be keeping you informed about the progress of the Appeal and shall publish a list of Friends of Scottish Child in the first issue of 1992. We hope your name is on it. ■

Rosemary Milne



Telling Stories

SCHOOLS

For nearly twenty years the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) have been running their *Writers in Schools* scheme, allowing children to learn about self-expression and creativity from visits to their own schools by well-known Scottish writers. Meg Bateman, Tom Leonard, Tessa Ransford, Joan Lingard, Norman MacCaig - these are just a few of the writers who currently participate in the scheme.

Schools can seek the advice of Shonagh Irvine, the SAC's literature officer, about which author may be best for their purpose, or, using the information on writers set out in the *Writers' Register*, they can make their own choice. The idea is to get children reading from the writer's own work, as well as creating new writing of their own.

One of Shonagh Irvine's duties is to administer the budget for the scheme - and recently there have been one or two setbacks. The most notable was in Lothian, where a budget cutback in May of this year has caused a massive reduction in the numbers of writers going into Lothian schools. This has meant that Lothian has lost its position as the region in Scotland most open to the use of the 'real' writers provided by the scheme.

Shonagh Irvine describes with regret a heroic - and ultimately unsuccessful - struggle by the SAC director and staff to try to persuade Lothian Regional Council to maintain their financial commitment to this way of bringing creative writers and creative writing into schools. It's not that the sums involved for each writer are huge, by any standards - the cost of

bringing a writer into your school is £70, of which £35 is paid by the SAC. Nevertheless, Lothian Region has opted to leave individual schools to meet the 50% of the author's fee required under the terms of the scheme.

In spite of these financial constraints Shonagh Irvine remains confident and optimistic about the way the scheme is being used. The emphasis is not always on the written word - the oral traditions of Scottish story-telling are also subsidised by the SAC. This autumn's Scottish Storytelling Festival at the Netherbow in Edinburgh was partly funded with SAC money and the *Comhdhail na Seanachaidh* on Skye, the annual Gaelic storytelling festival, receives financial support every year.

Children's television has played its

part in creating a new supply of actors and readers who want to tell stories. "We get a lot of English actors," says Shonagh, "ringing up saying that they now read in such and such a town in England and can we use them up here, please. It can be difficult to get them to understand that it's not simply a case of having storytelling skills. We want to support the genuine oral traditions of Scotland. Scotland is much richer than England in this respect because there still exists a living tradition of handing on stories in this way, especially the among the Gaelic seannachuids." ■

Rosemary Milne

For more information about the *Writers in Schools* scheme contact Shonagh Irvine at the Scottish Arts Council on 031 226 6051

Up Against It

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Throughout Scotland, youth homelessness is on the increase - but those dealing with the problem on behalf of **Glasgow District Council** believe there are only 'about 20' young people sleeping on the streets of the city and claim to turn no one away who needs help and does not have 'behavioural problems'.

A year ago, **Scottish Child** published **Homeless Voices**, where homeless teenagers spoke of their experience of homelessness in Scotland. At that time, the half dozen emergency hostels set up to cope with the problem were turning away 4 out of every 5 young people coming to them for help. The situation has now got worse.

"We were struggling a year ago", says John Milne of Glasgow's Stopover emergency hostel, "and we're struggling plus 20% now". Their figures show an 18% increase in young people coming to them for help in the year to October, and they are only able to help more young people by shortening their stay. The hostel only has fourteen beds, and is under increasing pressure to take young people from places around Glasgow. "Over a third of the referrals we get at the moment are from outside Glasgow - often there's nowhere in the towns they're from for these young people to go to".

A stark example of emergency provision being denied to young people was the recent decision not to open a Stopover hostel in Dumbarton, despite money being available,

because of local Not-In-My-Backyard objections. Scottish Office Minister Allan Stewart justified the backdown by describing the project as 'costly' and catering for 'a relatively small client group'.

In Edinburgh, the twelve bed Stopover hostel continues to turn away 4 out of every 5 referrals. "There is some follow-on provision for young people when they leave Stopover", says Shaun Thomas, a worker at the project, "for instance there are 9 places in our own follow-up flats. But what's available is nowhere near what's needed".

The picture is broadly similar across the country: growing need, few extra resources - and growing desperation. Jenny Kane, a project worker at the Open Door hostel in Livingston, reports increasing numbers of homeless teenagers in West Lothian, and describes some of the lengths young people will go to to get a place to stay: "We know of young people making serious attempts at suicide in order to get a bed for the night and some longer-term attention. These young people think this is the only way they'll get any help, and often they're right. When things reach that stage you really have to ask what's going on".

The view from **Glasgow District Council** is very different. Nicola McNulty, the single persons' manager at their Hamish Allan Centre, told **Scottish Child** that there are only "about 20" young people sleeping on the streets of the city. "If a young person is sleeping on the streets it's either because they don't know about our Centre or because they have behavioural

problems and we have put a DNA (Do Not Accommodate) on their file. We never turn young people away who need help".

In fact, the Hamish Allan Centre employs a controversial system of 'checking out' whether young people are genuinely homeless. In one case **Scottish Child** has come across, a young woman who told the Centre's staff that she was being subjected to violence at home was not believed when her mother denied hitting her. She had no option but to return home, soon became homeless again and ended up going to Glasgow Stopover.

The checks are carried out on every young person applying to the Hamish Allan Centre for a place to stay. Housing Officers, with no training in making such assessments, visit or phone families to check out the young person's story. "Our staff are very experienced" Ms McNulty told us, "and they can usually pick up an atmosphere in a house". "We're not in the business of breaking up families", she added.

When **Scottish Child** put it to Ms McNulty that according to many projects working with homeless young people up to 20% of them have become homeless because of sexual abuse, something they may find very difficult to talk about, we were told that "If anyone mentions sexual abuse that's completely different and we bring in the Social Work Department. We don't find a lot of young people tell us about sexual abuse - it's less than 1%".

Ms McNulty did not accept that her Centre's policy would result in some young people returning to an

abusive home rather than disclosing sexual abuse to her untrained staff.

Commenting on the Hamish Allan Centre's policy of 'checking out' young people's stories with their families, Kate Caskie of **Shelter (Scotland)** said "We don't believe this is good practice. Young people who become homeless are not likely to disclose sexual abuse immediately and we don't believe that their families should be contacted without their full and informed consent".

Glasgow District Council believes it is providing a better service for young homeless people than any other Council in Scotland. But at a time when youth homelessness continues to grow (**Shelter (Scotland)** estimates that there are now 11,000 to 12,000 homeless young people in Scotland) it appears unwilling to adopt the widely accepted practice of believing young people who tell emergency hostels that they are homeless. As one homeless teenager recently told **Scottish Child**, "A lot of people don't want to believe that there's so many homeless young people, they don't want to believe so many young people have nowhere to go. If everyone was to see it then things would be done about it. But people don't want to see it". ■

Colin Chalmers

Homeless Voices - the experience of homeless teenagers in Scotland is available for £2.50 (plus £1 p&p) from **Scottish Child**, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT.



Colin Chalmers

Scottish Child

February Workshops

Child Sexual Abuse

tuesday 11th
february

"When a child tells an adult about sexual abuse, it becomes the adult's crisis, not the child's."

How do we manage to create the conditions in which children and teenagers feel safe to tell others about abuse? How do we ensure that children are both protected and empowered when abuse is suspected? What are the problems for workers and parents involved with sexually abused children?

The workshop on Child Sexual Abuse finds common ground between sexual abuse and other forms of abuse of children.

workshop leaders
Colin Chalmers
Rosemary Milne

Child Punishment

monday 17th
february

Why are children punished and humiliated so frequently and so publicly? What stops us from intervening when we see children being punished? What are our own recollections of punishment when we were children and how do these memories affect us?

The workshop will be of interest to all those who look after, teach or care for children as well as to adults who wish to gain a fuller understanding of the importance of childhood experience on our adult life.

workshop leaders
Alison Bell
Rosemary Milne

Gender

wednesday 26th
february

How do we view ourselves as men and women? How do we manage our relationships with the "opposite sex" - at work, at home, in public? What doubts and insecurities underpin our understanding of each other? How can we come to terms with the imbalances of power between men and women? Is it possible to celebrate and enjoy gender differences?

The workshop on Gender will be of interest to all adults and is run with an equal number of men and women taking part, working in mixed and single sex groups.

workshop leaders
Alison Bell
Colin White

held at the Scottish Child offices, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh
5 minutes from Haymarket Station
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£25 per day, including lunch, coffee and tea (some concessions £5)
early booking advised (use form below). Enquiries to Scottish Child 031 220 6502

Please reserve me place(s) at the child sexual abuse workshop	I enclose a cheque/postal order for	name
Please reserve me place(s) at the child punishment workshop		address
Please reserve me place(s) at the gender workshop	£ made payable to Scottish Child	post to Scottish Child, 40 Shandwick place Edinburgh EH2 4RT

IN BRIEF

For anyone who doesn't yet believe that money can make some people do and say anything, the current debate about whether to ban advertising that encourages **SMOKING** should be pretty convincing. People appear on the television telling us that cigarette advertising isn't really about trying to get people to smoke at all; 'independent' scientists tell us how there's no proof that cigarettes harm you; and we have to listen to people going on about 'freedom of choice' (familiar, that one) when anyone who's not two plates short of a picnic can tell that what they're really trying to do is keep their bag sales up.

Most smokers want to give up - they know it's bad for their health, costs lots of money and annoys non-smokers. The reason they keep smoking is quite obvious to anyone not on tobacco companies' pay-roles - tobacco is very addictive.

Well, as we come up to new year and all you smokers resolve, once again, to give up, we pass on some encouragement from the **Smokebusters** of Primary 5A at Flora Stevenson Primary School in Edinburgh (pictured above). They've started an anti-smoking campaign as a way of getting to know how the media works. Maybe they could write to the chairmen of the big cigarette companies and ask them why they advertise cigarettes when they know they kill people - they might find out a bit about how big business works as well.

Oh, and if you are giving up smoking for the new year, why not get sponsored and raise some money for the **Scottish Child** appeal? - we'll let folk know how you've got on in the next issue.

"I have decided as of today to stop smacking my toddler...I hated smacking him and as I did it I knew it wasn't right or getting me anywhere. I just didn't know what else I could do."

That's from a letter quoted on the back of a new booklet that is packed with ideas about just what you *can* do instead of **SMACKING** your child. The booklet, entitled **Positively no smacking**, is published by **EPOCH (End Physical Punishment of Children)** and the **Health Visitors' Association** and looks at how smacking is unnecessary,



Smokebusters of primary 5 at Flora Stevenson Primary School

harmful and can be made to be socially unacceptable if people campaign against it.

The booklet points out that "Physical punishment reinforces negative behaviour in children and compounds a sense of bewilderment and shame. Children learn to believe they deserve the punishment and in turn learn to use physical retaliation as a means of expression and control."

Some people argue that to outlaw physical violence against children would mean that other, more insidious, methods would be used to control children. However this booklet, by offering alternative ways of dealing with real life situations that use discussion and openness with children instead of violence, points out that we can relate to children in an altogether better way. Altogether, a booklet for the future - and one for the stocking.

Positively no smacking is available for £4.95 (plus 50p p&p) from HVA Publications, 50 Southwark Street, London SE1 1UN.

Seeing children as human beings instead of pests is something the **OBSERVER** could learn a bit about. A recent **Observer** magazine published an article introduced by the statement that "Children who always whinge for what they want should be indulged less and controlled a little more". It was one of those 'humorous', 'light' pieces that you're a right, old spoil-sport if you find offensive - and it was music to the ears of adults wanting to justify child-beating to themselves.

Meg Henderson, who wrote the piece, once contributed to **Scottish Child**. Once. Writing about one child she knew, she describes "the slap across the legs I always itched to give him" - and thinks that the

child has got the problem. She writes with pride of her inability to cope with children crying, describing how she went up to a crying child in a bank and "whispered 'SHUT UP!' with a ferocity that surprised even me".

The **Observer** seems quite happy to encourage that sort of abuse by publishing articles justifying it. **Scottish Child** wrote to their letters page complaining about the article, pointing out that, in the 1990s, verbal and physical abuse of children should not be a matter for 'light-hearted' pieces in glossy, 'quality' magazines. But we didn't get very far. The editor of the **Observer's** letters page told us that she heartily agreed with the piece and wouldn't be printing our letter about it. We just couldn't take a joke, you see.

Perhaps this attitude is not so surprising. It was, if you remember, the **Observer's** considered judgement on social workers' attempts to protect children from sexual abuse in Orkney that "it might not be a bad thing if social workers were disbanded as a profession and dropped to the bottom of the Orkney quarry". 'Quality' journalism, eh?

We've now written to the **Observer's** editor asking him what he is going to do about his paper's 'let's laugh at children getting assaulted' view of the world. We haven't, as yet, had a reply.

Anyone for **POETRY**? The **Scottish Poetry Library** has recently opened the upstairs room of its flat in Tweeddale Court, 14 High Street, Edinburgh as a reading room for members. A wide range of poetry is available, including magazines, cassettes and videos. Temporary membership is available for one pound a day. If you

want more details, or want to join the **Scottish Poetry Library**, you can contact them at the above address or by phoning 031-557 2876.

Would you know what to do if someone was having a **DRUGS** overdose in front of you? If you don't, and you think it might be handy to know, there's a new **Drugs Awareness and First Aid Video Training Pack** available. The pack contains a video, depicting three critical incidents, and other training materials designed to help people deal with situations in ways that can, on occasion, save lives.

The pack has been produced jointly by the **Scottish Drugs Training Project** and the Scottish Branch of the **British Red Cross** and costs £23.50 including postage. For more information you can contact the **Scottish Drugs Training Project**, which is based at Stirling University, on 0786 67732.

The **ACHAMORE CENTRE**, a pioneering centre for children with special needs in north-west Glasgow, is still threatened with closure. But as we pointed out in our last issue's **In Brief** there is a Parents' Group determined to keep it open. A 7,000 signature petition was handed into Michael Cleary, Director of Administration at Greater Glasgow Health Board, by the group, who are now waiting for a decision from the Board.

Michael Cleary told the Parents' Group that most of the 280 letters he has received about the Board's new community care strategy have been expressing concern at the shutting of Achamore - the Board is due to make a decision in January. We'll let you know what happens.



Jock Tamson's Bairns?

An all day event on the theme of Jock Tamson's Bairns was recently held to mark twenty years of the Children's Hearing System. In the morning, **David Hayman** introduced the day with some reflections, dramatised by **Jean Raeburn**, on what unites - and what divides - the Scots. Here we publish an edited version of that contribution.

We're all Jock Tamson's Bairns - aren't we? Busy man, this Jock Tamson. And what on earth do we mean by 'Jock Tamson's Bairns' anyway? And whether we are or we're not, what does it have to do with the Children's Hearing System?

The phrase comes from the Jock Tamson who founded the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, and there's no doubt that it is a phrase that reflects a notion of common humanity which many Scots have sympathy with. It has a levelling effect, raising some, and lowering others - 'A man's a man for a' that', as in Burns; or more currently from Runrig.

I walk these hills and I sail the seas
I've weathered the storms of history.
Created to live, created to share
With the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air.

Tear down these walls
All men were born the same.
You came here with nothing
But naked and a name - a name.
Tear down the walls
They keep raising for you.

It's about communality, classlessness - scratch the surface and we're all the same. *We have more in common than our differences.* The Scots? Do we believe that?

Five million people live in Scotland. A small country with a population no more than London - but one divided within itself to an almost unimaginable degree. "It has no unity except upon the map", declared Robert Louis Stevenson. "two languages, many dialects, innumerable forms of piety and countless patriotisms and prejudices part us among ourselves more widely than the extreme east and west of that great continent of America".

Local patriotisms and prejudices? Is that right? Is that us?

The Past

However much our pride may appear ridiculous, petty or arrogant, it is just as often worthy, self-sacrificing, noble and touching. Always it rests firmly on the past, a past endlessly and energetically debated by the Scots who seek truth, morality and instruction from it. The past deeply influences and partly forms our national consciousness and is ingrained in our individual awareness. The Scots are beset by history - and we cherish it.

It goes almost without saying that the interpretation of the past is a subject that animates the Scots like no other. It is a brave man who will attempt publicly to state his own version - he can expect flat denial and disagreement on all sides from his fellow countrymen.

The Scots are well accustomed to wag the finger at themselves - they have little need of anyone else to do it for them. Should a *stranger*, a non-Scot, attempt an analysis of the Scots, the

'We recall only the tragedy, forgetting the victory. Why is that?'

personal element will become subsumed in a collective defence of patriotism, national prejudices and the desire to maintain the old myths. The Scots *are* their own history, a history kept alive like a flame by a nation of guardians who, all too often, are consumed by it.

Identity

Scotland's sense of separate identity can be traced back as far as Roman times, and nationalism was certainly a motivating factor in the Wars of Independence of the fourteenth century. The revolt against England, led by Wallace and Bruce, involved the common people - the Scottish nobility were less than enthusiastic in their support.

Separateness was reinforced by continental influences, particularly French and German; while Scotland looked to Europe for inspiration and support, the English remained largely insular. So it is that Scotland has always regarded herself as part of the European whole rather than merely an adjunct to England.

Although the Scots invaded England and were in turn invaded, there was an important difference between the two acts. Even if the Scots by chance defeated the English on the battlefield it would not have been possible for them to take over the country. The Scots, however, were always likely to be politically and culturally assimilated by the English. We get a feeling of nationhood, a sense of Scottish identity, largely as result of struggles against immemorial antagonists.

There exists strongly among the Scots a self-perception that takes heart from the emotional impact of Scotland's heroes, triumphs and disasters. The figures of Bruce, Wallace, Burns, Scott, MacDiarmid and a hundred others; the battles of Flodden, Bannockburn and Culloden; the disasters of the Darien Scheme, the '15 and the '45 rebellions, the Clearances, the decline of the shipyards - all combine to create a body of myth that, whether accurate or inaccurate in fact, soaks into the Scottish consciousness like Scotch mist. The Scots are saturated by their history, real and imagined, in a way that is incomprehensible to the English who, generally, take their history for granted - since they are not oppressed by it.

Love of the Land

That the Scots love and long for their country is not a matter of dispute - but there is a whole barrage of sentimental claptrap too. The maze of tartan, heather, bonnie lassies and braw lads of Brigadoon is quite frankly embarrassing. It seems to thrive best about a thousand miles away from the Scottish coast - except, of course, when it's recreated in the St James' Hotel for the tourists.

If we are honest this can be a dreich, drab miserable place - it may not simply be the search for new opportunities that takes our young folk to the far corners of the world. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote with great ambivalence about

Scotland. He was never sure that he wanted to come back to "That grey country where the wind squalls and the bells clash of a Sunday". Yet he was riddled with guilt about abandoning his country: "When I forget thee, Auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning". Stevenson acknowledged every drawback of life in Scotland, a life which had almost killed him in childhood, and yet he wrote,

"The happiest lot on earth is to be born a Scotsman. You must pay for it in many ways, as for all advantages on earth. You have to learn the Paraphrases and the Shorter Catechism; you generally take to drink; your youth, as far as I can find out, is a time of louder war against society, of more outcry and tears and turmoil, than if you had been born for instance, in England. But somehow life is warmer and closer; the hearth burns more redly; the lights of home shine softer on the rainy street; the very names, endeared in verse and music, cling nearer round our hearts."

Romantic and realist. Longing and guilt. *Internal* warring.

The Clearances

Many, of course, left the land against their will. The ill-fated Jacobite rising in 1745 and its climax on Culloden Moor was only the beginning of the cycle of events that were to desolate the highlands.

In the aftermath of Culloden, the old clan system was destroyed and a new order was heralded in the rise of the industrial revolution. Sheep farms were seen to be more profitable than the traditional patterns of land use. Families who had worked their land for generations came to be seen as an 'unprofitable liability'. Throughout the highlands, Anglicised clan chiefs, land-owners and factors ruthlessly implemented forced evictions, population clearance and emigration under duress.

Many highlanders were crowded on to emigrant ships or into the slums of swelling lowland cities. Those who remained were forced into congested pockets around the coast, left clinging to the marginal lands with inferior soil. They had no security of tenure - many families were moved on time and time again. Despite famine and desolation, they were forbidden to take even seaweed from the shores.

The tensions generated by the land issue culminated in major civil unrest. There were a series of bitter confrontations between the dispossessed people and the land-owning interests. A radical newspaper, **The Highlander**, was printed in Inverness. The Land League organised mass rent strikes, demonstrations and resistance. The people, wherever possible, stood against the formidable might of the sheriff officers, the police and the military.

One such occasion, which came to be known as the Battle of the Braes, took place on Skye in April 1883. After crofters dared to burn their eviction notices, a detachment of Glasgow

police were sent to reinforce local sheriff officers. The clash resulted in the jailing of the crofters' leaders, widespread publicity and more resistance. Crofters seized land, driving off the police. It looked as though they were going to repossess *all* the land that had been taken from them and their families since the clearances began - and that could not be allowed.

A request was sent to the Lord Advocate for the immediate dispatch of a gunboat and marines. Over 400 marines on the gunboat *Assistance* were joined as they arrived in Skye by the *Lochiel* which had been commissioned by the police.

They came prepared to fight and the crofters would have been no match for them. But the crofters, Gandhi-like, met this impressive demonstration of force with polite, passive resistance - they conspicuously dug their potatoes at every township along the coast. The **Glasgow Herald** reported that "The district was found in a state of the most perfect peace, with every crofter minding his own business".

It had been an object lesson in de-escalation, and after it, though many had lost their home, their homeland or their lives, the crofters were guaranteed a fair and reasonable rent and hereditary future of tenure. The crofters had won. Yet we recall only the tragedy forgetting the victory. Why is that?

By the 1930s Edwin Muir, in **A Scottish Journey** saw Scotland not as an oppressed nation but as a visibly depressed one, searching for the source of its depression. That was, of course, the time of The Depression, but that's not what Edwin Muir meant. He believed that the source of the Scots' depression was rooted in immemorial grievances against the English, by the failure of the 1745 rebellion, by the clearances and by a general despair that the Scots were no longer their own masters.

The Scots and the English

To the English, the injured pride of the Scots is incomprehensible. The Scot may indeed be British, but first he - a Scot, defined somewhat negatively by Hugh MacDiarmid as a feeling of being 'not English'.

According to Iain Finlayson, "Nationalism speaks seductively to the Scots, promising redemption: the past, that broad highway, will lead to final glory. Suffering will be justly rewarded and romantic fantasy will be converted to the new reality of a Golden Age. Myth will be made manifest. Scotland will grasp the thistle and be, finally, what it has always perceived itself to be in its inner heart - rich, successful, powerful, a nation among nations".

And what stands in the way of all this? England, of course!

Scotland today is a disappointed nation, uncertain of its identity, often relying on regrets, recriminations and resentments to rally itself. There can be a reluctance to acknowledge

bitter truths. We blame others more than we are able to blame ourselves. This projection of national resentment is sometimes properly based on fact - but often it is self-denying fantasy. When Robert Burns wrote 'Such a Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation' he was lamenting the betrayal of Scots by Scots - but there are many Scots who would tell you that the 'Parcel of Rogues' only live south of the border.

Divisions Within

Any psychoanalyst worth his salt would talk about self-delusion, denial and avoidance. Whatever it is, it seems to go hand-in-hand with a tendency to go to extremes, to do nothing by half measures. As G. Gregory Smith put it, "The Scot is not a quarrelsome man but he has a fine sense of the value of provocation, and in the clash of words he has often found a spiritual tonic".

We like to argue. But we are animated more by loyalties to ideas and persons with whom we feel connected than by the spirit of opposition. There are times when loyalty demands that the indefensible must be defended, even if it contradicts some factual knowledge we already possess.

Holding two contradictory ideas in perfect tandem is an heroic stance. Scots may not be the only ones to do this, but we are past masters of the art.

'Nevertheless' is a word well-established in our vocabulary, an often dramatic word. "The weather forecast today is for bright sunshine - nevertheless it's raining!" It is a word to neatly bridge the two parts of a sentence or argument in which white, if not precisely proved to be black, is at least declared to be so. It is a word to thwart inconvenient argument and preface a paradox.

The Scot, says Finlayson, has an amazing ability to contain contradictions - at rest on a knife edge 'whaur extremes meet'. Try reading Ronnie Laing's *The Divided Self* - it's a powerful business exploring and acknowledging the extremes within us. Our literature is laced with examples of *The Divided Self*: from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Robert Louis Stevenson) through *Peter Pan* (J M Barrie) to *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (James Hogg).

Dr Jekyll's contradictory personality is a picture painted extravagantly. Within it is reflected Robert Louis Stevenson's own feelings about himself as a "Shameless bohemian, haunted by duty". Stevenson was brought up in Edinburgh in Victorian times in a family home of strict Calvinist piety against which, as a young man, he rebelled. He was aware of a conflict within himself between wicked energy and virtuous impotence, a conflict he explored in his writings. Through Dr Jekyll he acknowledges that these different sides of his character are in fact both real, are both him. And though one side may triumph, it does so at a cost to the other.

Divisions of Geography

There are, of course, two sides to everything. Perhaps it is there writ large in the two sides of Scotland that are Glasgow and Edinburgh. There is forty miles distance, and a world of difference, between Scotland's principal cities of the west and east coasts. Put at its most basic, Glasgow is a great commercial, and, till recently, industrial city, while Edinburgh is a city of long-established and rich professional lawyers, bankers and accountants.

They have existed forever, it seems, in uneasy harness, economically and socially complementary but deeply suspicious towards one another. For all her elegance and lofty-mindedness Edinburgh is a reserved, plain, cautious and thrifty city, more lowland than highland. Glasgow is expansive, extravagant, romantic, a less tight-laced city.

Edinburgh is unshockable and cannot generally be taken by surprise. Glasgow is constantly being caught on the hop and is continually vocal in its astonishment and outrage at the duplicity of its apparent enemies. The difference between Edinburgh and Glasgow is not unlike the difference between the wise and foolish virgins - and who but a moralist would dare to say which is better? All Scots being more or less moralists will, of course, have their opinion, and will be, in this as in all matters, divided.

Religious Divisions

In the 1950s, when a black American musician visiting Glasgow expressed his admiration for the total absence of a colour bar, it was explained to him that there was no need to discriminate against blacks, when there were so many Catholics available!

Arnold Brown, the alternative comedian, felt that as neither a Billy or a Dan he did not fit comfortably into either of the divisions:

"One day my father called me into the front room and said: 'Arnold, it's about time you knew the facts of life'. So he told me where bigotry came from, how Rangers and Celtic started the Battle of the Boyne, who won and what the half-time score was, and the meaning of King Billy. Then he took me to my first Rangers-Celtic match. I remember very clearly that before we went in he said, 'Son, I'll tell you what the score is before the match starts. Don't provoke anybody, don't cheer, don't even say a word'.

"We went in to the stadium, well away from the Rangers and Celtic people, to the neutral section protected by the United Nations, and it was an education for a young boy from a sheltered home. I saw wonderful tricks that day - the uppercut to the chin, the broken beer bottle flung into the crowd, the head butt - and that was only the police in action.

"It was no picnic being Jewish in Glasgow without a team to call your own. Eventually, most of the Jewish supporters decided they would

follow Third Lanark. Unfortunately, Third Lanark turned out to be the only Scottish club to go out of business since the war, and I often thought retrospectively that God punished Third Lanark because Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath and we should have been at the synagogue instead of Cathkin Park."

Religion has played an important role in the development of the Scottish character. In the mid-eighteenth century hell was a very real and painful prospect to young James Boswell:

"The eternity of punishment was the first great idea I ever formed. How it made me shudder! Since fire was a material substance, I had an idea of it. I thought but rarely about the bliss of heaven, because I had no idea of it. I had heard that one passed one's time there in endless praise of God, and I imagined that that meant singing psalms as in church; and singing psalms did not appeal to me. I should not have wished to go to heaven if there had been any other way out of going to hell."

A bit like being between a rock and a hard place. Which brings us neatly on to Calvinism. It's almost impossible at a distance of four centuries to grasp the extent of its impact on the Scots - but you have to ask yourself why we so readily took to our hearts such an uncompromising religion. The fact is that its austerities suited our lives.

The Church exercised considerable power over the lives of most Scots until after the second world war. The Church? That implies that there was only one denomination, but the Scots, as we know, have ever been active dissenters and intellectual heretics. We like to argue - remember?

The established Church of Scotland was widely supported at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Roman Catholics were fairly thin on the ground. There were few Episcopalians, mostly from the upper middle class, and few Evangelicals. But from early in the nineteenth century the Evangelicals began to assert themselves. They were orthodox Calvinists, narrow in their beliefs and fervid in their enthusiasm, who ardently and urgently sought to reform society as a whole. Moderates might seek to save individuals; the Evangelicals were out to save a nation.

The Evangelicals appealed to the rising urban middle class, exhorting them to respect the laws of political economy, discourage trade unionism and dedicate themselves to moral and material improvement (which were seen as the same thing). They were urged to devote themselves to self-interest and self-help, inspiring the working class, by example, to traditional virtues of the simpler sort - thrift, sobriety, and personal responsibility. Something familiar there...

The Evangelicals eventually seceded to become the Free Church of Scotland and the Church of Scotland, as opposed to the Free Kirk, mellowed its belief in favour of a more liberal

'Scotland today is a disappointed nation... there can be a reluctance to acknowledge bitter truths'

Protestantism and today no longer has a monopoly of influence. But the residual effect of the Reformation, personified in the leading militant protestant John Knox, was profound - we have become imbued with persistent guilt!

Dr Anne Smith recently wrote in **The Scotsman** that, "Beyond the shadow of a doubt it will be found that the Knox Syndrome is at the root of all our major national afflictions, from tooth decay to alcoholism. Our national craving for cakes and ale, in short, is a neurotic response to the Knoxian injunction to virtue which all Scots suck in with their mother's milk."

The chief symptom of the Knox syndrome she identifies as "a distrust of pleasure, so profound as often to be mistaken for religious paranoia... If we are enjoying ourselves and haven't recently suffered, we tend to look nervously over our shoulders, fearing the Hound of Heaven as Sir Henry did the Hound of the Baskervilles. For we know surely that if we haven't suffered before pleasure, we shall inevitably suffer immediately after it."

It would appear to be difficult if not impossible to find a cure for this. The Bard tried, drinking and fornicating himself to death in his heroic effort to save the nation from the baneful influence of "The soorfaiced auld boy wi' the bunnet in New College" - John Knox. It's perhaps little wonder, with all that early emphasis placed on hell-fire, sulphur and almost certain damnation, that the Scots tend to be stoical about their fate.

Women

History tells us about the men who shape it - not the women. I wonder if that's because history on the whole is written by men? Why is it in all this, that we hardly mention women at all? What is their role in "A man's a man for a' that"? "We're a' Jock Tamson's Bairns", you'll note - not a mention of poor Mrs Tamson.

Women have always been there or thereabouts - wherever the action is.

Highland women were consistently at the forefront of resistance against oppression. During the clearances, it was reported that they assaulted and humiliated the Sheriff Officers at Durness, and in Lochshiel they drove off an eviction party. In Glencalvie, the women set fire to their eviction notices.

In 1852 the women of Greenyards lined up against the militia in front of their men and sustained severe injuries. At the Battle of the Braes they pelted 47 members of the Glasgow police with stones and mud until, it was reported, "like the great Napoleon at Waterloo, the police were forced to forget their dignity and seek safety in inglorious flight".

Women are often at their most vociferous in matters of defence of the underdog. They have an inner strength, rooted God knows where, that means they don't seem to see the world in terms of the same greedy competition as men do. They *help* each other.

Women look at you sometimes, and they *know* - and they know that you know too, and in that understanding they refrain from telling you that they know. Women are the containers of all the rubbish the world throws at them. They gather all the pieces, holding them together. They hold on, till the men can manage.

Getting On

In Scotland a great deal of importance has always been placed on 'getting on'. How much of the getting on was linked to 'getting out' is hard to tell. It didn't have to be to do with making vast sums of money - though that helped - *respectability* was the goal. Often women of few means would go to great lengths to present a respectable front to the world, whitewashing the doorstep and polishing the doorhandle. They would dress up their sick children to take them to hospital.

William MacIllvaney described the attitude of many Scots to the deprivation around them:

"Putting to their eye a telescope with a ben and a loch painted on the lens, they say, 'I see no poverty'. They have for long been aided in this illusion by the poor themselves. Scots pride, that formidable quality, has always rebounded on itself.

For generations, the poor of this country have equated poverty with shame and have consequently hallucinated adequacy in a desert of deprivation. When the sick refuse to moan, the healthy are grateful. It allows them, first of all, not to share the other's pain, and soon to imagine that it isn't there."

Edinburgh - the thriving affluent festival city, quality of life officially rated as second to none. Edinburgh - where one third of the population live on the breadline, some of them homeless, a high proportion of the homeless being youngsters barely out of school.

Further divisions, not peculiar to Scotland this time, between the haves and have-nots. Difficult, to 'get out' of that and 'get on'. And it has been education that has been seen, so often, as the way of doing just that.

Our remarkable and rather innocent admiration for an education system which was firmly authoritarian and often cruelly harsh was embedded in two notions: its democratic nature and the breadth of the curriculum at the upper stages of secondary school. It was, nonetheless, a hierarchical, elitist system which allowed only a few to filter through to higher education whilst producing an obedient, modestly schooled workforce.

The fact that a few always did get through fostered the conviction that the system was egalitarian and kept alive the hopes of aspiring parents that their children would take advantage of this wonderful opportunity, even if they themselves had not. Those who did not make it to the top - the vast majority - were usually convinced that it was their own fault that they hadn't 'got on'. This was a view, of course,

confirmed by those who had made it to the top.

Self-Esteem

But what we all knew in our hearts is now widely recognised by people in education - you have to feel good about yourself to be free to learn. Self-esteem is a fragile plant, it needs nurturing. The young child knows only the values of home life and if these are not recognised - or worse, are ridiculed - he learns that he is worthless.

Now in the 1990s, children's happiness at nursery and at school, thankfully, has a much higher priority. The primary sector is now more concerned with the needs of individual children. It offers a greater variety of experience and a chance to develop, each child at his own pace.

On the whole now, Scottish children get off to a better start. But society still seems to expect teachers to fulfil the role of disciplinarian, preparing pupils for exams and turning out biddable candidates for employers. Head teacher Margaret McIntosh has said that she believes many children see this with all the freshness of youth and would describe their years in school, especially their later ones, as a waste of time.

But education is about more than schooling. It is a life-long process engaging the learner in his own education so that he is not the passive recipient of someone else's view of the world. And it's for adults as well as children. Education in this sense puts us back in touch with the accelerated learning of the toddler whose whole world is an exciting, inviting playground of new wonders to discover.

Unrealistic? Impossible? Right now in Glasgow there is a primary school where the educational emphasis is on verbal argument and constructive challenge to ideas. This is not an invitation to anarchy, it is a return to the deep-rooted value in Scotland placed on the ability to think things through for yourself. To explore all of the 'what ifs'.

Does the idea of children questioning established wisdom scare you? It does many folk. If we have the courage to allow such questioning, though, the pay-off is high - thinking, assertive adults. That could be our future.

Because Scotland's not just history. It's out there now, on the streets, in the housing estates and in the town flats. It's a lively, pulsing, frustrating reality of overburdened institutions, football rivalries, inventiveness, humour and a thousand other things.

As we ponder the fleeting images of Scottishness, the banners of our complex history and our fighting disputatious spirit, it is really up to you to make your own connections between then and now. You must ask your own questions. ■

*Sections of this article draw heavily on Iain Finlayson's book **The Scots** (Oxford University Press £4.95) which is highly recommended as further reading.*

mmmmmm... D

Denmark and Scotland are similar in a lot of ways - but when it comes to children the Danes leave us standing.

Elaine and Jim Ennis investigate.

One of the pleasures of being on holiday is having the time to do and see new things and enjoy the fact that other places do things differently. We recently made our first trip abroad since becoming parents more than nine years ago. Denmark had been settled upon and for anyone keen on travelogue details - yes, we had a great time. The pastries were superb, Legoland lived up to its promise, even if it was a bit pricey, and that vital ingredient, the weather, was more than kind throughout our two weeks.

But it tends to be more elusive and intangible things that transform a good experience into something really memorable. And what impressed us most of all was the cultural climate for parents and children in that country - and how different it was to our own.

Some people might say that this has more to do with the 'halo' effect holiday venues enjoy - the maxim that 'the grass is always greener on the other side' must hold a grain of truth, otherwise we wouldn't use it so often. So, for the record, we'll just give you a few of our hard won credentials for the statements we're about to make.

We know about family life in Scotland. First as a threesome, then as a foursome, we've been seated next to toilets by restaurant and cafe owners keen to protect other customers from the sight of children eating. We've run the gauntlet of traffic in city centres with buggies and bags. We've changed nappies on wet concrete floors when no facilities existed. We've

abandoned shopping trollies in the middle of supermarkets to go in search of toilets a block away. More than anything else, we have learned that being out and about with children in Britain can be *hard* work and *isolating* work to boot. There's no reason to dwell on this - anyone with children will have their own catalogue of struggles to match or outdo anything we might remember.

Imagine then this scene in a bank. The parents need to fill in some forms - they do this painlessly because their children have made a bee-line to a Lego table, a fully equipped drawing table and some wheelie toys in a corner of the bank. That's Denmark. We checked out some other banks and all of them seemed to offer this same service.

Again, picture a 12 mile family bike ride in Britain with children aged nine and six, the younger having only mastered a two wheeler earlier that year. Foolhardy? In Denmark the cycle paths criss-crossed the area where we were staying. All the paths were beautifully laid and separated from the main road traffic by a wide grass verge.

Imagine a country where you can spend two weeks out and about without ever hearing a voice raised in anger against a child, without seeing a child being smacked and without seeing a child in tears for any other reason than a grazed knee after a fall.

It didn't really occur to us how remarkable all this was until we returned home to Britain. We

noticed the contrasts immediately, as we drove through Newcastle in search of the A1 and the road home.

Since that journey home we've been out as a family in towns around Scotland and seen sights that are a terrible indictment of the way parents and children experience one another in this country. We've seen children fighting and shoving each other while their parents gazed into the middle distance, seemingly oblivious to what was happening and certainly avoiding any responsibility for their children's behaviour. Children are dragged through crowded streets and slapped if they protest too much.

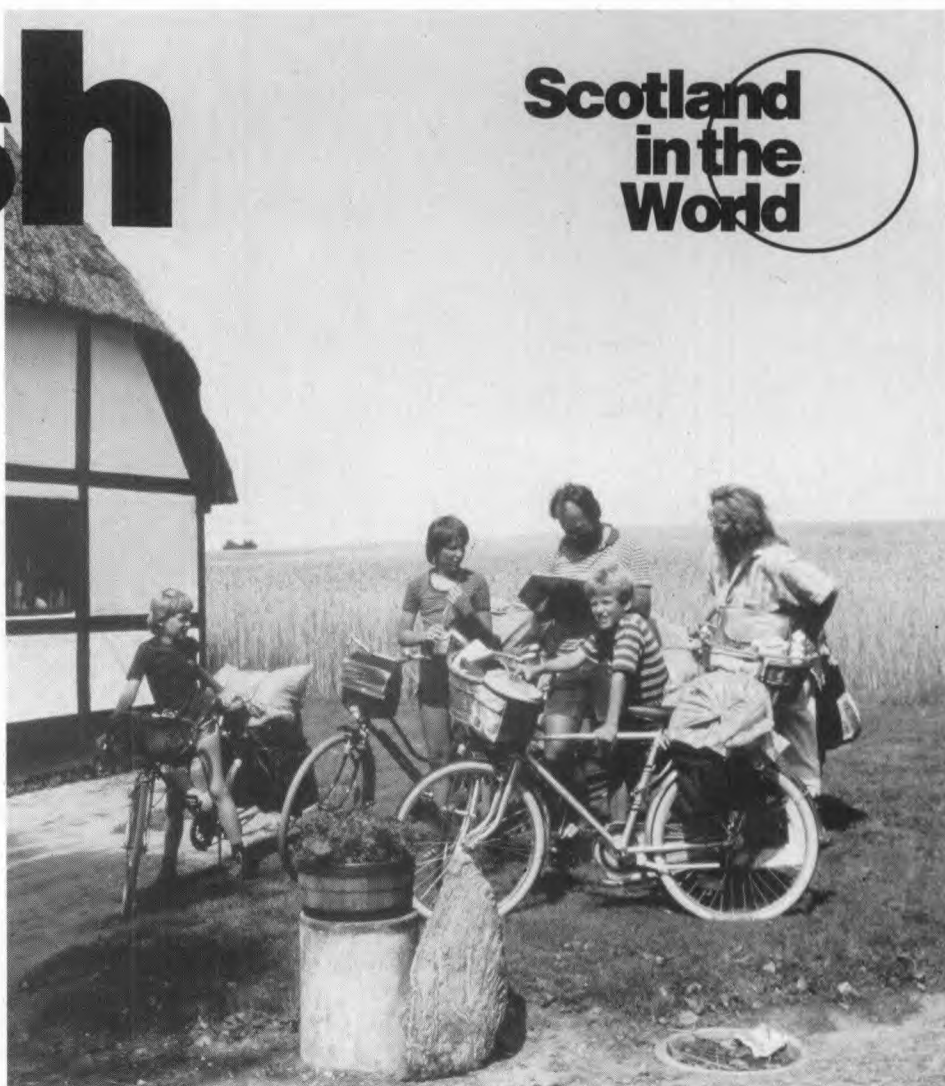
Many of the exchanges are characterised by anger - much of the language used by adults towards children is harsh, dismissive, threatening and often incredibly hostile. Neither parents or children seem relaxed in each others company, neither seeming to know what the other wants or needs and neither even wanting to be with the other. After the calming experience of Denmark, it sometimes feels like being in the middle of a desperate struggle - and one which is deeply saddening and uncomfortable.

We've thought a lot in recent weeks about the differences between Scotland and Denmark, about the different types of relationships we have seen in each country. Could the basic nature of Scot and Dane be so profoundly different? Or was the contrast linked in any way to decisions about resources and forms of

Danish

Scotland
in the
World

**'Imagine a country
where you can spend
two weeks out and
about without ever
hearing a voice raised
in anger against a
child'**



Denmark Tourist Board

social organisation? Believing firmly that the answer did not lie in pathology, we delved a little deeper into structural issues in the two countries.

The similarities between Scotland and Denmark are obvious and immediate. Both countries have a population of about five million, each with a heavily populated centre and widely scattered rural communities. Denmark is justifiably renowned for bacon and lager, and few people anywhere would hesitate to name where whisky and Angus beef are produced. The two countries have long traditions of seafaring, with fishing a deeply significant economic and cultural activity for both. Climate too, is broadly comparable. And the two countries have thriving island communities - there is a centuries-long tradition of communication between Denmark's island communities and those of Orkney and Shetland, much of it based on a recognition of mutual need and similarity. Available figures would suggest that the two countries have achieved similar levels of wealth generation - indeed, Scotland would seem to have the better natural resources, with its rivers, coal reserves and offshore oil.

But there are differences. Denmark's sovereign status at least giving its people a clearer picture of assets and problems and little doubt about ultimate responsibility. Scotland, of course, does not have sovereignty and indeed may not want to achieve it. Ownership of assets, resources and problems is consequently much more blurred - it is difficult to be clear about the origin of Scotland's social policies.

Danish social policy, supported by law, sets clear objectives that seek to further activities which can support parents and the family. The Danish Social Assistance Act of 1974 provides high rates of cash benefits to families, with payments of some £60 per child per month, roughly double that paid for children in the United Kingdom. Denmark's extensive network of state led and supported day care services for children needs to be seen, according to a leaflet from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the light of a social and educational goal of giving all children access to a day care institution, just as other public facilities - libraries, hospitals, schools and so on - are available to the public generally.

By 1989, 70% of Danish three to six year olds had pre-school places provided for them. This provision was made in recognition of the fact that it was extremely beneficial to all concerned and in support of women's growing participation in the labour market. In contrast, Scotland provides less than 10% of this age group with a place, even if local authority day nursery places and private childminding services are added together.

Denmark values childcare and makes sure it is provided. Compare that to the attitude expressed in the statement made by Edwina Currie in response to a European Childcare Network Report: "Our view is that it is for parents that go out to work to decide how best to care for their children. If they want or need help in this they should make the appropriate arrangements and meet the costs".

It's statements like that that perhaps epitomise the harsh and punitive stance taken towards children and their carers in the UK. Unlike Denmark and other European countries, where services address the care needs of parents and the developmental requirements of children, provision in Scotland is grudging, minimal and concentrated towards a rescue model of child protection. The market model ensures that private services will remain out of the economic reach of the majority of those who need childcare services.

Even when services do exist, the quality of provision compares very poorly to its Danish equivalent, with much pre-school provision in this country employing people who are poorly qualified and badly paid. Danish services are staffed by people who have completed three year programmes of study and supervised practice. In England and Scotland, children are so poorly regarded that low levels and standards of care are accepted as the norm.

The root of the problem must surely have something to do with the reluctance of British governments over the years to take any real responsibility for promoting a positive cultural climate for children and parents. In that context, it may not be coincidental that one third of parliamentary representatives in Denmark are women, while in the United Kingdom just 7% of MPs are women. We've a long way to go before we match Denmark's record on childcare provision and its general positive attitude to children - for some of us we can't begin to make that change too soon. ■

Wild at

A lot of adults think that they're not artistic and should leave that sort of stuff to the experts. Kids aren't so daft. Here art therapist **Pauline McGee** challenges us to take a more positive attitude to our own creativity and that of our children. The photos, of children at Langlees Family Centre in Falkirk, are also by **Pauline McGee**.



Christmas time in primary school is always special. Christmas time in the primary school I went to also meant queuing up before break-time to buy photocopies of nativity scenes for one penny each. The break would be spent furiously colouring in the shapes and comparing finished work.

Not one to be outdone, I always joined the queue and went off clutching my photocopy. Unlike everyone else, however, I didn't colour mine in - instead, on a separate sheet of paper, I tried to draw the photocopy.

Perhaps even then I had some far-off notion that if I could do a perfect line drawing I'd be achieving some degree of artistic credibility. I don't recall any of the other children finding my ideas of grandeur so bizarre - but what does stick in my mind is the sense of frustration in the teacher's voice every time she commented "you're supposed to colour it in, not copy it".

This came to a head one wet, windy lunchtime when we were all kept indoors. The inevitable photocopies were dished out for free and everyone lowered their heads in concentration. Seated at the front of the class, I overheard the teacher discussing my 'strange' ways with a colleague as I squirmed and hurt under their stares and laughter.

I stopped buying the photocopies - but I continued my line drawings at home. A few weeks after the Christmas break I was surprised to hear I'd been awarded second prize in a school art competition. The drawing was my own modified version of the dreaded photocopy, where instead of donning robes the figure wore a dress and instead of leaning over a baby she reached her hand out to a small cat.

No one appeared interested in how I had reached this composition. The teacher didn't comment or congratulate me and I felt little joy about my award. In retrospect I probably, cynically, believed that if I had stuck to the original and 'coloured between the lines' I would have got first prize, not second.

A few months ago my two-year old nephew Daniel started nursery school. My heart sank when one day he brought home a picture of a 'spider'. The spider was not a photocopy - but I imagine all the children were given the same drawing of a circle with lines all round it. All Daniel had to do was lick a few sticky shapes and paste them in the middle of the circle.

The children at Daniel's nursery that day may have enjoyed the exercise, I wasn't there so I don't know. But the spider was soon forgotten, while the paintings Daniel has done by himself

at the nursery and at home continue to have pride of place on the walls of his house. He points them out to visitors and is obviously very proud of his achievements.

Art can be an exciting and rewarding experience for children - when nurseries and schools create an environment that fosters exploration and inventiveness through art children benefit enormously. At nursery age, children are only beginning to develop language as a means of communication and art can play an important role as a bridge and extension of communication. Art can encourage the development of perceptual growth, flexibility, imaginative thinking and originality.

There is a problem though - a lot of adults are scared of creativity. A common response I get from adults when I'm introduced as an art therapist is that 'I'm no good at art'. They seem mistrustful of any kind of art-based activity, thinking that they 'can't do it properly'. They may have been given the same message I was given at primary school; or they may have been discouraged by the competitive, curriculum-based activity of secondary school where you have to prove your worth by sitting your Art 'O' level - or back off gracefully and let the 'real artists' get on with it.

t Art!







Adults who have been taught - and continue to believe - that they are 'no good at art' can easily transfer their fears and inhibitions onto the children they work with. They will be greatly tempted to restrict play and communication to what is known or feels safe for themselves. If an adult cannot handle his or her own chaotic, creative side then art activity with children is bound to be restricted.

'Dealing with chaos, mess and destruction is all part and parcel of the creative, learning process'

So 'colouring in' often proves a safe option - the adult is in control and the outcome is predictable. There is no chaos, no mess, nothing new to see, no excitement, no spontaneity, nothing new learned - and no freedom of choice for the child.

Dealing with chaos, mess and destruction is all part and parcel of the creative, learning process - unfortunately, many adults are frightened by chaos, and have a need to be in control of every situation involving children. Often this is for fear of criticism from fellow workers; and within the current atmosphere of increasing workloads and stress, new and creative ways of working with children are not top of the agenda. Indeed, some adults view art, drama and music as a waste of valuable time and energy altogether - children, of course, have no say in the matter.

Thankfully, however, there are many people out there in nurseries and schools who, although sometimes struggling with it, have acknowledged the need to confront their own fears and anxieties about art. They are letting shimmers of their own creativity through and into their workplace. The children they engage with are learning to work with their chaos, creating new meaning from it, finding a focal point for pulling things back together and rebuilding something new, their own world - their own creations.

For a child, the value of an art experience is in the actual process of creating. Working with three year olds on group painting, I have found that at the height of the activity a strange silence can fall, broken only by the sound of rustling, splashing and cutting of materials. On other days chatting never ceases - but the concentration and involvement is still immense. Afterwards, when we all discuss the work, we concentrate on what motivated the pictures, rather than on the aesthetic quality of the pictures themselves.

I could go on and on about art with children - but it's really about doing. These photographs of children playing, creating, learning - and having fun - at Langlees Family Centre in Falkirk demonstrate what I've been trying to put across. And that's really very simple - given safe enough boundaries, a few guidelines and an adult who will honestly and openly participate in the chaos, the mess and the frantic activity, it can all fit into place. Children know how to have fun. It's the adults who have to learn to let go.



The Parents' Charter

More Than a Piece of Paper?

Does the government's **Parents' Charter** herald some much-needed improvements in the education system - or is it avoiding the real issues?

Graham Atherton gives a personal view.

'To suggest that a school's 'performance' can be measured solely by its pupils' 'results', without considering the community the school exists in, is simply misleading'



"The Citizens' Charter is about giving more power to the citizens", declared the Prime Minister when he announced the government's intention of making public services more answerable to their consumers. The **Parents' Charter in Scotland** is very much a follow-up to the Citizen's Charter - it is, in effect, a mini-charter dealing specifically with schools in Scotland.

The Parent's Charter picks up the central themes of the Citizen's Charter - accountability and standards. It proposes measures that will make schools more accountable for the performance of their service to the service's consumers (well, parents - the Charter does not give pupils any more say in decision-making). This increased accountability is seen as an effective mechanism for raising educational standards.

The proposals of the Parents' Charter cover most aspects of school life. Schools will be required to publish more details about what they teach, giving parents more information about their child's education; schools must explain their curricular aims to parents; and schools' exam results, which are already made public, are to be set out in a 'standard way so that it is easier to make comparisons'.

Schools will be expected to publish information about their running costs, truancy levels and the destinations of school leavers. An audit unit will be set up within the Schools Inspectorate to monitor standards. Teachers will have their performance assessed every two years, with good performance duly 'rewarded'.

Parents will be issued with a new standardised report form with details of their child's educational progress, to which they will have a chance to respond. They will be given the opportunity to discuss this report form with their child's teachers. The results of any national tests will be included in this report form.

In some ways, these proposals are part of a

Scottish Child December 1991 / January 1992



Colin Chalmers

long-term trend in education. Ever since the 1970s, when there was a great debate about the opening up of the educational system to public scrutiny, schools have been under pressure to become more open and accessible institutions.

Since 1980, schools have had to issue information handbooks to parents, publish their SCE results, give parents more opportunity to send their child to another school and consult parents about school closures and other major changes. With the replacement of School Councils by School Boards in 1989, parents who chose to get involved in the School Boards system were given even more say in the running of schools, including involvement in school book-spending.

Parents have often taken advantage of these provisions for more 'Parent Power'. But parents do not always seem willing to get involved in the way that the government wants them to. The government has had some difficulty in persuading School Boards to take on extra responsibilities for the management of schools, let alone make schools 'opt out' of Education Authority control altogether. The government has also faced opposition from many parents to its national testing programme.

So what about the government's latest proposals? The Parents' Charter, in concentrating on educational performance *outputs* (exam results, performance tables), largely ignores the crucial educational *inputs* needed to help under-performing schools do their work better. Many schools report being short of essential books and equipment; not having the resources to give individual pupils the attention they need; having to cope with school buildings that are, sometimes, in chronic disrepair. These are not issues that the Parents' Charter addresses.

Research has shown that variations in academic performance between schools are mainly determined by factors that the school has no control over - the social and economic position of

pupils' families is the major determinant of achievement. To suggest that a school's 'performance' can be measured solely by its pupils' 'results', without considering the community the school exists in, is simply misleading - it's a bit like saying that Mother Theresa isn't very good at charity work because the people she works with are still poor. As Lindsay Paterson has put it,

"If the results in a school are good only because pupils can rely on generous amounts of material and resources at home then the school does not deserve much credit. If a different school overcomes a lack of home resources then that school is successful, even if it has not raised its pupils' attainments to the level of the most successful schools that serve pupils with advantaged backgrounds."

If schools with disadvantaged pupils are to be given the real help they need, then consideration must be given to ways of regenerating the communities they serve. Better job opportunities must be made available, housing improved, reasonable amenities provided, and so on. These sort of changes would make a real difference to the performances of the lowest-performing schools.

The Parents' Charter proposals are not, however, concerned with these sort of changes - indeed it is argued by many that, more than anything, the Charter is about drawing attention away from the burning need for just such social reform. The proposal in the Charter to increase the powers of School Boards over school budgets, for instance, bypasses a rather important issue - the size of the budgetary egg.

A glaring omission in the Charter document is a commitment to the expansion of pre-school education. Despite some growth in recent years, pre-school provision in this country, with our non-universal provision for three to five-year olds, still lags well behind that of most other west European countries. Children who have

had pre-school education are more likely to perform better at school than those who did not have it, even among children from poorer families - what has happened to the government's concern for raising standards here?

Another omission from the Parents' Charter is any mention of the need to rationalise provision for children with special educational needs. Research has shown that recording practices, particularly of children with learning difficulties brought about by social and emotional problems, in Scotland vary greatly between education authorities. The Charter is silent on this.

The government seems to believe that schools, through more devolved management, and education authorities, through more efficient allocation of their resources, can achieve higher standards - consumer pressure will nudge schools in the right direction when they fall below par. What is missing from this picture, of course, is central government itself - and it is central government, through its budgetary policies and priorities (including subsidisation of local expenditure and poll tax capping), that determines the framework within which the educational system works.

Central government cannot be left out of the picture - it must become more answerable, more accountable, too. At the moment the government only has to respond to the ballot box, the lobbying system and other political processes from which the most disadvantaged people in society are effectively disenfranchised or disaffected. If that was to change, then things could really start to happen. ■

The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Scottish Consumer Council.

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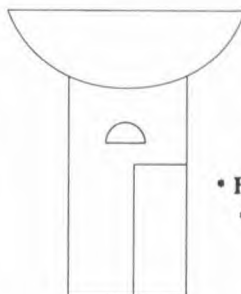
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Burnt Offerings or The Best Christmas Ever

by Neil Cooper

The debate was fierce, though I was steadfast in my views. Stephen, who I looked down my nose at, was sceptical.

"Of course he's real!", I affirmed as we ambled towards the last day of school before Christmas. "Who else could bring the presents?"

"It's your dad, stupid!" scoffed Stephen. "Haven't you heard him when he comes in from the pub and your mum has to carry him up the stairs to drop your presents at the end of your bed? Have you never noticed the funny smell on him when you're pretending to be asleep and he staggers in?"

"It's not true!" I mourned. "My dad doesn't live with us."

"Your mum then", said Stephen after a pause. I grew silent, unable to comprehend how mum could be dad and vice versa.

"Mum doesn't drink", I said.



We watched our breath frost over in the silence, racking our brains for some fresh argument. After a few minutes we met Andy and his superior friends. Though they hardly ever spoke to us, we sought Andy's hallowed opinion on it all.

"Of course", he began, "He may be real." He pondered a while, choosing his words and the moment with equal care. "But then again, how could a man of his size possibly climb down a narrow chimney without either getting stuck or else ripping himself to bits? Just think", he said. "All that flesh".



This gave us much food for thought, and the debate soon subsided.



Shiel Yule

On Christmas afternoon though, when everyone was recovering or else just waking up, I sneaked a look up the chimney in the front room.

I raked through the burnt remains with considerably more enthusiasm than I'd ripped the paper off my rather lack-lustre presents. My hands were black. Smoke and dust clogged up my lungs, but on I went, rummaging through the burnt remains.

I stopped. For amongst the ashes and half-burnt twigs I'd stumbled across something solid. I tugged at it. It was heavy. Too heavy for me, I thought. I braced myself, then heaved with all my might. Smoke went everywhere as out of the charred remains I pulled a leg. It

was the huge, overweight lower half of a leg clad in scarlet and a black leather boot. It was real alright.

I smiled and took it to show mum. It was all I could do to even lift the thing, even with both hands.



That evening we ate the finest Christmas feast we could have imagined, with the meat's tenderness being remarked on at length.

What was left over kept us in sandwiches for week afterwards, and kept my faith in Santa Claus for two more years at least. ■

REVIEWS

from 'I Wish I Had a Pirate Suit'

Despite the temptations of the television age, a lot of kids still read a lot of books - and have a plenty to say about them. Here's what some young Glasgow readers, aged 4 to 12, think of a selection of the current releases.



THE MIDDLE OF SOMEWHERE by Sheila Gordon (Orchard Books £4.99)

This book was absolutely fascinating. It dwelt on the troubles of a Black Family in South Africa, suffering under the regime of apartheid. It clearly illustrates the unfairness of the system and the near-impossible hardships suffered by the blacks.

It was all seen through the eyes of a nine-year old girl, all from her point of view. It is very interesting to see how she copes with the racial discrimination, and how calmly she takes it having been used to similar unfairness to the blacks all her life. The book ends hopefully, with Nelson Mandela out of prison attempting to do something about the situation, but it leaves the reader to decide what the final outcome will be.

I think anyone from nine to fifteen would like this book. You do not necessarily need to know much about the situation in South Africa, though an elementary knowledge would help, if you wish to enjoy the book. Whatever your opinion of apartheid, this book will hopefully make you realise how wrong the racial discrimination is.

Rebecca Yearling (age 12)

Right from the beginning I liked the book. It's about two girls who live in a village that is going to be bulldozed. One girl's family moves away and they take the girl with them. This is not a sad story because the girl's family come back. This is an exciting book. It seemed as though you were there when it happened. It gave me a real picture of how it is for black people in South Africa.

Katharine MacBride (age 9)

The story is set in a small village in South Africa. The villagers are being forced to move to a new village, Pofadderkloof, which is far away from the town where many of the people work. Rebecca's family are determined not to move. The book is from Rebecca's point of view, which is good as she is totally unbiased. She sees some white men as being good, instead of them all being bad. It also shows other views,

from her parents, her brother, etc. It is a well written book.

I quite enjoyed this book, but on the whole it's the not the type of book I like. Despite this, I think many people would like it. It is likely to raise people's awareness of the troubles in South Africa. I think it is a good book, but it is not the sort of thing I usually read.

Peter Stirling (age 12)

The Middle of Somewhere is a pleasantly written, easy to read book about a short period in a young girl's life in South Africa. It is an interesting insight into the hardships that people there have to face and the ways they overcome their difficulties. Though it's not everyone's choice of reading material and it's also a bit too expensive for a child to buy, I think this book would make a good present.

Jamie John McCracken

I WISH I HAD A PIRATE SUIT by Pamela Allen (Picture Puffin £2.99)

It is about a boy who wanted a pirate suit. I like the ostrich feathers and hat. I like him falling off the plank and pulling up the gold. I like Peter telling him what to do. I like him cooking his little brother for stew and sinking the pirate ship. I like the pile of prisoners. I think it is a good book. I like the whole story.

Alison Nimmo (age 4)

Bits of it are horrid - walking the plank, feeding crocodiles. Hate the stew. I hate pirates. I have a friend who would like it - he's a boy - but I wouldn't like him to play like that. I don't like this book.

Christina Knox (age 4)

I think the pictures are lovely and I think **I Wish I had a Pirate Suit** is a good idea for a title. I was disappointed by the story, it's too short. I didn't really like the story it's not as good as the pictures.

Sami Ibrahim (age 5)

WHERE THE STARS BELONG by Satomi Ichikawa (Hodder and Stoughton £6.99)

I liked this story very much, especially the nice pictures. I really enjoyed telling my sister all about the book. I would like to keep this book.

Sami Ibrahim (age 5)

It's lovely! It's great! I liked the part where they were playing with the stars and making necklaces and crowns and stuff. It could have been a longer story. The pictures on the title page are nice, the house and the bedspread in the sky. All the pictures are beautiful. This is quite a special book.

Ellen Spaeth (age 4)

I liked the book. I liked the funny toys. I didn't know you could get stars down from the sky. I didn't know toys could get out of the chest. I liked the bit when they made crowns with the stars.

Christina Knox (age 4)

I like the stars going back to the sky and the mischief and magic and the toys dancing, I like the stars being pretty and her being the queen of the stars. I like the toys jumping out of the box and Grandma coming in. I like the plums. I like the toys picking the stars. It was sad the sky weeping. I like this book, I like it all.

Alison Nimmo (age 4)

GIANT GUTSO AND THE WACKY GANG by Paul Stewart (Orchard Books £7.99)

I enjoyed it but it is difficult to explain why. It was rather funny and exciting. It had very short chapters and had big printing and would be useful for O.A.P.s to read. It was about five Wackies and Giant Gutso: The five children got caught by a giant and blew him up.

Robert Nimmo (age 8)



I like this book because I liked the people in the story. The best bit was when Gutso was walking to school and the animals were fainting. I did not like the bit when the headmaster was on the phone. I would like to read more Wacky Gang adventures, but they cost a lot of money.

Graham Durant (age 8)

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS by Kenneth Grahame (Pavilion £12.99)

I have read this before and I like the story but I found this version a bit long, with not enough pictures. It is quite a heavy book to read in bed at night. I know I said that there are not enough pictures, but I'd still give the detail in the pictures ten out of ten. This is not a book that I would buy, but because the National Trust have got their name on it I am sure that grandparents and aunts will buy it.

Kirsty Murray (age 8 3/4)

KLONDYKER by Anthony Masters (Simon and Schuster £2.99)

Klondyker is a wonderfully vivid book of Shetland folklore and mystery. Martin, the hero of the book whose parents are ornithologists, feels very much an outsider and finds it hard to establish friendships with the islanders. He discovers a silver knife in one of a few cottages called 'The Settlers' and realises that he has found more than he bargained for when confronted by a man in a cat mask. The magic knife opens up a world of greed, torment and hatred.

I think this thriller would appeal to a large number of people especially those who are willing to step into a new world every time they pick up a book.

Jamie John McCracken

These reviews were written as part of the book reviewing scheme in the Children's Department of John Smith's Bookshop in Byres Road, Glasgow. Thanks to all the children who wrote the reviews and to Enid Boston for her help in gathering them.

Street Life

Give Me Shelter Compiled by Michael Rosen Bodley Head £6.99

Sian Bayne

'Young homelessness - impressions in words and pictures' declares the cover of this collection of stories, poems, photographs, drawings, cartoons and song lyrics sold in aid of **Shelter**, the campaign for the homeless. Settling down to read it, I thought this meant that the book would contain plenty of first-hand impressions of life on the streets, straight from the pens of those who know best how to survive it - the homeless.

Perhaps if you live rough you don't have much energy left over for creative writing, because much of the book is comprised of slick and careful stories from established writers and journalists *imagining* how awful life must be in Cardboard City. The fact that there are so few contributions from homeless youngsters themselves (there is *one* poem, keyed into the computer at the London Connection) inevitably leads to the book losing its cutting edge.

The best bits are somehow the most unlikely, like Michele Robert's lament of a mother over the shoes of her runaway daughter:

"How do you feed yourself out on the street? You're too young to get a job. Who'd have you and what could you possibly do? What do you have to do to be fed? Do you have to go with men, is that it? How else could you get them money if you don't beg?... You're 15 years old. What do those men make you do? What do you have to do to get money for food."

The worst bits are contributions like John Hegley's poems - which appear week-in, week-out in the **Guardian** and are even more annoying the second time round - or the incongruous use of song lyrics from the Pogues and Bronski Beat which made nice songs but don't quite make it as poetry.

It's a book of very groovy graphics, attempting to play off against the excellent moody

photographs and drawings as if to say 'Hey, why be depressed? Homelessness is hip'. Facts and figures such as **Estimate: there are 51,000 homeless young people between 16 and 19 years of age in London** aren't given a home of their own, but are slotted in down the side of the page where the reader is forced to interrupt the flow of a story to take them in.

Give me Shelter does have its faults - it's a book largely written by the rich and famous, not the poor and homeless. But if it helps us to stop seeing those thousands of young people we have forced to live on our streets as objects of occasional pity and start realising that they are human beings who love, fear, need and hurt - that can't be a bad thing. ■

ME MIND

for a buck

id fuck ye chuck

for a pound

id carry ye round

for a 5er or 10er

id do as you order

for money

ye can take me

mind

BUT for a kind word of

con verse

by the fire

smoking EARTH

id show ye the

UNI verse

id show ye

RESPECT

Bas McGabhann's poem on computer at the London Connection



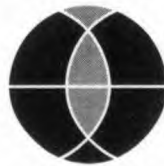
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Breaking Down the Wall of Silence

Alice Miller-Virago £13.99

Colin Chalmers

"The truth, about childhood, as many of us have had to endure it, is inconceivable, scandalous, painful. Not uncommonly, it is monstrous. Invariably, it is repressed."

Alice Miller begins her new book with a typically forthright statement - much of the rest of the book is concerned with documenting the consequences of such repressed childhood pain. She points out that child abuse is not a matter of a few individuals refusing to face the truth of their own childhood and taking their rage out on the next generation; society as a whole is involved in this vast denial.

All too often we are forced to deny the rage we feel against the hurt we suffered as children - and come to identify with those who attacked us as a result. A recent survey in W.Germany showed that over half of all parents approved of beating children; in France, over 78% of High School students said the beatings they had received as children were necessary and just.

This book is packed with examples of how psychiatric, medical and other professions collude with and perpetuate this denial, at enormous cost in human suffering. How many psychiatric wards are full of patients crying out, quite literally, to express their hurt and rage, only to be drugged to stop them doing just that? How many open hearts are crushed by these barbaric institutions?

This is powerful, important stuff. The problem with this book is that Alice Miller uses her profound understanding of these psychological and inter-personal processes as a basis for explaining political phenomena, ignoring the qualitative differences between them. It is impossible to understand political phenomena in terms of individuals without understanding the mediations between society and the individual - but Alice Miller does not seem to grasp this.

Her view of the political world is reminiscent

Facts and Fiction

of a 'Kings and Queens' approach to history. The personalities of a few important individuals are what's important and economic, social and other factors simply don't seem to matter. An overstatement? On page 85 she writes that,

"The nature of fascism is not determined by political or economic circumstances. For a long time people sought to 'explain' Hitler's success by pointing to the catastrophic economic situation of the Weimar Republic, and in so doing they sought to collectively deny the origins of Hitler's urge towards revenge, destruction and power."

It is quite possible, indeed necessary, to understand the very real political and economic determinants of Nazism without denying the abuse that Hitler suffered as a child. But Alice Miller will have none of it: "Instead of philosophising in the abstract about 'social structures', I draw my evidence from the facts of daily life".

But how can you understand the complex world we live in by ignoring social structures? In reality, of course, you can't, and Alice Miller doesn't - she simply portrays her own opinions as 'facts'. So we are told that the tumultuous events in the (once) Soviet Union are to be understood in terms of "Gorbachev's courage to face the facts", facts that "Marxism-Leninism helped for decades to obscure". And there can be no debate on the matter - those who disagree with you are 'denying facts'. It is a ploy reminiscent of the Freudian 'if you disagree with me then you're repressing something', and it allows Alice Miller in this book to present unsubstantiated prejudice as unanswerable 'facts'.

Alice Miller's political views are not unusual, they are by and large liberal and anti-authoritarian, but it is disingenuous for her to portray them as 'facts'. She labours under the typically Euro-centric illusion that we live in "the age of democracy, more or less" and is largely blind to the absolute calamity that the majority of the world's countries face.

Half a million children are being killed each year because of third world debt. In the period 1983-90, the poor countries paid £98,000 million to the rich countries, after aid and loans are taken into account - that's £1,400,000 per hour. These economic facts directly result in child

malnutrition, disease and poverty that constitute the greatest abuse of children in human history - and none of this gets a mention in this book. No, we don't live in "the age of democracy, more or less", and it is a denial of the facts to say we do.

It is maybe worth considering how Alice Miller has got to this position. Society is quite able to cope with dissident individuals, and will often place them on a pedestal, like a guru, for the precise purpose of isolating them from the real processes of change. The projection of feelings of isolation and helplessness onto Alice Miller, seen as a distant icon, must be enormous - just imagine her mailbag.

One gets glimpses in this book of Alice Miller fighting this isolation, but also of how she seems to relish it. Most notably, she states that "Without a single exception, all these authors (*US therapists* - editor) presume that forgiveness is a condition for successful therapy". There are, in fact, many books and many therapists who do not see forgiveness as a condition for successful therapy - so why has Alice Miller ignored them?

If Alice Miller is to pretend that her views on child abuse and its effects allow us to understand political processes then it is important to point out what she ignores. Her reductionist view of politics, in which evil dictators threaten to destroy the world unless we stop them, is a fairytale simplification of reality. And it is a dangerous one - because it can be used to justify a turning away from the structural oppression that causes such misery throughout the world and from which most of us in fortress Europe are protected. It can lead, in our 'democratic Europe', to a concentration on the 'personal' as the only thing that is 'real'.

Fighting child abuse does require political action, and Alice Miller is right to point that out. Laws making the physical punishment of children illegal should be welcomed; as Martin Luther King put it in another context, they may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless. But it will be impossible to create a society where powerless children are not abused if we do not also create a society that has ended other oppressions. You cannot be selective in fighting oppression - it's time we all learnt that. ■

Little Orphans, Big Business

Barnardos Today

Jennifer Chapman-Virgin £15.99

Kate Day

Jennifer Chapman sets out to show how 'Britain's leading child-care charity', now in its 125th year, has shed its old institutional image by moving into new areas and ways of working with the troubled individuals and families who constitute 'today's orphans'. The author relies on the power of personal stories to hook the reader - the people directly involved with Barnardos as service users and providers.

As the scene shifts from the more familiar ground of family centres, conciliation, adoption

and fostering services to projects providing special residential care, alternative schooling and youth training or helping youngsters to cope with leaving care, addiction and bereavement, these accounts make a strong visual and emotional impact.

They are much less helpful however, in building an appreciation of the methods used both to alleviate suffering and to give the empowerment ethos (misguidedly identified as 'Thatcherite') some reality in problem-fractured lives. Barnardos runs 160 projects countrywide; it is an organisation with a £60 million annual budget; it works with some 20,000 people a year. How things actually work, in structural and process terms, within such a large and diverse organisation is not always best illuminated by the 'human interest' approach.

As a consequence, the parts of the book that touch on the ways in which Barnardos defines its mission and mounts campaigns, decides on priorities, handles its internal squabbles and generally manages its affairs are sketchy and lacking in clarity.

Whilst there is a healthy scepticism about social work speak, there is little exploration of what Barnardos being a "trailblazer breaking new ground" or "the most avant-garde child-care authority" amounts to. This omission means that there is no opportunity to address the larger issue explicitly raised by the author about the degree to which we have come to rely - and ought to be relying - on the voluntary sector to provide our social services. To start to answer that question we must look elsewhere. ■

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SCOTTISH EDUCATION AND ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Children as Citizens



Recent talk about citizenship and citizens' charters has raised the question of what we are doing to ensure that children can see themselves as citizens - and allow their voices as citizens to be heard. **Isabel Willshaw** investigates.

According to Kathleen Marshall of the Scottish Child Law Centre the legal definition of citizenship is 'the link between an individual and a particular state or political community under which the individual receives certain rights, privileges and protections in return for allegiance and duties'. Children can't vote - but they have a right to care, support and education, and they have certain duties, such as obeying the law, obeying their parents and attending school. So it's official - children are citizens, with rights and responsibilities.

But the reality in Britain today is that adults have almost absolute power over children. You can see that power being exercised in its crudest form every day. We have organisations aplenty to protect or contain children - but none concerned with the representation of children's interests.

If we were to take child citizenship seriously, every school would offer a curriculum that allowed children to develop a sense of place, of history and of their role in the future of their community, in which they felt respected partners. Children would develop negotiating and other communication skills to help them influence decision-making. Every school would develop joint decision making bodies where children's views were listened to and acted on.

But we are a long way off from that. What input do children have to school boards? How many schools have effective pupil or pupil/parent/teacher councils? Why do we find it so easy to decide what's best for children without even consulting them?

No local authority in Scotland has set up a Children's Office to encourage children to be articulate and participative in the running of their communities. Everywhere we

see examples of problems caused by the very fact that children never are seriously consulted over matters affecting them. Which architects ever consult children about the design of schools *before* they build them? Why do planners of shopping centres site the toilets in the furthest, most isolated areas - dark, dangerous places? When do traffic planners consult children about the obstacles which beset them trying to cross roads or travel on buses? Which town will be the first to proclaim 'every speeding driver is a potential child killer?'

Some people enthusiastically propose the idea of a Scottish Parliament having 50% representation of women - what about extending this idea to include participation by our junior citizens? What mechanisms can we establish to ensure that the children of Scotland grow up with real pride in their country and the sense of truly contributing to its future?

Our messages to children can be very negative. We ignore them, patronise them, suspect them of being up to no good and tell them off. After being on the receiving end of such a barrage it is nothing short of miraculous that any children grow up into well-adjusted adults. If we were to extend the realities of citizenship to our 'fellow citizens' who are children we would certainly make that transition a lot easier.

The key issue is asking children what they think - and taking their views seriously. Why can't children be asked to take responsibility for planning the school dinner menu or deciding how to deal with misbehaviour? Why does nobody ask children whether they want to watch toy adverts all Saturday morning or whether they want sweets at the entrance to shops?

Denmark already has a child

citizenship project. It includes courses for children who are members of school boards; arrangements to give children real influence in the planning of school lessons; courses for staff to help them listen to children and take their ideas seriously; and children influencing which books are bought for their school libraries.

One adult involved in the project, a representative of a municipal planning department, says about the experience that "What is really funny is that so many things come up which I would never have considered a problem, having seen it through the eyes of an adult. Adults are used to considering children's conditions to a certain extent, but the way of thinking and considering is always that of an adult. We rarely hear the children's own version. That is what we have to learn - and that is what should become part of everyday life."

Taking children's rights to citizenship seriously isn't just a question of giving them the skills and mechanisms to enable them to have their fair say. We adults have got to take time to listen, we have to learn to be partners with children and to admit we are sometimes wrong.

Giving up power is very painful. But if we adults can move over and make some room for our junior partners we might produce a generation of young people who have a stronger sense of their roots and a clearer awareness of their rights, roles and responsibilities. That would no doubt be uncomfortable for many adults - but it could mean that the next generation of adults wouldn't be quite so hung up on wielding absolute power as this one often is. ■

This article was prompted by a recent talk by Kathleen Marshall of the Scottish Child Law Centre on Putting Children First.

among the contributors in this issue...

Graham Atherton is a senior researcher with the Scottish Consumer Council in Glasgow.

Ann Barlow has been a teacher and currently lives in Cheshire with her husband and two children.

Sian Bayne is a student at Edinburgh University.

Alison Bell is an associate editor of *Scottish Child*.

Neil Cooper lives in Edinburgh where he writes poetry, prose and plays. He hates Christmas.

Kate Day is a research worker and Children's Panel member.

Elaine Ennis is a teaching fellow for the Community Care Studies Programme at Dundee University.

Jim Ennis is a lecturer in the Centre for Childcare and Protection at Dundee University.

Anna Fawkes lives in Edinburgh with her son Samuel.

Bas McGabhann is a homeless youngster living in London.

Pauline McGee is an art therapist with the Aberlour Child Care Trust.

Rosemary Milne is an associate editor of *Scottish Child*.

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

Isabel Willshaw is director of **Edinburgh Vision**, an organisation which builds bridges between the public and private sectors to improve the quality of life in Edinburgh. **Edinburgh Vision** is currently working to make Edinburgh more child friendly.

A View from Victoria

Dear Editor,

On a recent visit to Scotland I had the good fortune to come across **Scottish Child** in the local newsagent. It was refreshing to find such an attractively presented, provocative publication. It has appeal for all who work either directly with children or are involved in decision-making processes affecting their living conditions and development.

I would like to comment on articles in the October/November edition. It seemed to me that Yvonne Burgess (*A Walk with Rukudzo*) was less than fair when she compared child rearing attitudes in tropical, tribal Zimbabwe with often wet and windswept Scotland.

Scottish parents have to endure significant frustrations induced by living in an intemperate climate. I



wonder if Yvonne would fantasise so much about motherhood if she had experienced years of pram pushing in the wind, rain, fog and snow. I well remember toddlers who only wanted to go to the toilet after their fourth layer of winter clothing was fastened. I also remember hours spent rescuing the washing on the line between showers and ambushing toddlers for potty training to save nappies from the wash!

These hassles would hardly be a worry in Zimbabwe, but I have been happy to observe that tribal life still exists in Scotland.

On my recent visit the family washing machine failed and I had frequent visits to the laundrette. These coincided with school holidays and I observed adults without children in tow entertaining children of

mothers doing their family wash.

On another occasion standing in the cold and rain waiting for a bus the entire queue helped entertain and distract a crying child - and one gentleman removed his anorak to wrap around the toddler. It is very important to notice these less overt signs of community caring for children so as we do not become pessimistic.

The interviews by Alison Bell (*Growing up Gay*) gave a moving insight into the anguish of young people who identify as 'gay'. However I would volunteer a note of caution. Concerns about sexual identity represent a confusional state during teenage years. Psychological insights indicate that a homosexual orientation cannot be accepted with confidence until youth reach their mid-twenties.

Labelling teenagers as 'gay' can risk locking them into a confusional state which for the majority is transient and normal. It has been my clinical experience that classroom discussion on homosexuality often raises more anxieties than it alleviates. Sensitive one-to-one counselling is a safer alternative.

Teachers should find **Scottish Child** a useful resource to generate debate on the issues of childhood. Congratulations on your third birthday!

Elizabeth MacMahon
(Victorian President)
NAPCAN
Melbourne, Victoria
Australia

A Rare Treat

Dear Editor,

I am very glad to have the opportunity to support you by becoming a 'Friend'.

I value your magazine the most, I think, because it is eminently readable - amongst the oceans of verbiage and jargon that wanders over my desk, such material is rare and treated by me as such.

I don't always agree with everything you say or print, but that's OK because I feel you wouldn't want me to and would listen to my point of view.

Please convey my appreciation of the 'Diary' to Anna - she gives me precious shafts of light that I trust because they come from one so unpretentious and with her feet on the ground. Her child is fortunate to have such a sensitive mum who is so in touch with what a small child needs.

I was struck by you saying that **Scottish Child** doesn't get any public funding. Actually, it seems to me that in a world where people really cared about children and their families and future, we wouldn't need to think in those terms. The magazine would be so well supported and bought up that it would flourish happily. After all, we wouldn't think of the **Sunday Sport** getting public funding and it won't need it to survive because it will have enough devotees. It's a measure of how little interest people have in children that we feel everything to do with them has to be a sort of charity. I hope **Scottish Child** will attract enough 'Friends' to ensure its survival and continued independence.

Frances Bowman
Livingston

Making the Most of Playgrounds

Dear Editor,

Mark Wilson is right to emphasise the value of play and to praise the quality of the equipment at the new Auchinlea Playground in Easterhouse (**Scottish Child** October/November 1991).

However, two points need to be added. Firstly the playground has been located next to a long-standing and popular Recreation Centre and a few yards from a recently opened Sports Centre. Easterhouse is a large place and it would have made sense to have distributed facilities over a larger area.

Secondly, within a few days the playground was closed because of vandalism. Years ago I was associated with the Handsworth Adventure Playground in Birmingham where its voluntary committee had little money for expensive equipment but did insist on employing

two play leaders. They prevented any one age group dominating, they protected the equipment and they played with the children. Likewise, the Auchinlea Playground needs human as well as material resources.

Bob Holman
18 Finlarig Street
Easterhouse
Glasgow

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A Single Parent Speaks

Dear Editor,

While attending the Scottish Council for Single Parents (SCSP) AGM on 7th November I was shocked and angered by one of the people who was asked to speak. Joe McDermott, a psychologist, started off by saying he was a married man with a "nice little wife", that he did not know any single parents and did not know a lot about being a single parent. He then went on to pontificate on the difficulties of being a single parent and suggested how we should cope with them, how we should act, etc, painting a rather bleak and depressing picture of what single parenting is all about.

The Scottish Council for Single Parents are supposed to support and represent single/lone parents; so why ask a married man who admits to knowing not a lot about what being a single parent is about to talk on the subject? Answer: because he is a psychologist and a professional.

I know for a fact that I was not the only one in the room who found this extremely patronising. Surely the best people to represent and talk about single parenting are single parents? Is this such a dangerous, extreme or unrealistic idea? When some of us single parents stood up

to express our anger we were, I felt, treated as being quite extreme and unfair on this poor man who was only doing his best.

As a single parent (and I do not pretend to represent all single parents) my main difficulties, which in some ways are similar to two parent families, are (1) lack of money, (2) lack of adequate childcare, (3) lack of support and recognition of our real difficulties, and (4) society's attitude to single parents and, more obviously, children. Being a single parent is not necessarily bad, destructive or depriving.

I would like to pick up on another point. Joe McDermott said that "If we are not listening to our children, then we should pretend to be listening". This is extremely worrying coming from a professional who is supposed to help and encourage children to express and talk about their feelings and experiences. How are our children going to trust us if we only pretend to listen to them?

I am very angry. If SCSP wish to represent and support single parents then they should do it properly.

Lucy Turnbull
Edinburgh



IN THE NEXT ISSUE FEBRUARY / MARCH 1992



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'How Do You Cope?'



So many people ask me how I cope. It really bugs me, the 'exclusiveness' of caring for a child. So many people don't know what the actual day-to-day reality of having a child is like. It saddens me that so many people have lost any sort of contact with the simpleness and incredible beauty, the depths and the heights, of the love that a child so willingly offers, no strings attached.

I know that Sam keeps me going when everything around looks bleak, sinister and apart from me - I feel so calm and we are completely one sometimes. It feels great. I've never experienced love like that, love that grows on and up. I'm really enjoying being with him now.

I went for an interview at Viewforth Children's Centre today, to see about getting Sam into nursery. I felt like I was almost grovelling, letting the interviewer know selected personal details of my life, trying to 'fit the criteria'. I came away thinking "I hope I sounded desperate enough", then I felt quite guilty as I was extremely lucky to even be considered. I came away feeling quite sick. Anyway, I've been given a date to appear before a panel to see if I can get a place on the waiting list. My health visitor assured me that it won't be a daunting experience but I don't feel relaxed about it, perhaps because getting Sam into nursery is so important to me. It will mean I will have time to do things by myself. Sleeping,

smoking a fag, thinking, just being single, without another.

It can be very frustrating at times. Sometimes I end up feeling resentment towards my friends who have no children because they get up late, they can be ill and get into it, they can do anything they want and not have to worry about it.

Having a kid is very rewarding, don't get me wrong, but it's at a cost. It's like parts of yourself dying, being forgotten about. Sometimes I feel all I'm doing is moaning quite selfishly... and the ironic thing is that it's usually to another single parent!

I think it's so important to have time by yourself so that you are in touch with your own identity and don't just function for your child; you can offer more to him because you have your own identity and are more mellow. It all comes down to being true to yourself. In order to do that I think you need to experience true love. Trust. No motives or complications; just pure, cleansing truth. Do you know where you can experience that love? From children, and that's something society has completely forgotten.

I was talking to a single friend recently who remarked what an exciting life I have. What she meant was all the men that were wanting to be a part of my life. Little did she realise, and it took me a while to realize, that part of the attraction for these men was that there before them was someone rekindling all sorts of feelings, particularly the need to be cared for. I know myself I need to be cared for. I feel quite jealous of Sam sometimes. I'd love to be in a womb. That must be heaven.

There are so many pressures that single parents experience all the time, day in, day out. As well as things like housing, lack of money, etc, isolation is a big thing to cope with. It angers me that in our 'modern and civilised' society there are such problems, and that ordinary, real, struggling folk are ignored by the people that are supposed to help. It always ends up with

parents, single or otherwise, supporting each other.

Children are the most important thing in the world. They are the future and when it comes down to it, they are always on the bottom of the list. If everyone was involved in caring and took responsibility for our children if they slowed down and spent time with the young, they would not only be creating a world which would be developing human beings to their full potential, they would learn to listen, look and feel everything around them. Wherever I go with Sam, I'm aware of folk rushing from A to B encased in their timetable.

I feel quite resentful a lot - 'you've more money than me', 'you're better equipped than me', 'you've more freedom than me'. I either cry or be angry - be true to my feelings and as a result I feel stronger. I guess that's 'how I cope'.

Something happened to me recently that, if I'd been on my own, would have been a disaster. In my mad efforts to be incredibly efficient I inadvertently locked myself out of my flat. I think it was because I was so eager to cash my book. Anyway, I calmly told Lucy, who fell about laughing and after a few sober moments of thinking came up with a life-saving plan of action.

Without so much as a by-your-leave, she waltzed into the industrial plant across the road from my flat, emerging with three men, a huge grin on her face and the largest ladder I think I have ever seen! After three hilarious attempts by the men, 'trickie dickie' launched himself through my open window, and I got on with the rest of the day.

I went to a conference today held by the Scottish Council for Single Parents. It was about bringing up children on your own and I helped at a workshop. We were talking about our feelings and I was quite frank, admitting feelings of frustration, resentment, anger and

isolation. For the young women in the workshop it was more feelings of frustration about not being independent of their families; they did not feel isolated as, being at school, they had a lot of time away from their children. They got out at night for an hour or two, but they were pissed off that there was nowhere to go.

I was initially quite shocked at speaking to 14, 15 year-olds who had children; but something made me feel great too. We all had a common bond - it was like touching an inner strength from each one.

'Sam keeps me going when everything around looks bleak, sinister and apart from me'

I released a lot of energy at the conference. I talked a lot, argued, listened and more important took an opportunity to express my ideas, thoughts and experiences. That makes you strong. Saying what YOU WANT, what YOU FEEL, what YOU THINK, who YOU ARE.

The negative side of the whole thing was that there was a professional who had the longest time to talk and who spouted the biggest load of patronising crap I've had to listen to for a while. This particular speaker who had "a nice little wife and two laddies" was giving advice about how to bring up kids on your own when he admitted knowing no lone parents and having no experience of the problems. I was shaking with fury.

I didn't get Sam into nursery. I was told I was doing a "fine job" and seemed pretty together. He's been put on a waiting list. I left quite quickly because I didn't want them to see me cry.

Anna Fawkes

childhood



Over the centuries, beliefs about how children should be brought up have changed radically. Does this diversity mean there is no 'right' way to bring up children? In recent decades intensive research has provided a basis of knowledge about development and the factors that influence the course it takes. But our knowledge is by no means complete. Some children reared in the most adverse circumstances succeed. Some children who seem to have everything in their favour fail. And the issue of cultural diversity is still with us. Is it the case that child rearing practices are such as to produce adult personalities that in some way suit or maintain the culture into which they occur?

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