



PlayAction Summer 2000

CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU ONLINE BY JULY 2001

The **Criminal Records Bureau** is being established by the Home Office to improve access to criminal records checks for employment-related purposes. There will be a special level of enhanced check for those working with children and other vulnerable groups, and a new booklet has been published as an information guide.

The CRB will be providing a service to employers and voluntary groups and such organisations will be able to ask successful applicant employees and volunteers to apply for a check so that the employer can ensure the person's background is suitable. The employee or volunteer will have to give their consent and there will be safeguards to ensure information supplied is not misused and that ex-offenders are treated fairly.

The CRB's Service will apply to England and Wales - separate arrangements are planned for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

SAFE JUST AND TOLERANT

The aim of the Home Office, in the words of the booklet, is to build a safe, just and tolerant society, and it believes that the CRB, by providing a reliable and fair system of checking, will both enable children and other vulnerable groups to be protected whilst at the same time also protecting the rights of others. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, put it clearly: "Dangerous people need to be stopped from working with children and young people. The creation of the Criminal Records Bureau is an important step towards achieving that."

HOW IT WILL WORK

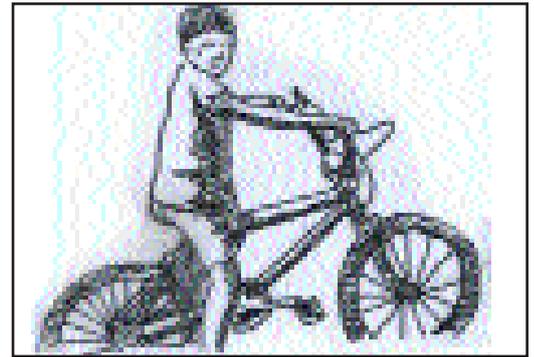
The CRB will undertake criminal record checks for individuals in return for a fee and there will be three levels of check, depending on the sensitivity of the type of work. For any normal form of employment, the individual will be able to make application themselves - the Bureau will advise individuals and organisations as to the appropriate level of the check. Most people will, of course, need only the basic Check, which PlayAction understands will be based on the computer record held by the CRB nationally, and the print out, which will go to the individual, will only list previous convictions etc not 'spent' by dint of the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation.

The Home Office is clear, however, that any check, any whatever level, is but one part of the recruitment process and that such checks are not a substitute for a proper procedure, only part of it. They will not give a full picture of someone's suitability for a post, nor exonerate an organisation from undertaking full child protection awareness measures.

The basic level check will be the criminal conviction certificate, CCC. The next level, the criminal record certificate, CRC, will include convictions that will normally be considered as 'spent' and will be suitable for those who have regular, but not 'substantial' contact with e.g. people under 18 years. One such level might be, for example, a playgroup assistant who is constantly supervised and unlikely to be left alone with children during the course of their work.

HIGH LEVEL CHECKS

The enhanced criminal record certificate, ECRC, will be the first to be introduced, in response to the need for those employing people to work e.g. with children to check their backgrounds thoroughly. The check will contain details



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Child Protection in Playwork

of all criminal record information held on the national computer, whether 'spent' or not, plus cautions, reprimands and warnings, pending prosecutions etc, and in the case of children, the ECRC will state whether the person is named on lists held by the Departments of Health and Education & Employment, as specified in the 1999 Protection of Children Act concerning people considered unfit to work with children.

The most controversial aspect of the ECRC will be the 'soft intelligence' aspect, that is information held by the police but which is not about convictions.

CODE OF PRACTICE

Applications for ECRCs and CRCs will be signed both by the applicant and countersigned by an officer of an authorised organisation which has registered with the CRB. The Certificates are designed to be used once only - that is, they are not transferable between employments and a person applying to a new post should be the subject of a new check.

A Code of Practice is being devised to help ensure the system is worked fairly and properly by employers etc - registered organisations will be expected to have written employment and recruitment policies, and to guarantee secure storage of records. This Code will have Parliamentary approval.

TIMETABLE

The ECRC relating to working with children will be the first to be issued:

March 2001 Commence registration of employers
July 2001 ECRCs for those working with children and young people
July 2001 - 2002 Commence remaining service provision, full service in operation by July 2002.

Applicants for basic CRCs will be able to submit telephone requests, Internet or post. But for ECRCs an application form will need to be filled in and countersigned by a registered person, as above. The form will be sent to the CRB and checks carried out. The CRB hopes the process will be speedy and a Home Office official stated that they expected several million such checks, of all three kinds, to be carried out annually. The Bureau will be based in Liverpool.

FAIR PLAY'S GROUND WORK

Working through the current VOCS pilot project, which has enabled Fair Play for Children to access on behalf of its voluntary sector member organisations criminal records information through local police forces, the organisation is set to apply to become recognised by the CRB for the purposes of handling ECRCs. "Many of our member organisations will not wish to become involved in this aspect, so we will be willing to run an agency for this need. We have a huge amount of experience, since 1993, in running such checks, and currently we list some 90 or more organisations registered with us for this purpose. The new system seems ideal to us for this service to be developed as part of our Child Protection in Playwork Programme." **Jan Cosgrove**, Fair Play's National Organiser, expressed confidence that the new system can be made to work as an essential tool of good practice.

Details of the CRB from: PO Box 91, Liverpool L62 2UH, and of Fair Play's Programme from the address on page 1 of this edition.

CHILD PROTECTION ACT

1999

Not too many people seem aware of the implications of the Act passed last June, as a result of **Debra Shipley MP's** private measure, which became law, with Government support, as the Protection of Children Act 1999. Born in the wake of scandals such as the North Wales children's homes, the Dunblane tragedy, the Act imposes important new obligations on a range of organisations employing (including volunteers) people working with children and young people.

The Criminal Records Bureau will deal only with person known to the police, either through conviction or prosecution information, or possibly 'soft' intelligence. Where a person is not known to the police, this safeguard cannot operate. The new Act, however, enables employers who have pretty justifiable concerns about people they have employed concerning their behaviour with or relevant to children to apply to the Secretary of State to have that person's name put on a List held by the Department. There will be a system of notification to the person and an appeal process by way of safeguard.

The List in effect seems to put on a sounder footing the current Department of Health Consultancy List, and it will be cross-referenced with the similar DfEE 'List 99' of persons similarly felt unsuitable to work with children. "This system seems aimed at those people who are not prosecuted because they 'retire early' or on medical or 'compassionate' grounds etc but whose behaviour involving the young raises serious questions as to suitability and probity. As it will be used with the CRBs enhanced level certificates, this will add another level of scrutiny and safeguard" is the view of Jan Cosgrove, for Fair Play for Children.

The Act also imposes on those organisations defined as 'childcare' in the Act a major new obligation to check applicants for paid and voluntary positions working with children against the new List. The definition of childcare is in terms of any obligation to be registered under legislation concerning that work, but PlayAction is not yet aware of exactly what this means. If it applies only to registration under the Children Act or the new Care Standards Act now being steered through Parliament, it will miss e.g. those working in the huge number of junior sporting organisations which Fair Play regards as amongst the most open at this time to abuse. "We hope this uncertainty can be satisfied as the Act's working details are published." Fair Play will publish more as the situation clarifies.



Childcare

Alternative Ulster

Early years provision is undergoing great changes in a land where change has almost become the norm, as James Tweed reports

Despite the suspension in February of the Northern Ireland Assembly barely two months into its existence, the myriad changes to life in the Province show little sign of slowing down. Gone are the security checkpoints and the once-familiar sights of British soldiers patrolling the streets of Belfast.

Gone too are the bombs which, at the height of the Troubles in the 1970s and 1980s, reduced much of central Belfast to car parks. Now the sites of these car parks are either plush new hotels or glamorous shopping complexes, or they will be soon, if the number of industrial cranes dotting the city's skyline are anything to go by.

EARLY YEARS TRANSFORMATION

The early years sector in the Province has also seen a transformation. Two years ago the Department for Education in Northern Ireland (DENI) published Investing In Early Learning, in which it outlined the future of pre-school education in the Province. In it, the then education and health and social services minister Tony Worthington outlined its Pre-school Education Expansion Plan, which would, he said, ensure that 'the learning experiences enjoyed by children are of high quality and provide a firm foundation for the future success in their education and throughout their lives'.

This was followed last September by **Children First**, a policy statement on the Province's childcare strategy, which outlined its long-term goal 'to integrate early education and care within a wider supportive framework of services for children and parents'.

Yet for all the strategy's good intentions - both 'the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme and the New Opportunities Fund support for out-of-school childcare will bring about major expansions in provision for children aged three and over', it claims - the single largest provider of daycare in the Province has been all but forgotten, according to **Bridget Nodder**, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA).

REGISTERED CHILDCARE OUTSTRIPS OTHER PROVISION - BUT CHILDMINDERS EXCLUDED

She points out that the 4,000 registered childminders in the Province provide as much daycare provision as the rest of the sector combined - pre-schools, playgroups and nurseries - due in part to the rural nature of much of Northern Ireland and parents' preferences for home-based daycare. As if to symbolise this, two weeks ago saw the official opening of NICMA's new headquarters in Newtownards, Co Down, having outgrown its former premises with the rapid growth in childminding across the Province.

Yet, Bridget says, 'Childminders have been excluded from the strategy on the grounds that you had to have six to eight children of the same age within the setting at the one time, which excludes them automatically.' However, in a bid to make childminders eligible for any of the additional £27.4m DENI has set aside for the expansion of pre-school provision for three- and four-year-olds over the next three years, NICMA is in the process of setting up a series of five childminding networks across the Province along the lines of the National Childminding Association's 'Children Come First' initiative in England.

Bridget explains, 'One is special needs, for children with disabilities, and the other four are based either in rural areas or very deprived and disadvantaged areas of Belfast. One is working with employers who are having difficulty in

Playgroups may face extinction

By James Tweed

Pre-schools in England may soon be a thing of the past as about 3,500 pre-schools and playgroups expect to close their doors for good in the next 12 months, the **Pre-school Learning Alliance** has claimed.

Chief executive **Margaret Lochrie** dropped her bombshell in May as she gave evidence in the House of Commons to the Education Select Committee inquiry into early years provision. She cited the results of an NOP survey commissioned by the Alliance which showed that just under a quarter of its members believed there was a 'strong threat' they would close this year. Up to 2,000 pre-schools and playgroups have already closed in England in the past three years.

In response, the Government revealed it was giving a further £500,000 to help pre-schools and playgroups through their 'short-term financial difficulties'. This is on top of the £1m emergency funding it has given the Alliance over the past two years. According to Government figures, it currently gives the Alliance just over £3m a year.

Mrs Lochrie told the committee the reason so many pre-schools and playgroups were closing lay with their funding, as highlighted by the independent report into the future of the sector, **Tomorrow's Children**, which called for a new funding structure to replace the current system. She said, 'Pre-schools have shown themselves ready and willing to contribute to the expansion of nursery education and childcare - the majority are now inspected by Ofsted. However, as the independent review noted, many pre-schools are struggling to make ends meet and this is why they are closing.'

'If this continues, there is a real danger the pre-school movement will disappear entirely within a very few years. This would be a great hardship, not just for the hundreds of thousands of children who attend pre-schools every day, but for the communities they serve.'

The predicted closures are almost three times greater than the Alliance anticipated. Earlier calculations had put the number at 1,200 in England this year. However, employment and equal opportunities minister Margaret Hodge made it clear she was losing patience with the Alliance and complaints of hardship from the voluntary sector. She said, 'We want a vibrant voluntary sector and we want to offer parents diversity, but services must meet the preferences of parents. The pre-school movement needs to work with partnerships, parents and the Government to provide quality services that



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recruiting women into their staff, and the other is a combination of rural and urban. 'It's a pilot scheme for 15 months, so we do hope we can see the success of that sufficiently to expand and continue. Once the networks are set up we will lobby again the Department of Education to change the criteria and allow them to access the pre-school expansion grant. Childminders are a massive resource, so why not put some investment into that?'

PARENTAL CHOICE BEING TAKEN AWAY

Bridget adds, 'Parental choice is being taken away as well. If their option is a playgroup or a day nursery even though they would prefer their child to be in a home setting, but one's free and one's not, it's obvious which one they're going to take.'

Indeed, Government figures for the Province show a steady increase in the number of pre-school places in the statutory sector. In October 1997 there were just over 11,000 pre-school children there. Of these, 8,500 were in 91 nursery schools and 69 nursery classes attached to primary schools. In addition, there were about 2,600 children in 400 reception classes and reception groups in primary schools. And in the voluntary and private sectors there were also just under 16,000 places available in playgroups and pre-schools, as well as more than 3,000 places in day nurseries.

More recent figures also show a rise in the number of free pre-school education places in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors to just under 19,000 - a 70 per cent increase in the past three years. NIPPA: The Early Years Organisation, formerly the Northern Ireland Pre-school Playgroups Association, is an umbrella group for the private and voluntary sector which represents the majority of the Province's day nurseries, pre-schools, playgroups, parent and toddler groups, and creches. It estimates that as a result of the Government initiative to offer a free pre-school place in the year before formal education starts, three-quarters of the 30,000 children attending settings run by NIPPA groups across the Province are now funded.

NIPPA representatives are on local Pre-school Advisory Groups, similar to the former Early Years Development Partnerships in England, which have brought together Education and Library Boards (as local education authorities are called here), and the private and voluntary sectors to discuss ways of promoting co-operation between sectors and ensuring no duplication of provision. But, as in England, the drive to expand pre-school provision is inflicting its own casualties. The most visible potential victim of the drive for places is Broughshane Community Playgroup, a multi-award-winning rural playgroup near Ballymena in County Antrim which has been in existence for 27 years and whose fans include Prince Charles. It is currently fighting for its survival because the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) has proposed to construct a purpose-built 26-place nursery school nearby which will take 52 children in two half-day sessions.

"BREAKING OUR HEARTS"

Playgroup supervisor **Jacqueline Coulter** says, 'We've been arguing that they'll be duplicating provision if they build the nursery school. It's breaking our hearts to think our wee children are going to be put into a crowded classroom. We're fighting for our children and our playgroup.' Following a letter-writing campaign by local parents on behalf of the beleaguered playgroup, which has included representations to prime minister Tony Blair, the NEELB has deferred its final decision until next month. But, despite all the progress that has been made in recent years, signs of the Troubles are never far away, especially on gable walls in working-class districts of Belfast.

Each day, children attending Blythe Street nursery school and primary school in the Sandy Row district of South Belfast have to walk the gauntlet of huge murals depicting red clenched fists - the red hand of Ulster - and images of men in balaclavas and combat gear holding submachine guns, representing the 36th Division of the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Ulster Freedom Fighters and the

parents want and children need.'

Mrs Lochrie replied, 'We couldn't agree more. We are already co-operating with more than 100 partnerships. We have been encouraged by their willingness to address the issues in Tomorrow's Children and many share our feeling that it is time the Government implemented the recommendations made.'

The Playgroup Network, representing around 1,500 playgroups in England, said they met parents' needs already. Network chair Tessa Drury said, 'They work to the requirements of the Children Act and those that take nursery education grants come under Ofsted too. They have to have high-quality provision.'

For the survey, NOP contacted 700 members of the Pre-school Learning Alliance in March about their sustainability. The Alliance said the 3,500 closures would mean a loss of more than 100,000 childcare places.

Nursery World 2000 TSL Education Ltd.

CHILDCARE FOR UNDER 3s ESSENTIAL TO ENDING CHILD POVERTY

The national childcare charity, **Daycare Trust** has called for more childcare provision in the wake of a major new report published by the charity recently. The report shows the shortage of childcare services for children under three with only one subsidised childcare place for every fourteen children under three living in poverty and currently only 288,160 children under three are using registered nurseries or childminders - out of 1,819,00 children in this age group.

The new report, **Achieving Potential: How childcare tackles poverty amongst young children**, calls for childcare services to be set up at the heart of every community in the UK. The new centres would provide affordable childcare places for young children as well as supporting carers and parents looking after children in their own home.

Colette Kelleher, Director of Daycare Trust, said: "For parents living in poor communities, being able to access quality childcare is almost as likely as being able to afford private education. Too many young children and their parents are missing out and living in poverty. The Government has an opportunity to build on the national childcare strategy and Sure Start to create the places that young children and their parents need. Childcare does change lives and is key to the eradicating of child poverty. We believe Centres for Children are a key step to delivering childcare for all."

PARENTS MISS OUT ON CHANCE TO STUDY



Childcare

Ulster Defence Association. As if in response, they have painted their own school mural on a wall beside the entrance gates.

The school's vice-principal **Mima Childs** acknowledges the social problems the children bring in each day along with their schoolbags. 'There is a high level of unemployment in this area and one-parent families, and there are quite a few in prison though quite a few are out now,' she says. 'Most of the children have been affected by the violence in some way. You just get a general feeling of indiscipline in the children - that they're just running the streets at night - nobody knows where they are, nobody cares where they are, as long as they are out at a youth club or somewhere it doesn't matter - as long as they're not at home. 'I think sometimes it's amazing that they are as well-behaved in school as they are. You have to keep the lid on - if you don't, you're in serious trouble.'

Acknowledgements to Nursery World 2000 TSL Education Ltd.



BECAUSE OF CHILDCARE GAP

A major new report by Daycare Trust released on Thursday 30 March 2000 shows that a lack of childcare is holding students with children back and preventing many from studying or taking up training opportunities.

The report "Learning for Life" highlights the serious shortage of available childcare with less than 40,000 childcare places for more than five million students in the UK. Daycare Trust warns that unless there is an extension of available, affordable, childcare targeted at students, access to lifelong learning opportunities will be a struggle for parents who want to study or train.

Collette Kelleher, Director, Daycare Trust, said: "A larger number of students are now mature students with children who are more likely to need childcare. If they can't find childcare, studying can be impossible for them.

Daycare Trust is calling on the Government to invest in creating more childcare places for the children and to do more to help studying and to do more to help studying parents with childcare costs.

GENDER ISSUES IN PLAY AND CARE WORK STUDY

The DfEE has carried out research into gender issues in playwork and childcare. Findings include that the role of the play worker is low-status and that men entering play work tend to fast-track out of face to face posts or into higher posts. The research also found that play work was seen as more of 'women's work', with women felt to be more 'natural' for the role.

The report can be downloaded from the DfEE Website at: www.dfeee.go.uk/research. If you don't have internet access then you can contact Katey at BAND 81 St Nicholas Road, Bristol BS2 9JJ. Tel: 0117 954 2128. or Fax: 0117 954 1694, E-mail: BANDLtd@aol.com



Special Report

The ritalin debate

This edition of *PlayAction* is presenting a Special Feature on Ritalin, following concern expressed in play work circles about the dramatic increase in use of this drug in terms of children's behaviour. We are not entering the *Does ADHD etc Exist Debate*. Our concern is with the effects of this drug on children's creativity, imagination, socialisation and other effects which may be apprehended in the play work setting.

Of growing concern to many who work with children, in various capacities is the increasing restrictions that are put on the lives and activities of children. Parental and adult agencies fears about traffic, abduction, drugs, bullying and other factors have contributed to a situation where the freedom to play has been seriously curtailed. A generation of children is growing up without that basic right to play, once taken for granted. It is not surprising that within this current climate the use of psychoactive drugs to treat children with 'emotional or behavioural problems' has seen such a marked and rapid increase.

The drug in focus is Ritalin and the disorder that it is used to treat is ADD or ADHD. However there is growing concern and debate over the use of this drug, its effects and as to whether ADD or ADHD are genuine medical conditions or simply convenient labels assigned to children who behave in manners that adult agencies deem inappropriate. Before the debate on the use of ritalin is begun, a number of questions have to be answered. The first is, **what is Ritalin?** It is the brand name for the drug Methylphenidate. This is a drug which is chemically similar to amphetamines and cocaine and is categorized by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a Schedule 2 drug, which means that it has a high degree for potential abuse and addiction. Other drugs in this category include morphine, opium and barbiturates.

What is ADD/ADHD? ADD or ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. These are both disorders which form part of a wider range of disorders known as Disruptive Behaviour Disorders or DBD's for short. ADHD and ADD are categorised by a number of specific patterns of behaviour which are seen to be present for an extended period of time. For the ADHD there is a list of nine types of behaviour. For ADHD to be diagnosed six of these criteria have to be met, as follows

1. Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
2. Often leaves seat in classroom or other situations, where remaining seated is expected
3. Often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate, in adolescents or adults this may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness.
4. Often has difficulty playing or engaging in play or leisure activities quietly.

The first four items in the list for diagnosing the 'inattention' form of the disorder include:

1. Often fails to give close attention to details or makes mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities
2. Often has difficulty in sustaining attention in tasks or play activities.
3. Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
4. Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores or duties in the workplace. (Not due to oppositional behaviour or failure to understand instructions).

Many playworkers will find this form of labelling of children quite disturbing. Patterns of behaviour that many would regard as children simply being bored or even sometimes 'naughty' have been recategorised and labelled as a medical condition, whereas no concrete evidence for a biological basis has been found for ADD or ADHD, and even if there is such a basis it would not explain the huge rise in the number of children who are being labelled as ADD or ADHD.

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ISN'T IT TIME YOU JOINED!



Special Report

In England the number of prescriptions for Ritalin jumped from just 3,500 in 1993 to 126,500 in 1998. Such a rise in such a short time should give pause for concern. Either more children are genuinely hyperactive or, as many suspect, it has become a convenient label and method of dealing with children as social and emotional pressures become greater on them. As more and more areas of children's lives are regulated and regimented, more and more become seen as disruptive. Patterns of behaviour once seen as normal part of childhood are now being labelled as disruptive or anti social.

The Rise and Rise of Ritalin

Of concern to many is the rapid growth in the use of the drug Ritalin to treat children with behavioural problems often referred to as ADD or ADHD. What is particularly of concern to many is that we may be drugging children on the basis of a disorder which may have no basis in fact. ADD and ADHD form part of a series of patterns of behaviour known as disruptive behaviour disorders or DBD'S. Often DBD's are not disruptive to those with them but others. The DSM-III-R, a scale of categorisation used by psychiatrists, states that DBD children are "characterised by behaviour which is socially disruptive and is often more distressing to others than those with the illness".

In effect, children who do not behave as adults would wish them to do in certain situations can be given this label, a perfect and insidious form of social control. Some may say this situation has all the hallmarks of a form of Stalinism: These children are disruptive so there must be something wrong with them. It is of course not the fault of parents, teachers and other adult agencies for creating a bland boring environment. Just as in the former Soviet Union it was the dissident who was categorised as mentally unbalanced when he or she complained or protested against the state, and often drugged as a result. We are now on the point of categorising and drugging many of our children on a massive scale,

NO AGREED CONSENSUS

The problem with ADD or ADHD is that there is no agreed consensus as to what it is or whether it even exists. The best that mental health professionals can do is agree a broad set of criteria which are open to subjective interpretation, there is no objective rational test for these conditions, and some do not even agree that it exists. Dr. Edward Hamlyn, a founding member of the Royal College of General Practitioners has described ADHD as a 'fraud intended to justify starting these children on a life of drug addiction.'

Others have shared similar views. In 1993 neurologist Fred Baughman, Jr. noted that studies conducted on children on Ritalin failed to confirm any definite improvement in their performance. He cites estimates of the frequency of ADD varying from 1 in 3 to 1 in 1000 and asks, "is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, after all in the eye of the beholder"

RITALIN'S EFFECTS

Dependency Link with Ritalin Use?

In a report presented to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Professor Lambert, director of the School Psychology program, reveals a "significant relationship" between the use of central nervous system (CNS) stimulants in childhood and a dependence on tobacco and other stimulants as adults.

Lambert's research is based on an ongoing 26-year old study conducted in the San Francisco Bay area. She looked at a sample of 492 children, half of whom suffered some degree of ADHD and half of whom did not. Her findings were astounding.

INCREASED RITALIN USE LINKED TO INCREASED LIKE



Special Report

Ritalin has become the new Calpol - the difference is that Calpol is a relatively mild drug, and Ritalin is certainly not. Ritalin is the brand name for the drug Methylphenidate, a drug which has the same chemical and neuropsychological effect as potent and addictive drugs such as amphetamine, and can cause similar side effects as these stimulant drugs. Ironically we spend as a society millions on educating children about the potential dangers of illegal drugs such as speed or cocaine, yet we are increasingly giving children at a younger and younger age drugs which are similar in chemical effects to these drugs.

Ritalin has been shown to cause severe adverse reactions in people, including disruption of sleep patterns, loss of appetite, withdrawal from social situations, depression, obsessive compulsive behaviour, lack of affect to emotional situations. Ritalin may make children concentrate more on boring repetitive tasks, but the price to be paid is a lack of creativity and interaction. Something that all those who work with children should be concerned with.

In one case of obsessive behaviour a child on Ritalin played non stop with lego, with no sleep or food or interaction with others for 36 hours. This is clearly not a normal or healthy pattern of behaviour. Parents are often not informed of these damaging side effects of the drug. As well as these psychological effects the use of Ritalin can cause in some individuals permanent and disfiguring muscle spasms to the face, eyes the neck and the mouth, and in common with all stimulant drugs can cause irregular heart rhythms.

GROWTH SUPPRESSION

It has been known from animal studies that Psychostimulant drugs including Ritalin can cause persistent and probably at times irreversible weakening of the heart muscle. A dozen or more cases of cardiac arrest have been reported to the FDA due to methylphenidate (Ritalin). The weakening of the heart muscle presents an as yet unstudied long term risk. Ritalin like all psychostimulants can inhibit growth leading to abnormally accelerated rebound growth if the drug is stopped.

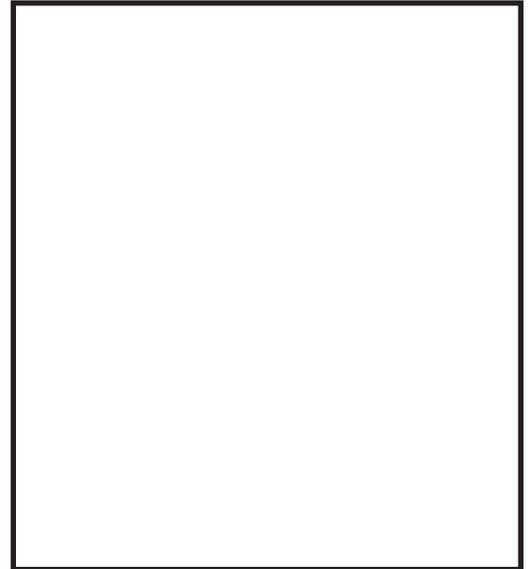
This growth suppression, as demonstrated in a large body of literature, takes place as a result of the suppression of growth hormone cycles. Since many children remain on methylphenidate through out the year and for many years at a time, it can no longer be hoped that they will recover their growth during the time they are off the drug. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that accelerated growth during a period of 'rebound' is in no way normal.

"The potentially negative effects of drug-induced cycles of growth suppression and rebound are beyond our current scientific appreciation but should be of grave concern. Considering the complex structure of the brain and of the formative changes occurring in the brain throughout childhood, it is obviously hazardous to suppress growth while bathing the child's brain environment in toxic psychostimulants. In sound medical practice, a drug that causes growth suppression should be contraindicated for children."

BRAIN GROWTH AFFECTED?

Recent data suggests that Ritalin along with other psychostimulant drugs can cause permanent and irreversible damage to the brain in the form of biochemical dysfunction, neurotransmitter receptor loss and brain cell death in the short term. However, the research on Methylphenidate's long term effects is too sparse and inconclusive.

Nasrallah et al (1986) found a small but measurable degree of atrophy of the brain in more than half of the 24 young adults with prior stimulant-treated hyperactivity during childhood. The authors suggest that "cortical atrophy may be a



We need PlayAction "regional Reporters"

who can supply copy for this journal on what's happening in play in their areas. A few hours a month - culling press stories, precisising reports, attending local play events.

Word processor a must. e-mail facility VERY desirable

Modest payment offered if needed.

Contact
Editor on 01243-869922 or e-mail
as per page 1



Special Report

long term adverse effect of stimulant treatment”.

Firestone et al (1998) studied a group of 4-6 year olds on methylphenidate over a period of 7-10 days. Their results were disturbing, they found a marked deterioration in behaviour at doses of 0.5mg compared to a placebo. Emotional effects included sad/unhappy in 69% of children, loss of appetite in 75% of children, uninterested in others 62%, and drowsiness in 62%. The above results tend to confirm that psychostimulant drugs reduce spontaneous behaviour and lead to more docility.

Furthermore when children are removed from the drug, or the effects wear off the initial hyperactivity returns at a more extreme level than before leading to greater doses of the drug. Children who are given psychostimulant drugs are frequently misdiagnosed with new psychiatric disorders and placed on more medication, including, antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, sedatives and in some cases even very powerful antipsychotics.

CONCERNS SUMMARISED

The concerns re: Ritalin and other psychostimulants are as follows.

1. They can cause irreversible brain damage and dysfunction. This is known with a high degree of scientific probability in regard to amphetamine and methamphetamine, and with a high suspicion in regard to methylphenidate (Ritalin)
2. Psychostimulants cause multiple adverse effects, including a variety of cardiac and central nervous system (CNS) effects, such as depression, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders, and even mania. The CNS effects often confuse doctors leading inappropriately to further psychiatric diagnoses and medication rather than to drug withdrawal.
3. Psychostimulants impair growth, including the brain.
4. Psychostimulants work by suppressing spontaneity and sociability, and by enforcing behaviour which is obsessive and persistent, and by isolating the child from normal outside influences.

~~A Story of 'non-compliance'?~~

As we continue to regulate and structure more and more areas of the lives of children, and as we increase the pace and pressures of life, those who don't conform are seen as disruptive or hyperactive and therefore 'wrong' or unbalanced. Is use of drugs like Ritalin a stop gap solution for this? We stand a risk of creating a whole generation of drugged up, compliant zombies who will perform boring and unstimulating tasks in over-structured settings. And what happens when we cannot maintain those settings and structures?

Dr. Peter Breggin, a vocal and persistent critic of the use of Ritalin, and on biological psychiatry in general, had this to say in response to a report carried out by the American Medical Association (AMA) which concluded that there is no problem with regards to the use of psychotropic drugs to control children.

“The council report specifically denies that Methylphenidate (Ritalin) is used for behavioural control but the diagnostic items are entirely limited to behaviours... Cookie cutter diagnosis and assembly line pharmacological treatments do not do justice to the needs of our children. On a social level they need improved schools and family life and value systems that emphasise their individuality

BULLY FREE ZONES

In 1996 the Bully Free Zone was launched. Since its launch it has become one of the leading anti-bullying peer support projects in Britain. The aim of the project is to raise alternative ways of resolving conflict and of reducing bullying. In 1998 the Bully Free Zone, (BFZ), was awarded the Phillip Lawrence Award for Citizenship.

In 1999, the BFZ was awarded a Millennium Volunteers contract. Millennium Volunteers is a new project aimed at young people aged 16-24, which aims to promote and stimulate volunteering as an activity amongst young people. Volunteers will work with projects aimed at working with resolving conflict in a number of settings including schools and colleges. This scheme aims to create innovative anti-bullying strategies and to create a large task force of anti-bullying programmes and volunteers. BFZ is an integral resource in meeting the needs of the DfEE's social inclusion: pupil support (circular 10/99) strategy.

BFZ Millennium Volunteers will:

- . Be specifically trained in conflict resolution
- . Identify and achieve personal volunteer plans.
- . Be committed to completing 200 hours of volunteering.
- . Receive national and regional accreditation for their work.
- . Be involved in planning and delivery of MV schemes both locally and nationally.
- . Receive a high profile national MV award of excellence after 200 hours of sustained volunteering.

For more information contact Carl Emery or Lucy Whiting (Manchester) at Bully Free Zone, Room 405, Gainsborough House 109 Portland Street, Manchester M1 6DN. Tel: 0161 236 5826. or e-mail: manchester@bullyfreezone.fsnet.co.uk

Or contact Cath Rose (Bolton), at Bull Free Zone, BASE, Marsden Road, Bolton BL1 2PF. Tel: 01204 454958, or e-mail: office@bullyfreezone.freeserve.co.uk



Special Report

rather than drug induced compliance and conformity.”

There is also no evidence to prove that Ritalin works in dealing with ADHD. Studies have shown that the response to the drug can not be used to validate the diagnoses. If a 'normal' child is given Ritalin they show the same changes as a child with ADHD. Within an hour of taking the drug any child tends to become more obedient, more narrow in focus and docile. Parents and teachers having difficulty with control can hand the child a pill and know they'll soon be more docile.

The drug has a similar effect on adults as well. It had been thought that the effect was different for children, but at the doses prescribed by a physician, children and adults will become spaced out and less in touch with their feelings, and hence more willing to concentrate on a range of narrow focused tasks.

In 1992 Grahame-Smith and Aronson authors of the Oxford Textbook of Clinical Psychopharmacology and Drug Therapy suggest that stimulants, including Ritalin may work in children in that same way as they impact on rats, by "inducing stereotyped behaviour in animals, i.e., in reducing the number of behavioural responses.”

THE CASE FOR ITS USE

Of course there are those who would argue that ADHD and ADD are very real conditions with a genetic and biological basis. Studies carried out by Alan Zametkin in 1990 received a great deal of publicity for finding increased brain metabolism in positron emission tomography (PET scans) of adults with a history of ADHD. However some psychologists and psychiatrists dispute the findings indicating that when the sexes were separated out and compared to the control group there was no statistical difference between the group with ADHD and the control group. Some believe that to achieve the difference a disproportionate number of women was placed in the control group and the data was lumped together to produce the results. In addition, when individual areas of the brain were compared between the control group and the group with ADHD, no differences were found.

The debate on ADHD and the use of Ritalin has not yet reached the stage in this country that it has in the US, where in Massachusetts's alone between 29,000 and 48,000 children are on Ritalin. The cost of the drug is between \$30 to \$60 per medicated child. The US accounts for 90% of the global market for Ritalin.

DISPROPORTIONATE USE IN BOYS

What is of concern is that the number of boys on Ritalin is far more disproportionate to the number of girls. Quite why there should be this statistical abnormality is not known. However Dr. Peter Breggin has suggested that ADHD may be no more than children who have not had enough attention from their fathers - they may have been divorced or simply their fathers are preoccupied with work. Is then ADHD a result of simply not having enough parental attention, especially attention from a stable male role model?

Not surprisingly, the girls who are labelled as ADHD or other forms of DBD's are often the girls who will not quietly fit into rigid assigned gender roles. Breggin states, "we are the first adults to handle the generation gap through the wholesale drugging of our children. We may be guaranteeing that future generations will be relatively devoid of people who think critically, raise painful questions, generate productive conflicts or lead us to new spiritual and political insights." These are all things that come about as a result of healthy, stimulated children, i.e., those who have been allowed to play. In a society already denying children this most basic and fundamental of rights, the labelling and drugging of increasing numbers of children as a means of 'compliance' is surely a step in the wrong direction?

DRUG OF CHOICE FOR MIDDLE CLASSES?



CHILD PROTECTION IN A PLAYWORK SETTING

Fair Play's Programme aimed at raising awareness, improving procedures and good practice in play organisations, after-school clubs, sports organisations, arts projects, youth groups, nurseries

Pack, same title: 60 pages with advice about policy formation, checks (police and others), what to do if ..., with examples, appendices, reading lists, more contacts, checklist: £10 [£7 Members]

Police Checks Service, contracted Voluntary Member organisations only

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Model Child Protection Policy - now published

Fact Sheet now available and at our Web Site

Details: Freepost, Fair Play for Children, Bognor Regis PO21 1YZ,

Tel: 01243-869922, Fax: 862072
e-mail: fairplay@arunet.co.uk



Play Around

What is also of interest is how in America Ritalin has become the drug of choice for the middle classes, a prep school drug, given out to children who are not severely disruptive, but who may not pay enough attention in class and do as well as their parents would like. Adult expectations of success fuel the growth in Ritalin. As well as being prescribed legally, the past few years have seen a significant rise in the use of it as a form of recreational drug, with teenagers selling their prescriptions onto their friends. The tablets are often crushed up and snorted, much in the same way as cocaine, or they are mixed in with marijuana and smoked. Figures for the US Drug Enforcement Agency indicate that Ritalin is amongst the top ten of drugs most commonly stolen from doctors surgeries or pharmacies.

A POWERFUL LOBBY

The advocates of the use of Ritalin are a very powerful lobby indeed. In America the main lobbying group is known as C.H.A.D.D (Children with Attention Deficit Disorders) This is a group of Parents who view ADHD and ADD as having a definite genetic and biological basis. They in no way believe that ADHD may be caused by environmental factors, such as poor housing, high divorce rates, family conflicts or poor schooling. Furthermore they have very strong ties to the drug company, Novartis, formerly known as Ciba-Geigy. In 1992 CH.A.D.D held a conference at the Chicago Hyatt Regency entitled "Pathways to Progress". The money to hold such a large scale event was supplied by Ciba-Geigy. This is made clear in the literature published by CH.A.D.D.

"CH.A.D.D. appreciates the generous contribution of an educational grant in support of our projects by Ciba-Geigy Corporation."

'NON-COMPLIANCE'

Others who view ADHD and ADD as having a biological basis often seem to place the 'blame' onto the child whilst exonerating adult agencies of any blame. One such supporter of the biological basis for ADHD is Russell Barkley. He states "**Although inattention, overactivity and poor impulse control are the most common symptoms cited by other as primary in hyperactive children, my own work with these children suggests that noncompliance is also a primary problem.**"

Is Barkley suggesting that we should drug our children to simply make them more compliant? He blames the child for having conflicts with various adult agencies, yet places no blame on these agencies themselves. As he puts it "there is in fact something 'wrong' with these children." A similar indictment is not made to the adults around them, who have far more power and control in shaping the world children live in than the children themselves.

The debate on whether ADD and ADHD are real biological conditions or merely the result of other environmental factors is not yet solved. What is clear from a Playwork position is that the drugging of children, with a powerful stimulant based drug whose long term effects are not yet known, and whose short term effects are clearly dangerous and even potentially fatal represents a clear and dangerous precedent. It has already been established that the use of Ritalin can cause severe adverse drug reactions, including depression, insomnia, and in some the very symptoms of hyperactivity the drug is supposed to counter.

ALTERNATIVE: A MORE STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT?

Many children who exhibit symptoms of ADHD will lose those very same symptoms if they are placed in an environment that is more stimulating. Are we now at the point as a society where we will label children as being disruptive and drug them to ensure their 'compliance' with ever narrower sets of goals and expectations? What we should be attempting to do is to create an environment where

LONDON PLAY... 18 MONTHS ON.

London Play (Working for a capital where children can play) are currently developing their charity as a pan-London coordination and support organisation with much of their work over the first eighteen months having been to develop their strategic plans and to identify ways to fund them.

- London Play have applied to the National Lottery Charities Board for £0.5m over three years to provide direct voluntary sector support work for inclusive play on a regional basis. Called the Play Together Project, this bid was lodged last June. They are still awaiting the outcome and expect to hear very soon.

- They have been successful in their application to Bridge House Estates Trust Fund to develop a Play Intranet. This is an IT project - for which they are currently recruiting a coordinator - to set up and maintain a comprehensive web-site for children's play in London.

- Whitbread in The Community have funded their Adventure Play Awards, results of which will be announced during Playday 2000.

- The Secretary of State, Chris Smith, addressed London Play's first annual conference last October and gave a supportive endorsement of our work and that of the whole play community. He encouraged London Play to lobby the new mayor's office and Greater London Authority to ensure that children's play is on the agenda.

- London Play are developing further plans and funding proposals for;

- supporting adventure play
- playwork training
- play research
- campaigning work
- developing our information services
- establishing a play development fund.

Other than these developments they provide an ongoing information service through their bi-monthly journal, London Play News and are shortly to launch their web-site londonplay.org.uk. They also provide informal advice and information on funding to play projects and organisations all over London.

If you would like to keep up to date with their work and developments in children's play generally, why not become a member of (or re-join) London Play? For £10 a year (£5 for individual membership) you will receive London Play News every two months and occasional one-off mailings as well as preferential rates for confer-



Play Around

children's natural curiosity is encouraged, not one where it is seen as abnormal.

A child who runs around and makes a noise, who doesn't always pay attention, is simply being a child - there is nothing wrong with that. If they are disruptive, then perhaps the environment they are in is simply just boring, or there is some other unresolved trauma in their lives. That is not the fault of the child - for that we adults have to take some responsibility. The drugging of children to ensure conformity goes against all the basic principles of good playwork and education. Education is not about cramming into a child but drawing the potential out as is good playwork. We may ensure that we have our 'peace and quiet', but a generation of children will be laced into a chemical straitjacket and that is a prospect which should concern us all.

"Oh, Brave New World, That has such people in it" is not only the rapturous (and ?misplaced) expression of wonder from *The Tempest*, it is also the ironic quote from Huxley's novel in which chemical manipulation of the population to ensure consumption and compliance is the nightmare vision of a future perhaps closer now than it seemed possible in the 1930's when the book was written.

GRUMPY PEOPLE TAKE ON NORTH WEST PLAY

* This is a Multiple Choice Article

So, there we are, just hanging around this

CHOICE A: modest / quite large /mega /MEGA MEGA

CHOICE B: local team / premier league /euro champions 99 /global legend

CHOICE C: kickabout area / football ground / stadium and there's a

CHOICE D: nailbiting end-of-league clincher / local government officers' day out/ regional playwork conference taking place.

* you need not answer these questions but any that you do may be taken in evidence that you were daft enough to try.

GRUMPY? No, that's not a question on your mental state 30 seconds after the latest bulletin from your bosses on the 2001 Things You've Got to Add to Your Good Practice Manual by 9am *CHOICE E:* today / yesterday, it's the crafty souls who somehow managed to:

1. take north west play by the scruff of the neck and get a conference organised in Manchester to, sort of, relaunch it
2. persuade Manchester United, a poor struggling sports club in inner-Manchester, to let the Conference be organised in their hallowed (and somewhat prestigious precincts) at Old Trafford, in May.

This was a major and exciting Play Event. Taking the years of low-level work of the North West Play Officers forum as its starting base, this event has actually launched what Play in the North West has needed for years - a regional play association. The Conference brought together a wide range of folk from all parts of the region - playworkers, day care projects, local authority officers from play units etc, voluntary sector interests, and many more. Indeed, so popular was the event, that people were turned away. Various working groups were held, and not a few folk rose to the challenge of arriving at the conference resplendent in hats made for the Occasion! Objectives for the new network centre of good practice sharing and dissemination, networking, information, raising awareness, providing a regional voice and forum. *Details from Steve at GRUMPY, Grumpy House, Vaughan Street, West Gorton, Manchester Greater Manchester M12 5DU, Tel: 0161-223 9730, Fax: 0161-220 9664, e-mail: resources@grumpy.org.uk*

ences and other events.

Fair Play for Children acknowledges the work that London Play provides for children in London and wishes all at London Play all the best for the future.

If you require any more information about London Play please contact them at London Play, West Library, Bridgeman Road, London, N1 1BD. Tel - 020 7 609 7053.

South West Opportunities for Play

Recently the fifth "South West Opportunities for Play" was held, and for the first time in Cornwall for playworkers across the five counties. The conference took place in March at Teretherra School in Newquay.

Playworkers had the chance to enjoy some out-of-doors workshops. On Porth Beach, they learned some new games, and the junior school playground wall was decorated with a large mural designed by the school children. In another area, Mellingey Mill supplied willow and expertise for a willow cabin. Whilst in yet another area of the school's sheltered quadrangles, a paved surface of mosaics was created.

The weekend was organised by the National Centre for Playwork Education and was primarily funded by PLEIAD and the Cornwall Play Association, through the 'National Lottery Millennium Festival Awards for All' grants programme.

The weekend gave play workers a chance to network with one another and to attend workshops providing innovative activities and skills for working with children in their play settings. Experts across the South West were called in to run the workshops, which included origami, soft block printing, screenpainting and drama and dance.

ISN'T IT TIME YOU



Play Around

THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS? NESTLE SPONSORSHIP OF KCN ROW

A row is developing in the Play World concerning a challenge put to Kids Clubs Network over its receipt of sponsorship from Nestle.

For many years, there has been an on-going controversy on a global scale around Nestle's promotion of its baby-milk products in Third World countries, and there has been a great deal of exchange between Nestle and its critics as a result.

On one recent television programme a UK interviewer spoke to the Health Minister of an African country who was asked why his nation's health service had become involved with Nestle, and whether he had any questions to put to senior-most executives of Nestle. The reply was dramatic as the health minister asked why Nestle was conspiring to kill his country's children.

KCN CORRESPONDENCE

Michael Tombs, who organises the UKPlayworkers e-mail listing has written to Anne Longfield, Director of KCN, on this issue of sponsorship. KCN is one of the leading UK organisations involved in promoting child care, and in promoting good practice. It is heavily involved in taking forwards The National Childcare Strategy and is thus recognised by the Government and its departments as a major player in the UK, with perhaps an important standing when it comes to our 'child care reputation' internationally.

PlayAction believes the debate ought to be joined throughout the Play world, so we are reproducing the letter sent by Michael to Anne as a start, and we will update this debate in the next edition including any response from KCN.

SCANDINAVIAN SURPRISE

In the meantime, one comment from a Scandinavian playworker, Nic Nilsson is "Over here in Scandinavia, we are very surprised to read that Nestle sponsorship of £250,000 each has been accepted by British Red Cross, Kids Clubs Network, Shelter and MacMillan Cancer Relief."

What are YOUR thoughts in this debate which concerns the fundamental ethics of play work? We're keen to hear from readers so write, fax or e-mail as one page 1 of this edition.

THE CONCERN

From Michael Tombs to KCN:

"Dear Anne Longfield

"I am writing to ask you to respond to a recent debate that has been taking place on the UKplayworkers Internet Mailing List. This debate has been about Kid's Clubs Network acceptance of sponsorship from Nestle.

"This debate has been based around the lack of ethics shown by Nestl when providing their powdered baby milk to parents in the developing world, which cause babies immune systems to not develop fully - meaning that babies are at higher risk of becoming ill.

"A local government officer in the midlands started a debate which has provoked some opposition to KCN's policy of accepting sponsorship from Nestle.

SAVE THE CHILDREN

have recently published a book on working with children in consultation. The book entitled. **A journey of discovery: children's creative participation in planning**, describes how Save the Children consulted children aged between 5 and 11 about plans for a Discovery Centre in Stratford, East London. Through storytelling, role play, art work, games and discussions, children were able to give their views about the centre.

This book shows how children can be involved in the early stages of planning services and can use their imagination and existing knowledge to explore options that are beyond their everyday experience. It describes the thinking that needs to be done before starting, offers guidelines for effective consultation with children and factors that aid a successful partnership approach. It includes consultation ideas, activity sheets and materials.

A Journey of Discovery by Judy Miller is available from Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, price £6.50 plus £1.50 postage and packing.

CITY FARM GOOD PRACTICE FILE

The National Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens has published a File of Good Practice Case Studies, based on actual City Farm and Community Projects in the UK. Each Case Study deals with a particular aspect of the range of issues covered by this form of provision.

For example, on the issue of Proving Mobile Animal Units, the work of Meanwood Valley Urban Farm in Leeds is examined, contacts are given and basic costings. [Two other Farms are examined in terms of this issue also in separate Studies so as to give comparison.] Similarly, looking at Linking Classroom Activities with Learning, the experience of Freightliners Farm in London is highlighted as well as other Farms.

Other issues covered include: Volunteering on City Farms, Working with People with Special Needs, and Qualifications on City Farms etc.

This is a sound approach to information work. Details from the Federation at: The Greenhouse, Hereford Street, Bristol BS3 4NA, Tel: 0117-923 1800, Fax: 0117-923 1900

A NEW WEBSITE: KIDS AND CO

has recently been launched, this aims top pro-



Play Around

"I have para-phrased the debate here, for your reference:

"It seems to me that Nestle as a company put money before children. Should KCN link itself to such a company?"

"When KCN first took its sponsorship from Nestle many people in the play field were extremely concerned. I know that JNCTP Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork wrote on more than one occasion asking for reasons why KCN was willing to accept this money apart from the obvious of 'we don't care where the money comes from as long as we can spend it'. There was never a conclusive response.

"We should not buy Nestle products - no matter how nice they are - and we should lobby and pressure KCN to distance themselves from Nestle.

"I may be wrong about my attitude and views of KCN and am very willing to enter into discussions to be persuaded otherwise but all my experience of interacting in the field of playwork for the last seven years makes me feel that KCN is a lone player who is not interested in the development of playwork as a profession. Or in being an active part of the networks that exist to improve the lot of Playworkers or the arena of playwork or the opportunities for children to have free and open access to play opportunities.

"I absolutely support UNICEF's campaign to boycott Nestle. It is barbaric and a complete disgrace to the human race. It is a issue I feel very strongly about.

"Although it does not surprise me that KCN has no principles and will take money from where ever they can, I think it is still important to make it clear that their actions are not acceptable to a lot of people in the playwork field. For me the very heart of playwork is about helping children to have an understanding of the world around them and their place within it. That there are massive inequalities and injustices, whereby the search for profit by multi-nationals keeps at least third of the world starving and in abject poverty is something that cannot be ignored. (oops, sorry, getting all political now)

"Part of Nestle's strategy is to pretend that they are OK now. If we let this go we are by implication saying that we agree with it. Tell KCN what you think.

"One of the most inconsiderate calculating and inhumane companys in the world, a company that was responsible for the death of tens of thousands of African children is attempting to gain public credibility through sponsoring childrens service providers.

"I am disgusted that KCN have accepted this sponsorship Playworkers are advocates of childrens right, needs and want all over the world not just in their local area. Any organisation calling themselves playworkers or childrens representative should be ashamed of themselves for even thinking about accepting such sponsorship.

"Let's face it a boycott of Nestle will do not much good and all we can do is do what I have been doing for years and take every opportunity to criticise KCN and where possible avoid any professional contact and try to persuade partnerships etc not to buy their products.

"In view of the above I created an opinion poll which asks if KCN should accept sponsorship from Nestle? So far everyone who has voted agrees that KCN should end this agreement now and refuse future investment from Nestle."

POLL RESULTS

The Poll elicited just 18 replies, but the list is relatively small although fast-growing. The results were 17 against KCN accepting Nestle sponsorship, 1 don't know and 0 in favour. This is a small sample, of course.

PLAYACTION SURVEY - YOUR VIEWS

vide upto date information for all those involved in all aspects of childcare. The site contains an OnLine newsletter and has links to other Website on play and childcare.

For more information e-mail info@childcare-info.co.uk

Or visit the Website at: <http://www.childcare-info.co.uk>

Or contact Kids & Co c/o Intelligent Era Ltd. Bow House Business Centre, 153-159 Bow Road, London E3 2SE.

Tel: +44 208-981 3131. Fax: +44 208-981 3131.

SLAIN IQBAL MASIH WINS WORLD'S CHILDREN'S PRIZE

STOCKHOLM, April 7 (AFP) - Iqbal Masih, a 12-year-old Pakistani child slave turned activist whose brutal 1995 murder made headlines around the world, was awarded the first World's Children's Prize posthumously in Stockholm Friday, a child jury announced.

Anne Frank, the Dutch jewish 13-year-old whose diary of the Holocaust has sold millions of copies around the world, and Hector Pieteron, a 12-year-old who was shot in Soweto in South Africa in 1976, received honorary awards.

The recipients were chosen by a jury of 15 children from around the world, organised by Sweden which established the prize as a national millennium project.

Sweden's Queen Silvia, an ardent supporter of children's rights, will present the award, dubbed a Nobel prize for children, to Iqbal's younger sister Sobia on April 13 in Mariefred, Sweden. Anne Frank's cousin, Buddy Elias, will accept on her behalf, and Hector Pieteron's sister, Antoinette Sithole, will accept for him.

The World's Children's Prize will carry the subtitle The Iqbal Masih Award for the Rights of the Child in the future to honour it's first prize winner. "It's natural that Iqbal was awarded the first prize. he continues to inspire children and adults around the world in the fight against harmful child labour even in death," 14-year-old jury member Laura Hannant said. Iqbal was sold into child bonded labour by his mother when he was five years old. he was forced to work more than twelve hours a day in the carpet industry.

He escaped at age 10 and began to speak out against child slavery and for freedom and schools for all Pakistani children, and traveled abroad to gather support for the fight against child slavery. In 1995 he was murdered, many



Play Around

So PlayAction seeks readers' views on this question:

Should KCN accept Sponsorship from Nestle?

Yes No Don't Know

Please e-mail your response to fairplay@arunet.co.uk
Or fax it to 01243-862072
or send it to Fair Play, Freepost, Bognor Regis PO21 1YZ.

KCN's response to date to Michael Tombs has been a holding reply from Laura Funnell, their Communications Manager. On 26th May she explained that neither KCN nor Anne Longfield had any record of his earlier message but that Liz Ketch, their Head of Public Affairs would be responding.

Fair Play-Safe Play Football Project

Fair Play for Children are currently running a Fair Play-Safe Play Football Project where we are aiming to reach as many youth football leagues and teams as possible to:

1. Broaden awareness of the issues and the resources that can help.
2. Enable many more groups to access criminal records and other services at low cost.
3. Offer training, and an advice and information service.

As shown in our Autumn 1999 edition of PlayAction a former boys' soccer manager, David Lawrence, was convicted at Bristol Crown Court on nine charges of indecent assault against and one charge of indecency with children between 1972 and 1997 and was jailed for five years.

For most of the years that he gained access to children throughout his involvement in soccer, he had never been subject to any form of check about his past. The simple reason is that his League and Club were unable to access Police Checks until 1997 when the youth league joined Fair Play and its Child Protection in a Playwork Programme in 1997.

We plan to hold a Conference on 7th September at Leicester City Football Ground, drawing together Clubs, Professional Players, Junior Leagues, County Football Associations, the FA and others to launch our Project and to discuss Child Protection Issues affecting the grass roots of football in this country.

We have received an encouraging amount of support to date from influential people in the game and professional football clubs as the following list shows: The project has received support to date from influential people such as: Liam Brady, David Moyes, David O'Leary, Martin O'Neill, David Platt, Peter Ridsdale, Bobby Robson. The Professional Clubs that we have received support from to date are: Bradford City, Bristol Rovers, Cambridge United, Ipswich Town, Leeds United, Leicester City, Luton Town, Oldham Athletic, Peterborough United, Port Vale, Reading, Tottenham Hotspur, Watford, Wimbledon.

We are currently in negotiation towards gaining support and possible funding towards the Conference and Programme. The Project is at present trying to gain more support and also funds for the Conference and Programme to help with

say because he dared to speak out.

TAKING CHILDREN SERIOUSLY A PROPOSAL FOR A CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COMMISSIONER NEW AND FULLY REVISED EDITION

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation have published a handbook, which describes in detail the proposal for an independent statutory institution to promote and protect the human rights of children - a Children's Rights Commissioner. Since Taking Children Seriously was published in 1991 the proposal has gained increasing support. Fully revised and expanded, this new edition sets out the case for and the functions of a commissioner. It considers the arguments for a separate institution for children or a commissioner integrated within a human rights commission and includes a draft Bill and details of similar offices established in other countries.

The book is available from Turnaround Publisher Services Ltd, Unit 3 Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ. Tel: 020 8829 3000. Fax: 020 8881 5088. E-mail: orders@turnaround-uk.com The price per copy is £5.99 plus £2.00 postage and packing

THE FIRST PLAYWORK TRAINING COURSES

have been nationally endorsed and will be able to include the "SPRITO ENDORSED" logo on all their training materials for next year.

The nine regional councils for Education and Training in Playwork considered the first submissions from across the country in February and March; these included a range of training courses from introductory day long courses to larger, more in depth courses covering a wide variety of topics. The national endorsement criteria are set by the Central Council, and the Regional Councils, made up of playworkers and others involved in playwork, decide if the courses submitted meet these national standards.

For more information please contact Paul Bonel, SPIRTO Playwork Unit, 24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD. Tel 0171 388775 ext.206. Or email paul@spirto.org.uk

NUTS AND BOLTS, COGS AND SPRINGS

Construction Kits and Tea Sets - Toy Libraries Supporting Families Training Conference, 10 February 2000



Play Around

publicity/promotion, administration costs, accommodation, catering, travel and a development pack. *If you would like to receive any more information about our Fair Play-Safe Play project please contact John Field (Development Worker) at 01243 869922 or write to me at the Fair Play address.*

COP OUT COUNCILS



Playground safety has been at the forefront of public debate for at least three decades. Thousands of children have been injured and sometimes paid the ultimate price with their young lives when play areas have not been 'safe'. Let us for one moment remember, Lorraine Copland died 1989, Simon Burks died 1992 and Rachel James died 1997 and for the thousands of other children who have suffered due to accidents in play parks.

I feel heart felt sympathy for the children around the country who are being deprived of play facilities. Ultimately it is a damning indictment of local authorities around the country that have decided not to prioritise and make more funds available for children. Councils are 'copping out', because for decades they have ignored the problem and now because parents are being made aware of the serious dangers of some play areas, they are eliminating the problem rather than addressing it. Once again our children are 'dipping out' of their fundamental right to play in relative safety.

Mrs Claire Donovan of Bedwas, Caerphilly wrote to me about a year ago, stating that her local park was a damn disgrace and so were the vast majority in the area. I believe she was probably right as Caerphilly Council has closed 95 play areas. Why on earth did they allow this situation to escalate to such an extent in the first place.

For a member of ROSPA to suggest that playgrounds could now be safe because there have been only 3 reported deaths is beyond belief. I suggest that children have just been lucky. I receive many letters from parents who are still not convinced that our play parks are now safe and from many that I see, I have to agree with them totally.

What is now required is for central government to take a firm hold of, a rapidly deteriorating situation, and make much-needed funds available. This government has squandered millions of pounds of our money on the 'Dome' which nobody wanted in the first place and is still ploughing our money into it. That wasted cash could have gone a long way in refurbishing many play areas. What better way of spending lottery money than investing it in our children's future.

The enormous problem that we have with many youngsters around the country will only escalate if the government does not step in immediately. Sadly, from a letter recently received from Kate Hoey MP, the Minister for Sport, which intimates that the government will still not take a more active role. She believes that the present 'goal setting legislation' backed up with guidelines, is the best way forward of ensuring compliance with the law and providing health and safety protection. This is obviously not working.

As a bereaved parent I call on parents and grandparents throughout the country, to stand up and be counted, because, until we do, nothing is going to change. Safety must be our priority at all costs, because when you lose a child in such a needless way, it is devastating. Reply to article by B Taylor, Daily Mail, Thursday May 30, 2001 by Ian Burks, Fair Play Safe Play Co-ordinator.

"A very well organised event. Most informative and very enjoyable. I've certainly gone away with lots to think about and take away to my staff team These were among the many enthusiastic comments at the end of our Training Conference, which was designed to provide information about setting up and supporting toy libraries.

Over 70 delegates - many of them from local Sure Start teams and Early Years Development Childcare Partnerships - took part in Workshops examining different aspects of running a toy library, both academic and practical. Keynote Speaker Dr Judith Trowell (Consultant Child Adolescent Psychiatrist, The Tavistock Clinic, London) highlighted some of the dangers to children in families that do not play.

Our next Training Conference will be in Autumn 2000. Contact NATLL for details: tel 020 7387 9592, fax 020 7383 2714, or e-mail: training@natll.ukf.net."

ARTS



Eton allows lower class into play [SUM00.01]. *Denis Campbell. The Observer, 5/3/00.* In an historic assault on the huge class divide in Britain's education system, fee-paying schools will invite state pupils to use their often luxurious sports facilities. Leading private schools such as Eton and

Harrow will open their doors to children from local state schools. Ian Beer, chairman of the Independent Schools Council who is the brain-child of the scheme, said that it was designed to use sport to break down 'huge social barriers', revive maintained schools' interest in physical activity and halt the alarming slump in fitness levels among teenagers.

When a hug can teach true love [SUM00.02]. *Libby Purves. The Times, 2/2/00.* The main source of sex education for your child is the example you set at home, says Libby Purves. She states that "Parents who are affectionate with one another are sending a powerful message to their children." She argues that sex education at schools needs to be monitored and the main source is through the parents. Parents who are affectionate, considerate, laugh together and hug one another are sending a powerful and important message to the children who run in and out of the family hug.

School day to go on until 5pm [SUM00.03]. *John O'Leary. The Times, 13/3/00.* Secondary schools will be expected to operate a longer day to give their pupils access to extra academic, cultural and sporting activities, under proposals David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, will announce this week. The school day will be extended to at least 5pm to accommodate the extra activities, which will include homework clubs for those who are falling behind. Mr Blunkett said "These are things that are taken for granted in the best of the private sector. State schools do not have their money, but the extra funding that will come on stream this year and next will allow us to help to support new developments."

Abused children need a champion [SUM00.04]. *Jim Harding and Jo Williams. The Times, 14/2/00 (Letter).* The NSPCC and the ADSS are united in calling for the government to appoint an independent Children's Commissioner to champion the needs of UK children, especially in care. The first task of this office must be to guarantee that the voice of every child is heard and that their concerns are properly investigated in an open way. They believe that such an appointment would be the single most important outcome of the North Wales Child Abuse Inquiry. The brave children and professionals who spoke out about the terrible abuse in North Wales children's home deserve, at the very least, an apology from the state for what was a national scandal.

Have Music and Art been sent to the bottom of the class [SUM00.05]. *Simon Rattle. The Times, 22/1/00 (Letter).* The crisis in arts funding, serious and potentially crippling though it is, pales beside what is being done to the arts in the name of education. For those in arts that longed for a new Government, who had taken Labour's pre-election pledge to "find ways to arrest the decline of music in schools" at face value, the removal of music and art from the primary school curriculum is a devastating blow. It seems ironic that the music profession, which fought tirelessly with the last government over what form the music curriculum should take, must now take on their successors to protect its very existence.

(Reply)David Blunkett. *The Times, 22/1/00 (Letter).* I made it clear on Tuesday that schools would not only be expected to continue teaching music and art but that they would still have to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. I also intend in the near future to say more about how we will develop creativity within our education system, which I regard as an important part of every child's development.

Primary Example [SUM00.06] *David Charter. The Times, 23/3/00.* A different name, a new head teacher, new uniforms and a free breakfast have transformed Manor Oak Primary School, in Orpington, southeast London, formerly Kensington School. Under the Government's Fresh Start policy, failing schools are closed and reopened with a different image, new head and mostly new staff. The



Digest

scheme though has been making headlines for the wrong reasons with the resignation of three of the schools so-called superheads brought in to run them, this small primary school though is winning admiration for its imaginative approach. The Department for Education is hoping to learn from this Manor Oak experience and headteacher, Mrs Marsh, has been invited to share her experiences at a seminar in Whitehall next month. She states "Mr Blunkett says that poverty does not matter, but it is not poverty so much as deprivation that is the problem."

Drug-free treatment for ADHD [SUMOO.07]. *Peta Bee. The Times, 4/4/00.* Do hyperactive children have to be treated with drugs? Or can diet help? Liz Thomson's 14-year-old son, Anthony suffers from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder(ADHD), which was diagnosed when he was ten and is one of many children trying nutritional therapy rather than conventional treatment. Drug therapy was the first thing Anthony's doctor tried(Combination of antidepressants and Ritalin) but some experts are outraged by the widespread use of such drugs for children and are convinced that it might cause damaging short and long-term side-effects, including weight loss, chest pains and irregular heart beats. Anthony, has been taking a cocktail of nutrients for only a few months, but already his mother believes that he is making progress. She says "Ritalin caused him to lose 2st in weight because his appetite disappeared and there was no signs of any improvement, with his tempers sometimes getting worse. So far things are looking good. But we have also been told that it could take months for the nutrients to work fully. It will be worth the wait. All we want is for him to have a chance in life."

Error that haunted Pooh's creator [SUMOO.08]. *A Correspondent, The Times, 17/4/00.* According to a manuscript which has surfaced after more than 70 years, children's writer, A.A.Milne, knew from the start that he had made a mistake in naming his chief character after his own son, Christopher Robin. His son's life was blighted by constant association with the character in his father's books and he refused even to stock them in the bookshop he later ran in Dorset. The author also insisted in a little-known essay penned in 1929 that he did not base the character in his books on the childhood antics of his real life son. The manuscript, to be sold on May 11, is expected to fetch between œ6,000 and œ8,000.

Princess's Playground [SUMOO.09]. *Tom Rawstone, Daily Mail, 23/12/99.* Princess Diana is to be remembered with a œ1.25million adventure playground near her Kensington Palace home. The work in Kensington Gardens should be completed in time for an official opening on Diana's birthday, July,1 and will take its inspiration from Peter Pan. A spokesman for the Royal Parks Agency said: 'It will reflect Diana's interest in children, particularly those who are disabled.'

Lack of baby play builds criminals, claims expert [SUM00.10]. *Cherry Norton, Independent, 12/04/00.* Future criminals are "hardwired" at eight months old by unwitting parents who don't know how to play properly with their children. Research shows that couples who watch television or listen to the radio while they play with or talk to their babies can produce violent, anti-social and aggressive children who later turn to crime and abusive behaviour. Margaret Lochrie, chief executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, stated that "The early years are very important but children's life values and social relationships are laid down by their parents in the first five years of life, not just a critical period of a few months."

Sickly Youth [SUM00.11]. *David Piachaud, Independent, 29/3/00.* To improve the health of the poorest children in society, David Piachaud argues, the government must do more than reduce poverty as a recent UNICEF study found "the UK emerging as a serious contender for the title of worst place in Europe to be a child." The government has now made the bold commitment to end child poverty in 20 years and with the latest measures in the budget it has made a good start towards achieving this goal, although it is arguable whether this reduction in child poverty will improve child health. Improving children's opportunities requires the ending of child poverty; it must also involve improving the health of the poorest children.



FAIR PLAY WEB SITE A GROWING 'HIT'

The number of visits recorded at the Fair Play for Children Web Site is now over 4,600 with visits from many countries including:

Australia Canada Ireland Malaysia Finland
Italy United States Germany Sweden Spain
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Zealand Norway Singapore France
Netherlands Hong Kong Denmark Israel
Taiwan Argentina Czech Republic Belgium
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Ecuador Slovenia Indonesia Greece India
Uruguay Pakistan Vietnam Yugoslavia
Poland - and Two from The US Military!

Perhaps it's part of Swords Into
Ploughshares? Find our Site at: [http://www.
arunet.co.uk/fairplay/](http://www.arunet.co.uk/fairplay/)



Digest

Hitting Back at the Bullies [SUM00.12]. Gary Skentelbery, *Manchester Evening News*. A Millennium Volunteers project is looking for young people aged 16-24 to learn new counselling, mediation and 'prejudice reduction' skills. The scheme was launched three years ago to reduce bullying and raise awareness of alternative ways of resolving conflict, the Bully Free Zone (BFZ) has been identified as a model of good practice. Projects Officer Lucy Whiting said: "Millennium Volunteers is an excellent way for young people to gain valuable training and work experience. This will provide them with practical skills which can be transferred to the workplace, or when moving on to further education."

Shooters turn fire on MPs over gun plans [SUM00.13]. James Landale, *The Times*, 14/4/00. Britain's shooting community criticised yesterday MPs' plan for tough new gun laws, including a minimum age for children handling firearms and tighter controls on airguns and shotguns. They argued that the laws would hit law-abiding sportsmen and do nothing to combat criminal use of illegally held weapons. Current rules on gun control are extremely complex but effectively allow children to use some firearms in certain supervised conditions. John Hoare, secretary of the National Small Bore Rifle Association, said that these proposals would hit only law-abiding shooters and have no impact on criminals.

Paedophile protest at warning posters [SUM00.14]. Paul Wilkinson, *The Times*, 14/4/00. After posters appeared across Durham warning children not to go with strangers, a teacher wrote a strongly worded letter to the regional newspaper complaining that youngsters were being overprotected. The teacher, Simeon Hope, later admitted that he was a paedophile with 51,000 indecent pictures of boys and girls stored on his computer. Magistrates at Sedgfield, Co Durham, were told yesterday that the 34-year-old supply teacher was arrested at his home in Willington by police after he admitted possessing the indecent material and he was sent to Durham Crown Court for sentence. Hope worked at a school for less than half a term and he was suspended immediately and none of the charges related to the school or its children.

After providing 40 years of safe enjoyment for village children...BANNED [SUM00.15]. Tim Woodward, *Daily Mail*, 22/2/00. For almost 40 years, generations of children enjoyed clambering safely onto the wooden see-saw at the Cotswold village of Bledington. Despite its blameless record, the see-saw was targeted by playground inspectors who said it could prove dangerous and land the local council in court. The see-saw was built by Mr Bolter in 1962 and was spotted recently by an inspector from the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association, which subsequently ruled that it breached EU standards on playground equipment. No-one was available to comment from the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association yesterday. The EU regulation came into effect on 1 January 1999.

Third of pupils bullied in past year [SUM00.16]. David Charter, *The Times*, 17/4/00. Pupils in Wales feel under the greatest threat from playground bullies, but there are more attacks in schools in the past year in the South West of England, a survey has shown. There were wide regional variations which suggested that schools in the North West have been more successful in tackling bullying than elsewhere

Test 11-year-olds for cocaine [SUM00.17] *The Independent*, 12/4/00. Frank Doran, a member of the council's controlling cabinet, stated that random testing for cocaine and heroin should be introduced for children as young as 11 in schools across Liverpool to tackle addiction. But, DCI John Sayers, of Merseyside police drugs support team, said: "We believe random drug tests would be a waste of resources."

Mind games bullies play [SUM00.18]. Sanjida O'Connell, *The Times*, 23/3/00. New research on under-age bullies is overturning how we think about them - and how to counter their behaviour. The research suggests that the stereotypical image of bullies is wrong and that bullies may be good at understanding how other children feel, which allows them to manipulate victims mentally and emotionally. The reason according to Professor Smith, could be that bullies are not initially not good at theory of mind skills, but once they start bullying, they end

up better than their peers. The research finds that bullies are four times more likely to become criminals - or executives furtively manipulating their workers. Dr. Sutton's message is: "There may be common elements between cult leaders, managers and ten-year-old bullies."

Children just love to go clubbing [SUM00.19]. Jane Wilson, *The Times*, 17/7/00. With the rising number of working parents, who all want to ensure their children are placed in safe and stimulating environments, the popularity of after-school clubs is growing. The government now plans to use lottery money - £200 million of it - through the New Opportunities Fund, to create nearly one million new after-school care places by 2003.

Lessons on the life of plants [SUM00.20]. Susan Elkin, *The Times*, 24/7/00. Susan Elkin reports that gardening is beginning to creep in to the everyday habits of schoolchildren across the country and as Sue Johnson, education officer at the Royal Horticultural Society, says, "You can teach many aspects of the National Curriculum through gardening". It is encouraging that RHS Greenfingers Challenge, a national competition for school gardens, should have attracted nearly 700 entries last year.

Sex casts a spell [SUM00.21]. Stephen Moss, *The Guardian*, 29/03/00. JK Rowling's training wizard Harry Potter is about to discover that 'girls are quite interesting' and there's more to life than his magic wand. JK Rowling, discussing the next instalment in her best selling Harry Potter series, said this week that sex is about to enter her young hero's life.

Children face curbs over 'risky' mobiles [SUM00.22]. Indira Das-Gupta and Zoe Morris, *The Evening Standard*, 10/05/00. Medical experts are hoping that an inquiry into mobile phone use will demand tougher age restrictions because of the increased risk to children's health. A recent study by Professor Om Ghandi at Utah University concluded that radiation exposure levels could be twice as high in children as in adults because their skulls are thinner. The Government is aware that the warning could spark public alarm. A Whitehall spokesman said: "We will publish the full report and let the public see what the conclusions are for themselves." Possible measures could include a minimum age for users and limiting the length and number of calls made.

You can ask for copies of articles quoted above - please send 50p in stamps plus an addressed envelope to our address on page 1, quoting the title and the ref. no. e.g. [SUM00.10]



tHE bACK pAGE

The Reading is taken today from the Gospel of St Janus who looketh both ways, commencing at verse 61.

Now it came to pass in the reign of Herod the King that three wise men sought the infant Jesus so that they could worship him. And Herod sought their counsel privily asking where the Child might be found, but they being warned, fled the country and sought asylum in a northern land being of lighter-toned skin.

Being warned in a dream, Mary and Joseph took the infant Child with them so that they might escape Herod's persecution. And lo, they journeyed to the land of Egypt, but the ruler of Egypt, being unwilling to incur the wrath of Herod, on whom they relied for much olive oil and other commodities, didst say unto Joseph, We are sorry but thou must leave at once and they were put on a camel train and thence a boat for a New Land, New Continent, to the north to whence the Wise Men had already departed.

And so it came to pass that Mary, being encumbered with the infant Jesus, and her husband, came to the New Land, and set foot from the ship in which they had journeyed thence.

Now the Lord of the New Land was a man of fair countenance and loveth all things New, and verily was a Man who preached fairness with firmness, rights with responsibilities, and who left no living stone unturned. And his wife was great with child but saith not that he taketh no leave or new leave. Having heard of the flight of the Child, with his mother, even unto his own New Land, he was vexed and concerned.

Yeah, he sought the counsel of a high pharisee, a Man of Straw, who saith that Joseph and Mary mayest not be genuinely fleeing Herod's wrath and ire, but may instead be common seekers of work and hire, after the manner of labourers in the vineyard. And when Mary, being without food or sustenance in this New Land, sought alms, the Man of Straw saith that she set the Child to beg. [Joseph having been detained at the pleasure of the Lord of the New Land in a secure place not unlike to a prison for many months thereto whilst the New Lord discovered whether he was a genuine seeker after asylum or merely a labourer seeking to hire his person.]

And the Scribes of the Land, writers on tabloids of stone, to whom the People paid great heed, ranteth that the seekers of asylum defileth the land and taketh all the dwellings and work of the People, that they are unclean and an abomination, and that they must be chased hence from the New and Fair Land.

It came to pass that, many months having passed, the Man of Straw declareth, I have examined the claims of this family, that they are persecuted by the King Herod and risk death if they are returned to his kingdom. I have sought the ethical advice of my Cook, and he saith the olive oil of the land of Judea is exceeding good, and thus this Joseph and his wife (who says the child is not his anyway) are but economic migrants and shall be returned forthwith to Judea from whence they came to this Fair and New Land.

And he then washeth his hands in the sauce of the Land of Chile so that he may be seen to be wise and merciful by all manner and condition of men. And lo, a miracle happeneth, and an Old Man beloved of [some of] his tribe walketh that was lame and possessed by simple devils and the People were sore amazed, saying of the Man of Straw, How is this accomplished that he which was evil and old and infirm perhaps near even unto death now danceth as an hart and as if full of kidney beans? And a great silence came upon the lips of the friends of the Old Man.

And so it was that the infant Jesus was returned to the tender mercies of the wise, the kind, the good, and the entirely harmless King Herod.

Thanks be to New God, Amen.



PLAYDAY₂₀₀₀

celebrating the child's right to play

For the first time Playday 2000 will cover a whole week of activities. Playday 2000 will start on Wednesday August the 2nd and will run until the following Wednesday. The focus of Playday 2000 will be the creation of 'Playmarks', permanent signs of children's play and creativity, to mark the start of the new millennium.

As part of Playday 2000, all local authorities in the UK will be invited to make a Pledge for Play to express their commitment to children's play. The Play Pledge has been coordinated by the Children's Play Council, The Children's Society, along with support from PlayWales, Play Scotland and Playboard Northern Ireland. The Play Pledge will challenge local authorities to make a public statement in support of Playday during the week of Playday 2000. With many local authorities in the process of developing their Cultural Strategies, the Play Pledge should be a timely reminder to local authorities not to forget children's culture.

The Culture Secretary Chris Smith has given the Play Pledge, his endorsement saying. "I cannot think of a better way we can show the children of this country we are committed to their needs. We all know how important play is to a child's development. I would like to see all local authorities embrace the Play Pledge and make play the priority it deserves to be."

*For more information on Playday 2000 contact Tim Gill or Pennie Hedge at Children's Play Council, National Childrens Bureau, 8 Wakley Street London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 020 7843 6016 or Fax: 020 7278 9512.
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