



Inner London Education Authority

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AIMS FOR EDUCATION

EDWIN NOBLE writes from 30 years' experience in teaching and as a member of the National Union of Teachers. He was until recently the editor of 'Polestar', the educational paper:

'ARE YOUR SHOTS HITTING THE TARGET?' asked a sergeant. 'I don't know, Serge,' replied the recruit, 'but they sure leave here with a hell of a bang!' That is the state of much modern education. Education needs good methods, adequate resources, motivated children, dedicated teachers and a society that gives it priority. But all these are ineffective without clear aims.

Aims must be related to both society's needs and the individual's potential. Education should be related to life but it is not enough to learn to fit in with the status quo. Children should be trained to cope with inevitable change and to initiate necessary change.

Being able to grasp new facts and work out their implications can be more important than specific knowledge. This does not rule out learning. The discipline of thorough learning can give the necessary training for absorbing and assessing the unexpected. It lays the foundation for the future even if the actual knowledge will never have any practical application. 'Pride in the quality of work done may be the attitude it is most important to inspire. Much of this attitude-formation should start at school,' writes Andrew Britton in the May 1985 *National Westminster Quarterly Review*.

Where it is impossible to see what tasks will be required in the next 50 years it is important to be adaptable.

Where employment is not guaranteed, every child can feel there is a satisfying task for him or her.

Where the future of mankind depends on establishing a moral foundation for society, every child can become aware of a Power which is ready to help him live by absolute moral standards and can guide him when he faces apparently insoluble problems.

Where the population is likely to be ever more mixed racially, children can give a lead in showing people how to live together.

The education of the young is too important to be left to the teachers or the government alone. Each person can, by their example, inspire others to play their part in remaking the world—surely this is a priority aim for education. ■

In this issue we give examples of how people are working towards this aim.

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TEACHING IN A SAAMI COMMUNITY

by Lilly-Anne Osttveit

AFTER FIVE YEARS OF TEACHING in the north of Norway, in a Saami* community, I have been a student again for a year.

It has been an enriching experience getting to know another *culture* from the inside. In some ways, though, it has also been an uphill struggle.

Being a southerner, I knew little about the Saami people when I started my job, and teacher training had not *prepared me* for the special challenge of cross-cultural education. I discovered, too, that the curriculum and textbooks were not geared towards children living in the far north, with a natural and social environment very different from that of the south. No wonder the motivation and work input of the pupils were low, and absenteeism high. What went on in school was simply not relevant to their everyday life, nor to their future when they finished school. In the community where I was working reindeer herding with related activities was the main means of livelihood.

There is a limit to what can be done within a fairly rigid school system, to adjust it to the pupils. Many of my Saami colleagues did an admirable job, developing teaching programmes and materials in the Saami language. The duplicating machine and photo-copier never rested.

Personally, I felt the need to learn more about the culture of the people among whom I worked, in a historical and wider regional perspective. When I was due for a year's leave, I decided to use it to study anthropology in Newfoundland, Canada. I knew that would be a good place if I wanted to focus my studies on circumpolar peoples.

These peoples have so much in common, in their way



D Channer

Lilly-Anne Osttveit

of life and in their relations through history with the larger societies that have claimed sovereignty over their territories. There is a *growing contact between them on an organisational level.*

Education in the far north has too often been instrumental in alienating young people from their own traditional background. Instead education should make them aware of their rich culture—past and present—and through it foster pride and confidence in what is their own. It could be a source of building a positive sense of identity in children and young people, who easily have the impression that anything of significance or worth learning about happens in the south or involves southerners. A positive sense of identity is vital to every individual and necessary for anyone to be able to share his and her special gift in life with others. The same is true for cultures.

The most important work will have to be done by teachers who are part of these cultures and their number is growing. But others are needed, too. ■

*The Saamis are the indigenous people of northern Scandinavia.

CROSSING THE BRIDGES

A CONFERENCE ON 'OUR CHILDRENS' FUTURE, everyone's concern' drew more than 80 people to Tirley Garth, the MRA centre in Cheshire in April. Teachers, parents, young people, police and others examined 'the dynamic for creative initiative', the conference title.

The backcloth to the discussions was the growing youth unemployment, violence, breakdown of family life and striking teachers and pupils. The influence of the media was mentioned by Chief Inspector Terence Williams, who is in charge of community relations for the Avon and Somerset police. He showed how often young people get their attitudes and opinions from their parents and other adults, as well as from TV and videos. 'We need to be far more aware of ourselves and our own attitudes,' he said, 'and to control them where they need control.'

'In many cases,' he continued, 'we cannot stop bad influences reaching young people. They cannot always be shielded. We can educate them early so that they can be

strong in mind, attitude and behaviour when the shield is gone.'

Many encouraging examples were given of how difficult situations had been overcome. A South Wales housewife had ended the reign of terror of a teenage gang of boys. 'Fourteen of those boys were sitting along our back wall,' said Patricia Davies. 'They were throwing abuse and stones at the younger children in the garden. When I saw it, fear took root in me. I prayed "Lord, what am I to do?" Before I had time really to absorb God's answer, I went quickly to the back wall. The boys then started hurling abuse at me. I said, "All these younger ones have had a birthday party. Would you like to come in and have tea?" There wasn't a sound. My eldest son thought I was mad and was frightened to death. The boys came into the house. We made sandwiches and quickly bought more squash. I spoke to those boys as I would to any others. They were just the same. Although all the problems aren't yet solved, I can walk down the street at any time and be greeted by those boys.'

How can we reconcile freedom and discipline in education?' said Thomas Clarke, a member of the Gwynedd County Council who is on the governing bodies of four schools. 'Countless mothers and teachers do it, but no one

IN AN INNER LONDON SCHOOL

A senior teacher in a London comprehensive school writes:

'AND HOW DID YOU ESCAPE from Asmara?'

'On foot and by camel—my aunt wouldn't ride the camel so she preferred to walk beside it. We travelled by night.'

'Was that for safety reasons?'

'Yes—if we had travelled in the day, the government planes would have spotted us and...'

CSE English oral examinations in a typical inner London secondary school: an Eritrean refugee, the daughter of an Iraqi diplomat, a Ghanaian, girls who have never stepped outside Fulham except for a holiday.... I listened to tales of how, 'in Jamaica, my mum says you can see the sun and the moon fighting each other' and to ambitions to work as a florist or join the army cadets. For us, the multicultural and *multi-ethnic world out there is a reality in our own small part of it here in London.*

'What has struck you about living here?' I asked the Eritrean girl I was examining.

'It is so free here: at home the government controls everything.'

I asked the same question of the Ghanaian girl I interviewed.

'I didn't know what racism was until I came here,' she said, 'from white people and from black—some people look down on us because we have come from Africa. But,' she added, 'I like meeting different people and seeing how they live. I like the old people here—they are so friendly.'

Racism and racist responses—institutional and individual, intentional and unintentional—are endemic in our society. But our changing population is showing them up. 'I have been racist'—as one white member of staff told the rest of us—'the resources I use are Eurocentric—they need to be changed to take account of other parts of the world. And

when a girl told me she spoke Twi (a West African language) I thought she was joking....'

'I see now my attitude to him was based on our cultural differences and so my response was racist,' a black leader told me about his reaction to a colleague of Asian origin.

At dinner recently with a couple from our church, the conversation turned to the old theme of whether or not this is a Christian country. It is easy to hold on to old categories: we are Christian, they are Muslim, you are Catholic, we are Church of England.... In London schools today, however, spiritual and religious issues are being treated with a new seriousness because they are now seen as part of the multicultural dimension of our schools. A parent/teacher discussion about producing an exhibition on Islam was drawing to a close when the local leader of an Islamic sect arrived to take part. A startled group of atheists, Christians and other Muslims suddenly found themselves listening to his prayers for the success of the venture—not the way most PTA meetings end! Islam is a living faith that must be reckoned with here in London. So is Judaism or Sikhism....

Rather than debating whether or not this is still a Christian country, in the old terms, perhaps it is time to recognise that we are rapidly becoming a multi-faith country in which there are strong and unashamed adherents of many different religious beliefs. Perhaps the true spiritual impetus for the future will come from the joint efforts of the committed members of all the different faiths rooted here—with their humane and demanding moral codes and their belief in surrender to the love and will of God.

As the Eritrean girl said, it is free here compared with elsewhere. We are being offered a rare and remarkable chance to meet the great diversity of human lives and cultures and experiences in our own streets and schools and workplaces. There is a hope for the future here that we must not retreat from or reject: if we can welcome what is happening to each of us, as our different cultures and groups meet, whether the encounter is painful or joyful, we can play our own part in the difficult task of creating a more hopeful future. ■

can write down a solution. They do it by bringing into the situation a power that belongs to a higher level, where opposites are transcended—the power of love.'

Robert Campbell-Lamerton, a teacher from Mansfield, told of the results of his care and concern for individuals—as one boy said to him, 'You are the only person who has ever treated me as a human being.' 'It is our job to make contact,' said Mr Campbell-Lamerton, 'to cross the bridges. We may not know what to do or what to say, but being there is what counts, as the first step.'

'I've learnt so much through failing,' said Judy Priestley, a 16-year-old schoolgirl from Sheffield, 'even though it hurt at the time.' She told of her great disappointment in not getting into a certain college. 'I'm one of those people who, if I don't think I'm going to get what I want, won't bother to go after it. I've now learnt to try and accept whatever the result.'

Dang Thi Hai from Vietnam is now studying in London to teach English as a second language. Her aim was to help meet the needs of the 19,000 Vietnamese refugees in Britain, 80 per cent of whom are unemployed, she said.

In the last three weeks, she said, she realised that God was asking her to *put things right* with a close relative whom she

felt bitter towards because of things said and done. 'I have refused to do it,' said Dang Thi Hai, 'and it has stopped me from creative living. I want to do it when I get back to London. I know that bitterness is real, but so is the cure.'

(Dang Thi Hai later told *New World News*: 'For some months I had bad arthritis in my right knee. It came suddenly and got worse each day. Many times I prayed to God to cure me. But nothing happened. Following my decision in Tirley Garth, I have apologised to my relative for my bitterness. Two days after I posted the letter, my bitterness went, and so did the pain in my knee! I had to bend, twist and touch-toe to convince myself that it was true. God answered my prayer when I paid the price of obedience to him.)

The final session of the weekend was a demonstration of the initiatives people wanted to take in their own situations. A *Charter for Education* which had been on the conference invitation, gave many people ideas of where they could start, especially the final section which described a world 'where all nations and their people face what they have done wrong, recognise their need of each other and take creative initiatives together for peacemaking and the shaping of a just world'. ■

GRASPING THE NETTLE IN THE 'CITY OF ROSES'

by Linda Pierce

THIS IS A STORY FROM PASADENA, California—otherwise known as the 'city of roses'. It is a story of courage and initiative, as told by John and Denise Wood, and demonstrates what can be done for a community.

'We want to give Pasadena a present for its hundredth birthday,' said the Rector to Denise. 'We want you to assess the quality of life among the 120,000 Pasadenans.' Why had the Rector turned to Denise for this task?

Lively, darkhaired Denise Wood arrived in Pasadena in 1972 with her husband John, developmental director for the Braille Institute. When they moved in, many white families were moving out. These families wanted no part in a court order that would bus their children to schools in other parts no matter where they lived, so as to equalise the racial balance. The Woods said to themselves as they settled in, 'Maybe one day we can have a part in helping with the situation.' They were fortunate, they said, to join a vibrant Episcopal church and in time John became part of its social concerns committee. This was during the recession years and there was much unemployment in the city. As part of this committee John looked thoroughly into the question of a community skills centre.

Skills centre

Tall and regal-looking the Woods have a quiet, unassuming manner. Their natural warmth broke through as they related how health returned to Pasadena and told of their community's strengths and weaknesses.

'Pasadena, famous for its rose parade, is set in the mountains,' said John in a deep, rich voice, 'and has a tradition of beauty and stateliness.' Wealthy families had moved out from the east coast, early in the century, and spent the winter in stately Pasadena homes. 'In the last 20 to 30 years,' explained John, 'there has been an influx of blacks, Hispanics (Spanish-speaking people), an Armenian population and growing numbers of boat people—Vietnamese and Cambodians.' As in many American cities the black population is concentrated in one area. Pasadena is the home of Cal Tech (California Institute of Technology) whose faculty boasts at least 16 Nobel Prize winners. Two miles away from the Woods' home is the Jet Propulsion Laboratory which 'creates, controls and directs space explorations beyond the moon'. Pasadena, I learn, is not only a high tech city with famous engineering corporations but is known, too, for its culture, art and museums. As Denise puts it, 'This city is small enough to get your arms around yet big enough to be significant.'

When John Wood, a Harvard graduate, explored the idea of a community skills centre, he admitted he knew 'very little about education and nothing about skills centres'. So he went 'on the knocker' and met people one by one—the superintendent of schools, the leading banker and so on.



John and Denise Wood

Everyone he met and talked with had long felt this need but did not know how to come together to make it work.

The outcome was the setting up of a task force of 'diverse views who had never met before. They were young black leaders, a Hispanic attorney, bankers, education people.' They met regularly over some months and 'listened and learned from each other, out of which grew an unprecedented plan and consensus of the type of skills centre it should be,' enthused John. 'The skills centre opened as a unique partnership of the school district, the city college and the city government.'

The skills centre is open to 17- and 18-year-old highschool students as well as adults. Training in basic skills is provided such as secretarial, wordprocessing, carpentry, electrical and drafting which will lead to jobs in the community. Each year 3,500 students have come through. Now in its fifth year the centre is flourishing. Vietnamese and Cambodians learn English as a second language as well as a skill. There is a child-care centre for those with children. School drop-outs can make up for lost classes and receive their highschool diploma through the centre. Sixty per cent immediately find jobs in the various engineering firms, supermarkets and other enterprises.

No graffiti

The key to all this was 'sheer persistence', said John. 'Everyone wanted it and I was not going to take "No" for an answer.' John is justly proud of the students' *esprit de corps* with no graffiti and theft'. He says, 'The three partners who run the centre are held together by cooperation through a joint committee' of which he is chairman.

This summer an extension of the skills centre opens in the north-west part where 'young blacks are shy about coming to the middle of the city'.

Looking back, John sees that everyone in the task force 'including myself has grown in their understanding of each other, in their sense of responsibility, expectancy and

enthusiasm. We all learned from each other. I could learn from the gifts of the young black head of the Urban Coalition about how you run a task force and build a skills centre.'

Then came this idea to do a survey of Pasadena to mark its centennial in June 1986. The Rector of the All Saints Church, which the Woods attend, asked Denise to spend nine months finding out 'the true story of Pasadena'. The church financed the survey but gave no direction on how to go about it. Denise's experience as dean of an elite Los Angeles school, told her that 'the best way to go about this is to be taught by people'. So she bought a tape-recorder and visited an old lady who had been a volunteer in the city. She in turn gave Denise five names of people 'who have a lot of ginger in them'. This 'ripple effect' led Denise to 104 people: a chain of 'creative connections'. Denise went to each of them, sometimes several times. Being 'John's wife' was a good door opener as he was so well known in the city. She said to them, 'I am trying to understand Pasadena. What is really happening in this city? How do you perceive it?'

Green shoots

Very early on Denise felt she was being 'shown and taught about a community in pain'. She learned of families living in automobiles and others in trash bins. People were hungry and there was a drug trade. 'It is as easy for kids to buy drugs on school campuses as it is for you or me to buy a cigarette,' said Denise. Most of the city's crime, according to the police, is narcotics-related. The scale of the problem can be gauged from the fact that pushers can make '\$25,000 in a week' and that last year 13 out of the city's 14 murders were because of drugs.

Through her quest Denise quickly 'discovered the wonderful resilience of the human spirit'. There were individuals who had faced up to these needs and without committee or budget 'rolled up their sleeves and begun to tackle what was needed'. Inspired, Denise called them 'green shoots of hope'. She has put 14 of these stories in a booklet, *Experiencing Pasadena*. 'I could have put down 40,' she adds.



The Pasadena farmers' market

One 'shoot' was the farmers' market. Once a week farmers would bring their produce 'from Brussels sprouts and strawberries, to mushrooms and potatoes' to a barren field. They had two rules: 'They must sell only what they have raised themselves and they were honour-bound at the end of the day to put three per cent of their earnings into a glass jar to defray costs.' Poor and rich would come and buy fresh food without the added cost of the middleman. And the money collected, after the bills were paid, would buy new school shoes for the neighbourhood children. 'A very simple circular process,' Denise pointed out, 'but it did a lot to make people into better neighbours.'

Gift

As Denise was made aware of 'coalitions being born to meet the emergency needs of Pasadena', she felt 'two burning convictions: the city must not be allowed to become polarised between rich and poor. And what happens to everybody's children has got to matter.' So in her final recommendation to the Church, Denise Wood suggested that they establish an Office for Creative Connections as their gift to Pasadena. This would be All Saints Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to the city.

Denise found herself doing a great deal of public speaking because people wanted to know more about what she was doing. *Experiencing Pasadena* has in a way 'defined the city morally to itself'. The booklet has had widespread distribution in the city and is now in its second printing. The Mayor asked Denise to be on his television programme and he said she was the first non-City Hall person to be asked. His reason: she 'thought for the whole city'. Denise says that 'with the training I have had with Moral Re-Armament that concept of thinking for the whole city was very natural and very much needed'.

At present Denise is working on another report on Pasadena, which she and her colleagues are calling *What are our children telling us?* As Denise puts it, 'If a boy of ten gets drunk every day, he is trying to tell you something.' Denise says her team want to 'grasp a few of these nettles and say to the community "we must hear what our children are telling us and begin to rethink our own values and priorities, so they have a different structure in which to grow and become strong adults."' This team is concerned with early childhood development, child abuse and the importance of learning parenting skills. As Denise explains, 'America has the highest teenage pregnancy rate so becoming a parent while you are still a child is a red-hot issue.'

Realists

In all her interviews, Denise reports, she never met a cynic but 'plenty of realists'. 'It is a different approach to urban problems—developing people rather than pitting people against each other.'

John has not been idle in the meantime. Two 'unexpected' things have happened to him. About a year ago he met a black minister, John Perkins, who has taken part in the civil rights movement in Mississippi. His brother was killed by the sheriff and he himself was tortured and imprisoned. John Perkins and his wife Vera Mae refuse to let bitterness have the upper hand because of their deep Christian experience.

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A week with Moral Re-Armament

'FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO UNDERSTAND the forces that run the world and have a part in changing them' ran the invitation to 'A week with Moral Re-Armament' at Tirley Garth in Cheshire. Eighteen young people arrived on Easter Day, all aged between eighteen and thirty and from a wide variety of backgrounds—a sixth-former from Newbury, an aircraft designer with British Aerospace, a student from the Royal College of Agriculture, a male nurse at a hospice for the terminally ill in Edinburgh, as well as participants from Germany and the Netherlands.

As the invitation suggests, the programme is designed to give an in-depth understanding of certain issues in the world, and at the same time study the spiritual resources necessary for anyone who wants to use their lives to bring change in one area or another. One of the world issues chosen was the relationship between Britain and Ireland; Dr Roddy Evans from Belfast and Leslie Fox from London outlined the historical background to the present situation and constructive initiatives being taken. Leif Hovelsen from Norway and Madame Alberti, who was personal assistant to Alexander Solzhenitsyn for three years, gave their unique insights into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Link

First thing each morning there was a 45-minute session taken by Brian Boobbyer from Oxford, John Burrell, a theological student, and his wife Suzan on the elements of the spiritual life—how to find a faith, how to deal with temptation and evil, and how to find God's leading.

Then, making the link between the inner life and *bringing change where you are*, came people who spoke of their experiences in attempting this—journalist Graham Turner and his wife Jean; Eric Priestley, retired chairman of a family clothing business in Yorkshire, and his wife Daphne; Malcolm Jack, machine-tool worker and national committee member of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers.

Towards the end of the week everyone wrote down 'What I have learnt; what I have decided; and what I am going to do.' Nearly everyone had decided to take a new step in life, whether it was to renew a broken family relationship; to take on his heart the British-Irish relationship; or to renew a commitment to do God's will.

The next 'Weeks with Moral Re-Armament' are planned for New Year and Easter 1986. ■

BEYOND WORK

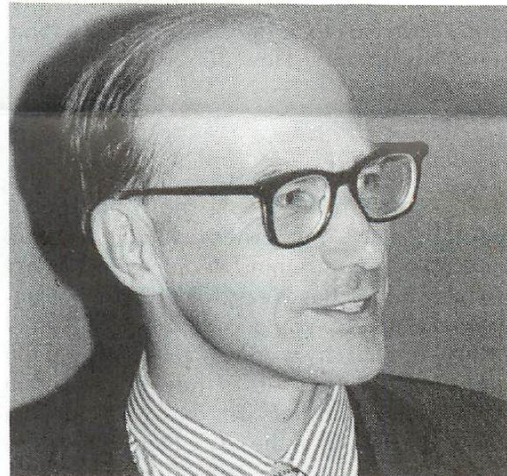
The following is taken from an address by DR JOHN LESTER to the education conference reported on page 2:

THE GREATEST ISSUE in the world is that of faith. All our attitudes and aims, commitments, achievements depend on whether or not we believe in God. But if we recognise that there is a chasm between those who do believe and those

who do not, we must recognise too that there is a great divide among those who believe—between those who have a relationship with God and those who believe only in a set of principles, the Christian ethic.

Those who believe in principles only usually believe only in work, in the work which they do for God, in the issues which they fight for God. The person who believes in God as a person sees their relationship with him, or in Christian terms with the Trinity, as the most important thing in life. We know that God loves us, we long to learn to love God, to know him, to be close to him. Naturally this relationship also issues in work for God and with him, but it is not the primary thing.

The first commandment that Jesus gave was to love the Lord thy God, not to work for the Lord thy God. Those who choose to work for God can be tempted to love the work rather than God himself.



Cummock

Dr John Lester

In John's Gospel we read, 'For God so loved the world, he gave his only son.' God allowed part of himself in his son to become fully man and to face the consequences—and in so doing to take our sins upon himself, and to show in the resurrection that death is not the end. We can be united with him now and beyond death. For anyone who can grasp any part of it, it is a wonderful thing and alters your attitudes on everything. How can you be bitter against anyone when you know how much you have been forgiven? How can you be jealous of anyone else?

This relates to the class divide and the race divide. Reconciliation between the class people becomes a reality if you think of Christ's sacrifice because as sinners we are all one. When we look at God we are all on the same side of the fence. For those who experience this, there is the sense of being part of God's kingdom on earth, even with the world in its present parlous state. There is also the sense of being part of God's kingdom that is not of this world, which incorporates this world but is timeless and is where God is.

Just creating a kingdom on earth, in the sense of altering the conditions in which we live, is not the whole of Christian understanding of the world. Many who run on Christian principles, but either never find or lose the Christian experience, can desire to build a Kingdom of Heaven on earth to end injustice, to end the danger of war, to increase prosperity. Please do not think I am against these things—they are part of what we are meant to do—but we can attempt to replace a spiritual heaven with a material heaven.

There is another danger if we do not have the experience of God in our lives. The Christian's basis of building a new

world is to run on the engine of love. That is a gift from God. If we do not have it we tend to force people towards running on hatred which is the engine of the natural human state.

Those who seek to build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in a material sense often seek to build a world without pain. It should be understood, for example, that the motive of many who advocate abortion is the attempt to remove pain, to remove awkward things. God's desire, on the other hand, may be to transform pain and suffering, not to remove it. The Christian response enables people to transform suffering and be transformed by it. I do not mean that God deliberately sends suffering—we are presumably meant to eradicate it, along with hunger, disease and so on. But pain and suffering, present at the first Easter and transformed by

it, can be transformed still, and are the way for so many to God. So for the Christian pain is part of the way in which we can be united with Christ in the Easter experience.

The relevance to education is—what will the teachers teach? Will we teach the Christian religion as history or as an experience? Or both? Do we believe that that experience is the most important thing that any child can learn, or do we shy away from it? Do we give people Christ or do we give people Christian principles? I'm sometimes concerned that too many have accepted the lie that a spiritual approach is not part of professionalism. So I am fearful that too many are happy to speak about the fruits of Christian living, happy to teach people standards, but afraid to give people the bread of life. The whole world depends on you teachers, for the souls of children as well as their intellects are in your hands. ■

Convincing evidence

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE NOT SO GOOD DAYS that teachers have now and again. I was trying to teach some basic calculations to fifth-year non-examination pupils and Terry was intent on causing the maximum annoyance as he rocked back and forth, with an air of defiance, on the back legs of his chair.

That was the day Terry went too far. I lost my cool and, to Terry's surprise, and mine, I knocked him to the floor. The class went silent. Then came a flurry of comments from the other pupils in anticipation of what might happen next.

Terry walked out of the room and I was left wondering what to do after such an indiscretion. An unexpected thought came, 'Go straight to see Terry's mother and apologise to her for hitting her son.'

Feeling somewhat foolish, I knocked at the door. 'I've come to apologise for hitting Terry.'

'Oh,' she said, 'come in and I'll give you a note to say you can hit him as often as you like.'

This unlikely reply marked a turning-point. It was the start of a new relationship between Terry, his parents, and me.

Things did not go absolutely perfectly from there, but within a year Terry improved beyond all expectation in both his mathematics and English.

Some time later I was trying to persuade another boy that God really does exist. All my evidence and intellectual argument had failed. Terry was listening in on the conversation which was becoming a bit too one-sided. 'Look,' he said, 'Sir hit me and went down to say sorry to my Mum and now I can read and do my sums, so there must be a God.'

The boy stopped arguing.

Tony Capron

Breakthrough

SHEILA WAS A NON-READER in a class of readers and therefore a non-participant in many activities. Whenever I tried to help her a shutter came down, snap, and a hard look came into her unhappy little face.

I reasoned, coaxed, pleaded but nothing would break the deadlock. She never played with the other children. She

never spoke except in monosyllables.

Eventually I tried praying for her every morning and waiting expectantly for inspiration. One idea that came was to give the whole class a short time of silence after prayers each day, after which anyone who liked could pool ideas that came.

On one of these occasions, Sheila came out with, 'If your Mummy's very ill in hospital, don't worry because God will look after her.'

Immediately the tension began to relax. She began to cooperate on a beginners' reader and to learn the two and three letter words I gave her for dictation. Now I knew the home situation I could enquire about Mummy and share Sheila's delight when she began to get better.

Soon after this I had the idea that we should act the story of Pheidippides and that Sheila, who was a good runner, should take that part. She ran like the wind to the admiration of the class and even spoke a few impromptu words.

From then on she began to look really happy and soon she was reading fluently. One of my colleagues asked, 'What's happened to Sheila, she's a different child.' A wisdom beyond my own had spoken to her, reassured her about her mother and transformed her as a result.

Elizabeth Falk

ONE DAY, WHEN EMILY SCOTT was a class teacher, the Chief Education Officer came to observe her lesson. She wondered why. Later she learnt that a father had been to him, demanding that she should be sacked as she was teaching the children to be irreverent.

His son had been afraid of the dark, but one night he went upstairs so boldly, that his father followed him quietly to see what he would do. He saw him kneel down, look under the bed, and say, 'Dear God, I know that you're under the bed as well as above it, and I'm not going to be frightened any more.' He called this irreverent.

The Chief Education Officer said, 'If I could find 16 more irreverent teachers like that, I would appoint them at once. ■

These three articles are taken from 'Polestar', the periodical which aims to change thinking about education. Copies may be ordered from Miss Beryl Jones, 18 Stabler Crescent, Garden Village, Wrexham, Clwyd LL11 2TL, price 10p plus postage.

TONY BIGLAND has been involved in professional theatre productions for 20 years. He is a craftsman woodturner and has some construction experience. Yvonne, his wife, is an artist and has considerable catering experience around the world.

JAMAICA VENTURE

OUT OF THE BLUE WE WERE INVITED to share our skills with a village community in Jamaica. The Walkerswood Cooperative in St Ann, Jamaica is a model of what could be done in any developing country. Some of its aims are to develop self-reliance, to make things from indigenous materials and to create work so that 'our children need not go off to the towns'.

The challenge to raise the necessary funds was overwhelming—there are so many calls on seemingly limited resources. To free ourselves from present commitments seemed impossible. Also Yvonne and I had been through a traumatic period in our married life which had jeopardised a number of family relationships. Through painful honesty we had an Easter experience which helped us to see this venture as a gift from a loving Father to share what had been given us.

By selling family silver we started our fund. In eight days we were promised £4000 to cover expenses and to buy a lathe and tools with which to teach the art of woodturning. With additional funds we hope to help rebuild the village Methodist Manse and perhaps create a rudimentary stage in the community hall. In the formal invitation my assistance was requested in these particular projects and Yvonne's creative talents will be fully utilised in the existing cottage



Tony and Yvonne Bigland

industries which are geared to the tourist market.

When it was clear we would be away for four months, we had to come to some arrangement with Stephen, our 23-year-old lodger. When we put to him the various possibilities over Sunday lunch, we were amazed that he immediately begged to come with us! He has sold his much cherished car to buy his ticket and has worked overtime to pay his own way. With an honours degree in applied biology Stephen is a nurseryman. He was prepared to give up his job but his employer is holding it open until his return. As the Walkerswood community has acquired 50 acres and the promise of a well, Stephen is uniquely equipped to help.

Preparing for the Jamaican adventure has been a freeing exhilarating experience. ■

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They have settled down in North-West Pasadena which is predominantly black, 'at the crossroads where the most virulent drug-traffic takes place'. 'We are going to stay,' they say, 'till we turn this situation around.' He and his wife have set up a plan to 'start to rebuild family life' over an eight-square block area around their home, where 'at times teenagers have been found dead on their doorstep'. The Perkins plan to start with the young children and in the summer 85 eight- and nine-year-olds will spend the day in the centre they have established. It is called The Harambee Christian Family centre. Children will learn the Bible and then go on to sewing and other skills. The older teenagers will learn house-painting and other paying jobs, so that they can take responsibility for themselves. The programme, John Wood tells me, includes the parents and will last five to seven years as it is 'looking forward to redeveloping the whole thinking of the area'. John Wood has now been

asked by Mr Perkins to head up the board of directors of his local operation and they work together on these issues.

The other 'unexpected' event was when the Mayor and the Vice-Mayor asked John to be chairman of the centennial committee for Pasadena to prepare for next year's celebration. 'We have come to you,' he said, 'because we want a centennial that will help to bring the city closer together and we know you are trusted by all the different elements in the city.' His colleagues at the Braille Institute have given John complete backing and want him to take off all the time he needs.

John and Denise Wood found that instead of confrontation and 'violence of spirit' within a community, this new approach 'looks for the best in people and develops that'. The Woods believe that it is the effective way to achieve the social justice everybody longs for.

Perhaps Pasadena can share the gift of her experience with America and the world. ■

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