

# POLESTAR

Education for a World in Crisis

No 75

APRIL - MAY 1989

Price 20p

FRANCE

## Neighbours into Friends

Jean-Jacques Odier

**“OUR CITY DWELLERS have become strangers to one another. The neighbourly spirit of yesterday has given place to indifference, if not mistrust.” So said the new Prime Minister of France, Michel Rocard, the day after forming his government in June last year. He then listed a series of measures designed to upgrade depressed areas and improve the quality of life for everyone.**

Although people may have smiled to see the Prime Minister taking such an interest in the details of the Frenchman's daily life, everyone now realises that these details are important, if the towns of tomorrow are not to become prey to delinquency, disorder and strife.

Government measures are one thing, putting them into practice is another. It is clear that public and private effort, political will and individual action must go together. In the light of this, it is appropriate to recount some of the initiatives I have come across.

### Disappointing Idyll

One couple decided two years ago to leave Paris and settle in the suburbs, where it would be greener. The beautiful woodland near their new home delighted them. Soon, however, they were appalled to discover that their block of flats was constantly vandalised.

On thinking about this, they realised that it was up to them to create good relationships with their neighbours. Providence provided them with timely opportunities: there was the neighbour who left his key with them for a workman who was coming while he was out; then there was the young man they decided to get to know when they saw him slinking suspiciously along the passage, instead of just passing him by.

Gradually they built up relationships with a number of their neighbours, won their confidence and created a feeling of collective responsibility. As a result, they contacted the local council and initiated a petition to the town hall, asking for the local railway station to be cleaned up, as it was in a very neglected state. Within a few months the situation was improved.

### Each Individual Has His Place

Madame Sublet is a Socialist M.P. and the mayor of Feysin, a small town on the outskirts of Lyons. She is particularly concerned about vandalism, mugging and the rebellious gangs of youths. She feels that the solution is to be found in improving the environment and teamwork among the social workers. “There can be no security,” she says, “without a social life in



Mayor Sublet

which every individual has his place.”

She decided to hold regular meetings with all those in her district concerned with the life of the community. The aim was that they should all get to know each other, then to know each other's work and the means that were at their disposal. Thus they were able to outline a project involving the police, the law, the local authority and the social workers. “A spirit of openness,” said Madame Sublet, “leads to the discovery of solutions that you would never have thought of. You wonder how you could have worked alone for so long!”

At these meetings, concern was expressed about the conflicts going on in the neighbourhood. The main problems were the aggressiveness of some of the adults towards the young and the evidence of racism. Madame Sublet decided to become personally involved in resolving these conflicts, hoping that others would follow her example. Whenever she heard of a local disagreement, she would gather together all the residents of the floor or block, and encourage them to talk to one another and say clearly where each one stood. Almost every time, she said, the disputes were settled.

One very simple case concerned a man

*continue overleaf*

## Energy and Power

Charis Waddy

**F**UTURISTIC SHAPES mingle with the traffic on a transcontinental highway. Weird sloping sails and gigantic beetles career along, making cars and lorries look old-fashioned. Science fiction? No! A race from Darwin in the North, to Adelaide in South Australia by the latest solar-powered vehicles.

The sunny air is alive with hope. The participants are convinced they are on the frontier of 21st century living. Something new, offering inexhaustible power. And what is it? The good old sun, pre-dating all history; source of light and warmth to every generation of man and now to be harnessed for the purposes of power. Who knows? The sun-drenched spaces of the Third World may yet become rich in contrast with the cloudier lands of the North.

Such risky ventures are the latest in a long history of the domestication of creation. It began with fire, went on to horses and cattle and, in recent times, to electricity and then to the terrors and wonders of nuclear power.

The discoveries of our time have made the intangible force of the Spirit more, not less, credible. It was the marvel of radio that helped me to believe that God might be calling nations and men, today as in history.

Frank Buchman, who opened up this dimension of truth to many of my generation, met a pioneer of electronics in 1955, when the word was not yet in our vocabularies. “My old friend Thomas Edison came to mind as I listened to this pioneer. Edison gave the world illumination, electric light. I saw it happen. It opened up something for the whole of the world.... Electronics is a new science. Spirit has been known for a long time. It is an old science. But linked with electronics, it hitches the world to a new dimension of life and thought.... We can scarcely grasp what the Electronics of the Spirit means. We just faintly glimpse it.”

Now in the 1980's a simpler parable

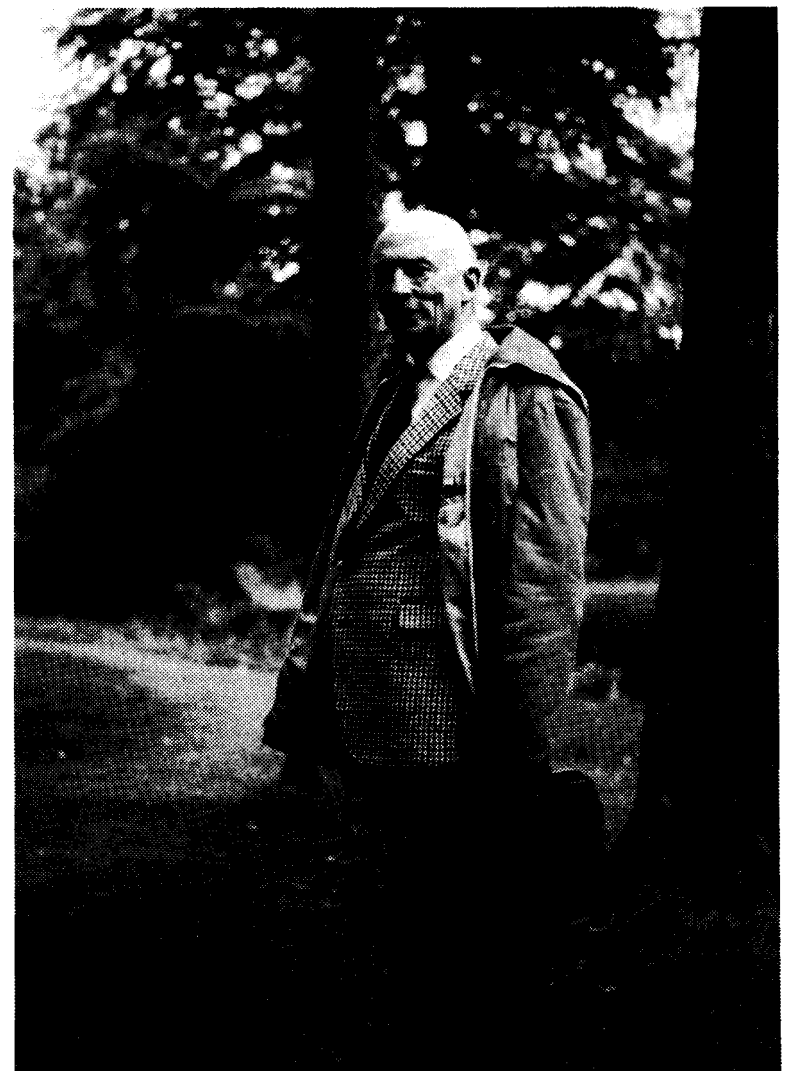
strikes the mind. Solar power brings once again into the imagery of the world of the Spirit that mighty commonplace source of light and heat which, even through a clouded sky, keeps us all alive.

### Riches of Spiritual Power

Years ago my father, walking in the terraced vineyards of the Holy Land, perceived the sun ripening each individual grape with as much warmth as it would bestow on a billion others. No question that God can care for everyone. Even the sun can do that. It fed his “bush man's version of God”. Individually penetrating, and absolutely universal.

It is a truism to say that the spiritually starved millions of the modern world need a new access to the riches of spiritual power. Endemic diseases of the spirit prevent advance in many fields: hatred, greed, indifference, the inherited wrongs of society. It is easy to see these on a large

*continue overleaf*



Edwin Noble,  
co-founder and  
first editor  
of Polestar.  
An appreciation  
is on page 2.

Theme of this Number: Communicating

## Neighbours (cont'd)

accused by his neighbours of making too much noise. He was able to explain to them that, owing to working in a noisy foundry, he had got the habit of shouting. The atmosphere of the meeting changed as soon as he explained and promised to be more careful in the future. It is often small misunderstandings that start the rot in a block of flats or a neighbourhood.

### Tackling Unemployment

Faced with the cancer of unemployment in our cities, we often feel helpless. A group of senior officials in Paris thought otherwise. They had the idea of creating an association which would be financed by contributions from their own salaries. Their aim was to provide work for those unemployed who had come to the end of their entitlement to benefit and who were still without work. (In France, unemployment benefit is only paid for a limited time, and six months work must be done before regaining the right to it). Working

in pairs, members of the association would contact and follow up those who were still unemployed until they got back into a job or, after temporary employment, regained their unemployment benefit.

**The association seeks employment contracts from organisations, often charities, which can offer work, but do not have the means of financing it. In this way, everyone benefits. The unemployed find work and human support; considerable help is given to the organisations unable to pay for necessary work and jobs are created which would not otherwise have existed. As for the members of the initial association, they have the chance to share their income with society's outcasts and, as a by-product, are brought into contact with another side of life. This initiative in Paris has been copied elsewhere: there are now twenty or so similar associations at work in the chief cities of France.**

If we can make known what is being done and multiply this kind of initiative, perhaps tomorrow we will live in more neighbourly cities.

## Energy and Power (cont'd)

**scale: hard to deal with them in our own circle. How to convey something of the sense of wonder and adventure, of mystery and of the Holy, so often deliberately besmirched and derided, but waiting to be quickened in every heart?**

I do not think that it is a question of efforts on our part to communicate with God. In the great monotheistic traditions that is His work. What we may be able to do is to help each other to clear away some of the human obstacles that keep Him out. There is much excellent work going on in connection with teaching religious truths to children. Perhaps there needs to be more encouragement for those who do the teaching.

### Respect for the Individual

I was once with a bishop and a headmaster. They were discussing what makes a great educator. Alek Fraser was one of the outstanding teachers of the century – famous for his work in Sri Lanka and Ghana. He said, "You look out at the boys in the playground. You know that each one of them is a child of God and may turn

into the full-blown article." I have often tried to paraphrase this pungent utterance in more dignified terms. But I have never forgotten it.

**The key to the democracy which we prize is respect for the individual. Yet at no time have so many people felt deprived of love and respect. To give this in abundant measure may be of more importance at this particular juncture, than to take the more common lines or rebuke or protest. Respect, for individuals as for communities, may help to clear away the clouds of cynicism and despair and allow children – and men and women – the space to receive the light and power they need, from a Spirit greater than the Sun that warms us all.**

**If I am to keep faith with those who surround me, I need to give myself the space and the stillness in which my own fragile sense of wonder and of the Holy, can survive and grow. With this priority, it may be that others will be fed.**

*Dr Waddy is a distinguished Arabic scholar. She is the author of "The Muslim Mind", "Women in Muslim History" and "The Skills of Discernment".*

# It is Better to Illuminate than to Shine

As we went to press with the last issue, we were greatly saddened to hear of the sudden death of EDWIN NOBLE. He will be very much missed by all of us who produce *Polestar*. The following appreciation was largely written by John Scarth and Norman Thursby, two long-standing friends of Edwin.

**EDWIN NOBLE was born in London, but lived for more than forty years in Manchester (and one was never conscious of his being a Southerner). He was an academic with a fine intellect; a historian; a mathematician (one of his hobbies) and an able linguist. At the outbreak of war, he was studying for his doctorate at Toulouse University.**

With this background, one really feels that he could have become a university don, but he felt called to join the teaching profession and taught in Manchester for thirty years. He did not find teaching easy, especially boisterous secondary pupils, but he was steadfast in his commitment to young people and to the creation of a fair, free and just society.

In 1933 he met the Oxford Group, which changed his life and relationships, especially with his father, and gave him a living faith. After the war, he became part of an enthusiastic and dedicated team of teachers, which fought for the highest standards in schools and colleges, both locally and nationally, and was committed to creating God's kingdom on earth.

To this end, he played a responsible and leading rôle in education conferences in the Moral Re-Armament centres in London, Cheshire and Switzerland. Students and teachers were made welcome in the home of Edwin and Leonora.

This commitment also led him to join the National Union of Teachers. He served on the Manchester NUT Committee for thirty years and was elected President of the Manchester Teachers' Association in 1972. He represented Manchester for several years at the national conferences of the NUT.

### A Marvellous Friend

After retirement, Edwin helped to found and produce *Polestar* and for eight years was the editor. His literary gifts in prose and verse were revealed to a wider public through his editorials and latterly his "Personal Viewpoint" feature.

This venture encouraged teachers in France to found their own organisation (AERE) to promote moral values in schools and national life. Edwin delighted

in attending their annual conferences, where his linguistic gifts were appreciated and valued. Thus he helped to create teamwork across national frontiers. One of the founders of AERE wrote that Edwin "was a marvellous friend of France, who enriched our seminars with humour and deep thought."

Earlier in life, he had tended to be shy and retiring, having been dominated by his father, a senior administrator in Maidstone Jail. However, as he increasingly placed his life in the hands of the Almighty, he excelled in the warmest of outgoing friendships, harnessing his sensitivity to encouraging young and old to have a closer relationship with God, by his example of morality and state of grace.

Notwithstanding his many talents, Edwin remained very humble and conscious of his own weakness and need for God, whom he served faithfully within the Church and in secular life.

### This is the Way

At his death, many tributes poured in which emphasised how much he illuminated the lives of others:

"He was a great encourager."

"Constantly cheerful, he was involved in a tireless effort to improve the conditions of children and teachers."

"His originality of thought and imagination", "his ideological insight and erudition", "his integrity and faithfulness" were qualities quoted.

The secret and aim of his life may perhaps be summed up in what he wrote in *Polestar* about a year ago:

**"In the hearts of every man a still, small voice speaks, saying 'This is the way, walk in it.' And for those willing to listen and obey, there is the power available to become different.**

**"For those who have experienced this in their own lives, the question must be whether they are doing enough to make the answer known. A moral and spiritual renaissance requires both personal experience and the intelligent and imaginative use of all our talents.**

**"Should this not be the task of all men of goodwill and especially of those involved in education?"**

*The headline of this article is a quotation from St. Thomas Aquinas.*

## TUNISIA

# A Worthwhile Sacrifice

Hatem Akkari

**FIVE YEARS AGO I returned to Tunisia as a secondary school teacher. I had decided that I wanted to break down the hierarchical distance between my pupils and myself and establish a more friendly relationship. However, the pupils did not always understand what I was trying to do and I did not always go about it the right way.**

Because of this, I only succeeded in creating tension in my classes. There came a point when four classes had ganged up on me. They refused to do an assignment I had set them and went on strike. I must admit the school administration was quite pleased and said, "This is the outcome of the new revolutionary approach you want to adopt in your classes."

At that point I was really in despair. It so happened that on my return home that evening, I had a 'phone call from Paris offering me a teaching post there – something beyond my wildest dreams.

The next morning I spent a long time quietly in thought. What should I do? Later with one of my classes, I decided to share with them my morning thoughts. I

said, "I came to Tunisia empty-handed. I am not one of those emigrants who lived in France and then came home with a car, a refrigerator and many western things to make life more comfortable. I don't always find life easy. I, too, feel an outsider in my own country, but I really love my country. Even when people say there is nothing in my country, I want to create everything out of nothing."

I asked them to help me. I said I was ready to help them and that I was there for my students, but I asked them to play their part as well. I told them that I was new to teaching and had much to learn, but I had a real interest in them and it was time to work together to understand each other better.

This was followed by a frank and honest exchange of views, which lasted some time. My students were very moved and some came to see me, asking my forgiveness.

Gradually a different relationship grew up between us, one of deep trust. Many students came to see me afterwards and said, "You know, you changed the mean-

ing of life between us. Now I know what I am meant to do."

**It isn't always easy when one returns home to pass on what you have learnt. What helped me in this particular instance and on other occasions is openness about myself because the problems my students have are mine too. Teacher and taught are meant to learn from each other.**

*Mr Akkari, the son of a primary teacher who emigrated to France twenty years ago, studied French Literature and Language at the Sorbonne. After living in France for fourteen years, he returned to Tunisia to teach.*

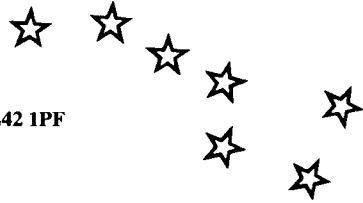
## Future Numbers

June – July What makes a good school?

August – September Family Matters

Contributions should reach the Editor by April 26th and June 21st.

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7, Lynwood Avenue, Aughton, Lancs L39 5BB



## Greatest Communicator

**WE LIVE** in a society where the means of communication are as varied and as efficient as they have ever been. Through the growing number of satellites, news and ideas can be flashed around the world in minutes to hundreds of millions of people.

Yet, we see families, societies and international relations breaking down because people cannot get on with each other – there is no meeting of hearts and minds. For there to be effective communication, the message has to be received as well as relayed. "I just can't get through to him" is a cry heard so often in families, schools, offices and factories. Reception can be impaired by the huge barriers of prejudice, ignorance, fear, hate and greed. Because of these barriers misunderstandings and divisions arise.

The unguarded word can also do untold harm. Many family feuds, which can last for generations, have started thus. That item of gossip which gets twisted as it gets passed on can do great hurt. The off-the-cuff remark by a politician hits the headlines the next day and causes hardship and anxiety.

Therefore, to have effective communication, the barriers need to be broken down and consideration needs to be given to what is passed on. Openness and honesty between individuals and groups can break down the walls between people. In this issue, there are examples of how this has happened in families, schools and communities. It always needs a determined and courageous person to start.

### Moral Responsibility

Now we are so proficient in the means of communication, we need to give more consideration to the values and ideas we want to spread around the world. As the Queen has said, "Electronics cannot create comradeship, computers cannot create compassion, satellites cannot transmit tolerance."

Those skilled in the communication arts and who earn their livelihood from it, do have a moral responsibility about the ideas they issue forth. Freedom of expression should not mean riding rough-shod over other people's values and firmly held beliefs. Recent events have shown what disastrous divisions can result when this is done. St Paul wrote, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient."

Training people to express themselves fluently is an important part of education, as well as helping them find the ideas which are worth expressing. The inarticulate teenager is, alas, too commonly met, but the art of conversation seems to be dying in all generations. This is something we could all revive. It takes thought and effort, but it is worth it. In the interview with Neil MacRae, he says, as a teacher, of having "interesting things to talk about and things to say which can surprise and make them (the pupils) laugh." This is something we could all do.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance and we are all responsible for what we see, hear and read. We don't have to read the books or the newspapers, or listen to the programmes on radio or television which we don't think help us to be better people. Are we helping to break down the barriers which prevent communication? Are we better listeners than we are talkers? Do we make our views and opinions known? If we have something worth communicating we should do so.

However, the most important communication is between ourselves and God, the source of the highest wisdom. We need adequate time and space to do this – to listen, as well as talk. As we do this, we will find that we not only know how to talk to people, but we will have something of value to pass on.



The Akkari family, see article opposite.

## Creating Real Jobs (Part 2)

*This continues the interview, begun in the last issue, with DR IVAN HENDRY, Co-ordinator of the Handsworth Employment Scheme (HES).*

### WHAT IS the basic need of a West Indian child that is not being met and which inhibits the learning process?

The West Indian child knows itself as black – a descriptive and objective definition in terms of colour – but he is in a culture where that concept has the meaning of everything that is bad. Therefore society is always saying to you implicitly and sometimes explicitly, that black is inferior to white. There is a human need to see yourself as normal and acceptable. You cannot live with the idea of considering yourself as second to anybody.

I don't think that white is inferior to black. I just see white as different and equal. My son is now eleven. He has been home to the Caribbean on several occasions and has got that ethnic reinforcement and black identity. He knows that there is a society where black is normal, but he occasionally has to wrestle with this idea of black being abnormal.

I'm sure that deep down all black children want to be white. They realise that they are in a society where to be white is all right, but to be black is to be told to stand back. This is something to which this society has not yet adjusted.

*There is a good ethnic mix amongst your staff and you seem to have a good team spirit. I presume you try to inculcate this into those who pass through your hands as trainees.*

There are many opportunities for our staff and trainees to interact with each other and to build up a community spirit. Every summer we have an outing. Last year between two and three hundred went to Rhyl. We have our own Sports Day and we take part in the Handsworth Carnival every year.

We are something of a United Nations here. We pick our staff very carefully to make sure we have an appropriate racial mix. No matter how much you talk to the trainees about equal opportunities, if they see that all the staff are white and all the trainees black, it makes a nonsense of

what you are saying to them. On the trainee side, the vast majority are from the ethnic minorities, but born in this country.

*Could it be said that the HES is the focal point for the people of Handsworth in relation to the City Council and to various agencies?*

We don't represent all the people of Handsworth. I don't think you will ever get an organisation which does that. But our policy has to be one of building bridges between the community and the establishment.

One of the fundamental issues with which we wrestle all the time, is that of race relations. There are a number of theories on these. One of them is to comply with the wishes of the dominant group. This is unacceptable to me, because it means that you collude with your own oppression. Another is to avoid any contact with the dominant group. I think this is pointless.

**I believe in everyone recognising that you have a culture and a history, which are essential parts of your identity. We must learn to be tolerant towards each other; to recognise that, though we are different in cultural or racial terms, we are equal, not only in the sight of God, but also in terms of ability and in the potential for contributing to the welfare of society.**

As black people we have an important part to play in the future of Britain, just as we had an important part in the past of the country. It is often forgotten that it is the colonies, whose peoples are largely black, that have made Britain great. Had it not been for that huge empire, Britain would have remained just a small island.

**The contribution to the historical development of Britain by black people should not be forgotten. Just as they have done in the past, so they can now do here in the city. All we ask is for this recognition and access to the benefits of the society to which we have all contributed.**

John Bennett & David Kirk

### Letters

#### Lines Open

I was very interested to read that the next edition of *Polestar* is to be on the theme of Communication. Having been a peripatetic music teacher for most of my teaching life, I have had experience of more than twenty schools. When communication is good, it is taken for granted. When it is poor, it leads to resentment and people feeling slighted and undervalued, whether the breakdown is between the head and the staff, the head of department and colleagues or between departments.

What causes poor communication? I think the greatest cause is the lack of thought rather than the deliberate withholding of information. There can also be the desire to control or to hold on to power, lack of trust or ill-feeling. This can apply whether the communication is going up or down the hierarchy.

My own experience must have been shared by all visiting teachers, that of arriving at a school to be greeted with, "Oh, didn't anyone tell you that we have our Sports Day today? I'm afraid they are all out on the sports field." Luckily improved communication can start from either side. The above situation can be avoided by asking ahead about planned school activities. Also I can make sure my schools know ahead of time should I not be able to attend.

Barbara Rohde, Llandudno

#### Teaching Council

Many teachers feel that a General Teaching Council, which can speak for the whole educational service, would be valuable. The idea has been around for several years, indeed Scotland has had one since 1965. The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) has taken some moves in this direction, with a series of seminars around the country in March.

A booklet is also to be produced in the form of a commentary written around the consultative text agreed by the forum of seventeen major professional associations. The text defines the rôles and functions of a General Teaching Council and ranges across advice on the supply of teachers, entry standards and training, as well as many other areas. Intended to prompt further thinking and evidence from those in and around teaching, the booklet may be obtained from the Education Management Unit, 55 Gordon Square, London WC1 ONU, and costs £2 (post free).

This is an opportunity for all concerned about our educational institutions to play a part, as responses, comments and evidence are invited from all interested. For all our major professional bodies to be concerned through UCET in promoting this move, makes it too good a chance to be missed.

Gwen Hearnshaw, Bath

# Enjoying English

Joy Weeks

NEIL MACRAE has recently become Head of English in a Hertfordshire comprehensive school. He is a family man with two children and a wife, whose love of home and family are evident from the moment one crosses their threshold.

From the very outset of our discussion, there was no doubt that here was a teacher who enjoyed his subject and the process of a developing relationship with his pupils. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) he explained had opened up new opportunities for communication with the young. The four key words now were "Listening, talking, reading and writing".

In fact, the methodology being developed and encouraged meant that teachers were having to learn to be better communicators. They are having to ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing, to apply considerable self-analysis and to make lessons more structured and interesting. "The classic 'Open your books and turn to page 73 exercise 6' is not enough anymore - if it ever was," he adds.

When asked how he saw his task as a teacher of English, he said, "I would like my pupils to develop an understanding of the power of language and of literature. I would like them to be able to say that they could use these for their own personal satisfaction, to help them to understand others better and to deal with them in the most positive way."

## Awareness to Language

He is conscious all the time of the need to raise the awareness of his pupils to aspects of communication and of opening their minds to new experiences. He illustrated how his department did this.

"We give the first years a lesson in a language that is alien to them, such as Russian, for example. Someone walks into the classroom and talks to a group of children in Russian for half an hour, without saying one word in English. There is immediate confusion, but gradually through this comes understanding. By the end of a seventy minute lesson, pupils know the numbers one to ten in Russian and can play Bingo (an interesting experience!). They will have understood 'hello', 'goodbye' and 'thank you' - important words.

This does not equip the children to go to Russia, but it does give them a tolerance of other languages so that they don't rank one language above another. About twelve per cent of the pupils in our school are of Italian origin and are bi-lingual. We should take more advantage of that than we do at present."

## Developing Concentration

When I asked Neil whether his pupils had received the right grounding in their primary schools, he admitted that one saw failures in some areas. However, he expressed great understanding of the difficulties faced by the primary school teachers. "They are having to make up for a lack in some homes of the enjoyment of reading and being read to and the development of the power to concentrate and the ability to listen. Television," he stated "positively discourages prolonged concentration."

He compensates for this by giving his pupils comprehension exercises on tape, so that they have to listen, understand and remember in order to give written answers to the questions put to them later. He is constantly amazed at their powers of retention once they have learnt the art of listening.

He reads to his classes a great deal. He finds this to be one of the most successful ways of persuading them to read for themselves. He also believes that they need to

understand the structure of narrative writing. TV watching breeds episodic writing with action and little, if any, description. The child sees pictures, but does not realise, until taught, that atmosphere and even settings need to be described in words for other people to enjoy the full impact of a story.

## Mutual Respect

His work schemes include a wide variety of material. The books he uses range from *The Outsiders* by S.E.Hinton and *A Kestrel for a Knave* to *Macbeth*, *An Inspector Calls* and collections of poetry which give a full range from classical to modern. He then added, "Whatever you do, you've got to enthuse about it or it will never come across."

Neil is conscious of the need to work constantly to improve communication with his colleagues and pupils. To do this, he finds he must be ready to stop and talk with someone as the need or opportunity arises, rather than relying entirely on organised meetings. With his pupils, he believes that the essential quality is to be fair. "Respect must be mutual," he emphasises. "We must respect their backgrounds, their views, and understand what we mean to them. We can provide them with a stable relationship; have interesting things to talk about and things to say which can surprise and make them laugh.

He realises that there is an inherent danger in more informal relationships. One may have the desire to please, which can sometimes lead to taking the easy way out, either in the material used for lessons or in the reluctance to apply the discipline both needed and expected. However, the greatest satisfaction is "the wonderful moment when you are surprised by something good" in an original piece of writing and the split-second in which the teacher becomes a real person, when a pupil says "Dad... I mean... sir".

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## BOOK REVIEW



MARGARET McMILLAN

MARGARET McMILLAN : PORTRAIT OF A PIONEER by Elizabeth Bradburn; Routledge, January 1989; Hardback £35

"NO GREAT PARTY has yet taken the Cause of Children much to heart.... The silent lapse of the children into life-long misery and weakness does not touch them." This cry was made by Margaret McMillan in 1924, after thirty years of tireless campaigning for children in need.

She was an extraordinary woman in so many ways. J.B.Priestley described her as "one of those beastly Agitators who are always bringing up awkward subjects and making decent people feel uncomfortable." (He went on to say that such people are "the salt of the earth"). One of the inspectors of her nursery school wrote of her "sense of largeness" and added, "Her sympathies were as wide as the world."

To Miss Stevinson, who became Principal of her College, Margaret was "a fighter. Her enemies were ignorance, prejudice, dirt and disease." But for many of the working class she was "Our Maggie"; as an observer at one of the many meetings she addressed wrote, "She so manifestly cared for them and their children."

From unlikely American, middle-class origins, Margaret McMillan, along with her sister Rachel, launched into an astonishing crusade to improve the health and education of children. Her faith was one source of inspiration, her socialist beliefs another. Margaret was a founder member of the Independent Labour Party and a friend of Keir Hardie; she talked of being swept in Bradford "into the warm glow of socialist comradeship". It was here that her pioneering work began and she served for eight years on the School Board.

There are interesting chapters which show Margaret's part in the achievement of the School Meals and Medical Inspection Acts of 1906 and 1907 and, equally

important, her struggle for Local Education Authorities to implement the Acts. The two health clinics that she inspired, the second of which was in Deptford, arose out of her concern that medical treatment should follow inspection. "It was quite a new idea," the opener of the Deptford Health Centre said, "that education authorities were responsible for the health of children - only a few years ago it was the firm conviction of the Board of Education that it had nothing to do with the bodies of children, but only to stuff into their little brains reading, writing and arithmetic."

## Children Matter as Individuals

The series of interlocking experiments in Deptford which followed over the next twenty years and culminated in the Rachel McMillan Training College, are vividly described. A former student wrote, "Margaret McMillan loved children in a way I shall never forget.... She knew all their names - when I was new this always amazed me. The first night at supper she asked me how Charlie was - I blushed and felt terrible. It taught me that children as individuals mattered to her."

*Margaret McMillan: Portrait of a Pioneer* should appeal to the general reader and specialist alike. It is enriched by its quotations from original sources. The author, Elizabeth Bradburn, spent seven years collecting and studying Margaret's numerous articles and pamphlets. It is a mine of information for students of social history, with its descriptions of the conditions against which Margaret McMillan battled; for political historians, with the light it sheds on the early Labour Movement; and obviously for all concerned with the teaching and care of children.

Dr Bradburn is well-known in her field. She was a Senior Lecturer in Education at Liverpool University and the National Vice-Chairman of the British Association for Early Childhood, formerly the Nursery Schools Association of which Margaret McMillan was the first president. With the freshly roused interest in Nursery education, the timing of the book is apt.

Sadly its price will put it beyond the pockets of many readers. It must be hoped that it will become widely obtainable through libraries.

M.E.F.

## Books Received

EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS: Martha Scott-Moncrieff. Linden Hall., Paperback, 50pp, £2.50. Copies from author (postage 25p), 5, Marine Place, St Andrews, Scotland KY16 9PP

COMMUNICATIONS AND MASS MEDIA: Reginald Holme. Blandford Special Studies Series. Paperback, 66pp £1.50