

Scottish Child

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working miracles

women, work and childcare in Scotland

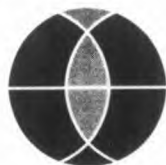
The fate of the Earth • Children's discussion

scan

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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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Many women have to juggle the dual demands paid work and childcare - usually getting little pay for the first and little recognition for the second. **Usha Brown** takes a look at women's work inside and outside the home - both past and present.

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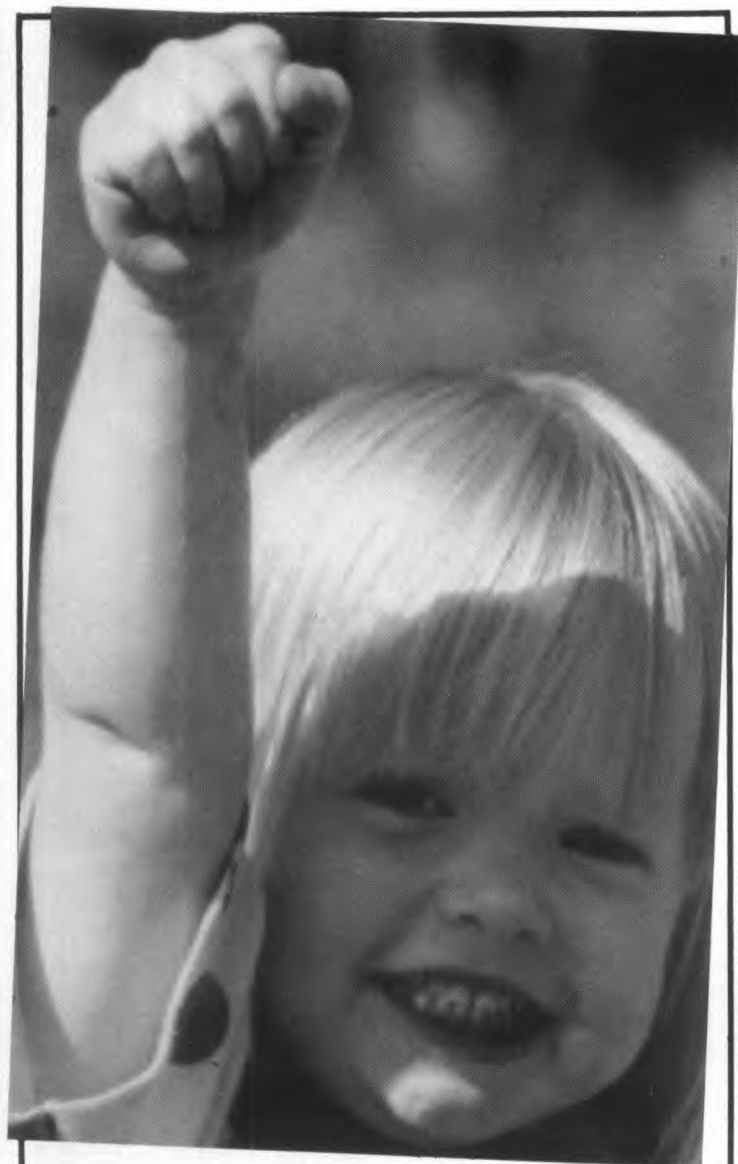
Tony Pelan reviews some more children's books.

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Violence, books, men and dirty dogs in a bumper mailbag.



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Do We Really Give a Damn?

You won't get many people, certainly not politicians, saying in public that they don't care about women and children who are subjected to violence in their homes. Everyone would say that they should be offered help in getting out of their situation. We are all against violence and unhappiness - no one wants to see people suffer. Isn't that right?

Well don't be too sure. Last year, SCOTTISH WOMEN'S AID received 17,000 requests for help from women who were in just such a situation. They were able to admit some 1,800 women - and 2,800 children - into their refuges, where they were able to offer a breathing space to women trying to deal with the trauma and the practical problems of escaping domestic violence. These women and children were able to get some help at least.

But many more were not. Nearly 4,000 women, and their children, were not able to be offered a place at a refuge, even though they needed one, because the places were simply not available. SCOTTISH WOMEN'S AID only have 256 places in the whole country, much fewer than are needed to meet the demand of those women and children we all want to help. The hostels are permanently full and often overcrowded - the staff are able to offer help to those who are staying in the hostels, and are able to give advice to many more, but are constantly aware that thousands of women and children that need help are not getting it.

Last month in London, a National Inter-agency Working Party on Domestic Violence launched a report calling for action to help women trapped by violence. The working party brought together representatives from the WOMEN'S AID FEDERATIONS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, VICTIM SUPPORT, social services and the police, as well as representatives of the probation, legal and medical professions - for the first time all the national organisations in England and Wales whose work has an impact on abused women came together to make clear recommendations for action. But as Nicola Harwin of WOMEN'S AID said at the launch, government must provide the resources to enable the work to be carried out.

And that's the problem, of course - we all care, but, we are told, there's *no money*. Or rather, the argument goes, there's only so much money to go round, and so even though we think it's awful, terrible, shocking that you're in this position we're afraid there's not a lot we can do.

A friend of mine is fond of saying, to sum up discussions on such topics, 'Aye, there's some people have got lots and lots and others who've got hardly anything at all'. How true. Because it simply isn't the case that there isn't the money to help these women - it's just that those who hold the purse-

strings want to keep a lot of it for themselves and their friends. Their 'concern' for people in need is about as hollow as a Smarties easter egg - and they shouldn't be allowed to get away with persuading us otherwise.

Getting to grips with the problems that cause men to be violent and abusive, in their homes and elsewhere, is a pretty enormous task, one that will require a lot of changes in the sort of society we live in. But offering help to those women and children who suffer from it is comparatively straightforward. We need to be able to offer refuge places to those who want to escape it. We need to be able to offer decent housing - not slums, miles from where you live - as an alternative. We need Social Work Departments that don't tell you 'There's nothing much we can do, come back when things are really desperate', forcing women to appear desperate enough to get help but not so desperate that they start being seen as the problem, with questions being asked about their fitness to look after their children. We need, quite simply, to stop punishing people for the crime of having been punished already.

There's nothing wrong with 'inter-agency co-operation' of course - but when everyone in all the agencies knows that no one is doing the job they are supposed to be doing because there is no money to do it, something more is needed - money. And, as anyone who has tried to get a Giro out the dole when they say 'It'll be with you in a few days' knows, you get it by making quite clear you know they can give you it and by making it easier for them to give you it than not to.

WOMEN'S AID only ever got any money in the first place because women who had been subjected to domestic violence demanded that something be done - and it was. Now, in the age of death-by-a-thousand-cuts, we need that spirit more than ever.

There really isn't any reason to feel depressed and isolated about 'lack of resources', as if we have to simply put up with the situation because 'nothing can be done'. There certainly isn't any reason to moan about money going to projects that help violent and abusive men change their behaviour, as well as women's refuges - many women would welcome the opportunity to tell men to go to such projects if they existed, many men would go and we would all gain. We - all of us who think that women and children should not have to suffer abuse - need to make ourselves truly awkward to those who really don't give a damn. Because there's lots of us that *do* give a damn - and we need to make it clear that we want action.

Colin Chalmers



Minority Rights Group

A Cruel Custom

HEALTH

Female Genital Mutilation, sometimes known as 'female circumcision', continues to play an important role in the *rites du passage* of many young girls living in Africa north of the equator and to a lesser extent in some countries to the south. Following accounts of genital mutilation carried out in this country during the early eighties the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act was introduced in 1985 banning the practice in the UK.

The term 'female genital mutilation' covers a number of procedures ranging from the 'Sunnah' form, in which the hood surrounding the clitoris is excised, to the most mutilating 'Pharaonic' form, or 'infibulation', in which the clitoris and a large part of the opening into the vagina is removed and the remaining tissue sewn up to leave only a small opening for the passage of menstrual blood and urine. Apart from the effects of the mutilation itself, the operation carries a serious risk of haemorrhaging, post-operative shock, septicaemia and tetanus, along with long-term risks of infection and the need for women to have their vulval scars opened at delivery.

Although frequently associated with Muslim cultures, there is no

basis for the practice in Islam. In fact, there is evidence of female genital mutilation in a wide range of cultures from ancient Rome and Tsarist Russia to Victorian England, where it was practised as a cure for 'female weakness'. Today, the **World Health Organisation**, which condemns the practice, estimates that there are some 80 million females throughout the world who have had some form of genital mutilation inflicted upon them. According to the **Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD)** almost the entire female population of Somalia, and 90% of women in north and central Sudan, have been infibulated.

Reasons for mutilating the genitals of females are bound up with issues of economic security, male power, sexual domination and female sexuality. The most frequent reason given for infibulation is that a girl must have her virginity protected if she is to be able to marry. In some societies, infibulation is performed on adult women who are widowed or divorced or separated from their husband for some length of time, in order to preserve the monogamous status of the women.

An underlying reason for the persistence of female genital mutilation is the belief that by preventing a woman from achiev-

ing sexual pleasure the likelihood of her seeking sexual enjoyment outside of marriage is reduced, protecting the family lineage, the family unit and the material possessions belonging to the family. This probably explains why it is usually older women such as maternal grandmothers and aunts who take responsibility for the maintenance of the custom.

A recent report from the **Minority Rights Group**, *Female Genital Mutilation: Proposals for Change*, suggests that the practice is widely condemned by gynaecologists, obstetricians and paediatricians throughout the world including those in countries where the practice is most common. The *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, which stresses that positive traditional values and cultures be preserved and strengthened, requests that "appropriate measures be taken in order to eradicate traditional practices and customs which are prejudicial to the child".

Discussion of the subject, particularly in Europe, has been inhibited by the tendency to view female genital mutilation as a race issue rather than as an issue of child protection. **FORWARD**, in their recent report *Child Protection and Female Genital Mutilation: Advice for Health, Education and Social Work Pro-*

fessionals, quote a social worker at a case conference saying that local government agencies should not concern themselves with the mutilation of young girls until it has been condemned by black MPs! But, as **FORWARD** put it, "Failure to act to protect black children at risk of mutilation would be a perverse form of racism".

Clearly in a country as racist as Britain, there is always the danger that the issue will be used by some to illustrate the 'backwardness' and 'brutality' of African peoples - neatly forgetting the brutality and barbarity of European colonialism in Africa and our own widespread abuse of women and children. Such racist views must be challenged - but must not be used as an excuse to stop us protecting children.

It is widely agreed that change will come about largely through education and raised awareness of the dangers of mutilation amongst women and men in groups where it has been traditionally practised - and a willingness amongst professionals to protect children at risk. And attitudes are changing: the **FORWARD** report suggests that Somali men born in the UK do not favour the practice and want to avoid the physical pain and mental suffering it brings to both wife and husband.

Patricia Robson/Mairi Telford

Creating Waves!

DISABILITY

A group called **Creating Waves** has started up in Edinburgh to encourage people with disabilities to get involved in the arts. Set up and run by a committee comprised mostly of disabled people, it's a perfect example of people with disabilities not only taking responsibility for themselves, but finding a way to help bring out untapped potential in others.

For disabled people, having untapped potential can become something of a way of life. Margaret, one of the women involved in **Creating Waves**, remembers her days at a 'special school' for children with disabilities where it was assumed that very few children would find employment as adults. "Any older child that they thought might eventually get a job," she explains, "saw the careers officer. Most of those who did had very little wrong with them. Heart conditions, that sort of thing. My hands were bad. If your hands

were bad, that was it! I never saw the careers officer."

The people involved in **Creating Waves** have strong memories of what it was like after they left school. Some were left to sit at home all day with nothing to do; others were sent to 'training centres' where the intricacies of basket weaving or some other mind-numbing occupation were supposed to keep you fascinated for weeks.

John complained about the school he attended where everything was done for him - he told them that he felt the environment was over-protective. It was a shock to him when he did leave school and suddenly all means of support disappeared. He was left sitting at home all day - a few years later he was sent to a training centre.

Anne has great speech problems and now communicates by using a voice-activated computer. Her obvious feeling of isolation was intensified while growing up because she had to attend a boarding school away from her family.

On the other hand, Margaret did

live with her family but found it difficult to fit in because of her disability. "My parents tried to treat me the same way as they did my little sister - I had household chores to do, which I did to the best of my ability. What I really found difficult was to play in the way my sister did. I remember when she became a good skater and I never managed to master it. It was never easy coming to terms with something like that."

A child's inability to communicate often disguises their true potential and intelligence. Today, advances in technology mean that people with all types of disability, including speech impairment, can finally get their opinions across without having to rely on anyone else to interpret them. But the barrier of bigoted attitudes is still the biggest problem for people with disabilities - and that's a problem that won't be got rid of simply by introducing new technology. As someone who has been thrown out of pubs and Pizzaland for being disabled - the staff thought I was

drunk and didn't give me the opportunity to explain the real situation - I know all about that.

Things are changing. Too slowly probably, but disabled people are no longer content to sit around hospital-like environments weaving place-mats and getting financial support from a well-meaning, patronising public. Individuals are finding their own voice, and are getting involved with planning their own lives.

Creating Waves is one group helping disabled people do just that. We are running a three day event during the Edinburgh Festival (August 20th-22nd at Bonnington Resource Centre, Bonnington Road) where we will be providing a venue for people with disabilities to share their interests in the arts, meet people and hopefully feel less isolated. If you're around, come along!

Carol Graham

Creating Waves can be contacted on 031-229 4362.



Gordon Cookson

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Wednesday 16th September 1992

- at -
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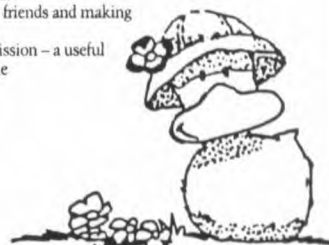
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IN BRIEF

The Ayr **shopper's creche**, a project that has given a worthwhile and highly appreciated service to shoppers and their children in Ayr (see *Come in and Play!* **Scottish Child** October/November 1991) is to close. This follows a decision by the recently elected Tory administration on Kyle and Carrick District Council to withdraw funding. The Conservative group on the council has always been opposed to the service, claiming it costs too much to run.

When the Conservative group took power, they offered the Council's Women's Unit 14 days to come up with a plan to reduce the cost of the creche. The Women's Unit duly did this, suggesting that with 34 places allocated as a workplace nursery (taking only those kids whose parents could pay, that is) the drop-in service for shoppers could be maintained at a reduced level, offering places to 16 children at a time.

This scheme would have halved the cost to the council, but having heard the plan the council decided they didn't want to keep it going anyway and opted to close the creche - and the Women's Unit - with a total loss of 18 jobs.

Anxious to show how in tune the new council is with what Ayr shoppers want, new Provost Gibson MacDonald took the unprecedented step of requesting that the public write letters in support of the council's action against the creche and the Women's Unit. This just increased the flow of letters supporting the shoppers' creche.

There were demonstrations and petitions backing the creche, but the decision has been taken and staff are resigned to the closure. As Gill Wade, manager of the creche, says "Basically they don't want to run it because it isn't profit-making. I'm just sick and tired of everybody pulling money out from under childcare services because

they don't make money. They care absolutely zilch about kids."

Josey Quinn the Council's Women's Officer is equally despondent, pointing out that only one of the councillors opposed to the creche had ever even seen inside it. "It's tragic really," she says. "All these things are being shut down and then you have central government making noises about childcare. It just doesn't make sense."

A new training package designed to raise awareness of child sexual abuse has just been jointly produced by the **RSSPCC's** Overnewton Centre in Glasgow and Jordanhill College. The pack - called **Can You Hear Me?** - contains a video, visual aids and trainers' notes and aims to give those using it an opportunity to explore their feelings and identify issues in relation to child sexual abuse and to reflect on their own values and attitudes. Common questions asked about sexual abuse - What is it? Is it really harmful? Why do children find it hard to tell? How can adults help? - are dealt with in a clear, easy-to-understand way.

The pack provides the framework and material for a full day's training and is relevant to all those who, in the course of their work, have contact with children. A copy of **Can You Hear Me?** costs £35 plus p&p and can be ordered from Sales and Publications, Jordanhill College of Education, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP. If you want more information, you can phone the Overnewton Centre on 041-334 4801.

We thought you might be interested in a few more findings from our readers' **survey** now it's all been totted up. The majority of you are female (71%), read your **Scottish Child** at home (73%) and are involved in some sort of voluntary organisation (64%). Most of



Has anyone seen the new TV adverts trying to get teenagers to join the **army**? The ad intercuts pictures of a couple of extremely bored looking youngsters talking about their absent friend 'Frank' who has joined the army. They imagine him having a pretty miserable time of it, but of course - Frank is having the time of his life!

We cut to pictures of him abseiling down a cliff, windsurfing in the sea, skiing down a mountainside and walking along a sun-drenched beach with his new girlfriend. Frank is also pointed out (literally - for some reason he has an arrow pointing at him throughout each adventure) in a battle, but that looks more like a Rambo set-piece than - God preserve us! - reality.

We've come a long way from press gangs and conscription, when youngsters were forced to join the services. Now, in the era of 'choice', we just relentlessly remind teenagers how boring and awful it is having no money and nothing to do - and offer them the chance of joining the Army's non-stop party that makes your average rave look about as boring as sitting at home all night with your mum. You are allowed to apply to join the Army at 15 years and 10 months, all ready to start on your 16th birthday - just as you become an adult and ineligible for Income Support when you can't get a job.

We phoned the main Army Careers Information Office in Glasgow to ask them if they didn't think that, well, they'd gone a bit over the top with this publicity. "Oh no," we were told, "when teenagers come to us we explain all about the Army, that they might have to serve in Northern Ireland and so on. We do have very good sporting opportunities you know." But don't you think it would be a bit more honest telling people what the Army is really about instead of all this beach-walking and skiing? "People want to forget about it really - and, like I say, we tell them all about it when they come into the office."

I wonder if it's the same advertising company that does the cigarette adverts that aren't about getting more people to smoke?

you are in contact with children at work (62%) and as a parent or relation (65%) and most of you work in social work (26%), education (25%), youth/community work (18%), health (12%) or with the under 5s (12%).

The main reason you like **Scottish Child** is that 'it offers a different perspective from other magazines' and 'presents the Scottish dimension' (both 63%). The only area that a majority of you wanted more room given to was children's views (53%); next were parenting (39%) and education

(34%). In every area, more people wanted more coverage rather than less.

Thanks again to all the readers who helped us with the survey - it gives us a very useful picture of who our readers are and what they want from **Scottish Child**. But don't think that our surveys are the only way you have of telling us what you think of your **Scottish Child** - we are a magazine that listens to its readers, so anytime you have any suggestion for improving the magazine just go ahead and write to us!



working miracles

women, work and childcare in Scotland

Many women have to juggle the dual demands of paid work and childcare - usually getting little pay for the first and little recognition for the second. **Usha Brown** of the Scottish Low Pay Unit takes a look back at the history of Scottish women's work, inside and outside of the home - and reveals just how little things have changed over the years.

'Almost as soon as women went out to work they faced criticism for neglecting their children'

Combining paid work and childcare is often talked about as if it is a problem that has only come to the fore for women in the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, women have been juggling with the competing demands of the home, childcare and the workplace since the middle of the eighteenth century - it's as old as the Industrial Revolution itself.

And the pattern throughout that time has been much the same - the subordination of women's right to work and have good quality childcare for their children to other 'more urgent' concerns like the preservation of the male-female wage differential, the protection of men's jobs and the relegation of women into low paid, low status sectors of the economy.

The Growth of Industry

The Industrial Revolution ushered in a major change in the lives of most families - the separation of work from home. Previously, families had lived and worked together all day - women would work in or near their home, looking after their children who would be nearby. It was not only men who went to work in the new factories - in 1835 nearly half the workers in textile production were women and 15% were children under 13. Although women started to go out to work in large numbers at this time, they continued to have primary responsibility for the care of their children - they needed to find ways to combine childcare with their new jobs.

This was no easy matter. The new factories that were being built enforced tight employment disciplines with fixed hours and fixed breaks that could not easily be combined with the care of small children. Often women would return to work two or three days after the birth of a child, rushing out at factory breaks to feed them.

Faced with these difficulties, mothers who could would work at home, putting in long hours for low pay. Those who had to go out to work juggled childcare arrangements as best they could. Children were looked after by grandmothers, older sisters, relatives, neighbours, young girls between 7 and 11 hired for 2s.a week and older baby-minders.

Not all women faced the same difficulties. Increasingly, middle class women, freed from the need to work and domestic drudgery, were expected to make maintaining the home and family their full-time occupation and the centre of their life. A dependent wife and family became a sign of prosperity for a middle class man. The enduring archetype of the 'ideal woman' - fulfilling her 'natural' role as mother, wife and homemaker - was born, and women,

whatever their own feelings or economic circumstances, felt pressurised to measure themselves against it.

Yet then, as now, many working men did not earn enough to support their families. As one historian has noted, "Rowntree had drawn the poverty level for the late 19th century at around 18s. to 21s. per week. If this were the case then the average Dundee wage of around 16s. would have put most of the workers below the poverty line. Only if a man's wife could earn around 10s. and his child 3s. could the family have been able to manage."

Many women did not have a male wage coming into the household anyway, but did have dependents - they needed to earn a wage to support themselves and their families. Employers, however, argued that single women only had themselves to support and that married women were supported by their husbands. Such arguments were used to keep women's wages at a level half to two-thirds that of men's, even when they did the same work. Then, as now, women had to combine childcare with low paid work.

Almost as soon as women went out to work they faced criticism for neglecting their children. Few of the critics understood the economic circumstances involved. Infant mortality was high because of bad hygiene, ignorance, poverty and the conditions of work that separated mother and child - it was not a necessary consequence of women working. Women worked out of economic necessity - and were given little credit for the lengths they would go to in building networks of family, friends and neighbours to ensure that their children were not neglected or harmed.

Formal Childcare and Schooling

In 1816 the first infant and nursery school in Britain was opened in New Lanark by Robert Owen for the children of workers in his mill. The school, known as the **Institute for the Formation of Character**, took 600 children from 18 months to 10 years, was open from 7.30am to 5pm and was free. The institute was well ahead of its time and it was many years before its example was followed elsewhere.

The adventure schools were a more common form of childcare and schooling for under-fives in the last century. Held in the teacher's house, their hours were flexible and the ages of the pupils varied. Parents paid a small fee for children to attend. Although this arrangement suited many parents, they were dismissed by educational and social reformers as "mere baby minding establishments" and they had disappeared by the end of the century.

Protective legislation for children introduced from 1820 onwards started to specify the age at which children could work, cut their hours of work and enforce a minimum of education for working children. This encouraged the growth of factory schools. In 1839 Dundee had five factory schools for children who worked part-time and similar schools were founded in other industrial cities in Scotland.

The **Education Act** became law in Scotland in

1872. The Act specified compulsory primary education - but school hours did not coincide with the hours worked by parents. The new elementary schools found themselves with large numbers of under-fives, a situation actively and successfully discouraged by the authorities who were determined that the schools should be there to provide education - not childcare.

By the end of the nineteenth century working mothers in Scotland were well-used to the now familiar problem of combining childcare and low paid work. With the concept of a woman's 'natural' role as a mother firmly entrenched, most women who could afford not to work didn't. Others were confronted with a familiar dilemma: on the one hand, social and moral pressure to stay at home was reinforced by poor childcare provision; on the other, economic necessity forced them out to work, having to accept the varying quality of childcare provision available. Childcare had acquired the 'make do and mend' quality so familiar to parents today.

The First World War

During the first 14 years of the twentieth century childcare continued to be regarded largely as a family, and therefore a private, matter. A number of nurseries were set up, some connected with teaching colleges such as Moray House in Edinburgh and Aberdeen Training College. Others, like Phoenix Park kindergarten in Glasgow were the result of public fund-raising. There was however little official interest in the provision of childcare. It took a war to change that.

Britain was the main supplier of arms and ammunition to the Allies during the First World War. However it had lost large sections of its workforce to the military. In the desperate need for labour, both to feed the military machine and to take over essential jobs left by men, the government turned to women. Despite existing ideas about a 'woman's place' - and strong opposition from the trade unions - increasing numbers of women were recruited into the labour force.

The government was forced to offer childcare for this expanded workforce of women. Generous grants were given to local education boards. Glasgow Education Authority opened 10 nursery classes for women working in the munitions factories. In 1916 the **Daily Mail** voiced its support for the establishment of day nurseries, noting that "at last the deplorable waste of the services of willing women workers, the mothers of young children, has been recognised."

But at the end of the war things soon changed back to how they had been before. The government introduced the **Pre-War Practices Act** giving men the right to claim back their former jobs. Large numbers of women lost their jobs. Day nurseries were closed as were Glasgow's nursery classes. The press had changed its tune as well - as the **Daily Graphic** put it, "The idea that because the State called for women to help the nation, the State must continue to employ them is too absurd for serious women to entertain. As a matter of grace notice should be at least a fortnight and if possible a month."

*This article is largely based on the book **Working Miracles - Experiences of Jobs and Childcare** by Usha Brown and Louise Tait; the book is available, price £11.50 (plus £1 p&p) from the Scottish Low Pay Unit, 24 Sandyford Place, Glasgow G3 7NG. The photos over the page, by Julia Morris, are from **Muirhouse - Who Cares? A Picture of Women's Lives in Muirhouse** published by the Muirhouse Under 12s Women's Group; for further information contact Lorraine Dick on 031-332 7801.*

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Day Seminar on the theme of - CONTACT BETWEEN CHILDREN IN CARE AND THEIR FAMILIES

21 October 1992, Crieff Hydro Hotel

This topic has troubled social work practitioners, their managers, the courts, children's hearings, and children and families throughout the history of the social work profession. Speakers will be drawn from social work, the law and children's panels.

Social work practice in this area is constantly changing, sometimes in response to new legislation and as a result of empirically-based research or practice in other countries. The 1989 Act in England, the recent report by the Scottish Law Commission on Family Law, the movement towards openness in adoption discussed in the Adoption Law Review and, indeed, the recommendations of the Child Care Law Review have all addressed and dealt with the issue of contact. There can be little doubt about the value of bringing together this spectrum of views and developing some generic strategies for dealing with contact in social work practice.

Programme from Alice Ednie, BAAF Scottish Centre.



'Women had to fight for adequate bomb-shelters and for the right of all workers to go to them when the sirens sounded'

Between the Wars

The period between the two World Wars was scarred by mass unemployment. Between 1920 and 1940 there were never less than a million people out of work in Britain - between 1931 and 1933 over a quarter of the workforce in Scotland was unemployed.

The majority of women who did work were young and single. Their work was often devalued and seen as unskilled. The most common form of work for women at this time was in domestic service, while the textile and retail trades continued to employ large numbers of women. There was a big influx of women into clerical work.

Women's pay remained lower than men's - and, as a 1931 report on the clothing trade noted, this could be very attractive to employers:

"The employers are attempting to get a large supply of cheap labour, women who will be forced into the industry at 12s. per week by the possible threat of losing their labour exchange benefit which will result in throwing many skilled workers now in the factories out of work."

Against a background of mass unemployment, married women who worked were easy scapegoats for male unemployment. 'Pin money' wives who threatened men's jobs became an enduring myth. Married women continued to work, usually in low paid jobs, in order to support their families, but because of the growing resentment against married women many of them hid the fact that they were married and had families.

Provision of nursery places between the wars was patchy and inadequate, covering barely 10% of the under-five population. During the 1920s there were some calls for increased nursery provision and in 1923 the Nursery Schools Association was founded to campaign for universal nursery education. Glasgow Corporation reopened some of its wartime nurseries and set up kindergartens during the 1920s and in 1929 Edinburgh Corporation opened the first Corporation Nursery School, Lochrin Nursery.

But nursery provision overall continued to be extremely low - in 1938 there were only 118 nursery schools in the whole of Britain! Employers in industries with a large female

workforce, such as Dundee's jute mills, needed to set up their own nurseries for their workers' children. The number of public day nurseries in Britain actually decreased in the period between the wars - from 174 in 1919 to only 104! Mothers were forced, as ever, to use childminders and informal networks of family, friends and neighbours to look after their children while they worked.

The Second World War

Just like the First, the Second World War proved to be a catalyst for significant changes in the position of women. The influx of men into military service created a labour shortage and women, once again, were called on to fill the breach.

Government posters exhorted women to come into the factories. The thousands of women who did found that war work was hard, monotonous and sometimes dangerous. The popular myths about wartime Britain do not always reflect what life was actually like. As one writer has noted, "Women had to fight for adequate bomb-



shelters and for the right of all workers to go to them when the sirens sounded. They also demanded at least one meal break should be provided at popular prices, with proper tea breaks on day and night shifts". Working women did win concessions - work canteens were opened, tea breaks were provided and basic safety measures were observed.

The hours of work were long. A woman working at the Hyde Park works in Springburn remembers that three days a week she worked from 8am to 9pm, the other two days she worked from 8am to 5.30pm and she also worked on Sundays. Women juggled family responsibilities and paid work; they frequently

had to take time off, and when the strain became too great they were often forced to give up their jobs. Anxious to cut down on absenteeism and encourage more women to work, the government approved shift work, part-time work and outwork.

Women's wages remained low. As one Glasgow woman remembers, "You worked really hard for your money; and no matter how hard you worked you couldn't get the same rate as a man". Throughout the war there were campaigns for equal pay. Churchill, who praised women's war work, dismissed women teachers' demand for equal pay as "impertinent". Women's average industrial earnings were lit-

tle more than half that of men's during the war.

The government was slow to make any form of childcare provision. Women's groups such as the **Glasgow and West of Scotland Women's Parliament** called for rapid provision of nursery schools, war-time nurseries, full-time education and school meals for children of school age and play centres for children of school age. Its members were scathing about existing provision.

The Post-War Years

As the war ended, public childcare was reduced and the case for women 'staying in the home'

'Women work today - as they always have done - out of economic necessity'



Julia Morris

published in 1946 was, as one commentator has noted, "emphatic that paid employment was an incidental stage in women's lives because of their natural relationship to marriage, family and the home". The Report did recommend equal pay for teachers, civil servants and others - but their recommendation was rejected by the new Labour government as potentially inflationary.

The pressures to force women back into the home were the same after 1945 as they had been in the inter-war years. However in the period after the Second World War these pressures were resisted and the number of working women steadily increased - a pattern that has remained constant to this day.

By 1979, more than half the women in Britain with dependant children were working. The **Equal Pay Act** of 1970 had the effect of narrowing the differential between male and female earnings, but today women in Scotland still earn on average only about two-thirds of what men do. 70% of the estimated 900,000 low-paid workers in Scotland are women.

Women, Work and Childcare Today

It was against this background that the **Scottish Low Pay Unit** decided to conduct its' childcare survey. We wanted to find out how working parents combined paid work and childcare - and what sort of problems they faced. Over 3,000 people took part in the survey, two-thirds of them parents.

Although it is less likely that you will hear reference made to women working for 'pin money' these days, the myth of the woman who works for the fun of it is still with us. Nowadays the myth is of a well paid woman, clamouring for cheap childcare, so that she can 'fulfill herself' at work and have what is currently described as 'quality time' with her children.

In fact, women work today - as they always have done - out of economic necessity; or, as one mother put it to us, "because of need not greed". Our Survey showed that mothers often cope with the pressures of home and work by taking part-time work - the majority of the part-time workers in the survey were mothers. Part-time workers account for around a third of all workers on low pay, and the majority of them are women. They have far less employment protection than full-time workers. Mothers who try to combine work and childcare often find themselves having to take part-time work with little security and low pay.

Our survey also revealed the complexity and the fragility of many women's arrangements for their children. Women still manage as best they can, using a variety of ad hoc and informal arrangements to supplement what little nursery care they can get access to.

Over half the parents in the survey told us that they relied on family and friends to provide childcare - more than four in ten said their children were looked after by grandparents. As one mother told us, "My daughter is looked after by my parents who are both approaching retirement age. They cope *only* because they have to, because being a single parent I cannot afford full-time childcare."

Parents identified lack of after school and holiday provision as a major problem. As one mother put it, "I am constantly harassed trying to be home for my daughter in time for 3.40 pm. I have to give her a key to let herself in after school if I'm not going to be home in time for her. Sometimes she sits up to an hour on her own, if I'm delayed." So commonplace is the problem to parents of children's school holidays that when asked the question 'What are your childcare problems?' many of them simply said 'School holidays'.

Time and again we were told that the one group that provided some flexibility in help with childcare when things went wrong was the family. One typical comment was that "The nursery will only take my child from 9.00 to 11.45 am, which means that I have to make arrangements for my family to watch my child while I return to work."

The survey revealed a frightening picture of employer inflexibility in relation to unexpected illness in the family. Over two-fifths of respondents said they were unable to take time off if their children were ill. Over half of part-time workers, mainly women, had to take unpaid leave to care for a sick child. In other words, that group of women who often choose deliberately to work less than full time to accommodate the needs of their children are most likely to lose money by looking after their sick child.

It is still mothers, rather than fathers, whose work is organised to take account of the care of children. It is still women who tend to get the low paid, part-time, unskilled jobs with little job security and less hope of advancement. It is still women, just as it has been for two centuries, who have to deal with the fact that public childcare provision for working mothers is at best, patchy and at worst, non-existent. Scottish women are still working miracles - their right to public childcare has yet to be established. ■

once again became popular. Between June 1945 and December 1946 day nursery places in Scotland were reduced from 6,400 to 3,600. Working women protested, raising the matter at the 1946 STUC. But by 1947 the TUC General Council were adopting a familiar stance:

"There is no doubt in the minds of the General Council that home is one of the most important spheres for a woman worker and it would be doing a grave injury to the life of the nation if women were persuaded or forced to neglect their domestic duties in order to enter industry, particularly where there are young children to cater for."

A Royal Commission Report on equal pay



Lucy Enfield

KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

There has been a flurry of interest recently in the way that young people in trouble are dealt with in New Zealand.

Rosemary Milne takes a look at what prompted the New Zealanders to set up a system which has been described as a 'more extreme version' of the Children's Hearing System - and asks whether the experiment has any lessons for us in Scotland.

The history of British colonisation of New Zealand begins in the early 1800s. Maoris then greatly outnumbered the colonial invaders. Nowadays Maoris make up only about 10% of the total population of New Zealand. In the intervening two centuries they have had the same treatment as all the other native peoples who experienced the 'civilising influence' of British rule under the Empire: they were driven off their traditional lands, their language and tribal customs were marginalised and outlawed by the imperialist power and many of them were killed.

The Maoris' main role in the British development of the modern New Zealand economy was as a surplus labour force. As the Maoris were evicted from their traditional hunting and farming lands huge numbers of them were forced into the cities, where they had to take the lowest paid jobs and often ended up on the social welfare registers. One effect of these attacks on the Maori people was an escalating crime rate within the Maori population, especially amongst the young.

This high crime rate amongst young Maoris, along with expanding welfare costs involved in caring for the aged population, made great demands on public expenditure. In the 1980s, the newly-elected Thatcherite Labour government in New Zealand started planning radical action to prevent social welfare costs spiralling out of control.

One element of the government's strategy for reducing the social welfare budget was to make radical changes in the system of juvenile justice. At the same time the Department of Social Welfare was coming under increasing criticism for its unsympathetic attitude to Maoris and Maori ways of doing things. The attack came principally from an interesting alliance that had developed between the elders of certain powerful tribes and Maoris who had gained footholds - in law and education especially - within the Pakeha establishment (Pakeha is the Maori name for White or non-Polynesian people). The demand for greater cultural recognition by these influential Maoris dovetailed neatly with the government's anxieties about the problems of urban Maori youth, the cost of welfare and the levels of taxation required to finance it.

Government policy-makers looked, as they did in educational reform (see *New Zealand lessons* **Scottish Child** February/March 1992), for models and guidance from Britain. They came up with the work done by the Social Policy Department at Lancaster University which, with its anti-state welfare message, was having considerable success in Britain at the same time. The so-called 'Lancaster model' was implemented, for instance, by Fife Social Work Department in their childcare work with, to many, alarming consequences. As the Fife Enquiry Report is finally demonstrating, The hard-line 'anti-care' practice adopted by Fife was a highly controversial and problematic one.

Very much in line with the 'Lancaster model', the New Zealand government took the decision to reform the law in a way that would put the responsibility for a young person's bad behaviour firmly back with the child's family. Discontent among the New Zealand public with

'It is the family, and the family alone, who decide what must be done'

the existing system of juvenile justice centred on the length of time it took to bring a young person to court after the commission of an offence and the way in which, so the belief was fostered, families could just walk away from any parental responsibility for their child's behaviour. There was also an increased awareness of how little attention was given to the victim in the process of legal adjudication. Changing the social behaviour of 'delinquent families' was given as a key justification for the reforms and helped to sell the changes to the general public.

It was in the definition of what constitutes 'the family' that the government demonstrated its new-found sympathy for Maori tribal customs. According to the Act that was passed - the **1989 Children, Young Persons and their Families Act** - the family is deemed to be anyone who can claim kinship with the child, no matter how distant the relationship or whether the person has ever met the child or close family before. In addition, *anyone* living in the same household as the child is also defined for the purposes of the Act as a relation.

The 'hand it back to the family' approach of the new Act means that there are now much greater powers of diversion from the formal court system. Where children deny an accusation they no longer appear in court to answer the charges. Instead, the Act requires them to attend a *Family Group Conference*. The Family Group Conference has a different kind of status and power from a court trial. It cannot impose a *compulsory* order on a child. The child has no right of appeal and there is no mechanism for reviewing the decision some time after it has been put into practice. It is can perhaps best be described as a 'quasi-informal' forum within which a family is expected to put forward a plan for dealing with the problems the child is having. It takes as a central assumption that there is a solution to this child's difficulties which the extended family is best qualified to identify and then to enact.

The idea of involving families in decision about their child's future when the child has committed an offence is a familiar one to us in Scotland. The **1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act** has accustomed us to the idea that if a child is getting into trouble the parents should be encouraged to have an active involvement in deciding what can best be done. The Children's Hearing, with its emphasis on open discussion, is based on the idea that a decision about what course of action is going to help a child should, if possible, have the active backing of those who live with the child.

In Scotland there is a hefty gap between the principle of parental involvement and the reality - Children's Hearings regularly take place with the father not present. This may well reflect the real situation of many families in Britain but, however marginal the New Zealand father might also be, his absence would be unthinkable in their new system.

The difference between the New Zealand system and the Scottish system is not, however, simply about the degree of involvement of the family in the decision-making process. Nor is it just one of how widely the family is defined.

The New Zealand Family Group Conference includes *no* outside decision-makers equivalent to Panel Members - it is the family, and the family alone, who decide what must be done.

Another critical difference between the New Zealand system and the Hearing System is that in New Zealand offence referrals are dealt with under a separate set of laws from care and protection referrals. Each branch of child welfare - juvenile justice, and care and protection - has its own group of professional coordinators, generally social-work trained, who are responsible for bringing the Family Group Conference together and providing backup for its deliberations.

The Children's Hearing System is sometimes accused of paying insufficient attention to the offences the child may be accused of at the expense of welfare issues. In New Zealand the balance is tilted in the other direction. The overriding responsibility of the Family Group Conference which meets to consider a child's wrong-doing is to drive home the message that getting into trouble is not going to be tolerated. Other questions affecting the young person - unemployment, poverty, homelessness - are treated as secondary to this main aim of the Conference.

Sometimes a two-part Conference is arranged, the first phase concerning itself only with the child's offences, the second bringing in other issues of child protection because the family recognises these as being of major importance in their own right. Whether this happens or not, it is frequently the case that Conferences last as long as a whole day and occasionally continue over a number of days.

As far as family attendance goes, the New Zealand Act is implemented with a rigour which can cause problems even for Maori children who have a clear sense of belonging to a unit much larger than a western-style nuclear family a lot of people are asked along. For Pakeha families the difficulties are multiplied because they have no sense of tribal identity. Controversy can erupt over who gets informed in the first place and then over who gets invited to the Conference.

It is not the responsibility of the family to convene its own Conference. That responsibility lies with officials of the Department of Social Welfare. In setting up such a Conference, they go to considerable lengths to trace lost family members and bring them in from geographically distant parts when necessary (means-tested financial help is available for travel to the Conference venue, which is usually in one of the Department of Social Welfare offices). In general the response to the invitation to attend a Family Group Conference is high, even among Pakeha families.

One interesting outcome of the Family Group Conferences in New Zealand has been the level to which, as a result of their involvement, many of the relatives say that they feel they have a responsibility for the child's behaviour - and want to help. A clear lesson that could surely be drawn by our own Children's Panel system from this is that much more could be done to get at least immediate families members here to take a closer interest in how their children are doing. Just because Maoris come from a more

tribally-based culture than our own there is no reason to assume that they will be more willing to take on the problems of children they are related to, even if distantly, than people in Scotland.

On the other hand, by removing the decision itself from the family, Scotland scores significantly higher in its attention to the rights of the child. In its efforts to off-load the cost and time burden of processing the juvenile delinquent, the New Zealand government seems to have lost sight of the fact that families are not the answer to many children's difficulties - indeed it can easily and convincingly be argued that the last thing many children in trouble need by way of help is to have their own family playing the role of judge and jury.

That is not to suggest that there is absolutely no external involvement in the New Zealand decision-making process - if the child or one of the key players disagrees with the decision of the Conference, the professionals can step in and send the case to court for determination or for ratification. In practice the plan for the child is often put to the court for ratification. But the court is an instrument of last resort as far as *determining* the plan for a child goes. This is particularly so where offending is the reason for the referral.

It is not just in the area of delinquency that the New Zealand system throws up some intractable ethical problems in its use of the family group. Child protection cases highlight the same problems. Where the Family Group Conference establishes to its collective satisfaction that there is, for example, clear evidence that a child has either been neglected or abused by one of its members, the pressure on the offender, or indeed on the offender's partner, can become enormous. If the father is found to have harmed the child, the mother may be told by the family elders that if she insists on remaining with him she will lose the care of the child.

Technically the professional coordinators can intervene in such situations. They can decide to transfer the case to a court because more formal undertakings are required to ensure the safety of the child. In spite of these safeguards though, there must be some doubt about how well the rights of the alleged abuser are protected in this kind of case and there must equally be a question as to whether the child's real long-term interests will always best be served by the family's decisions.

It is on the whole quite an injustice to the Scottish Hearing System to liken it to the New Zealand system. The Scottish system is far more 'principled' in its use of the family and in its protection of the rights of children. Indeed the New Zealand system seems quite reactionary in that respect.

Perhaps the main lesson that can be learnt by us in Scotland from the New Zealand experience is that Hearings could and should look again at the use they make of the family network. But for New Zealand a clear question remains about the efficacy - and the morality - of a system that puts the family so firmly in the driving seat; a system that offers the privatisation of justice at the expense of the rights of the child. ■

The Paperboy

Andrew Kane is a paperboy. Here he - and his mother, **Anne-Marie** - write about his delivery job.

Andrew's mother writes: As you browse through your newspaper do you ever give a thought to the child who carried it so conveniently to your front door?

Would you know the name of your delivery boy/girl? Or is he/she just an anoraked figure glimpsed now and then on your path or trudging up your stairs with a large orange bag overflowing with newspapers stuck to his shoulder?

Your newspaper may have been popped through your letterbox by a son or daughter of a neighbour, or a friend. It may have been delivered by my son - or by me on the occasions when his bike is off the road or he is running late for catching his school bus at 8.25am.

Whoever has delivered your newspaper will have risen at 6.30am to be at the newsagents for seven o'clock. If the newsagent is late, he will have had to wait outside the locked shop with the other delivery boys and girls to be late for school.

My fourteen year old son delivers newspapers for a local newsagent six days per week. In addition to the normal morning papers he delivers magazines and comics, and at the end of the week the local newspapers.

He has a bike which cuts down the time his run takes, unlike some of his pals who deliver on foot. His run takes on average three quarters of an hour to one hour, depending on how quickly he gets away from the shop - and on the weather.

Rain and snow slows him down. During the run he will have had to endure all the normal hazards of any delivery-person: locked gates, controlled entry flats, letter boxes too small to take a paper, unfriendly dogs and unfriendly customers.

As I've watched him leave the house in the worst of the winter weather I've often wondered if this is all worth it. He is paid £5.00 per week; less than £1.00 per day for a round trip daily of five miles.

Is work character-building for children? Is it a valuable taste of the big bad competitive dog-eat-dog world which they will have to face in a few years time? Does rising at 6.30am to deliver newspapers for less than £1 per day teach children the value of a pound and how hard it is to earn one?

Although I'd like to say it does, when I see that hard-earned fiver being spent on a giant pop poster at the weekend, I have my doubts.

But then, occasional newspaper delivery girl I may be - but fourteen-going-on-fifteen I'm not. And the fact that there is a wide chasm between what parents and teenagers consider a sensible use of money is hardly news. ■

Andrew writes: I don't like getting up at 6.30am to go out in the dark and the pouring rain to deliver newspapers. I only do it for the money. A lot of my pals deliver papers. Everybody says the same, they hate it and only do it for the money.

We've all worked for different newsagents but the pay is roughly the same no matter who you work for. £5 to £6 is normal. A Sunday run pays about £2 to £3 but everybody hates them because the bags are so heavy you sometimes have to go back to the shop a second time.

My bag is really heavy during the week; I deliver the **Daily Record**, the **Daily Express**, the **Herald**, the **Telegraph**, the **Scotsman** and the **International Herald Tribune**. Some days I've got magazines as well as the morning papers. Then at the end of the week there are the local newspapers.

I think £5 is nowhere near enough for the work. From that I have to deduct the price of batteries for bike lights, about £4 every couple of weeks. It's hard on my bike too, I'm always having to spend money and time on it. I travel a round trip of thirty miles a week.

The weather makes a big difference. The rain slows you down. There's not a lot of traffic at seven o'clock in the morning but what there is is fast. They think they have the road to themselves. They don't seem to notice kids delivering papers.

My dad has taken me out some mornings in the car when I've slept in. Yesterday morning I had a puncture while I was out and didn't finish my run. I had to be in school on time as I had a physics exam.

When I got back from school the newsagent phoned me to say that people has been phoning him all day complaining about not getting their papers. My mum stopped making the dinner and took me out on my run and helped me deliver all the papers and magazines I had left.

Sometimes I wonder if people who write the newspapers and magazines ever think of people like me and my pals who are the ones who actually deliver their product to their customers.

A boy I know organised a strike of all the newspaper boys and girls where he worked. They wanted more money because they were being expected to deliver more newspapers for the same money. He was given the sack and the rest all got a rise of 50p. That's not fair.

When I'm older I'll try for a Saturday job in a supermarket. They get paid more for a couple of hours than we do for working all week. And it's indoors so you don't get soaked. ■







ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

children on children

From left to right **Ross Young** is seven and a half, **Ross McKellar** is six, **Elsa Richardson** is seven, **Billy Young** (no relation) is twelve and **Lucy McCormack** is nine.

Rosemary Milne went to a playscheme run by Stirling District Council over the summer holidays to meet them - and to hear them talk about what it's like being a child in the 1990s.

Rosemary: I guess you all know each other quite well because you all come here together. Do you all know which of you have brothers or sisters?

Lucy: Yes, everybody has apart from me.

Ross Y: My wee sister is quite big troublemaker.

Lucy: Your wee sister is a *big* troublemaker!

Ross Y: I know. She gets up to mischief. I go outside and when I come back the room's a mess, so I get the blame and I have to tidy up. And my wee sister has lots of tantrums - millions of them. She keeps saying things that are not true.

'A person should never be picked on for being different' - Lucy



Colin Chalmers

dren

Billy: My little brother gets angry very easily. He hits me so I push him and he jumps away and shouts "mummy!". I suppose he's little so hopefully he'll grow out of it. But maybe if mum toughened up on him a little bit...

Lucy: Do you mean if she treated him a wee bit like she treats you?

Billy: Yes, if she didn't just let him off with things. He moans a lot though and I think she's got tired of telling him.

Lucy: I don't have a brother or sister but I'd like to have one. Lots of my friends have brothers and sisters and they talk as if it's nice having a

wee sister or a wee brother. I've got a wee cousin and she's like a sister. It's like Billy says with his wee sister - my cousin takes tantrums but playing with her still makes me feel I'd really like to have wee sister or a wee brother.

Billy: Take it from me - it's a bad idea!

Ross Y: I'd hate to have a wee brother if he was like some boys I know that swear and hit you. It's sore.

Rosemary: What do think you should do about people who hit and bite and kick and so on?

Elsa: You should try and convince them that it's wrong to hit, and punch and kick. I think you should try and tell them that if they keep kicking and hitting they'll get into a lot of trouble and people won't like them. So they should get that into their heads.

Ross McK: if someone hits me I hit them back. And if they hit me again I just hit them harder.

Lucy: Well, I don't agree with that because if boys keep hitting and swearing they're going to grow up like hooligans.

Elsa: But maybe when they get older they'll realise not to do it. I think it's a problem for the person who hits because most people start not to like you if you hit other people.

Ross Y: Yes that's quite an important thing. Other people get frightened of people who hit and punch.

Lucy: And there's another thing - if someone says they're going to hit you and someone else sticks up for you, the person who says they're going to hit you says "You can't defend yourself. You've got to get someone who'll stick up for you". They don't seem to realise that the person who defends you is concerned about you and doesn't want you to get hurt.

Billy: I think it really depends what the person who picks on you is like. If they're just a bully sometimes you can just ignore them. But if they're doing something you really don't like and you can't get them to stop, you have a choice - you can either hit them back or you can tell someone, like one of the teachers.

Elsa: If you can't defend yourself, you have to tell a grown-up.

Ross Y: Teachers do stop kids picking on each other, the headteacher especially can put a stop to it. I've seen that.

Lucy: Yes, I have too. I remember one time when the headteacher told the school to stop picking on one boy and if any of them did it again they'd find themselves in deepest trouble. I know that boy was getting hit by other kids because of his clothes.

Rosemary: Do you think adults pick on kids too?

Billy: Some adults do. A lot of adults give punishment - that's different because maybe you deserve your punishment. But I don't think that many grown-ups actually pick on you.

Ross McK: Aye, they do.

Lucy: There's two things you've got to have - you've got to be able to defend yourself *and* you've got to have friends.

Ross Y: There's lots of people in my school keep asking to fight and they keep bullying me, so my mum and me are going to judo after the summer because that way I'll be able to defend myself.

Billy: If you don't fight people it's not always that you're scared. It's sometimes because you don't want to. They start teasing you for that and if you tell someone then the people who want to fight you call you a tell-tale. So then your friends begin to leave you.

Rosemary: Do you think it's worse for boys than for girls?

Elsa: I think it's about the same. I knew this little girl and she was new in the class. She was Chinese and she couldn't talk English so everybody kept bullying her.

Ross Y: I had a Chinese girl in my class too and people kept making songs up about her. I hated it because she used to cry.

Ross McK: There's no one in my class who's from another country.

Rosemary: How do you tell whether people come from another country?

Lucy: Sometimes it's because they *look* different, not just speak different.

Billy: Or because they have a different accent.

Ross Y: But people make fun of you for lots of other reasons than because you come from another country. It can be because of your ability. I'm not very good at football and some other boys aren't very good at swimming.

Lucy: But it means that if you look different or sound different you maybe have to be able to stand up for yourself even more or be even better at things like sport and so on. I think that's wrong. I mean a person should never be picked on for being different. It could be that they have something wrong with them - like they can't see or hear properly. I think it's awful if someone who has something wrong with them should have their life made even more difficult by other people.

Elsa: Yes, I think it's wrong. That Chinese girl wore a big floppy bow and everybody thought she wasn't really real, she was just a rag doll. Then one day a friend came to her house and the Chinese girl started to smile and show friendship. Then she began to smile in the class too, and then the teacher said "I think our little rag doll is coming to life." But the teacher didn't mean it badly - she was trying to support her.

Rosemary: How many of you went to nursery before you went to school?

Ross McK: I didn't stay in Stirling. I stayed in Glasgow. But I was just at home.

Scottish Child Autumn Workshops

For Your Own Good? - The Punishment of Children

Thursday 3rd September

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

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

Living and Working with Teenagers

Both these workshops will be based on video and audio source material gathered from young people. They are aimed at youth and community workers, guidance teachers, residential workers, social workers, community health workers, parents and other interested adults.

Tuesday 29th September

Workshop One: "You Just Don't Understand!"

Why does society respond so negatively to young people and their activities? What do teenagers themselves have to say about their needs and problems? This workshop will explore ways of supporting teenagers and giving them the benefit of our experience in a way that doesn't undermine their need for independence and experiment.

Tuesday 3rd November

Workshop Two: From Boys and Girls to Men and Women

What are the different pressures experienced by boys and girls as they grow up? How do young people receive information from society about issues such as gender, sexuality and Aids/HIV? This workshop will look at how adults respond to teenage sexuality and how we can deal with such issues better.

All workshops begin at 10.00am and continue until 3.30pm.

The workshops are held at the Scottish Child offices at 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh.

The workshop fee is £30 per workshop or £50 for both 'Living and Working with Teenagers' workshops when booked at the same time. The fee includes buffet lunch, tea and coffee. A limited number of concession places are available at £6. Enquiries and booking can be made to Scottish Child on 031-220 6502.

Please reserve me _____ place(s) at the 'For Your Own Good?' workshop on 3rd September.

Name _____

Please reserve me _____ place(s) at the 'You Just Don't Understand!' workshop on 29th September.

Address _____

Please reserve me _____ place(s) at the 'From Boys and Girls to Men and Women' workshop on 3rd November.

Phone _____

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ made payable to Scottish Child.

Please return your booking form and cheque to
Scottish Child, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT

'I wish it could just be a perfect world - the bills not so expensive and no smoke in the air and no dirty rivers' - Elsa

Billy: I went to nursery.

Lucy: Yes - we all did.

Billy: I think kids should be able to go to nursery. It gives you a general idea pre-school of you what it'll be like at school. And it gets you away from your mum.

Ross Y: It gives your mum some free time and you get a lot of fun there - really quite a lot of fun. So I think it's not really fair for kids who can't go.

Lucy: Kids should be able to go to nursery to get an idea of what school's really going to be like. It's not like playing all day in school.

Billy: I can remember quite a lot about my nursery - the climbing frames and big tubes and in the afternoon you'd do painting sometimes and numbers and letters. Going to nursery gets you pals too.

Elsa: Yes, I still have two friends from when I went to nursery.

Ross McK: All my pals are from school and round my house. They're all boys and we play at football.

Billy: I've got more pals who are boys than I have girls but I do have friends who are girls. I think it's more mixed now than it used to be.

Ross McK: You mean you've got 'girlfriends'!

Billy: No, if you play with girls it doesn't mean they're your 'girlfriends'!

Ross McK: Aye, it does!

Elsa: No, that's not true.

Lucy: No, Ross. Billy's my friend and he's a boy, so he's a 'boyfriend'. But it's not like we're going out with each other. I play with one boy who comes round to my house. When he plays with my friends and me, all the other boys who aren't friends with him say "Oh, you're a cissy playing with girls. How do you not play with boys for a change?"

Ross Y: I've got two proper girlfriends. The one in Primary 3, I like her but I'm not sure if she likes me.

Lucy: My friend's got a boyfriend and she says to me "How do you not get a boyfriend?" But I just like my life the way it is. I don't really know if I want a husband when I grow up - I'm just waiting to see. I think I might have a husband.

Elsa: I don't really want one.

Lucy: But you might not feel like that later on in your life.

Elsa: It would be quieter without one.

Ross Y: But then if you get babies, they're not quiet. They get up at half past five in the morning and they scream and cry.

Lucy: I'd like to have a baby but I'm not very sure about having a husband.

Ross Y: You have to have a husband if you have a baby.

Billy: No you don't. I've got absolutely no idea if I want a baby or not - or if I want a wife.

Ross Y: I'd like to have babies. My dad gives me pocket money every two Saturdays. So I'd do the same to them - only I'd give them even more than I get!

Rosemary: Do you all get pocket money?

Lucy: No, I don't.

Ross McK: I get £1 a week now.

Lucy: I've got two bank accounts and I've got lots of money in one for my holiday. So if I got pocket money, it would just be for sweets and toys and I've got too much of them.

Elsa: I get money sometimes and I'm allowed to go up to the shops. But I don't get it regularly. When I do weeding or tidying up my room I get about £1 - if I do a lot of weeding or a lot of tidying up. It's not like pocket money that's just given to you but it's money for work that I do.

Lucy: Money's important but I don't want to pick what I do when I grow up just because of the money. I've got four things I'd like to be: a veterinary, a chef, a student or a hairdresser. If I'm a student I'd like to work on being a doctor.

Elsa: I would like to be a hairdresser, a designer for clothes, an artist and a policewoman.

Lucy: My mum says "Pick a good mix of stuff when you think what you want to be".

Billy: I'd like to start up a small business. I'd also like to write. I could do both of those things together. I've already written one poem which is about to be published in a book, so I'd try poetry and I might write stories. I'm not sure what kind of a small business I'd run - maybe in some sort of engineering.

Lucy: My uncle works in a pit but I don't really know if a girl could work in a pit. When he goes down into the pit to dig coal and stuff, he goes down in a big lift like a cage. I like the idea of that. I'd like to go down the actual pit and see what it's like. I'm quite interested in that. But I don't really know if any girls do work in a pit. Maybe it's too hard, the work, with all the digging and carrying the coal. My auntie, she works for **Highland Spring** and I'd like to see what that's like too.

Elsa: You have to work at something anyway because otherwise you can't get money for food and electricity and other things. I wish it could just be a perfect world - the bills not so expensive and no smoke in the air and no dirty rivers. And things used better. Like Coke cans - they could melt them, if they collected them all together, they could just melt them and use the metal again.

Lucy: Yes, that's right but it's people too are the problem. Sometimes you don't think about that sort of thing when you have a drink. You just get on with your life and you put the can in the bin. You know how you get **McDonalds** and **Burger King** and all that - I like those places but they chop the trees down to make the boxes the burgers come in.

Billy: No, it's not to make the boxes for the burgers. They chop down the trees in Brazil to make way for cattle and the cattle are killed and made into beefburgers. And then without the trees the land goes arid again. Eventually the cattle move out and all that's left is a desert.

Ross McK: I like those places like **McDonalds** because of the free toys, not just the burgers. I think they're good places for kids to go and eat.

Elsa: You hear about pollution on the telly but stuff like that seems often like it's done more for adults. They say big words like carbon dioxide and environment and so you think to yourself "It's for adults".

Lucy: Mostly children's programmes are cartoons. But I do like watching programmes about wildlife, especially in other countries.

Billy: I wouldn't like to live in those countries even though they do look beautiful. You could die of malaria or starvation or malnutrition.

Ross Y: I'd much rather live here.

Lucy: I'd rather live in a place that's not like Romania. I'd like somewhere like here but with more sun.

Billy: It's not brilliant here but it's better than places like Africa. But it could be far better here as well. The houses could be better here. They could get rid of all the slums and there's not enough grass for children to play on.

Elsa: I definitely think there should be more spaces for people to walk in. Even wider pavements would be better.

Lucy: And there's problems for some people who don't work. My friend's dad doesn't work - he still gets money but I don't know where he gets it from. He works sometimes in a little club but that's just volunteering. He helps the kids play.

Ross Y: I wouldn't like to live in London either.

Lucy: No I wouldn't either. You hear about the rats and the litter and the people who live on the streets, sleeping on benches.

Billy: But in Menstrie they say the same thing about Stirling! I think they could make things a lot better if they tried to enforce some of the powers they've got already - for litter and dog fouling. Kids notice those sorts of things because we're outside and the places where we play are sometimes disgusting. Some of the places there are, hundreds of dogs go there.

Lucy: The Council puts the notices up, so why do they put them up if they aren't going to do anything about it? And if you say something to your mum she says, "It's no point going on about it. They have to catch you doing something wrong before they can fine you". It's true - they never catch the people whose dogs make the mess.

Billy: I think some kids do bother about what's wrong - like dog fouling or other things - but then they go away and they forget about it again. They're just like adults in that way. ■



The fate of the Earth

The Earth Summit may have highlighted the perilous state our planet is in but it did very little to make things better. **Colin Chalmers** looks at some of the ecological problems we face - and the economic madness that is behind our march to disaster.

Rio de Janeiro, host to the Earth Summit, is a city of slums. Its street children - homeless, starving children who wander the streets of the city trying to survive - are regularly murdered by death squads. More than 40% of Brazilians live in absolute poverty; unemployment in the country is higher than it has been for eight years. The Earth Summit in Rio could have been a meeting place between those who 'lead' the world and those who really know about its problems. But, of course, it was not to be.

The street children were removed into 'preventative detention' for the duration of the summit. The world leaders who went to the Earth Summit didn't have to see the slums either - a \$150m motorway was specially built connecting the airport and the newly-built centre where the summit was being held. This was not to be an occasion marked by openness and understanding, as some had hoped. No demonstrations, however peaceful, were to be allowed at this grand meeting to discuss the fate of the earth. When 150 people tried to link hands and form a 'global heart' outside the centre they were broken up within minutes at gunpoint by the Brazilian army.

Ken Wilson, the Strathclyde East MEP and chairman of the European Parliament's environment committee, boycotted the summit, considering it to be sham and a photo opportunity for politicians wanting to show off their green credentials. "The Earth Summit", he said, "should be about nothing less than a rescue plan

for the planet. Instead all we are getting is a bland and vague statement that things are not right and we could do better. It doesn't amount to an awful lot."

He was not the only one feeling angry and disappointed at the patent inability of the most powerful men on earth to face up to the problems that confront our world. The Earth Summit, or the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as it was officially known, with its 130 heads of state and 15,000 negotiators, lobbyists and activists needed to achieve a lot - and it failed to. Proposals were watered down to suit the short-term interests of powerful countries, particularly the United States, and little concrete action was agreed. President Bush declared in the run-up to the summit that no position on global climate accords would be taken that would in any way threaten the US economy, its competitiveness and its recovery.

Some people have argued that the fact that the Earth Summit took place at all was an achievement and that some agreements were reached. Maybe so; but to see the Earth Summit as any sort of success is to underestimate completely the problems our planet is faced with.

What's Wrong with our Planet?

We face a number of separate, but inter-related, ecological problems. Most of them result from the over-use of unrennewable resources and

emission into the atmosphere of massive amounts of gases that are upsetting the ecological balance of the planet. The ozone layer, for example, which protects us from the harmful rays of the sun is thinning because of excess concentrations of man-made chlorine. Nuclear waste, pesticides, increasing mountains of rubbish, lead pollution - the list goes on. We are living in a way that is unsustainable and that has to change.

Take the Greenhouse Effect. It is responsible for global warming, which since the beginning of the century has seen an increase in the earth's average temperature of 0.5C. Over the same period, sea levels have risen by 10-15cm as the ice caps melt. This accelerating increase in temperature will have catastrophic consequences if it continues - arable land will turn to desert, land will turn to sea and the whole ecology of the planet will be disrupted in quite unpredictable ways. Already, much damage has been done. The eighties were the hottest decade on record - and in 1988 drought led to the failure of the US grain harvest, the 'world's granary'.

The Greenhouse Effect is caused by an increase in the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. This increase in CO₂ traps heat in the atmosphere. Half the increase in CO₂ levels over the last 130 years has been caused by cutting down forests, leaving fewer trees to turn CO₂ back into oxygen and releasing CO₂ as they are burned. The rest of the increase has come from burning coal, gas and oil and from car

Getting Down to Earth

After my first child was born, and the initial euphoria had subsided, I remember thinking to myself 'God, what have I done!'. I am sure that this is not an unusual reaction amongst parents. It is hard to rationalise the terrifyingly strong emotions that surface at such a moment: the scales fall away from your eyes as you stroke the red downy infant and you see atom bombs exploding, seabirds soaked in oil, motorway pile-ups and rats scuttling through heaps of rubbish. After the birth of my first child, I could never again witness the suffering of other children without identifying them with my own.

The birth of our children is a point at which we feel closest to nature, truly 'down to earth' - birth, death and sex rolled into one. So it's probably not surprising that so many parents are sympathetic to the green movement. The concern that we feel for the future of our children is immediate and real - and we become all too aware that we have great cause to be concerned.

It is now widely recognised that if we carry on using up the earth's resources and polluting the planet as we are at present then human life cannot be sustained. We are all part of many systems that describe human activity - political, social, economic... We are constantly reminded of the power that the ecological system has in relation to our activity. And as soon as our children are born they too become part of these interacting systems. Our newborn infants are particularly vulnerable to pollution in the food chain which gets stored in women's fatty tissue and is then released in breast milk.

Of course we want to do something to save the planet - but what can we best do to bring about the changes necessary in time? In our country much emphasis is placed on our power as consumers of goods and services. Our purchasing power, we are led to believe, is ours to wield as we choose; it is in deciding what to buy and what not to buy, we are told, that we are able to influence things.

But is this the whole truth? Unfortunately for parents, the birth of a child marks a point when they have to redefine their participation in the economic world in ways that are not all to do with being more ecologically aware. For most of us mothers that means opting out of the 'real' economy to become part of the 'invisible' economy. We're still encouraged to spend of course, but we are increasingly forced into the role of 'dependants' or 'claimants'. Not earning leaves a feeling of powerlessness that goes along with child-rearing's low status. We may well be aware of

environmental destruction but how can we make a difference?

It is at this stage that we examine the things most immediate to us that we can control - ourselves and our babies. We can see for example that using disposable nappies has undesirable consequences. But with reusable nappies the routine of sluicing, soaking, washing and drying, while bringing us closer to nature in the raw, is also more work - and may make the difference between getting help from a reluctant partner or not.

Washing machines do make reusable nappies easier to cope with than in our granny's day - though your mum may

Aileen Bruce reflects on how becoming a mother changed the way she saw the world - and wonders what we can do to stop it being destroyed.

think you are mad not to use disposables. And provided we avoid soaking solutions and nappy liners that are harmful to the environment we can feel good about doing the 'right thing'. For others a nappy laundering service may be a more acceptable and practical alternative to disposables - where one is available. The cost is about equivalent per nappy to top brand disposables but since reusables won't soak up the incredible amounts of liquid that disposables now do babies may need changed more frequently.

Other 'green' advice on feeding, clothing and playing with young children is pretty well the same commonsense guidance that is normally given to new parents in the context of keeping down costs while raising happy healthy kids. We need not feel that our kids are missing out because we are lacking resources - unless of course you lack even the basic essentials - but rather that we are saving them for their future. At this stage we might also consider how we can make sure that they are held in safe hands.

For some of us, our older children will already be entrenched in a society we may now consider to be at odds with our newly heightened green consciousness. The co-operation of the next generation is pretty crucial when it comes to saving the planet, and it is not likely to inspire support if we cancel Santa, instruct our parents to do the same (they won't anyway) and forbid fast food, TV video games

and all the other pastimes they enjoy with their friends. In our children's eyes we would just be being mean, not 'green'.

We should beware of being forced into feeling the guilt that is often passed on to those who have to cope with the reality of childcare - in 'green' issues as much as with anything else. We can take responsibility for the impact of our consumption on the planet but there is no need to accept the blame for the mess it's in. Children tend to be instinctively concerned about ecological issues and, as parents from all backgrounds will tell you, worries about having the right make of trainers and the like have more to do with belonging to tight-knit groups of friends than conspicuous consumption.

Of course we should encourage careful use of resources - and children can come up with some very imaginative suggestions to do this. They are aware of pollution through their own very direct experience of traffic congestion, sewage on beaches and the lack of wildlife around them. Schools are introducing children to the basics of ecology through the discussion of the importance of trees in the carbon cycle and campaigns in rural primary schools are encouraging children to grow native trees from local seed and plant them in community woodlands.

Children are already discussing the dirty politics that creates imbalances between humans and the environment leading to the destruction of the rain forests. Television is full of programmes on the battle between nature and greedy 'developers' and 'businessmen'. One cartoon character, CAPTAIN PLANET, even declares 'The Power is Yours!' Children do not need much convincing of the value of the natural world and are optimistic about the difference they can make.

We must ensure that our children continue to challenge the one-dimensional view of their place in the world, a view that sees them as basically passive against the great 'out there'. We can invite them to participate with us in events and projects to counteract the powerlessness that we as parents, and they as children, often feel. We can encourage them to realise that they have worth besides their contribution to the GNP. We can all feel a bit more optimistic, knowing that more people are now starting to take action to save our planet than ever before - in their homes, their jobs, through pressure groups, using whatever influence they have.

Changing our lifestyle will make a difference - but without also campaigning to get everyone involved then we're whistling in the wind. We must believe in a future with as much faith as our children. If we don't we've sold the world. ■

exhaust fumes.

Deforestation is taking place at the alarming rate of 40 million acres a year. World-wide, only one hectare of tropical forest is planted for every 10 cut down. Only about 0.1% of the tropics' productive forests are being cut sustainably.

Deforestation is leading to the extinction of many plant and animal species - such extinctions

are currently running at an estimated 30 a day - because the world's forests contain the great majority of its animal and plant species. The tropical rainforests alone have well over half of them.

Apart from anything else, this is a disaster for medicine. Drugs extracted from animal and plant species living in forests, three quarters of

them originally discovered by forest peoples, have been of inestimable value in combatting disease. It is an Amazonian tree, for example, that provides quinine, the drug used to fight malaria. A liana from the same forest produces curare, used to relax muscles for surgery and to treat multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease. The rosy periwinkle from Madagascar's

'We are living in a way that is unsustainable and that has to change'

forests has increased the chances of children surviving leukaemia fourfold - as a result 80% now recover. As species continue to be depleted at an alarming rate, who can tell what vaccines are being lost?

About a third of the world's land surface is covered by forests. If the soil is the flesh of the earth, trees are its protective skin. Their leaves and branches protect precious topsoils from wind and rain, their roots secure it. Rainforests, in particular, usually grow on poor land; their trees live off a layer of debris on the forest floor, not more than a few centimetres thick. Clear the land for crops and this disappears - a single storm can strip 30 tonnes of topsoil from each treeless hectare. In all, forest destruction is contributing to the loss of some 50 billion tonnes of topsoil every year.

So, as the forests disappear, the soil does too. Over the last 45 years an area the size of India and China combined has suffered moderate to extreme soil degradation, caused mainly by deforestation, agricultural activities and overgrazing. The deserts are spreading. According to the United Nations, one third of the world's cropland will turn to dust by the end of the decade.

Rich and Poor - the Great Divide

The average citizen of the world's rich countries does irreparably more damage to ecological systems - in terms of pollution, consumption and waste - than someone living in the south. The United States, for example, has less than 5% of the world's population - but is responsible for a quarter of all CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. The average person in the US uses roughly 180 times as much oil as someone living in Bangladesh.

The eating habits of people in the rich countries are enormously wasteful. The world has to grow about twice as much grain as it needs to feed the protein-rich, meat-based diets of the rich countries. Cattle ranching in central America, which exists to meet this demand, is probably responsible for two-thirds of that area's deforestation. The forest is burned to make way for ranches, which rapidly lose their fertility. They produce beef at a quarter to half the cost as in the US, where 90% of the meat goes. By one calculation, every single hamburger causes the destruction of at least two rainforest trees.

It is not only the rich countries that are living wastefully - rich elites in the poorer countries of the world are eager to ape the 'western way of life'. In Mexico for example, where a quarter of the population suffers from malnutrition, the share of the land growing grains for animal-feed has leapt from 5 to 30 per cent since 1960, to feed urban elites who demand western-style diets.

However it is not simply the case that the rich countries are responsible for waste within their own borders. The rich countries have become rich by plundering the planet's resources - the

relative affluence of the majority of people in a few rich countries is inexorably linked to the poverty of the majority of peoples in the world's poor countries. The mechanism for exercising this control is no longer, by and large, colonialism. It is debt.

The Third World Debt

The popular phrase used to describe the poor countries of the world - 'developing countries' - is a thoroughly misleading one. They are not developing at all - they are getting poorer. The reason for this is not their stupidity or their 'backwardness', as some would have you think. They are poor, and getting poorer, because they transfer vast amounts of wealth to the rich countries every year in debt payments. And the rich countries, like all loan sharks, fix the terms and make sure they have the muscle, if it comes to it, to enforce those terms - not knuckledusters and razors, but 5th fleets and US marines.

The total third world debt is \$1.3 trillion - that is one thousand and three hundred thousand million dollars. Every year the debt requires an enormous transfer of resources from south to north - and a growing one. Even after north-south aid is taken into account, the net transfer from poor south to rich north in 1984 was \$20bn. By 1988 the figure was \$40bn. The poorest countries in the world now have 60% more debt than a decade ago.

Next time you hear someone announce how much we are 'giving' to Africa, it is worth remembering just how much Africa is actually giving to us. During 1985, the year of **Live Aid** and a year of terrible famine in Africa, the hungriest African countries gave twice as much to the rich countries as we gave to them. Last year's **Red Nose Day** raised £12m - one day's interest payments from the 44 poorest countries.

The third world debt is not really a debt at all - it is just a legalised, 'free-market' way of robbing the poor countries blind. Debts can be cancelled - the US cancelled Poland's debt because it was the standard bearer of the new anti-communist states of eastern Europe; similarly Egypt had its debt cancelled after its support for the US in the Gulf War. But the poor, un-'strategic' countries of the world get no such favoured treatment.

Poor countries are told they must sell raw materials to pay their debt - raw material prices fall. Poor countries borrow at one rate of interest - higher interest rates come along and the debt continues to grow. The rules are fixed. They can't win. And the human consequences are quite devastating.

It has been estimated that 1,000 children die every day because of the third world debt. The death rate for children under five in Africa is 163 per thousand, and in Asia 108 per thousand (in Europe the rate is 15 deaths per thousand). The increased poverty caused by debt has meant that while in 1970 there were 460 million chronically hungry people in the world there are now 550 million. Last year 14 million people

died throughout the world from malnutrition.

Ecology and the World Economic Order

Faced with this situation, the poor countries are forced to take drastic measures to survive. They will clear forests to grow fast cash crops to pay the debt. They will mine minerals, to be sold at low cost on the world market. They will do anything that the **IMF**, the **World Bank** and the rich countries want in order to relieve their debt burden. The massive ecological damage that results is directly attributable to the third world debt.

As well as selling raw materials and labour, the poor countries can now import toxic wastes from the rich ones. Argentina imports 200 tons of hazardous waste every week from Europe and the US. Perhaps surprisingly (or perhaps not), the worst dumpers are the nations with the toughest environmental standards such as the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Germany and the US. These countries simply shift their filth elsewhere, improving things locally but making no difference in global terms. In Brazil, for example, huge lead-smelting plants are working flat out recycling the lead from car batteries used by motorists in the north. Workers in and around these smelters now have very high levels of lead in their blood.

The Philippines gives a chilling example of what the 'third world debt' means for those who have to pay it - and the ecological cost of what happens as a result. 70% of Filipinos live in absolute poverty, 10% more than when Marcos was overthrown by Aquino's 'People's Power'. Over half the national budget is given over to paying interest on debts - \$6m a day.

To pay the interest the country has cut down its rainforest, dug up coral reefs, replaced agriculture with industry and squeezed its poor beyond endurance. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from productive lives and driven into the huge squatter settlements that surround every city. These people, like millions of others in South America, Africa and elsewhere, live on rubbish heaps in shacks made of waste pieces of tin, wood or sacking. A Filipino child dies every hour to service debt - through lack of primary health care, lack of clean water, unemployment for parents, lack of shelter and malnutrition.

So how did the Philippines get into debt in the first place? Bataan nuclear power station is one example of the many projects, encouraged by western banks, that litter the third world - and are the excuse for today's 'debt'. Bataan nuclear power station was built in an earthquake zone 60 miles from Manila by an American corporation. It cost \$2.6bn, borrowed from foreign banks. It has been described by the Washington-based **Institute for Policy Studies** as "a \$2.6bn fiasco which will never produce one watt of electricity".

One American environmentalist recently observed that "We can no longer separate the future habitability of the planet from the current

distribution of wealth". Martin Khor Kok Peng, managing editor of **Third World Resurgence** magazine has put it even more starkly: "We now realise that the fight for democracy must also be extended to the international arena, where the lack of democracy is so obvious. International democracy is needed just as much as national democracy. Until there are moves towards a more balanced world economic order there is little hope for any genuine partnership on the environment."

Making a Future for Ourselves

This is the crucial point. The present world economic order, and in particular the exploitation of the poor countries of the world by the rich countries of the world through the mechanism of debt, is threatening *all* of us - rich and poor - with ecological catastrophe. Until we begin to challenge the economic madness that has brought us to this point we will not be able to solve our ecological problems.

The rules of the 'free market' are not capable of dealing with the ecological problems facing the world. As Tomas Borge, Nicaragua's Minister of the Interior under the Sandinistas has put it, "What could converting a forest into a desert matter to a timber company, providing the sale of wood is profitable? What could poisoning a river matter to a producer of chemical products, provided the products sell well on the market? What could poisoning the rivers with cyanide matter to a mining company?"

Companies have to make high profits - if they don't they will go out of business - and we are now living with the ecological results of the market's 'hidden hand'. Big, gas-guzzling cars were introduced in the US after the war because, in Henry Ford II's words "mini cars make mini profits". Throwaway beer bottles spread in the fifties and sixties not because consumers wanted them, but because brewing was being centralised and it was no longer 'cost-effective' to recycle the bottles. The **World Bank's** vice-president Larry Summers has argued that increasing pollution in the third world is 'economically rational'. And so it is, if you put profits before the future of the planet.

Drastic change is coming, whether we like it or not - the choice is whether we change the world into a fairer one or let our present world rulers continue on their present road as our ecological systems decay.

One demonstration did, somehow, manage to take place at the Earth Summit. 150 children arrived at the **World Bank** stall asking for literature. They kept asking and asking until after five minutes the man at the stall had given away as many documents and hand-outs as he usually did in a month. In ten minutes the stall was empty.

Then the children started to dismantle the stall. First they took the poles out. Then the Bank's banner came down. Then the literature was burnt in a barrel. And finally a flag reading 'People's Bank' was raised.

A small gesture perhaps - but we could do a lot worse than learn from it. ■





What's the time? Fuckin' hell!
 What's ma excuse? I wasn't well.
 Where's this? Where's that?
 Who are you? Feed the cat!
 Where's the light? I can't see!
 Who's that? Christ it's me!
 I've lost my money. I need a tap.
 I've got to shave. I need a crap.
 Find ma keys they're on the floor.
 I stubbed ma toe it's bloody sore.
 Where's ma trousers? Ma other shoe?
 One sock's red the other one's blue.
 Move it whoever you are!
 Rob a bank. Steal a car.
 Do somethin'! Get out of bed!
 I stood on the cat I think it's dead.
 Phone me a taxi! I'm in distress!
 Jesus Christ I forget the address.
 Somewhere in Glasgow I think.
 Look at ma hair! Ma oxters stink!
 Find ma clothes! Give me a comb!
 What d'ye mean yer husband's come home??!!
 Jesus Christ this isn't ma flat!!
 That's not ma bed! That's not ma cat!
 Check the trains! Check the flights!
 Fuckin' hell I'm wearin' yer tights!!
 Open a window! Open them all!

He's three feet wide! Eight feet tall!
 Oh God it's the thirty first floor!
 He's got an axe! He's at the door!
 He's rabid! He's manic!
 For Christ's sake don't panic!!
 Keep quiet! Scream and shout!
 Stay still! Run about!
 I'm outside clingin to the drain.
 The pipes are slippery. It's startin' to rain!
 Ma arms are achin'. Tights at ma feet.
 I'm completely naked! I'm gonny greet!
 Blackbirds are peckin' ma chest!
 Pluckin' ma hair to build a nest!
 Got to hold on. Keep ma grip firm.
 They're attackin' ma willie they think it's a worm!!!
 Husband's at the window. He wants me dead.
 He swings the axe tryin' to chop off ma head!
 He screams at her. Calls her a bimbo.
 I hear the crash as she's thrown out the window.
 I look down. See just what I feared.
 The birds and ma willie have disappeared!!
 I'm losin' blood. Startin' to perspire.
 Jesus Christ the buildin's on fire!!
 A massive crowd looks up in terror.
 I'm losin' the place, at the end of ma tether.
 Husband climbs out. It's me he blames.
 He's comin' towards me engulfed in flames!



He's wieldin' the axe he means me harm.
He's chopped off ma foot! He's chopped off ma arm!
He tries to get nearer he clings to the drain.
He weighs a ton it won't take the strain.
His melted hand's gougin' out ma eye!
The drain snaps. I'm gonny die!!!
Ma eye's in his hand. He screams out loud.
Falls to the ground. Lands in the crowd.
All over the city the sirens sound.
I'm clingin' to the drain it's swingin' around.
The buildin's burnin'. The flames get higher.
I'm bleedin fast. Ma hair's on fire!
I can't cope. There's too much smoke.
I can't breathe. I'm startin' to choke!
Fire engines everywhere tackle the blaze.
It's out of control. It could take days.
Look at me I'm in total despair!
One eye! One arm! Nae willie! nae hair!
There's ambulances, police cars all around.
Hundreds of corpses heaped on the ground.
I hear a voice on the public address.
"Give yourself up it's the S.A.S.
We're gonny shoot! I'll count to three!"
I'm shoutin' back "It's ok it's me!!"
But there's too much noise. He can't hear.
Then he exclaims loud and clear -
"He's up there clingin' to the drain!"

He's got a moustache! It's Saddam Hussein!!
Send in the troops! The armed forces!
I know it's him I've got my sources!!
Call the White House! Call Number Ten!
Dirty swine he's doin' it again!!
I try to let go in order to fall.
But ma skin's melted. I'm stuck to the wall!!
I can't move! What the fuck can I do??!
As hundreds of tanks roll into view.
John Major arrives says I've gone too far.
As President Bush steps out of his car
Sayin' "Make him suffer! Use mustard gas!
Fire a scud! Let's kick some ass!!"
Precision bombers fly overhead.
They hit a school the kids are dead.
The buildin's collapsin' it starts to shake.
A long range missile goes off by mistake.
The crowd gasps as it soars through the air.
It's headin' for Moscow. Lands in Red Square.
The Russians fire back. It's world war three!!
Nuclear bombs are launched from the sea.
Continents burn. Oceans expire.
The sun freezes. The moon's on fire.
I'm prayin' to God. He appears in a mist.
He says he can't help he "Doesn't exist".
As through the universe the earth is hurled.
Don't panic. It's just the end of the world.

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Simple Pleasures

VENUS PETER SAVES THE WHALE

Christopher Rush Illustrated by
Mairi Hedderwick
Canongate £6.95

NESTOR THE MONSTER

Nigel Tranter
B&W Publishing £3.99

SO FAR FROM SKYE

Judith O'Neill
Hamish Hamilton £8.99

John Pelan

If you want to escape from the stress and anxieties of daily living, 'losing yourself in a good read' is perhaps one of the most effective and enjoyable ways of doing so. But have you ever tried losing yourself in a good children's book? I can heartily recommend it. Children's books are by and large devoid of pretence, sentiment, forced symbolism, uncalled-for violence, gross self-indulgence and the pseudo-literary claptrap that pervades so much

adult fiction.

So it was with considerable pleasure that I read my way through, with page-turning ease, three new Scottish books and experienced, once again, with something of the open-eyed innocent excitement of an eleven year-old the sheer, unadulterated fun of reading.

The first of these books benefits from two things. A simple story, cleverly and humorously told; and vivid, striking illustrations packed with details sure to hold a child's attention. **Venus Peter Saves the Whale** by Christopher Rush with illustrations by Mairi Hedderwick (perhaps best known for her Katie Morag stories) is about a young boy who lives by the seaside and derives his name from his grandfather's boat, the Venus. Possessing the gift of talking with animals, Peter is called upon by the seagulls to come to the aid of a whale, stranded on the sand.

Undoubtedly, it is the beautiful pictures which make this book really special and I found myself returning to each one, always finding something new. The chamberpot under the grandparent's bed; the barnacles and starfish fixed to the whale's side; and Venus Peter himself, running about with his pyjama bottoms at half-mast - this is a book well worth having a look at.

First published over thirty years ago, **Nestor the Monster** by Nigel Tranter is surprisingly readable, given the heavy handed treatment of

Scottish history in the tedious historical novels for which Tranter is renowned. This book, attractively produced with a bright new cover, is the first in a series of Tranter's children's books to be published by B&W.

The story itself is hardly original: two children, Fiona and Ken, set out to trap the Loch Ness monster in order to photograph it and win the £500 prize being offered by the **News Despatch**. In the course of their adventures they encounter a group of nefarious crooks determined to kill Nessie (or 'Nestor', as Ken has renamed him) and return the body to the Nebraska Museum of Science for a reward of "thirty thousand bucks".

It's an exciting story and, if anything, suffers only from Enid Blyton-esque dialogue. "I say", "The Brutes!" and "By Jove!" style comments feature quite heavily. But if you are willing to take account of when the book was written you can get used to this, and it is refreshing to read such a grammatically correct book that is also filled with lines of lucid prose that would put many a writer of adult novels to shame: "Blinkered and blinded in the blaze of light, the young people faltered in their rowing". And with characters like the inscrutable Jakey who "only has one word of conversation but he can say aye in a lot of different ways" you know you're on to a good thing.

Acclaimed Australian-born and now Edinburgh-based writer Judith O'Neill has written a book which recounts the harrowing journey of just some of the hundreds of Gaelic-speaking crofters who were forced to emigrate from their beloved Skye to the strange and distant land of Australia in the middle of the last century. **So far from Skye** focuses on the journey of one family, that of Donald and Effie MacDonald and their children: Morag, Allan, Flora and Kenny.

The book is based on the true experiences of O'Neill's forefathers and many of the characters in the book bear the names of real people. Viewed mainly through the eyes of young Morag MacDonald, the book charts not only the voyage of the Georgina, the ship on which the family make their hazardous journey, but also an inward journey. The great sense of loss felt at leaving one's homeland is gradually eased by the fascination by and coming to terms with the new and daunting surroundings.

What is particularly impressive about **So far from Skye** is the way in which O'Neill conveys the resilience and adaptability of these simple people. This is particularly evident in the children and especially in Morag herself who survives the ordeal intact through a combination of level-headedness, bravado and unconscious fatalism.

This is a well researched book which derives its great strength from the sympathy which the author clearly has for her characters. **So far from Skye** is one of the few books I have read recently that I was sorry to have finished - and at the same time felt genuinely uplifted by. I hope it gets the readership it deserves. ■

Among the Contributors in this issue...

Usha Brown is a researcher with the **Scottish Low Pay Unit** and co-author with Louise Tait of *Working Miracles - experiences of jobs and childcare*. **Aileen Bruce** brings up two children, runs a business and is a member of **Scottish Child's** editorial group. **Tony Cownie** is an actor. **Carol Graham** is a writer involved in creating waves. **Anne-Marie Kane** lives in Glasgow. **Andrew Kane** lives in Glasgow. **John Pelan** runs the children's section in an Edinburgh branch of Waterstone's Bookshop. **Patricia Robson** is a course leader in Primary Health Care (International) at Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh. **Mairi Telford** is a lecturer in Primary Health Care (International) at Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh.



Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Dear Editor,
I found your article on the abuse of children (*Don't Hit Kids* **Scottish Child** June/July 1992) very informative. Hitting in my opinion is abuse. My own experiences of this kind of 'parental guidance' were quite horrific.

My earliest memory of being beaten (I do not use this term lightly) was when I was about four or five years old. I'd been climbing on the back of an articulated lorry which was parked in the vicinity and I was swearing at another kid.

My mother spotted me and proceeded to verbally humiliate me then dragged me home. When I got back home I was stripped naked and systematically beaten with a leather belt.

This sort of parental behaviour continued until I was about fourteen. By then I was beginning to crack under the strain of the beatings which were getting worse. She really had a foul temper. Finally I broke, I'd become an emotional and neurotic wreck.

Because I was not emotionally developed and had nowhere or no one to turn to, I became the same kind of monster my mother was. I began hitting, punching and kicking back. Although I felt some sort of relief, the attitude behind the violence pervaded until my early twenties.

By then I'd realised that I had become abusive to almost everyone close to me. Through soul searching and self-education I found that the cause of my abusive behaviour was, in no small measure, due to my upbringing. I knew that I had to break the cycle of violence and that it had to start with me.

I began to recognise that the inner hate I had for the way I had been treated had manifested itself

in the way I treated people. So I'd recognised the violence was being perpetuated and was unchecked.

One day an American advert on TV caught my attention - I remember it vividly. It showed adults appearing to castigate the viewers and telling me (the viewer) how 'useless' and 'worthless' I was. I recognised I had gone through this hundreds of times before. I was left feeling like a small, frightened person again, and extremely vulnerable.

Because I am still coming to terms with the violence I find it very hard to break the mould. The first thing I had to accept and change was that my temperament was not dissimilar to my mother's and that I did 'fly off the handle' too easily.

I try to counteract this by keeping fresh in my mind the pain of being on the end of a tirade of verbal and physical abuse. This helps me calm down a little and become more rational. I also try to keep in mind an idea of how I'd like to be treated and then I try to live it.

The buck stops here.

Geoffrey Craig
Edinburgh

Dear Editor,
'Those at the receiving end of things' (**Scottish Child** editorial June/July 1992) should include parents as well as children. Parents who can find no better solution to disciplinary problems than an escalating scale of physical punishments need as much help as their powerless children.

Your much despised 'compromise' means taking more than one point of view into account, to present a balanced, not an extreme, one-sided conclusion. It also means considering the consequences of

the legislation that is being proposed. For example, how would banning 'safe parental smacking' by law help the smacker, or the family unit the smacker was part of? What punishments for the offender are envisaged? How could such a law, in any case, be effectively administered? Perhaps the 'supermarket smack' would disappear, but how could the law prevent 'safe' smacking in the home?

Surely it was questions such as these which caused the **Scottish Law Commission** to draw back from attempting to ban all forms of physical punishment, including 'safe parental smacking'.

Smacking occurs because we live in a child unfriendly and parent unfriendly society - the parent/child carer is considered a 'non-person' just as much as the child is. We do need, as Penelope Leach suggests,

"Educational programmes pointing out that physical violence against children is wrong and doesn't help discipline". But we also need constructive parenting programmes that tell us what does help instead; support groups for all parents, not just the middle class ones who can afford them; and a society which places a real value on parents and their children, the parents of the future.

Susan Sellar
Edinburgh

Dear Editor,
My father was a criminal. He served seven years in Peterhead Prison. He didn't believe in corporal punishment on children and although I witnessed him assault my mother on many occasions I feared his wrath more for his puritanical, Calvinistic streak. He would not

hit his children but he confined them to the house. That slow, agonising torture of confinement would see me - as a child - crying and wishing that I could just be hit instead to get it over with.

But as an adult, I strongly oppose corporal punishment against children. To begin to hit means to go on hitting. Violence is handed down and justified by the hand of authority. And so the child learns to take violence as a measuring rod of 'justice'.

I am a father as well as a prisoner. I understand the rascality of discovery and adventure in the child. When my children were toddling and could not yet quite speak, somehow I had to warn them about danger in hot coffee cups on the table and electric sockets. I remember the warning shouts, the stern frown and the smack on the back of the offending hand - an indication to the child of the offence and the danger. The child has the capacity to understand instantly once communication has been established. There's no need to punctuate the point with pain, nor by the prolonged psychological torture of restraint.

And that's what Joe McGrath is saying too in his article (*Time* **Scottish Child** June/July 1992). If you fit people up, beat them up and shut them up in solitary you can hardly expect goodwill for your endeavours and rejoicing in the singing of your praises.

What's needed is *reciprocation* of communication and information, for children and for adults. That approach will develop the positive attitude of the child and of the prisoner. Get it right!

Tommy Campbell
Barlinnie Special Unit
Glasgow

A Good Read

Dear Editor,

I very much enjoyed John Pelan's excellent article in **Scottish Child** a couple of issues ago on children's books (*So Much to Read!* **Scottish Child** April/May 1992) and was pleased to see that you reviewed more children's books in your last issue. I hope you will continue to give space to reviewing children's books, which are so often, and unjustifiably, ignored.

We all know that the ability to read is crucial to progress at school and beyond - but it is not so widely recognised that books can play a vital role in a child's life *long before* the decoding process of reading begins.

Look around any library or bookshop and see the hundreds of picture-story books available. In the last two decades, starting perhaps with Eric Carle's *Very Hungry Caterpillar* the standard of illustration has risen in response to our recognition of the value of visual literacy. It is no longer enough simply to read the words. The illustrations are of equal importance in the telling of the story. In many cases - such as the ever popular *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins - the story would mean nothing without the pictures.

Book Trust Scotland have recently brought out a leaflet called *Books for Babies* aimed at parents and carers who might not otherwise think of reading a book with a very young child. The leaflet suggests 30 books which are ideal for sharing between an adult and a child - books where illustrations are of at least equal importance to the story as the words.

One of the main advantages of introducing children to books from a very young age is that when they come up against learning to read at school they will see much more point to what they are doing. But above all, there can be few more satisfying and relaxing ways of spending time that taking a child onto your knee and immersing yourselves in a book together.

The leaflet is available through libraries, bookshops, health centres and social work offices - but if you are finding it difficult getting hold of one you can write to **Book Trust Scotland** at The Scottish Book Centre, 137 Dundee Street, Edinburgh EH11 1BG (phone 031 229 3663).

Lindsey Frazer
Book Trust Scotland
Edinburgh



Colin Chalmers



Julia Morris

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE -
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1992**

SCOTTISH CHILD celebrates its **FOURTH BIRTHDAY ISSUE** with a **New Voices/New Writing** special on **SCHOOLS**. Poetry and prose from **Alison Kermack, Marion Arnott** - and other past and present schoolkids!

Plus DRUGS - are young people taking them more than ever? Or is it all getting exaggerated by a sensation-seeking media? We take a look.

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LETTERS

Attacking Men for Voicing Feelings

Dear Editor,

The round-table discussion about men (*men on men*, **Scottish Child** April/May 1992) in which I took part undoubtedly had its limitations. With a small group of men discussing such a broad topic within such a short space of time, this was always going to be the case. But there is equally no doubt that it was a valuable exercise. I hoped it would stimulate discussion, debate and dialogue by airing *some* of the current concerns of *some* men.

I was therefore angry and disgusted to read the letter from the **Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective** which you published in your last issue and which attacks me at length for my contribution to the discussion.

I will answer each of their points in turn.

Firstly, I did not in any way seek to justify or legitimise rape or sexual abuse. Nowhere do I suggest that an abuser is not responsible for his actions.

Neither do I "equate sexual abuse with the expression of love" - that would be grotesque. Within the context of a discussion where we were *all* interested in exploring the causes of sexual abuse, I made a statement which connected sexual abuse with love, or rather the lack of it. Who will deny that there is one?

Of course sexual abuse is a political/cultural issue. But it's a personal one too. The personal has too long been missing from the sterile politics of the 'left' and no fruitful dialogue on gender and sexuality will take place as long as it is denied.

Secondly, I do not dismiss or express contempt for feminists or feminism. Of course I didn't give them credit for their unquestionable achievements - that's not what we were talking about. What I did was address the very real and very common experience, which I shared, of feeling attacked, undermined, of being told I was 'bad', simply by virtue of being a man.

Far from stating that it is 'men's purpose' to please women, I talked about *my* struggle to get away from that, just as through feminism women sought to escape from the trap of feeling that they existed solely to please men.

From here on in, the accusations move from the wild to the downright ludicrous. The letter states that I "admit to getting a sexual buzz from my every encounter with women" - what I did was to assert that there is a sexual difference

between men and women and that this difference will always come into play at some level in interactions between them. Who will deny that this is so?

Finally, I am accused of placating women and expressing my views only "when safely amongst men" - when it is obvious that by participating in the published discussion I have done precisely the opposite. Such an accusation is all the more galling given that the authors of the letter have chosen to hide their identity behind a collective title.

In short, the letter from the **Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective** distorts what I said to conform to their own prejudices. Their attack, together with an attempt to blacklist me for not toeing their 'party-line' surely aims only to intimidate me and other men into silence, to frighten us out of talking about our experiences, our hurt, our anger. They do themselves and their cause no favours, because there will be no change as long as men are attacked simply for giving voice to their feelings.

Thankfully most people that I've talked to, women and men, have welcomed this latest contribution to what could be an extremely valuable dialogue, and I thank them for their support. Well done **Scottish Child** for making it happen - I hope it continues here and elsewhere.

Colin White
Edinburgh

Dear Editor,

I would like to comment on the *men on men* round-table discussion you carried in your April/May issue and on the response it drew from the **Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective** (*A Dubious Attitude to Women*) in the June/July issue.

Men on men was like a breath of fresh air. The men who took part seemed to be talking sincerely about what they felt and thought about being men. I really appreciated that. For years too many men have been afraid to say what they think and feel.

Ever since the 1970s the anti-men versions of feminism have placed men in a no-win, multiple-bind situation, by locating the causes of women's oppression in men as a sex and in what they call the exercise of male power.

It is possible unequivocally to condemn men's violence towards women in general and rape in particular, and wholly to disagree with the view that such violence is an

expression of the essence of male-ness or the exercise of male power.

Whenever men try to explore and understand their feelings and thoughts, or the violent fantasies, wishes and acts of some men, in a way that is other than compliant, they get shouted down.

The response of the **Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective** to Colin White's contributions to your round-table discussion is a good example of this treatment. They imply that Colin's views should be suppressed: "Do these views do justice to an organisation which aims to address issues such as that of sexual abuse?" Then they imply that he ought to be boycotted: "Are the opinions expressed by Mr White suitable in a person responsible for the running of gender workshops?" These questions are not questions at all: they are attacks on Colin White's integrity, and attempts to coerce **Scottish Child**. Finally, they distort and misrepresent what he says, for example accusing him of justifying rape.

I have read the text of the discussion over several times, and at no point does Colin seek to justify rape. What he does do - and what the authors of the Collective's letter apparently cannot hear - is to centre his contributions in his core. He tries to speak truthfully about what he as a man has experienced, what he has felt and thought, and what he imagines emphatically that men who commit rape might be thinking and feeling.

Most male children have to experience a loss, a burial, a denial of feminine identification very early in their lives. This loss has very serious consequences for their emotions and relationships later on.

Colin White has spoken out clearly and bravely and has said nothing that is hostile to women or that condones rape or other forms of violence. I wish that the members of the **Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective** would listen to men like Colin and treat them as allies, not enemies. In these processes we can either be true to ourselves or compliant. The members of the Collective seem to think that securing male compliance, or coercively silencing men, helps their cause. I believe it has the opposite effect.

Yours, in personal solidarity with Colin White,

Colin Kirkwood
Edinburgh

Dear Editor,

We are writing in reply to the letter from the **Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective** published in the last issue of **Scottish Child**.

Certainly it was an articulate response to the article *men on men* and overall a pretty persuasive piece of writing which raised some interesting points. However there were a couple of things that worried us about it. We couldn't help wondering that the letter was not particularly conducive to the whole idea of exchange and debate, which is what we took one of the main purposes of the article to be.

Here were a group of men sitting down for a relatively informal conversation. No one had come along with pre-prepared, definitive statements - it was just a discussion where points would be made and people might not get the chance to say all they wanted and sometimes things might not have even come out the right way! The beauty of it was, of course, that it was published in a national magazine, giving others the opportunity to gain from the exercise. We certainly did not regard Colin White - or any of the others - as speaking in the 'safety' of male company, as the letter suggested.

Whereas we recognise the validity of responding to comments made by the men, whether to disagree or otherwise, we thought that the Collective's attitude that the discussion had not been worthwhile because Colin White had had the audacity to speak his mind was a bit worrying. Okay, so you might disagree with what he said - but would it have been more worthwhile if he had 'toed the line' and basically lied about how he felt in order to be regarded in a more favourable light?

We thought that it was a brave and trusting thing for these men to do, and someone was bound to get shot down in flames for it. We must say that we regarded the condemnation (to the point where his ability to do his job was in question) of Colin White as a very negative response to a really interesting and useful piece.

Strathclyde Rape Crisis Collective acknowledged the value of men discussing such matters; does this only apply when what's said is what they want to hear?

Bridget Grant
Kate George
Edinburgh

Deadly Dogs

Dear Editor,
As a former dog owner I am not 'anti-dog'. But I am concerned that children continue to be attacked by unleashed dogs and continue to be blinded by toxocarasis - a disease which humans, mainly children, catch from dog excrement.

Random sampling has shown that the majority of parks are contaminated with defaecated toxocara eggs which thrive invisibly on grass, soil and sand. They can survive for two years or more and are resistant to disinfectant. Flies spread the risk.

Children play and fall on befouled school grounds, public grassed areas and parks. For many

families, a day in the local park is the only 'day out' they can afford. It is inexcusable that dogs' dirt is being walked into playgroups, schools and homes and has to be scraped off children, their shoes and socks, pram wheels, bikes and wheelchairs.

In the UK about half the most serious cases of toxocarasis occur in families who have never owned a dog or cat. Whether these health and safety risks are caused by the owners of 'latch-key' dogs in large housing schemes or by owners in more affluent areas who take their dogs, often by car, and unleash them in school grounds, parks and every available grassed area,

the effect is the same - injury to children and widespread dog fouling.

Remedies tend to depend on local council budgets and by-laws. Some have designated large dog zones in parks, leaving the rest of the park 'dog free'.

The RSPCA are *again* calling for Parliament to introduce a national dog registration scheme which would protect children, as well as dogs, from certain owners. The **Canine Crisis Council** (PO Box 76, Leicester) are campaigning for government legislation requiring owners to clean up after their dogs in all public places.

The situation will improve only

when we individually and collectively pressure for change.

Mary Montague
Glasgow

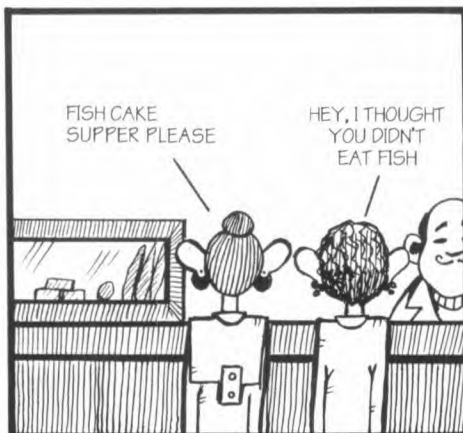
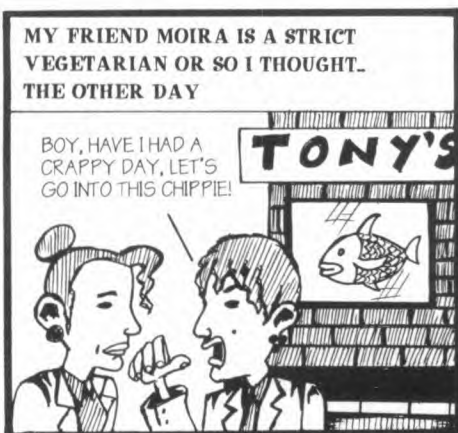
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We sometimes cut letters for reasons of length.



Colin Chalmers

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