

# Scottish Child

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June/July 1992

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# DON'T HIT KIDS

**THE CASE AGAINST  
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

**Women • The Travelling Life • Gaelic**

**THE NUMBER  
OF CHILDREN  
THAT DIE EVERY  
TWO MONTHS  
IS THE SAME  
NUMBER YOU  
USE TO STOP IT.**



**LIFT A FINGER. GET YOUR MP TO CANCEL THE THIRD WORLD DEBT.**

# Scottish Child

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Scottish Child is a non-profit making co-operative involved in publishing, training and event organisation that promotes an understanding of the importance of children and childhood in society

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# DON'T HIT KIDS

### THE CASE AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

In the wake of the Scottish Law Commission's recommendation that physical punishment of children should be 'limited', Penelope Leach puts the case against violence against children. And we ask some nine and ten year-olds what they think about big people hitting them.

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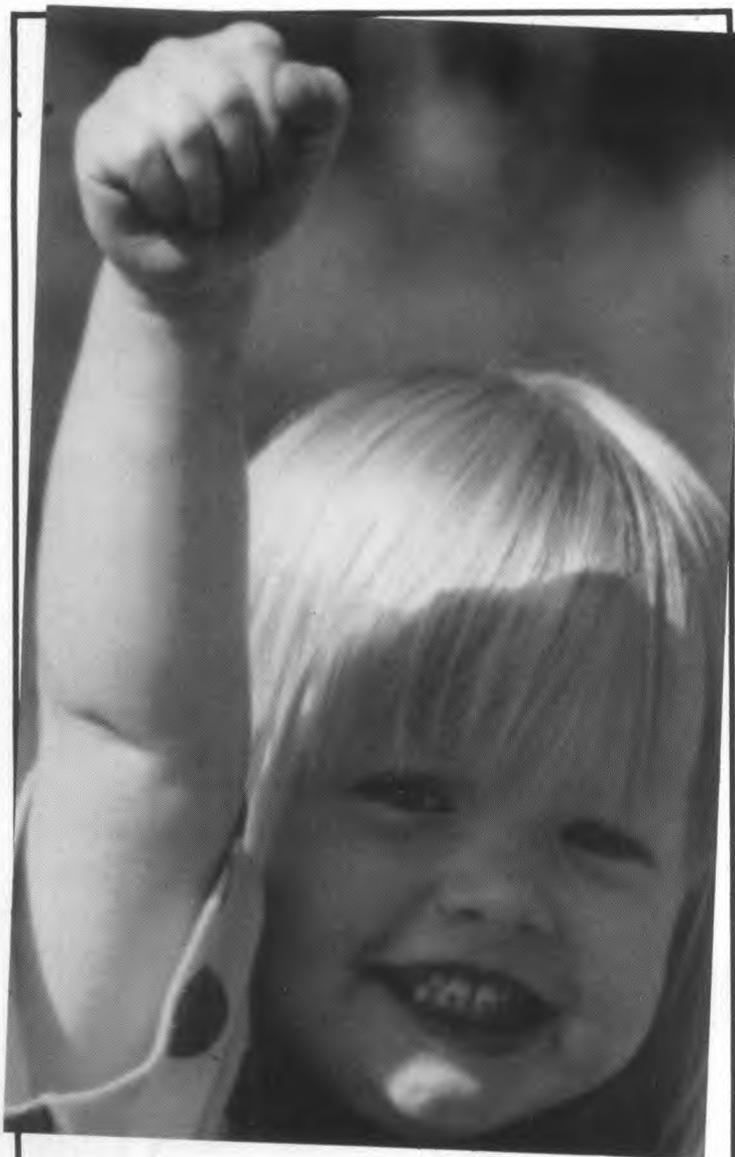
Thom Dibdin interviews Terence Davies about his new film *The Long Day Closes*; David Johnson takes a look over the last year for children; and John Pelan reviews the latest in children's books.

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The piece on the Earth Summit and ecology has been held over to our August/September issue.



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4 June 1992

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More than half the adoption orders currently granted in Scotland are in respect of step-parent adoptions. Recent research indicates an unjustifiable sense of complacency about the welfare of children in these situations. This Study Day will present the research findings and the views of parents and children involved.

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## Really Saying Something

In this issue we publish an article putting the case against violence against children. In the article, Penelope Leach points out that hitting children does not help to teach them anything and often leads to further aggression - but, underlying the argument, is a belief that it is simply wrong to hit other human beings. We do not allow people to hit their wives - though until comparatively recently we did - so why should we allow people to hit their kids? Hitting children is wrong, useless and damaging - and it shouldn't be allowed.

To some this will seem an 'extreme' position. Nowadays great store is put on 'compromise' - putting forward views that don't 'alienate' anyone and that supposedly take things forward step-by-step. When the Scottish Law Commission proposed that some violence against children should be banned while other violence should not, they were hailed by many as doing just that: showing a 'reasonable' and 'balanced' approach. Even some people who are perfectly well aware of the evidence of the damage caused by hitting children did not want to be seen as being out on a limb and accepted the recommendation as 'progress'. 'Compromise' was the name of the game.

There's nothing wrong with compromise as such, of course - it all depends on who you are compromising with. And the problem with compromises such as that made by the Scottish Law Commission is that they are all about appeasing the powerful - in this case parents who for whatever reason believe in smacking their kids - rather than standing up for the rights of the powerless - the children getting smacked.

The virtues of this sort of compromise are often enormously overstated - it is somehow seen as more mature and responsible to make concessions to the powerful than to side with the powerless. In fact, this supposedly mature and open attitude inevitably leads to the silencing of those who have no power - and so it was with the 'smacking debate'.

One of the most noticeable aspects of all the recent discussion about smacking has been just how little say has been given to children, the people who are actually getting hit. When a reporter from a major evening newspaper phoned up SCOTTISH CHILD recently asking us about smacking we suggested that she ask some children for their views and experiences. "Oh," she said "I'd never thought of that." The fact is that a lot of adults don't listen to children seriously - it simply doesn't occur to them that children might have something to say that is not either just plain wrong or at best a naive version of what adults think. Those at the receiving end of things, as usual, aren't the ones who are going to get listened to.

It's not just the smacking debate that has highlighted this bending to the powerful in the name of moderation - it's an attitude that's alive and kicking elsewhere. Even after we find ourselves, for the fourth time in a row, being ruled by a minority government, the cap-in-hand mentality seems to be as strong as ever in Scottish political life. Certainly there is a rise of a vague sort of nationalism - people who are by no means SNP supporters are seriously questioning a union that imposes changes on our lives that have little support in the country. But it remains to be seen whether this resentment will break out of its usual confines of bar-room talk, political posturing and meaningless demonstrations - and begin to seriously campaign on behalf of those who desperately and urgently need help.

It is far more likely, of course, that politicians and professional campaigners will moderate their demands (on behalf of others) for decent housing, benefits, services or whatever even further in order to appear 'reasonable' and, so the argument (although not the evidence) goes, be taken seriously by those in power. 'We need to make them see that what they're doing isn't right', goes the refrain 'and that what we're asking for isn't too much'.

That sort of thinking has got us precisely nowhere and we should stop believing that it ever will. If we are serious about wanting decent housing for everyone, an end to poverty and a civilised level of childcare we need to stop begging for these things as if they were privileges we are either granted or refused. They are our rights - and we should demand them as such.

Many readers who replied to the survey in our last issue told us that one of the things they liked about SCOTTISH CHILD was that it was 'real' and dealt with 'real people'. Perhaps one of the things that makes readers say this is that we do give a voice to those who are normally denied a say - those that are excluded from the compromises made about their lives. When kids are being hit we ask the kids about it instead of just the adults; when we are discussing child-friendly cities we ask children what they find unfriendly about their cities, not just parents; and when we look at teenage homelessness we believe the teenagers who sleep on the streets instead of those shameful institutions that tell us that everything's under control. We think it's important that these voices get heard, because until they are things will never change.

And if that's extreme - so be it.

*Colin Chalmers*

## Rude Boys

### SKINHEADS

In time, society reclaims all its youth cults. These days, the media use hippies to sell insurance, or punks to sell postcards. Removed from their original social context, youth cults lose any threat they once had. All that's left is a hollow iconography, a dress code rendered laughable or nostalgic by the passing of years and the changing fashions.

There is, however, one exception. Skinheads, who first appeared in the late 60s, still remains persona non grata, a youth cult too far. Not for them the appearance as a friendly eccentric in a cosy sitcom - the ultimate example of media appropriation. Instead, they are more likely to appear as faceless thugs, an easy stereotype for violence. The violent, neo-Nazi reputation skinheads courted through the 70s is the obvious reason for this marginalisation.

About the only exception to this media blackout are the liberal television plays *Made in Britain* and *Oi for England*; or, more contempora-

neously, Richard Allen's morally blank pulp novels of the 70s which, in exaggerated terms, reflected the values of the violent, conservative, working class skin culture. All were deemed 'controversial' by dint of their subject matter. It should come as no surprise then, that the latest attempt to broach the subject should cause a similar stink.

*Skin*, a forty page graphic novel by Peter Milligan and Brendan McCarthy, was originally commissioned in 1989 for Fleetway's 'adult' comic *Crisis*. It never appeared, however, after the reproduction house refused to handle the work. In the succeeding years a number of publishers have expressed interest, before retreating in the face of the 'disturbing' contents.

*Skin*, set in 1971, is the story of Martin Achitson, known to his skinhead friends as Martin 'Atchet. Martin, however, is rather different to his contemporaries - he is a 'thalidomide baby', a 'seal boy' according to the skins, born with 'flippers' instead of arms because his mother took the thalidomide drug during pregnancy.

The idea for the story can be found in artist McCarthy's own involvement in skinhead culture in the early 70s. One of the skinheads growing up in his part of London had been deformed by the thalidomide drug.

Milligan and McCarthy's values are probably a lot closer to those of tv playwrights David Leland and Trevor Griffiths, but the style and story of *Skin* have much more in common with the pulp novels of Allen. It is this approach that has undoubtedly caused the controversy. The story is narrated by a fifteen year old skinhead, using his natural argot - "He's at it again, see? Seal boy Skin in his bedroom. Ben Sherman, Braces, Levis, DMs, flipper arms, standing there BOOTIN' THE FUKKIN WALL AND SCREAMING." - reflecting his natural distrust of hippies and older people and showing a prurient interest in sex and violence. Indeed the plot of *Skin* is pure pulp, rising to a grand guignol climax, in which Martin lives up to nickname.

On a surface level, it would be easy to accuse Milligan and

McCarthy of whipping up 'controversy' through gratuitous use of 'bad language' and violence. That, however, would be a wilful misreading of their intentions. For the authors, it is the corporate violence of those who manufactured the thalidomide drug that represents the true obscenity. As Milligan and McCarthy say in the introduction, "Is *Skin* tasteless? We hope it is. A story that deals with a young person whose body, whose life is deformed by powerful multinational corporations, who is abandoned by government and ridiculed as a monster by his peers has an obligation to be tasteless."

If, on publication, *Skin* is greeted by predictable media furore, it's a sign that the comic is a success. For Milligan and McCarthy have given us an accurate reflection of an ignored culture without resorting to false sentimentality or liberal platitudes. If that's controversial, then I'm all for it. ■

Teddy Jamieson

*Skin* is published in July by Tundra Publishing at £2.95.



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AND  
PETER MILLIGAN  
1992



## Is Math Sin!

### Gaelic

Ten years ago the writing was on the wall for the Gaelic language. Children were growing up without learning to speak it and literacy in the language was less common than ever. Until, that is, a number of Gaelic-speaking enthusiasts and campaigners decided on a plan to keep it alive - by putting children at the forefront.

"Obviously if children aren't speaking the language then the whole thing is going to go," says John Angus Mackay, director of the **Gaelic Television Fund** and a campaigner for Gaelic broadcasting. "But now a lot more children are speaking the language. They are getting a good education and are leaving school fluent in both Gaelic and English."

The fund was set up in the wake of the Government's 1991 broadcasting bill which announced £9.5 million in extra funding for Gaelic broadcasting - and a target of 200 extra hours per year of Gaelic programmes. Funding was won by a three year campaign of constant lobbying.

Winning the battle for Gaelic

broadcasting was important because of television's influence on children. "No matter what you do in education and the schools," Mackay argues, "television would tend to undermine the linguistic situation. What we are trying to do is create a critical mass of broadcasting in Gaelic - and make a success of it! The main thing is that a lot of people watch these programmes and enjoy them."

There is much more to attract young people to the language than there was ten years ago; there is even a regular Gaelic comic **Smathsin**, named due to the fact that the word 'Smashing' is thought by some to have come from the Gaelic 'Is Math Sin' or 'That is good'.

Children and families are the key target in the bid to revitalise the language through education and the media, rejuvenating the language from the bottom up. If children are speaking Gaelic in primary school then the demand forces its way up the system to secondary and higher education.

Education in Gaelic has seen a huge growth in the last few years. In the Western Isles, the language's stronghold, 14 out of 48 primary schools now offer Gaelic-medium

classes in all subjects from primary one to three, compared with none at all in 1985. Three more primary schools will begin teaching all subjects in Gaelic in August, maintaining the momentum for change. Two secondary schools on Lewis are now preparing to teach maths, science and home economics in Gaelic.

Schools such as **Shawbost Primary School** on Lewis have been teaching pupils in their Gaelic Units for four or five years now. At Shawbost, children learn entirely in Gaelic for the first two years with English increasingly introduced after that. Immersion in Gaelic can start even earlier in the Western Isles, with Gaelic-medium nurseries and playgroups available to parents. By the time children move up to secondary school they are usually fluent in both languages.

Fears that learning in Gaelic for two or more years would hold kids back in English have not been justified. In fact, many children say that their English is better than that of those who learn in English. "The same has been found in Wales," says MacKay, "it's because their intellects have been exercised."

Shawbost Primary's Assistant

Headteacher Tina Murray agrees. "We are getting evidence that the fluency target is being met. When we started, a lot of teachers were wondering 'are we doing the right thing?' But, if anything, the children's English is better."

So is Gaelic worth all this effort? Not surprisingly, John Angus MacKay thinks it is. "The Gaelic language is something old, beautiful and precious - and you want to preserve things that are precious to you. It is a terribly debilitating experience to see something that is very precious to you being eradicated in front of your face."

But Gaelic is no museum piece - "If you give people the feeling that things which are important to them, are valued, it's a great energiser, a great motivator. It is a case of validating bilingualism. Not many countries in Europe are as sadly monoglot as ours - what we are doing will soon be seen more as the mainstream than as a backwater."

And children are in the forefront of this new, more open attitude towards Gaelic - making it, of course, all the more likely that it's an attitude that will win the day. ■

Stephen Naysmith

## Between the Sheets

### BEDWETTING

Amongst all the stresses of family life there are few things more calculated to bring an adult to breaking point than a child who wets the bed. Research by the **Eneuresis Research and Information Centre** shows that bedwetting is the second most common reason - persistent crying is the commonest - given by adults for hitting their children.

As many as 10% of all five-year-olds wet their bed regularly (boys are more likely to be bedwetters than girls, though it is not known why). By the age of ten this has fallen to about 5% and a smaller proportion still - around 1% or 2% - are still wetting the bed by the time they are teenagers. Of these a fraction will continue to do so throughout their adult lives.

Almost everyone can remember the child in school who carried a lingering, pervasive smell of urine about them. Children and adults deal savagely with the 'offender' - the sadism of some of the supposed 'cures' meted out to the bedwetting child is evidence of the

fear in families about being labelled collectively as 'smelly'.

The commonest of these remedies is to punish the bedwetter. The most likely outcome of this is to increase the bedwetting. The child's anxiety reaches fever pitch and bedtime is dreaded in case he does it again - and suffers the consequences that will follow.

Next on the list of remedies is the one that says the bedwetter must be made uncomfortable in bed, either by having to sleep on a hard surface or by tying a knotted rope round his waist. Both of these methods are equally ineffective in preventing bedwetting - and the strong element of punishment in these practices is concealed behind a rational explanation that 'This ought to make the child sleep less deeply and therefore rise in time to go to the toilet to pee.'

The trouble with all the efforts at preventing bedwetting that involve an adult monitoring or advising a child - making sure the child drinks most liquid in the early part of the day, making the child go to the toilet just before bed, waking the child for another pee after he has gone to sleep and so on - is

that they can very quickly become weapons of punishment as soon as the adult's patience wears thin.

Sometimes extreme correctives are tried - like tying the penis with string or blocking up a girl's urinary channel. Once you start on the road of punishing children for something they can't help it's sometimes not long before the family home can get a bit like a torture chamber.

But there *are* things you can do to help with bedwetting. The child can be encouraged to experiment by himself with holding onto his pee while in mid-flow. This benefits the child in two ways - he gains greater control over the act of peeing and he experiments with this of his own free will.

There are other ways of helping - drugs, hypnosis and the 'pad and bell' method are all used with some success for a proportion of sufferers. The skills of doctors, psychologists and hypnotists can be brought into play if the child and his parents feel defeated by the problem.

Most children eventually stop wetting the bed anyway. It may seem to everyone affected as

though it will never happen but holding your anger in check, swallowing your disappointment and dealing with a wet bed as calmly as possible is likely to bring that time nearer, faster. The adult who is infuriated at the child who appears to be indifferent to his wet sheets and smelly bed has to keep on reminding herself that, for the child, the only way of coping with his bedwetting may be to appear not to care.

As one parent put it, "I used to get so angry because I felt that it was me that was failing. Then a friend suggested that I make a chart of his wet and dry nights - not for him but for myself. And I still recall my amazement when I discovered that he was not actually wet every night of the week. I think that was when I began to lay off him a bit. And now I can hardly remember when he stopped being wet. But he did, bit by bit. I really wish I'd made less fuss about it now."

**Rosemary Milne**

*Thanks to John Jamieson for the material on which this article is based.*





## Getting in Touch

### MEN AND MASSAGE

If anyone had suggested to me five years ago that one day I would become an alternative health practitioner I would have rejected the idea as ridiculous. I was working as a gardener and was a typically repressed Scottish male with a tendency to overeat and overdrink. As a result, I had very few real friends and several failed relationships behind me.

However for reasons I have never been entirely clear about, I gave up gardening and went to Newbattle Abbey College. There, on the advice of a friend, I decided to go into therapy, paving the way for a dramatic rediscovery of myself. I decided to train in massage as a means of passing on to others the pleasure and release I had experienced from working with my own physical and emotional tension.

Human beings use touch to communicate before we ever learn to talk. Touch gives us an awareness of our own and others' deepest

selves, enriching our everyday contact with the people around us. Early experiences of touch are at the heart of our experiences of pleasure and sensuality - put quite simply, touch is as essential to babies and children as the air they breathe and the food they eat.

Unfortunately, for the majority of boys and men in our society, touch has come to express only anger and the pain of repression. Ask most Scottish men to touch each other and they will be up in arms! So when a man comes to me for a massage he will not usually say he has come for enjoyment or the comfort of a relaxing massage - he is far more likely to be complaining of chronic back or shoulder pain. He may relate this vaguely to 'stress' or a more specific injury. At the same time a defensive, tensed up way of standing may hint at the existence of long term underlying problems which may emerge if we continue over several sessions.

From the first session, I look for positive things to tell people about themselves. Of course massage does work at a purely remedial

level giving relief from injury, toothaches and headaches - even colds and flu can be significantly relieved - and massage can strengthen the body's resistance to disease and improve the general physical condition. But massage can go deeper, resolving surface layers of tension so that deeper layers can then be dealt with.

Very often a sense of fear and excitement accompanies a first experience of massage - it can take time to build up a sense of trust and show that this sort of massage is a comforting, but specifically not a sexual, experience. I know from my own experience how hard it is to take the risk and see what it's like to feel another man touching you. Sometimes it's necessary for a man to have several sessions just exploring touch, breaking down the confusion that exists between sensuality and sexuality. Our homophobic taboos against touch between men are deeply ingrained - even trained body workers like myself have to be constantly aware of our fears and hang ups!

There are still many barriers to men who want to become

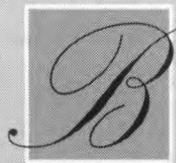
bodyworkers; far fewer men than women work in massage nowadays. Many qualified women practitioners are unwilling to treat male clients, being suspicious of their motives in coming to them in the first place. Since a lot of 'massage parlours' are simply brothels under a different name it's a suspicion with a lot of basis to it.

But things are changing, slowly. Men are discovering that massage can reinforce the aspect of touch which expresses love, comfort and healing and coming to see it as fundamentally very enjoyable and a bit of a treat. By receiving and giving massage we can enrich our everyday contact and learn to touch each other in a more caring and loving way. And that can't be a bad thing, can it? ■

**Mike Hastie**

*You can contact Mike Hastie for a massage on 031-229 3374. Books about massage include **The Book of Massage** by George Downing (Penguin £6.99) and **The Baby Massage Book** by Tina Heint (Coventure £9.95).*

# ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE COMPANY



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Christmas Play

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The films that are programmed in the next few weeks include

Sat 6 June **MY GIRL**

Sat 13 June **THE SECRET GARDEN**

Sat 20 June **THUNDERBIRD 6**

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# CONNECTIONS

## IN BRIEF

It's not often you get new, independent **magazines** coming out in Scotland, so it's quite a surprise to see two coming out in the same month. **Rebel Inc.** is a 40 page publication with lots of poems, prose and photographs from new Scottish writers and artists - one or two of whom have appeared in **Scottish Child**. The mag, which describes itself as 'Made in Scotland from Biros', contains 'Sharp new writing from Embra and other bits of Scotland like Falkirk'. Duncan McLean, Barry Graham, Alan Spence, Alison Kermack and Kim Oliver are a few of the writers in the first issue - well worth a read! It costs £2, and if you can't get hold of a copy you can phone them on 031-334 5271 and I'm sure they'll help you out.

The other new mag is **Harpies and Quines** - 'Scotland's new feminist magazine'. You're more likely to have heard of this one - it's got quite a bit of support amongst District Councils, BBC Scotland and the like - and if you're looking for a feminist magazine with a Scottish perspective you could be interested. The first issue has articles on Germaine Greer, breast cancer, a women's centre in Maryhill and lots more stuff. It costs £1.50, is planning to come out every two months and can be contacted at PO Box 543, Glasgow G20 9BN.

Just how much help is available to survivors of child **sexual abuse**? One of the most sickening aspects of the Orkney Inquiry fiasco has been the sight of fat-cat lawyers making thousands of pounds out of the pointless exercise while services to help survivors either don't exist or are hopelessly inadequate. It says quite a lot about our society's Alice-in-Wonderland values that paying for these legal eagles' second and third homes clearly has more importance attached to it than putting a roof over the heads of those teenagers fleeing abuse at home and ending up on the streets.

If you need convincing about just how big the problem is, you could do a lot worse than get hold of a copy of **4 in 10 - A Report on young women who become homeless as a result of sexual abuse** by Mandana Hendessi (CHAR £5.95). The title comes from the fact that four out of ten young women who become homeless have experienced sexual

abuse in childhood or adolescence and the report gives a clear picture, often in the words of survivors themselves, of just how little help is available to them.

The overall picture is one of a society that doesn't really want to know, preferring to talk about a 'housing problem' or a 'criminal problem' (according to the book one in three young women offenders is a survivor of child sexual abuse) than face up to just how widespread sexual abuse is. It's a familiar story - 'We don't want to hear about this problem, so we'll set up services and institutions that make it just about impossible for you to tell us about it'. Result: bemused services thinking 'We're doing all we can for these kids and they still screw it up'; teenagers increasingly coming to the conclusion that no one really wants to know; and, of course, an ever-recurring gravy train for lawyers and academics trying to 'find out what's going on'.

A point that comes through strongly in **4 in 10** is that the vast majority of young women (the book only deals with female survivors) who have been abused *want to talk about their abuse* - but find it hard to get someone to talk to. That's certainly the case in Scotland where there are only two residential projects for young women who are escaping sexual abuse - one in Glasgow (three places, one worker - that's the west of Scotland taken care of) and one in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh one - **The Pathway Project** - has just brought out a report about its first four years called **Four Steps Forward**.

**The Pathway Project** was Scotland's first safe house for young women made homeless as a result of abuse and has been able to accommodate 29 young women since it opened. "Of all the places I've been to", says one of its residents in the report, "it's been the best place within years. I think I've been more settled here than I have anywhere else."

It's a women-only hostel, with no males allowed in the building, and although some women clearly find the place safe and supportive there are problems - highlighted by the fact that three-quarters of the residents leaving Pathway either left without notice or were asked to leave. Staff recognise the problem - after all, why should a female teenager have to put up with not being able to invite her boyfriend home for two years in order to get some help in relation to her sexual abuse? What is clearly needed is a range of services -



**Homelessness isn't good for your health** - and according to a new report about families living in temporary accommodation the health of thousands of children is suffering as a result of poor housing.

The report - **ODDS AGAINST HEALTH** - has been published jointly by **SHELTER (SCOTLAND)** and the **SCOTTISH HEALTH VISITORS ASSOCIATION**. It reveals that more than one in three children living in temporary accommodation are reported as having poor or very poor health; children living in bed and breakfast accommodation are reported as having 50% more physical symptoms of poor health than average.

And it's not just a few homeless

some single-sex, some mixed; some residential, some not - to meet the demand. But until people start *demanding* those resources, and stop putting up with the 'Let's talk about something else' attitude of most services, it isn't very likely to happen.

Now where's my twenty grand for that recommendation?

One of the problems that people who do want to talk about painful or taboo subjects is the difficulty in getting reliable **information** about them. For many the search begins with a visit to a bookshop - unfortunately, the average high street bookshop may not have much, if anything, in stock. You can easily end up leaving empty-handed or with a book that doesn't give you the particular information that you need.

In an attempt to overcome this problem **West and Wilde Bookshop** has published a series of booklists on a variety of topics - the most recent one is about *surviving sexual abuse*. Aimed primarily, though by no means exclusively, at women (it has a *men as survivors* section) the booklist summarizes a wide

range of titles on the subject. All of the books on the list are currently available from the shop or by mail order; other lists include *HIV/AIDS* and *women and mental health*. If you want to find out more about the booklists you can contact Bob Orr at West and Wilde, 25a Dundas St, Edinburgh (phone 031-556 0079).

**ODDS AGAINST HEALTH** is available for £6.50 from Shelter (Scotland), 65 Cockburn Street, Edinburgh EH1 1BU.

A big thank you to all our readers - and there were hundreds of you - who filled in our readers' **survey**. We haven't put it all through the computer yet but it's clear already that a lot of readers do value 'us being around. A comment that a lot of readers made was that, unlike a lot of magazines, we seemed to be writing about *real* people - shucks, it makes it all worthwhile. We'll be letting you know the results of the survey in more detail soon; and if you ticked a box saying you wanted to help **Scottish Child** in some way, we will be getting in touch. Meanwhile, we can announce the lucky winner of the £30 raffle: it's Angela Lamb, a student from Penicuik. Congratulations, Angela - your cheque is in the post!



# **DON'T HIT KIDS**

## **THE CASE AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

The proposals from the Scottish Law Commission about how much adults can hit children have sparked off some controversy - but they have fallen far short of banning physical punishment of children altogether. Here **Penelope Leach**, a mother, psychologist and the Parent Education Co-ordinator with **End Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH)** points out just how senseless hitting children is - and argues for its banning by law. And over the page, we get some views on smacking from a group whose opinion on the matter few people seem to have asked - the children themselves.

# 'The research literature on hitting children contains not one single piece of data suggesting that physical punishment is effective'

The **Scottish Law Commission**, backed by over 90% of the respondents to the opinion poll it commissioned, believes that it should be a criminal offence to hit children with implements or in any other way cause or risk causing injury, or pain or discomfort lasting more than a very short time.

This is certainly an advance on the right of "reasonable chastisement" - a phrase which has been taken by judges in the last three years to include beating children with belts, garden canes and electrical flexes. The Commission believes that the line it wishes to draw in criminal law will be "easily explained and understood. No implement. No injury or risk of injury. No lasting pain or discomfort or risk of lasting pain or discomfort" (para 2.99).

But 'line-drawing' has its problems. The Commission "accept and regard as important the arguments to the effect that physical punishments tend to escalate in severity, that parents using physical force may inadvertently cause damage, and that much abuse starts as ordinary punishment" (para 2.90). They accept the arguments - but then choose to ignore them by constant references to "safe disciplinary smacks", "a safe parental smack on the bottom" and "ordinary safe smacks" which "cause no injury and only transient pain".

'Carry on Spanking' was the interpretation placed on the Commission's proposals by some of the tabloids. On the day the Commission's report was published, Glasgow's **Evening Times**, which finds its way into a high percentage of the city's homes, carried a banner headline on its front page proclaiming that very message. "Most unhelpful", said Commissioner Dr Eric Clive. But the Commission has only itself to blame for such headlines - if they had acted on the overwhelming evidence showing physical punishment to be harmful and useless, and called for its banning by law, then the headlines would have been very different indeed.

## Smacking Doesn't Work

Indiscipline amongst children - at home and at school - and violently anti-social behaviour amongst young people and adults, is a major concern almost everywhere. And as long as people believe that the physical punishment of children is, or even may be, an effective disciplinary technique, morality alone will not stop it. We need educational programmes, squarely based on research, to counterbalance that belief.

The fact is that the research literature on hitting children contains *not one single piece of data suggesting that physical punishment is effective*. Indeed the literature tells us that hitting, imprisoning and humiliating children is not only wrong, it is useless and dangerous with children today and tends to produce violent adults tomorrow.

## Why do People Think that Smacking Children Works?

There is a commonsense view that suggests that if you punish somebody every time she does wrong, surely she'll learn not to do it. Parents who start smacking children in babyhood are often trying to teach safety-lessons: smacking when a baby crawls towards the fire or a toddler goes into the road. The urgency of the 'lessons' and the obvious rightness of trying to protect children from danger overcomes any moral or sentimental scruples they might otherwise have about hitting such very small people. By the time those safety-issues have given way to tiresomeness - interrupting, making a mess, being 'cheeky', smacking is a habitual response.

So what about this commonsense view - can't we see that the smacked child desists from doing wrong? Well yes, of course she does for that moment, while she cries. But that's only useful learning - a real contribution to discipline - if her *future* behaviour is altered. Research tells us it is not; indeed it tells us that no kind of punishment is an effective way of changing behaviour at any age because to change behaviour we have to do several things that punishment cannot do: we have to ensure that they understand what that different and desirable behaviour is, and that it is available to them; and we have to make them feel good about choosing to behave that way. The smacked child is not motivated to please the parent: far from it - she is hurt, angry and humiliated. The punishment tells her that she has done wrong but it does not tell her what she should have done instead and should do in the future, nor will she even hear, through her angry tears, if the parent tries to tell her. Most smacked or beaten children remember the punishment - often for years - but never understand, and therefore cannot remember or avoid, the behaviour that led to it.

Physical punishment is meant to hurt - it is pain that makes it punishment and if it really doesn't hurt, it isn't punishment. It is also a warning to those, such as the **Scottish Law Commission**, who accept the need to *control* parents' use of physical punishment - with legal definitions of what is 'moderate and reasonable' and legal sanctions for those whose punishments amount to cruelty - but will not accept the need to ban it altogether. *Minimal* physical punishments will never be effective. So those who support the physical punishment of children at all should logically support what most people would label cruelty to children. They don't, of course. Instead they accept *ineffective* levels of physical punishment which then escalate but *still* don't work...

## The Escalation of Violence

Individual parents don't recognise the risk of escalation. They tap the hand of the baby who

fiddles with the TV and when he fiddles again they tap him again and when he fiddles *again* they smack him a bit harder. But ask them if they would ever *spank* him and they'll tell you "no". Whatever their personal punishment practices at the time of an enquiry, parents regard those as 'normal' and anything more violent as 'abnormal' or 'cruel'. But return in a year's time and many of them are found to have incorporated those previously rejected levels of punishment into their 'normal practice'.

The Child Development Unit at the University of Nottingham demonstrated this process in the lives of more than 700 families. Two thirds of the parents had slapped babies before they were one year old. By the time the children were four the frequency and severity of physical punishment (as well as the number of parents using it) had escalated; more than nine out of ten children were now smacked or spanked at least weekly.

Escalation is not universal, of course - by the time the children were seven some parents had abandoned corporal punishment. But many of those who still used it had moved on from bare hands. Almost a quarter regularly punished their seven year-olds with straps, belts, sticks and other implements, while a further 53% regularly threatened to do so.

## Physical Punishment and Aggression

There is no doubt that physical punishment increases aggression. An extensive body of research in psychology, sociology and criminology clearly establishes this. National commissions or committees in the United States, in West Germany prior to unification and in Australia, charge with looking into the levels of all violence in their societies and recommending measures to combat it, have each concluded that the ending of the physical punishment of children should be a governmental priority. The **Australian National Committee on Violence**, reporting in 1989, put it like this: "The greatest chance we have to prevent violence in society is to raise children who reject violence as a method of problem-solving, who experience and believe in the right of the individual to grow in a safe environment."

Banning beating in schools and other institutions is crucial - but it is not enough. The widely held belief that physical punishment by a parent is less damaging, because of his intimate relationship with the child, is erroneous. Children have a far greater tendency to model themselves on the behaviour of their parents or parent-substitutes than on any outside authority figure so the potential for harm in the home is greater. A simple statement by G.C. Walters and J.E. Grusec sums up the findings of many studies: "If parents employ physical punishment on their children they will become

## Hitting Back

We start off by talking about whether kids get smacked a lot or not. Do this lot get hit by their parents?

"My mum doesn't hit me a lot," says Natalie, "my mum would hit me for being cheeky or swearing. Sometimes she grounds me or doesn't give me any supper."

John does get hit. "I don't mind when my mum hits me because she only taps me. But when my dad hits me it's harder, he sometimes goes for the head and I fall down and get dizzy. My dad hits me for hitting my wee cousin, he's five, for hitting me. When my wee cousin doesn't get something he just gets bad tempered and bites me, and when he bites me I get really bad tempered and hit him back."

Gerry gets the treatment from mum and dad as well. "Sometimes my mum puts me in my bedroom and asks me why I do things and she hits me. Then she goes back downstairs and then my dad comes up and starts hitting me sore and my mum comes up and stops him. I get that for going down the shops. I'm not allowed down the shops because of all the drunk people."

"When I was young, says Tommy, "my mum used to get a knife and she used to threaten me with it. One day I was in my room and she brought the knife through and I was scared and I put my hand up and she cut my finger really badly. She did it because I was being naughty, because I swore."

We seem to be getting into a worse-time-I-ever got-hit sort of discussion. Rachel tells us how "When my mum hit me once I banged my head off the wall and I didn't feel it. Then I went to the hospital and got a big jag in my brain." By now, the children are talking about the sort of implements used to hit them - a belt, a slipper, a shoe - until I ask if anyone thinks that smacking stops them doing things they shouldn't. Most say no.

"Your mum doesn't stop you doing anything by smacking," says Keith, "it

just gets you angry even more. I just run out the house."

Matthew remembers smacking having an effect on him. "I was smacked once. I was playing chicken on the road and it did stop me playing chicken. But I still go on the road."

"My auntie's got a baby," says Kate, "that keeps going near the fire and her mum smacks her on the hand. It doesn't do any good."

John thinks his wee cousin needs it: "It doesn't work telling my wee cousin to stop. Believe me, he's really..." and John makes a face of being completely at a loss. But Rachel disagrees: "My wee sister gets hit for not doing what she's told, but she still does it."

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What do kids think about smacking? **Colin Chalmers** went to an after-school club to ask a group of seven to ten-year olds for their views

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I ask everyone how they feel when they get hit by adults and get a variety of responses: "I feel ashamed of myself", "I feel sad", "I just get angry".

Carol remembers her feelings quite vividly: "I just walk up the stairs thinking 'I want to get fostered'. I remember when my mum was hitting me once I said 'I wish I'd got fostered' and my mum said 'Well, I'll take you to a home', but she didn't really do it. I'd rather my mum would keep on hitting us for doing something wrong, if I do something wrong. I'd only hit my kids if they were doing something cheeky."

Gerry makes the point that adults sometimes don't know how hard they're hitting you. "Some adults don't know their own strength, they've been digging or building or something and when they hit you it's really sore."

John is keen to agree with that point. "It's like with rollerskates, if you've been out on rollerskates for dead long when you take them off and you start to run you go faster than you usually run but you think you're just running normally."

So does anyone know why adults hit children? "I was hit because I was bad," says Kate. Rachel tells us "I've been smacked plenty times. I was smacked for smoking when I was four. Grown ups hit you for something bad, because they're getting angry. When people are drinking they hit children. My dad does that to me."

Well, there seem to be enough 'reasons' why adults hit kids there - but does everyone think it's right that kids get hit?

There is a resounding chorus of "No". "When adults hit other adults," says Gerry, "they might get put under arrest - but when they hit children they don't get put under arrest." So does he have any idea why that is? "I don't really know," he replies, rather bemused.

"It told you on the news that you're not allowed to hit your children," says Keith. "Smacking is illegal now," continues Natalie, "when we were in our house last night my mum thought my neighbour was going to skelp me, but my mum said 'You'd better not skelp her because it's against the law to hit children'."

Natalie's mum won't get away with saying that for long, of course - so Natalie is more likely to get hit than if it really was against the law. We were finishing up now, and I ask everyone if they would ever hit their kids. "I would just ground them," says Gerry. "We wouldn't hit our children," agree two girls who have been talking to each other about it. "I'd never hit my kids," says Kate, who surely deserves the last word. "If they did something bad I'd talk to them."

*The names of the children have been changed.*

physically aggressive, whereas if they rely on other forms of punishment then children are less likely to become aggressive..."

Some parents, teachers, police and judges who are willing to believe that physical punishment is not an effective way to *teach* socialised behaviour or to *prevent* interpersonal violence, nevertheless wish to retain it to *punish* violent behaviour such as aggression to parents or siblings, bullying at school, or violently anti-social behaviour in adolescence. Ironically, these are exactly the circumstances in which

physical punishments are most likely to provoke more aggression. Every mother who 'bites back' her biting three year-old should read the study of 379 five year-olds and their mothers which explains,

"Physical punishment is itself a form of attack - perhaps often perceived as aggression by the child. If parents serve as models, then it is not surprising that the children adopt similar ways of behaving. When the parents... employ physical punishment they are providing a living example of the use of aggression at the very

moment they are trying to teach the child not to be aggressive."

And such children do become aggressive. There are so many pieces of research relating physical punishment at home to being a bully at school that as long ago as 1977 the **UK Association of Education Psychologists** told the **British Department of Education and Science** that "Children who are beaten tend in turn to beat and bully."

The aggression does not remain within the childhood worlds of home and school, either. A

# 'Any country that wishes to control or limit the hitting of children must ban it by law'

recent study by John and Elizabeth Newson, for example, unequivocally demonstrates a strong association between physical punishment in childhood and adult, often criminal, violence. Having made allowances for social factors - poverty, unemployment and so on - they report that "The measures which stand out as most predictive of a criminal record before the age of 20 are having been smacked or beaten once a week or more at 11, and having had a mother with a high commitment to corporal punishment at that age."

## Parents are Right to be Concerned about Discipline

It's important that those of us who campaign for an end to physical punishment should never allow ourselves to be seen as wanting an end, or even a loosening, of discipline within families. But we should point out that many parents are quite simply wrong about the kind of discipline that is likely to bring about the kind of socially acceptable behaviour they want from their children. A body of carefully validated research work carried out with successive groups of children and parents in their own homes since the 1950s makes this point well.

The researchers originally predicted that children whose mothers were permissive of 'tiresome', 'defiant' or 'disobedient' behaviour - doing little or nothing to prevent it - would frequently behave in these ways, while children whose mother reacted punitively would do so much less often. Consistently, the findings showed that the first prediction was always correct but the second was always wrong. Allowing this type of behaviour certainly increased it, but *so did punishing it*, especially if the punishments were physical ones. The 'best-behaved' children had mothers who were neither permissive nor punitive. But, contrary to the expectations of the researchers (which would probably be shared by most lay people) the 'worst-behaved' groups of children were not those whose mothers were both permissive and non-punitive, but those whose mothers were permissive *and* punitive. As these researchers put it, "The most peaceful home is one in which the mother believes aggression is not desirable and under no circumstances is ever permissible when addressed to her, but who never uses physical punishment on the child but relies on non-punitive forms of control."

## So Why do Parents Still Smack Children?

As the evidence against physical punishment piles up, the fact that it still goes on seems increasingly incredible. Why do so many parents still smack their children? Why? Partly because they are venting on their children stresses emanating from adult societies that are far from family-friendly and partly because they cannot think how else to discipline their children. But partly physical punishment continues because psychological mechanisms perpetuate it from generation to generation.

The parent who is most likely to smack her children is one who was smacked when she was a child. It is her belief that 'it didn't do me any harm' that insulates her from moral argument and, unless we understand the mechanisms that are in operation, it will successfully insulate her from education as well.

Children identify with their parents or parent-figures. That is the generally accepted basis of family bonds and therefore of all social learning. In order to identify with parents, children have to believe that those parents are good people and that what they do is right. No pre-pubescent child can comfortably accept that his adult model is 'bad' or 'wrong'. The child whose father is in prison will often find it easier to believe in a court conspiracy than in his father's guilt; the child who has been sexually abused all too readily believes that it was, in some mysterious way, her fault. In the same way, children who are physically punished, even those who are physically abused, seldom blame the people who hurt them. They blame themselves for misbehaviour or inherent wickedness that 'deserved' the treatment meted out to them.

This tendency to self-blame for physical punishment continues into adult life and therefore into parenthood. A study of a large number of students found that those students with punitive and even brutal parents would retrospectively justify their parents by assigning crimes to the children they used to be. Far from blaming their parents, they consistently played down the violence used towards them. For example, 80% reported being spanked as children but only 40% reported that they had received 'physical punishment' - for many young adults, then, smacked bottoms were too trivial to count. Of those students who had suffered lasting bruises from parental beatings only 10% considered those punishments to have been excessive or cruel. Even amongst the group of students who had received hospital treatment for fractures, or other serious injuries resulting from parental punishment, only 43% saw themselves as having been 'abused' or 'cruelly treated'. The study concludes that "the recipients of punitive physical discipline are the least likely to recognise its inappropriateness".

Clearly, then, children who receive physical punishment at the hands of their parents are likely to grow into adults who have incorporated the justice and rightness of such punishment into their self-images and belief-systems. Many people assume that if children have been victimised by physical punishment (or brutalised by physical or sexual abuse) they will consciously avoid repeating the pattern with their own children because they 'know what it is like'. But this is a dangerous over-simplification.

If victimised children are helped to see themselves as victimised - as the innocent recipients of misused adult power - then there is some hope of breaking the inter-generational pattern. But without such help, even young people who can allow themselves some anger at punishing (or abusing) parents, and consciously intend to avoid

treating their own children as they themselves were treated, often meet the stresses of parenthood by falling back on the old, familiar pattern.

## The Need to Ban Violence Against Children

Educational programmes pointing out that physical violence against children is wrong and doesn't help discipline are necessary - but they are not enough. As long as parental physical punishment is generally accepted and widely practiced in the present, it seems inevitable that it will continue to be so in the future *unless the on-going process is interrupted from outside*. That is perhaps the very worst thing that is wrong with hitting children - and the reason why any country that wishes to control or limit it must ban it by law.

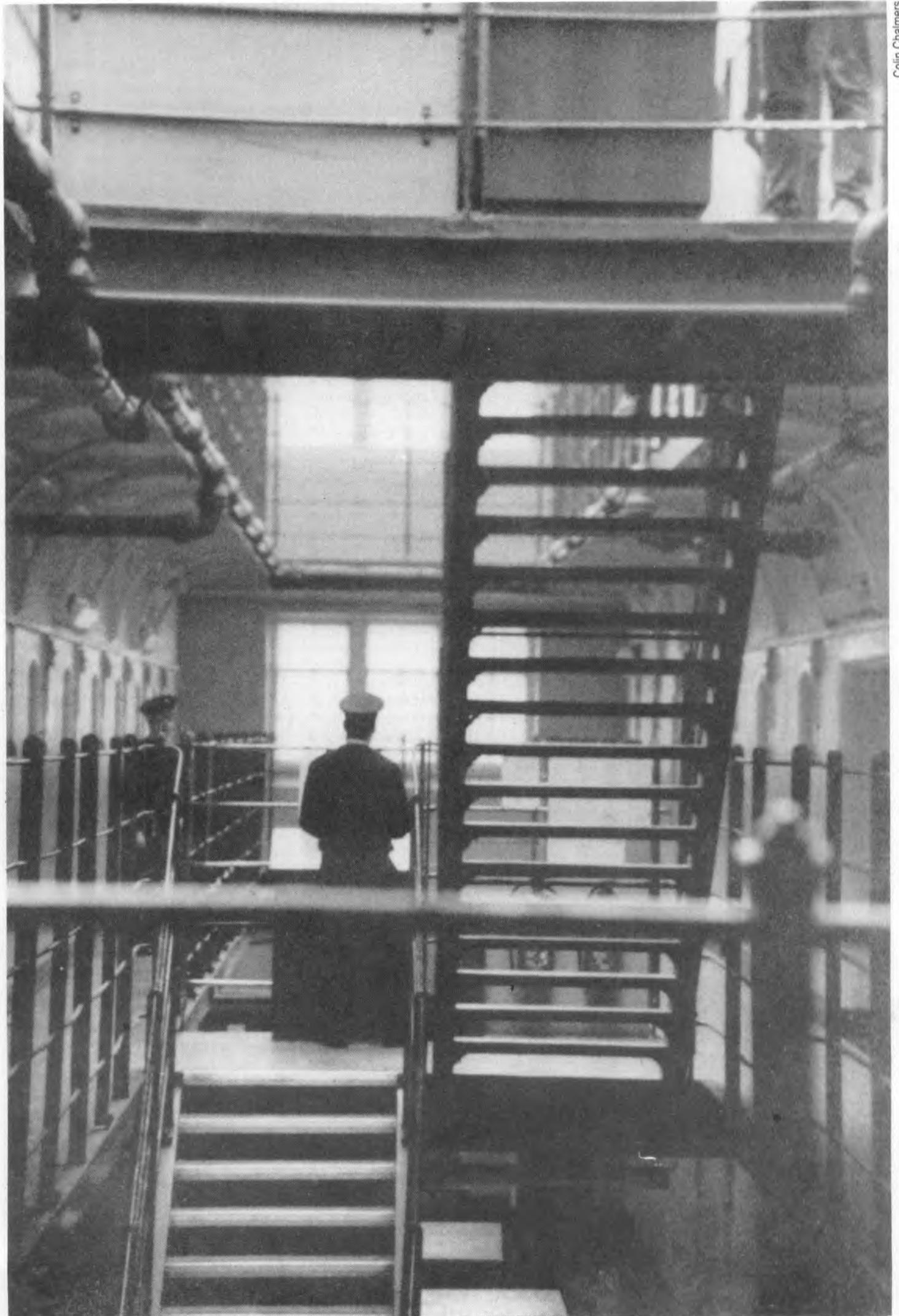
Which brings us back to the **Scottish Law Commission's** report. It is sad that the Commissioners, who in other parts of their report took a principled and logical line on respect for children's rights and on parents' responsibility for their children, should have been intimidated into confusion when they came to consider physical punishment. One can only conjecture whether it was fear of public controversy or more understandably the influence of their own childhood and parenting experiences that caused them to do this. Whatever the cause, the section of the report dealing with physical punishment, unlike other sections, follows and reflects rather than challenges and leads public opinion.

Five other European countries have already taken the principled route of making it clear in their family law that no level of physical punishment is acceptable, and others will follow suit soon. Such a statement allows no ambiguity: hitting people is wrong and children are people too. But nor does it imply that the criminal law must concern itself with smacking which causes no injury and only transient pain.

Adding such a statement to family law in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom is not incompatible with the Law Commission's proposal that the criminal courts should intervene when implements are used or punishment causes or risks causing injury or pain or discomfort lasting more than a very short time. In fact it is an essential complement which **EPOCH** and its supporting organisations, including the **RSSPCC**, **NSPCC** and **Save the Children**, will be pressing ministers to accept in the coming months. The time has come to recognise just how wrong and pointless it is to hit our children - and make sure we stop it. ■

*Much of this article is based on a speech I gave to an international seminar on ending physical punishment of European children organised by EPOCH and held in London in March this year. I would like to thank Peter Newell, the co-ordinator of EPOCH for his help in writing the finished article.*

*If you want more information about EPOCH in Scotland they can be contacted at EPOCH, Lion Chambers, 170 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 2TU (phone 041-332 9389).*



# TIME

**Joe McGrath** is a prisoner doing a twenty three year sentence - and a member of **Scottish Child's** editorial group. He is now in Shotts Unit but he spent five and a half years of his sentence in Peterhead, five years one month of that on rule 36 - in solitary. Here, in a moving insight into prison life, he writes about what it's like to do that sort of time.

I am in prison. I feel it intensely, every day of it. They - the staff - used to say to me in Peterhead "You can do your time. You would never think you are doing one of the longest sentences in Scotland. You handle it well." I was told that often by my fellow prisoners too, during snatched, late night conversations through our windows. It confused me, especially early on. I mean it *really* confused me. I used to ask what they meant and most often the reply was "Well, eh, you just handle it well." or "You don't change - you're the same all the time."

What nonsense.

I got fed up hearing it. If I was pissed off, I'd tell them to go and gas themselves but more often than not all their words did was kill the conversation. Because after hearing this stuff so often I got so as I could tell the type of character most likely to come out with this kind of remark. And I knew they weren't exactly handing me a compliment of any kind. What they wanted was to know what it felt like; they wanted to know if it was hard, if I was suffering in any way. And in their minds I must have been because *they* were suffering doing their 4 or 5 years. I knew they were because I remember how I suffered doing my 4 years.

I remember how you waited on the postman daily. If you didn't get a letter from your loved one, your day was heavy with time, brooding on it. And then the next day - the prospect of the mail again - lifted you, eased you. The approaching uniform with mail had the world in his hands. A hesitant step as he approached flipped your belly, made you sweat.

The week before your monthly visit was agony - the letter acknowledging your visitor had got their pass, ecstasy. And then the day arrived. Every ring of the telephone before visiting time stopped you pacing the cell for five minutes, stopped you breathing if you heard footsteps outside your door. Homicidal if you heard the key in the lock because you feared the worst: a cancelled visit. But the screw wouldn't know it to look at you. A granite face stared back at him - "Oh, aye, nay bother."

Anger, hate, frustration, when that door was closed again - at everyone, everything. Nobody

could ever understand it. Perhaps the car broke down? Perhaps they missed a train? No matter what the reason, your potential visitor couldn't ever realise what they did to you. You loved them. You'd been missing them so much. Oh God, you loved them.

Then the other part - being humiliated by a screw, a shithouse of a screw, who supposed when he'd locked the door again that the loved one had no doubt had a heavy night of it or would be having one tonight...

That's how a prisoner suffers - not all of the time, only about 90% of it. Some of them take drugs, which takes them out of real time. Some of them use music. They're young guys, go to discos, so they get into it. But music, like drugs, has its comedowns and you can only enjoy yourself for so long until it hits you again - you're not where you *could* be, at the Savoy Centre, the Mayfair, suited and booted, looking the part. Then it's back to time and all you've managed to steal is a minus-smidgen point of your 10% of not suffering.

Thinking about somebody worse off than yourself is what some of them do - those were the ones who asked me about my sentence at Peterhead. They wanted me to tell them how I suffered. They wanted me to comfort them. But I didn't. In Peterhead I suffered my time in silence, alone. I contained it. Time was outside of me. I had divested myself of what comforted me. There was no warmth inside of me, for anybody. I waited for no mail man. I expected no visit. No agony or ecstasy. No ups or downs. I had no intention of adding to what I was suffering in plenty. So don't try and measure your time by me, or your agony.

Nobody has a clue about time. I don't know how often I've heard outsiders say "I imagine it must be really difficult." I've even heard them say "I do understand. The boredom must be terrible." Silly-assed fuckers - that's polite. They don't have the slightest notion.

How did I cope then? I coped by shutting my system down. I turned to stone. I became neutral about everything and everybody. I thought about everything else, just to stop thinking about myself. I ran, I ate and slept. I stayed

alive. Occasionally a screw or governor would engage me in conversation - try and get from me my thoughts on my future - as though I had one. Of course, in their reasonable minds I did have light at the end of my tunnel. I could have dispassionately despatched those assholes with my hands for thinking that I was stupid enough to go for that bullshit.

You fucking heap of maggots. Of course I had light at the end of my tunnel - if I thought about it. If I suffered sixteen years of time.

All you wanted from me was the knowledge that I had been broken by the yoke of time - then you could really have made me suffer. That might have been the easiest thing in the world for me to do, to let myself be broken, considering I had been locked up in solitary for five years with the prospect of more of the same. First of all you wanted me to serve my eleven years in your cesspit of a prison; then you locked me up inside a prison inside a prison for trying to escape. You treated me like a very rare and dangerous species. Your system shut *me* off.

So, every day I would send you a message. Every time you looked in my face for the agony, the suffering, the time, I stared back at you with granite eyes in a granite face:

You do not touch me. There is nothing you can do to me that you have not already done. I am me and I am stronger and more powerful than you. You are nothing but an evil, sadistic cypher in a weak and powerless system. Surround me by time. Surround me with your stick-carrying screws. Move me from cell to cell twice every day. Put another gate in front of my steel door. Surround me with cameras. Be as you are - weak, frightened, powerless. Now there is nothing left you can do to me. You cannot make me any harder, any more dangerous, nor any more loathing. I hold in contempt your sadistic, weak powerlessness. All you have to offer me as an alternative to the freedom of having nothing else to lose is a light at the end of a 23 year tunnel - is the suffering of time. The only penance for my crimes you have the imagination to conjure up is time behind a door. ■

**'The only penance for my crimes you have the imagination to conjure up is time behind a door'**



*In my life*

## **A traveller's life for me**

Travellers do not have an easy time of it - they face constant discrimination and have to battle for basic facilities that others take for granted. But **Hughie Stewart**, a traveller for all his sixteen years, wouldn't change his way of life for the world.



In the travelling life you've got freedom. You can go out and shout your lungs out if you want. When I'm in a house I'm like a fish that's been taken out of water and put in a tank. I feel blocked in.

If you're a five year old in a caravan you have all these different things to do. You've got fields, football, a bike - whatever you want. In a house you haven't got so many things to do. Most of the greens around flats and council

houses have got 'No Ball Games' and the nearest park will be six or seven hundred yards away.

We usually move in the springtime and summer - it's hard to travel on icy roads in the winter. We travel in small groups, families going together. If there's someone else in the clearing we're moving to we move in beside them. We're not hard to make friends with. I remember when I was wee my dog Chips would

sit on the dash of the car when we went. She would lie there and look out the window.

It's difficult being a traveller because you're always getting treated badly by Councils and the Police. If you move into a place you get charged with trespass or whatever they can put on you. Quite a lot of the time if you park some place the Police come and say they'll be back in 24 hours and charge you unless you move away. So you have to move.



# 'Life - my past, my present, my future - I'm proud of it'

I was born in Inverness but I've been all round Scotland. I've got three brothers, Christopher, Alexander and Donald - I'm the youngest, a lot younger than Chris and Sandy, but there's only five years between me and Donald.

When I was wee I used to talk to my mother most. We were all close to my mother. She's - how can I say - wild at heart. We try to look after her now, me and Sandy, but she won't be looked after, she won't be pampered. If you get in her bad books she can cut you to death with her tongue. She says what she knows and says what she thinks. When I started smoking - I was 14 - she knew I was smoking and she wanted me to smoke in front of her, tell her I was smoking. She couldn't stop me so she wanted me to be truthful. She likes straightforwardness.

I used to look forward to visiting my Aunt Lizzie. She was outside of Perth. She'd been in the same place for 30 odd years, in a caravan with her husband and her sons, my cousins. She had a nanny goat that she milked - I used to love goat's milk. My aunty looked after me an awful lot, she was like my mother in many ways. She lives on a caravan site in Blairgowrie now - she couldn't keep her goat on the site so she had to give it away.

I know all about my mother's family. They lived mostly in the Highlands, up past Perth. My mother's granny travelled around a lot herself. She didn't speak English, only Gaelic. My mum speaks the Gaelic a lot, especially if she's in a bad mood. She speaks it to herself.

I'm sad that I never met my granny or grandpa on either side. I was born too late in life, they'd all gone, passed away. I ask my mother about them sometimes when she's talking about the old times and she tells me about them. I'm a seventh generation Stewart, seven generations straight down the line.

We were all brought up with animals - horses, dogs, cats and things. My brother always kept a greyhound for poaching in the fields. He would

get rabbits and deer - some of the farmers used to go wild at him. Once that greyhound killed 30 odd rabbits, 20 odd hares and a deer in one night. It's all in the knack of the dog. To catch a deer it's got to have the speed.

It was mostly old caravans when I was a wee boy, they had big mirrors and fancy chrome. They said thunder and lightning were drawn to chrome and mirrors and you were always looking forward to it. If there was rumbling and thunder in the sky folk would say 'The auld yin's moving his furniture around'. And the lightning is when he's supposed to be angry.

I loved the rain when I was wee. I liked standing in the rain, walking in the rain. You can actually feel your soul in your body, you know you're still alive. I was always standing in the rain when it came down heavy.

Most people say 'Travellers - don't go near them'. It's like cowboys and Indians. I first noticed it when we moved into a council house in Kirkcaldy and I was going to school. It's always hard making friends in a new school but if you're a traveller it's even harder. The first day I went I came back with a black eye - I got hit, the first day. Since then it has been an uphill struggle all the way.

I went to school for three years in Kirkcaldy, from about six to nine. I couldn't take orders, being told what to do, I'm no use at that and that's what school was like. I'd be sitting in the class and look out the window and just want to go. Some of them in the school might come out with O levels and A levels whereas some of us could hardly read or write at the end of it. I can't read or write much.

Most of the friends I made in those three years at school are drug users now. I still know them but I don't mix with them. Tablets, injections, you name it. But I like life, I like seeing life with my own eyes. It can be a wee bit hard at times but at least I know what I'm doing. With the life I've been leading - hardship, death and all that - I feel I know who I am more than a person in a house. In a caravan, walking, doing

whatever you're doing - you've got a chance to explore yourself.

When I was about nine years old we went and spent three years or so down in Cambridge, London and Boston. The people down there were more polite than they are in Scotland, they had a more polite way of saying no. It was nice meeting Irish and English travellers, hearing a change of voices. The Irish and English travellers drive trucks and they tarmacadam roads. Scottish travellers don't work on the roads so much. We work with trees and stuff like that - cutting and trimming trees and hedges, doing gardens, sharpening knives and scissors and axes. This is all men's work. The women sell stock - clothes-pegs, pots, scrubbers - door-to-door and do the housework. They keep the family together.

The travelling life teaches you how to survive. I learned to drive when I was just about nine years old - my father taught me to drive inside his lorry. I sat on the seat and he worked the pedals with my head stretched over the steering wheel. I was kind of steering.

Some people accept us, some people don't. It's because of the bad name we get - for stealing, violence. Mostly the people that are hostile to us would like to move around but can't - there's a bit of jealousy there because we move around, we've got more freedom, we've got a choice. We can just pick a road and go. Some people in houses, they're there for the rest of their lives, they can't get out, can't move, and they get jealous of our freedom. If you're in a house people are always looking out the window to catch a look at you, see what you're doing. If you move into a house you're choked up for air.

Our life is freedom. The council try to put us away off the road and forget us when all that we want is our life, our freedom, places to stay. I'm a traveller and I'm proud of it. Life - my past, my present, my future - I'm proud of it. I'll keep my freedom. They won't lock me in a house. ■





Madeleine Milne

# women on women

How is life changing for women in Scotland in the 1990s? **Scottish Child** invited five women to have a one-off meeting to try to throw some light on this question. **Yvonne Burgess**, a writer and musician, and **Jacqui Fleming**, a student, came from Fife; creche worker **Louise Mays** came from Glasgow; and **Mary Archibald**, who works with homeless women, and **Sally Wassell**, an adoption and fostering worker, came from Edinburgh. **Alison Bell** played host for **Scottish Child**.

**Alison:** Do you think there's a difference for young women nowadays compared to a few years ago?

**Mary:** In some ways it was easier when I was in my teens and twenties - that would be about thirty years ago - because we knew what was expected of us. And jobs were ten a penny, you could leave one job on a Friday and have another one by the Monday. I'm in my fifties now, and I think that nowadays there's more scope for women of my age. You don't get looked on as being strange if you do things that young women do. You can do virtually anything if you have a mind to. I think that goes for older women as well - last year my mum went abseiling and she's over eighty years old. But for young women it's really hard. If you don't get the exams and you don't have the qualifications you are on a hiding to nothing.

**Sally:** There's so much push towards competi-

tion. I think that the whole political scene, all these years of Thatcherism, has had a powerful effect on younger women - it works very much against co-operation. Certainly, there are no more women managers than before in the area of childcare. Mine is a profession with a very high percentage of women working in it, so you'd think there'd be plenty of experienced women, but senior management is still very much dominated by men.

**Mary:** Childcare was better 10 or 15 years ago than it is now, definitely. There was more choice. A lot of services have been cut.

**Sally:** That's so true. Nowadays, to get childcare, you either have to prove you're in severe difficulties or else you have to be quite well off and be able to afford to pay for child-minding.

**Jacqui:** The change in family structures is a big part of all this. People are more mobile, they're more ambitious on the job front and have wider

aspirations. Nowadays families aren't always so close by and a lot of people don't know their neighbours because we've become such a commuting society. I think communities used to be more close-knit.

**Yvonne:** Yes, women used to cover for each other more. But I'm interested in what Mary is saying - I'd like to ask what services did we used to have in Britain that we don't have now? What things have been cut?

**Mary:** Well, for instance, ten years ago there were six playbuses in Lothian Region - there aren't any now. And it's much more difficult to get your child into a nursery now. At one time you could get your child into a nursery as soon as it was three - now you're lucky if you get your child in by four.

**Louise:** I also think there's a lot more pressure on younger women like myself to be out of the house. There's not many places in nurseries

# 'Childcare was better 10 or 15 years ago than it is now, definitely' - Mary

because most young mothers are wanting to go out and work. There are pressures on young mothers to be out and about because everybody else is doing it.

**Jacqui:** Maybe it's just that young women are more honest about not being happy with staying at home.

**Yvonne:** If you really feel you've been left all alone with little ones it can drive you mad. The isolation seems like a punishment. You feel desperate because you feel there's nobody else doing it.

**Sally:** That's right, looking after children at home can be tremendously isolating. There are thousands and thousands of women doing childcare who don't feel part of anything. On top of that they often feel that they somehow aren't okay unless they start extending themselves outside of the home.

**Yvonne:** Feminism has a lot to answer for there. You could say that feminism has encouraged us to look at a fulfilled human being as someone who's in the market, doing a job that's respected. I'm not saying that's all that feminism has done but there's an edge to feminism that's made women staying at home feel quite inadequate.

**Mary:** Yes, but women now realise that we can do other things, and feminism has played a big part in that. Some women don't want to go out to work full-time but they might like to go to an evening class or something. If you've got small kids you may not want them watched every day but you'd like to be able to get out a couple of mornings a week. If you do that you come back refreshed, and you enjoy your children more and they enjoy you more.

**Alison:** It's funny that nobody's mentioned sharing childcare with a father. That's quite interesting.

**Yvonne:** Yes, it is interesting. We were waiting for the bus coming here and a mum arrived with three children - a baby, a two year old and a four year old. They were all really relaxed and there was no crying and no temper. It was great. Then I thought that if that was a man with those three children I would have been thinking, 'Where's their mother?'

**Jacqui:** And you'd have had people rushing up to help!

**Mary:** Getting about with kids is another thing that's much harder for women now. When my three children were wee there was a conductor who would lift the kids on and help you with the pram. Nowadays a lot of people act as if children shouldn't be allowed in the city or on public transport at busy times.

**Louise:** On my bus, the driver was really raging at some woman. She shouldn't have put 'that' in the luggage compartment - "Especially since it was just a buggy". The woman got angry and was saying to her wee boy "Hurry up, get off the bus".

**Yvonne:** Yet more fathers are doing childcare and it's not easy for them. A mistake that a lot

of us women make is laughing at men when they don't do it exactly the way we would.

**Sally:** I live with a man who has three children. The children live with us and he is their main carer, so the usual situation is reversed. But the school will not acknowledge his role, they refuse to take it in and they write to 'Mrs' all the time. It's as if, because it's about children, it's automatically the woman's responsibility. The assumption is that only good enough nurturing can come from a woman. The mother.

**Louise:** There's a guy in the creche I work for and a lot of the weans take to him, he's dead popular, especially with the boys. Maybe it's because he's the only man around. In Maryhill, you don't see many men looking after kids. I've been working there for four years and I've never seen a man come into the creche regularly. I've seen some men come at the end of the day and say "I'm here today to pick up whoever", but that's about it. What you *do* see is a lot of single mothers.

**Sally:** I've noticed that too. That's another burden that's falling on women - knowing how to bring up boys on their own.

**Jacqui:** I got round that by consciously using men that I'd chosen as role models for my son. They are the more caring, nurturing type of man, not the macho man. I think it's paid off.

**Louise:** My mother brought up a family on her own after my father left. I think it was good though because the boys grew up to be quite sensitive people. They're family men now and quite understanding compared with some of the dominant guys you meet.

**Yvonne:** You don't think they have any trouble being men?

**Louise:** No, not at all. They take part in their own families. We are all quite close.

**Mary:** And do they bring their own boys up differently?

**Louise:** Aye, they do.

**Jacqui:** My mother used to do everything for us, absolutely everything. She even used to polish my father's shoes. She was always in the house and everything was geared to the family. I grew up thinking 'There's no way I'm going to be like that'. I couldn't even boil an egg when I got married - it was as if I shut off from it all because I didn't want to know.

**Louise:** I felt like me and my mother were the parents to my family. I had a lot of responsibility when I was dead young. I had to stand on tip-toe to see what I was cooking, I was so wee. I had days off school just to do the washing by hand and hang it on the line. But at that time I was too young to understand what was going on and I just thought 'Here I am helping the family'. But as a wean I was also depressed. Sometimes I'd get really angry just at the fact of washing the dishes because I thought 'God, is this what I've to grow up for? I've been doing it all my life'. Now I stay on my own. I'm going out with this guy and when he comes up it can

really get on my nerves. He'll expect me to make cups of tea for him and it just riles me.

**Yvonne:** So do you make him his cup of tea?

**Louise:** No, I get dead stubborn and I say "If you want a cup of tea, make it yourself". I get angry and then I think away back and I realise I'm probably like that because I had a lot of responsibility when I was wee.

**Sally:** When I was growing up the message was that if you married you'd sacrifice your own interests and talents and you'd be subordinate to your husband. I made an early decision that I wouldn't do that.

**Mary:** When I was leaving school the big idea was that you worked in an office for a few years and looked around for a man, a man who had a better position so you could better yourself, so that you could be one or two steps up the ladder from where you were.

**Jacqui:** Nowadays, though, there are a heck of a lot of women just cohabiting. Or they're enjoying living alone and their boyfriends get told when they can stay and when they can't. They are having the best of both worlds.

**Sally:** But there are still a lot of people who get married very young, when they're teenagers or in their early twenties.

**Mary:** Often when a couple gets married, the man looks on the woman as his possession. Its like you've got the table and chairs - and the wife.

**Louise:** ...And the woman thinks 'I don't need to comb my hair now, 'cos he married me.'

**Jacqui:** I've heard women here in Scotland expressing contempt for their men and then stay locked in their relationship. I think its a lot to do with financial reasons.

**Yvonne:** When I lived in Zimbabwe I noticed that women didn't show much of their preferences or personalities when they were young, at school. Then when they have a man, or are pregnant with their first baby, they start become really expansive, they really show themselves. A mother is the best thing they can be. I don't think any man quite gets the same encouragement from society as a mother in that culture. When the children come up you have to behave yourself because you are the mountain at the centre of the family. But once the menopause comes and you stop having children you can smoke dope all day and laugh uproariously. It's almost as if you become a third sex - women who are older!

**Mary:** I feel a bit like that now. I'm not saying I'm right off sex at all but I do feel that I can do what I want, when I want and how I want. I wouldn't change this time of my life for anything.

**Jacqui:** I've got three friends who are about your age and they say exactly the same thing.

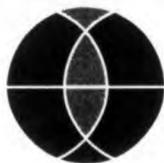
**Alison:** What do you think the misunderstandings are that make communication between women and men difficult?

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# 'Men in general seem unwilling to acknowledge that there are men who beat up and rape their wives, their girlfriends and even their children' - Sally

**Louise:** I am clear that there are some things women can only get from other women. I'm not saying there isn't an emotional side to our relationships with men, but in everyday life we need other women for support. For complaining or just sounding off. Telling things you wouldn't want to tell a man. The man I go out with always sits reading his paper. It drives me nuts. Why do guys always read a paper for about three days? Then it's the football on the telly.....

**Jacqui:** I've noticed that men go out to the pub and sit together without hardly saying a word to each other except "Want another pint?" And yet they've 'been together'. I wonder if they're satisfied with that?

**Sally:** I have the feeling that intimacy between men is quite tricky for them. I think loads of men are not only lost when it comes to communicating with women, they are out of touch with each other as well. Nonetheless I would say that I have as many good men friends as women friends. Nowadays it's possible to have really intimate friendships with men that aren't sexual relationships. My male friends are very special to me.

**Yvonne:** In other cultures women tend to spend a lot more time with one another and men spend a lot more time with one another. They don't put this huge investment in a big 'love affair'. Here we expect a man to be a sexual partner *and* a best friend to grow old with. It places enormous demands on a relationship.

**Louise:** I grew up with four brothers and I got to know a lot of guys as friends. Some of them come up to visit me, just for a chat. My boyfriend finds it very strange.

**Alison:** Would this group like to see more women moving into male dominated areas such as government?

**Jacqui:** We had a woman prime minister in the 1980s who didn't raise women's issues, who toed the male line. But we do need political power, definitely - how else are things going to change?

**Yvonne:** It's a difficult question because to get into political power...how do you do it? If you *really* differ with the way things are, whether it's as a woman or as a 'green' or whatever, there doesn't seem to be a way in. Personally I can't be bothered so I wouldn't say that somebody else must. Still, I'd be really glad if folk succeeded in doing it.

**Louise:** I often think the way it is with men having that power goes back thousands of years. Ever since women stayed at home and men went out into the world and saw things.

**Yvonne:** I think it's wrong to assume that the fact that the men went out to hunt made the men strong in those cultures. There was an awful long time when women were the source of power because they stayed put. They ran the town and the men came and went.

**Sally:** It amazes me that we allow ourselves to stay in this position. It must be that early on we take in some idea of ourselves, some message,

that makes it hard for us to assert ourselves in the fullest way later on - so we don't move into the political arena and take power.

**Jacqui:** I think women *have* learned to be more assertive though. Years ago I think they expected not to be heard and to be more subdued.

**Yvonne:** Most Europeans will view African society as oppressive - men are never contradicted by women in public discussion, especially with foreigners present. Nonetheless there is a lot of straight talking within African families and between colleagues. I once worked in an office in Scotland where there was a chap who took a real dislike to me and I couldn't think what I'd done to offend him. Gradually I realised it was because I was taller than he was. I tried, but I couldn't find any way of making things right between us. I told my friend in Zimbabwe about this and she said "I'd soon have put him right". She said something really aggressive. It never occurred to me to be aggressive with the man. Here, when you strike up a friendship with a man, you tend to do more listening. You adapt to how the man is feeling and what he is comfortable with. The friendship is built up by female effort. If I get to know a woman I don't have to play a game of not hurting feelings.

**Mary:** I have close male and female friends but I find women easier to get to know and easier to get on with. If us lot met as a group two or three times more we'd probably get to know each other very quickly, I would become fairly open, whereas if it was a group of men I'd be wary. But that's about me, the wariness would be coming from me.

**Sally:** I think it's the men who are wary. They'll often choose very deliberately what they are showing you and it might not be the real them.

**Jacqui:** Women are under a lot of pressure to be nice and smiling. I think it takes women a lot before they'll explode or be aggressive about something whereas a man will tell you straight out. If you do express your anger, you're told to calm down and they say "Have you got PMT?". It's all put down to your hormones.

**Louise:** I think it's easier for a man - he can be aggressive and that's it done with. For a woman you have feelings that can't always come out. You'll hear men say to you "Are you still going on about that?" and all you're trying to do is talk about what you're feeling.

**Alison:** But a lot of men show their aggression physically.

**Mary:** It's supposed to make *you* shut up. It's the same as society's answer to violence in general: "Don't go out of your home. Don't go out late at night. Take yourself off the streets and don't let yourself be seen." That sort of attitude gets me really angry.

**Sally:** The message is that *you* have to restrict *your* life.

**Jacqui:** But even if you did it wouldn't work. I've been out on the street at six o'clock at night and been attacked by men. The police did

nothing. We need more men to take on board that this violence against women is perpetrated by men so the onus shouldn't all be on women to sort out the bloody problem. I mean, if a woman is raped a man might be questioned about whether he did it but the woman is also subjected to a barrage of questioners. She often ends up in a worse position than the perpetrator. Very often the implication of the questions she gets asked is that 'she asked for it'.

**Sally:** I thought it was interesting that when there was a conference on women abusers recently the press got very interested in it. It was such a marked contrast to the lack of outrage and action about abusing men. Suddenly it's 'Oh, women do it too'. There was this great readiness to focus on women abusers and make a big issue of it and take attention from the enormous amount of men's abuse. Men in general seem unwilling to acknowledge that there are men who beat up and rape their wives, their girlfriends and even their children.

**Louise:** Most men have been brought up and taught that if they feel angry they should fight. To change that they have to be brought up to recognise that they have feelings and they can talk about them.

**Jacqui:** Men will open up to me, cry and share deep emotions - but man to man they wouldn't dream of it. I don't think it's up to women to sort men out.

**Yvonne:** I think the way our culture has gone in the last hundred years men and women have become polarised into different corners. Women in Scotland don't have huge upper arms like they do in other parts of the world. Men don't cry, they don't hold hands with each other and they aren't publicly around children the way they are in other countries. They've grown apart, and I think that's why we see so much male anger and rage.

**Jacqui:** Women feel anger as well, it's just that they don't express it.

**Yvonne:** We don't have an acceptable way of expressing it. We have a feeling of not being safe - we aren't safe! Over the centuries in our society, women by the thousand have been done away with for resisting oppression of one kind or another.

**Jacqui:** The law here used to give men the right to hit women with a stick as long as it wasn't above a certain size.

**Yvonne:** I'm sure that's why my African friend would be able to say 'rubbish' eyeball to eyeball with a male colleague whereas I can't do that. There is still that memory that I daren't. The bottom line is the fire. I mean the witches. I think that threat is still there. The burnings lasted about three or four hundred years and everybody in Europe did it. The communities were all involved in persecuting women. Our society is still on the side of the forces that burned those women. I think that's why we're still scared. And I think that's why we still see women splayed on the bonnets of cars. ■

## new voices, new writing

More poetry this month. Below, **Viv Grahame** reflects on a Scottish childhood; and opposite, **Kevin Williamson**, editor of the new **Rebel Inc.** magazine, gives his initial reaction to the burning of the American dream.

### MacQueenie Todd the Barber

MacQueenie gave me a No. 2  
as I sat on top of a tray  
on top of a swivel chair  
while he watched what he  
could see of the boxing  
through the smoke-filled  
room of his barber shop.  
*Do you want to be a soldier  
when you grow up, son?* he'd say.  
I don't even want to be  
a man, I'd reply  
and he'd laugh,  
look puzzled and  
carry on shaving my ears.  
Mum would come back from  
the bakers with the German  
biscuits and Scotch pies  
and look surprised  
when she realised  
her son was a skinhead  
and even more surprised  
when she realised  
her son was her daughter.  
*Never mind, she'd say as she  
peeled off the plasters -  
Have a German biscuit.*  
As usual my hair would  
grow back in six weeks  
like mum said it would  
and back I'd be bribed to  
MacQueenie's with promises  
of my favourite food.

### Carrot Top

Big blue eyes  
and red hair.  
A walking Glaswegian postcard.  
A walking exhibit  
was smiling at me  
from between her mother's legs  
across the aisle  
of the inter-city train.  
I wanted to be her.  
I wanted to be happy  
and have flowing red hair  
and be able to stare  
at big girls  
and not annoy them  
because I was so nice to  
look at.

### Adolescent Dreams

At night,  
he climbs inside my head,  
Wee Willie Winkie  
without his  
dressing gown,  
and enters my dreams.  
He makes me  
toss and turn  
and grind my teeth  
and wake up  
sweating,  
with claw marks  
on my stomach.

### Between the Lines

My mother bought me  
some felt tip pens.  
She bought me  
a colouring book.  
She encouraged me to colour  
someone else's picture  
and not to go over  
the lines.  
Trees were to be green  
the sky was always blue.  
She told me that's what I  
was supposed to do.  
I looked through the same  
eyes as everybody else.  
I used the same colouring book,  
the same felt tip pens.  
And, just like everybody else's,  
they ran out,  
at puberty,  
taking what little  
imagination I had  
with them.

## Go on yersels and burn the whole fucking country to the ground

Blackened tinfoil on the toilet floor  
The clunk-click of the snubnose kids  
Swaggering infants patrolling the sidewalks  
Hey maaan...  
This is where America ends, baby  
This is where America ends  
Forever John Wayne in blue jeans  
Screeching tyres  
Batons twirl  
Don't fuck with me, maaan...  
This is where America ends, baby  
This is where America ends

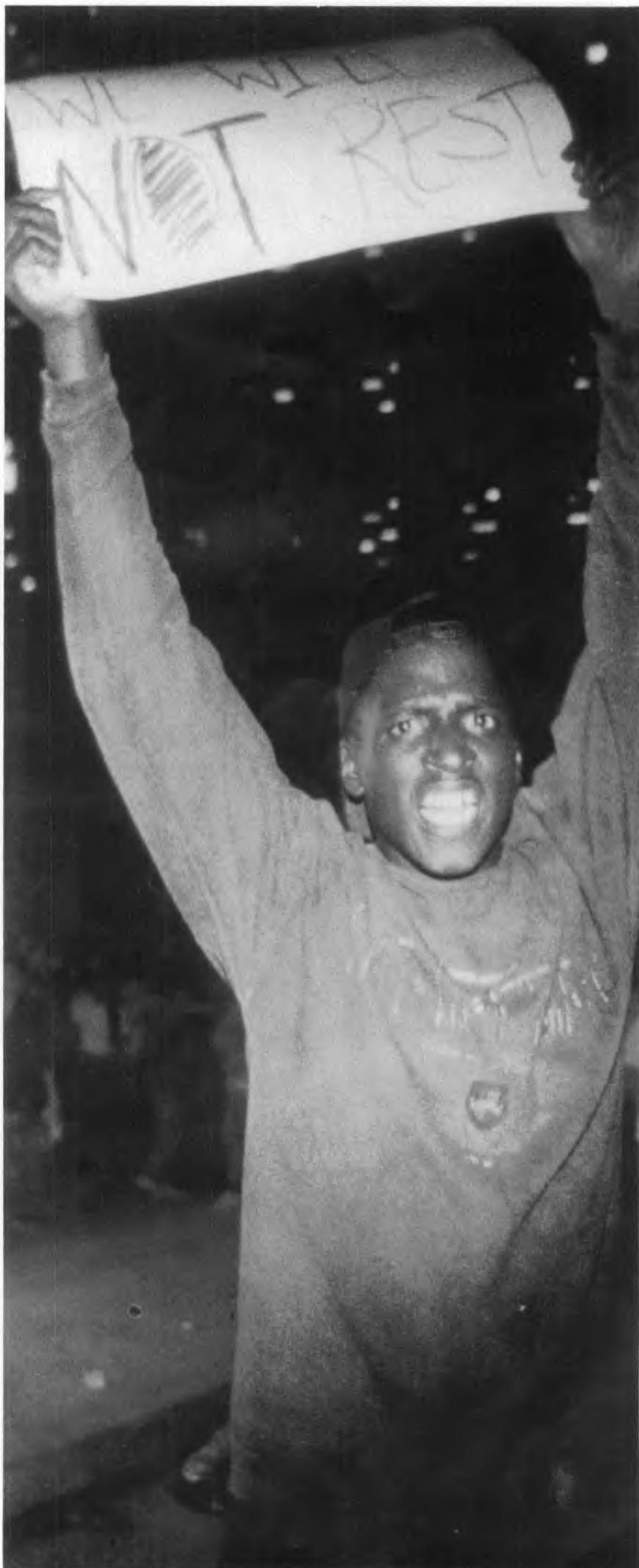
The stupid fuckers in the lumberjack heads  
Learnt nothing from sixty-five  
Now its time to take a walk  
Or a one way ride  
where there's no free  
ways  
And getting down on your knees, missee  
And praying to *THE LORD JEEEZUZ*  
And the chat show boys  
Is gonna get you nowhere, missee  
It's all gone so beautifully wrong

And where have all the heroes gone now, maaan  
Batman, Spiderman, Superman, The Ku Klux Klan  
Arnie S and Clint E  
Mickey fucking Mouse and Elizabeth T  
Who's putting their pawprints on the sidewalk now,  
maaan...

Who's terminating now, maaan...  
This is where America ends, baby  
This is where America ends

Hey this is Hollywood, maaan,  
And lets hear it for the boyz from the hood  
The Crips an Bloods doing *reeeaaaal* good  
Burning down the crack white dream  
"Hey mister! I don't wanna complain or anything  
But I think you've overdone the Kentucky Fried  
Chicken..."

This is where America ends  
No future, no french fries, no friends  
This is where America ends, baby  
This is where America ends





## Magic Moments

"I thought I would be eleven for ever," says director Terence Davies of his childhood in early fifties Liverpool. In **The Long Day Closes** he remembers it as an idyllically happy time, watching his mother and his elder brothers and sisters go about their mysterious, grown-up lives. He remembers running errands to buy cheap scent and make-up for his sisters; he remembers listening to the radio; and, most of all, he remembers going to the cinema.

The cinema was paradise. There were eight cinemas within walking distance of his home and he went to watch films whenever he got the chance. "Discovering the cinema was hugely important to me," says Davies, "because when I went I was discovering a completely different world. Suddenly you were being shown all this life and glamour, this colour, that was over there in this mythical land called America. I went all the time. It was something I couldn't stop doing."

Needless to say, cinema suffuses **The Long Day Closes**. From the cold excitement of waiting outside a picture house in the rain to the

magical experience of sitting in a packed, smoke-filled auditorium watching another world up on the screen, Davies' early addiction to the silver screen is atmospherically portrayed. Throughout **The Long Day Closes** you never actually see

father, a father whose profoundly disturbing effect on Davies' early years was the subject of his previous film **Distant Voices, Still Lives**. He condenses these four years into one year in the life of Bud, played by Leigh McCormack. While

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In his new film **The Long Day Closes**, director **Terence Davies** draws on his memories of growing up in Liverpool to make a very personal statement about the magic of childhood. Here **Thom Dibdin** talks to him about the film - and the childhood experiences that inspired it.

---

any of the films that people are going to, queuing for and watching - just their reflections on the faces of the audience and snippets of soundtrack and songs. It's an atmospheric touch, providing an extra, often highly ironic, layer which runs through the whole movie.

The film is based on the four years of Davies' life after the death of his often brutal and violent

his father's influence is still present as a nightmare in **The Long Day Closes**, the problems Bud encounters come mainly from his fellow pupils at the secondary school he now attends - and from the Catholic Church.

Besides his mother, whom Davies portrays in the film in a highly idealised way, Bud's big influence is clearly the church. "It permeated



ts

every part of your life. At school you prayed four times a day. You were constantly told that you were a sinner and had to be pure in thought, word and deed - which is of course absolutely impossible."

"The film is about being happy and that happiness being taken away from you," says Davies. "It's about being ecstatic for a short period of time and really never thinking that it is going to be taken away - but then it goes. It's the loss of paradise and the loss of innocence."

The child's innocence in the film is that of a bystander, someone in awe of, and uncomprehending of, the adult world. "The adult world was mysterious," remembers Davies, "it was glamorous. These adults went and did jobs and then came home with money at the end of the week, which seemed an incredible mystery. You never thought for a moment what kind of boring jobs they did. It was just that they had money at the end of the week and it was dead mysterious and they gave you two shillings. You saw it in a completely naive and innocent way."

There are painful memories too. In one scene Bud is sitting with his older brother and his brother's girlfriend after an evening at the fair. While the girlfriend talks to Bud about candy-floss and dodgem rides, the brother silently points a finger upstairs, making clear to Bud that he wants him to go. "When he did that, I was so cross," remembers Davies. "I was so embarrassed and thought I had got in the way."

It's a scene played for laughs in many a Hollywood film - big brother wanting rid of wee brother so he can get his girlfriend alone - but here you are led to see the scene from the child's viewpoint, to feel the child's very real and painful sense of rejection. It's the sort of childhood pain that many film-makers - and viewers - would prefer to shy away from, by turning the whole thing into an adult joke. It's typical of Terence Davies' film-making that he prefers to acknowledge, rather than deny, the hurt.

**The Long Day Closes** is certainly not a film that uses driving narrative and tension-producing editing techniques to make its point. There is a slowly paced exposition, reflecting the emotions and feelings memories of childhood so often evoke. This should be taken as a warning to any potential viewer who believes a film is not complete without a car chase. The film is rich in atmosphere: after watching it, you could be forgiven for thinking that Liverpool in 1954 was a place that was always either dark or raining, preferably both. And, against this backdrop, Bud will be looking out of the window transfixed by the light, distorted by rain on the window pane, as it falls on the carpet.

Sentimental it may be - but Davies feels quite okay about getting sentimental over the four happiest years of his life.

**The Long Day Closes** is far removed from any Hollywood dose of **ET**, **My Girl** or Steven Spielberg's latest blockbuster **Hook** - Bud is not a mini-adult, complete with sophisticated attitudes, acting out some adult fantasy of childhood like so many children on film.

"When you see children explaining things in films, that is unreal," says Davies. "They don't explain things, they move from one emotional state to another. The Americans are particularly bad at understanding this - in their films kids are always explaining what is going on between adults. Children don't do that. Children don't understand what is going on and usually they remain silent. They feel, but they don't explain, which is the point - they move from one emotional state to another. Very often they are quiet - but a lot is going on."

**The Long Day Closes** is not a film that gives childhood a glossy edge. Bud is a lonely little boy, alone in the midst of a large family and captivated by his elders. But what Davies has managed to evoke in this film, and what makes it worth seeing, is that sense of stasis, of pure happiness, that is a very real part of childhood.

At 46, Davies is now planning to make a thriller in New York. Quite patently he is no longer eleven - that can be left to the Lost Boys in **Hook**. However, there is a bit of him that will always be eleven for the viewers of this movie. ■

**The Long Day Closes** can be seen at the Glasgow Film Theatre, the Edinburgh Filmhouse and at other cinemas throughout Scotland during the summer. Check local press for details.

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

reviewed by John Pelan

### I SAW EASU

The Schoolchild's Pocket Book  
 Edited by Iona & Peter Opie  
 Illustrated by Maurice Sendak  
 Walker Books £9.99

In Iona Opie's introduction to this unique collection of more than one hundred and seventy traditional rhymes, boisterously illustrated by Sendak, she describes the book as "A feast of laughter" and "A declaration of a child's brave defiance in the face of daunting odds." She suggests that this book could almost be a schoolyard aid for a child, providing him or her with "A stinging reply" or an array of "Comic complaints." But, for most parents, who will, after all, be the ones buying it, **I Saw Esau** is a book to treasure and keep.

### ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

Robert Crowther  
 Walker Books £10.99

Pull the tabs! Lift the flaps! Spin the wheels! Robert Crowther's ingenious book has everything you'd expect from a funfair: burger bar, bouncy castle, big-wheel, dodgems, ghost train and lots more. The problem with pop-up and lift the flap books is that they don't last very long - but young children love books that actually do things. There's lots of "Ooooh's" and "Wow's" in this book and snippets of conversation such as "You'll love the big wheel once you're up there!" or "I wish I hadn't eaten three burgers." This is a book that both parents and children can have fun with.

### THE SPACE ATLAS

Heather Couper & Nigel Henbest  
 Dorling Kindersley £10.99

Dorling Kindersley continue to flatten the competition in children's reference books with this fascinating voyage of discovery through space. If you are a fan of D.K.'s characteristic combining of strong visual images with text you'll like this book. There are maps, star charts, photographs and lots of fun activities. Heather Couper, who is president of the British Astronomical Association, is one of the foremost writers of astronomy for children.

### THE USBORNE BOOK OF KITES

Susan Mayes  
 Usborne £3.50

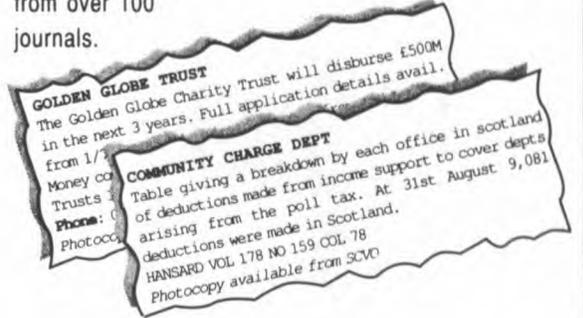
If you're looking for something to keep the kids occupied over the holidays then you could do a lot worse than this new book from Usborne. Kite-flying is one of the fastest growing pastimes in Britain although we have a long way to go before we catch up with the Europeans or the Chinese. This brightly illustrated, inexpensive book gives clear step-by-step instructions in how to make simple kites which require cheap and easy to obtain materials.

Yes No

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Colin Chalmers

## Rights and Wrongs

**CHILDREN NOW**  
A Review of 1991  
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Children's Bureau and The  
Children's Society  
£5 plus £3 p&p

**David Johnson**

**Children Now** has two self-declared aims. Firstly to provide a calendar of the main policy and social changes which have affected children and young people over the past year and secondly to present 'a detailed analysis of the state of children and young people in the UK' by assessing the performance of the UK against the principles set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It tries to achieve this in 43 pages which makes its cost of £5 with a £3 postage and packing charge somewhat on the pricey side.

The calendar is set out under key headings ranging from 'Adoption' to 'Children at War' but apart from providing a reminder of the wide range of events which had an impact on children in 1991 there is little to be gleaned from it. Each heading has a few month-by-month, factual 'sound bites' but there is no discussion, analysis or evaluation of the presented facts. I find it difficult to see what helpful purpose these first

11 pages serve in a 43 page booklet, especially when the rest of the booklet has much to recommend it.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was ratified by Britain in December 1991 - with some important exceptions. For instance Britain has indicated 'non-acceptance' of those articles dealing with nationality and immigration law, employment safeguards for 16 to 18 year olds and separation of children from adults in detention. This reflects one of the fundamental weaknesses of such charters - if individual governments can opt out here and there, and there are no sanctions available to enforce good practice, what real chance is there to promote universal rights for children?

Those of us involved in social work provision, social policy or the legal profession are well used to the maxim 'in the best interests of the child'. This booklet usefully reminds us that - certainly as far as Britain's progress, or lack of it, in implementing the articles of the UN Convention goes - there are many decisions affecting children's lives which are not subject to any such welfare principle in areas such as education, planning, housing, health and safety.

The same downgrading of children's interests is also apparent when it comes to listening to children - very often they aren't. As **Children Now** observes, children and young people in the UK have few rights in law to be heard in judicial or administrative procedures affecting them. Implementing the Convention fully would involve a review of all services, procedures, institutions and laws affecting children and

young people to ensure that the obligation to hear and take children's views seriously is built in.

The final chapter of **Children Now**, which looks at the international scene, raises some important questions. How can the least developed countries, facing further economic decline, adhere to the UN Convention when their economic environment militates against giving millions of children even the absolute basics? How can richer countries help the underdeveloped world and be helped themselves to adhere to those articles which do not fit current government dogma?

Some solutions are offered: 'By spending less on the military, for instance, additional resources could be generated for social programmes. Within the social sectors, a larger proportion of the budget could be spent on low cost programmes to benefit the majority rather than expensive programmes used primarily by urban elites.'

But, as **Children Now** acknowledges, there is very little evidence of restructuring of this kind taking place. And there's the rub. For the UN Convention to be successful, restructuring is required on a world scale. Power - be it personal, parental, governmental or the power of the rich, industrialised countries over the rest of the world - needs to be shared and distributed with those who are less powerful. Amongst the latter, as **Children Now** illustrates, children figure prominently. The UN Convention is an attempt to give them a voice and this booklet provides a useful way of quickly assessing how successful that attempt is in practice. ■

### Among the Contributors in this issue...

**Thom Dibdin** is a journalist living in Edinburgh. **Viv Grahame** comes from Penicuik but doesn't usually admit it. **Mike Hastie** is a massage practitioner working in Edinburgh. **Teddy Jamieson** lives in Stirling and was editor of the film fanzine **The Big Ticket**. **David Johnson** is the Principal Training Officer with Barnardo's in Scotland. **Penelope Leach** is Parent Education Co-ordinator with **EPOCH** and Vice-President of the **Health Visitors' Association**. her books, all available in Penguin, include *Babyhood*, *The Parents' A-Z* and *Baby and Child*. **Joe McGrath** is a prisoner in Shotts Unit. **Stephen Naysmith** is a freelance journalist. **John Pelan** runs the children's section in an Edinburgh branch of Waterstone's Bookshop. **Hughie Stewart** lives in Fife. **Kevin Williamson** is editor of **Rebel Inc.**



Colin Chalmers

## A Summer Warning

Dear Editor,

In the glorious weather last weekend I spent a day and a half digging and sowing vegetables and having a bonfire in my 'foster garden' in Auchtermuchty. I had a great time, but afterwards I noticed that my face felt quite burned, though there had been quite a bit of cloud and not too much wind. When I looked in a mirror, I got the fright of my life: there was a vertical scar of paper-thin tissue running down either cheek, raised off the rest of

the skin, as if I'd burned it up against something hot. There was no red in it, just a kind of parchment texture - white, dead.

Wednesday today, and I'm still lathering my face and lips with cream to relieve the nippy, tight feeling. It's not as hot or sore as 'real' sunburn. This morning, for the first time in my life, I spent £6 on a tiny bottle of maximum protection sunscreen.

I have lived in Louisiana (humid, unbearable heat) and in

Zimbabwe (dry, but very hot and bright) - both in heat and sun far more intense than Fife in May - but I have never experienced such burns. My skin's not fair, and generally I can absorb a lot of sun without problems. It seems to me this must be connected with the thinning of ozone and the 'hole' we hear about.

I want to make this incident known, not simply to encourage everyone to run out and buy sunscreen - more to say "Look what's

happening, what we're doing to the world". This destruction is caused by us, by the way we are living. Please think hard about what you consume, how you make a living, how much you earn and spend. Please try to burn up less - and I will too - so we can stop burning up the earth and each other.

**Yvonne Burgess  
Auchtermuchty  
Fife**

## A Dubious Attitude to Women

Dear Editor,

We are writing to express our anger over some of the statements printed in the article *Men on Men* published in the April/May edition of **Scottish Child**. We acknowledge that **Scottish Child** magazine plays an important role in highlighting issues concerning children, and furthermore, we would not deny that it is valuable for men to discuss the issues surrounding masculinity; however, we felt that the views expressed by Colin White who co-runs **Scottish Child's** gender workshops, have serious implications in terms of his portrayal of male sexual violence.

At one point during the discussion, the question is asked, "why do men get violent and get abusive? Where does that rage come from?" It is here that Colin White comments: "Rape is like the most desperate attempt to get a woman to love them. It's the absolute last, hopeless attempt." He continues by describing the abuser as a man who needs to overcome

feelings of powerlessness, whose behaviour shows he "wants to be loved."

This perception of sexual abuse on the part of someone involved in these issues in a professional capacity is alarming for various reasons. First, he portrays the abuser as a victim; rather than confronting the abuser's responsibility for his behaviour, he allocates the blame elsewhere, justifying the act of rape. Secondly, he makes the serious mistake of equating sexual abuse with the expression of love. This is an unacceptable attempt to legitimise an act which uses violence to exert power and control over another person. Finally, he personalises the act of rape, instead of perceiving it as something more far-reaching which results directly from political and cultural conditions. The problem of male sexual violence will be only be solved if it is acknowledged as a political and cultural rather than a personal one.

Overall, it must be said that Mr

White seems to have a dubious attitude to women and a disquieting failure to grasp some of the most basic ideas which have come from the women's movement. For instance, instead of giving credit to feminism for the crucial role it has played in putting child abuse and male violence on the public agenda in the first place, he can only refer contemptuously to "these feminist women" who (according to his simplistic view) merely tell men "that they're bad people". Then, reacting to an anecdote in which two women were harassed by a man at a discotheque, he refuses to sympathise with the way the women felt, instead happily declaring men's purpose to be "to please women"; this implies that those of us who receive harassment are merely misunderstanding men's attempts to please. At one point he admits to getting a sexual buzz from his every encounter with a woman, which reveals him to be entirely uncritical of the way in which society judges women first and

foremost in terms of their sexuality. He cannot continue to bluff his way through sexual politics in this way - by placating women, and then (when safely amongst men) denying the validity of the issues raised by feminism.

Fortunately, the other men involved in the discussion did challenge some of the comments we have mentioned. We would nonetheless appreciate a response from the editorial of **Scottish Child** on this matter: do these views do justice to an organisation which aims to address issues such as that of sexual abuse? Are the opinions expressed by Mr. White suitable in a person responsible for the running of gender workshops? For our part, in reply to his offensive contributions to what might otherwise have been a worthwhile discussion, we can only paraphrase Colin White himself: "We'd say bollocks to that!"

**Strathclyde Rape  
Crisis Collective  
Glasgow**

## The Orkney Inquiry

Dear Editor,

It is disappointing to see a magazine so knowledgeable and concerned about the interests of children joining countless knockers (who have their own motives) of the Orkney Inquiry in glib, sweeping prejudgements long before it has had a chance to report.

On just what grounds or evidence does Rosemary Milne assume, in an otherwise valuable piece (*Out in the Open Scottish Child* April/May 1992), that its conclusions "are likely to offer nothing new to those who actually have to deal with sexual abuse" (this seems arrogant) or that the main result will be "some advice on tightening up the rules" about questioning of small children before court hearings?

The Inquiry remit has been frustrating for many different people on many different grounds. But this rare public airing of complex child abuse issues has continuously raised many important questions about child protection, in a field which a professional elite has till now largely kept private to itself. It also seems unfair to vent frustration on an Inquiry whose ex-

istence and remit, as critics now prefer to forget, was overwhelmingly demanded by public and media; and which would not have taken place without key decisions by individuals, for instance Sheriff David Kelbie.

It may be frustrating for financially-strapped organisations caring for abused children to see so much public money poured into such inquiries. But it is not necessarily true that all this money would have been more wisely spent as a handout to practitioners. Practice has to be informed by new knowledge and insights and careful debate, and that includes learning the lessons of past mistakes, and acknowledging that some aspects of sexual abuse are barely tackled or understood. If, in particular, professionals and the public are to reach an informed view on how to deal with suspected organised abuse, inquiries like Orkney may prove very valuable; likely to save some human misery and some misdirected cash in the long-term.

Sarah Nelson  
Edinburgh

## Powis 'Extremely Well Resourced'

Dear Editor,

I am disappointed and disturbed that you chose to publish the extreme criticism of Grampian Regional Council's Policies in Powis, Aberdeen, contained in Ruth Campbell's article (*Scottish Child* February/March 1992) without offering the Council any opportunity to respond.

Grampian Regional Council has allocated considerable resources to the Powis area - in 1991/92 over £250,000. The area has only 322 households, therefore Powis has been extremely well resourced in comparison with other areas of deprivation in Grampian.

Recent problems in Powis stemmed in the main from the existence of three separate projects - the Young People's Project, the Parent and Child Project and the Community Education Centre Management Committee - each concentrating on its own area of interest. As a result certain groups of residents, e.g. senior citizens, were deriving absolutely no benefit from the very high level of funding going into the area. This contributed towards division and bitterness within the community which manifested itself in letters of concern and complaint and representation from residents to the Regional Council.

The sponsoring departments within the Regional Council - Education for the Powis Young People's

Project and Social Work for the Parent and Child Project - were increasingly unhappy with the application of the resources provided to these organisations. In addition, an independent evaluation undertaken by Stirling University staff identified major concerns with regard to the Parent and Child Project.

All these concerns prompted the Regional Council to take steps to improve the situation in Powis. The Regional Council has supported the establishment of a new Community Project, which will provide a range of support and services to all sections of the Powis Community. The project will cost £143,000 in its first year and includes provision for a Mini-Family Centre, a Youth Programme, a Welfare Rights Service, support to residents to participate in the St Machar Credit Union, adult education, and senior citizens groups.

Ruth Campbell ends her article by quoting from Caius Petronius "...whilst producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation." This would accurately reflect what has been happening in Powis over the last two years and which the Regional Council will rectify with the new Powis Project.

John Liddell  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Grampian Regional Council



**IN THE NEXT ISSUE -  
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1992**

**WORKING MIRACLES - that's what a new report has found many women to be doing as they juggle the competing demands of low paid work and family responsibilities. We ask - can't we make things better for mothers and children?**

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# LETTERS

## Challenging Child Persecution

Dear Editor,  
Every day, somewhere in the world, children face arrest, detention and death. Some are prisoners of conscience, jailed for their views, peaceful activities, beliefs or origins; some are held in reprisal for the activities of adults; some are refugees seeking asylum from the threat of persecution or death; some disappear, never to be seen again, killed by shadowy murder squads linked to military governments. The list goes on.

At a recent meeting in Glasgow between the **Scottish Child Law Centre** and **Amnesty International** it was decided that the time was ripe to form a Scottish Committee of Amnesty's **Working Group on Children**. Readers of **Scottish Child** will know that **Amnesty International** is a worldwide movement independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religious creed which works to eradicate certain kinds of human

rights violations.

The **Working Group on Children** was set up by the British section of **Amnesty International** in 1984. It campaigns for children and young people who are targets of political imprisonment and detention, unfair trials, the death penalty and extrajudicial executions, 'disappearances', torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment in custody and forcible exile.

The group has almost 500 individual members and co-ordinators in over 160 local Amnesty Groups throughout the UK. A steering committee produces a quarterly newsletter and other information for the network. Amnesty supporters do not work on cases within their own country as this might be seen as compromising their impartiality. However they are called upon to ensure that their home government, as well as others, respect international standards on the rights of refugees and other human rights,

including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Amnesty's **Working Group on Children** has four aims. Firstly, to raise public knowledge and awareness about the plight of child victims of human rights violations and abuses; secondly, to expose those responsible for these violations and abuses; thirdly, to press governments to honour the national laws and International Conventions which protect children's rights; and fourthly, to draw attention to the particular vulnerability of children and to the ways in which certain patterns of human rights violations and abuses are even more damaging to young people than to adults.

The Scottish Group is hoping to meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to carry out specific tasks or projects for the Working Group. There is, for example, a proposal to design a poster exhibition illustrating human rights violations against children and

young people throughout the world.

Anyone interested in joining the group or finding out more about it can contact me, Ruth Adler, at Amnesty International, Regent House, 9 Union Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LT (phone 031-558 1890).

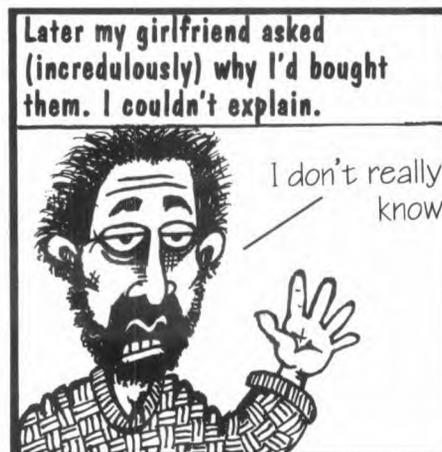
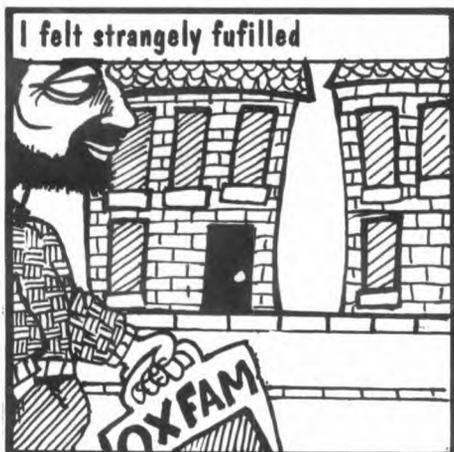
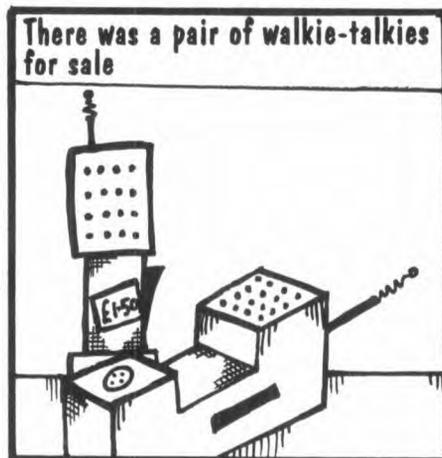
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**Edinburgh**

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## We Spend All Our Adult Lives Trying To Recreate Our Childhood

Coburn & Naughton



# IN MANY COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, CHILDREN ARE IMPRISONED, TORTURED AND KILLED



Sue Cunningham

## WE NEED YOUR HELP TO FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE INNOCENT

In Brazil alone, 7 million children fend for themselves on the streets. These children are subject to arrest, torture and killing by the police, who are under constant pressure to "clean up the streets", and the ever-present threat of the Death Squads.

Sadly, children throughout the world face arrest, detention and death. Some face reprisals because of the activities of their relatives or friends. Some have been taken from their mothers and forcibly adopted by strangers. Some "disappear" and are never seen again. All need your help.

You can give that help by joining Amnesty International's Working Group for Children. We raise public awareness of the plight of child victims of human rights abuses. We expose those responsible for these abuses and press governments to honour national and international laws protecting children's rights. We help those who cannot help themselves. And you can help us do it.

### JOIN US!

- Yes, I want to join Amnesty International and its Working Group for Children and I enclose my membership fee (£15 for individuals; £20 for families; £6 students or OAPs)
  - I already am a member of Amnesty International and I want to join its Working Group for Children
  - I would like to know more about the Working Group for Children so please send me a fact pack - I enclose £3
- I enclose a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form (plus any cheque made payable to Amnesty International) to Amnesty International, Scottish Office, Regent House, 9 Union Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LT

