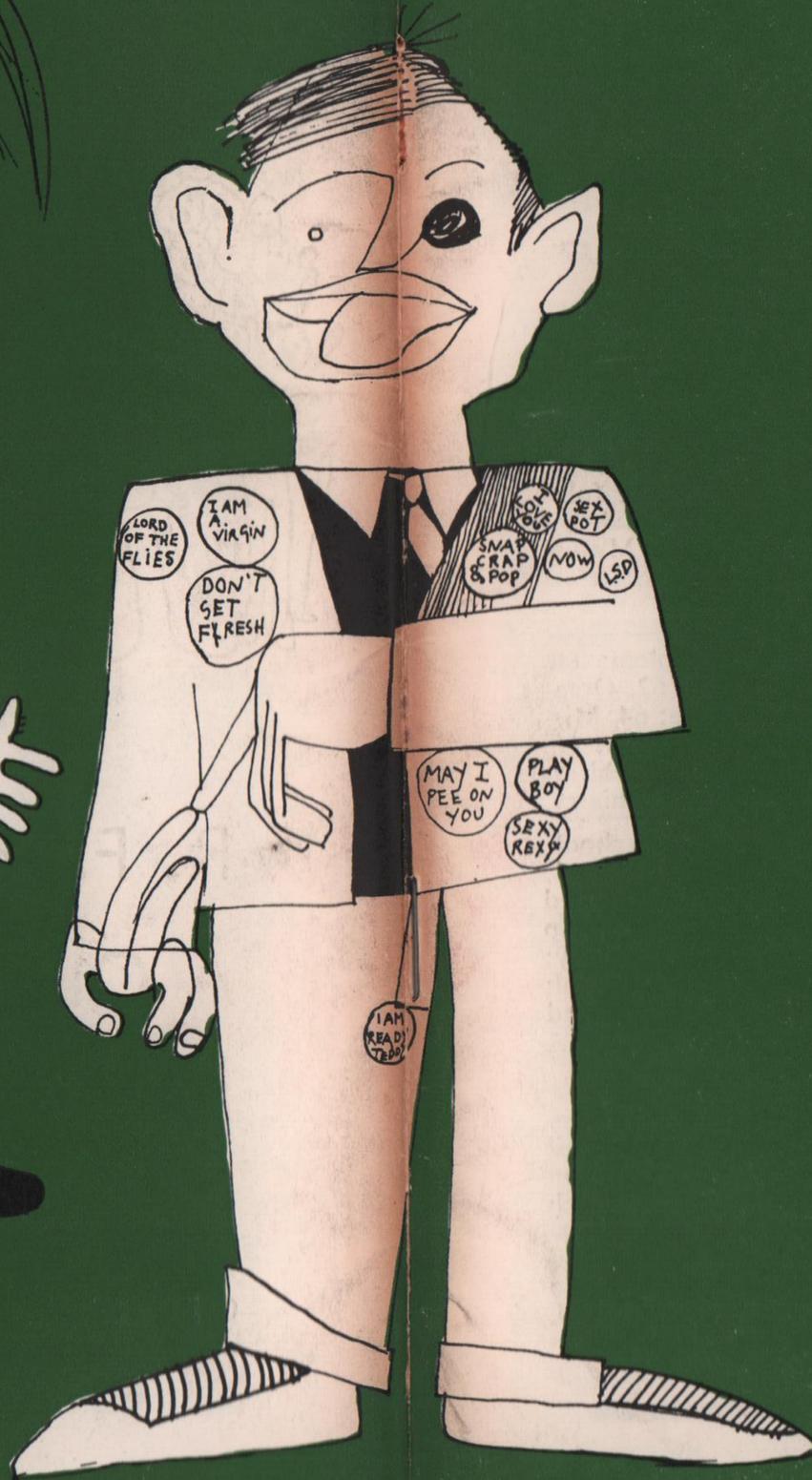
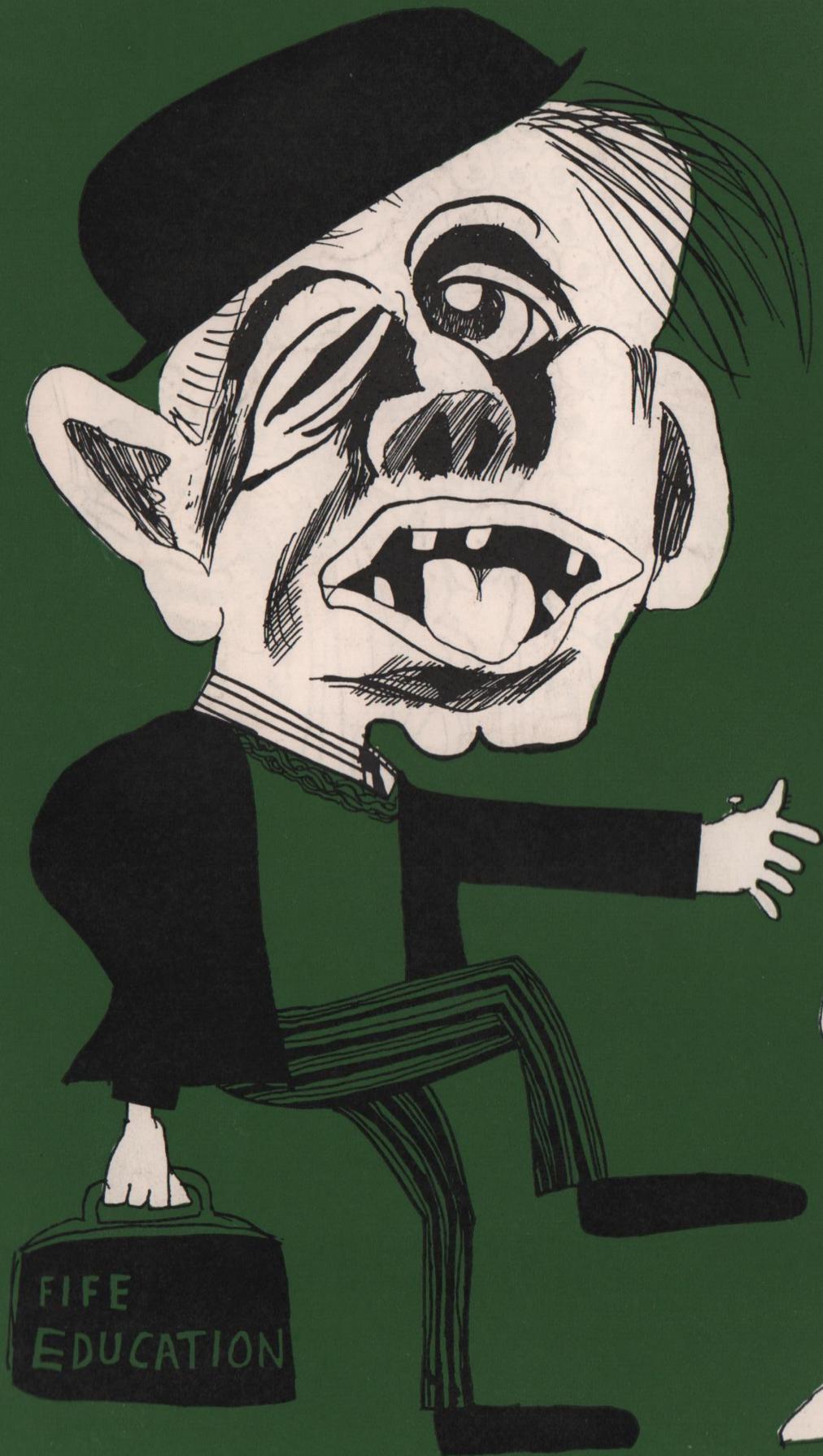


ANARCHY 82

TWO SHILLINGS OR THIRTY CENTS



Drawings by Paul Douglas illustrating "The Master of Braehead" and "The Sins of The Fathers"

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Sins of the fathers : the end of an educational experiment

PAUL FOOT

"SCHOOL, WHAT IS SCHOOL, nobody really knows what it is. School is a place kids go to to be taught subjects such as maths, English and many other subjects. School is not a thing to be laughed at, because it helps many people to get on in the world. Long ago, many people never had schools, and only the very rich people had tutors."

The leader-writer in this term's first issue of the *Braehead News* is Helen Tulley, 13, a pupil starting her final year at Braehead Secondary School, in Buckhaven, Fife. If you ask her for quotes, she will say that she disapproves of Braehead because it does not do enough "teaching of subjects like maths, English and other subjects" and therefore does not "help people to get on in the world". But in private she is delighted that she goes to Braehead and is now on the *Braehead News* editorial board and not sweating it out in classes in the High School up the road.

Her younger school-friends will not have the choice. Fife County Council decided on 12th December last year that Braehead would be closed down and incorporated in the High School as a comprehensive. Protests to the Secretary of State for Scotland have produced no change of mind. The decision is final. Only the closing date is still in doubt.

Unlike the usual groans about comprehensive schemes—that the grammar schools will be "levelled down" by secondary modern incorrigibles—most of the complaints voiced are concerned solely with the closing of Braehead School. For Braehead has become, in the last ten years, one of the most remarkable State schools in Britain.

Scottish reactions to the "Butler" Education Act of 1944 (the Scottish equivalent was passed in 1945) were slower than in England,

PAUL FOOT, whose excellent account of Braehead School is reprinted by kind permission of the author and The Queen (the magazine, not the institution) is the author of the *Penguin Special* Immigration and Race in British Politics and of the recent Anti-Cameron Report, a devastating critique of the official enquiry into the Barbican and Horseferry Road site disputes.

and it was not until 1957 that the "comprehensive" system operating in towns like Buckhaven went over to the recommended structure of senior secondary (grammar) and junior secondary (secondary modern). Braehead was a "comprehensive" until 1957, rigidly streamed but containing under one leaking roof the bright pupils of Scottish Certificate grade as well as the drop-outs. Then the "sheep" were herded into the glittering new High School and the "goats" were left behind at Braehead, to be joined by a small band of politely-termed "modified" children who had stayed over their time at the Denbeath Primary School nearby.

The small mining towns of Buckhaven and Methil are not the perfect background for progressive social experiment. They hover gloomily on the Firth of Forth, their buildings and beaches blackened by the grime from the Wellesley colliery, shortly to close. Most of the men work, or worked, in the coal mines up and down the coastline—notably the large Michael colliery at East Wemyss which, many local people believe, may close after two recent gas explosions. Two of the nine miners killed in the disaster at the Michael pit were fathers of children at Braehead School.

With the increase in long-term unemployment, families fall apart and crime increases. A recent murder at Leven, which involved a brothel not 100 yards from Braehead School, evoked typically lurid language from defence counsel at the trial:

"You have to descend into this twilight world of falsehoods, beatings, drunkenness and murder. . . ."

A. S. Neill, the famous libertarian educationist, was forced to practise his theories with the children of middle-class liberal parents who could afford his fees. Most other reformers of modern times—Currie of Dartington Hall is the most obvious example—have taught children who have been "properly brought up". By contrast, the children of Braehead come from tough, rough backgrounds where every penny must be counted. The Headmaster has no right to pick and choose pupils and parents. He has to take them as they come, unsoftened (or unspoilt) by the veneer of good manners and liberal generosity. Nor is there any of the tolerance of permissive ideas which can be found in the south. Buckhaven lies near the heart of John Knox country—where one of the most puritanical disciplinarian movements took root and prospered.

One of the best-qualified applicants in 1957 for the post of Headmaster of the new school was Robert Mackenzie, son of a radical stationmaster in rural Aberdeenshire and a graduate of Aberdeen University. The Staffing Committee of Fife Education Committee which interviewed the applicants saw a tall, craggy Scot with a gentle voice and a sudden, mischievous smile. It took note of an impeccable teaching record at Galashiels Academy (grammar) and the enlightened Templehall School, Kirkcaldy (secondary modern). Mackenzie must have seemed an intelligent fellow, perhaps with a few ideas about education which he could use to help justify the school to angry parents. It is a fair guess that the committee came nowhere near to understanding what Robert Mackenzie

stood for, because it gave him the job—and few of its members have ceased to regret it.

Robert Mackenzie got many of his ideas about education from a year's teaching soon after leaving university at a tiny school (about forty pupils) called the Order Of Woodcraft Chivalry. The Order was set up on the banks of the Hampshire Avon with some money left for the purpose by a Quaker eccentric named Ernest Westlake.

Work was entirely voluntary at the Order Of Woodcraft Chivalry. The accent was on outdoor activities. Mackenzie recalls:

"It was an exhilarating mixture of Freud and the Red Indians. A lot of it was quite mad, of course, and the children were entirely unrepresentative, since their parents had to pay fees. We were all reading and discussing A. S. Neill at the time, and the place proved to me the accuracy of his basic theme—that people who are free grow up happy, that if children are not happy, it is because they are not free.

"There was also this terribly important thing—the absence of fear. If children stop being frightened of all the hoodoos and the feelings of guilt imposed on them by their parents and conventional schooling, they start to live entirely different, more invigorating existences."

Such ideas were quickly submerged by the Second World War, when Mackenzie became a navigator for the RAF. He went back to teaching after the war, but resolved no longer to experiment in the sociological no-man's-land of the middle-class liberal intellectual. He has always maintained that educational experiment and reform is really valuable only when applied in the State system—which caters for more than ninety-five per cent of British children.

At Galashiels in the Borders, he set himself bravely to "re-learning all the stuff about the Napoleonic wars, and forgetting it again—just like the children". He struck a deal with his principal teacher, who allowed him to speed through the history syllabus in two terms so he could teach H. G. Wells' *Outline Of History* in the third. In his recent book, *The Sins Of The Children*, Mackenzie writes about Wells:

"Back over the centuries (and particularly in Scotland) education had been a heavy oppressive thing, impressing the student with the weight and majesty and authority of the figures of the past and as a result giving him a feeling of his own insignificance in the company of these hoary characters. Along came Wells and challenged them all—particularly Caesar and Napoleon."

Where possible, at Galashiels and at Kirkcaldy, Mackenzie tried to get his children out of the classroom and into the countryside. He has no time for the cold-bath-before-breakfast philosophy of Gordonstoun and Outward Bound, with its accent on competition, discipline and achievement.

On the contrary, the countryside for Mackenzie provides a haven where education in geography, history, botany, biology and art can take place in an atmosphere of freedom not available in the classrooms or the streets and playgrounds of a mining town.

When Robert Mackenzie was installed as Headmaster, the Con-venor of the Staffing Committee of Fife Education Committee made the

standard speech of welcome. The words of the speech, according to Mackenzie, encouraged experiment and reform. But experiment and reform, it was clear, were only to be encouraged as long as they made no real impact on the school or on the community.

There was no immediate revolution when Mackenzie took over Braehead. He is the last man to bulldoze his colleagues with his terms and views. An older member of the staff admitted his astonishment at discovering in one of Mackenzie's books that "the Headmaster really thought all that". Normal curricula, normal routines, normal techniques dominated the early years at Braehead. Mackenzie's ideas were effected more by omission than by intervention. When asked whether the school should have a uniform, Mackenzie, who hates uniforms, shrugged his shoulders and said that the children could decide. There were no uniforms. He managed to persuade the staff to abandon "the belt" (a Scottish euphemism for corporal punishment) for girls. But when he suggested that, for a trial period, the teachers should stop belting boys, the entire staff signed a protest petition and sent it to the Director of Education. The proposal was dropped.

The two main departures from ordinary junior secondary routine were in the teaching of art and the extra-curricular activities. The deputy headmaster at Braehead is Hamish Rodger, a wiry Highlander, who saw the founding of the school as a perfect opportunity to teach art in the liveliest and most unconventional way. Thus art lessons at Braehead are apparently chaotic affairs, with pupils ranged across the barren art-room, drawing and painting as they choose with the maximum of individual instruction.

The results have been staggering. The corridors and classrooms at the school are hung with paintings which would compliment a good provincial art gallery. The Braehead paintings have been shown at exhibitions at Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow colleges of education, and a selection was shown at the start of an art conference at the Glasgow College of Art. The exhibition in November 1965 had unpatronising, if surprised, rave notices from every major critic in Scotland.

Rodger's aim is to widen his pupils' knowledge through the art medium. Two months before each Christmas, he concentrates his art classes on a massive programme of Christmas decorations for the school. He chooses different themes each year to broaden the children's knowledge and interest. One year, he concentrated on the Commonwealth Arts Festival; another, on the architectural development of Buckhaven; another, on the old eighteenth-century fishing communities of Buckhaven and Leven. A forty-foot high Neptune was built from driftwood and wire, and magnificent marine murals, painted for the most part on old newspaper, turned the school hall into a weird but glorious aquarium.

As I talked with (or rather listened to) Hamish Rodger in the old art-room, his enthusiasm for his pupils' work began to take hold of him, until he was ripping old canvases off the cupboards and spreading them out on the floor. Here was a group of oriental paintings, the figures standing out clearly from their abstract backgrounds; here was an African group, the dancers merging musically into the pattern ("We

connected it with pop; showed how beat music originated in the Negro culture"); here was a vast canvas, half of it superbly painted and devised, half of it crude and incompetent scrawl: "There were two boys on this. One was no good, one very good. The good one knew the other was bad, but was quite happy to work on the project together with him, happily, for many days. That's what the whole thing's about. Not the results. Not art for art's sake or any of that bloody humbug. But art for the children's sake."

Hamish Rodger was standing now in the middle of his art-room, the entire floor and most of the walls covered with painted canvases and photographs of murals. "And now," he said grimly, "this has all gone for six, because in the new school we won't get the facilities for this kind of thing. They will spend the money on digests of Plato."

In late 1960, a young mountaineer called Hamish Brown called in at the school and asked if he could fill in three spare months teaching English. Before long, he organised expeditions into the Highland mountains and moors of Inverness-shire and Argyllshire. Representations to the Forestry Commission produced a small hut near Loch Rannoch, where the pupils travel in groups of ten between March and October every year to spend a few days in wild freedom.

"Every time you take a new bunch to Rannoch," says Hamish Brown, "you get the same thrill. As they get out of the bus [a minibus bought after money had been begged and borrowed and with the help of a local authority grant], they explode. It's like a cork coming out of a bottle. They just run and run for miles."

Demand for these trips is high, and Hamish Brown reckons nearly half the school's 460 boys and girls go out on some form of expedition each year. He has also worked out that the examination results of those who go on expeditions is higher than for those who do not, higher even than the average junior secondary results in all Scotland.

Outdoor activities do not stop there. Canoes have been built by the boys, and these are paddled out to sea on calm days. And Mackenzie found to his astonishment that two members of his staff were qualified gliding instructors. Squads of boys are taken out to the gliding aerodrome near Loch Leven and flown around at 2,000 feet, from which vantage they can gain a better knowledge of Fife than from any map.

Most of this was greeted in Buckhaven, and by Fife Education Committee, with extreme suspicion. The parents of Braehead were understandably upset that their children had been left behind by the High School pupils; that the difference in schools was a crucial, merit difference, a ruthless division of the able from the drop-outs. Braehead was a symbol of this division, and it was therefore distrusted. The grumbling grew when the parents saw the canoes on the sea and the uniforms discarded and heard from their children that at some lessons they were very much left to themselves. Many parents saw the experiment and the comparative lack of discipline as an added insult; further evidence that their children were not up to it. These parents would have been happier if their children had trod the weary treadmill of

examination-ridden, grammarian discipline followed in most junior secondary schools. Had their children been taught traditional subjects in traditional ways, they might still have been failures, but at least they would, in the parents' view, have gone through the proper motions.

Such grumblings reached the Press on numerous occasions, and Fife Education Committee immediately took a dislike to Mackenzie and his work. Mackenzie deliberately allowed the Press to look at his school's dilapidated lavatories and comment upon them. A deputation from the Education Committee visited his school and argued angrily that this behaviour was improper. An industrialist member of the committee visited the lavatories and commented coolly: "They are no worse than other school lavatories in Fife." At which Mackenzie exploded: "If they don't shock you, they ought to." The deputation stormed from the premises, but the lavatories were fixed earlier than they would have been.

In 1963, Mackenzie published his first book since going to Braehead, *A Question Of Living*. Like his two later books, it is written in clear, unsentimental prose and is a devastating attack on traditional notions of education. Drawing on the Braehead experience, Mackenzie exposes the total inadequacy of teaching and learning as laid down and accepted by examination-setters and the educational administration by local and central government:

"And so it goes on, breaking your heart if you take it seriously. Because you know that when the formal educationists come in at the door, education escapes through the window. On the one hand there is Maureen Smith of the Coal Town who can make you split your sides with laughter as she plays the part of her aunt at Sunday afternoon tea; on the other hand there are the educationists who want to examine Maureen's ability to write the correct things about Shylock as a tragic character in a comedy, in order that Maureen's prospective employers can know how many marks Maureen made in 'English' . . .

"Our national education is based upon the uncritical belief that the existing curriculum is good and the pupils must adapt themselves to it. In order that this end might be achieved the pupils are lectured, provided with incentives and pep talks, warned, promoted or demoted, punished; they write notes, then revise their notes and sit tests and then preliminary examinations. It is based on what is called 'discipline', one of the most frequently ill-used words in the English language."

The book was widely reviewed in the Press, and Robert Mackenzie was invited to lecture at the main Scottish colleges of education. It provoked a violent debate in staff-rooms throughout the country, particularly in teachers' training colleges.

Joan Davies, who had been teaching at teachers' training colleges for twelve years, went to Braehead after reading Mackenzie's book. Most of Joan Davies' evenings are spent visiting the homes of Braehead pupils. In a town where work for men is becoming scarcer, while women's work is still available, the breakdown of the traditional family is more frequent than elsewhere.

"Things are changing at terrifying speed," says Joan Davies. "When

I was teaching before, the teachers could rely to some extent upon stability in the home, some sort of affection outside the school. They could get away with just teaching facts without worrying too much about the emotional consequences. Today, it's not so easy. And the schools will have to provide a lot of the security and affection which previously came from home—or the society will disintegrate."

Colin Cushley, a 31-year-old graduate from Edinburgh University, was teaching French at Oban High School (Grammar), Argyllshire, when he read Mackenzie's book.

"I was fed up," Cushley says. "The teaching was monastic—a silent ritual. Grammar was more important than language."

Cushley threw in the towel after he had taken a group of High School children to France in the summer holidays. "The elder ones," he says, "many of whom had passed their 'O' examinations, couldn't and wouldn't speak French or communicate at all. It was the younger ones, who hadn't passed the exam, who started to pick up the language.

"At Braehead, children come to me classified as linguistic failures by the eleven-plus. In a matter of months, some of them have even started to *think* in French. You can tell by the speed of their responses. With the older children now, I talk French almost as fluently as I would in France. This year, I'm taking my first Braehead party over, and I'm prepared to guarantee it will be at least twice as successful as the Oban lot."

Robin Harper's tutor at Aberdeen University advised him to try Braehead, "probably because of my scatty inefficiency". Harper, 27, teaches English and history. He showed me thirty note-books crammed with pupils' poetry, all written in a few periods each week in one year. In terms of output, I doubt whether there's a poetry class in Scotland that produces more.

Harper teaches his subjects in an entirely original way, seldom relying on text-books or conventional aids, but concentrating almost exclusively on "do-it-yourself" methods.

"They come from primary school," he says, "utterly convinced they are incapable of anything in class. We have to try to persuade them that they *can* do things, and in most cases it works."

Harper teaches the guitar to groups of boys and girls after school hours, four nights a week. About 100 children in the school have been to his classes.

Malcolm Kirke, 37, started teaching later than most and worked for a year in primary schools in his home town of Nottingham. He, too, read Mackenzie's book and, soon afterwards, was teaching maths at Braehead.

Kirke fingered testily through the Scottish Education Department's *Modern Mathematics For Schools*, the standard primer, which his pupils are expected to absorb in the first six months.

"The difficulty is," he says, "that the children don't understand the language. 'The universal set'," he read from one of the introductions, "'contains all the elements discussed in any particular context. Thus, the set of even numbers is a subset of the universal set of whole numbers.

Again, in a certain florist's shop, the set of daffodils is a subset of the universal set of flowers in a shop.'

"I very much doubt," says Kirke, smiling sadly, "however much I read that out, if the children will begin to understand it. Yet that is the language in which we are recommended to teach."

Kirsten Adam, 30, principal of the music department, went to Braehead after teaching at a secondary modern school in Buckinghamshire and a high school in Aberdeenshire. Ann Winning, 26, who runs the drama group as well as teaching English, went after hearing a Mackenzie lecture at Moray House College of Education in Edinburgh. And Dorothy Main, 21, arrived only this term after reading Mackenzie's books. These girls agree with the other teachers that their primary incentive in going to Braehead was to be allowed to teach and experiment as they wished.

Bill Rintoul, 54, one of the five teachers who have stayed the school's full course of ten years, came out top of a quick popularity poll I conducted among a group of senior pupils. Rintoul, quiet, methodical, solidly Scottish, reckons he maintains a discipline in his class as good as any, but without thug methods.

"It's not that we get our ideas from the Headmaster," he says. "It's just that new ideas and methods are encouraged."

In the old days, teachers like Rintoul suffered much in the Buckhaven area from the bad reputation of the school. At his golf club, friends would rib him constantly: "How's the circus going?" If Rintoul laughed, he was admitting the "circus" existed. If he argued, they would laugh. So he shrugged his shoulders and got on with the game.

"It's funny," he says, "I don't get any more of that any more. No one's joked about the school outside for some time. Perhaps they realise at last that the truth is that we don't have discipline problems here on the scale most schools have."

Later in the day, Mackenzie told me: "Well, you know, Bill may be right. They were telling me this morning that we have nobody, nobody on probation. And that hasn't been the case for a long time."

Everyone agrees on one point: teaching experimentally in an atmosphere of greater freedom, where traditional forms of discipline are regarded as a sign of failure, is no sinecure. It is harder than repeating pap from text-books and keeping order with threats and belts. All the teachers named here, and many others, spend a great deal of extra-curricular time sailing, mountaineering, and teaching guitar, accordion, piano, painting, pottery and French in hours for which trade unionists would demand overtime but for which these teachers are unpaid. The idea—prominent in the minds of some Fife County Councillors and Buckhaven parents—that more freedom for pupils means an easier life for teachers is quite false.

"The fallacy is," says Malcolm Kirke, "that you can give children all the freedom they want and then leave it at that. On the contrary, you can give children far more freedom than they can cope with. Without some kind of guidance, they go down the drain as quickly as they do under heavy disciplinary pressure." Braehead's mixture of

guidance and freedom means very hard work.

Much of the responsibility for the parents' unease about the school must attach to the Braehead staff and to Mackenzie himself for failing to understand that their methods and approach could succeed finally only if they involved the entire community. The Braehead Parent-Teacher Association is energetic but not representative. And far too little is done to spread the importance of the Braehead experiment into the homes of Buckhaven.

There is no such excuse for the attitude of the authorities. The justification for the 1944 "Butler" Education Act—the division of schools by selection at eleven or twelve—was that the junior secondaries would be allowed to experiment. Yet the authorities, local and national, grow suspicious and obstructive when experiments are genuinely attempted in the most difficult circumstances.

The Scottish Education Department Press officers were all too keen to refer enquiring journalists, particularly English journalists, to the "great work" being done at Braehead. But official enthusiasm vanished when it came to practical support.

Thus Fife Education Committee went on record against Mackenzie's idea for a hunting lodge at Inverlair in Argyllshire—generously offered by British Aluminium—where forty boys could be housed for a month at a time and enjoy the freedom of the countryside. The council and the Government deliberately refused to contemplate Mackenzie's carefully worked out estimates for the Inverlair Lodge and refused their own £15,000 estimate because the lodge was too "remote"! Again and again in the past few years, they have promised a new school for Braehead. Then, suddenly, they announced that "O" grade secondary modern pupils (those who are thought "inadequate" for the High School but possibly capable of passing exams) could choose between Braehead and the other Buckhaven junior secondary, Kirkland, which is housed in glittering new buildings and has new equipment. Thus Braehead has had an even lower intelligence entry than it would normally have had. Finally, they decided that the school should be absorbed into the High School.

Needless to say, Mackenzie, Rodger and the other teachers at Braehead have not yet been given an indication of jobs for them when the merger takes place.

In these activities, Fife County Council has had the total support of the Scottish Education Department and the Government. Scottish Labour MPs have joined to a man in the general campaign of calumny against Mackenzie. Mrs. Judith Hart, formerly in charge of education at the Scottish Office, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Old Etonian MP for West Lothian, and Mr. Harry Gourlay, formerly deputy Convenor of Fife Education Committee, now MP for Kirkcaldy Burghs, have been particularly hysterical in their support for "traditional education".

Until recently, the method of attack was simply to dismiss Mackenzie as a crank and to characterise him as a dictator with nothing but contempt for the teaching profession. But now a new argument has arisen. Mackenzie's defence of his school and the campaign among

many educationists in the south are seen as an attack on the comprehensive system and as a deliberate, Enfield-style attempt to sabotage progressive comprehensive proposals. The wife of a Scottish left wing Labour MP put it this way:

"That man Mackenzie, he patronises his kids. He sees them as not good enough to learn, and all he can do is just keep them happy. He's against the comprehensives."

That is a grotesque caricature. Mackenzie's views on education are stated quite clearly in his book *A Question Of Living*:

"There is something seriously wrong with an educational system that ruthlessly destroys parents' hopes for a child when he is eleven or twelve and as a consequence decreases the child's confidence in himself. Parents who have watched the miracle of birth and growth are briefly informed that the miracle is over. . . . At the age of twelve, hope is given up for three-quarters of the children in the country. They are regarded by their parents and themselves as just ordinary, as have-beens."

His argument so far could have come straight from a Labour Party policy statement—but for the lucidity of the prose and its obvious sincerity. But Mackenzie goes on:

"The comprehensive school in its present form is assuredly not the answer. The comprehensive school is an administrative, not an educational change. The same treadmill is in operation in comprehensive as in junior secondary [or secondary modern] schools. The trouble goes much deeper than administrative change can effect. It needs re-assessment of the whole content and method of school work. It needs a new kind of education. . . ."

The attack is on two fronts; against the snob-ridden elitists who work to divide into "sheep" and "goats" at an early age; and against the Labour bureaucrats who think the problem is solved if the divisions are created *inside* one school building, instead of *between* school buildings. Mackenzie's is no sectarian whine against the comprehensive system because it is depriving him of ten years of reform and experiment. It is a shout of faith in a genuinely comprehensive system, in which all education for all pupils is geared not to the rat-race of examinations but to the creation of a fuller life for all the pupils.

And that is why, if there is a spark of humanity or libertarianism left in the Labour movement which still controls Fife and the country, Mackenzie would get a brand new school and the Braehead teachers around him would move with him. Examinations would still be passed. Braehead pupils pass their exams at about the average Scottish junior secondary rate, in spite (or because) of all the experiments. And Mackenzie has always been prepared to make generous compromises with the examination system he so detests.

But, far more important, such an appointment would give confidence and hope to the thousands of teachers everywhere who know that what Robert Mackenzie is saying is right: that the existing exami-

nation system encourages sameness, subservience and sterility; and that the "comprehensive ideal" is merely a cover for maintaining class inequalities in the education system.

If Robert Mackenzie is sacked, demoted and humiliated, as seems likely, the lesson for all teachers in State education is plain: stick to the rule book if you want to survive.

And the sins of the fathers will indeed be visited on the children, even unto the third generation.

Mackenzie hasn't been offered another headship when Braehead closes—not even a post at the comprehensive. "I don't know what I'll do. Maybe go back to class teaching at some little school in the Highlands if they'll have me." The fruit of a decade of experiment, for him, is simple rejection at 57, a blank wall. What huge comprehensive, with a thousand or more children under its roof and no alternative choice for a parent, can afford a headmaster who has novel ideas, who blazes his own trails?

Duane at Rishingill showed it starkly; Mackenzie underlines the lesson. Big comprehensives can experiment in technical sense, with language laboratories, closed circuit television, all the paraphernalia. But can they afford to cut across established notions of academic excellence or discipline, can they experiment with the children themselves? The answer, as Braehead demonstrates, is drearily predictable. The new system we're building, because it insists on size, complete entry from set catchment areas, inevitably involves consensus education. There is no chance to go out on a limb, to change directions. Comprehensive education means the disintegration of Bob Mackenzie's individual work; well, that's perhaps inescapable and open to debate. But comprehensive education, too, seems to leave him without a school to toil for, without horizons to explore. And that is a damning indictment which must give every educationist pause.

—PETER RESTON in *The Guardian*

The Master of Braehead and his school

PETER MILLER

BRAEHEAD SCHOOL IS A MIXED SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOL in Buckhaven, on the Northern shores of the Firth of Forth. It takes its pupils from a community whose occupations have traditionally been fishing and mining. People still display attitudes reminiscent of the 1926 depression days, and recent pit closures have stirred old memories. Housing is poor, unemployment high.

The town is drab, and the school, an old two-storey building, with frosted glass in the windows (was the purpose to prevent pupils from looking out, or the people in the street from looking in?) might easily escape the notice of a visitor. It is said that it was first declared a slum in the 1920s, and even if one suspects that the story is apocryphal, the present condition of the building, both inside and out, does little to belie it. Inside, one's first impression is of cold stone and brown wooden panelling, with only an occasional poster or scrawled chalk message—"Miss X. is fab", "We love Bill"—to relieve the monotony. Yet it is within this dismal building that there survives what is probably the only really progressive school in Scotland.

The school is at nearly all times a very noisy one, yet the sort of silence which, in the "normal" school, is taken for granted, spontaneously falls as the Headmaster appears on the stage to take morning assembly. R. F. Mackenzie is a slim balding man with a kind, crinkled face full of character. He talks to the children about manners—"Manners are quite simply thinking about other people"—for some players have failed to turn up for a rugby match. Then he launches into an attack on the *Daily Express's* attitude to the UN. The audience chew gum and suck lollipops, a low hubbub of voices is heard as they begin to lose interest. "R.F." tells them about the work of the UN, the supply of medicines to cure disease, the problems of trying to fulfil the mandate to "stop war". He then announces the music for that morning—an excerpt from the ballet *Swan Lake*. On Wednesday the

PETER MILLER's description of Braehead School is reprinted from the current, third, issue of the Libertarian Teachers' Association Bulletin (1s. 6d. from Peter Ford, 82 North Road, Highgate, London, N.6). This bulletin started as two sides of a single sheet and has grown to 26 pages. Demand for it has so far outrun the supply.

pupils make their own choice—something from the Top Ten, of course. But there are classrooms, a timetable, a hymn and a prayer once a week at assembly, the children must go to classes. What is being done that is different or progressive?

There is a variety of activity of the "Outward Bound" type. With the help of the school bus—a converted van—the basic aim is to remove the children from their own environment to a completely different one, and to show them how to appreciate the change, so that they can build the foundation for a deeper appreciation of their immediate surroundings.

Notable among these activities are the climbing, fishing or orienteering expeditions undertaken by a teacher appointed solely for this purpose. Parties of boys, sometimes girls, go off for weeks at a time to various of the remoter parts of Scotland, staying in Youth Hostels. Many are, as a result, experienced climbers.

Along similar lines is the series of trips in winter to the Cairngorms, when parties of boys and girls are taught to ski by a registered instructor, otherwise a teacher of modern studies. In both these instances, remarkable results have been achieved as much in non-sporting as in sporting aspects. Children who in the classroom seem unmanageable, soon settle down and may even take the lead in these alien surroundings. "These so-called tough-nuts or awkward customers just need to fall down a couple of times in the snow, and make a fool of themselves, and they soon learn to live with the rest." The pupils sometimes visit a nearby ski hotel, and one girl was heard to remark on being told the price of a Coke, that she could get the same thing for half the price at home. "Yes, but this is a Rank hotel," said the employee, to which she swiftly replied: "Yer tellin' me; and so's yer prices—Rank robbery!"

Perhaps the boldest venture which the school has undertaken is the Inverlair Lodge idea. This time the intention is to use the lodge in the Highlands as a residence and a sort of base for activities in the hills. The school has been battling for seven years now to get the money for this, and it now looks as if the lodge will be ready by the end of the year. The work of renovation and conversion has been done by members of the school. It is planned to accommodate groups of philosophy, to make a break with the environment which determines perhaps 30 at a time. This is the culmination of the school's special to such a large extent the pupils' attitudes and behaviour, and makes mere schooltime seem largely irrelevant.

In addition to all this, mention must be made of several other unusual aspects of the school's work. There are two school councils, junior and senior, which are elected with one representative for each class, and which deal with the running of the school shop, minor discipline, fining pupils for dropping litter, fighting, etc., and the Friday night "Rock and Roll" dances (perhaps the name betrays the length of time these have been on the go). These dances to a large extent finance the weekly school magazine *Braehead News*, produced entirely on the premises by members of the school.

Individual departments or teachers have produced some remarkable results. The art department in particular must be mentioned for its work with new materials and ideas, and departure from the conventional approach. Perhaps the perfect set of footprints on the ceiling of one classroom testifies to this. One teacher of English has coaxed some remarkable poetry from his classes; and many other individual projects have had varying success.

The fact is that there is anarchy in the way in which the Braehead teacher is left to develop ANYTHING he thinks will interest the pupils. This means, of course, that there is a great deal of internal dissension about aims and methods. Some of the teachers are fairly conventional in approach, and do not exclude corporal punishment from their methods, while others pursue individualist lines which in the "ordinary" school would be classed as madness. There is no question at Braehead of the staff being a united body, and arguments are a continual feature of staffroom activity. (This is probably healthier, by the way, than the sort of progressive school where those of like opinions congregate, and may become complacent through lack of opposition, just as their conventional counterparts do.)

There is a corresponding confusion among the pupils, who often in the school magazine express their dissatisfaction with the lack of discipline. The fact that the staff have no united policy is equally unpopular with the children, who often prefer to know where they stand, and find it hard to understand what it is all about. The result is that the "difficult" pupils are given greater scope to poison the atmosphere with their misdemeanours. There is often an atmosphere of barely repressed violence about the place, rather like that at a football match when things on the field begin to get out of hand. This is the price of freedom in a school where the pupils are not necessarily from a "good" background, and are not therefore especially manageable, as the pupils of so many other progressive schools are.

And now Braehead faces closure, and absorption into a larger comprehensive system. It is hard to foresee whether its ideas and ideals would survive this change, but my impression is that they would not. There does not seem to have been any connection or communication with other schools of a similar type, and few of the staff even seem aware that there exists a body of opinion sympathetic to them. The school seems to have achieved only a limited amount, and few people would regret its disappearance, but something valuable is in danger of being lost; libertarian ideas put, sometimes unconsciously, often inadequately, into practice; an endeavour to teach children about the world around them, instead of about what is in the examination syllabus; the ideal of persuasion rather than blind compulsion. As one teacher puts it—"Children must be allowed—quite apart from the question of guiding the subconscious—to decide for themselves what they want—how otherwise is the business of education to have meaning?"

Kilquhanity and Coal Town

DOWN IN GALLOWAY in the south-west of Scotland a school which has done more than any other to pull Scottish education out of the Middle Ages was meeting similar but much greater difficulties. Kilquhanity School was founded by John Aitkenhead 25 years ago as a small boarding school and run on the lines approved by Homer Lane and A. S. Neill. The school incorporated a small farm. It grew slowly, but never had more than 40 pupils. Freedom bred initiative and confidence. Nothing could be less like the cold institutionalism of council schools. The pupils converted a barn into a pottery studio and a stable into a little theatre. One day senior boys approached the headmaster and said, "We want to build a fort". "All right. What do you want to make it with?" "One of the 'Three Sisters'."

The "Three Sisters" were three of the biggest trees in a beautiful estate, but for him the pupils have always been the first consideration and he agreed to the felling of the tree. The trees were pines 80 feet high with a girth at the base of five feet. The tree that was felled weighed about a ton. The four lengths of 20 feet had different weights because of tapering. All the work was done by the pupils—the felling, the transportation to the site of the fort, the digging of the holes to put the four posts in and the lowering of them into the holes and the consolidation and subsequent building. Here, I thought, was education at its best. The problem of how to lower these five-cwt. corner posts into deep holes is the sort of problem that human beings have faced throughout the history of man on the earth. How do you use your intelligence (with nobody to help you) as well as your muscles to overcome natural difficulties? And for the pupils it was a real problem, not a set exercise like going to the library to do a project on forts. The whole business arose out of their own interests and wishes; it was a pupils' problem, not something of adult interest only like the history of John Knox or the speeches of Pitt and Fox. This, I should have thought, was not only good in itself, since the pupils got happiness and enjoyment, a kick out of overcoming difficulties of nature, but was the kind of education which Britain, now thrown back as not for a long time before on the skill and ingenuity of her people as her best assets, most needed in order to meet the terms of survival in a technological age. The

ROBERT MACKENZIE's three books are A Question of Living (1963, 18s.), Escape from the Classroom (1965, 18s.)—from which the passage above is quoted, and The Sins of the Children (1967, 25s.). All three are published by Collins and all may be ordered from Freedom Bookshop.



reaction of a school inspector was revealing. She played down the achievement. She tried to turn it into a lesson on stresses, and bamboozled the boy who had conceived the idea and had worked at night, sometimes by lamplight and sometimes by moonlight, to build the fort. She asked him how he could test a crossbeam to hold the floor, what dimensions would be required and he replied that by the time they were at that stage, they knew so well what would work and what wouldn't work. Having described the situation, John Aitkenhead added, "Two hundred years ago my forebears in the island of Islay built houses which last to this day and they hadn't studied any of the textbooks on stresses."

There are, I think, two important issues raised by this incident. One is the unwillingness of intelligent people brought up on textbooks to enter into the spirit and intention of new ideas. It is like the fear of the stranger in ancient communities, a too-great dependence on the cosiness of the known. They try to weaken the effect of new ideas by weaving them into the old web.

The second point in Kilquhanity's method puts the teaching of technique into its proper place. Pupils try and solve problems themselves. This is the important thing, the scope for imagination and ingenuity. Then if they get stuck, the teacher may show them how to get advice from the textbook. The teacher doesn't baffle and overwhelm them with theory and technique before they have met the problems.

The distinctive contribution which Kilquhanity makes to educational research has been widely recognised. Public bodies have referred pupils to Kilquhanity and the Colleges of Education send their students there to study. The school has proved its value over 25 years. John Aitkenhead, who has given the best years of his life and all his money to build up a school which would help bring back vitality to Scottish education, might have had to close down because he hadn't the money to meet the letter of the law on school accommodation.

While the school inspectors were threatening Kilquhanity with closure, the buildings of the Coal Town school were sub-standard, but no inspector wrote to the County Council threatening to close the Coal Town school for that reason. The Kilquhanity pupils had converted the ground floor of the stable into a carpenter's shop, theatre and dressing-room and the loft into a pupils' common room, an office for the school's weekly newspaper, the headmaster's office and a store. But the Scottish Education Department's inspector forbade the use of the loft "for educational purposes" because (in his words) of "insufficient fenestration". Meantime the lighting in the Coal Town school (and in many other schools in Scotland) was sub-standard, the provision of lavatories and wash-hand basins was below the minimum standards laid down by law, the firemaster's report on the building had been ignored for over 20 years and a visiting MP had agreed with my description of the gymnasium building as "a slum". For a school of 40 pupils, John Aitkenhead had to provide three sinks in the kitchen together with a wash-hand basin for the cook to wash her hands. For the Coal Town's school kitchen (serving 200 dinners a day) less strict hygienic conditions

sufficed. The private individual, operating his own enterprise, had to meet the utmost requirements of the law; but the County Council didn't have to. A councillor told me, "If we were to bring all our schools up to standard it would throw a huge burden on the rates. We could never afford it all at once."

Let us examine the situation. The laws governing boarding school accommodation, I have no doubt, are sensible and humane laws which the state has passed to protect its children. Laws have to be clear and detailed and government inspectors have to measure and enforce. As a result there is probably not a boarding school in the country that doesn't have at least five W.C.s and ten wash-hand basins for every 50 pupils. But this very insistence on building standards puts a premium on material prosperity and success. In other words the status quo is subsidised. At the very time in history when on all sides we hear about an educational system failing to adjust itself to new conditions of life, a new approach in education is blanketed out. They'll close down the school if you haven't four sinks in the kitchen. But you can get by without four ideas on education.

R. F. MACKENZIE: *Escape from the Classroom*

Thoughts on the student question

ELIZABETH SMITH

CARL DAVIDSON'S ARTICLE "Towards a student syndicalist movement" in ANARCHY 80 gave a lot of interesting information about the student movement in America. The following observations were prompted by his article, but relate mainly to British universities, as the only student situation where I have first-hand experience.

A comparatively long article on students seemed at first somewhat out of place in an issue of ANARCHY entitled "Workers' Control", although anarchy clearly concerns all aspects of life and the juxtaposition was perhaps accidental.* It is possible, however, that the context of

*It was. Another contributor failed to deliver his article on "Workers' Control and British Industry" and Carl Davidson's excellent article which belongs in a different context had to be inserted in place.—Ed.

Carl Davidson's article implied an assumption that the struggles of workers and students for "control" of their respective environments are essentially similar; this assumption must be challenged. Admittedly students have been known to combat authority, occasionally using strikes and direct action, and in certain countries at certain times they have rioted against oppressive regimes or even been prominent in revolutionary outbreaks. But the fact is that in Britain today students are *on the other side* from workers in the class struggle. The universities are an integral and vital part of the system against which any libertarian/proletarian revolution must be directed. Davidson describes very well the position of the colleges in the American system, how vital they are "to the corporate liberal state". He also describes the internal construction of colleges, equipped as factories for assembly-line production of knowledgeable people, and decides that "As integral parts of the knowledge factory system, we are both the exploiters and the exploited". I think there is a danger that superficial similarities between students and workers, as objects manipulated, restricted, and directed in parallel situations, tend to obscure the fundamental conflict between the two groups. It would be more accurate to describe universities and colleges as government training centres for apprentice exploiters.

British students are overwhelmingly and irredeemably bourgeois in origins and outlook. In spite of the well-propagated myth of "equal opportunity", sociological statistics show that only 25% of students come from the lower social classes which comprise 75% of the population. The educational process is very good as assimilating strays from a non-bourgeois background and at confirming existing bourgeois attitudes. It is not apathy that prevents students from effectively challenging the system in which they find themselves but rather self-interest, class-consciousness, knowing which side their bread is buttered. *They* are the people who will do all right with things just as they are, who will be protected and cherished as the heirs apparent to our present rulers. Davidson's argument "What would happen to a manipulative society if its means of creating manipulative people were done away with?"—ignores the fact that the manipulative people can hardly be expected to do away with themselves in the process of being created. True, the establishment could not exist without its pillars, but neither could they be pillars without the establishment, so they are not going to help much in sabotaging it. Karl Marx pointed out long ago that a ruling class does not voluntarily abdicate from power; presumably it is because we believe this that we are revolutionaries. Organising the campuses is like trying to reform Parliament—a nice short cut if it could be done, but actually impossible and a dangerous distraction. Davidson admits that we should not ignore organising elsewhere; in realistic fact, "elsewhere" *must* come first.

This will all be denounced as being unfair to the dissenting minority of students and as ignoring a potential source of support in opposition to the set-up. "The discontent is there," says Davidson, ". . . even the apathetic gripe at times." Of course they do, but they aren't going to take any significant action. They complain about conditions, about not

being treated already as fully-fledged exploiters; they even have occasional perceptions of how they are being used and mutter about the "rat-race". There is a great consolation, however, in the knowledge that they have a head start in the race, and if this is not enough they have plenty of distractions from real issues in the forms of Charities Weeks (doing their bit for those less fortunate and having fun too), Rectorial Elections, student pranks and all the traditional delights involved in having "the time of their lives", something to look back on when they settle down in a secure niche in the establishment. The organisation of "a mass radical base with a capacity for prolonged resistance, dedication and endurance" is here a hopeless task. For those with revolutionary perspectives, the point is not to organise like mad in whatever situation you find yourself, but to view your situation as it is and come to terms with it accordingly. Students fundamentally alienated from the system must find their own solutions. I suggest some possible lines of approach to the problem:

1. You can give up being a student and try to find some more congenial form of existence where you feel you have a chance of organising more usefully. This is undoubtedly valid for some, and may indeed happen involuntarily if you insist on doing your own work at university and ignoring the system and its requirements.

2. Educate yourself *in spite of* the educational system and its determination to train you for its own purposes. Choose subjects you like instead of those where you get good marks and which lead to "good" job opportunities; read books that interest you; listen to teachers who have something to say.

3. Maintain as many "outside" contacts as possible, keeping a drawbridge open from the ivory academic tower. This may seem difficult if you're at college away from home, but it can be done by means of YCND, anarchist groups, etc. The advantages are two-way; you stay in touch with the currents of relevant activity, and you can use your position as a student to help the people you meet, by gaining them access to student premises (if they want!), by getting them books from libraries, by sharing your knowledge and using it in discussion groups. You can also help to disillusion people about students. Quite often, well-founded suspicions of students are mingled with the assumption that they must at least be intelligent and therefore worthy of their future positions. Young workers may at first be surprised to learn that they themselves are more intelligent than a lot of the students you meet, and you can help to dispel their reluctant but entrenched respect for those whom society has certified as "brainy".

4. By all means establish as many contacts as you can with like-minded fellow-students; use university societies, debates, newspapers, to express your views; argue with anyone who seems interested in what you have to say. But don't expect that you are going to form a mass movement or anything apart from a small dissenting minority. Realise the nature of the institution you are in, and of the vast majority of its inhabitants.

Back to school— with poems and songs

DENNIS GOULD

FOR ONE WEEK I HAVE BEEN IN SCHOOL AGAIN. The longest period since I left a grammar school at fifteen for an hotel apprenticeship, in 1953. This school, for 11- to 15-year-olds, is a Midlands county school which has children in it from two large neighbouring council estates. The staff are young and there is a relaxed informal atmosphere in the staff commonroom. Many of the children come from homes much deprived of emotional love and intellectual growth, although the kids often have far more spontaneity than one sees in grammar school education. There is streaming such that the "lower-classified" children can be visually picked out due to the wretched conformity in the classroom, i.e. many children poorly dressed, physically smaller and less articulate. The "lower-streamed" children seen as a class against the "upper-streamed" in another form are obviously handicapped by being isolated from kids with potentially more creative and original ideas. Equally true, though, is that the "upper-streamed" miss the roughness and simplicity, the values which kids placed in the "lower-stream" hold. If a part of education is to enable different personalities and abilities to mix, they should be seen to do so. At present, the better-adjusted to the school system "succeed", the poorly equipped "fail"—drop-outs . . . thank god; although drop-outs face anguish and desperation at times when involved in just making a living.

I was invited to read poems and sing folksongs in the school—which I'll call High School—and therefore my view of it must be seen from the biased eyes of one who, as an outsider, spent just five days in the school or educational factory. I was invited by a teacher there, a friend of the Quakers, Society of Friends as they call themselves, to spend one day reading and singing in as many classes as possible. Such was the interest that I returned for the rest of the week and visited a good many of the thousand kids in the school.

In the evenings I also had work—in a folkclub; youth club; Quaker Meeting; youth leaders training college; college of education and a radical group, *The Project*. These evening meetings were important, for sometimes a collection would be made or a small fee given and, since the schools paid nothing, these helped to provide money for travelling expenses; postage on letters to other interested groups in areas I would be visiting in a few weeks' time; and living expenses. (I am trying to gain the interest of Education Committees and the Arts

Council!)

On going into the classroom I said "hallo" and made sure they were aware I was on their side, and explained I was visiting schools all over the country to sing folksongs and read poems. Then I introduced poems and songs through the medium of pop music. The best popsongs are poetry with music; for example songs like *Ruby Tuesday* by The Rolling Stones; *Strawberry Fields Forever* by The Beatles; *Dead End Street* by The Kinks; *My Generation* by The Who; the songs of The Loving Spoonful; The Byrds; The Love; the folksongs of Bert Jansch and folk tunes of John Renbourn; songs of Tom Paxton and Phil Ochs; the songs of Simon and Garfunkel; folksongs of Hamish Henderson, Malvina Reynolds, Dick Farina. There are a hundred more song writers, some well-known, some unknown but to a small group of local friends. There are a hundred more rock and roll, rhythm and blues groups whose best songs like many of their names—The Pink Floyd, The Pretty Things, The Poets—are full of poetry.

We, the children and I, often began by singing a chorus song like *We Shall Not Be Moved* or *Where Have All The Flowers Gone?* or perhaps *Cosher Baily*, one very popular with the kids because of its good chorus, its funny verses. Then I read two or three poems followed by another chorus song; more poems and then a song again, from time to time stopping to explain background or interesting bits about the song or the writer of the song, or poem. In all the schools I've been in, the kids have loved both the harsh songs of Bob Dylan as well as the gentle beauty of the lovesongs and traditional songs that Joan Baez has made her own; songs that have become accepted as part of the topical singer's understanding of his own times. I think of *Mary Hamilton* and *Banks of the Ohio*, of *All My Trials* and *Barbara Allen*. The earlier gentle Donovan songs; the raw urban citysongs of Leon Rosselson, as well as the early ballads and broadsides that Ewan McColl and Bert Lloyd dig up for the historical scholar and mediaeval revivalist. (I am personally more interested in McColl's own songs which seem the very basis of contemporary folksong in Britain, though he probably feels they are more the observer's attempt to record feelings and experiences of industrial workers and unskilled or non-professional workers in song.)

For example in one class we sang *Chimes Of Freedom* and *Motorpsycho Nightmare* followed by *Plaisir D'Amour* and *The Cherry Tree Carol* which were equally enjoyed, even by the boys when they allowed themselves to listen to the lovesongs.

Poems that came to mean a lot for many children included *Portrait Of A Bird* by Jacques Prevert, translated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti; *Tonight At Noon* by Adrian Henri, published in *Underdog* (the Liverpool magazine, edited by Brian Pattern); *Soldier Freddy* by Spike Milligan, in the anthology *Every Man Will Shout*; *Group Poems 1.2.3.* in the children's collection *Pussies And Tigers*, edited by Vanessa Redgrave; *The Magic Roundabout*, written by this writer after watching, as often as possible, the BooBooCee's television serial by the same name. This is an absolutely charming programme, lyrical and simple

in the extreme, a beautifully written and delightful interpretation of an original French TV show for the under-fives. (The TV show is brilliantly written into English and scripted by Eric Thompson.) The most popular song, often copied down into rough notebooks, was *Blowing In The Wind*, Bob Dylan's evocative poemsong, or "story" as he calls his songs.

The most popular poem without any doubt was *Song About Mary*, the only poem which children in many classes asked to hear again, and in two cases then heard it a third time read by one of their own class who requested to be allowed to read it themselves. It is included in *Adrian Mitchell Poems*. The poem's simplicity and vulgarity touched something very real to the children. The poem is not beautiful. It is moving. It made the children stir, roused them and disturbed their imagination. It entertained beyond triviality and commented on the very hypocrisy that a few teachers upheld when their shocked or surprised faces let out their prim sense of values.

This poem was not irrelevant, not nice, and too honestly critical to find wide sympathy or understanding that such poetry is vital and alive; creative and therefore dangerous.

Song About Mary is not a nice poem, not a gentle poem from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. It is blasphemous, disrespectful and lovingly anarchist in its very acceptance and appreciation of individual circumstance. It encourages aggressive independence of our sick institutions with their sad-faced inmates, staff and patients.

Lovesongs enjoyed by most children were *It Ain't Me Babe* and *On The Banks Of The Ohio*; *Don't Think Twice It's Alright* and the beautiful Irish lament *She Moved Through The Fair*. Again and again they asked to hear *It's All Over Now Baby Blue*—one of Dylan's most haunting lovesongs.

Now I dare hazard a guess that lovesongs are not often or rarely ever sung by teachers to their classes. But why, oh why, are we so timid and scared of singing lovesongs and reading lovepoems? Is it, as R. D. Laing comments, that we can justify our use of violence, which tends to be that oppressive discipline that all the time restricts and crushes our children; yet love is such an undisciplined and dangerous politics that its release of deep feelings cannot be regulated or controlled. . . . And lovepoems/lovesongs may be a trigger. R. D. Laing writes: "Love and violence, properly speaking are polar opposites. Love lets the other be but with affection and concern. Violence attempts to constrain the other's freedom, to force him to act in the way we desire, but with ultimate lack of concern, indifference to the other's own existence of destiny. We are effectively destroying ourselves by violence masquerading as love." (*The Politics Of Experience and The Bird Of Paradise*.) This brings to mind David Mercer's TV play *In Two Minds* where the girl is crucified by parents who believe they are caring for their daughter, when they are really ~~are~~ driving her mad—imprisoning her in their manner of life.

Therefore we sing warsongs, anti-warsongs, political and social songs. We read everything but lovepoems—or at least our elders do.

For if one listens to the poemsongs of the best rock and roll and rhythm and blues groups, one hears different values, different sexual and sensual feelings; one hears songs of passion and compassion; songs for lonely people; (*Eleanor Rigby*) songs for lifeless, loveless people; songs for mindful and mindless people; songs for frightened people; crushed and bruised children and lovers; such songs, the best of them, are poems with MUSIC. Among younger poets, almost totally unpublished nationally, there are many, many lovepoems. Romantic. Pornographic. Sensual. Godly. Wondrous and loving.

Among younger poets there is a wish to read publicly, to share experiences, in words anyway, and images varying individually. A desire to create and fashion poetry, in the kaleidoscopes of minds as varied as the poets', to replace religions and churches. A poetry which will give strength to exist when living seems too futile. A poetry which will encourage others to follow their very own visions and professions. A poetry which will make English people laugh and cry; love and hate; work and play at their own leisure, for their own friends and communities.

In the school I visited the kids seemed relatively unbrutalized, yet their teachers are certainly sergeant-majors in many cases. The attitude is accepted that since a certain subject is to be taught, it will be taught though all the kids hate it, though it will never be used by the kids on leaving school, and though the kids positively listen very little; the subject is on the syllabus and therefore is to be taught. Now it is naive of me to expect that teachers would give up the fight and talk about badgers, foxes, Dr. Who and The Monkees; about The Stones and Francis Chichester's Round-The-Horn-Solo voyage; about folk-music and poetry; about living with unmarried mums and alcoholic friends; helping the aged, lonely and the children in children's homes; living on a tight budget; helping the kids to understand and *visit* public libraries, theatres, museums and parks; helping individuals to understand that their own job or profession *can* be changed; that there is no reason, if there is sufficient will, why a person should remain shuttered in a factory or shop, office block or building site. There is always the potential to alter jobs. Seek new experiences by hitch-hiking to a new town or new country before lover and wife, friend and mistress claim one for love and caring.

Oh, there is a need for such thoughts and hopes. There is a need for more visitors to interrupt the routines of schools and other institutions—bringing fresh thoughts and visions for both teacher and child, prisoner and prison officer, mental nurse and mental patient.

After one week I was exhausted, singing and reading; morning, afternoon and evening. But the interest and wonder shown by a young girl . . . who wanted to read a poem herself . . . the growing lovely and sexual movements of a fifteen-year-old singing *Love Minus Zero*. A classroom of girls and boys enjoying *Michael Row The Boat Ashore*. Another eleven-year-old group singing *Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, the French drinking song—enjoying their own voices filling the classroom; unaware of their captivity in a schoolroom!

TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

If our schools had books and magazines of contemporary poems . . . poems written by children and for children *during the last five years*; if books of folksongs like Bob Dylan's, Pete Seeger's, Ewan McColl's and Leon Rosselson's were held in school libraries, and ordered by music teachers.

If touring poets and folksingers, touring groups, were sponsored by Education Committees, Hospital Management Committees and the Boards of Prison Governors, as they are by the Military Authorities for soldiers, sailors and airmen.

If poets were supported by their local museum, art gallery and library—for readings and exhibitions of visual poems; poster poems, picture poems.

If universities and colleges (Art and Technology) were sufficiently thoughtful and progressive and would create an "establishment" for a lecturer in poetry, since its differences to literature, i.e. novels and plays, is often considerable. For it is also an art form which needs to be read aloud as well as simply criticized and explained historically. Lecturers in "Waiting", in "Typewriting", in "Games", but no lecturer in poetry . . . anywhere?

Finally, of course, the poet must stand on his own. He or she must carry on writing and reading poems even when no one wants to know. The poet must publish and print his poems himself, if nobody else is concerned, without thought of profit or publisher's kudos. Indeed it is good to print one's own poems with those of other local poets. To be independent of the mass or large scale circulation for the immense gain of person-to-person contact, of readers who will be not far from the writer, of local community influence, who will be able to relate personally to the poet or poets.

Why this concentration on visiting institutions? It is simply that these formal, often closed, societies, have little relief for both staff and patients/students/prisoners. But folkclubs and liberal studies' departments of technical colleges also are an important part of our tour, for it is from such engagements we get our bread and butter through fees and collections.

* * * *

If any reader feels this work is creative and worth supporting we shall be happy to visit the society, school, college, hospital, prison, folk-club or factory that you may be associated with. Alternatively we can suggest a possible means of forming other such groups devoted to opening up the crack in music and poetry which people as distant as Ewan McColl, The Incredible String Band, Davy Graham, Mike Westbrook, The Beatles, Donovan, Adrian Mitchell, Christopher Logue, Gael Turnbull, Mike Horowitz, Howard Sergeant, Jon Silkin, and Martin Bax have created in their various ways in Britain. Also perhaps even greater influences of Americans like Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg, Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan.

The Whisper & Shout,
56 Jackson Avenue, Mickleover, Derby

DENNIS GOULD

The mundane reality

TONY GIBSON

ADOLESCENT BOYS OF EAST LONDON by Peter Willmott
(Routledge & Kegan Paul 30s.)

THIS BOOK IS ONE OF A SERIES of reports from the Institute of Community Studies. It deals with information about 246 boys aged 14 to 20, living in Bethnal Green, a district of the East End of London. This district has been well studied by the Institute, and in fact some of the boys happened to be members of households which had been studied some years before. (*Family and Kinship in East London*, Michael Young and Peter Willmott.)

After a good deal of pilot work involving interviews carried out both in boys' homes and at the premises of the Institute, a research sample was drawn from the electoral register and the boys from the sample households were given a structured interview. The topics covered ranged around attitudes to school, to parents, to job, and to all that was considered important in the life of adolescents. As far as a "final result" emerged from analysis of the interview schedules, the author divided the boys into three meaningful categories, "working-class" (about two-thirds), "middle-class" (about a fifth) and "rebels" (about a tenth). Reference to class here means *attitude*, and not class origins, for the sample was overwhelmingly working-class in composition by the usual objective criteria.

The main difference between the "working-class" type and the "middle-class" type may be considered in terms of their attitude to the more or less traditional way of life of Bethnal Green. The "working-class" boys were relatively content with this sort of life; their immediate goals involved settling down into the sort of work which typified most residents of that area, or seeking to exploit the relatively routine pleasures of life (sex, sport, mass entertainment) and never envisaging that their lives might be very different from those of their parents. The "middle-class" boys, on the other hand, had aspirations which would tend to alienate them from the area of their origins, even if their parents lived in that area and had middle-class occupations such as shopkeeping. The category of "rebel" was given to boys outstanding in their rejection both of the traditional tame working-class mores, and of the values of the "middle-class" boys. Such "rebel" boys typically did very badly at school because of their hostility to its values, and were therefore condemned to unskilled or semi-skilled manual work. They felt very frustrated by such work, yet lacked the educational

advantages and the attitude of mind (involving "deferred gratification") which would make any occupational advancement possible. Willmott suggests, probably quite rightly, that seriously delinquent boys often come from the ranks of the "rebels".

Willmott's study is entirely descriptive and sociological. His conclusions are tentative and such recommendations as he makes are modest. Although statistical analysis was used as the basis for outlining the major trends emerging from the data, he is well aware of the pitfalls inherent in reporting on results, obtained from comparatively small numbers, recruited in a manner which inevitably leads to artifacts of sampling. Of the sample approached, 8% refused to be interviewed and a further 4% could not be interviewed. The whole experience of such social survey work teaches us that the non-responding sample was probably rich in dissident types and what Willmott calls "rebels". Sheep are always much easier to interview than goats.

Much of the meat of the book is impressionistic. Thirty of the boys completed personal diaries for a week (for £2 a head) and about twenty selected boys came to the Institute for open-ended tape-recorded interviews. It is natural that documents obtained in such a way will be far more characteristic of the sheep than the goats, and this fact must be borne in mind when reading all the verbatim extracts, and the general impressions of the life of teenage boys which are conveyed by them. With this caution, we may consider what Willmott has to say about the more "sensational" aspects of teenage life. On the whole the mundane picture which emerged is a very healthy antidote to much of the sheer nonsense which appears in the press about teenage violence, sex and delinquency.

In order to get a fuller picture of delinquency in the East End, Willmott has drawn upon two other sources in addition to his own: the work of M. J. Power for the Medical Research Council in the area of Tower Hamlets, and that of David Downes in Stepney and Poplar (*The Delinquent Solution* by David Downes, reviewed in ANARCHY 64).

What is called "delinquency" can be measured in many ways, in fact the term is really so vague as to be pretty meaningless. As far as court appearances go, about one in three Bethnal Green boys can expect to appear in court before his 21st birthday. Although the pattern of unlawful activity changes between the ages of 14 and 20, about 40% of all court appearances are concerned with some form of stealing. Stealing is, in fact, an entirely *normal* phenomenon among boys. Because it is regarded as such, quite realistically, in working-class areas, this study of Willmott's (like a number of others) encountered little difficulty in getting uninhibited accounts of self-confessed stealing. There was a widespread tolerance of thieving from employers and big shops, but a view that stealing from individual people was morally wrong. Those who appear before the courts, therefore, are either unlucky in being caught, or unusually rash and persistent in their unlawful behaviour.

The attitude to violence was more mixed. There was in the area a general cult of masculine "toughness" among teenage boys, but there

was plenty of evidence that most boys seldom fought, and disliked violence. The boys were asked about what they thought of the reported clashes between rival groups of teenagers at the coast, which the newspapers magnified so greatly. Only about one in ten seemed to approve of the fighting, and as many as two-thirds actually condemned the participants. In fact mob battles in the East End are a rare occurrence nowadays, and this is in stark contrast to the conditions which prevailed forty years ago. The growth of peaceable conduct has steadily mirrored the alleviation of economic hardship over the years. The paper tiger of "lawless youth" throwing over the traces is largely a figment of journalists and politicians out for sensations and votes, and Barbara Wootton's warning is very apposite: "... we probably ought to refrain from the tempting and common practice of quoting movements in the criminal statistics as evidence of the ups and downs of criminal behaviour."

Those people who actively look for signs of rebellion against the status quo will naturally be interested in Willmott's group whom he designates as "rebels". This book contains no socio-political suggestion that such types might be a force for changing the conditions of which they are the victims. Rebelliousness, as measured in Willmott's study, was most typical of the 17- to 18-year-old group, and less so of younger and older boys. He sees it therefore as a phase through which boys pass, and as being mainly a function of the tension between the world of the teenagers and the adult world, which is resolved, more or less, as each individual grows older.

There are good chapters on sex and marriage, on school, on work and a number of other topics, all illustrated by extracts from the boys' diaries and tape-recorded interviews. The only thing that makes this reviewer a little unhappy is the generally high standard of literary expression displayed in these extracts, in spite of occasional incorrect syntax and swear-words. Presumably the written accounts have been in no way altered (except in spelling) but the reports of verbal material are all remarkably lucid. I get the impression that this has been produced by the intellectual cream of the sample (even though many are from secondary modern schools) and not from the run of the mill.

This is a very useful book and has the virtue of modesty. It must be considered in the context of a number of reports of similar studies. Such studies are cross-fertilizing in that the ideas generated and the methodology used in one study further the conduct of future research projects. There is some slight danger that this sort of research may become too stereotyped, and one study just validates another by asking the same sort of questions to the same sort of people. Perhaps what is needed is greater effort and more ingenuity in studying the characteristics of the "goats"—the ones who do not wish to be interviewed. However, social research is not so advanced today that anyone can carp at a book like this one of Willmott's. It has the great merit of being readable.

FURTHER COMMENT ON ANARCHY 77

MAY I COMMENT BRIEFLY ON N.W.'S COMMENT ON ANARCHY 77. In the interests of historical accuracy, Ken Weller is quite wrong in referring to "not a few" well-known anarchists "flocking to the colours" in the First World War. N.W. lets him off here somewhat lightly; not only was it literally "a few" well-known anarchists, but they did not "flock to the colours", the only possible meaning for which is to join the armed forces voluntarily without being conscripted. That one or two elderly and/or foreign-born anarchists supported the war is undoubted but there is no record of any anarchist then in the movement eligible for the armed forces, whether "well-known" or not, volunteering for service. (Kropotkin refused to make recruiting speeches precisely because he felt the irony of doing so after a lifetime of anti-militarism now that he was too old to fight.) On the practical test, any attempt to reconcile anarchism and patriotism was bound to fall down. It might be quite another matter if, say in France, one was called to the colours anyway, to claim one was enthusiastic about it; but "flocking" to the colours—no, sorry, myth.

His story of Durruti and Emma Goldman is a combination of two stories. It had nothing whatever to do with Durruti (he has come into the story to give it colour). The then secretary of the Spanish CNT did write specifically in 1936 to the English anarchist movement, via Emma Goldman who was then the representative of the CNT-FAI in London, saying more or less what Ken said—that they did not want to have volunteers, they had plenty of supporters; if anyone wanted to do anything they should do it in their own country. There was no question of rudeness, as N.W. imagines; thousands of anti-fascists wanted to "flock to the colours" in Spain and the idea of depopulating the anarchist movement abroad, merely to add to their million or so supporters in Spain, filled the CNT-FAI with dismay, particularly when they compared their international support with that of everyone else concerned. They did say "no thanks" to the idea of an international brigade of their own (except for refugees).

Later, in 1937, Emma Goldman did in fact tell a meeting (and this must be what Ken Weller refers to) at which I was present personally, that she asked to serve in Spain as a nurse and "the Spanish comrades" (not Durruti, who was dead by then) told her they had plenty of nurses, and she would be better employed carrying on as she was (not, in this instance, "in her own country"). N.W.'s disbelief in the story is not therefore entirely justified. Although he tells it somewhat inaccurately, Ken's moral is quite justified.

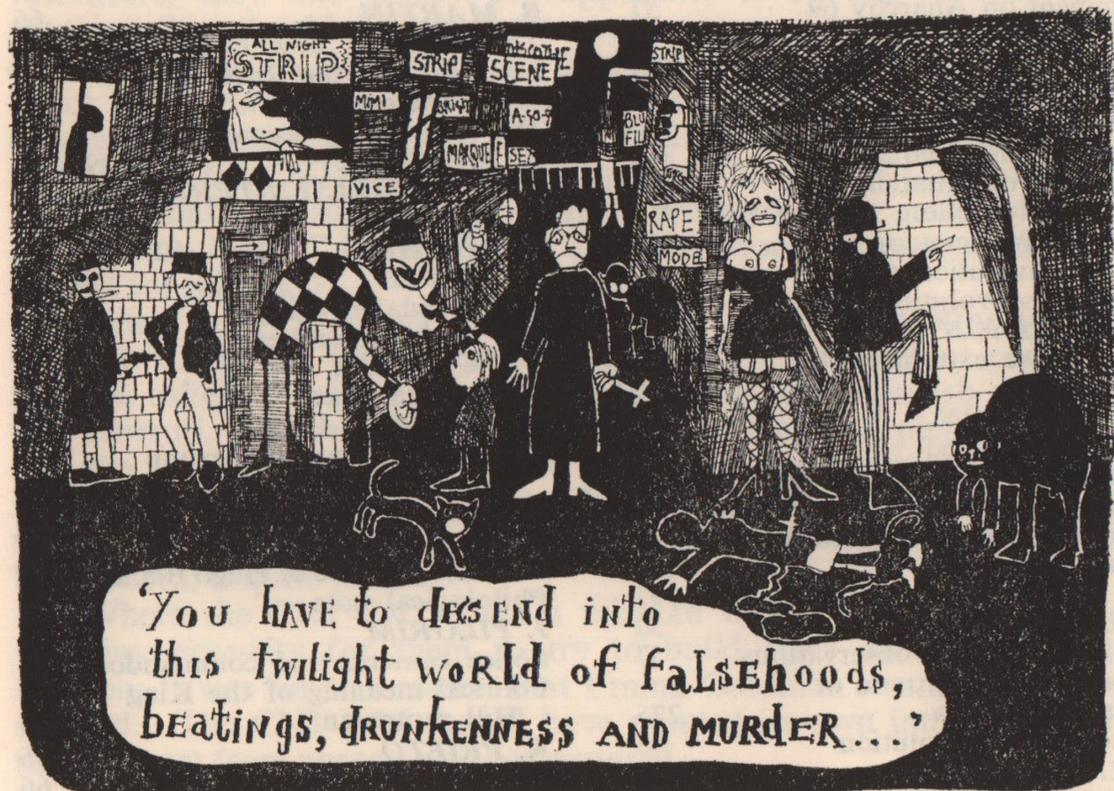
Where the CNT-FAI made a mistake was in assuming that there was any necessity for them to try to build their own movement in London; it was for this reason that Emma Goldman's campaign did not succeed. The CNT-FAI should have minded its own intelligent advice that support from abroad was not required.

London

A. MELTZER

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R. F. Mackenzie :
 A Question of Living
 Escape from the Classroom
 Sins of the Children
 order them from
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FREEDOM PRESS ON THE MOVE

Dear Reader

As you may already have learned through the columns of Freedom Press, it is necessary for Freedom Press to move from its premises in Maxwell Road, Fulham, owing to redevelopment plans for the whole area.

You can imagine what problems this presents for an organisation like ours, which operates continually on a financial shoestring and yet needs premises which are not too far from the centre of London and are adequate to provide not only a publisher's office but also some kind of display area for our publications, a library and a stockroom.

Ideally, we should like a shop with rooms for meetings and other social activities on a minor scale attached. But the rent or purchase price for such premises would be far beyond our means and would cripple us financially as far as our real work of publishing anarchist literature and acting as a centre for movement activity is concerned.

Fill now, we have been fortunate in that the landlord at Maxwell Road is a very good friend of Freedom Press and we have been tenants there at a ridiculous rent but now that those premises are to be demolished we shall have to face up to the harsh reality of paying more normal rents.

WILL YOU COMMIT YOURSELF

FINANCIALLY

FOR FREEDOM PRESS?

Even in the past we have had to make do with what we can move into, but we will rather fortunate in that we can move into premises which are well equipped with at least some administrative facilities, a stockroom, a library and even room for small meetings - but no shop front.

At least £1000 a year - times what we have been paying at Fulham. Since we are in the making organisation and seek always to keep the price of our publications as low as possible, this means a very heavy financial burden. And finally, we see little chance of a publishing house for the benefit of a landlord and a local council, leaving nothing for anarchist publishing.

But we hope you will agree with us that we must keep going. So we are asking for your help and asking for it in rather a special way. Will you commit yourself to a regular payment every year to a premises fund to enable Freedom Press to carry on its work of publishing anarchist literature free from the burden of rent and rates?

If one thousand of our readers will commit themselves to £1 per annum we are there, and there can't be many of our readers who would find that an unbearable burden. (Those who can afford more of course can work out their own arithmetic - 100 at £10 per annum or 100 at £100 comes to the same thing.) What we need is a regular commitment (in units of £1 - any amount) and we want it urgently. We want to take up the tenancy of our new premises on 1st January 1968, and we want to be sure we can afford it!

There is one other thing. The premises we are moving to need decoration and fittings. The physical movement of all our stock, furniture, etc. will be expensive. We have therefore established a Moving Fund, and are asking for once-and-for-all contributions to this.

It will help us considerably if you would use the slip below to let us know if you will help. Contributions to the Moving Fund can be sent now, but for the Premises Fund, all that we need immediately is your commitment to a contribution every January starting with January 1st 1968.

Yours sincerely,

FREEDOM PRESS

FREEDOM PRESS, 17a Maxwell Road, Fulham, London SW6, England

I promise to contribute the sum of £..... per annum to the Freedom Press PREMISES FUND, every January 1st.

*I shall pay by Bankers' Order.

*I should appreciate a reminder when it is due.

Signed

Address

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Till now, we have been fortunate in that the landlord at Maxwell Road is a very good friend of Freedom Press and we have been tenants there at a ridiculous rent, but now that those premises are to be demolished, we shall have to face up to the harsh reality of paying more normal commercial overheads.

Even in this, however, we are still rather fortunate in that we can move into premises in Aldgate where our printers are situated. This means that the move will bring with it at least some administrative advantages, we shall have space for our needs, and even room for small meetings and social gatherings—but no shop front.

The snag will be financial in that our rent and rates will amount to at least £1000 a year—several times what we have been paying at Fulham. Since we are a non-profit making organisation, and seek always to keep the prices of our publications as low as possible, this will put a severe burden on our finances. And, frankly, we see little point in running an anarchist publishing house for the benefit of a landlord and a local council, leaving nothing for anarchist publishing!

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