



How it All Started

The reason Fair Play for Children was brought into being

On 31st July 1972, a Letter to the Editor of The Times was published. Its publication caused a stir and public attention was brought to focus on the lack of safe play places for children in the UK. The author was **Bishop Trevor Huddleston** and in due course his intervention led to the creation of Fair Play for Children.

The text of that letter is reproduced and a fuller appreciation of Huddleston, his life and achievements, can be found at:

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1275235486.pdf>



THE  **TIMES**

31st July 1972

Playgrounds in cities

From the Bishop of Stepney

Sir. A few days ago a young friend of mine in Stepney, Bobby McNally, aged nine, was drowned in the Regents Canal. Another child of seven was drowned with him. It was the first day of their school holidays. Of course such accidents occur all over the country and in widely differing contexts. Of course, too, the usual pieties and the usual counsels about parental responsibility are mouthed. I wish to state, without apology or qualification, that in this part of London children suffer and die for lack of proper recreational facilities. And I believe this lack, in a country as affluent as Great Britain, to reveal a sinful and scandalous insensitivity on the part of successive governments. Since the Plowden Report it has been recognized that there must be Educational Priority Areas involving more generous financial provision from the state. But, as the recent National Child Development Study *From Birth to Seven* makes clear . . . "equality of educational opportunity cannot be achieved solely by improving our educational institutions" . . . It is the total environment that must be changed. The local authority, the local community and many voluntary agencies in East London are doing their best to provide recreational facilities and opportunities during the school holidays. But they are up against vast environmental difficulties in terms of disused canals, dangerous motorways and, above all, lack of open space. I plead on behalf of thousands of children like Bobby McNally for the proclamation of Recreational Priority Areas in the great cities of our land, and for the financial support from Government which alone would make this a reality. Can a country spend £1,000 million on the development of one supersonic airliner for its tycoons yet allow its own children so little opportunity, for the freedom and the safety of proper recreation? I believe that on the answer to this question largely depends the future of our country.

I remain, sir, yours truly, TREVOR HUDDLESTON, CR, 400 Commercial Road, E1.

Published by Fair Play for Children : playaction@fairplayforchildren.org